

Notes in the Wall

Rabbi Gary Oren

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In less than thirty days, I will be traveling to Israel with a group of congregants. I am very much looking forward to sharing nearly two weeks in the holy land. I know we have a great itinerary planned and that we will inevitably get off course and experience wonderful surprises. Undoubtedly, one of the highlights will be our visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The Western Wall is the most sacred site to Jewish people. It is also known as the Wailing Wall because of the tendency of Jews to cry next to the wall for the loss of the temple and other more personal reasons. In Hebrew it is known as the *Kotel* which simply means - the wall. The *Kotel* is the last remaining part of the 2nd temple built by King Herod.

A unique habit formed in the western wall which is to insert notes with prayers and requests to the cracks between the huge stones. The notes are, by their very nature, very personal communications in which people express their deepest prayers, desires, and hopes. People pray from everything from the healing of a loved one, to find their life partner, and even to win the *toto* (Israeli lottery).



You may have heard the story about a Jewish man who goes to the *Kotel* every year and puts a prayer in the crack saying, "God please help me win the lottery." Year after year, he loses. Finally, after several years, God speaks to him: "Nudnik, will you go and buy a ticket." Additionally, the Israeli postal workers' favorite anecdote is about an Israeli man who, years ago, wrote a letter to God describing his crippling poverty and asking for 5,000 shekels. Postal workers were so moved they collected 4,300 shekels and mailed it back. After a month, the same person writes again to God, but this time he writes, "Oh, thank you God for the contribution, but next time, please don't send it through those postmen. They're thieves; they stole 700 shekels."



On a more serious note, the *Kotel* is one of the focal points of not only Jewish prayer but of believers all over the world. In fact, tons of mail every year addressed to "God" ends up in Jerusalem. You

also may know that Jews all over the world turn and face Israel during the *Amidah* and that Jews in Israel turn and face Jerusalem and Jews in Jerusalem turn and face the *Kotel*.

As I prepare, along with our congregants, to make our pilgrimage to Israel, we want to extend a special opportunity to each of you to send your personal notes to the wall. From April 1st – April 28th, there will be specially marked boxes in both the Frank Galleria and in the synagogue office in which you can place your personal notes. During our visit to the *Kotel* each member of our group will take the time to place the notes in the wall. In doing so, we hope to connect our whole community to the holiest of Jewish locations. I encourage you to take the time to stop in and write your personal note.

Kol Tuv ~ Only Good,
Rabbi Oren