

Deborah, a Prophetess & Judge

(Judges 4-5)

by

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Many of the stories in the Bible are about men, aren't they? But there are also some very interesting stories about women, too. So today I thought I'd tell you a story that has two women in it. But there are also men in it as well -- and a battle! However, the women are the real "heroes" (rather, "heroines"!) of this story.

This true story can be found in the book of Judges in the Old Testament part of the Bible. It is between the stories of Ehud and Gideon that I've told you at other times. It is a story of something that really happened, and it happened over 3,000 years ago.

Now, before our story today takes place, the Lord had taken the children of Israel out of their slavery in Egypt, led them across the wilderness, and then to the land of Canaan (I've talked about that with you before, haven't I?). Yes, the Lord took them back to Canaan and gave them the land of Canaan just as He had promised. Of course, the Lord always keeps His promises, doesn't He?!

But then the children of Israel (later called the Jews) would sometimes forget the Lord and how good He had been to them. And then they would start worshipping idols. Why, that is not only very wicked, but it's also very silly, isn't it?! After all, an idol is just a thing; it can't do anything, can it?! And also, when the people started worshipping idols, they would also start being mean to each other, too.

When that would happen, the Lord would allow their enemies to come in and conquer them. (After all, if they wanted to worship an idol instead of the Lord, let the idol protect them -- which, of course, it couldn't do!) Well, after a while then, the Jews would realize how wicked they had been and would cry out to the Lord to forgive them. Then the Lord would send someone to deliver them from their enemies. We call this person a judge.

In our story today, the Jews had again started worshipping idols. Now there was a Canaanite king named Jabin, and Jabin was an enemy of the Jews. And the Lord let Jabin come in and conquer them. Jabin had a general whose name was Sisera, and Sisera seems to have pretty much ruled over the Jews for 20 years after he had conquered them, and he was very mean to them. But what could the Jews do about that? After all, Sisera had 900 iron chariots! (That would be sort of like having lots of tanks now.) It wasn't even safe for the Jews to walk along the big roads anymore. Instead, they used the little side roads.

Well, after a while, the children of Israel did the only thing they could do -- they cried out to the Lord! That was the only sensible thing to do, wasn't it? And the only thing that could really help them!

Now there was in Israel at that time a judge to whom the people would go when there was a problem. And this judge was a woman! So the first woman we're going to be talking about today is a judge, isn't she? Her name was Deborah, and she was a prophetess as well as a judge, and she was married and had children. And now after the Jews had cried out to the Lord, He gave Deborah a message. The Lord told Deborah how He would save the Jews from Sisera and his army.

So Deborah sent for a man named Barak, and she said to Barak, "The Lord God of Israel has ordered you to get together 10,000 men and to go to Mt Tabor."

Then Deborah told Barak, "And then the Lord God is going to have Sisera and his great big army and his chariots all come out to the river Kishon which is near Mt. Tabor. And then God will deliver them into your hand." That meant that the Lord would let Barak win over Sisera and his army and chariots.

But then it sounds as if Barak were afraid or at least not sure whether he should do this, because he said to Deborah, "If you'll go with me, I'll go; but if you won't go with me, I won't go."

So Deborah said, "All right. I'll go with you. But you won't get honor from this. The Lord is going to give General Sisera into the hand of a woman."

So Deborah got up and went with Barak. And Barak called together 10,000 of the Jewish men to come with him. Then Deborah and Barak and their little army went to Mt. Tabor, as the Lord had said for them to do.

Now, there was a man named Heber. He wasn't a Jew, but his people had been friends of the Jews. In fact, Heber's people were descended from Moses' father-in-law. Well, Heber had left his own people and had gone to live somewhere else, and Heber had made peace with Sisera, the enemy of the Jews. And Heber knew that Barak had this army together and that Barak had gone to Mt. Tabor. So Heber went and told Sisera about it, that Barak had gathered an army and was at Mt. Tabor.

Well, on hearing this, Sisera got all 900 of his iron chariots together, and he got his whole big army together, and he started out toward where Barak was, and they got near to the river Kishon.

Now, how could Barak with his much smaller army win against Sisera with all of those chariots and soldiers? Well, remember, the Lord God was on the side of Barak and the Jews, wasn't He? And later in the Bible it says, "If God be with us, who can be against us?" And God was with the children of Israel, the Jews! So how did God help them? Why, the Lord God sent a great, big rain storm!

