



The Half Shekel Journals of 2023 by Pastor Ed Rice
#23016 Thur 23 Mar Davidson Center, Temple's Southern Steps.

Beverly and I have not grown tired of kosher breakfast, that made two of us. This one, at the Prima Kings Hotel dining room, actually broke an 8-hour fast, even though since it was at 5:30 am, 9 minutes before sunrise here in Israel. The old and arthritic sleep when they can, I was up at 0300, trying to let my wife sleep a couple more hours. Workers were still setting up the breakfast buffet but coffee and danish was an adequate start.

Not many were gathered for breakfast, so Bev and I reviewed

City of David
Jerusalem Walls National Park
Dedicated by
E. and S. Shvidler
For the Glory of Jerusalem



Pastor Lee's booklet, that offered a look at our day and caused us to reminisce about our last two visits to the Temple's Southern Steps. For a Holy Land tour, one never forgets their tour guide. We fondly recalled many of the quipped quotes of Ron Winters in February 2009.

“Walking where Jesus walked, sitting where Jesus sat, here on the southern steps of the temple, is more valuable than walking on the moon.” He quoted Neil Armstrong with full authority. Back in November 2022, Joe Freedman gave us grand detail about excavations discovered, mikvahs¹, why the southern steps were so arranged, and the name of the two gates and why the entrance and exit gates both were called the Huldah Gate. Eli Talmi, our present guide, had already found a warm and memorable place in our hearts with his wisdom and

exuberance; we were eager to follow him into day eight of this pilgrimage wherein we would once again visit the Temple's Southern Steps.

Pastor Lee's booklet, “Bible Berean Israel Tour 2023” described day 8 as follows:

Day 8 March 23rd 2023. We Begin our day with breakfast and devotions on the bus to set



1 Britannica s.v. “mikvah” (“collection [of water]”), in Judaism, a pool of natural water in which one bathes for the restoration of ritual purity. The Mishna (Jewish code of law) describes in elaborate detail the requirements for ritually proper water and for the quantity of water required for ritual cleansing.

the tone of the day.

1. Our first stop will be at Davidson Archaeological Park, at the southern wall.

2 We will stop at the southern steps where Jesus would have taught and preached.

3. We now make our way to the City of David. This is the place where David set up his capital on his 12 acre city. It was a very small town called Jebus. Deuteronomy 7:6-9. What would we take from here?

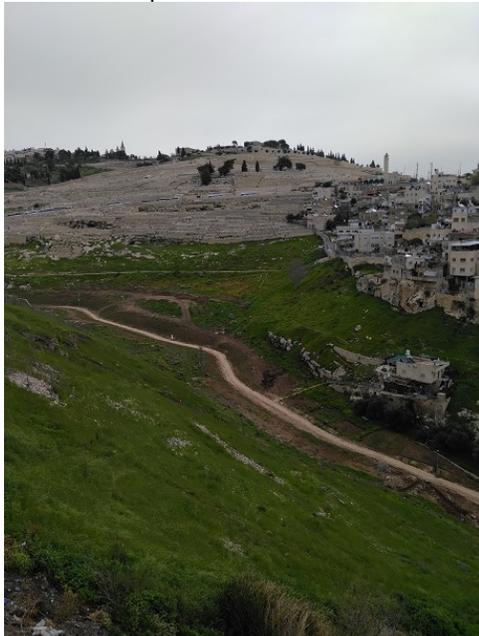
4. We now stop at the pool of Siloam and Hezekiah's tunnel. John 9:1-11.

5. Our next stop is at the Holocaust Memorial, Yad Vashem. This is not a museum but a memorial to the more than 6 million Jewish people murdered during World War II. Proverbs 28:1, 2Timothy 1:7-8. What is our takeaway today?

6. Our next stop is the Israel Museum to visit a model of Jerusalem and the Shrine of the Book, where the Dead Sea Scrolls are housed.

