

Judges 08-03-07a

This is Friday, the 7th of March, 2008. We're in the Book of Judges. We are finishing up Chapter 5, moving into Chapter 6 tonight.

We are right in the middle of the narrative poem, the celebratory chant song of the prophetess Deborah after the victory over the forces of King Jabin under General Sisera. As we begin, we'll pause for just a moment and make sure that we have focused our concentration, eliminated any obstacles in our soul and in our hearts to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that he can overcome whatever the limitations of the presentation or the concentration may be and that our souls can be nourished up and strengthened by the truth of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we recognize that it is not by might nor by power, but by your spirit that we are sustained, that we are enabled, that we are possessors of inheritance, that we have a hope for great future things.

We have a great hope in the present. We have opportunities. We have potentials because of the Lord Jesus Christ and because of the salvation that you have made possible for us through him.

We thank you for the truth of your word and the specific principles that we find embodied and embedded in this passage. And we ask your blessing on us as we study it and fellowship in your word together. We pray that we will each come to an understanding that will thoroughly equip us for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. As I said, we are finishing up the account of the battle with the kings of Canaan that came about because Israel had been disobedient.

Israel had been faithless. Israel had started to go into idolatry. And this occurred because there was a vacuum of leadership.

Each of these different Gilgal cycles points to a different aspect of failure in Israel. This particular cycle, the Deborah Barak incident, emphasizes failure of leadership and it is embodied in Deborah herself. Why is it that a prophetess calls Israel to the defense and calls Israel to the offensive and calls Israel to throw off this oppression? It's no accident.

It isn't, well, just she happened to be the one who happened to be around at the right place at the right time. Not at all. She is performing a man's role.

The leadership in Israel come to her when this problem really becomes a crux and reaches its unbearable climax. They come to her because she has been sitting under this palm tree, manifesting signs of divine guidance, one form or another. And so they come to her and they say, what should we do? And she says, this is what you need to do.

We need to get Barak. And they follow her and she rises up as a mother in Israel. So you will perhaps recall that last time, as we read this great piece of victory poetry, the song of Deborah

in chapter five, it began when leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, bless the Lord.

And verse three says, Hear, O kings, give ear, O princes. I, even I, will sing to the Lord. I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel.

And in the same way that they had to listen to her to solve this problem, now that the problem has been solved and God has granted a great victory, they still need to listen to her to learn the lesson. What's the point of going through a test and having God preserve and deliver and provide in a miraculous way if you don't learn the lesson? Why did the problem arise in the first place? Why did God allow Jabin to reassemble a Canaanite force in the northern part of Israel and set up a new capital there in Hazor that had already been defeated and burned? There's a reason for that. And it's not enough to have a challenge such as this arise and create a problem that drives the people of God back toward God.

Once the pressure is off, once the difficulty has been solved, we ought to come away knowing something. And this is equally true in our individual lives, as goes the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, and so goes the individual believer in the church age. You and I should look at this and say, it is not enough to face and be delivered through, out of, or from difficulties.

When those difficulties are a result of a failure or a misstep or some other blame that attaches to us, we should learn. We ought to grow and be smarter and sharper and more spiritually alert and aware, stronger and more mature as a result. How many times have you looked at people in the world today, whether they are celebrities, whether they are individuals in our personal circle of acquaintance or family or whatever it may be, and you see someone and they seem to keep on making the same mistake.

There is no more pathetic in the original sense of the word. Pathos attaches to a situation where someone has come under the grip of, say, substance abuse. And it seems that a series of bad decisions led them into that, and they keep returning to it like a dog returns to its vomit.

And they are remorseful, they are horribly chastened as a result of bad episodes. They say, I'm going to stay away from that, and heaven help the person who gets tangled up with crack cocaine or alcohol or any other addictive substance and then has to try to get away from it. And they do not take advantage of what God provides by way of deliverance.

I will say this as an aside. It is not enough to try to turn away from a bad thing, to abstain from a bad thing. To withhold my hand.

I will not pick up the mixed drink. I will not partake of the controlled substance or the illegal substance. I just won't do that.

And then I just sit there and say, I'm not going to, I'm not going to. One of the keys to success, and anybody who's had any familiarity with this scenario knows, it is not enough to turn away from a thing. You have to turn positively and aggressively toward something else.

