

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

Sefer Melakhim: The Book of Kings
By Rav Alex Israel

Dedicated in memory of Jack Stone, and Helen and Benjamin Pearlman, z"l,
and in honor of Mrs. Esther Stone.

By Gary and Ilene Stone of Teaneck, NJ

Dedicated by Aaron and Tzipora Ross and family in memory of their
grandparents Shimon ben Moshe Rosenthal, Shmuel Nachamu ben Shlomo
Moshe HaKohen Fredman, and Chaya bat Yitzchak David Fredman.

Shiur #10 – SHLOMO'S PUNISHMENT

INTRODUCTION

After detailing Shlomo's sin of idolatry, the *Navi* now tells us about its consequence, the punishment that will be meted out to Shlomo. God's response to Shlomo's abandonment of God's instructions is devastating in its severity:

The Lord said to Shlomo: Because you are guilty of this – you have not kept the covenant and the laws which I enjoined upon you – I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. However, in your days I shall not tear it away, because of your father David; I will tear it from your son. However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give your son one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen. (11:11-13)

In these lines we read the pronouncement of Shlomo's punishment directly from God. Later, the condemnation is restated by the prophet Achiya Ha-Shiloni in greater detail in his prophecy to Yerovam at the end of the chapter (v.31-37). This repetition of the severe punishment of Shlomo forms an envelope structure to the chapter.

1-10	Shlomo's sin of idolatry
11-13	Declaration of punishment
14-28	<u>Political adversaries</u> Hadad (14-22) Rezon (23-25) Yerovam (26-28)
29-40	Achiya Hashiloni's encounter with Yerovam

Restatement of Shlomo's punishment (Achiya)Summative *pesukim* of Shomo's reign

Given this structure, it seems natural to read the section bounded by these two condemnations (v.14-28) as the detailing of the ensuing punishment visited upon Shlomo. It is in this section that we read of three "*satanim*," political enemies who stir up opposition to Shlomo's reign. The final of the three is Yerovam, who, as we shall read in chapter 12, leads the revolt against Shlomo's son, thus dividing the kingdom into two and wresting ten tribes of the kingdom away from the House of David. These characters, political opponents of the king, embody the punishment that is meted out to Shlomo Ha-Melekh.

PART 1 - THREE SATANIM

Let us study the section in which we meet these three dissidents, Rezon, Hadad, and Yerovam. They all rebel in some manner against King Shlomo, rejecting his sovereign authority. They form a nice pattern in the countries in which they take protection:

Name	From	Take protection in
Hadad	Edom	Egypt
Rezon	Tzova	Syria (Aram)
Yerovam	Ephraim (Tzereda)	Egypt

The first two are defined by the *pesukim* as "*satanim*." Yerovam is not given that title, but he is explicitly designated by prophecy to overthrow the Solomonite monarchy and to "tear it" from the hands of Shlomo's descendents. As we will see in chapter 12, Yerovam is the motivating force behind a national rebellion.

ALL THE DAYS OF SHLOMO?

Despite the fancy title given to these political opponents, there are some fundamental unanswered questions about these rebels. What is the historical role of Hadad and Rezon?

TITLE AND PLACING: On the one hand, the title "*satan*" and the placing of their story in this chapter, between Shlomo's sins and the Yerovam story, would lead us to surmise that Hadad and Rezon are an instrument of Shlomo's punishment. But is that in fact the case?

CHRONOLOGY: The problem of the timing of this political resistance is more than a little confusing. First, we hear of Hadad the Edomite, of the Edomite royal family (11:14), who escaped as a baby during King David's six month campaign against Edom.¹ It appears that he takes protection in Egypt until Shlomo's rise to power. From that point on, he asks to be released, possibly

¹ See *Melakhim I* 11:15, and *Shmuel II* 8:13-14.

to return to Edom in order to lead a resistance movement to King Shlomo. But the historical timing seems to be mismatched. After all, Shlomo rules for forty years. If Hadad has been a national threat for that long, why do we hear of him only now?

POLITICAL HISTORY: Furthermore, we have no account of any serious challenge or harm that Hadad might have caused the Israelite kingdom. Has he been causing trouble throughout the reign of Shlomo? If so, why do we hear about this enemy at this particular juncture? And let us add that Shlomo had full control of the lands of Edom!² Shlomo built a port at Etzion Gaver (9:26), today's Eilat. If Edom was giving him border trouble, attacking convoys traveling from the port to Jerusalem and carrying exotic discoveries or military equipment, Shlomo would certainly have retaliated. But there is no record of a single military campaign waged by Shlomo against Edom.

