



**The Half Shekel Journal** by Ed Rice  
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With no rush, schedule, or appointment our group of 24 gathered back

together after exploring the Western Wall. We circled around Ronnie, our guide, as he explained some background of the Western Wall Tunnels we were about to enter.

Where there are two Jews you will have three opinions, and this is the case for the location of the Jewish Temple on the temple mount. The “traditional location” is held to be where the outcropping of Mount Moriah's bedrock reaches the temple mount elevations. This outcropping of the bedrock is presently covered by the Muslim shrine known as the Dome of the Rock. Historical accounts say that this anodized aluminum dome, recently coated with gold leaf, was built to overlay the location of the original Jewish temple and most rabbis in Israel agree. But when the Romans, Titus Vespasian in particular, overthrew Jerusalem and leveled the temple mount on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the month Av in 70 A.D., as Christ said to his disciples in Matthew 24, they built a temple to Jupiter on this site. (132 A.D.) Then in the 7<sup>th</sup> century Umayyad Muslims built on those ruins attempting to desecrate the Jewish temple's Holy of Holies location. Innuendos and myths then sprang from an unintelligible verse of the



Western Wall Tunnels  
"Our feet stood poised at your gates, o Jerusalem"  
(Psalm 102:2)

From the time of the temples destruction we have been unable to ascend the temple mount to stand in the presence of the shechina. Foreign domination and the constraints of halacha? which prevented access to the temple mount shifted the focus and longings of the Jewish people for their heritage to the Western Wall. For hundreds of years the indignity of destruction concealed the major part of the Western Wall. The few stones visible told a tale of devastation. In 5727 (1967) soon after the liberation of the old city of Jerusalem, the Ministry of Religious Affairs undertook the task of clearing the Western Wall plaza area. The Ministry also initiated a project with a goal beyond mere scientific and archaeological curiosity. The workers pick-axe stripped away the centuries to make this ancient heritage visible and tangible to the Jewish people. Many tons of dirt and refuse were laboriously removed by hand to expose the magnificent underground structures. A continuous historical chain wrought in stone stretching from the Hasmonean era until our time was discovered.

Koran which spoke of a “farthest place of prostration”, to where today most Muslims think maybe in a dream Mohamed went to Jerusalem and ascended from this outcropping of Mount Moriah's bedrock. The Al Aqsa Mosque (ie. farthest mosque) is so named to forge this outlandish connection back to that uninterpretable Koran verse and substantiate such wild suppositions. The gist of this information is that nobody knows an accurate location for the original Jewish temple on the temple mount. We expect that Solomon's temple, the post exile temple, and Herod's

remodeled reconstructed temple all stood on the same location, but that location sill not be verified until scientific and archaeological excavation=s can be done in the multiple natural and man made caverns and passage ways beneath the temple mount. This

investigation will not occur until the Waqf, the Supreme Moslem Council, relinquishes its absolute control of the whole temple mount area, which they consider a huge outdoor sacred mosque. These Muslims want not only the annihilation of Israel but the annihilation of any evidence that Israel ever existed. This diabolical hatred has resulted in a destruction of much archaeological evidence on the temple mount and active opposition to all activities of the Israeli Archaeological Society.

These excavations revealed the entire length of the Western Wall in all its glory. Almost 449 meters long with one stone reaching a weight of almost 400 tons. About 2000 square meters of rooms and public halls were discovered, as well as a section of a second temple road, a Hasmonean water tunnel, a pool, and many other finds. These finds will one day provide the setting for a learning center dedicated to fostering an awareness of Jewish history and an appreciation of the ideals nurtured in Jerusalem and the temple. Here is a realm rich in roots - it was on this mountain that Abraham was warned not to "lift your hand against the youth", Isaac. Here one can imagine the songs and music of the Levites. The stones evoke memories of King David and Solomon, of Ezra and Nehemiah of the Maccabees and the sages. King and prophets walked along these paths. Here at the foot of the Western Wall, more than any other place on Earth, the memories of Jewish past mingle with the hope of Jewish future.

We were now entering the Western Wall Tunnels which exposed the entire length of the western wall. Since 1967 tons of schmutz was removed from these tunnels to expose indeterminate insight to the second temple period and a fever of new interest in knowing even more. The entry way into the tunnels was strange. Where previous the tur-styles had been separate for men and women, these were marked for those who read signs, Jews vs Messianic Jews and Gentiles. Since the group of ladies before us went through one turn-style, I led a group of preachers through the other and the counters tallied us up as Jews, entering the tunnels. The distinction was likely made here because there were places in the tunnels deemed

so close to the Holy of Holies that Jews were warned not to assemble there.

Workers were building supports in several deep openings we could peer into through the cracks in the plywood. As an engineer I wondered at the remarkable lattice of support holding up the city above while archaeologists dug through the city beneath. We had been warned about the claustrophobic nightmares of some of the narrower passages and our group hummed with anticipation as we made our way through the 'secret passage' and passed the 1<sup>st</sup> century stair way access partly exposed here. There were cisterns open to our view as we made our way through the rock lined corridors of the 1<sup>st</sup> century passages. At the 'large hall' we all assembled at another model of the temple. Before Ron began his discussion we examined the model's western wall and the many gates exposed to our view. From Robinson's Arch to the south, we worked our way

north to Barclay's gate then to Wilson's Arch and to our present location just outside Warren's Gate, so named after Charles Warren, who discovered it in 1867. If the Holy of Holies was situated at the traditional site it would be just inside and north of Warren's Gate, that we were now approaching. If physicist Dr. Asher Kaufman were right in his estimation, it would be 330 feet further north, situated just inside the Eastern Gate, is Tel Aviv architecture Tuvia Sagiv were right, with his studies of the topography of the mount area the Holy of Holies would be about 20 meters in elevation down the souther slope from the traditional location.

