

THE BOOK OF II SHMUEL

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LECTURE 75: CHAPTER 8

DAVID'S WARS (PART II)

I. THE PLUNDER

In the previous *shiur*, we discussed David's military victories over the Philistines, Moav, and Aram, described in the opening verses of our chapter. Following the victory over Aram, Scripture describes the plunder taken by David in this war:

(7) And David took the shields of gold¹[1] that were on the servants of Hadadezer and brought them to Jerusalem. (8) And from Betach and from Berotai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took exceeding much brass. (9) And when To'i king of Hamat heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, (10) then To'i sent Yoram his son²[2] unto king David to salute him and to bless him – because he had fought against Hadadezer and smitten him, for Hadadezer had wars with To'i – and he brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass. (11) These also did king David dedicate unto the Lord, with the silver and gold that he dedicated of all the nations which he subdued: (12) of Aram, and of Moav, and of the children of Amon, and

1 [1] The reference is to shields, as in the verse: "Your neck is like the tower of David built with turrets, whereon there hang a thousand shields (*ha-magen*), all the armor (*shiltei*) of the mighty men" (*Shir Ha-Shirim* 4:4); see also II *Melakhim* 11:10.

2 [2] The parallel verse in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* reads: "He sent Hadoram his son." In our book, the idolatrous name "Hado," which parallels Hadad, is replaced by the name of the God of Israel. It is possible that this replacement is part of the approach of the redactor of the book of *Shmuel* to omit idolatrous names (as in the substitutions Eshba'al/Ish-Boshet, Yeruba'al/Yeruboshet; see *shiur* 60, note 7), or it is possible that To'i himself changed the name of his son in honor of David. The name Hadadezer also appears in the Torah in its Hebrew form in the name Eliezer, who was also from Damesek.

of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rechoh, king of Tzova.

According to this account, David dedicated the plunder to God without specifying the purpose. But in *Divrei Ha-yamim* it says: "And from Tivchat and from Kun,^{3[3]} cities of Hadadezer, David took very much brass, **wherewith Shlomo made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass**" (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 18:8). This difference seems to be part of a fundamental difference between the two books. The book of *Divrei Ha-yamim* emphasizes time and time again David's involvement in the building of the Temple. This involvement finds expression in various areas, the first of which being the identification of the site of the *Mikdash* in the threshing floor of Aravna (in *Divrei Ha-yamim*, "Ornan") the Yevusi. In *Divrei Ha-yamim*, it is explicitly stated that following the angel's appearance in the threshing floor, David asserted: "Then David said, ' This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of burnt-offering for Israel' " (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 22:1). This assertion is entirely missing from the book of *Shmuel*. David's involvement is also expressed in his vigorous collecting of building materials for the Temple and in his preparing them for his son Shlomo, as is mentioned in the continuation of that same chapter in *Divrei Ha-yamim*:

And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God. And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the couplings; and brass in abundance without weight; and cedar-trees without number; for the Tzidonites and those of Tzor brought cedar-trees in abundance to David...

Then He called for Shlomo his son, and charged him to build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel...

" Now, behold, in my straits I have prepared for the house of the Lord a hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight, for it is in abundance; timber also and stone have I prepared, and you may add thereto. Moreover, there are workmen with you in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all men that are skillful in any manner of work; of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, there is no

3 [3] There is also a difference between the two books with respect to the names of Hadadezer's cities: In *Shmuel* we find Betach, whereas in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* we find Tivchat (a switch in the order of the letters, which is a common phenomenon); in *Shmuel* we find Berotai, whereas in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* we find Kun (according to the Radak in our chapter, this city had two names).

number. Arise and be doing, and the Lord be with you.” (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 18: 2-4, 6, 14-16)

The collection of building materials and the command to Shlomo are also not at all mentioned in the book of *Shmuel* or in David's testament to Shlomo in the book of *Melakhim*. In the continuation in *Divrei Ha-yamim*, it is stated that David also drew up precise and detailed building plans:

Then David gave to Shlomo his son the pattern of the porch [of the Temple], and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper rooms thereof, and of the inner chambers thereof, and of the place of the ark-cover; and the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, for the courts of the house of the Lord, and for all the chambers round about, for the treasuries of the house of God, and for the treasuries of the hallowed things; also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the Lord, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the Lord: of gold by weight for the vessels of gold, for all vessels of every kind of service; of silver for all the vessels of silver by weight, for all vessels of every kind of service; by weight also for the candlesticks of gold, and for the lamps thereof, of gold, by weight for every candlestick and for the lamps thereof; and for the candlesticks of silver, silver by weight for every candlestick and for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick; and the gold by weight for the tables of showbread, for every table; and silver for the tables of silver; and the flesh-hooks, and the basins, and the jars, of pure gold; and for the golden bowls by weight for every bowl; and for the silver bowls by weight for every bowl; and for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot, even the *keruvim*, that spread out their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the Lord. All this [do I give you] in writing, as the Lord has made me wise by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern. (ibid. 28:11-19)

There is also no hint to any of this in the books of *Shmuel* and *Melakhim*.

