

Judges Chapter 5 Part 5

Judges 5:10 (NASB) You who ride on white donkeys, You who sit on rich carpets, And you who travel on the road—shout in praise!

Judges 5:10 (Chisholm) You who ride on light-colored female donkeys, who sit on saddle cloths, you who walk on the road, pay attention!

Judges 5:10 (Loeffel) Let riders of white donkeys, Those who sit on saddles, And those who walk along the way Sing contemplatively!

Loeffel gives a nice description of this verse:

“Deborah now returns to the "highway" theme she began in verse 6. There she looked at them before YHWH's intervention and they were deserted. Now they are filled with travellers. She speaks to Israel by dividing them into three classes. The "riders of white donkeys" refer to the elite aristocracy (2 Kings 4:8, 24; Judg. 10:4). The "saddle sitters" probably are the wealthy merchants who also can afford to ride, but not in the style of those who have white donkeys. The rest of the people can afford neither white donkeys nor saddles, so they just shuffle down the road on foot. Every person no matter his status has benefited from YHWH's intervention. He is faithful to all, no matter the class distinctions, therefore all owe their survival to Him. The highest honor they could perform is to worship YHWH in gratitude. The picture perhaps is that while they are on the roads and using them, they are to sing praises thoughtfully to themselves. This way praise becomes a normal part of their lives just as walking or riding down the road. Then

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as they approach a watering place and begin to hear the everyday noises of people dividing up the water, right there they are to give praise to YHWH for His great deliverance.”

Judges 5:11 (NASB) At the sound of those who distribute water among the watering places, There they will recount the righteous deeds of the Lord, The righteous deeds for His peasantry in Israel. Then the people of the Lord went down to the gates.

Judges 5:11 (Chisholm) Hear the sound of those who divide the sheep among the watering places; there they tell of the Lord’s victorious deeds, the victorious deeds of his warriors in Israel. Then the Lord’s people went down to the city gates—

Judges 5:11 (Loeffel) At the sound of the dividers among the watering places, There commemorate the righteous acts of YHWH, The righteous acts of His outlying areas in Israel! Then the people of YHWH went down to the gates!

Here is another difficult verse. I will skip over who the people who are commemorating. There are arguments of who they are. That is not the important point. The point is, there were witnesses to God’s acts of righteousness. Those witnesses are now witnessing to others about those acts, indeed those acts point to the character of God.

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Recount/Commemorate. Based upon Gesenius Hebrew Dictionary and these translations, this is a praise-witnessing. These witnesses experienced something they have to tell someone else about. Remember the new believers in Mexico who can't wait to tell friends and neighbors about salvation in Christ through faith. So here people witnessed something God did. After looking up this word, looking at the context, let me suggest the translation, "informal, spontaneous celebration." Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, please.

Righteous deeds. This is a single word in the Hebrew meaning righteousnesses. The TDOT suggests when this word is used of God, "...the context generally involves actions through which he demonstrates his righteousness." And it is used twice in our context, emphasizing it.

We know God does not pervert His righteousness. In the book of Job, Bildad asks a rhetorical question:

**Job 8:3 3 (NASB) Does God pervert justice?
Or does the Almighty pervert what is right
(from the same root as our word in Judges)?**

As Moses says:

**Deuteronomy 32:4 (NASB) The Rock! His work
is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of
faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous
and just is He.**

God did not deliver people who rejected Him. No, they had turned back to God, even if it was only for a short time. They trusted Him. As we will see in a couple of verses, they volunteered to fight a fierce enemy, trusting God would deliver them. And He did. Now they are praising Him, commemorating His great acts done in righteousness.

In this instance, God gave Israel a promise through Deborah:

Judges 4:6 (NASB) Now she (Deborah) sent word and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, has indeed commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.

Judges 4:7 (NASB) “I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon, and I will hand him over to you.””

This is not just a general promise, the Lord will fight for you. No, this promise says they, Barak and his army of 10,000, will be successful—essentially, I will cause you to win. This is “faith-rest.” Here is a promise. You trust it which takes you to the essence and character of God. He does the work. And here, His promise is success. This resulted in a righteous act by God. Righteousness is one of the characteristics of God’s essence. The application for Christians is, walk by faith and God does the work allowing us to participate in God’s plan, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

As a reference point, here is a list of characteristics from the essence of God that R.B. Thieme Jr. taught many years ago:

1. Sovereignty
2. Righteousness
3. Justice
4. Love
5. Eternal Life
6. Omnipotence

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7. Omniscience
8. Omnipresence
9. Immutability
10. Veracity

I am not going to teach them now. But I do want to point out that Righteousness is one of those characteristics. Herman has mentioned it many times in his teaching. It is important to understand that a righteous God can only fellowship with righteous beings. And this is the essence that the faith rest should take you to. This is who God is. But to better understand those characteristics, they need to be shown in action. In the case of Barak and his band of farmer warriors, they saw the Righteousness of God acting in history.

