

YEHOSHUA BEN-NUN: A LIFE (PART II)

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I

THE APPEARANCE OF YEHOSHUA... ON THE STAGE OF HISTORY

In last week's shiur, we analyzed some enigmatic passages in the final chapter of Sefer Yehoshua - notably the delay of Yoseph's interment until after the passing of Yehoshua. In this week's shiur, as promised, I would like to further investigate the life and career of Mosheh's disciple, the great leader who brought us into Eretz Yisra'el - Yehoshua bin-Nun.

We first meet Yehoshua in this week's Parashah: Then came Amalek, and fought with Yisra'el in Rephidim. And Mosheh said to Yehoshua, Choose for us men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand. So Yehoshua did as Mosheh had said to him, and fought with Amalek; and Mosheh, Aharon, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Mosheh held up his hand, that Yisra'el prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Mosheh's hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aharon and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Yehoshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

And Hashem said to Mosheh, Write this for a memorial in a book, and recite it in the ears of Yehoshua; for I will completely put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Mosheh built an altar, and called its name Hashem-Nissi. For he said, Because Hashem has sworn that Hashem will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

We will yet return to this passage as we continue to assay Yehoshua's successful leadership of Am Yisra'el.

II

AVNEI ALGABISH

There are two wondrous and famed miracles associated with Yehoshua bin-Nun. By far the most well-known (gospel afficianados will appreciate this one) is the implosion of the walls of Yericho - an event we will revisit further on. The second great wonder is recounted in Yehoshua 10. An alliance of

five K'na'ani kings had attacked the Giv'onim, who had deceptively gotten the B'nei Yisra'el to sign a mutual protection treaty. The likely reason for the attack on the Giv'onim, besides punishing them for their treachery in allying with the B'nei Yisra'el (some things don't change), was to effectively lure Yehoshua's army into battle.

The text relates: So Yehoshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And Hashem said to Yehoshua, Fear them not; for I have delivered them to your hand; there shall not a man of them stand before you. Yehoshua therefore came to them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night. And Hashem struck them with confusion before Yisra'el, and slew them with a great slaughter at Giv'on, and chased them along the way that ascends to Beth-Horon, and struck them as far as Azekah, and Makkedah. And it came to pass, as they fled from before Yisra'el, and were in the descent to Beth-Horon, that Hashem threw down great stones from heaven upon them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from hailstones than there were killed with the sword by the people of Yisra'el. (Yehoshua 10:7-11 - this event directly precedes the famous passage - which was a focal point of last week's essay - in which Yehoshua "stops the sun". He did so in order to continue the rout of these kings and their armies)

I would like to pose two questions relating to this passage:

1) Why did God use hail to defeat the enemy here; first of all, it seems that Yehoshua was doing quite well before this overt Divine intercession. Second, there are more "customary" methods in which God intervenes in such situations - e.g. creating mass confusion among the enemy camp (e.g. Sh'mot 14:24, Shoftim 4:15, ibid. 7:22). Why use hailstones - an unprecedented and never repeated form of Divine battle?

2) Although the text reveals that the Heavenly projectiles were hail, they were first called "stones": Hashem threw down Avanim Gedolot (great stones) from heaven upon them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died from Avnei haBarad (hailstones) than there were killed with the sword by the people of Yisra'el. Why are they first called "Avanim" (stones) if in the same verse they are called hail?

The first Mishnah in the final chapter of Massechet Berakhot details the obligation to give thanks to God when happening upon a place where a miracle took place. The Gemara quotes a Baraita which provides a list of locations where miracles took place:

Our Rabbis taught: If one sees the place of the crossing of the Reed Sea, or the fords of the Yarden, or the fords of the streams of Arnon, or Avnei Algabish in the descent of Beit Horon, or the stone which Og king of Bashan wanted to throw at Yisra'el, or the stone on which Mosheh sat when Yehoshua fought with Amalek, or [the pillar of salt of] Lot's wife, or the wall of Yericho which sank into the ground, for all of these he should give thanksgiving and praise to the Almighty...

