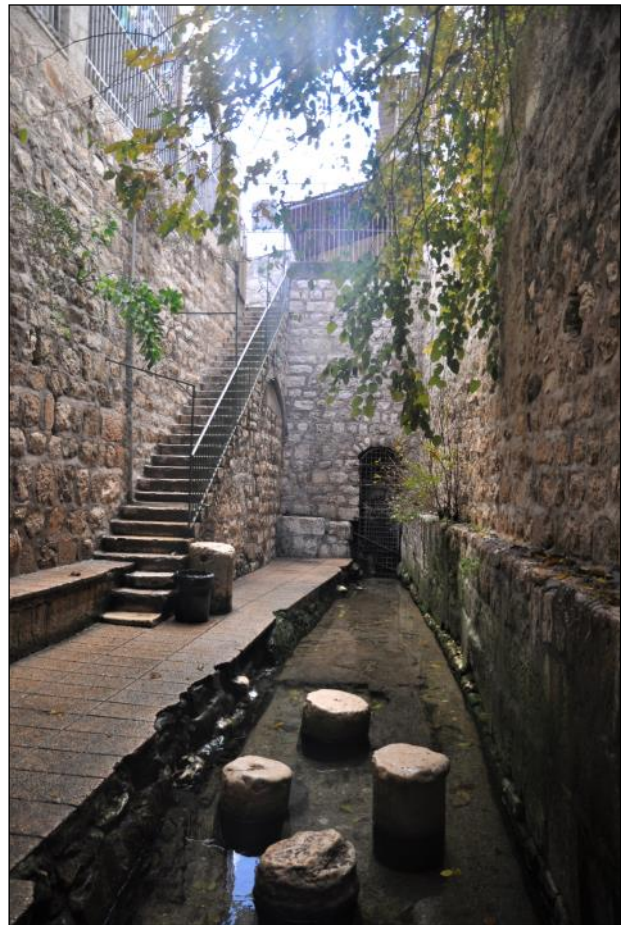


SILOAM POOL

In the past, visitors to Jerusalem were shown a pool that had been associated with Jesus' healing of the blind man in John 9. In that text, the Lord made a mud pack with spit and dirt, and he put it on the man's eyes. Then he sent him to the Pool of Siloam (which means "Sent"), telling him to wash (Jn. 9:7). After following Jesus' instructions, the blind man gained his sight. This traditional pool was remodeled by the Empress Eudocia of Byzantium in the fifth century A.D. A church building was constructed over this area to commemorate Jesus' miracle.



Pool of Siloam (Jerusalem Model)

