

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

**“THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON
COULD NOT STAND
ON ITS WATER TOWER”**

-VOLUME E -

**On the unanimous Recognition
of the presumed Site of
the Temple of the Jews,
by the three Monotheist Religions,
and by the 19th century Archaeologists**

>-<

**Demonstration of this Error,
with the evident Proofs which have been
preserved, intact, by the Muslims
in the Bedrock of the “Haram”**

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

-1-

**CHRONOLOGY
REFERENCES**

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

By the middle of the 19th century the ancient site of the Temple of the Jews, presumed to have stood on the Muslim Haram (Esplanade of the Mosques) was unanimously acknowledged by the three great monotheist religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

As a ever-living testimony, a Jewish Worship, despite recurrent Muslim opposition, had progressively developed, first around the Gates of the Haram, then on the Mount of Olives, and finally at the Western Rampart (Wailing Wall) of the Haram.

Over the second part of that 19th century, European archaeologists, during a unique period of about fifty years were allowed to explore the rocky underground of the Haram :

And these 19th century archaeologists confirmed the location of the site of the lost Temple of the Jews, in spite of their extraordinary discoveries leading, in fact, **exactly to the real site downstream from the Haram** (as demonstrated in the present Study) when those talented Archaeologists unconsciously uncovered the unquestionable **proof** of the real site of the lost Temple, that lay, up today, engraved in the heart of the bedrock beneath the Haram, where it had been preserved over the centuries by the Muslim pious guardians.

Jerusalem History : Chronology References : from 638 to 1517

Summary

- **638** : Conquest of the Byzantine (Christian) Jerusalem by the Muslims.
- **1099** : Re-Conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders.
- **1187** : Jerusalem falls back to the Muslims with Saladin (Salah-al-Din ibn Ayyub)
- **1193-1250** : After the death of Saladin, Jerusalem remains under Muslim domination with the Ayyubid Dynasty (Saladin family)
- **1260-1517** : Slaves-mercenaries converted to Islam, the Mamluks, in the service of the Ayubid dynasty, overthrow their masters and exercise power over Jerusalem for about three centuries.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

Jerusalem History : Chronology References :
Crusades period and Latin Kingdoms period : from 1096 to 1291
Summary

- The eight Crusades lasted from **1096 to 1273**
- The Latin Kingdoms established in the Orient by the Crusaders lasted from **1099 to 1291**, the date of the fall of Acre, the last important strong hold of the Crusaders.
During this period :
 - the ancient Byzantine-Christian Jerusalem was re-conquered over the Muslims by the Crusaders **in 1099**,
 - and then retaken over the Crusaders by the Muslims under Saladin in **1187**.

When Saladin died in 1193, Jerusalem remained under the tutelage of the Ayyubid Dynasty (the family of Saladin) until **1250** . :

During that time however :

- in **1219** -The ramparts of Jerusalem had been demolished on order of the Sultan of Damascus.
- in **1244** - Jerusalem had been ransacked by the Khwarizmians who slaughtered Christians and Jews.)

Main following Events

- **1250** The Mamluks, Slaves-mercenaries converted to Islam and in the service of the Ayubid dynasty, overthrow their masters in Fustat-Cairo and exercise power over Jerusalem for about three centuries.
- **1260** - Jerusalem is ransacked by the Mongols who, in fact, ransacked all the middle east (including Baghdad).
- **1260** - The same year, the Mamluks vanquish the Mongols and then govern Jerusalem for about three centuries.
- **1291** The Mamluks chase out definitely the Christian Crusaders from their last territories in Orient.
- **1517** - Jerusalem is taken by the Ottoman Turks who reign for three centuries over the City, until the arrival of the British in **1917** during World War I.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

-2-

**HISTORY OF
THE WESTERN "WAILING" WALL
from 638 to 1517**

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

1/ The re-conquest of the Crusader Jerusalem by the Muslims under Saladin had once again transformed the Jews into Dhimmis (inferior caste) and access to the Haram was forbidden to all Jews, as well as Christians, under pain of immediate death or immediate conversion to Islam.

The occupation of the Haram by the Christians from the time of the Crusades, and the transformation of the sacred Muslim site the Dome of the Rock into the Christian 'Templum Domini' and the Al Aqsa Mosque into the 'Templum Solomonis', had confirmed and amplified the unanimous recognition of this site as the authentic and original site of the forgotten Temple of the Jews razed to the ground by the Romans. Moreover, for the first time, the Christians had conferred on the Haram a sacred character by the abstraction of the Christ's prediction concerning the disappearance of the Temple.

The Jews who at the time of the Crusades had obtained from the Christians the authorization to pray in the proximity of the supposed court of their lost Temple, in a small forecourt inside the Golden Gate, were, from that point onwards, once again reduced, apart from their Synagogues, to pray by trying to approach as closely as possible what had become the Muslim Haram.

But when these religious manifestations gathered too many Jews together, or when they became too frequent, the Jews were subjected sooner or later to the insulting, violent and sanguinary reactions of the Muslim crowds who did not hesitate to attack the Jewish Dhimmis who had dared to come out of their few private synagogues or almost clandestine, tolerated sometimes with adequate bribery by Islamic authorities : The Jews making with their public prayers what the Muslims considered an obscene exhibition of the fallacious religion that Mohammed had forever denounced.

Because of these constraints the Jews privileged, in the first times of the hostile Muslim occupation, the site of the nearby Mount of Olives that had the advantage :

- of being situated outside of the city,
- of being to the **East** of the site of the forgotten Temple, thus in conformity with the precepts laid down by Moses concerning the direction of prayer towards the Temple :
- of offering different themes of biblical and rabbinic exegesis and more specifically those related to the Shekinah (Divine cloud presence which accompanied Moses' Tent of the Meeting).

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

2/ All texts available, both Jewish and non-Jewish, indicate that the western rampart of the Haram, which became the mystical focus of all Jewish nostalgia concerning the Temple, called the 'Wailing Wall, only acquired this sacred characteristic from the 16th-17th century onwards.

However this 'Wailing Wall' possesses such a force of attraction for the Jews and was impregnated with so much fervour that it created its own substitute Temple, legitimate by its importance, but distinct from all original legitimacy.

Moreover the examination of the texts prior to the 16th-17th century, in which a precise reference to worship in front of this Western 'Wailing' Wall has been sought in vain, could not however, diminish the mythical power that it has permanently acquired.

On the other hand, the examination of the same texts is inscribed in the fundamental research necessary concerning the genuine topographical base of the founding religion that exalted the Temple of Jerusalem, and for which the 'Wailing Wall' constitutes a kind of physical transportation in time providing a topographic reference for the Rabbinical study of the *Torah*.

3/ In the detailed chronological examination which follows it is necessary to take into account the multiple meanings that are surrounding the expression 'Western Wall'.

In fact this denomination is surrounded by voluntary or involuntary confusions that, on occasions, lead to certain shortcuts that are acceptable from the mystical or allegorical point of view but are totally erroneous when seen in relation to real events and historical facts.

At the origin the 'Western Wall' was the wall of the Holy of Holies in the Temple, on the west side of the Sanctuary and against which was positioned the Ark of the Covenant.

The entrance of the Temple was to the east, thus the High Priest, the Priests and the worshipers were situated to the east of the Temple where they prayed facing west.

For the Rabbis whose spiritualizing work extended to all the architectural elements of the Temple, the Western Wall then became a timeless and immaterial wall, symbolizing a terrestrial support against which was placed the Shekinah of *YHWH*.

- It is in this perspective that, for instance, a Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, wrote at the time of the Crusades, that the Jews came to pray in the small forecourt situated below the Golden Gate in the eastern rampart of the Haram : And Benjamin of Tudela then speaks of the 'Western Wall' of this small forecourt, which is therefore unconsciously or implicitly metaphorically assimilated with the 'Western Wall' of the lost Temple.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

- It is to this same metaphorical assimilation that the readers of other texts make reference when these texts in reality evoke the Western rampart, which is part of the ramparts surrounding the Haram, together with its base and substructures, that is to say, in fact, the ground floor of the ancient Herodian Esplanade, on which is supposed to have stood the forgotten Temple, and which was, in reality, the Jewish Citadel (called Fortress Antonia by Herod) overlooking and protecting the disappeared Temple, as will be seen infra.

