

DEBORAH AND HER GOD GLORIFYING SONG

Around the time of 1195 B.C. we come to meet the prophetess Deborah. For her part in the cycle of judges, Israel will enjoy 40 years of peace and prosperity before falling away and suffering enslavement yet once again. However, before we get ahead of ourselves, let us discuss the times of the cool-headed lady who judged Israel.

After Shamgar's victory over the Philistines which leads to several years of deliverance, the Israelites continue the cycle of despair that will haunt them for years to come. Israel serves the Lord, Israel falls into sin and idolatry, Israel is enslaved, Israel cries out to the Lord, God raises up a judge, Israel is delivered. Repeat! The deliverance of the Lord through the judges Ehud and Shamgar have come and gone and now we see the Lords people fall into the hands of Canaanite King Jabin and his head henchman, army commander Sisera. We learn that the king and Sisera had 900 iron chariots at their disposal which is more relevant than it may seem considering that these are the days prior to Israeli kings or armies, therefore the Israelites did not have access to instruments of war, leaving them vulnerable. What's more, is that once a land is conquered by another land, the conquering land will commandeer the resources of the conquered land and utilize it for its preferred territory. This led to 20 years of poverty and oppression before the sons of Israel were defeated to the point of crying out to the Lord.

Enter the heroine judge, Deborah. The wife of Lappidoth, she was known to sit under her designated palm tree while the people of curiosity would come to inquire of her the wisdom of God, because she was a prophetess and a judge and the words of the Lord found her ears. There must have been direction from the Lord because we are told that she summoned Barak, the son of Abinoam to gather 10,000 men from the northern tribe of Naphtali and march them to Mt. Tabor to challenge the army of Sisera. The Naphtali tribe, who were the descendants of Jacob, were known as a fighting people that could be depended upon in battle and this is convenient because their land is directly north of Mt. Tabor. Although Deborah assures Barak that the Canaanites will be delivered into their hands, Barak has cold feet and for whatever reason questions his leadership skills and says that he will not go unless Deborah goes with him. Because of his lack of faith in the Lord she assures him that while she will accompany him it will be a woman who gets the glory rather than him and he seems to be alright with that. The pair depart and assemble the troops of Naphtali, 10,000 men ready to do battle for the Lord. Sisera hears of the assembling of men and quickly dispatches his 900 iron chariots and unit of men to do battle with the ragamuffin men of Israel. Sisera surely underestimated the Lords army because under the direction of Barak and Deborah they were quickly facing defeat. Smelling loss and humiliation in the air, Sisera cowardly flees for the hills to the tent of Heber the Kenite only to meet his wife Jael. This is the beginning of the end for the Canaanites and the start of a new beginning for the Israelites.

While the cowardly lion Sisera is abandoning his men, they are being slaughtered until not one is left. Thinking he has found sanctuary in the tent of Heber the Kenite, Heber's wife Jael welcomes him in with open arms and a warm blanket. His request for water is met with the gift of warm milk and a cot to comfort the tired and famished commander. As he fades off to REM state, Jael quietly picks up a tent peg and a hammer, approaches the sleeping Canaanite commander and plunges the tent peg directly into his temple so that it sticks to the ground. Soon after, Barak makes his way to the tent after pursuing the coward Sisera only to find him dead. This is the twist that we may not have seen coming. Of course we have the gruesome death in detail but if we remember correctly, Deborah told Barak "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the honor shall not be yours on the journey that you are about to take, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman." At the time, we assume that Deborah is speaking of herself. Little do we know that Jael is lying in wait to do the Lords will by eliminating a vicious threat against the Jewish people fulfilling Deborah's prophecy that a woman will get the glory.

This is not where the tale of Deborah ends. Our heroin receives two chapters in this Book. The first is the recounting of events by our author whom I believe to be Samuel, and the second is Deborah's recounting of events via song. Chapter five takes us into the heart of Deborah as she sings praises to the Lord, giving Him credit for all that has transpired. In the midst of glorifying God she makes mention of what caused them to arrive in this predicament in the first place. The nation was in tatters, the highways were deserted and the nation of Israel had been delivered into the hands of the Canaanites all because the Israelites had sought other gods. It took decades before their stubbornness would dissolve enough to cry out to the Lord for deliverance. Now, Deborah alongside Barak will assemble the warriors to fight the battle in the name of the Lord and unclench the grip of King Jabin. Chapter five is Deborah's song, her praise to the Lord giving Him credit for all that has come to be and showing Him that she understands why life had become what it had. She makes mention of the different tribes and wonders why they failed to take action. Why did you stay in your sheepfolds? Why did you remain across the Jordan? Why did you stay on your ships or sit on the seashore? It took two unassuming people to take action. Mind you, this is God's people. This is God's nation. This is not an autonomous nation that is separate from God such as present-day nations. God's present-day Church is void of borders. This is why their inaction is so cumbersome. They were God's chosen people and they were indifferent.

Back to the song. As she sings, she reaches the point of battle, the imminent defeat of the Canaanites, the falling of Jabin. It is at this point that Deborah puts a bit of a sadistic twist to her song. She takes the time to include general Sisera's mother into the mix. As Jael is preparing the warm milk to put the general to sleep so that she can puncture his temple, the mother of Sisera is impatiently waiting for her son to return from his plunder. She looks out at the fields wondering what is taking her precious son so long to return, unaware of his demise. And so Deborah concludes her song with a bit of "that's what you get" to the enemies of the Lord. "Thus, let your enemies perish oh Lord, but let those who love Him be like the rising of

the sun in it's might". The story of Deborah is just another case of an unassuming individual taking extraordinary measures to be pleasing to the Lord. Caution was thrown to the wind and trust was placed in the God most high. At no time did Deborah worry about the outcome or fret about what might be. She had the utmost faith in God, recognized why Israel was in the shape that it was in, gave credence to His name and rebuked Barak for having doubt. Let us be as unwavering and assured of God's protection in our daily lives as Deborah was.