

READING PLAN HANDOUT WEEK 5 (PREP FOR WEEK 6)
The Epic of Eden: Deborah, “Deborah Musters the Response”

Word from the Author: The “mobile artillery unit” of the ancient world was the chariot. It was a formidable development and game changer for battlefield confrontations. The super powers of the day, who could afford to equip their professional armies with many agile chariots, drawn by domesticated warhorses traveling speeds of up to 25 mph, guided by shield-bearing charioteers and carrying a second soldier wielding a newly developed composite bow with a range of up to 574 feet (3x the range of a drawn self-bow) were enough to throw any enemy’s battalions into quick disarray. Why is this important? Because it represents the might of the *enemy* of Israel. How amazing that Israel’s Barak found himself, then, with an army of ten thousand men to enter the direct conflict (and what would appear to be certain failure). Imagine the courage of those men. Imagine their willingness to fight and die for the kingdom in which they believed.

Day #1: Read Judges 4:6-10. This is the call to arms and the mounting movements. Do you recognize the role in which Deborah is functioning in the words she speaks to Barak? The map on the reverse shows the territories Deborah and Barak are coming from (Barak is in Kedesh) and the fronts Hazor and Sisera are concerned with (Sisera is in Megiddo). Please note the tone of the dialog between Barak and Deborah. These passages (Judges 4:6-9) has been rendered with interesting overtones in some translations, but the original Hebrew does not imply cowardice or reluctance on Barak’s part. Barak is “all in” from the time we meet him in the book of Judges. He even had to cross enemy lines to answer Deborah’s summons. Furthermore, he inspired the loyalty and courage of 10,000 men who joined him. He clearly saw Deborah’s participation as crucial for success, not unlike Moses and Joshua. Have a quick glance at Exodus 17:9 to see what we mean.

Day #2: A brief meditation, today, on the names used and given in our texts. **Read Judges 3:15 and Judges 4:1-10.** Names in this time had meanings. It may be of interest to know the meanings of these character’s names: Ehud = “Where is majesty”, Jabin = “he will establish understanding”, Deborah = “Yahweh leads”, Lappidoth = “torches” or “lightening”, and Barak = “lightening”. Many times in scripture, names were changed or given in deference to the character of the bearer or his or her destiny. Think of “Jacob” who became “Israel” in Genesis 32 or even “Saul” who became “Paul” in the New Testament. What about you? Do you have a moment when a former name no longer served you or defined you? In our day and age, it is much more subtle, but it is often still there.

Day #3: Each session we have been looking at another Judge from the book of Judges. This week, we want to have a look at Jephthah. You can find his region on the map on the reverse side of this sheet. The story of Jephthah is found in Judges, chapters 10 and 12. It is hard to understand and fraught with conflict and distress, with harsh consequences, bad choices, and painful outcomes. But the fact remains that Jephthah was in the line of those empowered by the Spirit of the Lord to defend Israel, to rescue them from their oppressors and judge over them for six years. The story reminds us that both God’s patience and discipline are hard to fathom.

