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Sing Praises to ADONAI

5: 1-11

Sing Praises to ADONAI DIG: What is the purpose and occasion for the psalm of praise? Who is it for? What other songs in Scripture does this one bring to mind? As songwriters, what similarities do Debrah and Barak have with Moses and Miriam? What feelings come through about God in this song? What can we learn from this story about the kind of people God recruits into His service?

REFLECT: Debrah was a prophetess, a leader, and a song-writer. If you (or your family or spouse) had to describe you in three words, which three would you choose? What is the story behind those words? When has God shown His mercy and saved you from ruining your life more than once? What is one change you need to make in your life to be more usable for God's service? Who can you serve this week?

The God of the Exodus came to rescue Isra'el . . . again.

As **Deborah's** victory **song** continues (**to see link click At - Deborah's Victory Song**), unlike the story of **Chapter 4**, the **song** is not concerned with how **ADONAI** took the honor of victory away from **Barak** and gave it to **a woman**. It pays tribute to those individuals and tribes who rose up to defend **the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**, and rebuke **those** who did not. But its chief burden is **the righteous act of ADONAI Himself**, who went forth as **Isra'el's** champion and overwhelmed **the enemy** by unleashing the powers of heaven against **them**. The climax of **the song** is the battle itself (**5:19-23**), and the final verses show how completely **the enemy** was defeated (**5:24-31a**). Only when **the song** is completed is the entire **Deborah-Barak** story closed with the now famous formula of **rest** for **the land** (**5:31b**).

So, the **Deborah-Barak** story as we have it in **Chapters 4** and **5** concludes with a victory **song** of **praise to God** and **His** loyal supporters, but especially **YHVH Himself**. The **Gideon** episode which follows immediately begins very differently – a

striking example of the downward moral progression in each of **the judges** (see [An - Cycles of Rebellion and Retribution](#)). At the beginning of the **Gideon** episode, **ADONAI** will have to dispatch **a prophet** to remind **the Israelites of their** impending apostasy, and of **His** many interventions on **their** behalf (see [Az - A Prophet Sent by ADONAI Confronts Isra'el](#)).



The Singers (5:1): This verse links **the song** to the preceding story. **On that day** God subdued Jabin the Canaanite king, before the Israelites. **And the hand of the Israelites grew stronger and stronger against Jabin, the Canaanite king, until they destroyed him** (see [As - The Fourth Cycle: Debrah](#)). And **on that day Debrah and Barak, son of Abinoam, sang this song (5:1 NIV):** This does not mean that **they** composed **the song** together, it only means that **they sang it** together. The **song they sang** was composed by **Deborah**, as **verses 3, 7, and 12** as **Chapter 5** clearly shows.¹⁰⁰ The circumstances in which **the song** is **sung** and the way **it** is introduced both remind us of **Exodus 15:1 – the song sung by Moses and the Israelites** after being rescued by divine intervention from the vastly superior forces of **Pharaoh** with **his six-hundred chariots**.¹⁰¹ The

phrase **on that day** links **the song** chronologically with the defeat of **Jabin the Canaanite king**, and suggests that **it** was a spontaneous response to the victory. **The song itself has nine specific stanzas.**

The First Stanza: Praising ADONAI (5:2-3): Verse 2 focuses on the role of **the leaders** and **the people**. When **Isra'el's leaders took charge**, **the people gladly followed**. When **Isra'el's leaders** were willing to **lead**, and **the people** were willing to follow **their lead**, then there was victory along with the resulting opportunity to **praise ADONAI (5:2 NLT)**. Verse 3 issues a call to **the Gentile kings** and **princes: Hear this, you kings! Listen, you princes!** The content of what the Gentiles heard **the Jews sing: I will sing praises to ADONAI, the God of Isra'el (5:3 Hebrew)**. Four things should be noted here. First, this is a call to Gentile **kings** and **princes** to hear what **Deborah** proclaims about **the One true God**. Second, these **kings** and **princes** were Gentiles because **Isra'el** had neither **kings** nor **princes** at this point in **her** history (**21:25**). Third, this verse is the response of **Deborah**, and thus is expressed in the first person. Fourth, this is a **praise to ADONAI**, and not anyone else.

The Second Stanza: ADONAI, the Commander in Chief (5:4-5): Verse 4a portrays **God** as a **Divine Warrior**, marching **out from Mount Seir** to aid **His people**. **ADONAI, when You went out from Mount Seir, when You marched out from the land of Edom (5:4a CJB)**. It was the land of **Esau**, and comprised the mountain range stretching east from the southern end of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah. **Verses 5:4b to 5** picture the results of **God's** presence among **His people**. The result was that **the earth quaked, and the sky shook; yes, the clouds poured down torrents of water (5:4 CJB)**. Keeping in mind that Ba'al was viewed as the storm god, here, **the God of Isra'el** was using what should have been Ba'al's strongest weapons. The storm imagery emphasizes that **ADONAI** is **God**, not Ba'al. The following mention of **Sinai** and **Edom** recalls the beginning and end of the Wilderness Wanderings, both portrayed as witnesses to the mighty acts of **YHVH**. **The mountains quaked at the presence of ADONAI, the God of Sinai, before ADONAI the God of Isra'el (5:5).**¹⁰²

