

= Birket Israel =

Birket Israel (trans . Pool of Israel) also Birket Israil or Birket Isra 'in , abbreviated from Birket Asbât Beni Israil (trans . Pool of the Tribes of the Children of Israel) was a public cistern located on the north @-@ eastern corner of the Temple Mount , in Jerusalem . The structure is believed to have been built by the Romans for use as a water reservoir and also to protect the northern wall of the Temple Mount . Arab locals have known it by this name since at least 1857 .

By the mid @-@ 19th century it had gone out of use as a reservoir ; being partly filled with rubbish and reused as a vegetable garden . In 1934 it was filled in and is now known as el @-@ Ghazali Square . It is currently in mixed use for shops , as a car park , and as a transshipment point for refuse .

= = Construction = =

According to Muslim tradition , the reservoir was constructed by Ezekiel or Hezekiah , King of Judah . Some archaeologists have determined that the cistern was possibly built during the Herodian period to improve Jerusalem 's water supply . Others estimate the date of construction later , in around 130 CE . This view is held by Charles Warren who recorded that although some kind of fosse must have existed at the spot at a very early period , since there is no description of the pool in the works of Josephus , " and it is very improbable that he would have omitted to mention so enormous a reservoir had it existed in his time " , it was most probably constructed by Roman emperor Hadrian during his restoration of Jerusalem . This is further attested to since the masonry of the birket is inferior in character and resembles the later Roman work in Syria . Additionally , this reservoir appears to be mentioned by the Bordeaux Pilgrim (section 4) as already existing , and " would therefore most naturally be referable to Hadrian . "

It was constructed in the bed of the western fork of the Kidron Valley that traverses the north @-@ west quarter of the city . It formed Jerusalem 's largest reservoir , measuring 109 @.@ 7 m (360 ft) by 38 @.@ 4 m (126 ft) with a maximum depth of 26 m (85 ft) . The cistern contained a total capacity of 120 @,@ 000 cubic meters and for centuries it formed part of Jerusalem 's rainwater storage system . The pool also served as a moat , protecting the northern wall of the Temple Mount .

The eastern and western ends of the pool were partially rock @-@ cut and partly masonry . The masonry at the eastern end formed a great dam 13 @.@ 7 m (45 ft) thick , the lower part of which was continuous with an ancient eastern wall of the Temple compound . The sides of the pool were lined entirely with masonry because it was built across the width of a valley . The original bottom of the reservoir was covered with a layer of about 19 inches of very hard Roman concrete and cement . There was a great conduit at the eastern end of the pool built of massive stones , and connected with the pool by a perforated stone with three round holes 5 ½ inches in diameter . The position of this outlet shows that all water over a depth of 6 @.@ 5 m (21 ft) must have flowed away .

= = Association with the Pool of Bethesda = =

The Birket Israel cistern was frequented by Christian pilgrims during the 19th century , it being previously identified as the " Sheep Pool " or Pool of Bethesda of John 5 : 2 ; a double @-@ pool with five porches , where the sick came to be cured . This link was based on the premise that the nearby St. Stephen 's Gate occupied the site of the Sheep Gate mentioned in the New Testament . It was reinforced by the co @-@ location of the names ' Birket Israel ' and the ' Pool of Bethesda ' on maps and plans of Jerusalem ; and in drawings and paintings , such as those made by David Roberts in 1893 .

According to Kopp , the Pool of Bethesda became associated with a Byzantine church by 450 CE ; then a 6th @-@ century church , which by the arrival of the Crusaders , in 1099 , was known as the " Church of St. Anne " . A new Church of St. Anne was built in the 12th century CE ; the church and the pool fell into disuse after the fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem . The church was converted into

madrasah and Christian pilgrims were redirected to nearby Birket Israel on the other side of what is now called the " Via Dolorosa " . Ownership of the whole site of the Church of St. Anne passed to France after the Crimean War , in 1856 ; and discoveries made in around 1870 led to the belief that the real Pool of Bethesda was actually located in the grounds of the Church of St. Anne .

= = Later uses = =

By the mid @-@ 19th century , Birket Israel was no longer being used as a reservoir ; and towards the end of the 19th century it was being rapidly filled with refuse and part of it was being used as a vegetable garden . In 1934 the pool was filled in because its condition posed a threat to public health .

Being located just inside the Lions ' Gate , one of the major entries to the Old City , the East Jerusalem Development Company initially intended to excavate the reservoir and build a multi @-@ storey car park at the site . This post @-@ 1967 plan was rejected by the waqf authorities who own the plot because they feared that clearance work at the base of the Temple Mount would endanger the Haram compound . Subsequently , in 1981 a small square equipped with benches was constructed on part of the covered pool .

Today the area is known as el @-@ Ghazali Square and is used as a car park and collection point for refuse before it is dumped outside the city . Some small shops also exist at the site .