

Deborah: Why Women make Excellent Warriors

In addition, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. In addition, the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan that reigned in Hazor, the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. In addition, the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. (Judges: 4:1ff)

Apparently, Israel just could not seem to keep to a Godly course. Thus, the Lord brings adversity upon His people to nudge them onto the right path. This nudge developed into twenty years of oppression by an enemy that Israel had failed to exterminate—the hated Canaanites. This is much like our own propensity to halfheartedly deal with our sins. Our own sins enamor us. Therefore, when they get out of hand we put them aside for a while.

God had told Joshua to wipe these people off the face of the earth. We should understand that these people were evil. Child sacrifice was an integral part of their worship. They would often murder their firstborn and place them in the doorstep as a form of dedication to their god. Their figurines and drawings put today's pornography to shame, and cult prostitution was an everyday part of life. While only a little is known about the particular tactic used by Deborah much is known about the methods, armament, and equipment utilized.

During this general period, the Egyptians and Hittites in this area fought a major battle. Egyptian scribes and artists have left drawings and scripts as our sources of information.

Apparently, Deborah utilized the same tactics against the Hittites that the Hittites had used against Ramses. In that, battle the Hittites had drawn the Egyptians into a trap whereas here Deborah sets one for Jabin.

The text indicates that the Hittites were in possession of nine hundred chariots of iron. This would have been a formidable enemy. It nearly matches the number utilized in the previous battle with the Egyptians.

These were 3-men, 6-spoke, and two-horse chariots armed with a charioteer, the shield-bearer, and the spearman. This implies close combat as opposed to the more distant archers. The text says that the chariots were further fortified with iron plates for protection. They were heavy and far less maneuverable than the Egyptian chariots, but at the same time, sturdier. Additionally, Sisera, the commander of the Hittite army, probably had an additional 10 to 15 thousand foot soldiers at his disposal.

The chariots were used as a strike force by the Hittites and would have been incredibly difficult for a foot soldier to out maneuver them. Israel was at a distinct disadvantage. The Hittites were experienced professional soldiers, well armed with heavy body armor for protection.

Israel was lightly armed but did have some advantages. Their forces were composed of slingers and archers who were exceptionally well trained with the left hand or right. The slingers used stones about the size of a golf ball or larger. A trained slinger could easily hit a man-size target at about 100 yards. The stone traveled about 80 miles per hour. The tribe of Benjamin provided men exceptionally skilled with the sling. (Judges 20:16)

Israel's army also included the heavily armed phalanx, which was typical of the armies of that period. In addition, the army included lightly armed soldiers capable of foot pursuit if the opposing army broke ranks and tried to flee from the battlefield. (I Chronicles 12:32)

It is essential to be able to follow up an attack, which breaks the will of the enemy, causing them to turn and run with troops in pursuit. More enemy is destroyed running from the

battlefield than those killed in outright attack are. This is why God's army was to be composed of fearless warriors. Warriors who can withstand the onslaught then follow up with sustained attacks that do not end until the enemy is destroyed.

Sisera's army was stationed at the Northwest corner of the Jezreel Valley. Deborah moves Barak and her 10,000-man army, made up of men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, to Mount Tabor. Men from Zebulun were trained in all weapons of war (I Chronicles 12:33); those of Naphtali were armed with shield and spear or trained in the phalanx and close combat. Mount Tabor is defensible against the chariot. It was a perfect staging area with visibility in all directions.

Sisera hears of the deployment of Deborah's troops (probably from Heber the Kenite.) This is likely disinformation employed to draw out Sisera. Deborah's second force is concentrated on the northern slopes of Mt. Ephraim. Signal mounts at Mt. Gilboa and the Hill of Moreh are used to signal troop movements for Deborah.

Deborah signals for the troops on Mt. Ephraim to move and divert Sisera from Mt. Tabor. This force is then unsuccessfully intercepted by troops from the region around Taanach. Sisera moves to the aid of Taanach upon being informed that his help is needed.

Deborah and Barak then advance from Mt. Tabor on Sisera, driving Sisera into the now flooded swamplands around the River Kishon. The heavy iron chariots are bogged down in the marshy area along with the heavily armed infantry. Sisera and his men flee and are pursued by the Israelites. Sisera, abandoning his useless chariot, escapes on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Of all places to hide, he expects refuge, but she kills him.

It is here that an important principle is learned when engaging the enemy. James 4:7 tells us to resist the devil and he will flee. Peace is not acceptable. No, the Christian pursues and chases the adversary and his army until it ceases to exist.

In every major engagement in the battles of the Bible, God expected His army to chase the enemy from the battlefield and to keep on until they were destroyed. God's harshest criticism is reserved for those who quit. The enemy is to be destroyed. Not bargained with. Not preserved. No treaties made. The battles of Joshua and Judges emphatically teach this principle. Pursue the enemy until you physically drop, until you can no longer lift your weapon. Give no refuge to the enemy. Chase him until he has nowhere to go—then destroy him.

There is another lesson to be discovered in this battle. I have often wondered if more women warriors ought to be invited into combat. The problem is when they are, the tendency is to make them over into the image of men. Women are trained in men tactics, and men weapons.

My partner and I were on patrol in a high-crime area several years ago when we were assigned a family violence call. Upon arrival, we saw half the neighborhood standing around the front door. On the way in, several started laughing and saying it was going to take more than us to deal with the situation.

Inside we came face to face with a twenty-year-old male, high on drugs and out of control. I called for cover and we heard them assign the call to a unit that was composed of two women. My partner took the radio and called for two other male units. About the time the female officers showed up, the fight began. I took my baton and swung it, hitting the suspect across the chest as hard as I could. It broke. I stepped back and wondered what to use now. The women officers he easily flung aside. Fortunately, the other officers showed up and helped bring the situation under control.

The problem was the female officers had been trained with male weapons and tactics and those were not even working for me. I am not saying women do not make good police officers. They do, and I have worked with many who were far superior to men. They possess skills and abilities that go unrecognized and untrained.

Women think tactically different from men. Men who play war games find it easy to discern various strategies of an opponent. However, few could predict how a woman would conduct a battle. Sisera made the mistake twice and paid with his life.

In the early part of the 20th century, women began to attack the temperance problem and were highly successful in getting laws passed using tactics that overwhelmed proponents.

I suspect women have skills unused and unrecognized by the enemy, making them a greater threat. Men train women to be prayer warriors, evangelists, missionaries, and preachers, all the things men do. However, the tactics employed are from the minds of men. The purpose for using a woman in these areas should include recognition that tactics change.

Deborah was a judge and a skilled tactician, not an armor bearer, nor an archer, nor a slinger. We tend to forget Genesis 3:15 and God's promise of enmity between the adversary and women. True, this is a Messianic prophecy, yet it also suggests something else.

Women, wise women, do not like to be fooled. Eve saw immediately how the evil one had tricked her. I suspect since that day the woman has conducted her own private war against the adversary. Deborah out thinks the enemy. Barak was willing to follow this woman into combat—not many men are wise enough to do the same.