

Leadership in the Book of Judges

Shoftim 6:7-13

וַיְהִי כִּי-יָזְעֻקוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יְהוָה עַל אֲדֹת מִדְיָן: וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אִישׁ נָבִיא אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנֹכִי הֵעֲלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְנָאֲצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִבְּיַת עַבְדִּים: וְנֶאֱצֹל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד כָּל-לֹחֲצֵיכֶם וְנֶאֱגַרְשׁ אוֹתְכֶם מִפְּנֵיכֶם וְנֶאֱתַנָּה לָכֶם אֶת-אֲרָצָם: וְנֶאֱמַרְהָ לָכֶם אָנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא תִירָאוּ אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יוֹשְׁבִים בָּאֲרָצָם וְלֹא שִׁמְעֶתֶם בְּקוֹלִי: (פ) וַיָּבֹא מִלֶּאֱדָן יְהוָה וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּעַפְרָה אֲשֶׁר לְיוֹאֵשׁ אֲבִי הָעֶזְרָי וַיַּגְדְּעוֹן בְּנֹו חֲבֹט חֲשִׁים בִּגְתָּ לַהֲגִים מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן: וַיָּרָא אֵלָיו מִלֶּאֱדָן יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה עִמָּךְ גִּבּוֹר הַחֵיל: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו גִּדְּעוֹן בִּי אֲדֹנָי וַיֵּשׁ יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ וְלָמָּה מְצָאֲתָנוּ כָּל-זֹאת וְאֵיךְ כָּל-נִפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר סָפְרוּ-לָנוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לֵאמֹר הֲלֹא מִמִּצְרַיִם הֵעֲלָנוּ יְהוָה וְעַתָּה נִטְשָׁנוּ יְהוָה וַיִּתְּנֵנוּ בְּכַף-מִדְיָן: וַיִּסָּפֶן אֵלָיו יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר לָךְ בְּכַחַךְ זֶה וְהוֹשַׁעְתָּ אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכַּף מִדְיָן הֲלֹא שְׁלַחְתִּידָּ:

When the Israelites cried to the LORD on account of Midian, the LORD sent a prophet to the Israelites who said to them, "Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel: I brought you up out of Egypt and freed you from the house of bondage. I rescued you from the Egyptians and from all your oppressors; I drove them out before you, and gave you their land. And I said to you, 'I the LORD am your God. You must not worship the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.' But you did not obey Me." 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. The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, valiant warrior!" Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why has all this befallen us? Where are all His wondrous deeds about which our fathers told us, saying, 'Truly the LORD brought us up from Egypt'? Now the LORD has abandoned us and delivered us into the hands of Midian!" The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this strength of yours and deliver Israel from the Midianites. I herewith make you My messenger."

Midrash Tanchuma, Shoftim 4:1

תתן לך. אתה תמנה שופטים בכל שערים. שפועמים בשבת בתי דינין יושבין בעירות, בשני ובחמישי. ואם עמדה הלכה לפניהם, היו שואלין לבית דין שבלשכת הגזית. ושפטו את העם משפט צדק, שיהיו מטין את העם לכף צדק. אמר רבי יהודה ברבי שלום, שיהיו מטין ומלמדין עליהם זכות לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא. ממי אתה למד. מגדעון בן יואש, שבימיו היו ישראל בצרה, והיה הקדוש ברוך הוא מבקש אדם שילמד עליהם זכות ולא היה מוצא, שהיה הדור דל במצות ובמעשים. כיון שנמצא זכות בגדעון, שלמד עליהם זכות, מיד נגלה עליו המלאך, שנאמר: וַיָּבֹא אֵלָיו מִלֶּאֱדָן ה', וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ: לָךְ בְּכַחַךְ זֶה (שופטים ו, יד), בְּכַח זְכוּת שְׁלֵמֶדֶת עַל בְּנֵי הָעָם, וַיִּשְׁפְּטוּ אֶת הָעָם מִשְׁפַּט צֶדֶק, שִׁיְהִיו מְלַמְדִּין זְכוּת עַל הָדוֹר.

