



DEBORAH AND Jael: WOMEN ON THE BATTLEFRONT

INTRODUCTION

In the days of the Judges, the Scripture says . . . *every man did that which was right in his own eyes* (Judges 17:6). As it was then, it is today. You've heard it said, "If it feels good do it!" The Bible teaches in Ecclesiastes 1:9b . . . *there is no new thing under the sun*. Whether in the past or present, people do what they feel is right and have no problem with those who practice sin (Romans 1:32). In the days of the Judges, Israel experienced the darkness of sin that nearly extinguished the light of righteousness that only glimmered in the lives of a faithful few who worshipped God. God's own people rebelled against Him; therefore, He turned them over to the hands of their enemies. These opponents of God were used by the Lord to discipline His children and cause them to look to Him.

The Lord sought someone who would willingly speak the truth to His people according to His Word; someone who would be a light to shine in the darkness and bring hope to a dying world. In our study, we will discover the woman, Deborah whom the Lord appointed to judge Israel, whose life shines out as an example to us. We will also look at Jael, the woman whom God chose to defeat the enemy of the Lord.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

So let all Thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might . . . (Judges 5:31)

Names Given to the Women in this Story

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|------------------|---|
| Deborah | <i>And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time</i> (Judges 4:4). The name <i>Deborah</i> in Hebrew means - a bee, eloquent and diligent, doing all things in order, which symbolizes the nature of the bee. |
| Prophetess | A prophetic gift from God which gave her the ability to discern the mind and purpose of God and declare it to others. |
| Wife of Lapidoth | Her husband's name comes from <i>lappid</i> a word in Hebrew which means - to shine; lamp or flame: fire-brand, lightning, torch. Lapidoth must have been a strong encourager to Deborah, which enabled her to hear from God and influence the young warriors of her day. |
| Judge | She was raised up the fifth judge by God to deliver His people from their enemies. Her title of Judge gave her jurisdiction to dispense righteousness, justice and mercy to God's people. |
| Mother in Israel | <i>I Deborah arose . . . a mother in Israel</i> (Judges 5:7). Deborah understood that she was called by God to be a spiritual mother to God's children. |
| Jael | <i>Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be . . .</i> (Judges 5:24). The name <i>Jael</i> in Hebrew means - wild mountain goat or gazelle. |
| Wife of Heber | Her husband was a Canaanite, a tent dweller, a descendant of Moses. |

SECTION 1 – Darkness Abounds

READ Judges 2:1-23.

1. Joshua led the children of Israel through the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. How long did the Israelites serve the Lord (vv. 1-7)?

2. Joshua and all of his generation died and were gathered to their fathers. What is said about the new generation's knowledge of the Lord (vv. 8-10)?

LOOK DEEPER

Israel was commanded to teach their children all the words of the Lord. Failure of the parents to teach them resulted in a generation which did not know God, or the things He had done for their forefathers.

What were the children of Israel instructed to teach their children concerning God (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)?

What were they to teach them (vv. 7-9)?

Why (vv. 10-15)?

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3. In Judges 2:11-13, the Scriptures tell of the spiritual condition of these people. WRITE what each verse says they were doing.

v. 11

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v. 12

v. 13

⁴

4. The LORD was angry with them for their sinful behavior. What did the LORD do to them (v. 14)?

5. What happened to them as a result (v. 15)?

¹ fear the LORD - Hebrew *yare* reverence: the fear of the LORD dreads God's displeasure, desires His favor, reveres His holiness, submits cheerfully to His will, is grateful for His benefits, sincerely worships Him, and conscientiously obeys His commands (Psalm 33:8, Proverbs 1:3, 7); to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13); the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7); to stand in awe of who God is.

² Jealous [God]: God's zeal to protect His loved ones.

³ Baalim: master, a pagan god; plural for Baal.

⁴ Baal - Hebrew *Baal* lord, possessor: chief male pagan god of the Phoenicians.

6. When the children of Israel were greatly distressed, what did the LORD do to relieve them (v. 16)?

_____ 5 6

7. In spite of the LORD's help, how did they respond to the judges (v. 17)? _____

What did they do instead? _____

8. How long were the Israelites free from the hand of their enemies (v. 18)? _____

Why did it *repent*⁷ the LORD? _____

9. When the judge the LORD used to deliver the people died, what happened (v. 19)? _____

10. The anger of the LORD was hot against Israel because they broke the covenant⁸ of the Lord and did not listen to His voice. The LORD did not drive out the other nations which Joshua left in the land after he died. Why did He do this (vv. 20-22)?

LOOK DEEPER

READ the following Scriptures and WRITE the reasons the Lord gives for proving His people.

Exodus 16:4 _____

Deuteronomy 8:2 _____

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 _____

⁵ judges: rulers who render appropriate verdicts according to the word of the LORD.

⁶ Ashtaroth: lewd worship of the Canaanite goddess Astarte, who is identified with Venus; patroness of war and sex.

⁷ *repent*: to be moved with pity.

⁸ covenant: formal, binding agreement defining relationships and responsibilities between two or more parties.

PERSONAL

What situation has happened in your life, as a test from the Lord, to prove whether you will keep His ways and be obedient to Him?

SECTION 2 – Arise Deborah

The children of Israel repeatedly fell into a cycle of disobedience when a judge died. They returned to a life of obedience when a new judge was raised up by God. In Judges Chapter 3, the Lord used three different judges to deliver His people, but the Scripture tells us when the judge Ehud died, *the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD . . .* (Judges 4:1).

READ Judges 4:1-5.

