

# MAN "AL HAPEREK"

## A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

### Shoftim Perakim 1-2

The book of Shoftim opens with a description of events from the days of Yehoshua told from a new perspective. The people of Israel must now transform conquest of the Land into permanent settlement and grapple with the vicissitudes that life in Israel brings.

### General Overview < "וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְּסֵפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים"

#### Perek 1 and Introduction to the book:

- 1 a) Compare the opening pesukim of the books of Yehoshua and Shoftim, noting in particular the principle differences between each books' character and historical period.
- b) The book of Shoftim can be divided into three main sections: 1-2:10; 2:11-16; and 17-21.

Skim through the perakim and try to understand the motivations behind this division.

- 2 Create a chronological list of the judges and the location from where they originate, and mark those locations on the attached map. How does the geographical pattern reflect the spiritual/political process taking place during this period?



3 The book of Yehoshua describes the conquest, division, and settlement of the Land. The book of Shoftim describes a period in which conquest must give way to permanent residence. The gap between these two periods is highlighted by Shoftim's repetition of certain events mentioned in Yehoshua, and by the differences in the respective descriptions.

a) What is the difference between the description of the conquest's summary as told in the book of Yehoshua and as it appears in our perek? Take special note of Yehoshua 21:41-43.

b) "*And Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean . . . And Ephraim drove not out the Canaanites . . . Asher drove not out the inhabitants of Akeko . . .*" (Shoftim 1:27, 29, 31). Compare the list of enclaves that appears in our chapter to that in Yehoshua 18 & 19, and discuss the differences between striving for an ideal and living its reality.

c) In the book of Yehoshua, the tribe of Yehuda initiates battles for the conquest (see 10:4-15). In our perek, however, Yehuda waits for a call to God to continue conquering the Land. In your opinion, what might be the reason for this?

## Perek 2

4 Both at the beginning and the end of the book of Shoftim there is a "*great wailing*" (2:4-5 and 20:26). Compare the two cases: How do these two events reflect the character of the period?

5 The period of the shoftim is characterized in pesukim 11-19 as a cycle of recurrent behavior and response. Look at the stories of the following shoftim: Otniel (3:7-11), Gideon (6:1-7, 14), Yiftach (10:6-10, 11:29), and Shimshon (13:1, 16:31). Notice how the pattern changes during the course of the book. What do you think these changes signify? How do they reflect the deteriorating situation of the nation?

6 Pesukim 7-10 in our perek reiterate the ending of the book of Yehoshua (see 24:29-33). Against the backdrop of transition to a new form of leadership, what could be the rationale for this repetition?

## In-depth Study < "מִפְּנֵי וְשׁוֹם שְׁכָל" >

- 7 "...and there arose another generation after them, that knew not the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel." The transition from one generation to the next is never simple. How is this problem expressed in the book of Shoftim, and how can it be dealt with?

For further explication, see the comments of Professor Haim Yerushalmi below: "Nowhere else but in Israel do we see the command to remember given as a religious obligation to the entire people. 'Remember what Amalek did to you on your way out of Egypt' (Devarim 25:17). From the very moment of the Exodus from Egypt, it is clear and expected in both the Torah and the Nevi'im, that with the entry of Israel into the Promised Land, a new generation would arise that did not experience the Exodus, nor Mount Sinai, nor the settling of the Land. Forgetting is part of human nature. The circle of life is like the cycle of time. Young people are born; quite naturally and predictably, even weighty matters do not take the foremost place in their minds and lives. The question we have is how to instill in them, the new generation, a legacy based on remembering, not forgetting, that they will have the wisdom to deal with the circle of life ... " (Yerushalmi, *Remember: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Am Oved, 1982).

## Appendix < "וַיְבִינּוּ בְּמִקְרָא" >

**"And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son..." (Bereshit 25:11)**

- > Said R. Simon: Wherever it says "And after" the world returned to its previous state. "And it came to pass after the death of Avraham"--"Immediately all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Avraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them" (Bereshit 26:15). "And it came to pass after the death of Moshe" (Yehoshua 1:1). Immediately the well, the manna, and the clouds of glory ceased. "And it came to pass after the death of Yehoshua" (Shoftim 1:1). Immediately the inhabitants of the country provoked them. "And it came to pass after the death of Shaul" (II Shmuel 1:1). Immediately, "the Philistines fought against Israel" (I Shmuel 31:1).

- > Said R. Yuden: If God had not put others in their place [to replace the previous leader], the world would have returned to its previous state.

As it is written: "And it came to pass after the death of Avraham, all the wells, etc," "And Isaac dugged again the wells of water..." (Bereshit 26:18).

It is written: "And it came to pass after the death of Yehoshua ... And the Lord said: 'Judah shall go up'" (Shoftim 1:2).

"And it came to pass after the death of Shaul...David returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites" (II Shmuel 1:1).

(Bereshit Rabbah parsha 62:11)

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