Appoint for yourselves [in all of your gates] (Deuteronomy 16:18) You should appoint judges in all the gates; as courts convene twice a week in the cities, on Monday and on Thursday. And if the law was stuck in front of them (they were not able to determine it), they would ask the [high] court in the chamber of hewn stone. "And they shall judge the nation with righteous judgement," that they should incline the people towards righteousness. Rabbi Yehudah beRabbi Shalom said, "That they

should incline towards and advocate merit for [the Jewish people] in front of the Holy One, blessed be He." From who do you learn [this]? From Gidon ben Yoash. As Israel was in distress in his days, and the Holy One, blessed be He, sought a person to advocate merit about them. But He did not find [anyone], as the generation was poor in commandments and in good deeds. Once he found the merit in Gidon, that he advocated merit about them, the angel immediately revealed himself to [Gidon]; as it is stated (Judges 6:12-14), "And the angel of the Lord [was revealed] to him.... And he said to him, 'Go with this strength of yours,'" with the strength of the merit that you advocated about My children. This is, "And they shall judge the nation with righteous judgement," that they should advocate merit for the generation.

Malbim Shoftim 6:13

ויפן אליו ה': 'עד עתה דבר עמו המלאך, ועתה פנה ה' אליו בדבור נבואי (שהמלאך הוא אמצעי אליו ויקדים להתראות טרם יגלה דבר ה' כמו שהיה בהיות יהושע ביריחו), ויאמר לך בכחך זה כיון, אם על הכח הנמצא בו לגבורה, כמו שאמר במ"ש להניס מפני מדין, שהוריק על כח זה שפע רב עד יספיק להושיע את ישראל. ואם על כח הטענה כי אחרי ראה שטוען בעד סור ההשגחה מישראל זה אות שדבר זה סוער בלבבו, והוא מוכן לתשועתם.

"The LORD turned to him..." Until this moment an angel had spoken with him, and now G-d turned to him with a direct, prophetic communication (because the angel was an intermediary whose appearance preceded the revelation of Gd's word, just as Joshua had experienced at Jericho.) And when Gd said 'Go in this strength of yours...' this meant one of two things. Perhaps it was a reference to the capacity he had for mighty deeds, as it says "...to keep it safe from the Midianites." (6:11) In this case Gd was pouring out great abundance into this power, enough that he could save Israel. Or perhaps it is a reference to the strength of his claim against the angel. When Gd saw that Gidon made a claim against the removal of providence from Israel (and their subsequent suffering), it was a sign that this feeling burned in his heart and he was ready for their salvation.

Shoftim 7:1-7

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. The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many troops with you for Me to deliver Midian into their hands; Israel might claim for themselves the glory due to Me, thinking, 'Our own hand has brought us victory.' Therefore, announce to the men, 'Let anybody who is timid and fearful turn back, as a bird flies from Mount Gilead.'" Thereupon, 22,000 of the troops turned back and 10,000 remained. "There are still too many troops," the LORD said to Gideon. "Take them down to the water and I will sift them for you there. Anyone of whom I tell you, 'This one is to go with you,' that one shall go with you; and anyone of whom I tell you, 'This one is not to go with you,' that one shall not go." 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." Now those who



"lapped" the water into their mouths by hand numbered three hundred; all the rest of the troops got down on their knees to drink. Then the LORD said to Gideon, "I will deliver you and I will put Midian into your hands through the three hundred 'lappers'; let the rest of the troops go home."

