

The Book of
JUDGES

Testing the Heart of God's Children



Conditional Obedience

Judges 4:1-24

Lesson 4

Introduction

After 80 years, the longest period of peace recorded in the Book of Judges, the leadership of Ehud came to an end. Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. Two hundred years earlier, God delivered Israel from the slavery of Egypt. Now, He “sold” them into the hands of the Canaanites as punishment for their sins. Canaan was made up a number of city-states, each ruled by a king. “Jabin” was the name (or title) of the King of Hazor. He was also called “King of Canaan”, which suggests that he was the head of a confederacy of kings. Hazor was the primary stronghold, about 8 ½ miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Joshua had burned Hazor (Josh. 11:13), but the Canaanites had rebuilt it and occupied it.

Sisera the captain of Jabin’s army had nine hundred chariots of iron; he mightily oppressed the children of Israel for twenty years. Once again, Israel cried out to God to relieve their suffering. Chapter 4 tells us that Deborah the prophetess was judging Israel at that time in the mountains of Ephraim. In a male dominated society, the fact that a woman was Israel’s judge suggests that there may have been no men who would step up. Through Deborah, God provided explicit and strategic directions for Israel’s success in defeating their enemy. Along with His deliverance, was His promise to go with them. The Canaanites depended on 900 iron chariots, the Israelites depended on the Lord.

When summoned to deploy his troops, Barak’s response was conditionally based on Deborah’s accompanying him. Was it evidence of unbelief? Or was it precaution in case he should need a word from the Lord? Scripture doesn’t tell us, but because of his response, God gave the glory of victory to Jael, the wife of a Kenite. It is significant though, that Barak is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:32, so we know he acted on the faith that he had.

Mt. Tabor, the place of the impending battle, rises to 1,300 ft. It was strategically located at the juncture of the tribal areas of Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar, in the NE part of the Jezreel Valley, not far from the Kishon River. Judges 5:20-22 tells us that the Lord sent a fierce rainstorm that would make the Kishon River overflow and turn the battlefield into a sea of mud. God showed Himself to be bigger than Baal, the god of the storm, sending the enemy into a panic.



LOOKING FOR GOLD - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The first step in mining for gold is getting the lay of the land. **Carefully observe the text** looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. **Mark your text** looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. Look for answers to, Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

Setting the scene: Read Judges 5:19-31 for more insight into the battle with Sisera. Use an atlas or other sources to place the cities in the appropriate place on your map. Pay attention to who's inheritance they are occupying.

Judges 4:1-10

1 When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. 2 So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. 3 And the children of Israel cried out to the Lord; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel.

4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6 Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; 7 and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand'?"

8 And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!"

9 So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.

Judges 4:17-24

17 However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.

19 Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him. 20 And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.'"

21 Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. 22 And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man whom you seek." And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

23 So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. 24 And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.



BOILING IT DOWN – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



What **lesson** can I draw from my observations?

State each lesson in a simple sentence (aim for 10 words or less).

Judges 4:1-10 _____

Judges 4:11-16 _____

Judges 4:17-24 _____



REFINED AS GOLD - HOW CAN I APPLY IT?

How should it change me? Ask yourself, "What **course of action** do I need to take to apply each lesson?" (aim for 10 words or less)

Judges 4:1-10 _____

Judges 4:11-16 _____

Judges 4:17-24 _____

CHALLENGE: Use cross-references to find correlating scripture that backs up a main point of the chapter. Summarize your findings in your own words..



STORING UP YOUR TREASURE . . .

What was God's command? v.6-7

What condition did Barak place on his obedience? v.8

What was the result of Barak's conditional response? v.9

How did seeing God fulfill His prophecy with their own eyes affect Israel?

v.23-24

What words or phrases are repeated?

CHECKING FOR CLARITY: See if you can boil down the meaning of **each section** into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you catch the vision?

Judges 4:1-10 _____
Judges 4:11-16 _____
Judges 4:17-24 _____

BARS OF GOLD: State the main **point** of the passage in the form of a title.

FLEX YOUR MUSCLES: Can you discover an N.T. example of this O.T. truth?



HIDE YOUR TREASURE IN YOUR HEART

For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up against me. Ps 18:39

Radiating His Truth . . .

We know that "God's commandments are God's enablements" and that we should obey His will in spite of circumstances, feelings, or consequences.

-BEC

