
Chapter 13

THE FIRST “WESTERN (WAILING) WALL”

FROM HADRIAN (135 C.E.) to the Edict of Milan (313 C.E.), the true site of the Temple over and around the Gihon Spring (in the *south* and the *southeast* of Jerusalem) was the dump of the city. Eyewitnesses during that period stated that only an occasional temporary tent or hut could be found within its confines. There were no walls around the area. Near the end of this period (in 303 C.E.), Eusebius records that part of the Temple Mount by then had become a Roman farm and was being plowed. After the Edict of Milan, however, the Jews came back to Jerusalem and began building structures (including a *new* Temple of God) on the *southeast* ridge of the Holy City. They started with the Temple building itself with its altar and courts, then began to erect a “House for Hezekiah.” They also constructed a pinnacle part of the Temple for observations to other areas of Palestine. Within those twelve years (313 to 325 C.E.), we read that seven syna-

gogues were erected by the returned Jewish authorities in the southwest part of the city.²⁸⁷

All these building activities were halted by Constantine and his mother Helena around 326 C.E. Constantine cut off the ears of the Jewish builders and this effectively stopped that particular rebuilding of the Temple. The account was recorded in the writings of John Chrysostom.²⁸⁸ The narrative makes sense in every way and there is no reason for denying its veracity. A number of ruined Jewish buildings remained on the spot.

Seven years later in 333 C.E., we have the Bordeaux Pilgrim telling us about the parts of *that* Temple and Altar constructed in the time of Constantine. They were still in existence in Jerusalem. In 362 C.E., there was another attempt to finish the Temple, but that came to a halt with the death of Emperor Julian in 363 C.E.

So, within a period of 50 years to the middle of the fourth century there were two attempts to rebuild the Temple, at the time of Constantine and at the time of Julian. After that final occasion, remnant portions of the Temple were still seen over and around the Gihon Spring, notably a portion of the Western Wall of the Holy of Holies from the Constantine/Julian attempts. This residual part of the Western Wall did NOT belong to that of Herod's earlier Temple. That Temple of Herod and Jesus was leveled to the ground, with not a stone of the Temple or its walls left intact after 70 C.E. This was the condition Jesus prophesied would occur, and his prediction proved accurate to the smallest detail.

The Location of the Actual "Gates of the Temple."

One major problem for historians has been to identify the "Gates of the Temple" mentioned in the Geniza documents. What we will discover is that those Gates were intended by the writers to identify "gates" located in the *southeastern* part of Jerusalem, in and around the Gihon Spring. This is true; but today scholars who read the Geniza remains automatically and without compunction, endeavor to place them in the Haram esh-Sharif. All scholars and

²⁸⁷ See the Bordeaux Pilgrim's account.

²⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, *Against Judaizing*, Disc.V. 10; VI.2.

religious authorities today (whether Christian, Muslim or Jewish) place the site of the Temple in the Haram. So, they say, the “gates” of the former Temple must be in that *northern* rectangular area. But the Haram “gates” were NEVER the “Gates of the Temple.” The Haram had its own “gates” with their own names. No wonder scholars are confused over the location of the “Gates of the Temple” because the Jews from Tiberias said those “Gates” were in the *southern* part of Jerusalem near the Gihon and Siloam water sources, NOT north in the Haram region.

Indeed, when I, and the students I supervised, worked with Professor Mazar in the dig near the south Haram wall, the group (along with other staff) found two large Umayyad buildings *south* of the Haram’s southern wall. Professor Mazar compared them to palaces because they were so large and sumptuous in decoration. These buildings were located next to the southwestern corner of the Haram. Further south a short distance, one met the present southern wall of Jerusalem built in the first Ottoman dynasty. But the early Jewish authorities who spoke with Omar and came from Tiberias in 638 C.E., wanted to reside in an area yet *south* of this modern wall. The seventy Jewish families from Tiberias wanted to live *near their Temple in the southern part of the city adjacent to the Siloam water system*, even farther *south* than those two palatial Umayyad buildings and the modern wall (at the present “Dung Gate”).

This means that if scholars wish to find any of the “Gates of the Temple” mentioned in the Geniza documents, they should look even farther *south* than the present Dung Gate of the wall built by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1537–1539 C.E. They need to look near the Gihon Spring.