The Gemara analyzes each of these locations. In assessing the significance (and meaning) of Avnei Algabish, the Gemara comments:

What are Avnei Algabish? A Tanna taught: Stones [Avanim] which remained suspended for the sake of a man [Al Gav Ish] and came down for the sake of a man. 'They remained suspended for the sake of a man': this was Mosheh, of whom it is written, Now the man Mosheh was very meek, and it is also written, And the soldiers and hail ceased, and the rain poured not upon the earth. 'They came down for the sake of a man': this was Yehoshua, of whom it is written, Take thee Yehoshua bin Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and it is written, And it came to pass as they fled from before Yisra'el, while they were at the descent of Beit-Horon, that Hashem cast down Avanim G'dolot. (BT Berakhot 54a-b)

3) Why are these rocks, which fell in Morad Beit-Horon (a place Mosheh never reached), associated with Mosheh? These stones fell in the Yehoshuan war against the southern kings, well after Mosheh had passed on - and passed the mantle of leadership to Yehoshua.

Although these questions focus on one particular - albeit outstanding and awe-inspiring - event in the storied career of Yehoshua bin-Nun, we will need to deepen our appreciation of the development of this general cum Navi in order to properly respond. Thereby, we will not only provide an explanation for the oddities associated with the Heavenly Hail, but also - and more to our point - gain a fresh and enhanced understanding of the unfolding of this first Sefer of N'vi'im.

III

"ON THE DAY THAT YOU CROSS THE YARDEN"

Before beginning our inquiry, I'd like to pose one more question, relating to the sequence of events in Sefer Yehoshua.

To illuminate the question, here is an outline of the first third of the Sefer:

Chapter	Topic
1	Appointment of Yehoshua
2	Spies sent to Yericho
3	Preparation for crossing the Yarden
4	Crossing the Yarden, setting up of commemorative stones
5	B'rit Milah and Korban Pesach in Gilgal
6	Conquest of Yericho
7	Aborted attempt to conquer Ha'Ai
8	Conquest of Ha'ai, Construction of altar at Har Eval

As can be seen, the first two chapters take place on the East Bank of the Yarden, the next two describe the process of crossing the Yarden - and from that point on, the B'nei Yisra'el remain (until

the very end of Sefer M'lakhim) "between the (Yarden) river and the (Mediterranean) sea". Following the sequence of events as presented here, from the time that the B'nei Yisra'el cross the Yarden until they arrive at Har Eval, construct the altar and complete this inauguration ceremony (see below), at least several weeks elapse. The text testifies that the people crossed the Yarden on the tenth of the first month (Aviv/Nissan) (4:19). They continue on to Gilgal, perform B'rit Milah and the Korban Pesach (on the 14th of the month), followed by the week-long preparation for the conquest of Yericho (cf. 6:3-4). Subsequent to the vanquishing of Yericho, spies are sent to Ha'Ai (7:2), the initial foray is repelled (7:5), Yehoshua prays to God and the traitor Achan is identified via a process that certainly took most of a day. Finally, the B'nei Yisra'el attack Ha'Ai, circling the city at night and attacking the next day. It is only after the destruction of Ha'Ai that the people ascend Har Eval for the covenant ceremony, as presented at the end of Chapter 8.

Even if we allow that the conquest of Yericho began during Hag haMatzot, we still have at least two full weeks at the absolute minimum between the crossing of the Yarden and the covenant ceremony on Har Eval.