It is no wonder, then, that the book of *Divrei Ha-yamim* is the only one to mention that the plunder taken by David served in the construction of the Temple vessels. But how precisely are we to understand the difference between the books? Why does the book of *Shmuel* totally ignore David's part in the building of the Temple?

It seems that the difference is rooted in the difference between the two books regarding the reason that David did not build the Temple, a difference that we noted in chapter 7 (*shiur* no. 72). As may be recalled, Natan's vision emphasized the problem of timing – the Temple cannot be built before regime stability is achieved. But David himself says in *Divrei Ha-yamim* that he was barred from building the Temple on account of the great amount of blood that he had shed. Now, it is precisely in the chapters in which David emphasizes this point (I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 22 and 28) that his considerable part in the preparation of the materials and plans for the building of the Temple is described. It seems, then, that the blood that David shed only made it impossible for the building to be called by his name, but it did not disqualify him from participating in the preparation of the groundwork for it. The book of *Shmuel*, on the other hand, emphasizes that the time had not yet arrived to build the Temple, and a long road of political and governmental stability would still have to be traveled. From this perspective, it is not at all fitting to deal with the *Mikdash* at this time, when other objectives must still be achieved. For this reason, the book of *Shmuel* does not present David as one who dealt in any way with *Mikdash*-related matters.

II THE WAR AGAINST EDOM

Let us move on now to the next two verses:

(13) And David got him a name⁴[4] when he returned from smiting Aram in the Valley of Salt, even eighteen thousand men. (14) And he put garrisons in Edom;⁵[5] throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all the Edomites became servants to David.

4 [4] The word "*shem*" refers to a memorial monument, like "*yad*," and in the sense of the word in the verses: "And they said: 'And let us make us a name (*shem*); lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" ([Bereishit 11:4](#)); "Even unto them will I give in My house and within My walls a monument and a memorial (*va-shem*)" (*Yeshayahu* 56:5).

5 [5] The style is slightly surprising: "And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons" is written in a poetic style, and it is possible that Scripture is integrating a victory song into its relating of the events; the song's refrain may be found in the continuation of the verse, which had appeared also in verse 6 (see the previous *shiur*): "And the Lord gave victory to David wherever he went." This phenomenon of integrating such a song into the narrative is found in other places as well - for example, in the war fought in

The difficulty is striking. Verse 14 deals with the steps that David took in Edom after smiting it; why, then, does verse 13 mention Aram? Moreover, it seems that the Valley of Salt is connected in one way or another to the Sea of Salt, and it is thus more reasonable to assume that we are dealing with a war against Edom, and not against Aram. Indeed, this is precisely what it says in the parallel verse in I *Divrei Ha-yamim* (18:12): "Moreover, Avishai the son of Tzeruya smote of **Edom** in the Valley of Salt eighteen thousand." the heading of psalm 60 in *Tehillim* similarly says: "When he strove with Aram-Naharayim and with Aram-Tzova, and Yoav returned, and smote of **Edom** in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand."⁶[6]

After combining all the sources, it seems that our chapter should have read: "And David got him a name when he returned from smiting Aram [and Yoav/Avishai smote of Edom] in the Valley of Salt, even eighteen thousand men;" this would resolve all the difficulties. Why, then, were the words in brackets omitted? Some suggest that they were omitted by mistake because of the similarity of the words "*et Aram*" and "*et Edom*." It seems, however, that there is a more fundamental explanation. We have already seen in previous chapters Scripture's reservations regarding Yoav and Avishai the sons of Tzeruya. It seems then that Scripture wished to omit their part in the victories over the enemies, and thus create the impression that it was David who actually smote Edom.⁷[7]

In any event, this war also had a long-term impact. Edom was subjected to the kingdom of Israel until the days of Yehoshafat, and even in his time, we read: "And there was no king in Edom: a deputy was king" ([I](#)

Binyamin: "They inclosed the Benjamites round about, and chased them/ and overtook them at their resting-place" (*Shofetim* 20:43), and similarly when the Philistines capture Shimshon: "And when the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said, Our god has delivered/ into our hand/ our enemy/, and the destroyer of our country/ who has slain many of us" (*ibid.* 16:24).

