

Women of God Study Class
Deborah
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Deborah The Battle Belongs to the Lord

The Book of Judges

The author of Judges is unknown, however, it is believed to have been written by Samuel or one of his students. The Jewish tradition contained in the Talmud attributes Judges to Samuel. The name, Judges, is taken from the contents of this book and covers a period of time (around 1380BC to 1050BC) when the Lord raised up judges to deliver Israel from their bondage. The term "judges" is from a Hebrew word, shophetim, which means "to put right and so to rule".

As you study this book, it is important to realize that it was not written in strict chronological order. The first two chapters and the first few verses of chapter three are written to give the reader an explanation of how this period came about. The main body of this book is chapters 3 through 16, which tells the story of six major deliverers. The sins were brought about by the people, while the punishment and the deliverance were brought by hand of the Lord.

This spiritual pattern is contained throughout this book:

<u>Sin</u>	<u>Suffering</u>	<u>Supplication</u>	<u>Deliverer</u>
3:5-7	3:8	3:9	Othniel
3:12	3:13-14	3:15	Ehud
4:1	4:2	4:3	Deborah/Barak
6:1	6:2-5	6:6-7	Gideon
10:6	10:7-9	10:10-16	Jephthah
13:1	13:1	Nothing recorded	Samson

In this book we can see the sinfulness of man, the constant failure of man and the constant mercy of God. The reign of Judges is very similar to the history of the Nephites. It is a story of a continuous cycle of apostasy and repentance.

Type and Shadow

The Book of Judges (world) illustrates the need for a righteous king (Jesus). The Judges are rulers, saviors, spiritual deliverers - Jesus was the Savior and King of His people.

Background History

After the patriarchs of Israel died, Joshua, called by God, led the Israelites into the Promised land. Under his leadership, the Israelites united and fought over 31 battles trying to conquer Canaan. Joshua's generation remained faithful to God (Jos. 24:31). But after the death of Joshua, the unity that had brought Israel together in battle was replaced with loyalty to one's tribe and spiritual apostasy followed. During this 350-year period when the people pulled away from God, He remained faithful. In the days of Joshua, Israel claimed many victories but during the time of the Judges they saw many defeats. God used their bondage as a way to call them back. He would hear their cries and provide a

deliverer who would bring peace to the land. However, the deliverance and peace were usually short lived. As soon as the deliverer or judge was dead, Israel turned to other gods, and the cycle began again. Even though Israel declined spiritually, God did not abandon His people! At a very dark time in the history of Israel, God called for a woman to help bring about deliverance. Deborah was the fourth of the Judges of Israel and the only woman recorded to have held such a position. She was also a prophetess and was one of several women named in Scriptures who were given a gift of being able to discern the will of God and tell others.

Deborah - Book of Judges

4:1-4 This is the spiritual condition of the people after the death of the judge Ehud. Ehud had delivered them from 18 years of bondage to Moab. Where is Hazor? Hazor was one of the cities conquered by Joshua (Jos. 11:1-4). It was believed to have been located approximately 10 miles Northwest of the Sea of Galilee on the main trade route from Egypt to Mesopotamia. It was considered to have been a very important city during this time. Hebrew word for host means, "a mass assembled " for a purpose such as war or battle. It also is believed, by a few, that Jabin was a name of some of the rulers of Hazor. There has been archaeological evidence that Hazor was destroyed about 1200BC which fits in with this time frame. Harosheth of the Gentiles, is believed to have been a specific site rather than a city, quite possibly the wooded hill country of Galilee. There is nothing known about the background of Deborah except that she was the wife of Lapidoth and their home was in the hill country of Ephraim.

Deborah is referred to as a prophetess. What does that word mean? The word prophetess is the female title for prophet. A prophet is a person through whom God could speak. Old Testament prophets were considered God's mouthpiece. They would reveal to the people what God wanted said. The spirit of prophecy is not a priesthood gift it is a gift of the spirit. There is no special ordination in the priesthood that ordains a man to be a prophet (D&C 47:7a-f; Rev. 19:10). Deborah is not the only prophetess mentioned in the Old Testament, Exodus 15:20 calls Miriam, "the prophetess." In 2 Chronicles 34:22, Huldah was a prophetess who sought to hinder the work of Nehemiah in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. It is recorded in the Journals of History that Elizabeth Johnson Blair, the wife of W.W. Blair, stood and prophesied at a prayer service that Joseph Smith, III would become the next prophet of the church. What is the test of a true prophet? Time - time will proclaim a prophet. Deborah's husband's name is Lapidoth, which means "flame, torch, or lamp", quite possibly a strong name for a strong man??

