

Deborah 2

A message from our Lord!

April 16, 2020

by

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By way of recap – whether you were able to tune in yesterday or not – Deborah – the judge of Israel – informs Barak son of Abinoam, that the Lord wants him to raise an army of 10,000 armed men, to attack Jabin king of Canaan’s military captain, Sisera. All Sisera’s troops and 900 chariots fitted with steel, are summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim – their stronghold – to meet Barak and the men of Zebulun & Naphtali, on Mount Tabor.

Barak insists that Deborah joins him in this battle. Deborah states that this will mean no glory for Barak – since Sisera will be delivered into a woman’s hand; but it appears this isn’t the issue for Barak. He wants to be on the Lord’s side! More importantly, he wants the Lord to be on his side; and he figures God’s judge being with him is “good for business” – even if the business is war.

Let’s jump into today’s reading by using the last two verses that we read yesterday for continuity.

¹⁴Then Deborah said to Barak, *“Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?”* So, Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. ¹⁵At Barak’s advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

16Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera’s troops fell by the sword; not a man was left. ¹⁷Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite.

¹⁸Jael 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 covered him with a blanket.

¹⁹*“I’m thirsty,”* he said. *“Please give me some water.”* She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up.

²⁰*“Stand in the doorway of the tent,”* he told her. *“If someone comes by and asks you, ‘Is anyone in there?’ say ‘No.’”*

²¹But Jael, Heber’s wife, picked up a tent peg and a 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.

²²Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. *“Come,”* she said, *“I will show you the man you’re looking for.”* So, he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple—dead.

²³On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites.

²⁴And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.

PRAYER

I've got to admit; it's hard looking at instance after instance where someone strikes down another in some barbaric, assassination-like fashion, all supposedly "*to the honor and glory of His name.*"

I mean, it just looks more like treachery than brave patriotism. And yet, "*With Jael, as with Ehud.*" Ehud kills a king with a long dagger, in a deceitful manner. Jael feigns concern and ends up in the quick of treachery! A tent peg through the head after issuing a "nightcap" to a weary man – a man, whose boss, your husband has a treaty with. Tent peg through the temple!

Personally, I believe Barak would have caught up with Sisera, and would have given him a more "military" ending. Sooner or later; I mean, Sisera wasn't even headed back to Harosheth Haggoyim like the rest of his routed army. Instead, Sisera is headed for refuge in the tents of a man who his king has an alliance with. He is so confident that he has reached a place of safety that he can even relax enough to take a nap. Nope! Treachery.

And yet, all commentators do not agree. Some see Jael as having taken her guests life as a God-ordained executioner of a condemned criminal.¹

One commentator stated that Jael's initial invitation to find shelter in her tent was legitimate – up until Sisera asked her to lie, if someone inquired as to whether or not someone was there. They suppose that she had a

reverence for the truth which prevented her from even answering Sisera's request.

Was it a Divine impulse which moved Jael to take away Sisera's life? Scripture is not clear at all. Simply that she moved with a cold resolve which has typically been thought of more as a warrior's heart. No one would have been surprised, had Barak caught up to Sisera, and ended his life.

For me, I have a hard time explaining away Jael's actions. Deborah on the other hand, praised her actions. Even though Deborah herself, likely never could have acted out this resolve – she likely saw it as part of God's plan to give Israel respite from their enemies. One thing is certain; with Sisera and his 900 chariots fitted with iron gone, the last 2 verses of our text are given a big push.

²³*On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites.*

²⁴*And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.*

I suppose my final take on this passage is the same as I stated a couple of days ago when we looked at Ehud. God never wastes even the sinful deeds of men, when they might be used by Divine Wisdom to some spiritual end. Although it's not stated until the Song of Deborah & Barak is finished at the end of Chapter 5; *"The land had peace for forty years."*

PRAYER

1. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/sermon/judges/4.htm>