YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Understanding the haftarot**

**By Harav Yaakov Medan**

**PARASHAT BESHALACH**

**“And May His Friends Be Like the Risen Sun”**

**The Fall of Egypt**

The *haftara* for *Parashat Beshalach*, according to the Ashkenazi rite, is the longest of all the *haftarot*, and our study of it is also the longest.

Devora was a prophetess, the wife of Lapidot; she was judging Israel at that time. She sat beneath Devora's palm between Rama and Beit El in the Efrayim hills; the Israelites would go up to her for judgment. One day, she summoned Barak son of Avinoam from Kedesh Naftali and said to him, "The Lord, God of Israel, has commanded: Go, take ten thousand men of the people of Naftali and Zevulun and lead them to Mount Tavor. And at the Kishon Stream I shall lead to you to Sisera, Yavin's general, along with his chariots and his hordes, and deliver him into your hands." Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; if not, I will not." "Then I shall go with you," she said, "but you will find no glory on the path you are taking, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Devora arose and accompanied Barak to Kedesh. Barak mustered Zevulun and Naftali at Kedesh and advanced with ten thousand men behind him, and Devora went up with him. Chever the Kenite had parted ways from the Kenites, who were descended from Chovav, Moshe's father-in-law. He had pitched his tent at Elon BeTzaananim, which was by Kedesh. Sisera was informed that Barak son of Avinoam had advanced to Mount Tavor. And Sisera mustered all his chariots – nine hundred iron chariots – and all his warriors from Charoshet HaGoyim to Kishon Stream. "Rise up!" Devora said to Barak. "For on this day, the Lord will deliver Sisera into your hands – the Lord marches before you!" Barak charged down Mount Tavor with ten thousand men behind him. And the Lord threw Sisera, all his chariots, and his entire force into panic before Barak's swords. Sisera dismounted from his chariot and fled on foot. Barak chased the chariots and warriors to Charoshet HaGoyim, and all of Sisera's army fell by the sword; not a single man survived. Now Sisera had fled on foot to the tent of Yael, the wife of Chever the Kenite, for there was peace between Yavin, king of Chatzor, and Chever's family. Yael went out to meet Sisera. "Turn aside, my lord," she said to him, "turn aside to me – do not fear." He turned aside into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. "Give me a little water, please," he asked her, "for I am thirsty." She opened a skin of milk, gave him some to drink, and covered him once again. "Stand at the entrance to the tent," he told her, "and if anyone comes and asks you if someone is here, say, 'No.'" Then Yael, wife of Chever, picked up a tent peg, grasped a mallet, crept up to him – he had fallen asleep, exhausted – and hammered the tent peg through his temple until it sunk into the ground and he died. Now Barak was chasing Sisera, and Yael went out to meet him. "Come," she said to him, "I will show you the man you seek." He came to her, and there was Sisera, sprawled out dead, with the tent peg through his temple. On that day, God subdued Yavin, king of Canaan, before the Israelites. And the hand of the Israelites grew harsher and harsher against Yavin, king of Canaan, until they had destroyed him.