4/ Before the Muslim arrogation of this Esplanade and during the very rare and very brief periods when the Jews had the possibility to access it, it is quite possible that the Jews positioned themselves so as to pray in a westerly direction that is to say facing from the east the point where the Temple and the Altar were presumed to have stood.

No documentary evidence is however available for that pre-Islamic period.

From the time of the Muslim arrogation and up to the 16th-17th century the existing texts, given below, make no explicit reference to any Jewish ritual whatsoever that would have taken place in front of the western rampart of the Haram, that is to say in front of the rampart henceforth called 'The Wailing Wall'.

These texts contain however, certain imprecision and approximations, which make them sometimes difficult to understand and to situate within their topographical and mystical context.

Notwithstanding, it is necessary to note that the Jewish travelers or pilgrims were, for much of the time, subjected to threats and dangers that could have rendered their direct observations difficult or incomplete, and which as a result could have led them to be satisfied with indirect evidence rather than direct visual observations at certain times, replacing what they missed by the exaltation of mystical speculations without any real link to the Topographical Reality.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

Texts about the Western Wailing Wall

5/ **In 950**, under the first Muslim occupation, a *Guide to Jerusalem* was written, and was found in the Geniza of of the Synagogue of Fustat-Cairo (In the Geniza of a Synagogue were stored the archives of the Jewish community as well as the sacred Torah Rolls worn out, but which could not be destroyed).

This *Guide to Jerusalem*, which details the different holy places of Jerusalem where the Jews made their prayers following the transformation of the Esplanade to the Haram el Sherif by the Muslims, makes no mention of the western rampart, or of a 'Western Wall'.

The *Guide book*, on the other hand, indicates that the places of pilgrimage or prayer, and the gathering of Jews in Jerusalem were principally situated to the south and to the east of the Haram, and in particular on the Mount of Olives.

6/ **Towards 990**, (under the Muslim Fatimids) the *Chronicles of Ahimas* tell us:

Chronicles of Ahimas :

Rabbi Samuel (Nasi of the Jewish community) brought to Jerusalem (from Egypt) the coffins containing the bodies of his father Rabbi Paltiel and his mother, as well as that of the uncle of his father Rabbi Hananel, all of whom had been embalmed. In the name of the Eternal, and in order that he was taken into consideration by He who Resides in the Clouds, Rabbi Samuel dedicated 20,000 drachmas: for the poor and afflicted, for the students and professors who study the Torah, as well as for the Readers of Prayers: also the oil for the underground altar (of the Synagogue, called the 'Cave' in the documents of Geniza ; cf. infra) near to the western rampart (at the Barclay Gate), and for the Synagogues and Jewish communities, near or far, and those who lament the loss of the Temple, and those who cry in bereavement for Zion, for the professors and students of the Yeshiva of Jerusalem....

7/ **Between 1010 and 1060** (under the Fatimids and before the Crusades)

Several letters found in the Cairo Geniza concerning Jerusalem make reference to this same underground Synagogue, situated in a cavity and called the 'Cave'.

It was reached by descending thirty steps, and the concern of supplying oil in adequate quantities indicates quite clearly the need to provide lighting for a dark place.

This underground Synagogue seems to have been situated at the base of the western rampart of the Haram in a cavity at the Barclay's Gate (called the Gate of the Prophet or the Gate of Muhammad) to the south of the Wailing Wall.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

Letter of Solomon ben Judah to Ephram ben Shemaria: Extract :

Monday we were assembled (in Jerusalem) with many persons in the cave and we took out the Rolls of the Torah; then we proceeded to the excommunication of those who declare illegal Decrees (most probably the Karaites).

One of the letters of the Cairo Geniza evokes a collapse in this underground Synagogue, probably due to an earthquake, and indicates that the wall itself of the synagogue had a thickness of two and a half cubits (approx. 1.25 metres).

But none of these texts found in the Cairo Geniza, make mention of a worship at the western rampart of the Haram.

On the other hand, several letters of the Geniza attest to the fact that the Jews prayed on the Mount of Olives on the most important religious events in their community, as well as at the different Gates of the Haram including the Golden Gate, since it was strictly forbidden to penetrate into the Haram itself.

For example several letters of the Gaon (President of the Rabbinic Community of Jerusalem), Solomon ben Judah, refer to Jewish ceremonies that took place on the Mount of Olives and at the Gates of the Haram :

As the permission from the Muslim authorities had been obtained, against payment, the Gaon of Jerusalem solicited help from the Diaspora, as prayers made on the Mount of Olives or at the Gates of the Haram had the value of absolution for all the Jews.

In particular, the Gaon solicited financial help from the Jewish community of Fustat (Cairo), certain members of which had access to the Fatimid Rulers.

Letter from Solomon ben Judah : Extracts :

Permission has also been given (by the Muslim authorities) to make the tour of the gates of the Haram and to pray out loud in front of each of these doors, Qudusha and Barkhu, (names of prayers); then to climb the Mount of Olives singing, and to assemble together there on holy days in front of the Tabernacle of God (supposed to be the site of the Dome of the Rock) to the place of His seat and His divine presence. (*'And the glory of the Eternal rises in the middle of the City and stands on the mountain to the east of the city' (Ezekiel 11-23). 'On this day, His Feet (of the Eternal) will rest on the Mount of Olives' (Zachariah 14:4).*

But if we could not pay this tax, it would be forbidden, as well as to make the tour of the gates of the Haram, as to go to the Mount of Olives to pray there out loud. ...

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

And, in the same way as for the Rabbinate of Jerusalem, amongst the different letters of the Cairo Geniza, all of which bear witness to this worship on the Mount of Olives and at the gates of the Haram, is another letter sent from Jerusalem by a Karaite Jew of Tripoli, David ben Hayyun, to the president of the whole Karaite community of Tripoli, warmly thanking him for the financial help he had sent and in return he assures him that he prays and will continue to pray for him and the Jewish community of Tripoli, on the Mount of Olives and at the Golden Gate (at the eastern rampart of the Haram).

Again, in this letter as in all the letters of the Cairo Geniza, no mention is made of any Jewish worship being practiced at the western wall of the Haram.

8/ **In 1160**, (during the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem)

Benjamin of Tudela, the Jewish traveler, gives an eye witness account :

This account is quite important since it is one of the sources from the 16th century onwards that gave rise to the confusion and ambiguity between the Western Wall of the Temple and the western rampart of the Haram.

Indeed, from the epoch when Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela visited Jerusalem in 1160, that is to say forty years before the re-conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin, the Crusaders had authorized the Jews to pray at the Golden Gate situated in the eastern rampart of the Haram :

The Golden Gate was in fact a rectangular building at the rampart of the Haram, but set at a slightly lower level.

This means that the Jews could meet in the court of this building and pray facing ritually to the west, towards the Dome of the Rock (transformed by the Crusaders into the Christian Templum Domini) that is to say in the direction of the presumed site of the lost Jewish Temple.

In this way, Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, conferred, metaphorically, to the western wall of this small inner court of the eastern rampart, the name of 'Western Wall of the Temple'.

In this manner this simple 'wall' endowed with a mystical signification by the term 'western', was assimilated in prayer with the Sacred Western Wall of the Holy of Holies in the Temple, in a kind of topographical and spiritual transfer.

But this "western" wall was in reality at the extreme eastern side of the Esplanade and therefore to the east of the supposed forgotten site of the Temple (where the Dome of the Rock stood, transformed by the Crusaders, at that time, into the Templum Domini).

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

In any case in this gathering place of the Jews, who prayed in the direction of the virtual Temple situated to the west, they remained, in a certain manner of speaking, in full compliance with Mosaic precepts, that is to say respecting the required axis of worship in the Temple, and in the same obedient manner as when prayers were said in the same east-west direction from the summit of the Mount of Olives looking towards the Temple.

Benjamin of Tudela : Itinerary, Jerusalem :

Jerusalem is a small fortified town with three walls and densely populated with Ishmaelites, Jacobites, Syrians, Greeks, Georgians and Franks (crusaders) of all languages. A dye house exists there, where each year the Jews pay a lease and an annual license to the King (of Jerusalem). No person can exercise the work of dyeing with the exception of Jews (this privilege accorded to Jews seemed to have been valid for the whole Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem).

