



THE JUDGES

June 13, 2021
“Judge Deborah”

OPENING PRAYER

O Gracious God, as we embark to study this ancient and complex story from the Book of Judges, we open ourselves to learning and growing in our understanding of You. We thank you for the example of Deborah, a judge, prophet and leader, who listened carefully for your voice and acted with courage. Please show us areas of our own life where we have not been able to trust in You fully. Please give us increased trust and guidance for the days ahead.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:

Judges 4 (NRSV)

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-ha-goiim. 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 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 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-ha-goiim 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-ha-goiim. All the army of Sisera fell by the sword; no one was left.

Judges 4 (NRSV) [continued]

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

INTRODUCTION

Because they didn't fully trust God and so didn't fully obey God, Israel was living in the land God had promised, but alongside people who practiced despicable acts in their worship of false gods. When the people of Israel begin to experience distress because of their disobedience, they cry out to God, and God once again raises up a heroic spiritual leader. Deborah, a judge, prophet and leader, delivers Israel from the grip of King Jabin, with the help of the military leader, Barak, and a clever woman, Jael. Vocal and wise leaders can help turn us back to God if we are willing to listen.

QUESTIONS

- 1) Who is your favorite villain in a movie, book, or TV series? What makes them your favorite? What are his or her motivations?
- 2) *Read Judges 4:1-3.* What is the current situation in Israel? How is the cycle of disobedience reflected in their current state?
- 3) *Read Judges 4:6-7.* In Judges 4:6, Deborah sends for the military leader, Barak. She does not ask or plead, she simply sends for him with authority—an authority that comes from God. When God puts something on your heart to do, do you struggle with the words to say? Do you struggle with what people will think?
- 4) *Read Judges 4:8-10.* Deborah just ordered Barak to take 10,000 men into battle with a king, who has been oppressing them for 20 years, a king with 900 iron chariots! And yet, Barak does not sneer or even question whether Deborah had thought through all the consequences of her orders. He only responds, "If you will go with me, I will go." While his comment is often



Small Group Study Guide

interpreted as being cowardly, perhaps he wanted a strong person of faith with him? When have you wanted a strong person of faith along with you for the ride?

- 5) *Read Judges 4:11-16.* In what ways is God proven faithful to his promises in this passage?
- 6) *Read Judges 4:17-24.* We never learn Jael's motives in this story. What does it say about God, that God uses the actions of people for His purposes, regardless of their motives?

FINAL APPLICATION

Where do you feel God is calling you to lead spiritually – the home, the church, the community etc.?
What is one step you can take to be that spiritual leader?