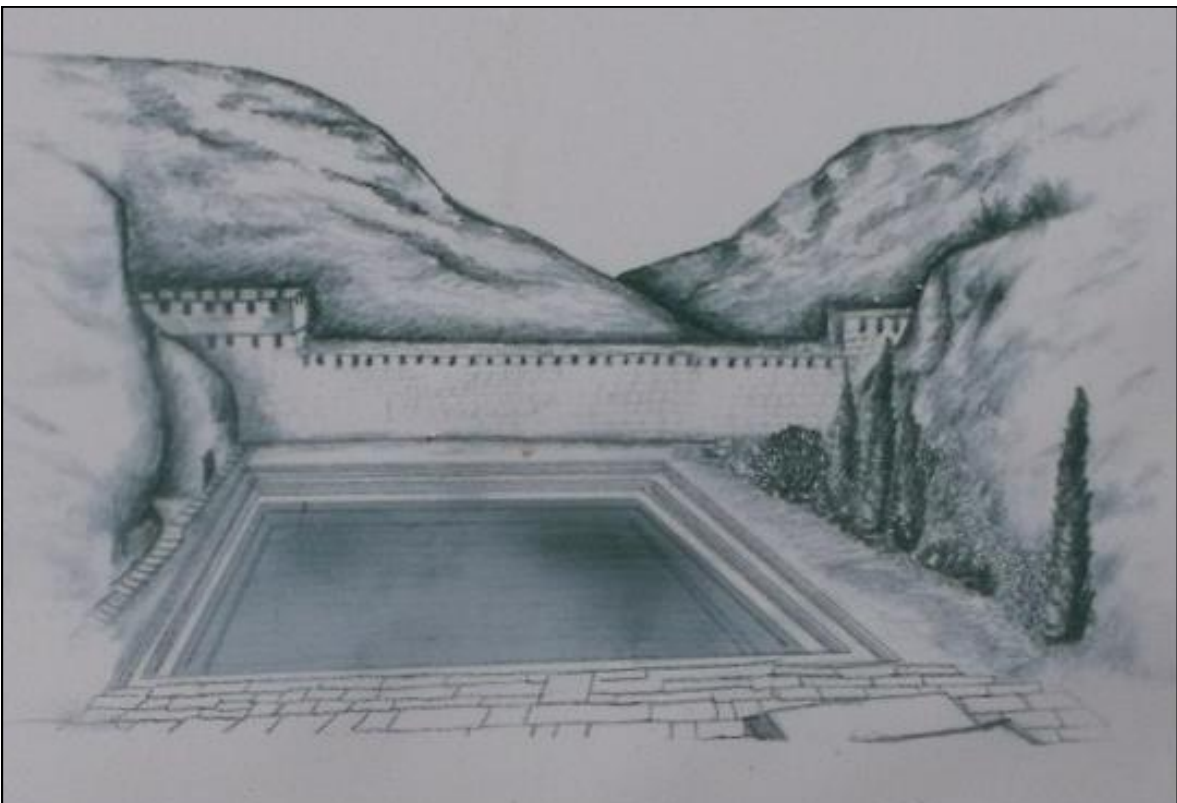


Traditional Pool of Siloam

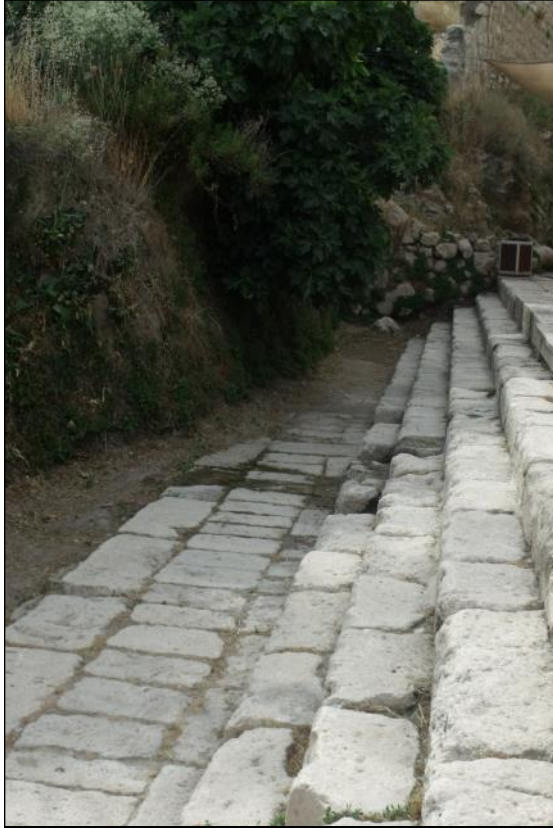
In the summer of 2004, archaeologists Ronny Reich and Eli Shukron were called in to continue an excavation some workers had begun days earlier. The workers were digging to repair a sewage pipe nearby the traditional Siloam Pool, and, while doing their job, they uncovered some ancient stone steps. Reich and Shukron supposed at the beginning of the excavation that the stone steps belonged to the actual Siloam Pool mentioned in John 9:7.



Steps of the Pool of Siloam (Discovered in 2004)



Artist's Reconstruction of the Pool of Siloam (Shiloah)



Steps of the Pool of Siloam

This pool was large, measuring 225 feet long on one end, and it was built in the shape of a trapezoid. It had three sets of stairs with five steps each; this feature accommodated different water levels that could be present due to seasonal and weather factors. Its depth is estimated to be greater than the height of an average person, and the northwestern side of the pool seems to have been adorned by a colonnade.

Excavators and archaeologists have proposed several theories concerning the function of the pool. (1) *It was used for ritual immersion.* People must have considered its purification qualities superior to those of other public baths because its water came from the Gihon Spring. On the other hand, ritual immersions were often done in more private settings. (2) *It functioned as a water cistern.* However, the large and luxurious construction argues against this position. Further, since most homes in Jerusalem had domestic cisterns, it may have been unnecessary to send someone with a pitcher to draw water from the Siloam Pool. (3) *It served as a laundry facility* (see 2 Kings 18:17; Is. 7:3; 36:2). (4) *It was a public swimming pool.* Its stairs, adornments, and colonnade support this proposal. The steps may have served as broad landings for swimmers to rest in shallow water between dips. Of course, it is possible that the pool served multiple functions.

The original Siloam (Shiloah) Pool was built by Hezekiah when he had the tunnel dug from the Gihon Spring (2 Kings 20:20). Its purpose at that time was to supply Jerusalem with

drinking water without having to leave the protection of the city walls. Apparently, there was an upper pool and a lower pool (Is. 8:6; 22:9-11). The two pools we have today were likely built at the same location as Hezekiah's original ones. The newly discovered pool belongs to the Hasmonean and Herodian periods (Second Temple). This conclusion is based partly on the fact that archaeologists have discovered the coins of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.) in the plaster work. At present, the excavation of the pool has been stopped because the property belongs to the Greek Orthodox Church.

Rabbinic tradition tells how water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam in a golden flask, carried to the temple, and then poured out as a libation during the Feast of Tabernacles (Mishnah *Sukkah* 4.1, 9). This is the historical background for John 7, where Jesus stated that he is the source of living water (Jn. 7:2, 37-38).