7. Our final stop of the day is in front of the Knesset (Israel's Parliament or House of Representatives). Here we have another Menorah which is the emblem of the Nation.

Back to our hotel, for relaxing evening of good food and fellowship. Laila Tov.



We greeted Eli and Costia at the bus at 0700. Everyone was eager for the second day in Jerusalem and I was privileged to start our day with a “short” on the bus morning devotional. Allow me to give a nutshell of that here.

Like most, when I got saved I could not word just what happened or what just happened. But I knew it did. The Bible says I

was instantly **Converted**, via repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, **Justified** before God, **Indwelt** by the Spirit of God, **Quickened** with new eternal-life, and **Baptized**, or fully immersed, into Christ. Wow, I was only 8 years old at the time. In the 9-Blessed “R”s of Matthew 5 Jesus introduces the kingdom. The first three get us in (Poor in spirit, They that mourn, The Meek) the next make us a new creature, and the last show us to be, not of this world and persecuted because “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”(2Tim.3:12). It is a blessing to be saved, a very special blessing to be saved and in Jerusalem today.



The Minister Jehucal Made His Mark
”And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying: ‘Pray now unto the Lord our God for us’” (Jeremiah 37:3).

At this spot, a *bula*, an imprint in clay used to seal documents, was found. The *bula* bears the name Jehucal son of Shelemiahu son of Shobai, one of the royal officials of King Zedekiah, who ruled over Judah at the time of the destruction of the First Temple. The *bula* of another royal functionary Gedalalhu son of pashur (Jeremiah 38:1), was found nearby.

We had prayer together and as Costia launched the King-Long tour bus into traffic, Eli manned the mic.

Today we visit the Southern Wall Archaeological Park, the biggest one in Jerusalem. There are still excavations in progress and they started here after the 1967 Six-Day war. Oh, look off to your right and you can see where the Potter's field or *akeldama* (Aramaic for "field of blood") is located. I couldn't see what was pointed out as the bus circled the south side of Jerusalem.

The "Field of Blood" was named that in Matthew 27:

*Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,⁴ Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. ⁵ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. ⁶ And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. ⁷ And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Wherefore that field was called, **The field of blood**, unto this day. ⁹ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the*



This model is designed for the visually impaired and represents a first temple period residential structure.

To access it, please be in contact with the on-site staff. This model was made possible with funding from the National Insurance Institute, and in cooperation with the Nature and Parks Authority and the Ir David Foundation.



children of Israel did value; ¹⁰ And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me (Matt.27:3-10).

As I strained to see out the bus window, the bus turned to the left, and headed what I perceive to be north. Again Eli exclaimed, Now when you look to the right you can see the Hinnom Valley which goes south of Jerusalem. It is called in Jewish theology and history, the valley of Gahanna or the valley of hell. We will explain much more about that valley later.

The three valleys that surround Jerusalem had been pointed out a couple times now. A brief article from Immanuel-Tours.com puts the three in good perspective:

The Valleys of Jerusalem Through History.

an article from www.immanuel-tours.com

Jerusalem, "The City of Peace" is the city where Christians and Jews yearn to ascend to. This city on a hill is surrounded by three valleys that from their depths, no doubt, made the gleaming Temple look even more impressive and grand; The Tyropoeon Valley, the Hinnom Valley, and the Kidron.

Jerusalem has been at the center of the world for millennia and prior to its religious significance, it had strategic military advantages being surrounded by valleys which created immediate high ground. These valleys have stories, and histories as well, that reach far beyond just being the beginning of ascent.

The Tyropoeon Valley is also known as “Valley of the Cheesemakers” (though there is no evidence any cheese was ever made there) and it divided the Old City and Mt. Moriah. Today, it is barely recognizable and is filled with houses and debris and streets with close proximity to the Al-Aqsa compound.