About two hundred Jews reside by the Tower of David, in this part of the town. (Certain manuscripts mention 4 Jews, or even one).

Concerning the walls of the Tower of David, the foundations, were built by our ancestors to a height of ten cubits (about 5 metres) whilst the rest was the work of the Ishmailites. There is not an edifice in the town more solid than this tower. There are also in Jerusalem two important buildings: the first is a hospital that takes all the sick, and to whom is given all that is necessary when they are in life or when they die.

The second building is called Temple (the ancient Al-Aqsa Mosque that is now Templum Solomnis).

This is the palace that was built by King Solomon, King of Israel – Peace be with him - . In this palace live 400 Knights (Templars or Order of the Knights of the Temple) and they go out everyday for warring expeditions. Stationed there are also Knights from the countries of the Franks and of Edom, who have made the vow to remain there one or two years.

In Jerusalem there is also a big Temple called the Sepulchre (Holy Sepulchre) where there is the tomb of this man (Jesus Christ) that attracts pilgrims.

Jerusalem has four gates :

the Gate of Abraham, the Gate of David, the Gate of Zion and the Gate of Gushpat or the Gate of Josaphat facing our ancient Temple now called (by the Crusaders) Templum Domini (the Dome of the Rock).

At the site of this Sanctuary, Omar ben Khattab (in reality Abd al-Malik) built an edifice having a very big and beautiful cupola, in which the Christians have added no image or effigy but only come to pray.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

Facing this Sanctuary, is the 'Western Wall', which was one of the Walls of the Holy of Holies (symbolically) : it is called the Gate of Mercy (one of the two Doors of the Golden Gate situated in the eastern rampart of the Esplanade), and **it is there** that all the Jews come to pray opposite this wall of the Temple Court (facing to the west, and facing the Dome of the Rock).

There are also in Jerusalem, near the Temple of Solomon (previously the Al-Aqsa Mosque) the Stables (of King Solomon) that the King had built.

This is a very solid building in stone : nowhere else in the country can be seen a building of this kind. One can even today see in there the pool where the Priests (of the Temple) cut the throats of the animals offered in sacrifice (?).

The Jews who come there write their names on the wall.

The Gate of Josaphat leads to the Valley of Josaphat (the Kedron Valley was called the Valley of Josephat by the Byzantines and then by the Muslims) where the nations will gather (on the Day of Resurrection).

Thus according to this text of Benjamin of Tudela, the Jews could, during this period of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, come to pray on the Haram, in the small inner forecourt situated below at the Golden Gate in the eastern rampart, that is to say to the east of the Templum Domini (the Dome of the Rock).

In this way the Jews prayed in conformity to the ritual laid down by Moses facing to the west, and facing the Templum Dominin, in front of the so-called 'Western Wall' of this small forecourt situated inside the building called Golden Gate.

This authorization conceded by the Crusaders gave the Jews the right to come to pray inside of the Haram, and was perhaps renewed for a time by the Muslims after the Crusades had ended.

Indeed, looking at an account, written by Isaac ben Joseph ibn Chelo in 1334, it seems that the Jews at this time were still authorized by the Muslims to come to pray on the Haram at this same place at the Golden Gate.

However, this text of 1334 poses certain problems that will be examined below.

To conclude on the text of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela it is necessary to clearly underline that the Jews in 1160 did not pray in front of the Western 'Wailing' Wall, but prayed in front of the western wall of the small court of the building, called Golden Gate (Gate of Mercy).

9/ **In 1165**, (still during the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem)
Maimonides, Rabbi (Moise ben Maimon= Rambam) and physician, wrote :

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

Maimonides : *Travel Diary: Jerusalem and Hebron* :

Tuesday, the 4th of the month of Marheshvan in the year 4926 of the Creation, (14th October 1165) we left Acre for Jerusalem, and this journey entailed great dangers (probably because of usual attacks by armed groups of Muslims).

And I entered into the grand and Holy House (Jerusalem, the Haram, or the Templum Domini ?) and there I prayed the 6th day of the month of Marheshvan (16th October).

And, Sunday the 9th of the month, (19th October) I left Jerusalem for Hebron, to kiss the tombs of the Patriarchs (Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Lea), in the double cave (the Cave of Makhpelah). That day I stayed in the cave to pray to the Eternal – Glory to Him. And there I made the vow that henceforth these two days, that is to say the 6th and the 9th (when I had been able to pray in Jerusalem then in Hebron) would be, each year, holy days, days of prayer, days for the celebration of the Eternal, in the joy of food and drinks.

That the Eternal helps and that with His benediction I can accomplish this vow! And as I have had the privilege of praying in the dwelling place (Jerusalem) when it (the Temple) was in ruins, could I have the privilege of seeing it (in my lifetime), I and all the people of Israel, when it will be rebuilt !

Given the importance that Maimonides has conferred on the mystical signification of the Temple in his work, this account has a particular importance as it mentions no prayers whatsoever in front of the western rampart, while Maimonides noted the details of his prayers made in Hebron.

Further, the importance can be measured of this absence of all reference to any worship in front of a western wall in this letter of Maimonides, by citing one of the passages where he, in fact, underlines the mystical value of the Western Wall of the lost Temple, and in one of his passages where he insists on the specific veneration to be shown when facing the eastern façade of the Sanctuary according to the Precept that Moses strictly defined, which is to respect the east-west axis for prayer.

Maimonides : Rabbi Moïse ben Maimon

Code (Mishnah Torah): Book 8 : Book of the Service of the Temple :

17: There was a stone (Eben Shetyah or the Foundation Stone) in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, at the western wall. On this stone stood the Ark of the Covenant. Opposite the stone was a jar filled with manna (to tell future generations of the gift of manna that the Eternal gave to the wandering Jews in

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

the Sinai Desert, *Exodus Chapter 16 verses 32-34*), as well as the rod of Aaron (an almond stick that in one night produced fruit and flowers, *Numbers Chapter 17 verses 21-26*).

30: Though the Sanctuary is today in ruins, because of our sins, we should venerate it in exactly the same manner as when the Temple stood there. It is only possible to go (on the Haram) where the authorized places stood. And in the same manner one should not sit down or act in an irreverent manner (on the Haram) when in the axis of the eastern door (axis of the mosaic prayer).

Indeed, it is said :

'Respect the Sabbath and venerate my Sanctuary' (Leviticus Chapter 9 verse 30).

Thus, in the same way that we should respect the Sabbath to the end of time, in the same manner we should respect the Temple to the end of time, because even though it is in ruins, its holiness remains eternally.

Concerning the mystical connection established by Maimonides with the forgotten Sanctuary, replaced as he believed by a Muslim edifice, it is interesting to note that following the Jewish persecutions in Spain set in motion by the Muslim Almohades, Maimonides and his family were first of all refugees in the Maghreb.

Then Maimonides went to the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, then to Cairo. There he was to become the doctor of the Vizier of Saladin and perhaps even the doctor of Saladin.

10/ **In 1183**, still during the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem, this account is given indirectly by Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbonne :

Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbonne :

Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbonne visited Jerusalem.

There was only one Jew named Rabbi Abraham, the dyer, who paid the King (of Jerusalem) a heavy tribute for the right to remain there. Rabbi Abraham showed to Rabbi Petachia the Mount of Olives. From there he could observe that the Esplanade of the Temple was big with a width of 300 cubits (150 metres). On the Esplanade stood a superb edifice that the Ishmaelites had built in the past (the Dome of the Rock)) when they conquered Jerusalem.

The impious Jews had then indicated to the Caliph (Omar) :

'There is amongst us an old man who knows the site on which once stood the Sanctuary of the Temple with its forecourt.' The Caliph (Omar) then forced the old man to divulge the secret.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

Now, as this Caliph was favourable to the Jews, he declared: 'I want to build there a Temple, and alone the Jews will have the right to pray there.' (?)

The Temple was edified in red and green marble with all kinds of windows. But the gentiles (the Crusaders) intervened and placed in it statues (Christian decorations of the *Templum Domini*). As the statues fell down they fixed them into the wall. However, the statues could not be kept in the very holy place (and were pulled down)...

Far from there the Holy Sepulchre can be seen and on the other side the Hospice for the poor. The ground is uneven and the place in the valley is called Beth Hinnom where they have their cemetery.

