

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



"AL HAPEREREK"

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Shoftim Perakim 9-10

In Perek 9, we encounter the murderous leadership of Avimelech, who ruled until he himself was murdered. Perek 10 briefly describes periods of rule by multiple judges, and a national attempt to repent which is rejected by God.

General Overview < "וַיִּקְרְאוּ בְּסֵפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים"

Perek 9

- ❶ Avimelech takes upon himself certain customs of royalty. What were these? In what ways did his behavior differ from that of the other judges?
- ❷ In pesukim 1-6, the words "mother," [אם] "father," [אב] and "brothers" [אחים] are repeated many times. Explain the irony in the use of these words in light of Avimelech's conduct.
- ❸ Yotam's parable is a clear example of a fable, defined by Eben Shoshan's Hebrew language dictionary as an imaginary story that teaches a moral lesson to others. Who represents the respective trees in the parable? Consider the various possibilities. Does every detail in the parable have a parallel in the reality it represents?

- ④ What are the different stages in Avimelech's fall from power? How does the beginning of this process (pasuk 5) also foreshadow its end?
- ⑤ "... lest they say of me: 'A woman killed him'" (pasuk 54). With what weapon did the woman kill Avimelech? Why is death at the hands of a woman considered shameful? See also Shoftim 4:9.

Perek 10

- ⑥ The text presents the "minor" judges in a simple, recurring pattern (10:1-5; 12:8-15). What are the central components that are repeated in this pattern? What can we learn from the little information provided by the text about the nature and characters of these judges?
- ⑦ Pasuk 10 is the only pasuk in the Book of Shoftim in which the people repent for their sins. What brings the people to repentance at this stage of the book, and why does God refuse to accept it?

In-depth Study < "מִפְּנֵי שׂוֹם שְׂכָל"

- ⑧ The story of Avimelech is the antithesis of the story of Gideon. Examine the similarities and differences between the two stories.
- ⑨ Shechem and Har Gerizim play important roles in the story of Avimelech. See Devarim 27:11-26, Yehoshua 8:30-35, and Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 102a: "*A Tanna taught in the name of Rabbi Yosi: 'A place marked for disaster: In Shechem, Dina was raped, Joseph was sold by his brothers, and the Kingdom of David was divided.'*" What additional layer of meaning do these events add to our story?

Appendix < "וַיְבִינּוּ בַּמִּקְרָא"

Why does Yotam specifically choose to use the Lycium (אטד) in his parable and not any other plant species?

The Lycium is a bush with few thorns and tangled branches which flowers from August to September. The flowers are lilac colored and have a delicate smell, the bush itself growing to a height somewhere between 1-4 meters. Lycium grows on the edges of cultivated fields, on the land of deserted villages, and on riverbanks. Professor Yehuda Feliks, in his book "Nature and Land in the Bible" (p.123-125), suggests that Yotam's parable describes a botanical garden containing different kinds of fruit trees like grapes, dates, and olives surrounded by a hedging of Lycium. Those searching for a king turn to the fruit trees in the garden, approaching each one individually with their request. After each species refuses, the request is then brought to the Lycium bushes surrounding the garden. This plant, whose entire job is to guard the fruit trees, who itself can not reproduce more of its kind, is the one who ironically accepts the position as king.



Lycium Photo: Amikim Shuv ©All rights reserved