There will be confusion in comparing the written opinions of modern scholars (and even scholars since the Crusades). Many names of the “Gates of the Temple” have been transferred since the Crusades (against all reason) from their proper *southerly* positions to the wrong *northerly* Haram region. This was done by various people over the centuries who were unaware of the true Temple site. This factor must always be kept in mind in any

research, whether in historical documents or archaeological evidences. With the actual Temple site being in the *south* and the fact that there were often two or more “gates” with the same name (because of transference) one should expect confusion over the issue — and there was.

The result was in the proper name of a Temple “gate” in the *south* (identified by the Jews from Tiberias and their descendants), being confused with a another “gate” given the same name in the *north* and subsequently identified with “gates” around the Haram. Thus, “two gates” (and even more) of the same name has been the consequence.

The Gates of Huldah

As an example, Talmudic Jewish references speak of the “Gates of Huldah” being the *southern* “gates” of the Temple, but because modern scholars believe the *south* wall of the Haram is the *southern* wall of the Temple, they have transferred the “Gates of Huldah” to that *south* wall of the Haram. They now identify some closed gates that are easily seen as those very “Gates of Huldah.” The truth is, the real “Gates of Huldah” were located about 1200 feet *south* and led to the tomb of Huldah reckoned to be on top of the *southern* part of the Mount of Olives.²⁸⁹ According to Jewish sources, it was only the *southern* part of the mountain that was known as the “Mount of the Anointment” [that is, the “Mount of the Messiah”]. This was the only distinctively “Jewish” area on the Mount of Olives. Note what we read in Zev Vilnay’s *Legends of Jerusalem*.

“The *southern* part of the Mount of Olives was named the Mount of the Anointment, in Hebrew *Har ha-Mish-ha*, for here was prepared the finest olive oil which was used to anoint kings and high priests of Israel. The Mount of Anointment commands a beautiful view of Jerusalem of the biblical period: the City of David and the Ophel. The Mount of Anointment was at a certain period the center of the cult of idol worship; idolators gathered there to perform their

²⁸⁹ Peters, Jerusalem, quoting Rabbi Moses Basola (1480–1560 C.E.), p.485. The same was stated by Isaac Chelo (1334 C.E.), *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages*, p.132.

abominable practices. Therefore the beautiful name *Mish-ha* (Anointment) was changed into *Mash-Hit* (Corruption)."²⁹⁰

The *southern* "Gates of Huldah" directed people over the Kedron Valley and up the western slope of the *southern* part of the Mount of Olives to the Tomb of Huldah (located in a cave).

Other Temple gates suffered the same wrong fate. Another important "Gate" mentioned by Jewish authorities from the Byzantine period to the Crusades (and prominently so in the Geniza documents) was the "Gate of the Priests." It is mentioned in association with the Western Wall of the Holy of Holies and sometimes in a context that references the "Gates of Huldah" we just spoke about. That "Gate of the Priests" was also located in the *southern* part of Jerusalem at least 900 feet south of the southern wall of the Haram esh-Sharif. Additional sources from the Geniza collection speak about Rabbanite Jews who dwelt by the Priests' Gate.²⁹¹ This particular Gate was NEVER part of the former Temples from Solomon to Herod, but was a remnant of the Constantine/Julian Holy of Holies.

With the Crusades, Temple "Names" Moved to Haram

In the time of the Crusades all people in Jerusalem began to assume (almost to a man) that the Temple Mount was to be found within the Haram esh-Sharif. All historical references to the names of the "Gates of the Temple" were moved to the Haram to name the various gates of its surrounding walls. The result has been modern confusion in interpreting records concerning the Haram in the *northeastern* part of Jerusalem along with Jewish records that relate to the *southeastern* part of Jerusalem, a different sector altogether. So, one must be careful in interpreting even the Jewish records regarding "Temple Gates" during the 460 years from 638 C.E. to the coming of the Crusaders in 1099 C.E. The main "Temple Gates" were not identified by the earlier Jews or Muslims with the gates in the Haram walls.

²⁹⁰ Vilnay, p.295.

²⁹¹ Dan Bahat, "The Physical Infrastructure" in *The History of Jerusalem*, p.53.

After the Crusades, the matter changed drastically. It became popular to place all the “Gates of the Temple” within the Haram walls, as all modern scholars do. This brings in utter confusion. Modern interpretation of the Geniza documents is often tarnished by contemporary scholars because of this erroneous trend to “switch sites.” The truth is, most references to “Gates of the Temple” in the Geniza documents refer to the ruined “Temple Mount” in the *southeastern* part of Jerusalem, NOT to the *northeastern* part where the Haram is. Keep this in mind as we continue.

