

# Deborah

Judges 4:1—5:31

Main Street



## bible verse

COMMITTING TO MEMORY

### Judges 5:2 NKJV

When the leaders lead in Israel, when  
the people willingly offer themselves,  
bless the Lord!



## story lesson

BIBLE STORY

If Joshua is the optimistic light and a tale of success for a people obedient to God, then Judges is the depressing darkness and a tale of wickedness for a people disobedient to God. Judges begins with a command to fight the remaining Canaanites, but they disobey and do not fight. The Israelites did not completely conquer the land, but allowed the previous inhabitants to stay in the land and be their slaves. This did not bode well because the people of the land led the people of Israel astray in following other gods.

This started a downward spiral of disobedience (otherwise known as the Sin Cycle):

- the people would disobey God for a while
- then foreign invaders would come in and conquer them and oppress them for a time
- then God would raise up a deliverer (or Judge) that would rally the people and kick out the occupying force
- then there would be a time of obedience to the current Judge
- then he or she would die
- then the people would disobey again

...and the cycle would start all over again.

This cycle gets worse and worse as the book of Judges unfolds. Famous names in the Bible are found here: Deborah, Gideon, and Samson. The final four chapters or so in the book describes utter chaos, or civil anarchy. The people did what was right in their own eyes in the days when Israel had no king. Professor Mark Jalovick sums up Judges: "This book records the story of Israel from Joshua's death to the time of Samuel [historical], emphasizing the decline and defeat of the theocracy due to covenant unfaithfulness [theological], for the purpose of explaining Israel's monarchy [literary]." This book precedes 1 & 2 Samuel where the people of Israel reject God as their king and want a human king for themselves. Samuel is known as the last Judge and the first prophet.

Just prior to the following story about Deborah, there was a judge named Ehud who helped to deliver the people of Israel out of the hands of the Moabites. This were going well under Ehud's leadership, BUT: "After Ehud died, the Israelites once again did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (Judges 4:1). The cycle of sin is repeating.

And so the Lord turned the Israelites over to a Canaanite king named Jabin, whose military commander was a man named Sisera. "Because he had nine hundred iron chariots and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help" (Judges 4:3). Because Israel was disobedient and did evil in the eyes of the Lord, the Lord allowed the oppression of His people for 20 years. And then finally, Israel asked the Lord for help.

"Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country or Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided. 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 the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands'" (Judges 4:4-7).

Barak was supposed to be the strong military commander for Deborah. Instead, Barak was a little wimpy: "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go" (Judges 4:8). Deborah conceded to Barak's request, but she did inform her feeble commander that the honor of victory would not be his, but a woman's.

And so, the two armies met on the field of battle—all of Sisera's chariots and troops and all the men of Naphtali and Zebulun. "The Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim. All the troops of Sisera fell by the sword; not a man was left" (Judges 4:15-16). The Lord fought for His people.

Meanwhile, Sisera is running away and trying to hide. He finds his way to the tent of a woman named Jael. Jael is the wife of a man who was on friendly terms with King Jabin (Sisera's king), so Sisera deduced that Jael was an ally, a friend, someone he could trust to protect him.

"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 put a covering over him.

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

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

But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and 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”

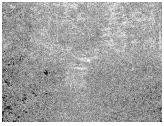
(Judges 4:18-21).

Barak, the commander of the Lord’s troops, did not receive the honor of victory, Jael a woman did.

Meanwhile, the Lord had delivered Israel from the hands of her enemies because she had humbled herself and cried to the Lord for help. Through Deborah, Barak and Jael, God subdued Israel’s enemies.

Deborah and Barak sang a song in Judges 5:1-31.

“Then the land had peace forty years” (Judges 5:31).



## life application

MAKING IT REAL

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### Sin has consequences

The people of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Not just one person, but everybody, did bad stuff. Sometimes sin's consequences happen right away, or a little while later, or even in other people.

### Do what you are asked

When Barak was commanded by God through Deborah to go up and do battle with Jabin and Sisera, his response was—only if you go with me (I imagine his tone was a little whiny). God did not offer any choices here. He gave a direct command and expected it to be followed. Barak's passing of the buck was unacceptable to God. Our passing of the buck is unacceptable too.



## questions

REMEMBERING

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1. **Who was the first woman judge?** Deborah
2. **Who was Deborah's commander?** Barak
3. **Why was Israel being suppressed by the Canaanites?** Because Israel did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord
4. **Who was the Canaanite king?** Jabin
5. **Who was the Canaanite king's commander?** Sisera
6. **Why did the honor of victory go to a woman?** Because Barak did not really lead, he lead only with Deborah's presence. Therefore the Lord said the honor would go to a woman.



## coloring sheet

ON THE NEXT PAGE

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**Judge Deborah**