It required about three days to cross the country of Israel.

Rabbi Petachia visits the Red Sea and Hebron, and then his account concerning Jerusalem continues :

In Jerusalem there is a gate called the Gate of Mercy (Golden Gate).

It is entirely closed up by stones and mortar, and no Jew can approach it (from the outside of the ramparts), and much less the gentiles (the Christians). Once, the gentiles (Crusaders) wanted to take away the stones and open this Gate :

The ground of Israel started to tremble and in the city there was agitation which did not cease until they stopped the work (of trying to open the Golden Gate).

There is a tradition amongst the Jews, which says that the Shekinah went into exile through this Gate, and it is by this Gate that it will reappear.

The Gate (Golden) is just opposite the Mount of Olives, which is situated lower down (?) However, any person on the Mount of Olives can see the Gate from there. It is written : *At that time the Lord stood on the Mount of Olives (near to Jerusalem on the east side of the city) (Zachariah 14-4)*

It can clearly be seen that when the Eternal returns to Zion He will pass through this Door. It is there that prayers take place.

The Tower of David still exists in Jerusalem.

In the account of his travels in the Orient Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbonne is in a general manner both knowledgeable about the different legends concerning the holy places of the Jews and the different forms of worship that took place there.

In reading the whole of his accounts, it seems that Rabbi Perachia de Ratisbonne would not have missed mentioning a tradition of prayer at the western rampart of the Haram, if such Jewish worship had existed at that place in his time.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

11/ **In 1185**, (still during the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem) when Jews, apparently, were allowed to come rather freely, Rabbi Jacob ben Nataniel Ha Cohen wrote :

Rabbi Jacob ben Nataniel Ha Cohen :

In Jerusalem there is the Tower of David and the Temple and the Sanctuary, the Western Wall (but the stones at the top are new) and the quarries of King Solomon and the Gate of Mercy (Golden Gate) and the wells in which the Priests wash themselves, and the Monument of Absalom, and below the Mount of Olives, facing the tower, there is a tower standing on another tower ... cubits high, and there is no road to go there.

The waters of Siloam flow near by the Mountain of the Temple. Between Zion and Jerusalem there is nothing other than a rampart. These things are known, nothing more can be said.

It is difficult to know, in this text, if Rabbi Jacob made reference to the 'western wall' of the inside court of the Golden Gate, or to the 'western rampart' of the Haram, both probably having at that time 'new stones on top'. In any case, no mention is made of a specific worship being possibly practiced in front of this 'western wall'.

And the only possible Jewish worship seems to imply the "Temple" and the "Sanctuary", i.e., in this period of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Haram and the Templum Domini (Dome of the Rock) where the Jews had, according to certain periods, a rather free access, as well as the Muslims, the Crusaders being generally, rather hospitable and tolerant concerning another worship unlike the Muslims.

12/ **In 1210**, (after Jerusalem was again retaken by the Muslims) Rabbi Samuel ben Samson gave this account :

Rabbi Samuel ben Samson : *Itinerary in Palestine I:*

We arrived from the west when we saw Jerusalem, and seeing the Holy City for the first time we rent our clothes as is prescribed. It was a moment of great emotion and we cried bitterly, Rabbi Jonathan, the High Priest of Lunel and myself.

We entered into the city by the western gate (the Jaffa Gate) ... and we proceeded to the Tower of David, where it was the tradition to prostrate

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

ourselves before proceeding towards the Temple.

At the Gate of Sichem we prostrated ourselves again before the path that led to the Fountain of Etam, which was the bathing place for the purification of the Priests. The opposite door is in the western rampart : in the base of this western wall a vault can be seen that was in the base of the Temple. It is by this underground passage that the Priests could reach the Fountain of Etam where there purification bath was located.

From there we went to the Mount of Olives where long ago the Red Heifer was burnt. We went to the summit of the mount, and there we prayed twice, having a Mynian (a quorum of a minimum of ten men necessary for a community prayer). The day of the Sabbath we recited the afternoon prayer at the place where the non-circumcised (Christians) have edified a sanctuary with idols (statues) that this (sacred) place cannot tolerate, and which were overturned as soon as they were set up (a Church built on the Mount of Olives and destroyed by the Muslims).

This place is one of the ten stations that were visited by the Shekinah, when It left its Heavenly Home to come to bless the earth (*Zachariah 14:4*). The Ishmaelites (Muslims) venerate this place. Only the foundations remain and the place on which the Ark of the Covenant stood can still be seen.

From there we went to the waters of Siloam then to Hebron.

This description of the visit by Rabbi Samuel ben Samson to Jerusalem, after the City had been reconquered by Saladin and after the Haram had been returned to the Muslims, poses several questions given while delivering some confused details.

Rabbi ben Samson speaks with a certain degree of precision on the western rampart and in particular explains that at its base was a vaulted door that allowed the Priests of the Temple of the Jews to go by an underground passage to the 'Fountain of Etam' in order to accomplish their ritual immersion in the living waters. This place, as described by Rabbi Samuel ben Samson, could have been situated either at the level of Wilson's Arch over which passed the aqueduct conveying spring waters from the Etam Spring to the Herodian Esplanade, or, more probably, at the traditional site of the 'cave', at the Barclay's Gate.

Concerning the daily prayers that required a Mynian (minimum) of 10 men, this indisputably took place on the Mount of Olives during the period when Rabbi Samuel ben Samson made his visit.

Thus it is again confirmed, in an indirect manner, that no prayers in particular took place in front of the western rampart of the Haram, after the reoccupation of Jerusalem by the Muslims.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

13/ **In 1217**, (after the re-conquest of Jerusalem by the Muslims) Yehuda al-Harizi gives this description in *The Tahkemon Yehuda al-Harizii* which includes accounts of his visit to Jerusalem :

Yehuda al-Harizi : Pilgrimage in Holy Land :

Arriving in Jerusalem we inclined ourselves and went down on our knees to thank God for having guided us to this city where we stayed for several months. The time passed very pleasantly.

Each day we went to visit the sepulchers and the funeral monuments.

We cried for Zion, mourning its children, we shed tears on the ruins of its palaces and of its abodes, and we followed the lines of tombs of the just that are situated all around.

After some days we were taken by a desire to climb to the top of the Mount of Olives to prostrate ourselves in front of the Eternal and offer him our prayers.

It was so great a torment to contemplate our sacred court transformed into a foreign sanctuary that we tried to turn our regard away from the majestic edifice (the Dome of the Rock) that now stands on the site of the ancient Tabernacle, where Providence had long ago dwelt.

Even if Yehuda al-Harizi was not a very pious Jew, and was not too familiar with the religious practices prescribed in Jerusalem, it remains that his poetic curiosity nevertheless led him to visit all the places accessible to the Jewish pilgrims, and it appears once again that the western rampart of the Haram was not part of his tour.

14/ **Between 1238 and 1240**, (after the re-conquest of Jerusalem by the Muslims)

Rabbi Jacob, Messenger of the Grand Rabbi Jechiel of Paris, gave this account:

Rabbi Jacob :

Introduction

Behold the pilgrimages of the children of Israel who wish to contemplate and pray in front of the sepulchers of the Patriarchs, the Saints of the Holy Land, and the very holy and glorious Temple where our fathers prayed in Jerusalem. That the Temple be rebuilt and worship be restored in our time !

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

Jerusalem :

When we arrived in Zophim, we were able to see Jerusalem, and we rent our clothes, and when we arrived in Jerusalem, we went to a ruin and from there we contemplated the Mountain of the Temple (the Haram), with the wall of the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel, the place of the Sacrificial Altar, the place of the Temple and the Sanctuary and we rent our clothes for a second time.

From Jerusalem we went to the Siloam stream, where the waters flow from the underground of the Temple Mount. Then the waters flow down to the gardens of the city, and it is there that we bathed. It is said that these waters heal the sick and because of that the Muslims come here to bathe.

From Siloe we climbed the Mount of Olives, some following the valley, which is the Valley of Josaphat (the Kidron Valley was called the Valley of Josephat by the Byzantines and by the Muslims), and there, below the Temple Mount is a Jewish cemetery.

