

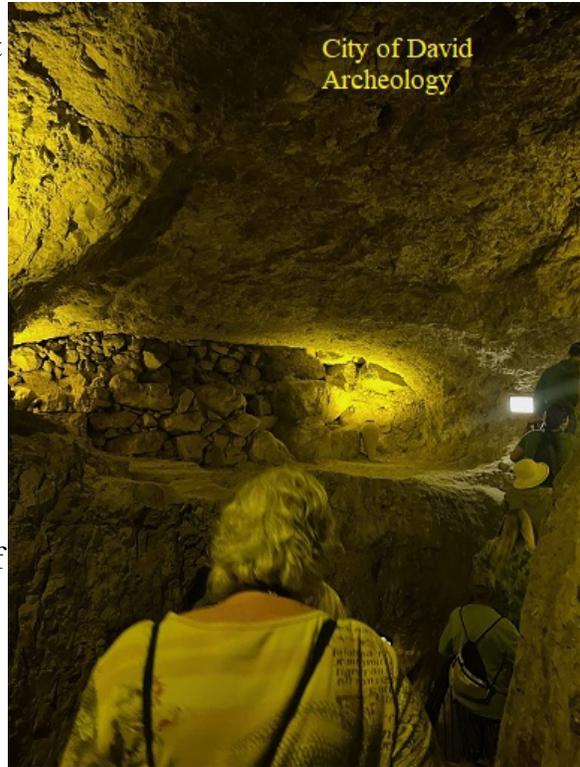


The Half Shekel Journals of 2022 by Pastor Ed Rice
#12 Thur 3 Nov Hezekiah's Tunnel, The Western Wall

The things I believe about eternity affect my daily life, and the things in my daily life affect what I believe about eternity. “I go to prepare a place for you. ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:2–3).

It has been 13 weeks since we returned from Israel and in four weeks, by God’s grace, we will board an El-Al flight at the Newark liberty International Airport and return to Israel. I have spent a couple hours each week pondering what went on there, and a couple hours pouring over its pictures. It is now dawn on a Wednesday of February, and I read in Blaise Pascal's 350 year old book, *Pascal's Pensées*¹, where T. S. Eliot writes in the introduction:

“The majority of mankind is lazy-minded, incurious, absorbed in



vanities, and tepid in emotion, and is therefore incapable of either much doubt or much faith; and when the ordinary man calls himself a skeptic or an unbeliever, that is ordinarily a simple pose, cloaking a



disinclination to think anything out to a conclusion.” And so I dare not be lazy – minded in these matters.

We walked from the entryway of the city of David through some of the excavations that preceded the entryway into Hezekiah’s tunnel. After Rabshakeh, sent by Sennacherib king of Assyria, stood by the conduit of the upper pool and threatened to seize all of Jerusalem (2Kings 18:17–19), Hezekiah saw a flaw in the great fortress city's water supply system.

1 Pascal, Blaise, “*Pascal's Pensées*”, (*Pensées DE Pascal, Avec les Notes de M. de Voltaire*” Tome Premier, A Londres, M.DCC.LXXXV.), 1662, pg xvi, via <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/18269>, [Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), one of the greatest physicists and mathematicians of all time, wrote after his conversion to our Lord Jesus Christ, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.”].

And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? (2Kings 18:17,19)



Sennacherib king of Assyria had already deported ten tribes of Israel into captivity, and now he came with Rabshakeh to destroy Jerusalem and take Judah into their captivity. Hezekiah, and God's prophet Isaiah, took their plight to the Lord and God said, "I will handle it." (2Kings 19 records Hezekiah's prayer and God's answer in greater detail). Hezekiah actually took Sennacherib's letter into Solomon's temple, and spread it before the Lord" (19:14). "And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and



Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD."

God's solution to the siege was that an hundred fourscore and five thousand Syrian soldiers woke up dead (19:35), and Sennacherib, king of Assyria, went home to Nineveh and was killed by his own sons while he worshiped his false god Nisroch (19:36–37).

