

# **Stones and Stories #3**

## **Shoftim I: Battles in the Jezreel Valley**

### **Outline of Sefer Shoftim**

1 The unconquered land, various tribal skirmishes

2 Moral outline of the book

3 Enemy list; Otniel ben Knaz vs Cushan Rishaatayim, Ehud ben Gera vs Eglon, Shamgar ben Anat vs Philistines

4-5 Devorah and Barak vs Sisera

6-8 Gideon vs Midian

9 Avimelech

10 Tola ben Puah, Yair HaGilaadi

11-12 Yiftah vs Amon, various minor judges

13-16 Shimshon vs Philistines

17-18 Tribe of Dan finds a new home

19-21 The concubine of Giveah and the civil war

In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did as he pleased. (Shoftim 17:6)

### **Battle #1: Devorah, Barak and Sisera**

And the LORD surrendered them to King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. His army commander was Sisera, whose base was Harosheth-goiim. The Israelites cried out to the LORD; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he had oppressed Israel ruthlessly for twenty years. Deborah, wife of Lappidoth, was a prophetess; she led Israel at that time. She used to sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites would come to her for decisions. She summoned Barak son of Abinoam, of Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded: Go, march up to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun( Shoftim 4: 2-6)

## Hazor – Wasn't That Destroyed?

Joshua then turned back and captured Hazor and put her king to the sword.— Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms.— They proscribed and put to the sword every person in it. Not a soul survived, and Hazor itself was burned down. Joshua captured all those royal cities and their kings. He put them to the sword; he proscribed them in accordance with the charge of Moses, the servant of the LORD. However, all those towns that are still standing on their mounds were not burned down by Israel; it was Hazor alone that Joshua burned down. (Joshua 11:10-13)

## Rain or Topography

and the LORD threw Sisera and all his chariots and army into a panic <sup>c</sup>*Lit. "at the edge of the sword before Barak."* before the onslaught of Barak. <sup>c</sup> Sisera leaped from his chariot and fled on foot as Barak pursued the chariots and the soldiers as far as Harosheth-goiim. All of Sisera's soldiers fell by the sword; not a man was left. (Shoftim 4: 15-16)

Then the kings came, they fought:  
The kings of Canaan fought  
At Taanach, by Megiddo's waters—  
They got no spoil of silver.

The stars fought from heaven,  
From their courses they fought against Sisera.

The torrent Kishon swept them away,  
The raging torrent, the torrent Kishon. (Shoftim 5:19-21)

## Mrs. Sisera at the Window

Through the window peered Sisera's mother,  
Behind the lattice she cried: "Why is his chariot so long in coming?  
Why so late the clatter of his wheels?" (Shoftim 5:28)

## Battle #2: Gideon and the Midianites

Then the Israelites did what was offensive to the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years. The hand of the Midianites prevailed over Israel; and because of Midian, the Israelites provided themselves with refuges in the caves and strongholds of the mountains. <sup>a</sup> After the Israelites had done their sowing, Midian, Amalek, and the Kedemites would come up and raid them; they would attack them, destroy the produce of the land all the way to Gaza, and leave no means of sustenance in Israel, not a sheep or an ox or an

ass. For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, swarming as thick as locusts; they and their camels were innumerable. Thus they would invade the land and ravage it (Shoftim 6:1-5)

An angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was then beating out wheat inside a winepress in order to keep it safe from the Midianites. (Shoftim 6:11)

Early next day, Jerubbaal—that is, Gideon—and all the troops with him encamped above En-harod, while the camp of Midian was in the plain to the north of him, at Gibeath-moreh. (Shoftim 7:1)

So he took the troops down to the water. Then the LORD said to Gideon, “Set apart all those who lap up the water with their tongues like dogs from all those who get down on their knees to drink.” (Shoftim 7:5)

Watch me,” he said, “and do the same. When I get to the outposts of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all those with me blow our horns, you too, all around the camp, will blow your horns and shout, ‘For the LORD and for Gideon!’” (Shoftim 7:17-18)

## **A Proof for Literacy?**

On his way back from the battle at the Ascent of Heres, Gideon son of Joash captured a boy from among the people of Succoth and interrogated him. The latter drew up for him a list of the officials and elders of Succoth, seventy-seven in number. (Shoftim 8:13-14)

## שיר העמק

באה מנוחה ליגע  
ומרגוע לעמל  
לילה חיוור משתרע  
על שדות עמק יזרעאל  
טל מלמטה ולבנה מעל  
מבית אלפא עד נהלל

מה מה לילה מליל  
דממה ביזרעאל  
נומה עמק ארץ תפארת  
אנו לך משמרת

ים הדגן מתנועע  
שיר העדר מצלצל  
זוהי ארצי ושדותיה  
זהו עמק יזרעאל  
תבורך ארצי ותהולל  
מבית אלפא עד נהלל

מה מה לילה...

אופל בהר הגלבווע  
סוס דוהר מצל אל צל  
קול זעקה עף גבוה  
משדות עמק יזרעאל  
?מי ירה ומי זה שם נפל  
בין בית אלפא ונהלל

## The Valley Song

The weary came to rest  
and finish their labors.  
Pale night spreads over  
The fields of the Jezreel Valley.

Dew underneath and moonlight above,  
From Beit Alpha to Nahalal....

Oh, what a night of nights  
Silence across Jezreel  
Sleep my beloved valley, land of glorious be:  
We shall be your guardians.

The sea of grain is swaying,  
the song of the flocks rings out,  
This is my land and her fields,  
This is the Jezreel Valley.  
Bless and praise my country  
From Beit Alpha to Nahalal.

Oh what ...

Mount Gilboa is darkened  
A horse gallops from shadow to shadow.  
A voice is carried high.  
Over the fields of the Jezreel Valley.  
Who has shot? who has fallen?  
Between Beit Alpha and Nahalal...