

THE BOOK OF II SHMUEL

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LECTURE 69: CHAPTER 5 (III)

THE SOLIDIFICATION OF DAVID'S KINGDOM

I. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTER

In the previous lecture, we dealt with the first action that David took after he was anointed as king over all of Israel - the conquest of Jerusalem. Now let us take a broader look at the chapter. When we examine the chapter from this perspective, we see that it describes several events, between there are verses that grant us a more comprehensive view of what is happening:

1	6-9	The conquest of Jerusalem
2	10	And David waxed greater and greater; for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.
3	11	And Chiram king of Tzor sent messengers to David, and cedar-trees, and carpenters, and masons; and they built David a house.
4	12	And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people Israel's sake.
5	13-16	The birth of David's children in Jerusalem
6	17-25	The two battles against the Philistines

It would seem from this description that this chapter is meant to tell us about the solidification of David's kingdom. First, we have an account of the capture of his capital city (1), then, we are told of the building of David's house (3), and finally, we come to the founding of a dynasty in Jerusalem, which also includes David's heir to the royal throne, Shlomo (5). Between these reports, Scripture inserts verses (2, 4) that express the same idea: David's ascent and the solidification of his kingdom.

This tendency is particularly striking in light of the assumption that these sections describe events that did not take place at this time, but rather were recorded here in order to describe the solidification of David's monarchy. This is clear regarding the section relating to the birth of David's children in Jerusalem (5), which includes, as stated, the birth of Shlomo, which occurred at a much more advanced stage of David's rule.¹[1] The building of David's house with the help of Chiram, king of Tzor, seems also to be a much later event, for we find Chiram ruling as king of Tzor many years after David became king over all of Israel in Jerusalem; the same Chiram helps Shlomo build the Temple (I *Melakhim* 5) – construction that ended in the eleventh year of Shlomo's reign (ibid. 6, 38) – and twenty years later, Shlomo is still negotiating with him (ibid. 9:10-11).²[2] If indeed David built his house at the very beginning of his reign in Jerusalem, it would turn out that Chiram ruled during the 33 years of David's reign in Jerusalem and another 31 years during the reign of Shlomo, so that he ruled as king over Tzor for at least 64 years – something that seems rather exceptional.³[3] Thus, it seems that David built his house only later, but the construction is recorded here as part of the account of the solidification of David's kingdom.

It is possible, then, that David's conquest of Jerusalem was also not, from a chronological perspective, his first act following his anointment as king. The account of his battles with the Philistines at the end of our chapter opens with the words:

(17) And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the stronghold.

The beginning of the verse seems to be a direct continuation of the description of David's anointing, with which verse 3 had ended: "And they anointed David king over Israel." Had the attack followed the conquest of

1 [1] As is explained below in chapter 12.

2 [2] It might be suggested that there were two different kings with this name, but this solution is difficult, for the Chiram who talks with Shlomo is identified as a king who was very close to David: "For Chiram was ever a lover of David" (I *Melakhim* 5:15).

3 [3] This is, among other things, perhaps the basis for the *midrashim* that attribute extreme longevity to Chiram, identifying him with the Chiram about whom Yechezkel prophesied, and even with Chira, the Adulamite shepherd of Yehuda (see *Bereishit Rabba* 84,5; *Yalkut Shim'oni Yechezkel*, 367).

Jerusalem, it is reasonable to assume that Scripture would have noted that the Philistines had heard of David's conquest of the city, and not just that he had been anointed as king over Israel.

Moreover, Scripture notes that David went down to the "stronghold." At first glance it would seem that this is the stronghold mentioned in verse 9: "And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David." But that this understanding is difficult for several reasons. First, if indeed the battle took place after the conquest of Jerusalem, it is not clear why David had to **go down** to the stronghold, when he was already there. Second, the site of the battle is mentioned later: "Now the Philistines had come and spread themselves in the valley of Refa'im" (v. 18). Once again, were David already in the city of David, it is reasonable to assume that the Philistines would have assembled in that area, and not in the valley of Refa'im.

