

Un. 17:4-7

Emerson says, “Hitch your wagon to a star.” I say,
Be allied to the deific power, and all that is good will aid
your journey, **as the stars in their courses fought against
Sisera.** (Judges v. 20.)

Research: Battle of Deborah and Sisera

Judges 4:4-7, 13, 14, 23

4^f And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

“*Deborah, a prophetess*] i.e. a woman inspired to declare the divine will, and on this occasion to deliver her country from oppression; as a prophetess she announces the command of Jehovah” (Cambridge Bible).

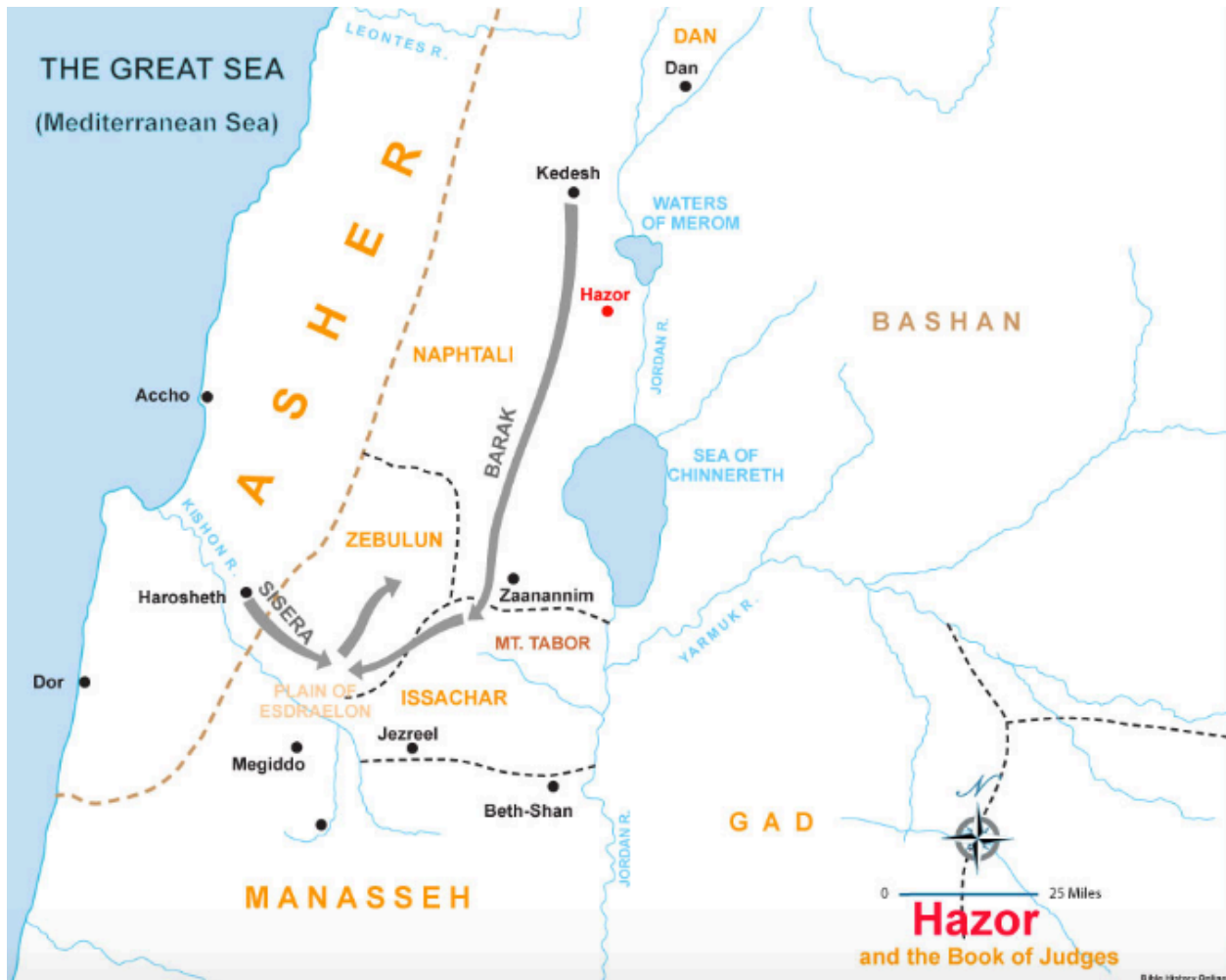
“The name Lapidoth, which occurs nowhere else, means “flames,” “lamps,” or “splendours;” and Rashi says that she was called “a woman of lamps,” from making the wicks for the lamps of the sanctuary; while others, with equal improbability, interpret it of her shining gifts and of her fiery spirit.