Judges 5:12 (NASB) “Awake, awake, Deborah; Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead away your captives, son of Abinoam.

Judges 5:12 (Chisholm) Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up wake up, sing a song! Get up Barak! Capture your prisoners of war, son of Abinoam!

Judges 5:12 (Loeffel) Awake! Awake, Deborah! Awake! Awake, speak out a song! Arise Barak! And capture your captives, son of Abionoam!

Awake, awake. This word is repeated four times. It must be important. This word can have several meanings. It is possible to translate it as “awake.” However, the context does not suggest Deborah was sleeping. The TDOT says that a survey of the usage of this word “...suggests that its fundamental meaning is “to excite, stir up,” in the sense of “become/make active such that someone or something becomes and

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remains engaged in some activity.”” The TDOT also says, “It is usually Yahweh who prompts someone (or something) to become active.” The context, going back to chapter 4, suggests that Yahweh/God stirred up Deborah to action. She got a message from God which she delivered to Barak. That message was a call to arms. Remember, Deborah in addition to judging Israel was a prophetess.

Judges 4:6 (NASB) Now she (Deborah) sent word and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali, and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, has indeed commanded, ‘Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun.

This is indeed a “call to arms,” or as Merriam-Webster says, “a summons to engage in active hostilities.”

So instead of “awake, awake,” may I suggest something like “attention, attention.”

Sing/speak a song. Why would Loeffel translate the word as “speak?” Technically, he is correct. The Hebrew word is not one of the words for singing previously used in this chapter. Instead, it is *dabar*, to say or to speak. It is not the word I would have expected. On top of that, it is in the intensive or *piel* form of the word. The word for song is derived from one of our previous words for singing, the one that emphasized the words. This suggests the doctrinal content is being emphasized. Although the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this chapter it is likely that the Holy Spirit inspired the words of the song and incited them to sing it.

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Arise, Barak. Here is a repetition of Deborah's call to Barak to attack in chapter 4. From a human military perspective, in those circumstances, it was the wrong move. But it was the right move from God's perspective because He caused the weather to work against Sisera. As a result, Deborah, stirred up by God, had to give Barak a kick in the pants to get him going. Sometimes God does that to us. We are hesitant to take an action, until God convinces us to move forward.

And capture your captives. Loeffel is closer to the Hebrew. The noun "captives" and the verb "to capture" are from the same root meaning to take captive. This adds emphasis. When I read this I thought there was something wrong. In chapter 4, it said

Judges 4:16 (NASB) But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not even one was left.

If all the troops of the attacking force were killed, except Sisera, then who are the captives Barak is told to capture? If we eliminate the attacking force, who is left? It is possible that there was a fort or at least some kind of headquarters encampment at Harosheth-hagoyim? It is possible that those left at the encampment were some of the "captives." Let us consider another possibility.

We know that Barak left the battle and pursued Sisera. He met up with Jael after she had killed Sisera. Subsequently Israel eliminated Jabin. Certainly there were some troops or a guard protecting Jabin.

Judges 4:23 (NASB) So God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan on that day before the sons of Israel.

Judges 4:24 (NASB) And the hand of the sons of Israel pressed harder and harder upon Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had eliminated (can mean killed) Jabin the king of Canaan.

Let me go on a small excursion, often called in Bible studies an excursis. There are statements in the Bible that tell us something is true. Jabin the king of Canaan was “eliminated” or killed. There are other events that we can reasonably assume happened even though the Bible does not specifically say so. Chapter 4 does not say anything about Jabin’s guard. We can reasonably say there were guards. Eglon in chapter 3 had guards. That would have been the standard for any ruler. In the United States, the president has the Secret Service who guards him. Jabin reigned at Hazor.

Judges 4:2 (NASB) So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.

In other words, he lived in Hazor. His residence was likely a fort or palace of some sort, especially if he had been there for twenty years. This was the norm for kings. He would not be living apart from the rest of humanity but in all probability had servants serving him and guards guarding him and an administration that was administering the Israelites while they lived under Jabin’s rule as slaves. Hazor was in Israelite territory. What does our friend Josephus have to say?

From the Antiquities of the Jews book V chapter V: “Barak also fought with Jabin at Hazor; and when he met with him, slew him: and when the general was fallen, Barak overthrew the city to the foundation, and was the commander of the Israelites for forty years.”

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It is a reasonable assumption that some of the survivors of Hazor became captives of Barak and served as forced labor. Hence, “capture your captives.” Be careful when making assumptions. They must be reasonable based upon evidence or precedent.