6 [6] This verse differs from the verse in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* in two details: First of all, it mentions Yoav, and not Avishai; second, it mentions a figure of twelve thousand, and not eighteen thousand. The Radak, in his usual manner, tries to reconcile the two sources, suggesting that Avishai started the battle, killing six thousand men, and afterwards Yoav killed another twelve thousand people, for a total of eighteen thousand people.

7 [7] In the same way that the book of *Shmuel* omits Yoav's part in the conquest of Jerusalem (see chapter 5, and *shiur* no. 68), even though he is mentioned in I *Divrei Ha-Yamim* 11:6.

[Melakhim 22:48](#)). Only later, in the days of Yoram ben Achav, was kingdom restored to Edom ([II Melakhim 3](#)).

III. THE CONCLUDING VERSES

The chapter ends with the following verses:

(15) And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed justice and righteousness unto all his people. (16) And Yoav the son of Tzeruya was over the host; and Yehoshafat the son of Achilud was recorder; (17) and Tzadok the son of Achituv and Achimelekh the son of Evyatar⁸ were priests; and Seraya was scribe; (18) and Benaya the son of Yehoyada and the Keretites and the Peletites⁹ and David's sons were chief ministers.¹⁰

8 [8] The words "and Achimelekh the son of Evyatar" are difficult, for Evyatar was the son of Achimelekh (see [I Melakhim 22:20](#)). The Radak explains that Achimelekh was also the name of Evyatar's son, and he proves from here that even though Evyatar was removed from the priesthood only in the time of Shelomo (see [I Melakhim 2:21](#)), the process of his removal began already in the days of David. From Scripture we know of another son of Evyatar named Yonatan, who partnered with Achima'atz the son of Tzadok in David's spy ring at the time of Avshalom's revolt (see [II Shmuel 15:36](#)) and participated in the appointment of Adoniyahu as king ([I Melakhim 1:22](#)), but nowhere else is another son mentioned.

9 [9] The verse in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* reads: "And Benaya the son of Yehoyada **was over** (a) the Keretites and the Peletites " (*I Divrei Ha-Yamim* 18:7), and so too below 20:23. Rashi cites Targum Yonatan, who understands the phrase as referring to archers and sharp-shooters, and also the explanation of *Chazal* that the reference is to the *Urim Ve-Tumim*. The Radak brings yet another explanation: These are the names of two families in Israel who were close to the king. According to the plain sense, the reference is to a band of non-Jewish mercenaries, from Keretim and Peleshet, who were commanded by Benayahu the son of Yehoyada.

10 [10] These words are very surprising. The parallel in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* reads: "And the sons of David were chief about the king" (*I Divrei Ha-Yamim* 18:17), and in light of this the commentators to our chapter understand the word "priests" in the sense of distinguished people.

These verses seem to serve as summation verses for David's kingdom. Indeed, a similar list appears also at the end of chapter 20:

Now Yoav was over all the host of Israel; and Benaya the son of Yehoyada was over the Keretites and over the Peletites; and Adoram was over the levy; and Yehoshafat the son of Achilud was the recorder; and Sheva was scribe; and Tzadok and Evyatar were priests; and Ira also the Yairite was chief minister unto David. (20:23-26)

The location of these summation verses at the end of chapter 20 is understandable, for that chapter closes the narration of the events occurring in the book of *Shmuel*.¹¹[11] But what are they doing at the end of our chapter?

It seems that by placing these verses here, Scripture wishes to say that in certain senses, David's kingdom came to an end already at this stage. Chapters 5-8, the special structure of which was analyzed in the previous *shiur*, are the high point of David's kingdom, both from a military-political perspective and from a spiritual perspective. From here on, there will be a steady deterioration: It begins with the David and Bat-Sheva affair, which takes place at the very time of Yoav's war against Amon (chapters 10-12); and it continues with a series of mishaps that befall the house of David afterwards – the Amnon and Tamar affair, Avshalom's revolt, and the rebellion of Sheva ben Bikhri.¹²[12] These verses mark the end of a positive and meaningful unit and its climax: God's promise of everlasting kingship to the house of David.

(Translated by David Strauss)

11 [11] Chapters 21-24 are considered appendices to the book of I *Shmuel*, for they include several accounts between which there is no chronological continuity: The story of the Giv'onites (21:1-14); the wars against the giants (ibid. 15-22); the song of David (22); David's last wars (23:1-7); a list of David's warriors (ibid. 8-39); and the story of the census and the purchase of the threshing floor of Aravna.

12 [12] We shall deal with chapter 9 in the next *shiur*. Here let it be noted that this chapter serves as an exposition for the story of Tziva and Mefiboshet, the main part of which is in chapters 16 and 19, and it is part of the unit relating to the Bat-Sheva affair and its consequences.