The New “Gate of the Priests” Was in the Southeast.

Positioned in a part of *that* wall of the former Holy of Holies was a *new* gate of the Temple called “the Gate of the Priests.” This Gate was situated near the entrance to a *cave* that became the synagogue of the Jews in their quarter of the city. The Jewish Quarter was clearly in the *southeast* sector of Jerusalem, where the Temple Mount was formerly situated. This ruined area had remnants of some Temple gates built in the time of Constantine/Julian surrounding it. All were basically in ruins but Jewish authorities could still recognize the general regions where there were gates, such as the Huldah Gates and the significant *eastern* portal called “the Mercy Gate.” These geographical sites in the *southern* part of Jerusalem were prominently mentioned in Jewish literature, composed in Jerusalem within the four centuries before the Crusades.

These ruined parts of the Temple of Constantine/Julian were positioned around one another (a short distance from each other) in the *southeastern* portion of Jerusalem where the Jews had their living quarters in Jerusalem.

The Real Western Wall

The remnant of the Western Wall once part of the Holy of Holies in the Constantine/Julian attempts to rebuild the Temple was well known by Jewish authorities from the fifth century to the coming of the Crusades. In a fifth century work called *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* (a compendium that summarizes and synthesizes Jewish teaching from the Holy Scriptures as well as the Talmud for teaching in synagogues), we are told that the Western Wall of the

Holy of Holies was where the “second Moses [the Messiah]” was to be located. They said that the Messiah and the Shekinah (the divine presence of God) were to be found “behind our wall.”²⁹² They arrived at this conclusion by a mystical interpretation of the biblical book *Song of Songs* 2:9.²⁹³ And though the *Song of Songs* was used in an allegorical sense by Jewish authorities, they recognized it as a way of interpreting how a remnant of the Western Wall of the Holy of Holies came to be visited by the Jewish people who lived near Jerusalem. There was a literal Western Wall that existed at the former site of the Temples. This remnant wall (now

²⁹² Pesikta, Piska 5:8.

²⁹³ Though the *Song of Songs* was interpreted allegorically, a person should pay close attention to the context about the person standing “behind our wall” (the Shekinah) in *Song of Songs* 2:9. The person was likened to a young hart (deer) who had just finished leaping on the mountains and skipping on the hills (in other words, the person was outside in the open air). He then looks inwardly through the windows and lattices and asks for the woman to come outside because the outside weather is beautiful and it was not raining. Though allegorical, the context is important to the practical side of the story. The context shows the Shekinah to be outside the Kotel (the name of the wall) and that He is looking inward to where the woman (allegorically, Israel) was living. Since this “wall” was reckoned to be the ruined “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies, the Shekinah of the allegory was then in exile and outside (on the west side) of that Western Wall while Israel (the woman of the parable) was on the inside of the ruined building.

This fact is fatal to the present allegorical theory concerning the contemporary “Wailing Wall” in Jerusalem because the roles in evidence today are reversed. Presently in Jerusalem it is the people who are outside (that is, on the west) while people believe that the Shekinah is inside (that is, on the east side of the wall). These reverse roles in the present arrangement do NOT fit the context of the allegory that the early Jewish Sages made. And further, the present “Wailing Wall” has no windows or lattices for the people to look inside like the allegory demands (while the actual “Western Wall” of the allegory identified by the Sages was ruined enough that it was possible to view the people assembled on the east side of that wall of the Holy of Holies). There is another difference. Israel in Temple times always approached God from the east, NOT from the west as they are doing now.

But fatal to the present theory is the fact that the present “Wailing Wall” is an external wall of the Haram and has NOTHING to do with any “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies. Indeed, even more devastating to the theory is the fact that the Haram walls are those of Fort Antonia (NOT the external walls of the Temple). There can be no doubt whatever that the four walls of the Haram have nothing to do with the Temple of Herod. These points must be realized.

in ruins but still distinguishable in places) was part of the Holy of Holies left standing from the two attempts to build the Temple in the times of Constantine/Julian.

