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**Shiloaĥ Tunnel**

The Shiloaĥ tunnel is accredited to King Ĥizkiyahu. It is a water tunnel that brings the water from the Giĥon spring from outside of Jerusalem inside the city. This tunnel was first discovered at the end of the 19th century, together with the “Shiloaĥ Inscription” that describes how it was dug. This inscription – written in Ancient Hebrew script – is one of the few inscriptions that have survived from the First Temple period. Ĥizkiyahu’s Tunnel can be visited in the City of David National Park. The inscription, however, is on display in the Istanbul Archaeology Museums.

**Sources: II Chronicles 32:2-4**

**II Chronicles 32:30**

**Isaiah 22:11**

**II Kings 20:20**

**Background**: After King Ĥizkiyahu declared a tax rebellion against Sanĥeriv, king of Assyria, the latter embarked on a campaign of conquest and destruction against the cities of Judah. Ĥizkiyahu prepared for a lengthy siege on his capital, Jerusalem. He fortified the city, forcing him to leave its primary water source – the Giĥon spring – outside of the walls, due to its low topographical height, near the bottom of the slope leading to the Kidron spring. So that he would not lose this important water source, and so that it would not be available to the enemy soldiers, Ĥizkiyahu came up with a brilliant engineering solution: he stopped up the source of the Giĥon to the east of the city, and diverted the water through an excavated tunnel 600 meters long, beneath the houses of the city, to a pool inside the fortified city walls. This gave the city a powerful water source within its walls. Ultimately, the army of Sanĥeriv withdrew and the city was spared.

**Letter of the Reaper from Ĥashavyahu Stronghold**

The letter is a 2700 year-old ostracon (inscription on a pottery sherd), dated to the time of King Yoshiyahu. It was discovered in a fortress known as the Ĥashavyahu Stronghold, adjacent to Kibbutz Palmachim. It is written in Ancient Hebrew script, with no final letters and no punctuation. The ostracon records the complaint of a sharecropper against a tax-collector who was sent to collect a debt, and confiscated the sharecropper’s only garment. The ostracon is on display in the Israel Museum, and a copy is on display at the Sea Museum (Bet Miriam), on Kibbutz Palmachim.

**Sources: Exodus 22:23-25**

**Background:** Six ostraca were discovered in the guardhouse of the Ĥashavyahu Stronghold, all written in Ancient Hebrew script in pale ink. The most interesting is the “reaper’s letter”, apparently intended for the commander of the stronghold. In the letter, a sharecropper complains against the tax collector, Hoshiyahu ben Shevi, who had accused him of the crime of tax evasion, and therefore confiscated his only garment. The ostracon begins with the words, “May my master the minister hear the words of his servant”, and continues to describe the work of the reaper. According to his claim, he had submitted the assessed amount of produce that he had been commanded to reap, but the tax collector did not believe him, and took his garment. To support his claim, the reaper is prepared to bring as witnesses his fellow reapers, claiming, “My brothers will attest to my credibility; I am free of guilt”. The ostracon ends with the plea, “and return your servant’s garment”. The description of events in the letter is consistent with the biblical prohibition to confiscate a debtor’s only garment, lest he have nothing with which to cover himself at night. It demonstrates that this action was an accepted pressure tactic in ancient times, which the Torah came out against.