YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

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

***MIKDASH***

**Rav Yitzchak Levy**

**Lecture #295: The History of the Divine Service at Altars (CV) – The Prohibition of Bamot (LXXXI)**

In this *shiur* we wish to examine the two periods of Yehoash's reign in detail. As in the previous *shiur* we will divide Yehoash's reign into two periods – while Yehoyada the priest was alive, and after his death.

### Collecting money for the renovation of the Temple and the repair of its breaches

Yehoash's main activity during the first period involved the renovation of the Temple. Scripture first notes the fact that with all of Yehoash's doing what is right in the eyes of God and his adhering to that which Yehoyada the priest commanded him to do, the *bamot* were not removed and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense at them. Yehoash turns to the priests:

And Yehoash said to the priests, All the money of the hallowed things that is brought into the house of the Lord, in current money, the money of the persons for whom each man is rated, all the money that comes into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord, let the priests take it to them, every man from him that bestows it upon him; and they shall repair the breaches of the house, wherever any breach shall be found. (II *Melakhim* 12:5-6)

"All the money of the hallowed things" refers to all types of contributions brought to the house of God:

1. "Money" – The half-shekels that must be brought by every individual. As the Torah puts it, "every one that passes among them that are numbered" (*Shemot* 30:13), from twenty years and up, wherever he is, must contribute a half-shekel every year. This money was used to finance all of the Temple's expenditures. King Yehoash seeks to renew this contribution, which apparently was stopped during the period of Atalyahu's rule.
2. "The money of the persons for whom each man is rated" – If a person donates his own valuation, he must pay the Temple treasury a certain sum as determined by the Torah: "When a man shall clearly utter a vow of persons to the Lord, according to your valuation, then your valuation shall be for the male from twenty years old to sixty years old, your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary" (*Vayikra* 27:2-4). The money that is collected is used for the upkeep of the Temple.
3. "All the money that comes into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord" – All the money that a person is interested in freely donating to the Temple is used for the upkeep of the Temple.

Scripture goes on to say: "But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of King Yehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house" (II *Melakhim* 12:7).

The Radak explains the matter and says:

It seems that the priests meant to keep the money until it amassed in their hands and then they would repair the Temple. But the king suspected that they were taking the money for themselves. Therefore, he told them that they must not take the money for themselves, but rather immediately upon receiving it they must put it towards repairing the Temple. (Radak, II *Melakhim* 12:8)

It would appear that, on the one hand, the repairs that had to be made in the Temple in the wake of the breaches that occurred in the days of Atalyahu were very extensive, and much work was needed to fix everything; on the other hand, the priests wanted to collect all the money in advance so that they would be able to carry out all the repairs, and the people apparently did not bring enough money. King Yehoash suspected that the priests were taking the money for themselves, and therefore he summoned Yehoyada the priest and the other priests and told them not to collect the money themselves from the donors, but to use it immediately for repairing the Temple.

The priests agree to stop collecting the money themselves so that they would not be suspected. Yehoyada the priest takes a chest, bores a hole in its lid, and sets it beside the altar to the south, and the priests who serve as gatekeepers put in it all the money that was brought into the house of God. With this money, craftsmen are brought in to repair the breaches in the walls.

As for those who brought money for the purchase of a sin-offering or a guilt-offering, the money was not put into this chest, but rather it was given to the priests who were involved in the atonement process.

Scripture refers here to the surplus money that remained after the purchase of all the required sacrifices. This money was used for the purchase of free-will burnt-offerings. The priests took the hides of these animals for themselves.

*Chazal* in a Mishna in *Shekalim* cite a midrashic exposition that relates directly to the matter at hand:

On six [was inscribed] "for freewill-offerings." What was done with the free-will offerings? They bought with them burnt-offerings, the flesh [of which] was for God and the hides for the priests. The following is the exposition which was expounded by Yehoyada the High Priest: "It is a guilt-offering; he is certainly guilty before the Lord" (*Vayikra* 5:19). This is the general rule: With what is [left over of money] offered for a sin-offering or a guilt-offering burnt-offerings should be bought [of which] the flesh goes to God and the hides to the priests. Thus the two statements of Scripture are fulfilled: "He is certainly guilty to the Lord" and "It is a guilt-offering to the priests." (*Shekalim* 6:6)

There is a contradiction in the verse: "It is a guilt-offering; he is certainly guilty before the Lord." "It is a guilt-offering" implies that it is like all other guilt-offerings that are eaten by the priests. But the words, "he is certainly guilty before the Lord" imply that the whole animal is offered to God and consumed by the altar, like a burnt-offering, with leaving anything for the priests.

How are we to resolve this contradiction? The Mishna answers that this is the general rule: Any money that is left over from money that was set aside for the purchase of a sin-offering or a guilt-offering is assigned for the purchase of free-will burnt-offerings, the flesh of which is for God, burnt entirely on the altar, but the hides of which are for the priests, as is the case with ordinary burnt-offerings. Thus, both parts of the verse are fulfilled: A guilt-offering to the Lord – the flesh; a guilt-offering to the priests – the hides.