Judah Nadich in his work titled *Jewish Legends of the Second Commonwealth*, has interesting comments about these Jewish references to *this* “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies. All of these references are to the *first* Western Wall that was a remnant of the Constantine/Julian Temples. When this is finally understood by modern historians and theologians, the documentary evidence will make the correct identification clear as crystal. I will also show that the present “Western Wall” at the *outer* wall of the Haram esh-Sharif had nothing to do with the Holy of Holies.

“Before the Temple was destroyed the Divine Presence dwelt within it [that is, within the Holy of Holies], for it says, *The Lord is in His holy place* (Psalm 11:4). But when the Temple was destroyed the Divine Presence removed itself to heaven, as it is said, *The Lord has established His throne in heaven* (Psalm 103:19). This was said by Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman.

But Rabbi Eleazar said, ‘The Divine Presence did not depart from the Temple, for it is said, *My eyes and My heart shall always be there* (II Chronicles 7:16).’ So it also says, *I cry aloud to the Lord, and He answers me from His holy mountain* (Psalm 3:5). For although it was laid waste [the Temple of Constantine and Julian was ruined], it still retained its holiness. See what Cyrus said, *The God that is in Jerusalem* (Ezra 1:3), implying that though Jerusalem is laid waste, God had not departed from there. Rabbi Aha, said, ‘The Divine Presence will never depart from the Western Wall, as it is said, *There he stands behind our wall* (Song of Songs 2:9).’ [The reference to this] *wall* alludes to the Western Wall of the Temple [of the Holy of Holies] which will never be destroyed. Why? Because the Divine Presence is in the West. And because God has sworn to Himself that it will never be destroyed; nor will the **Gate of the Priests** nor the Gate of Huldah ever be destroyed until God shall renew them” (pp.367–8).²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ Judah Nadich cites several early references that mention these points that he relates in the above paragraph. There is Pesikta Rabbati 35:1; 15:10; 47:3 (also from the fifth or sixth century); Exodus Rabbah 2:2; Tanhuma Hakadam Exodus; Numbers Rabbah 11:2. One should pay close attention to the reference to the “Gate of the Priests,” because this Gate is mentioned later in some docu-

Note an important point mentioned in the above quote. Jewish authorities of the fifth century spoke of “the Gate of the Priests” as though the Jewish community was well aware of its existence.

The Gate of the Priests

Yes, the Jewish communities in Palestine (and later in Jerusalem) certainly knew where “the Gate of the Priests” was located. It was in the *southern* part of the city near and around the Gihon Spring. Be that as it may, just where was *this* “Gate of the Priests”? There is no reference in any historical source to the “Gate of the Priests” associated with the former Temples from Herod on back to Solomon. This designation is a novel one. It represents a *new* Gate that only came into existence with the Temples being built in the time of Constantine and Julian.²⁹⁵ Though some scholars might

ments that come from the Geniza collection of Hebrew letters from Cairo that greatly illumine what was happening in Jerusalem from the time of Omar the Caliph to the Crusades. Pay close attention to this “Gate of the Priests.”

²⁹⁵ This “Gate of the Priests” (or, “Priest”) was a new gate. We hear of it only in Jewish records well into the Byzantine period. It is mentioned many times as a cardinal geographical area in Geniza documents that speak of Jewish matters in Jerusalem from 638 to 1099 C.E. Moshe Gil states in regard to locating the “Jewish Quarter” in the southeastern part of Jerusalem during that period:

“There is mention of its [the Jewish Quarter] being ‘adjacent to the Gate of the Priests.’ These references appear in such phrases as ‘the Rabbanite sect dwelling alongside the Gate of the Priests,’ ‘we pray regularly for you on the Mount of Olives ... and beside the Gate of the Priests and beside the gates of the Lord’s Temple,’ and ‘we have blessed you on the Mount of Olives and beside the Gate of the Priests.’ In the Mishnah [continues Gil], we can find no reference to the Gate of the Priests, neither in the tractate Middot (Measurements) which provides a description of the Temple and the Temple Mount, nor in any other tractate. Nor is any reference given in either the Babylonian or Jerusalem Talmud. However, a Palestinian midrashic commentary dating probably from the Byzantine period speaks of the Gate of the Priests. In the Song of Songs Rabba, commenting on 2:9 (‘There he stands behind our wall’), we read: ‘This is a reference to the Western Wall of the Temple’” (Gil, “The Jewish Community” in *The History of Jerusalem*, p.172).