Climbing up the valley there is a platform on the Mount of Olives where the Red Heifer was sacrificed, and then there is a climb to the place facing the Gate of the Temple (the Golden Gate).

From there you can contemplate the Temple and all the buildings there, and you pray facing the Temple.

Rabbi Jacob then describes the Valley of Josephat, Zion (according to the Christians) and the Tower of David, and then he comes back at the description of the Haram :

The walls (ramparts) of the Esplanade form a square, and it is said that its length is 360 cubits (approx. 180 metres : an error but it is the figure given by Flavius Josephus) and its height 60 cubits (approx. 30 metres ?) the difference of 60 cubits (?) being due to the stones (at the top) being removed from the original ramparts. The materials that constitute these ramparts are very large stones, and the corners of these ramparts are also in very large stones : certain measure 30 empans long and 6 empans wide. Certain say that these stones date from the construction of Ezra (the second Temple).

Around the Eben Shethyah (Rock of the Foundation) the Ishmaelite Kings have built a very fine edifice as a house of prayer that is surmounted by a cupola (Dome of the Rock). This edifice stands at the site of the Holy of Holies of the Temple, and around this mosque are the pillars on which the cupola reposes, and it seems that the space where these pillars are was the place of the Sacrificial Altar that was in the Court of Israel. The Muslims gather there in crowds on feast days, and they dance moving in procession around this edifice,

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

in the same manner as the Israelites on the seventh day of the great pilgrimages to the Temple, if we could compare our sacred rituals to the profane. (The circumambulation around the Dome of the Rock had been instituted by the Ummayyads, prompted by that of the Ka'aba of Mecca, and therefore seemed to have been still practiced in 1240.)

And there is a slope opposite this grand edifice which is surrounded by a high wall as was the wall of the Court of Israel, and to the south there is a descent with stairs like those there had been long ago to the south of the Temple and there are underground entrances in the ramparts from the external court and they say that it is possible to go up from there to the Eben Shethyah.

In our times Jerusalem extends from the northwest of the Temple Mount but it was not like that in the beginning, because then Jerusalem extended to the south of the Temple Mount, as it is said in *Ezekiel 40:2 (Vision of Ezekiel)* "On the south side (of the Temple mount) is the agglomeration" and in *Psalms 48: 3* "Mount Zion to the extreme north".

And the Cave of Sedecias is also there (to the north of the Haram).

In the city of Jerusalem there is a synagogue of the Prophet Elijah, and there is a niche in its wall in which to put the Rolls of the Law where the name of the Unnamable is engraved.

Here again, the western rampart of the Haram, or prayers facing this western rampart, are not mentioned at all in this detailed description of Rabbi Jacob, who then continues with the surrounding area of Jerusalem, and then Bethlehem, Hebron and Rama.

15/

Reminder of some useful Chronology References

In 1244 the defensive walls of Jerusalem were demolished on the order of the Sultan of Damascus and the city was sacked by the Muslim Kwarizmians who massacred the Christians and the Jews.

Then **in 1250**, the Mamluks, mercenary slaves converted to Islam, in the pay of the Ayyubids, seized power in Fustat-Cairo, Egypt, for their own ends.

And **in 1260** the Mamluks defeated definitively the Mongols.

-The Mamluks then ruled Jerusalem for the next three centuries until the arrival of the Ottoman Turks **in 1517**.-

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

16/ In 1267, (after the sack of Jerusalem by the Mongols and at the beginning of the Mamluks rule of Jerusalem) Nahmanides (Rabbi Moise ben Nahaman = Ramban) wrote the following in a letter to his son :

Nahmanides : Letter to his son :

What can I say of this country ? Great is the solitude, great is the waste, in a word the more sacred the places the greater is their desolation !

And Jerusalem is even more devastated than the rest of the country and Judah is more ravaged than Galilee. But in spite of this terrible destruction, it is a blessed land !

Jerusalem has about 2,000 inhabitants, of which 300 are Christians who escaped the sword of the Sultan. There are no Jews.

Because, since the attack of the Tartars (the Khwaizimians and the Mongols) they have all fled, the others perished by the sword. There are only two brothers who are dyers, and must buy their ingredients from the Muslim authorities. Ten Jews (of which eight are outside of Jerusalem) gather together for the Sabbath and the service is held in the house of these two brothers.

But we encouraged them and we succeeded to find a vacant house, built with pillars and marble with a fine vault (perhaps part of the remains of a Crusader church). We made it into a synagogue. Because this city has not a real master, and whoever wants to take possession of a ruin can do so.

We contributed to the repairs of this synagogue. We also sent someone to Sichem so that he could bring back Rolls of the Law, that had been put in safekeeping there (by the Jews of Jerusalem), at the time of the Tartar invasion (the Khwarizmians). In fact the Jews come to Jerusalem, men and women, from Damascus, from Aleppo, from all of these regions to contemplate the Sanctuary and there to mourn for it.

This text has the interest of evoking the construction of the first Synagogue of Jerusalem at the beginning of the Mamluk period, but makes no mention of prayer that may have been practiced or which could have been instituted by Nahmanide or even foreseen, at the western rampart of the Haram.

17/ In 1333, (in Jerusalem during the domination of the Muslims Mamluks) the following account is given by Rabbi Isaac ben Joseph idn Chelo :

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

Rabbi Isaac ben Joseph idn Chelo : *The Road to Jerusalem*

The Holy City (2nd Part)

The Jewish community of Jerusalem – May the Eternal protect it – is quite large and includes family heads from all parts of the world and principally France. The more important persons in the community, as well as the principal Rabbis, come from this kingdom and amongst them are Rabbi Chaim and Rabbi Joseph. They live here in happiness and tranquility, each consistent with his condition and his fortune, because the (Muslim) authorities are just and good. – May the Eternal protect them and make them prosper.

Amongst the members of the Jewish community of Jerusalem there are many craftsmen, such as dyers, tailors, cobblers etc. Others undertake a prosperous commerce with all kinds of merchandise, and they have fine shops. Others consecrate themselves to the sciences, such as medicine, astronomy and mathematics. Most of the cultivated Jews work day and night studying the Holy Law and the truth found in the Kabbala (Jewish Mystical tradition). They are supported by the community because their mission is the study of the Law. There are also in Jerusalem excellent calligraphers and their works are very sought after by foreign visitors who buy them and take them back to their countries. I saw a Torah, written with such art that several persons disputed the right to buy, but finally the price was so high that it was the Head of the Synagogue of Babylon who acquired it to take it with him back to Baghdad.

The Holy city (1st Part)

Today the Holy city possesses four gates (Isaac ben Joseph ibn Chelo seems to amalgamate the names of landmarks and mystics) :

The Gate of Mercy (the Golden Gate) to the east, the Gate of David to the west (the Jaffa Gate), the Gate of Abraham to the north (the Damascus Gate), the Gate of Zion to the south.

In leaving the city by the Gate of Mercy (?) one climbs the Mount of Olives, the Mountain of oil (holy), and the place where, long ago, the Red Heifer was burnt. The Valley of Josaphat is on this side with the Torrent of Kidron, Bethphage and the Cemetery of the Jews.

Isaac ben Joseph ibn Chelo then indicates the itineraries from the three others gates, then he speaks of Mount Zion, which he believed to be the Biblical Zion, before describing the Temple Mount that he calls Mount Moriah :

It is on Mount Moriah that in ancient times the Temple of Solomon – May the Eternal preserve him – was built. And it is from this Temple that the mountain was called the Temple Mount.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

Alas, because of our sins, the site where the sacred Temple stood is now occupied by a profane structure (the Dome of the Rock), that was built by the King of the Ishmaelites (Omar) when he took Palestine and Jerusalem after having defeated the uncircumcised (Christians).

Here is the account :

The King (Omar), who had made the vow to rebuild this holy edifice, if God delivered the Holy City into his hands, asked the Jews to show him the site of its ruins. But the uncircumcised, through their hate of the people of God, had piled rubbish and filth on this spot, so much so that no one knew exactly where the ruins were found.

