

Salem

The Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature. James Strong and John McClintock; Haper and Brothers; NY; 1880.

Sa'lem (Heb. *Shalem*', שָׁלֵם, *peaceful*, i.e. uninjured, or whole, as often) occurs in a few passages of Scripture, and in several other notices, as the name of one or more places, although some writers doubt whether it should not in all cases be translated as a simple appellative. It has likewise been usually regarded as commemorated in the name *Jerusalen*. *SEE SHALEM*.

1. (Sept. Σαλήμ, and so N.T.) The place of which Melchizedek was king (*Ge* 14:18; *Heb* 7:1-2). Some have inferred, from the circumstances of the narrative (e.g. Bochart, *Phaleg*, 2, 4; Ewald, *Gesch.* 1, 410), that it lay between Damascus and Sodom; but although it is said that the king of Sodom — who had probably regained his own city after the retreat of the Assyrians went out to meet (לִקְרָא) Abraham, yet it is also distinctly stated that this was *after Abraham had returned* (אַחֲרֵי שׁוּבוֹ) from the slaughter of the kings. The only clue is that afforded by the mention of the valley of Shaveh (q.v.), which seems to have been the "King's Dale" near Jerusalem. *SEE ABSALOMS PILLAR*. Dr. Wolff, in a striking passage, implies that Salem was — what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews understood it to be — a title, not the name of a place. "Melchizedek of old... had a royal title: he was 'King of Righteousness' (in Hebrew, *Melchi-zedek*); he was also 'King of Peace' (*Melek-Salem*). When Abraham came to his tent, he came forth with bread and wine, and was called 'the Priest of the Highest,' and Abraham gave him a portion of his spoil. Just so Wolffs friend, in the desert of Meru, in the kingdom of

Khiva ... whose name is Abd-er-Rahman, which means 'Slave of the merciful God,' ... has also a royal title. He is called Shahe-Adaalat, 'King of Righteousness' — the same as *Melchizedek* in Hebrew. When he makes peace between kings, he bears the title Shahe Sulkh, 'King of Peace' (in Hebrew, *Melek-Salem*). The main opinion, however, current from the earliest ages of interpretation, is that of the Jewish commentators, who, from Onkelos (*Targum*) and Josephus (*War*, 6, 10; *Ant.* 1, 10, 2; 7, 3, 2) to Kalisch (*Comm. on Genesis* p. 360), with one voice affirm that Salem is *Jerusalem*, on the ground that Jerusalem is so called in **Ps 76:2**, the Psalmist, after the manner of poets, or from some exigency of his poem, making use of the archaic name in preference to that in common use (see Reland, *Palaestina*, p. 833). The Christians of the 4th century held the same belief with the Jews, as is evident from an expression of Jerome ("nostri omnes," *Ep. ad Evangelum*, § 7), and Eusebius (in the *Onomast.* s.v.). Here it is sufficient to say

(1) that Jerusalem suits the circumstances of the narrative rather better than any place farther north, or more in the heart of the country. It would be quite as much in Abraham's road, going from the sources of Jordan to his home under the oaks of Hebron, and it would be more suitable for the visit of the king of Sodom. In fact, we know that, in later times at least, the usual route from Damascus avoided the central highlands of the country and the neighborhood of Shechem, where *Salim* is now shown (see Pompey's route in Josephus, *Ant.* 14:3, 4; 4, 1).

⇒ **Bible concordance for SALEM.**

(2) It is, perhaps, some confirmation of the identity — at any rate, it is a remarkable coincidence — that the king of Jerusalem in the time of Joshua should bear the title Adonizedek — almost precisely the same as that of Melchizedek.

2. Jerome himself, however, is not of the same opinion. He states (*Ep. ad Evang.* § 7) without hesitation, though apparently (as just observed) alone in his belief, that the Salem of Melchizedek was not Jerusalem, but a town near Scythopolis, which in his day was still called *Salem*, and where the vast ruins of the palace of Melchizedek were still to be seen. Elsewhere (*Onomast.* s.v. Salem) he locates it more precisely at eight Roman miles from Scythopolis, and gives its then name as *Salumias*. Further, he identifies this Salem with the Salim (q.v.) (Σαλείμ) of John the Baptist. That a Salem existed where Jerome thus places it there need be no doubt; indeed, the name has been recovered at the identical distance below Beisan by Van de Velde, at a spot otherwise suitable for Aenon. But that this Salem, Salim, or Salumias was the Salem of Melchizedek is even more uncertain than that Jerusalem was so. The ruins were probably as much the ruins of Melchizedek's palace as the remains at Ramet el-Khalil, three miles north of Hebron, are those of "Abraham's house." Nor is the decision assisted by a consideration of Abraham's homeward route. He probably brought back his party by the road along the Ghor as far as Jericho, and then, turning to the right, ascended to the upper level of the country in the direction of Mamre; but whether he crossed the Jordan at the Jisr Benat Yakub, above the Lake of Gennesaret, or at the Jisr Mejamia, below it, he would equally pass by both Scythopolis and Jerusalem. At the same time, it must be confessed that the distance of Salem (at least eighty miles from the probable position of Sodom) makes it difficult to suppose that the king of Sodom can have advanced so far to meet Abraham, adds its weight to the statement that the meeting took place after Abraham had returned — not during his return, and is thus so far in favor of Salem being Jerusalem. *SEE MELCHIZEDEK.*

