**Judges 4-6 -** March 10th

Deborah - 4th Judge

**4**Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, now that Ehud was dead. **2**So the Lord sold them into the hands of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. Sisera, the commander of his army, was based in Harosheth Haggoyim. **3**Because he had nine hundred chariots fitted with iron and had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years, they cried to the Lord for help.

**4**Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. **5**She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. **6**She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mount Tabor. **7**I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.’”

**8**Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.” **9**“Certainly I will go with you,” said Deborah. “But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.” So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. **10**There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him.

**11**Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses’ brother-in-law, and pitched his tent by the great tree in Zaanannim near Kedesh. **12**When they told Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, **13**Sisera summoned from Harosheth Haggoyim to the Kishon River all his men and his nine hundred chariots fitted with iron.

**14**Then Deborah said to Barak, “Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?” So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. **15**At Barak’s advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

**16**Barak pursued the chariots and army as far as Harosheth Haggoyim, and all Sisera’s troops fell by the sword; not a man was left. **17**Sisera, meanwhile, fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was an alliance between Jabin king of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite.

**18**Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, “Come, my lord, come right in. Don’t be afraid.” So he entered her tent, and she covered him with a blanket.

**19**“I’m thirsty,” he said. “Please give me some water.” She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up.

**20**“Stand in the doorway of the tent,” he told her. “If someone comes by and asks you, ‘Is anyone in there?’ say ‘No.’”

**21**But Jael, Heber’s wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

**22**Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. “Come,” she said, “I will show you the man you’re looking for.” So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple - dead.

**23**On that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan before the Israelites.**24**And the hand of the Israelites pressed harder and harder against Jabin king of Canaan until they destroyed him.

The Song of Deborah

**5**On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song:

**2**“When the princes in Israel take the lead,
    when the people willingly offer themselves—
    praise the Lord!

**3**“Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers!
    I, even I, will sing to[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+4-6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-6627c)] the Lord;
    I will praise the Lord, the God of Israel, in song.

**4**“When you, Lord, went out from Seir,
    when you marched from the land of Edom,
the earth shook, the heavens poured,
    the clouds poured down water.
**5**The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai,
    before the Lord, the God of Israel.

**6**“In the days of Shamgar son of Anath,
    in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned;
    travelers took to winding paths.
**7**Villagers in Israel would not fight;
    they held back until I, Deborah, arose,
    until I arose, a mother in Israel.
**8**God chose new leaders
    when war came to the city gates,
but not a shield or spear was seen
    among forty thousand in Israel.
**9**My heart is with Israel’s princes,
    with the willing volunteers among the people.
    Praise the Lord!

**10**“You who ride on white donkeys,
    sitting on your saddle blankets,
    and you who walk along the road,
consider **11**the voice of the singers at the watering places.
    They recite the victories of the Lord,
    the victories of his villagers in Israel.

“Then the people of the Lord
    went down to the city gates.
**12**‘Wake up, wake up, Deborah!
    Wake up, wake up, break out in song!
Arise, Barak!
    Take captive your captives, son of Abinoam.’

**13**“The remnant of the nobles came down;
    the people of the Lord came down to me against the mighty.
**14**Some came from Ephraim, whose roots were in Amalek;
    Benjamin was with the people who followed you.
From Makir captains came down,
    from Zebulun those who bear a commander’s staff.
**15**The princes of Issachar were with Deborah;
    yes, Issachar was with Barak,
    sent under his command into the valley.
In the districts of Reuben
    there was much searching of heart.
**16**Why did you stay among the sheep pens[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+4-6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-6640f)]
    to hear the whistling for the flocks?
In the districts of Reuben
    there was much searching of heart.
**17**Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan.
    And Dan, why did he linger by the ships?
Asher remained on the coast
    and stayed in his coves.
**18**The people of Zebulun risked their very lives;
    so did Naphtali on the terraced fields.

**19**“Kings came, they fought,
    the kings of Canaan fought.
At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo,
    they took no plunder of silver.
**20**From the heavens the stars fought,
    from their courses they fought against Sisera.
**21**The river Kishon swept them away,
    the age-old river, the river Kishon.
    March on, my soul; be strong!
**22**Then thundered the horses’ hooves -
    galloping, galloping go his mighty steeds.
**23**‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel of the Lord.
    ‘Curse its people bitterly,
because they did not come to help the Lord,
    to help the Lord against the mighty.’

**24**“Most blessed of women be Jael,
    the wife of Heber the Kenite,
    most blessed of tent-dwelling women.
**25**He asked for water, and she gave him milk;
    in a bowl fit for nobles she brought him curdled milk.
**26**Her hand reached for the tent peg,
    her right hand for the workman’s hammer.
She struck Sisera, she crushed his head,
    she shattered and pierced his temple.
**27**At her feet he sank,
    he fell; there he lay.
At her feet he sank, he fell;
    where he sank, there he fell - dead.

**28**“Through the window peered Sisera’s mother;
    behind the lattice she cried out,
‘Why is his chariot so long in coming?
    Why is the clatter of his chariots delayed?’
**29**The wisest of her ladies answer her;
    indeed, she keeps saying to herself,
**30**‘Are they not finding and dividing the spoils:
    a woman or two for each man,
colorful garments as plunder for Sisera,
    colorful garments embroidered,
highly embroidered garments for my neck -
    all this as plunder?’

**31**“So may all your enemies perish, Lord!
    But may all who love you be like the sun
    when it rises in its strength.”

Then the land had peace forty years.

Gideon - 5th Judge

**6**The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven (7) years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites. **2**Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. **3**Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. **4**They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. **5**They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count them or their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. **6**Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.

**7**When the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of Midian, **8**he sent them a prophet, who said, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I brought you up out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. **9**I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians. And I delivered you from the hand of all your oppressors; I drove them out before you and gave you their land. **10**I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God; do not worship the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not listened to me.”

**11**The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. **12**When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.”

**13**“Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?’ But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian.”

**14**The Lord turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

**15**“Pardon me, my lord,” Gideon replied, “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”

**16**The Lord answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”

**17**Gideon replied, “If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign that it is really you talking to me. **18**Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.”

And the Lord said, “I will wait until you return.”

**19**Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+4-6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-6674g)] of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

**20**The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And Gideon did so. **21**Then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared. **22**When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, “Alas, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!”

**23**But the Lord said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die.”

**24**So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

**25**That same night the Lord said to him, “Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old. Tear down your father’s altar to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+4-6&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-6680i" \o "See footnote i)] beside it. **26**Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.”

**27**So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the Lord told him. But because he was afraid of his family and the townspeople, he did it at night rather than in the daytime.

**28**In the morning when the people of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar!

**29**They asked each other, “Who did this?”

When they carefully investigated, they were told, “Gideon son of Joash did it.”

**30**The people of the town demanded of Joash, “Bring out your son. He must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.”

**31**But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him, “Are you going to plead Baal’s cause? Are you trying to save him? Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning! If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.” **32**So because Gideon broke down Baal’s altar, they gave him the name Jerub-Baal that day, saying, “Let Baal contend with him.”

**33**Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.**34**Then the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. **35**He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.

**36**Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised - **37**look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” **38**And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew - a bowlful of water.

**39**Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece, but this time make the fleece dry and let the ground be covered with dew.” **40**That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.