

Sodom Curse Revoked 3900 Years Later



SODOM...Ever since Lot's wife looked back to see what was happening to Sodom and Gemorrah, and was turned into a pillar of salt -- a somewhat excessive punishment for her understandable curiosity -- the area around the southern end of the Dead Sea has symbolized the utmost conceivable desolation.

Now, after 3,900 years the Jewish National Fund has accepted the challenge of converting this zone into a fertile region. This miracle is happening by the application of willpower, courage, and ingenuity, together with the use of new concepts of science and technology, hydrology and irrigation, not to mention money.

Recently, a hundred members of a Hadassah Founders Mission were amazed to find that the desert is already being transformed. The redemption of Sodom is Hadassah's latest JNF project.

The group learned many extraordinary things from Menachem Perlmuter, the Director of Engineering for the Negev and Sinai of the Settlement Department: Contrary to the general stereotype of an arid desert, there is an abundance of water available. Archeologists believe that the five "wicked cities" of the plain could rely on fresh water streams flowing down to the Dead Sea from the mountains.

Genesis (13,10) tells us that "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the Plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gemorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt..."

There is still a lot of water around: the zone being redeemed includes marshes, but they are salt-laden, which is the major problem since Lot's era.

Yet, a modern miracle is taking place: Plants in the area are being irrigated with water having a saline content of more than 1,200 milligrams per liter -- as compared to the Colorado River whose 500 milligrams per liter is of grave concern to Americans.

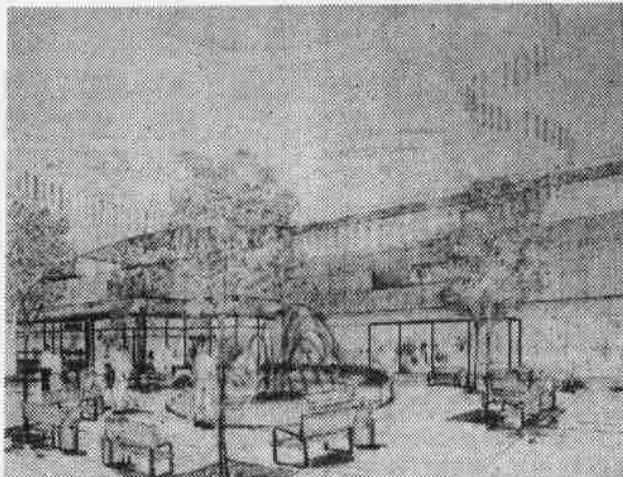
Menachem Perlmuter explains how the Israelis are succeeding: Leaves cannot stand salty water, but roots can. Therefore, instead of using sprinklers they use a system of drip irrigation direct to the roots without ever wilting the leaves.

Every solution creates a new problem. In this case, the saline water introduced to the roots naturally threatens to raise the shallow water table. To prevent this, a system of underwater canals was installed to drain the water off sideways after it had fed the roots. Because water prefers to flow sideways rather than upwards, the canals have worked.

With the control of a computer, fertilizer is fed to the roots in the water. While there can be no life without water, too much is dangerous. Every winter flash floods change the dry gullies and ravines of the Negev into wide torrents that devastate any crops that stand in the way. In the reclaimed Sodom area, the floods come from a catchment area of 4,000 square kilometers. The answer has been to build two dams.

Sodom, 397 miles below sea level, is the lowest point on earth. The heat can be so intense as to be indescribable. Yet, for agriculture, this can be a great boon: with over 300 cloudless days and all kinds of rays from the sun beating

The Boulevard Mall Undergoes Extensive Renovation



LAS VEGAS -- Las Vegas' first shopping center, The Boulevard Mall, located on Maryland Parkway at Desert Inn, undergoes an extensive renovation which began on January 3, 1984. The date of the completion for the work on the 905,000 square foot, 76-shopping center is scheduled for August 8, 1984.

Reconstruction features will include new facias, new and additional lighting, additional seating areas, and new flooring materials involving a combination of carpeting and tile. The center fountain will be pleasantly redesigned to become a multi-purpose focal point, including the fountain spray and a planter containing live shrubbery surrounding the fountain. With the use of temporary platforms, it will have the capacity to be transformed into a stage to be used for entertainment and promotional events.

Complimenting the remodeling, there will be the simultaneous renovation of many existing tenants. A total remodel of J.C. Penney's storefront is included in the plan, and will be complimented with the addition of four new wall stores. The parking lot will be extensively landscaped with additional large trees, giving the Mall's exterior a true "boulevard effect."

