

Day 7  
Thursday March 9, 2023

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### **Kidron Valley Walk**

The Kidron Valley (classical transliteration, Cedron, from Hebrew: Naḥal Qidron, literally Qidron River; also Qidron Valley) is the valley originating slightly northeast of the Old City of Jerusalem, which then separates the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. It continues in a general south-easterly direction through the Judean desert in the West Bank, reaching the Dead Sea near the settlement of Ovnat, and descending 4,000 feet (1,200 m) along its 20-mile (32 km) course. The ancient Mar Saba ('Saint Sabbas') monastery is located in the lower part of the valley.

### **Western Wall**

Jewish tradition teaches that the world began at the Foundation Stone, which is in the center of the Temple Mount. Also according to Jewish tradition, when Abraham was commanded to prepare his son Isaac for sacrifice, they traveled to the Temple Mount and Isaac was bound at the very spot of the Foundation Stone. "And Abraham called the name of that site 'God will see,' as it is said this day, on the mountain God will be seen" Genesis 22:14.

Later, the First and Second Temples were situated on the Temple Mount. When Rome destroyed the Second Temple in 70 C.E., only one surrounding wall of the Temple Mount remained standing (the Western Wall is not part of the original Temple, rather one of the supporting walls for the Temple Mount).

For the Jews, this remnant of what was the most sacred edifice quickly became the central object of yearning in Jewish life. Throughout the centuries, from around the world, Jews made the difficult pilgrimage to the Holy Land and immediately headed for the Western Wall (in Hebrew called "haKotel" meaning simply "The Wall") to pray to God. The prayers offered at the Western Wall were so heartfelt that gentiles began calling the site the "Wailing Wall."

During the rebirth of Jewish assertion in the Holy Land, a young Israel fought a bitter War of Independence in which the Western Wall fell into Jordanian hands. For the following nineteen years, from 1948 to 1967, Jews were tragically not permitted to visit the Western Wall. During the Six Day War of 1967, paratroopers led by Motta Gur broke through to the Old City through the Lion's Gate. The Western Wall and Temple Mount were liberated, the city of Jerusalem was reunified, and the Jewish

people were again able to come to the Western Wall to pray. One of the first to reach the Western Wall in the 1967 Six-Day War was Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, who helped revive a traditional Jewish custom by inserting a written petition into its cracks. It was later revealed that Dayan's prayer was that a lasting peace "descend upon the House of Israel."

The massive stones of the Western Wall invite worshipers to pour their hearts out to God, through verbal prayer or hand-written notes that are stuck in-between the cracks of the rock. The wall is both a symbol of destruction, a witness to the Temple that once stood beyond its walls, and the redemption of the Jewish people who have returned to Jerusalem. Millions of visitors, Jews and non-Jews alike, come to the Western Wall every year in order to be moved by and connect to this truly inspirational landmark.

Upon arriving to the Western Wall, one will immediately notice that men and women are separated by a partition. Next, one will notice the many, diverse prayer groups convening at the Wall.

The following is a guide to some of the different groups that you will find at the Western Wall:

*Hassidim* – Hassidic Judaism, which started in 18th century Europe, is a branch of Orthodox Judaism that focuses on the mystical and spiritual aspects of Judaism. Common practices among Hassidic Jews include frequent immersion in ritual baths (called *mikvahs*), and the inclusion of wordless melodies in prayer. Many distinct sects of Hassidim exist today, each one with a particular style of dress. Thus, Hassidic Jews can be identified from other types of Jews by their distinct clothing such as long, dark jackets (called *bekeshas*) and black fur hats (called *shtreimels*).

*Litvacks* – Litvacks originally descended from Lithuania but nowadays represent a major stream of Israeli religious Jews. The Litvack community places a strong focus on rational Talmudic study, and their prayer is often serious and focused. Litvacks can be identified by their dress of white shirts, black suits and black hats.

*Sephardim* – Sephardi Jews, who all at one point originated from Spain, hail from communities from Morocco to Syria, and Greece to Iran. Much of the traditional dress from these counties has been lost, but there is still a strong tradition of unique tunes and chanting which were sung in the original communities.

