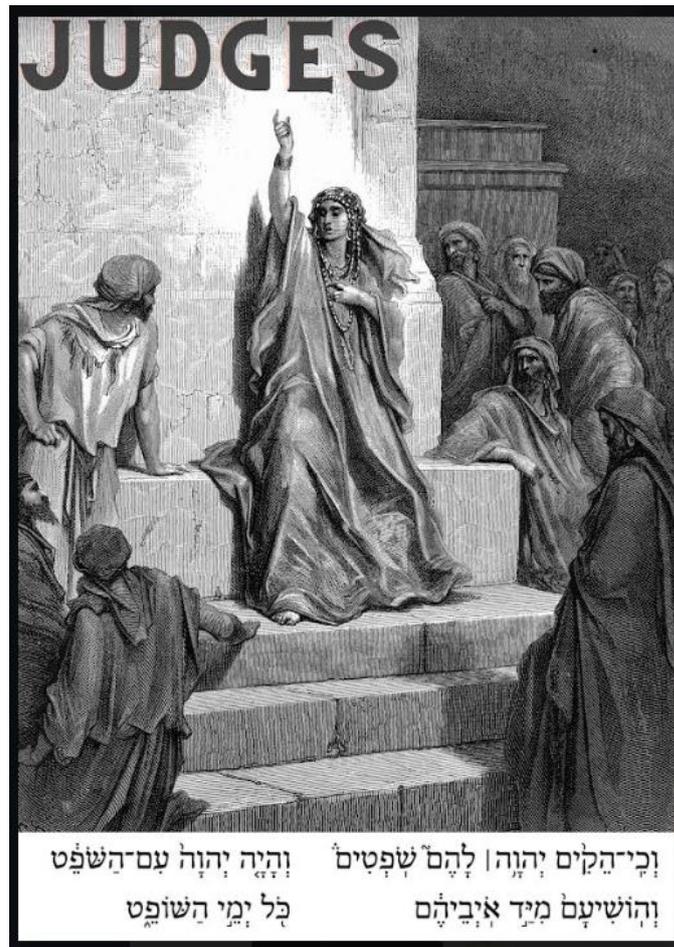


BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 4

THE FOURTH CYCLE: FOURTH JUDGE: Deborah and Barak: Jud ch 4 and 5

D & B = one Deliverer



- **The cycle is:** apostasy, servitude, supplication, deliverance and freedom.
- It is clear that Israel has **NOT** obeyed Deut 6:4-10: her heart is divided
 - She has not committed her heart or will to the Lord God.
 - so His commandments are **NOT** precious to her...
 - therefore she falls repeatedly into worldliness, sin and error, and deception and all kinds of things as a result.
 - and God **has** to let her experience the consequences of her choices!

1-3 After the death of Ehud Israel fell **again... so** God permitted Jabin, the King of Hazor in Canaan to oppress them...

- People often wish God would leave them alone to go **their own** way, but He **loves** us too much to allow this to go on... for **He** sees the loss of souls, where we **don't**.
 - in the end we are grateful that He loved us more than we loved ourselves.
- God used a **different** oppressor this time – **anything** to get our attention!

(NB) Joshua had won a victory over a previous Jabin of Hazor (Joshua ch 11) because he operated within God's Will in the Covenant. Once Israel abandoned God's Will, Jabin grew powerful. **Sisera** was Jabin's famous General; they had 900 chariots – VIP at that time.

- they oppressed Israel for 20 years!

(NB) In the first cycle Israel repented after 8 years.
In the second cycle they repented after 18 years.
In this third cycle they repented after 20 years. } It takes longer each time!
This is a downward spiral.

- 4-5 God called the **FIRST** woman **PROPHET** and Judge.
- The men are failing in their leadership roles, so God called women out of their traditional role in the family to head the Nation.

Other Prophetesses: Miriam (Ex 15:20) Huldah (2 Kg 22:14)
Anna (Lk 2:36) Philip's 4 daughters in Acts 21:8-9

- There may have been many more: these are the ones mentioned in Scripture. cf Paul's instructions to these women in **1 Cor 11:5** and **1 Cor 14:32**

(NB) Deborah was called by God to be a **National** Leader.
She gave guidance sitting under a palm tree.

