



# "AL HAPEREK"

## A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

### Shmuel Perakim 13-14

Shaul's first failure as king creates tension between him and Shmuel and seals his reign's ominous fate. Yonatan, son of Shaul, triumphs in a brilliant military victory, almost losing his life in the process.

### General Overview < "וַיִּקְרָאוּ בְּסֶפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים"

#### Perek 13

- ❶ a) The war in Michmas functions as Shaul's first test as king. What dynamic between Shaul and the nation is presented in this perek and how is his loyalty to God tested? (Take into account the tension between Shaul and his opposition in 10:27.)
- b) In verses 11-12, who does Shaul blame for his choice of action? What can be learned from this about Shaul's perspective on monarchy?
- ❷ Identify the various statements in the perek which testify to the widespread control of the Philistines in the land of Israel. Do these reflect a new problem or an ancient one? See Shoftim 13:5, I Shmuel 4:1-2 and 9:16. Why is Shaul the one destined to eliminate this national threat?

#### Perek 14

- ❸ The contrast between the personalities of Shaul and his son Yonatan becomes stronger as the perek progresses, until it reaches a tense climax in pesukim 43-44. Compare these two personalities from the following angles: their acceptance of Divinely-stated decrees (she-ila ba-Hashem), styles of warfare, and their relationship with the nation. Does the perek reflect a clear position as to which personality type is preferable in a leader?

4 "Ye shall not eat with the blood; neither shall ye practice divination nor soothsaying" (Vayikra 19:26). Into which category of prohibitions is the prohibition of "eating with the blood" categorized? To better understand this commandment, see the various commentaries on this verse. How does Shaul's construction of an altar direct the spiritual intentions of the nation in a more positive direction?

5 The exceptional and charismatic figure of Yonatan is boldly highlighted in the story of the battle at Michmas.

a) Is the oath of Shaul and the nation not to eat until nightfall meant to lead to a military victory? Why does Yonatan object to this approach? See pesukim 29-30.

b) "Far from it; as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day." (45). On what basis does the nation mollify the severity of Yonatan's violation of the oath? Consider Yonatan's course of action throughout the perek and how God's providence helps him find success.

## In-depth Study < "מִפְּרֶשׁ וְשׁוֹם שְׂכָל"

6 "Saul was one years old when he began to reign; and two years he reigned over Israel" (13:1). There is a widespread debate amongst the commentaries how to understand Shaul's age as presented in this pasuk. See the opinions brought below and try to understand how each deals with this textual challenge.

**Radak:** *To be understood that these words that Shmuel said at the re-inauguration of the monarchy [in perek 12], it was a year from the beginning of his [Shaul's] reign and two years he ruled after that; or in total he only ruled two years as explained by the author of Seder Olam [Rabbah].*

**Midrash Yalkut Shimoni, Shmuel 1:13:** *Because when he ruled, his sins [committed] up until that day were forgiven. And it is written about three whose sins are forgiven: a groom, a wise man, and a ruler. A ruler, from where do we learn? As it is written: "Saul was one years old when he began to reign"--and was he really one years old?! Rather, just as a one day old infant is clean of sin, such was Shaul who was free of sin when he began to reign.*

**Targum ha-shiv'im (Septuagint):** *Shaul was thirty when he began to reign and two years he ruled over Israel.*

## Appendix < "וַיְבִינּוּ בַּמִּקְרָא"

The term "*d'vash*"—honey—appears 55 times in Tanach, 16 of them used in the description of the land of Israel, "a land flowing with milk and *honey*." This honey refers to date honey, commonly called Silan.

In contrast to this, honey made by bees is only mentioned twice in all of Tanach: in the story of Shimshon who scrapes bee honey from the gut of a lion in the ravine of Sorek (Shoftim 14:8-9), and in the story of Yonatan, son of Shaul, who dips his hands into the discovered abundance of honey during the war in Michmas: "*And all the people came into the forest; and there was honey upon the ground. And when the people were come unto the forest, behold a flow of honey...But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath; and he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes brightened*" (I Shmuel 14:25-27). The honey of bees was consumed as food and was also known for its medicinal and ritual uses. Beeswax was often used in the making of metals, leather tanning and healing.

Bee honey was considered a rare delicacy during the period of Yonatan and the entire Tanach. This fact helps further explain Yonatan's excitement upon finding honey in the midst of battle: not only was he hungry from the battles of war, but he had happened upon a rare, invigorating delicacy.