

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1

The Book of Judges is a book on spirituality. It also documents the faithfulness, love and yes, the Justice of God. Yet, you may not see those words in the text. But the action illustrates those concepts. The text of the book of Judges in the Hebrew uses many techniques to get our attention and emphasize various aspects of the history of believers in Israel. It is my wish that you enjoy this study as well as learn something about spirituality and apply it to your life.

You will not read in the book of Judges that the “deliverers” have faith. But you will see it described. I have made this point before, but I want to once again stress this point. Read about faith and the outworking of that faith in the book of James 2:14-26.

Four of the so-called judges are in the Hebrews chapter 11 list of faith heroes. Spirituality is about faith. So let us read the entire 11th chapter of Hebrews.

Then pay particular attention to Hebrews 11:32-34

Hebrews 11:32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

Hebrews 11:33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

Hebrews 11:34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1
Judges 4:1-24

**weakness were made strong, became mighty
in war, put foreign armies to flight.**

Each one of Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah were flawed. Yet, they are in the list of faith heroes. In the book of Judges, they are not said to have great faith. But they are characterized in the book of Hebrews to be faith heroes.

Tonight we start in the fourth chapter of the book of Judges.

Outline (based upon Thomas Constable & Robert Dean):

Judges 1:1 – 3:6 The reason for Israel's apostasy

**Judges 3:7 – 16:31 The record of Israel's apostasy
[& God's Deliverance]**

Judges 17:1 – 21:25 The results of Israel's apostasy

As an overview of the second section here is outline of the section based upon a combination of Thomas Constable, J. Vernon McGee and Robert Chisholm.

- A. The first apostasy 3:7-11 [judge: Othniel] 3:7 “The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord,…”
- B. The second apostasy 3:12-31 [judge: Ehud] 3:12 “Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.”
- C. **The third apostasy chapters 4—5 [judge: Deborah and Barak] 4:1 “Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord…”**
- D. The fourth apostasy 6:1—10:5 [judge: Gideon] 6:1 “Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.”
- E. The fifth apostasy 10:6—12:15 [judge: Jephthah] 10:6 “Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord,…”
- F. The sixth apostasy chapters 13—16 [judge: Samson] 13:1 “Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord,…”

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1
Judges 4:1-24

Pattern of chapter 2 applied to chapter 3 (NASB).

Chapter 2	Chapter 4
<p>2:11-13 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, 12 and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked the Lord to anger. 13 So they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtaroath.</p>	<p>4:1 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. [Note that Ehud died is part of the Barak narrative and not part of the Ehud narrative. Interesting. Also, we are to assume that did evil is a reference to the evils listed in chapter 2.]</p>
<p>2:14 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.</p>	<p>4:2 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.</p>
<p>2:16 Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.</p>	<p>4:6 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. [The word for deliverer does not appear in Judges chapters 4-5.]</p>
<p>2:18 When the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.</p>	<p>The judge in this case appears to be Deborah. But, Barak is the one listed in Hebrews 11 as a faith hero.</p>
<p>2:18-19 But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.</p>	

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1
Judges 4:1-24

It was my intention to possibly skip chapter 5 since it looked like a daunting task beyond my abilities in Hebrew. However, it appears that in order to understand some of the text in chapter 4, it will be necessary to delve into chapter 5.

In chapter 3, stylistic features of the text sometimes amplified or intensified the meaning of the text. It was evident there were multiple double entendres. One of those stylistic features was the use of specific words, sometimes using a double meaning, sometimes just using repetition. Here in Judges chapter 4 there are words with similar functions:

“Another literary feature of Judges 4 is vocabulary pairing.

1. Yahweh ‘sold’ (makar) Israel into Jabin’s power and will ‘sell’ Sisera into a woman’s hands (vv. 2,9);
2. Barak is to ‘draw out (mashak) his troops on Mount Tabor, while Yahweh will ‘draw’ Sisera and his army to Wadi Kishon (vv.6-7);
3. Yahweh will ‘give’ (natan) Sisera and his troops into Barak’s hands (vv. 7, 14);
4. Barak ‘called out/up’ (za’aq) his troops, as did Sisera (vv. 10, 13);
5. both Barak and Sisera ‘went down’ (yarad) either to attack or to flee (vv. 14, 15);
6. Jael “went out (Yatsa’) to meet Sisera and Barak (vv. 18, 22).” Quoted from “Judges, Such a Great Salvation” by Dale Ralph Davis. P70

“The structure itself, however, has something important to say; it shows us that the biblical writer was anything but sloppy in the way he wrote his story. He has carefully thought out how he wanted to tell his story; it is a piece of literary art.” Quoted from Judges, Such a Great Salvation by

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1
Judges 4:1-24

Dale Ralph Davis. P71. I reformatted the text and numbered the list of items.