Kojak knew this when he quit smoking. He started sucking on Tootsie Pops. This is true in salvation.

If you have been an unbeliever for a significant period of time, maybe through your teenage and early adult years, and you suddenly come to faith, maybe you got saved as a child and got completely away from God, and now you're trying to return and become a growing, strong believer, you cannot just say, well, I'm going to refrain from my old habits. If any man be in Christ, what does the scripture say? He is a new creation, old things are passed away. Is that the end of the passage? If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, a new creation.

Old things are passed away. What's the rest of it? Behold, pay attention, look, all things have become new. You can't just withdraw from the old without engaging the new, turning into the new, becoming the new, aggressively pursuing the new.

To get away from substance abuse, you have got to change your way of life. You've got to aggressively pursue new things. You can't sit around just saying, I won't, I won't, I won't.

So, Israel not only needs to recognize that pursuing the path of idolatry and fraternization and amalgamation with the Canaanites is wrong. Okay, I won't intermarry with the Canaanites, I won't worship their gods, I won't fraternize and intermarry with them, I'll refrain, I'll withdraw, I'll draw a line in the sand. What do they need to do? Is it enough to not do the evil? They need to aggressively pursue God, worship of God, fidelity and obedience to God, faithfulness to the promises and principles and doctrines that are contained in the law of Moses.

It is not enough to simply stop or refrain or try to withdraw from evil. You've got to aggressively pursue good. So, this is the message.

They became apathetic, they became indifferent, they got further and further into idolatry and into bed with the Canaanites. They've got to withdraw and stop and get out of that. And what? Where are those Levites? Where is the worship that was detailed in the law that we received at Sinai? Well, as Deborah sings this song, she is going to point out, here's the problem.

Each of these cycles, the reason the book of Judges exists in the canon of Scripture for Old Testament Israel and for us, is each of these different problem areas, there is an emphasis. Here is how to not let this happen. I would rather learn from the mistakes of others.

This particular cycle, it is a failure of leadership. So, you will notice again in verse 3, Hear, O kings, give ear, O princes. Now, unfortunately, in our English translation, the symmetry and the great chiasmic structure of this poem has been marred to some extent.

We are going to restore it tonight. I can't dwell on it too long because we want to move on into chapter 6 and get in. But, you will remember, perhaps, that last week, we went down and saw this poetic account of the battle, where Deborah gets down and she says in verse 10, you have a return to this emphasis on the leaders.

She says that in the days of Shamgar and in the days of Jael, this is sort of a bracket from the past to the present. She doesn't say the days of Deborah. She doesn't say the days of Barak.

She says the days of Jael in verse 6. From the days of Shamgar to the days of Jael. What do Shamgar and Jael have in common? Shamgar is the son of who? Look at your Bible there. Verse 6. Who is Shamgar the son of? Anath.

And Anath is a Canaanite name. It's a Canaanite goddess. And Shamgar delivered Israel.

What do we know about Jael? Is she an Israelite? She is the wife of who? Heber the Kenite. She is also a foreigner. What does this tell Israel? How come they don't have native deliverers? How come there are not strong, vibrant, dedicated believers like Othniel in the early days of the possession of the land? Like Joshua and Caleb and that first generation that came into the land.

Now God has to deliver them through the hand of faithful foreigners. Canaanites who have come to faith in God. Wives of outsiders, of nomadic Bedouin who are dwelling in and amongst Israel because they like it there.

And Jael is evidently a worshiper of God. And they have come to Israel. And God says, look, why am I having to use these outsiders? What's the matter with you? So the highways are deserted.

You remember all of the conditions that it wasn't safe to be on the roads. It wasn't safe to be abroad in the villages. And there was war in the gates, not a shield or a spear was seen among 40,000 Israel.

My heart is with the rulers of Israel who offered themselves willingly with the people. Bless the Lord. There were only a few who answered the call to come and throw off this yoke of oppression.

And so then in verse 10, she chastises these rulers. And rather than speak, it's more like pay attention, you who ride on white donkeys, you who sit in judges attire and who walk along the road far from the noise of archers among the watering places. Actually the noise of the archers among the watering places.

