YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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***MIKDASH***

**Rav Yitzchak Levy**

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**In memory of Alice Stone, Ada Bat Avram, A"H,**

**beloved mother, grandmother and great grandmother**

**whose Yarzheit is 2 Tammuz.**

**Dedicated by, Ellen & Stanley Stone,**

**Jake & Chaya, Micah, Adeline, Zack & Yael, Allie,**

**Isaac, Ezra & Talia, Yoni & Cayley, Marc & Eliana, Adina, Gabi & Talia.**

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**Lecture #276: The History of the Divine Service at Altars (LXXXVI) – The Prohibition of Bamot (LXII)**

In the last two *shiurim* we presented a general picture of Yerovam's actions. One of the main issues arising in this context is the question whether, over and beyond the personal element, which is the only motivation that Scripture attributes to Yerovam, there was also a new and different general outlook that Yerovam was proposing for the people of the kingdom of Israel.

### How could Yerovam convince the entire kingdom of Israel to accept such a far-reaching religious and spiritual change?

We are faced with a fundamental difficulty. On the assumption that personal factors drove Yerovam to prevent the people from reaching Jerusalem (as follows from the plain meaning of the text), how was it possible to persuade the entire nation to abandon the house of God in Jerusalem, to serve golden calves in Bet-El and in Dan, to create a new priesthood from all sectors of the population, and to drastically change the calendar?

As we have already mentioned, the priests remained loyal to God and continued to serve in Jerusalem, as is stated in *Divrei ha-Yamim*:

And the priests and the Levites that were in all of Israel presented themselves to him out of all their border.  For the Levites left their open land and their possession, and came to Yehuda and Jerusalem; for Yerovam and his sons cast them off, that they should not execute the priest's office unto the Lord. And he appointed him priests for the high places, and for the satyrs, and for the calves which he had made… So they strengthened the kingdom of Yehuda, and made Rechavam the son of Shelomo strong, three years; for they walked three years in the way of David and Shelomo. (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 11:13-17)

How then were the rest of the people persuaded to abandon the ritual that they had previously observed?

In any event it is reasonable to assume that we are dealing here with a process that extended over a period of several years, rather than an immediate and absolute change (as the verses speak of three years). What is more, what was the impact of the *bamot* that Shelomo built for the worship of idols on the rest of the people? There is no explicit prophetic reference to this question.

Is it possible that at least indirectly the existence of *bamot* dedicated to idol worship to the east of the city of Jerusalem created an atmosphere that made it easier for Yerovam to set up a different ritual alternative for the kingdom of Israel? We have no knowledge that this is so, but it is certainly possible that these *bamot* made the transition to a different and alien ritual more readily acceptable.

We wish to examine whether Yerovam's steps were based on some general outlook that went beyond the personal dimension. The background for this might have been Yerovam's understanding of Achiya the Shilonite's prophecy that differed in its very essence from the plain understanding of his words. This could have served as sort of a justification for the far-reaching steps taken by Yerovam.

In Achiya the Shilonite's prophecy Yerovam is informed that he will eventually lead the ten tribes:

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…

And I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and shall be king over Israel. (I *Melakhim* 11:29-37)

This prophecy which is stated about Yerovam repeats and confirms that which God had said to Shelomo earlier in that same chapter:

The Lord said to Shelomo, Forasmuch as this has been in your mind, 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.  However, in your days I will not do it, for David your father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not rend away all the kingdom; but I will give one tribe to your son; for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen. (I *Melakhim* 11:11-13)

In God's words to Shelomo and in Achiya's words to Yerovam, two points are emphasized. First, the rending of the kingdom, it being clear that in the end ten tribes will stick together and the tribes of Binyamin and Yehuda will remain together in the kingdom of Yehuda.

Second, God's blessing of the city of Jerusalem to set His name there. The prophet repeats this idea twice, in addition to the choosing of David and his kingdom.

A new model is presented here for the first time. Owing to Shelomo's sins, which are primarily royal sins: taking too many wives, too many horses, and too much gold and silver, in clear opposition to the Torah's commandments in the passage dealing with a king – a "religious" sin is added – *bamot* dedicated to idol worship. This being the case, it was decided that the scope and power of Shelomo's rule be narrowed, and that his kingship be restricted to the tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin. The leads to the creation of a different and separate kingdom that prepares the ground for an alternative government in the form of the kingdom of Israel.

The clear emphasis both in God's words to Shelomo and in Achiya's words to Yerovam upon God's selection of Jerusalem comes to ensure that the two kingdoms will have separate systems of government, but as for the sphere of religion, they will continue in their joint service of the God of Israel.

