

Israel, Part 5: Ancient Echoes

By Amy Krakovitz

From the short walk along the Via Dolorosa, we head south and stop at the Kotel Plaza. For some of us, it is our first visit to the Kotel, but for me, I am hoping that I have a better experience in the daylight than I did the night before. I make every attempt to create a prayerful attitude. I use the handwashing sinks and cups available at the top of the plaza, I say the bracha, I feel I have brought focus to the center of my spirit and I again approach the wall.

This time I stop to take a prayer book, as I had nothing in my hands the night before. But it still doesn't matter. Here in the daylight, the women's section is even more crowded, and to my surprise, women are on their cell phones while they take up precious space adjacent to the ancient stones. I



These women sat and prayed together at the Kotel.

are about ten women sitting together. They are praying aloud, yet softly. One woman reads a few lines of prayer, the rest of them respond to her together. It's lovely. It's the moment I have been waiting for today.

Their voices are quiet. I hardly think of this group as rebellious. They are left to continue their soft-voiced prayers unmolested. I stand just above them and enjoy the sounds of their voices together.

After everyone has made their visit to the Kotel, we continue southward to the Jerusalem Archaeological Park and the Davidson Center.

The Davidson Center houses exhibits with artifacts from the Temple Mount going back to the Second Temple period through the Islamic Period. Included in this exhibit is a computer-generated virtual reality reconstruction of the Herodian Temple Mount. How did the huge stones used for construction of the Temple and the retaining walls get moved and placed? This film attempts to explain the logistics involved and the simple machines and human labor that accomplished the task.

The exhibit hall contains vessels used in the Temple, Roman coins from the period, even a sign saying "korban," telling the worshippers where to bring their sacrifices.

Outside the museum are the Southern Wall excavations. Begun in 1968, these excavations have

revealed astonishing details about temple life in the Hasmonean, Herodian, and Roman periods. There is a street, thirty feet wide; the "Trumpeting Stone," with its inscription that indicated this was where the priests would signal the start of Shabbat and festivals with the blowing of the shofar; and several mikvot. Excavations continue in the area.

Our group now exits the Old City in preparation to continue southward into the City of David. Doron prepares us for the next event on our busy schedule, the walk through the water-filled Hezekiah's tunnel. We need to change from our more modest Kotel clothing into something we don't mind getting wet.



Steps down into one of the many mikvehs from the Second Temple period at the Southern Wall excavations.

For some of us it is shorts and sandals; for some it is even bathing suits.

As we stand by our bus and remove one set of clothing for another, a woman passing on the street stops. Suddenly, she is shouting. She is moving in closer and closer, her finger shaking and pointing. Her target is Kelly Wilson, who was helping some of the younger girls remove their

longer sleeved shirts and put on sunscreen.

Clearly, the passing woman is concerned about the immodesty displayed as the girls apply their sunscreen. Kelly's eyes get wider and wider; she draws her body back away from the shouting woman. "Okay, okay," she finally says and grabs a towel to throw

over the girls' shoulders. Grumbling still, the woman goes on her way. Though we are outside the Old City and out of sight of the Kotel and Temple Mount, notions of modesty and appropriateness are always a moving target in Jerusalem. ☆

Next month: Hezekiah's Tunnel, Yad VaShem



This stone on display at the Davidson Center says "korban." It showed ancient worshippers where to bring their sacrifices at the Second Temple.

wouldn't mind waiting for someone to finish a meaningful prayer before I can take my place next to the Kotel, but waiting for someone to finish a conversation with her mother or babysitter or girlfriend irks me.

I decide to exit and wait for the rest of our party on the plaza. As I walk backwards up the slight incline to leave the women's section, I hear some quiet but melodious voices to my right. There in the uppermost corner, as far away from the partition as they can get,

Committee on Jewish Scouting to be Formed

To better serve the children of the Jewish community we are trying to establish a Jewish Committee on Scouting and to affiliate with the National JCOS. The purpose of this committee is to encourage Jewish boys and girls of Scouting age to join the appropriate Scout unit, enhance the quality of their Scout experience, foster the establishment of addi-

tional Jewish sensitive Scout units and foster growth, stability, and longevity of those units, encourage the achievement of Jewish related awards, convey a consensus of the Jewish community to the local Mecklenburg County Scout Councils, foster support of Scouting within the Jewish community and its various institutions, and advocate for non-denomina-

tional Scouting at a local and regional level. Currently there is one Cub Scout Pack (serving boys in grades 1-5) at Shalom Park, but there is justification and need for additional units serving girls in grades k-12 and boys in grades 6-12. If this need sounds important to you please contact David Lintz at 704-451-4411 or email DLintzScout@aol.com. ☆

Women of the Jewish Community:

Are You Being Hurt by Someone You Love?

Does your partner: Destroy your property? Isolate you from family and friends? Control all your finances? Threaten you? Put you down in front of other people? Hurt you? Just one "yes" answer may mean that you are in an abusive relationship.

In our Jewish community, there is help: Informal support sessions at a private location where women can share and heal in a safe and confidential setting. Facilitated by volunteer counselors, it is free of charge.

Contact Carol at 704-609-3120 or Sally at 908-330-5623.

This service is offered by Shalom Bayit-NC, an all-volunteer group working to end domestic abuse in our Jewish community. Contact them at info@shalombayit.org or www.shalombayit-nc.org. ☆

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