- vs 6 **Notice** that she didn't go out of her feminine role of being a life-giver and a mother. **She** called **Barak** to be the **Military Leader** to dispense justice on God's behalf.

Notice since **Deborah** was the chosen one why would the Bible point this out?

St Paul's answer

- 1) It has to do with God's ordained **ORDER** in Creation: 1 Cor 11:3,8-9
- 2) It has to do with Angels watching over Humanity: 1 Cor 11:10
- 3) Also the facts of the Fall in Gen 3: 1 Tim 2:14
- 4) It has **nothing** to do with female inferiority for
 - a) Jesus was under the Headship of His Father: Jn 5:19
 - b) **without** being inferior to Him: Jn 1:1; Jn 10:30 **The Father and I are One**

6-7 **Deborah calls Barak** with a message from God.

8-10 Barak will only take the military leadership if Deborah is with him!

- this shows his reliance on **Deborah** was greater than his reliance on **God**.
 - Even though Hebrews 11:32-33 calls him a hero in faith, his faith in Deborah's relationship with God was what he **leaned** on.
 - The consequence for Barak was that **he** would not be given the privilege to defeat **Sisera**
 - that would be faith and **a woman** (Jael)
 - Then Barak went to war with 10,000 men (probably an exaggerated figure).
(10³ = correct number)
 - he showed great courage facing an army with 900 chariots when he and his men were on foot with hand-held weapons.
 - nevertheless **God** was with him and he prevailed.

- vs 11 We are introduced to Heber, the Kenite who was related to Moses through Jethro, priest of Midian and father-in-law to Moses.
- it is his wife **Jael** who will win glory for Israel in the coming battle...

12-16 The Battle at the **River Kishon**

Sisera moved his army and chariots into **Harosheth-ha-Goiim**

- this was later known as the Plain of Esdraelon
- the Kishon River drained into this plain from the highlands.
- The spring rains flowing down into the plain turn it into a swampy muddy mess making it impossible for iron chariots to pass through.
- If the rains were heavy it would flood the area.

vs 15 Barak descended from Mt Tabor into battle. In Summertime this would amount to descending into the valley of death... but in Springtime the Lord produced the **floods** to rescue His People! cf Judges 5:20-21 cf Joshua 10:10-14: **Help from on High!** cf Ps 18:13-15 Ps 83:9

- Because of the Lord's intervention, Barak won the battle because it turned into hand-to-hand fighting and Israel was an expert at this.

17-22 **Death** of **Sisera** at the **hand of a woman**

- he fled on foot to save his **own** life!
- he went to the tent of Heber, the Kenite, whose wife Jael killed him!!

- In this gory murder Jael did many things wrong:
 - (i) she invited the man to her tent – unheard of in those days
 - (ii) she broke the laws of Hospitality – which were very sacred
 - (iii) she deceived Sisera to get him into her power
 - (iv) she gave him milk (vs 19) instead of water – an alcoholic drink?
 - (v) she killed him when he was asleep – drunk? sedated?
why did he not wake up with the pain?
 - (vi) she killed a man her husband had made peace with
 - (vii) she used Satan's best weapon: DECEIT

Can she be called a heroine?

Question: Can God achieve His Purposes through evil people or evil deeds?

Psalm 76:10 Throughout O.T. God allowed foreign kingdoms to punish Israel when she had persevered in apostasy for a long time.

- The action of Judas Iscariot was evil and yet God used it for **The Redeemer**

Jn 8:7 **If any one among you is without sin, let him be the first to cast the stone...**

Answer:

- Both God and Satan are the two eternal enemies – since they are:
Light vs darkness, Good vs evil, Love vs hate...
- The battle for the **human soul** continues throughout history...
- Both God and Satan use people who sin for their purposes...
Satan even uses good people **against** good people and bad against bad also...
- The **fact** that God uses **His own creatures** to accomplish His purposes is normal but His children are **meant** to operate good, not evil.
- the actions of Jael and Judas are inexcusable, and they bear the responsibility.

Possible interpretation: Since the enemies of Israel were to be wiped out, we can take them as **a symbol** of sin... so the message would be that we must conquer our sins **completely** – even to taking strong action to gain control again.

