



"AL HAPEREK"

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Shmuel Perakim 11-12

Shaul realizes the dreams of the nation, achieving a brilliant victory against Bnei Ammon. Shmuel inaugurates Shaul for the third time and delivers a momentous farewell speech to the nation.

General Overview < "וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְּסֵפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים"

Perek 11

- ❶ In chapter 8, the people express their desire for a king: *"He will go out before us and he will fight our battles"* (8:20), and in chapters 9 and 10, Shaul is crowned. Considering the people's stated motivation behind their request for a king, why don't the elders of Yavesh immediately turn to Shaul to save them from the Ammonites?
- ❷ Compare the formulation of Shaul's call to the people in verse 7 to the Levite's actions after the abuse of his concubine at the end of Shoftim (19:29-30). How does this parallel testify to the differences in the military, governmental, and social structures of the two periods?
- ❸ In verses 14-15, Shaul's reign is inaugurated for the third time (the first two inaugurations take place in 10:1 and 10:17-27). What can be learned from this about the institution of monarchy? Compare the three coronations, paying close attention to what and who play a central role in each.
- ❹ In chapters 10 and 12, the voices of Shaul's detractors are heard. Compare the words of these opponents and Shaul's response in verse 12, to what takes place in 10:27.

Perek 12

- 5 In his speech, Shmuel refers to the period of the Judges (verses 9-12). Which judges does he mention, and in what order does he mention them? Why do you think he chooses these particular judges, and why does he alter their chronological order?
- 6 a) During his farewell speech, Shmuel performs miraculous signs for the people, and they respond with great fear. Compare the events of this chapter to the events in Shemot 19:1-18. What is the significance of the signs performed by Shmuel specifically regarding the re-inauguration of Shaul, first king of Israel?
- b) Compare Shmuel's farewell speech to that of Moshe in Bamidbar 16. Why do both leaders emphasize that they did not take anything from the nation during their terms of leadership?

In-depth Study < "מִפְנֵי שׂוֹם שְׂכָל"

- 7 "Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you . . ." (12:23). What do Shmuel's words teach us about the prophet's role and the relationship between him and God? See also Bereshit 20:1-7, 17-18.
- 8 See Abarbanel's commentary (brought below) concerning the threat of Nachash the Ammonite against Yavesh-Gilad. Which motifs does Abarbanel emphasize in his commentary, and how do they reinforce the comparison to the end of the book of Shoftim, mentioned above in question two?

"Then Nachash the Ammonite came up, and encamped." The text states that Nachash, king of the Ammonites, went up; his name indicates that he was an evil-doer, a constrictor-snake, like a python, deaf and with stopped-up ears. "He encamped against Yavesh-Gilad" and although they asked him to make a treaty and serve him, he [Nachash] did not want to do this unless, as a condition, he would put out the right eye of everyone even though this would not benefit him—it was because of his cruelty. It also teaches of his wealth, that he didn't consider gold and silver; also, this would disgrace all of Israel, if the eyes of Yavesh-Gilad were put out and all Israel couldn't save them.

Midrash Shmuel (parsha 14) says "These ["eyes"] are [refer to] the slings and arches of Israel, that are the precious delights in the eyes of Israel," and R. Shimon said, "These are the Sanhedrins of Israel, that are the eyes of Israel," and the rabbis say, "His [Nachash's] demand of them was 'Bring me a Torah scroll, which is your [Israel's] right eye, and I will uproot from it [the verse] "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord"'" (Devarim 23:4).

The people of Yavesh-Gilad responded: "Give us seven days, etc," which means that if it was their [the Ammonites'] intention to revile all Israel, he [Nachash] should give us seven days to notify all the tribes of Israel, "and if there is no one to deliver us" then we will come out to you and accept the disgrace, and it will be known that we [Yavesh-Gilad] sought help but did not find it; without this, there would be no disgrace on Israel, because they didn't know anything." Therefore he gave them the time. (Abarbanel 11:1)

Appendix < "וַיְבִינּוּ בַּמִּקְרָא"

Rainfall during the wheat harvest shocked the nation and brought them to a recognition of their sin against God: "*Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we die not; for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for a king*" (12:19). Thus they requested and confessed. Here we see a wonderful example of how the action of a prophet for the sake of God brings about a desired change, as in the words of Yeshayahu: "*For as the rain cometh down . . . from heaven, and does not return, except that it water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, and give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, except that it accomplish that which I please, and make the thing whereto I sent it prosper*" (Yeshayahu 55:10-11). The people were horrified by the occurrence of rain during the wheat harvest, and saw themselves as worthy of heavy punishment, "*that we die not!*" (12:19).

Perhaps they suspected that their request for a king and the rejection of Shmuel's leadership was objectionable to God and His prophet. This had happened before, with the case of Korach, who rebelled against Moshe Rabbenu, and who was swallowed up by the earth with all his followers. Shmuel hastened to reassure them with words of encouragement, despite their sin: "*Fear not*" (12:20). Shmuel's advice was attached to his words of reconciliation, not to agonize after God but to serve Him with all their heart. God will not forsake the people "*for His great name's sake*" (12:22), and for the sake of His choice of Israel to be a people of God. The prophet that prays—this is the main element of prophecy. The prophet that doesn't pray on behalf of the people, sins against God (12:23); thus Shmuel pronounced words of reconciliation to the nation. Recall the first time in the Bible that the term "prophet" appears: "*Because he is a prophet and he will pray for you*" (Bereshit 20:7). The term "prophet" is bound up with the term "prayer", such that prophecy and prayer are intertwined.

(Eliyahu Yedid, Shaul, Chosen of God, pp. 46-47)