



The Mighty Arrows will begin a series on great women of the Holy Bible and what we can learn from them....

DEBORAH THE FEMALE

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JUDGE AMONG JUDGES

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Ancient Israel was a patriarchal society. The priesthood was handed down from father to son, and as today no woman served the Lord as priest. The Levites at the time the Holy Book of Judges was written served the tabernacle and later would serve the Temple were also men. Religious roles were inherited by males; a male descendent of Aaron would serve as priest and a male descendent of Levi could serve at worship. This was understood, accepted, and commonplace without question.

Women simply did not fill these roles and their gifts and talents were not considered for social nor governmental roles. Deborah's emergence as a judge was extremely remarkable if not miraculous at best. Though she may have been known as a prophetess, this in no way makes way for her to become a judge. Her role of prophetess was in an advisory capacity. While it is held true that rulers would often send for prophets to advise them concerning decision making, it was not expected to hold them in a governmental/ruling place of favor for their services.

Never the less in the midst of such a patriarchal society, Deborah did indeed become the Lord God's judge. One would expect that Israel's patriarchal society would frown, murmur, and disobey such an unprecedented selection for judge who contradicted all they knew and were accustomed to. Yet the Holy Bible plainly tells us that all the people in the tribes she served submitted to her leadership. We must notice the word "serve" here. Deborah served God and gave all the glory of her leadership to the Lord.

An excerpt from the Holy Book of Judges alludes to Deborah's wisdom...

Deborah sends for Barak... "Barak, son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, March to Mount Tabor and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and the sons of Zebulun. I will entice Sisera, the com-

mander of Jabin's army to encounter you at the wadi Kishon with his chariots and troops; and I will put him into your power (this is the order of the Lord God of Israel to you)." (Judges 4:6-7)

She did not say, prepare the men and I will lead, or to go before her in battle. She specifically directed Barak to "take charge." Barak must have really felt ill, having a woman prophet telling him to lead a battle. What could he do but think of God's wrath if he disobeyed (and Deborah's wrath as well), his own demise, and perhaps having to battle for a woman. Barak adamantly and willfully replied that she must come with him and if she will not, he will not. She wisely replied she would go, but that would take away his glory, Sisera will have been beaten by a woman. Deborah in no way considered this battle might have been lost so great was her faith in the Lord.

The battle ensued and so great was the victory that Sisera himself leaped down from his chariot and fled. The story concludes with the docile female Jael having hammered a tent peg through the temple of Sisera and into the ground within her tent. The sight of such a deed by a calm demeanored woman left his soul with much to peruse.

Proof positive to the surprised male Israelites, a lesson from God had been learned through the vehicle of a female.

So full would Barak's heart become, he would later sing this song: *"So perish all you enemies, Lord God! And let all those who love You be like the sun when he arises in all his strength!" (Judges 5:31)*

What lessons do we today learn from Deborah the Female Judge's example?

1) God Himself chooses those whom society considers weakest and makes them strong.



2) God wanted to teach Israel that His Power could work through anyone He selected.

3) Women should not be viewed as culturally inferior, God does not create inferiority.

4) In a strongly patriarchal society while men are leaders of the family and community at large, women were also leaders within their family structure during Old Testament times largely unrecognized due to their humbleness and restraint.

5) Women's contributions to the family were equal to those of a man's contributions to the family but deeply embedded into a patriarchal society existed set gender standards for living which assist society to function. This is not a bad thing because society during this era was in great need of order and control. Also gender role function assisted

to increase a woman's virtuousness as written in Proverbs 31a woman's duties are endless, necessary, and absolutely essential for the survival and well being of her family and virtue is her reward for shadowed diligence:

"She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come, she speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all. Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised..."(Proverbs 31: 25-30)

Glory be to God forever. ✨