

JOSHUA'S LONG DAY.

HERE is another suggestion respecting the so-called "long day" of Joshua, – namely, that it was a dark day, notable for its manifestations of divine power against Israel's enemies. We quote as follows: –

"I have read that Adam Clarke, the commentator, wrote that Joshua's 'sun standing still' had 'kept him going' three weeks. Of course he had other work in those weeks besides writing his commentary; but it has been a passage which has received much attention, and yet the explanation of it is very simple.

"Our English word 'sun' has more than one meaning. We speak of 'sitting in the sun,' which does not mean in the orb around which the planets revolve, but in the sunshine; and probably we oftener use the word 'sun' for sunshine than for the orb itself.

"Our English word 'stand' also has several shades of meaning, and one of them is 'to remain'; and 'still' sometimes means 'silent.' These words are given in Joshua 10:12-14 as the equivalents of the Hebrew words of Joshua, and they may be understood in a sense agreeing with the Hebrew; or they may be, and generally are, taken in a sense which contradicts the words of Joshua and actually convey a meaning the very opposite of that of the inspired record, as interpreted by common sense.

"The Hebrew, though a language of very few words, has two words for sun: *chammah* and *shemesh*; this in Joshua is *shemesh*, 'the servant of the sun,' that is, sunshine, the sun's rays. There are also two words for moon: *levonoh* and *yareach*; and this in Joshua is *yareach*, 'the scent of the moon,' the moonlight. In Deut. 33:14, we read: 'For the precious fruits brought forth by the *shemesh*, sun'; not the body of the sun, millions of miles distant, but the light and

influence sent forth by that body; 'and for the precious things put forth by the *yareach*, moon'; not the orb, but its shining; (indeed the word is plural here, 'moons').

"Now, what concerned Joshua, and what is spoken of, was not the two bodies called sun and moon, it was simply light, sunlight, or, more properly, direct sunshine, and moonlight. So we say, for example, 'The moon's on the lake.'

"A 'dark moon' would not have concerned Joshua in the least, therefore the moon was not then near its 'change'; in other words that day was not when sun and moon were near 'conjunction,' as astronomers call new moon; so Professor Totten cannot locate this miracle on a day when there would have been 'no moon.'

"Now we had better turn to the chapter, Joshua 10th, and read the history; and perhaps you have a map of Canaan also, which you can look at. There seem to have been several 'Gilgals.' The word means 'circle,' and places were so called where circles of memorial stones were set up (Joshua 4:20); but there is no proof given that Joshua's headquarters were not still at the Gilgal between the Jordan and Jericho.

"Joshua and all the mighty men of valor 'went up from Gilgal all night' (v. 8), to the relief of Gibeon, which was besieged by the five kings of the Amorites (or hillside men); the Gibeonites having beguiled Israel into making a league with them. Now what happened?

"'And the *Lord* discomfited them' – mark this, and do not give the credit to Joshua when it reads, 'Jehovah doth crush them before Israel.' (– *Young*.) 'Jehovah rageth at them [or, 'useth violence upon them'] before [literally, to the face of] Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter.'

"Before an Israelite sword was drawn, while yet the two armies were apart, 'The Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them, unto Azekah, and they died; there were more which died with hail stones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.' The words rendered 'hail stones' signify 'stones of congelation;' probably they were not meteoric stones, but great hail of frozen water. Such hail, 'every stone about the weight of a talent,' is spoken of in Rev. 16:21; and the smallest Greek talent was fifty-seven pounds, avoirdupois weight. See also Job 38:22; Rev. 8:7; 11:19.

"The artillery of heaven turned upon the Amorite host, probably while drawn up in order of battle to meet the attack of Joshua's men, and certainly before the two armies had met and mingled in hand-to-hand combat with swords, else the Israelites must have suffered from the great hail equally with the Amorites.

"The formation and discharge of such hail implies a dense, dark cloud, and much electrical disturbance. Thunder and lightning would not be absent. The Amorites, having known of the dividing of the Jordan and the falling of the walls of Jericho, now perceived that the God of Israel was fighting against them; and they fled in terror at the blackness of the heavens above them, and from the slaughtering hail. What does Joshua now wish for? is it that the darkness may pass away, the sun shine forth bright and clear, ending the terror of the panic-stricken fugitives, and perchance giving them opportunity to rally and make a stand and fight?

"No such thing! He desired the darkness and terror to continue. Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: "*Shemesh, be-Gibeon dum.*" That word DUM is the identical word which we spell 'dumb;' the margin informs us that the Hebrew means 'be silent.' We apply it to not giving forth sound; the Hebrew with its much fewer words applies them to things analogous. Here it is used for not giving forth light. We use the same word with

this application, but then we spell it 'dim.' The Hebrew DUM is the origin of both our 'dumb' and 'dim.' Observe, we are not speculating on what Joshua meant, we are giving the very words of Joshua; and what he said was 'Sun [or sunlight] in Gibeon be *dumb* [or *dim*]. He called not for light, but for darkness; and the Amorite host was broken by Jehovah before Joshua called for a continuation of the gloom to continue their panic, and enable him to annihilate their cowed and fleeing remnants.

