

Judges 08-02-22b

We continue now our study in the book of Judges, and we've not only surveyed the situation here and seen that this, when I was a little boy in Sunday school and you go to Child Evangelism and they use the flannel board and Deborah and Barak and it's represented as one of the great high points of Old Testament victory, and it's not. This is really kind of a shameful, embarrassing story. This reminds me of Bush 43 over there at that dinner, the Orient someplace, you remember there was kind of an embarrassing, I mean there's just no good way to throw up at a formal banquet if you're the President of the United States, but you know, it can't be helped.

Well, the sad thing is this could have been helped, and should have, they should have known better. They represent the mature believer. However, you and I would like to think that we are somewhere in the general vicinity of at least a growing and hopefully reasonably mature believer, and this is a, as they say, a cautionary tale.

We ought to find in this depiction the motivation to be sober and be vigilant, because the devil is roaming the earth, seeking whom he may devour, and he wants to set up in the hot sore of our soul and start sending forth his little armies of darkness to oppress us and to knock us off stride and to make us go running to the wet nurse, which is what Israel does. You can see the clues, think in terms of the patriarchal society that Israel was, and you know, it's tricky, and there are very few politically incorrect people such as myself who will tell this story the way the Bible intends it to be told, because it's politically incorrect and someone will read into this story a horrible, misogynistic, anti-feminist viewpoint that, oh well, why should it be an embarrassment for a woman to lead? That misses the point, and it's a tragedy if the point gets missed. It isn't about which gender, it's about missing one's assignment.

In football, you've got backs that are supposed to cover certain areas of the field, and if a guy gets fooled, if a guy isn't paying attention, and he misses his assignment, and a critical catch is made by an opposing running back or end or whatever, or receiver, and a touchdown is scored because somebody missed his assignment, that's terrible. And if some other guy has to run clear across the field and tackle your man because you goofed, it's embarrassing. Well, this is embarrassing.

It's Barak is the most embarrassed man. If Moses was the most afflicted man, Barak is the most embarrassed man. Other than the ones, remember David sent the messengers and they came back with their beard half shaved off and they tore off their tunics where they couldn't be seen in public? Well, this is of that same range.

And all of the signals are there, there are these little signals waving with the location and the names that we've pointed out. And you notice that the winning of the battle is given in one sentence. This story is not about defeating the army.

You look at it. We have had 14 verses of introduction in this chapter, 14 verses of setup and detail and clue and metaphorical communication. In verse 15, oh by the way, the Lord routed Sisera and his thousand men and his chariots before Barak.

Well, that's all you get of the battle account. We're done with the army and the chariots. It's just an aside.

Well, of course, the war was won, but then we're right back to the main point, which is Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Herosha's Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edges of the sword, not a man was left. So we get a little recap.

But the main thing is, this gives us an excuse to find out that they were pushed all the way from Kadesh, all the way from Kadesh, which is several miles away, all the way back to Herosha's Hagoyim. This is what the last half of verse 15 tells us. It's incidental that he defeated them, but he pursued them and destroyed them and not a man was left.

And so Sisera is running away on foot. And the victory is mainly given as an explanation for why Sisera finds himself running away and outside his chariot. And he's back home.

He's back up where he sits, where he operates from. So he fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. Jael went out to meet Sisera and said to him, Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me, do not fear.

And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket. Now, we can't help this, at least I can't help it, because I'm a victim of my generation and my culture and my environment. But I think about the way someone would shoot this as a movie.

If this was a movie script, now you think about the way this would play. You pop in the DVD and you have all this background. You see Deborah sitting under the tree, these men of Israel with their hat in their hand coming up and, well, can you get any word from the Lord? And the priests are over here nefariously doing next to nothing over in Shiloh.

And this very humiliating scene with Barak, well, I'll go if you go, and okay, I'll go, but you're not going to get the victory now if I have to go with you. And then there's like a wide shot. And you see the milling throngs of CGI soldiers down there battling, and it's clearly an Israelite victory.