⇒Definition of sale

3. Professor Ewald (*Geschichte*, 1, 410, note) pronounces that Salem is a town on the further side of Jordan, on the road from Damascus to Sodom, quoting at the same time [Joh 3:23](#); but there seems to be no authority for this, nor any notice of the existence of the name in that direction either in former or recent times.

4. A tradition given by Eupolemus, a writer known only through fragments preserved in the *Proeparatio Evangelica* of Eusebius (9, 17), differs in some important points from the Biblical account. According to this, the meeting took place in the sanctuary of the city Argarizin, which is interpreted by Eupolemus to mean "the Mountain of the Most High."

"*Argarizin*" (Pliny uses nearly the same form — *Argaris*, *H.N.* 5, 14) is, of course, *har-Gerizzim*, Mount Gerizim. The source of the tradition is, therefore, probably Samaritan, since the encounter of Abraham and Melchizedek is one of the events to which the Samaritans lay claim for Mount Gerizim. But it may also proceed from the identification of Salem with Shechem, which, lying at the foot of Gerizim, would easily be confounded with the mountain itself. *SEE [SHALEM](#)*.

⇒ *See also the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.*

5. A Salem is mentioned in [Jg 4:4](#) among the places which were seized and fortified by the Jews on the approach of Holofernes. "The valley of Salem," as it appears in the A.V. (τὸν αὐλῶνα Σαλήμ), is possibly, as Reland has ingeniously suggested (*Paloest.* p. 977), a corruption of εἰς αὐλῶνα εἰς Σαλήμ — "into the plain to Salem." If Αὐλών is here, according to frequent usage, the Jordan valley, then the Salem referred to must surely be that mentioned by Jerome and already noticed. But in this passage it may be with equal probability the broad plain of the Mukhna which stretches from Ebal and Gerizim, on the one hand, to the hills on which Salim stands, on the other, which is said to be still called the "plain of

Salim" (Porter, *Handbook*, p. 340 a), and through which runs the central north road of the country. Or, as is perhaps still more likely, it refers to another Salim near Zerin (Jezreel), and to the plain which runs up between those two places as far as Jenin, and which lay directly in the route of the Assyrian army. There is nothing to show that the invaders reached as far into the interior of the country as the plain of the Mukhna. The other places enumerated in the verse seem, as far as they can be recognized, to be points which guarded the main approaches to the interior (one of the chief of which was by Jezreel and Engannin), not towns in the interior itself, like Shechem or the Salem near it. *SEE JUDITH, BOOK OF.*

6. (Sept. ἐν εἰρήνῃ; Vulg. *in pace*), *Ps 76:2*. It seems to be agreed on all hands that Salem is here employed for Jerusalem, but whether as a mere abbreviation to suit some exigency of the poetry and point the allusion to the peace (*shalom*) which the city enjoyed through the protection of God, or whether, after a well known habit of poets, it is an antique name preferred to the more modern and familiar one, is a question not yet decided. The latter is the opinion of the Jewish commentators, but it is grounded on their belief that the Salem of Melchizedek was the city which afterwards became Jerusalem. (See above.) See a remarkable passage in Geiger's *Urschrift*, etc. p. 74-76. The antithesis in ver. 1 between "Judah" and "Israel" might seem to some to imply that some sacred place in the northern kingdom is here contrasted with Zion, the sanctuary of the south. If there were in the Bible any sanction to the identification of Salem with Shechem (noticed above), the passage might be taken as referring to the continued relation of God to the kingdom of Israel. But the parallelism is rather one of agreement than contrast. Hence, Zion the sanctuary being named in the one member of the verse, it is tolerably certain that Salem, in the

other, must denote the same city *SEE [JERUSALEM](#)*.