

Sunday School Lesson
Judges 4:1-24
 by Lorin L. Cranford
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Deborah the deliverer



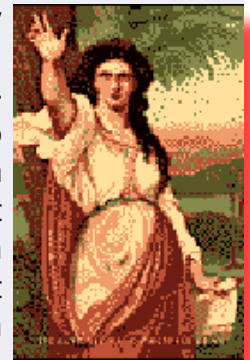
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Can women lead a country to throw out foreign conquerors? With just a cursory reading of the Old Testament, one would be inclined to say no. The patriarchal, male dominated tones of the OT text would suggest at first glance that, in an overwhelmingly male controlling world, a woman would never be able to rise up to inspire soldiers to fight to the death under her leadership. But such a conclusion would be woefully mistaken about the world of ancient Israelites. Men, without question, dominated Israelite society, at least in its public expression. But women possessed substantial power and influence. On occasion, they were able to exert their influence over national life in very public and consequential ways. Deborah was one of those women in Israelite history.



This woman was wife, prophetess, judge and deliverer of the Israelite people at a critical time in their history. She held the unquestioning loyalty of a military general. In fact, he was so confident of her leadership that he refused to go to battle without her by his side. She inspired thousands of Israelite men to rise up in a fight to the death revolt against their Canaanite oppressors. And all this was under the leadership and blessing of the Lord. She has become an inspiration to Jewish, as well as Christian, women for many, many centuries.

And quite fascinatingly another glimpse into the contributions of women from almost the opposite end of the spectrum is a part of this narrative as well. Jael, a non-Israelite woman, also played a major role in the liberation of Israel. By her rather grizzly killing of Sisera, the Canaanite military general, she completed the victory of Israel over the Canaanite king Jabin. Although I'm not sure how comfortably her husband went to sleep at night after this episode, she demonstrated remarkable courage in going against ethnic loyalties dominating the Kenites at that time.



If for no other reason, studying episodes such as Judges 4-5 becomes important for keeping a balance in perspective. By just reading OT texts that stress *principles* of male / female roles in Israelite society, one would not have a correct understanding of how daily life was lived out under God's leadership. These historical narratives balance the picture by saying that yes, certain guidelines are in place defining women's role, but, in reality, there are exceptions. Examples like Deborah and Jael caution us against turning dominant patterns into unbending rules and laws.

I. Context

Much of the background study for this passage was completed in [the first study](#) in the series about the judges of ancient Israel, Ehud in 3:1-30. Summation and reference to that material will be given here, with new material added only when needed for our particular passage.

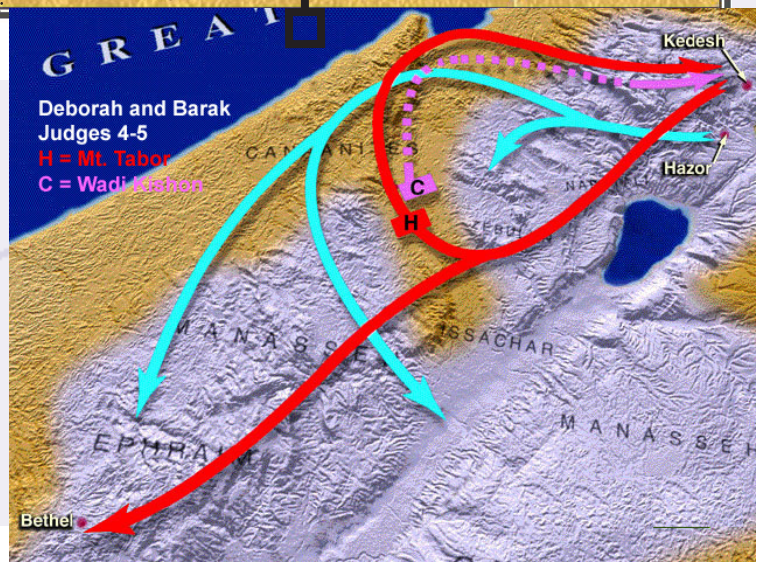
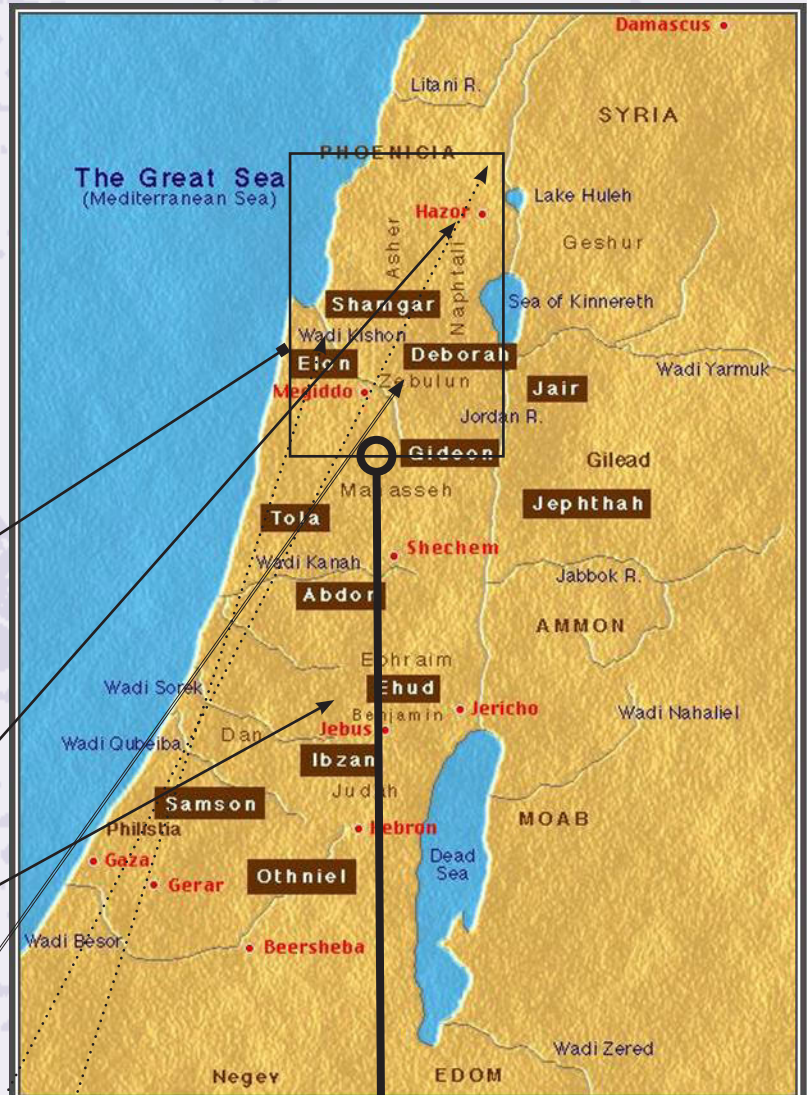
a. Historical

External History. Signals suggest the exilic editorial shaping of these texts brought two oral traditions together, that of Deborah and that of Jael, into a single narrative as a part of the larger agenda to illustrate the Israelite defeat of the Canaanite king with greater detail. Of course, that an Israelite woman and a non-Israelite woman, could together accomplish decisive victory over the powerful Canaanite oppressors only heightened the sense of Israelite legitimacy living in Palestine.

Internal History. Coming as the third of the major judge stories, the downward plunge of the retributive cycle of Israelite history hasn't degenerated too far yet. The unified story takes place in the northern part of Palestine and completely on the western side of the Jordan. As is true of the other narratives about the judges, not all the tribes were involved in this action, although more are mentioned here than in any of the others. The tribes in southern Palestine, Judah etc. did not take part in this action to throw out the Canaanite oppressors, most likely because Jabin's power did not extend that far south.

Sorting out the place markers in the narrative become important to making sense of the scene shifts that take place.

Deborah lived and ministered near **Bethel** in the central part of Ephraim (v. 5): "She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment." The Canaanite king Jabin ruled from **Hazor** in the far northern part of Palestine: (v.2): "King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor." His military commander, Sisera, lived in **Harosheth-ha-goiim** in the western part of this region (v. 2): "the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim." Barak, the Israelite general, lived north of Hazor at **Kedesh** in the tribal area of Naphtali. The main action of the battle took place at **Mt. Tabor** sw of the Sea of Galilee.



Jael killed Sisera at **Elon-bezaananim** not far from Barak's home in the far north, while Barak's armies were chasing the retreating Canaanite armies after the defeat at Tabor all the way to Sisera's home at Harosheth-ha-goiim in the western region. The Kenite tribes lived scattered through out Palestine during the period of the Judges. The reason for this is not real clear, since traditionally they are linked to the Amalekites who lived in southern Palestine as well as to the Israelites. Their nomadic herdsman lifestyle probably accounts for this. G. M. Landes (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, iPreach) concludes:

The fact that Kenites are mentioned in biblical tradition as living in various places in Palestine not only illustrates their nomadic character, but also suggests that they were not completely absorbed by any other people, but maintained a separate existence throughout most of their history.

b. Literary

Genre. The Deborah story in Judges 4 and 5 is a two part story. The first is the narrative depiction in 4:1-24. The second is the epic poem, the Song of Deborah, depicting the same events in Hebrew poetic celebration of victory. Each account has some different details, not all of which can be easily reconciled with one another. The interpretive inclination is to try to harmonize the two accounts into a single story, but this is a mistake. J. L. Mays (*Harper's Bible Commentary*, Logos System) offers a helpful word at this point:

The story of Deborah's victory over the militarily superior Canaanites in the north is told in two versions, one prose (chap. 4), the other poetry (chap. 5). The accounts differ in details, but it would be a mistake to try to harmonize them or to prefer one over the other as the more "correct" or "likely" version. Each should be considered on its own merits. The poem, which is older, offers a more dramatic, but also more elliptic, presentation.

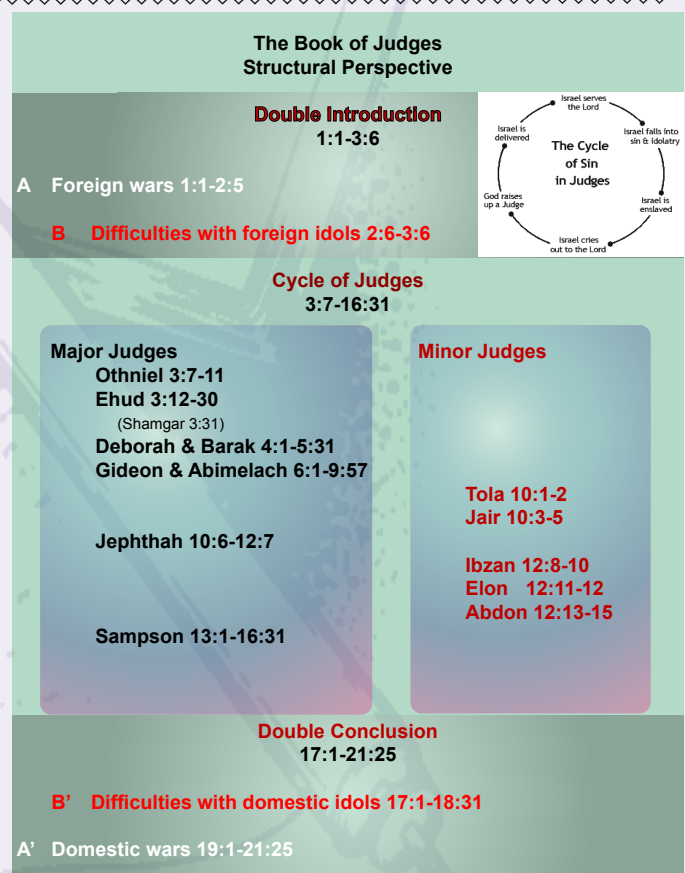
The prose account in chapter four is framed against the traditional fourfold retributive approach to history:

- (1) Israel sins, 4:1. "The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died."
- (2) God punishes, 4:2a. "So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan."
- (3) Israel cries out for God's help, 4:3a. "Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help."
- (4) God's deliverance brings "rest to the land" (5:1). "And the land had rest forty years."

As is typically the case, the bulk of the prose narra-

It is important to remember that the region in which this narrative is set encompasses an area of no more than about 60 miles wide and 80 miles long, and perhaps smaller than this. This helps underscore the significance of the logistics in marshalling armies for battle, and in being able to pull together armies of up to 10,000 warriors out of this region. Population density in central and northern Palestine was far greater than in the southern region.

The time markers inside the narrative indicate that Jabin had dominated the Israelites in northern Palestine for 20 years (4:1). No time frame is indicated about how long it took Deborah and Barak to assemble the 10,000 soldiers at Tabor for the battle. The battle lasted a day, and was followed by "mopping up" action over an unspecified period. This lasted until King Jabin was destroyed at his home in Hazor (4:24). Subsequent to that "the land had rest forty years" (5:31).



tive focuses on the deliverance that comes as God's response to the cry for help. The Song in chapter five uses the victory at Mt. Tabor as its anchor point of celebration.

Literary Setting. As is clear from the above chart, the Deborah and Barak story stands as the third of the six major judges in the cycle of narratives. The map of the Judges (previous page) also

τῆς Βαιθηλ ἐν τῷ ὄρει
Εφραιμ καὶ ἀνέβαινον
πρὸς αὐτὴν οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰθ
ραηλ εἰς κρίσιν 6 καὶ
ἀπέστειλεν Δεββωρα καὶ
ἐκάλεσεν τὸν Βαρακ υἱὸ
ν Αβινεεμ ἐκ Καδης
Νεφθαλι καὶ εἶπεν πρὸ
ς αὐτόν οὐχὶ ἐνετείλατο
κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ
σοὶ καὶ ἀπελεύση εἰς
ὄρος Θαβωρ καὶ λήμψη
μετὰ σεαυτοῦ δέκα
χιλιάδας ἀνδρῶν ἐκ τῶ
ν υἱῶν Νεφθαλι καὶ ἐκ
τῶν υἱῶν Ζαβουλων 7
καὶ ἐπάξω πρὸς σέ εἰς
τὸν χειμάρρουν Κισων
τὸν Σισαρα ἄρχοντα τῆ
ς δυνάμεως Ἰαβιν καὶ
τὰ ἄρματα αὐτοῦ καὶ
τὸ πλῆθος αὐτοῦ καὶ
παραδώσω αὐτόν εἰς
τὰς χεῖράς σου 8 καὶ
εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὴν Βαρακ
ἐὰν πορευθῆς μετ’ ἐμοῦ
πορεύσομαι καὶ ἐὰν μὴ
πορευθῆς οὐ πορεύσομαι
ὅτι οὐκ οἶδα τὴν ἡμέραν
ἐν ἧ εὐδοοῖ τὸν ἄγγελον
κύριος μετ’ ἐμοῦ 9
καὶ εἶπεν πορευομένη
πορεύσομαι μετὰ σοῦ
πλὴν γίνωσκε ὅτι οὐκ
ἔσται τὸ προτέρημά
σου ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδόν ἣν σὺ
πορεύῃ ὅτι ἐν χειρὶ γυν
αικὸς ἀποδώσεται κύριος
τὸν Σισαρα καὶ ἀνέστη
Δεββωρα καὶ ἐπορεύθη
μετὰ Βαρακ ἐκ Καδης
10 καὶ ἐβόησεν Βαρακ
τὸν Ζαβουλων καὶ τὸν
Νεφθαλι ἐκ Καδης καὶ
ἀνέβησαν κατὰ πόδας αὐ
τοῦ δέκα χιλιάδες ἀνδρῶ
ν καὶ ἀνέβη μετ’ αὐτοῦ

ment. 6 Now she sent
and summoned Barak
the son of Abinoam from
Kedesh-naphtali, and
said to him, “Behold,
the LORD, the God of
Israel, has commanded,
‘Go and march to Mount
Tabor, and take with you
ten thousand men from
the sons of Naphtali and
from the sons of Zebu
lun. 7 ‘I will draw out to
you Sisera, the com
mander of Jabin’s army,
with his chariots and his
many *troops* to the river
Kishon, and I will give
him into your hand.’ “ 8
Then Barak said to her,
“If you will go with me,
then I will go; but if you
will not go with me, I will
not go.” 9 She said, “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.” Then Debo
rah arose and went with
Barak to Kedesh. 10
Barak called Zebulun
and Naphtali together
to Kedesh, and ten
thousand men went up
with him; Deborah also
went up with him. 11
Now Heber the Kenite
had separated himself
from the Kenites, from
the sons of Hobab the
father-in-law of Moses,
and had pitched his tent
as far away as the oak
in Zaananim, which is
near Kedesh. 12 Then
they told Sisera that
Barak the son of Abi
noam had gone up to

6 She sent and sum
moned Barak son of
Abinoam from Kedesh
in Naphtali, and said to
him, “The Lord, the God
of Israel, commands
you, “Go, take position
at Mount Tabor, bring
ing ten thousand from
the tribe of Naphtali and
the tribe of Zebulun. 7 I
will draw out Sisera, the
general of Jabin’s army,
to meet you by the Wadi
Kishon with his chari
ots and his troops; and
I will give him into your
hand.’ “ 8 Barak said to
her, “If you will go with
me, I will go; but if you
will not go with me, I will
not go.” 9 And she said,
“I will surely go with you;
nevertheless, the road
on which you are going
will not lead to your glo
ry, for the Lord will sell
Sisera into the hand of
a woman.” Then Debo
rah got up and went
with Barak to Kedesh.
10 Barak summoned
Zebulun and Naphtali
to Kedesh; and ten thou
sand warriors went up
behind him; and Debo
rah went up with him. 11
Now Heber the Kenite
had separated from the
other Kenites, that is, the
descendants of Hobab
the father-in-law of Mo
ses, and had encamped
as far away as Elon
bezaananim, which is
near Kedesh. 12 When
Sisera was told that
Barak son of Abinoam
had gone up to Mount
Tabor, 13 Sisera called
out all his chariots, nine
hundred chariots of iron,

to settle their disputes.
6 One day she sent for
Barak son of Abinoam,
who lived in Kedesh in
the land of Naphtali. She
said to him, “This is what
the LORD, the God of
Israel, commands you:
Assemble ten thousand
warriors from the tribes
of Naphtali and Zebulun
at Mount Tabor. 7 I will
lure Sisera, commander
of Jabin’s army, along
with his chariots and
warriors, to the Kishon
River. There I will give
you victory over him.” 8
Barak told her, “I will go,
but only if you go with
me!” 9 “Very well,” she
replied, “I will go with
you. But since you have
made this choice, you
will receive no honor.
For the LORD’s victory
over Sisera will be at
the hands of a woman.”
So Deborah went with
Barak to Kedesh. 10 At
Kedesh, Barak called
together the tribes of
Zebulun and Naph
tali, and ten thousand
warriors marched up
with him. Deborah also
marched with them. 11
Now Heber the Kenite,
a descendant of Moses’
brother-in-law Hobab,
had moved away from
the other members of his
tribe and pitched his tent
by the Oak of Zaanan
nim, near Kedesh. 12
When Sisera was told
that Barak son of Abi
noam had gone up to
Mount Tabor, 13 he
called for all nine hun
dred of his iron chariots
and all of his warriors,

Δεββωρα 11 καὶ Χαβερ ὁ Κιναῖος ἐχωρίσθη ἀπὸ Καινα ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰωβαβ γαμβροῦ Μωυσῆ καὶ ἔπηξεν τὴν σκητὴν αὐτοῦ ἕως δρυὸς πλεονεκτούντων ἢ ἐδτιν ἐχόμενα Κεδες 12 καὶ ἀνηγγέλη Σισαρα ὅτι ἀνέβη Βαρακ υἱὸς Ἀβινεεμ εἰς ὄρος Θαβωρ 13 καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Σῖσαρα πάντα τὰ ἄρματα αὐτοῦ ἐννακόσια ἄρματα σιδηρᾶ καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν τὸν μετ' αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ Ἀρισωθ τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς τὸν χειμάρρου Κισων 14 καὶ εἶπεν Δεββωρα πρὸς Βαρακ ἀνάστηθι ὅτι αὕτη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐν ἣ παρέδωκεν κύριος τὸν Σισαρα ἐν τῇ χειρὶ σου ὅτι κύριος ἐξελεύσεται ἔμπροσθέν σου καὶ κατέβη Βαρακ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους Θαβωρ καὶ δέκα χιλιάδες ἄνδρων ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ 15 καὶ ἐξέστησεν κύριος τὸν Σισαρα καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄρματα αὐτοῦ καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν στόματι ῥομφαίας ἐνώπιον Βαρακ καὶ κατέβη Σισαρα ἐπάνωθεν τοῦ ἄρματος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔφυγεν τοῖς ποσίν αὐτοῦ 16 καὶ Βαρακ διώκων ὀπίσω τῶν ἁρμάτων καὶ ὀπίσω τῆς παρεμβολῆς ἕως Ἀρισωθ τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ ἔπεσεν πᾶσα παρεμβολὴ Σισαρα ἐν στόματι ῥομφαίας οὐ κατελείφθη ἕως ἐνός

Mount Tabor. 13 Sisera called together all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon. 14 Deborah said to Barak, "Arise! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hands; behold, the LORD has gone out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. 15 The LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. 16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left.

and all the troops who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the Kishon River. 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day on which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. The Lord is indeed going out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him. 15 And the Lord threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic before Barak; Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, 16 while Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim. All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left.

and they marched from Harosheth-haggoyim to the Kishon River. 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Get ready! Today the LORD will give you victory over Sisera, for the LORD is marching ahead of you." So Barak led his ten thousand warriors down the slopes of Mount Tabor into battle. 15 When Barak attacked, the LORD threw Sisera and all his charioteers and warriors into a panic. Then Sisera leaped down from his chariot and escaped on foot. 16 Barak chased the enemy and their chariots all the way to Harosheth-haggoyim, killing all of Sisera's warriors. Not a single one was left alive.



Notes.

In the first three verses we encounter the formula used to frame the narrative with the first three stages of the fourfold retributive approach to history:

Stage 1: Israel sins. "1 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died."

In the Prologue to the book (chaps 1-2), the assertion was made (2:16-19): "16 Then the Lord raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them. 17 Yet they did not listen even to their judges; for they lusted after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their ancestors had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord; they did not follow their example. 18 Whenever the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge, and he delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord would be moved to pity by their groaning because of those who persecuted and oppressed them. 19 But whenever the judge died, they would relapse and behave worse than their ancestors, following other gods, worshiping them and bowing down to them. They would not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways." Thus, one should not be surprised to read of Israel's turning back into sin after the death of Ehud. This was to be a consistent pattern throughout the cycle of judges. The people's religious depth was less than skin deep in terms of loyal commitment to their religious heritage.

The “evil” that the Israelites did alludes back again to the prologue declarations about the idolatrous religious practices of the people (2:10-13):

10 Moreover, that whole generation [after Joshua died; cf. vv. 8-9] was gathered to their ancestors, and another generation grew up after them, who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel. 11 Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and worshiped the Baals; 12 and they abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them, and bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. 13 They abandoned the Lord, and worshiped Baal and the Astartes.

Given God’s stern insistence on unconditioned loyalty to Him, coupled by the degrading and immoral tendencies of the pagan religions, this turning to idols indeed constituted an “evil.” For a more detailed discussion see [the study on Ehud](#), pp. 5-8.

Stage 2: God punishes. “2 So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim.” The nature of the divinely imposed punishment varies from judge to judge. And always includes God’s allowing Israel’s enemies to oppress His people.

With *Othniel* (3:8), “Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of King Cushan-rishathaim of Aram-naharaim; and the Israelites served Cushan-rishathaim **eight years.**”

With *Ehud* (3:12-14): “12 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord strengthened King Eglon of Moab against Israel, because they had done what was evil in the sight of the Lord. 13 In alliance with the Ammonites and the Amalekites, he went and defeated Israel; and they took possession of the city of palms. 14 So the Israelites served King Eglon of Moab **eighteen years.**”

In the instance of *Deborah*, Jabin, the Canaanite king, “had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly **twenty years**” (4:3b). We are progressively moving from 8 to 18 to 20 years with each stretch of punishment.

The first pagan king used by God was *Cushan-rishathaim* of Aram-naharaim (3:8). The location of Aram-naharaim is disputed but most likely was located in the northern top of the fertile crescent in



the region of Haran. The second king was *Eglon* who ruled the Ammonites in the transjordan region east of the Dead Sea. The third king, *Jabin*, is a Canaanite city-state ruler at Hazor in northern Galilee.

The Canaanites represent a different kind of enemy in that they occupied pretty much the same territory in northern Palestine as did the Israelites. Dennis Olson (*New*

Interpreter’s Bible, iPreach) has a helpful summation:

The Canaanites are the fourth set of enemies Israel has faced in this first phase of the judges period. With the judge Othniel, the enemy had come from some distance in the far north and east in Mesopotamia. With Ehud, the enemy had been a closer neighbor to the east, Moab. Shamgar fought against the Philistines, Israel’s close neighbor to the west. Now for the first time Israel faces a more internal enemy, King Jabin of Canaan, who is said to reign in the far north of Canaan at Hazor (v. 2). Many interpreters believe this King Jabin may be related in some way to the “King Jabin of Hazor” who led a coalition of Canaanite kings against Joshua and Israel as reported in Joshua 11:1. Joshua successfully conquered the coalition, and Josh 11:10 notes that Joshua “took Hazor, and struck its king down with the sword.” Is this the same Jabin, or is “Jabin” a common royal name among Canaanite rulers? Some scholars suggest that Judges 4:1–5 is a retelling of the same event as recorded in Joshua 11:1 with some changes. Others suggest that the name of Jabin has been imported into the present text of Judges 4:1, since Jabin plays no active role in the story itself and is never mentioned in the song in Judges 5:1. The mention of “the kings of Canaan” in 5:19 may have occasioned the link with the account in Joshua 11:1. In any case, King Jabin remains a shadowy figure in the background to Judges 4:1; general Sisera is the one Canaanite who grabs the spotlight and generates any narrative interest in the story.

Stage 3: Israel repents. “3 Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly **twenty years.**”

The mentioning of “nine hundred chariots of iron” in Jabin’s army underscores the superior military equipment used by the Canaanites. Judah in southern Palestine also had trouble with such chariots

in the earlier conquest, as 1:19 indicates: “The Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain, because they had chariots of iron.” With greater wealth and superior military equipment the Canaanites were able to inflict severe blows on the Israelites. One subtle implication of the mentioning of iron is that the time period now is the early phase of the Iron Age (1200-1000 BCE), rather than the previous Bronze Age (late Bronze Age, 1600-1200 BCE).



Thus for two decades the Canaanites had cruelly dominated the Israelites in northern Palestine. Finally, the people woke up enough spiritually that they “cried out to the Lord for help.”

Stage 4: God delivers. The remaining verses, vv. 2-24, focus on God’s answer to that plea for help. Interestingly, three individuals are going to play leading roles in God’s deliverance: two women and a man. And two basic scenes would serve as anchor points in the story: the battle at Mt. Tabor (vv. 4-16) and the murder of Sisera by Jael (vv. 17-24).

In the first “battle” scene, three characters play leading roles: Deborah, Barak, and Sisera.