1. As the cycle of disobedience continued, into whose hand did the Lord sell the children of Israel (vv. 1, 2)?

Who was the captain of his army? Where did he live? _____

2. Why did the children of Israel cry unto the LORD (v. 3)? _____

How long did Jabin oppress the children of Israel? _____

3. DESCRIBE who the Lord raised up as a judge over Israel at this time (v. 4). _____

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Nothing is known about Lapidoth except his name, which means to flame or torch or to shine. It seems as though recognizing his wife's divine appointment, he willingly allowed his light to shine through her and was a support and strength to her. Possibly, he was even a source of wisdom for her as she judged the people of God.

4. What did Deborah do as judge and prophetess (v. 5)? _____

⁹ prophetess: female prophet; one who is divinely inspired to communicate God's will to His people, and to disclose the future to them.

PERSONAL

The children of Israel walked in sin and disobedience. They were in need of deliverance from their oppression. They needed someone to be a light shining in the darkness. Examine the condition of your heart? Are you living in the darkness of some sin? Do you have oppressive circumstances in your life and need deliverance? WRITE a brief prayer to the Lord asking for His help.

SECTION 3 – God’s Plan for Deliverance

READ Judges 4:6-10.

1. Deborah did not usurp authority over Barak, commander of Israel’s army, but was obedient to the voice of the Lord and called for him with a word of prophecy.¹⁰ What command did the Lord give him through her (v. 6)?

2. The Lord said He would deploy Sisera against Barak, but what would happen to Sisera (v. 7)?

3. What was Barak’s response to Deborah (v. 8)? _____

Barak, whose name means lightning or thunder, understood that God was directing His people through Deborah, His chosen judge.

4. What was Deborah’s reply (v. 9)? _____

According to Deborah, would there be any glory for him in the journey? _____

¹⁰ prophecy: the oral or written message of a prophet that is from the LORD.

Into whose hand would the LORD sell Sisera? _____

5. Barak obeyed the LORD's command. Who went with him to war (v. 10)? _____

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READ Judges 4:11-16.

6. In these verses, we are introduced to another man whose wife we will look at later. What was his name (v. 11)?

Where was he living? _____

7. How did Sisera find out that Barak had gone up to Mount Tabor (v. 12)? _____

8. Sisera gathered together his army and chariots and as he did, Deborah spoke to Barak. What did she tell him (vv. 13, 14)?

Barak obeyed God. Who followed after him? _____

9. How did God fight against Sisera (v. 15)? _____

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10. Sisera fled from his chariot on foot, what did Barak do (v. 16)? _____

What happened to Sisera's army? _____

¹¹ Zebulun and Naphthali: the young men of two tribes of Israel. Zebulun is the tenth son of Jacob, the sixth and last of his wife Leah. Naphtali is the second son of Bilhah, Jacob's wife Rachel's maid.

¹² discomfited: to confuse, frustrate or terrify.

LOOK DEEPER

READ Hebrew 11:32-40. Barak is named with the heroes of faith. What phrases best describe him and the armies of the LORD?

SECTION 4 – Jael: Willing and Able

READ Judges 4:17-24.

1. Exhausted from the battle, Sisera fled on foot to the tent of Heber. Who is Heber's wife (v. 17)?

Why did Sisera go there? _____

2. What did Jael say to Sisera when she went out to meet him (vv. 18, 19)? _____

How did Jael comfort Sisera once he was inside her tent? _____

3. Sisera totally relaxed in Jael's care and went to sleep. What was his request of her (v. 20)?

4. Sisera fell into the hands of a woman. What did she do once Sisera was completely asleep (v. 21)?

Deborah's word from the Lord came true. Sisera fell into the hands of a woman (Judges 4:9).

The Kenites were a nomadic tribe who had no permanent home but moved from place to place with their animals for water and food. It was common for the women of these tribes to take down and set up the tents. No wonder Jael had no trouble using her tools of the trade to kill Sisera.

5. What did Barak learn of Sisera's death (Judges 4:22)? _____

6. How did God prevail (vv. 23, 24)? _____

SECTION 5 – Deborah’s Song

READ Judges Chapter 5.

1. How does Deborah, inspired by God, magnify the LORD (vv. 1-5)? _____

2. What was the condition of Israel before God conquered their enemies (vv. 6-8)? _____

3. Which governors¹³ of Israel did she praise for joining the LORD in warfare against His enemies? Which did she rebuke (vv. 9-19)?

4. How did God fight the enemies of His people (vv. 20-22)? _____

5. Why did the angel of the LORD curse Meroz¹⁴ (v. 23)? _____

6. What did Deborah say about herself (Judges 5:3, 7, 9, 12, 21)? _____

¹³ governors: commanders, princes, rulers of Israel.

¹⁴ Meroz: a place in northern Palestine near the Kishon River.

7. How does Deborah bless Jael, the tent women, and reveal the unsuccessful expectations of Sisera's mother (vv. 24-30)?

Deborah then exalts the LORD and those who love Him in verse 31.

MEMORY VERSE

... (Judges 5:31).

Deborah was . . . *a city* [that is] *set on an hill* [that] *cannot be hid* (Matthew 5:14). Her life was a light in the darkness giving hope and direction to those who came to be judged by her. She was a woman who willingly humbled herself under the mighty hand of God and was exalted to be a voice to His people at this dark time in Israel's history. She had an ear attuned to the heartbeat of her Lord: through His wisdom she knew how to judge, speak and move the armies of the LORD of Hosts into battle. She was a woman who understood His order and working and encouraged others to do the same. God's people experienced peace because they willingly offered themselves to do battle for Him.

NOTES: _____

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