Leading Ladies

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“We need to elevate female voices and stories... For too long we’ve been seeing the world primarily through men’s eyes.”

J. Guyton, National Geographic, 2019
"Mother in Israel"

Deborah’s Story
Time of the Judges

Assumptions:

1. Time of evil, godlessness

*In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*  *Jdg 21:25*

2. Time of brutality & bloodshed

No. More than 75% of era was peacetime

*National wickedness was always punished with oppression*  *Jdg 2:19-22*

Judges is *not* a time of predominant evil, but cycles of obedience and disobedience
In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. *Jdg 21:25*

So is not equal to

The Lord saw that the *wickedness* of man was *great* in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil* continually. *Gen 6:5*

=> Judges is *mainly* a time of obedience

Seven cycles: Peace => Sin => Oppression => Appeal => Deliverance => Peace
Deborah, a prophetess… was judging Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah… in the hill country of Ephraim.  

Jdg 4:4-5

Barak, God-appointed military leader

“Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor?’”  

Jdg 4:6
Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.”  

Jdg 4:6,8

“I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.”  

Jdg 4:9

Is this why Deborah led, because Barak failed to?

NO
The God of Israel commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mt Tabor.’”  

Jdg 4:6

Two Leading Ladies

“...the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.”  

Jdg 4:9

• Barak’s reluctance to lead, led to the elevation of *Jael.* Jael will now be the military victor

• Deborah was already elevated as the judicial leader

“The God of Israel, commands you: ‘Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them up to Mt Tabor.’”  

Jdg 4:6
Mapping the War

Fought for Israel

- Palm of Deborah
- Mt Tabor
- Tent of Jael
“From Ephraim their root they marched down into the valley, following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zebulun those who bear the lieutenant’s staff; the princes of Issachar came with Deborah, and Issachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed at his heels… Zebulun is a people who risked their lives to the death; Naphtali, too, on the heights of the field.” Jdg 5:14-18
Mapping the War

Fought for Israel

- Tent of Jael
- Mt Tabor
- Palm of Deborah
“Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Why did you sit still among the sheepfolds, to hear the whistling for the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan; and Dan, why did he stay with the ships? Asher sat still at the coast of the sea, staying by his landings... The torrent Kishon swept them away, the ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. March on, my soul, with might!” Jdg 5:15-21
Mapping the War

Fought for Israel

Absent from war

River Kishon

Mt Tabor

Tent of Jael

Palm of Deborah
“Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you [Reuben, Gad, Manasseh], saying ‘...all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them, until the Lord gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they also take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it.’” Jos 1:13-15
“The princes of Issachar were with Deborah; yes, Issachar was with Barak, sent under his command into the valley.” Jdg 5:15

Yes
The Song  Proportions of Praise

60% of Song is dedicated to praise of God & Leading Ladies

15% of Song is cursing cowardly men
The Song

15 persons mentioned:
8 Female, 7 Male

- 3 Deborah
- 2+1 Jael, Barak
- 2 Sisera
- 1+1 Shamgar
- +1 Sisera’s mother
- Princesses

Female characters in the ascendancy throughout the plot

Female names in the ascendancy numerically

The Days of Shamgar = The Days of Jael

Deborah arose
Mother in Israel

Awake, Awake, Deborah (& Barak)
Princes came with Deborah (& Barak)

Jael is “Most Blessed of Women”

Jael “crushed Sisera’s head”

Mother of Sisera is wailing
Princesses reveal the destruction
“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”
Lk 1:42

“Most blessed of women be Jael.” Jdg 5:24

“I will put enmity between... your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Gen 3:15

Jael’s blessing matches Mother of Messiah
“she shall bruise your head”
Gen 3:15

“she struck Sisera; she crushed his head.”
Jdg 5:26

Messiah will crush the head of the enemy of God’s people
Jael is his pre-cursor!
“Between her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; between her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell—dead.” v27

“he shall bruise your head”
Gen 3:15

Jael’s blessing matches Mother of Messiah
Jael’s actions (offspring) are Messianic!
“In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned, and travelers kept to the byways. The villagers ceased in Israel; they ceased to be until I arose; I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel. When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates.”  

**Why does Deborah choose ‘Mother’?**

- Mother > Warrior or Judge
- This is actually God’s preferred leadership style; a nurturing one
“When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates.”  

Jdg 5:8

- Deborah understood why the Canaanite war began
- A Nurturing Leader, a Mother, notices the offense of war
A Wise, Discerning Judge

A Mighty, Valiant Warrior

**Why does Deborah choose ‘Mother’?**

- Mother > Warrior or Judge
- This is actually God’s preferred leadership style; a nurturing one
- Because she saw Messiah
“You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one.”  
**Jn 8:15**

**The Non-Judge**

“Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.  
**Lk 22:49-51**

**The Non-Warrior**

What Role did he choose?

**Role of Messiah**

**A Judge to Be**

“[God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed”  
**Acts 17:31**

**A Warrior to Be**

he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
**Isa 11:4**
Role of Messiah

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”

Mt 23:37

Jesus chooses the role of Mother in Israel

• Not a Strut ting Rooster
• Not a Crowing Cockerel
Mother in Israel

- Jesus declined to be a Judge
- Jesus declined to be a Warrior
- Jesus chose his role as a Mother in Israel

- Deborah was a literal Judge
- Deborah was a literal Warrior
- Deborah chose her role as a Mother in Israel

Deborah saw Messiah
Leading Ladies Mirroring Messiah

Messiah Mother

Mary

Jesus Messiah

Blessed of women

Crushes enemy head

Mother in Israel

Jael

Deborah

Eve