

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## JUDGES 1-4

When I think of my past, my biggest regrets are *the missed opportunities*. The “*what if(s)*” and “*if only(s)*.”

And if I were to sum up the book of Judges I'd also use two words, “*missed opportunities*.” The years after Joshua's death could've been Israel's “*golden age*,” instead they became the darkest period in its history.

When General Joshua died, Israel had the enemy on the run; yet rather than finish the job, and completely drive out the Canaanites, the Hebrews tolerated the idolators, worshipped pagan gods, and compromised their allegiance to Yahweh! *They blew their opportunity!*

The book of **Joshua** is 24 chapters covering 30 years... **Judges** is 21 chapters spanning 350 years.

During those three-and-half centuries Israel had fourteen judges. And when I say “*judge*” I'm not talking about a court-appointed official. A judge in the biblical sense was a divine vigilante called by God to war and administer God's judgment on the battlefield. Thirteen judges are mentioned in this book - and according to tradition, the fourteenth judge, Samuel, was its author.

There's an old Pogo comic strip that captures the message of Judges. Pogo goes to fight a battle. When he returns, he says, “*We have met the enemy... and he is us.*” This book proves we're often our own worst enemy. When we put ourselves ahead of God's will we whiff on opportunities to receive God's blessings.

The last verse in Judges sums up the book... 21:25 compresses 21 chapters and 350 years into a single phrase, “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*”

Though the book ends in tragedy, it gets off to a good start. The tribes of Israel are working together. Judah and Simeon join forces to drive out the enemy...

Verse 1, “*Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, 'Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?' And the LORD said, 'Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.' And Judah knows* what we should learn, an enemy is easier to defeat if he's double teamed...

“*So Judah said to Simeon his brother, 'Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory.' And Simeon went with him.*” One reason God gives us brothers and sisters in

Christ - a church family - is so we don't tackle our enemies alone. A foe is easier defeated if fought with a friend.

"Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek." Bezek was a city in the mountains of Samaria - west of the Jordan River.

"And they found Adoni-Bezek (or "Lord of Lightning") in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him..." *And get ready for a little savagery...* it's indicative of this period, "and (they) cut off his thumbs and big toes." *Ouch!*

The Hebrews capture a guy who had a grizzly habit of amputating appendages of the kings he conquered. It was a humiliation - *Adoni-Bezek's signature torture*.

No big toe meant a shaky foundation. No thumb equaled no grip on a weapon, or even a fork. *In antiquity, thumbless and toeless was helpless.* Check out this rhyme, "A foe without a toe - you know who did it. Without a thumb you'd be dumb not to guess Adoni-Bezek." But when the Hebrews caught him and chopped off his thumbs and big toes, he confessed, verse 7, "Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me." They brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died." He admits, "what goes around comes around" - "you reap what you sow."

Verse 8 makes an interesting statement, "Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire." *Why then does David have to reconquer the city 400 years later?* Well, this is indicative of Israel's problem... *they lacked a good follow-through...*

If you play tennis you know, "A good serve requires a good follow-through." And the same is true spiritually.

Don't serve the Lord halfway - **go all in!** Don't leave it for someone to have to come behind you and do what you neglected. Hey, "a job ain't over 'til it's over!"

Verse 9, "And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South, and in the lowland." They take *Hebron* and kill three kings. Then attack *Debir* - the new home of an old warrior. *Caleb* calls it by its original name *Kirjath Sepher* and puts an offer on the table...

Verse 12, "Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife." He provides a battle incentive to draw out the bravest soldiers. He offers a pretty girl, a *knockout*, to anyone who *knocks off* some

Canaanites. “And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife.” And this was a win-win for Caleb. The enemy gets defeated, and Achsah, his daughter, gets married to a brave young man.

Today, girls look for a *sensitive man*, a *handsome man*, a *rich man*... but you want your daughter married to a *brave man*! Life is full of challenges. In the face of obstacles or enemies a lot of guys opt for the path of least resistance. Your girl needs to be yoked to a man who's unafraid - who'll *press on* when it *gets hard*.

