



"AL HAPEREK"

A Renewed Meeting with Tanach

Shmuel Perakim 9-10

Seeking lost donkeys and the origins of royalty, standing head and shoulders among the people yet hiding himself among the baggage: Introduced in this colorful story is Shaul, first king of Israel.

General Overview < "וַיִּקְרָאוּ בְּסֵפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים"

Perek 9

- ❶ In Chapter 9 we meet the character of Shaul for the first time.
 - a) Study carefully pesukim 1-2 and the various commentaries on them. What attributes does the text associate with Shaul? What do these traits imply about his future role?
 - b) The detailed story about the search for the lost donkeys provides us with keys to understanding Shaul's personality. Try to determine what significant character traits are revealed in this story.
- ❷ *"Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man out of the land of Benjamin, and you will anoint him to be prince over My people Israel, and he will save My people out of the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry is come unto Me"* (9:16).
 - a) Look at 8:20-21. Is the kingship of Shaul an answer to the people's request? If so, in what way?
 - b) In Devarim 17:14-20, the Torah warns kings against adorning themselves in the typical trappings of royalty. Pay attention to the manner in which these motifs are organized in our perek in the following verses: 3 (horses); 7-8 (silver); and 11-13 (women). What does this subject teach us about Shaul's character?

Perek 10

- 3 Shmuel gives Shaul three signs. In what order are they expected to occur, and in what order do they actually occur? Can you think of any symbolic relationship between these signs and Shaul's life?
- 4 References to Shaul's height appear at the beginning and end of these chapters (9:2 and 10:23) and form a framework to the story. What is the relationship between this framework and the perakim's contents? Pay close attention to the diverse perspectives voiced in pesukim 10:11, 24, and 27, and to the way Shaul relates to his new role in 9:21; 10:9, 21-23, and 27.

In-depth Study < "מִפְּרָשׁ וְשׁוֹם שְׁכָל" >

- 5 The sequence of events in chapters 9-10 is described as a series of "coincidences" that God directs, culminating in the anointment of Israel's first monarch. Find the places in the story where "coincidence" meets Divine intervention. Try to determine the significance of the repeated descriptions, and compare them to God's response to the people's demand for a king in 8:7-9.
- 6 "And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart" (10:9). What do you think is the significance of the change that overtakes Shaul? See also the commentary of the Malbim on the words "God gave him another heart":

Because the heart of every ordinary person guides and directs all his strength and energy, but the heart of a king leads the hearts of the people, who act in accordance with it. And the relationship of their hearts to the heart of their king is like the relationship of the life energy to the heart of an ordinary person, because the king's heart is in the hand of God in all its desires, and with it the heart of all the people, and in its essence, the heart reigns over the body's strengths, and will reign also over the nation itself. The heart of Shaul was changed in its essence from being the guide of an ordinary person, that is, from Shaul the private individual, to Shaul who would be the guide of all people, that is, the nation of Israel. And it happened that all the signs came to him on that day, and were not postponed to another day."

(Malbim's commentary on I Shmuel 10:9)

Appendix < "וַיָּבִינוּ בְּמִקְרָא"

It seems that the necessary qualities for monarch are six: And that explains the intentions when appointing a king which are to fight against enemies and to judge the nation in just judgment. The nation said when asking for a king: *"and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles"* (8:20). Therefore you must find the necessary characteristics for this.

The qualities of judges have already been explained as four: men of valor, fearers of God, men of truth, and haters of unjust profit.

And when combined with these qualities critical for war, among them are found six.

Firstly, the king must be cruel to foreigners and merciful to his nation, willing to give of his soul to save them, like it is the way of a shepherd to risk his own life to remove harm and to fight with the lion and bear to protect his flock and to have mercy on them: *"Even as a shepherd that feedeth his flock, that gathereth the lambs in his arm, and carrieth them in his bosom, and gently leadeth those that give suck"*(Yeshayahu 40:11).

Second: that he should do good for those who do good for him and to his servants and his soldiers, because if he will not do so, who will sacrifice their souls for his honor? Who will be zealous on his behalf if others rebel against him?

Third: that he should hate unjust profit and not be one who covets, for the shepherd who is sent to guard his flock should not steal the skin and meat off their bodies, because then it will be flipped, the sheep will begin supporting the shepherd and not that he is there to protect the sheep. And it was about this the verse says: *"neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold"* (Devarim 17:17), that if he tries to gather silver and gold, even from the enemies, when he won't find from them he will take from his own nation.

Fourth: that he should be a man of valor and brave of spirit, his heart with the warriors, to break from injustice, not to show a weak face, not to fear executing just judgment.

Fifth: that he should speak truth and injustice not be found on his lips and he should adjudicate just judgment, so that one who denies or speaks lies, because of fear or because he can not accomplish what he wills against who he wishes, and the judge will not fear any man. The verse states: *"you shall not be afraid of the face of any man"* (Devarim 1:17) and even more so the king who has no one to prevent him from carrying out his will. Therefore it is below him to lie, and also because no man will trust in the words of the king if the words of his lips shall be unjust and his tongue speak deceit.

Sixth: that he fear God and be mindful of His words, subordinate to those who worship God and keep His commandments which apply to the king and to every man. In regard to the rest of the commandments, he should not feel above his brethren to think that he is more free from commandments than them.

The verse states: *"that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left"* (Devarim 17:20). And that is as the wise man says: the king and religion are loyal to each other as brothers. And if the nation sees the king belittling Torah and its students, it will cause the entire nation to take Torah lightly and Torah will fall entirely.

(Rav Yosef Albo, The Book of Principles, 4:26)