

## לחזק את-בדק בית-יהוה

אבנר רמו



In chapters 12 and 22 of the Book of Kings we find several times the words:  
**לחזק את-בדק בית-יהוה** - “to strengthen up the breaches of the house of *YHWH*.”

It is not clear how the English translator determined that the Hebrew word: **בדק** means "breaches." The Greek translator apparently did not know the meaning of this word and just transliterated it to: “bedek.” It is possible that the reading of the word: **נזק** - “**damage**” in the Book of Ester (Est 7:4), or in the Aramaic parts of the Books of Daniel (Dan 6:3) and Ezra (Ezr 4:13, 15, 22), convinced the English translator that the word **בדק** is a letter substitution error of the word: **נזק**.

Alternatively, the reading in the Book of Amos:  
**והכה הבית הגדול רסיסים ; והבית הקטן בקעים** - “and the great house shall be smitten [into] **splinters**, and the little house **breaches**” (Am 6:11; see also: Is 22:9), convinced the English translator that the word: **בדק** is a vowel letter deletion, a letter substitution, and an order type error of: **בקעי** - “breaches.”

It is also possible that the word **בדק** is an order type error of: **דבק** - “linkage” or “seam” (e.g Is 41:7).

In the Book of Kings we are told about the money that was collected by the guards of the entrance to God’s house:

**ויתנה (ויתנוהו) על-יד עשי המלאכה המפקדים [] בבית (בית) יהוה; ויתנו אתו לעשי המלאכה אשר בבית יהוה, לחזק [] בדק הבית. לחרשים ולבנים ולגזרים; ולקנות עצים ואבני מחצב, לחזק את []-הבית.**

“And they should give it into the hand of the workmen that have the oversight [on] the house of YHWH; and they should give it to the workmen that are in the house of YHWH, to strengthen up [the] breaches of the house;

**To the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons; and for buying timber and hewn stone to strengthen up [] the house”** (2 Ki 22:5-6; see also: 2 Ki 12:12; 2 Ch 34:10).

However, the logic of these verses suggests that the words:

**ויתנה (ויתנוהו) על-יד עשי המלאכה המפקדים בבית (בית) יהוה** are a word deletion, and a word disorder of: **ויתנה (ויתנוהו) על-יד המפקדים על עשי המלאכה בבית (בית) יהוה** - “And they should give it into the hand of those that have oversight on those that were working in the house of YHWH.”

In addition, the Hebrew syntax, and the comparison between these verses suggest that the words: **לחזק את בדק הבית** are a word deletion error of: **לחזק את-הבית** - “to strengthen up the breaches of the house of YHWH”, and the words: **לחזק את-הבית** are a word deletion error of: **לחזק את בדק-הבית** - “to strengthen up the breaches of the house” (see also: 2 Ki 12:15; 2 Ch 34:8).

In the Book of Kings we also find:

**ויהי בשנת עשרים ושלוש שנה-למלך יהואש: לא-חזקו הכהנים את-בדק הבית. ויקרא המלך יהואש ליהוידע הכהן ולכהנים ויאמר אלהם, מדוע אינכם מחזקים את-בדק הבית; ועתה אל-תקחו-כסף מאת מכריכם, כי-ל[] בדק הבית תתנהו. ויאתו הכהנים לבלתי קחת-כסף מאת העם, ולבלתי חזק את-בדק הבית.**

“And it was in the twenty- third year of king Jehoash, the priests did not strengthen up the breaches of the house.

**Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the [other] priests, and said to them: Why you are not strengthening up the breaches of the house? And [therefore] now do not take money from them that bestow it upon you for you shall give it for the [] breaches of the house.**

**And the priests consented not to take money from the people, and neither strengthened up the breaches of the house”** (2 Ki 12:7-9).

It is not clear how the English translator determined that here the Hebrew word: **מכריכם** means: “them that bestow it upon you” and this understanding is no shared by the Greek translator. Yet the logic of these verses suggests that here the words: **ועתה אל-תקחו-כסף מאת מכריכם** are a letter substitution and word deletion error of: **ועתה אל-תקחו-כסף מאת העם בשלכם** - “And now do not take money from the people for yourselves.”

In addition, the comparison between these verses suggests that here the words: **כי-לחזוק בדק הבית תתנהו** are a word deletion error of: **כי-לחזוק בדק הבית תתנהו** - “for you shall give it for the strengthening up of the breaches of the house.”

The logic of these verses also suggests that the words:

**ויאתו הכהנים לבלתי קחת-כסף מאת העם, ולבלתי חזק את-בדק הבית** is a vowel letter insertion, a word deletion, and an order type error of: **ויאתו הכהנים לבלתי קחת-להם כסף מאת העם, בלתי אם לחזק את-בדק הבית** - “and the priests agreed not to take money from the people for themselves, only for strengthening up the breaches of the house.”