Then an old Jew declared: 'If the King swears to preserve the Western Wall (of the Temple) I will show him the place where the ruins of the Temple are.' At once the King (the Caliph Omar) placed his hand on the thigh of the old man (as a sign of making his oath) and swore to he would fulfill the old man's wish. When the Jew showed the King the spot, covered with filth, the King had the place brushed and cleaned, taking part in the cleaning himself, until the spot appeared perfectly clean. After that he built the Temple, with the exception of the 'western wall' and he made a magnificent sanctuary that he consecrated to his God. It is this 'wall' (western) which is now found in front of the Temple of Omar ben Khattab (the Dome of the Rock) and that bears the name 'Gate of Mercy' (the Golden Gate).

It is there that the Jews gather to pray, as was already recounted by Rabbi Benjamin de Tudela.

And to this day, this wall is one of the seven (mystic) marvels of the Holy City, which are: the Tower of David, the Palace of Solomon, the Tomb of Hulda the Prophetess, the Sepulcher of Kings, the Palace of Queen Helene, the Gate of Mercy, and the Western Wall (of the inner court of this Gate of Mercy = Golden Gate).

It is difficult to know:

- if this text implies that the Mamluk authorities had renewed, for a brief period, the authorization that had once been accorded by the Crusaders to the Jews, to come and pray on the Haram itself, in the inner court of the Golden Gate
- or if this text implied that the Jews prayed outside of the ramparts in front of the Golden Gate, though this seems to be more probable (but poses the problem of the Muslim cemetery before the Golden Gate).

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

On this particular point perhaps Isaac ben Joseph ibn Chelo was simply content by referring to the old account of Benjamin of Tudela, whose publication had been an edition success and had been widely distributed.

- In addition it is necessary to note that Isaac ben Jose ibn Chelo was also inspired by the account of a French Jew settled in Palestine, Estori Farchi.

But in any case Isaac ben Joseph ibn Chelo took care to note, as Benjamin of Tudela had before him, that the 'Western Wall' then revered by the Jews was an inside wall, situated on the Haram and part of the architectural structure of the court of the Golden Gate, which is situated in the eastern rampart of the Haram, facing the Mount of Olives.

And like before, and during, the Crusaders' occupation of Jerusalem, the Jews still pray facing the presumed site of the disappeared Temple, in the sacred axis east-west prescribed by Moses' Laws.

(There has been an attempt to show that this text of Rabbi Isaac ben Joseph ibn Chelo was a forgery, produced by Carmoly, who published it for the first time in 1847.

Other than a minor interest in inventing a forgery of this type, it can be admitted that even if it had been the case, Carmoly would have been forced to precisely indicate in this text the Western Wall to the west of the Haram, and in the court of the Golden Gate of the eastern rampart, so as to confer a 'historical' anteriority to the worship at the 'Wailing Wall' that was been fully attested by 1847.)

18/ **In 1488**, in Jerusalem, during the last period of the Muslims Mamluks domination, Rabbi Obadiah da Bertinoro (an eminent commentator of the *Mishnah*) gave the following account in a letter to his father (in Italy):

Rabbi Obadiah de Bertinoro :

Letter to his father : Extracts presented in a theme order :

About three quarters of a mile (about 1 kilometre) from Jerusalem, at a place where the summit of the mountain can be reached by steps, we have seen the famous Holy City, and at this place, we have rent our clothes, as it is written.

Advancing, the glorious sanctuary of our destroyed Temple appeared before our eyes and again we have rent our clothes.

Jerusalem for the most part is in ruins and devastated.

There is no point to mention that the City is no longer protected by the ramparts (demolished in 1219 on the order of the Sultan of Damascus).

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

I have been told that the population numbers 4,000 families.

Concerning the Jews, 70 families of the poorest class live there. There is practically not one family that is not in need, and he who can be ensured of his daily bread during one year is considered to be rich. ...

The Muslims do not have just laws and they change them to suit their wishes. It has already happened in Jerusalem that an Arab in a fit of anger has cut the throat of his mother as he would cut the throat of a sheep. Brought before his judges, he gave as excuse drunkenness. The judges immediately imputed his crime to the Jews and Christians who reside in the country because they alone produce wine. The Jews were condemned to a fine of six florins, and the Christians twelve florins. The assassin was not punished and left the tribunal free without any other form of process.

In the same manner an incredible number of other indescribable things happen. The non-Jewish false witnesses (and anti-Jews) are everywhere in Jerusalem, as they are subject to no questioning and they are not even sworn in : judgment is pronounced on the spot, based on their false evidence. If such laws governed Christian countries each one would swallow his next alive. ...

The streets of the Jewish quarter are very big and certain Jews live in Zion (Christian appellation)..

Before the Jews had more houses but now they are destroyed and devastated. In fact it is a mass of ruins that cannot be rebuilt :

In fact the laws and regulations forbid a Jew to rebuild without authorization from the Muslim authorities his house and its court. And for most of the time the possible building consent is more expensive than the value of the whole property. ...

The Synagogue of Jerusalem (perhaps the Synagogue built by Nahmanide) contains today no more than a few (*Torah*) Rolls when once, so I am told, it possessed more than three hundred.

The Synagogue is built on columns. It is long, narrow and sombre ; the light only penetrates by the door. Inside there is a cistern.

In the court of the Synagogue there is also a Church and a Mosque. ...

No Jew is allowed to enter onto the Esplanade of the Temple.

And even if, sometimes, the Muslims want the Jews to come, carpenters or goldsmiths, to work, the Jews refuse to enter being afraid of profanation (walking on the ground of the Holy place of the Temple).

I was not able to find out if the Muslims themselves go into the Holy of Holies (supposed to be inside the Dome of the Rock).

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

I also tried to find out what had become of the Eben Shetyah, the Rock of the Foundation on which stood the Ark of the Covenant. They told me it was now under a fine and high cupola (the Dome of the Rock) that the Muslims had built over it on the Esplanade of the Temple. The Eben Shetyah is closed and nobody can approach it.

The whole Sanctuary contains great richness : It is said that the Kings (Muslims) have built halls covered with gold, and the present King has built an edifice decorated with gold and precious stones, even more beautiful than those of the previous Kings.

Today the Esplanade of the Temple has twelve gates :

These called the Gates of Mercy (the Golden Gate which is constituted by two small gates) are in iron; there are two, side by side. They face to the east of the Temple. Only half can be seen as they are buried in the earth. It is said that the Muslims have often tried to uncover them, without success.

The western rampart of which a large part still remains standing is formed of very large thick stones : I have never seen stones so big in an old building, neither in Rome nor in another country.

To the north east (in all probability an error instead of south east) of the Esplanade, in an angle, is a building built of very large stones. I went in and I saw a huge building (Stables of Solomon) consisting of massive high pillars : there were so many pillars that I had difficulty to go to the end of this building. It is filled with earth that has been thrown there with the ruins of the Temple. The Sanctuary (the Haram) stands on these pillars, and at each of these columns there is a hole through which a cord could be passed. It is said the bulls and rams destined for the Sacrificial Altar were attached there. ...

In another letter of Rabbi Obadiah de Bertino to his brother, he recounted the following :

I live here in Jerusalem, in the house of the Nasi (President of the Jewish community) who has appointed me in as being in charge :

Twice a month I give readings at the synagogue in Hebrew, a language that most of the Jews here understand. My sermons ring in their ears like a precious song ; they make praises of them, they love to listen to them, but they do not act according to my preaching. ...Every morning and evening we meet together to study the Halakha (Jewish Law). Two Sephardi students attend my lessons and we now have two Ashkenazi Rabbis. ...

May the Eternal decide that the City and the Temple be rebuilt, so that the dispersed exiles of Judah and Ephraim come to meet here and to prostrate themselves in front of the Eternal and his Holy Mountain.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

These letters have a double importance and they mark a turning point concerning the history of the expression 'Western Wall' used in relation to the western rampart.

Indeed for the first time, indisputably, the expression 'Western Wall' designates the western rampart of the Haram, and not, as indicated by the predecessors of Rabbi Obadiah da Bertino, the 'Western Wall', which was metaphorically spiritualized in the small interior court of the Golden Gate at the eastern rampart.

Further, Rabbi Obadiah da Bertino, who is one of the eminent commentators of the *Mishnah*, and to whom the spiritual leadership of the Jewish community had been attributed, does not mention in his different letters, any worship, or even simple prayers, that may have been practiced in front of this western wall of the Haram.