This is, in and of itself, not bothersome - until we look into Sefer D'varim and note the command regarding this ceremony. Compare:

And Mosheh with the elders of Yisra'el commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day. And it shall be on the day when you shall pass over the Yarden to the land which Hashem your God gives you, that you shall set you up great stones, and plaster them with plaster; And you shall write upon them all the words of this Torah, when you have passed over, that you may go in to the land which Hashem your God gives you, a land that flows with milk and honey; as Hashem God of your fathers has promised you. Therefore it shall be when you have gone over the Yarden, that you shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in Mount Eval, and you shall plaster them with plaster. And there shall you build an altar to Hashem your God, an altar of stones; you shall not lift up any iron tool upon them. You shall build the altar of Hashem your God of whole stones; and you shall offer burnt offerings on it to Hashem your God; And you shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before Hashem your God. And you shall write upon the stones all the words of this Torah very plainly.(Devarim 27:1-8)

With: Then Yehoshua built an altar to Hashem God of Yisra'el in Mount Eval, As Mosheh the servant of Hashem commanded the people of Yisra'el, as it is written in the Book of the Torah of Mosheh, an altar of whole stones, over which no man has lifted up any iron; and they offered on it burnt offerings to Hashem, and sacrificed peace offerings. And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the Torah of Mosheh, which he wrote in the presence of the people of Yisra'el. And all Yisra'el, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side of the ark and on that side before the priests, the Levites, who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Hashem, the foreigner as well as he who was born among them; half of them over opposite Mount Gerizim, and half of them over opposite Mount Eval; as Mosheh the servant of Hashem had commanded before, that they should bless the people of

Yisra'el. And afterwards he read all the words of the Torah, the blessings and curses, according to all that is written in the Book of the Torah. There was not a word of all that Mosheh commanded, which Yehoshua did not read before all the congregation of Yisra'el, with the women, and the little ones, and the foreigners who lived among them. (Yehoshua 8:30-35)

It is quite clear that the ceremony described at the end of the 8th chapter of Yehoshua is the fulfillment of the Mitzvah given in D'varim - but note v. 2 in D'varim:

And it shall be on the day when you shall pass over the Yarden

4) Why didn't Yehoshua lead the people directly from the Yarden to Har Eval on the 10th of Nisan?

The Tosefta, ignoring the sequence in Sefer Yehoshua, comments:

Come and see how many miracles were performed on that day. Israel crossed the Jordan, came to mount Gerizim and mount Ebal [thus traversing a distance of] more than sixty mil, ...After that they brought the stones, built the altar, and plastered it with plaster, and inscribed thereon all the words of the Torah in seventy languages... Then they sacrificed Olot and Sh'lamim, ate and drank and rejoiced, pronounced the blessings and the curses, packed up the stones, and came and lodged in Gilgal; as it is said: Carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place. (Tosefta Sotah 8:6)

Although this passage solves the problem of the timing of the ceremony at Har Eval, it leaves a greater question - why is the text presented out of order. In other words, if the ceremony took place on the day of the Yarden-crossing, why isn't it described at the end of Chapter 4? Why are the B'rit Milah, Korban Pesach, conquest of Yericho, defeat at Ha'Ai, identification of Achan and the successful rout of Ha'Ai written before the description of this ceremony?

Whether or not we accept the Tosefta's approach (see Rashi and Radak at 8:30) we are left with a problem. Either the ceremony happened much later than it was to have - or it is written as if it happened later. Why doesn't the sequence conform to Mosheh's command?

Regarding the placement of this text, one of the Qumran scrolls (4QJosh.a) records the ceremony at Har Eval before the B'rit Milah (at the end of Ch. 5). LXXb, on the other hand, places it after the beginning of Chapter 9. Josephus (Ant. V 1:19) suggests that this event took place after all of the wars of conquest (i.e. after Chapter 11) and there are others who suggest that its proper placement is in Chapter 24, which takes place in Sh'chem. This wide range of opinions and approaches demonstrates the difficulty with the location in the Masoretic text - a difficulty we will try to resolve.

Now that we have laid out our questions, we are ready to analyze the development of Yehoshua - and developments within [Sefer] Yehoshua - which will eventually help us resolve all of them.