The novelty in this proposal is the separation introduced between the kingdom and the site of the Divine service. In order to understand this novelty, we must examine the connection between the kingdom and the Temple and between Jerusalem and the kingdom of the house of David.[[1]](#footnote-1)

### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE KINGDOM AND the tEMPLE

The connection between the kingdom and the Temple finds expression in several areas:

First of all, the reason that the prophet offers as to why David cannot build the Temple is that a royal dynasty must first be established, as is stated in the prophet Natan's answer to David:

Even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will cause you to rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord tells you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you that shall proceed out of your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.  (II *Shemuel* 7:11-13)

Only a permanent kingdom, that is to say, the kingdom of a king who is also the son of a king, can build the Temple.

### The Parallels in the torah between the Passage dealing with a king[[2]](#footnote-2) and the Passage dealing with the place that God will choose[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. The choosing: The choice of the location of the Temple is a Divine choice. We already saw this principle in connection with the patriarch Avraham and the *Akeida*; afterwards in connection with David, who is commanded by the prophet Gad in the name of God to erect an altar to God in the threshing floor of Aravna the Yebusite (I *Divrei ha-Yamim* 21:18); and similarly during the Second Temple period, when one of the prophets who returns together with the exiles testifies to the site of the altar (*Zevachim* 62a). The selection of a king is also a Divine choice. While it is true that the request and initiative to appoint a king come from the people – something that may be likened to the initiative that one must take to seek the place of the *Shekhina –* but the identity of the king is determined by God.

The Ramban in *Devarim* expands upon the parallelism between the selection of the king and the selection of the Temple:

In my opinion, according to the plain meaning of the text, what "whom the Lord shall choose" (*Devarim* 17:15) means is that anyone who rules over nations is appointed to do so by God… And so the Sages said: "Even to a lowly position, one is appointed from heaven" (*Bava Batra* 91b). It says: "You shall surely set a king over you" – whoever is decreed from heaven that he shall rule… And similarly according to the plain sense of the text: "the place which the Lord your God shall choose" (*Devarim* 14:25) – wherever they shall build the Temple there to God, it is all by the will of God. (*Devarim* 17:15)

The Ramban emphasizes the fact that the choosing of a king and the choosing of the Temple are both Divine choices, and that just as every selection of even the lowliest officeholder is in fact a Divine selection, so too "wherever they shall build the Temple there to God, it is all by the will of God," that is to say, it is a revelation of God's will.

2. After taking possession of the land and settling it: the site of the Temple is reached after taking possession of the land, settling it, and finding rest from the enemies; the kingdom as well arises from taking possession of the land and settling it, and the role of the king is to make finding rest from the enemies possible. Reaching the kingdom and the Temple is dependent then on a practical and spiritual process of taking possession of the land and dwelling in it – a process that implies permanence, continuity and holding fast to the land.

3. "Every man does that which is right in his own eyes" (*Shofetim* 17:6; 21:25). The Temple is the opposite of every man doing what is right in his own eyes, of offering sacrifices at *bamot*. The kingdom is also the opposite of every man doing what is right in his own eyes," and the closing chapters of the book of *Shofetim* – the story of Mikha's idol and of the concubine in Giv'a – illustrate the great need for a king, and how the absence of a king leads to idolatry, sexual offenses and bloodshed.

4. "Desire of the soul": It is specifically here that there is a difference between the Temple and the kingdom: Offering sacrifices "after all the desire of your soul… in all your gates" (*Devarim* 12:15) is the opposite of the place which the Lord shall choose, whereas the king can choose his capital city and rule as his soul desires.

5. Fear: The Temple is a place of fear, and it is in the place which the Lord shall choose that the *mitzvot* of eating second-tithe and *Hakhel* are fulfilled. The king's fear must be cast upon the people, and in this sense the king parallels the Temple. On the other hand, the Torah emphasizes the obligation falling upon the king himself to fear God, and it is not by chance that it is the king who would read from the Torah to the people at the *Hakhel* assembly – a *mitzva* whose whole purpose is to bring Israel to fear God.