And Devora sang – and Barak son of Avinoam with her – on that day: / When chaos was loosed in Israel, / when people offered themselves willingly – / bless the Lord! / Hear, O kings, / give ear, O rulers, / I – to the Lord I will sing, / I will chant to the Lord, God of Israel. / O Lord, when You left Se'ir, / when You marched from the fields of Edom, / the earth shook, / the heavens poured – / rain poured from the clouds, / the mountains melted before the Lord, / Sinai itself before the Lord, God of Israel! / In the days of Shamgar son of Anat, / in the days of Yael, / there were no caravans; / wayfarers walked roundabout paths. / There were no unwalled cities in Israel, / none – / until you arose, Devora, / until you arose, a mother in Israel! / When they chose new gods, / there was war at the gates – / but no shield or spear was seen / amid forty thousand of Israel! / My heart is with Israel's leaders, / the people who offer themselves willingly – / bless the Lord! / O riders of white she-donkeys, / mounted on fine saddles, / O wayfarers: / speak out – / louder than the sound of archers / by the watering places; / there they shall recount the Lord's graces, / how He graced the unwalled cities in Israel; / then, down to the gates / marched the people of the Lord! / Awake, awake, Devora – / awake, awake, burst into song! / Arise, Barak – / seize your captives, son of Avinoam; / then the remnant ruled over the mighty people, / the Lord ruled over the warriors for me! / From Efrayim, rooted in Amalek: / "After you, Binyamin, with your people!" / From Makhir marched down leaders, / from Zevulun, wielders of the scribal staff. / Yissakhar's chiefs were with Devora, / Yissakhar, like Barak, charged into the valley, / while amongst the clans of Reuven / was great soul-searching. / Why did you linger among the sheepfolds / to hear the whistling for the flocks? / Amongst the clans of Reuven / was great soul-searching. / Gilad stayed put across the Jordan, / and why did Dan stay by the ships? / Asher lingered by the seashore, / staying put by its harbors. / Zevulun, a people who risked their lives for death / with Naftali on the open heights; / then came the kings to do battle, / then Canaan's kings did battle / at Tanakh, by the waters of Megiddo – / but they took no spoil of silver! / From the heavens they fought; / the stars from their courses fought against Sisera! / Kishon Stream swept them away, / the ancient stream, the Kishon Stream – / march on, my soul, with might! / The hooves of horses hammered / with the gallop, the gallop of the steeds! / "Curse Meroz," said the Lord's angel, / "curse its people harshly, / for they did not come to the aid of the Lord, / to the aid of the Lord amidst the warriors." / Blessed beyond women be Yael, / wife of Chever the Kenite, / blessed beyond women in tents! / Water he asked for, milk she gave; / in a princely bowl she offered cream. / Her hand shot out for the tent peg, / her right hand for the workman's hammer, / and hammered Sisera / and crushed his head / and smashed and pierced his temple! / Between her legs he lay slumped, sprawled, / between her legs he slumped, sprawled, / where he slumped, there he sprawled, slain! / Through the window she peered, / Sisera's mother wailed through the lattice, / "Why does his chariot tarry so? / Why so late, the clank of his chariots?" / The wisest of her ladies reply – / she even answers – / "Why, they are dividing up the spoil they found, / a womb or two for every man, / a haul of colors for Sisera, / a haul of colors of embroidery, / colored embroidery, two apiece, for the spoilers' throats." / Thus may all Your enemies perish, O Lord, / and may His friends be like the risen sun! / And the land was quiet for forty years. (*Shoftim* 4:4-5:31)

**Part I: Chapter 4 – The Story of What Happened[[1]](#footnote-2)**

**1. The Connection Between the *Parasha* and the *Haftara***

The connection speaks for itself. In the *haftara*, God saves Israel through heavenly intervention that causes the Kishon River to sweep Sisera's army to its destruction, just as He did in *Parashat Beshalach*, at the Sea of Suf, to Pharaoh's army that was in pursuit of the Israelites. The people of Israel were freed from the yoke of Yavin king of Chazor, who had been oppressing them for twenty years, and of all his camp, "not a single man survived," as happened to Pharaoh's army at the Sea of Suf.

When the fighting came to an end, a song was recited, reminiscent of the Song of the Sea, and its recital by Devora the prophetess brings to mind the actions of Miriam the prophetess, who went out with all the women with tambourines and dance at the time of the Song of the Sea.