And now we zoom in and you see Sisera huffing and puffing and running away. You see his chariot disappearing in the background, and he's running away, and he runs and he says, oh, well, here's a friendly place to stop. I know that this Heber the Kenite is a friend of Jabin's, and they've got an agreement, and so I'll run in there.

And you think about the battle, what a great opportunity. This is where you have your cast of thousands, the smoke and the carnage and the hacking and the slashing and the jumping and

the stuntmen and all of this stuff going off, the pots of explosives and everything. This is where they like to really spend their time, telling this great story.

Well, the Bible just glosses, this is one of the ways you know that it wasn't written by human beings, because any man in his right mind writing this story would say, and now back to the battle. You know, they flanked him here and ran, you know, carnage and destruction and wheels coming off of chariots and men fleeing, screaming. It's all skipped by the way they won.

But the zoom and the close-up and the fine-grained detail is Sisera, who we have known only by reputation up to this point, but now we see him with his left sandal squeaking as he runs toward the tent of jail, hoping for some refuge and figuring, well, here is safety. And I ask myself, why does God choose what he chooses to present and to not present? Well, it is exactly the same reason that a director and a scriptwriter in a movie does so, because the parts that are presented tell the message. When Robert Redford is involved in a movie, there is going to be a message.

You remember years ago, before he got so prune you could hardly recognize him, he did a movie called Sneakers, and it was about a computer hacking type of a thing, and it begins with him and his college roommate or something hacking and getting in trouble, and I think his roommate was Gandhi, was Ben Kingsley, and they are college guys and he is out for pizza and the guy gets arrested, and then later on they get back together and Ben Kingsley has gone evil, he has got this world domination thing going and he has this computer thing that is going to take over, so Robert Redford has to stop. But the message in the movie, at the beginning, they are diverting money away from causes that they don't like to causes that they do like. Well, you can fill in the blank, if you know anything about Robert Redford, of who they are sending money to and who they are taking it from, and the very same thing happens at the end of the movie.

You can tell who are the friends and who are the enemies, because this is the theme, this is a thread weaving through, because this is the agenda, there is something being told. So, we are looking at a story that is being told, and we are trying to find what is God's agenda in telling this story. Why is this here? Well, one thing we know for certain is he is not using it as Gettysburg to talk about military tactics.

There are battles where Joshua's tactics are given. The brilliant pincer movement that he uses in front of Bethel, they are in A.I. where the men are drawn out and they look back and here is the smoke ascending from the city. There is a lot of tactical information given in that one.

That is not the point here. The point here is the means by which this deliverance is given. I would wager that nobody anywhere in the United States has preached a sermon in any pulpit in any church with this theme, and this is the theme.

God may deliver you from a crisis, and he will do it in the most unimpressive, unflattering, unmiraculous way. The crisis has in fact been averted. You are in fact better off than you were

before, but it is not something you want to go put into your testimony that you are going to put on your blog, on the web, or that you are going to give in front of a large crowd of people, because basically you are saved in spite of yourself.

You are saved and there is an embarrassing component to it. God is still delivering Israel, but you get the idea that it is the barest, most minimalist deliverance. God does not appear.

Where is the glory of God in this story? Where is God glorified? There is one statement where it says that the Lord routed Sisera before Barak. That is the one place where God gets a mention. Sisera runs to the tent, and it is all about the details of how this guy is going to die.

It is not a roster of David's mighty men. It is not the guy who hacked and slashed his way with a sword and they had to pry his fingers off because it was stuck to his hand. It is not Shamgar with the ox goad.

Where is the glory in this battle? Jabin, king of Hazor, has peace with the house of Heber, so Sisera goes running into Jael's tent. Turn aside, my lord. Turn aside to me.

Do not fear. She does not say to us. She does not say come in and see my husband Heber, the friend of your king.

She says turn aside to me. Now, this man turning to the care of this woman is in trouble. He would be better off to turn around and find some Israelite to have a sword battle with.

This turning to this woman, and she says turn to me. I will help you. Well, isn't this what Israel has done in going to Deborah? They have turned to the prophetess rather than demanding the performance of their duties by the Levitical priests.

