

2:11-23 The Shoftim Spiral (continued)

1. Rashi to 2:16

ויקם ד' שפטים - תמיד מדור אל דור כמו שהוא מונה והולך בספר הזה שופט אחד שופט:

"And Gd established judges" – perpetually, from generation to generation, as he records in this book, judge after judge.

2. Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah 22:6

אמרו רבותינו כתיב ביהושע (יהושע א) "כאשר הייתי עם משה אהיה עמך" והיה צריך יהושע לחיות ק"ך שנה כמשה רבינו, ולמה נתקצרו שנותיו י' שנים? בשעה שאמר הקב"ה למשה "נקום נקמת בני ישראל מאת המדינים אחר תאסף אל עמך" ואף על פי שנתבשר בשורות מות לא אחר הדבר, אלא נזדרז "וישלח אותם משה". אבל יהושע כיון שבא להלחם עם ל"א מלכים אמר "אם אני הורגם מיד, מיד אני מת כשם שעשה משה רבינו." מה עשה? התחיל מעכב במלחמתם שנא' (שם יא) "ימים רבים עשה יהושע את כל המלכים האלה מלחמה." אמר לו הקב"ה, "וכך עשית? הריני מקצר שנותיך י' שנים..."

Our sages have said: Yehoshua 1:5 says, "As I was with Moshe, so I will be with you", and so Yehoshua should have lived 120 years, as Moshe did. Why were his years reduced by ten years?

When Gd told Moshe, "Take the vengeance of Israel upon Midian, and then you will be gathered to your nation," he did not delay even though he had been given news of his own death. Rather, he was energetic, "And Moshe sent them." But when Yehoshua came to battle the 31 nations, he said, "If I will kill them immediately, I will die immediately, like Moshe." What did he do? He began to delay in their battle, as Yehoshua 11:18 says, "For many days Yehoshua battled all of these kings." Gd said to him, "Thus you do? I will shorten your years by ten years."...

Were we always bad?

3. Midrash, Rut Rabbah 1:1

"ויהי בימי שפוט השופטים" אוי לדור ששפטו את שופטיהם ואוי לדור ששופטיו צריכין להשפט

"And it was, in the days of the judging of the judges" – Woe to a generation which judges its judges, and woe to a generation whose judges need to be judged.

Divine wrath?

4. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei haTorah 1:11-12

וכיון שנתברר שאינו גוף וגוייה, יתברר שלא יארע לו אחד ממאורעות הגופות, לא חיבור ולא פירוד, לא מקום ולא מדה, לא עליה ולא ירידה, ולא ימין ולא שמאל, ולא פנים ולא אחר, ולא ישיבה ולא עמידה... והואיל והדבר כן הוא, כל הדברים הללו וכיוצא בהן שנאמרו בתורה ובדברי נביאים הכל משל ומליצה הן...

Since it is clarified that He has neither body nor form, it is clarified that nothing that happens to a body can happen to Him, neither joining nor division, neither place nor measure, neither ascent nor descent, neither right nor left, neither front nor back, neither sitting nor standing... And since it is so, all of these things and that which resembles them, stated in Torah and in the words of the prophets, are all parables and metaphors...

5. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man pg. 58

Halakhic man never accepted the ruling of Maimonides opposing the recital of *piyyutim*, the liturgical poems and songs of praise. Go forth and learn what the *Guide* sought to do to the *piyyutim* of Israel! Nevertheless, on the High Holidays the community of Israel, singing the hymns of unity and glory, reaches out to its Creator. And when the Divine Presence winks at us from behind the fading rays of the setting sun and its smile bears within it forgiveness and pardon, we weave a "royal crown" of praise for the *Atik Yomin*. The Ancient One. And in moments of divine mercy and grace, in times of spiritual ecstasy and exaltation, when our entire existence thirsts for the living Gd, we recite many *piyyutim* and hymns, and we disregard the strictures of the philosophical *midrash* concerning the problem of negative attributes.

Structure of Perek 3

- 3:1-6 Which nations were left?
- 3:7-11 Kushan Rishatayim of Aram and Otniel ben Kenaz
- 3:12-30 Eglon of Moav and Ehud ben Gera
- 3:31 The Plishtim and Shamgar ben Anat

3:1-6 Which nations were left?