With regard to the shared theme of songs, I want to note here that all the songs in the Bible are war songs of glory to the victor, and are coordinated with the tambourines and dancing of the women who go out to meet the warriors. The first song in Scripture is Lemekh's song to his wives (*Bereishit* 4:23-24), which I understand as a song about his victory in war and his revenge on his enemies ("I killed a man for wounding me, killed a boy for bruising me. If Kayin will be avenged seven times, then Lemekh, seventy-seven"). The Song of the Sea is not about the miracle of the splitting of the Sea of Suf, but about God's war against Pharaoh and his army; the Song of the Well (*Bamidbar* 21:17-18) relates to the war of the streams of Arnon,[[2]](#footnote-3) a miraculous war against the army of Sichon; and the Song of *Haazinu* closes with God's war against His enemies and the vengeance that He will wreak on them. The same is true of the Song of the Kings of Canaan (*Yehoshua* 12), the Song of David (II *Shmuel* 22), the Song of the Ten Sons of Haman (*Esther* 9),[[3]](#footnote-4) and others.

**2. Background**

The verses preceding our *haftara* describe the predicament that Israel had fallen into as a result of their sins:

The Israelites resumed doing what was evil in the eyes of the Lord once Ehud had died. So the Lord handed them over to Yavin, king of Canaan, who reigned in Chatzor; his general was Sisera, who ruled at Charoshet HaGoyim. The Israelites cried out to the Lord, for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed Israel fiercely for twenty years. (*Shoftim* 4:1-3)

Chatzor was a large fortified city in the Upper Galilee; it is identified today near Kibbutz Ayelet Hashachar in the Galilee Panhandle, and the modern city of Chatzor, near Rosh Pina, is named after it. Yavin (apparently, a fixed name for the kings of Chatzor, like the name "Pharaoh" for the kings of Egypt) had headed the alliance of northern kings that fought against Yehoshua (as related in *Yehoshua* 11), and Yehoshua captured his city and burned it to the ground. The city was later rebuilt by King Shlomo (see I *Melakhim* 9:15), but did not exist in the time of Devora and Yael; Yavin was not then "king of Chatzor," but rather "who reigned in Chatzor," while living in Charoshet HaGoyim. The location of Charoshet HaGoyim is uncertain, and various hypotheses have been proposed. The most recent hypothesis was advanced by the archaeologist of the territory of Menashe, Adam Zertal, who places it in the Iron Valley, at Tel El-Ahwat (southwest of Umm al-Fahm, near the settlement of Katzir). If his hypothesis is correct, it makes a lot of sense that the military struggle in our *haftara* was over the Jezreel Valley, through which runs the chariot road connecting the Iron Valley to the entire north and also to the eastern bank of the Jordan. It stands to reason that Yavin and Sisera mainly oppressed the northern tribes, and that Barak's control of Mount Tavor endangered their control of the Jezreel Valley in particular and of the north in general.

**3. A Woman as a Judge and as a Leader**

No one questions Devora's status as a prophetess; we find that Miryam was a prophetess, and there is a tradition that the matriarchs were as well. However, we do not find a woman serving as judge until Devora – not as a judge of Torah law, nor as a leader. It would appear from the Talmud that a woman should not be appointed to a judicial or leadership position, and the *Rishonim* discussed Devora's halakhic status. For instance, *Tosafot* write:

Devora did not judge, but rather she taught those who would judge. Alternatively, in accordance with the Divine word is different. (*Tosafot*, *Yevamot* 45b, s.v. *mi*)

From the fact that it is written about Devora: "And she was judging Israel," one cannot bring proof that a woman is fit to judge, for perhaps they accepted her upon themselves on account of the *Shekhina*. (*Tosefot*, *Bava Kama* 15a, s.v. *asher*)

With these two comments, *Tosafot* offer three explanations:

1. Devora was appointed to judge the people by virtue of a temporary decree received by way of a prophecy from God.

2. She did not judge Torah law, but rather she taught the judges and guided them along their way.

3. The people of Israel agreed to accept her as their judge by virtue of the *Shekhina* that rested upon her.

We will focus primarily on the third explanation. According to this approach, it stands to reason that Devora did not judge on the basis of the laws of the Torah, but rather in accordance with the laws of the kingdom and the leadership, based on her having been accepted as a leader. The laws of the kingdom enabled her to judge the people of Israel even according to her discretion and according to temporary decrees that she issued in accordance with the needs of the generation. There is also, then, no problem with a woman serving as a leader if the people of Israel accept her – and we find that the Sages of Israel during the Second Temple period demonstrated respect and handed over authority to Queen Shlomtzion, widow of King Yannai, who was a God-fearing woman and followed the path of the Torah.