In our opinion, the deeper meaning of all these parallels is that the site of the Temple is the site of the kingdom of the King of the universe. On the other hand, a king of flesh and blood parallels in many ways the King of the universe – "Kingdom on earth is like kingdom in heaven" (*Zohar*, *Bereishit* 197a)

### The Relationship between kingdom and the Temple

1. The proximity of the supreme court to the Temple – the proximity of the Sanhedrin to the altar.

2. There is a broad parallel between the king, who is responsible for mundane life, for the state and for the people; and the High Priest, who is responsible for the Temple – the eternal life of the people of Israel. On the High Priest's head sits the *tzitz*, which is similar to a royal crown; both are anointed with anointing oil; these offices are inherited, like every office; there is a parallel between the laws of honoring a High Priest and the laws of honoring a king; both of them are responsible for the rule of Torah in Israel and both of them judge the people.

3. The connection between the ark and the site of the kingdom, beginning with David's bringing the ark to Jerusalem immediately after he was anointed king over all of Israel, and continuing with David's leaving the ark in Jerusalem when he fled from Avshalom.

4. Yerovam's denial of the kingdom of the house of David and of God, as follows from the words of *Chazal*:

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai taught: … In the future they will reject three things: the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the house of David, and the building of the Temple. When did they reject these three? In the days of Rechavam. This is what is written: "What portion have we in David?" – this is the kingdom of heaven; "neither have we inheritance in the son of Yishai" – this is the kingdom of the house of David; "to your tents, O Israel; now see to your own house, David" (I *Melakhim* 12:16) – this is the building of the Temple.

Rabbi Shimon ben Menasya said: Israel will never see a sign of blessing until they repent and ask for the three. This is what is written: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God" – this is the kingdom of heaven; "and David their king" – this is the kingdom of the house of David; "and shall come trembling unto the Lord and to His goodness in the end of days" (*Hoshea* 3:5) – this is the building of the Temple.

The connection that the Midrash finds between the rejection of the kingdom of heaven, the kingship of the house of David and the Temple, and Israel's renewed seeking of the three attests to the close connection between them.

5. The permanent kingdom as a condition for and prelude to the building of the permanent Temple. And what actually happened is that the establishment of a fixed monarchy preceded the building of a permanent Temple (II *Shemuel* 7; *Tehilim* 132).

*Chazal* strengthen this connection is various places. In *Bava Batra* (4a), the Gemara states: "The Temple is different, for were it not for the kingdom, it would not be built." That is to say, the building of the Temple is conditioned on the existence of a kingdom. Indeed, the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (20b) rules that the communal obligations that fell upon Israel as soon as they entered Eretz Israel – "to appoint a king over them, to eradicate the seed of Amalek and to build the Temple" – had to be fulfilled in that precise order.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Lastly, the Rambam emphasizes the connection between the kingdom and the Temple in the future as well. He notes that the building of the Temple is one of the primary tasks cast upon the Messianic king, and a sure sign of his kingship:

In the future, the Messianic king will arise and renew the Davidic dynasty, restoring it to its initial sovereignty. He will build the Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel. (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 11:1)

6. Only the kings of the house of David are permitted to sit in the Temple courtyard. This halakha asserts that as opposed to the priests and Temple workers, only the kings of the house of David were privileged to sit in the Temple courtyard, because their kingship represents the kingship of God.

### The connection between the choosing of Jerusalem and the kingship of the House of David

There is a very deep connection between the kingship of the House of David and the city of Jerusalem. Scripture emphasizes this very strongly in the dedication of the house of God:

Since the day that I brought forth My people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house in, that My name might be there; neither chose I any man to be prince over My people Israel; but I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name might be there; and have chosen David to be over My people Israel. (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 6:5-6)

What we have here is a parallel and double choosing here of Jerusalem and David, which teaches us about the strong and clear connection between the two.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The Malbimin his commentary to *Tehilim* discusses the relationship between these two selections – that of Jerusalem and that of David.

"The Lord swore to David" – For the sake of the selection of Jerusalem, the Lord swore to David that the kingship will not depart from his seed, as it is written (II *Shemuel* 7). This can be likened to the beloved friend of a king, who, owing to his great love for his friend, lodged by him. And the friend built a Temple for the king in his house, built to perfection. It found such favor in the king's eyes that he decided to dwell there forever, and swore to his friend that he would never leave that place… **It turns out that the friend was the cause that the king chose the place, and the place was the cause that the king chose the seed of his friend forever.**

This is the meaning of what is written here about the selection of the Temple that it is **"for the sake of David Your servant"** (*Tehilim* 132:10). And afterwards, it says that since He has chosen the Temple forever, **"the Lord swore unto David… Of the fruit of your body will I set upon your throne… For the Lord has chosen Zion"** (*Tehilim* 132:11-13). Afterwards by choosing Zion He swore that the kingship will not depart from the house of David.

