YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

***MIKDASH***

**Rav Yitzchak Levy**

**Lecture #294: The History of the Divine Service at Altars (CIV) – The Prohibition of Bamot (LXXX)**

In this *shiur* we will discuss the reign of Yehoash.

In the [previous *shiur*](http://etzion.org.il/en/lecture-293-history-divine-service-altars-ciii-%E2%80%93-prohibition-bamot-lxxix) we explained the background to the reign of Yehoash. The renewal of the Temple service and all of the related activities – the renovation of the physical structure and the collection of shekalim– were a direct consequence of the sad reality that existed in Jerusalem and in the Temple during the days of Yehoram and Achazya, throughout the period of Atalyahu's influence.

It would appear that Scripture divides the period of Yehoash's reign into two: the time during which Yehoyada the priest stood at his side, and the time after his death:

And Yehoash did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord all his days wherein Yehoyada the priest instructed him. (II *Melakhim* 12:3)

And Yoash did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Yehoyada the priest. (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:2)

The first period is characterized primarily by the house of God's return to full function. This is in addition to the fact that the Temple had already stood for one hundred and fifty years, and it must have suffered damages by the ravages of time. The second period (the details of which are described only in *Divrei ha-Yamim*, and not in *Melakhim*) is characterized by the return of idolatry to Yehuda and by the cult of the king, the cult of Yehoash himself. During this period Yehoash kills Zecharya the son of Yehoyada in the court of the house of God in a terrible show of ingratitude towards Yehoyada his father.

### The First Period – The renovation of the House of God

When Scripture notes that Yehoash was seven years old when he became king, it is absolutely clear that the most significant figure in the regime alongside the king is Yehoyada the priest.

In the previous *shiur*, we saw Yehoyada's critical contribution to Yehoash's rescue. After Yehosheva,[[1]](#footnote-1) daughter of king Yoram and sister of Achazyahu, stole Yehoash the son of Achazyahu from among the sons of the king who were being put to death, she hides him from Atalyahu for six years.

It is clear that Yehoyada the High Priest was in charge of all the service arrangements and administration in the house of God, and therefore it was possible with his help and advice to hide Yehoash during those six years in the house of God. So too, in the seventh year Yehoyada became stronger, and it was he who headed the conspiracy against Atalyahu (while gathering together the Levites and the heads of the fathers' houses in Israel, and making a covenant with the king). After all this planning, he anoints Yehoash as king.

It is Yehoyada who orders that Atalyahu be taken to the house of the king and killed there. Yehoyada makes the covenant between King Yehoash and the people. After the house of Baal is broken and its images are destroyed, Yehoyada directs all the activity, and the renewal of the service in the house of God, and the renewal of the sacrificial service, and the placing of gatekeepers at the gates of the house of God to prevent the unclean from entering, and it is he who actually seats the king on the royal throne.

With these actions, Yehoyada restores the kingdom of the house of David to leadership and rule. He returns the house of God to its full and complete function. Against this backdrop, his critical role in the government following Yehoash's ascent to the throne is very understandable. In addition, Yehoyada's involvement largely explains the fact that during this period, Yehoash did what was right in God's eyes. It is reasonable to assume that all of Yehoash's activities at the beginning of his reign were directed and inspired by Yehoyada the priest.

At the end of the activities aimed at strengthening the house of God, Scripture summarizes as follows:

And when they had made an end, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Yehoyada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the Lord, even vessels wherewith to minister, and buckets, and pans, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt-offerings in the house of the Lord continually all the days of Yehoyada. (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:14)

The verse states that the money and the gold were brought before the king and Yehoyada. It may be suggested that in principle the money was brought to the king, but in practice in the house of God the priest who received the money was Yehoyada. But it is also possible to say that Scripture is alluding to the fact that they were acting in full collaboration in everything related to the full renewal of the service in the house of God.

### The burial of Yehoyada

Scripture in *Divrei ha-Yamim* summarizes the days of Yehoyada as follows:

But Yehoyada waxed old and was full of days, and he died; a hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and His house. (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:15-16)

Scripture first emphasizes that Yehoyada lived a long life. A quick calculation indicates that he was born at the end of the days of Shelomo.

The author of *Seder Olam Rabba* at the end of chapter 18 states:

When the corruption started in the times of Shelomo, Yehoyada who fixed it was born.