Verse 14 “Now it happened, when she came to him, that she urged him to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you wish?” So she said to him, “Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water.” One thing about Achsah, she wasn't shy about asking. She'd asked for a field and now wants a spring. *And why is it we get to a place where we stop requesting of our heavenly Father? Do you think you've tapped out God's grace?*

Well, God is like Caleb. “Then Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.” Caleb does more than she asks! Achsah requests a spring, and Daddy gives her two! This is the heart of our heavenly Father toward us. Jesus says in Matthew 7:7, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” *God never tires of us asking...*

“Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law (who was Jethro), went up from the City of Palms (or Jericho) with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which lies in the South near Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people. And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was called Hormah. Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its territory, and Ekron with its territory.”

We'll learn later, Judah failed to keep possession of these cities. They all become Philistine strongholds.

Again, it's not enough to gain ground spiritually, if we then lose what we've gained. Hebrews 10 tells us “*hold fast the confession of our hope, without wavering.*”

Christian philosopher, GK Chesterton, once said, “*The only way to love anything is to realize it can be lost.*” There are what I call *Teflon Christians*. Nothing sticks. God's lessons and bless'ns, slip away. Hey, when God does a work in you - remember it, nurture it, embrace it - never let it go. Hold fast to your faith!

Verse 19, “So the LORD was with Judah. And they drove out the mountaineers, but

they could not drive out the inhabitants of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron.” The Canaanites had entered the iron age, and built fleets of very formidable, iron chariots.

“And they gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of Anak.” Or the giants. Caleb was the exception. He conquered the Canaanites in his territory completely. “But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day.”

Further north, the house of Joseph, Ephraim, sent spies and paid informants to defeat Bethel or Luz. Even further north, verse 27, “Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages.” And this was indicative of Manasseh in all its cities, for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land.”

The Canaanites were *more determined* to stay, than the Israelites were to drive them out. “It came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out.”

And the rest of Chapter 1 is a long record of four foot putts that didn’t drop - *missed opportunities*. Not one of the 12 tribes of Israel drove out the enemy completely.

Verse 29, “Nor did Ephraim...” Verse 30, “Nor did Zebulun...” Verse 31, “Nor did Asher...” Verse 33, “Nor did Naphtali...” Verse 34, “The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they would not allow them to come down to the valley...” The Amorites dominated the Danites. It should’ve been vice versa.

Chapter 2 is a flashback. Joshua is still alive and in command. “Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: “I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you.’” God sends His spokesman. The word “Angel” means “*messenger*.” And this messenger speaks of God in the first person, “I led you up from Egypt... I spoke to your fathers... I will never break My covenant.” This messenger sounds like God Himself...

And notice, he doesn’t come from heaven, but from Israel’s base of operation throughout their conquest of Canaan, *Gilgal*. Recall, in Joshua 5 the Commander of the Lord’s Army met Joshua outside Jericho. We talked of how it was a pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus.

I believe Jesus stayed in Gilgal for the duration of the war, and directed Israel’s battle plans. Now He rebukes them for not trusting Him and fully possessing the land.

Verse 2 is what He told them, “And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants

of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' " If we cling to ungodly influences, God will make sure those influences become a snare, a thorn in our side. They'll hinder Israel's growth and hassle its soul.

"So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept..." Thus the name, "Bochim" (which means "*weeping*") Remember compromise with evil always yields weeping. Verse 6, "And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land. So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died when he was 110 years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains of Ephraim..."

Verse 10, "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel." Joshua's death exposed a *generation gap* in Israel. The post-Joshua generation didn't know God or His works. While Joshua and his elders lived, Israel served God. As soon as they died...

Verse 11, "Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals (the local idols); and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger.

They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths." Baal was god of the storm. The Canaanites tried to appease him so rain would water their crops... Ashtoreth was a fertility goddess. She supposedly brought fruit to farms and kids to families. She was worshipped with immoral sexual practices...

And it grieved God's heart that His people, Israel, had forsaken His revelation, and His miraculous acts of deliverance - to depend on these sinister superstitions.

