YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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***MIKDASH***

**Rav Yitzchak Levy**

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**This week’s shiurim are dedicated in memory of**

**Rebbetzin Ruth Schonfeld z”l**

**by Melinda Menucha Robeson**

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**Lecture #274: The History of the Divine Service at Altars (LXXXIV) – The Prohibition of Bamot (LXI)**

Having completed our examination of various aspects of the Divine service during the reigns of David and Shelomo, we will now move on to the period of the divided kingdom, during which time the service of God is performed in the kingdom of Yehuda and in the kingdom of Israel in different manners.

We will begin by examining the actions of Yerovam which left a far-reaching impression on the character of the kingdom of Israel for generations until it reached its end and was destroyed by Ashur in the days of Hoshea ben Ela.

Yerovam is presented in the book of *Melakhim* as follows:

And Yerovam the son of Nevat, an Ephraimite of Tzereda, a servant of Shelomo, whose mother's name was Tzerua, a widow, he also lifted up his hand against the king.  And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Shelomo built the Milo, and repaired the breach of the city of David his father. And the man Yerovam was a mighty man of valor; and Shelomo saw the young man that he was industrious, and he gave him charge over all the labor of the house of Yosef.

Shelomo sought therefore to kill Yerovam; but Yerovam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Shelomo. (I Melakhim 11:26-40)

In order to understand the background of the division of the kingdom, we must consider this first account relating to Yerovam and examine how he raised his arm against the king. We will then examine the prophecy of Achiya the Shilonite to Yerovam concerning the division of the kingdom.

### Yerovam and the raising of his hand against King Shelomo

The story begins with a description of Yerovam's lineage – he is an Ephraimite.

As for his city, Tzereda, some identify it with Tzartan or Tzardeta (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 4:17), which is identified with Tel Saidiya on the east bank of the Jordan in the Sukkot valley.

Others identify it with the city of Yose ben Yoezer, according to the Mishna in *Avot* 1:4, which is identified with Dir Asna in the western slopes of the Shomron, about 25 kilometers southwest of Shechem.[[1]](#footnote-1)

As for his mother, Tzerua might be a derogatory nickname, derived from the word *tzara'at*, leprosy, given to her because she gave birth to a son who divided Israel.

The verse that states that Yerovam was "a servant of Shelomo" means that he was one of Shelomo's ministers. This is frequently the meaning of the term "servant" in connection with a king. For example, at the beginning of the book of I *Melakhim* we find: "And his servants said to him" (I *Melakhim* 1:2), and the reference there is to the king's ministers.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Verse 28 describes Yerovam's talents. The word "man" means that he was a distinguished man; "a mighty man of valor" means that he was a fearless soldier.

Shelomo saw that the "young man" (= the soldier) had unique organizational skills and that he was diligent (Rashi), and he put him in charge of all the labor of the house of Yosef. Essentially Yerovam was appointed over the tax collectors and all the tax-related work of the tribes of Ephraim and Menashe.

In order to understand the background of the rebellion, let us briefly examine the matter of the Milo. In the days of Shelomo, the Milo played an important role in two stories – Shelomo's marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh and Yerovam's rebellion. Below, we will try to show that there is a connection between its roles in these two stories.

Shelomo brought the daughter of Pharaoh to the City of David "until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about" (I *Melakhim* 3:1). Later, when he engaged in his two greatest construction projects – the house of God and the house of the king – Shelomo built a house for Pharaoh's daughter **as part of the royal palace complex** (I *Melakhim* 7:8). What is important for our purposes is the next verse, which attests to a connection between the construction dates of the house of the daughter of Pharaoh and the Milo.

But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David unto her house which [Shelomo] had built for her; then did he build Milo. (I *Melakhim* 9:24).