According to Joel Blaisdell, Boulevard Mall Manager, construction of the project will proceed with minimum disruption to the store operators and the customers. "We will complete one phase at a time, before going on to the next," he explained. "The timing of the major construc-

down on them, plants thrive in winter, as well as summer.

Mr. Perlmuter predicts that this area will be the vegetable basket of Europe throughout the winter. Europe can absorb 4,000 to 5,000 tons of tomatoes, and the same quantity of cucumbers. "They will taste like the real thing, not like plastic," he says.

Avraham Kalman, Assistant Director of the American Desk and Director for Overseas Tourism at the JNF, described the human problem: "One settlement, Neo Hakikar, was established a dozen years ago, another, Ein Tamar, is taking shape with 22 families living in temporary structures.

"The settlers are all young idealists from cities or old cooperative villages, who are prepared to make great sacrifices because they are inspired by the vision of transforming the Negev. Conditions are very hard: the average temperature is around 120 degrees. Under doctors' orders, they are not allowed to work in summer during the normal hours of the day: Instead, they work from 3:00 A.M. to 9:30 A.M., and from 5:00 P.M. onwards. Their children are bussed to school a considerable distance away in the Arava Valley. Their urban center is Beersheba, a 90-minute drive. Yet they stick it out. What is more, we hope to establish four new settlements and a regional center in the next few years."

tion work will be scheduled to avoid the busy selling periods," Mr. Blaisdell continued.

Arlene Eisenstadt, Marketing Director for The Boulevard Mall reports that the theme selected for the renovation phase is "Creating the Looks You'll Love." And, she commented, "once we're completed, we certainly will have created the looks you'll love."

Shimon Peres Places David Ben Gurion Among The Great Global Leaders Of The Twentieth Century

NEW YORK -- "David Ben Gurion takes his well-earned place in recorded history alongside Churchill, Roosevelt, De Gaulle, Lenin and Mao Tse Tung as a foremost global leader of the Twentieth Century." This was the assessment of Shimon Peres who was Mr. Ben Gurion's colleague, intimate friend and disciple, in paying homage to his mentor on the occasion of the Tenth Yahrzeit in honored tribute to the former Prime Minister of Israel. Mr. Peres spoke to more than three hundred Zionists at the memorial which took place at 515 Park Avenue, New York City. Mrs. Bernice Tannenbaum, Chairman of the World Zionist Organization-American Section, presided.

Mr. Peres, who is the leader of the Labor Party of Israel, said: "David Ben Gurion was a political genius because he was a man of great character and unique insight and acumen who had the courage and ingenuity to find new answers to difficult old questions, and the determination, perseverance and remarkable leadership qualities to successfully implement his novel solutions." Like him, Mr. Peres said, Einstein and Freud were also considered to be bizarre because of their unusual, pioneering ideas. "Like him they were geniuses who also had the capacity to stand up against all convention." Emphasizing the uniqueness of the man, Mr. Peres said: "David Ben Gurion represented a vision before he was elected to make that vision a reality. He spoke in the name of history before he made history. He was a war leader before we had an army. He was a statesman before we had a state. He proved his statesmanship by the fact that no state which started so poorly, achieved such success as Israel did under his leadership."

Drawing a portrait of the man, and the unique factors that illuminated his life and his impressive contributions to Israel and the Jewish people, Mr. Peres commented that it was said of Ben Gurion that 'he is the only Jew who isn't afraid of the Jewish people.' The fact is he was dedicated to their cause at the personal cost of permanent loneliness in his life." Mr. Peres spoke of Ben Gurion's "fantastic" mind, intellectual capacity, total recall ability, urge to learn and his insatiable curiosity in Jewish history and the Jewish people and their fate. "Ben Gurion's greatest friends were his books. He never read anything that he did not disagree with. He couldn't learn without having an opinion." Mr. Peres pointed out that Ben Gurion was steeped in the philosophy and politics of socialism, but, uniquely characteristic of the man, his inspiration came from the Bible, not the Communist Manifesto -- "from Amos, not Marx; from Isaiah, not Lenin." For to him "Judaism was not a religion. It was a faith."

In retrospect, history has put its affirmative verdict on the astute correctness of his decision to accept partition as a condition for the creation of the Jewish state, Mr. Peres said. Despite powerful opposition at home and abroad, particularly by the U.S. State Department, he persisted in proclaiming independence. Mr. Peres quoted his decisive argument "The land is divided anyway. The question is can we establish a Jewish state in a land which is divided. I say yes!"

Mr. Peres discussed Ben Gurion's dissatisfaction and impatience with Jewish life in the

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