

The Historical SOLOMON'S POOLS



The City of Cultures and Civilizations

By S. Architect George N. Bassous

The Place of Water-Science Innovation

The Source of Life for Jerusalem through the Centuries

Nominated as a Cultural and Heritage Site of Potential Outstanding Universal Value in Palestine



Located three kilometers south of the Nativity Church, the site of Solomon's Pools encompasses an area of 245,000 square meters. The site is part of the Closed Paradise Valley "Artas" in Bethlehem, and is a place rich in valuable archeological contents and cultural and natural heritage that was created over thousands of years and through a number of eras – Bronze, Roman, Byzantine, Mamluk, Ottoman, British, etc.

The three large reservoirs known as Solomon's Pools are partly excavated from the rock and partly constructed. These pools were the main section of an ancient waterway that supplied water to Jerusalem; it was the largest aqueduct in Palestine – 68 kilometers long – and used for many centuries to maintain a regular water supply to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Herodian Mountain. The pools have the capacity to hold around 400,000 cubic meters of water, with a total area of 30,000 square meters. The pools are supported through water flow from aqueducts coming from Wadi Arrub and Wadi al-Biyar; in addition to a number of ancient springs. Nowadays, the pools still function, but they face serious threats and challenges (see photos).

In response to the site needs, Solomon's Pools Center (SPPD) is continuously working to protect and improve the conditions of Bethlehem Governorate and

the Solomon's Pools area, creating a safe environment for the preservation of the site's valuable cultural, natural, and manmade landscapes, including the three ancient pools, the Ottoman Murad Castle, the Mediterranean forest and gardens, the museum, the archaeological components, and areas such as the castle's stables, the aqueducts, the surface-water collection canals, and the huge pumps and filters.

Through presidential decree and ministerial resolution, the Solomon's Pools site was named "Solomon's Pools – the City of Cultures and Civilizations in Bethlehem," as the main center for Bethlehem, the Arab Cultural Capital in 2020. Accordingly, SPPD's strategic plan for the next five years is to protect the historical site and to reduce the threat level in preparation for the transition to becoming the City of Cultures and Civilizations.

Archeological, historical, natural, and architectural studies and assessments are taking place at the moment and will be followed by rehabilitation works for the lower pool carried out by the "EMERGENCY CONSERVATION OF THE LOWER POOL AT SOLOMON'S POOLS PROJECT," which is funded by the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. The site still needs lots of intervention to reach its optimal and sustainable status.

Call for support

For all concerned parties who are keen on preserving our Palestinian valuable heritage, this is a call to join us to preserve and sustain the largest remaining cultural heritage site in Palestine: the Solomon's Pools Area.

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