The nature of the relationship seems to be clear. The royal palace complex is situated between the house of God to the north and the city to the south – precisely in the area where the Milo is found.[[3]](#footnote-3) We can therefore conclude that the palace buildings including the house of the daughter of Pharaoh, were built in the Milo. The Milo, the house of God, the house of the king and the wall of Jerusalem were effectively a single construction project. Therefore the daughter of Pharaoh had to wait until the completion of this project, which took place, according to our calculations, in the twenty-fourth year of Shelomo's reign, until she could go up from the city of David to her house.

Now we can move on and discuss Yerovam's rebellion. How does the statement: "Shelomo built Milo, and repaired the breach of the city of David his father" (I *Melakhim* 11:27), indicate that Yerovam lifted up his hand against the king? The Gemara in *Sanhedrin* connects this directly to the daughter of Pharaoh:

Rabbi Yochanan said: Why did Yerovam merit kingship? Because he reproved Shelomo. And why was he punished? Because he reproved him publicly. As it is written: "And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Shelomo built Milo, and repaired the breach of the city of David his father." He said to him as follows: Your father David made breaches in the wall, that Israel might come up [to Jerusalem] on the Festivals; whereas you have closed them, in order to exact toll (*angariya*) for the benefit of Pharaoh's daughter. (*Sanhedrin* 101b)

Rabbi Yochanan's statement takes us back in an interesting way to the difference between the house of David and the house of Shelomo. David's house was situated in the midst of the city; therefore the breaches that David left in the wall – apparently the northern wall – allowed direct passage from the city to the Temple. According to Rabbi Yochanan, this direct passage was sealed up by Shelomo in order to exact toll for the benefit of the daughter of Pharaoh.

The term *angariya* refers to a "labor levy, a tax that residents pay the authorities in labor or in the labor of one's animals" (Even Shoshan dictionary). What is the significance of an *angariya* in connection with the daughter of Pharaoh? Rashi (ad loc.) offers three suggestions:

Whereas you have closed them, in order to exact toll (*angariya*) – so that they should enter through the gates, to know who entered, in order to exact toll for the daughter of Pharaoh…

Another explanation: He closed the gates and built a tower for the daughter of Pharaoh above one of the gates. Everyone would pass there in order to be with her to honor her and to serve her.

Another explanation: Shelomo was accustomed to close the doors of the Temple courtyard and hide the keys in his hand, and it is the way of a king to sleep until the third hour of the day, and Israel would stand outside the courtyard until the king rose. Yerovam said to him: You want them to pay you a toll for the benefit of the daughter of Pharaoh, so that she should give them the keys?[[4]](#footnote-4)

"The Milo" – One of the breaches in the fence, and they filled it for the wall.

Essentially, Rashi in his commentary continues the midrashic inclination to contrast Shelomo's connection to the daughter of Pharaoh and his connection to God in the Temple. The breaches in the wall were sealed in order to collect a toll from those arriving on the Festivals for the benefit of the daughter of Pharaoh (a tax on which the pilgrimage is dependent) and to force them to honor and serve her. Thus Shelomo turned the pilgrimage undertaken to encounter God into a sort of tool in the service of the daughter of Pharaoh, a situation which Yerovam describes with his harsh statement: "You want them to pay you a toll for the benefit of the daughter of Pharaoh, so that she should give them the keys?"

Rabbi Yochanan's statement paints a fine picture of what is described according to the plain meaning of the verses. Yerovam was put in charge of the forced labor – the *angariya* – that was cast upon the house of Yosef. Shelomo's grand construction projects continued for decades, and included not only Jerusalem, but the entire kingdom (Chatzor, Gezer, Megiddo, and elsewhere). The house of Yosef, so it seems, played a considerable role in this service. The people were prepared to bear the burden of building the house of God and the necessary governmental buildings. But the demand to continue investing so much on royal palaces, and especially on the house of the daughter of Pharaoh, whose marriage to Shelomo was apparently scorned by the people (because of the difficult spiritual significance of its timing and because of her standing in general) – aroused great murmurs among the people, as the Radak explains:

"Shelomo built the Milo" – The Milo was a place in the city of Jerusalem near Jerusalem, and it was a broad area where the people could assemble… Shelomo built that place, because he needed it when he built a house for the daughter of Pharaoh. Even so, it would appear that the people did not approve of what Shelomo did, but they were too afraid of him to say: Shelomo did such-and-such. But Yerovam swelled with pride and daringly said: "Shelomo built the Milo" – that is to say: See the evil that he did. And furthermore, he said: "Shelomo," and not "the king," and this was a rebellion against the king. (Radak, I *Melakhim* 11:27)

The Milo (which, according to our understanding was a grand construction project) represented for the people decades of forced labor and the injustice of construction whose sole purpose was the glorification of the kingdom of Shelomo with his foreign queen. The people kept this critique in their hearts, for fear of Shelomo, but Yerovam dared to express it out loud and in the bluntest manner.

Thus far we have dealt with the meaning of the sealing of the breach in the city of David, according to Rabbi Yochanan, and with the connection between the building of the Milo and the daughter of Pharaoh, according to this understanding. The Radak proposes another explanation of the sealing of the breach of the city of David:

David made a breach in the wall of Zion, so that if the people of Israel rebel against him, he would leave and escape from there without their knowing about it, as is the custom today among the kings of Yishmael, to make a breach in their fortresses, so that if the people of the city rebel against the king, he be able to escape from there… And Shelomo repaired that breach. And so Yerovam said: See his arrogance that he repaired the breach, that is to say, that he is confident, that he is not afraid of rebellion. (I *Melakhim* 11:27)

This explanation as well highlights the difference between David and Shelomo. David, a man of humility and meekness, did not have confidence in himself, but rather felt constant dependence on the tribes, and therefore he left himself an escape route in the event of a revolt. Shelomo did not fear a rebellion, and therefore repaired the breach.

The Ralbag suggests a third explanation:

There was a place there where the wall was breached so that the people of Israel could approach the king when they wished to present their disputes before him. (Ralbag, I *Melakhim* 11:27)

The Ralbag's interpretation also emphasizes the difference between David's great closeness to the people, the direct and comfortable approach that he created for them so that they could present their complaints to him, and Shelomo's sense of distance and superiority, which did not allow such an approach.

We can conclude, therefore, that the issue of the Milo well illustrates Shelomo's view regarding the status of the kingdom, which was different from David's approach to the matter, both in relation to the people and in relation to God and His Temple. On the one hand, Shelomo is detached from the people and feels superior to them, and in his arrogance he seals the breach and erects a barrier between himself and the people. The special status that this closure bestowed upon the daughter of Pharaoh is also an expression of this perception. On the other hand, the sealing of the breach cancelled the direct passage to the Temple and allowed for the imposition of a tax on making a pilgrimage; thus the kingdom became a barrier between the people and the Temple, rather than a bridge between them. Like other issues that we have discussed, the issue of the Milo illustrates the terrible price of turning the eternal status of the kingdom into a goal in itself: creating a barrier against the people on the one hand, and against God on the other.

All of these clearly illustrate the essence of Yerovam's lifting his hand against Shelomo. This reality is the necessary background for understanding Achiya's prophecy to Yerovam when he left Jerusalem.

### Achiya's prophecy to Yerovam regarding the division of the kingdom and its meaning

And it came to pass at that time, when Yerovam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Achiya the Shilonite found him in the way; now Achiya had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field. And Achiya laid hold of the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces.  And he said to Yerovam, Take you ten pieces; for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Shelomo, and will give ten tribes to you. But he shall have one tribe, for My servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. (I *Melakhim* 11:29-32)

With his meeting with Yerovam and his rending of the garment into twelve pieces, the prophet Achiya announces that God will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Shelomo. Yerovam will be given ten tribes, while one tribe will remain with Rechavam, as God had promised Shelomo (I *Melakhim* 11:13).

The reason for the tearing of the kingdom was already told to Shelomo: "And you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely rend the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant (I *Melakhim* 11:11).

