

READING PLAN HANDOUT WEEK 7 (PREP FOR WEEK 8)
The Epic of Eden: Deborah, “Deborah’s Legacy Still Matters Today”

Word from the Author: On paper, the confrontation of Israel by the enemy *should have nearly been* a rout. They were outgunned, outmanned, and betrayed by an ally. But, miraculously, in this “all is lost” moment, it began to rain. The Kishon River flooded, the playing field was leveled, and the people of God took the day! So, how might this “story that matters” speak into our hearts today? Well, this story has me thinking about mustard seeds and leaven. In Matthew 13:31-33, Jesus tries to explain the strategy of the kingdom to his disciples by describing it like the smallest seed in the garden which produces the largest plant. And he further speaks to the transformative power of a miniscule bit of yeast in dough. Indeed, the strategy of victory for the kingdom of God is demonstrated in God’s delight in choosing “the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor 1:27). Feeling a little outgunned today? You might be exactly where God wants you.

Day #1: Read Judges 4:17-21. This gives us an excuse to try relating to Jael – a most unlikely heroine. As you read verses 18 and 19, do you get a sense of Jael’s recognition of an opportunity? Sisera has no reason to suspect anything is amiss, knowing Jael’s husband, Heber, is strongly allied with Sisera’s king, Jabin. But, as we noted in an earlier session, the Kenites (Heber’s tribe) were “pastoralists” (shepherds), who placed themselves in a position to trade with both Israel and their enemies. As it happened, to Sisera’s demise, Jael, who was clearly physically and constitutionally strong and independent, was allied with Israel. **Read Judges 5:24-27** for the poetic rendering of this turning point moment highlighting Jael’s autonomous decision-making.

Day #2: Read Judges 5:28-31. This seems almost like the classic caricature of an arrogant and self-focused woman. Well, because, it is. These verses contrast a third woman in this story, Sisera’s mother. She has no compassion for the women who would be spoils of war for her son’s conquering troops (verse 30). She is anxious and eager about her own rewards from the conquest. How unlike Deborah and Jael is she? Someone you would never want to emulate. So why do *you* think we see her depicted here? Is it hard to have compassion on her for the loss of her son? How do you think we are supposed to feel about her? What is the lesson of her presence in the story?

Day #3: Read Judges 5:15-18. It is a roll call of sorts for those who answered Deborah’s call to arms and those who did not. A deeper study into the contemporaneous political and commercial endeavors of those who did NOT join in the battle would reveal a number of “reasons” they stayed out of the conflict. But, in the end, does it really matter? Are they to be given a pass because they had a “good reason” for not answering the call? This is a more pertinent question than it seems, for sometimes it applies to the face in the mirror. When God nudges or calls us outright to be his emissaries, are we inclined to step up to His call? Even if it seems daunting? Or do we have a tendency to look for convenient reasons to excuse ourselves out of it? This “Story That Matters” would teach us something about how we might want to respond.

