Profile

Jerusalem University College
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History

Located on Mount Zion, adjacent to the southwest corner of the Old City wall, Jerusalem University College had its beginnings as the Institute of Holy Land Studies on the Street of the Prophets in 1957. Ten years later, in 1967, soon after the Six-Day War, the Institute moved to its present location in the historic Bishop Gobat School, which was located in what had been, for all practical purposes, "no-man's land", between East and West Jerusalem since 1948.

From the gardens of the university, students overlook the Hinnom Valley and the Montefiore section of Jerusalem. In the near distance the hills of the Judean Wilderness are reminders of powerful Bible stories and early church history.

The founder of the school, Dr. G. Douglas Young, envisioned an educational experience in which students would study the Bible in the land of the Bible among the people of the Bible. The study of biblical history, archaeology, historical geography, Hebrew, cultural and religious practices, and other related subjects were to become living learning experiences as the students walked the land, met the people, and interacted with the cultures of the Middle East. That vision continues to give focus to the mission of the university today.

The university offers graduate and undergraduate programs of study; is a gathering place for scholars, students, and friends from around the world; and enjoys the respect of the Jerusalem national and international communities.

In 1996 the board of directors approved a new name for our school: Jerusalem University College. The name was changed to reflect the growth in student enrollment, the expansion of study programs and the need to clarify to the international community that this school is and always has been an institution of higher education. The rich history of the Institute of Holy Land Studies will be preserved as it continues as a division of continuing education for all who do not seek academic credit. Students from other colleges and universities who are on the way to their first degree and who transfer earned academic credits to their home institutions will be enrolled in the Undergraduate Program. All graduate students who are completing
the requirements for one of the Master of Arts degrees at Jerusalem University College or who take courses for transfer to their home institutions are enrolled in the Graduate School.

Academic Standing, Accreditation and Affiliations

Jerusalem University College is recognized by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the Foreign Ministry of Israel. It functions with the approval of the Israeli government.

The university, a Christian institution of higher education in the context of Judaic and Islamic cultures, maintains rigorous academic standards. In Israel the university has received all the academic approval and recognition it can receive under law as a Christian university-level school; that is, Jerusalem University College is an autonomous institution functioning under the regulations of the status quo provisions for church-state relations designed by the Ottoman Empire and handed on by the British Mandate to the newly formed state of Israel in 1948.

The university is accredited by the Asia Theological Association, is an associate member of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, is an international affiliate of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, and is a member of the International Council for Higher Education. The university enjoys self-authenticating accreditation. Over the years the university has safeguarded its high academic standing by requiring that all colleges, universities, and seminaries in consortium with the university be fully accredited in the countries where they are located, according to standards equivalent to those maintained in Canada and the United States. (see page 20 – Associated Schools)

In Israel the university maintains close working relationships with national universities and international teaching and research institutions located in Jerusalem and maintained by a worldwide variety of churches and faith-related organizations. The Jerusalem academic community includes scholars, researchers, and teachers with outstanding and unique qualifications. They make up the
faculty in the various schools. Jerusalem University College is the only Protestant Christian school at both the graduate and undergraduate university level in this academic community, and plays a significant role because its student population is the largest among the international schools in Israel.

Last year almost 1,300 students pursued academic studies in the undergraduate and graduate divisions of the university, about 1,000 of them short-term students. The undergraduates and many of the graduate students transfer their credits to the school they attend in their home country. Other graduate students are working on their master of arts degree offered by the university. Some of these continue their studies toward their doctorate at major institutions such as Cambridge University in England, Harvard University, Brandeis University, and University of Chicago in the United States, or at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The university maintains many professional memberships, including the World Alliance of Christian-Jewish Interfaith Organizations, the Ecumenical Theological Research Fraternity in Israel, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (North America), the National Association of Evangelicals (North America), and various archaeological societies. The academic programs of Jerusalem University College have been endorsed by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities for the students of its member schools.

The university is chartered in the United States of America as a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and is registered with the United States Department of Education under code number 026118.

**Academic Aims**

Two major goals characterize the educational programs of Jerusalem University College. The first is to lead students to an advanced understanding of and experience in biblical studies, especially the Tanach (Old Testament) and the roots of the New Testament in the Old Testament. This means that students will master the history and geography of the land of the Bible; study
aspects of Judaica; and learn to use historical, archaeological, cultural, and linguistic data in the interpretation of the Scriptures. The second is to introduce students to the culture and religions of the area, especially Judaism and Islam, so that they may better understand the interplay of ideologies and customs in Middle Eastern historical, political, and social relationships. To reach these goals, students are involved at different levels in the study of biblical and modern Hebrew, Arabic, and other Semitic languages. Studying in this part of the world, students must come to terms with the relationship between attractive traditional understandings and “hard-nosed” searching for truth in the process of interpreting biblical backgrounds and historical evidences.

Cross-Cultural Setting

Jerusalem offers a remarkable mixture of religious and secular cultures. Christians, Jews, and Muslims have given the city a dominant place in their religious life because of the events that took place in Jerusalem. The three “Abrahamic Faiths” share large parts of the history described in the Bible. Each has developed a distinct culture which, even though it shares a common root with the other two, is expressed in strikingly different ways in family life, social customs, dress, music, and worship.

Because Jerusalem is an international city, Christian organizations and institutions represent faith communities from around the world, each contributing its unique perspective to a mosaic of Christian cultural expression. The university student community is international. Men and women from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North and South America discover that all are international students when they study in Israel. They also discover that Christianity is a minority religion in Israel. This minority status challenges the university community to apply fresh thinking to a Christian way of living in the environment of the Middle East.

Multi-Denominational Community

Jerusalem University College is an institution of advanced learning which is Christian, Protestant, and Evangelical. Its students, staff, and Christian faculty represent many denominational affiliations. The
small Christian Protestant churches in Jerusalem hold services in the English, German, French, Dutch, Korean, and Russian languages in churches that belong to the Anglican (Episcopalian), Assemblies of God, Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed and Pentecostal traditions. The Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, among which one encounters the Coptic, Greek, Latin, Maronite, and Syrian traditions, also provide religious services for residents and pilgrims.

**Spiritual Dimensions**

The name of Jerusalem may create visions of spirituality beyond what is to be the ordinary experience of the Christian faith elsewhere. The challenges to one's faith are significant, however, when "holy places" and biblical sites are commercialized or turned into objects of political struggle. On the other hand, study at the university also offers rich opportunities for genuine spiritual development as the Bible becomes a better understood book, events in the Bible are reconstructed on site, and the life of Jesus takes on historical reality.