“**She judged Israel.**—We see from the next verse that up to this time her functions had mainly consisted of peaceful arbitration and legal decision ([Deuteronomy 17:8](#)). (Ellicott’s Commentary).

5And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in mount Ephraim:
and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

“between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; which places were in the tribe of Benjamin in the borders of Ephraim, see [Joshua 16:2](#). The Jews conclude, from the situation of her, that she was a very opulent woman; the Targum is, “she was dwelling in a city in Ataroth, Deborah was supported of her own; she had palm trees in Jericho, orchards in Ramah, olives producing oil in the valley, a place of watering in Bethel, and white dust in the kings mountain:”

and the children of Israel came up to her; from all parts of the land to the mount of Ephraim: for judgment: to have her advice and counsel in matters of difficulty, and to have causes between contending parties heard and decided by her, so that she might be truly reckoned among the judges” (Gill’s Exposition).



6And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh–naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, *saying*, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun?

“*And she sent and called Barak*] continues [Jdg 4:4](#). Barak = ‘lightning’; the name is found in Phoenician, e.g. Barcas the father of Hannibal, and in Palmyrene and Sabaean (*NSI.*, p. 299).

out of Kedesh-naphtali] also called K. in Galilee ([Joshua 20:7](#)) to distinguish it from other places of the same name” (Cambridge Bible).

“**Mount Tabor.**—The broad flat top of this strong, beautiful, and easily fortified mountain (which is nearly a mile in circumference) would serve the double purpose of a watch-post and a stronghold. It was in the district of Issachar, about six miles from Nazareth, and its peculiarities attracted notice in very early days” (Ellicott’s Commentary).

“*mount Tabor*] Now Jebel eṭ-Ṭûr, 1843 ft., a prominent feature in the landscape of S.E. Galilee, remarkable for its dome-like shape and apparent isolation. It was the natural rallying-place for Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali, whose settlements were in the

neighbourhood (cf. [Joshua 19:12](#); [Joshua 19:22](#); [Joshua 19:34](#), which, however, describes the boundaries of a later age); while the position of the mountain, commanding the N.E. quarter of the Great Plain and one of the main outlets to the Jordan, afforded obvious advantages for a descent upon an enemy advancing from the W. across the Plain. A further reason for Barak's muster on Tabor has been suggested; apparently Issachar and Zebulun had a religious centre there, [Deuteronomy 33:19](#) (*the mountain* is prob. Tabor); the holy war would begin with a sacrifice at the tribal sanctuary" (Cambridge Bible).

7And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.

"And I will draw unto thee,.... Which are the words of the Lord by Deborah, as are the preceding, signifying, that by the secret and powerful influence of his providence he would so order things, and the circumstances of them; and so powerfully operate on the mind and heart of the Canaanitish general as to engage him to come" (Gill's Exposition).

13And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, *even* nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that *were* with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon.

14And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this *is* the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: *is not* the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.

"*is not the Lord gone out before thee?*] i.e. to battle. Jehovah was believed to 'come forth' from His place on Sinai to fight for Israel ([Jdg 5:4](#) f.), or to march against Israel's enemies with the ark as His symbol ([Numbers 10:35](#)), or to be Israel's leader in battle ([2 Samuel 5:24](#); cf. [Habakkuk 3:13](#); [Zechariah 14:3](#); [Psalm 44:9](#)). The belief in Jehovah as 'a man of war' was characteristic of this period." (Cambridge Bible).

