YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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***MIKDASH***

**Rav Yitzchak Levi**

**Lecture #257: The History of the Divine Service at Altars (LXVII) – The Prohibition of Bamot (XLIV)**

Let us briefly survey the events that take place in the book of *Shemuel* from the beginning of David's reign in Jerusalem.

After inquiring of God and going up to Hebron, David rules over the tribe of Yehuda for seven years. Then, with the death of Ish-Boshet, David goes to Jerusalem, without first inquiring of God, in order to unify the tribes of Israel under his rule.[[1]](#footnote-1) As was mentioned in the previous *shiur*, following the establishment of David's kingdom in Jerusalem, the Pelishtim go up to attack the city. After inquiring of God, David wages two battles, defeats the Pelishtim, and even pursues them from Geva to Gezer (II *Shemuel* 5:25). Following his victory, David brings the ark up to Jerusalem.

### The ark in the city of David

Scripture describes how the ark was brought to the city of David:

And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. (II *Shemuel* 6:17)

Let us try to imagine a tent pitched in the heart of the City of David. It is reasonable to assume that it was pitched in the northern part of the city, south of the royal region that has been uncovered,[[2]](#footnote-2) and that the ark was brought inside it. It is clear that a building was not to be constructed to house the ark, because the construction of such a building could be interpreted as bringing the ark to its permanent location, whereas bringing it into a tent symbolized its temporary nature.

The Radak relates to this matter:

"That David had pitched for it." He pitched a curtain above it, even though in the house of Avinadav and in the house of Oved-Edom it was in a roofed building, as it is stated in their regard "house," and it is does not say there "tent." [This is] because it was left there only temporarily. But now that David brought it up to Jerusalem, and they knew that God would rest there forever, as they had a tradition… But until that time David did not want to bring it into a roofed building, but rather keep it under a curtain, as it had been before. And also now that the *Ohel Mo'ed* was in Giv'on, and the *Mishkan* and the ark and the two tablets and all the holy vessels were under a curtain, he brought the ark containing the broken tablets under a curtain as well. Or perhaps this is the ark containing the whole tablets. This is the correct understanding as we explained above, with respect to the war against the Pelishtim in which the ark was taken captive. And this is the ark that was brought into the permanent Temple, into the Holy of Holies.

Why didn't David bring the ark to Giv'on where the *Ohel Mo'ed* was? Because David knew that the *Ohel Mo'ed* would eventually come to Jerusalem, and he thought that this would take place in his days, and that he would build the Temple. Therefore after he brought the ark to Jerusalem, He inquired of Natan the prophet whether he would build a house for God, and Natan said to him: "Go, do all that is in your heart" (II *Shemuel* 7:3). He said this to him on his own, not by way of prophecy, because he thought like David that David would build a house for God. (II *Shemuel* 6:17)

### The Meaning of the Tent

The Radak notes that David placed the ark into a tent in the City of David despite the fact that when the ark was in the house of Avinadav and in the house of Oved-Edom it stood in a roofed building. In those places it was kept under a roof, because its stay there was only temporary. He is working with the assumption that there was a tradition that Jerusalem is the holy city, and that the Temple would be built there, even though they did not know exactly where in the city it would be built.[[3]](#footnote-3) He emphasizes that there is a certain similarity between the ark and the *bama* in Giv'on, at which all the holy vessels were found under a curtain.

What emerges from his words is that at that time there were two focal points to the worship of God: In Giv'on – the holy vessels; in the City of David – the ark. He asks why David did not bring the ark to Giv'on where the *Ohel Mo'ed* stood. He answers that David knew that the *Ohel Mo'ed* would eventually reach Jerusalem, and he hoped that this would happen during his life, and that it would be he who built the Temple. In addition, he addresses the relationship between the whole tablets and the broken tablets. He understands that the ark contained the whole tablets, and he raises the possibility that it contained both the whole and the broken tablets.

