

Ayalon: The story (continued)

1. Joshua 10:8-14 (tr. JPS 1985 ed. c/o sefaria.org)

The Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for I will deliver them into your hands; not one of them shall withstand you.”

Joshua took them by surprise, marching all night from Gilgal. The Lord threw them into a panic (ויהומום) before Israel: [Joshua] inflicted a crushing defeat on them at Gibeon, pursued them in the direction of the Beth-horon ascent, and harried them all the way to Azekah and Makedah. While they were fleeing before Israel down the descent from Beth-horon, the Lord hurled huge stones on them from the sky, all the way to Azekah, and they perished; more perished from the hailstones than were killed by the Israelite weapons.

On that occasion, when the Lord routed the Amorites before the Israelites, Joshua addressed the Lord; he said in the presence of the Israelites: “Stand still, O sun, at Gibeon, O moon, in the Valley of Aijalon!” And the sun stood still And the moon halted, While a nation wreaked judgment on its foes —as is written in the Book of Jashar. Thus the sun halted in midheaven, and did not press on to set, for a whole day; for the Lord fought for Israel. Neither before nor since has there ever been such a day, when the Lord acted on words spoken by a man.

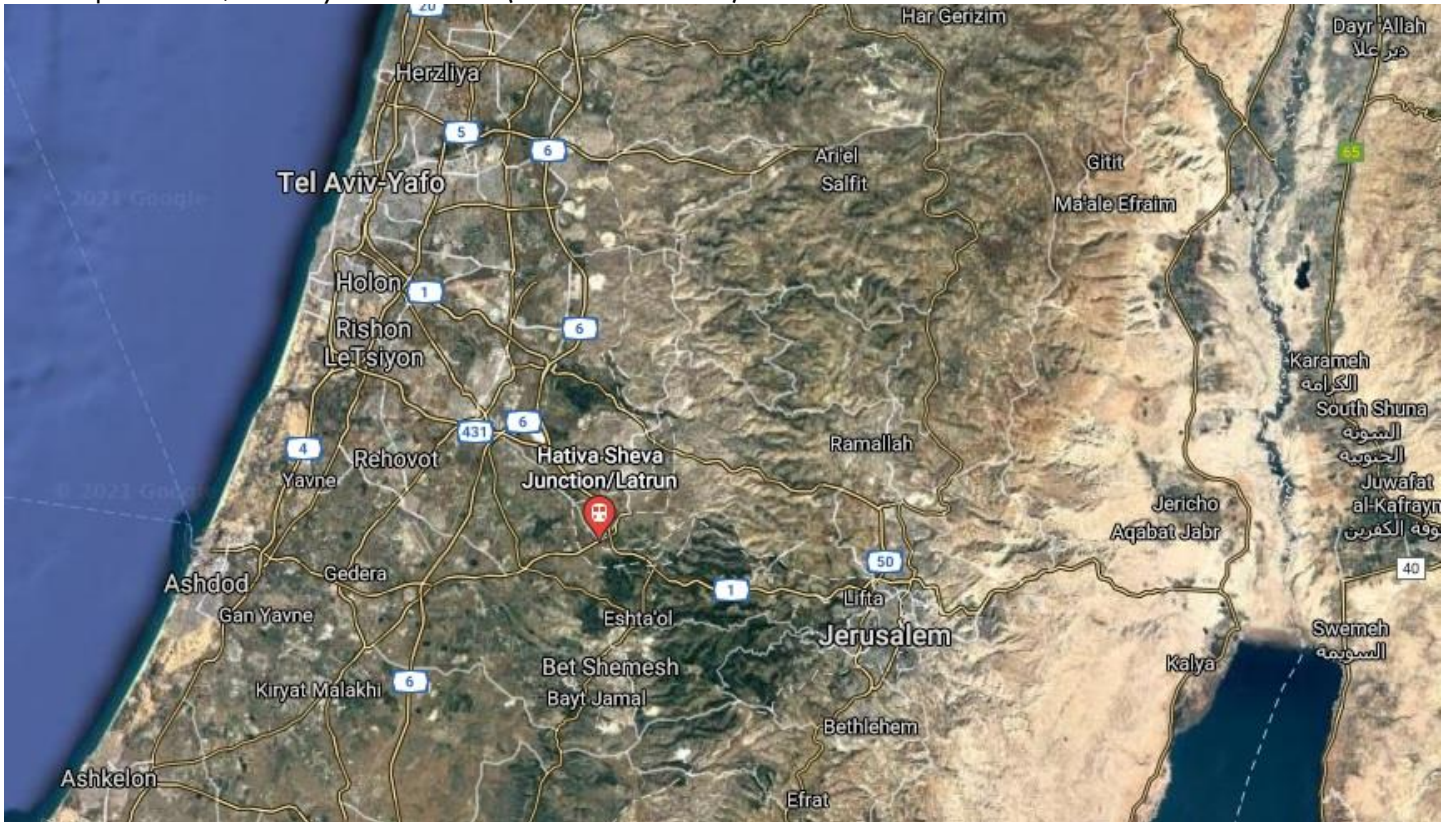
2. Exodus 9:33, 14:24

And Moses departed the city from before Pharaoh, and he spread out his hands before Gd. And the sounds halted, and the hail and rain did not pour earthward.