"Barak went down from mount Tabor—It is a striking proof of the full confidence Barak and his troops reposed in Deborah's assurance of victory, that they relinquished their advantageous position on the hill and rushed into the plain in face of the iron chariots they so much dreaded" (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown).

23So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel.

"*The Lord discomfited Sisera* — The particulars of the battle are not recorded in the sacred text; but it evidently appears from thence that there was something extraordinary and miraculous in this defeat of Jabin's host. The Hebrew word **יָהָם**, *jaham*, imports that they were discomfited with great terror and noise, probably with thunder, lightning, and hail-stones, poured upon them from heaven, as is implied [Jdg 5:20](#); and as the same word is used [Joshua 10:10](#); and [1 Samuel 7:10](#). Josephus confirms this opinion, assuring us that "as soon as the armies were engaged, there arose a prodigious tempest of hail and rain, which drove in the faces of the Canaanites, and occasioned a total rout of them."

— *Antiq.*, lib. 5. cap. 5. The heavens, therefore, had the principal share in this great overthrow” (Benson Commentary).

Judges 5:1, 3, 7

1THEN sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

“*Then sang Deborah* — The composer of this song, one of whose special gifts, as a prophetess, it was to sing God’s praises, [1 Chronicles 25:1-3](#). *And Barak* — Who was now probably become a judge, in consequence of this great deliverance which God had wrought by him. *On that day* — In which they had completed their victory, by the destruction of Jabin’s kingdom. Whether they two only sang this song, or the elders of the people, called together into one assembly, sang it with them, is not certain. The text, however, only speaks of its being sung by them two; and Dr. Kennicott has expressed his opinion strongly, that they sang it in alternate verses, answering each other” (Benson Commentary).

“Deborah, as “a prophetess,” both composed and sang this noble ode, which, for poetic spirit and lyric fire, is not surpassed by any of the sacred songs in the Bible” (Barnes’ Notes).

3Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, *even I*, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing *praise* to the LORD God of Israel.

“*Hear, O ye kings*, &c. — The prophetess begins her song with summoning the attention of the neighbouring kings and princes, that they might understand and lay to heart what God had done for Israel, and learn from thence not to oppress them, lest the same vengeance which had fallen upon Jabin and his people should be inflicted on them. *I, even I, will sing unto the Lord* — She declares that Jehovah should be the object of her praise, who, she would have the world to know, was superior to all in power, and would defend his people while they depended on him alone” (Benson Commentary).

7*The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.*

“Instead of *The inhabitants of the villages ceased*, some render the **leaders ceased**. Till Deborah arose and stirred up Barak, there was no one to put himself at the head of the people” (Pulpit Commentary).

“*A mother* — That is, to be to them as a mother, to instruct, and rule, and protect them, which duties a mother owes to her children” (Benson Commentary).

“he inhabitants of the villages ceased,.... Not only did those Canaanitish robbers go upon the highway, and robbed all they met with, which made travelling difficult and dangerous; but entered into the villages and unwallied towns, and broke into houses and plundered them; so that the inhabitants of them were obliged to quit their dwellings, and go into the

fortified cities for security; by which means the villages were left empty, and in time fell to ruin, and ceased:

they ceased in Israel: for they were the villages which belonged to the Israelites that were plundered, and not those that belonged to any of the Canaanites; and these were the unhappy circumstances Israel were under

until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel; until it pleased God to raise her up, and endow her in a very wonderful and extraordinary manner with gifts qualifying her to be a nursing mother to Israel, to teach and instruct them in the mind and will of God, to administer judgement and justice to them, to protect and defend them, and in all which she discovered a maternal affection for them; and as a good judge and ruler of a people may be called the father of them, so she, being a woman, is with propriety called a mother in Israel, having an affectionate concern for them as her children" (Gill's Commentary).