Hadad is not alone. The second "*satan*," Rezon from Syria (Tzova), is described as "an aggressor to Israel **during the entire period of Shlomo**" (11:25), and the *pesukim* seem to indicate that Aram gained independence during this period (11:25).³ Yet the text in chapter 5 states quite clearly:

He controlled the entire region west of the Euphrates – all the kings... from Tiphseh to Gaza... and he had peace on all of his borders roundabout. All the days of Solomon... (5:4)

Shlomo seems to be quite in control of Aram. Was Rezon in fact a threat or aggressor during Shlomo's long reign?

Radak raises this problem and explains:

It is referring to the period after Shlomo got old – then these political dissidents arose, at the same juncture that his [Shlomo's] heart moved aside from God. (Commentary to 11:23)

In other words, the notion that these political aggressors were around from David's time or "throughout the days of Shlomo" is mistaken. Their trouble

² The account according to the internal evidence in Tanakh is far from comprehensive, but we may mention that *Shmuel* II 8:13-14 and *Melakhim* I 22:48 both mention Israelite dominance over Edom. Many suggest ongoing Israelite dominance over Edom throughout the period of David until after Yehoshafat. Likewise, Edom joined Yehuda and Israel as an ally in war in *Melakhim* ch.3. Only in *Melakhim* II 8:22 do we see Edomite independence from Yehuda. Later in *Tanakh*, Edom appears to be an aggressor, especially in the context of the *churban*; see *Tehillim* 137:7 and *Eikha* 4:21-22, and the book of *Ovadia*.

³ Verse 11:25 is very confusing. After talking about Rezon, it then reintroduces Hadad into the picture: "He was an adversary to Israel all the days of Shlomo, adding to the trouble caused by Hadad. He rejected the rule of Israel, and he ruled over Aram." Is this all talking about Rezon? Rezon DOES originate from Syria, making his rule in Aram quite anticipated. However, the name Hadad, or Ben Hadad, is the standard name for the king of Aram/Syria! Could Hadad possibly be the candidate to the throne in Aram? For this reason, the Raibag assumes that it is Hadad who becomes king in Aram! In contrast, the Septuagint changes Aram to Edom - exchanging the letter "*resh*" for a "*daleth*" - assuming that Hadad from Edom becomes king in Edom.

began only in Shlomo's latter years, the same time at which he capitulated to *avoda zara*. And obviously, the former is the result of the latter.

Abarbanel eloquently expresses that this represents a case of "*midda knegged mida*," divine reciprocity:

All this was in the latter years of Shlomo. Just as in his home and palaces, there were many abominations which his wives served as gods; correspondingly, God set up against him various aggressors of one sort or another. God did not protest their existence in the same manner that Shlomo failed to protest his wives' idolatry.

The only problem with this view is its apparent contradiction to the simple reading of the text. The text talks of these problems "throughout the days of Shlomo." Hence, Prof Yehuda Elitzur, one of the leading editors of the *Da'at Mikra* series, offers a different proposal in a wonderfully insightful article:⁴

The general picture is thus: During Shlomo's reign, there were a series of occurrences that weakened and rocked his kingdom/sovereignty. These events are fully explicable according to straightforward real historical explanations. Nonetheless, and specifically because that is the case, the *Tanakh* offers at the outset an idealistic-prophetic explanation that express the view that these dangerous national events were some sort of result or product of Shlomo's actions. We are talking about actions in which there is absolutely no rational connection between the act and the consequences. It is obvious that Hadad the Edomite was unconcerned regarding the fact that "Shlomo loved many wives..." Neither was Rezon particularly troubled by the shrines of Solomons wives...

... The prophetic author sees a higher order over and above the realistic political plane, and it is that order that is primary. What you see here on earth is a true process, but it is not the total picture.

Prof. Elitzur is claiming that whereas every empire has its dissidents and political outlaws, in prophetic hindsight, we can identify many anti-Shlomo forces that rose during his reign as instruments of punishment. *Sefer Melakhim* brings the information about these national irritants in order to express that in God's mind, these state problems are a response to Shlomo's sins.