*Carlebachers* – Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach (1925-1994) was a Jewish musician, Rabbi, teacher and composer who revolutionized Jewish music in the 20th century. Through his music, storytelling and captivating personality, Carlebach reached out and touched people from all walks of life. His influence on Jewish prayer exploded after his death, and his songs can be heard sung enthusiastically at the Western Wall. Close followers of Carlebach can be identified by their bright, hippy clothing and joy in their service to God.

*Birthright Participants* – In an effort to strengthen Jewish identity and connection to the Jewish people, tens of thousands of young Jews travel to Israel for a free ten-day trip of personal discovery. For most Birthright participants, this is their first time traveling to Israel and experiencing a traditional Shabbat. Birthright participants can be identified by their large groups of young, secular Americans.

*Yeshiva Students* – A rite of passage for many American Jews is to spend a year after graduating high school immersed in Torah study in the Holy Land. Not only does the Western Wall inspire these students in their prayer, but it also serves as a convenient “meeting point” to catch up with friends who are studying at different yeshivas in and around Israel.

Friday Night Prayers = The central prayers for Friday evening are called “Kabbalat Shabbat” or “Welcoming the Shabbat,” which begin with the six psalms 95-99 and 29. The traditional Friday night prayer service has been recited by Jews throughout the world for centuries. Expressions of joy, praise, longing and pain are encapsulated in the prayers. The pinnacle of the Shabbat service is a special prayer called Lecha Dodi. In this prayer, composed by the Kabbalists of Safed in the 16th century, the welcoming of Shabbat is compared to the intense anticipation, joy, love and celebration of a groom welcoming his bride. The words- “Come, my Beloved, to meet the Bride, let us welcome the Shabbat” are repeated in every stanza.

One will notice that every group at the Western Wall sings the Friday night prayer to a different tune and with a different atmosphere. Some are serious, some joyous, some full of song, and some quite and introspective. Incredibly, all are reciting the same prayers which have been adopted around the world and throughout the Diaspora as the liturgy for accepting the Shabbat.

#### **Quarter Café Restaurant**

<https://www.quarter-cafe.co.il/>

Uzi and Alon Amidor are the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation owners of the Quarter Café. In 1975, their father Yehuda Amidor was the first person to open a dairy restaurant in the newly restored Jewish Quarter of the Old City. Since then, the restaurant has been frequented by many visitors from all over the world, who come to experience the Quarter Café's delightful local cuisine and its perfect setting in the heart of Jerusalem. Over time, the authentic home-made recipes that were passed down in the family have also been enhanced by additional fresh local salads and herbs. The result is that the café offers delicious cuisine to suit the tastes of its varied visitors who come from Israel, Europe, America, and the Far East. Also gluten free and vegetarian is available. *free*

#### **Temple Mount**

The Temple Mount, in Hebrew: Har HaBáyit, "Mount of the House of God", known to Muslims as the Haram esh-Sharif, "the Noble Sanctuary and the Al Aqsa Compound, is a hill located in the Old City of Jerusalem that for thousands of years has been venerated as a holy site in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike.

The present site is a flat plaza surrounded by retaining walls (including the Western Wall) which was built during the reign of Herod the Great for an expansion of the temple. The plaza is dominated by three monumental structures from the early Umayyad period: the al-Aqsa Mosque, the Dome of the Rock and the Dome of the Chain, as well as four minarets. Herodian walls and gates, with additions from

the late Byzantine and early Islamic periods, cut through the flanks of the Mount. Currently it can be reached through eleven gates, ten reserved for Muslims and one for non-Muslims, with guard posts of Israeli police in the vicinity of each.

According to Jewish tradition and scripture, the First Temple was built by King Solomon the son of King David in 957 BCE and destroyed by the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 586 BCE – however no substantial archaeological evidence has verified this. The Second Temple was constructed under the auspices of Zerubbabel in 516 BCE and destroyed by the Roman Empire in 70 CE. Jewish tradition maintains it is here that a third and final Temple will also be built. The location is the holiest site in Judaism and is the place Jews turn towards during prayer. Due to its extreme sanctity, many Jews will not walk on the Mount itself, to avoid unintentionally entering the area where the Holy of Holies stood, since according to Rabbinical law, some aspect of the divine presence is still present at the site.

