

God Can Use What Seems Insignificant

by Mike Attwood

This sermon delves into the Book of Judges, focusing on the stories of Shamgar, Deborah, and Barak. Shamgar, a deliverer of Israel, used an ox goad to defeat the Philistines, showcasing God's ability to use the ordinary for extraordinary purposes. Deborah, a prophetess, judged Israel and called Barak to lead an army against Sisera. Barak, though hesitant, displayed faith by following God's command despite unfavorable odds. Deborah's involvement led to a prophetic declaration that the victory would be credited to a woman, emphasizing the importance of obedience and dependence on God for success.

Scripture: Judges 3:31, Judges 4:4, Hebrews 11:32, Revelation 3:11

Topics: "Faith in Action", "God's Empowerment through Ordinary Means"

Description

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Transcript

We're in the Book of Judges, chapter 3, verse 31, and we're going to read down to chapter 4, verse 9, and we're going to consider actually three people this morning, Shamgar, Deborah, and Barret. And so, beginning in verse 31, it says, And after him, that's after Ehud, was Shamgar, the son of Ammoth, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goat. And he also delivered Israel.

And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor, the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Haroshef of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.

And 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 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 Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go. But if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.

And she said, I will surely go with thee, notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor. For the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

And again, God will bless that reading of his precious word to us. And I'm sure we'll be encouraged as we study this portion together. And so we begin with this man, Shamgar.

We want to consider him. Now, many so-called critics of the Bible and these higher critics, they say Shamgar shouldn't even be there, that he's an interpolation. He was put in the text.

He really doesn't belong there. He's not really a judge. And they say all kinds of negative things about him.

But let's just say this, that there's no question that he was used as a deliverer of the nation of Israel. These judges, remember, weren't so much court judges, but they were deliverers. And it tells us the testimony of this man, he also delivered Israel.

Now, what's interesting is there's not a lot told to us about Shamgar. He's mentioned here in verse 31, and he's also mentioned in chapter 5. And in chapter 5, verse 6, it says this, in the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jeor, the highways were unoccupied and the travelers walked through byways. So what we can see is quite clearly that he was a contemporary.

And so he's about the same timeframe as Jeor. And then verse 7, in the habitations of villages ceased, they ceased in Israel till I, Deborah, arose. So it's kind of the same timeframe.

So obviously, clearly meant to be discussed at this context, at this time. So what do we know about him, this man Shamgar, because so little is said about him in scripture? What we do know is that his name, Shamgar, means, and there's two derivatives of his name. One is stranger, and the other is sword.

They almost seem, how could they be related? But that's what the experts tell us, stranger and sword. And in a sense, perhaps, it's very fitting because it seems that he was a stranger to the sword. He didn't have the use of a sword.

He only had an ox goad. And that's what he used, but he used it very effectively to slay of the Philistine's 600 men. Also, it seems that he has a Gentile name.

He's the son of Ammoth, and Ammoth is a Gentile name. And so maybe this stranger, which would be fitting, right? If he's a Gentile, he's not part of the people of God. And yet he associates himself with the people of God.

And he fights with them against their enemies. And so maybe one that heard of God's great dealings in the past and wanted to identify himself with the people of God, but nevertheless, a stranger. And he was a stranger.

He was simply a plowman. Having an ox goad would tell us that he was a plowman. We'll explain that a little bit more, but just a simple kind of rural activity that was his occupation.

He's certainly somebody, as we said, a stranger in terms of his background. But one thing we know is that for all the insignificance that seems to be connected with this man, Shamgar, is that God took him up and used him to deliver Israel. And so that's a great thing to say about him.

So what's really significant about Shamgar was the weapon that he used, an ox goad. Now we're told that an ox goad was a strong pole about eight feet long. I'd never realized that until I did this study.

An eight feet long pole at one end was a sharp metal point for prodding the oxen. And the other end was a spade for cleaning the dirt of the plow. And so kind of you get this idea, this eight foot long pole, don't know what that is in meters, but you can get the idea.

It has a sharp pointed metal edge at one end, and it has also a spade kind of end at the other end for cleaning off the plow. It was the closest thing that Shamgar could find to a spear, because it would seem that at this time the enemy had confiscated the weapons of the Israelites. If you look again at chapter five, you'll notice this statement in verse eight, they chose new gods, then was war in the gates.