The brevity of the accounts concerning this “Gate of the Priests” gives rise to different interpretations about its location, but this much is reasonable: This “Priest’s Gate” had to lead to an area for priests (or, since the singular is used, “for a priest,” and probably, “the High Priest”). Though this Temple was in ruins, parts of it were yet standing, so the site of the “Holy Place and the Holy of

think the sentiment of the Jewish authorities in regard to *this* Western Wall referred to a remainder from Herod's Temple in 70 C.E. (or most unlikely, to the ruins of the Temple destroyed in the 6th century B.C.E by the Babylonians), but mention of "the Gate of the Priests" in the quote above shows that this was a *newly* named Gate in Jerusalem.

The designation "Gate of the Priests" goes back only to the building of the Constantine/Julian Temple in the fourth century. More important to our present inquiry is that this "Gate of the Priests" is mentioned several times in Geniza letters as being located by the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem in the *southeastern* part of the city. This "Gate of the Priests" was part of the "Western Wall" remnant of the Holy of Holies from the Constantine/Julian Temple. It was NEVER part of the external Western Wall of the Haram (where all scholars attempt to place it today).

There is a contradiction in geographical facts when "the Gate of the Priests" is placed by the modern scholars (Jewish, Muslim or Christian) within the Western Wall of the Haram. Putting this "Gate of the Priests" into that western wall of the Haram disturbs *all* of the data found in the Geniza documents, much of it describing eyewitness accounts that say it was located within the *southern* district where the Jews had their living quarters. But, dear reader, if you check every book written on the subject up to and including all of 1999 (except my own works on the Internet which show the

Holies" would have been known (after all, what remained of the "Western Wall" was the western wall of the Holy of Holies). So, this "Gate of the Priests" would have been located on the east side of the site of "the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies."

We are also told that the Jewish Quarter located in the south and southeastern sector of Jerusalem was "adjacent to the Gate of the Priests." The Rabbinic sect of the Jews lived close to and "alongside the Gate of the Priests," while Karaite Jews lived farther east and south. Since Jews always worshipped God by facing Him, they stood "before Him" on the east side of the Holy of Holies (or, just to the east of this "Gate of the Priests"). Also, the ruins of the Western Wall were located west of this "Gate of the Priests." So, though the Jewish people believed the Shekinah was "behind our wall," the people worshipped God from the east side of that Western Wall, NOT from its west side. This made it possible for the people to be located "before our wall," while the Shekinah of the allegory found in Song of Songs was "behind our wall." These points are important.

truth of the matter), you will find that all scholars (Jewish, Muslim and Christians) desperately try to place the “Gate of the Priests” somewhere within the Western Wall of the Haram esh-Sharif, usually north of the modern “Wailing Wall” of the Jews. They use every false and erroneous device they can muster, to squeeze that “Gate of the Priests” into that wall north of the present day “Wailing Wall.” They are as wrong as can they can be.

The truth is, that “Gate of the Priests” (or the remnants of it) could be seen from the Mount of Olives.²⁹⁶ I will show that the Jews observed Jerusalem from the *southern* spur of Olivet now called the Mount of Offense where they had a synagogue.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ The Jewish scholar Hirschman (p.221 of his work) was correct when he wrote: “whoso stands on the Mount of Olives sees the Hulda Gate [the southern most Gate of the Temple] as well as the Priests’ Gate.” And Moshe Gil answers by stating the truth that “the Priests’ Gate was situated in the Jewish quarter, which was in the south.” Gil, *A History of Palestine 634–1099*, p.641, note 113. It is clear from the Geniza documents that “the Gate of the Priests” was situated just above a cave that Rabbinic Jews used as a synagogue, positioned next to their “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies in the southern part of Jerusalem over and around the Gihon. In no way do geographical indications in the Geniza documents suggest the area where Jews had their cave/synagogue was within the Haram. The “Gate of the Priests” (along with the nearby cave, also a Jewish synagogue) was within or contiguous with the Western Wall of the former Holy of Holies of the Constantine/Julian Temple and where the Shekinah was believed to hover, even though the Temple itself was then in ruins.

My daughter Kathryn and I in March, 1999 walked into that very cave (which led to a series of tunnels or other caves). These latter tunnels led downward to the Gihon Spring at the base of the southeastern hill that was once the Ophel, situated north of David’s Mount Zion. You can see these things yourself.