And it was, at the morning watch, and Gd gazed upon the Egyptian camp in a pillar of fire and cloud, and He panicked (ויהם) the Egyptian camp.

Jericho: The Battlefield – A Valley

3. Map of Israel, with Ayalon centred (at Latrun Junction)



4. Genesis 14:1-3 (tr. JPS 1985 ed. c/o sefaria.org)

Now, when King Amraphel of Shinar, King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim, made war on King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar, all the latter joined forces at the Valley of Siddim, now the Dead Sea.

5. Other valley battles include:

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|--------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| • The Valley of Jezre'el | Midian and allies invade Israel | Judges 6         |
| • The Valley of Elah     | Philistine attack               | Samuel I 17      |
| • The Valley of Rephaim  | Philistine attack               | Samuel II 5      |
| • The Valley of Berachah | Amon and Moav invade Israel     | Chronicles II 20 |

6. Joshua Levinson, *From the Sands of the Sea to the Valley of Ayalon*, in Israel, from Dan to Eilat (IDF), pg. 6  
This is the broadest valley in the northern and southern portions of the Shefeilah; its formation was tied to a depression along the length of fault lines which run from northeast to southwest. A wide valley, formed at the very edge of a mountainous area, generally draws to it numerous streams from the mountains. These unite to form one big stream... The length of the Ayalon Valley, from the area of the Maaleh Beit Choron Junction to the Latrun Junction is about ten km; its width, from Mishmar Ayalon to Emmaus, is about four km...  
Several of the battles which determined control of the centre of the land, and especially the passage by Jerusalem, were held at different times at the roads entering this valley. Even today, the Ayalon Valley serves as an entrance to two paths...

Ayalon: The Miracle

7. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon, Commentary to Joshua 10:12

There are many doubts regarding this portion, and it is appropriate to examine them.

1. If the Sun had halted its appropriate movement, that miracle would have been infinitely more marvelous than the miracles performed by Moses! Moses's miracles involved an alteration of existing nature among the lower entities. This use of the more honoured entities, changing their tasks, would be much greater than affecting the lower entities' orders... If this indeed were to be so, that would contradict the Torah's statement that "No prophet ever arose in Israel like Moses, for all of the signs and miracles which Moses performed before the eyes of all of Israel!"...
2. Further, the simple translation of these words does not appear to say that the sun and moon halted their movement. We see this clearly from the statement, "They did not hasten to set," which does not indicate that they halted. It only suggests that they did not hurry in their motion.  
Similarly, it says "Sun, be silent in Givon; Moon, in the valley of Ayalon." It does not say, "Sun be silent, and Moon," but rather it gives them a wide space. Clearly, saying they did not leave this large place does not mean that they halted entirely, for it is possible to move within a broad space. To present a comparable case: One who tells someone not to leave his land is not saying that he shouldn't move! This is clear to anyone who has examined the natural orders.  
Further, it says, "There was never any day like that, neither before nor after, for Gd to listen to the voice of a human being, for Gd fought for the Jews." This shows that the miracle involved the war itself. If the miracle were the halting of the sun, that wouldn't have had any impact on the war.
3. Further, it is clear from the Torah that Gd only performs miracles for a need, or to inculcate proper beliefs in people, and here we find no mention of any impact this miracle had, whether serving a need or inculcating belief.
4. Further, it has already been explained in the Book of the Wars of Gd (*authored by Ralbag*) that no prophet can create a miracle in these higher entities, meaning the celestial catalysts.

Rather, it is clear that this was not the miracle...Rather, Joshua's statement to Gd was that the battle against their enemies should be completed before the Sun would leave Givon and the Moon would leave the valley of Ayalon. The verse was brief in describing this.

This may be seen from the verse's comment, "And the Sun was silent, and the Moon stood, until the nation had gained retribution upon its enemies." This means that the Sun was silent in Givon and the Moon in the valley of Ayalon until this was completed. This was marvelous; not only did Joshua specify that the Jews should successfully gain retribution upon their enemies, but he also specified that the victory should occur in a very brief period.