Was there a shield or spear seen among 40,000 in Israel? And so it would seem that Israel had been basically disarmed by the enemy. They've taken all their weapons away from them. If you look at first Samuel, you'll see another occasion like that.

And that would be during, again, during the time of the Philistines in first Samuel 13, verse 19, it says, now there was no sword found throughout all the land of Israel. It's 13 verse 19 for the Philistines said, lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears. But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man, his share and his coulter and his ax and his mattock.

Yet they had a file for the mattocks and for the coulters and for the forks and for the axes and to sharpen the goads. And so it would seem that there wasn't much available as far as weaponry. So verse 22, it came to pass in the day of battle, there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan, but with Saul and with Jonathan, his son was there found.

So again, we get the idea, one of the things that the enemy wants to do to bring people into subjection is to take away all their weapons. That's kind of an interesting thing here in the States, the whole idea of people having guns and all the rest of it is that they recognize that whenever there's tyranny, the first thing that the government does is remove the weapons from the citizenry. Now, again, I'm not getting into politics.

I'm just telling you, that's a fact of the matter. First thing Hitler did when he came to power, he disarmed the citizenry and he gave it to his henchmen and his thugs. That's what happens when tyranny occurs.

So the Israelites find themselves without weapons. All he had in his hand was an ox goad. But yet we're reminded that again, the Lord would say to us, what is in your hand? Because God is able to use what we have no matter how seemingly insignificant it is to bring deliverance to the people of God.

And so Shamgar used an ordinary instrument to do an extraordinary work for God. And God, again, will use whatever's in your hand for his glory if we allow him to do that. Even something as unlikely as an ox goad.

And we have a tendency to think, well, what can I offer? What can I give? And the Lord just simply wants our availability. He's not looking for our ability. He's looking for our availability.

What's in your hand? I can take it and I can use it for good and for glory, for my glory. And so we need to ask ourselves, am I available to the Lord? Am I willing to be used of the Lord? What is in my hand that God could take up and use me in some seemingly insignificant thing, but he can use it in a marvelous way for his glory. So far in chapter three, if we consider the three judges, we have Othniel, and we're reminded that the power of the Spirit came upon him.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Othniel. We have Ehud, and he had the power of the sword. Remember he had made this two-edged dagger or two-edged sword.

And so you've got the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of the sword, and then in Shamgar, the simple power of service. He just used whatever he had to serve the Lord. And these three elements are so critical if we want to be useful.

The Spirit of God upon us, the sword of the Spirit or the word of the Lord in our hands, and a willingness to serve. In these three areas, if we have these three things, Spirit of God upon us, I mean, we're all indwelt by the Spirit, but he is our ministry anointed by the Spirit. We have his empowerment.

We know how to use the sword and we internalize the sword, hit it in our hearts and able to use it. And then a willingness to serve, then God can take us up and use us in a very significant way. And so it tells us, after him was Shamgar, the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines 600 men with an ox-goat.

Now, we don't know if he did it all at once. We've seen things like that, as we consider 1 Samuel, that sometimes the Lord gives supernatural strength and multitudes, or whether it was one at a time, but one way or another, he picked off and slew of the Philistines 600 men. Now, remember the Philistines.

Right now, as we've looked at judges, they haven't been the dominant force, but as we proceed in the book of judges, they're going to become the principal enemy of the nation of Israel. They're going to become very prominent. And it would seem that this man, Shamgar, saw their inherent danger before anybody else did.

Before they even had come to their full power, he was already saw the threat when others didn't see it. And he had the insight, as it were, from God to pick them off and to destroy them. Who were these Philistines? Now, we've talked about them before, but just to say this, that they weren't natives to the land.

Okay. There were people that had, many believe they come from the Mediterranean Sea. They'd gone up into Egypt, and then they migrated, like Israel, from Egypt up into the land of Israel.

But they're among the people of God in the land. They're not native to the land, but they're in the land, but they know nothing of shed blood. They know nothing of the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and nothing of the crossing of Jordan.

And so many liken them to unbelievers amongst the people of God. And we're going to see, for instance, in Genesis, they're spoiling, they're filling up the wells. They have no interest in the word of God, for instance.

They're among the people of God. They're not really interested in the, they have got the same spiritual heritage and all the rest of it. And they tend to drag down the people of God.

