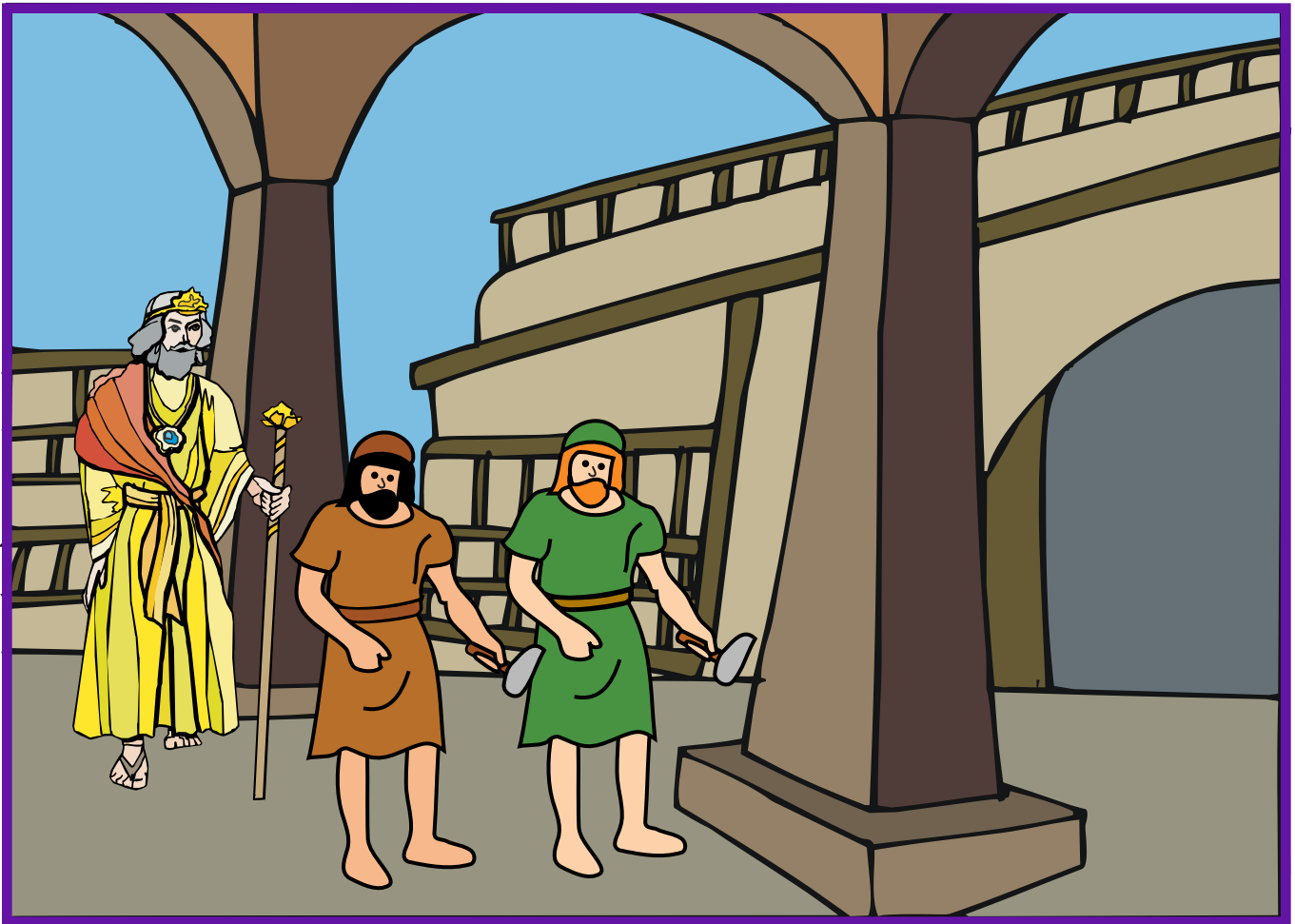


Tour of the Holy Lands - Below the City

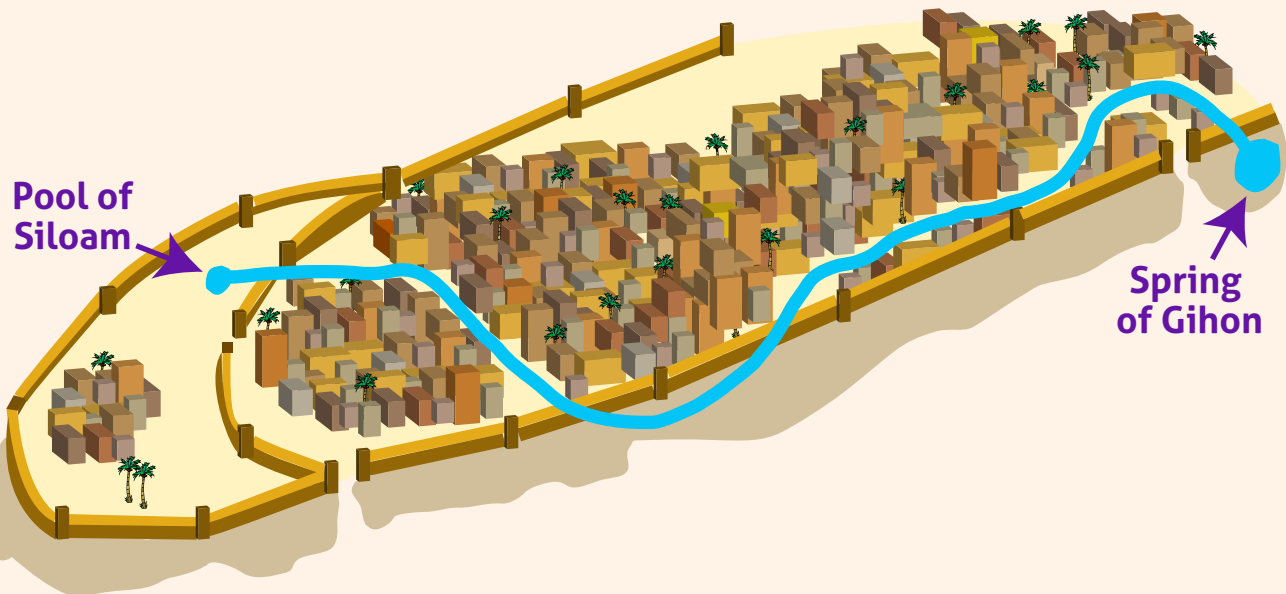


Good morning! Does everyone have waterproof shoes and headlamps? Today, we're going wading. A couple of summers ago at Megiddo, we talked about ancient cities and how to keep them safe from attack. Remember how important it is for every city to be built on a hill so the people can see their enemies coming from a long way off? Well, Jerusalem is located on a hill. But, what is the second most important thing for a city to be safe? Right, having a hidden water supply. Jerusalem does not have one, so she could be in big trouble. Her underground spring, called the Gihon, is located outside the city, where her enemies could easily find it and hurt her. They could cut off the water or poison it.



Here's a smart king with a clever idea. His name is King Hezekiah. He knows how to fix this water safety problem. First, he sends his workmen to a place in the south of the city to build a pool. But how does he plan to fill it and keep it full?

Hezekiah's Tunnel



King Hezekiah has a remarkable solution! He orders a team of workmen to begin digging with pick-axes from the northern end of the pool. And he sends a second team of workmen all the way across the city and beyond the city wall to the Gihon Spring. The second team is ordered to dig with pick-axes, heading south. The two work teams dig a tunnel from opposite ends, and meet in the middle. Water from the Spring can flow all the way to the pool and keep it full -- and keep the city safe! The tunnel is so narrow that only one man at a time can work at each end. But how do the teams know where to meet, when the tunnel is dark and crooked? In fact, it has 5 curves in it and is 1,700 feet long. Many years later, someone found a message scratched on the wall of the tunnel. It said that the teams found each other by the shouts of the workmen. The king's plan worked. During the next attack, the enemy couldn't find the hidden water supply and Jerusalem was saved. Some people say that cutting that tunnel was a miracle.



Let's put on our waterproof shoes, and climb down the stairs into the tunnel and walk from one end to the other. We'll wear our headlamps so we can see in the dark. Oh my, the water is as cold as it was in the days of King Hezekiah, 2740 years ago. Uh oh, the cold water is coming up as high as our knees. Yikes! Be careful, you taller kids – bend over so your heads don't hit the roof. Look, shine your lights on the walls. You can still see the marks from the pick-axes.