This is not the noise of the archers. This is those who divide. And it's a long story.

They don't have time to go into why they translate this as archers, but it's literally those who divide and those who are among the watering places. These are the common people of Israel. The villagers are the ones who live in town and have little businesses and shops.

They weave baskets. They sell garments and cloth. They provide foodstuffs and so on.

Then you've got the people in the agricultural area, and they are the ones who are dividing the flocks, who are calling them all together into the stone things and then dividing them out and taking them to the fields. And among the watering places, this is out in the hills. You take the flocks out and water them.

And he says, you know, you judges, you're riding these fancy, these tawny donkeys were a sign of rank. Just like the king coming in riding on the foal of an ass, this was a sign of rank. And sitting in judges attire, this is the word, it's from Dean, the same one we find in Genesis chapter 6. I will not, my spirit will not judge man forever for that also his flesh.

Dean, the tribe name Dan comes from this. These who wear the trappings of judging, but they're riding these donkeys and they are far from the common people who actually need their help. Those who are dividing the flocks and leading them to water and so on.

That's, it's among the common people where they will recount the righteous acts of the Lord, the righteous acts for his villagers in Israel. Then the people of the Lord will go down to the gates. And this reminds me, I've mentioned this once before, but I'll mention it again because I like it.

When I was a little boy and my folks got the Bible and Living Sound, we had all of the Old Testament stories. There were about 40 records and we had nearly all of them that dramatized in sort of a radio show format with sound effects and actors, different voices and things. They dramatized many of the Old Testament stories.

So you have a dramatization of Jacob and Esau. You have a dramatization of Joseph being thrown into the pit by his brothers. You have a dramatization of the Exodus and of the wanderings in the wilderness.

You have a dramatization of God at Mount Sinai and this great trumpet blows as the 10 commandments are delivered and thunder crashes. And it's very, very gripping for young children. This is back in the sort of early days where we didn't see too much television and we could listen to these where now your kids might watch videos or see biblical-based movies.

We would listen to these. But we only had the Old Testament. We had all the way up through Job and Ruth and then it ended.

Well, in more modern days, somebody took those recordings and put them on CD and then they also had done the New Testament. I'd never heard the New Testament. So I got the set, got the complete set, all the Old Testament, all the New Testament.

I thought, this is great. And so how does the New Testament begin? Well, in the dramatization, we have the birth of Christ and so on. And so they begin with the shepherds out in the fields.

As the account says, and they were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And then it talks about the angel of the Lord. Well, to dramatize this, how do you dramatize a shepherd sitting out in the field before the angel shows up? You got the little sheep noises and goat noises.

Well, what are they doing? Are they just sitting there? Oh, you know, pass me another fried piece of goat meat there, Ahab. Or I mean, what are they going to, how do they do that? Well, it

was really wonderful in this dramatization because the shepherds are depicted as talking about the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. And these are knowledgeable shepherds and they know the scriptures and they're asking each other questions and informing each other from scripture.

And well, but you remember where it says over in Isaiah that a virgin shall conceive and it goes back and forth. And it's a really wonderful dialogue that has been invented for these shepherds. Well, listen, it's a biblical principle.

That's what you have right here. It is out among the dividing of the flocks, out among the watering places. Deborah says, this is where you're going to hear the righteous deeds of the Lord recalled and spoken of.

It's out amongst the shepherds and the common people, the villagers and these who are out there amongst the flocks at the watering holes. Why isn't it in the places of judgment? Why isn't it amongst the rulers? Why are they not leading as the previous individuals did? As long as Ehud was alive, as long as Shamgar was alive, as long as Othniel was alive, people were obedient and faithful. They remembered God and they worshiped God.

But when that leadership disappeared, the people went astray. And Deborah says, pay attention, you donkey riding, judge's robe wearing people who have made a deal with the Canaanites so that you can walk. You've got sort of like a little mafia pass here, where you can just go where you please and you don't have any fear of violence because you have compromised your position and you have compromised with the Canaanites and the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God is far from you.

You've got to go out in the fields and out to the watering holes to find it. That's where the righteous acts of the Lord will be recounted, the righteous acts of God for His people in Israel, the common people. Villagers just means the hoi poloi, the run-of-the-mill people.