Rabbi Obadiah da Bertino simply expresses an architectural interest for this western rampart whose stones impressed him and he compared this 'touristy' wall to other similar constructions that he visited during his travels, including those he made to Rome.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

-3-

**THE INVENTION OF
THE "WAILING" WESTERN WALL
IN THE 16th 17th CENTURIES**

**JERUSALEM
UNDER THE DOMINATION
OF THE OTTOMANS
1517 - 1917**

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

1/ During the **12th century**, a new Muslim Power emerged : the Ottoman Turks. The first wave of development of Ottoman Power took place around Constantinople on the Asian continent, in Anatolia, where the remaining Christian lands were conquered, and on the European continent where the Ottomans to the detriment of the Byzantine Empire led the advance of the inexorable forces of the global Islamic progress in pincers on the two sides of the Mediterranean sea :

- **From 1359 to 1463** the Ottomans advanced into the Balkans as far as Vienna conquering Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Moldavia and Bosnia and then finally Constantinople.

The ancient capital of the Christian Orient was taken in **1453** :

Thus with the taking of Constantinople it was a complete segment of Christianity that collapsed and the end of a Byzantine millennium :

- The most beautiful Dome cathedrals of original Christianity were transformed into mosques with the addition of minarets for the call of the muezzin.

- The name of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who had transformed the whole of the Roman Empire into Christianity and had created Constantinople into a living junction between Paganism and Christianity, was swept away.

- In its place, the Christian capital, appropriated by the Muslims, was to become from then onwards the capital of Islam during four centuries : it was called Istanbul.

- **From 1453** the Ottomans also conquered the Hejaz with the two holy Cities of Islam (Mecca and Medina), then Egypt, Syria, and Palestine :

- **In 1517** the Sultan Selim made his entry into Jerusalem.

- His son, Suleiman who reigned **from 1520 to 1566**, reconstructed the ramparts of ancient Jerusalem approximately as Hadrian had wanted them when he had created Aelia Capitolina where from all the Jews had been expelled.

This Ottoman Empire was to rule over Jerusalem for **four centuries**.

But in the **19th century** the rise in technological and military power of the European Democracies that were emerging from Judeo-Christianity enabled them to progressively recover the Ottoman possessions in Europe, where Christianity succeeded in regaining its original influence in the majority of the re-conquered regions.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

- **In 1920** the Ottoman Sultanate was abolished by the Turkish National Assembly, and, in this way, the last Caliph in the History of Islam disappeared.

Nevertheless Islam had succeeded in winning to the detriment of Christianity a foothold on the European continent with Istanbul and its region as well as a few territories that included Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania.

2/ It was under this Ottoman Empire during a period between the 16th to 17th centuries that it appears that prayer at the Wailing Wall was progressively established, without however being able to trace its exact genesis :

The Jews at that time in Jerusalem were principally grouped together in a district that was situated not far from this western rampart of the Haram.

As the access to the Haram was forbidden to the Jews and the path to the Mount of Olives was relatively far and frequently filled with dangers, it seemed that quite naturally, when they were not in their Synagogue, certain groups of Jews may have come on occasions to pray in attempting to approach the presumed site of their disappeared Temple, as near as was possible :

Now it appeared that along the western rampart of the Haram, there was then a passage about thirty metres long and four metres wide that terminated in a cul-de-sac. And from David Street one could accede to the northern extremity of this passage by a small street perpendicular to it about 2.5 metres wide that opened onto the external base of the western rampart of the Haram itself. This small street was however in the beginning enclosed within the walls of a mosque.

When the Jews succeeded in obtaining access to this street, during the Ottoman Empire, the small passage that ran alongside the base of the western rampart offered them an immense advantage :

Indeed, it did not constitute a thoroughfare since it was a cul-de-sac and was entirely lined by the blind walls of the mosque and different buildings as well as the walls of some private or public courtyards. This discrete protection provided a shelter from the regards of the Muslims and the impressive authenticity of the Herodian stones that formed the base of the rampart formed a propitious surrounding for the development of prayer evocative of Hebraic Mystic Memory. Thus quite soon, for the Jews who came to pray, the fact that this rampart was situated at the west of the Haram facilitated the assimilation, both mystical and speculative, of the "Western Wall" with that of the lost Temple's Holy of Holies.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

But as a consequence the Jews accomplished a kind of religious revolution :

Indeed the axes of all Palestinian Synagogues were oriented towards Jerusalem, whilst, on the contrary, in Jerusalem itself, a practice was progressively establishing and legitimizing a relation west-east to the supposed physical site of the Temple itself.

Now this new practice was in absolute contradiction to the Mosaic rule, in which the Divine Eternal had written that the cosmic ritual practiced in the Temple should always take place in the east-west axis of the Sanctuary, and therefore in the same east-west axis of the supposed site of the lost Temple.

3/ In our following examination of Jewish texts concerning the City of Jerusalem and Jewish worship, only the accounts of witnesses who make specific and direct reference to this Wailing Wall in the 17th and 18th centuries will be mentioned.

A number of indirect accounts, very likely of questionable authenticity, advance the possible existence of prayer at the Wailing Wall from the 16th century, and certain of these accounts credit Sultan Selim, the first Ottoman conqueror of Jerusalem, as the tolerant initiator of this Jewish worship at the Wailing Wall.

In reality these accounts were destined to credit a legitimate reference of prayer at the Wailing Wall, by tracing back to the founder of the Ottoman Empire who may have granted the Jews this right. But the fact is that these direct or indirect accounts are not confirmed by eye witness reports at that time, and, on the contrary, they are quite refuted by various following testimonies.

There is, for example, the quite detailed account of Rabbi Moses Basola that dates from 1523, and which makes strictly no mention of such prayer at the western rampart of the Haram in his time :

4/ **In 1523** after the Conquest of Jerusalem by Selim, founder of the Ottoman dynasty, Rabbi Moses Basola gives this account :

Rabbi Moses Basola : *Account of a Pilgrimage : Extracts* :

In Jerusalem I was able to rent a room in a big house called the House of Pilate. I was on the upper floor and from there I had a view on the esplanade of the Temple. There is no other house in Jerusalem where so much of the Sanctuary can be seen ; it is God who guided me here to this place. Thus every morning at dawn I recite prayers looking at the Temple before going to the Synagogue – May God be blessed for having judged me worthy for that.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

When on the summit of the Mount of Olives and looking in the direction of Jerusalem, the whole Esplanade of the Temple can be contemplated with its court and gardens. From this side to the east, the Sanctuary has two iron gates that are closed, the bottoms of which are embedded in the earth. They are called the Gates of Mercy (the Golden Gate). It is told that young married couples entered by one and the bereaved left by the other.

Near the Temple (the Dome of the Rock) on the south side, there is an edifice that is called the Academy of Solomon (the Al-Aqsa Mosque).

Outside of Jerusalem and on the south slope is Mount Zion (Christian); the Nasi (President of the Jewish community of Jerusalem) – May the Rock of the Foundation and the Creator preserve him – told me that the place once occupied by the Jews, went from Mount Zion to the Temple, and that seems to me to be true. ...

On Mount Zion there is a building for Christians Priests, like the monasteries in Italy. On the side there is a door in iron, and it is said that David and Solomon are buried there. But the Muslims do not authorize anyone to enter into it.

Still on this side of Jerusalem there is a strongly fortified citadel that is called the Tower of David.

The Tomb of Jesus is in Jerusalem to the west, where there are two cathedrals facing each other. ...

There is only one Synagogue in Jerusalem. It is very beautiful with four colonnades. It measures 63 feet long and 28 wide (approx. 18 x 10 metres). Opposite its arch there is a room for the Rolls of the Torah, which are disposed all around it : there are more than sixty. The Jews pray to the east, in the direction of the Temple. The Synagogue has no light (daylight), with the exception of the entrance that is to the west and above which there is a small window. Also the Jews use lamps there that are lit during the day.

Rabbi Moses Basola then goes on to give detailed explanations of the important persons in the Jewish community of Jerusalem, on its composition, on the different forms of prayer and on the religious studies made :

But Rabbi Moses Basola makes no allusion to any worship whatsoever at the Western Wall of the Haram.