Among Muslims, the Mount is the site of one of the three Sacred Mosques, the holiest sites in Islam. Amongst Sunni Muslims, it is considered the third holiest site in Islam. Revered as the Noble Sanctuary, the location of Muhammad's journey to Jerusalem and ascent to heaven, the site is also associated with Jewish biblical prophets who are also venerated in Islam. Umayyad Caliphs commissioned the construction of the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock on the site. The Dome was completed in 692 CE, making it one of the oldest extant Islamic structures in the world. The Al Aqsa Mosque rests on the far southern side of the Mount, facing Mecca. The Dome of the Rock currently sits in the middle, occupying or close to the area where the Holy Temple previously stood.

In light of the dual claims of both Judaism and Islam, it is one of the most contested religious sites in the world. Since the Crusades, the Muslim community of Jerusalem has managed the site as a Waqf. The Temple Mount is within the Old City, which has been controlled by Israel since 1967. After the Six-Day War, Israel handed administration of the site back to the Waqf under Jordanian custodianship, while maintaining Israeli security control. It remains a major focal point of the Arab–Israeli conflict. In an attempt to keep the status quo, the Israeli government enforces a controversial ban on prayer by non-Muslims.

### **Citadel / Tower of David Museum**

**Citadel:** Jerusalem's Citadel, known as the "Tower of David", is a historical and archaeological asset of international significance. The Citadel is a medieval fortress with architectural additions from later periods. It is located near the Jaffa Gate, the historical entrance to the city and the point where the East meets the West. It bears cultural and architectural values and has been the symbol of the city of Jerusalem for generations. Despite being called the Tower of David, the citadel has no connection to King David. The roots of this mistake date back to the Byzantine period, when early Church fathers misinterpreted Josephus Flavius' writings and attributed a tower from the time of Herod (the Tower of Phasael) to King David. The Muslims also associated the Herodian tower with King David and called it mihrab Nabi Daud (the prayer niche of the prophet David). In the 19th century, when Westerners arrived in the city looking for physical evidence of the scriptures, the Turkish minaret added to the Mamluk mosque was mistakenly identified as the Tower of David. It was then that the misnomer for the

Herodian Phasael Tower was transferred to the Turkish minaret and it received the name the Tower of David. From the heights of the towers of the Citadel one has a breathtaking 360 degree view of Jerusalem: the Old City and the New City, the Four Quarters, the new neighborhoods, the Mount of Olives, Mount Scopus, the Judean Desert and the Dead Sea in the distance. The panoramic view is the only one of its kind in Jerusalem and literally allows the viewer to hold the city in the palm of one's hand.

**Museum:** The Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem is located in the medieval citadel known as the Tower of David, near the Jaffa Gate, the historic entrance to the Old City. The Museum presents Jerusalem's story. It details the major events in its history beginning with the first evidence of a city in Jerusalem in the second millennium BCE, until the city became the capital of the State of Israel, as well as its significance to three religions. The permanent exhibition illustrates the city's history along the axis of time using myriad methods and includes explanations in Hebrew, Arabic and English. In addition to being a museum of history, the Tower of David relates to both the past and the future.

### **Ben Yehuda Pedestrian Mall**

Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall in central Jerusalem is one of those Israel destinations that won't blow you away with its beauty or antiquity, but is one of those tourist attractions where you'll probably end up window shopping and coffee guzzling. And where you'll start wondering if anybody speaks Hebrew in the neighborhood...

Ben Yehuda street is named after Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who helped revive the Hebrew language in the late 19th century. And despite its grand origins, the street is widely known simply as one of Jerusalem's finest shopping areas, what with its very central location alongside King George Street and Jaffa Road, and not too far a walk from perhaps the ultimate Jerusalem destination. Both Jews and tourists from around the globe enjoying the local shops and cafes – Ben Yehuda street is also popular with the locals, who refer to the street as the *Midrachov*.

Shopping in Ben Yehuda street usually revolves around the regular tourist tack, such as tourist t-shirts and arty jewelry, but you can also find nice little niche shops, if you look carefully. You can also expect to be entertained by a variety of buskers down the length of the street, ranging from black folk singers to young Korean Christian choirs to street performers drumming on pipes and whatever else they can get their hands on!