

Exploring the book of Judges

Deborah and Barak

October 29, 2017

1 Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD, now that Ehud was dead. 2 So the LORD sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. 3 Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the LORD for help.

4 Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. 5 She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. 6 She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. 7 I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands. ' "

8 Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go."

9 "Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh.

12 When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13 Sisera summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River all his men and his nine hundred chariots fitted with iron.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. 15 At Barak's advance, the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

16 Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera's troops fell by the sword; not a man was left. 17 Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite.

18 Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come, my lord, come right in. Don't be afraid." So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

19 "I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up.

20 "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.' "

21 But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

22 Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple—dead.

23 On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites. 24 And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.

1 On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

Praises to God

2 "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the LORD!

3 "Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I, even I, will sing to the LORD; I will praise the LORD, the God of Israel, in song.

Recounting God's power

4 "When you, LORD, went out from Seir, when you marched from the land of Edom, the earth shook, the heavens poured, the clouds poured down water.

5 The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai, before the LORD, the God of Israel.

The situation

6 "In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths.

7 Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel.

8 God chose new leaders when war came to the city gates, but not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.

9 My heart is with Israel's princes, with the willing volunteers among the people. Praise the LORD!

10 "You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on your saddle blankets, and you who walk along the road, consider 11 the voice of the singers at the watering places. They recite the victories of the LORD, the victories of his villagers in Israel. "Then the people of the LORD went down to the city gates.

Calling Deborah and Barak

12 'Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, break out in song! Arise, Barak! Take captive your captives, son of Abinoam.'

13 "The remnant of the nobles came down; the people of the LORD came down to me against the mighty.

Who was in and who was out

14 Some came from Ephraim, whose roots were in Amalek; Benjamin was with the people who followed you. From Makir captains came down, from Zebulun those who bear a commander's staff.

15 The princes of Issachar were with Deborah; yes, Issachar was with Barak, sent under his command into the valley. In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart.

16 Why did you stay among the sheep pens to hear the whistling for the flocks? In the districts of Reuben there was much searching of heart.

17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan. And Dan, why did he linger by the ships? Asher remained on the coast and stayed in his coves.

18 The people of Zebulun risked their very lives; so did Naphtali on the terraced fields.

The battles

19 "Kings came, they fought, the kings of Canaan fought. At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo, they took no plunder of silver.

20 From the heavens the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.

21 The river Kishon swept them away, the age-old river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul; be strong!

22 Then thundered the horses' hooves—galloping, galloping go his mighty steeds.

23 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD. 'Curse its people bitterly, because they did not come to help the LORD, to help the LORD against the mighty.'

Jael kills Sisera

24 "Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, most blessed of tent-dwelling women.

25 He asked for water, and she gave him milk; in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk.

26 Her hand reached for the tent peg, her right hand for the workman's hammer. She struck Sisera, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple.

27 At her feet he sank, he fell; there he lay. At her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell—dead.

Lament of Sisera's mother

28 "Through the window peered Sisera's mother; behind the lattice she cried out, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why is the clatter of his chariots delayed?'

29 The wisest of her ladies answer her; indeed, she keeps saying to herself,

30 'Are they not finding and dividing the spoils: a woman or two for each man, colorful garments as plunder for Sisera, colorful garments embroidered, highly embroidered garments for my neck—all this as plunder?'

Petition and praise

31 "So may all your enemies perish, LORD! But may all who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength." Then the land had peace forty years.