



War and Morality (2014) <https://www.yutorah.org/search/?teacher=81072&collection=4590>

Jericho: The Battlefield – A Walled City

1. Numbers 13:19, 13:28

“And what is the land in which they dwell – is it good or bad? And what are the cities in which they dwell – are they in open camps, or in fortresses?”...

“It is for naught, for the nation who dwells in the land is mighty, and the cities are great fortresses. We also saw the descendants of giants there.”

2. Leviticus 25:29-31

And when one sells a house of dwelling in a walled city, its redemption shall be until the end of the year of its sale; for a year shall be its redemption. And if it is not redeemed until a complete year has fully passed, the house in the walled city will stand permanently for the one who purchased it, for his generations; it shall not revert in the jubilee year. And the houses of villages which have no wall around them shall be considered as fields of the land; it may be redeemed, and in the jubilee year it will revert.

Jericho: The Miracle

3. Kings I 16:33-34

And Achav made the *asheirah*, and Achav added acts to anger Hashem, Gd of Israel, beyond those of the previous kings of Israel. In his days, Chiel of Bethel built up Jericho. With his firstborn Abiram he established her foundation, and with his youngest, Seguv, he set up her doors, as per the word of Gd, spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

Review Questions

- 1) What was the goal of destroying Jericho?
- 2) How many days did the “war” with Jericho take?
- 3) How many priests carried shofar horns?
- 4) How many circuits did the priests make around the city?
- 5) Which of these is not a characteristic of walled cities in the Torah: 1) security, 2) permanence, 3) agriculture?
- 6) Which of these is the message of the miraculous collapse of Jericho’s walls? 1) Rebranding Israel, 2) Time to build a casino, 3) Walls are prohibited around Israeli cities

4. Colin Humphreys, Graeme Waddington, *Solar Eclipse of 1207 BC helps to date pharaohs*, Royal Astronomical Society Journal of Astronomy and Geophysics 58:5 (Oct '17)

<https://academic.oup.com/astrogeo/article/58/5/5.39/4159289>

There is a possible reference to a solar eclipse in a puzzling passage in the biblical Old Testament book of Joshua. This records that, after Joshua had led the people of Israel into Canaan, he prayed: “Sun, stand still [Hebrew *dôm*] at Gibeon, and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” The passage continues: “And the Sun stood still, and the Moon stopped [Hebrew *'amad*], until the nation took vengeance on their enemies,” (Joshua 10:12–13, New Revised Standard Version [NRSV])...

If these words are describing a real observation, then a major astronomical event was being reported (“There has been no day like it, before or since”, Joshua 10:14), but what does the text mean? The Hebrew word *dôm* means to be silent, dumb or still. The term *'amad* is a broader word meaning to stop or stand. Modern English translations of this passage, such as the NRSV quoted above, have all followed the King James Authorized Version (KJAV) of *The Bible*, translated in 1611, and assumed that the Hebrew text means that the Sun and Moon stopped moving. However, a plausible alternative meaning is that the Sun and Moon stopped doing what they normally do: they stopped shining. In other words the text is referring to a solar eclipse, when the Sun stops shining. As a solar

eclipse can only occur when the Moon is directly between the Earth and the Sun, the Moon itself is not visible and so it is not reflecting sunlight to the Earth – like the Sun, it has “stopped shining” as well.

The first person to suggest that Joshua 10:12–14 was referring to a solar eclipse seems to have been the linguist Robert Wilson (1918), who almost 100 years ago gave the following translation:

Be eclipsed, O sun, in Gibeon,

And the moon in the valley of Aijalon!

And the sun was eclipsed and the moon turned back, while the nation was avenged on its enemies.

Wilson claimed that in Babylonian cuneiform texts there are words with the same root as the Hebrew *dôm* that are used in Babylonian astronomical tablets in connection with eclipses, meaning “to be dark”. However, at that time, 100 years ago, it was not deemed possible to investigate this further because of the laborious nature of the calculations required (Russell 1918)...

And: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/3224-years-later-scientists-see-first-ever-recorded-eclipse-in-joshuas-battle/>

Ayalon: The story

5. For more on this story – a six-part series

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/827196/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/827462/>

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<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/828134/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/828559/>

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/829094/>

6. Joshua 9:1-3

And it was, when all of the kings across the Jordan, in the mountains, in the Shefeilah, and along the shore of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite, the Emorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Chivvite and the Jebusite, heard, then all of them gathered together to battle Joshua and Israel, with one mouth.

And the people of Givon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai...

7. Joshua 10:1-7 (tr. JPS 1985 ed. c/o sefaria.org)

When King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem learned that Joshua had captured Ai and proscribed it, treating Ai and its king as he had treated Jericho and its king, and that, moreover, the people of Gibeon had come to terms with Israel and remained among them, he was very frightened. For Gibeon was a large city, like one of the royal cities—in fact, larger than Ai—and all its men were warriors. So King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent this message to King Hoham of Hebron, King Piram of Jarmuth, King Japhia of Lachish, and King Debir of Eglon: “Come up and help me defeat Gibeon; for it has come to terms with Joshua and the Israelites.”

The five Amorite kings—the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, with all their armies—joined forces and marched on Gibeon, and encamped against it and attacked it.

The people of Gibeon thereupon sent this message to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: “Do not fail your servants; come up quickly and aid us and deliver us, for all the Amorite kings of the hill country have gathered against us.” So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his whole fighting force, all the trained warriors.

8. Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak), Commentary to Joshua 10:1

All of the kings of Jerusalem at the time were called *Malki Tzedek* or *Adoni Tzedek*, as in, "And Malki Tzedek, king of Shalem (Bereishit 14:18)", which is Jerusalem, as in Tehillim 76:3, "And His shelter was in Shalem."

9. Midrash, Bereishit Rabbah 43:6

This place makes its residents just – *Malki Tzedek*, *Adoni Tzedek*. Jerusalem is called *tzedek*, as in Yeshayah 1:21, "Righteousness would reside in her."

10. 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 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 Makkedah.

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.

11. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Joshua 10

He only prayed that the daylight continue until they would be in Emek Ayalon, and this is the meaning of, "And the Moon in Emek Ayalon", meaning: The Moon should halt until Israel would be in the valley, in the area of Ayalon...

And he saw the Sun descending to set below the land in the area of Givon, and the Moon beginning to become visible, ascending from the land in Emek Ayalon... And he prayed for the Moon lest the entire movement of the heavens be confused.

12. Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag), Commentary to Joshua 10:13

I think there was a book called *Sefer haYashar*, and it was lost with exile.

13. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Joshua 10:12

I think that [the mention of *Sefer haYashar*] refers back to the vengeance it had mentioned, for Israel to avenge itself upon its foes. And it said that this revenge was performed by them via that celestial miracle which our master Moshe had foretold in the Torah – which is *Sefer haYashar*... The foretelling is in *V'Zot haBerachah*, Deuteronomy 33:26-29: There is none like Gd, Yeshurun, who rides the heavens to aid you, and in His might the skies... And He chased from before you the enemy, and He said, 'Destroy'...

Jericho: The Battlefield – A Valley

14. 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 Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar, all the latter joined forces at the Valley of Siddim, now the Dead Sea.

15. 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 |