IV

A FINAL QUESTION

When Yehoshua leads the people into the Yarden, he is commanded by God to appoint a representative from each tribe to take a boulder from the dried-up river bed and to set it up in the lodging where they sleep that night (4:2-3). Along with fulfilling this command, Yehoshua sets up another 12 rocks in the Yarden itself (4:9). He then orchestrates the Milah of Yisra'el - using sharpened flintrocks (5:2). Rocks (or boulders) continue to appear in the narrative - including the stone walls of Yericho which fall (6:20), the rocks used to bury various enemies (e.g. 7:26, 8:29, 19:27), the near-civil war caused by the construction of the Giladite altar (22:10) and the "rock-witness" to B'nei Yisra'el's acceptance of the B'rit (24:26). This, of course, in addition to the Avanim Gedolot cast down by God as the army chased its enemy down the slopes of Beit Horon.

Our final question:

5) Why do rocks play such a central role in the Yehoshua narrative?

V

YEHOSHUA MESHARET MOSHEH

The opening lines of Sefer Yehoshua reveal a difficulty in the transition of leadership which will occupy the first third of the Sefer - at least as a subtext:

And it was after the death of Mosheh the servant of Hashem that Hashem spoke to Yehoshua bin-Nun, Mosheh' minister, saying, Mosheh My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross over the Yarden, you, and all this people, to the land which I give to them, to the people of Yisra'el. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that I have given to you, as I said to Mosheh. From the wilderness and this L'vanon to the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Mosheh, so I will be with you; I will not fail you, nor forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land, which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the Torah, which Mosheh My servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. (Yehoshua 1:1-7)

Yehoshua is asked to fill the void left by Mosheh - to step into the shoes of the greatest teacher and leader ever known. The powerful distinction between the two is adumbrated in the opening line - Mosheh is Eved Hashem (the servant of God), whereas Yehoshua is Mesharet Mosheh - the "minister" of Mosheh. In addition, Mosheh's name is mentioned 6 times in this brief section - establishing the challenge which Yehoshua will face as he steps into the role of leader.

It seems both reasonable and implicit in the text that Yehoshua was concerned with his ability to lead the people. God reassures him that: as I was with Mosheh, so I will be with you; (1:5, 3:7);

The text tells us that On that day Hashem magnified Yehoshua in the sight of all Yisra'el; and they feared him, as they feared Mosheh, all the days of his life. (4:14)

And the members of Gad, Re'uven and Menasheh swear allegiance to Yehoshua: As we listened to Mosheh in all things, so will we listen to you; only Hashem your God be with you, as he was with Mosheh. (1:17)

As proof of the great concern which God has for Yehoshua's confidence in the face of this great challenge, we see Divine interaction (via command or incident) which serves to "mimic" Mosheh's life:

a) The crossing of the Yarden is not only evocative of the crossing of Yam Suf, the former is also used as a reminder of the latter (4:23). b) Both the celebration of the Pesach and the immediate cessation of the Mahn (5:10-12) serve as direct associations with Mosheh's great career. c) Most telling, however, is the enigmatic interaction between Yehoshua and a Divine emissary in the outskirts of Yericho, just prior to the conquest of that city: And it came to pass, when Yehoshua was by Yericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man before him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Yehoshua went to him, and said to him, Are you for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, No; but as captain of the army of Hashem I am now come. And Yehoshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshipped, and said to him, What does my lord say to his servant? And the captain of Hashem's host said to Yehoshua, Take your shoe from off your foot; for the place on which you stand is holy. And Yehoshua did so. (5:13-15)

It is abundantly clear that this final command deliberately and pointedly evokes the beginning of Mosheh's great career:

And Mosheh kept the flock of Yitro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock far away into the desert, and came to the mountain of God, to Horev. And the angel of Hashem appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Mosheh said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when Hashem saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Mosheh, Mosheh. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Do not come any closer; take off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. (Sh'mot 3:1-5)

As as been demonstrated, a significant concern which occupies the text through the first 8 chapters of Sefer Yehoshua is the transition of leadership to Yehoshua - who, justifiably and understandably, is hesitant to step into the hallowed and powerful position held by his master, Mosheh Rabbenu. It is this relationship which is so beautifully illustrated by Haza"l:

The face of Mosheh is the face of the sun and the face of Yehoshua is the face of the moon. (BT Bava Batra 75a).