Read Luke 15:11-32 (Prodigal Son) to look for words that are not there.

Are the words faith and change of mind and confession in the text? No. But they are described. So we see in the book of Judges that there are words that are missing. In some cases, words and action that are missing in chapter 4 are inserted into chapter 5. The hermeneutical step of observation can include observing what is not in the text as well as what is in the text. As I suggested last time, words that are not in the text may scream in the silence.

“When structure so effectively serves plot and thematic development, balancing action with corresponding or contrasting action, heightening parallels and nurturing irony, artistry both pleases and contributes to lucidity with economy. And it adds another dimension. It teases the reader into slowing his pace, into pausing now and then to take note of the several developments in their interrelatedness, also into savoring the pleasure of discovering that the author has presented not a flat photograph but a hologram to be viewed from various angles.” Quoted from John H. Stek, “The Bee and the Mountain Goat: A Literary Reading of Judges 4,” Walter C. Kaiser & Ronald F. Youngblood, eds., *A Tribute to Gleason Archer. Essays on the Old Testament*. Chicago: MoodyPress, 1986. Hbk. ISBN: 0802487807. Chapter 3. pp. 53-86

Robert Chisholm commented that, “The juxtaposition of narrative and poetic accounts of the victory reminds us of Exodus 14:1-15:21, which reports and celebrates the Lord’s defeat of Pharaoh’s army at the Red Sea. The similarity may be more than coincidental, for there are other literary and thematic parallels between Exodus 14-15 and Judges 4-5, suggesting the narrator of Judges viewed the Lord’s defeat of Sisera as a reactualization of his might victory over Pharaoh. The parallels include:

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1
Judges 4:1-24

- (1) Both accounts emphasize the strength of the enemy's horses and chariotry (Judg. 4:3, 7, 13, 15-16; 5:22, 28; cf. Exod. 14:90, 17-18, 23, 28; 15:1, 4, 19).
- (2) The waters of the Kishon River, like those of the Red Sea, are the Lord's instrument of destruction (Judg. 5:21; cf. Exod. 15:6, 10).
- (3) In both instances the Lord confused/routed (Hebrew text) the enemy (Judg. 4:15; cf Exod. 14:24).
- (4) In both instances the enemy was totally destroyed, as the language of Judges 4:16 (Hebrew text here), "not even one was left," and Exodus 14:28 (Hebrew text here) "not even one of them remained," makes clear.

There are also parallels between Judges 4-5 and other parts of Exodus. Judges 4-5 views the Lord's battle with the enemy as a struggle for kingship over his people (note especially Judg. 5:3, 19), as does the Exodus account (Exod. 5:1-2, cf. 14:5, 8: 15:18). The same Hebrew word (Hebrew text here) describes the oppressive deeds of both Jabin and Pharaoh (cf. Judg. 4:3 with Exod. 3:9)."

This reference to the Exodus is pointing backwards to the founding event in Israel's history. I suggest that as we go through Judges 4-5 we attempt to look forward. Is there something in the future that parallels the action here? Is there yet a great suffering under which Israel will suffer which the Lord Jesus Christ will deliver them from?

At this point before we go further, I want to identify the key characters of this narrative:

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1
Judges 4:1-24

Sons of Israel	Enemy Force
Deborah: a woman, prophetess, judge. Her name means “ Bee ”	Jabin, king of Canaan
Barak: Sent and called by Deborah; victorious against enemy forces. His name means “ Lightning ”	Sisera
Jael: called Sisera; kills leader of enemy forces. Her name means “ Mountain Goat ”	(Heber, Jael’s husband)

Let us read Judges chapter 4-5 to get an idea of what we are dealing with. Notice that there is information in chapter 3 that is not included in chapter 4. Actually it is a separate account of the same action from a different perspective.

Now let us read the parallel account in Josephus. Just like for chapter 3, Josephus answers or clarifies some issues/questions we may have from reading chapter 4.

Note an interesting reversal between chapters 3 and 4. Both narratives deal with killing the leader of the enemy forces and defeat of the enemy forces. But, the timeline of these events is reversed between chapter 3 and chapter 4. In chapter 3, Ehud kills the king of Moab, Eglon. Then he defeats his army. In chapter 4, Barak defeats the opposing army. Then, Jael kills the commander of those forces.

