



THE WESTERN WALL

The Western Wall was built by King Herod in 20 B.C. during his expansion of the Temple enclosure, and is part of a retaining wall that enclosed the western part of the Temple Mount. According to the Roman-Jewish historian Josephus, construction of the walls took 11 years. During this time it rained in Jerusalem only at night so as not to interfere with the workers' progress. In 70 A.D., the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple. During the Ottoman Period (beginning in the 16th century), the wall became the Jews' primary destination to lament the destruction of the Temple.

The Western Wall (Ha-Kotel Ha-Ma'aravi) in Jerusalem is the holiest of Jewish sites, sacred because it is a remnant of the Herodian retaining wall that once enclosed and supported the Second Temple. It has also been called the "Wailing Wall" by European observers because for centuries Jews have gathered here to lament the loss of their temple. The Western Wall Plaza (the large open area that faces the Western Wall) functions as an open-air synagogue that can accommodate tens of thousands of worshipers at one time. Prayers take place here day and night, and special services, celebrations, and memorials are held here as well.