Notice verse 7, Joshua **knew God personally**. His elders **knew the works of God**. But their offspring **knew neither**. The third generation had no faith at all...

We see this later in Israel's history. David followed God with a *whole heart*. His son, Solomon, had a *half-hearted* devotion. But Solomon's son, Rehoboam, had *no heart* for God. Proving that second-hand, talk-only experiences of God aren't influential.



They don't shape a young person's character. *Thus, if you're a parent make sure your relationship with God is real and vital!*

An impression is made when your kids see God in action in your life. Just hearsay won't capture a heart. It goes in one ear and out the other. This is why every generation needs its own experience with God. All true Christians are *first generation Christians*. Everybody needs to meet God and experience Him personally...

Parents, don't just impose your faith and convictions on your kids - just shove it on them - rather find ways to help your kids cultivate their own walk with God.

The rest of Chapter 2 describes the cycle that occurs over and over in Judges. Write down these six words: **sin, servitude, supplication, Savior, Spirit, serenity.**

*Here's how it works...* Israel **sins** and follows false gods... God allows the enemy to enslave His people, and force them into **servitude**... Israel cries to God for deliverance, and makes **supplication**... In response, God raises up a **Savior**, a judge to lead Israel... The **Spirit** of God then comes upon him or her with power to win battles... Which culminates in a period of calm and **serenity**... until it's interrupted by another round of sin and servitude and supplication, etc. **This cycle gets repeated at least seven times in Judges.**

Verse 14 "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed."

"Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them." Again, we think of judges as people dressed in black robes - with legal degrees and wooden gavels.

But OT judges were more *vigilantes of virtue*. They were usually commoners with no formal credentials, but called by God to rise up and ignite a fire under His people. They had a passion for purity - a hunger for truth - a zeal for justice - a fire for freedom. Their goal was God's glory. They rallied the nation into battle.

Yet notice verse 17, "They would not listen to their judges..." After God's deliverance the cycle would start over. *Read the text:* They played the harlot with other gods... were oppressed... cry for deliverance... then God would deliver them through the hand of a judge...

Yet as soon as the judge died, the cycle would start over... But, with one caveat, verse 19, they “**behaved more corruptly than their fathers.**” Each generation got a little worse than the previous. Like watching a toilet bowl after you flush - each swirl went a little lower...

“Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept them, or not.” Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.” *Ever wonder why God doesn’t rapture us as soon as we’re saved? Why does He leave us in a broken and sinful world, among enemies no less, and trials and temptation? The reason for us, is the same as the reason Israel was left in a land full of enemies...*

Life is a test! The Christian Life is an opportunity to see God’s faithfulness, and prove our faith. In the process, we get to develop some resistance, and character, and endurance... Life is definitely a test.

Chapter 3 begins with a list of nations God left in the land to teach Israel these lessons - *that life is not a party, but a battle.* Verse 3, “**five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites...**”

Verse 4, “**And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.**” *Failing the test with a big fat “F”!*

“So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs. Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served ole C.R. eight years.”

So the six-spoked cycle begins. **Sin** turns to **servitude**, that erupts in Israel’s **supplication**. Which yields the first judge, “**When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel.**”

Othniel conquered the king of Mesopotamia. “**So the land had rest for forty years.**” His efforts resulted in four decades of peace and **serenity**. Until, “**Othniel the son of**

**Kenaz died.”** And the cycle repeats... again **sin, servitude, supplication, Savior, Spirit, then serenity.**

Verse 12, **“And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms (or Jericho).”** This was heartbreaking to God and Israel. The groundbreaking miracle - the opening salvo - their initial victory at Jericho is now negated.

Jericho is back in pagan hands. Verse 14, **“So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man.”** *Just out of curiosity, how many of you are left-handers?* Statistics say 1 out of 10 of us are southpaws.

In ancient times left-handedness was viewed as a handicap or birth defect. The English word **“gauche”** (g0sh) means *crude or uncouth - socially awkward*. But it comes from a French word meaning **“left-handed.”**

Left-handedness was seen as an *abnormality*. This is why God chose Ehud. He wanted the credit for the coming victory to go to Him, not his instrument, Ehud.