Deborah’s “resume” is given quite simply (vv. 4-5) as:

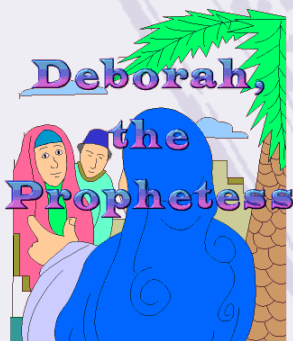
1. “At that time Deborah, a prophetess,”

During at least part of the twenty years of Canaanite oppression, Deborah lived in the central hill country serving as a prophetess. The designation “prophetess” doesn’t show up often regarding women, as D. Napier (“Prophetess,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, iPreach) observes:

In the OT the term is applied to Miriam, the sister of Moses (Exod. 15:20); Deborah (Judg. 4:4) – in both instances seen by many scholars as a relatively late ascription; to Huldah, a contemporary of Jeremiah and a functioning woman prophet II Kings 22:14); to Noadiah, an adversary of Nehemiah and presumably also a professional (Neh. 6:14); and by Isaiah to his wife (Isa. 8:3).

In the NT the term is used of Anna (Luke 2:36) and of one Jezebel (Rev. 2:20).

Thus she is rather unique to women in the Bible, although her role as a prophet was not emphasized



as primarily significant for the task that God had in mind.

2. “wife of Lappidoth,”

The Hebrew phrase so translated here can also mean “woman of torches” or “woman of splendors.”

3. “was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment.”



The most important activity of Deborah

for this story is her leadership / judicial role as a “judge.”

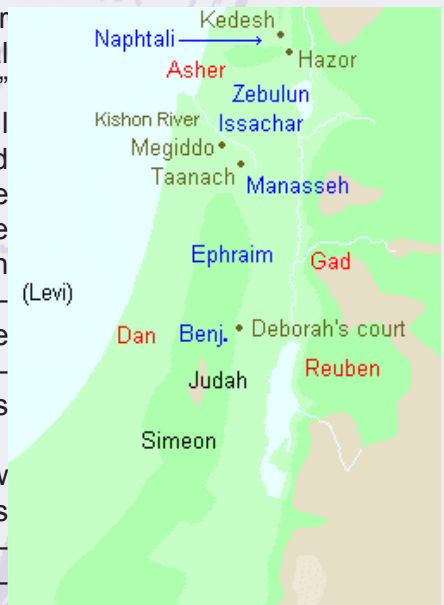
Unlike the usual pattern where God raised up a judge when the people cried out, Deborah was already functioning in this role when the call to liberate the Israelites came.

The Hebrew verb *šēpōṭ* here is a translator’s challenge since no single English word

can gather up the full meaning of what the Hebrew verb indicates was taking place. A helpful summation is found in the *Theological Wordbook to the Old Testament* (article # 244b, c)

The primary sense of *šāpaṭ* is to exercise the processes of government. Since, however, the ancients did not always divide the functions of government, as most modern governments do, between legislative, executive, and judicial functions (and departments) the common translation, “to judge,” misleads us. For, the word, judge, as *šāpaṭ* is usually translated, in modern English, means to exercise only the judicial function of government. Unless one wishes in a context of government—civil, religious, or otherwise—consistently to translate as “to govern or rule,” the interpreter must seek more specialized words to translate a word of such broad meaning in the modern world scene. For the participle NIV uses “leader.”

The meaning of *šāpaṭ* is further complicated by the fact that although the ancients knew full well what law—whether civil, religious, domestic or otherwise—was, they did not think of themselves as ruled by laws rather than by men as modern people like to suppose themselves to be. The centering of law, ruler-



ship, government in a man was deeply ingrained. "The administration of justice in all early eastern nations, as among the Arabs of the desert to this day, rests with the patriarchal seniors ... Such ... would have the requisite leisure, would be able to make their decisions respected, and through the wider intercourse of superior station would decide with fuller experience and riper reflection."

The location of this activity by Deborah is described as "between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim." As described in the IVP Bible Background Commentary, "Ramah, in the tribe of Benjamin, is identified with *er-Ram*, three miles north of Jerusalem, and Bethel (*Beitin*) is another four miles north along the road into Ephraimite territory. This well-traveled route would be a likely place for a judge or prophet to sit and hold court."

In the Song of Deborah, she is called "a mother of Israel" (5:7) and is given credit for bringing prosperity to the Israelite peasants through these conquests (5:7).

Verses 6-10 describe Deborah summoning Barak to meet her at her home near Bethel.

Barak is introduced as (v. 6):

1. "son of Abinoam"

The name "Barak" in Hebrew means "lightening." The Hebrew phrase בן־אבִינֵעָם here translated as "son of Abinoam" also means "father of pleasantness." Thus old "Lightening" came from a father whose disposition was the essence of pleasantness.

2. "from Kedesh in Naphtali"

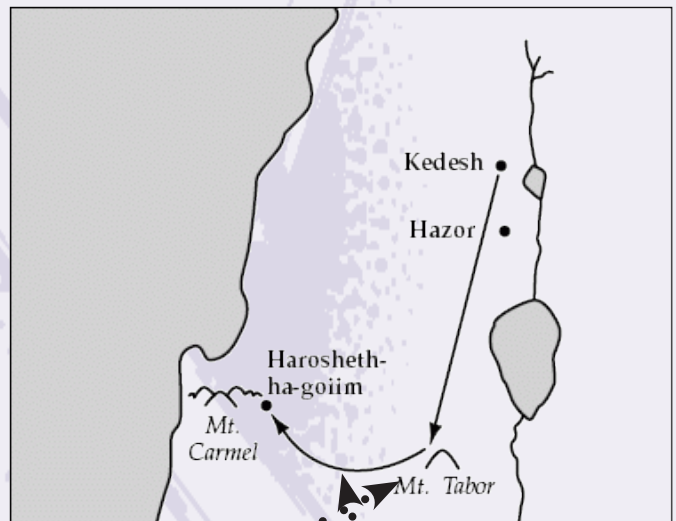
Barak's home was in the far northern part of upper Galilee, Kedesh, located in the territory of the tribe of Naphtali. He grew up not too far from where Jabin ruled at Hazor.

Once Barak came down to Bethel to visit Deborah, she gave him the challenge of his life (vv. 6b-7):

"The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, 'Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'"

Barak was to assemble an army of 10,000 Israelite soldiers from the two tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun. These two tribes occupied the territory just to the west of the Sea of Galilee from north of Kedesh down to the Mt. Tabor region. Logistically, these men would travel the least distance to arrive at their muster point on Tabor.

Barak agreed to do this on one condition: that Deborah accompany him. This she agreed to, although she told him that a woman would get the glory for killing Sisera rather than him. Evidently because of his inappropriate attitude toward her as God's spokesman. Together they traveled back to Barak's home in Kedesh where the troops were assembled. Although the narrative version indicates that troops came from just Naphtali and Zebulun,



the Song of Deborah (5:13-18) indicates that eight additional tribes provided soldiers as well.

When the Canaanite general Sisera learned of this he assembled troops and 900 chariots from Harosheth-ha-goim, his home, to a location not far from Tabor on the Wadi Kishon. Before engagement between the two armies began, “**And the Lord threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic before Barak**” (4:15). The text doesn’t indicate what this was, but in the Song of Deborah paints a dramatic vivid picture of the battle (5:19-22):

The kings came, they fought;
then fought the kings of Canaan,
at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
they got no spoils of silver.
The stars fought from heaven,
from their courses they fought against Sisera.
The torrent Kishon swept them away,
the onrushing torrent, the torrent Kishon.
March on, my soul, with might!
Then loud beat the horses’ hoofs
with the galloping, galloping of his steeds.

In the beginning part of the poem (5: 4-5), a huge

and the Israelites to begin going after them as they retreated westward toward Sisera’s home. The Canaanite army was completely destroyed (4:16): “**All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left.**” Sisera fled the scene on foot, not able to use his heavy chariot weighted down with iron protection because of the rains and flooding.

What should we make of this in regard to serving God in our world? The picture painted by the narrator is rather saturated with “blood and guts.” Is this just one of those OT stories of brutal warfare that has little or any relevance to Christians today? Certainly, the inclination to treat this way and then to dismiss any relevancy to our day is present. And to some extent, this is correct. Quite clearly, the principles of Jesus set forth in places such as the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7) dramatically turn Christians away from such brutality as took place here.

But arbitrarily dismissing the passage as having only historical appeal and little spiritual value could be missing some helpful insights present in this OT text.

One must not forget that within the Deuteronomic framing of this story, this battle between the Israelites and the Canaanites is portrayed as God’s way of delivering His people from two decades of severe oppression by these Canaanite peoples. Also, one must not lose sight of the fact that even this severe oppression of the Israelites was the unleashing of the “anger of the Lord” because of the evil that they had committed. From the Deuteronomistic perspective, the spiritual principles of sin - punishment - repentance - deliverance are foundational to all of God’s dealings with humanity, and with His people in particular. For the Jewish exiles who first read this finalized text, this story highlighted again that one doesn’t ever find a loophole around God’s



rain storm is described that came from the SE across the River Kishon into the Valley of Megiddo where it trapped Sisera’s armies by flooding the Kishon flowing through the valley:

Lord, when you went out from Seir,
when you marched from the region of Edom,
the earth trembled,
and the heavens poured,
the clouds indeed poured water.

The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai, before the Lord, the God of Israel.