And those are the people who will go down to the gates. Then awake, awake, Deborah. We looked at that last time.

Then these people come down. I will tell you that all of this Hebrew is difficult. Poetry is difficult in Hebrew because we don't have very many examples.

This is early poetry, which we have even fewer examples for. This song is older than the song of Hannah. It is older than the Psalms of David.

It is very old poetry. We only have a few examples older than this. The poetic prophecies of Jacob, the song of Moses.

Very few examples. And so how does ancient, ancient, ancient Hebrew poetry work? Well, it's hard to know because you don't have much by way of comparison. So this is difficult.

And I will tell you this. It has been difficult for centuries. It was difficult for the scribes to figure out, even before the days of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They had already had 1200 years to mess this up because they had forgotten Hebrew, and particularly the ancient poetic Hebrew. And there are portions of this that have been garbled and corrupted. And it's very difficult, especially for somebody like us today, who don't have Hebrew as a first language to decipher.

But I can tell you that there are some things that we can straighten out. So the Lord came down, and then it talks about the different tribes. Who participated and who did not? When Deborah gave the call, as from God, let's fix this problem.

Who responded? Ephraim responded. Ephraim, whose roots were in Amalek. Ephraim has inherited the territory that once belonged to Amalek.

Benjamin, with your peoples. From Machir, rulers came down. And from Zebulun, those who bear the recruiter's staff, it says.

Well, Machir is a descendant of one of the sons of Joseph, and it's one of the sons of Manasseh. And so this is sort of a poetic reference to the Joseph tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. Machir is one of those sons.

Zebulun, one of the lesser known, less famous tribes, not really notable for much in the Old Testament. But on this occasion, the men of Zebulun stepped up. This generation in Zebulun is enshrined in the word of God, because when Deborah gave the call, when Barak went forth and said, let's go get these guys, Zebulun stepped up.

And so did Issachar. The princes of Issachar were with Deborah, as Issachar, so was Barak, sent into the valley under his command. Among the divisions of Reuben, however, and this is a bad place to divide the verse, really, the verse division ought to be right after, sent into the valley under his command.

Draw a line under that, because the good guys have now been listed. You've got Ephraim, you've got part of Manasseh, you've got Zebulun, you've got Issachar. These guys stepped up, and they bore the brunt of this attack and this battle.

Then you draw a line, and you can say, however, among the tribes of Reuben, there were great, it says, resolves of heart. This is more like counsels. Everybody was sitting around trying to decide what they ought to do.

They were debating. They were counseling together. Well, you know, there's been this call, yes, but... And they were just turning it over and mulling it and talking about it, and they felt like, well, gee, we really ought to do something, but what should we do? And you know what this is reminiscent of? Think back to the Joseph story.

Remember when the brothers saw Joseph coming afar off, and they hated him, and so when he showed up with the information from their father and so on, what did they do? They threw him in the pit, and did the caravan of Ishmaelites immediately come and haul him down to Egypt? He was there overnight, wasn't he? He was there for a long time. Do you remember the details of that story? What took place between the throwing him in the pit and pulling him out and having the Ishmaelite caravan take him down? Didn't somebody have a resolve of heart? Didn't somebody say, you know, something really needs to be done for this brother? We really shouldn't let this happen. Who was that guy? I don't see a lot of confident, knowledgeable looks.

Turn back with me to the book of Genesis. I want to show you something here. Go back to Genesis chapter 37, verse 18.

When they saw Joseph afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, Look, the dreamer is coming. Come therefore, let us now kill him, cast him into some pit.

We shall say a wild beast devoured him. We shall see what will become of his dreams. This is Genesis 37, verse 21.

But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, Let us not kill him. Reuben said to them, Shed no blood, cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness. Do not lay a hand on him, that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

That was his intent. It came to pass that they stripped him, took him, cast him into the pit, sat down to eat a meal. Then they saw the Ishmaelites coming.

Judah says, What profit is it if we kill him and conceal him? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites. So Reuben had taken a powder. So in 29, Reuben returned to the pit, and Joseph was not in the pit.

He tore his clothes. He had a good idea, but he didn't act on it. He said, Well, you know, I'll deal with this later.