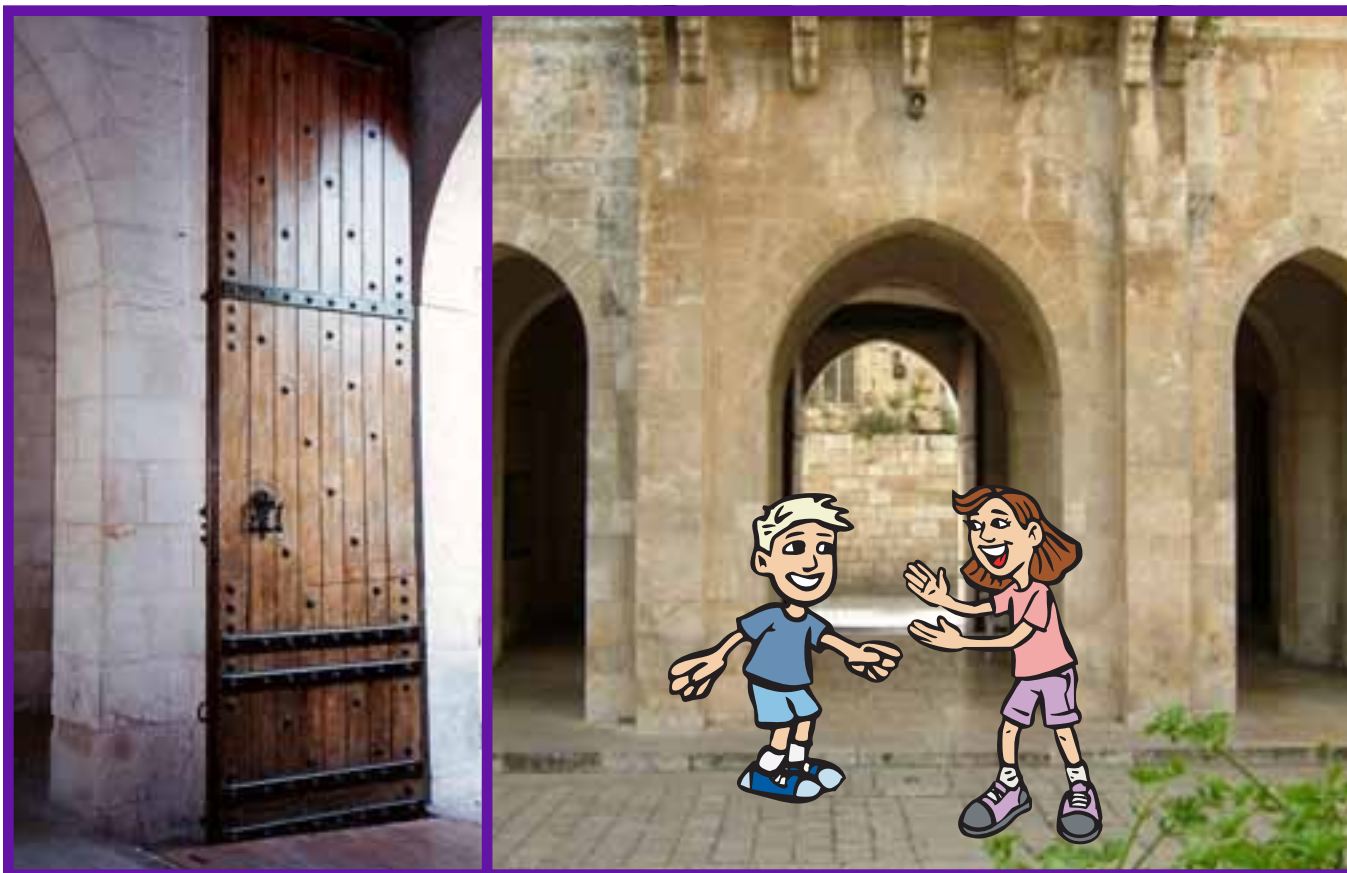
After 45 minutes of wading, we come out of the dark tunnel, one at a time, into the bright sunlight at the Pool of Siloam. We know that name from one of Jesus' famous healings. What does the word "Siloam" mean? "Sent!" Right! It probably means the water was "sent" from the spring outside the city. Let's look at the healing from John 9. The whole story is 41 verses, but that's too long for us today. We'll look at just 7 verses.



