

## קצין ו/או ראש?

אבנר רמו

In the Book of Judges we read:

ויצעקו בני עמון, ויחנו בגלעד; ויאספו בני ישראל, ויחנו במצפה.  
ויאמרו העם שרי גלעד, איש אל-רעהו, מי האיש אשר יחל להלחם בבני עמון-יהיה לראש,  
לכל ישבי גלעד

“Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpah.

And the people, the princes of Gilead, said one to another: What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead” (Jud 10:17-18).

In codex Alexandrinus we read here: “The rulers of the people of Galaad said” which suggests that this Greek translator believed that ויאמרו העם שרי גלעד is a word-order type error of: ויאמרו שרי עם גלעד - “and the rulers of people of Gilead said.”

In the next chapter we read:

ויהי מימים; וילחמו בני-עמון עם-ישראל.  
ויהי כאשר-נלחמו בני-עמון עם-ישראל; וילכו זקני גלעד לקחת את-יפתח מארץ טוב.  
“And it came to pass after a while, that the children of Ammon made war against Israel.  
And when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob” (Jud 11:4-5).

Verse Jud 11:4 does not appear in codex Vaticanus, and it suggested that the Greek translator assumed that its information is superfluous and therefore did not include it in his translation.



Jephthah, depicted here in *Promptuarii Iconum Insigniorum* published in Lyon by Guillaume Rouillé (c.1518-1589).

Now we hear the elders of Gilead:

ויאמרו ליפתח-לכה והייתה לנו לקצין; ונלחמה בבני עמון.

“And they said to Jephthah: Come and be us a chief commander and we will fight with the children of Ammon” (Jud 11:6).

It appears that Jephthah understood that in spite of their initial public call (Jud 10:18), the elders of Gilead were trying to shortchange him by appointing him to be only a temporary commander for the war against the Ammonites, and he answers them:

ויאמר יפתח אל-זקני גלעד, אם-משיבים אתם אותי להלחם בבני עמון, ונתן יהוה אותם, לפני-אנכי אהיה לכם לראש.

“And Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead: If you bring me back home to fight with the children of Ammon, and *YHWH* delivers them before me, I will be your head” (Jud 11:9).

The elders of Gilead realized that they have no other solution and therefore:

ויאמרו זקני-גלעד אל-יפתח: יהוה יהיה שמע בינותינו-אם-לא כדברך כן נעשה. וילך יפתח עם-זקני גלעד, וישימו העם אותו עליהם לראש ולקצין;

“And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah: *YHWH* shall be witness between us; if according to your word so will we do.

Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them” (Jud 11:10-11).

Yet it is somewhat surprising to read that prior to these negotiations:

ויאמרו זקני גלעד אל-יפתח, לכן עתה שבנו אליך והלכת עמנו ונלחמת בבני עמון; והיית לנו לראש לכל ישרי גלעד.

“And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah: Therefore are we returned to you now, that you may go with us, and fight with the children of Ammon, and you shall be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead” (Jud 11:8).

We may therefore assume that this verse was misplaced (or inserted) by a late scribe who did not understand the logic of the negotiations.