We'll leave him there for now. He didn't confront his brothers. He didn't make a decision.

He didn't exercise leadership as the firstborn brother. What did he do? He just quietly took counsel. Well, here's what I'll do.

I'll talk him into a lesser thing, and then I'll come back. He was all intentions, but his actions were a failure. Well, his descendants down here in Judges 5, verse 16, the divisions, the clans of Reuben, have great searchings of heart.

They're mulling it over. They're having counsel together. The New American Standard says that they were mulling this over.

There were great resolves of heart, it says. Why did you sit among the sheepfolds to hear the

pipings of the flocks? Now, this is not sheepfolds. The word translated sheepfolds is not sheepfolds.

This is campfires. Why did you sit among the campfires to hear the call for the flocks? This is where they would sit down. You know, they sat in their tents.

They would sit around the campfire and have these conversations, have these debates. What should they do? They didn't go anywhere. They didn't do anything.

There was no call to arms. They stayed out with their flocks and said, boy, you know, somebody really ought to do something. I think that Deborah's really doing a good thing.

That Barak has taken charge. You know, cheering from afar, but no action. They're still sitting out in their fields by their campfires.

Listening to the shepherds call for their flocks. Gilead. Now, is there a tribe in Israel called Gilead? Who does it refer to when it's talking about Gilead? Gilead is over on the other side of the Jordan, isn't it? This is Reuben Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, but part of them are up there in Gilead.

Gilead stayed beyond Jordan. Why did Dan remain on ships? The tribe of Dan, remember they were originally assigned down in the south? But they couldn't take their land. They didn't like their land.

They said, oh, it's too scrubby and we've got all kinds of problems down here. They migrated up and they eventually arrived at the sea coast. And they started trying to do business with the Phoenicians, with the sea peoples.

And so they said, boy, you know, there's money to be made in brokering goods. These guys are sailors and they'll bring stuff to the shore, but they don't have a delivery mechanism to bring it inland. Well, we've got good relations with 12 other tribes in our nation.

So we'll go up there and we'll be settlers. We'll be brokers. We will buy this stuff cheap from the sea peoples and sell it to our brothers and we'll become businessmen.

We'll make a profit. And so that's what they did. They thought, you know, this possessing the land deal is too much work.

We'll go into business. So that's what they did. So they're up there and remaining on the ships.

This is actually kind of with the ships. They're up at the seashore. So they don't want to leave their business.

I can't leave my business. You know, it'll all fall apart. Somebody else will come in and take my clientele.

Asher continued at the seashore and stayed by his inlets doing much the same thing. Zebulun is a people who jeopardized their lives to the point of death. Naphtali also on the heights of the battlefield.

Here are two more tribes who answered the call. Zebulun and Naphtali. Two more tribes you don't hear much about.

But on this occasion they at least had the gumption to come to the battlefield, to join Barak and Deborah in this assault, in this remedy to this Canaanite problem. So you have this roster of those who responded and those who did not. And you'll notice there's only a few, only about half of Israel actually comes at this point.

Whatever happened to the great promise that Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh made when Joshua went in to take the land? They said, we will fight alongside you. You know, when there's time to fight, we'll be right there. We're going to live on the other side.

But if there's a fight, we'll come. Well, they didn't come this time, did they? The promise is long gone and forgotten. And they stayed out there with their flocks at the watering holes and listening to the piping of the shepherds.

And they didn't show up. People were busy with business. People were busy with agriculture.

People were busy, you know, they had a view of the beach. They didn't want to come down there. But Zebulun, they came down and were right in the forefront.

They got into the thick of it and they didn't take a care for their lives. They did not care for their lives unto death, is what it says in Hebrew. They threw themselves into this thing.

And so did Naphtali. So then it says in verse 19, The kings came and fought. The kings of Canaan fought in Taanaq by the waters of Megiddo.

Now, Megiddo is not really near this battlefield. Megiddo is where they eventually fled. They took no spoils of silver.

They fought from the heavens. The stars from their courses fought against Sisera. The torrent of Kishan swept them away.

That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishan, O my soul... Does this make any sense to you? I mean, does it sort of leap out and say, Oh, yeah, good job, Deborah, way to write that poem. It seems a little obscure to me, and I would suspect it does to you as well. Let me offer you a few thoughts on what is going on here.

