



1. Is this a leader of the Jews? Shoftim 14:1-3 (621)

2. Talmud, Rosh HaShanah 25a-b

ואומר "ויאמר שמואל אל העם ד' אשר עשה את משה ואת אהרן (שמואל א' יב:ו)", ואומר "וישלח ד' את ירבעל ואת בן ואת יפתח ואת שמואל (שמואל א' יב:יא)" ... שקל הכתוב שלשה קלי עולם כשלשה חמורי עולם, לומר לך ירבעל בדורו כמשה בדורו, בן בדורו כאהרן בדורו, יפתח בדורו כשמואל בדורו, ללמדך שאפילו קל שבקלין ונתמנה פרנס על הצבור הרי הוא כאביר שבאבירים...

And Shemuel I 12:6 says, "And Shemuel told the nation: G-d, who established Moshe and Aharon", and Shemuel I 12:11 says, "And G-d sent Yerubaal [Gidon], Bedan [Shimshon] and Yiftach and Shemuel"... The text weighed the three global lightweights with the three global heavyweights in order to teach you that Yerubaal in his generation is like Moshe in his generation, Bedan in his generation is like Aharon in his generation, Yiftach in his generation is like Shemuel in his generation. This teaches you that even the lightest of the light, if appointed as a communal leader, is like the mightiest of the mighty...

3. Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer, Bigdei Shesh, Introduction to Shoftim

אין לך ספר בתנ"ך המבטא חוסר הצלחה כספר שופטים

No book in Tanach expresses failure like the book of Shoftim.

Outline

4. Ralbag to Shoftim 3:30 (1)

הראשון הוא כולל כל ספור זה הספר והוא שמי שיעבוד הש"י הוא מושגח ונעזר בו ואשר יסור ממנו תסור ההשגחה האלקיות ויהיה נכון אל שיגיע כל רע ולזה תמצא שתכף שסרו ישראל מאחרי ד' היו נופלין ביד אויביהם ובשובם אליו היו ניצולים.

The first lesson includes this entire book's narrative. It is that one who serves Gd will be watched over and aided by Him, and one who strays from Him will also have Gd's supervision stray from him. He will be prepared for all ill. Therefore you will find that as soon as Israel strayed from after Gd, they fell into the hand of their enemies, and when they returned to Him they were rescued.

5. The limits of miracles and supermen Gidon (Chapters 6-8) and Shimshon (Chapters 13-16)

6. Gd moves our national history Shoftim 3:7-10 (589)

7. Talmud, Bava Batra 14b

שמואל כתב ספרו ושופטים ורות

Shemuel wrote his book, Shoftim and Ruth.

Outline

Chapters 1-2 Introduction reviewing settlement in Israel, culminating chronologically with end of 5

Chapters 3-5 First Shoftim through Devorah – Power and failure

Chapters 6-9 Gidon and Avimelech – Descent into lawlessness

Chapt's 10-12 The mini-Shoftim, and Yiftach – A networking experiment

Chapt's 13-16 Shimshon: The last (?) Shofeit

Chapt's 17-21 Pesel Michah and Pilegesh b'Givah: The worst

8. The fifteen judges, per Abarbanel, based on Succah 27b

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---|
| 1. Otniel ben Kenaz of Yehudah | Chapter 3 | 40 years |
| 2. Ehud ben Gera of Binyamin | Chapter 3 | 80 years |
| 3. Shamgar ben Anat, a Kohen | Chapter 3 | 1 year, during Ehud's 80 th year |

4. Devorah and Barak of Naftali	Chapters 4-5	40 years
5. Gideon of Menasheh	Chapters 6-8	40 years
6. Avimelech of Menasheh	Chapter 9	3 years
7. Tola ben Puah of Yissachar	Chapter 10	23 years
8. Yair haGiladi of Menasheh	Chapter 10	22 years
9. Yiftach of Menasheh	Chapters 10-12	6 years
10. Ivtzan (Boaz of Yehudah)	Chapter 12	7 years
11. Eilon of Zevulun	Chapter 12	10 years
12. Avdon ben Hillel of Ephraim	Chapter 12	8 years
13. Shimshon of Dan	Chapter 13-16	20 years
14. Eli the Kohan	Shemuel I	39 years (40 th incomplete)
15. Shemuel the Levi	Shemuel I	11 years

Are these leaders?

9. 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...

10. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Introduction to Shoftim, pp. 93-95

- Five similarities to Kings
 - Called by G-d, appointed by a court on behalf of the nation
 - Lead in war as needed
 - Has the power to punish (as judges and) extra-judicially
 - Those who rebel against a judge would be punished with death
 - There is continuity; there were no periods without judges
- Five differences from Kings
 - Not anointed
 - They preside over courts, which kings cannot do
 - The mitzvot of kings (limits on marriage, money and horses; mitzvah of writing a Torah) do not apply
 - The nation's obligations of reverence do not apply
 - The position is not hereditary

11. Targum Yonatan to Shoftim 2:16

ואקים ד' נגידין ופרקינן מיד בזזיהון

And Gd established leaders, and redeemed them from those who raided them.

12. Prof. Yehuda Elitzur, Daat Mikra edition of Shoftim, pg. קלו

עקר הלקח שספר שופטים מבקש לשנן לבאי עולם הוא כי יש מנהיג לבירה זו ושום דבר אינו מתרחש בלעדי ד'. כאשר ישראל נמסרים ביד אויב הרי זה משום שעשו את הרע בעיני ד', וכאשר הם נושעים מידי שושיהם וצורריהם, הרי זה משום שקצרה נפשו בעמל ישראל כי זקנו אליו. שונים הם האנשים המושיעים את ישראל אף על פי שכולם בשם 'שופטים' יקראו. הצד השווה בכלם כי ד' הקים אותם ורוחו היתה עליהם...

The essential message which the book of Shoftim seeks to repeat/sharpen for all who enter this world is that there is a Director of this building, and nothing happens without Gd. When Israel are given into the hand of the enemy, it is because they have done that which is evil in Gd's eyes, and when they are rescued from their raiders and foes it is because Gd has tired of the struggles of Israel for they have cried out to Him. The rescuers of Israel are varied, even though all of them are called "Shoftim". The common denominator for all of them is that Gd established them, and His spirit was upon them...