*Chazal* (*Megilla* 14a) also noted the verse's emphasis on Devora's sitting under a palm, and explained that since she received visitors for judgment and to teach them Torah, she did not do so in a closed room, so as not to seclude herself with a man to whom she was not married, but rather she received them in an open place, under a palm tree.

**4. Barak Son of Avinoam**

The verse that precedes our *haftara*, cited above, mentions that the people of Israel cried out to God. In response, God instructs Devora to rebel against Yavin and his general, and He promises His salvation in this war. As stated, the appropriate tribes for this war are the northern tribes, who live in constant friction with Yavin and his army. Devora, who resides on Mount Efrayim, sends for her general from the northern tribes, from Kedesh Naftali (whose main identification is Hirbet Kadish, close to and east of old Poriya, about a kilometer west of the southern portion of the Kinneret[[4]](#footnote-5)). He is ordered to mobilize the northern tribes – Zevulun, located in the center of the Lower Galilee, and Naftali, located to the east and to the north of Zevulun. We will see below that the tribe of Yissakhar, located in the Jezreel Valley, was also a major partner in this war.

From Devora's words it appears, though it is not explicitly stated, that Barak was to go up with his army to Mount Tavor, for she says the army will draw Sisera's troops into the Kishon Stream, which is at the foot of the Tavor. Sisera's large (and somewhat unwieldy) chariot army will not ascend the wooded mountain, but will wait for Barak's army at the Kishon Stream. From God's promise that this army will be given into Barak's hand, it may apparently be concluded that there will be a sudden flood that will defeat Sisera's chariot army.

However, Barak does not completely accept the prophetess's words, and conditions his going out to war on her going with him:

Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; if not, I will not."

There have been those in our day who mocked Barak, in macho style, for hiding behind Devora's skirt, but this is an incorrect interpretation of his words. Barak, as a general, considers the ability of the ten thousand men he was ordered to mobilize against Sisera, his soldiers and his nine hundred iron chariots, and reaches a military conclusion, which we can call "secular," that he will not be able to overcome Sisera's army. Barak does not refuse Devora's order, but he insists that she come with him – not as a leader, but as a prophetess. Her presence, due to the *Shekhina* that rests with her, promises Divine intervention – the intervention of an overt miracle that will decide the fate of the campaign. Using our "secular" military concepts, we can liken Barak to the commander of an infantry division who demands air cover for his soldiers.

Devora's reaction is to set the price for complying with his demand. Though she is willing to accept Barak's ultimatum, it would have been better in her eyes if the demand had not been made. It seems that Devora was not interested in an overt miracle from heaven (which at times exacts a price of its own), and was "satisfied" with the promise of heavenly assistance in the form of a covert miracle, such as God granting strength and valor to Barak's warriors, while instilling weakness and disgrace in the soldiers of Sisera. Barak, however, did not rely on this, and demanded overt miraculous intervention, along with the presence of the prophetess who was with him.

**5. “For Into the Hands of a Woman”**

"Then I shall go with you," she said, "but you will find no glory on the path you are taking, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Devora arose and accompanied Barak to Kedesh.