They have turned to a woman for their solace, to relieve their crisis. The sons of Israel, the B'nai Yitzra'el, go to Deborah to be led by her. Sisera is now going to Jael.

She says, turn to me. Do not fear. He had turned aside.

She covered him with a blanket. Now, this is a maternal action. Why else would we be given this detail? Why do we care if she covered him with a blanket or not? Well, when you cover someone with a blanket, what are you doing? Here is protection from the cold.

Here is protection from visibility. Your army of the Lord is protecting you. He said to her, don't you feel better now? Don't you feel more safe? Aren't you comforted? Ah, come in and relax.

Here is a bathrobe I will throw around you to make you feel better. Then he said to her, please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty. One of the most famous scenes in the entire Bible is a guy asking for a drink because he is thirsty.

In the flames of torment, asking from someone that he once considered to be an inferior and someone not to be dealt with, not to be recognized, Lazarus. Father Abraham said to Lazarus to

dip his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty.

Well, she doesn't do what he says. She doesn't give him any water. She opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him, put another blanket on him.

So now he's got some nice warm milk. You know, they didn't have refrigeration. This wasn't cold milk.

And she covers him with another. So he's got warm milk and two blankets on him. And it's been a hard-fought day.

The battle didn't go well. He doesn't want to really be talking to Jabin any time soon. So he can just push it all out of his mind.

He said, stand at the door of the tent. And if any man comes and inquires, stand at the door of the tent. Be my bodyguard.

Watch over me. Someone to watch over me. A little milk, a blanket.

This is what the mighty general of the army has been reduced to. Remember the theme that runs through Judges, the pattern that runs through Judges. God delivers Israel into the hand of... Then God delivers that oppressor into the hand of... Well, what have we got going here? Israel has been delivered into the hand of Jabin and his right-hand man, Sisera.

Now Sisera is being delivered into the hands of the sons of Israel? No, into the hands of this woman. And he has put himself, put yourself completely in my hands. And that's what he's done.

Stand at the door of the tent. If any man comes and inquires of you and says, is any man here? You shall say, no. And she says, well, of course.

No, she took a tent peg and a hammer in her hand and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple and it went down into the ground. For he was fast asleep and weary and full of milk and covered with two blankets. And so she just pounded a stake through his head.

This is going to be a woman to meet. Not necessarily to visit, but to meet. And oddly enough, as a result of her tender care, he died.

Then as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him. Notice Barak is hot on the trail of the on-foot general because this would be the glory. I got him.

Here he is. I can parade his head or something, hang him on the wall of the city or whatever. But when she gets there, he's nailed to the ground.

He's staked to the earth. And with all of his huffing and puffing and pursuit and hacking and

slashing and everything else, well, a woman with a hammer and a stick has defeated his enemy. She says, come, I will show you the man whom you seek.

And when he went into her tent there lay Sisera dead with a peg in his head. So on that day, God subdued Jabin, king of Canaan, in the presence of the children of Israel. Notice that there is an envelope around this story because God wasn't present in any manifestation and neither was Jabin.

Jabin is pushing the chess piece of Sisera. God is pushing the chess piece of Barak. And the pushing implement is Deborah.

But Barak is on the board. Sisera is on the board. Barak only succeeds because two women flank him.

He must have ran a pawn down. He's got two queens now. And with the help of two queens, he manages to win the game.

The hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin, king of Canaan until they had destroyed Jabin, king of Canaan. Now, to their credit, there is a sort of rebound after this. They do strengthen themselves.

It doesn't say Deborah went and defeated Jabin. They are encouraged. They see an opportunity for relief and they make a sort of recovery.

Well, this brings us to chapter 5 and the song of Deborah. Now, God had promised to grant deliverance and God did in fact do so. And the account that we have here very much follows the pattern that we have seen in the victory over the Moabites and the victory over the Canaanites.

And if you are a fan of chiasms, we have one here. If you look at the victory back in chapter 3, you had the assassination of the enemy leader by Ehud and then you had the defeat of the army afterward. He blew the trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim.

