

Stones and Stories #4

Shilo and the Mishkan

Civil War

Then the Benjaminites realized that they were routed.. Now the Israelites had yielded ground to the Benjaminites, for they relied on the ambush which they had laid against Gibeah. One ambush quickly deployed against Gibeah, and the other ambush advanced and put the whole town to the sword.

A time had been agreed upon by the Israelite men with those in ambush: When a huge column of smoke was sent up from the town, the Israelite men were to turn about in battle. Benjamin had begun by striking dead about 30 Israelite men, and they thought, "They are being routed before us as in the previous fighting."

But when the column, the pillar of smoke, began to rise from the city, the Benjaminites looked behind them, and there was the whole town going up in smoke to the sky! And now the Israelites turned about, and the men of Benjamin were thrown into panic, for they realized that disaster had overtaken them.

They retreated before the men of Israel along the road to the wilderness, where the fighting caught up with them; meanwhile those^h from the towns were massacring them in it. They encircled the Benjaminites, pursued them, and trod them down [from] Menuhah to a point opposite Gibeah on the east.

That day 18,000 men of Benjamin fell, all of them brave men. They turned and fled to the wilderness, to the Rock of Rimmon; but [the Israelites] picked off another 5,000 on the roads and, continuing in hot pursuit of them up to Gidom, they slew 2,000 more.

Thus the total number of Benjaminites who fell that day came to 25,000 fighting men, all of them brave. But 600 men turned and fled to the wilderness, to the Rock of Rimmon; they remained at the Rock of Rimmon four months. (Shoftim 20: 36-47)

Reconciliation at Shilo

They said, "The annual feast of the LORD is now being held at Shiloh." (It lies north of Bethel, east of the highway that runs from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.)

So they instructed the Benjaminites as follows: "Go and lie in wait in the vineyards.

As soon as you see the girls of Shiloh coming out to join in the dances, come out from the vineyards; let each of you seize a wife from among the girls of Shiloh, and be off for the land of Benjamin.

And if their fathers or brothers come to us to complain, we shall say to them, 'Be generous to them for our sake! We could not provide any of them with a wife on account of the war, and you would have incurred guilt if you yourselves had given them [wives].'"

The Benjaminites did so. They took to wife, from the dancers whom they carried off, as many as they themselves numbered. Then they went back to their own territory, and rebuilt their towns and settled in them. (Shoftim 21:19-23)

Tu B'Av: An Old/New Holiday

Rabbi Shimon ben Gamaliel said: There were no days of joy in Israel greater than the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur. On these days the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed white garments in order not to shame any one who had none. . . . The daughters of Jerusalem come out and dance in the vineyards. What would they say? Young man, lift up your eyes and see what you choose for yourself. Do not set your eyes on beauty but set your eyes on the family. (Mishnah Taanit 4:1)

It lies north of Bethel, east of the highway that runs from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah. (Shoftim 21:19)

The Mysterious Town of Yavesh Gilead

They inquired, "Is there anyone from the tribes of Israel who did not go up to the LORD at Mizpah?" Now no one from Jabesh-gilead had come to the camp, to the assembly. For, when the roll of the troops was taken, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was present. So the assemblage dispatched 12,000 of the warriors, instructing them as follows: "Go and put the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead to the sword, women and children included. This is what you are to do: Proscribe every man, and every woman who has known a man carnally." They found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 maidens who had not known a man carnally; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. (Shoftim 21: 8-12)

Nahash the Ammonite marched up and besieged Jabesh-gilead. All the men of Jabesh-gilead said to Nahash, "Make a pact with us, and we will serve you." But Nahash the Ammonite answered them, "I will make a pact with you on this condition, that everyone's right eye be gouged out; I will make this a humiliation for all Israel." The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days' respite, so that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel; if no one comes to our aid, we will surrender to you." When the messengers came to Gibeah of

Saul and gave this report in the hearing of the people, all the people broke into weeping. (Samuel I 11:1-4)

When the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard about it—what the Philistines had done to Saul— all their stalwart men set out and marched all night; they removed the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan and to Jabesh and burned them there. Then they took the bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and they fasted for seven days. (Samuel I 31: 11-13)

Setting Up the Tabernacle and Dividing the Land

The whole community of the Israelite people assembled at Shiloh, and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The land was now under their control; but there remained seven tribes of the Israelites which had not yet received their portions.

