

21:13-18 Saving Binyamin

1. Abarbanel to Shoftim 21:13

פירשו המפרשים שלא הספיקו להם...וכוונתי בפירושו שלא מצאו להם אותם הבתולות ולא נתנו אותם אליהם לפי הדין, כי אם היתה השבועה שימיתו כל אשר לא יעלה אל ד' ונשיהם וטפם וכל אשר להם, אין ספק שהיו הבתולות בכלל השבועה... וזהו "ולא מצאו להם כן", כמו (במדב' כ"ז ז') "כן בנות צלופחד דוברות", (שמות י' כ"ט) "כן דברת", שהיא לשון דין ומשפט...

Commentators have explained that there were not enough [women]... But I think it means that they did not find those women and give them [to Binyamin] legally. If the oath was to kill all who did not ascend to Gd [in Mitzpah], them and their wives and children and all associated with them, then there is no doubt that the girls should have been included in the oath... This is "And they did not find *ken*", like "The daughters of Tzelofchad speak *ken*," "Ken you have spoken," a term of logic [?] and law.

2. 21:17 – What were they saying?

	The words ירושת הפליטה	The problem	The point	The message
Bava Batra 116a	Land	Loss of their land	Solution	Girls won't inherit land
Metzudat David	Women of Yavesh Gilead	Binyamin's survival	Denying the problem	Binyamin is saved, and we won't marry our daughters to them
Rashi	Land	Loss of their land	Agreeing with the problem	Binyamin will lose their land via their daughters!
Radak & others	Binyamin's survival	Binyamin's survival	Agreeing with the problem	We can't marry off our daughters to them, so how can we save them?

3. Talmud, Bava Batra 116a

"ויאמרו ירושת פלטה לבנימן ולא ימחה שבט מישראל" א"ר יצחק דבי רבי אמי מלמד שהתנו על שבט בנימן שלא תירש בת הבן עם האחין

"And they said: The *yerushah* of the remnant is for Binyamin, and a tribe will not be eliminated from Israel" – Rabbi Yitzchak of the yeshiva of Rabbi Ami said: This teaches that they set a condition for the tribe of Binyamin, that a son's daughter would not inherit [land] with the brothers [of her father].

4. Metzudat David to Shoftim 21:17

השיבו כל העדה ואמרו הלא ירושת הפליטה מיבש גלעד הם הבתולות שהחיו הלא לבנימן נתנום ולא יהיה א"כ עוד נמחה השבט כי הם יולידו בנים ובנות:

The entire nation responded: The *yerushah* of the remnant from Yavesh Gilad, the girls who were kept alive, we gave them to Binyamin and so the tribe will not be eliminated, for they will produce sons and daughters.

5. Rashi to Shoftim 21:17

נחלת השבט נשארה ריקנית, הבו עצה שיולידו בנים ויחזיקו בנחלתם הפליטה הנשארת ולא ימחה שבט מישראל:

The portion of the tribe remained empty; provide a plan for them to produce children and the remaining remnant will hold their portion, and a tribe will not be eliminated from Israel.

6. Radak to Shoftim 21:17

צריך שתהיה ירשת פליטה לבנימן ולא ימחה שבט מישראל, וטעם "ירשת" כי ירושה הוא מיעקב אבינו להיות מבניו שנים עשר שבטים עד עולם:

There must be a *yerushah* of a remnant from Binyamin, and a tribe shall not be eliminated from Israel. *Yerushah*, because it is a *yerushah* from our patriarch Yaakov that there would always be twelve tribes from his descendants.

7. Mishnah Taanit 4:8 (26b)

לא היו ימים טובים לישראל כחמשה עשר באב וכיום הכפורים שבהן בנות ירושלים יוצאות בכלי לבן שאולין שלא לבייש את מי שאין לו... ובנות ירושלים יוצאות וחולות בכרמים ומה היו אומרות בחור שא נא עיניך וראה מה אתה בורר לך אל תתן עיניך בנוי תן עיניך במשפחה

There were no days as great for Israel as the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av and Yom Kippur, for then the girls of Jerusalem would go out in white clothing, which was borrowed so as not to embarrass those who didn't have... And they would dance in the vineyards, and what would they say? "Young man, raise your eyes and see what you are choosing! Do not look for beauty; turn your eyes to family..."

8. Radak to Shoftim 21:19

ואני תמה מה צריך לכל זה? כי שילה ידוע היה בלא סימנין! והנראה בעיני כי החג היה בשילה... ולהודיע אותו המקום זכר אלה הסימנין וכרמי שילה היו סמוכים לזה המקום

I am shocked; what was the need for all of this? Shiloh was known without identifiers! It appears to me that the festival was in Shiloh... and to inform of the place, they mentioned these identifiers. The vineyards of Shiloh were near that site.

9. Prof. Yechezkel Kauffmann, Shoftim 21:19

...מקדש שילה נעשה מפורסם בסוף תקופת השופטים, אבל אין זכר לפרסומו בראשית תקופת השופטים...

The Temple of Shiloh became well-known at the end of the era of the Shoftim, but there is no mention of its fame at the start of the era of the Shoftim...

10. Radak to Shoftim 21:19

ואמר בו התרגום "מזמן לזמן ממועד למועד". ואפשר כי מפסח לפסח היה זה או מסכות לסכות, שהיה זמן שמחה, או ביום הכפורים שהיו בנות ישראל יוצאות וחולות בכרמים כדברי רז"ל.

The Targum said of it "from time to time, from *moed* to *moed*." And perhaps it was from Pesach to Pesach, or Succot to Succot, or on Yom Kippur when the Israelite girls went out and danced in the vineyards, as per our Sages.