The Hinnom Valley, also known as Gehenna translated to “hell”. This small valley has arguably the saddest history of the area, as children were sacrificed to Molech, with drums beating to drown out the screams of the children in the fire. This is spoken of in the books of Jeremiah and 2 Kings 23. In 2 Kings 23:10, it states that King Josiah defiled the valley and ensured that no man would ever make sacrifice of his child there again during his reforms to bring a new covenant with the Lord.

Gehenna as a term was used by Jesus to describe eternal punishment and fire. This was in no way by accident, as the people he spoke to would have been well aware of the dark history of the area.

The Kidron Valley is the most well known of the valleys. It separates the Temple Mount from the Mt. of Olives. This massive valley extends 20 miles, all the way to the Dead Sea. David fled through the valley to escape his son. It is the Kidron Valley to which Satan tempted Jesus to throw himself from the Temple. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he walked through the Kidron



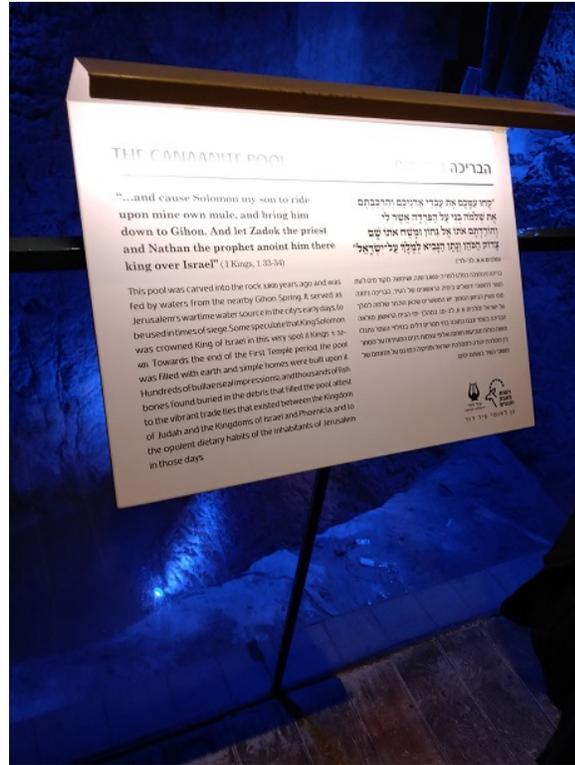
Valley to get there and passed back and forth several times through it. In John 18:1, it even mentions the Kidron Valley in conjunction with the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Kidron Valley is lined with graves, as it has long been a place of burial, and it holds massive significance for the Jewish people believing that the Messiah will pass through the valley to the Golden Gate, raising the dead in the cemeteries there on his way. This has made the area very sought after for

burial. There are some monumental tombs there as well, the Tomb of Zechariah, the Tomb of Absalom and the Tomb of the Sons of Hezir.

Next time you are in the Old City, remember that the areas around it hold just as much history!²

As Costia guided our tour bus toward the city of David from the south, Eli pointed out the pool of Siloam at the lower portion of the city of David. As the bus slowly made its way through the streets of Jerusalem, Lee Pickett explained that we would not follow all



The Canaanite Pool

“... and cause Solomon my son to ride upon my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel. (1King.1:33-34).

This pool was carved into the rock 3,800 years ago and was fed by waters from the nearby Gihon Spring. It served as Jerusalem's wartime water source in the cities early days, to be used in times of siege. Some speculate that King Solomon was crowned king of Israel in this very spot (1King.1:32-40). Towards the end of the First Temple period, the pool was filled with earth and simple homes were built upon it. Hundreds of bullai (seal impressions), and thousands of fish bones found buried in the debris that filled the pool, attest to the vibrant trade ties that existed between the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdoms of Israel and Phenicia, and to the opulent dietary habits of the inhabitants of Jerusalem in those days.