Now, in chapter 4, we had the defeat of the enemy army followed by the assassination of the enemy leader. And both of the assassinations are given in great detail and between that you have these two army victories and at the center of any chiasm is an important element. What is given to us between these two army victories? Shamgar and Deborah.

And both of those are significant for different reasons. First of all, one man can make a big difference. Even if the nation is on the slide, God can use an individual believer.

Even if he is in a minority. Even if he is not in a position to be a military leader. All those things we saw about Shamgar.

He doesn't even have an Israelite name. They try to figure out where Shamgar is from. They say, maybe he was a mercenary or maybe he was a proselyte or something because Shamgar is not a Semitic name.

It is certainly not an Israelite name. And then we have Deborah, who is the nursemaid for the B'nai Yisrael. And we have a contrast there.

There is still a faithful remnant in Israel. While most of the nation has to be nursemaided along, there is a remnant. And apparently there is enough of a remnant that there is a kind of recovery that takes place after the victory and after the assassination of Sisera.

So, this brings us to chapter 5. And we have the song of Deborah. Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying, When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord. This is the theme of the song.

When leaders lead, when people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord. This literally says, leaders here is the word for princes. Now, there is an alternative translation that says, when long hair hangs loosely in Israel.

That's how verse 2 can be translated. When long hair hangs loosely in Israel, and the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord. And I think probably both of these things are in view, as is so often the case in Hebrew.

They love a good wordplay. God loves a good wordplay, which is why he assigns names and uses the literary devices that he does. So, hear this, you kings.

Give ear, you princes. I, even I, will sing to the Lord. I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

Now, once again, I want you to notice something. This is in the singular. I will sing, I will praise.

But it says, Deborah and Barak sang on that day. And they don't say we will sing praise. And you will notice that in verse 7, we've already seen it, I, Deborah, arose.

So, who wrote this song? Barak can't even generate a lyric. He just says, well, if you'll tell me the words, I'll do the harmony part, I guess. I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the field of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens poured. The clouds also poured water. The mountains gushed before the Lord, this Sinai before the Lord God of Israel.

In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were deserted and the travelers walked along the byways. Village life ceased. This means that there was tribute being taken.

There were poll taxes. Javen was, nobody wanted to travel the main roads. They were all toll roads.

And there was oppression and there was abuse. Normal life ceased. Domestic life ceased.

Life as we know it, life as it was supposed to be in the land of milk and honey ceased in Israel

until I, Deborah, arose. Arose as a mother in Israel. Reminds you of there being a little fight amongst elementary school boys.

And how embarrassing if your mother has to come out and separate you from the antagonist. Well, what do you hear for the whole rest of the week? Well, you had to have your mommy come help you. This is sort of the idea.

Arose as a mommy in Israel. They chose new gods. Then there was war in the gates.

Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel. You could assemble forty battalions in Israel and you couldn't find a shield or a spear amongst them. My heart is with the rulers of Israel who offered themselves willingly with the people.

Bless the Lord. Speak you who ride on white donkeys, who sit in judges attire and who walk along the road. Far from the noise of the archers among the watering places.

There they shall recount the righteous acts of the Lord, the righteous acts for his villagers in Israel. Then the people of the Lord shall go down to the gates. Awake, awake, Deborah.

Awake, awake, sing a song. Arise, Beric, and lead your captives away, O son of Abinoam. Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles.

The Lord came down for me against the mighty. From Ephraim were those whose roots were in Amalek. After you, Benjamin.

Now this starts getting real cryptic. If you're following along with this, you say, what? At least I did. Those were not the tribes that Beric was told to assemble and bring to battle.

Benjamin and so on. From Machir, rulers came down. From Zebulun, those who bear the recruiter's staff.

The princes of Issachar were with Deborah. As Issachar, so was Beric, sent into the valley under his command. Among the divisions of Reuben, there was great resolve of heart.

Why do you sit among the sheepfolds to hear the piping for the flocks? The divisions of Reuben have great searchings of heart. Gilead stayed beyond Jordan. And why did Dan remain on ships? Asher continued at the seashore, etc.

