

"Deborah's Song of Victory"

Judges 5:1-31

Introduction

1. This is the only song in the Book of Judges. It was sung by a woman - Deborah! Israel sang, under Moses, after the passing of the Red Sea (Ex. 15). Both songs are songs of victory. Here God used human instruments, whereas at the Red Sea, it was God's singular mighty power.

2. The song is filled with dramatic qualities. It is vivid and picturesque. There is brevity and compression, yet an amazing completeness. The contents of Judges 4 are repeated and complemented with an impetuous rapidity.

3. Let your heart engage itself in rapturous worship of the Lord as you study the song. You will learn the jubilation of Deborah and Israel over God's great victory against the Canaanites. Israel had the joy to "come to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (v. 23).

1. EXULTATION vv. 1-5.

a. By Deborah vv. 1-3.

Actually, the text indicates that Barak joined Deborah in this song (v. 1). The verb "sing praise" (v. 3) notes that there was an accompaniment of a stringed instrument. The singing was unto the Lord and not to men! "Avenging of Israel" is a phrase which seems to indicate "flowing locks" (cf. Num. 6:5; Ezek. 44:20). The idea is that the head was not shorn until victory was won (cf. Acts 18:18). The phrase is a parallel expression to "people willingly offered themselves" (vv. 2, 9). Kings and princes are invited to listen to the peon of praise to the Lord (v. 3).

b. About God vv. 4, 5.

References are made to Sinai and Edom as examples of God's march to victory. The earth, heavens, clouds, and mountains were all affected by His demonstrated power. He is declared to be the Lord God of Israel (vv. 3, 5).

2. DESOLATION vv. 6-9.

a. Dated v. 6.

Two persons are named: Shamgar and Jael. It was in the days of these historical persons that God gained the victory.

b. Described vv. 6-8.

The highways were unoccupied. This means that the Canaanites commanded and pillaged the mainroads, hence the travelling companies ceased. Travellers took the back roads. Villages were also affected. Proper military weapons were lacking. 40,000 troops were the total extent of soldiery throughout the entire land. They turned to idolatry in choosing new gods! It was indeed a sad state of affairs in the nation (cf. 4:1).

3. ACTIVATION

a. Under Deborah vv. 7, 9, 12, 13.

Some acute phrases are recorded: "until that I...." (v. 7). It was Deborah, "a mother in Israel," who finally came to grips with the problem (v. 7). It was she who had a "heart" (v. 9). She rose with a song (v. 12) and took the leadership in the nation (v. 13). This is a tremendous personal witness!

b. With volunteers vv. 9-11.

There were no conscriptions. It was all for those who really wanted to help! It was people who "offered willingly," (vv. 2, 9), who "remained" (v. 13), who "ride...sit...walk" (v. 10). Their praise would be sung far and near (v. 11). God still looks for this caliber of person. Those forced are never the quality desired!

c. From tribes vv. 14-18.

Representatives came to help from Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir (western Manasseh), Zebulon, Issachar (princes only), Zebulon, and Naphtali. Reuben gave thoughtful interest, but apparently never showed. Gilead

(eastern Manasseh), Dan, Asher, and Meroz (specific family) did not help. Judah, Simeon, and Gad are not even mentioned! Those who came, came "to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (v. 23).

4. DESTRUCTION vv. 19-30.

a. In the field vv. 19-22.

It was "kings" who came to fight. They battled at the "waters of Megiddo" (Kishon). The heavens gave their help for Israel, for the stars aided the troops of Barak. Kishon joined in flooding so as to impede the chariots of Sisera. The Hebrew provides an onomatopoeitic description of the galloping flight of the enemy's cavalry (v. 22). The strong ones galloped away! The Israelite troops were faint, but pursued (v. 21b). They fought the battle without resorting to gain (v. 19).

b. In the tent vv. 24-27.

This amazing account of Jael's killing of Sisera is dramatic. Although many may be prone to discredit the action, it is obvious that those who knew best (the contemporaries) acknowledged this as a tremendous feat of bravery! They knew all the circumstances and we stand with them. Her conduct was honorable and regular. In the end, Sisera fell dead (v. 27). Nothing is said about Jabin. The key to the entire battle was Sisera.

c. In the home vv. 28-30.

Sisera's mother hoped in vain for victory. Her attendants encouraged her in her false hopes (v. 30). It was all vanity. This touching thought suggests that the mother joined Sisera in his action against Israel.

Conclusion Although it is not known who wrote this book, it may well have been Samuel. So the Talmud says. If it was Samuel, the thought expressed in the final verse is his (v. 31). As for God's enemies--let them perish. So be it now and forever. As for those who truly love the Lord, let them shine like the sun in its strength! So be it now and forever! It was God who then gave Israel 40 years of peace! God grant such to all of His own.