²⁹⁷ Note carefully Second Kings 23:13. This description is not speaking about the two summit areas of Olivet located in the north called the central summit and the Scopus summit. This Scripture refers to the southern flank of Olivet located directly east of the original Jerusalem and the site of the former Temples: “The high places that were before Jerusalem [that is, east of Jerusalem], which were on the RIGHT HAND [southern part of Olivet] on the hill of Corruption.” The “Hill of Corruption” is the same as the “Mount of Offense.” This eastern site from Jerusalem of the Mount of Offense is also described in First Kings 11:7. It was a “hill” on the southern flank of the Mount of Olives. This means that in the time of prophets, it was the “Mount of Offense” that was directly east of early Jerusalem. This is also where Jewish authorities from the time of Omar the Second Caliph until 1077 C.E. had their synagogue and their Sanhedrin. They even purchased this southern portion of Olivet. I will show more on this fact in a later

Moshe Gil states the Jewish documents from the Geniza collection show that the “Gate of the Priests” was part of or associated with the Western Wall of the Holy of Holies connected with a *cave* that Rabbinic Jews had turned into a synagogue. This is true, but the “Western Wall” was NOT the western wall of the Haram. Both the *wall* and *cave* were located in the *southern* part of Jerusalem over and near the Gihon Spring. There is quite a bit of historical data about this *cave* that became a synagogue. In the Geniza documents, according to Gil,

“it was common practice to make special donations to the *me'ara* (the *cave*), the synagogue in Jerusalem, which was evidently situated beneath the ‘Priests’ Gate’ (that is, “The Gate of the Priests”), in the Western Wall as we shall soon see.”²⁹⁸

This *cave* alongside the Western Wall of the former Holy of Holies was in the same location as the Jewish Market Place. It was in the living area of the Jewish population in the *southern* part of Jerusalem near the Gihon Spring. This *cave* was also known in the local vernacular as the *masjid Da'ud* — the place of David’s prayer at the altar he raised up on Mount Moriah, in other words, the site of the Temple Mount.²⁹⁹ To Jewish authorities this particular “Gate of the Priests” near that *cave* was associated with David’s place of prayer on Mount Moriah, which later became the site of the Temple.³⁰⁰ This place was over the water source of the Gihon Spring.

This “Western Wall” that the Jews visited and lamented (within the 600 years before the Crusades) was reckoned to be the same one mentioned in the *Song of Songs* 2:9. All these early references applied to the *internal* wall of the Holy of Holies, NOT to the present “Wailing Wall” that comprises the *external* Western Wall of

chapter. The central summit of Olivet, however, was always dominated through the period by Christians, though one Muslim writer did say Omar built a Muslim site that was allowed to exist. The “Jewish Olivet,” though, was exclusively on top its “southern spur.” This spur was not part of the two summit areas east and northeast of the Dome of the Rock.

²⁹⁸ Gil, *A History of Palestine 634–1099*, p.607.

²⁹⁹ See Gil, *A History of Palestine 634–1099*, p.649 along with comments also on page 67.

³⁰⁰ See the article “The Jewish Community” by Gil in *The History of Jerusalem*, pp.172–3.

the Haram where modern Jews assemble to mourn the Temples. In Midrash *Lamentations* I.5,31 the Rabbis mention a traditional prophecy that the Western Wall “should never be destroyed because the *Shechinah* abode in the west [that is, the *west* part of the Holy of Holies].” What side of the wall were they referring to? Could the *Shechinah* dwell in other areas, while at times He would appear at the Western Wall? These are important questions.

Let us look at what some top Israeli scholars say about these matters of which we now speak. In their excellent book titled *The Western Wall (Hakotel)* by Meir Ben-Dov, Mordechai Naor and Zeev Aner, these Jewish scholars state dogmatically that these early fifth century references to the Western Wall referred to the wall of the Holy of Holies (and NOT to the “Western Wall” of the Haram where modern Jews are praying). They mention that while the “Western Wall” around the Haram remains (as do its other three walls built in Herod’s time), “the western wall about which it was prophesied that it would never be destroyed, is the western wall of the actual Sanctuary [the Holy of Holies].”³⁰¹

In fact, regarding all the references to the “Western Wall” in the documents of the fifth century, our modern Jewish authors state with dogmatism: “We must again stress that the subject of these traditions is the western wall of the Temple building itself.”³⁰² The scholars emphasize that the Western Wall of the Haram (the present “Wailing Wall”) is NOT to what the early records of the Jews referred. Indeed, we have to wait until the 16th century before the “Western Wall” of the Haram is given any recognition of a sanctified nature by Jews. But back in the fifth century, up to the period of the Crusades, when the “Western Wall” is mentioned, it refers to the wall (then ruined) of the Holy of Holies built in the times of Constantine and Julian. It was located on the southeast ridge.

