

An Ancient Architectural Feat & Biblical Verification
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In 1880, a young Jacob Eliahu noticed something unusual on the dank wall of an underground waterway. Translation of the ancient Hebrew inscription revealed the excitement of men nearing the completion of the Siloam tunnel, a passageway constructed under the orders of King Hezekiah of ancient Israel. Remaining an intriguing location in itself, the tunnel and its message reveal ancient architectural ability and substantiate the historicity of the biblical record. How workers were able to pick their way through 1,750 feet of rock² from opposite directions and meet in the middle, achieving a zero point seven percent slope throughout, has been a subject of scholarly research. Alluded to by four books of the Bible, the tunnel constitutes one of a growing number of archaeological discoveries that now include evidence for Israel's early monarchy and even the Patriarchal period.³

The Inscription & its Tunnel

Etched into the tunnel's walls in 702 B.C., a clear view of the faint inscription was obscured by lime deposits which "accumulated through more than twenty-five centuries of

¹ Thompson, Henry O.,
York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987), 35.

² 1,200 cubits, or 530 meters.

³ See 2 Kings 20:20; 2 Chronicles 32:30; Isaiah 22:9-11; and John 9:7, 11. Wright, G. Earnest, "Biblical Archaeology Today,"
, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Feb., 1947), 12.

intermittent overflowing of spring water.”¹ Upon discovery of the text, Conrad Shick and Carl Guthe used acids to reveal the following (translated) words:

[W]hile there were yet three cubits to excavate, there was heard the voice of one calling to another, for there was a crevice in the rock... And on the day they completed the boring through, the stone-cutters struck pick against pick, one against the other; and the waters flowed from the spring to the pool, a distance of 1000 cubits. And a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the stone-cutters.²

As one writer elucidates, when “the two teams of tunnelers came within about five feet of each other they realized that they had gone slightly off course... The workmen relied on the sound of their pickaxes and their voices to correct the trajectory to join the two parts of the tunnel. The meeting point is visible as a series of irregular cuts near the tunnel’s midpoint.”³

2 Kings 20:20 records that Hezekiah commissioned this waterway that would eventually become the site at which Jesus performed a new kind of miracle: He sent a blind man to wash his eyes in a pool of water at the exit of the watercourse.⁴ Hezekiah’s was the third waterway built in connection to the Gihon spring. The first, now referred to as Warren’s Shaft, provided general access to the tunnel’s waters. The other two, the Siloam Channel and the Siloam Tunnel, were constructed to handle the Gihon’s excess water flow.

Though the Siloam Channel served its purpose effectively, it lay partially unprotected. “[O]nce the threat of war arose, there also arose the urgent need to construct a strategic water supply system designed to capture, store, distribute, and conceal the excess waters of the Gihon.

¹ Owen, G. Frederick, (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1961), 279.

² As cited in Owen, G. Frederick, (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1961), 279. Though someone cut this inscription from the wall and broke the stolen tablet in pieces, it was recovered and now resides in the original in Turkey’s Imperial Ottoman Museum.

³ The Center for Online Judaic Studies, “Hezekiah’s (or Siloam) Tunnel Inscription, 701 BCE”; available from [http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Hezekiah's_\(or_Siloam\)_Tunnel_Inscription,_701_BCE](http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Hezekiah's_(or_Siloam)_Tunnel_Inscription,_701_BCE); accessed February 14, 2013.

⁴ John 9:1, 6-7

Josh McDowell states that “Christianity is a historical faith which claims that God has broken into history with many mighty acts.”¹

