

## What is the Wailing Wall / Western Wall?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Wailing-Wall.html>

The Wailing Wall, also known as the Western Wall, is a 187-foot-high section of the ancient wall built by Herod the Great as the retaining wall of the Temple Mount complex. The Wailing Wall is on the western side of the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem. Herod the Great constructed the oldest layers of the wall between 20 BC and 19 BC as the second Jewish temple was being remodeled. The wall extends for 1,600 feet, but houses built against it obscure most of its length. Today the exposed portion of the Wailing Wall faces a large plaza in the Jewish Quarter and has been a venue for pilgrimage and prayer for Jews since the 16th century. It should be noted that Jews usually do not use the term Wailing Wall, preferring the term Western Wall or Ha-Kotel (“the Wall”).

At least seventeen layers of the Wailing Wall are below the street level, but the massive lower stones, called ashlar, of the visible portion date to the time of Herod. These colossal limestone stones, each weighing between one and eight tons, were crafted with masterly precision so that they fit perfectly against each other without mortar. Some of the joints, however, have eroded, and Orthodox Jews fill many of the chinks in the lower blocks with written prayers. On a daily basis, many Jews gather at the wall to pray, chanting and swaying before the wall. They conduct daily and Sabbath prayers and celebrate Bar and Bat Mitzvah.

The Wailing Wall takes its name from the traditional Arabic term for the wall, El-Mabka (“the Place of Weeping”), due to the sorrow the Jews expressed over the loss of their temple. Jews stopped using the term Wailing Wall after the Six-Day War in 1967. Once Jerusalem was once again under Israeli sovereignty, Jews took the official position that

the Western Wall should be a place of general celebration instead of mourning.

Each year on Tisha B'Av in August, the Jews keep a fast to commemorate the destruction of both of their temples with worshipers reciting Lamentations and other dirges. The first temple, Solomon's Temple, was built during his reign, 970–930 BC, and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 BC. The temple was reconstructed in 516 BC, with a significant expansion in 19 BC by Herod. The Romans under Titus destroyed Herod's Temple in AD 70 to crush the Jewish revolt that had been going on for four years.

The destruction of Herod's Temple in AD 70 by Titus was predicted by Jesus in Matthew 24:1-2 and Luke 23:28-31. The Bible also predicted the restoration of the Jews to their native land (Ezekiel 36:24, 33-35). The nation of Israel was reestablished on May 15, 1948, by a United Nations resolution.

Although the Jewish people have been restored to their geographic and political nation, they have yet to be restored to their covenant relationship with God because they have rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ. As a consequence of Israel's rejection of the Messiah, God has paused His work with the physical nation of Israel. Israel will be ultimately restored, and God will fulfill all of His promises to her. Today God is working through His church, everyone–Jew and Gentile—who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:16; 2:28-29). In the age of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, those who receive forgiveness and salvation through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus become children of God and thus are called the “seed of Abraham” (Galatians 3:26-29).