2 From <https://www.immanuel-tours.com/israel/the-valleys-of-jerusalem/> alast cessed 11/18/2023.

that was in our schedule today because of necessary changes, but those hiking through Hezekiah's tunnel were to exit at the next stop and those choosing to skip that hike should stay on the bus and go to the Archaeological site and wait for us. Exuberant hikers clamored off the bus at 7:45 am, the elderly and infirm, LOL, stayed behind and rode the bus to the archaeological site where excavations were in progress. While waiting for the hikers Bev found the Hinnom Valley on her Scofield Bible maps plate 1 and 9.

Turns out, some of us were quite familiar with this Hinnom valley, its history and theology. In Hebrew *hinnom* means “lamentation”, and the valley of the son of Hinnom refers to a deep narrow ravine with steep rocky sides located southwest of Jerusalem, separating Mount Zion to the north from the “Hill of evil council” and the sloping rocky plateau of the “plane of Rephaim.”³

The Holy Bible clarifies some of this:

Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. 30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the



LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. 31 And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. 32 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. ... 19:1 Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; 2 And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom,



which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, 3 And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants

3 Quote from the the online Bible Hebrew lexicon.

of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle.

⁴ Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; ⁵ They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind: ⁶ Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter (Jer.7:29-32, 19:1-6).

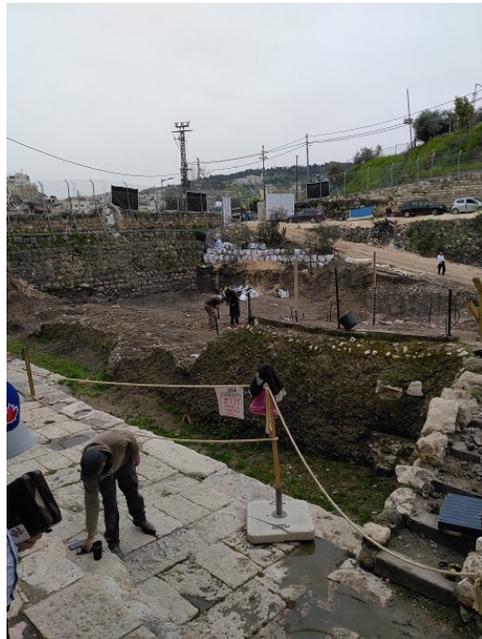
But wait there's more, in Greek this valley is called "gehenna", translated "hell" all twelve times it appears in the Holy Bible. When one uses a modernist ecumenical



copyright version of the bible (little b), they find hell is very often not translated but transliterated and not spelled out as "hell".

"Hell" is in your King James Bible 54 times,

32 OT, 22 NT; it is only in the NIV 13 times, 0 OT, 13 NT; it is



only in the ESV 14 times, 0 OT, 14 NT. Our King James Bible aptly translates three original Hebrew/Greek words to the word "hell." Additionally those modernist ecumenical copyright bibles have 64,000 fewer words than the accurate English Holy Bible.

"Hell is a place of the future punishment called "Gahanna of fire". This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destination."⁴

So, the valley of the children of Hinnom was a vile place of abomination where mankind, "without natural affection" for their children (cf 2Tim.3:2), would make them

4 Quote from online Bible Greek Lexicon.

pass through the fire to Molech (2Kings.23:10, 2Chron.28:3, 33:6, Jer.32:35). It was the dump, the place of perpetual burning and Jesus used it as a fit symbol for the hell to be avoided at all cost.

We were at the Southern Wall Archaeological Park, known as the Jerusalem Archaeological Park. It is the largest Archaeological Park in Jerusalem, resulting from several large scale, excavation projects following the Six Day War when Israel took control of the entire city of Jerusalem.

Here we could view, and visit the many finds of the digs around the Southern Wall of the Temple Mount. Excavations yielded a wealth of finds in an extensive area; Cobbled streets with shops and ritual baths called mikvah, designed to ensure the purity of pilgrims who climbed the southern steps. They would enter and exit the temple mount through the Hulda gates, named after the prophetess, who clarified prophecy for a young king Josiah, as stated in 2Kings.22:14. The prophetess was entombed near here. The gates were sealed shut in the middle ages and remain blocked to this day.

