

This week's learning is dedicated to the full recovery of Leah Feiga bat Spisia

# MAN "AL HAPEREK"

## A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

### Shoftim Perakim 7-8

These perakim describe Gidon's war against the Midianites, the participation of the various tribes in the war, and the relationship Gidon has with them. The brilliant victory in battle removes what had been a national threat to Israel for many years. In addition, Gidon's leadership causes the people of Israel to express, for the first time, their desire for a king.

### General Overview < "ויקראו בספר בתורת האלהים"

#### Perek 7

- ❶ Perek 7 describes the battle between Gidon and the Midianites. Examine the relationship between the description of the preparations for battle and the description of the battle itself. How do your conclusions relate to the process of development that Gidon underwent in the previous chapter?
- ❷ In 7:2-6, God commands Gidon to test the warriors who will join him in battle.
  - a) Why does the text (7:4) use the verb "test" (אֶצְרְפוֹ)? How does the use of this particular Hebrew verb reflect the process that the warriors must undergo? (We suggest first looking up the word צָרַף in the dictionary if you are not familiar with it.)
  - b) Why are those that lapped the water chosen? Consult the various commentaries for possible answers.
- ❸ What parallels exist between the dream's interpretation (7:14) and the description of the dream itself (7:13)? Is this the only possible way to understand it? Why was it important that Gidon hear the dream's interpretation directly from the enemy?

## Perek 8

- ④ Why did Gidon exact such an extreme punishment against the men of Sukkot and Penuel? Examine the parallels between this story and that told in Devarim 23:5.
- ⑤ "Rule thou over us, both you and your son, and your son's son also; for you have saved us out of the hand of Midian" (Shoftim 8:22). What implications in the pasuk clarify the reason behind Israel's request that Gidon become their king? See pesukim 18, 21, and 30-31. What elements of Gidon's behavior invite this request? Why, in spite of all this, does Gidon reject the request?

### In-depth Study < "מִפְּנֵי שׂוֹם וְשׂוֹם שְׂכָל"

- ⑥ In perek 7:15, we see how the Midianites dream reflects not only the future, but the present reality as well. This concept appears in a few other places in Tanach. See, for example, Bereshit 41:1-9 and 41:33-37; Daniel 2:1-4 and 2:29-49.
- ⑦ There are different approaches concerning what Gidon's goals were in fashioning the ephod after he refused the kingship. R. Yosef Kara explains, "*And Gidon made an ephod: to be a remembrance of the great deliverance; to see how many soldiers were there [who were wearing nose-rings]—this gold was the way they counted them. He made it, and Israel erred because of it, engaging in idol-worship*" (Shoftim 8:27). For a different understanding of Gidon's act, see Bamidbar 31:1-12, 50-54.

## Appendix < "וַיִּבְיֵנוּ בַּמִּקְרָא"

### A tour in the Jezreel Valley in the path of the battle between Gidon and the Midianites.

The tour includes easy walking, but most of it can be done by car; the route is suitable for all seasons and all ages.

The battle between Gidon and the Midianites is the only battle that is described in great detail. This allows us to understand how the battle was planned and carried out, and how victory was achieved. You chose a beautiful day to visit the places where these dramatic events took place, described in Shoftim perakim 7-8.

The tour should start from Ein Harod National Park. Stand on the edge of the spring and ponder the first "entrance exam" (Shoftim 7:5-7) and the consolidation of the elite fighting unit that happened on this very spot. From there you can go to Givat HaMoreh and imagine what happened in the battle. You should walk across the summit of Givat HaMoreh; during the months of February-March, the Nazareth iris blooms are breathtaking. From Givat HaMoreh, it is possible travel along the scenic path Ramot Issachar, from which can be seen the heights of Issachar, Tabor, Gilboa, and the valleys. From this final and most spectacular lookout to the east, we can tell the story of the pursuit and eventual capture of the Midianites. The story of Gidon's battle tells us in detail the meticulous preparation: the formation of an elite fighting unit, the gathering of intelligence, the in-depth knowledge of the region, the use of improvised weapons, night-time fighting, the deliberate sowing of pandemonium, and the final chase to the finish. Gidon served as a model to many generals, the best known of whom was Orde Wingate, who trained the defense units in the valley with a Tanach in his hand.

For the tour's continuation and more information:

<http://lib.cet.ac.il/pages/item.asp?item=13358>