This perspective is expressed through the simple use of the word "*satan*." It is surely an unusual choice of language, but it has appeared already in the Shlomo narrative before. The sense of calm and tranquility that prevailed in Shlomo's reign is described in Shlomo's own words:

Now the Lord my God has given me respite all around; there is no adversary (*ein satan*) and no mischance. (5:18)

⁴ <http://www.daat.ac.il/DAAT/kitveyet/deot/elyzor.htm>

In the same manner that Shlomo's commitment to God induced a national atmosphere of peace, his waywardness generated turbulence and trouble. The key word is "*satan*."

SEEDS OF DISASTER

However, I believe that there is a further possibility here. I propose that these *satanim* are expressions of small beginnings of troubles that will ferment and grow, generating FUTURE threats. In this regard, Egypt's backing of Hadad and Yerovam is a political harbinger and indicator of the future invasion by Pharaoh Shishak,⁵ which devastates Jerusalem just five years after Shlomo's rule. Shishak, King of Egypt is the real destroyer of Shlomo's legacy, as he "carried off the treasures of the House of God," stripping Jerusalem of the wealth and finery of Shlomo's era. Shishak had been planning this attack for a generation, hosting an entire array of renegades against Shlomo's regime. He waited for Shlomo to die, and then he attacked. Our chapter gives the underpinnings of that calamitous attack.

Similarly, Yerovam's rebellion as described in chapter 11 is relatively minor. Chapter 11 describes the seeds of conflict, while in chapter 12, Yerovam's enmity develops into a full-fledged rebellion.

Likewise, the fact that Rezon is a new king in Aram (see footnote #3) with anti-Israelite tendencies, warns of future enmity between the two countries. **These "*satanim*" are not so much existential threats in Shlomo's era, as the product of current dissent which becomes the seeds of future destruction.**

PART II GOD'S DECREE AND ITS MITIGATION

Let us return to analyze God's declaration of punishment to Shlomo. The punishment is expressed in an intriguing way.

First a sweeping pronouncement is declared: "I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants." In other words, Shlomo will lose the throne and it will be passed to one of Shlomo's subjects or courtiers. The manner in which this decree is expressed (v.11) reflects the language of the condemnation of Shaul when he is informed of the untimely termination of his monarchy:

The Lord has this day torn the kingship of Israel away from you and given it to another who is worthier than you. (*Shmuel I* 16:28)

And when Achiya rips Yerovam's new robe into twelve pieces, it conjures up the image of Shmuel's robe ripped by Shaul, representing the tearing of Saul's kingship.

⁵ See 14:25-26 and in *Divrei Ha-yamim*.

At the initial level, then, we would anticipate a parallel between kings, each rejected because of their sin. However, there is a fundamental and critical difference between them. Whereas Shaul's monarchy is terminated and eliminated entirely, Shlomo's punishment, expressed at first in categorical terms, is qualified and limited - one might even say it is mitigated. This is done in two ways. God says:

1. "I will not tear the kingdom in your lifetime... but in your son's reign" (v.12). Why? "Because of your father David."

2. "I will not tear away the whole kingdom. Your son shall retain one tribe" (v.13). Why? "For the sake of... my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

This is astounding. If Shlomo's actions deserve condemnation, then how does the memory of David or Jerusalem function to postpone and diminish the extent of the decree? Why does God reduce or minimize the punishment?

BECAUSE OF DAVID

The argument that the kingdom should not be torn from David's descendents "for the sake of David" is a theme that first appears here (11:12,13,32,34), but it recurs widely in *Sefer Melakhim*, becoming something of a theme in its own right.⁶ In each instance, the situation warrants a total ending of a given royal line, but God capitulates "for the sake of David." Why?

Let us take a look at a critical chapter, *Shmuel* II ch.7. There, King David requests to build the *Beit Ha-Mikdash* and God responds:

The Lord declares to you that He, the Lord, will establish a house for you. When your days are done, and you lie with your fathers, I will raise your offspring after you... and will establish his kingship. He shall build a house for my name **and I will establish his royal throne forever... When he does wrong, I will chastise him with the rod of men and the affliction of mortals, but I will never withdraw My favor from him as I withdrew it from Saul... You and your house shall be secure before you; your throne shall be established forever.** (*Shmuel* II 7:11-16)

This prophecy is momentous! First, God says that He will build the Royal House of David. This is expressed by David having a continuation - his son - succeeding him and continuing his sovereignty after him. In a beautiful statement of reciprocity, God promises that specifically that son, who represents the royal line, will build a house for God - the *Beit Ha-Mikdash*.

