



Regards from the Past: Ancient Water Bridge Found in Jerusalem

by Hillel Fendel

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(Israelnationalnews.com) Part of the ancient aqueduct that brought water to the Temple Mount has been exposed near the Sultan's Pool across from Mt. Zion. The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) says it found a "spectacular arched bridge" that marked part of Jerusalem's ancient water system while conducting archaeological rescue excavations prior to work on the city's modern water system.

Two of the bridge's original nine arches have now been excavated to their full height of about three meters.

In actuality, the newly-discovered bridge was built in 1320 C.E. by the sultan Nasser al-Din Muhammed Ibn Qalawun, as evidenced by its dedicatory inscription. However, it was apparently constructed to replace an earlier bridge dating to the time of the Second Temple period that was part of the original aqueduct.

Yechiel Zelinger, excavation director on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, said, "The bridge, which could still be seen at the end of the 19th century and appears in old photographs, was covered over during the 20th century. We were thrilled when it suddenly reappeared in all its grandeur during the course of the archaeological excavations."

"The route of the Low Level aqueduct from the time of the Second Temple, beginning at Solomon's Pools near Bethlehem and ending at the Temple Mount, is well known to scholars," Zelinger said. "Substantial parts of it have been documented along the edge of Yemin Moshe neighborhood and on the slope adjacent to the Old City's western wall. In order to maintain the elevation of the path along which the water flowed, a bridge was erected above the ravine."

The Israel Antiquities Authority, in cooperation with the Nature and Parks Authority, is working to expose the entire length of the arched bridge. It plans to conserve and integrate it in the framework of the overall development of the Sultan's Pool, as part of underscoring the importance of the water supply to Jerusalem in ancient times.

The Gihon Corporation, whose name preserves that of Jerusalem's ancient source of water and which is conducting work on the modern water system in the area, is assisting in funding excavations that uncover Jerusalem's ancient water systems.

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