The reason is explained to Yerovam in greater detail:

Because they have forsaken Me, and have worshipped Ashtoret the goddess of the Tzidonians, Chemosh the god of Moav, and Milkom the god of the children of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, to do that which is right in My eyes, and to keep My statutes and My ordinances, as did David his father. (I *Melakhim* 11:33)

### Who is the one tribe?

The one tribe left to Rechavam (for the sake of David and for the sake of Jerusalem) is mentioned at the beginning and at the end of chapter 11, but it is not identified. How are we to understand the relationship between the one tribe and the ten tribes? Surely there are twelve tribes in Israel!

Yehuda Kil[[5]](#footnote-5) suggests that the term *echad* alludes to the special (*meyuchad*) tribe, namely, the tribe of Yehuda. As we find in *Tehilim* 114:

When Israel came forth out of Egypt, the house of Yaakov from a people of strange language;  
Yehuda became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion. (*Tehilim* 114:1-2)

The Radak (I *Melakhim* 11:13, s.v. *ha-shevet ha-echad*) argues that since Binyamin's portion was together with that of Yehuda, and Jerusalem was divided between them, they are treated as one tribe. This is also the position of the Ralbag.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Rav Yaakov Medan has offered an instructive explanation for the identification of the one tribe. Rabbi Yosef Ibn Kaspi explains in his commentary[[7]](#footnote-7) (I *Melakhim* 11:31-32, s.v. *asara shevatim ve-ha-shevet ha-echad*) that it is correct to consider Israel as eleven tribes, because Levi belongs to God, and it is also correct to consider them as twelve tribes even without Levi, because Yosef is divided into two tribes.

If we identify the one tribe with either Yehuda or Binyamin, then the total sum is missing one tribe. In order to solve the problem, Rav Medan suggests the following understanding:

At first, "But he shall have one tribe, for My servant David's sake," the reference is to the tribe of Yehuda. Then he fills in several words, "and [he shall have one tribe] for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all of Israel" (I *Melakhim* 11:32)." Here the reference is to Binyamin.

David is clearly from the tribe of Yehuda. Jerusalem belongs entirely to the tribe of Binyamin.[[8]](#footnote-8) If Yehuda were left alone, Jerusalem would be situated on its border with the rest of the tribes. Since Binyamin joins Yehuda, the border with the rest of the tribes is found along the northern border of the tribal territory of Binyamin, in the Bet-El area.

This proposal solves the problem of the number and fits in perfectly with the plain meaning of the verses. This solution also accords with the Radak's conclusion that ultimately Jerusalem belongs to both Yehuda and Binyamin.

### The joining of the tribe of Binyamin to the tribe of Yehuda

On the face of it, we would expect the tribe of Binyamin to join the tribes of Ephraim and Menashe, the descendants of Yosef, they being the sons and grandsons of Rachel. What brings the tribe of Binyamin to join the tribe of Yehuda?

On two occasions Yehuda serves as a surety for Binyamin. The first is when Yosef rules over Egypt and the brothers return to Egypt with Binyamin to obtain food for Yaakov in the land of Canaan. Yehuda offers to serve as a surety for Binyamin before he sets off for Egypt:

I will be surety for him (*e'ervenu*); of my hand shall you require him; if I bring him not unto you, and set him before you, then let me bear the blame for ever. (*Bereishit* 43:9)

In the end, when the cup was found in Binyamin's sack, Yehuda approaches Yosef and says:

For your servant became surety (*arav*) for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto you, then shall I bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, let your servant, I pray you, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brothers. (*Bereishit* 44:32-33)

But there is another occasion at which Yehuda serves as a surety for Binyamin.

In the battle between Israel and the Pelishtim in the Ela Valley, Yishai sends his son David to his brothers in the Israelite camp:

And bring these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and to your brethren shall you bring greetings, and take their pledge (*arubatan*) (I *Shemuel* 17:18).

