

# DEBORAH & Jael



PEACEKEEPER VS  
PEACEMAKER

Judges 4-5

**NAME :** Deborah meaning Honeybee, diligent working for a community, with a stinging as well as bringing sweetness.

Jael, meaning Mountain goat, symbolising sure-footedness and the ability to cover treacherous terrain

# DEBORAH & JAEEL

**ABOUT :** Deborah is the Fourth Judge of Israel and a prophet, as in she speaks out God's word. She is thought to be the wife of Lappidoth, though the translation could mean she is a woman *from* Lappidoth, we hear nothing of her husband so we don't know for sure. Israel are under oppression again having strayed from the Lord.

Deborah sits under the "Palm of Deborah" in between two settlements, unlike the other Judges who would have held court at the entrance to the town. Perhaps she placates each group by being central and available in this way. The people from both towns come to bring their quarrels and disputes for her to listen and bring to God and share that wisdom with them. There is much to read into this; palm trees have wide-spreading roots that anchor them and allow them to bend in the wind. It's their flexibility that ensures they survive. How apt then we find her sat here, keeping peace when the Lord tells her to call Barak to wage war on their oppressors. She is called now from her peace keeping to a more active role, one of peace making.

## Scripture.

***4 Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading<sup>[a]</sup> 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.***

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# WAR FOR PEACE



## Reflection

There's a tension here in so many ways; having spent her life peacekeeping, I wonder if Deborah felt challenged to be the one waging war. Jesus tells us in the Beatitudes that the peacemakers are blessed; the peacekeepers go unmentioned.

What's the difference? Peacekeeping isn't resolution; it's maintenance and largely inaction. Peacemaking requires something else: the risk of being unpopular, the need for courage and the grace to move yourself and others. Peace costs something; it isn't merely the absence of chaos.

The dictionary definition of peace is a state of harmony, marked by the absence of hostility and violence. After 20 years, the Israelites had maybe adjusted to this false peace; perhaps fear had become normal, and survival felt like peace. Silence appears to be wisdom. Even so Deborah acts, she responds and they are rewarded with 40 years of true peace as a result. Deborah learns that sometimes the path to peace is through conflict.

## Small Group Questions

1. Have you ever had to merely keep the peace?
2. Have you ever mistaken keeping everyone happy for peace?
3. What if your experience of peace, is actually fear or avoidance?
4. What does the difference between Peace keeping and peace making look like to you?

## Scripture.

**11 Now Heber the Kenite had left the other Kenites, the descendants of Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law,[b] 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?"**

# WHAT IS IN YOUR HAND?

*So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. <sup>15</sup> At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword.....<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> "I'm thirsty," he said. "Please give me some water." She opened a skin of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him up. <sup>20</sup> "Stand in the doorway of the tent," he told her. "If someone comes by and asks you, 'Is anyone in there?' say 'No.'"<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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.*



## Reflection

Jael comes in from the left field to play her part, she too lives in contention. She is Kennite and therefore an ally of King Jabin, but her people are also descendants of Moses, The couple have moved out from the Kennite town creating a distance, and pitched themselves by a landmark tree. I wonder if they have seen the treatment of the Israelites, and felt that the loyalty to Jabin made them complicit in the oppression. Those decisions made way before means she is beautifully placed as a refuge for Sisera. Jael grabs a tent peg, used to provide tension to keep a tent up, to end his tyranny. Often we already have in our hands all that we need to respond to God's word. It won't be when we have more time or more money, or a deeper knowledge. He asks for what He has already given us, and he doesn't ask us to move before we have it.

## Small Group Questions

1. Have you/ are you experiencing contention between the way of the world and following God ?
2. Where and How?
3. How do you navigate this with your conscience and the world's expectations?
4. Often we have friends and family that don't follow God, how do you manage this especially if you see them doing something wrong or immoral?

# FOR PERSONAL REFELCTION

Scripture -

**Exodus 4:2-5**

***2 Then the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?"***

***"A staff," he replied.***

***3 The Lord said, "Throw it on the ground."***

***Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it.***

**John 6:1-14**

***8 Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, 9***

***"Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"***

Reflection

God asks Moses what is in your hand?

For Moses its a staff, for Jael it is a tent peg, For David a sling, Samson a jawbone and for a small boy it was merely his packed lunch. Not one of these things looks remotely useful or relevant for what comes next in each story.

And perhaps that's the point.

God doesn't always begin by giving us something new. Sometimes He asks us to surrender to His use what we already have.