The verse in I *Divrei Ha-yamim* states:

And David made houses for himself in the City of David, and prepared a **place** (*makom*) for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 15:1)

The word "place" might itself allude to a holy place, as it does in the story of the *Akeida*:

And he saw the **place** (*ha-makom*)afar off… And they came to the **place** (*ha-makom*) which God had told him of… And Avraham called the name of that **place** (*ha-makom*) Adonai-yir'e: as it is said to this day. (*Bereishit* 22:4-14)

And similarly in II *Shemuel -*

And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in **its place,** in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it. (I *Shemuel* 6:17) -

in the place designated for it in the tent.

Yehuda Kil[[4]](#footnote-4) explains that the place designated for the ark in the tent was sort of a Holy of Holies. It is interesting to note that the Vilna Gaon explains the words, "And he prepared a place," as referring to a stone structure, whereas the words, "And he pitched for it a tent," refer to a curtain spread out above. It turns out then that the word "place" refers to a building; this understanding is certainly novel. What this means is, even if it is difficult to fit this in with the plain sense of the verses, that parallel to the *Ohel Mo'ed* at the great *bama* in Giv'on, there is a sort of *Mishkan* in the City of David built in the image of the *Mishkan* in Shilo.

Scripture notes that David offered burnt-offerings before the Lord, and peace-offerings apparently near the tent containing the ark. Of course, during the period when *bamot* were permitted, when the great *bama* was in Giv'on, David was permitted to offer sacrifices in the City of David.

### How Long was the ark in the city of David?

It should be noted that according to the calculation of *Seder Olam Rabba* and based on the verses, the ark was brought up to the City of David in the eighth year of David's reign, and it remained there until the end of the his rule which extended for 33 years. We assume that the dedication of the house of God took place in the 24th year of Shelomo's reign.[[5]](#footnote-5)

At the time of the dedication of the Temple, Shelomo brings the ark of the covenant from the City of David to the house of God together with the *Ohel Mo'ed* and its vessels from the great *bama* in Giv'on.

According to this calculation, the ark was in the City of David for fifty-seven years from the time that it was brought there by David and until it was brought into the house of God by Shelomo. Let us consider the significance of the ark's being located in the City of David during this period.

### The Division of Labor between the Tent containing the ark in the city of David and the great *Bama* in Giv'on

Let us go back to the verses in I *Divrei Ha-yamim* which describe the matter in detail:

So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had set up for it: and they offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before God. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings and the peace–offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 16:1-2)

As opposed to the verses in *Shemuel* here it is noted that the sacrifice of both the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings was before the Lord, and that these sacrifices were offered by the people and not by David alone.

And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to invoke, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel. Asaf the chief, and next to him Zekharya, Ye'i'el, and Shemiramot, and Yechi'el, and Mattiya, and Eliav, and Benayahu, and Oved-Edom: and Ye'i'el with lutes and with lyres; but Asaf was to sound the cymbals; and Benayahu and Yachazi'el the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God. Then on that day David first delivered this psalm (to thank the Lord) into the hand of Asaf and his brethren. (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 16:4-7)

The musicians were headed by Asaf son of Berachyahu.[[6]](#footnote-6) The Levites played lutes, lyres and cymbals. Asaf who headed the musicians played the cymbals.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Afterwards in verses 8-36 Scripture records the psalm that accompanied the daily-offering, and then it states:

So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the Lord Asaf and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required. (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 16:37)

This implies that David instituted that at the tent in which the ark was found in the City of David the Levites would sing the psalm accompanying the daily-offering.

The offering itself was brought at the *bama* in Giv'on as it is stated:

To offer burnt-offerings to the Lord upon the altar of the burnt-offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the Torah of the Lord, which He commanded Israel. (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 16:40)

It turns out then that David introduced a very interesting split between the daily-offering itself which was brought by the priests at the great *bama* in Giv'on, and the song that accompanied that offering sung by the Levites at the tent in the City of David.