And it's true that if we're in a congregation, that's a mixed multitude, and we have unbelievers amongst us, they don't have the same appetites, and they don't have the same experiences, and they have a tendency to drag down the people of God. They don't have an appetite for spiritual things. And he saw the danger of these Philistines before others saw the danger, and he was used of God in a marvelous way to kill 600 of these Philistines.

So enough about Shamgar. We thank the Lord for Shamgar, for this man who God used him with what was in his hands to accomplish deliverance. He also delivered Israel, the writer of the Judges wants us to know.

So now chapter 4 and verse 1. Now what's unique about chapter 4 is that in a sense, the incident that we're going to look at in chapter 4, we have a unique situation in that there's a victory hymn written to celebrate what happens in chapter 4 in chapter 5. And so that's kind of unique. We don't see that elsewhere. And it's going to kind of give a, the hymn will give a narration and information about the great victory that took place.

And what we find is we read verse 1, it says, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead. And so what we see is that Israel's loyalty to the Lord was superficial and seemed to depend entirely upon the restraining influences of the judges. I hope we're seeing a pattern here that whenever the judge was alive, they followed the Lord.

But then when the judge was dead, they go back to their old ways once again. And so it would seem that the judges had a restraining influence for God. And we're told to be like that, aren't we? We're told to be like salt.

And you remember what salt does? It preserves, remember in the days before refrigeration, how would you get meat? Well, you'd salt it, wouldn't you? And it would have that preserving aspect. And the Lord would say, if the salt's lost its savor, it's useless, no good for anything. And so it gives preservative, it gives flavor as well.

Of course, we all like our salty bacon and all the rest of it because we like salt. It's a nice flavor. And so the idea of the believer, we're all meant to be people that are used of God to hold back corruption, to restrain, and also to give a beautiful flavor to life.

And of course, when the restrainer is removed, then evil predominates. And of course, we know prophetically there's a day coming soon when the church, the restrainer will be removed. And literally, if you pardon the expression, all hell will break loose when the church is removed.

But certainly these judges, they had a restraining influence. And while ever they were alive, the people of God behaved themselves once they were gone. And so we need to ask ourselves, am I living that kind of a life that actually has restraint, causes people to be restrained? Does it do that to people? Do I affect? Now, I can remember as a young Christian, newly saved in the workplace, and it was an interesting thing.

But when I would come into the coffee room, if they were telling dirty jokes, immediately they'd stop. It's kind of an amazing thing. And I was only a new believer.

And yet it was a restraining influence. They knew who I was and who I served. And that seemed to cause them to back off a bit, you see.

So we're meant to be that salt in this world. And I hope that we are being like that. But notice it says the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.

And of course, what that evil is, as we've seen all along, is they go into Baal worship, basically. They go back to idolatry and all the immorality that's connected with it. And so there's nothing new or original about what they do.

And it tells us something about sin. It's difficult to be creative in sin. There's a certain monotony about it.

Most of what people do has already been done before. We do the same thing over again. It really is a boring routine.

There's nothing fresh, nothing new, nothing exciting about it. It's the same old, same old stuff. And every time Israel sin, they go back to the same old, same old again.

It's just the same. And so what it is, is the fast lane that people talk about, oh, you're going to go in the fast lane. The fast lane soon becomes a rut.

And people get themselves in that rut. And yet with Christ, every day is a new day. There's a freshness.

There's a newness about this eternal life we have. But sin is just boring. It's the same old, same old stuff.

And so they go back to the same old routine. No originality. Back to the slavery and the staleness of sin.

And let's just say this, it doesn't satisfy. We often sing this beautiful hymn, and I love it. Now none but Christ can satisfy.

None other name but he. There's life and peace and lasting joy, Lord Jesus found in thee. Don't be deceived about sin.

It does not satisfy. It has pleasure, but it's momentary. It doesn't last.

And it becomes a rut and a routine and a slavery and a bondage. And we need to tell the people of this world what sin is really like. Sin and all its ugliness.

And we need to preach exceeding sinfulness of sin. And the fact that it doesn't satisfy, and only Christ satisfies. And so they go back again to their old ways.

Back to the old rut. They did evil. And we said yes last week.

And again, we say it's in the sight of the Lord. It may not have been considered even wrong in the Canaanite culture what they were doing. It's probably perfectly acceptable.

