

Summary24052026

*** Sunday

Due to the forecast for mild weather (up to 26° or 27°) I decided to take advantage of the situation and do the next section from the south, Meitar, and maybe farther. On Saturday night I finished the final preparations, showered, and went downstairs but couldn't fall asleep. Sleeping during the day on Shabbat is pleasant but disrupts the sleep routine. Staying awake on Shavuot night also didn't help. This year on Shavuot I didn't feel the urge to sleep until the Musaf prayer. In any case, the alarm rang at 4:55 to coordinate with Ziv who was visiting for the holiday and get to the central bus station. On the ride on the internal line, when I lifted my backpack to get off, I saw a puddle of water. Outside, after another check, I discovered a hole in the side of one of the liter-and-a-half bottles. At the station I couldn't find a liter-and-a-half drink to replace it. I went out to a kiosk and bought flavored water that seemed to come in a thicker bottle. The taste was pretty disgusting, Coke is even preferable but it has a smaller cap that makes refilling harder. All good. I'm still carrying six liters of water because if there's no water at the night camp and I don't have the strength to keep walking looking for some, I'll have enough to make dinner. I found the platform for line 440 from Jerusalem to Be'er Sheva through Gush Etzion, Kiryat Arba and Mount Hebron. At seven the bus was still waiting across from the platform. One of the passengers approached the bus and spoke with the driver.

"We're waiting for a replacement bus," he claimed. At 7:20 we were on the way. Many of the roads were decorated with Israeli flags. A worthwhile initiative. I hadn't traveled in this area in a long time. Reserve duty in Halhul once quite a few years ago. Now they bypass Halhul. During part of the ride I closed my eyes. The driver was flying. Maybe trying to make up the delay. Better to arrive alive! I got off at Kramim Junction, a small settlement in the area. I walked a few minutes to the Dvambam Bridge where I had finished the previous section. Across the way you can see the separation wall and an Arab village beyond it.

The weather was good for hiking and the scenery beautiful. I didn't expect and there weren't any trail hikers. I barely met any people except those in vehicles and on bicycles who waved Shalom to me. And I had peace. The trail passes by Sansana, I met groups of children in the forest. In the settlement of Lahav there is a bio-organic power station.

Near Dvir you can see the kibbutz, there is a night camp under renovation without water. Apparently it's been under renovation for years. Already in 2020 it was reported there was no water. Renovation or not, the place seemed active with trash bags in the bins so I decided it was a good place to stop for the night. There were winds and it was chilly. Good thing I bought a windscreen for the stove. Boiling time was really shortened. Later in the night it became too hot in the winter sleeping bag. In the evening prayer we say "for fear of the night." Usually I fear two-legged creatures. I woke up to something like the sound of galloping horses which turned out to be, of course, imagination. A smaller animal — pigs. I know that animals at night can get startled easily and attack or trample... I considered what to do when they are right in front of the tent. Whether to shout? When I actually saw the shadow of a pig a few centimeters from the tent wall, there was no choice but to make a weak sound to drive them away. They still stayed around and I heard one fart! Crude animals... Maybe I'm the crude one for entering their habitat.

*** Monday

The alarm rings at 5:00 but by the time I get up... I needed to refill water but the kibbutz gate was far away. On the map I saw Dvir Junction where there is a gas station and some stores. It's not on the trail but you can return to the trail easily, or so I thought. It's on the wrong side of the train tracks in this section so I had to return to the bridge over the railway. There is electrification work and fencing along the tracks. There are trees by a dry streambed that shade the trail at the edge of the fields. Later there were fewer and fewer trees and the heat rose to 27 degrees.

Passing organic olive groves and nets for collecting olives already laid underneath them.

Arriving at the reserve and the Pora Lake on the Shikma Stream. A beautiful spot. There's a sign warning against entering the water because of the depth and the quicksand-like mud. You can actually see the mud at the bottom of the lake.

Afterward you walk a bit in the stream whose channel bottom is a layer of stone. Beautiful. Not far away there are remains of a Turkish bridge that unlike a Roman bridge did not survive through the years.

I lost the trail markings several times as usual. Without the apps on the phone I wouldn't manage at all. At Tel Nagila (my brain read it as "nargila") I met a young and pleasant ranger named Netanel, wearing a short-sleeved shirt and sandals doing a patrol to make sure no one had moved the tel (Hill in Hebrew)...

I told him I was melting in the sun even though the heat was reasonable. Wheat fields that had been harvested and some still not harvested and the Shavuot holiday was already behind us. On a dirt road a pickup truck with a Bedouin stopped and asked about my route.

He has dogs that aren't the nicest and he's afraid I'll become their lunch. He offered me a ride to get past them but it's against the hikers' ethical code to skip by hitching rides.

He went back and dealt with the dogs while I walked in the stream and climbed the opposite bank. Then the trail passes to the western bank... the dogs bark and David passes.

I lose the trail marking but I don't feel like getting close to the dogs to look for it in that area. After fear of heights maybe I'll deal with fear of dogs too...

Crossing barbed-wire fences several times. Not recommended for various reasons.

At least there are no mines.

More frequent stops. In a eucalyptus grove I stopped for the night hoping not to meet more pigs. No pigs, but before sunset there were flies and after sunset mosquitoes arrived. Good thing I have a tent. I wouldn't manage without it. I made mashed potatoes for dinner. Better sleep. It was warmer but I opened the zipper of the sleeping bag and it was pleasant.

At one in the morning I was hungry and opened a bag of tortillas. Easy and tasty food but not the healthiest with all the preservatives they put in them.

*** Tuesday

I stopped 2.2 kilometers from the end of the section at Tel Keshet. On the map it's also marked "Be'er Shikma." I thought surely I could find water at one of them. The tel is an abandoned dirt mound and the well maybe once had water. The closest settlement "Ahuzim" is two kilometers away. I debated whether to continue the next section to Beit Guvrin because I had gotten a bit too much sun but the water issue decided it. If I hadn't lingered so much at the night camp maybe I could have taken advantage of the cooler morning hours.

The forecast was four hours of 27 degrees and another hour of 28. In the near future, I'll still miss such "heat" (summer weather) but we need to get used to it. I took a bus to Kastina Junction and on to Jerusalem.

Finally home, a shower and a tent and coffee, arranging the backpack and already missing the trail. Such is life.