

Introduction to Shimshon

1. Outline of Perakim 13-16

- Chapter 13 – The instruction of Hatzlelponit regarding Shimshon
- Chapters 14-15 – Shimshon and the woman from Timnat
 - 14:1-9 – Courting the woman
 - 14:10-19 – The ill-fated party
 - 14:20-15:8 – Punishment with 300 foxes
 - 15:9-20 – Jewish betrayal, and recovery
- 16:1-3 – Shimshon and the zonah
- 16:4-20 – Shimshon and Delilah
- 16:21-31 – Shimshon's End

2. Identity of the Philistines Successful invaders

3. Bereishit 21:32; Shemot 13:17; Shemot 23:31; Shemuel I 6:18

וַיִּקְרְתוּ בְּרִית בְּבָאָר שִׁבְעַת וַיָּקָם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ וַיִּפְיֵל שֶׁר צָבָאוּ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ אֶל אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים:
 וַיְהִי בְּשִׁלַּח פָּרְעֹה אֶת הָעָם וְלֹא נָחַם אֱלֹקִים דָּרֹךְ אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים...
 וַשְׁתִּי אֶת גְּבֻלָּהּ מִיָּם סוּף וְעַד יָם פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּמִמְדִּבְרַת עַד הַנֶּהָר...
 וַעֲבָרֵי הַנְּהָב מִסָּפֶר כָּל עָרֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים לַחֲמִשָּׁת הַסָּרְגָנִים...

4. Amos 9:7

הֲלוֹא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל הִעֲלִיתִי מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּפְלִשְׁתִּים מִכַּפְתֹּר וְאַרְם מִקִּיר:

Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Crete and Aram from Kir?

5. Talmud, Rosh haShanah 25a-b

ויאמר שמואל אל העם ד' אשר עשה את משה ואת אהרן, ואומר וישלח ד' את ירבעל ואת בן ואת יפתח ואת שמואל - ירובעל זה גדעון ולמה נקרא שמו ירובעל? שעשה מריבה עם הבעל. בן זה שמשון ולמה נקרא שמו בן דאתי מן יפתח כמשמעו. ואומר משה ואהרן בכהניו ושמואל בקראי שמו. שקל הכתוב שלשה קלי עולם כשלשה חמורי עולם, לומר לך: ירובעל בדורו - כמשה בדורו, בן בדורו - כאהרן בדורו, יפתח בדורו - כשמואל בדורו. ללמדך שאפילו קל שבקלין ונתמנה פרנס על הצבור - הרי הוא כאביר שבאבירים

- "And Samuel said to the nation [upon coronating Saul]: Gd, who made Moshe and Aharon, (Samuel I 12:6)"
- "And Gd sent Yerubaal [Gidon] and Bedan [Shimshon] and Yiftach and Samuel (Samuel I 12:11)" – Yerubaal is Gidon, and why was he called Yerubaal? For he fought with Baal. Bedan is Shimshon, and why was he called Bedan? For he was from Dan. Yiftach is as he sounds.
- "Moshe, and Aharon with his priests, and Samuel among those who call out in His Name (Psalms 99:6)".

The text equated the world's three lightweights with the world's three heavyweights, to tell you: Yerubaal in his generation is as Moshe in his generation, Bedan in his generation is as Aharon in his generation, Yiftach in his generation is as Samuel in his generation. To teach you that even the lightest of the light, if appointed as community leader, is like the mightiest of the mightiest.

6. Vayikra 22:2

דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן וְאֶל בָּנָיו וַיִּנְזְרוּ מִקִּדְשֵׁי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל...

Speak to Aharon and his sons, and they will separate from the consecrated items of the Children of Israel...

7. Prof. Yechezkel Kaufmann, Sefer Shoftim, pg. 243-244

Many scholars have tried in various eras to give the stories of Shimshon a mythological explanation and to demonstrate that Shimshon is only an incarnation of the god of the Sun or of sons of a Sun god. Their template is Melqart, Heracles and the like. This is hinted by the name Shimshon. Shimshon splits a young lion, and the lion represents the Sun god.

Also, Gilgamesh and Heracles, sons of Sun gods, kill lions. And in the lion's body Shimshon finds honey, and honey is the gift of the Sun god. The Greek Aristaeus, discoverer of honey, is also an image of the Sun god. Finding honey in the lion's body is meaningful, for the bee gives its honey when the Sun is in the constellation of Leo. The foxes, which Shimshon sends into the Philistine fields, represent blight, which the Sun's glare inflicts on the standing grain. The locks of Shimshon's head, in which his strength is stored, represent the rays of the Sun, storing the strength of the Sun. Gilgamesh, Heracles, Helios and the like have locks or [long] hair. And so on.

But this explanation is intellectually unsatisfying.

The name Shimshon may be rooted in service of the Sun god, and it may be Canaanite – but this demonstrates nothing regarding the nature of Shimshon himself. And the proofs from the stories are only *midrashim mepulpalim*. The gods of the nations live and act like people, and for every human affair and deed one could find a model in the mythological stories, or explain them mythologically. Shimshon splits a lion, and the mythological heroes also kill lions. But David killed a lion, and the Assyrian kings gloried in killing lions. And had Shimshon killed an ox or donkey, one could also have found a mythological model for this. Gilgamesh killed the ox of the heavens. And the donkey has a special connection with the Sun god. Honey is a gift of the Sun god, but every other food is also a gift of the Sun god or the Earth god or some other god...

Shimshon's mother

8. Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah 10:5

מנוח היה מדין ואשתו היתה מיהודה, נמצא שמשון בא משבט דן ומשבט יהודה, שכך אמרו אמיה דמשון הצללפוני שמה, והיא מיוחסת על שבט יהודה...

Manoach was from Dan and his wife was from Yehudah, so that Shimshon came from the tribe of Dan and the tribe of Yehudah, for they said, "Shimshon's mother's name was Hatzlelponi," and she was associated with Yehudah...

9. Divrei haYamim I 4:3

ואלה אבי עיטם יזרעאל וישמא וידבש ושם אחותם הצללפוני:

10. Radak to Divrei haYamim I 4:3

מה שהזכיר אחותם וכן הזכיר למעלה בבני זרובבל ושלמית אחותם, אולי לא היתה להם עוד והזכירם, או היו בעלות השם בדורם ונשים חשובות לכך הזכירם כמו סרח בת אשר:

It mentioned their sister, and it likewise mentioned "And their sister Shlomit" earlier with the sons of Zerubavel. Perhaps they had no others and it mentioned these, or they had reputations in their generation and they were women of stature, and so it mentioned them, like Serach daughter of Asher.