

"AL HAPEREK"

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Yehoshua Perakim 9-10

In these chapters, the people of Israel battle with the nations inhabiting the Land. This new reality poses both military and ethical challenges, and results in consequences that will accompany the people of Israel throughout the generations to come.

General Overview < "וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְּסֵפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים"

Perek 9

- ❶ The nations inhabiting the Land react differently towards the Jewish people's arrival. What courses of action do the different nations choose? Compare your conclusions to the quote from Midrash Devarim Rabbah appearing in question 7 (below).
- ❷ The ruse of the Givonim is similar to the disguise used by Yeravam's wife in 1 Malachim 14:1-11. Compare and contrast the two operations—their respective goals, the means by which they were carried out, and their results—in order to shed light on the similarities and differences between the two stories.
- ❸ *"We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel; now therefore we may not touch them"* (Yehoshua 9:19).

In order to understand the meaning of both an oath and its violation, see Vayikra 22:32 and Bamidbar 30:3. (For a broader understanding, refer also to the commentary of the Ibn Ezra on Shmot 20:6.)



מכון תורני לנשים ע"ש שרה בת יצחק יעקב רעננערט
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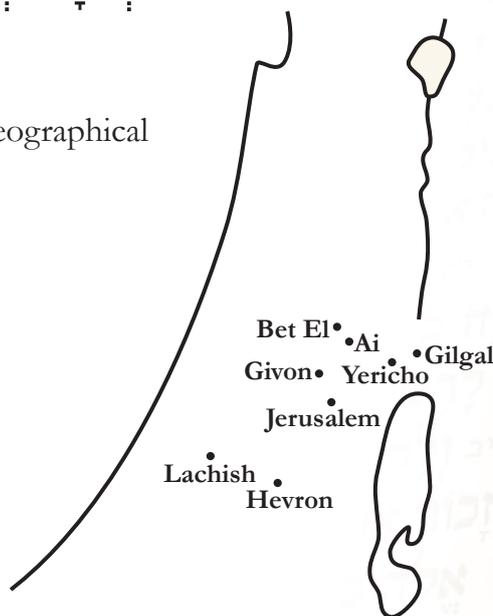
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Perek 10

- 4 The king of Yerushalayim served as leader of the five kings. Against whom would we have expected him to fight? Against whom did he actually fight? What can we learn from this about the relationship between the rivaling monarchies?
- 5 In the description of the battle in pesukim 8-14, we see two sources of leadership, one human and one Divine. Examine the dynamic between these two sources. How do they work together?

In-depth Study < "מִפְּנֵי וְשׂוּם שָׁכַל"

- 6 Use the map below, to help you understand the military and geographical importance of the following cities:
Yericho,
Ai,
Gibeon
and the cities of the five kings.



- 7 "When you draw near unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it" (Devarim 20:10). Read the various commentators on this pasuk in addition to the Midrash quoted below. What are the different opinions regarding peace treaties? How should Yehoshua have acted?

Midrash Devarim Rabbah Parashat Shoftim 14:

Shmuel bar Nachmani said "Yehoshua fulfilled what is written in our parsha. What did Yehoshua do? He sent letters to all the places he was going to conquer, saying 'Whoever wants to make peace, let him come and make peace; whoever wants to leave, let him leave; and whoever wants to make war, let him do it.' What did the Girgashim do? He turned and departed before them, and God gave him a beautiful country of his own, which is Africa. With the Givonim, who asked for peace, Yehoshua made peace. But as for the thirty-one kings who came to fight against him, God caused them to fall into his hand, as it says, 'He smote them until there were none remaining.'