But in the sight of the Lord, it was evil. They did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead. And it says, the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor, the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harasheth of the Gentiles.

Now, this enemy, Jabin, king of Canaan, reigned in Hazor. Well, we've already seen him before, or we've seen somebody with the same name before. If you look back to Joshua 11, it tells us in the first 15 verses, and we won't have to read them all, but we'll read a few just to get the sense.

It says in verse 1 of Joshua 11, it came to pass when Jabin, king of Hazor, had heard those things, that he sent to Joab, king of Madan, and to the king Shimron, and to the king Axaf, and to the kings that were on the north of the mountains, and of the plains south of Jinnaroth, and in the valley, and in the borders of Dor in the west. And look down in verse 8, it says, the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them to the great Zidon, and to Mithraphothmair, and so on and so forth. And verse 9, Joshua did unto them, as the Lord bade him, he hocked their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

And Joshua at that time turned back, and took Hazor, and smote the king thereof with the sword, for Hazor before time was the head of all these kingdoms. And so, so how come he's back again? If Joshua slew the king of Hazor, Jabin, and if he destroyed Hazor, how come that this old enemy is back once again? Well, could it be that Jabin is a title, rather than a proper name? For instance, you have Abimelech, who keeps showing up, but they're different Abimelechs, it's a title like Caesar or Pharaoh, you see. And so it's just the leader of the nation is called either Caesar or Pharaoh, or Abimelech, or Ben-Hadad, that's another one, there's a bunch of Ben-Hadads.

But it's again, it's this titular idea, it's a title. And so this king of Jabin who was killed, well now, there's another Jabin, king of Hazor. And it illustrates the fact that old foes can be resurrected in new forms to vex the Lord's people who lapse into their former sinful ways.

And it is true, enemies that we once defeated, if we begin to backslide, those enemies can come back and bring us into bondage once again. And we already had the victory over them in the past, we slew them. And now, because of compromise, those enemies have come back again.

And that reminds us of, I believe, who this is really picturing, it's picturing the devil. Remember, he was defeated at Calvary. Remember, he received that fatal head wound at Calvary, and at the cross, and yet, that old enemy still keeps coming back, doesn't he? He goes about like a roaring lion, I mean, he's a defeated foe, we know he is, his doom is sure, the Bible is clear, his doom is sure, and he has already had a significant blow and defeat when the Lord Jesus won the victory on Calvary.

And yet, this scoundrel, this enemy keeps on coming back and keeps on coming back. And so, I believe that that's what's in view here. Now, let me explain why I believe that that's in view, because the word Jabin means intelligence and understanding.

And I believe it is representative of that wisdom that descendeth not from above. As James would put it in James chapter 3, verse 15, wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish. It's the wisdom of this world that is brought to us by the God of this world, small g, by this prince of the power of the air, and I think of the airwaves when I think of that, right? The prince of the power of the air, this individual, who's the chief minister of misinformation, he's a liar from the very beginning, right? And so, this wisdom, human wisdom, if you like, devilish wisdom, that's opposed to divine revelation.

And notice he's, this Jabin is, well, he's got a host under him. Because you've got, it says, Iranian Hazor, the captain of whose horse was Sisera, which dwelt in Harasheth of the Gentiles. So again, it's a clear picture of this, this one that we're up against, this liar who has principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness under his authority.

And this is our enemy that is in view here, and particularly his work as the minister of disinformation, his propaganda, his lies. Of course, Israel's complacency and wickedness led to the Canaanites regaining a foothold in the land, these old foes coming back to vex and enslave the Lord's people lapsing into their former sinful ways. And of course, the sad thing is that it says the Lord sold them.

How heartbreaking that must have been to have to use these enemies to chasten his own people, for the Lord to have to sell his people. And you get something of the heartache of it in Psalm 44, what you used to see there, Psalm 44, verse 12, about how hard it must be for God to have to do this, to chasten his people so that they're brought back to him. Thou sellest thy people for naught, and does not increase thy wealth by their price.

He sold them for naught and had not been enriched himself in doing so. It was hard for the Lord to do this, but he did it because he loves his people and whom he loves, he chastens. And so it tells us in verse three, the children of Israel cried to the Lord for he had 900 chariots of iron and 20 years, he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Notice that the oppression time getting longer, six years, eight years, 20 years. And so 20 years before they cry out to the Lord, and of course, there's a great military advantage. Sisera terrorized the tribes living near the Valley of Jezreel, the plains and valleys under his control left Israel powerless as they had this advanced technology for the day, these chariots of iron.

