

The Western Wall

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Have you ever been to Israel?
2. Can you name any famous holy sites around the world?
3. Have you ever heard of the Wailing Wall? If so, do you know which city it is located in?
4. Have you ever heard of a ceremony in the Jewish religion called a Bar Mitzvah?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.
Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

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| _____ 1. wail | a) a place |
| _____ 2. enlarge | b) to build |
| _____ 3. destroy | c) very large, huge |
| _____ 4. reminder | d) to take back, to get control of again |
| _____ 5. site | e) to cry in a loud voice |
| _____ 6. custom | f) to speak to God |
| _____ 7. enormous | g) to make bigger |
| _____ 8. recapture | h) something that makes you think of something else |
| _____ 9. construct | i) something that is usually done, a tradition |
| _____ 10. pray | j) to break into pieces |

Reading

1. The Western Wall, one of the holiest sites in Judaism, is found in the city of Jerusalem. It is also known as the **Wailing** Wall. Non-Jewish people began calling it this after watching Jewish people cry as they **prayed** at the wall.
2. The wall is part of a large retaining wall that Herod the Great had built in biblical times. It was built to mark off and **enlarge** the area known as the Temple Mount, which contained the holiest Temple of the Jewish people.
3. In the year AD 70, the Romans **destroyed** the Temple but left parts of the wall standing. People began praying at the western section of the wall because it was the only **reminder** of their Temple. It gradually became a holy **site**. Many people started leaving written prayers to God in the cracks of the wall, a **custom** that is still carried on today.
4. Herod's wall was constructed with **enormous** stones, most weighing between two and eight tons (about 1,814 and 7,257 kilograms). A few weighed as much as 100 tons (about 90,719 kilograms), and scientists still do not know how these rocks were moved to the site.
5. Today's Western Wall is about 165 feet (about 50 meters) long and about 40 feet (about 12 meters) high. At some point, four or five rows of smaller stones were added on top of the seven rows of original stones.
6. In 1948, Jordan took control of the Western Wall and denied Jews access to it. Israel **recaptured** the area during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. After the war, the Israelis **constructed** a large plaza in front of the wall that became a formal place of worship. Men and women have separate prayer areas. Boys from Israel and around the world often come to the plaza to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah.
7. The Western Wall has also been a symbol of Jewish unity and survival since the 1800s. Today, the Israeli government often holds national events in the plaza.

Over one million notes (prayers) are tucked into the cracks of the Western Wall each year. The notes are eventually collected and buried in a Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives.

Comprehension

A. True or False?

Read the statements below.

If the statement is true, write T beside the sentence.

If it is false, write F and correct the information.

- _____ 1. The Western Wall is a holy place in the Jewish religion.
- _____ 2. Jews have always controlled the Western Wall.
- _____ 3. Jewish people changed the name of the Western Wall to the Wailing Wall.
- _____ 4. The Western Wall was built by the Romans.
- _____ 5. Men and women pray together at the Western Wall.

B. Ask and Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner.

Then write your answers in complete sentences in your notebook.

- 1. Where is the Western Wall located?
- 2. Why is the Western Wall also known as the Wailing Wall?
- 3. Why was the Western Wall built?
- 4. Why did the Jewish people begin to pray at the Western Wall?
- 5. Describe the Western Wall as it is today.
- 6. What did the Israelis build after they recaptured the Western Wall in 1967?
- 7. What kind of symbol has the Western Wall become to the Jewish people?

Vocabulary Review

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

1. The Western Wall is one of the holiest sites in Judaism.
a) has the most holes in it
b) most religious
c) biggest
2. The wall is part of a large retaining wall that was built in biblical times.
a) religious
b) temple
c) keeping something in place
3. The wall became a formal place of worship.
a) fighting
b) prayer
c) celebration
4. The Western Wall was built in biblical times.
a) in modern times
b) recently
c) a very long time ago
5. Jordan took control of the Western Wall and denied Jews access to it.
a) refused to let them near it
b) shared it with them
c) destroyed it

Discussion

1. Have you ever been to a world-famous holy site? If so, describe it.
2. A Bar Mitzvah is a ceremony held when a Jewish boy reaches the age of 13, recognizing that he has reached the age of religious responsibility. What other ceremonies in other religions mark the passage from childhood to adulthood? If you have ever attended one of these, describe it.
3. Why do you think many Jewish boys travel from around the world to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah at the Western Wall? In other religions, do people travel to special places for special celebrations? Give examples.