Well, we are going to save the concise but detailed excursus on this song for next time. But, here's the main idea. This song didn't make any more sense to the Israelites of Deborah's day than it does to us at this point.

And it was a rebuke. These songs are typically inspired by the Holy Spirit. The song of Hannah, the song of Miriam, the song of Moses, the song of David, the songs of David, the last words of David, the final blessing of Jacob.

These are inspired communications from God given at some propitious occasion, death or victory being the two. And so here is this song and she is speaking and people are saying, wow, so white donkeys and floating on ships. I have to hope that the tune was entertaining because I don't think anybody in Israel figured out what was going on in this song.

We will take a look at it next time. Essentially, we will break this into stanzas. We will see what the import is of each stanza and it will make sense.

But, like a lot of things, it doesn't yield its secrets at first blush. But, if you go down to the last line in that chapter it says, So the land had rest for forty years, another generation. Now, it says that during that generation they strengthened themselves and they eventually got out from under Jabin king of Hazor.

So, think about the progression now. We had the incursion in the south, Othniel took care of. We had the incursion in the center that Ehud took care of.

We had the incursion by the Philistines that Shamgar made a difference in. And we have had this episode in the north where Barak, at Deborah's behest and with Jael's, this is apropos of nothing, but I was standing in the coffee shop this morning while I was taking the gals all these places that they went and I looked on the music rack at Starbucks and they sell CDs in there and there is a collection of Grammy winning songs and it is the most eclectic mix you could imagine. There is everything on there from, you know, it just spans the gamut of music.

Anything that ever won a Grammy I guess was fair game. But I was looking and there is a song on there by Culture Club and the name of the song is Do You Really Want to Hurt Me? And there is another song by Peter, Paul and Mary that says If I Had a Hammer. So it kind of put me in mind of Jael here.

But the land has rest for 40 years and it is during that time that this moderate return, this sort of half-hearted recognition that God still could deliver and would deliver and they make enough headway to throw Jabin back out of Hazor. And that is why to this day when you look at the archeological evidence there does not appear to be any occupation from the time of Joshua's destruction until the time of Solomon. So he did not permanently return, but it was a near thing and it took this whole episode to throw it off, but 40 years of rest.

Now when you look at chapter 6, here comes another cycle. And you remember Heber the Kenite separated himself from the Midianites, but the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel.

Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves and the strongholds which are in the mountains. Now some of these dens, caves and strongholds have preserved for us the Dead Sea Scrolls. But some of this began back at that time.

So it was whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up. Also the Amalekites and people

of the east would come against them. They would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep or ox nor donkey.

And I suggested to you previously that this is the kind of thing that Shamgar put a stop to by the Philistines years before. They would come up with their livestock and their tents coming in as numerous as locusts. Both they and their camels were without number, and they would enter the land to destroy it.

Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites. The children of Israel cried out to the Lord." Now the first incursions were military. Othniel won a battle.

Ehud won a battle. Barak won a battle. And you think, well, okay, that's the threat.

Shamgar is an interesting sort of cryptic unknown in there. Now we get a great different kind of attack. This is a whole different kettle of fish.

This is not the kind of thing you can defeat with military force. You can't find a general and take care of him. You can't find a king and assassinate him.

The Midianites are nomadic. They are like Bedouin. This reminds me of the tactical problem in the Middle East with the advent of rocket launchers.

Rocket launchers are mobile. You pull one around a corner, fire off the rockets, pull away. How do you counter strike? Something like that.

It's not a fixed position. There is nothing to defeat and to destroy unless you can find where they park the thing at night. It's a hit and run.

And it's not easily defeated. This is the problem with the Midianites. They raid.

And these are raids for the purpose of theft. And it is just as frustrating for the Israelites as when you go out there and find that something has been stolen out of your car. Or you set your purse or your briefcase down and you turn around and do something.

You turn back and it's gone. How do you combat this? You would have to mount a massive army and try to go over and just round them all up and annihilate them. They disappear in the night.