Although one has to love, and learn from, the drama of all this, the



point we are pursuing is that at the close of Hezekiah's long and extended life (2Kings 20:20²), he “stopped the upper water course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works” (2Chron.32:30³).

A highlight of our day came in wading through the 1/3 mile underground tunnel that Hezekiah “prospered” to dig 2,700 years earlier. The wonder of this great



adventure was in how Hezekiah's workers, who started at the separate ends, ever met in the middle. An inscription in the tunnel describes how they came to be within three cubits of each other,

after 1,200 cubits of digging, and being 100 cubits underground, and they “heard the voice of a man calling to his fellow.” It is an awesome thing, even miraculous, that in this S-shaped, carefully descending, underground, tunneled waterway, the two tunnels met perfectly. They were likely following the natural crack and contour of the rock that they chiseled through, but Hezekiah certainly had the hand of God in his life, ... and prospered. It is a wonder, just the same.

In Hezekiah's Tunnel the Inscription said:

“[...when] (the tunnel) was driven through. And this was the way in which it was cut through: While [...] (were) still [...] axe(s), each man toward his fellow, and while there were still three cubits to



- 2 2King.20:20 *And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?*
- 3 2Chron.32:30 *This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.*

be cut through, [there was heard] the voice of a man calling to his fellows, for there was an overlap in the rock on the right [and on the left]. And when the tunnel was driven through, the quarrymen hewed (the rock), each man toward his fellow, axe against axe; and the water flowed from the spring toward the reservoir for 1200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the head(s) of the quarrymen was 100 cubits.”⁴

Sojourners waded underground through knee deep water from Gihon Spring all the way to the Shiloah Pool. Gihon is a “siphonic, Karstic spring” which is captured in the name “Gihon”, meaning *gushing forth*. It does indeed gush forth with an amazing amount of water. Our group successfully emerge from Hezekiah's tunnel, wet above the knees, near the Pool of Siloam. Bev and I sat-out this spelunking adventure and enjoyed a cup of coffee and some bar mitzvah cake as the smiling water soaked adventurers hiked the half mile up the hill through the area once known as the City of David.

After gathering in the food plaza and exchanging excitement and stories about Hezekiah's tunnel we headed out behind our guide to go to the Western Wall Prayer



Western Wall Prayer Plaza
Men's Side



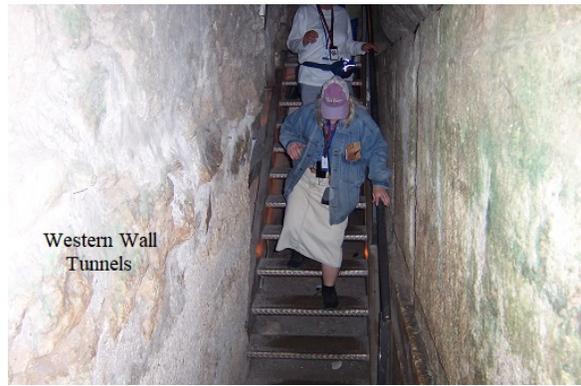
Plaza.

The Western Wall has been the center of Jewish yearning and memory for 1,950 years. It is the only fragment of the great temple that survived the Roman destruction of 70 A.D.. The temple itself was every bit as destroyed as Jesus said it would be:

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down (Matt.24:1–2).

4 From <https://www.bibleplaces.com/heztunnel/> accessed 02/16/2023.

So, the section of the foundation stone, that once held the temple, is all that is left to represent God's presence in the temple. "Built (by Herod the great), to support the western side of the temple mount, it is known as the Western Wall (in Hebrew, *HaKotel Ha'Ma'aravi*). It is the most sacred structure of the Jewish people. Its ancient stones stand testimony to a glorious Jewish past, a proud heritage, and an extraordinary national rebirth. It is a focus of Jewish longing and prayer for redemption and renewal.⁵

