

## The Wall

A friend and I were discussing Judaism  
When we were both considering conversion.  
She had an image I'd like to share.  
She said Judaism had a wall around it,  
A big wall, that you had to break into, if you were interested...  
I immediately envisioned the beautiful tall stone walls around the ancient walled city in  
Jerusalem,  
And agreed.  
As we discussed it, she ran her fingers through the air,  
Showing how you had to scratch your way through the walls,  
And by such repetitive action you could  
Eventually make the walls crumble down before you, enabling you to  
Climb over the rubble  
To the beauty of Judaism within,  
As the beauty of the ancient city of Jerusalem within its walls.  
The heart of the religion is there for you, then,  
As accessible as the Temple Mound within the city,  
As available as breathing the air, once you get in.  
The wall for the non-Jew seems impenetrable at first.  
At first you accept the wall, look at it respectably and keep your distance.  
For the non-Jew it is foreign.  
It's seemingly impenetrable stone blocks include Hebrew.  
Annual life-cycle events and unfamiliar holidays that have no personal memories or  
meanings,  
A repetitive prayer service you don't understand and wish could be more creative,  
And the very ethnicity of Judaism, the beautiful stone of "from generation to  
generation,"  
Which will ever keep you outside.  
The non-Jew is on the other side of the wall.  
I suspect that Synagogue executive committees and Boards of Director  
In their interest in the strength of Judaism continuing,  
Are in the business of inspecting the foundation of that wall,  
Looking out for cracks,  
Cherishing each of the stone blocks that create it.  
Jewish outreach is in the business of making gates in that wall.  
The blocks are so big.  
The wall is beautiful, and yet foreboding to the non-Jew.  
If they bother to gaze at the wall, as incredible a personal endeavor as bothering to  
gaze at a burning bush, they may see an occasional gate  
That lets out the awesome light of Judaism from within.  
I don't think conversion can ever be as easy as walking through a gate.  
I think every potential convert has to knock down that wall for themselves,  
Coming to terms with each block,  
And by the way once they do,  
They very lovingly replace the blocks,  
Caressing each one.

by Lee Needelman