

**Close Reading Questions for High School Students on
Sefer Shoftim: Perakim Yud Aleph - Yud Gimmel
by Zvi Grumet**

פרק יא

1. Can you find parallels/differences between the family backgrounds of יפתח and אבימלך? If you had to generalize from this about the שופטים, what conclusion might you draw?
2. Do you see a parallel between the initial supporters of יפתח and אבימלך?
3. יפתח describes a scene that is similar to but in some ways the reverse of, a similar scene we saw with גדעון. What is now different?
4. יפתח gives a history lesson to עמון in the middle of this פרק! What is the point of that entire speech?
5. What kind of theology does יפתח display in this פרק?
6. Explain why this פרק was chosen as the הפרשה for פרשת חקת?
7. What is the substance of יפתח's נדר?
8. Notice how frequently יפתח invokes the name of 'ה'. Did 'ה' come to appoint him as שופט (as with גדעון)?
9. What military strategy did יפתח employ? (The שופטים in the first half of the ספר all had military strategies of one kind or another)
10. The end of this פרק presents a startling conclusion to יפתח's נדר. What two possible alternative readings can you find for how יפתח fulfilled his נדר?!

פרק יב

1. This is the second time we hear that אפרים was upset about not being invited to the battle. In what way was this complaint different from before? In what way is the שופט of the second half of the ספר שופטים different from the parallel in the first half of the ספר?
2. יפתח offers some background before he acts on אפרים's complaint. (Notice that he gave background before acting on עמון's complaint, too!) Based on יפתח's explanation, was אפרים more justified or less justified than in their previous complaint?
3. How is יפתח's ultimate response to אפרים different from גדעון's? In what way is his response *similar* to גדעון's response to סוכות and פנואל?
4. What seemingly useless information are we given about the "minor" שופטים listed? From whom did these three minor שופטים save בני ישראל?

פרק יג

1. The opening פסוק of this פרק presents a dramatic reversal in ספר שופטים. Can you find it?!
2. In the previous story, יפתח helped בני ישראל in their struggles with עמון. Which nation will מנשה's son help defeat? Based on י:ז, what conclusion might you draw about יפתח and שמשון?
3. שמשון comes from דן שבט. Did this story happen before or after דן migrated northward?
4. In what ways are the notification of שמשון's job and גדעון's job similar? In what ways are they different?
5. There is a famous quip that מנשה is the husband of מנשה's wife. What does that mean? In what ways can you observe that to be true in this פרק?