

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter X: Mikeitz (Gen. 41:1–44:17)

Essay 3. Why David receives credit for building the Temple¹

מדרש ילקוט "מזמור שיר-תנכת הבית לדוד", וכי דוד בנאו? ולמה "מזמור שיר"? פנגד בית המקדש מעלה ומטה עכ"ל. העולם מקשים שנהיה לו להקדים קושניא שנהיה קודם קושניא ראשונה, שנהרי קושניא השניה היא על תחלת הפסוק "מזמור שיר" והקושניא הראשונה היא על סוף הפסוק "לדוד" וכי דוד בנאו וכו'. ומדלא הקדים משמע דלא קשי ליה הכפל רק אחר שאמר "לדוד". והא אילו הנה אומר "מזמור שיר-תנכת הבית" ותו לא הנה נמי קשי הכפל?

There is a midrash Yalkut: “ ‘A Psalm: a song at the dedication of the House; of David’ (Ps. 30:1). But did David build [the House, i.e., the Temple]? Also, why [the apparent duplicative language] ‘A Psalm: a song’? It corresponds to the Heavenly Temple and the Earthly Temple.”² The Earthly Temple is positioned opposite and serves as a gate to the Heavenly Temple, where the Shechinah dwells. The psalm refers to one, and the song to the other.

Everyone asks that [the midrash] should have advanced the second question before the first, for the second question is on the beginning of the verse, “A Psalm: a song,” and the first question is on the end of the verse, “of David”—but did David build it? But from the fact that [the midrash] didn’t advance the second question before the first, the meaning is that [the author of the midrash] found the doubling of the term, “A Psalm: a song” difficult only after [the verse] said “of David.” But if it had only said, “A Psalm: a song at the dedication of the House,” and nothing more, wouldn’t there still been a difficulty of the doubling?

וגיש לומר דאמרינו פרק קמא דסוטה "לְיִשְׂרָאֵל נִאֻמָּה תְהִלָּה" אלו משה ודוד שלא שלטו שונאייהם במעשה ידיהם, דוד דכתיב "טבעו בארץ שעריה", וכתב מהרש"א, דבמדרש רבה יש שאילו הם שערי בית המקדש ונעשה להם נס לפי שחלקו כבוד לארון וכו'. ורש"י פירש על שערי ציון ולא אשערי בית המקדש, ונדחק בזה משום דנקט הכא דוד והוא לא בנה בית המקדש אלא שלמה בנאו. והמדרש סובר דנדאי בשערי מקדש אירי, ואף על גב דשלמה בנאו, עיקר הכבוד הנה לדוד שיהא הכין כסף וזהב לבנינו וקנה המקום של המקדש, ולגבי שערים אמרינו דבכוו שערים זה בזה וכו' עד "וְזָכְרָה לְחִסְדֵי דָוִד", ולכן בשערים תהלה לדוד עכ"ל ועיי"ש באורך.

It can be said that it’s said in the first chapter of tractate Sotah (9a): “ ‘Sing forth, O you righteous, to the Lord; it is fit that the upright acclaim Him’ (Ps. 33:1). These [upright] are

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¹ Parshat Mikeitz is usually read during Chanukah, which is why this essay relates to the dedication of the Temple.

² Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 713:1.

Moses and David, for their enemies did not rule over their achievements. David, as it is written, ‘Her gates have sunk into the ground’ (Lam. 2:9).” The understanding of many commentators on the Gemara is that the Tabernacle built by Moses was never destroyed, and that David’s citadel was not destroyed by his enemies.

The Maharsha³ wrote, that in the Midrash Rabbah it is [written] that these referenced gates are the gates of the Temple and a miracle was carried out for them so that they imparted honor to the Ark of the Covenant.⁴

The Maharsha notes the earlier view of **Rashi**, who in Lam. 2:9 **explained that this referred to the gates of Zion, i.e., the gates of Jerusalem, and not the gates of the Temple, and [Rashi] was pressed into this explanation because [the rabbis in Sotah] state “David” here, and [David] did not build the Temple, but rather his son, Solomon, built it.**

The Maharsha states that **the opinion of the midrash is that it’s certainly speaking of the gates of the Temple, and even though Solomon built it, the principal part of the honor is David’s, for he prepared the silver and gold to build it, and acquired the land of the Temple.**

Concerning the gates, it says in Shabbat 30a that they stuck together and could not be opened, a witness to “the loyalty of David” (II Chron. 6:42), and therefore it refers to the gates before David, and see there in the Maharsha’s Chiddushei Agadot on Sotah 9a, at length.

