

The Judges: Deborah Leads Israel

Preview: Girl Power

Deborah is the only female judge in the Bible. Another hero of this story is Jael, a young woman who had the smarts and the guts to eliminate the enemy commander. Deborah says and does what God has told her ([Judges 4:6-7, 14](#)) and it has a powerful effect. A theme in this passage is that courage is not limited by **gender**.

Key thought: Heroes encourage others to obey God

Read & Explain (What does it mean?): Judges 4-5 (Author = Samuel?)

Judges 4

Deborah

1 When Ehud [Othniel was the first judge, Ehud was the second judge, Shamgar (not shamwow) was the third judge, and Deborah was the **fourth** judge] **was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. 2 So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. 3 And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron** [the Old Testament equivalent of **stealth** bombers], **and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel.**

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment [David Guzik: The Bible tells us of several other prophetesses: Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Anna (Luke 2:36), and Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:8-9)]. **6 Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; 7 and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand?'"** [Deborah is challenging this general of Israel (Barak) to do what God has already told him to do. Notice that she is always **respectful** and always encouraging him to **do** what God told him to do. David Guzik: Often it is assumed that Deborah's rise to authority was because of a lack of male leadership. Barak doesn't seem to be all he should be, yet we have no indication that he failed to do something God told him to do in taking leadership.]

8 And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!" [Can everyone clearly see that we need a hero here?]

9 So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went

with Barak to Kedesh. **10** And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali [two of the twelve tribes] to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which *is* beside Kedesh.

12 And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. **13** So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who *were* with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, “Up! For this *is* the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?” [Encouraging him to obey God] So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. **15** And the LORD routed Sisera and all *his* chariots and all *his* army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from *his* chariot and fled away on foot. **16** But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left. [So how did Israel defeat those chariots of iron? Chariots of iron are heavy and do not work well in the mud. God sent lots and lots of **rain**.]

17 However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for *there was* peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. **18** And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, “Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear.” And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.

19 Then he said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.” So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him. **20** And he said to her, “Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, ‘Is there any man here?’ you shall say, ‘No.’”

21 Then Jael, Heber’s wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died [Duh! David Guzik: In those days, customarily it was the job of the women to set up the tents; it shouldn't surprise us that Jael was handy with a tent peg.]. **22** And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, “Come, I will show you the man whom you seek.” And when he went into her *tent*, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

David Guzik: Of course, there is no defending the treachery of Jael. She broke her promise to Sisera and killed a man that her own husband had made peace with. But, God even used her treachery to accomplish His purposes. Surely, Sisera deserved to die; he fought against God's people. . . . But this does not excuse Jael’s personal sin. She will have to answer for it. The lesson for us is important—God can make even the **evil** of man serve His purposes: Surely the wrath of man shall praise You (Psalm 76:10a). Yet, that *never* diminishes the personal responsibility of the one doing the evil. Judas’ betrayal of Jesus served the eternal purpose of God, yet he still had to answer for that evil deed.

23 So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. 24 And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

Judges 5

The Song of Deborah

1 Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying: [a great song that you should read a few times this week]

2 “When leaders lead in Israel,
When the people willingly offer themselves,
Bless the LORD!

3 “Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!
I, *even* I, will sing to the LORD;
I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.

4 “LORD, when You went out from Seir,
When You marched from the field of Edom,
The earth trembled and the heavens
poured,
The clouds also poured water;

5 The mountains gushed before the LORD,
This Sinai, before the LORD God of Israel.

6 “In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,
In the days of Jael,
The highways were deserted,
And the travelers walked along the byways.

7 Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel,
Until I, Deborah, arose,
Arose a mother in Israel.

8 They chose new gods;
Then *there was* war in the gates;
Not a shield or spear was seen among forty
thousand in Israel.

9 My heart *is* with the rulers of Israel
Who offered themselves willingly with the
people.
Bless the LORD!

10 “Speak, you who ride on white donkeys,
Who sit in judges’ attire,
And who walk along the road.

11 Far from the noise of the archers, among
the watering places,
There they shall recount the righteous acts
of the LORD,
The righteous acts *for* His villagers in Israel;
Then the people of the LORD shall go down
to the gates.

12 “Awake, awake, Deborah!
Awake, awake, sing a song!
Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away,
O son of Abinoam!

13 “Then the survivors came down, the people
against the nobles;
The LORD came down for me against the
mighty.

14 From Ephraim *were* those whose roots
were in Amalek.
After you, Benjamin, with your peoples,
From Machir rulers came down,
And from Zebulun those who bear the
recruiter’s staff.

15 And the princes of Issachar *were* with
Deborah;
As Issachar, so *was* Barak
Sent into the valley under his command;

Among the divisions of Reuben
There were great resolves of heart.

16 Why did you sit among the sheepfolds,
To hear the pipings for the flocks?
The divisions of Reuben have great
searchings of heart.

17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan,
And why did Dan remain on ships?
Asher continued at the seashore,
And stayed by his inlets.

18 Zebulun is a people *who* jeopardized their
lives to the point of death,
Naphtali also, on the heights of the
battlefield.

19 “The kings came *and* fought,
Then the kings of Canaan fought
In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
They took no spoils of silver.

20 They fought from the heavens;
The stars from their courses fought against
Sisera.

21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away,
That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.
O my soul, march on in strength!

22 Then the horses’ hooves pounded,
The galloping, galloping of his steeds.

23 ‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the LORD,
‘Curse its inhabitants bitterly,
Because they did not come to the help of
the LORD,
To the help of the LORD against the mighty.’
So the land had rest for forty years.

Apply (What is the point?)

1. Courage is not limited by gender
2. Heroes encourage others to obey God
3. God will use **anything** to accomplish His plan

24 “Most blessed among women is Jael,
The wife of Heber the Kenite;
Blessed is she among women in tents.

25 He asked for water, she gave milk;
She brought out cream in a lordly bowl.

26 She stretched her hand to the tent peg,
Her right hand to the workmen’s hammer;
She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head,
She split and struck through his temple.

27 At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still;
At her feet he sank, he fell;
Where he sank, there he fell dead.

28 “The mother of Sisera looked through the
window,
And cried out through the lattice,
‘Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?’

29 Her wisest ladies answered her,
Yes, she answered herself,

30 ‘Are they not finding and dividing the spoil:
To every man a girl *or* two;
For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments,
Plunder of garments embroidered and dyed,
Two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck
of the looter?’

31 “Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD!
But *let* those who love Him *be* like the sun
When it comes out in full strength.”

Personalize (What do I do with that?)

1. God wants to use everyone
2. Who am I encouraging to obey God?
3. Recognize God’s hand at all times