Questions for Personal reflection

1. What is already in my hand that I have dismissed as too ordinary for God to use?
2. Where am I being called to move into Peacemaking rather than treading water in peacekeeping?

# THE JESUS CONNECTION

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1“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

— Matthew 10:34

Jesus teaches us that peace costs, that often something has to be broken or sacrificed to make way. For our peace it was His body. We say the Agnus Dei at every Mass, Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

2.The story of the Israelites is the story of humankind; we are enslaved to sin, we cry out, God hears, and because we are unable to free ourselves, deliverance is needed. A battle ensues, the enemy is defeated and peace is won. At least until we slip back into sin. It's man's story and it's our personal story.

3.Way back in Genesis 3, we are told the 'Protoevangelium' that although Adam and Eve are leaving the garden that the offspring of a woman will crush the head of Satan.

“She shall crush your head” A foreshadowing of Mary and Christ. In Deborah's song, Jael is called “Most blessed of women be Jael...” Judges 5:24. Jael is followed by Judith who cuts off the head of Holfernes, and onto the pinnacle Mary who bears Christ the Prince of Peace. “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.”

Eve → Jael → Judith → Mary → Christ

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WORKS OF MERCY -

Council the Ignorani

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**Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way. - Proverbs 19:2**

Ignorance is a lack of knowledge, for us to learn something someone has to teach us. This week choose a few of the readings and do an in-depth bible study of them. Who are the people, the places, the back story, the links to the Old Testament? Then share your new found knowledge in a conversation with someone, perhaps get two or three of you together to do this and share what you have learnt, if we all did this regularly we would grow in understanding and knowledge of who God is and what He is asking us to do.

# TAKING IT TO PRAYER

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Father,

We thank you for Deborah, for a woman who listened for your voice and had the courage to speak when you called. When we are tempted to remain comfortable, **awaken us.**

When fear makes us hesitant, **strengthen us.**

When keeping the peace becomes easier than speaking the truth, **give us wisdom and courage.**

As Deborah arose as a mother in Israel, help us to arise in the places where you have planted us — Teach us to recognise the battles that are yours and the battles that are not ours to fight.

Keep us from anger and pride, but never let fear disguise itself as peace. Lord, show us what you have already placed in our hands. Give us the courage to offer it willingly to you, however small or ordinary it may seem.

And when another woman is called to rise, make us like women who encourage rather than compete, who strengthen rather than diminish, and who rejoice when you work through another. **Awake our hearts, Lord. Awake our faith.**

**Awake our courage. Awake within us the gifts you have given us.**

May we rise when you say, “*Arise.*”

May we go when you say, “*Go.*”

And may we rest when you say, “*Be still.*”

And, like Deborah, when the battle is over,

may we remember that the victory was always yours.

Let those who love you **rise like the sun in all its strength,**

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

# MY PEACE I GIVE YOU

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*There is a difference between keeping the peace and making peace. Keeping the peace can sometimes mean, don't upset anyone or don't challenge what has always been done, absorb the hurt yourself; call the absence of argument "peace."*

*But biblical peace — shalom — is deeper. It involves truth, justice, right relationship and wholeness. Deborah and Jael teach us that sometimes the road to genuine peace passes through confrontation.*

## *.Peacekeeping*

- *Avoids conflict to keep things calm.*
- *Says, "Let's not make a fuss."*
- *Can mean staying silent because speaking feels uncomfortable.*
- *Often tries to keep everyone happy.*
- *May smooth over problems rather than address them.*
- *Can tolerate unhealthy behaviour for the sake of harmony.*
- *Sometimes comes from fear of rejection, anger or disapproval.*
- *Asks: "How can I stop this becoming a conflict?"*
- *Can produce a surface peace while the real problem remains.*

*Peacekeeping like this suppresses our emotions, leading to resentment, anxiety and hypervigilance. It leads to weakened boundaries and exhaustion. Saying It's fine when it really isn't creates a gap between your inner truth and what you present to others. It erodes the person and the relationships.*

## *Peacemaking*

- *Is willing to enter conflict when necessary to bring about real peace.*
- *Says, "This needs to be addressed."*
- *Speaks truth with love and courage.*
- *Accepts that doing the right thing may disappoint people.*
- *Seeks reconciliation rather than simply avoiding disagreement.*
- *Establishes healthy boundaries.*
- *Sometimes requires challenging injustice or wrongdoing.*
- *Asks: "What needs to change for genuine peace to exist?"*
- *Seeks a peace rooted in truth, justice and right relationship.*

