Thousands swarmed at the entrances.

A field of vision entirely filled with women, men and children.

Some said there were tens of thousands, others- hundreds of thousands.

But I am not writing statistics. I write about those who walk this earth on their way to worship.

Facing those armed with faith and prayer rugs stood soldiers and policemen, armed with weapons and orders, and blocked their way.

On posts raised above the access tracks stood soldiers, their rifle barrels pointed at the heads or body-center of Palestinians.

I stood with the Palestinians, among them, and rifle barrels were appointed at me too.   
I can verify that this is scary. Very scary.

Quite a few of the crowd knew they do not meet the criteria for crossing, and still came from afar, hoping – but their hope was dashed.

The computer showed that the man or woman or child do not stand the precise standard, and were shamefully sent back.

Again, gender separation tightened, and as a woman I was prevented from reaching the men’s inspection posts. But I did see the crowds on their way. When crowding increased prior to selection, I heard the commander ordering his subordinates: **Profile them by face!**

I couldn’t understand at the time, and cannot understand now what and how.

Does one’s face replace one’s age and family status, or added to them? Does danger have a face before it materializes? Does it wear a beard or carry a baby on its shoulder?

Having no other choice, I focused on the other side meant for women, faced with a well-oiled apparatus functioning at a regular rhythm.

The women advanced towards the inspection posts in body groups directed by uniformed, armed soldiers, and prayed to cross the first bottle neck on their way to Al Aqsa.

Once every few minutes, upon a signal originating somewhere unknown, the inspections at the head of the line ceased. The first women had to stop and those standing behind them, not knowing what was going on, continued to advance. Hundreds of women were crushed one to the other’s back and created a breathless, impassable mass.

A kind of paralysis took hold of the crowd that had become a single seething body.

Because of the crowding and thirst and lack of air, several women collapsed, fainting.

Those there at the ready to rush to these women’s aid were the young people in fluorescent vests. And they are to praised. Those first-aid volunteers lifted - and, with their grace and gentleness - helped the fainting women onto stretchers and wheelchairs prepared in advance.

Translated by Tal Haran.