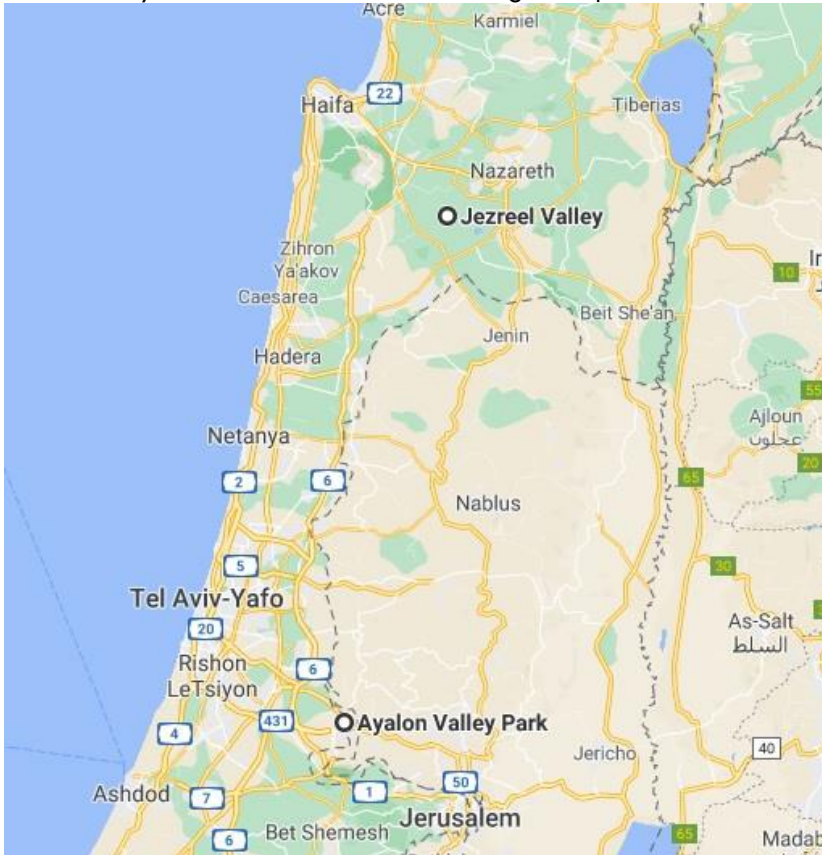


Kishon: The story

1. Judges 4:1-3 (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.

2. From Ayalon to Kishon/Yizre'el, Google Maps



3. 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 (ויהם) 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 (לא נשאר עד אחד).

4. 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.

5. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* V 5 (<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-5.html>), Whiston translation
So the battle began: and when they were come to a close fight, there came down from heaven a great storm, with a vast quantity of rain and hail; and the wind blew the rain in the face of the Canaanites; and so darkened their eyes, that their arrows and slings were of no advantage to them. Nor would the coldness of the air permit the soldiers to make use of their swords. While this storm did not so much incommode the Israelites; because it came on their backs. They also took such courage, upon the apprehension that God was assisting them, that they fell upon the very midst of their enemies, and slew a great number of them. So that some of them fell by the Israelites: some fell by their own horses, which were put into disorder: and not a few were killed by their own chariots.

6. Rabbi David Kimchi to Judges 4:17

Sisera knew that he could not flee successfully, as they would catch him, and so he fled elsewhere to avoid detection...

Kishon, the Battlefield

7. The Kishon River, <https://www.biblewalks.com/kishonriver>



8. Joshua Levinson, *The Valley of Yizre'el*, in Israel, from Dan to Eilat (IDF), pp. 8-10

Rainwater and water which flows to the valley from the mountains drains via two large rivers which flow in different directions, Nachal Kishon to the Mediterranean Sea and Nachal Charod to the Jordan.

Nachal Kishon flows from the point of separation of the waters toward the west. Its headwaters originate in the Gilboa Mountains... The area of its drainage basin is more than 1000 square kilometers. In the summertime it is an untrustworthy river, but close to where it pours into the sea, north of Haifa, it flows with water all year.

9. Claude Conder, Herbert Kitchener (Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund), *Tent Work in Palestine*, Chap. 4 (1887) <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46641/46641-h/46641-h.htm>

On this day (the 19th of October) we crossed the Kishon and found by experience how treacherous are the banks of this apparently insignificant stream. The subject which naturally concludes the account of the Plain, is therefore the great battle in which the host of Sisera was drowned in the swollen waters of this river...

The Kings of Canaan assembled in Taanach and by the waters of Megiddo, but it was not at either of these places that the battle was fought. Sisera was drawn to the river Kishon (Judges iv. 7), and the host perished near Endor, "at the brook Kishon" (Psalm lxxxiii. 10). The battle-field indeed was almost identical with that from which Napoleon named the "battle of Mount Tabor," when the French drove the Turks into that same treacherous quagmire of the Kishon springs. There are few episodes in the Old Testament more picturesque than this of the defeat of the Canaanites. Tabor, the central position, a mountain whose summit is 1500 feet above the plain, is bare and shapeless on the south, but to the north it is steep, and wooded with oaks and thickets in which the fallow-deer finds a home. About three miles west are the springs from which the Kishon first rises, and from this point a chain of pools and springs, fringed with reeds and rushes, marks, even in the dry season, the course of the river. Along this line, at the base of the northern hills, the chariots and horsemen of Sisera fled. The sudden storm had swollen the stream, "the river Kishon swept them away, that river of battles the river Kishon." The remainder fled to Harosheth, now only a miserable village (El Harathîyeh), named from the beautiful woods above the Kishon at the point where, through a narrow gorge, the stream, hidden among oleander bushes, enters the Plain of Acre.

The flight of Sisera himself was in an opposite direction, under the slopes of Tabor and across the great lava plateau on which stood, near Bessûm, the black tent of Heber the Kenite.

The Bedawin have a delicious preparation of curdled milk called Leben, which is offered to guests but generally considered a delicacy; from personal experience I know that it is most refreshing to a traveller when tired and hot, but it has also a strange soporific effect, which was so sudden in its action on one English clergyman after a long ride, that he thought he had been poisoned. It was perhaps not without a knowledge of its probable effects, that Jael gave to her exhausted guest a tempting beverage which would make his sleep sound and long.

One final illustration may be added. In the magnificent song of Deborah, the great storm which swelled the Kishon is described: "They fought from heaven, the stars from their courses fought against Sisera" (Judg. v. 20).

The season was probably that of the autumn storms which occur early in November. At this time the meteoric showers are commonest, and are remarkably fine in effect, seen in the evening light at a season when the air is specially clear and bright. The scene presented by the falling fiery stars, as the defeated host fled away by night, is one very striking to the fancy, and which would form a fine subject for an artist's pencil.

10. The Battle of Mount Tabor - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Mount_Tabor_\(1799\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Mount_Tabor_(1799))

11. Psalms 126:4

G-d, restore our captives, like *afikim* in the Negev!

12. Rabbi Moshe Alshich (16th century Israel), Commentary to Psalms 126:4

From being a place that is entirely dry, rain comes and turns it into streams, from one extreme to the other at once.

13. Job 6:15

My brothers have betrayed [me], like a stream, like an *afik* the streams pass.

Kishon: The miracle

14. Psalms 20:8

These with chariots, and these with horses, but we will call out the Name of Hashem our G-d!

15. Exodus 14:24-28 (JPS 1985 tr. c/o sefaria.org)

At the morning watch, the Lord looked down upon the Egyptian army from a pillar of fire and cloud, and threw the Egyptian army into panic (וַיִּהָמוּ). He locked the wheels of their chariots so that they moved forward with difficulty. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Hold out your arm over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians and upon their chariots and upon their horsemen." Moses held out his arm over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal state, and the Egyptians fled at its approach. But the Lord hurled the Egyptians into the sea. The waters turned back and covered the chariots and the horsemen—Pharaoh's entire army that followed them into the sea; not one of them remained (לֹא נִשְׁאַר בָּהֶם עַד אֶחָד).

16. Joshua 10:9 (tr. JPS 1985 ed. c/o sefaria.org)

Joshua took them by surprise, marching all night from Gilgal. The Lord threw them into a panic (וַיִּהָמוּם) before Israel:

Review Questions

- 1) Who were the two women who engineered the Jewish victory over their Canaanite oppressors?
- 2) How did the Jews defeat Sisera's 900 chariots, with which he had controlled them for 20 years?
- 3) What does a wadi signify in Tanach?
- 4) What is the message of connecting the events at the Red Sea with the events at Kishon?

17. For more regarding the Elah story

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/970097/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/973286/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/975022/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/976912/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/978918/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/981767/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/971709/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/974179/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/975956/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/977901/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/979880/>

18. Malcom Gladwell, *David and Goliath*, Introduction

At the heart of ancient Palestine is the region known as the Shephelah, a series of ridges and valleys connecting the Judaeen Mountains to the east with the wide, flat expanse of the Mediterranean plain. It is an area of breathtaking beauty, home to vineyards and wheat fields and forests of sycamore and terebinth. It is also of great strategic importance...

David puts one of his stones into the leather pouch of a sling, and he fires at Goliath's exposed forehead. Goliath falls, stunned. David runs toward him, seizes the giant's sword, and cuts off his head. "The Philistines saw that their warrior was dead," the biblical account reads, "and they fled." The battle is won miraculously by an underdog who, by all expectations, should not have won at all. This is the way we have told one another the story over the many centuries since. It is how the phrase "David and Goliath" has come to be embedded in our language—as a metaphor for improbable victory. And the problem with that version of the events is that almost everything about it is wrong.

19. Samuel I 13:17-14:1 (tr. JPS 1985 ed. c/o sefaria.org)

The raiders came out of the Philistine camp in three columns: One column headed for the Ophrah road that leads to the district of Shual, another column headed for the Beth-horon road, and the third column headed for the border road that overlooks the valley of Zeboim toward the desert.

No smith was to be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines were afraid that the Hebrews would make swords or spears. So all the Israelites had to go down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, their mattocks, axes, and colters sharpened... Thus on the day of the battle, no sword or spear was to be found in the possession of any of the troops with Saul and Jonathan; only Saul and Jonathan had them. Now the Philistine garrison had marched out to the pass of Michmas.

One day, Jonathan son of Saul said to the attendant who carried his arms, "Come, let us cross over to the Philistine garrison on the other side"; but he did not tell his father.