There is more. Rabbis clearly recognized that the mystical teaching of the *Song of Songs* gave a context for interpretation the *very reverse* of what Jews after the 16th century began to believe about their *new* “Wailing Wall” at the Haram. Early Rabbis up to

³⁰¹ *The Western Wall*, p.27.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, p.28.

the period of the Crusades knew the parable that spoke of the *Shekinah* being *outside* and looking *inward*, NOT as the Jews have it today, with the *Shekinah* *inside* looking *outward* (that is, the *Shekinah* looking from *within* the Haram enclosure toward the people praying *outside* at the western side of the wall). The earlier Rabbis understood this significant difference. Speaking of the *Shekinah*, we read in the *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*:

“*Or a young hart* (Song of Songs 2:9) — He is like the young of the gazelle, said Rabbi Jose bar R. Hanina.

Behold, He standeth behind our wall (Song of Songs 2:9) — outside the walls of houses of prayer and houses of study.

He looketh in through the windows (Song of Songs 2:9) — that is, through the openings that are formed by the arms of the priests (when they raise their hands in blessing).

He showeth Himself through the lattice (Song of Songs 2:9) — that is, through the openings between the fingers of the priests (when their fingers are spread out in the bestowal of blessing).”³⁰³

This particular “Western Wall” being discussed was compared allegorically with the wall mentioned in the *Song of Songs*. It was in a ruined state. It had breaks in it. This could not be the “Western Wall” of the Haram because its Herodian stones have no windows (breaks or openings) in them whatever, nor have there been lattices in the “Western Wall” of the Haram (to shade open areas in the wall). But the *ruined* “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies (from the Temple of Constantine and Julian) could well have had such apertures and breaks associated with it. Whatever the case, all early traditions about the *Shekinah* (the Divine Presence) remaining near the “Western Wall” of the Temple refer to the “Western Wall” of the Holy of Holies, and NOT to the external wall (the present “Wailing Wall”) that is a part of the Haram esh-Sharif.³⁰⁴

What we find in these records are references to parts of the

³⁰³ Piska 5:8.

³⁰⁴ It was only in the time of the Ottoman Empire (some 400 years after the Crusades) that we witness any historical information about Jews assembling at the Western Wall of the Haram. I will explain why the Jews switched to this outer “Western Wall” on my Web Page on the Internet.

Temple still in existence and built in the time of Constantine and Julian. The Jewish people in Jerusalem resided in this *southeastern* quarter until the water of that spring became bitter near the time of the great earthquake in 1067 C.E., and the move of the Academy of Jerusalem to Tyre and then to Damascus in 1077 C.E. From 1077 to 1099 C.E. the Jews in Jerusalem moved to the *northern* part of the city, even *north* of the Haram esh-Sharif. They then left behind (until now) that *southern* region where the Temple was located.

But what about the present “Wailing Wall” of the Haram esh-Sharif, wrongly identified with the former (and original) “Western Wall”? The fact is, the present “Wailing Wall” of the Jews was NOT even recognized by any Jews as having any religious value or significance until a Rabbi by the name of Isaac Luria designated it (wrongly) as the former “Western Wall” in the sixteenth century. He ignorantly misjudged the true geography of Jerusalem. He was a mystic religionist, NOT a proper historian or geographer. There was not a single Jewish person in the world who paid any attention whatever to the “Wailing Wall” now revered by Jewish people in Jerusalem until the sixteenth century of our era. Early Jews before the time of the Ottoman Empire would have thought it highly odd and even wrong for Jews to show reverence to the Western Wall (the modern “Wailing Wall”) and there is no evidence whatever that any Jew saw any religious significance to that “Wailing Wall” until the sixteenth century – a mere 400 years ago. I will show more on this plain and simple fact at the ASK Web Page on the Internet in the months to follow. Keep your eyes on monthly updates to all “Temple Research” at the ASK Web Page on the Internet. It is: www.askelm.com.