It therefore seems that the battle with the Philistines took place at an earlier stage. It stands to reason that the Philistines tried to capture David immediately after he was anointed as king in Hebron, and David was forced to shut himself in a safe place – the stronghold – that was near the valley of Refa'im. We know that such a stronghold existed from what is stated in chapter 23:

And three of the thirty chiefs went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam; and the troop of the Philistines were encamped in the valley of Refa'im. And David was then in the **stronghold**, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. And David longed, and said, "Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" (23:13-15).

There is no question that the stronghold mentioned there is close to the valley of Refa'im and Bethlehem, and not in the city of David. It stands to reason, then, that the reference in our chapter is also to that stronghold, and this identification fits in with our argument regarding the order of events in the chapter.

To summarize, our chapter describes a series of events that took place over an extended period of time, but were recorded in direct succession in our chapter because they were all connected to the solidification of David's kingdom.

II. THE SONS OF DAVID IN JERUSALEM

As stated, one of the topics in our chapter is a list of the sons born to David in Jerusalem:

(14) And these are the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem: Shamu'a, and Shovav, and Natan, and Shlomo; (15) and Yivchar, and Elishu'a, and Nefeg, and Yafi'a; (16) and Elishama, and Elyada, and Elifelet.

A parallel list, with slight changes, appears in I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 3:

(5) And these were born unto him in Jerusalem: Shim'a, and Shovav, and Natan, and Shlomo, four, of Bat-Shu'a the daughter of Amiel; (6) and Yivchar, and Elishama, and Elifelet; (7) and Noga, and Nefeg, and Yafi'a; (8) and Elishama, and Elyada, and Elifelet, nine.

Besides the addition of several sons, the verse in *Divrei ha-Yamim* presents a significant difficulty. According to what is stated there, the first four sons were of "Bat-Shu'a the daughter of Amiel," who is "Bat-Sheva the daughter of Eliyam" (I *Shmuel* 11:3).⁴[4] This account stands in apparent contradiction to what is reported later in chapter 12 - that following the death of the son born to Bat-Sheva after her first relations with David, Shlomo was born: "And David comforted Bat-Sheva his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and called his name Shlomo. And the Lord loved him" (12:24). How then is it possible to understand the verse in *Divrei Ha-yamim*, which implies that Shlomo was the fourth son born to David and Bat-Sheva?

The commentators to *Divrei Ha-yamim* (see Radak and *Metzudot*) write that the sons are listed there from the youngest to the oldest, so that Shlomo

4 [4] An interesting point follows from this: David and Bat-Sheva name one of their children Natan – the same name as the prophet who rebuked David for his part in the affair.

is indeed the first child. With all its difficulty, there does not seem to be an alternative explanation.

My revered teacher, R. Yaakov Medan,^{5[5]} offered an interesting suggestion, based on *Chazal's* midrashic comment on what David said regarding the lamb of the poor person: "And he shall restore the lamb fourfold" (12:6). *Chazal* expounded that this was indeed fulfilled in David, for four of his children suffered harm: the first child born to Bat-Sheva, Amnon, Avshalom, and Tamar.^{6[6]} This *midrash* contains a double difficulty: First, Bat-Sheva was also a partner in the sin, and she too should have been punished. Second, Amnon and Avshalom died for their own sins. R. Medan suggests that the "fourfold" are the first child and the three next children born to David and Bat-Sheva – Shamu'a, Natan, and Shovav – who all died, according to this understanding, as part of the punishment imposed on David and Bat-Sheva. Only after the death of the four children was Shlomo born and he survived.

Clever though it may be, it seems to me that this suggestion is difficult for several reasons. First of all, the very assumption that four of David's children were condemned to die because of his statement, "And he shall restore the lamb fourfold," is midrashic interpretation. According to the plain sense of the text, this was merely David's comment on the parable of the lamb. David's punishment was not quantitatively limited, but rather stated in general terms: "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house" (*ibid.* 10). Second, it is very difficult to see how this fits in with the verse, "And David comforted Bat-Sheva his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her; and she bore a son, and called his name Shlomo," which implies that Shlomo was born immediately after the death of the first child. If indeed other children died, Scripture should have emphasized this, but the plain meaning of the verse implies just the opposite. We are left, then, with our difficulty with the verse in *Divrei Ha-yamim*, and we must content ourselves at this time with the Radak's solution.