So Joshua said to the Israelites, “How long will you be slack about going and taking possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has assigned to you? . . .

The men set out on their journeys. Joshua ordered the men who were leaving to write down a description of the land—“Go, traverse the country and write down a description of it. Then return to me, and I will cast lots for you here at Shiloh before the LORD.”

So the men went and traversed the land; they described it in a document, town by town, in seven parts, and they returned to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh.

Joshua cast lots for them at Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua apportioned the land among the Israelites according to their divisions. (Joshua 18:1-10)

Was the Tabernacle Neglected?

There was a man from Ramathaim of the Zuphites, in the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham son of Elihu son of Tohu son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

He had two wives, one named Hannah and the other Peninnah; Peninnah had children, but Hannah was childless.

This man used to go up from his town every year to worship and to offer sacrifice to the LORD of Hosts at Shiloh.—Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD there. (Samuel I 1:1-3)

Permanent or Movable?

When they came to Shiloh, bamot were forbidden. [The Tabernacle] there had no roof, but [consisted of] a base of stones with a ceiling of curtains, and that was

the “resting place” [referred to in the Torah]. Most holy sacrifices were eaten within the curtains, and less holy sacrifices and second tithe [were eaten] wherever [Shiloh] could be seen. (Mishnah Zevachim 14:6)

The difference between the Tabernacle in Shilo and the Temple in Jerusalem is only that in Shiloh one eats offerings of lesser sanctity, in any place that overlooks Shiloh,. And in Jerusalem one eats those consecrated items only within the walls. (Mishnah Megillah 1:11)

And on the front side, to the east, fifty cubits: (Shmot 28:13)

Place of Prayer

This happened year after year: Every time she went up to the House of the LORD, the other would taunt her, so that she wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, “Hannah, why are you crying and why aren’t you eating? Why are you so sad? Am I not more devoted to you than ten sons?” After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose.—The priest Eli was sitting on the seat near the doorpost of the temple of the LORD.— In her wretchedness, she prayed to the LORD, weeping all the while. And she made this vow: “O LORD of Hosts, if You will look upon the suffering of Your maidservant and will remember me and not forget Your maidservant, and if You will grant Your maidservant a male child, I will dedicate him to the LORD for all the days of his life; and no razor shall ever touch his head.”

As she kept on praying before the LORD, Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah was praying in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice could not be heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Sober up!” And Hannah replied, “Oh no, my lord! I am a very unhappy woman. I have drunk no wine or other strong drink, but I have been pouring out my heart to the LORD. Do not take your maidservant for a worthless woman; I have only been speaking all this time out of my great anguish and distress.”

“Then go in peace,” said Eli, “and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him.” She answered, “You are most kind to your handmaid.” So the woman left, and she ate, and was no longer downcast.(Samuel I 1:7-18)

Shilo Destroyed

A Benjaminite ran from the battlefield and reached Shiloh the same day; his clothes were rent and there was earth on his head.

When he arrived, he found Eli sitting on a seat, waiting beside the road—his heart trembling for the Ark of God. The man entered the city to spread the news, and the whole city broke out in a cry.

And when Eli heard the sound of the outcry and asked, "What is the meaning of this uproar?" the man rushed over to tell Eli.

Now Eli was ninety-eight years old; his eyes were fixed in a blind stare.

The man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battlefield; I have just fled from the battlefield." [Eli] asked, "What happened, my son?"

The bearer of the news replied, "Israel fled before the Philistines and the troops also suffered a great slaughter. Your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of God has been captured."

When he mentioned the Ark of God, [Eli] fell backward off the seat beside the gate, broke his neck and died; for he was an old man and heavy. He had been a chieftain of Israel for forty years. (Samuel I 4:12-18)

Until Shilo Comes

לא יסור שבט מיהודה ומחוקק מבין רגליו עד כי יבוא שילה ולו יקרת עמים