Judges 4:1 Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died.

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1 Judges 4:1-24

Again. The first word in the Hebrew. But it is not an adverb. It is the same verb found in Judges 3:12 and means “they continued.” They continued to do evil. An echo from Judges 3:12 and pointing back to the paradigm in Judges chapter 2. Interesting use of the word. By repeating it here after using it in chapter 3, it ties the two chapters together through the thread of “evil,” and then back to the paradigm. The Fabric of Scripture.

Sight. Literally “eyes” but instead of plural it is the “dual,” meaning two. In other words, in the two eyes of God.

After Ehud died. Literally, “And Ehud was dead,” or “And Ehud had died.” The Hebrew word translated “after” by the NASB is multifunctional. It can be translated with many different words. After is an OK translation in this context. This is included at the beginning of this narrative in chapter 4 rather than at the ending of chapter 3 where you would have expected it. The author is again playing with words. He is emphasizing here that the sons of Israel lacked a physical human leader. They still rejected God as their king. So when the previous judge died, everyone went back to doing what was good in their own eyes.

As an application, Dale R. Davis comments in his book, “Judges, Such a Great Salvation” on page 73, “There is something wrong with religion when its degree of fidelity depends solely on outside pressures, influences, and leadership. Then we are ‘Christian’ only because of our surroundings, or of the expectations of Christian people around us, and lack a genuine, internal work of God.” That is what we see today in America. Churches want to be politically correct. So they bow down to people who are anti-God. There is at least one church in downtown Dallas that had joint Muslim-Christian services. Post-modern churches bend their doctrine to please the young people and get them into church. When you mix faith with anything else, it is no longer the faith God is looking for.

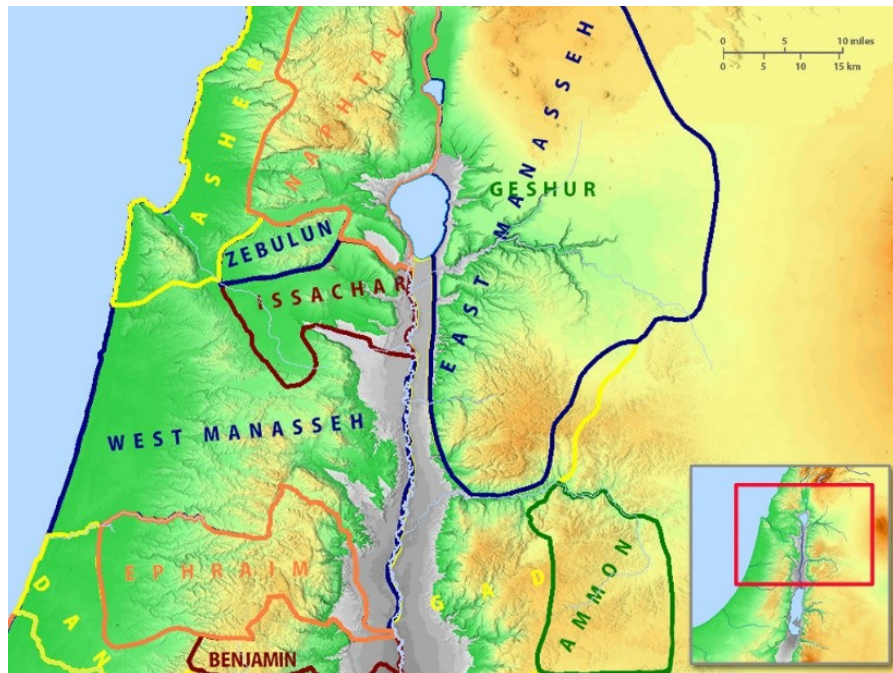
Judges Chapter 4 Part 1
Judges 4:1-24

Judges 4:2 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.

Read Joshua 11:1-11

There was a previous king of Canaan named Jabin. Quite possibly, he was a descendant named for the original Jabin.

Sold them. This is actually mentioned in the paradigm in chapter 2.



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This map is included to show the tribal lands in the area we are concerned with.

