

"It's defined as a class-3 stone, the most durable kind. It can be used in all sorts of applications and in all types of weather," he said.

Over the past few years, Jerusalem Gardens has been involved with the construction of the Jewish Community Center in Staten Island, New York; Torat Emet Synagogue in Columbus, Ohio; and the impressive Levy Chapel at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, which have all incorporated Jerusalem stone in their design.

However, Jerusalem stone's appeal is not limited to the Jewish community. Christian groups and private contractors have started using it in a wide range of structures, from cathedrals to luxury hotels. For instance, Jerusalem stone was used in the expensive renovation of New York's Plaza Hotel, owned by Israeli tycoon Yitzhack Tshuva. In addition, many Christian groups like the idea of having a piece of Jerusalem in their houses of worship. Last week, a Brazilian church reportedly announced it would buy \$8 million worth of Jerusalem stone imported from Israel to build a replica of the First Temple in Sao Paulo (see box).

However, large-scale quarrying in the Judean Hills also has adverse affects on the environment, says Itamar Ben-David, the chief planner of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. Last month, a National Planning Committee which overlooks quarrying activities in Israel submitted a list of recommendations to the government, including a ban on the export of building materials such as Jerusalem stone from the country.

"Because Israel is a small country and we don't have much land, one of our recommendations has been to ban the export of building materials from the country," Ben-David told *The Jerusalem Post*. "If one has to negatively

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SYNAGOGUES ABROAD have begun to incorporate Jerusalem stone.