6. Ralbag to 3:2

עתה הם צריכין ללמדם ענין המלחמה כי לא יכירו מה שנפקד מהם בסור השגחת ד' יתברך מהם, כי קודם זה לא היו צריכים לדעת סדר ענין המלחמה כי ד' הנלחם להם:

Now they must teach [future generations] to wage war, for they would not recognize that which they had lost when Gd removed His supervision. Until now they did not need to know how to wage war; Gd had waged war on their behalf.

7. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook, Orot, On War (Naor translation)

Chapter 4: Were it not for the sin of the Golden Calf, the inhabitants of the Land of Israel would have been reconciled with the People of Israel, for the Name of Gd called upon them would have aroused awe. No war would have been necessary, and the influence would have proceeded peacefully as in the Days of the Messiah. Only sin intervened and the matter has been delayed thousands of years...

Chapter 8: The spiritual fabric that in its present state could not prevent, despite all its glorious wisdom, wholesale slaughter and such fearful world-destruction, has proven itself invalid from its very inception... Therefore, the entire contemporary civilization is doomed and on its ruins will be established a world order of truth and Gd-consciousness.

8. Rashi to 3:2

למען דעת ולהתבונן דורות בני ישראל הבאים מה החטא גורם, כי עתה הם זקוקים ללמדם מלחמה:

So that future Israelite generations will know and understand the effect of sin, for now they must teach them war.

3:7-11 – Kushan Rishatayim of Aram and Otniel ben Kenaz

9. Talmud Yerushalmi, Nazir 9:1

ולמה נקרא שמו כושן רשעתיים? שעשה שתי רשעיות: אחת שחילל את השבועה, ואחת ששיעבד בישראל שמונה שנה.

Why was he called *Kushan Rishatayim*? He performed two evils: He desecrated the oath, and he enslaved Israel for eight years.

10. Talmud, Sanhedrin 105a

בעור שבא על בעיר. כושן רשעתיים דעבד שתי רשעיות בישראל: אחת בימי יעקב ואחת בימי שפוט השופטים. ומה שמו? לבן הארמי שמו. *Be'or* because he lived with his donkey. *Kushan Rishatayim* because he performed two evils to Israel: in the days of Yaakov and in the days of the judges. And what is his name? Lavan the Aramean.

11. Malbim to 3:10

רוח ד'. א] רוח משפט וגבורה לשפוט את ישראל ולהשיבם אל דרכי ד'. ב] וע"י ששבו אל משפטי ד' אמת, יצא למלחמה וד' עזרו. "The spirit of Gd" – 1) Spirit of justice and strength to judge Israel and return them to the path of Gd. 2) Because they truly returned to Gd's laws, he went to war and Gd helped him.

12. Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 3:2

מהו "כי ידעתי את מכאוביו"? יודע אני כמה עתידים להכאיבני במדבר... ואעפ"כ איני נמנע מלגאלם. א"ר שמואל בר נחמן הדבר הזה שפט עתניאל בן קנז לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, אמר לפניו רבון העולם כך הבטחת את משה בין עושין רצונך בין לא עושין רצונך אתה גואלם, שנאמר (שופטים ג) ותהי עליו רוח ה' וישפוט את ישראל...

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman said: Atniel ben Kenaz passed judgment on this matter before Gd. He said before Gd: Master of the Universe, You promised Moses that whether the Jews would do Your will or not, You would redeem them! This is the meaning of the verse, "And the spirit of Gd was upon him, and he judged Israel."...

13. Rambam, Moreh haNevuchim 1:45

The first prophetic level is for Divine aid to accompany a person, moving and energizing him to a great positive deed, like saving an important group from evildoers, or saving a great, important person, or benefiting a large number of people. He will find something moving him to action; this is called "the spirit of Gd." Regarding one who is accompanied by this, the text will say, "the spirit of Gd was powerful upon him," or "the spirit of Gd clothed him," or "the spirit of Gd rested upon him," or "Gd was with him," and similar expressions. This was the level of all of the Jewish judges, regarding whom the Torah said in general that Gd established judges for them, and Gd was with the judge and He rescued them. This is also the level of all of the distinguished counselors of Israel...