⁶ See *Melakhim* II 8:19, 15:4, 19:34, and 20:6.

But the second point is more radical. God promises that he will not treat David's line as he treated that of Shaul. He promises that David's throne will exist FOREVER.

Now we understand why Shlomo must live out his reign. God promised David that He would establish Shlomo's kingship. Of course, if that son sins, "I will chastise him with the rod of men and the affliction of mortals." The commentators explain⁷ that this is exactly the situation of the "*satanim*," as described in our *perek*. These adversaries are "the affliction of mortals." But the royal line remains, as promised.

We have explained the phrase "because of my servant David." But what of "for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen?" Throughout *Sefer Devarim*, the Temple site is referred to as "the place that God shall choose,"⁸ indicating that God will choose a particular location. When did God choose this location?

Furthermore, why is David granted such a far-reaching promise? We may speculate that it is his desire to build God's "house" that induces God to promise his (David's) royal "house." It would seem that David's house and God's house are eternally intertwined.

It is the Book of *Tehillim* that offers us some clarity:

A Song of Ascents. the Lord, remember unto David all his affliction;
How he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:

"Surely I will not come into the tent of my house, nor go up into the bed that is spread for me;

I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids;

Until I find out a place for the Lord, a dwelling-place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

... **The Lord swore unto David** in truth; He will not turn back from it:

"Of your issue will I set upon your throne.

If your children keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children also for ever shall sit upon thy throne."

For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation:

"This is My resting-place for ever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

David makes an oath not to rest until God has a resting place. In response, God promises that as long as his progeny follow the Torah, they shall sit on his throne. But along with that comes the eternal selection of Jerusalem as a dwelling place for God! These promises cannot be abrogated!⁹ And hence, even in a situation of Shlomo's violation of God's

⁷ See Rashi on verse 23 and Raibag on verse 40.

⁸ *Devarim* 12:5,11,21,26; 14:24,25; 16:6; 17:8-10; 18:6; 26:2

⁹ This question of the abrogation of the promise to David arises in *Tehillim* chapter 89. There, the promise to David is restated:

I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

covenant, what remains is the promise of Jerusalem for the line of David. This is why we still pray for the restoration of "*tzemach David*," the sprout of David. We anticipate that the *Mashiach*¹⁰ will be "*ben David*," in fulfillment of this promise. We also insist that God does not renege on his promises; Jerusalem is eternally chosen and still awaits the Davidic heir.

Our *shiur* next week will discuss Yerovam and his rebellion.

I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed him;
... Forever will I keep for him My mercy, and My covenant shall stand fast with him.
His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.
If his children forsake My law, and walk not in Mine ordinances;
If they profane My statutes, and keep not My commandments;
Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with strokes.
But My mercy will I not break off from him, nor will I be false to My faithfulness.
My covenant will I not profane, nor alter that which is gone out of My lips.
Once have I sworn by My holiness: Surely I will not be false unto David;
His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before Me.
It shall be established for ever as the moon; and be steadfast as the witness in sky.
(*Tehillim* 89:21-38)

The author of this *mizmor*, who apparently lived after the *churban*, protests that the Davidic line has, in fact, been interrupted and torn away:

Yet You have rejected and spurned and become enraged with Your anointed.
You have repudiated the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown even to the ground...
...You have brought his strongholds to ruin.
All that pass by the way spoil him; he is become a taunt to his neighbors.
...You have made his brightness to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.
...How long, O *Hashem*, will You hide Yourself forever? How long shall Your wrath burn like fire? (89:39-47)

This *perek* of *Tehillim* challenges God after the Destruction: how He could have backtracked on his promise of eternal sovereignty to David? Ibn Ezra (on *pasuk* 1) mentions that:

...There was a great scholar in Spain, wise and pious, and he found this chapter [of *Tehillim*] too [theologically] difficult, so much that he would not read it nor hear it, because the author speaks so harshly against God.

¹⁰ The word *Mashiach* means "anointed one" and refers to the king. See, for example, *Shmuel* I 24:6,10.