We see from here that David attached great importance to the ark's being located in the City of David. David did not merely bring the ark of the Lord up from Kiryat-Ye'arim.[[8]](#footnote-8) By establishing that the Levites sing a psalm accompanying the daily-offering, he created a center of special holiness in Jerusalem that was meant to complement to a certain degree the service at the great *bama* in Giv'on.

This gives clear expression to David's goal of building in the City of David itself a center of holiness in his royal city irrespective of where the house of God was to be built.

Only after the revelation at the threshing floor of Arvana the Yevusi, the building of the altar, and the fire coming down from heaven and consuming the sacrifice, does David become terrified of the angel of God. Scripture attests to the fact that he is now unable to go to Giv'on. It says in *Divrei Ha-yamim* as follows:

But the *Mishkan* of the Lord, which Moshe made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt-offering, were at that time in the high place at Giv'on. And David could not go before it to inquire of God; for he was terrified because of the sword of the angel of the Lord. (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 21:29-30)

This situation indicates that at the fiber of his being David was connected primarily to the ark and much less so to the great *bama* in Giv'on and to the offering of sacrifices.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Scripture continues:

And Tzadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the *Mishkan* of the Lord in the high place that was at Giv'on, to offer burnt-offerings to the Lord upon the altar of the burnt-offering continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the Torah of the Lord, which He commanded Israel; and with them Heman and Yedutun, and the rest who were chosen, who were expressly named, to give thanks to the Lord, because His steadfast love endures forever; and with them Heman and Yedutun with trumpets and cymbals for making a loud sound and with musical instruments of God. And the sons of Yedutun were posted at the gate. (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 16:39-42)

Before the *Mishkan* at the *bama* in Giv'on stands Tzadok the priest from the house of Elazar. Tzadok is the primary figure together with his brothers the priests who are responsible for the daily sacrificial service. Alongside him we find Heman and Yedutun who serve as musicians and gatekeepers at the *bama* in Giv'on.

Let us summarize the matter of the tent in the City of David into which David brings the ark. David wishes to join his royal city to holiness, and therefore he brings the ark of the covenant to the City of David. It seems that at this stage David does not yet know the location of the Temple. He turns the place into a site of special holiness in the city in which Asaf and his Levite brothers are the musicians and gatekeepers.

This center has a special relationship with the great *bama* in Giv'on, where the daily-offerings are brought, for in the tent in the City of David the Levites sing the psalm that accompanies the daily-offering brought at the great *bama* in Giv'on. In Giv'on Tzadok the priest is responsible together with Heman and Yedutun for the operation of the *Mishkan* there, Tzadok for the offering of the sacrifices and the priestly service, and Heman and Yedutun for the singing and for keeping the gate.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. In our series of *shiurim* on Jerusalem in the Bible we dedicated many *shiurim* to David's selection of they city and to the major events connected to David in Jerusalem. Therefore we will limit our discussion here to topics that we did not expand upon there. For a fuller picture, see those earlier *shiurim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In the area of the Visitors' Center found today at the entrance to the City of David. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Until David built the altar at the threshing floor of Arvana the Yevusi on the instructions of Gad the prophet. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In his *Da'at Mikra* commentary to I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 15:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In the fourth year he starts to build the Temple which continues for 7 years, after which he builds the house of the king for 13 years. The dedication of the Temple takes place after 20 years in the 24th year of his reign. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The book of *Tehilim* includes 12 psalms with the heading: "Of Asaf." [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. We will not deal with the issue that we addressed in the past whether the ark was borne by the priests or by the Levites. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. It is clear that in Kiryat-Ye'arim the ark did not play any role, and that it was not sought out by Israel. It is also clear that bringing the ark up to Jerusalem to the City of David was meant to express the deep connection between kingship and sanctity. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. We will deal with this issue in the next *shiur*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)