Verse 15, **“By (Ehud) the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab.”** Eglon's headquarters was in Jericho. That's where Ehud went to pay taxes. But with his tribute or tax, he brought along a surprise.

**“Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it under his clothes on his right thigh.”** Ehud had a double-edged dagger 18 inches long. It fit in a holster he could strap to his thigh, just under his robe... a *concealed weapon*.

**“So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now Eglon was a very fat man.) Severely chunky. Clinically obese. His BMI was off the charts. “And when (Ehud) finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute. But he himself turned back from the stone images that were at Gilgal, and said, “I have a secret message for you, O king.”**

He said, **“Keep silence!”** And all who attended him went out from him. And Ehud came to him (now he was sitting upstairs in his cool private chamber). Then Ehud said, **“I have a message from God for you.”** So he arose from his seat.” Eglon was so fat he couldn't get out of his chair, so when he leaned forward to hear the secret it made him more vulnerable to Ehud's attack.



**“Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly.”**

Ehud probably put his right arm around the king's shoulder. He pretended to whisper the secret in his ear, instead he stabbed it in his gut. **Ehud delivered his message!** The God of Israel is the one true God!

*And you can be sure Eglon got the point!* Here's the first message ever preached with *power point* **“Even the hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the dagger out of his belly; and his entrails came out.”** Eglon's fat rolls covered the handle of the dagger. Ehud couldn't pull it out. He ends up leaving the dagger as his calling card.

And here's an allegory. Eglon represents the flesh. He's a lot of flesh, *and so are we*. Our flesh is our self-indulgence, our self-sufficiency. *Yet how do we deal with the flesh?* Stick a sword in it, apply God's sword, His Word, and your entrails, or your crap will come out. Deal with your flesh if you want to be spiritually healthy.

**“Then Ehud went out through the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them. When he had gone out, Eglon's servants came to look, and to their surprise, the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said, “He is probably attending to his needs in the cool chamber.” He's using the John!**

So while they wait, our assassin, Ehud, escapes. When his servants finally unlock the door and find Eglon dead, Ehud is almost home. He blows a trumpet, rallies his troops, and Israel attacks. They cut off the escape routes to Moab, and slaughter 10,000 Moabites that had occupied Jericho. *It led to 80 years of peace!*

And there're a couple of lessons for us in this story.

**First**, God even uses left-handers! Ehud's left-hand was viewed as a weakness, yet the text goes out of its way to tell us that's the hand that did the stabbing. God can turn a perceived weakness into a strength. Rather than an excuse, see your handicap as an opportunity for God to show Himself strong on your behalf.

And **second**, Hebrews 4 says the Bible is *“sharper than a two-edged sword.”* Ephesians 6 calls it *“the sword of the Spirit.”* God's Word is a spiritual dagger. Its message cuts to our hearts. It gets to the point. And it's two-sided - it works both *for us* and *on us*. It harms the enemy, but it also exposes our fleshly thoughts... *Use the Word, and start by using it on yourself!*

Verse 31 sums up the third judge in one verse, **“After (Ehud) was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six-hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.”** Shamgar, grabbed a cattle prod and slew 600 Philistines single-

handedly.

The story of Shamgar reminds me of a poem, “Shamgar had an oxgoad. David had a sling. Samson had a jawbone. Rahab had a string. Mary had some ointment. Aaron had a rod. Dorcas had a needle... All were used by God.” His cattle prodder is a reminder that even little things become important when they’re turned over to God, and empowered by God’s Spirit.

One other point about Shamgar... Verse 31 notes, he was “the son of Anath.” *Anath* is a sinister name. It was a Canaanite idol. Shamgar may’ve come from a family of idolaters. And if that’s true it proves, you can be the only believer in your family, or circle of friends, or workplace - yet still stand tall and strong for God.

Chapter 4, “When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD.” After eighty years the cycle begins again when Israel’s sin.

“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. And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD; for Jabin had nine-hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he harshly oppressed the children of Israel.”