*Chazal* expound this verse as follows:

"And take their pledge" – their security. Rabbi Yuda Bar R. Simon said: That tribe was accustomed to serving as a surety for each other, as it is stated: "I will be surety for him" (*Bereishit* 43:9). Yishai said to David his son: This is the time that you should go and fulfill the surety of Yehuda your ancestor, who became surety for Binyamim to his father, as it is stated: "I will be surety for him." Go and take him out of his surety. What did David do? He went and fulfilled his surety and killed Golyat.

The Holy One, blessed is He, said to him: By your life, just as you risked your life for Shaul, who is from the tribe of Binyamin, just as your ancestor Yehuda did, as it is stated: "Let your servant, I pray you, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord" (*Bereishit* 44:33) – so will I put the Temple in the portion of Yehuda and Binyamin. And what is more, all of the tribes will go into exile, but the tribes of Binyamin and Yehuda will not go into exile with them. Why? Because these two tribes believed in Me and sanctified My name at the Sea, as it is stated: "There is Binyamin, the youngest, ruling them, the princes of Yehuda their council." (*Tehilim* 68:28). (*Yalkut Shimoni*, I *Shemuel*, 126)

This midrash is instructive in and of itself, as it seems from here that it is because of this special surety of Yehuda for Binyamin that the tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin merited that the *Shekhina* should rest in their portions and that the Temple should be built there.

It is very possible that Yehuda's guarantees for Binyamin created a close and meaningful connection between the two tribes. Now with the division of the kingdom, the tribe of Binyamin is given the opportunity to serve as a surety for the tribe of Yehuda and remain together in one kingdom. For this reason, Binyamin does not join with the descendants of Yosef, but rather with Yehuda.

In the words of the prophet Achiya, both to Shelomo and to Yerovam, it is explicitly stated that Jerusalem is the city that God has chosen. Emphasizing the selection of Jerusalem is significant, not only because of Binyamin's connection to Yehuda, but in order to establish that the selection of Jerusalem is eternal, even if in the wake of the sins of the people of Israel, the kingdom is divided.

According to this understanding, there is no direct connection between the division of the people into two kingdoms and the location of the Temple, but rather the division of the kingdom impacts only upon the matter of the kingdom.

In the next *shiur*, with God's help, we will consider Yerovam's actions after he was chosen to head the kingdom of Israel.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. Our identifications and our comments about Yerovam's lineage and skills follow Yehuda Kil in his *Da'at Mikra* commentary to the book of *Melakhim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is also the meaning of the word *eved* found on seals from the First Temple period. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. There are various understandings of the matter of the "Milo." We will not deal with them in this framework. We dealt with this issue at length in our *shiurim* on Biblical Jerusalem in 2006, *shiur* 23, "Shelomo's Kingdom in Jerusalem (V), the Milo."

   In our opinion, the Milo was located north of the City of David and south of Mount Moriya, in the area where today are found the excavations in the eastern portion of the Davidson Center, and in the southern part of the Temple Mount, where today are found the Al-Aksa Mosque and Solomon's Stables. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The narrative in the third explanation is very similar to that found in *Midrash Vayikra Rabba*: "Rabbi Chanina said: The daughter of Pharaoh danced eighty types of dances that night, and Shelomo slept until the fourth hour of the day, and the keys to the Temple were found under his head…." The Midrash there concludes: "His mother went in and reproached him. **And some day: Yerovam ben Nevat went in and reproached him"** (12, 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In his *Da'at Mikra* commentary to the book of *Melakhim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. And so too the Radak in the continuation: "Yehuda and Binyamin are considered a single tribe because they were joined in their territory in Jerusalem" (I *Melakhim* 11:32). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Adnei Kesef*, pp. 52-53, MS Cambridge, London, 1912. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. According to *Chazal*, a strip of land protruded from the tribal territory of Yehuda into the tribal territory of Binyamin, and part of the chambers in the Temple and the southeastern corner of the altar belonged to Yehuda. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)