4:5 It is believed that the palm tree under which Deborah ruled must have been some kind of landmark. Later, the palm tree became the symbol of Palestine.

4:6-7 God's plans will go forward!! Even if you make the choice not to participate, God will use someone else and He used Deborah. Apparently God had made His plan known (verse 6 - "Hath not the Lord commanded"). This verse (vs. 6) sounds as if Barak knew that God commanded and he ignored.

4:8 Deborah was a judge - she was not a warrior - she did not lead Israel into battle, she judged the people. God blessed her with spiritual insight but during this time no man had stepped forward to lead Israel - even the leader of the army had to be called forth and reminded. Did God make His plan known to Barak, previous to Deborah talking to him? Was he afraid to go? Remember - the spiritual condition of the people at this time in history. Deborah was known by her people as a prophetess - could it be that he was not about to go unless the God that he saw within this woman went with him into battle? Or did Barak look for success to come from the presence of man rather than God?

4:9 God was not going to give the victory to a military man but assign this victory to a woman. In 1 Peter 3:7, Paul refers to the woman as the weaker vessel. Could it be that God was going to use a woman, the weaker vessel, to magnify the power of what He can do, even in the most difficult situations? Zechariah 4:6 says, "...not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit..."

4:10 Zebulun and Naphtali were 2 of the 12 tribes. 10,000 men at his feet, seems to imply that quite possibly they walked to battle.

4:11 We are now introduced to a man named Heber, if you read ahead verse 17 tells us that Heber was a Kenite. Who were the Kenites? They were a people who lived in the land of Canaan and closely associated with the Midianites. They were descendants of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. In Numbers 10:29, Hobab was the son of Jethro, Zipporah's father, which makes Hobab, Zipporah's brother.

4:12 Heber tells Sisera (the enemy of Israel) that Barak has gone to Mt. Tabor.

4:13 Where does Sisera go? Exactly where God said He would send them (go back and read verse 7). Many of the battles fought in the Old Testament times were fought in valleys. This battle is no different. On one side of the valley by the River Kishon next to a plain (perfect for a battlefield) is Sisera and his men while on the other side of the valley is Mt. Tabor where Deborah and Barak are.

4:14 Upon the word from Deborah, Barak went down from the mountain with his 10,000 men to face an army 10 times greater; quite possibly they were on foot and badly armed to face iron chariots. Sisera and his men were ready in the valley beside the river.

What happened in this battle?? The River Kishon flows in a northwest direction through the Jezereel Valley until it empties into the Mediterranean Sea near present day Haifa. Because the land is flat the river is usually not much more than a sluggish stream. However, in times of hard rains, it can overflow its banks and flood the land. Chapter 5 verse 21 suggests that this is what happened; making it possible for the smaller army of Deborah and Barak to conquer. In other words, like so many other times in the Scriptures God used His nature!! When the water came the iron chariots, which had been a big asset in the battle became a liability as the sandy plain became mud. (In 1799 a very similar occurrence happened when Napoleon defeated the Turks in this same valley). Now this battle becomes no contest!!

4:15-17 The word discomfited means “to put in commotion; to destroy; to disturb; to drive.”

4:18-19 Since Heber's family was of the Kenites (people of Canaan), Sisera felt safe hiding there. Not only did he stay in their tent but Jael, Heber's wife, served him. But read verse 19 closely. Sisera asked for water but Jael gave him milk! Just think about the difference between milk and water - milk fills you up and makes you sleepy while water quenches thirst. Jael knew what she was doing!

4:20-22 While he slept, Sisera was killed by Jael thus fulfilling the prophecy given by Deborah (verse 9). But God was not finished yet!

4:23-24 God not only won the battle for them but destroyed their enemy as well. (Read chapter 5 verse 31 shows the result of the victory).

5:1-6 Deborah and Barak gave the credit for the victory to the Lord

In a day when there was "no king in Israel" when leadership was lacking, God raised up a woman named Deborah, a weaker vessel, a faithful woman who respected the word of God and made herself available to be His servant.

"The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel."

Judges 5:7