Strong action: prayer, fasting and **penance** to kill that infernal enemy you may have made friends with!

23-24 Success made Israel stronger but the **war** wasn't over until **Jabin** was destroyed.

BOOK OF JUDGES

CHAPTER 5

The Song of Deborah

1-2 Theme of the Song: Blessing God for deliverance

- This victory song is a masterpiece of Hebrew literature and was composed at the time of these events.
 - it witnesses to the faith that held the 12 Tribes of Israel together and formed their National unity
 - in spite of the awful events it celebrates, the **love of God** is shown very clearly.
- Deborah wasn't the first woman to sing the praises of God as the Saviour and Deliverer of His Chosen People:
 - (i) Moses' sister, Miriam the prophetess, preceded Deborah in Ex 15: 20-21
 - (ii) In later times (1,000 BC) King David praised God for victory over the Philistines also in 1 Sam 18:7 and all his Psalms!

Lesson:

We, Christians have **so much** to praise God for since His own Divine Son is **our** Saviour and Deliverer. We, too, sing songs of praise for Deliverance:

eg **The Exultet** at Easter-time; **The Te Deum Laudamus**; **The Gloria**, etc.

vs 2 **The warriors unbound their hair (JB) **when locks are loosed** (KJV)**

- letting the hair down was a war ritual going back into antiquity **worldwide**.

3-5 Seir and Edom are the same place where the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, lived. God assisted Israel by sending the flood waters into the plain... down the mountains. Deborah seems to be remembering the events at Sinai also: **Deut 33:2**

6-8 Life under oppression to the Canaanites

- (i) village life had ceased
- (ii) all weapons were confiscated
- (iii) the people had to use by-ways to travel... main roads were dangerous for them. So, the land was full of anarchy and no roads were safe from bandits.

Lesson

- (i) Satan wants to bind souls and oppress them
- (ii) he wants to **DISARM** us spiritually so that God can't use us for His Kingdom
- (iii) he wants us to lay down our armour (Eph 6:12-18) – **disaster!**

vs 8 **Until I, Deborah, arose as a mother of Israel**

vs 9 As a spiritual mother, Deborah grieved for the **LEADERS** who were **not** leading! She praises those who courageously followed her call to arms.

10-12 Deborah wants the "little people" in the villages to hear what great things the Lord has done for them – so this song is both her testimony and making sure these events are recorded for later history – for the people must **LEARN** the **LESSONS!** – if they don't the problem will crop up again and again – as **it did!**

Notice God's people rode on **donkeys** – to meet Sisera with 900 iron chariots!! (vs 10)

God's people **WALKED** also to battle – the enemy had horses, etc.

- this is the power of powerlessness.

13-18 Some Tribes helped – but others did not

- (i) Those that helped Deborah were, **notably** Ephraim, West half Manasseh, Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar and Naphtali – all those in the **NORTH**
 - the southern tribes of Judah and Simeon are not even mentioned!
- (ii) Those who refused were those on the East side of the Jordan: Reuben, Gad, half Manasseh and two from the North: Dan and Asher.
 - Deborah herself was from the Tribe of Ephraim so one would expect their help.
 - This division already shows the disunity among the Chosen People which will become two kingdoms in later times, while those tribes in the East will fall away.

19-23 The battle described

God's intervention is told dramatically:

From high in heaven the stars fought from their orbits against Sisera.

The torrent of Kishon swept them away.

- These were the Spring Rains cascading down the mountains to flood the plain...
- The city of Maroz was **in the path** of the conflict, so they were **expected to help**. Deborah curses them **because they did not come to the help of the Lord against the mighty**
 - even though they would benefit hugely!

24-27 Deborah praises Jael for her dastardly deed!

The assassination of Sisera is given in great detail.

Most blessed among women is Jael - Why? Because she killed the Tyrant.

28-30 Sisera's family and associates discover his fate.

vs 31 Final Praise to God

Thus let all your enemies perish, O Lord!

But let those who love Him (God) be like the sun when it comes out in full strength.

Then the land had rest for **40 years**.

"Show me your **friends** and I'll tell you who you are"

We are not defined by our enemies, but by our relationship with God.
