



In verse 13 what does Deborah do?

This is probably exactly why Barak wanted Deborah to go with him.

What did Deborah mean by "has not the Lord gone ahead of you?"

Who won the victory?



This is a common theme in the Bible God is the Divine Warrior who fights for his people. The victory is not because of numerical strength, tactics or leadership. Judges 5:8 as being ill-equipped for battle. The victory was because God fought for them.
The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name. Exodus 15:3

Judges 5 is a poem recording the victory. It is possible that it is older than Chapter 4 which may well have been written to give context to the poem.



According to Judges 5:21 cf 5:4 what happened?

What happens to chariots when it rains?

There are several warnings in Ancient Near East documents against the folly of using chariots in the rain. Because of this, we assume the weather was unexpected. It would also explain why Sisera abandoned his chariot and flees on foot. There are several accounts in the bible of commanders using chariots to escape a lost battle, they move fast.

How does this connect with Judges 4:15?



Barak forces the enemy back to where they came from.

When it says in verse 16, 'not a man was left' does not necessarily mean Siera's whole army was killed, it probably means that the whole army was scattered. The victory is total.

The poem of chapter 5 emphasises the willingness of the troupes to stand together and to fight despite the huge risks. The willingness or the men seems to contrast the reservations of Barak.



Analysis.

What did Israel need in order to cast off the oppression?

What did the army need?

Everyone had a part to play.



What did Deborah do?

What did Barak do?

What did God do?

How did Barak do?

How did Deborah do?



How is faith seen in this passage?

How is courage seen in this passage?

How is team seen in this passage?

What effect is this story intended to have on us?

In the end, Deborah and Barak made a great team. They worked together well. But the victory was not because of this.

God is part of the team. In contrast to Barak, Deborah always knew this.

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Deborah



Read Judges 4:1-3

What is the current state of Israel?

Why?

This fits the Deuteronomistic cycle that runs through the book – periods of obedience to God and freedom followed by disobedience and oppression.

These verses tell us that:

God punishes

God hears

God delivers.

In the midst of defeat and disobedience, there is hope.



Nine hundred chariots is an incredible number by the standards of the day. Chariots were expensive. They were used as strike platforms for archers, creating fear on the battlefield, they were also very good at running down any stray soldiers. We are being told that the Israelites are seriously outgunned. Hazor was a major city north of Galilee which we assume controlled the whole region at the time. The city was destroyed by Joshua as part of the northern campaign 100 years earlier, Joshua 11. Jabin is given as the king's name at the time. We assume this was a heredity title, like Caesar or Pharaoh.

The Canaanites lived in the valleys and the Israelites in the hill country. Obviously, agriculture is harder in the hills. It is likely the oppression is economic. Villages are being raided for their crops. The chariots may have been used to restrict the Israelites to the hills and prevent trade and communication. Judges 5:6.



What did they do?

What do you do when you face trouble?



Deborah

Read Judges 4:4-5

The account revolves around three delivers Deborah, Barak and Jael.

Who was Deborah?



Deborah is described as three things;

She is a prophet. Depending on how you count them there were 15 Judges in Israelite history. Only one other, Samuel the last and arguably greatest judge, is described as also being a prophet.

She is a judge, that is the leader over the nation or a part of the nation.

She is also a judge like Moses in that she resolves disputes between people Exodus 18:13. Again the only other judge of whom this is said was Samuel, 1 Samuel 7:16. It may have been part of the role of other judges too.



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How does she describe herself in Judges 5:7?

✓ Deborah means bee. But it comes from or sounds like the Hebrew word for 'word' (devar). This ties into with her being a prophet and visionary. It is Deborah that hears from God, who knows what to do and when to do it. It is Deborah that will give the command that ends with the liberation of the people.

? **Overall what picture do we get of Deborah?**
What does this passage tell us about the role of a prophet at this time in Israel's history?

Deborah is outstanding.

Do you have a problem with a woman being the leader of Israel?