"Sun *in* Gibeon.' This preposition, *be*, is the first letter of the Bible – 'In the beginning.' It has some latitude [R3344 : page 103] of meaning: 'in, at, to, by,' etc., but it does not mean 'over,' or 'on the meridian of Gibeon;' another preposition would have to be used to express that. This prepositional prefix is just our English prefix 'be,' – used in 'be-fore' – in the front; 'be-hind' – in the rear; 'be-low;' 'be-side,' etc. We can thus easily see what it means. The position of the orb of the sun in distant space – although it is on the meridian of Gibeon at noon there, every day in the year – is not, and cannot be denoted by Joshua's words; and the sun *never* was in the *zenith* at Gibeon or any other place outside of the tropics, since the earth had its present position. But let us go on.

"*We-yareach be-emeg, Ajalon* – 'And the moon [or moonlight] in the valley of Ajalon.' Here is the *be*, 'in,' again. The shining of the moon has been in that valley, but the orb itself, never.

"'And the sun stood still': literally, 'And DUM is the sun.' Not a word of the orb pausing in its apparent course. 'The sun stood still [that is, remained silent, dumb, dim], and the moon stayed [*amad*, stood, continued, "dim" as it was] until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.'

"If we bear in mind that the Canaanites worshiped the sun and moon, we will see more force in this incident. Had Jehovah's cloud passed away and the sun shone out bright and clear, they would have been likely to think that their god Baal (who was associated with the

sun) had vanquished Jehovah in the heavens, and would assist them to vanquish Jehovah's people; and their leaders would not have failed to attempt to rally them by appealing to them to see how the sun-god had scattered Jehovah's cloud and silenced his artillery. What Joshua asked for was not a bright day nor a long day, but for a continuation of the darkness and gloom which had terrified the Amorites.

"So the sun stood still [*amad*, stayed, as it was] in the midst of heaven, and hasted not [literally, 'pressed not' – the sunshine did not press through the pall of cloud] to go down [*bo*, literally meaning either 'to go,' or 'to come,' or 'to come in,' 'to arrive' – there is no word here for 'down'] about [literally, as] a whole day.' The sunshine, usually so bright in Syria, did not pierce through the clouds all that day.

"I see not a word here, or elsewhere, of the day being [R3345 : page 103] lengthened. The battle began at Gibeon and by the grape-shot of Jehovah's hail the Amorite army was soon routed; up to Upper Beth-Horon they fled, the hail continuing upon them and driving them over the crest of land down to the Lower Beth-Horon, and on in a distracted, huddling mass down to the bottom of the descent in the valley of Ajalon: that is, those of them who could get so far. This remnant of them were as it were in a trap; and if the darkness might last for the day and the coming night, and no shining of sun or moon give heart to them to rally and fight their way out, Joshua thought he might finish his work and cut them to pieces to the last man. The command was, 'Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.' – Deut. 20:16.

"That is what the Book says. The versions may be twisted to say that the central body of the solar system ceased its motion; or ceased to emit that electric or other influence which causes the earth to rotate on its axis, so that *the fact* of the case was that it was the earth which stopped, and this caused the sun to *appear* stationary.

"But, supposing that it is an influence from the sun which causes the earth's daily rotation upon its axis, were that power withdrawn, the earth would spin on till it gradually slowed down, and such a slowing down would not at all meet the requirements of the case. And an instant and forcible stoppage would have given a tremendous jar to everything. What a jerk it gives when a car stops suddenly; everything is thrown forward. Suppose an express train running fifty miles an hour is suddenly checked by some obstacle, as in a collision; the passengers will be violently pitched to the forward end of the cars; but the earth's rotation is twenty times the velocity of an express train, and such a stoppage is not supposable or reconcilable with the narrative.

"The fact is, there was no 'long day' there; and all figuring as to when it was, or when it was not, is a waste of time.

"There was indeed a day when the five Amorite kings were defeated; 'And there was no day like that before it or after it,' – for its length? no – 'that the LORD hearkened to the voice of a man: FOR THE LORD FOUGHT for Israel.'

"Hab. 3:11 may be thought to sanction the idea of the stoppage of the sun in Joshua's day; but see the R.V. The shining of the sun and moon are poetically represented as standing abashed, –

"At the light of thine arrows as they went,
At the shining of thy glittering spear.'
"And it is not historic but prophetic."

– *A. Armour.*

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