And of course, whenever human wisdom and intelligence gains the ascendancy over divine things, it spells weakness and spiritual decline for the Lord's people. And we've got to recognize this. And again, can I just a word of exaltation to my own heart and to all of us really, that when you're listening to the media, it doesn't matter what media source it is.

There's an agenda behind it. And who's behind it? The prince of the power of the air. And he wants to deceive the people of God.

He wants to bring them into bondage. He wants them to be crippled with fear, so that they're cowering down. And again, we've got to be careful about this, because this pandemic, the Lord's people have been terrorized in fear.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. But we have been gripped by fear. Why? Because we're listening every day to the minister of disinformation.

And whatever sites we're going to, I'm not saying one site or another, it doesn't make any difference. The enemy is a liar from the very beginning. And so we've got to be aware of this.

And we've got to guard our hearts and minds that we're not brought into subjection to the evil one. And so notice that God does something here. As they cry to the Lord for deliverance, it says in verse four, Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

What an indictment on the people of God. The rule of women was not normal in Israel. Her prominence implies a lack of qualified and willing men.

It is an indictment. And in our day, there are brethren who never take part in any meeting and who would adamantly defend or speak against women taking part. And rightly so in the meetings, right? They would defend the scriptures, but their abdication of their responsibility only encourages people to act in

disobedience.

And so we've got to be careful about these things, right? We have to be careful. We've got to quit ye like men, be strong. It's time for men to be men and to take your spiritual responsibilities seriously.

Because in these days, God had to use a woman. The vessel through whom he chose to speak in response to the people's cry for deliverance from their suffering underlies the extent of their failure and was an indictment on the spiritual condition of the men of that day. There was no man deemed fit to convey his message of deliverance.

And therefore he entrusted this responsibility to a woman. Deborah is the woman among the judges, but she was definitely a worthy person in many ways. A remarkable person and certainly was a woman who understood headship.

She's revealed as the wife of Lapidoth. She was a woman who certainly did not want to act out of her station. She wanted Barak to take the lead, but we learned some things about her.

Her name, Deborah, it means bee. Of course, it speaks of busyness, doesn't it? As busy as a bee. You've heard that saying, right? We often say as busy as a bee in a bottle.

And so she's industrious. And of course, a bee has a sting when it's threatened. And so she certainly is industrious and she certainly will have a sting when threatened.

And she's a prophetess. She communicates the mind of God at a given time. Now, again, this is a rarity.

I want you to know this. This is very rare. In the Old Testament, only three women are said to have the gift of being a prophetess.

Miriam in Exodus 15, the sister of Moses. Huldah in 2 Kings 22, during the reign of godly King Josiah and Deborah here in Judges chapter 4. Now, there's another one mentioned in Nehemiah 6, Noah Dyer, but it seems that she's working against Nehemiah and may well be a false prophetess because she's certainly working against God's servant there. But all I want you to see is it's a rare thing.

In the New Testament, once again, it's extremely rare to come across a prophetess. There's Anna in Luke's Gospel, chapter 2, verse 36, really still part of the Old Testament economy, really, because the New Testament here really begins at Pentecost. But nevertheless, Anna, and then you have Philip, who had four daughters that prophesied, Philip the Evangelist in Acts 21.

So all I'm saying is that it's a very rare thing for a woman to be called of God as a prophetess. And the rarity of it would tell us, in one sense, that generally speaking, these women were raised up in bleak times where men abdicated their spiritual responsibility, generally speaking. And so, for instance, Huldah, who was a time where things were very wicked, very corrupt, and she had the mind of God at that time.

And so generally, it's a rarity, and we need to recognize that. Now, her husband, we're told that she's the wife of Lapidoth, and it means lamp or firebrand. And so, she, we're told, judged Israel at that time.

And she dwelt under the palm tree. Now, again, usually judges would sit in the gate, right? That's how they would judge. But she didn't leave her home place.

She stayed in her area. She stayed under a palm tree, and people would come to her. And so she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel.