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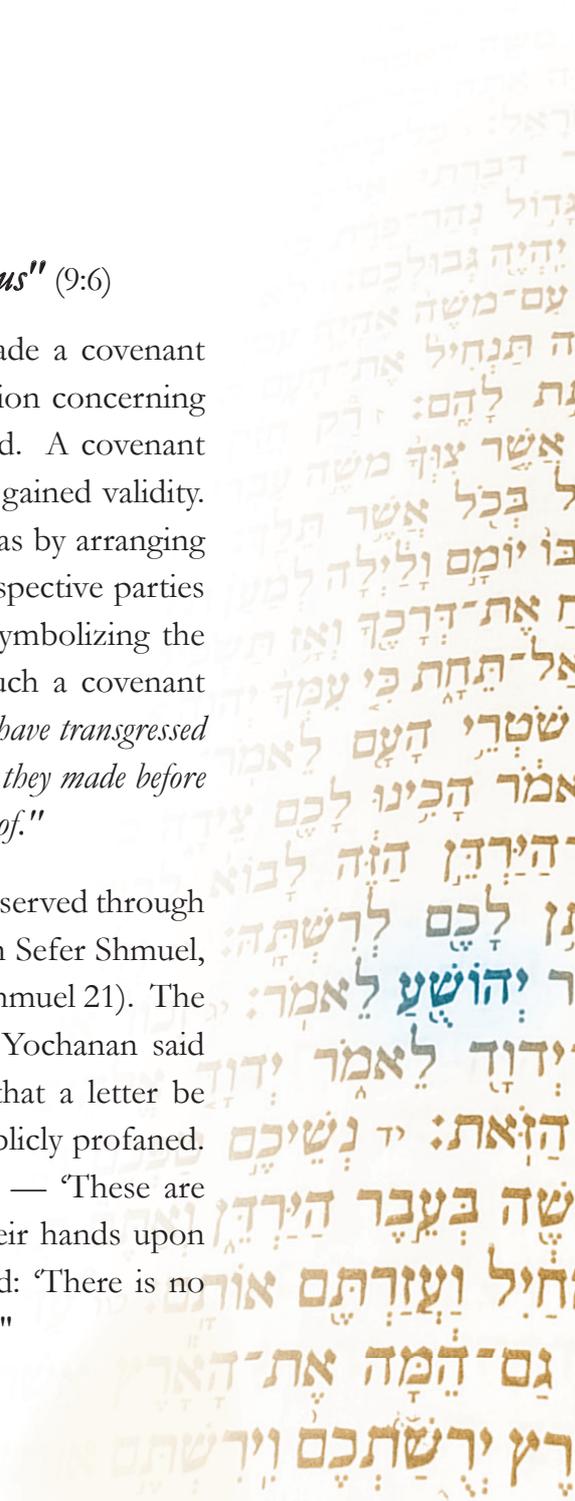
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Appendix < "וַיְבִינוּ בְּמִקְרָא"

"We are come from a far country; now make a covenant with us" (9:6)

Our chapter does not provide details as to how Yehoshua made a covenant with the Givonim, but other sources provide us with information concerning the structure and importance of covenants in the ancient world. A covenant was usually accompanied by symbolic actions through which it gained validity. One such action through which a covenant might be formed was by arranging a feast, during which an animal was cut into two parts. The respective parties would pass between the parts, with the dismembered animal symbolizing the fate of one who violates the agreement. A description of such a covenant action appears in Yermiyahu 34:18: *"And I will give the men that have transgressed My covenant, that have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof."*

The obligation to uphold the covenant with the Givonim was preserved through the generations. After Shaul violated the covenant with them in Sefer Shmuel, his descendants were punished with exceptional severity (see 1 Shmuel 21). The Talmud Bavli Tractate Yevamot 79a explains this act: "Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak, 'It is better that a letter be rooted out of the Torah than that the Divine name shall be publicly profaned. For passers-by were inquiring, 'What kind of men are these?' — 'These are royal princes' — 'And what have they done?' — 'They laid their hands upon unprotected strangers' — Then they [the passers-by] exclaimed: 'There is no nation in existence which one ought to join as much as this one.'"



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