

▲ Viewpoint

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respectively), and Muslim holy sites were built on the top of the Temple Mount, the Western Wall is the only artifact remaining from Temple times for Jews to venerate. As an indication of the reverence that the site enjoys, every day people of all nationalities, races and faiths congregate at the wall to pray, contemplate, or perhaps just to place a written message to the Supreme Being in its cracks.

The 187-foot length of the Wall that is visible in the Western Wall Plaza is just a fraction of the entire Wall, which is 1,600 feet in length. There are 45 levels (courses) of stonework, 28 of them above ground, and the remaining 17 underground! It is only since 1967, when Israel regained control of the Old City, that Jews have had access to the tunnels and the ability to discover and renovate previously hidden areas. Because of the efforts of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the entire length of the Western Wall has now been revealed by the tunnel excavations. Discoveries include many rooms, public halls, a section of a Second Temple road, a Hasmonean water tunnel, a pool, incredible arches that support the various levels of construction, and more.

A sense of awe overwhelms most visitors as they are guided through the tunnels, especially at the section that is only three hundred feet from where the Ark of the Covenant – the Holy of Holies – once rested. (The current location of the ark is a mystery, which continues to arouse speculation.)

The sizes of the stones used to construct the tunnels range from relatively small to a gargantuan stone more than 40-feet long. The stone courses that are underground, as well as some above ground, are the original Western Wall stones

from the time of Herod the Great, more than 2,000 years old. (King Herod, who had been made king by the Romans, rebuilt the Second Temple, the port city of Caesarea, the palace at Masada and more.) Other stones were placed on top of them during later eras: Roman, Crusader, and Ottoman. While touring the tunnel, one can see excavations of lower levels from earlier periods, some of which are scores of feet below!

Midway through the tour we saw a short documentary about the methods the builders used in those days. Stonecutters used hammers, chisels and metal wedges to quarry the stones. To move them from the quarries the builders used large mechanical cranes with levers and pulleys and huge wheels or log rollers, which formed a type of conveyor belt. Once moved from their resting place, the stones were transported by oxen or even by “manpower.”

The tour concluded at the terminus of a typical King Herod-era street, which was abruptly left unfinished upon Herod’s death in 4 BCE. This was evident from the fact that we stood at a “dead end,” which happens to be the location of the last stand of the Jews against the Romans in 70 CE, when the Second Temple was razed.

Our excellent guide, Rivka, reminded us of the Prophet Zechariah’s visions: “And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in truth and in righteousness.” (Zechariah: 5/8) There we stood, youngsters and their parents or grandparents, walking on a street built by Herod more than 2,000 years ago, fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecies. Only in Jerusalem! (For more information see: www.english.thekotel.org)



The Western Wall

Music superstar group, the Klezmatics, perform at JCC



(L-R): Linda and Mark Lavinsky with Harry and Selma Fishlow.



(L-R): Sondra and Morris Siegel with Hannah Shapiro enjoy a light moment before the show.

The Klezmatics pause for a photo before the performance: Frank London-trumpet, David Light-drum, Matt Darriau-sax, clarinet,



Lisa Gutkin- violin, Lorin Shamberg-Accordian, Paul Morrissett – bass.



(L-R): Sandra and Clayton Neiderman talk with Miki and Gene Gruber before the program.



(L-R): A large crowd fills the auditorium; Carol Conrad, Anita Weiss, Ruth Bandoroff, Barbara Bell and Ann Emdur.

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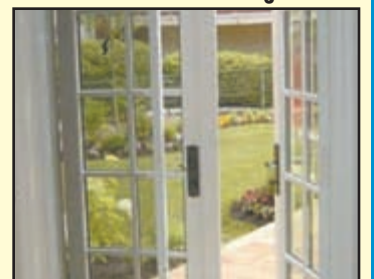
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