The Canaanite armies panicked allowing Barak



laws. When an individual or a group of people commit sin, especially in turning their backs on God to pursue pagan deities, the sinners will be punished. That punishment comes both in this life, and most certainly in the life to come after death. This is made clear time and time again all through the pages of scripture. But also this

passage reinforces the spiritual principle of God’s graciousness to those who genuinely reach out to Him in repentance. His deliverance takes different forms but it always comes. God can be trusted!

b. Murder at Elon-bezaananim, vv. 17-24

LXX

17 καὶ Σισαρα ἔφυγεν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτοῦ εἰς σκηνὴν Ἰαηλ γυναικὸς Χαβερ ἑταίρου τοῦ Κιναίου ὅτι εἰρήνη ἦν ἀνά μέσον Ἰαβιν βασιλέως Ἀσωρ καὶ ἀνά μέσον οἴκου Χαβερ τοῦ Κιναίου 18 καὶ ἐξήλθεν Ἰαηλ εἰς συνάντησιν Σισαρα καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἔκκλινον κύριέ μου ἔκκλινον πρὸς με μὴ φόβου καὶ ἐξέκλινεν πρὸς αὐτὴν εἰς τὴν σκηνὴν καὶ περιέβαλεν αὐτὸν ἐπιβολαίῳ 19 καὶ εἶπεν Σισαρα πρὸς αὐτὴν πότισόν με δὴ μικρὸν ὕδωρ ὅτι ἐδίψησα καὶ ἤνοιξεν τὸν ἀσκὸν τοῦ γάλακτος καὶ ἐπότισεν αὐτὸν καὶ περιέβαλεν αὐτόν 20 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὴν Σισαρα στήθι δὴ ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ ἔσται ἐὰν ἀνὴρ ἔλθῃ πρὸς σέ καὶ ἐρωτήσῃ σε καὶ εἴπῃ εἰ ἔστιν ὧδε ἀνὴρ καὶ ἐρεῖς οὐκ ἔστιν 21 καὶ ἔλαβεν Ἰαηλ γυνὴ Χαβερ τὸν πάσσαλον τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ ἔθηκεν τὴν σφύραν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς καὶ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτόν ἐν κρυφῇ καὶ ἔπηξεν τὸν πάσσαλον ἐν τῷ κροτάφῳ αὐτοῦ καὶ διεξήλθεν ἐν τῇ γῇ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξεστῶς ἐσκοτώθη καὶ ἀπέθανεν 22 καὶ ἰδοὺ Βαρακ διώκων τὸν Σισαρα καὶ ἐξήλθεν Ἰαηλ εἰς συνάντησιν

NASB

17 Now Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my master, turn aside to me! Do not be afraid." And he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 He said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a bottle of milk and gave him a drink; then she covered him. 20 He said to her, "Stand in the doorway of the tent, and it shall be if anyone comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there anyone here?' that you shall say, 'No.'" 21 But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died. 22 And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple.

NRSV

17 Now Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. 20 He said to her, "Stand at the entrance of the tent, and if anybody comes and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.'" 21 But Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground -- he was lying fast asleep from weariness -- and he died. 22 Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went into her tent; and there was Sisera lying dead, with the tent peg in his temple. 23 So on that day God subdued King

NLT

17 Meanwhile, Sisera ran to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because Heber's family was on friendly terms with King Jabin of Hazor. 18 Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come into my tent, sir. Come in. Don't be afraid." So he went into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. 19 "Please give me some water," he said. "I'm thirsty." So she gave him some milk to drink and covered him again. 20 "Stand at the door of the tent," he told her. "If anybody comes and asks you if there is anyone here, say no." 21 But when Sisera fell asleep from exhaustion, Jael quietly crept up to him with a hammer and tent peg. Then she drove the tent peg through his temple and into the ground, and so he died. 22 When Barak came looking for Sisera, Jael went out to meet him. She said, "Come, and I will show you the man you are looking for." So he followed her into the tent and found Sisera lying there dead, with the tent peg through his temple. 23 So on that day Israel saw God subdue Jabin, the Canaanite king. 24 And from that time on Israel became stronger and stronger against King Jabin, un-

αὐτῷ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ
 δεῦρο καὶ δείξω σοι τὸν
 ἄνδρα ὃν σὺ ζητεῖς καὶ
 εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτήν καὶ
 ἰδοὺ Σισαρα ῥεριμμένος
 νεκρὸς καὶ ὁ πάσσαλος
 ἐν τῷ κροτάφῳ αὐτοῦ

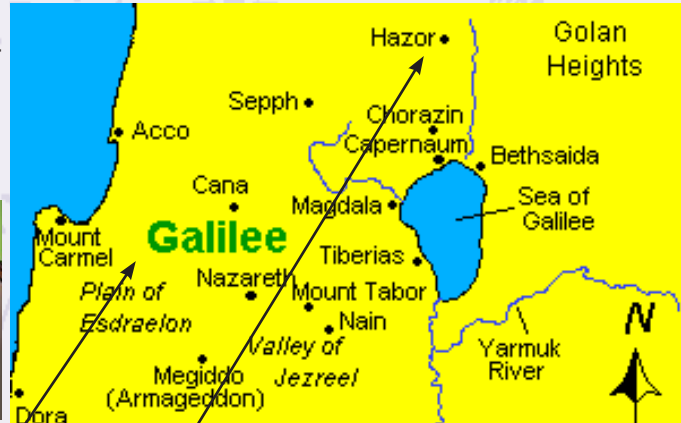
23 καὶ ἐτρόπωσεν ὁ
 θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ
 τὸν Ιαβιν βασιλέα Χά
 νααν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν
 υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ 24 καὶ
 ἐπορεύετο χεὶρ τῶν υἱῶ
 ν Ἰσραηλ πορευομένη καὶ
 σκληρυνομένη ἐπὶ Ιαβιν
 βασιλέα Χανααν ἕως οὐ
 ἐξωλέθρευσαν τὸν Ιαβιν
 βασιλέα Χανααν

23 So God subdued
 on that day Jabin the
 king of Canaan before
 the sons of Israel. 24
 The hand of the sons of
 Israel pressed heavier
 and heavier upon Jabin
 the king of Canaan, un-
 til they had destroyed
 Jabin the king of Ca-
 naan.



Jabin of Canaan before
 the Israelites. 24 Then
 the hand of the Israel-
 ites bore harder and
 harder on King Jabin of
 Canaan, until they de-
 stroyed King Jabin of

til they finally destroyed
 him.



Notes.

The second segment of the deliverance phase of the narrative centers on the death of the Canaanite general Sisera. His defeat on the battlefield was the major thrust in the previous unit. Now his ignominious death at the hands of a woman according to Deborah’s prediction occupies this second unit.

The story is of deception and murder in a very grizzly fashion. But this way of being killed only heightened the shame attached to Sisera’s name in his world.

The narrative divides itself into three basic scenes. 1. Jael welcomes Sisera into the tent of her husband (vv. 17-20). 2. She murders him (v. 21). 3. She reveals this to Barak and the Israelite soldiers who were pursuing Sisera (v. 22). Then, the text closes with a summation of the eventual total victory of God over Jabin the Canaanite ruler (vv. 23-24). This lays the foundation for the joyous celebration of victory in the Song of Deborah in chapter five.

1. Welcome to my tent. With Sisera’s army in disarray and under systematic destruction by Barak as they retreated westward from Mt. Tabor toward Harosheth-ha-goim, Sisera is forced to flee on foot to find safety and refuge. Quite naturally, he heads in the direction of Hazor where his king resides some 60 miles north east of his home where Barak’s armies are headed. How long it took him to get to the northern region is not mentioned, nor is it important to the story. The narrators telescope the accounts into quickly passing scenes in order to heighten their point of Sisera’s death.

Sisera manages to get into the general vicinity of Hazor when he comes upon the tent of Heber the Kenite at Elon-bezaananim near Kedesh, some 10 miles north of Hazor. Ironically Kedesh is Barak’s home. Thus the story takes on some interesting nuances. Sisera will die near Barak’s home, which would have brought special glory to Barak. But Barak doesn’t get the glory of ridding Israel of a major enemy near his home. Instead, a non-Israelite woman accomplishes this deed, robbing Barak of glory as a successful military commander. But Sisera is killed in the “back yard” of his king’s seat of power at Hazor, underscoring how vulnerable Jabin has become to the revitalized Israelite army now under Barak’s leadership.

In splicing the Deborah and Jael stories together, the narrators hint at things to come in the Jael section with the declaration in verse 11: “Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites, that is, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had encamped as far away as Elon-bezaananim, which is near Kedesh.” This almost parenthetical insertion in the battle story, vv. 5-16, takes pains to let us know the location of Heber and his identity as a Kenite. The ethnic connection to Israel is traced back to Moses’ father-in-law Hobab. This detail becomes necessary because in 1:16 indicates the Kenites settled in the far southern region of Palestine as they migrated into Canaan on friendly terms with the Israelites: “The descendants of Hobab the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah

from the city of palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negeb near Arad. Then they went and settled with the Amalekites." Heber, as the text indicates, had migrated away from the rest of the Kenites in the south and followed his herds as far north as Elon-bezaananim near Barak's home at Kedesh in the far northern part of ancient Palestine.

But we are also alerted to why Sisera would risk taking refuge with a Kenite by the statement in v. 17: "for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite." Although friendly with the Israelites, Heber had managed to establish friendly relations with the dominating power in northern Palestine, Jabin the Canaanite king. As a migrating herdsman, Heber posed little or no danger to Jabin and thus he was willing to allow this shepherd with his extended family to graze the more fertile pasture lands in northern Palestine.

