



**From Rabbi Weber:**

JERUSALEM,  
August 7, 2013 –  
Elul 1, 5773

I prayed at the Kotel (the Western Wall) today. That may not seem like a big thing for someone who has spent over a year of his life in Jerusalem, but it was actually the *first* time I've ever prayed at the Wall.

I've been to the Wall many times. I appreciate its history, and I understand the sacred connection to the Temple which once stood on that spot. But I could never pray there, no matter how hard I tried.

Let me explain it this way: Imagine you are invited to a party. You arrive at a beautiful, old house and are escorted into a large, lavish room. There's food and drink and good conversation. But after a while you realize that the black people you saw coming to the party are nowhere to be seen. You inquire, and learn that there is a small room in the back for the non-whites. No music, no food, just a tiny place for them to stand quietly.

I ask you: could you go back to the big room and enjoy the party, knowing the black people were segregated like that?

That is what the Kotel has always been to me. As a male, I have access to a large, open area of the Wall. There are prayerbooks for everyone, Torah scrolls on the appropriate days and even cardboard *kippot* in case I forgot to bring one. *But no women are allowed.* Women are jammed into a tiny area off to the side and told to keep their voices down; not to wear a

*kippah* or a *tallit*, not to read from Torah. Try as I might, I could never pray while I knew that the women I knew, and the women I didn't know, were relegated to the corner.

Until today. Today I joined hundreds of women and men of The Women of The Wall, to celebrate *Rosh Hodesh*, the first of the Jewish month of Elul – the month leading up to Rosh Hashanah. Yes, we needed a police escort to get there, and no, we could not get to the Wall itself since the ultra-orthodox had blocked it with hundreds of girls from their *yeshivot*. But standing at the back of the Kotel plaza, dozens of us men surrounded the women to shield them from the catcalls, whistle-blowing and insults thrown by the ultra-orthodox. We were given copies of the Women of the Wall prayerbook for Rosh Hodesh, and we joined in quietly, adding our voices to those of the women.

At the beginning, I just stood there and gaped at the furious faces of people who thought we were committing *a shande*, a desecration of *their* holy place. But little by little, as the human wall of police officers pushed them away from us, their shouts were replaced with the beautiful melodies of women and men praying together. And while I did not abandon my post as a buffer, I turned more and more toward the crowd – *our* crowd. We were singing, praying, laughing, celebrating... there was even a young woman celebrating as she became a Bat Mitzvah.

And then we read, *Ve-haviyenu le-Tzion ircha be-rina, ve-li-rushalayim beit mikdashcha be-simchat olam* – "Bring us back, with song, to Zion

Your city, and to Jerusalem Your sanctuary with everlasting joy." I looked to my right at the angry, screaming faces of the ultra-orthodox, and to the left at the happy, singing faces of the Women (and men) of the Wall, and it all fell into place: *we* were doing it right! Men and women. Together. Praying at the Wall.

My anger fell away, and I was at peace. I prayed – I prayed for my family, for my People, for the Land of Israel, and for *you*. It felt good. It felt right. It felt whole. *I* felt whole.

The challenges facing the Women of the Wall are many, and their work is far from done. Their ultimate goal is actually not to have men and women praying together, but to establish the right for women to pray separately, but equally, at the Wall. Our efforts today were just a stepping-stone toward that goal, but the result was a wholeness I have never experienced at that holy place.

I encourage you to support the Women of the Wall with contributions, by "liking" them on Facebook, by buying a t-shirt or by buying a *tallit* from them when you want a new one. Their web site is [womenofthewall.org.il](http://womenofthewall.org.il).

Make no mistake; there are times where these services have turned really, really ugly. And that may happen again in the future. But for me, the first of Elul, 5773, was a day I will never forget: The day I finally prayed at the Wall.

I wish you and your loved ones a New Year filled with song, everlasting joy, and true, meaningful prayer.

# SEPTEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>



8:00 P.M. – Erev Rosh Hashanah service at Marlboro HS

Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup>

Rosh Hashanah service at Marlboro HS

(see tickets for times)

Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>

Rosh Hashanah service at Marlboro HS – 10:00 a.m.

Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>

Kol Nidre service at Marlboro HS – 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 14<sup>th</sup>

Yom Kippur services at Marlboro HS

(see tickets for times)

Wednesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>

Lunch with the rabbi and the cantor at Wegman's – 12:30 p.m.

Erev Sukkot Family Service – 7:30 p.m.

Join us as we thank God for all our blessings, and plan to eat at least one meal in the temple's sukkah between now and September 26<sup>th</sup>.

Sunday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>

Women's Spirituality Sukkot Dinner in our temple sukkah – 6:30 p.m.

For more info and to RSVP, contact Suzie Beizer at [asksuzie@yahoo.com](mailto:asksuzie@yahoo.com) or 732-933-1562

Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>

Sisterhood Book Discussion – 7:00 p.m.

We will be reading "Sisterland", by Curtis Sittenfeld. Please RSVP to Marla Bucher at [mmack59@gmail.com](mailto:mmack59@gmail.com) or 732-972-7307, by September 20

Wednesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>

Erev 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sukkot Service & Yiskor – 7:30 p.m.

Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup>

Rock Shabbat & Simchat Torah! – 6:30 p.m.

