



DISCOVERING THE LAND: BY VARDAAH LITTMANN, PHOTOS BY RIMONAH TRAUB

The Kosel Tunnels

Part IV

large guardrail. To one's left is the cistern and the guardrail, and to the right is the original stairway leading down into the cistern.

The tunnel twists and turns, and at last, covered by a large stone arch, leads to a reservoir pool.

Antonia Fortress And the Struthion Pool

Before the pool that served as a moat for the northwestern corner of the Antonia Fortress was constructed, the aqueduct ran from the north into this area, servicing the city and Har Habayis. On expanding the Temple area, Herod blocked off the southern side of the aqueduct, and the pool was split into two parts. The southern section no longer had any function, but the northern section continued to bring rainwater into the pool.

The Bar Kochba revolt ended in defeat in 135 C.E. The Roman Emperor Hadrian turned the entire pool area into a marketplace. They covered the pool by first dividing it into two, with a wall along its length. They then placed two arches fanning out in opposite directions from this wall. A square platform which served as a marketplace was built on top of these arches.

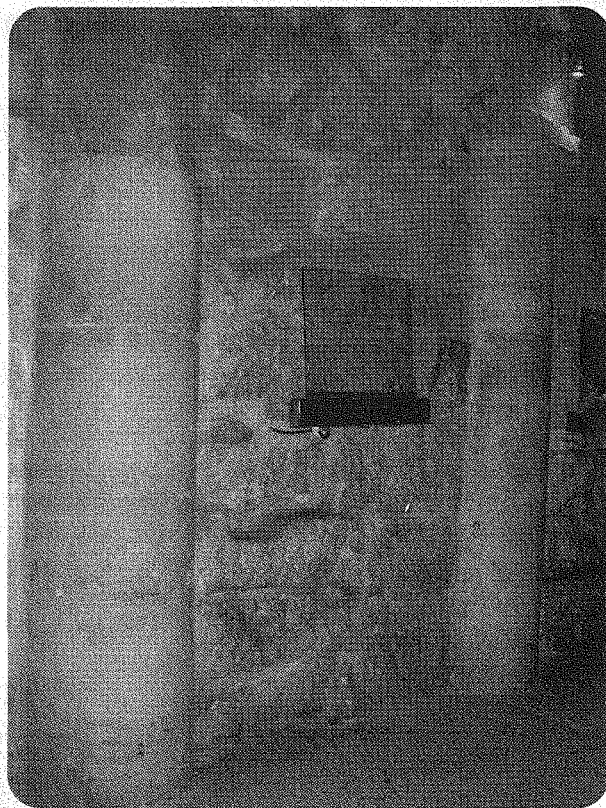
In the 19th century, when the foundation for the Convent of the Sisters of Zion was being dug, they discovered the ancient pool and aqueduct. To prevent strangers and explorers from entering their convent from underground, the nuns had another wall built, splitting the pool again, width-wise.

Only the northern side of the Struthion Pool can be seen, as going into the convent causes halachic problems.

At this point, one will have reached the end of the excavations.

In September 1996, the exit through a small tunnel leading up to the Via Dolorosa was opened, thus affording thousands of additional tourists access to the Tunnels.

Days of violence followed, sparked by angry Palestinians claiming that this change in the



On the wall opposite the Kosel are two columns that are presumed to be an entrance to a shop.

Tunnels had involved excavating under the Dome of the Rock. Tragically, many people on both sides died because of this lie.

The Tunnels are not located under the Temple Mount or any other site Muslims consider theirs.

As one leaves the dark developing calm of the Kosel Tunnels, one exits through the modern turnstile — so out of place among the history-laden ancient stones.

At this point, take a moment to consider the miracle of the survival of the Western Wall, the place about which Hashem promised that His *Shechinah* will always reside.