וַיִּשְׁכְּם יִרְפָּעֵל הוּא גִדְעוֹן וְכָל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ וַיִּחַגּוּ עַל־עֵינַי תָּרֹד וּמַחְנֶה מִדְּיָן הָיָה־לּוֹ מִצָּפוֹן מִגְּבֻעַת הַמּוֹרָה בְּעָמָק:
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן רַב הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתְּךָ מִתֵּתִי אֶת־מִדְּיָן בְּיָדָם פֶּן־יִתְפָּאֵר עָלַי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר יָדִי הוֹשִׁיעָה לִּי: וְעַתָּה
קִרְא נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם לֵאמֹר מִי־יֵרָא וְתָרֹד יֵשֵׁב וַיִּצְפֹּר מִתַּר הַגִּלְעָד נִיֻּשָׁב מִן־הָעָם עֲשָׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אֶלֶף וַעֲשָׂרַת אֲלָפִים
נִשְׁאַרוּ: (ס) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן עוֹד הָעָם רַב הוֹרֵד אוֹתָם אֶל־הַמַּיִם וְאַצְרֶנּוּ לָךְ שָׁם וְהָיָה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ זֶה
זֶלְזָל אֲתָךְ הוּא זֶלְזָל אֲתָךְ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ זֶה לֹא־יִגְלֶךְ עִמָּךְ הוּא לֹא זֶלְזָל: וַיּוֹרֵד אֶת־הָעָם אֶל־הַמַּיִם (ס) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן כָּל אֲשֶׁר־יִלָּק בְּלִשְׁוֹנוֹ מִן־הַמַּיִם כְּאֲשֶׁר יִלָּק הַכֶּלֶב תִּצְיֵג אוֹתוֹ לְבָד וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יִכְרַע עַל־בִּרְכָּיו לִשְׁתוֹת: וְהָיָה
מִסְפָּר הַמִּלְקָקִים בְּיָדָם אֶל־פִּיָּהֶם שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְכָל־יֵתֵר הָעָם פָּרְעוּ עַל־בִּרְכֵיהֶם לִשְׁתוֹת מַיִם: (ס) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
אֶל־גִּדְעוֹן בְּשֹׁלֶשׁ מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ הַמִּלְקָקִים אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם וְנִתְתִּי אֶת־מִדְּיָן בְּיָדְךָ וְכָל־הָעָם יִלְכוּ אִישׁ לְמַקְמוֹ:

Yalkut Shimoni 62:1

א"ל הקב"ה רב העם אשר אתך הורד אותם אל המים אותם שכרעו על ברכיהם מים לשתות (י) רוצה ולא רוצה
היה משתחוה לאלילים, דורו של גדעון היה משתחוה לבבואה, אמר לו הקב"ה בשלש מאות איש המלקקים אושיע
את ישראל, ועליהם הוא אומר והשארתי בישראל וגו', ועליהם הוא אומר והיה שארית יעקב וגו'.

"There are still too many troops," the LORD said to Gideon. "Take them down to the water..." Those who knelt on their knees to drink water, willing or not, were bowing down to idols. The generation of Gidon was bowing down to a reflection in the water. The Holy One said to him "I will deliver you and I will put Midian into your hands through the three hundred 'lappers'" and of them it says "I will leave in Israel only seven thousand—every knee that has not knelt to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him." (Kings I 19:18) and "The remnant of Jacob shall be, In the midst of the many peoples, Like dew from the LORD, Like droplets on grass— Which do not look to any man Nor place their hope in mortals." (Micah 5:6)

Shoftim 7:16-18

וַיַּחֲצֵן אֶת־שְׁלֹשׁ־מֵאוֹת הָאִישׁ שְׁלֹשָׁה רְאשִׁים וַיִּתֵּן שׁוֹפְרוֹת בְּיַד־כָּל־ם וּכְדִים רָקִים וּלְפָדִים בְּתוֹךְ הַכְּדִים: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם
מִמָּנִי תִרְאוּ נָכוֹן תַּעֲשׂוּ וְהָיָה אֲנֹכִי בָּא בְקֶצֶה הַמַּחְנֶה וְהָיָה כְּאֲשֶׁר־אֶעֱשֶׂה כֵּן תַּעֲשׂוּ: וְתִקְעַתִּי בְּשׁוֹפָר אֲנֹכִי וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר
אִתִּי וְתִקְעֻתֶם בְּשׁוֹפְרוֹת גַּם־אַתֶּם סְבִיבוֹת כָּל־הַמַּחְנֶה וְאַמְרַתֶם לִיהוָה וּלְגִדְעוֹן: (פ)

He divided the three hundred men into three columns and equipped every man with a ram's horn and an empty jar, with a torch in each jar. "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!'"

Teacher Bio

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