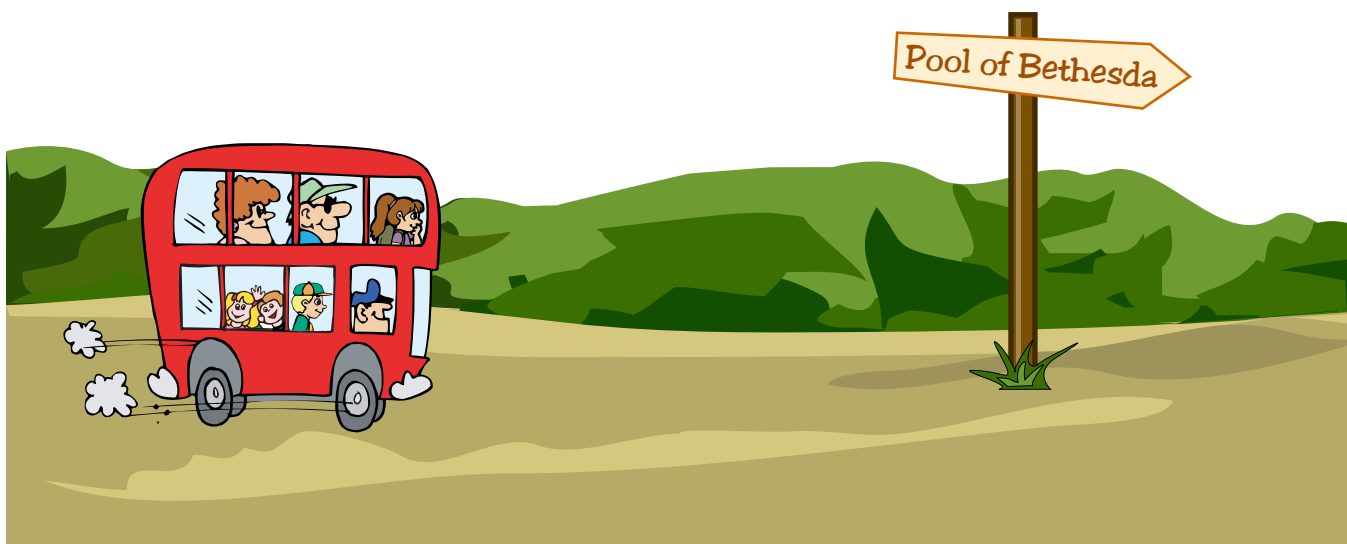
As Jesus is walking along with his disciples, he sees a blind man. In fact, this man has never been able to see. A case like this sounds impossible to heal. The disciples think that physical problems are caused by people doing something wrong. But Jesus says, "No." The man did nothing wrong, neither did his parents. As the "light of the world," Christ Jesus was sent by God to bring solutions to people's problems. The man's blindness provides an opportunity for Jesus to show God's omnipotence. That day, the disciples would learn what God can do. In fact, through this story, everyone learns about the power of God.



Jesus touches the man's eyes with clay that he has made with spit (an old-fashioned home remedy for cuts and scrapes). It has no real power to heal him, but it's a loving symbol of hope. Then Jesus, who was "sent" by God, "sent" the man to the pool called "sent" to wash. The man could now see for the very first time, as if God had made him brand new. His freedom to see comes as easily as washing his face. As we climb up those steep steps out of the pool, we see how hard it must have been for the man to enter the pool when he was blind.



Okay, let's put on dry shoes, climb on the bus, and drive to another pool in Jerusalem. It's called the Pool of Bethesda. "Bethesda" means "House of Mercy." Now that we're here, look at these beautiful doors and this courtyard, where we will meet and talk. We'll be reading from John 5:1-9.