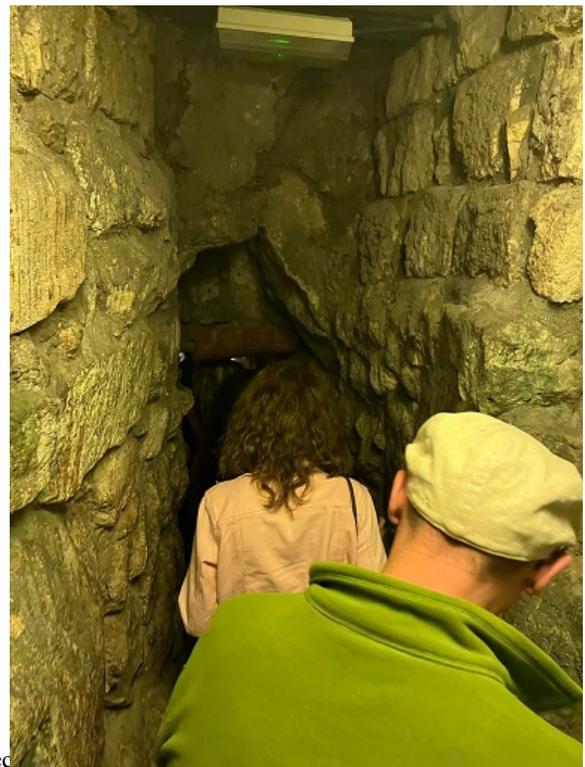


It is said that the divine presence has never departed from the Western Wall. The Bible supports such a claim: "*For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually*" (2Chron.7:16 cf 1Kng.11:36, 2Kng.23:27⁶).

I did not hear where our group was given



any guidance for visiting the Western Wall but several rules were posted and some customs may be in need of mentioning. The no smoking, no pets, no alcohol, signs would be expected, but no candles, no drums (or musical instruments), no speakers (or boomboxes), and no immodest apparel were also posted in picture form (the immodest apparel interpretation was Bev's idea, I thought they were banning bullet proof vests).



5 From Western Wall Heritage Foundation, www.thewall.org

6 *1Kng.11:36 And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light always before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. ... 2Kng.23:27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.*

On Sabbath days, no cell phones, no cameras, and no writing?, was posted. The whole area near the wall is considered a synagogue. To show reverence for Judaism, when at the wall, men should have their head covered. And, a little more obscure custom is to not turn your back on the wall, just back away with reverence.



When we came to the Western Wall Prayer Plaza there was an Israeli military swearing in ceremony being set up. It was very crowded until we worked our way towards the prayer wall. Most Christians understand their ability to call on their heavenly Father from any place that they happen to be. In Christ, we are indwelt by God, made his temple (1Cor.6:19–20), and able to call him Father.

6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ... 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. ... 23:9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. (Mat.6:8–9, 11:27, 23:9).



A few Christians have a reverent appreciation of this truth, and know 2Chronicles 7:14. Very few Christians, however, understand what is going on here

at this Western Wall of the Temple Mount. They have not continued reading in 2Chronicles chapter 7 to understand or appreciate 2Chronicles 7:15–16 “*Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. 16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.*”

Nor have we often rehearsed Solomon's whole prayer in second Chronicles chapter 6, with particular attention paid to its closing:

If they (the children of Israel) sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, ... 38 If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul ... and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name: 39 Then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, their prayer and their supplications, 40 Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. 41 Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. 42 O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant (2Chron.6:36–42).



On November 3, 2022, at 3 PM Israel time, 8 AM EST, I removed my hat, leaned one hand on the sanctified wall, and with an open Bible recited these verses to my Father. With prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, I mentioned by name each of our family members, and then each member of Good Samaritan Baptist Church, and then, by name and calling, each missionary we support.

Because of our schedule, and my curiosity of all that was going on around me, it was not a “sweet hour of prayer”; it easily could have been, but it was at least sweet... and very precious. I pulled a small scroll of paper from my pocket, it had each name I had just prayed for inscribed on it by hand: I made it in a previous prayer meeting, and now tucked it into a small crack in the wall. I had been told, and did believe, that the Western Wall Heritage Foundation periodically removed all such slips of paper, and perpetually stored them somewhere here at the Western Wall Prayer Plaza. I know that that made my prayer no more pertinent or powerful, but it gave me some solace just the same. Thirteen years earlier I left an identical list... more members, fewer missionaries, with the same expectations. God is good.

