

MADABA, ابدام

is the capital city of Madaba Governorate of Jordan, which has a population of about 60.000. Madaba is the fifth most populous town in Jordan. It is best known for its Byzantine and Umayyad mosaics, especially a large Byzantine-era mosaic map of Palestine and the Nile delta. Madaba is located 30 miles south-west of the capital Amman.



History

Madaba has a very long history stretching from the Neolithic period. The town of Madaba was once a Moabite border city, mentioned in the Bible in Numbers 21:30 and Joshua 13:9, Madaba dates from the Middle Bronze Age.

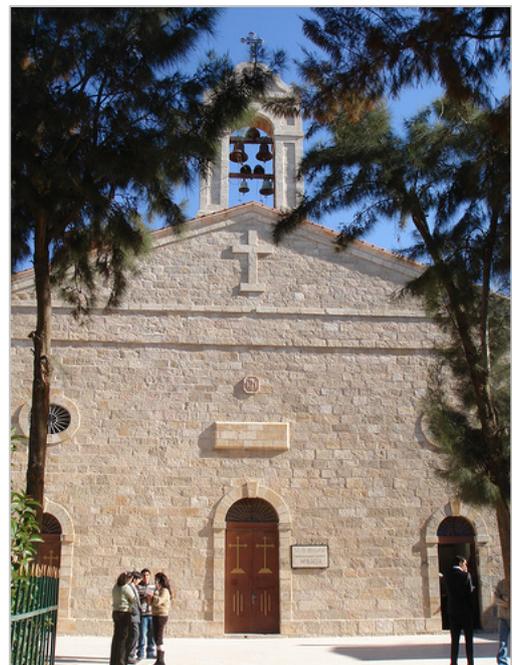
During its rule by the Roman and Byzantine Empires from the second to the seventh centuries AD, the city formed part of the Provincia Arabia set up by the Roman Emperor Trajan to replace the Nabataean kingdom of Petra. During the rule of the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate, it was part of the southern Jund of Palestine.

The first witness of a Christian community in the city, with its own bishop, is found in the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon in 451, wherein Constantine, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bostra, the provincial capital, signed on behalf of Gaiano, "Bishop of the Medabeni."

The re-settling of the city ruins by 90 Arab Christian families from Kerak, in the south, led by two Italian priests from the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1880, saw the start of archaeological research. This in turn supplemented substantially the scanty documentation available.

St. George's Church, Madaba

The modern Arab village of Medeba (Madaba) is built on the ruins of biblical Medeba. During construction of the Church



of **St. George**, the beautiful "**Madaba Map**" was found. This map was originally part of the floor of a Byzantine church, built during the reign of emperor Justinian, 527-565 A.D. It is the oldest map of the Holy Land that is still extant.

Five other Byzantine churches have been discovered in Madaba, all with nice mosaics. This has led to Madaba's designation as "the city of mosaics." Madaba is 20 miles (32 km) south of Jordan's capital city of Amman.

The Madaba Mosaic Map

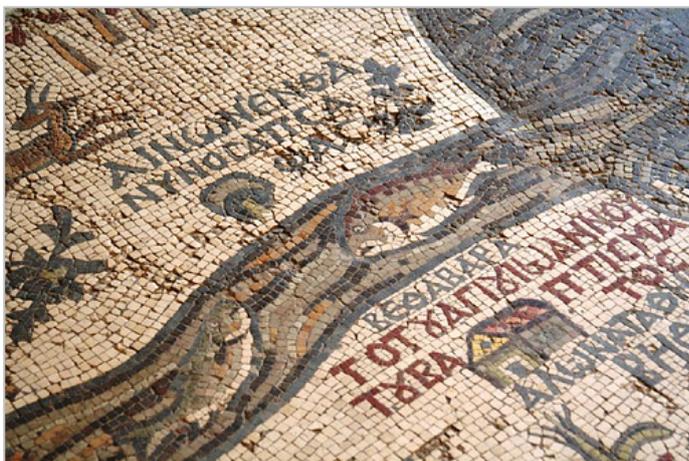
is a unique piece of art realised in 6th cent. A.D. as a decoration for the pavement of a church in the town of Madaba (Jordan) in the Byzantine Near East.

At that time Madaba was part of the so called *Provincia Arabia*, and was inhabited by Aramaic speaking Christians descendant from the ancient biblical people of the Moabites.

The mosaic was discovered accidentally about one hundred years ago (in 1897) while constructing a new church for the Greek-Orthodox Arab community, which was then settling on the very ruins of the ancient town of Madaba.



The mosaic represents the biblical land from Egypt to Lebanon, including Sinai, Israel, Palestine, and Transjordan. Unfortunately the northern sector is almost completely lost, and the rest suffered a lot of damage too. The original panel would have measured about 94 square meter but only 25 are still preserved. What remains is still of the greatest importance for art, history and biblical topography. The city of Jerusalem is depicted with the uppermost care but a total of 156 places or biblical memoirs are present in the preserved portion of the map.



The mosaicist conceived and carried out his masterwork with great topographical skill and biblical knowledge.

The Madaba Mosaic map is deemed by some scholars to be the best topographic representation ever done before modern cartography.

As a source of biblical topography the map is fully comparable with the well-known treatise on the biblical places written in Greek about 395 A.D. by the historian Eusebius of Caesarea and translated into Latin by Jerome about 490 A.D.