

Canaanite Oppression (c. 1279 – c. 1259 BC)

Judges 4:1–3

- 1 The Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight after Ehud's death.
- 2 The LORD turned them over to King Jabin of Canaan, who ruled in Hazor. The general of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth Haggoyim.
- 3 The Israelites cried out for help to the LORD, because Sisera had nine hundred chariots with iron-rimmed wheels, and he cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years.

Rest Under Deborah and Barak (c. 1259 – c. 1219 BC)

Judges 4:4–5:31

Deborah as Judge

- 4:4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time.
- 5 She would sit under the Date Palm Tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the Ephraimite hill country. The Israelites would come up to her to have their disputes settled.
- 6 She summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali. She said to him, "Is it not true that the LORD God of Israel is commanding you? Go, march to Mount Tabor! Take with you ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun!
- 7 I will bring Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to you at the Kishon River, along with his chariots and huge army. I will hand him over to you."
- 8 Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go. But if you do not go with me, I will not go."
- 9 She said, "I will indeed go with you. But you will not gain fame on the expedition you are undertaking, for the LORD will turn Sisera over to a woman." Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh.

The Battle Between Barak and Sisera

- 10 Barak summoned men from Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. Ten thousand men followed him; Deborah went up with him as well.
- 11 Now Heber the Kenite had moved away from the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' father-in-law. He lived near the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh.
- 12 When Sisera heard that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor,
- 13 he ordered all his chariotry—nine hundred chariots with iron-rimmed wheels—and all the troops he had with him to go from Harosheth-Haggoyim to the River Kishon.
- 14 Deborah said to Barak, "Spring into action, for this is the day the LORD is handing Sisera over to you! Has the LORD not taken the lead?" Barak quickly went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him.
- 15 The LORD routed Sisera, all his chariotry, and all his army with the edge of the sword. Sisera jumped out of his chariot and ran away on foot.
- 16 Now Barak chased the chariots and the army all the way to Harosheth Haggoyim. Sisera's whole army died by the edge of the sword; not even one survived!

Jael Kills Sisera

- 17 Now Sisera ran away on foot to the tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, for King Jabin of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite had made a peace treaty.
- 18 Jael came out to welcome Sisera. She said to him, "Stop and rest, my lord. Stop and rest with me. Don't be afraid." So Sisera stopped to rest in her tent, and she put a blanket over him.
- 19 He said to her, "Give me a little water to drink, because I'm thirsty." She opened a goatskin container of milk and gave him some milk to drink. Then she covered him up again.
- 20 He said to her, "Stand watch at the entrance to the tent. If anyone comes along and asks you, 'Is there a man here?' say 'No.'"
- 21 Then Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg in one hand and a hammer in the other. She crept up on him, drove the tent peg through his temple into the ground while he was asleep from exhaustion, and he died.
- 22 Now Barak was chasing Sisera. Jael went out to welcome him. She said to him, "Come here and I will show you the man you are searching for." He went with her into the tent, and there he saw Sisera sprawled out dead with the tent peg in his temple.
- 23 That day God humiliated King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites.
- 24 Israel's power continued to overwhelm King Jabin of Canaan until they did away with him.

Deborah and Barak's Song

5:1 On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this victory song:

- 2 "When the leaders took the lead in Israel,
When the people answered the call to war—

- Praise the LORD!
3 Hear, O kings!
Pay attention, O rulers!
I will sing to the LORD!
I will sing to the LORD God of Israel!
- 4 O LORD, when you departed from Seir,
when you marched from Edom's plains,
the earth shook, the heavens poured down,
the clouds poured down rain.
- 5 The mountains trembled before the LORD, the God of Sinai;
before the LORD God of Israel.
- 6 In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,
in the days of Jael caravans disappeared;
travelers had to go on winding side roads.
- 7 Warriors were scarce,
they were scarce in Israel,
until you arose, Deborah,
until you arose as a motherly protector in Israel.
- 8 God chose new leaders,
then fighters appeared in the city gates;
but, I swear, not a shield or spear could be found,
among forty military units in Israel.
- 9 My heart went out to Israel's leaders,
to the people who answered the call to war.
Praise the LORD!
- 10 You who ride on light-colored female donkeys,
who sit on saddle blankets,
you who walk on the road, pay attention!
- 11 Hear the sound of those who divide the sheep among the watering places;
there they tell of the Lord's victorious deeds,
the victorious deeds of his warriors in Israel.
Then the LORD's people went down to the city gates—
- 12 Wake up, wake up, Deborah!
Wake up, wake up, sing a song!
Get up, Barak!
Capture your prisoners of war, son of Abinoam!
- 13 Then the survivors came down to the mighty ones;
the LORD's people came down to me as warriors.
- 14 They came from Ephraim, who uprooted Amalek,
they follow after you, Benjamin, with your soldiers.
From Makir leaders came down,
from Zebulun came the ones who march carrying an officer's staff.
- 15 Issachar's leaders were with Deborah,
the men of Issachar supported Barak;
into the valley they were sent under Barak's command.
Among the clans of Reuben there was intense heart searching.
- 16 Why do you remain among the sheepfolds,
listening to the shepherds playing their pipes for their flocks?
As for the clans of Reuben—there was intense searching of heart.
- 17 Gilead stayed put beyond the Jordan River.
As for Dan—why did he seek temporary employment in the shipyards?
Asher remained on the seacoast,
he stayed by his harbors.
- 18 The men of Zebulun were not concerned about their lives;
Naphtali charged on to the battlefields.
- 19 Kings came, they fought;
the kings of Canaan fought,
at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo,

- but they took no silver as plunder.
- 20 From the sky the stars fought,
from their paths in the heavens they fought against Sisera.
- 21 The Kishon River carried them off;
the river confronted them—the Kishon River.
Step on the necks of the strong!
- 22 The horses' hooves pounded the ground;
the stallions galloped madly.
- 23 'Call judgment down on Meroz,' says the LORD's angelic messenger;
'Be sure to call judgment down on those who live there,
because they did not come to help in the LORD's battle,
to help in the LORD's battle against the warriors.'
- 24 The most rewarded of women should be Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite!
She should be the most rewarded of women who live in tents.
- 25 He asked for water,
and she gave him milk;
in a bowl fit for a king,
she served him curds.
- 26 Her left hand reached for the tent peg,
her right hand for the workmen's hammer.
She "hammered" Sisera,
she shattered his skull,
she smashed his head,
she drove the tent peg through his temple.
- 27 Between her feet he collapsed,
he fell limp and was lifeless;
between her feet he collapsed and fell limp,
in the spot where he collapsed,
there he fell limp—violently murdered!
- 28 Through the window she looked;
Sisera's mother cried out through the lattice:
'Why is his chariot so slow to return?
Why are the hoofbeats of his chariot-horses delayed?'
- 29 The wisest of her ladies answer;
indeed she even thinks to herself,
- 30 'No doubt they are gathering and dividing the plunder—
a girl or two for each man to rape!
Sisera is grabbing up colorful cloth,
he is grabbing up colorful embroidered cloth,
two pieces of colorful embroidered cloth,
for the neck of the plunderer!'
- 31 May all your enemies perish like this, O LORD!
But may those who love you shine
like the rising sun at its brightest!"

And the land had rest for forty years.

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