Jesus walked and talked and preached in this temple entrance area in all likelihood on some of these very first century stones uncovered in these extensive excavations.



Our group gathered on the southern steps of the temple. Pastor Lee Pickett exclaimed more of the wonder of where we now sat, and asked Pastor Diedrich Peters to give a Bible devotional as we sat here on the southern steps.

Pastor Peters opened our Bibles to Luke 19 and expounded on the authority that Jesus had in his teachings, and the many times he would have been right here in this place teaching with that authority. It was electric, and Pastor Dedrick walked us through verse after verse that describes the power and authority that Jesus had in his teaching.

We had about a half-hour here to reflect and ponder. Bev and I moved to the upper corner of the southern steps and prayed together. It was a moving time, we had visited and prayed at the steps twice previously: in February 2009, unforgettable, and November 2022 absolutely unforgettable, and now here in March 2023, making memories that

would never be forgotten.

From the southern steps, we went past the “Robinson’s arch” discovered in 1838, and headed up the Western Wall of the temple toward the Western Wall Prayer Plaza. Eli, our guide, delighted in giving detail about the Western Wall. The Western Wall is the only remains of the retaining wall of the first and second temple wall. It has been a place of prayer for 1000 years; the first temple was destroyed by Babylonians in 586 BC, the second by the Romans in 70 AD. Some hold that Titus left the Western Wall as a painful reminder of the Roman defeat of Judah. Disputes about access to the wall have been ongoing, and in the June 1967 Six Day War that gave Israel total control of the wall area, these disputes have not been totally eliminated. The Bible says, and many Jews believe, the divine presence never departs from the Western Wall (De.12:5, 1Kng.9:3, Ne.1:9).⁵

Jews, who have pilgrimaged to Jerusalem



from all the corners of the world, gather at the stonewall to pray about the suffering of exile, and for the peace of Jerusalem. Men and women pray separately, and men should wear a kippah, yamaka, or other head covering. You may take photos at the wall, but do not disturb those who are praying. There are many ceremonies that take place at the Western Wall, including bar Mitzvahs, and military



5 De.12:5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes **to put his name there**, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: 1Ki.9:3 ... I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, **to put my name there for ever**; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. Ne.1:9 But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto **the place that I have chosen to set my name there**.

swearing in ceremonies. Security checks are required before entering the Western Wall Prayer Plaza, there are no knives or weapons of any kind allowed.

My heart stopped when Eli said the word knives: I did have a jackknife in my pocket; I go almost nowhere without one. Only about four paces further a prominent sign was posted showing contraband, all I saw was a picture of a knife, it was not a jackknife, per se, but I had been down this road many-a-time before. I slid to the back of the group and told Pastor Pickett of my dilemma. He went to the front and whispered to Eli, and the three of us met. Eli confirmed I would not be allowed in with my jackknife. I was not disheartened. I really wanted to pray at the wall with this group, but instead of entering the security checkpoint, I ascended some stairs and took a perch overlooking the security entry point and some of the wall.

Watching a security checkpoint for the Western Wall Prayer Plaza turned out to be an interesting affair. There



Welcome to the Western Wall a remnant of the Temple
"Request the welfare of Jerusalem; may those who love you enjoy tranquility. May there be peace in your wall, tranquility in your palaces" Psalms 122:6-7)

were three panhandlers working the crowds, they worked more in competition than collectively, but they didn't miss a tourist, nor approach a native, ... as best I could recognize which were which. Tour groups with the guides were pretty much off-limits, and the bar Mitzvah parties that came through made panhandlers disappear entirely. I watched three such parties go by, dancing, and singing, joking and poking fun. It was



