

**Close Reading Questions for High School Students on
Sefer Shmuel Bet: Perakim Yud Chet - Chaf
by Zvi Grumet**

פרק י"ח

1. Up until now, דוד has always avoided fighting a civil war. Why does he now make an exception?
2. In what way is דוד here acting very differently from what he did in the battle with עמון (the beginning of פרק יא)? Why is this significant?
3. In the previous פרק, the masses were with אבשלום. How did דוד manage to build himself an army with three divisions?
4. In many of his other battles, דוד leaves the encounter with another wife. Why is that element missing here?
5. יואב kills אבשלום despite explicit instructions from דוד not to harm him and despite being reminded of that instruction by a soldier. Why? In the debate between דוד and יואב about אבשלום's fate, who do you think was right?
6. Why does יואב not want אחימעץ to tell דוד's death? Why does אחימעץ insist on going? Notice how different the reports from אחימעץ and the כושי are!
7. Compare what אחימעץ had planned to say (פסוק יט) to what he actually said (פסוק כח).

פרק י"ט

1. דוד's mourning for אבשלום far exceeds his mourning for אמנון. Is this because he liked אבשלום better or for some other reason?
2. The debate between דוד and יואב regarding אבשלום's fate continues into the opening of this פרק. What was יואב's rebuke of דוד? Did דוד accept his rebuke? What does דוד NOT do that we might have expected him to do?
3. Notice the surprising, unusual word which is used both in יח:ה and in יט:ה.
4. אבישי wants to kill בן גרא (שמעי בן גרא who came with a thousand men from בנימין) for cursing משיח ה'. This language is similar to the one דוד used to prevent אבישי from killing (שמואל א' פרק כו).
5. What was the reason given by ישראל for bringing דוד back as king? What does this tell you about them? What challenge does this suggest דוד still faces?
6. Which שבט was surprisingly the last one to accept דוד back as king? Can you explain why it was so hesitant? Why do you think דוד sent the כהנים, rather than someone like יואב, to encourage them to re-accept דוד? (Compare this to כב פרק יח)
7. What remarkable offer does דוד make to אבשלום's general, עמשא? Why did דוד go much further with him than he did with בן נר?
8. What repeat argument does דוד have with אבישי בן צרויה about בן גרא? Notice that דוד's logic now is the reverse of the logic he used previously to explain his position!

9. comes to greet דוד upon his impending return to ירושלים. דוד challenges מפיבשת's loyalty, which מפיבשת explains and defends. Does דוד believe him? How do you know? Do you think that דוד acted correctly or incorrectly? In what way is this story, including דוד's and מפיבשת's responses, a foreshadowing of a famous judgment of שלמה?
10. In this פרק all the characters from the unfolding rebellion of אבשלום return – יואב, אבישי, שמעי בן גרא, ברזלי הגלעדי, & ציבא מלכים א' פרק ב. With which of those characters does דוד achieve a sense of closure? See the beginning of פרק ב.
11. What remarkable debate emerges at the end of this פרק between the ten northern tribes and יהודה? What does this tell you about the relationship between them?

פרק כ

1. Was the revolt of שבע בן בכרי a personal one or a threat to split the nation? What evidence can you find? (Notice that בכרי is probably not his father's name, but the name of the clan of בנימין from which he came. See בראשית מו:כא.)
2. Notice that שבע בן בכרי was from אפרים. That is where יהושע is buried and where much of the activity in ספר שופטים is centered. Why might that be relevant?
3. Which soldiers was עמשא instructed to gather to chase after שבע בן בכרי? Why did דוד choose him for this task?
4. How did אבישי בן צרויה get involved in a mission that דוד assigned to עמשא?
5. In what ways is the death of עמשא similar to the death of ג (פרק ג)? In what way is it different? Is יואב motivated by personal or national concerns in his killing of עמשא?
6. Earlier, יואב had fought against the reconciliation between יהודה and ישראל, while in this פרק he seems to be fighting for that very unity. Try to explain the shift in his approach.
7. Note: the city of מעכה is located in the far north of ישראל.
8. Notice how a wise woman *again* prevents דוד from engaging in an act that could undermine his authority and legitimacy. In what ways is this scenario very different from the earlier one, in which אביגיל convinces דוד not to kill her husband?
9. The end of the פרק describes the administrative structure of דוד's kingdom. Compare this to the similar description at the end of פרק ח. What has changed since then? Can you find explanations for the changes?