

Mass Chaos

A Study of the Book of Judges

Session 4: Deborah

Introduction

Watch a [video](#) that summarizes the role Deborah played in fighting against the Canaanites.

Deborah's Battle against the Canaanites

4:1-24

Geographic Note: Hazor was located north of the Sea of Galilee and was probably the most powerful, fortified, and important of the Canaanite city-states. Joshua destroyed it, but it was rebuilt, and this battle seems to be an attempt for the Canaanites to reestablish control in the north.

Learning Activity: Actor/Actress for a Day

In small groups, you will select one of the following characters from this story:

1. Deborah, the judge of Israel
2. Jabin, the Canaanite king of Hazor
3. Barak, the commander of the Israelite army
4. Sisera, the commander of the Canaanite army
5. Jael, the wife of Heber and gatekeeper of her tent

Your task will be the following:

1. **Research** the role this individual played in this battle scene. Place yourself in this person's shoes, and try to understand what and why he/she did what he/she did.
2. **Prepare** two questions to ask other characters in this story. These questions may be explicitly addressed in the text, or they may not.
3. **Anticipate** the questions other people might ask of you, and try to be somewhat prepared. You may have to use your imagination to answer!
4. **Appoint** someone who will speak primarily (but not exclusively) for your group. This person will be an actor/actress who is playing the role of the character listed above.
5. **Participate** in a dialogue at the end of this battle scene between all the characters.

Our notes and questions:

Song of Deborah

5:1–31

Literary Note: It is typical literary style in the ancient Near East to follow a narrative account of a national victory with a poem celebrating that event. This is the case in the Song of Moses (Exodus 15), which was sung after Israel's victory over Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. This is also the case with two accounts of Egypt's victory over the Hittites at the Battle of Kadesh. This is one of the oldest poems in the Bible.¹

Much like we follow the reading of Scripture with hymns and songs in church, so a prose account of the battle is followed by a poetic song. Analyze the two:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the two chapters?
2. In what ways does this song impact you in a way that the previous prose account doesn't?

Conclusion

In the ancient world, this story would have been downright strange—two women, Deborah and Jael, who lead an army, kill a general, and save the day. What was God teaching Israel (and us) through it all?

¹ Note on 5:1–31 in Robert Hoerber, ed., *Concordia Self-Study Bible* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1984), 335; “The Bulletin and Poetic Accounts of the Battle of Kadesh,” in Walther Kaiser & Duane Garrett, ed., *Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 353.