But how would a big rain storm help Barak and his small army? Well, remember, they didn't have paved roads then as we have now, did they? No, all of the roads were just dirt. So, what would happen to those dirt roads as the rain came pelting down in torrents? Yes, the roads turned to

mud! Now, how easy would it be for a heavy iron chariot with its horses to move around in the mud? It wasn't! Why, the wheels of the chariots got stuck in the mud, and the horses just plunged around without being able to move the chariots! So the soldiers in the chariots got down out of their chariots, and they began running away! Yes, all of the enemy soldiers were running away! They could no longer depend on their chariots, and they were scared!

Well, Barak's army was still up on the mountain, and they were all on foot; they didn't have chariots. They could move around, couldn't they? Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! The Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand!"

So Barak and his men ran down Mt. Tabor and attacked General Sisera's army in the valley. And Barak and his little army then killed all of Sisera's big army as they were trying to run away!

But what about General Sisera himself? He had been in a chariot, of course, but his chariot couldn't move in all of that mud, either, could it? So Sisera got down out of his chariot, and he started running away, too. And since Sisera knew that Heber was his friend and that Heber lived near there, Sisera ran to where Heber had his tents.

Now, as Sisera came running up there, Heber's wife came out to meet him. Her name was Jael. Jael was by her tent, and she said to Sisera, "Come on in, sir. Don't be afraid."

So Sisera went into the tent. And Sisera was all tired from running, so he lay down, and Jael put a blanket over him. And Sisera said, "I'm thirsty. Please give me a little water to drink."

But instead of just water Jael brought Sisera some nice milk, and she put something like yogurt or cottage cheese in a beautiful dish and gave it to him to eat.

Then Sisera said to Jael, "Now, you stand there in the doorway of the tent, and if anyone comes and asks if there is any man in here, you tell him that there isn't."

Now, does that sound nice to you that Jael was helping wicked Sisera, the enemy of God's people? But wait! Let's see what happens next! Well, naturally Sisera was tired after all of that running, wasn't he? So he fell asleep.

Okay, then. Jael waited until Sisera was fast asleep, and then she took a tent peg in one hand and a hammer in the other hand, and she crept softly up to where Sisera was fast asleep. Then Jael put the tent peg up against Sisera's head -- and whack! Jael hit the tent peg hard with the hammer, nailing Sisera's head to the ground and killing him!! So she was on the side of God's people, the Jews, after all, wasn't she?!

Well, after a while, here comes Barak chasing after Sisera and trying to find him. Jael comes out to meet Barak, and she says to him, "Come in here, and I will show you the man you're looking for!" So Barak went into Jael's tent, and there lay Sisera -- all dead!

So that day the children of Israel with their little army won against their enemy's mighty army and its many iron chariots. And how were they able to do this? Yes, because the Lord was on their side. And Deborah and Barak sang a song praising the Lord and describing what had happened. After all, they had been able to win because the Lord sent the big rain which made all that mud so that Sisera's iron chariots couldn't move, hadn't they? (You can read this exciting song in the Bible.)

But to whom did the honor of killing Sisera go? Yes, to Jael. To a woman. Just as Deborah, God's prophetess, had said it would. But if Barak had just gone ahead and done what Deborah had told him to do in the first place, he would have had the honor himself, wouldn't he?

So that is the true story of 2 women who (with God's help) helped deliver the Jews from their enemies. First there was the judge/prophetess Deborah who went with Barak and his army, and then there was Jael who killed the enemy general. A woman got the honor, didn't she? Just as Deborah had said. Of course, whatever God has one of His prophets say comes true, doesn't it?

Yes, the Bible is full of God's prophesies. Some have already come true, but others haven't yet come true. But they will, won't they? Now, many, many of the prophesies in the Bible are about Jesus, aren't they? Why? Yes, because these prophesies tell about both the first time Jesus would come to earth and the second time Jesus would come to earth. And those are both very, very important events, aren't they?

The first time Jesus (the Son of God) came to earth because He loves us so much that He wanted to make a way for us someday to be able to be with Him forever. And how did He do that? That's right, Jesus, Who had done no sins at all, died for us on the cross, died for our sins. But 3 days later Jesus was alive again, was resurrected, wasn't He? And if we trust in the Lord Jesus to forgive our sins, He will. And then someday we can go to heaven and be with the Lord forever! How wonderful!

But the second time Jesus comes to earth hasn't happened yet, has it? No, but we know that He will come again, because God in the Bible says He will. And this time the Lord Jesus will come as a King to rule over the whole earth! And when He does, everyone who has trusted Him to forgive their sins will be with Him! Won't that be glorious?!

I hope you liked hearing this true story of these 2 women, Deborah and Jael. I liked telling it to you.