In the Book of Kings we also read that in the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah told Shaphan the son of Azaliah:

**עלה אל-חלקיהו הכהן הגדול, ויתם את-הכסף המובא בית יהוה-אשר אספו [] שמרי הסף מאת העם.**

“Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest, and he should give the money which is brought [to] the house of *YHWH*, which the [] guards of the door have gathered from the people” (2 Ki 22:4).

When these words appear in the Book of Chronicles we find:

**ובשנת שמונה עשרה למלכו, לטהר הארץ והבית-שלח את-שפן בן-אצליהו ואת-מעשיהו שר-העיר, ואת יואח בן-יואחז המזכיר, לחזק את []-בית יהוה אלהיו. ויבאו אל-חלקיהו הכהן הגדול, ויתנו את-הכסף המובא בית-אלהים אשר אספו-הלויים שמרי הסף מיד מנשה ואפרים ומכל שארית ישראל, ומכל-יהודה ובנימן; וישבי (וישב), ירושלם.**

“And in the eighteenth year of his reign, [when he had] purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to strengthen up [] the house of *YHWH* his God.

And they came to Hilkiyah the high priest, and (he) gave the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the guards of the door, had gathered from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and they returned to Jerusalem” (2 Ch 34:8-9).

However, the Hebrew syntax, the comparison between these verses, and their logic, suggest that here the words: **לטהר הארץ והבית** - “to purify the land and the house” are superfluous, and should be replaced by a version of the last five words of verse 2 Ch 34:8:

**כדי לחזק את בדק-בית יהוה אלהיו** - “for strengthening up the breaches of the house of *YHWH* his God.”

In addition, it is not clear why the Chronicler found it necessary to describe in detail the people from whom the money was collected, and to inform us that the “**guards of the door**” were the Levites.

On the other hand, when we read the words of the Chronicler:

**ויתנו [] על-יד עשה המלאכה המפקדים בבית יהוה; ויתנו אתו עושי המלאכה אשר עשים בבית יהוה, לבדוק ולחזק הבית.**

“And they gave [it] into the hand of the workmen who had the oversight in the house of YHWH; and they gave it to those that were doing the work in the house of YHWH, to mend and repair the house” (2 Ch 34:10).

As indicated above, the logic of this verse suggests that the words:

ויתנו [] על-יד עשה המלאכה המפקדים בבית יהוה; ויתנו אתו עושי המלאכה אשר עשים  
בבית יהוה

are word deletion, word insertion, and word disorder of:

ויתנו את הכסף על-יד המפקדים על עושי המלאכה בבית יהוה; ויתנהו לעושי המלאכה בבית  
יהוה

“And they gave the money into the hands of those that have oversight on those that were doing the work in the house of YHWH; and they gave it to those that were doing the work in the house of YHWH.”

However, it seems that like the Greek translator, the Chronicler was not sure what was the meaning of the word: **בדק**. In fact, the Chronicler does not mention this word even once. Yet apparently, he felt it necessary to describe the work that was carried out in YHWH's house, and therefore he wrote:

לבדוק ולחזק הבית.

ויתנו לחרשים ולבנים, לקנות אבני מחצב ועצים למחברות; ולקרות את-הבתים,

“for mending and strengthening up the house.

And they gave it to the carpenters and to the builders, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to roofing the house[s]” (2 Ch 34:10-11).

It is not clear how the English translator determined that the Hapax legomenon: **לבדוק** means: "for mending" and this understanding is not shared by the Greek translator. It is suggested that the words of the Chronicler: **לבדוק ולחזק הבית** are a vowel letter insertion, a word deletion, and a word disorder of: **לחזק את בדק-הבית** - “to strengthen up the breaches of the house.” Yet his use of the word: **למחברות** - "for couplings" may suggest that the Chronicler assumed that the word: **בדק** is an anagram of the word: **דבק** - “linkage” or “seam.”

In the Book of Ezekiel we read about the ships of Tyre:

ישבי צידון וארוד היו שטים לך; חכמך צור היו בך המה חבליך.

זקני גבל וחכמיה היו בך מחזיקי בדקך; כל-אניות הים ומלחיהם היו בך,

“The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers; Your wise men, Tyre, were in you, they were your pilots.

The elders of Gebal and its wise men were in you your calkers; All the ships of the sea with their mariners were in you” (Eze 27:8-9; see also: Eze 27:27).

It is not clear how the English translator determined that the words: **מחזיקי בדקך** mean: “your calkers” and this understanding is not supported by the Greek translation of this verse. However, the comparison between these verses suggests that the words: **מחזיקי בדקך** is a vowel letter insertion and an order type error of: **מחזיקי דבקך** - “those that strengthen up your seams.” In addition, the logic of these verses, and the Hebrew syntax suggest that in verse Eze 27:9 the word: **בך** is a letter substitution error of: **לך** - “for you.”