

Were Assyrian rulers the forefathers of today's CEOs?

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Tel Aviv University archaeologists find ancient Jerusalem may be a model for today's corporations.

Dr. Oded Lipschits, from Tel Aviv University's Department of Archaeology, directs Ramat Rachel, an archaeological dig two miles from the Old City of Jerusalem. Until now archaeologists believed the site was a palace of an ancient Judean king, probably King Hezekiah, who built it around 700 BCE.

But evidence points to foreign rule, says Dr. Lipschits, who believes the site was likely an ancient local administrative center — a branch office — of Assyrian rulers. "They were wise rulers," he says, "using a good strategy for keeping control, stability and order in the region."

As today's corporations know well, the strategy was all about location. Explains Lipschits, "Between 700 BCE to about 70 CE, Jerusalem was home to various Judean cults and at times a center for religious fanaticism. The Assyrians understood that they could gain better control of their vassal kingdom — and continue collecting taxes — by maintaining a safe distance."

Where did they set up their branch offices? In the "suburbs." The Assyrians built their economic hub for the region two miles south of Jerusalem at Ramat Rachel. They created elaborate gardens, stocked their cellars with the wine and olive oil they collected in taxes, and quietly but carefully monitored Jerusalem.

“You can see Jerusalem from Ramat Rachel, but when you’re inside Jerusalem’s City of David, you can’t see Ramat Rachel at all,” says Lipschits. “The Assyrians kept a watchful eye, but didn’t let the locals feel a dominant foreign presence.

“It was smart for the Assyrian managers to take a few steps back, and not appear to be interfering with the city’s religious center and local culture. Businesses today could be advised to adopt similar strategies with their branch offices in foreign locations,” he surmises.

Lipschits is currently writing a book about this precursor to today's corporate strategies with Boston College’s Prof. David S. Vanderhooft. He is also the author of the popular book *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Eisenbrauns 2005).

Source: American Friends of Tel Aviv University

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