5 [5] In his book, *David U-Bat-Sheva – Ha-Chet, Ha-Onesh Ve-Ha-Tikun* (Alon Shevut, 5762).

6 [6] See *Yoma* 22b; Rashi explains accordingly in chapter 12. It is interesting that *Chazal* did not suggest that the fourth child to suffer harm was Adoniyahu, who also died prematurely, but rather preferred to mention Tamar, even though she did not die, but was raped. This can be explained in several ways: Adoniyahu did not die during David's lifetime, but only after his death; he was not murdered, but was rather executed in accordance with the laws governing the conduct of a king; or because the story is not reported in the book of *Shemuel*, but rather in the book of *Melakhim*.

III. THE BATTLES AGAINST THE PHILISTINES

The last part of the chapter describes two of David's battles with the Philistines. Despite their similarity in location, there is a manifest difference between the two battles:

The first battle (vv. 17-21)	The second battle (vv. 22-25)
<p>(17) And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the stronghold. (18) Now the Philistines had come and spread themselves in the valley of Refa'im. (19) And David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you deliver them into my hand?" And the Lord said unto David, "Go up; for I will certainly deliver the Philistines into your hand." (21) And David came to Ba'al-Peratzim, and David smote them there; and he said, "The Lord has broken mine enemies before me, like the breach of waters." Therefore, the name of that place was called Ba'al-Peratzim. (21) And they left their images there, and David and his men took them away.^{7[7]}</p>	<p>(22) And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Refa'im. (23) And when David inquired of the Lord, He said: "You shall not go up; make a circuit behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees. (24) And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then you shall bestir yourself; for then is the Lord gone out before you to smite the host of the Philistines." (25) And David did so, as the Lord commanded him, and smote the Philistines from Geva until you come to Gezer.</p>

7 [7] This matter is very surprising: Why did David and his men take the Philistine idols? Indeed, the parallel verse in *Divrei Ha-Yamim* reads: "And they left their gods there; and David gave commandment, and they were burned with fire" (*Divrei Ha-Yamim* 14:12), and most of the commentators explain our verse in the same manner (the word "*va-yisa'em*" is understood in the sense of "*masu'a*," "fire"). It seems, however, that our verse can also be understood in its plain sense: David and his men took the Philistine idols in order to humiliate them and demonstrate their victory over them. If this is correct, this indicates the closing of the circle that had remained open since the first battle against the Philistines in the book of *Shemuel*, at the end of which the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the Temple of Dagon to demonstrate their victory, as it were, over Him (see I *Shemuel* 5, and what we wrote there [lecture no. 9].)

In both battles, David inquires of God. But whereas in the first battle, the question is worded in positive terms, "Shall I go up against the Philistines," and the answer is similarly positive, "Go up," in the second battle, God's command is "You shall not go up." In both cases, David fulfills God's words to the letter, something that should not be taken for granted.

First of all, David's conduct is recorded in striking contrast to that of Shaul in his first battle with the Philistines, when Shaul did not wait for the prophet Shmuel to offer his sacrifice (see I *Shmuel* 13-14, and at length in the lectures on those chapters). Afterwards, he did not inquire of God, even though it would have been possible for him to do so, as is emphasized by Scripture: "And Shaul tarried in the uttermost part of Giv'a under the pomegranate-tree which is in Migron; and the people that were with him were about six hundred men, and Achiya, the son of Achituv, Ichavod's brother, the son of Pinchas, the son of Eli, the priest of the Lord in Shilo, wearing an efod" (I *Shmuel* 14:2-3).⁸[8] Moreover, when Shaul sees the tumult in the Philistine camp, he finally turns to the priest, but while the latter is preparing himself for the word of God, Shaul stops him and prevents him from carrying out the task: "And it came to pass, while Shaul talked unto the priest, that the tumult that was in the camp of the Philistines went on and increased; and Shaul said unto the priest, 'Withdraw your hand'" (ibid. v. 19). David, in contrast to Shaul, was careful at all times to inquire of God,⁹[9] even after he became king over all of Israel, expressing his recognition that everything is in the hands of heaven.