The Gemara states:

When Solomon built the Temple and sought to bring the Ark into the Holy of Holies, the gates stuck together [and could not be opened]. Solomon uttered twenty-four songs [of praise (I Kings 8)], but was not answered. He began and said: “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; that the King of glory may come in” (Ps. 24:7). [The gates] ran after him to swallow him [as they thought that in the words: “King of glory” he was referring to himself], and they said, “Who is the King of glory?” (Ps. 24:8). He said to them: “The L-rd strong and mighty” (Ps. 24:8). He said [again]: “Lift up your heads, O you gates, yea, lift them up, you everlasting doors; that the King of glory may come in. Who then is the King of glory? The L-rd of hosts; He is the King of glory. Selah” (Ps. 24:9–10), but he was not answered. When he said: “O L-rd G-d, turn not away the face of Your anointed; remember the loyalty of David Your servant” (II Chron. 6:42), he was immediately answered [and a fire descended from Heaven] (II Chron. 7:1).

- Shabbat 30a⁵

³ Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels (1555–1631), Polish rabbi famous for his Talmud commentaries, Chiddushei Halachot and Chiddushei Agadot.

⁴ Chiddushei Agadot on Sotah 9a, paragraph 9. The Maharsha refers to “Midrash Agadah,” as does Rashi in his commentary on Lam. 2:9. The Midrash Agadah that we know today wasn’t published until 1894, based upon a manuscript that Solomon Buber discovered in Aleppo in 1894. It could be that Rashi and the Maharsha were familiar with the Midrash Agadah in manuscript form. Another source, with which the Zera Shimshon may have been familiar (as he wrote “Midrash Rabbah”) is Midrash Eicha Rabbah 2:13.

⁵ This also appears in Num. Rabbah 14:3.

ומעמדה הרגיש המדרש שתי קושיות בפסוק זה, תחלה הכפל של "מזמור שיר", ועוד למה אמר "לדוד" וקרי הוא לא בנאו. ואם לא היה אמר הפסוק "לדוד" רק "מזמור שיר" חגגת הבית" ותו לא, לא היה קשה הכפל, שהייתי אומר שהכפל הוא על שתי מקדשים שאחר שנחרב הראשון נבנה השני. אמנם עתה שאמר "לדוד" שלפי שהכין הכסף וזהב וקנה המקום נקרא שהוא בנאו. אם כן לא היה לו להיות נחרב לעולם שהוא כמו מעשה דוד ממש. ולמה כתב הכפל שנראה שבודאי עתיד ליהרב? ועוד שהמקדש שני בנאו עזרא ולא דוד. ומירץ שפוננת המשורר לא היתה על החרבן אלא כנגד ביח המקדש של מעלה ושל מטה.

Now the Midrash felt two difficulties in this verse, first the doubling of the term, "A Psalm: a song," and also why it says "of David," as he did not build [the Temple]. If the verse had not said, "of David," but had only said, "A Psalm: a song at the dedication of the House," and nothing more, the doubling is not difficult, for I would say that the doubling is for the two Temples, for after the first was destroyed, the second was built.

However, now that it said "of David," we understand that because he prepared the silver and gold and bought the land, it is considered as though he built [the Temple]. If so, it should have never been destroyed, because then it would be like an actual achievement of David, and as the rabbis said in Sotah 9a, the enemies of Moses and David did not rule over their achievements! Now we can understand why the author of the midrash only asked about the doubling "A Psalm: a song" after David was mentioned at the end of the verse.

Also, why is the doubling written, for it appears from this, if we take it as referring to the First Temple and the Second Temple, that [the First Temple] was destined to be destroyed? Also, the Second Temple was built by Ezra and not by David, so even if we posit that David is credited for the First Temple because he gathered the silver and gold for it, why would he also be credited with the Second Temple. The solution is that the intent of the singer of the Psalm in referring to the dedication of the House and the apparent duplicative language of "A Psalm: a song" meaning two Temples, was not of the destruction of the First Temple and the need to build a Second Temple, but corresponding to the Heavenly Temple and the Earthly Temple. The reason that David was mentioned because he is credited for the construction of the first Earthly Temple, which provided such a direct connection to the Heavenly Temple and the Shechinah.

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