

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



# "AL HAPEREREK"

## A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

### Shoftim Perakim 5-6

In perek 5 we read one of the longest poetic sections of Tanach: The Song of Devorah. This "song" provides us with additional perspectives on the battle fought by Devorah and Barak described in the previous perek. In perek 6, the period of Gidon's leadership begins, a period we will continue to explore in the coming week.

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

#### Perek 5

- ❶ The Song of Devorah opens with a description of a revelation of God (pesukim 1-5). A similar description appears in Habakkuk 3:3-8 and Tehillim 18:7-16. What additional layer of meaning do these descriptions add to our understanding of the war with Sisera? How do pesukim 4:23 and 5:20 strengthen this understanding?
- ❷ In pesukim 14-18, Devorah rebukes the tribes that did not participate in the war and congratulates the tribes who answered her call to come and fight. Check to see which tribe belongs in each group. What does this teach us about the ties amongst the tribes during the period of the judges [shoftim]? Does this topic arise in perek 4? What could be the reason for this?
- ❸ a) In the Song of Devorah, three female characters are mentioned. Each woman appears in a different setting: a tent, a field of battle, and a window. How do the different settings express the unique role each woman plays in this story?  
b) Read 4:18-19 and 5:24-27. What is the nature of the interaction between Yael and Sisera? Which words in the pesukim reinforce this impression?

## Perek 6

- 4 a) How do the words of Gidon in pasuk 13 constitute an answer to the prophet's rebuke in pesukim 8-10?
- b) In light of the previous question, why doesn't Gidon recognize the man as an angel of God?
- 5 "Then Gidon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it 'Adonai-shalom'; unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites" (6:24). "Then the men of the city said unto Yoash: 'Bring out your son, that he may die; because he has broken down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the Asherah that was by it'" (6:30). According to these pesukim, what development process does Gidon undergo? Does the nation undergo a parallel process?
- 6 The three signs described in perek 6 (6:17-22 and 6:36-40) appear in response to Gidon's request. What is the significance of the repeated requests? What does this teach us about Gidon's character?

## In-depth Study < "מִפְּרֵשׁ וְשׁוּם שְׂכָל"

- 7 "Then sang [וַתִּשֶׁר] Devorah and Barak the son of Avinoam on that day, saying:" (5:1). The Hebrew verb וַתִּשֶׁר is not consistent with the subject in either gender or number [i.e. the verb is feminine singular and thus does not match the plural, mixed gender subject "Devorah and Barak"]. This occurs in other places in Tanach; see, for example, Bamidbar 12:1 and Bereshit 31:14. For an explanation of this construction, see Radak's commentary on this verse:
- "Because Devorah is the principle part of the event, [as in another occurrence] 'And Miriam and Aharon spoke' (Bamidbar 12:1). [The Hebrew verb וַתְּדַבֵּר in this example is also in the feminine singular form, despite the plural, mixed gender subject, "Miriam and Aharon."]
- 8 "And he said unto him: 'Oh, my lord, with what shall I save Israel? behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.'" (6:15). Gidon is not the only leader who refused to accept the responsibility of leadership. What similarities and differences does Gidon's refusal share with the refusals of other leaders (ex: Moshe, Yirmiyahu)?

## Appendix < "וַיִּבְיֵנוּ בַּמִּקְרָא"

In Arslan-Tash, Syria an eighth-century BCE ivory plaque showing a woman looking out a window was discovered. Ivory, made from elephant tusks, was in ancient times considered a valuable material, much like gold. In addition to its other uses, ivory was used to decorate furniture. In this plaque, a woman is seen standing alongside a railing set on low columns, surrounded by a framework of three crossbars that create a window. The woman's head is adorned with shoulder-length hair and she wears a decoration on her forehead. This detail, called "A Woman in the Window," is found in later sites in additional locations such as Nimrod, the capital of Assyria, and Samaria, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. This motif of an important woman in a window was apparently a figure of great significance. The Bible describes three women standing and looking out the window: Sisera's mother (Shoftim 5:25); Michal, the daughter of Saul (II Shmuel 6:16); and Queen Ezebel of Sidon (II Malachim 9:30). All three are daughters of kings or queens who stand and watch an important event, and from this position, a dialogue is opened that leads to the final stage of a tragic journey.



Courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem