

MARCH 1, 2010

Parashat Ki Tissa

Hidden Treasures

Shemen mishchat kodesh...ledoroteichem – “holy anointing oil...throughout your generations” (Exodus 30:31)

By stating that the holy oil which Moses was instructed to make for anointing the Tabernacle should serve “throughout your generations,” the Torah alludes to the eternal nature of this oil. To the rabbis of the Talmud (Horyot 11b) this was not just a commandment, but also a prediction. “When the ark was hidden, so too was the anointing oil hidden...And who hid them? Josiah the King of Judah” (Kings II; Chapters 22-23). Rashi (on Exodus 30:32) noted that the rabbis derived an additional lesson: “From this [verse] our rabbis learned that the entire [Tabernacle] is still intact for the future [generations] to come.”

While Jewish tradition teaches that the holy treasures described in the Torah await future rediscovery, these artifacts have eluded archeologists for centuries. However, a recent find in Jerusalem could bring us closer to uncovering these relics while providing archeological credibility to the stories of the Tanach.

A section of a wall from the 10th century B.C.E.—possibly built by King Solomon—has recently been found in Jerusalem. Discovered during archaeological excavations directed by Dr. Eilat Mazar, and conducted under the auspices of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the seventy meter long, six meter high section of the city wall is located between the City of David and the southern wall of the Temple Mount. According to Dr. Mazar, this wall “Testifies to a ruling presence. Its strength and form of construction indicate a high level of engineering...A comparison of this latest finding with city walls and gates from the period of the First Temple...enable us to postulate with a great degree of assurance that the wall that has been revealed is that which was built by King Solomon in Jerusalem in the latter part of the 10th century B.C.E...This is the first time that a structure from that time has been found that may correlate with written descriptions of Solomon’s building in Jerusalem.” Dr. Mazar specifically cited the third chapter of Kings I, where it is written: “Until he [Solomon] had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.”

This newly discovered wall gives hope that archeologists will find additional artifacts from the First Temple period, maybe even one day actualizing Rashi’s prediction of finding the entire Tabernacle preserved. In the meantime, this excavation provides new clues for those hoping to learn more about the ancient connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. ■

Thinking Creatively

Lachshov machshavot – “To make designs” (Exodus 31:4)

According to the Torah, Bezalel was chosen as the chief architect and designer of the Tabernacle and was filled “with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” (31:3) so that he could *lachshov machshavot*. Many commentators disagree as to the meaning of the phrase *lachshov machshavot*. While Sa’adia Gaon interpreted it to mean that Bezalel was an expert goldsmith, Rashi explained it to indicate Bezalel’s unique weaving ability. However, Ibn Ezra offers a third explanation, stating that the phrase *lachshov machshavot* implies a broader quality: “[the ability] to independently produce new things using his

intellect.” According to Ibn Ezra, Bezalel need this special creative ability to take the basic blueprints that Moses provided him and implement them in new and different ways.

Nowadays, Israel is following in Bezalel’s legacy. By using existing drone technology to create a new, improved military drone, the Jewish state is using its ability *lachshov machshavot* to project the air superiority necessary for its national defense.

Israeli military officials recently unveiled a new fleet of pilotless planes capable of flying over 2,000 miles and remaining airborne for up to 24 hours at a time. The new drone, called the Eitan—Hebrew for “strong”—boasts the wingspan of a Boeing 737 passenger jet and carries “an impressive array of hi-tech equipment including cameras, devices to map the terrain, electronic jamming equipment and even missiles,” ABC News reports. The drone could help Israel defend itself against the growing Iranian threat by providing surveillance or by jamming hostile communications. This new breakthrough will also help the United States and its allies in their ongoing battle against terrorism. *The New York Times* notes that Israeli companies, as the “world leaders in drone technology now export unmanned aircraft to a number of armies, including U.S.-led forces that have used them in Iraq and Afghanistan.” For more on U.S.-Israel military cooperation, click [here](#).

Bezalel’s creativity and inventiveness were critical components of the construction of the Tabernacle. Today, Israel’s military industries have adapted Bezalel’s ability *lachshov machshavot* to invent and create new means to defend and protect Israel and her allies. ■

Dashed Hopes

Vayashleich miyadav et haluchot – “and he cast from his hands the tablets” (Exodus 32:19)

We learn that Moses, in a fit of rage over the sin of the Golden Calf, destroyed the Tablets of the Covenant. However, Moses learned about the Sin of the Golden Calf while he was still on Mount Sinai. Why did he not destroy the Tablets there? Why did Moses wait until he had seen the Israelites sinning with his own eyes to become enraged? Rabbi Moshe Alshich explained that Moses realized the severity of the sin, but that he still hoped that the Jewish nation would repent and redeem itself. Yet, when Moses descended the mountain and “saw the calf and the dancing” (32:20), he realized that not only had the people not repented, but they actually rejoiced in their sinful behavior. It was at this point that Moses recognized the painful reality of the situation, acknowledged that the Israelites would not change course on their own and “cast [the Tablets] from his hands.”

Like Moses, who hoped that external pressure would not be necessary to convince the Israelites to voluntarily change their ways, the international community has hoped that engagement alone, without the external pressure of sanctions, would convince the Islamic Republic to abandon its nuclear program.

Recently, Iran defiantly announced its intentions to begin work on two new uranium enrichment sites. These sites are expected to use advanced centrifuges to amass stockpiles of enriched uranium which could be turned into the fissile core of nuclear weapons. Iran’s announcement comes shortly after the International Atomic Energy Agency released a report declaring, for the first time, that they have extensive evidence of “past or current undisclosed activities” by Iran’s military to develop a nuclear warhead. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic has told international inspectors that it was preparing to make its uranium into a metallic form—a step that is widely viewed as necessary for making the core of an atom bomb. Although the Obama Administration had hoped to convince Iran to abandon its nuclear ambitions through negotiation, these recent developments clearly demonstrate that America’s diplomatic efforts must immediately be supplemented by crippling economic sanctions. For more on Iran, visit www.aipac.org/Iran.

While Moses’ hope for a change in the Israelites’ behavior was admirable, he himself destroyed the Tablets when the evidence of the nation’s transgressions stared him in the face. Like Moses, the United States must accept the reality of the situation. Now, America must lead the way in immediately imposing economic sanctions in order to convince Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons program. ■