The editor of *Seder Olam Rabba*, R. Zv. Ratner notes therethat the reference is to the end of the days of Shelomo. One hundred and twenty-five years passed from the death of Shelomo to the twenty-third year of Yoash when corrections were made in the Temple. It is interesting to see the relationship between Yehoyada the priest and the correction of the corruptions that began in the days of Shelomo. The Malbim explains these verses in a comprehensive manner:

Because he had done good in Israel, for he delivered them from the hand of Atalya, the wicked one, and reestablished the monarchy of the house of David, and toward God, for he set the house of God back on its foundations. (Malbim, II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:16)

In these two basic senses - the reestablishment of the kingdom of the house of David and the setting of the house of God back on its foundations – these are major corrections to Shelomo's actions. Scripture states that King Shelomo failed in the three most essential elements that distinguish the image of the king of Israel: his taking many wives, his acquisition of many horses, and his accumulation of an abundance of silver and gold. On the other hand, he build *bamot* for his wife's idols, Kamosh, the abomination of Moav and Molekh the abomination of Amon. The construction of *bamot* for idolatry was sort of an alternative to the worship of God in parallel to the existence of the house of God.

In addition, many Midrashim in the wake of Shelomo's actions portend the destruction of the Temple. Thus, for example, we find in *Vayikra Rabba*:

Rabbi Yuden said: During the entire seven-year period in which Shelomo built the Temple, he did not drink any wine. When he had built it and married Pharaoh's daughter Batya, that very night he drank some wine. There were two dances in celebration that night, one, the rejoicing over the building of the Temple, and the other, the rejoicing over the daughter of Pharaoh. The Holy One, blessed is He, said: Which shall I accept, this or that? At that moment, it entered His mind to destroy Jerusalem. This is in line with what is stated: "For this city has been to Me a provocation of Mine anger and of My fury from the day that they built it even to this day, that I should remove it from before My face" (*Yirmeyahu* 32:31). (*Vayikra Rabba* 12:5)

In addition, in the wake of Shelomo's sins, the kingdom was split into two kingdoms. Yehoyada with his actions succeeds in bringing about two major corrections. The first is the renewal of the Davidic kingdom and the continuation of the royal dynasty from the house of David. The second is setting the house of God back on its foundations – renewing the house of God and restoring the proper service in it. In both matters, Yehoyada corrects what went wrong in the days of Shelomo. And therefore the Midrash draws a connection between them.

Scripture notes the site of Yehoyada's burial in the city of David with the kings: "And they buried him in the City of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and His house" (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:16). It should be emphasized that the royal burial grounds in the City of David were used exclusively for the burial of the kings of the house of David from the time of David and until Chizkiyahu. Yehoyada the priest was the only individual, according to *Divrei ha-Yamim*, who was buried in the royal burial grounds even though he was not a king.

According to what we have explained, this deviation is very understandable. During the many years that Yehoyada led the people of Israel, he effectively filled the role of king. According to this understanding, it was by virtue of his part in this role in which he restored both the monarchy of the house of David and the house of God that earned him burial in the royal burial grounds. This fact stands out in itself, but it receives its full meaning in relation to the burial site of Yehoash king of Yehuda. In *Melakhim* it is stated:

And they buried him with his fathers in the city of David. (II *Melakhim* 12:22)

But in *Divrei ha-Yamim* it is stated differently:

And they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the tombs of the kings. (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:25)

Yehoash was in fact buried in the City of David, but he was not buried in the tombs of the kings.

### The second period - the cult of Yehoash

Scripture describes Yehoash's actions after the death of Yehoyada, when idolatry reemerges in the kingdom of Yehuda: "And they forsook the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols; and wrath came upon Yehuda and Jerusalem for this their guiltiness" (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:18), and a cult develops around King Yehoash himself. All of these things negate Yehoash's right to be buried in the tombs of the kings in the City of David. In addition, his killing of Zecharya the son of Yehoyada means the complete takeover and abolition of the priesthood and the prophecy. It may be argued that, symbolically, the acts of Yehoash after the death of Yehoyada the priest constitute a most essential contrast to the actions of Yehoyada the priest, both in the royal dimension and in relation to the worship of God.

In this way, the description of Yehoyada's burial symbolically expresses Scriptures' attitude toward the king and toward the priest, each one in accordance with his role and position.

In the next *shiur* we will relate in detail to the two periods of Yehoash's reign.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. The verse in II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 22:11 notes that Yehosheva the daughter of the king was the wife of Yehoyada the priest. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)