When Sisera came upon Heber's camp, Heber's wife came outside the tent to meet him. In the absence of her husband, she became the official greeter of strangers. Very specific customs of hospitality prevailed in ancient Palestine across ethnic lines. When a stranger was invited inside the clan leader's tent, the clan assumed responsibility for the stranger's safety and comfort. Normally, he would be offered food and drink as a part of the welcoming custom.

Jael invited Sisera into her husband's tent. She offered cover to make him more comfortable. Because the exact meaning of the Hebrew word translated as 'rug' is unclear, we can't be sure of what she offered him for cover. But her hospitality reassured Sisera that he was in a safe place. When he asked her for water, she went beyond his request and provided him goat's milk to drink, giving him even more reassurance. He felt safe enough to take a nap, and asked Jael to stand at the entrance to the tent to keep enemies from finding him. This was a workable request in that culture since forced entry into the harem of an ancient sheik would have provoked war. So Sisera, confident of his safety, drifted into a sound sleep.

2. Bad mistake. When Sisera had fallen into a deep sleep from the exhaustion of fleeing Barak's army, Jael determined to kill him. By then she knew that he was the most powerful military general among the Canaanites. Perhaps, she knew that he was fleeing the Israelite forces. How many details about Sisera's circumstance she knew isn't given.

Thus, we are only left to speculate about her motivation for killing Sisera. But the 'why' question is more a modern western cultural concern, rather than an ancient Jewish one.

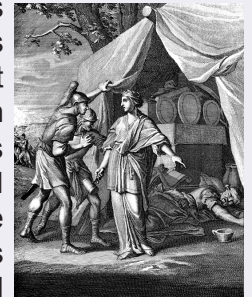
Her possible motives were considered irrelevant to the Hebrew narrators in telling the story. For them, her action was both heroic and a fulfillment of Deborah's prophecy in 1:9, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

Thus we are forced to see a deeper divine providential dynamic going on in the background. God was using the actions of humans to complete His plan to deliver His people from oppression by these Canaanites. And He had the ability to use a non-Jewish woman's actions as a part of that plan.

3. Here's your enemy. Once Jael had driven the wooden tent stake through Sisera's head pinning it to the ground, the narrative indicates that Barak arrived with his soldiers in hot pursuit of Sisera. Jael went out to meet him and invited him into her tent to show Barak his dead enemy. So Barak entered and saw Sisera laying dead on the floor inside the tent. His enemy was dead, but Barak had been robbed of the glory coming from having personally killed the leader of his enemies.

Mopping up. Verses 23-24 indicate that "God subdued King Jabin" on the day of Sisera's execution. This proved to be another decisive turning point that gave the Israelites the needed momentum to finish off Jabin himself at his palace in the nearby Hazor.

Wow! Killings of thousands of soldiers and a grizzly murder by a woman no less! Any worthwhile lessons for us to take home with us? In all honesty, I don't see a whole lot. But just to know that God does take care of His people. And that when we are oppressed as His children, our God will take vengeance on our enemies. And He has amazing abilities to work in unusual ways through human actions in order to carry out His intentions. For the Israelites and later Jews this was the major lesson to be learned from this story. And I suspect it remains so for us as God's new covenant people as well.



LXX

1 καὶ προσέθεντο οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραηλ ποιῆσαι τὸ ποιηρὸν ἐνώπιον κυρίου καὶ Ἀωδ ἀπέθανεν 2 καὶ ἀπέδοτο αὐτοὺς κύριος ἐν χειρὶ Ἰαβιν βασιλέως Χανααν ὃς ἐβασίλευσεν ἐν Ἀσωρ καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ Σῖσαρα καὶ αὐτὸς κατώκει ἐν Ἀρισωθ τῶν ἐθνῶν 3 καὶ ἐέκραξαν οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραηλ πρὸς κύριον ὅτι ἐννακόσια ἄρματα σιδηρᾶ ἦν αὐτῷ καὶ αὐτὸς ἔθλιψεν τὸν Ἰσραηλ κατὰ κράτος εἴκοσι ἔτη 4 καὶ Δεββωρα γυνὴ προφήτις γυνὴ Λαφιῶθ αὐτὴ ἔκρινεν τὸν Ἰσραηλ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ 5 καὶ αὐτὴ ἐκάθητο ὑπὸ φοίνικα Δεββωρα ἀνὰ μέσον τῆς Ραμα καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῆς Βαιθηλ ἐν τῷ ὄρει Ἐφραιμ καὶ ἀνέβαινον πρὸς αὐτὴν οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραηλ εἰς κρίσιν 6 καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Δεββωρα καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τὸν Βαρακ υἱὸν Ἀβινεεμ ἐκ Καδης Νεφθαλι καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν οὐχὶ ἐνετείλατο κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ σοὶ καὶ ἀπελεύση εἰς ὄρος Θαβωρ καὶ λήμψη μετὰ σεαυτοῦ δέκα χιλιάδας ἀνδρῶν ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν Νεφθαλι καὶ ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν Ζαβουλων 7 καὶ ἐπάξω πρὸς σὲ εἰς τὸν χειμάρρουν Κισων τὸν Σισαρα ἄρχοντα τῆς δυνάμεως Ἰαβιν καὶ τὰ ἄρματα αὐτοῦ καὶ

NASB

1 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud died. 2 And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. 3 The sons of Israel cried to the LORD; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years. 4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6 Now she sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, "Behold, the LORD, the God of Israel, has commanded, 'Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. 7 'I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many *troops* to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your hand.' " 8 Then Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." 9 She said, "I

NRSV

1 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. 2 So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim. 3 Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly twenty years. 4 At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. 5 She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. 6 She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, "Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. 7 I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand.'" 8 Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will nevertheless, the road

NLT

1 After Ehud's death, the Israelites again did what was evil in the LORD's sight. 2 So the LORD handed them over to King Jabin of Hazor, a Canaanite king. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-haggoyim. 3 Sisera, who had nine hundred iron chariots, ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD for help. 4 Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophet who had become a judge in Israel. 5 She would hold court under the Palm of Deborah, which stood between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to settle their disputes. 6 One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam, who lived in Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. She said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: Assemble ten thousand warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor. 7 I will lure Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him." 8 Barak told her, "I will go, but only if you go with me!" 9 "Very well," she replied, "I will go with you. But since you have made this choice, you

τὸ πλῆθος αὐτοῦ καὶ παραδώσω αὐτὸν εἰς τὰς χεῖράς σου 8 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὴν Βαρακ ἔὰν πορευθῆς μετ' ἐμοῦ πορεύσομαι καὶ ἔὰν μὴ πορευθῆς οὐ πορεύσομαι ὅτι οὐκ οἶδα τὴν ἡμέραν ἐν ἣ εὐδοοῖ τὸν ἄγγελον κύριος μετ' ἐμοῦ 9 καὶ εἶπεν πορευομένη πορεύσομαι μετὰ σοῦ πλὴν γίνωσκε ὅτι οὐκ ἔσται τὸ προτέρημά σου ἐπὶ τὴν ὁδὸν ἣν σὺ πορεύῃ ὅτι ἐν χειρὶ γυναικὸς ἀποδώσεται κύριος τὸν Σισαρα καὶ ἀνέστη Δεββωρα καὶ ἐπορεύθη μετὰ Βαρακ ἐκ Καδης 10 καὶ ἐβόησεν Βαρακ τὸν Ζαβουλων καὶ τὸν Νεφθαλι ἐκ Καδης καὶ ἀνέβησαν κατὰ πόδας αὐτοῦ δέκα χιλιάδες ἀνδρῶν καὶ ἀνέβη μετ' αὐτοῦ Δεββωρα 11 καὶ Χαβερ ὁ Κιναῖος ἐχωρίσθη ἀπὸ Καινα ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰωβαβ γαμβροῦ Μωυσῆ καὶ ἔπηξεν τὴν σκηπὴν αὐτοῦ ἕως δρυὸς πλεονεκτούντων ἣ ἐδτιν ἐχόμενα Κεδες 12 καὶ ἀνηγγέλη Σισαρα ὅτι ἀνέβη Βαρακ υἱὸς Ἀβινεεμ εἰς ὄρος Θαβωρ 13 καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Σισαρα πάντα τὰ ἄρματα αὐτοῦ ἐννακόσια ἄρματα σιδηρᾶ καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν τὸν μετ' αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ Ἀρισωθ τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς τὸν χειμάρρον Κισων 14 καὶ εἶπεν Δεββωρα πρὸς Βαρακ ἀνάστηθι ὅτι αὕτη ἡ