It is only after the crossing of the Yarden (a Mosaic miracle), the successful conquest of Yericho (the onset of his career as leader of the conquest) and the "recovery" at Ha'Ai that Yehoshua's position is affirmed - both in his eyes and the eyes of his flock (see Bamidbar 27:17). Once Yehoshua has shown that he can not only lead the people in war, but plead their case to God (7:7-9) and chastise the people to bring about their better character (the identification and excision of Achan) that his place as leader is assured.

With this understanding of the development of Yehoshua Mesharet Mosheh in hand, we can revisit our questions and provide reasoned responses.

VI

AVNEI YEHOSHUA

Let us begin where we left off - why rocks play such a significant role in the career of Yehoshua. Since Yehoshua's entire term of leadership was marked by his success in following Mosheh, it stands to reason that he would utilize a "Mosaic-reminder" - both for himself and for his nation - at every significant turn.

At the beginning of this shiur, we noted the first time that Yehoshua is introduced to us (at the end of this week's Parashah). During that war, as Yehoshua was leading the people against Amalek, we learn of what Mosheh, his Master, was doing atop the mountain:

But Mosheh's hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat on it;

The text goes out of its way to identify an Even (boulder), provided for Mosheh during the war. Although rocks and boulders are ubiquitous in the mountainous desert of Rephidim, the narrative mentions it nonetheless, as if to mark this event as having an association with this rock. Furthermore, upon the successful conclusion of the war, Mosheh builds an altar (out of rocks), calling it "Hashem-Nissi" (God is my banner).

We can now answer our final question: Rocks are used in every major story of Yehoshua because that is Yehoshua's "trademark" - as a reminder of the rock upon which Mosheh sat when Yehoshua fought his first war.

We can also understand the anachronous presentation of the ceremony at Har Eval. Whether or not the event took place on the day of the crossing or several weeks later, the text deliberately places it after Yehoshua had completed his transition to leader. This clearly distinguishes the wars fought beforehand (Yericho and Ha'Ai) from those fought later. These first two wars were not wars of conquest, as much as opportunities for Yehoshua to establish himself as Mosheh's worthy successor. It was only after this event took place, that the full realization of "the day that you cross the Yarden" was achieved, at which point the ceremony was undertaken.

We can finally return to our point of departure and explain the curious events (and description) at the slope of Beit Horon.

Yehoshua had been using rocks during the development of his career - as a way of maintaining a Mosaic presence throughout. He had buried his enemies under piles of rocks, created commemorative steles using piles of rocks and his first victory in Eretz K'na'an was achieved when the stone walls of Yericho fell.

Although some of these acts were the responses to direct commands from God, the use of rocks was, by and large, initiated by Yehoshua himself. As he moved into the secure position of leader, he had been consistently using boulders and stones to mark every step of the conquest.

We can now answer questions 1 and 2 above. Although Divine intervention in Israelite wars is usually through the confusion of the enemy camp, God demonstrated Divine validation of Yehoshua's veneration for his teacher by burying the enemy under rocks - much as Yehoshua had been doing himself. That is also why the text first refers to these Heavenly weapons as Avanim, even though it immediately clarifies that it was really Avnei haBarad (hailstones).

We also understand the enigmatic passage in Berakhot, which identifies these hailstones:

which remained suspended for the sake of a man [Mosheh] and came down for the sake of a man [Yehoshua].

These hailstones served to cement Yehoshua's place as the rightful successor and the leader of the B'nei Yisra'el, by virtue of his constant commitment to remembering his master and teacher, Mosheh Rabbenu, who years ago and far away, sat upon a rock while the young general fought his first war.

Yehoshua led the B'nei Yisra'el during his entire life, satisfied to continue in the role of van ,ran; it was only in his death that he was granted the greatest accolade possible: And Yehoshua bin-Nun, the servant of Hashem, died..

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the Torah, which Mosheh My servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

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