And of course, the palm tree speaks of victory, speaks of prosperity, speaks of peacefulness. I thought that was interesting, that even though there's defeat all around, but it would imply that Deborah was somebody who was spiritually prosperous. She enjoyed peace in the midst of a troubled time, and she was somebody who was an overcomer.

She experienced personal victory in a time of corporate failure and defeat. And she lived in Ramah, which means high place, and Bethel, the house of God. And so, she's a woman who was an overcomer, who lived in the realm of the heavenly places and appreciated the house of God, if I could use those terms to kind of pull it together.

She encourages believers to value the house of God and to desire to live in the spiritual heights that are open to them. And that is who she is. Quite a picture, really, the whole of Israel screaming up the hill country of Ephraim, so that Deborah could hear their cases and make judgments.

Because of her gifts, she had become the political and judicial center of the nation at that time. Unique in all the history of Israel, there's never a time when Israel chose a woman to be their leader. And again, it does show something of the impoverished times.

And just to prove the point, I'd like to look at Isaiah chapter three, just for a moment, Isaiah chapter three and verse 12, where we read this. It says, as for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. Oh, my people, they which lead thee, cause thee to err and destroy the way of thy paths.

And so again, usually we would say that when this is the situation, when their children oppress them, when women rule over them, it means that the country is in a very bleak condition. Sad condition, no male leadership in the land. So God raises up this prophetess to judge the nation.

And yet it's very clear as we proceed, that she doesn't want that place. She'd rather men take the leading role. And we're going to see this as we move on.

Verse six, it says, she sent and called Barak the son of Abinuim out of Kedesh Naphtali and said to him, hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded saying, go and draw toward Mount Tabor, take with thee 10,000 men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun. And so she calls Barak and basically calls him to recruit an army to go towards Mount Tabor, because the Lord has commanded that. And the Lord has intentions to deliver the children of Israel as a result of their crying out to him.

Now, Barak, quite a common name in Israel, and it means lightning. And it perhaps suggests the swiftness of God's power to deliver. She calls him privately, not wanting to publicly humiliate him.

She sees her place in God's economy. The son of Abinuim means the father of pleasantness or graciousness. And he's from Kedesh Naphtali.

Now I love the meaning of this. Kedesh Naphtali means sanctuary of the wrestler, sanctuary of the wrestler. Does this not remind us at least of Jacob wrestling with the angel? Does it not remind us in a sense of a man wrestling in the sanctuary so that spiritual warfare can be won against the principalities and powers that are in heavenly places? Remember Ephesians 6, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers against the rulers of the darkness of this present age.

So it's a picture of a man of the sanctuary. And in the sanctuary, he is praying. And as a result of his praying, divine power is exerted against the enemies of God's people against principalities and powers.

And certainly, if ever there was a day when we need men of the sanctuary who know how to wrestle with God in prayer, today is such a day. We need people who know how to fight on their knees, who know how to wrestle with God for victory and for blessing. And so the need of men and women of prayer to engage in successful warfare against the wisdom of this world is very relevant and needed today.

Now he's told to bring his army of 10,000 men to Mount Tabor. And what a great place to gather 10,000 men together. Mount Tabor, it certainly would be safe from Caesar's chariots.

It's a conical shaped mountain. It rises 1,800, sorry, 18,430 feet or 5,617 meters above the valley of Jezreel at the eastern end. And so there's no way these chariots would be effective when they're on Mount Tabor.

Kind of interesting. We'll think more about it next time when we look at chapter five, but whenever they were on Mount Tabor, they were safe. The enemy couldn't get them.

But in order to defeat the enemy, they had to leave the high place and come down in the valley to fight the chariots. And there's going to be significance, great significance to that, but I'll just mention it now. This is where God gathers them.

It would seem that God had already called him prior to Deborah speaking to him, because notice again, verse six, she sent, called Barak, the son of Abinuin, out of Kedesh Naphtali and said unto him, hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded saying? In other words, it would seem that God had already commanded Barak to do this, but he was reluctant to do it. And he needed the promptings of this woman to actually get him to do what he should have been doing willingly already. So God uses a woman to stir him up to move.

I wonder how many of us have profited from the gentle nudge of a godly sister. Has there ever been any godly sisters that have encouraged some of us brothers to take our place and to get moving for God? Oh, I can think of that. Very definite examples, even in my own life, of women that have been a real encouragement for me to step up for the Lord and to serve him.