Sisera, the hero of the Canaanite army, will be delivered in an unusual way by a woman, Yael. What is the meaning of this prophecy? It seems to have two meanings. One concerns Sisera, namely, the humiliation of a war hero who dies at the hands of a woman – as we find with Avimelekh son of Gidon:

Just as he was approaching the entrance of the tower to set it alight, a woman dropped an upper millstone on Avimelekh's head and shattered his skull. He called urgently to the boy who bore his arms. "Draw your sword and put me to death," he said to him, "lest they say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" (*Shoftim* 9:53-54)

Sisera's humiliation will find expression in the next chapter, in the Song of Devora, who declares: "Between her legs he lay slumped, sprawled, / between her legs he slumped, sprawled, / where he slumped, there he sprawled, slain!"

But in our chapter, the primary meaning relates to Barak: the victory will be attributed to Yael, who will kill the commander and thereby bring his army to flight. The fact that the victory was not credited to Barak's heroism resulted in Barak being the only military victor in the book of *Shoftim* who was not appointed a judge by virtue of his success. Otniel, Ehud, Gidon, Tola son of Puah, Yiftach, and Shimshon, who defeated their enemies and delivered Israel, were appointed as leaders because of this. Shaul was also re-appointed as leader by the will of the people following his victory over Nachash, king of the Amonites. Barak, however, remained anonymous after his victory – this being the price he paid for his demand that the prophetess come with him so that an overt miracle would be performed.

Let us clarify this point. Barak and Yael can be compared to Shaul and David in the battle fought in the Ela Valley. David killed the hero of the Philistines, Golyat, while Shaul led the army and directed the decisive pursuit of the Philistines after Golyat's death, as well as the conquest of their cities and their removal from Israel's territory, and presumably many Philistines were killed in this war.

Based on plain reasoning, it seems to me that Shaul deserved most of the praise and glory for his victory in the war, and King Shaul himself also felt this way, but it was David who the dancing women praised:

The laughing women echoed each other, chanting, "Shaul has struck down thousands, and David myriads!" This infuriated Shaul, and the affair seemed ominous to him. "They credited myriads to David," he said, "and credited me with just thousands. Only the kingship is yet to be his!" And Shaul kept a close eye on David from that day onward. (I *Shmuel* 8:7-9)

This reasoning also seems correct to me with respect to Barak's victory over Yavin's Canaanite army. However, a study of the Song of Devora indicates that the main praise was given to Yael, who killed Sisera, and not to Barak, who struck down the entire army.

I also wish to clarify that Barak did not deserve to be "punished" for the demand he presented to Devora. In my understanding, the meaning of her prophecy is that an overt miracle would give the glory of victory to God. The meaning of a woman's victory in the Biblical world is that the victory was a miracle, a victory in the hands of God.

**6. Chever the Kenite**

Chever the Kenite had parted ways from the Kenites, who were descended from Chovav, Moshe's father-in-law. He had pitched his tent at Elon BeTzaananim, which was by Kedesh.

This verse comes to explain how Sisera later fled to the tent of Yael the wife of Chever the Kenite, which was close to the aforementioned Kedesh. The verse teaches us that Chever (and his wife Yael) came from the Kenite family, from the descendants of Chovav, who was (according to most of the commentators) the brother of Tzipora and the son of Yitro, father-in-law of Moshe; he (Chovav) too is called "*choten Moshe*." What is the connection between the family of Chovav, which comes from the Sinai desert or from the Negev, and the territory of Naftali, west of the Kinneret?

After Yitro left and returned to Midyan, Moshe asked Chovav to accompany the people of Israel as they traveled to their country. In exchange for this, Moshe promised him:

If you come with us, whatever good the Lord does for us, we will do for you. (*Bamidbar* 10:32)

Chovav, his family, and his descendants received an inheritance in the land of Israel, one of the best in the country – Yericho, which is blessed with sun and water all year round:

Surely it was already stated: "Come with us and we will be good for you." What then does the verse teach: "For the Lord has promised good things to Israel"? This refers to the pasture land of Yericho, which the descendants of Yitro would consume. (*Sifre Devarim* 352)

But this good inheritance was taken away from them by force by Eglon, king of Moav:

Then the Israelites resumed doing what was evil in the eyes of the Lord, and the Lord inspired Eglon, king of Moav, to overcome Israel, for they had done evil in the eyes of the Lord. He rallied the Amonites and Amalek to him, and they launched an attack on Israel and seized the City of Palms. (*Shoftim* 3:12-13)

The City of Palms is Yericho. The Kenites, who were dispossessed of their land, returned to the Negev, to the Judean Desert in the Negev of Arad, which was closer and more similar to the place from which they originated in the desert:

Now the descendants of the Kenite, Moshe's father-in-law, ascended from the City of Palms with the Judahites to the Wilderness of Yehuda in the Negev region near Arad; they came and settled among the people. (*Shoftim* 1:16)

Chever the Kenite parted from all his friends who headed south, and instead went up north and settled near Kedesh, near the Yavne'el Valley. As a single family or father's house, he needed backing and protection, and so he entered into an alliance with Yavin, King of Chazor, and his men, as stated later in the *haftara*:

For there was peace between Yavin, king of Chatzor, and Chever's family.

The Kenites who lived in the Negev apparently entered into an alliance with Israel's enemies, the tribes of Amalek, and Shaul demanded of them on the eve of his war with Amalek to surrender and separate from the Amalekites. According to the Midrash,[[5]](#footnote-6) Yitro as well entered into an alliance with Amalek, and he fought against Israel with them at Refidim, but at the critical moment, at the time of Israel's victory, he made peace with them. So too the Kenites in the days of Shaul obeyed his directive and separated from Amalek at the critical moment. This is also what Yael, the wife of Chever, did in our *haftara,* when she crossed over to the side of the Israelites.[[6]](#footnote-7)

**7. The Deployment of the Armies**

Barak mustered Zevulun and Naftali at Kedesh and advanced with ten thousand men behind him, and Devora went up with him. (4:10)

From Efrayim, rooted in Amalek: "After you, Binyamin, with your people!" / From Makhir marched down leaders, / from Zevulun, wielders of the scribal staff. / Yissakhar's chiefs were with Devora, / Yissakhar, like Barak, charged into the valley. (5:14-15)

Zevulun, a people who risked their lives for death / with Naftali on the open heights. (5:18)

The first verse quoted here is taken from the account in chapter 4, and the others are almost consecutive verses in the Song of Devora. The verses indicate the tribes from which the warriors came, and it appears from them that the people of Zevulun and Naftali were at the forefront of the fighting – due to their proximity to Mount Tavor and the Kishon Stream, where the battle took place. It stands to reason that the "Kedesh" to which Zevulun and Naftali were called is Kedesh Naftali, near Kinneret, the city of Barak.[[7]](#footnote-8)

The tribe of Yissakhar could not be mustered, nor was that necessary. Yissakhar was situated in the Jezreel Valley and in the channel of the Kishon, and Sisera's army sat "above him," at the foot of Mount Tavor. The tribe’s contribution came only after the war began, when Sisera's army was occupied. Then the members of the tribe, who were near Sisera's soldiers, could act as guerilla forces, hiding in their houses, fields, and other hiding places known to them.

Together with the three aforementioned tribes came the descendants of Rachel: Efrayim, the sons of Makhir (Menashe), and Binyamin. Since they were not part of the first assault of Zevulun and Naftali, we must clarify what their role was.

Sisera, the commander of Yavin's army, besides his strong army and iron chariots, also had allies near the front:

Then came the kings to do battle, / then Canaan's kings did battle / at Tanakh, by the waters of Megiddo – / but they took no spoil of silver. (5:19)

The kings of Tanakh and Megiddo, Canaanite cities in the south of the Jezreel Valley, in the north of the territory of Menashe, were Sisera's allies. Their participation in a war that was not theirs was apparently primarily for “spoil of silver” – payment that Yavin and Sisera promised them, and the spoils that they would take from the tribes of Israel after the victory. The political and military status of these kings is described at the beginning of the book of *Shoftim*:

Menashe did not dispossess Beit She'an and its dependencies, Tanakh and its dependencies, the people of Dor and its dependencies, Yivle'am and its dependencies, or Megiddo and its dependencies; the Canaanites were determined to stay in that land. When Israel grew strong, they taxed the Canaanites with forced labor, but they never dispossessed them. (*Shoftim* 1:27-28)

The five fortified cities that the people of Menashe did not dispossess are located on a continuous line from the Jordan on the east (Beit She'an) to the Mediterranean on the west (Dor). The five Canaanite cities, with the areas adjacent and visible to them, could have cut off the northern part of the Land of Israel from its center, and apparently did so as part of their alliance with Yavin, King of Chatzor, when Israel was in his hands. As Devora describes it in her song: "In the days of Shamgar son of Anat, / in the days of Yael, / there were no caravans; / wayfarers walked roundabout paths" – the roads were blocked, and those who wanted to pass had to do so secretly, through "roundabout paths," in the hope that they would not be stopped by the Canaanites. Therefore, the main campaign was fought by the northern tribes who had been cut off. The verse cited from *Shoftim* 1, "When Israel grew strong, they taxed the Canaanites with forced labor," apparently relates to the victory of Devora and Barak over Sisera and his allies in Tanakh and Megiddo: even after their victory, Israel did not penetrate the Canaanite cities or take possession of them, but only taxed them with forced labor.

I wrote above that the tribes of the descendants of Rachel – Menashe, Efrayim, and Binyamin – joined the campaign but were not in Barak's army. Barak's troops, which included the tribes of Naftali and Zevulun, charged directly against Sisera's army, and Yissakhar joined them after the campaign opened. It is possible that Devora appointed another leader for the tribes of Rachel. They came from the south, and it may have been their role to cut off Tanakh and Megiddo – perhaps the other Canaanite cities mentioned above, and their armies, as well – from Sisera's army. It stands to reason that Devora sent messengers to additional tribes and called upon them to come to war, but not all the tribes responded to her call, as will be explained in the second part of this *shiur*.[[8]](#footnote-9)

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. This part of the *haftara* is customarily read only according to the Ashkenazi rite, but our study of it will also explain parts of the song, which is read in accordance with the Sephardi rite as well. Our study of the second part of the *haftara* will address other parts of the song. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See *Berakhot* 54a-b. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See *Megilla* 16b. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. As opposed to "Kedesh in the Galilee on Mount Naftali" (*Yehoshua* 20:7), which is identified west of the Yesha intersection at the foot of the Naftali Mountains in the Galilee Panhandle. However, in *Atlas Da'at Mikra* (p. 178) and in Prof. Y. Elitzur’s commentary to the book of *Shoftim*, Kedesh Naftali is identified near the Yesha intersection. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. *Midrash Shmuel* 12, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. A similar thing happened to the Druze, who see themselves as descendants of Yitro, in the War of Independence – they went over to the Israeli side after the battle at Ramat Yochanan, north of Haifa. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. It is possible that this is a different Kedesh that is closer to Tavor – Kedesh, the Levite city in the tribal territory of Yissakhar (see I *Divrei Ha-yamim* 6:57), which is identified with Tel Abu Kudis, and marked today on maps as Tel Kedesh, a kilometer east of Givat Oz, which is south of Megiddo Junction. But in light of the assumption made above regarding the location of Charoshet HaGoyim, the city of Yavin, king of Canaan, and Sisera, the commander of his army, it is not reasonable to think that Barak organized his army near their city. Thus, we can understand that the army was organized at Kedesh Naftali, near the Kinneret. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Available [here](https://etzion.org.il/he/tanakh/torah/sefer-shemot/parashat-beshalach/veohavav-ketzeit-hashemesh-begevurato) in the original Hebrew. We hope to translate the additional sections of this *shiur* at a later date. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)