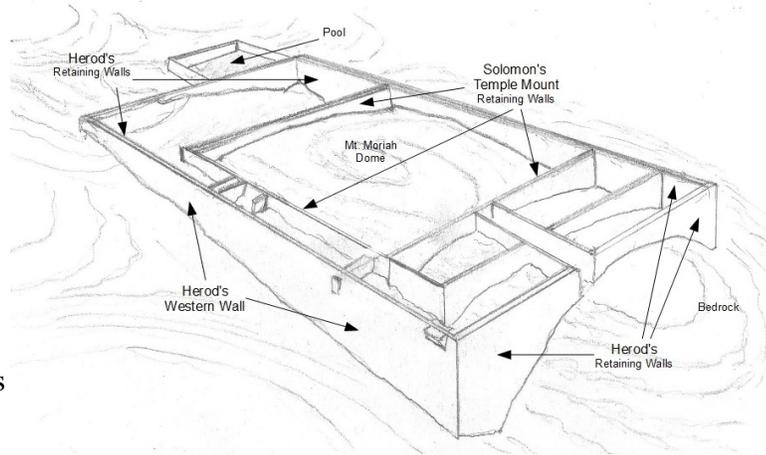
North of the Western Wall Prayer Plaza, underground, in a series of tunnels, we followed the foundation stones, laid by Herod the great, all the way to the north west



corner of the Temple Mount. Herod's gargantuan foundation stones eventually gave way to the bedrock of Mount Moriah. Throughout the amazing maze of tunnels there were little libraries, reading rooms, carved out synagogues and sanctuaries, and empty cisterns.

Three things struck me as we made our way through these underground tunnels. First, as we made our way along the western wall foundation, we surely crossed a place where we stood just a very little bit west of where two cherubims, at one time, stretch out their wings across the Most Holy Place (1Kngs8:6-8). The spot was marked by a small underground synagogue.

Second, the Temple Mount, constructed just east of us, was not a solid mass of 20 foot deep backfill. The whole walled in 1,575 x 985 foot hollowed platform, tapering from 30 feet high at the south wall, to bedrock of Mount Moriah at its north end, was absolutely and perfectly riddled with cavern like rooms, interconnecting tunnels, and small storage spaces. This made up, as it were, the basement of the temple and basilica structures constructed above. I sketched what the landscape under the Temple Mount would likely look like, and one can imagine numerous open areas that were likely present. Notice that



there would be some openings in Solomon's original temple mount area, and even more so under Herod's huge platform area.

These secret basement rooms and tunnels would be quite filled with debris from the destroyed temple, but would likely also contain all that was present when the temple was operational. In hush tones it is quietly speculated that even the original ark of the covenant may have been stored in a concealed room under the most holy place.

This area under the temple mount is very literally an archaeological gold mine. One that has very covertly been explored by Israeli researchers.

Muslims, who are today in control of the Temple Mount, have dug into these man-made caves and tunnels, and, with extreme hatred and bias, have poured many of them solid with concrete. Muslims were at one time dumping their digging refuse in the garbage, and hauling it out the Dung gate. Wise Israeli researchers set up a garbage reconciliation center outside the gate, and collected many artifacts from under the temple mount before the Palestinians got wise to their blunder.



Third, there is one particularly gargantuan stone in Herod's construction of the western wall. It is 44 x 12 x 14 feet, weighing 600 tons! It is most certainly some kind of anchor point, likely a base for an arch support that would span a large room within the temple basement. It seems, for the huge architectural finds buried in the basement of the temple, the rule, at present, is 1% find, and 99% imagination. Many are striving to change that imbalance.

We were exhausted as Eiad, bus driver extraordinaire, turned the Irizar i6S toward the motel. Exhausted but smiling. After a spectacular buffet supper several decided to venture downtown to go shopping. Beverly and I declined, choosing rather a good Book, a relaxing lounge in the lobby, and a controlled crash into a comfortable bed. I had heard that Pastor Gates closed the day with a blast of a Shofar, but we just plain missed it.