! It is remarkable that several commentators refuse to acknowledge Deborah as a judge at all even though the Hebrew word for judge shophat is used of her, just because she was a woman. In the book of Judges, at the start of the book, when the nation is doing well, women are seen as strong leaders. By the end of the book when the nation is falling apart they are seen as objects of abuse. The role of women in the book of Judges is a barometer for the state of the nation.

Is there a lesson here?

If a woman could lead Israel at such a time then can women lead today?

X There is one thing that Deborah can't or won't do. That is to lead the troops into battle. To have been accepted the way she was we assume she was not young. The title 'mother in Israel' suggests maturity. Even if she was accepted as a military leader, which is doubtful, she was probably too old for the job.

Barak

▶ **Read Judges 4:6-10**

Barak means 'lightning'.

We know nothing about Barak or his preparedness for this role. We do not know his age, ability or standing in the nation. Leaders in Judges are often the most unlikely people. He could have been an existing leader or he could have been a total nobody.

What does Deborah tell Barak to do?

? **How would you describe Barak?**
Why did Barak want Deborah to go with him?

Usually, we take this as weakness on Barak's part, probably the result of fear.

What does Deborah have that he might need?

✓ The answer is a lot, she is a prophet, she has credibility, wisdom and the ability to hear from God. He probably sees her as representing God's presence on the battlefield. He also wants her to commit personally to a risky venture.

If you were Barak would you have asked Deborah to go with you?

Deborah criticises Barak's reluctance, why might she do this?

Maybe she sees this as a lack of faith. Maybe she does not take kindly to Barak not immediately doing what she tells him to. Maybe her age is an issue.

3 There are three characters in this account that deliver Israel. Each of them has a role to play and the victory does not work unless they all do their part. Deborah knows what her role is. She also knows what is not her role – going onto the battlefield. She knows God will give Barak the victory. She knows Barak does not need her, but Barak does not know this. It was a big ask to expect him too. Barak is nowhere near as clear about his role.

& She has heard from God, she is the prophet so for her, the issues are clear and simple. Barak has not heard from God and he has a very challenging job to do. Gideon also needs convincing.

Is this a bad thing?

? **When you have a vision how do you get other people to come on board?**
What allowances do you need to make for others inexperience or weakness?
Do you know what your role is?
Do you know what your role is not?

Barak did not know his role or his ability to fulfil it.

Do we sometimes/often/always do the same?

Just because you think you know your role or limitations does not mean you are right.

Deborah sees in Barak what he does not see in himself. We expect this of a prophet.

Do you think she is deliberately lifting him into leadership?

I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

? **How is team supposed to work?**
What helps it work?
What stops it from working?

Deborah wants Barak to go beyond what he thinks he is capable of.

When might this happen in church?

Someone once described Barak as "a guy called 'lighting' who seems none too quick, brave or brilliant."
Is this fair?

What prophecy or rebuke does Deborah give Barak in verse 9?

If you read the battle accounts of the First Testament you will discover that killing the opposing king, brought great honour.

! If you do not know the rest of the story you assume that the women who will get the honour for the victory is Deborah. The narrator is deliberately misleading us and setting us up for an unexpected twist.

+ Notice that after Deborah agrees to come, which she does quite quickly, two more times we are told that Deborah went with Barak, v9,10.
Notice also that Barak does not delay in assembling the army.

▶ **The Battle**
Read Judges 4 11

The thousand is a big army, but the location Deborah gives is classic chariot country. Barak must know this is a huge risk.

Tabor is an almost egg-shaped mountain that stands out from a broad valley just north of the valley of Jezreel plains. It is the traditional site of the Transfiguration. Battles often took place near landmarks like rivers or mountains.

Sisera is the commander of Jabin troupes. This is probably because Jabin was old. It is likely that he was a king in his own right who was allied to Jabin. Harosheth Haggoyim may have been his city.

In verse 12 Sisera hears that Barak has raised an army and goes out to meet him. (Commanders deployed scouts and intelligence officers as a matter of course). Here he waits for Barak to see what he will do.