11. Livius, *The History of Rome*, Book 1, Chapter 9 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>)

Rome was now strong enough to hold her own in war with any of the adjacent states; but owing to the want of women a single generation was likely to see the end of her greatness, since she had neither prospect of posterity at home nor the right of intermarriage with her neighbours. So, on the advice of the senate, Romulus sent envoys round among all the neighbouring nations to solicit for the new people an alliance and the privilege of intermarrying... Nowhere did the embassy obtain a friendly hearing. In fact men spurned, at the same time that they feared, both for themselves and their descendants, that great power which was then growing up in their midst... This was a bitter insult to the young Romans, and the matter seemed certain to end in violence. Expressly to afford a fitting time and place for this, Romulus, concealing his resentment, made ready solemn games in honour of the equestrian Neptune, which he called Consualia. He then bade proclaim the spectacle to the surrounding peoples... Many people—for they were also eager to see the new city—gathered for the festival, especially those who lived nearest, the inhabitants of Caenina, Crustumium, and Antemnae. The Sabines, too, came with all their people, including their children and wives. They were hospitably entertained in every house, and when they had looked at the site of the City, its walls, and its numerous buildings, they marvelled that Rome had so rapidly grown great. When the time came for the show, and people's thoughts and eyes were busy with it, the preconcerted attack began. At a given signal the young Romans darted this way and that, to seize and carry off the maidens. In most cases these were taken by the men in whose path they chanced to be. Some, of exceptional beauty, had been marked out for the chief senators, and were carried off to their houses by plebeians to whom the office had been entrusted.

12. Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 6, Chapter 138 (<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>)

These Pelasgians dwelt at that time in Lemnos and desired vengeance on the Athenians. Since they well knew the time of the Athenian festivals, they acquired fifty-oared ships and set an ambush for the Athenian women celebrating the

festival of Artemis at Brauron. They seized many of the women, then sailed away with them and brought them to Lemnos to be their concubines.

#### 13. Metzudat David to Shoftim 21:25

עם כי לא היה בימים ההם מלך בישראל וכל אחד עשה הישר בעיניו מ"מ לא שלחו יד בנחלת בנימן

Although there was no king in Israel in those days, and each did what was right in his own eyes, still, they did not extend a hand against the portion of Binyamin.

#### 14. Abarbanel to Shoftim 21:25

וכוונתי שנזכרו בספורים שעברו ארבעה פעמים בימים ההם אין מלך בישראל, אחד לענין פסל מיכה, השני לענין בני דן שהלכו לקחת לישא, השלישי לענין פלגש בגבעה שנתקבצו בני ישראל ונלחמו אלה על אלה, הרביעי זה הנזכר בסוף הספר ובא על ענין יבש גלעד שהחרימום ונתנו בתולותיהם לבני בנימן ושזקני העדה אמרו אליהם שיחטפו בנות שילה, כל זה היה הסבה לפי שלא היה מלך בישראל, כי אלו היה שם לא נעשים אותם הדברים באותו אופן הבלתי מסודר.

I mean that in these past stories it says four times, "In those days, there was no king in Israel." Once was regarding the idol of Michah, the second in Dan when they took Layish, the third in *pilegesh b'Givah* when Israel gathered and battled each other, the fourth is this mention at the end of the book, regarding Yavesh Gilad when they destroyed them and gave their girls to Binyamin, and the nation's elders told them to kidnap the girls of Shiloh. All of this was because there was no king in Israel, for had there been a king, these events would not have occurred in this lawless manner.

## Outline of Shoftim

Overall themes Identifying Gd's Hand in history; Gd can "win" with any pieces; The need for strong leadership

### 1:1-3:6 Introduction

- First conquest, including pieces from Yehoshua
- Rebuke of the nation for failing in their mission to evict Canaan
- Description of the failure cycle under the Shoftim

### 3:6-31 First Shoftim

- Otniel ben Kenaz saves us from Aram – who represent what Avraham left behind
- Ehud ben Gera (action hero) saves us from Moav – who represent Lot/Sdom
- Shamgar ben Anat (cattle goad) saves us from Plishtim – who did what we were supposed to do

### 4-5 Devorah and Barak

- Leadership is defined not by gender but by qualities
- Gd acts on our behalf, miraculously, as seen in this war
- The need for loyalty to others
- The opposition between Canaan's pursuit of luxury and pleasure, and Spartan Devorah/Yael

### 6-8 Gidon over Midian

- Miracles don't help; we become insecure about whether Gd will be with us
- Power corrupts
- What we do to our children I

### 9 Avimelech's disaster

- The dangers of pursuing power
- Gd will punish

### 10 Tola and Yair - Mini-Shoftim I

- Perhaps here for variety, to show the different types of shoftim
- But perhaps showing the failure to learn from Gidon's disaster, as Yair wants power
- What we do to our children II

### 10-12 Yiftach vs. Amon

- Those who try to do good, but are horribly off-base
- The problem of ignorance, or stubbornness, leading to Yiftach's daughter's fate
- Ephraim's ingratitude and hubris, Yiftach's rash reaction (unless per Abarbanel's defense)
- What we do to our children III

### 11 Ivtzan, Eilon, Avdon – Mini-Shoftim II

- Perhaps here for variety, to show the different types of shoftim
- But perhaps showing the attempt to govern via network, through their many children and grandchildren
- What we do to our children IV

### 13-16 Shimshon

- The righteousness of Hatzleponi, anonymous Jewish mother, contrasted with the Philistine women
- That Hashem is behind what happens – not the magic and idolatry of the Plishtim/Canaanites
- The danger of miracles and confidence that Gd will be with us
- What we do to our children V

### 17-21 Pesel Michah and Pilegash b'Givah

- What happens when there is no ruler
- Growth of either Avodah Zarah or syncretism
- We have become like the Canaanites
- And we have no outside enemy here; we are the enemy, harming ourselves