And so we thank God that she does this. But he should have gone already without having to be stirred into activity. Notice verse seven.

What we see here is God's providence revealed here. God's, in a sense, working behind the scenes here. He says, 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 thy hand.

So God is going to providentially lead Jabin and his army, and he's going to lead them to the river Kishon. Now, what we know, and there's a lot of help in this story from Josephus. And what he says is that this is the dry season when this event is taking place.

And the river Kishon was nothing but a little wadi, like a little stream. And so ideal for his chariots, right? Dry land, he's, you know, flat land. Wow, he's going to go down there ready to fight.

And he's thinking, wow, I've got all, everything's on my side. I've got the technology. I've got the landscape is perfect.

All he can see is victory. But God, according to Josephus, was going to cause a great storm to come down in the dry season, not typical at all. And this storm, of course, Baal, the god of the Canaanites, well, he was supposed to be the god of the storms.

And so for this storm to come up in the dry season, according to their suspicious minds, would tell them that God was against them. And flash flooding would occur, making their chariots ineffective. Just look at chapter five to see that we're not kind of making all this up or dreaming all this up.

Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchest out of the field of freedom, the earth trembled, and the heaven dropped, the clouds also dropped water. And so quite clearly, the Lord is going to bring storms that are going to affect Sisera and affect his ability to fight. And so clearly, the Lord has all this in view.

Now, a couple of quick points. First of all, I want to just think about Barak for a moment. Despite his hesitancy, and we're going to see even more of it, what's interesting is that in Hebrews 11, verse 32, Barak is listed.

Interestingly enough, Deborah and Jael are not mentioned. But Barak is mentioned. So again, despite his hesitancy, there was definite faith seen in this man Barak.

And of course, the wisdom of the world would mock at the Lord's command to Barak, to take the Israelite forces into territory through which the river Kishon flowed, which was a valley, which was a dry valley, would have been, in a sense, suicidal, a suicidal mission. And so it took him faith to go down there, right? They've got all the advantage, the chariots of iron, flatland in a valley. I mean, this is an act of faith, he has to believe that God is going to do them something.

They also had a scarcity of weapons, as we've already seen in chapter 5, verse 8. It says they choose new gods. Then was war in the gates. Was there a shield or spear seen among 40,000 in Israel? So they're up against all this technology, all this weaponry of the enemy, and they don't seem to have anything.

And so it seemed like it was a complete suicide mission. And yet, Barak believed God. And yet there's a reluctance.

It says in verse 8, Barak said to her, if thou will go with me, then I will go. But if thou will not go with me, then I will not go. Basically, he said, okay, I'll go, but I need a woman to hold my hand.

I want you to go with me. I want you to help me. So despite his clear faith, evidenced in Hebrews 11, there's a reticence there.

And he says to God, he actually is giving God conditions really. God says, I will draw, I will deliver. God has commanded.

And he says, okay, Lord, I'll go if she goes with me. And so in a sense, he's giving conditions, supplemental conditions. God says, I will, his response was, I will not.

If you'll go with me, I'll go. But if not, I won't go. And so as a direct result of that, it says in verse 9, she said, I will surely go with thee.

Notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor. For the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

So a prophetic word here. Basically, she says, you're not going to get the honor. The honor will fall into the hands of a woman.

And isn't it an interesting thing? We're warned in Revelation chapter 3, verse 11, let no man take thy crown. Or we might paraphrase, no man or woman take thy crown. I would have honored you greatly, Barak, if you'd have simply just obeyed and gone at my command.

But because you made these stipulations, these additional conditions, the honor is going to go to someone else. The honor will go to a woman. And so we, again, need to make sure that nobody takes our crown.

That we don't lose our reward. God has a battle for us to fight for him. And we may not have much in our hands, like Shamgar.

We may, whatever's in our hands, the Lord says, I can use you. But we have to be willing to be used. We have to be dependent on him to win the victory.

Because, again, there's no way that Barak could arrange a storm. It was God that gave the victory. And God always gives the victory.

But often the victory is won in Kedesh Nephthali, the sanctuary of the wrestler. May God encourage us to go into the sanctuary of the wrestler and to do battle against these principalities and powers in these heavenly places. Let us learn to wrestle with God for victory in these days.

May the Lord encourage us with these thoughts.

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