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." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together to Kedesh, and ten thousand men went up with him; Deborah also went up with him. 11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated himself from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaananim, which is near Kedesh. 12 Then they told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. 13 Sisera called together all his chariots, nine hundred iron chariots, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the river Kishon. 14 Deborah said to Barak, "Arise! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hands; behold, the LORD has gone out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. 15 The LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on

on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went up with him. 11 Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the other Kenites, that is, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had encamped as far away as Elon-bezaananim, which is near Kedesh. 12 When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13 Sisera called out all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the troops who were with him, from Harosheth-hagoyim to the Wadi Kishon. 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day on which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. The Lord is indeed going out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him. 15 And the Lord threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into a panic before Barak; Sisera got down from his chariot and fled away on foot, 16 while Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim. All the army of

will receive no honor. For the LORD's victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 At Kedesh, Barak called together the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand warriors marched up with him. Deborah also marched with them. 11 Now Heber the Kenite, a descendant of Moses' brother-in-law Hobab, had moved away from the other members of his tribe and pitched his tent by the Oak of Zaananim, near Kedesh. 12 When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, 13 he called for all nine hundred of his iron chariots and all of his warriors, and they marched from Harosheth-hagoyim to the Kishon River. 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Get ready! Today the LORD will give you victory over Sisera, for the LORD is marching ahead of you." So Barak led his ten thousand warriors down the slopes of Mount Tabor into battle. 15 When Barak attacked, the LORD threw Sisera and all his charioteers and warriors into a panic. Then Sisera leaped down from his chariot and escaped on foot. 16 Barak chased the enemy and their chariots all the way to Harosheth-hagoyim, killing all of

ἡμέρα ἐν ᾗ παρέδωκεν κύριος τὸν Σισαρα ἐν τῇ χειρὶ σου ὅτι κύριος ἐξελεύσεται ἔμπροσθέν σου καὶ κατέβη Βαρακ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους Θαβωρ καὶ δέκα χιλιάδες ἀνδρῶν ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ 15 καὶ ἐξέστησεν κύριος τὸν Σισαρα καὶ πάντα τὰ ἄρματα αὐτοῦ καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν παρεμβολὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν στόματι ῥομφαίας ἐνώπιον Βαρακ καὶ κατέβη Σισαρα ἐπάνωθεν τοῦ ἄρματος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔφυγεν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτοῦ 16 καὶ Βαρακ διώκων ὀπίσω τῶν ἀρμάτων καὶ ὀπίσω τῆς παρεμβολῆς ἕως Αρισωθ τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ ἔπεσεν πᾶσα παρεμβολὴ Σισαρα ἐν στόματι ῥομφαίας οὐ κατελείφθη ἕως ἐνός

17 καὶ Σισαρα ἔφυγεν τοῖς ποσὶν αὐτοῦ εἰς σκηνὴν Ἰαηλ γυναικὸς Χαβερ ἑταίρου τοῦ Κιναίου ὅτι εἰρήνη ἦν ἀνὰ μέσον Ἰαβιν βασιλέως Ἀσωρ καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον οἴκου Χαβερ τοῦ Κιναίου 18 καὶ ἐξῆλθεν Ἰαηλ εἰς συνάντησιν Σισαρα καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ τῷ ἔκκλινον κύριέ μου ἔκκλινον πρὸς με μὴ φόβου καὶ ἐξέκλινεν πρὸς αὐτὴν εἰς τὴν σκηνὴν καὶ περιέβαλεν αὐτὸν ἐπιβολαίῳ 19 καὶ εἶπεν Σισαρα πρὸς αὐτὴν πότισόν με δὴ μικρὸν ὕδωρ ὅτι ἐδίψησα καὶ ἤνοιξεν τὸν ἀσκὸν τοῦ γάλακτος καὶ ἐπότισεν

foot. 16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left.

17 Now Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my master, turn aside to me! Do not be afraid." And he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 He said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a bottle of milk and gave him a drink; then she covered him. 20 He said to her, "Stand in the doorway of the tent, and it shall be if anyone comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there anyone here?' that you shall say, 'No.'" 21 But Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and seized a hammer in her hand, and went secretly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went through into the ground; for he was sound asleep and exhausted. So he died. 22 And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you

Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left.

17 Now Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the clan of Heber the Kenite. 18 Jael came out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; have no fear." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug. 19 Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink; for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him. 20 He said to her, "Stand at the entrance of the tent, and if anybody comes and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.'" 21 But Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground -- he was lying fast asleep from weariness -- and he died. 22 Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went into her tent; and there was Sisera lying dead, with the tent peg in his temple. 23 So on that day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. 24

Sisera's warriors. Not a single one was left alive.

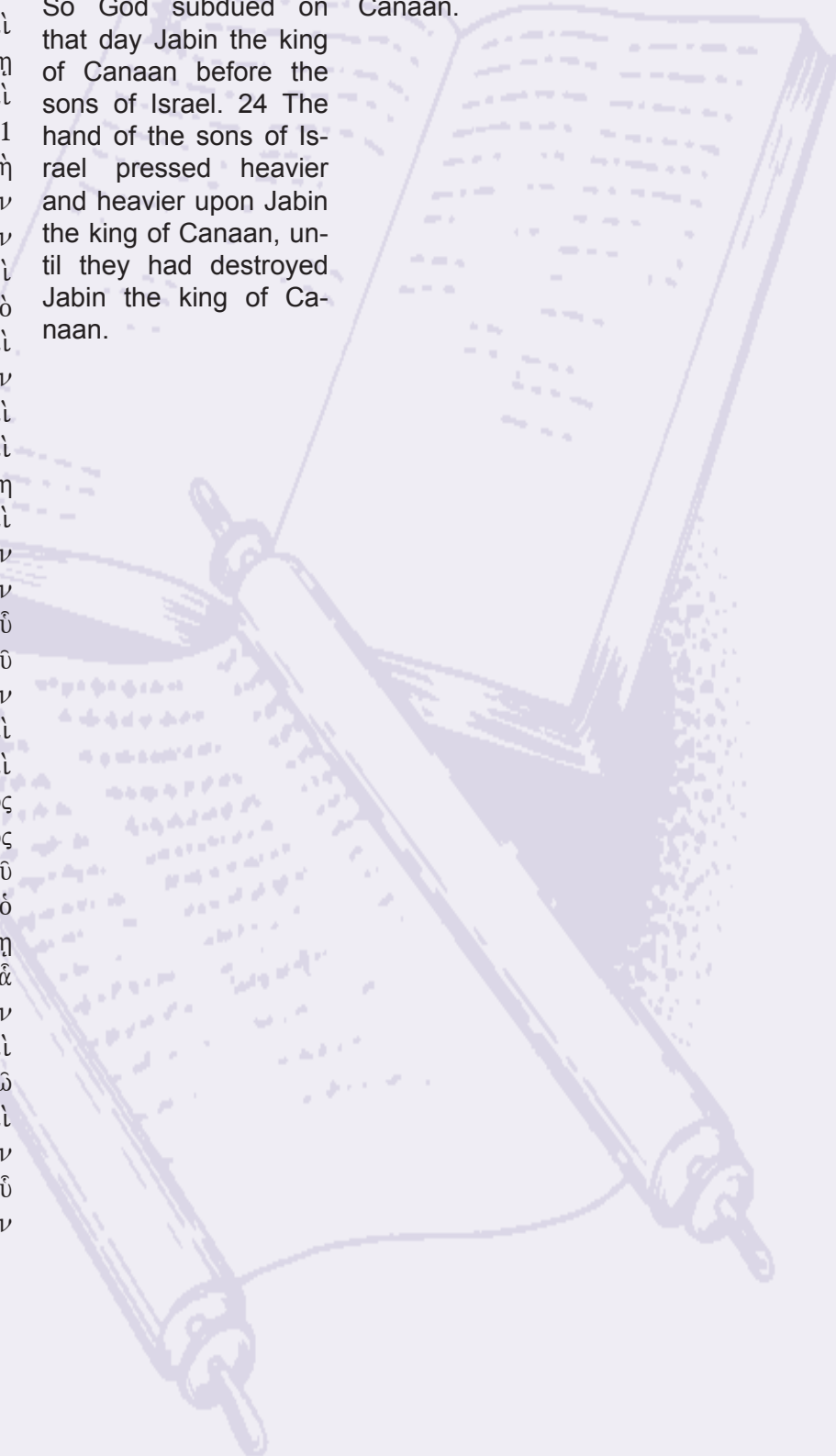
17 Meanwhile, Sisera ran to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because Heber's family was on friendly terms with King Jabin of Hazor. 18 Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Come into my tent, sir. Come in. Don't be afraid." So he went into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. 19 "Please give me some water," he said. "I'm thirsty." So she gave him some milk to drink and covered him again. 20 "Stand at the door of the tent," he told her. "If anybody comes and asks you if there is anyone here, say no." 21 But when Sisera fell asleep from exhaustion, Jael quietly crept up to him with a hammer and tent peg. Then she drove the tent peg through his temple and into the ground, and so he died. 22 When Barak came looking for Sisera, Jael went out to meet him. She said, "Come, and I will show you the man you are looking for." So he followed her into the tent and found Sisera lying there dead, with the tent peg through his temple. 23 So on that day Israel saw God subdue Jabin, the Canaanite king. 24 And from that time on Israel became stronger and stronger against King Jabin, until they fi-

αὐτὸν καὶ περιέβαλεν αὐτόν 20 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτήν Σισαρα στήθι δὴ ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ ἔσται ἐὰν ἀνὴρ ἔλθῃ πρὸς σὲ καὶ ἐρωτήσῃ σε καὶ εἴπῃ εἰ ἔστιν ὧδε ἀνὴρ καὶ ἐρεῖς οὐκ ἔστιν 21 καὶ ἔλαβεν Ἰαηλ γυνὴ Χαβερ τὸν πάσσαλον τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ ἔθηκεν τὴν σφύραν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτῆς καὶ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν κρυφῇ καὶ ἔπηξεν τὸν πάσσαλον ἐν τῷ κροτάφῳ αὐτοῦ καὶ διεξῆλθεν ἐν τῇ γῇ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐξεστῶς ἐσκοτώθη καὶ ἀπέθανεν 22 καὶ ἰδοὺ Βαρακ διώκων τὸν Σισαρα καὶ ἐξῆλθεν Ἰαηλ εἰς συνάντησιν αὐτῷ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ δεῦρο καὶ δείξω σοι τὸν ἄνδρα ὃν σὺ ζητεῖς καὶ εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς αὐτήν καὶ ἰδοὺ Σισαρα ῥεριμμένος νεκρὸς καὶ ὁ πάσσαλος ἐν τῷ κροτάφῳ αὐτοῦ 23 καὶ ἐτρόπωσε ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ τὸν Ἰαβιν βασιλέα Χανανααν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ 24 καὶ ἐπορεύετο χεὶρ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ πορευομένη καὶ σκληρυνομένη ἐπὶ Ἰαβιν βασιλέα Χανανααν ἕως οὗ ἐξωλέθρευσαν τὸν Ἰαβιν βασιλέα Χανανααν

are seeking.” And he entered with her, and behold Sisera was lying dead with the tent peg in his temple. 23 So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel. 24 The hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier upon Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin the king of Canaan.