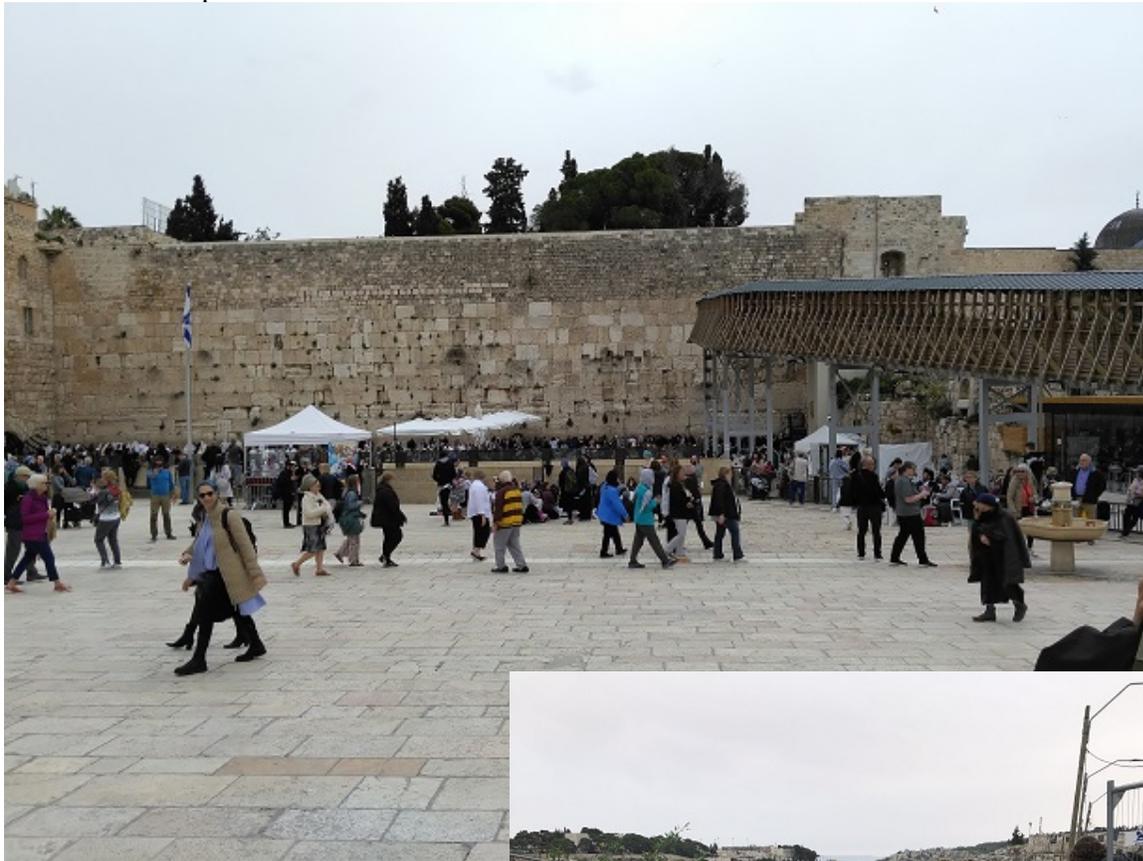
easy to pick out the lauded young man, more so his parents. There was the bashful sort, the business sort, and the bodacious sort; all three were a joy to watch, as they made their way through the security check point, and went



down into the Western Wall Prayer Plaza to, ... have prayer, I guess, to pray over the lad.

I missed being at the prayer wall. It is true born- again Christians can come boldly unto the throne of grace and obtain mercy from any location or place we might be, (that's

one of the 13 heads of lettuce in Hebrews (Heb.4:16)). Just the same, being in a place solely dedicated to prayer, especially an international place, particularly this one, where God had chosen to put his name there, forever! Well, it is a very special place of prayer. The group returned, I could tell Lee and Eli were very relieved that I had not wandered off. I met my Beverly, and as we walked to the bus, we exchanged stories of what all we had seen in the past hour.



Our next stop held special excitement. We were headed to Golgotha, and the Garden Tomb.

«A Song of degrees of David.» I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. 2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. 3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: 4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. 5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. 6 ¶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. 7 Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. 8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. 9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good (Psalm 122:1-9).