Judges 5:13 (NASB) Then survivors came down to the nobles; The people of the Lord came down to me as warriors.

Judges 5:13 (Chisholm) Then the survivors came down to the mighty ones; the Lord’s people came down to me as warriors.

Judges 5:13 (Loeffel) Then the remnant ruled as nobles, The people of YHWH ruled for Him as mighty ones.

These two translations seemly go in different directions. I lean towards Loeffel’s translation. It makes more sense to me. Here is his comment:

"The enthusiasm of the people to muster for war is indicative of the gigantic transformation that had occurred within them. They were a remnant, which looks at the army of Israel from the perspective of the hardship they encountered at the hands of the Canaanites for twenty years. Now however, this remnant, which survived, is ruling as they ought to rule, because they are the people of YHWH and heirs to the promise of the land (Exod. 23:20f)."

Judges 5:14 (NASB) From Ephraim those whose root is in Amalek came down, Following you, Benjamin, with your peoples; From Machir (Manasseh) commanders came

down, And from Zebulun those who wield the staff of office.

Judges 5:15 (NASB) And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; As was Issachar, so was Barak; Into the valley they rushed at his heels; Among the divisions of Reuben There were great determinations of heart.

Judges 5:14 (Loeffel) Out from Ephraim – “Their root is in Amalek!” “After you, Benjamin! Among your kinsmen!” Out from Machir (Manasseh) descended the scepters, And out from Zebulun the leaders with the scribe’s staff.

Judges 5:15 (Loeffel) And His princes in Issachar with Deborah! And Issachar like Barak was let loose into the valley following Him. Among the divisions of Reuben there were lofty resolutions of will.

Here we have information that was not given in chapter 4. It was not pertinent to the purpose of that passage. Let me stop and show you that it is not unusual for a passage to leave out details that we might like to know but are not essential to the purpose of the passage.

For instance, you have probably read Genesis chapter 15 where God made a covenant with Abraham. But nowhere does it say that Abraham was a friend of God. But...

2 Chronicles 20:7 (king Jehoshaphat speaking to God) Did You not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land from Your people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Your friend Abraham forever?

This is king Jehoshaphat speaking. How did he know that Abraham was a friend of God? Isaiah picks this up also:

Isaiah 41:8 “But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend,

Then James echoes this:

James 2:23 and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called a friend of God.

The point is that people in the Old Testament knew things that were not written down in the Bible. In some cases, as here, another portion of Scripture will illuminate an earlier portion.

Take another example. In Judges chapter 3, it was a reasonable guess that Ehud had a rapport with king Eglon. Why else would the king allow someone from a subjugated nation to be in a room alone with him? It is a reasonable assumption. In this case, there is extra-Biblical information saying that. Josephus says, “Now this man (Ehud) became familiar with Eglon, and that by means of presents, with which he obtained his favour; and insinuated himself into his good opinion; whereby he was also beloved of those that were about the king.”

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There are other passages that force us to a conclusion based upon logic. Take for instance, Genesis 5, which provides a genealogy of Noah. I call this chapter God's spreadsheet. It is written such that it is easy to transcribe the information from the written page into a spreadsheet. You will see, if you look at such a spreadsheet, that Methuselah died in the year of the flood. The Bible never says he died just previous to the flood. But logic dictates that conclusion.

Reasonable assumptions can be made. But always be able to defend the assumptions you make.

Preview of coming attractions. Again, we gain information we did not have in chapter 4. Naphtali and Zebulun were not the only tribes who had volunteers. And later you will see that there were tribes that refused to respond for the call to defend Israel. Even today, there are Jews who try to distance themselves from Israel and even do things that are not in Israel's best interest. David Mahmet, the playwright and once liberal Jew, calls such a person a "wicked son." But that is a story for another day.

Judges 5:16 (NASB) Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, To hear the piping for the flocks? Among the divisions of Reuben There were great searchings of heart.

Judges 5:17 (NASB) Gilead remained across the Jordan; And why did Dan stay on ships? Asher sat at the seashore, And remained by its landings.

Judges 5:18 (NASB) Zebulun was a people who risked their lives, And Naphtali too, on the high places of the field.

Judges 5:16 (Loeffel) Why do you sit between the hearth stones listening to the whistling for the flocks? With reference to the divisions of Reuben there was great soul searching.

Judges 5:17 (Loeffel) Gilead remained on the opposite side of the Jordan. And Dan, 'Why does he remain in ships?' Asher sat by the side of the sea, And dwelt by his landings.

Judges 5:18 (Loeffel) Zebulun was a people who despised his life so as to die! Even Naphtali, against the high places of the battlefield!