His account has, in addition, the advantage of indicating the axis of prayer in the Synagogue which is oriented towards the presumed site of the Temple in Jerusalem, as are all Synagogues in Palestine and the Orient.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

5/ It would seem that **one of the first texts that explicitly mentions Jewish prayer at the western rampart of the Haram** dates to **1658**.

This account is that of a Karaite Jew, Moses Yerushalam :

Moses Yerushalam : Description of Jerusalem :

Now everybody knows that one Wall and only one Wall of the Temple remains, and it is there we should cry and lament over the destruction of our Temple, this wall is called the Western Wall...

Near to this wall the Arabs have built a mosque and surrounded it with a wall. Now the wall of this mosque is made up of part of the wall of the Temple and no one can approach it. But the Jews have obtained permission to go there by paying a tax of ten paras. The Jews of Jerusalem pay this tax that gives them free access for the whole year and they can go there as many times as they wish. But it is necessary to go there from the outside of the Haram because no Jew may enter into the Haram.

The greatest reverence is attached to the Western Wall of the Temple since its beginning and for always.

Thus this text of Moses Jerusalem of 1658 appears to be the first which clearly asserts the deliberate and mystical confusion between on the one hand the Western Wall of the lost Temple and on the other the western rampart of the Esplanade on which the real Temple was presumed to have stood.

6/ **Around 1710**

Amongst other available texts of the early Ottoman period is for example that of Gedaliah, a Polish Jew who immigrated to Israel around **1710** .

Gedaliah : Searching Peace in Jerusalem :

The remaining Western Wall of the Temple (the rampart of the Haram) is very long and very high. The greater part of its height is very old and the stones are very big. Certain of these stones measure between five and six cubits long, as well as high (approx. 3 metres). Though I do not know what they measure in depth. If I could see them at the end of the wall, I would be able to know how thick they are.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

But at the southern end of the wall, a court has been built that hides the wall and at the other end of the wall is the house of a Muslim judge....

The Muslims have raised the top of the (western) wall by constructing new buildings there that make it that much higher. And in these new buildings there are doors to go in and to come out. Only the Muslims have the right to go into the area of the Temple (the Haram), and that is strictly forbidden to all Jews and any other non-Muslims, unless that is –God save us – he is converted, on the spot, to Islam.

Indeed the Muslims declare that no member of any another religion is worthy of entering into this sacred territory.

Though in the beginning the Eternal had chosen the Jews and because they sinned He abandoned them and He chose the Ishmaelites : at least that is what the Muslims always say.

When we go to the Wall (the western rampart) to pray, we are in reality *'behind our Wall'* (*Song of Songs 2:9*), but very near.

On the eve of the new moon, the 9 Ab (the Day of the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple), as for other days of fasting, the Jews go to the 'Wall' to pray, and though the women cry there bitterly no one comes to stop us. The Muslim judge who lives closely by and who hears the lamentations neither intervenes or chases us away.

Sometimes, a young Arab approaches to annoy the Jews, but they give him a coin and he goes away leaving us in peace. Besides, if a dignitary catches him, this young Arab will be severely reprimanded. This site of the Temple is quite far from the streets where the Jews live and we must pass through other streets and steps (occupied by the Muslims, that is the Mughrabis quarter) to go to the Western Wall.

The prayers made at the "Western Wall" are the most precious of all prayers.

This text of Gedaliah is extremely precise and recounts the religious embarrassment that subsisted at the beginning of this tradition in observing that the Jews who pray "in front of" the Wailing Wall are, in fact, **'behind'** the supposed Western Wall of the Temple, that is to say in the opposite direction of the east-west axis which was required for prayer in front of the Temple.

That is why the Rabbis had started to search in the Holy Scriptures for an interpretation that would allow them to ratify and legitimize this prayer that was beginning to establish firmly.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

This justification for prayer **practiced in the wrong direction from 'behind the wall'** immediately proved to be rather problematic, as the only reference the Rabbis could find was a verse of an amorous evocation in the Bible in the Book *Song of Songs*, very far from the cosmic rigor of the Mosaic rite fixed by the Eternal, in compliance with the path of the sun.

Song of Songs Chapter 2 verses 8-9

Listen! My beloved!
Behold, he is coming,
Climbing on the mountains,
Leaping on the hills !
My beloved is like a gazelle
Or a young stag,
Behold, *he is standing behind our wall.*
He is looking through the windows...

7/ Fully corroborating the appearance of these first textual accounts of the 18th century, which very precisely attest to prayers made by the Jews in front of the Western Wall of the Haram, **the first known graphic representation of the Western Wall appears to have dated from 1743** : It is a very summary illustration with a brief commentary figuring in a Hebrew book on Jerusalem by Poliastro, published in Istanbul.

In spite of innumerable difficulties, of incessant persecutions and recurrent violence exercised against them, the Jews will remain, from then onwards, indefectibly attached with obstinacy to this Wailing Western Wall, up until the day, in the twentieth century, when they were reborn from the ashes of a Holocaust, and after having re-conquered Jerusalem they were able to freely approach the consecrated site, without danger, without having to pay taxes, and with the sentiment of having fully recovered their legitimate right.

8/ Just before the arrival of archaeologists bearing all the scientific ambitions of the 19th century, a French traveler came to Jerusalem **in 1810** : he reported with unique perspicacity on the ideological condition of the Jews in Jerusalem at that epoch. He described the conditions of unspoken persecution that they were subject to and without the slightest protest on their part, and how their attachment to the mystical nature of the Wailing Wall did not in reality appear anything more than one of the visible manifestations of a genetic magnetism that the Jews recognized as divinely imposed.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan

The French traveler who attempted to decrypt these lines of a permanent ideological force that he observed in Jerusalem was Chateaubriand **in 1807** :

Chateaubriand: *Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem: Extract* :

Cast your eyes on the Mountain of Zion and the Temple; look at this small people who live separated from the rest of the inhabitants of the City:

The specific object of all disdain they bow their heads without complaint; they suffer all insults without asking for justice; they are overwhelmed by blows without uttering a sigh; if his head is asked for the Jew presents himself to the cemetery. If some member of this banished society dies, his companion will go in the night to bury him furtively in the Valley of Josephat, in the shadow of the Temple of Solomon. If you go into the house of this people you will find them in terrible misery, reading the mysterious Book to their children who in their turn will read it to their children. What they did five thousand years ago, these people still do it. They lived through the destruction of Jerusalem seventeen times and nothing can discourage them; nothing can stop them from turning there regards towards Zion (Jewish).

When one sees the Jews dispersed around the world, according to the word of God, one is no doubt surprised : but to be struck by an supernatural astonishment, it is necessary to see them in Jerusalem; it is necessary to see these legitimate masters of Judea, slaves and foreigners in their own land; it is necessary to see them waiting, under all the oppressions, a King who will deliver them. Crushed by the Cross that condemns them, and is planted above their heads, hidden near the Temple of which there only remains not one stone on the other, they remain in their terrible self delusion.

The Persians, the Greeks and the Romans have disappeared from the face of the earth, and a small people whose origin preceded that of all these great peoples still exists without mixing in the ruins of their land.

If something, among nations, bore the character of a miracle, we think that this character is here.

This same acute observation, forerunner of Proustian analysis, and that few writers, Christians or Muslims, had in regard to the Jews, Chateaubriand applied in the same way to the Muslims.

Indeed Chateaubriand visited the rest of the Muslim Orient including the Balkans and Greece, then occupied by the Ottoman Turks.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower
By N. Natan*

Chateaubriand who sensed that Christianity was giving birth to Democracy saw Islam on the other hand locked into a kind of collective incarceration, fixed in an unbreakable gangue of submission to the unique absolute law of the strongest and most violent.

Chateaubriand: *Itinerary from Paris to Jerusalem: Extract :*

Accustomed to follow the destiny of a Master, they (the Muslims) have no law that attaches them to ideas of order and political moderation : Kill, when one is the strongest, seems a legitimate right; they exercise it or submit to it with the same indifference. Essentially they belong to the sword; they like the wonders that it makes; the sword to them is the wand of a genie that creates and destroys empires. Freedom, they ignore : force is their God. When time passes and they see no conquerors, executors of high justice from heaven, they are like soldiers without a leader, like citizens without a legislator, like a family without a father.

*The Temple of Solomon Could not Stand
On its Water Tower*
By N. Natan