And again, there's some really difficult Hebrew, but in working through it, and I've worked through it word by word by word, and I've decided not to inflict the re-division of words and things on you. Here's the result of my perambulations and investigations. This is what I think is going on here.

The kings came and fought. The kings of Canaan fought. Now, how many kings have been mentioned in this context? It's just Jabin, right? Sisera is a general for Jabin.

But remember, Jabin is set up at Hazor, and he is assembling another coalition, just like his ancestor Jabin did. And if they don't do something, the reason this came to a head is those Israelite leaders who did come to Deborah realized that there was a storm brewing in the north, and these kings were about to form a coalition. And so when you defeat... This is like cutting off the head of the serpent.

When you defeat Jabin and Sisera, this defeats all of these other guys who are just starting to assemble and form this big coalition. The glue that holds them together is going to be eliminated. So these kings of Canaan were coming to fight.

These kings of Canaan... Remember, these are city-state kings. These are not great empire kings. These are Canaanite strongholds, Canaanite-walled cities that have never been taken, never been eliminated, as God instructed Israel to do.

And so they're all saying, Oh, go Sisera, we're with you all the way. So they sent a few troops out. The kings of Canaan fought in Tanach by the waters of Megiddo, but they took no spoils of silver.

They thought, you know what? We're going to take these Israelites. Where are they going to get spoils of silver? Have you ever seen scenes of looting on a battlefield? If you have seen the movie Patton, you remember that there is a scene where in North Africa, a unit of allied tanks has been defeated, and the Bedouin are there looting all of the soldiers who were dead there by their tanks. There's a little dog tied to one tank, and these guys come up and they say, Well, look at this and all these that are being looted.

That's what the Canaanites figure. You know, we've already been robbing them on the highways. We've been taxing them and extorting money from them in the villages.

And when they come against us militarily, we're going to slaughter them and take all their jewelry, take their accouterments, and we'll just add even more silver to our coffers. That's what the Canaanites are thinking. Come bring it on Israelites.

We're going to defeat you. Sisera is a great general. We've got these chariots, and we're just going to loot your dead bodies.

That's their plan. And so when the Canaanite kings hear that there's going to be, they hear that Israel is marching against Sisera, they say, Hey, I want to get in on that. That's going to be, this is like the British ships.

They used to try to be in sight when a prize was taken because then they would share the prize money back in the late 1700s, early 1800s. Looting is in view. But they took no spoils of silver.

Now it says they fought from the heavens, the stars from their courses fought against Sisera. Now a good translation, a little bit closer to Hebrew here, would be from the heavens, the stars fought. From their courses, they fought.

And it says against Sisera. I don't think so. Against in Hebrew is al, which is also translated upon.

Or against. This is men. This is with.

They fought with Sisera. Now remember, what is the problem? Why did Israel get in this mess in the first place? Idolatry, falling in with the Canaanite religions, and they worship the stars, Anath, Ashtaroth, Ashtar, Esther, Esther, Ashtaroth, all of this, this is stargazing. This is astrology.

This is gods associated with the heavens. And so what Deborah is saying here is, the Canaanites with their gods, the stars of heaven, they felt like the stars were on their side. It was a propitious time.

You remember much, much later, Haman is going to consult the astrologers to find out when is a good time to snuff out the Jews. And they tell him, well, he's got to wait so many months. And unfortunately for him, because the astrologers put in that delay, that gave Esther and Mordecai time to put some things in place.

So that by the time Haman finally tried to execute his plot, it all falls to pieces. But they did it by looking at the stars. False worship, idolatry was associated with astrology.

This is why you got the ziggurat at Ur and other places. It's moon worship, star worship. So what she's saying is, the stars in heaven, from their courses, they fought with Sisera.

These are the putative gods of the Canaanites. But what does it say? The river Kishon swept them away. The age-old river, the river Kishon.

Now, you would think, what is greater? The stars of heaven or the waters of the earth? Which would be more powerful? That which is very high and lofty? You know, in biblical imagery, Satan, you were going to ascend above the stars of heaven. You were going to raise your throne up and be like God. But you were cast down to earth.

You were humbled. You were limited. You were imprisoned to roam to and fro.

