

אדרכונים ודרכמנים

אבנר רמו

Unlike the writer of the Book of Samuel, the Chronicler tells us about King David's words to his people about the preparations for building the house of God:

וככל-כחי הכינותי לבית-אלהי, הזהב לזהב והכסף לכסף והנחשת לנחשת הברזל לברזל, והעצים, לעצים; אבני-שהם ומלואים אבני-פוך ורקמה, וכל אבן יקרה ואבני-שיש-לרב. ועוד, ברצותי בבית אלהי, יש-לי סגלה, זהב וכסף: נתתי לבית-אלהי למעלה מכל-הכינותי לבית הקדש.

שלוש אלפים ככרי זהב, מזהב אופיר; ושבעת אלפים ככר-כסף מזקק, לטוח קירות הבתים.

לזהב לזהב ולכסף לכסף, ולכל-מלאכה ביד חרשים; ומי מתנדב, למלאות ידו היום ליהוה. ויתנדבו שרי האבות ושרי שבטי ישראל, ושרי האלפים והמאות, ולשרי מלאכת המלך. ויתנו לעבודת בית-האלהים, זהב ככרים חמשת-אלפים ואדרכונים רבו, וכסף ככרים עשרת אלפים, ונחשת רבו ושמונת אלפים ככרים; וברזל מאה-אלף ככרים. .

“Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for the things of gold, and the silver for the things of silver, and the brass for the things of brass, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colors, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.

Moreover also, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, seeing that I have a treasure of mine own of gold and silver, I give it unto the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house.

Even three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, wherewith to overlay the walls of the houses;

Of gold for the things of gold, and of silver for the things of silver, and for all manner of work to be made by the hands of artificers. Who then offers willingly to consecrate himself this day to *YHWH*?

Then the princes of the fathers' houses, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers over the king's work, offered willingly;

And they gave for the service of the house of God of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand darics, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and of iron a hundred thousand talents” (1 Ch 29:2-7).

The Chronicler, who apparently lived in the Persian period, did not realize that several hundred years earlier, when David reigned, there were no **אדרכונים** (*adarchonim*), a word correctly translated to English as “**Darics**.” The Greek translator of Chronicles, who may have been aware of the Chronicler's anachronism, wrote here “Gold coins” and in fact the Persian “Daric” is the result of d - z and c - g letter-exchanges of “zarig” meaning gold in Middle Persian.



Achaemenid Daric, c. 490 BC.

The Persian Daric coin weighed 8.4 gram and was made of 95.8% pure gold. One Daric was equal to 20 “siglos” and this other Persian coin may be the **סגלה** (*segulah*) - “treasure” mentioned in verse 1 Ch 29:3).

In the Book of Nehemiah we read about **זהב דרכמונים** (*zahav darkemonim*) - “darics of gold” (Neh 7:69, 70, 71). It appears that here both the Greek and English translators assumed that the **אדרכונים** (*adarchonim*) of the Chronicler is the same as **דרכמונים** (*darkemonim*) - “darics” of the Book of Nehemiah.

In the Book of Ezra we find **זהב דרכמונים** (*zahav darkemonim*) - “darics of gold” (Ezr 2:69), and **אדרכונים** (*adarchonim*) - “darics” (Ezr 8:27). The Greek translator of the Book of Ezra wrote “drachmas of gold” and “drachmas” respectively. It appears that this translator was not familiar with the coinage of the Persian Empire, and because of the similarity in sound assumed that these names must represent the Greek drachmas.

The writer of the Book of Daniel apparently lived in the 2nd century BC. In this book we read about the “King of the North” (a Seleucid king) who will attack the “King of the South” (a Ptolemaic ruler) and:

ומשל במכמני הזהב והכסף, ובכל חמדות מצרים

“But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt” (Dan 11:43).

It is not clear how the English translator determined that the Hapax legomenon **מכמני** (*michmanai*) means “treasures.” In the Greek translation of Theodotion this word appears as: “secrets” and it possible that both translators believed that **מכמני** (*michmanai*) is a misspelled form of **מטמוני** (*matmonei*) - “hidden treasures” (e.g. Gen 43:23; Jer 41:8). Although in the Bible words from the root **טמן** (*tmn*) generally mean “hide” they do not relate to gold. Furthermore, a king does not “hide” his gold.



Gold octadrachm coin depicting Ptolemy III Euergetes. Issued by Ptolomey IV Philopator (reigned in Egypt between 221–205 BC) to honor his deified father.

By the 2nd century BC the Greek culture was well established in the Near-East and we therefore suggest that **מִכְמַנַי הַזָּהָב** (*michmanai hazahav*) is a misspelled **דְּרַכְמַנַי הַזָּהָב** (*drachmanai hazahav*) - “gold drachmas.”