This is what was meant when the verse said, "There was never any day like that, neither before nor after, for Gd to listen to the voice of a human being, for Gd fought for the Jews." This was what allowed the Jews to complete their victory in this brief time, for the hand of Gd will never be insufficient. Gd listened to Joshua's voice in that Gd had never promised that they would complete the victory in this short span, and yet Gd listened to his voice.

#### 8. Talmud, Avodah Zarah 11a

Onkelos son of Klonymus converted. The governor sent Roman troops after him; he drew them with verses, and they converted.

He then sent more Roman troops after him, and told them, "Don't say anything at all to him." When they were walking, he said to them, "Let me just tell you something: A neophra carries the torch before the piphiora, the piphiora for the duksa, the duksa for the hegmona, the hegmona for the kuma; does the kuma carry the torch before anyone?" They replied: No. He said to them, "Gd carried the torch before Israel, as it says, 'And Gd went before them by day, etc.!' " All of them converted.

He then sent more Roman troops after him, and told them, "Don't engage in any speech with him." When they took him and went, he saw the mezuzah on the entrance, put his hand on it, and said to them, "What is this?" They replied: You tell us! He told them, "Normally, a flesh and blood king sits inside and his servants guard him from outside. But Gd's servants are inside, and He guards them from outside, as it says, 'Gd will guard your going and coming from now, forever!'" They converted.

He did not send any more after him.

#### Review Questions

- 1) Why did the Jews agree to a pact with Givon, after being tricked?
- 2) Why did the Canaanite kings band together to fight Givon?
- 3) What is the "Book of the Righteous", where the miracle is recorded?
- 4) What three messages does the war provide?
- 5) What is important about the Valley of Ayalon?
- 6) Is Jewish tradition unanimous that the Sun and Moon halted?
- 7) What is the message of the miracle?

#### 9. For more regarding the Kishon story

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/932666/> <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/933470/>  
<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/935220/> <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/935868/>  
<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/936559/> <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/937256/>

#### 10. Judges 4:1-9 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

The Israelites again did what was offensive to the Lord—Ehud now being dead. And the Lord surrendered them to King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. His army commander was Sisera, whose base was Harosheth-goiim. The Israelites cried out to the Lord; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he had oppressed Israel ruthlessly for twenty years.

Deborah, wife of Lappidoth, was a prophetess; she led Israel at that time. She used to sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites would come to her for

decisions. She summoned Barak son of Abinoam, of Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The Lord, the Gd of Israel, has commanded: Go, march up to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun. And I will draw Sisera, Jabin's army commander, with his chariots and his troops, toward you up to the Wadi Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hands."

But Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; if not, I will not go." "Very well, I will go with you," she answered. "However, there will be no glory for you in the course you are taking, for then the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh.

11. Deborah, Smasher of Stereotypes <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/914097/>

12. Judges 4:17-22 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Sisera, meanwhile, had fled on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was friendship between King Jabin of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite.

Jael came out to greet Sisera and said to him, "Come in, my lord, come in here, do not be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. He said to her, "Please let me have some water; I am thirsty." She opened a skin of milk and gave him some to drink; and she covered him again. He said to her, "Stand at the entrance of the tent. If anybody comes and asks you if there is anybody here, say 'No.'"

Then Jael wife of Heber took a tent pin and grasped the mallet. When he was fast asleep from exhaustion, she approached him stealthily and drove the pin through his temple till it went down to the ground. Thus he died.

Now Barak appeared in pursuit of Sisera. Jael went out to greet him and said, "Come, I will show you the man you are looking for." He went inside with her, and there Sisera was lying dead, with the pin in his temple.

13. Yael, the Accidental Assassin

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/914099/>

Kishon: The story

14. Judges 4:10-16 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Barak then mustered Zebulun and Naphtali at Kedesh; ten thousand men marched up after him; and Deborah also went up with him.

Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites, descendants of Hobab, father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent at Elon-bezaananim, which is near Kedesh.

Sisera was informed that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. So Sisera ordered all his chariots—nine hundred iron chariots—and all the troops he had to move from Harosheth-goiim to the Wadi Kishon.

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! This is the day on which the Lord will deliver Sisera into your hands: the Lord is marching before you." Barak charged down Mount Tabor, followed by the ten thousand men, and the Lord threw Sisera and all his chariots and army into a panic before the onslaught of Barak. Sisera leaped from his chariot and fled on foot as Barak pursued the chariots and the soldiers as far as Harosheth-goiim. All of Sisera's soldiers fell by the sword; not a man was left.

15. Judges 5:20-22 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

The stars fought from heaven, From their courses they fought against Sisera. The torrent Kishon swept them away, The raging torrent, the torrent Kishon. March on, my soul, with courage! Then the horses' hoofs pounded As headlong galloped the steeds.