This oath deals with two matters: Regarding the seed of David He took an absolute oath without any conditions; about this He said: "The Lord swore unto David in truth; He will not turn back from it: Of the fruit of your body will I set upon your throne" (*Tehilim* 132:11). But regarding the seed of his seed there was a condition (*Tehilim* 132:11).

According to the Malbim's explanation, Jerusalem was chosen because of God's love of David, but once God chose Jerusalem, and, as it were, settled in it, this led to the selection of David forever. It turns out then that David was the cause of Jerusalem's selection, and the city was the cause of the eternal selection of the Davidic dynasty. Thus, the two selections are intertwined, in such a way that one affects the other; hence the eternal connection between David and Jerusalem.[[6]](#footnote-6)

This eternal connection arises again at the end of the vision of the dry bones, where the prophet Yechezkel draws a parallel between David's eternal leadership and the *Shekhina's* eternal resting in the Temple:

And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Yaakov My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, and their children, and their children's children, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will establish them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them forever. My dwelling place also shall be over them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord that sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them forever. (*Yechezkel* 37:25-28)

We also find a connection between David's kingdom over all of Israel and Israel's arrival in the city. So too the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem at the end of the first Temple period are intertwined.

It is interesting that this special connection between David and Jerusalem is preserved in the *Shemoneh Esreh* prayer and in the Grace after Meals. In the *Shemoneh Esreh* prayer we say:

Return in mercy to your city Jerusalem and dwell in it, as You have promised; rebuild it soon, in our days, as an everlasting structure, and speedily establish in it the throne of David.

And in the Grace after Meals:

Have mercy, O Lord our God, upon Israel Your people, and upon Jerusalem Your city, and upon Zion the abode of Your glory, and upon the kingship of the house of David Your anointed, and upon the great and holy house over which Your name was proclaimed… And rebuild Jerusalem the holy city speedily in our days.

This also has halakhic significance:

It was taught: Rabbi Eliezer says: Whoever has not mentioned… the kingdom of the house of David in the "Builder of Jerusalem" blessing has not fulfilled his obligation. (*Berakhot* 48b)

That is to say, the kingdom of the house of David cannot be detached from the building of Jerusalem. So too rules the Rambam:

Whoever does not mention the kingdom of the house of David in this blessing does not fulfill his obligation, because it is an essential element of the blessing. There will be no complete comfort until the return of the sovereignty to the house of David. (*Hilkhot Berakhot* 2:4)

The true consolation of Jerusalem is the return of the Davidic kingdom to the city, because the two are connected and they are essentially the same thing.

Another *halakha* in *Hilkhot Melakhim* emphasizes the special connection between the kings of the house of David and Jerusalem:

Kings of Israel are not anointed with the special anointing oil, but with afarsimon oil. Only a descendent of David may be appointed as king in Jerusalem. And only descendants of David are anointed with the special anointing oil. (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 4:10)

Thus far, we have seen the strong connections between kingship and the Temple in general, between the Davidic kingdom and the Temple in general, between the kingdom of the house of David and the Temple on Mount Moriya and between the selection of Jerusalem and the selection of the Davidic dynasty. As we mentioned, these principles are mentioned in Achiya the Shilonite's words to Yerovam, when he notifies him of the division of the kingdom. The emphasis that they are given comes to prevent any misunderstanding on the part of Yerovam about the eternal selection of the city of Jerusalem.

In the next *shiur* we will examine Yerovam's attitude toward Achiya's outlook and how he rejects that outlook with his actions.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. This is a broad issue, which we already dealt with in our *shiurim* for the Virtual Beit Midrash, 5765, *shiur* 26. Here we will bring the gist of that discussion and expand upon certain points so that it can serve as a background for understanding the novelty of Yerovam's actions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Devarim* 17:14-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Devarim* 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The *Yerushalmi* records the opinion of Rabbi Acha that in the future Temple the order will be different: "Rabbi Acha said: This indicates that the future Temple will be built before [the restoration] of the kingdom of the house of David" (*Ma'aser Sheni* 8:2). It is interesting that according to the Gemara in *Gittin* (56b), this connection finds expression (in a different way, of course) also in the destruction: Jerusalem and the Temple fall only into the hands of a king. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This connection follows also from *Tehilim* 78 and *Tehilim* 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In this way, the prophet Yirmeyahu refers both to the future king from the house of David and to Jerusalem by the same name: "The Lord is our righteousness" (*Yirmeyahu* 23:5-6; *Yirmeyahu* 33:15:16). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)