Second, we can see a connection between this account and the story of the spies and the *ma'apilim*, which also revolved around the issue of obeying the word of God – both the command to go up and the command not to go up. In his first parting speech, Moshe emphasizes that the two sins were two sides of the same coin:

The sin of the spies	The sin of the <i>ma'apilim</i>
<i>Devarim</i> 1:21, 27	<i>Devarim</i> 1:42-43
Behold, the Lord your God has set	And the Lord said unto me, Say unto

⁸ [8] In our lecture on that chapter (lecture no. 24), we saw that while Shaul did not inquire of God, even though it would have been easy for him to do so, Yonatan managed to inquire of God even without the formal possibility of doing so - by way of the sign in the continuation of the chapter.

⁹ [9] See I *Shemuel* 23:2, 4, 10; 30:8.

<p>the land before you; go up, take possession...</p> <p>Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God.</p>	<p>them, Go not up, neither fight...</p> <p>So I spoke unto you, and ye hearkened not; but you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and were presumptuous, and went up into the hill-country.</p>
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Moshe rebukes the people for not going up when God told them to do so, thus rebelling against the word of God, and for going up when He told them not to do so, once again rebelling against His word. Indeed, both tests are difficult, and every individual in Israel, and especially the king, is obligated to obey God's command in both cases.

“MAKE A CIRCUIT BEHIND THEM”

Why, indeed, did God tell David not to go up in the second battle, but rather to make a circuit behind the Philistines, in contrast to what happened during the first battle?

The answer to this question seems to be connected to another question arising from the account of the second battle.¹⁰[10] Like the first battle, the second battle also started in the valley of Refa'im, but it ended elsewhere: "And David did so, as the Lord commanded him, and smote the Philistines from Geva until you come to Gezer." How is it that a battle that started south-west of Jerusalem ends far from there in the region of Geva and Gezer, north of Jerusalem?¹¹[11]

It stands to reason that the second battle was a little more complicated than the first. The Philistines sent forces to the valley of Refa'im, but that was merely a diversionary tactic, the goal of which was to draw David southward, and then to attack from the north. It is for this reason that God told David not

¹⁰ [10] What is stated from here on is based on an article by Yitzchak Sapir, "*Be-Sham'ekha et Kol Tze'ada Be-Roshei Bekha'im az Techeratz*," *Shomeron U-Vinyamin* 1 (5747), pp. 54-59.

¹¹ [11] Geva is identified with Giba near Michmas, and Gezer is found in the region of Ayalon.

to go out against the Philistines in the valley of Refa'im, but rather to surprise them and attack them from behind, from the north – "*mi-mul bekha'im*." This expression is exceedingly obscure. The commentators write that the reference is to trees, and they offer various explanations as to how these trees contributed to the war effort (see Radak and Ralbag). It is, however, possible that the reference is to cliffs,¹²[12] which are common in this area, and through which David and his men emerged to surprise the Philistines.

If this explanation is correct, it well accounts for God's command to David not to go up, and it shows how God rewarded David, who obeyed His word, guiding him to adopt a plan of military deception and thus rout the Philistines.

(Translated by David Strauss)

¹² [12] Thus proposed Sapir (see note 10), based on the verses in *Iyov* 28:9-11: "He puts forth his hand upon the flinty rock; He overturns the mountains by the roots. He cuts out channels among the rocks; and his eye sees every precious thing. He binds the streams '*mi-bekhi'*...."

Here the word "*bekhi*" (plural: "*bekha'im*," like "*tzevi*" - "*tzeva'im*") parallels the words "*chalamish*" (flint) and "*tzur*" (rock).