MODEL OF THE POOL OF BETHESDA

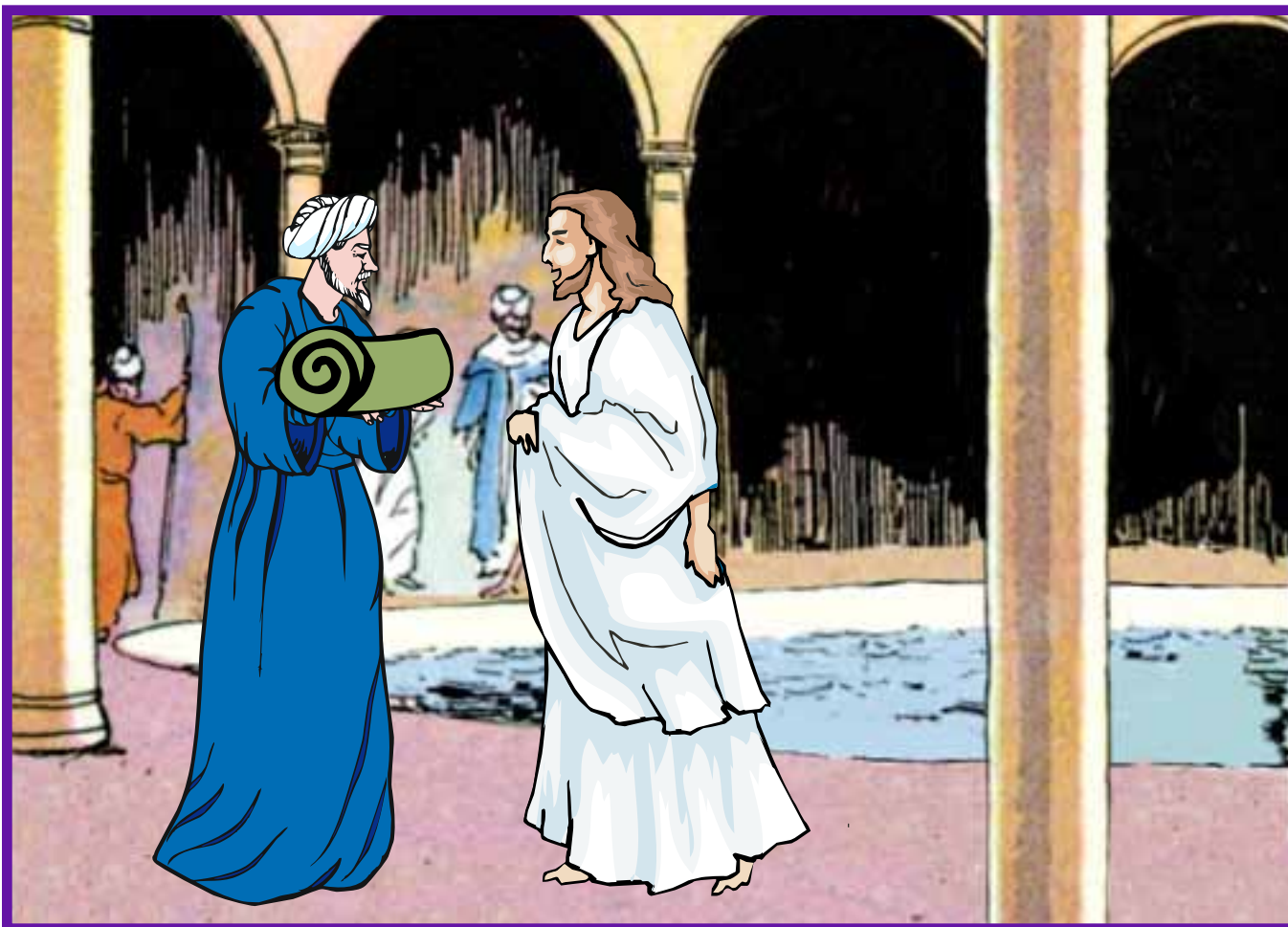
Before we go to the ruins of the pool, let's look at this model of what the pool looked like in Jesus' day. You can see that it was a double pool. The Bible says it had five porches. We can count them by pointing to the four sides all the way around and then to the one side that divides the pool in half.



One day, when Jesus comes to the city by himself, he visits this pool. Sitting or lying under the five porches are sick people. They are superstitious. The water that fills the pool comes from a deep underground spring, which bubbles up now and then. The superstitious people think that an angel stirs it up. And, they believe that the first person to enter the pool after it bubbles is healed of whatever disease he has.



From the crowd, Jesus chooses one man. Maybe he had been there the longest. The man needed to be awakened. Jesus says to him, "Do you want to get well?" Instead of saying "yes," the man lists the excuses for why healing was impossible. "I don't have any friends or a servant to put me in. And while I'm dragging myself along, someone less handicapped gets there first. They never make way for me." How does Jesus deal with this man's problem?



Jesus must have known that the man was already free, because he tells him, "Get up, pick up your bed roll, and walk." Jesus doesn't offer a hand. He knows the man is able to stand and walk – God made him free. And the man does...



Let's walk up close to see the pools as they look today. They've been rebuilt and changed so much over the years that it's hard to find where the porches once were. But you all are welcome to scramble down into the pools over the different stairways and walkways. Try to imagine Jesus here, bringing hope and healing to those who needed it. Hasn't it been a great day?