So they would come up, the Amalekites, the people of the East would come against them. So there are raiding parties that are coming in and doing these lightning raids. They come and they go and there is nobody to hit back at.

They destroy the produce of the earth. This is a fulfillment of God's promise. Remember the blessings and the cursings at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim? Remember what God said? He said, one of you will put to flight a thousand.

That was military victory. And he said, but if you refuse and if you fall away and if you become disobedient, I will take away your agricultural prosperity. And this is what has happened.

They can't bring in a crop and they can't even hold on to their land anymore. And so now they're having to go live in a cave. It's one thing to be nurse-mated by the prophetess, but this is a new low where they actually have to skulk and live in caves and holes in the ground.

There is a progress. It reminds you of the progress of a debilitating practice. People who get into substance abuse, it starts small and it grows and it gets progressively worse and worse.

And someone who started out thinking, well, this is fun to just dabble with something minor, well, pretty soon the minor thing doesn't do it anymore. The same thing with alcoholism. Alcohol starts out and one or two drinks and people are happy and then pretty soon it's three or four and then it's five or six and then it's seven or eight.

What used to be one or two winds up being way, way too many. But it is degenerative. It progresses in a negative direction.

The same thing with psychological problems. Same thing with dependencies of almost any kind. Bad habits of almost any kind.

They don't ever stay at a level. People who get into degeneracy may start with pornography, but pretty soon, well, the pornography is old hat and it has to be worse and worse and pretty soon it becomes just unspeakable and things move from looking to participating to just the depths of unspeakable depravity because the mind and the soul become injured. The conscience becomes seared with an iron and there is a downward progression.

This is what we see happening in Israel. At first they were just apathetic about their worship of God and they were rebuked, they cried out and they were restored. But it gets worse.

We see the elimination of the priestly ministry altogether. Nothing is happening at Shiloh. Now, we can tell by the discipline that is coming upon them that they are getting worse and worse and worse and their situation is declining greater and greater.

What is the application of this Old Testament picture to a New Testament believer? Did these people recognize and acknowledge that things were bad? You'll notice that they are now digging holes in the ground to live in and they're not looking for a prophet and they're not looking for a priest and they're not crying out to the Lord yet. They're reduced to living in caves. They're becoming cavemen who can't live out in the open.

They skulk about in the dark. I suppose they're having to steal their food, maybe steal it back from the raiders. How can you grow crops when you're living in a cave in the mountains? These raiders come up with livestock in their tents and they're like locusts.

God specifically predicted that there would be plagues of locusts on the crops of Israel. These

are human locusts who come in and devour the fruit of their labor. If you think about the prediction that God made back in passages like Deuteronomy 28, verse 15 and following, Deuteronomy 28.15, it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes with which I charge you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.

Cursed shall you be in the city and cursed shall you be in the country. So where are you going to have to live? Hole in the ground. Can't live in the city and can't live in the country.

Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. As soon as you put something in it, these raiders are taking it away. Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.

Cursed shall you be when you come in and cursed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion and rebuke in all that you undertake to do until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds because you have forsaken me. The Lord will make the pestilence cling to you until he has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it.

The Lord will smite you with consumption and fever, inflammation, fiery heat, the sword, blight, mildew. They will pursue you until you perish. The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze and the earth which is under you iron.

Figuratively, this is where they're heading. This is where they're going. A lot of this is already coming true.

So what is our point of application? God watches and God holds us to account. We have great opportunities. We have great potentials and we should wake up, not just take measures to get around and to cope with discipline that is designed to change our spiritual focus and our spiritual priorities.

It takes more than mechanical fixes. It takes more than changing where you live and changing how you get your sustenance. If you're an Israelite, it is time to return to God.

That's what these disciplines are designed to do. If you keep reading in Deuteronomy, God says, but if you turn. They turn, but it's never for long and it's never enough.

That's why this downward cycle continues. We will pick up and cover the Song of Deborah and move further into chapter 6 next time. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the encouragements and thank you for the warnings that we find in your word. We ask that you minister them to us individually and collectively so that we can fulfill the potential that you have created for us in our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name.

Amen.