According to ancient standards Jabin’s 900 iron chariots made him a military juggernaut, a superpower. Hazor was a powerful city-state that ruled north Israel.

Until now the judges have been men. But in verse 4 we meet Deborah... “Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 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.” She was a wonderfully wise woman - in tune with God.

“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 10,000 men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; 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?’” God promises victory to General Barak.

Notice, God called a man to lead His people into battle. The Bible teaches in the church and home, God ordains male leadership. *And this is not just a cultural accommodation.* 1 Corinthians 11 explains the idea of male headship goes all the way back to creation, “Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.” From the first couple onward God paints a picture of His relationship with humanity through gender roles. A man lovingly leads, as a wife willingly follows - likewise we follow God, as He leads us.

But, when a man refuses to lead, God will raise up a godly woman, like Deborah, to do the job! **God won't let His work be hindered for lack of a godly man!**

It's sad, but many Christian women have to assume leadership. Their husband is either afraid or unfit to lead his family spiritually. This is why the greatest need in today's church is for men to step up and be their family's spiritual leader. Most Christian women want to be led, and will readily follow, if only their husband was serious about leading his family wisely and lovingly.

Verse 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!'"** *Barak's reply isn't exactly a manly declaration.*

Deborah was obviously a courageous and capable woman, but she knew the spiritual importance of the man's leadership. That's why she chastises Barak for trying to hide behind the skirt of a woman... **"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.'"**

Because of Barak's reluctance to lead, God will use a woman to strike the decisive blow. And the need for a woman's involvement will take some of the luster off Barak's victory... **"Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh."** They went north toward Lebanon.

**"And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with 10,000 men under his command, and Deborah went up with him."** They end up camping on Mount Tabor in the Valley of Jezreel in northern Israel.

And they're spied on by **"Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses"** (Earlier Moses' father-in-law went by the name Jethro - that was probably a title. His name was **Hobab**). And his descendant reports to Sisera, *Barak is on Mount Tabor.*

Verse 13, **"So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine-hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon."** General Sisera is licking his chops. This is a dream come true. He commands a modern army. Israel is defenseless. Judges 5:8 says not a single shield or spear was seen among the Israelis.

**"Then Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?'"** Barak must've been timid. Deborah sounds the battle cry.

**"So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with 10,000 men following him."** This was

terrible military strategy. On top of Tabor Barak had the high ground. You never give up the high ground, but he does. He leads his men into the valley where the chariots of Sisera can crush them. Israel is *out-manned, out-machined, out-manuevered*. Israel is headed for a brutal beating... or so it seems. *But God intervenes in a miraculous way.*

*“And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak...”* Chapter 5 records the victory ballad written by Deborah. In her tune she sings of the details of this battle. God brought heavy, torrential rains... Imagine, one of Sisera's chariot drivers in the midst of the thunderstorm and flash flood. His chariot gets stuck in the mud - and sitting in an iron chariot is the last place you want to be when lightning is striking all around you.

Sisera's army jumped out of their iron chariots in confusion, fled in all directions, running for their lives. And according to verse 16 his entire army gets routed.

*But what about the general?* Verse 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.”* The Kenites though were relatives of Moses.

And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." Jael offers General Sisera refuge. *“And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.”* He was probably wet and cold. *“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.”* He asks for water, but Jael gives him milk. *Why?* Milk has tryptophan, a natural sedative. You drink a big glass of milk at bedtime to fall asleep. And Jael wants Sisera to take a snooze...

*“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.’”* He wants her to stand guard, as he catches a few winks. Sisera thinks Jael is his friend, but he's about to be betrayed.

“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.” I’m sure he did! I guess you could say, *“Jael nailed it!”*

Sisera thought Jael was his ally, but sweet Sister Jael is not what she seems. The gal drives a stake through Sisera’s brain, *and why would you put it on a coffee cup? That seems strange...* Deborah told Barak a woman would deal the decisive blow, *and she does!*

Verse 22, “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.” A gruesome sight to see. “So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin... until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.” And Deborah writes a song celebrating their victory... in Judges 5.