Then the hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on King Jabin of Canaan, until they destroyed King Jabin of Canaan.

nally destroyed him.



WTT Judges 4:1 וַיִּסְפוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַרַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה
 וַאֲהוּד מֵת² וַיִּמְכְּרֵם יְהוָה בְּיַד יָבִין מֶלֶךְ־כְּנָעַן אֲשֶׁר מֶלֶךְ
 בְּחָצוֹר וְשֶׁר־צָבָאוּ סִיסְרָא וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּחַרְשַׁת הַגּוֹזִים:
³ וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְהוָה כִּי תָשַׁע מְאוֹת רֶכֶב־בְּרִזְלִי
 לוֹ וְהוּא לַחֵץ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחֻזְקָה עֲשָׂרִים שָׁנָה: ס
⁴ וְדְבוּרָה אִשָּׁה נְבִיאָה אֲשֶׁת לַפִּידוֹת הִיא שֹׁפֵטָה
 אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּעַת הַהִיא:
⁵ וְהִיא יוֹשֶׁבֶת תַּחַת־תְּמָר דְּבוּרָה בֵּין הַרְמָה וּבֵין בֵּית־אֵל
 בְּהַר אַפְרָיִם וַיַּעֲלוּ אֵלֶיהָ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפָּט:
⁶ וַתִּשְׁלַח וַתִּקְרָא לְבָרֵךְ בֶּן־אֲבִינֵעַם מִקְדָּשׁ נִפְתָּלִי וַתֹּאמֶר
 אֵלָיו הֲלֹא צוּהָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְךָ וּנְמִשְׁכַּתְּ בְּהַר
 תְּבוֹר וּלְקַחְתָּ עִמָּךְ עֲשָׂרַת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי נִפְתָּלִי וּמִבְּנֵי
 זְבֻלוֹן:
⁷ וּנְמִשְׁכַּתִּי אֵלֶיךָ אֶל־נַחַל קִישׁוֹן אֶת־סִיסְרָא שֶׁר־צָבָא יָבִין
 וְאֶת־רֶכֶבוֹ וְאֶת־הַמּוֹנֵנוּ וְנִתְתִּיהוּ בְיָדְךָ:
⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ בָּרֵךְ אִם־תִּלְכִי עִמִּי וְהִלַּכְתִּי וְאִם־לֹא תִלְכִי
 עִמִּי לֹא אֵלֶיךָ:
⁹ וַתֹּאמֶר הֲלֹךְ אֵלֶיךָ עִמָּךְ אִפְסִי כִּי לֹא תִהְיֶה תַפְאֲרֹתְךָ
 עַל־הַדָּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אֲתָה הוֹלֵךְ כִּי בְיַד־אִשָּׁה יִמְכַר יְהוָה
 אֶת־סִיסְרָא וְתִקֵּם דְּבוּרָה וַתֵּלֶךְ עִם־בָּרֵךְ קָדְשָׁה:
¹⁰ וַיִּזְעַק בָּרֵךְ אֶת־זְבוּלוֹן וְאֶת־נִפְתָּלִי קָדְשָׁה וַיַּעַל בְּרַגְלָיו
 עֲשָׂרַת אֲלָפֵי אִישׁ וַתַּעַל עִמּוֹ דְּבוּרָה:
¹¹ וַחֲבֵר הַקִּינִי נִפְרָד מִקִּיֵּן מִבְּנֵי חֶבֶב חֲתָן מֹשֶׁה וַיֵּט אֹהֶלוֹ
 עַד־אֵלוֹן (בְּצַעֲנִים) [בְּצַעֲנַיִם] אֲשֶׁר אֶת־קָדְשׁ:
¹² וַיִּגְדּוּ לְסִיסְרָא כִּי עָלָה בָרֵךְ בֶּן־אֲבִינֵעַם הַר־תְּבוֹר: ס
¹³ וַיִּזְעַק סִיסְרָא אֶת־כָּל־רֶכְבוֹ תָשַׁע מְאוֹת רֶכֶב בְּרִזְלִי
 וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעָם אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ מִחַרְשַׁת הַגּוֹזִים אֶל־נַחַל קִישׁוֹן:
¹⁴ וַתֹּאמֶר דְּבוּרָה אֶל־בָּרֵךְ קוּם כִּי זֶה הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה
 אֶת־סִיסְרָא בְיָדְךָ הֲלֹא יְהוָה יֵצֵא לְפָנֶיךָ וַיִּרְדּוּ בָרֵךְ מִהַר
 תְּבוֹר וְעֲשָׂרַת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ אַחֲרָיו:

15 וַיְהִי־הֵם יְהוּה אֶת־סִסְרָא וְאֶת־כָּל־הַרֻכָב וְאֶת־כָּל־הַמַּחֲנֶה
לְפִי־חָרֵב לְפָנָי בְּרֹק וַיִּרְדּוּ סִסְרָא מֵעַל הַמַּרְכָּבָה וַיִּנְסוּ
בְּרִגְלָיו:

16 וּבְרֹק רִדָּף אַחֲרָי הַרֻכָב וְאַחֲרָי הַמַּחֲנֶה עַד חֲלֻשַׁת הַגּוֹיִם
וַיִּפֹּל כָּל־מַחֲנֶה סִסְרָא לְפִי־חָרֵב לֹא נִשְׁאַר עַד־אַחֵר:

17 וְסִסְרָא נָס בְּרִגְלָיו אֶל־אֶהֱל יַעֲל אִשֶׁת חֶבֶר הַקִּינִי כִּי
שְׁלוֹם בֵּין יִבְיָן מֶלֶךְ־חֲצוֹר וּבֵין בֵּית חֶבֶר הַקִּינִי:

18 וַתֵּצֵא יַעֲל לְקִרְאֵת סִסְרָא וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו סוּרָה אֲדֹנָי

סוּרָה אֵלָי אֶל־תִּירָא וַיִּסֹּר אֵלָיָהּ הָאֶהֱלָה וַתִּכְסֶהוּ בַשְּׂמִיכָה:

19 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיָהּ הִשְׁקִינִי־נָא מֵעֵט־מַיִם כִּי צִמָּאתִי וַתִּפְתָּח

אֶת־נְאוֹד הַחֵלֶב וַתִּשְׁקֶהוּ וַתִּכְסֶהוּ:

20 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיָהּ עֲמֹד פְּתַח הָאֶהֱל וְהִיָּה אִם־אִישׁ יָבוֹא

וְשִׁאלָךְ וְאָמַר הִישִׁיפָה אִישׁ וְאָמַרְתְּ אֵינִי:

21 וַתִּקַּח יַעֲל אִשֶׁת־חֶבֶר אֶת־יְתֵד הָאֶהֱל וַתִּשֶׂם אֶת־הַמַּקְבֵּת

בִּידָהּ וַתָּבוֹא אֵלָיו בְּלֹאט וַתִּתְקַע אֶת־הַיְתֵד בְּרִקְתּוֹ וַתִּצְנַח

בְּאָרֶץ וְהוּא־נִרְדָּם וַיַּעַף וַיָּמָת:

22 וַהֲנֶה בְּרֹק רִדָּף אֶת־סִסְרָא וַתֵּצֵא יַעֲל לְקִרְאֵתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר

לֹא לָךְ וְאַרְאֶךְ אֶת־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה מִבְּקֶשׁ וַיָּבֹא אֵלָיָהּ

וַהֲנֶה סִסְרָא נָפַל מֵת וְהַיְתֵד בְּרִקְתּוֹ:

23 וַיִּכְנַע אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת יִבְיָן מֶלֶךְ־כְּנָעַן לְפָנָי בְּנֵי

יִשְׂרָאֵל:

24 וַתִּלְךְ יָד בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל הַלּוֹךְ וְקִשָּׁה עַל יִבְיָן מֶלֶךְ־כְּנָעַן

עַד אֲשֶׁר הִכְרִיתוּ אֶת יִבְיָן מֶלֶךְ־כְּנָעַן: פ