This is the meaning of the verse regarding Yehoyada the priest: "The money for the guilt-offerings and the money for the sin-offerings was not brought into the house of the Lord; it was the priests" (II *Melakhim* 12:17). That is to say, the money that was left over from the money that was set aside by those who were liable to bring a guilt-offering or a sin-offering for the purchase of their offerings, was not used for the repair of the Temple, but rather it was given to the priests, and they would use it for the purchase of free-will burnt-offerings, the hides of which went to the priests.

In the parallel account in *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24, Yehoash turns to the priests and to the Levites with the intention of renovating the house of the Lord, and tells them to go out to the cities of Yehuda and gather money from all of Israel for the repair of the Temple.

Yehuda Kil in his *Da'at Mikra* commentary to *Divrei ha-Yamim* cites the explanation offered by Rabbi Y. Richer,[[1]](#footnote-1) according to which owing to the many breaches in the Temple made by Atalyahu, there was an urgent and immediate need for repairing the damage which could not suffer any delay until all the necessary money was collected. Therefore Yehoash turned to the most distinguished members of Yehoyada the priest's faction, and entered into an agreement with them that they would immediately begin the repairs at their own expense, and whatever money would be collected would be used to cover the money that they had advanced, and whatever surplus would remain at the end would go to them.

This was the case in the Temple for twenty-two years, but in the twenty-third year the priests could no longer fulfill their part of the agreement. The income diminished and their own needs expanded and they could no longer make the necessary repairs. The monies used for the repair of the Temple that were specified in the book of *Melakhim* (the half-shekel, the valuations, and all the other free-will donations) are referred to in *Divrei ha-Yamim* by the general term, "the tax of Moshe," which refers to the half-shekels and the contributions to the building of the *Mishkan* in the days of Moshe.

The book of *Melakhim* describes the location of the chest that was placed in the house of God differently than *Divrei ha-Yamim.* According to *Melakhim* the chest was placed next to the altar to the right, whereas according to *Divrei ha-Yamim* it was placed outside the gate of the house of God.

The *Yerushalmi* (*Shekalim*, end of chap. 6) explains that the chest was placed outside the gate of the house of God "because of the ritually impure." That is to say, in order to enable even the ritually impure who were barred from entering the Temple to bring their contributions. The *Korban ha-Eida* on the *Yerushalmi* explains that this implies that there were two chests, one inside and one outside.

In the concluding verses dealing with the collection of money, it is stated:

So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set up the house of God in its state, and strengthened it. 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* 24:13-14)

Scripture emphasizes that the collection of the money needed for the repair of the Temple was managed through the full partnership of King Yehoash and Yehoyada the priest. The meaning of the expression "setting the house of God in its state" becomes clear from the description of the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem in the days of the return to Zion: "They hear that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped" (*Nechemya* 4:1); and from the repair of the altar built by Eliyahu on Mount Carmel: "And he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down" (I *Melakhim* 18:30).

"Setting the house of God in its state" means returning the house of God to its state in the days of Shelomo and restoring it to its full and perfect functioning.

Now let us move on to the second period of Yehoash's reign, following the death of Yehoyada the priest.

### The rise of Chazael king of Aram against Yehuda and Jerusalem

The book of *Melakhim* does not tell us when Chazael, king of Aram, arrived in Jerusalem, nor does it explain the circumstances that brought him there. The parallel passage in *Divrei ha-Yamim* explains that this took place following the death of Yehoyada the priest and it is presented as a punishment for Yehoash's becoming a king before whom others prostrated themselves, for the idol worship that was taking place in Jerusalem, and for the killing of Zekharya, the son of Yehoyada the priest.

Chazael fights initially against Gat. He captures it and sets out for Jerusalem. In order to forestall the evil, Yehoash takes all of the hallowed things that his forefathers Yehoshafat, Yehoram, and Achazya had dedicated,[[2]](#footnote-2) and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the Temple, and sends them to Chazael, king of Aram.

In the book of *Melakhim* there is no direct judgment of this action, but it is certainly possible to see in it a critique of the way that the Temple treasures that should have been used for the strengthening and beautification of the Temple were actually used to bribe a foreign king who threatened the fate of Jerusalem and the entire kingdom.

In *Divrei ha-Yamim*, the very arrival of Chazael king of Aram is presented as a punishment for Yehoash's actions: "And it came to pass, when the year was come about, that the army of the Aramaeans came up against him; and they came to Yehuda and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and they sent all the spoil of them to the king of Damascus" (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:23). That is to say, those very princes (apparently including those princes who influenced the idol worship, and perhaps also the murder of Zekharya the son of Yehoyada) sent their spoil to Chazael. The army of the Aramaeans was small in number "for the army of the Aramaens came with a small company of men; and the Lord delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. So they executed judgment upon Yoash" (II *Divrei ha-Yamim* 24:24).

The army of the Aramaeans seriously wounded Yehoash and left him in great diseases. His own servants kill him in his bed. Scripture emphasizes that this is a case of measure for measure, connecting Yehoash's death to the killing of Zekharya the son of Yehoyada.

In this *shiur* we addressed Yehoash's repairing of the Temple and the arrival of Chazael the king of Aram. In the next *shiur* we will complete our study of the second period of the reign of Yehoash king of Yehuda.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. In his book, *Mikra u-Mesoret*, vol. 1, 1924, pp. 121-122. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is interesting to note that Yehoram and Achazayhu, despite their exceedingly problematic conduct in all areas (between man and God and between man and man), dedicated of their property to the treasury of the house of God. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)