And what Deborah is saying here is, Sisera, with all of his armies fighting for Jabin, has supposedly the stars on his side. But guess what? The lowly waters of the brook Kishon defeated the stars, washed them away. The stars, in order for that to happen, had to be basically fallen to earth.

Then she gives an exhortation to herself. This is a feminine. It's in the singular.

And in here, you have this sort of interjection that says, Oh, my soul, march on in strength. And if you check other versions, like the New American Standard, you can tell that there's a problem here. The New English translation says, Step on the necks of the strong.

Where she says, Oh, my soul, march on in strength. The New English says, Step on the necks of the strong. And I just give you that as an example of how difficult the Hebrew is here.

What you literally have in the last part of verse 21 is basically three words. The first one is from Derek. You may remember D-E-R-E-K means the way.

It means to set out, to travel a way, to march, to tread. Then you have nefesh with the first person possessive. Nefesh ani, my soul.

So step forth, my soul. And then you have oz, O-Z, which is the word for strength. And it is a cohortative or adjustive.

It means you're telling yourself, you know, march on, my strong soul. And this doesn't make a lot of sense until you straighten out the stars and the creek. Because here you have Sisera, and supposedly the stars of heaven that are untouchable and undefeatable have all come down on his side.

And she says, but you know what? The most unlikely of foes has washed those stars away. It's the Brook Kishon. And the Brook Kishon represents these people of Israel from the hills.

Remember it says they came down from the hills? How does the Brook Kishon get fed? It's these little wadis and spring-fed and rain-fed creeks that come down from the hills. And she says the Brook Kishon wiped out these stars. And she is so happy about that, she says, step on them, my strong soul.

My soul is strong, and I tread them down. I am with this great army that, like the Brook, washes away these stars, this mighty army of the Canaanites with all their supposedly strong gods. Then in verse 22, it says something about horses and hooves and so on.

It says the horses' hooves pounded. But actually, it's the horses' hooves were pounded, or hammered. The horses' hooves were struck.

And remember, the strength of Sisera's army was all of these horse-drawn chariots? Well, the chariots are drawn by horses whose feet have to touch the ground. Well, it's pictured as though this Brook Kishon has come along and struck the hooves of the horses so that they are now ineffective. The strength of these horses is their ability to gallop along the ground, pull these chariots, and defeat everybody.

But the lowly Brook Kishon, who would have thought? It has struck the hooves of the horses. That's their weak point. You've got this great big strong horse with this great big strong chariot, great big strong warrior inside with his great big sword, and his great big spear, and his great

big shield.

But they all have to touch the ground. Everywhere those hooves touch the ground, the Brook hits them, and trips up the horses, and bogs down the horses. And they're mired, and it harks back in sort of a euphemistic, suggestive way to Pharaoh and his chariots.

There was another time when the armies that were coming against the people of God were washed away by mighty waters. But notice the contrast. This is a brook, not the mighty Yom Suf.

And these are the mere horses and chariots of Jabin under Sisera, not the Pharaoh of Egypt. It's a pale echo. But it still took place.

It still happened. The horses' hooves were struck. And they were scattered in every direction.

This galloping, galloping is a repeated verb. It says that they just became ineffective. Their strength was turned into weakness because their hooves were struck.

The point of balance, the point of strength, the point of direction was struck. It's kind of like Achilles' heel for a horse. And this is why she just gets excited talking about the greatness of this victory.

She says, March on, my mighty soul. March on, my strong soul. She says this to herself right in the middle of this.

And the horses' hooves were struck. The galloping, his steeds were galloping in every direction. Now we come to verse 23.

And this is a real crux. I'm telling you, for hundreds of years, nobody's been able to figure out what the heck is going on in verse 23. Well, I'm going to give you, and I'm not claiming that I have outsmarted everybody for the last 2,000 years.

But what I will say is, I think I have a pretty good idea of what happened to this verse. And I think when I show you the evidence, you will find it to be at least reasonable, if not persuasive and even compelling. But you need to do so having partaken of a snack, having had to have a cup of coffee, having taken a break.

So we're going to pause here and take our break. We're going to refresh our mighty souls. And then we're going to come back and finish up this great song of victory.