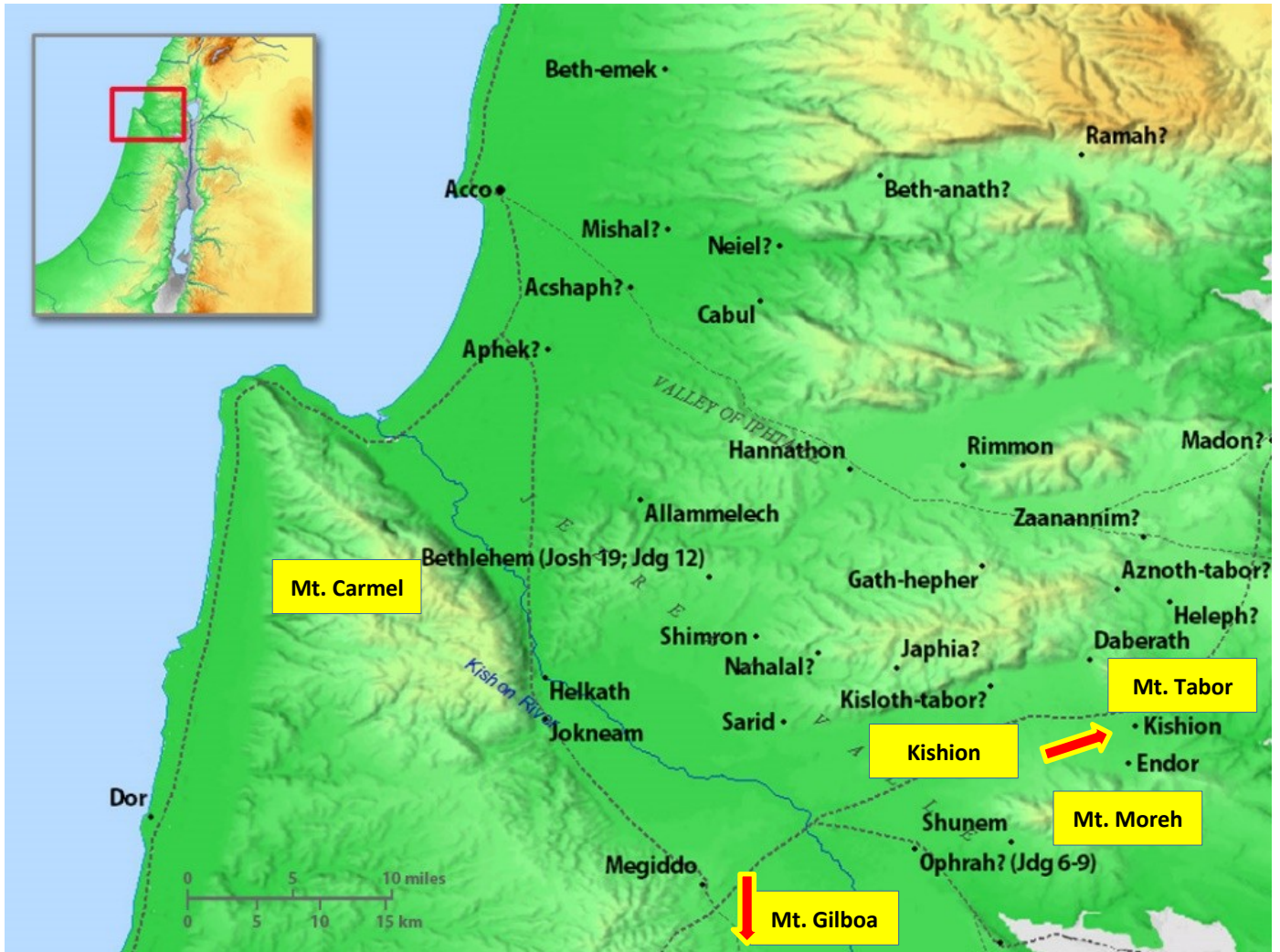
Judges Chapter 4 Part 1 Judges 4:1-24



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This map shows us some of the place names in the area. Note Megiddo at the bottom of the map.

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1 Judges 4:1-24



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I have added text in yellow boxes to highlight some placenames pertinent to our study.

I enlarged the map and highlighted place names of interest. Note the four mountains that form the valley of Jezreel.

Judges Chapter 4 Part 1
Judges 4:1-24

From Merrill Unger's Bible Dictionary:

“Megiddo occupied a very marked position on the southern rim of the plain of Esdraelon, the great battlefield of Palestine. It was famous for two great victories: of Barak over the Canaanites (Judg. 4:15), and of Gideon over the Midianites (Judg. 7); and for two great disasters: the deaths of Saul (I Sam. 31:8) and of Josiah (II Kings 23:29, 30; II Chron. 35:22). Armageddon becomes a poetical expression for terrible and final conflict.