This powerful poetry draws on the historical memory of **the Exodus**, when **Ha'Shem**, as **the divine warrior**, displayed **His** presence by making **wind** and **water** change **their** normal actions for the sake of **His people**; and **at Sinai**, where **His Presence** was demonstrated on the mountain in **cloud** and **fire** and **earthquake**. The same kind of language can be seen in **the Psalms** to recall **God's** saving works in the past (**Psalms 68:7-10**), or **His** present majesty as ruler

of **the entire earth (Psalm 97:1-6)**. It will be taken up later by **the prophets** to speak of **His Second Coming to judge the world (Amos 9:5-6; Isaiah 2:19; Zechariah 14:1-5)**. Here in **Chapter 5** it gives a powerful poetic expression to the belief that **the storm** which broke over **Sisera** and **his army (5:4)** threw **them** into panic and retreat was no merely natural event, or amazing stroke of bad-luck. It was unleashed by **YHVH**, as **He** had divided **the sea** at **the Exodus** and shaken **Mount Sinai**. That same **God** had come to **their** rescue . . . again.¹⁰³

The Third Stanza: The Emergence of Deborah (5:6-8): These verses describe the conditions under which **Isra’el** lived before **Deborah** arrived on the scene. **In the days of Shamgar son of Anath** (see **Ar – The Third Cycle: Shamgar**), and **in the days of Ja’el (4:17-22)**. Here **Shamgar** and **Ja’el** are viewed as contemporaries, which further demonstrates that **Shamgar’s judgeship** came within **the judgeship** of **Ehud** (see **Aq – The Second Cycle: Ehud**). The situation was that of total destruction of communication and trade. **The main highways were abandoned, and travelers kept to the side roads (5:6 HCSB)**. **The roads** were deserted. The caravan routes that crisscrossed the country, especially across the Jezreel Valley, linking **the Jews** in the north to **the Jews** in the south, were disrupted so that **Jews** ceased traveling on **their** normal trade routes for fear of attack from **Canaanites** or to avoid the heavy tolls demanded by **the Canaanites**.¹⁰⁴ **Shamgar** may have temporally saved **the Israelites** by repelling an incursion into the southern highlands, but it would take more than that to free **them**; only a successful engagement with **the enemy** on the lowlands could do that, and this became a possibility only through the leadership of **Deborah**.¹⁰⁵

Before **Deborah’s** arrival, **the common people, the villagers of Isra’el would not fight**. However, after **her** arrival there was a break in the crisis. **Until I, Deborah arose, until I arose as a mother in Isra’el (5:7 Hebrew)**. What did **she** mean by this? It could only have meant that **she** was intensely concerned for **the people**, pained by **their** anguish, and absolutely determined to change **their** dismal situation. Like **a mother** who cares for **her** children, **Deborah** was the consummate leader who cared for **her** “offspring,” **the nation of Isra’el**, and this led **her** to do everything in **her** power to improve **their** lot. Also, the title **mother of Isra’el** anticipates the contrast to **Sisera’s mother** later in the poem (see **Ax – Blessed by Ja’el: The Eighth Stanza: The Mother of Sisera**).¹⁰⁶

Verse 8a describes the religious situation as **Debroah** found them: **When Isra’el chose new gods**, the results were war, weakness, and slavery. **When Isra’el**

violated the Torah (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy B1 - Have No Other Gods**), **she**, once again, descended into **idolatry**. **Verse 8b** describes the military situation: **The enemy** carried **their** destructive raids up to **the city gates**. **Yet not a shield or spear could be seen among forty thousand warriors in Isra'el (5:8 NLT)**. Expending all their energies in making a living, **the Israelites** lacked any **shields** or **spears** needed to defend **themselves**. This is another symptom of **the nation's** depressed condition, but in this context it represents another way of highlighting the role of **Ha'Shem's** role in the miracle victory over **Sisera's** well-equipped army.¹⁰⁷ Like the earlier battle of **Jericho** (see **Joshua Bb - And the Walls Came Tumbling Down**), this was a holy war (see **Deuteronomy Ag - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**) led by **ADONAI-Tzva'ot, the LORD of heaven's** angelic **armies**.

The Fourth Stanza: The Praise of ADONAI (5:9-11): Having described the desperate plight of **her people**, **she** now turns to **their** deliverance. **My heart goes out to the commanders of Isra'el, with those who volunteered for war. All of you, praise ADONAI**. With the rise of **Deborah** and the choice of new **leaders**, the time had come for **Isra'el** to go on the offensive. As in **verse 2**, **she praises the leaders** and **the people** for **their** response despite all the disadvantages. Then **Deborah** issues a call to all the classes of **Israelite** society. **Consider this, those of you who ride on tawny donkeys, sitting on soft saddle blankets, and you who walk along the road . . . consider (5:9-10 NLT)! Tawny female donkeys** were preferred by **the rich** over the generic gray animals. **They** advertised **their** status by dressing **the donkeys** with luxurious **blankets**. **Those who walked along the road** were **the poor**. **Consider . . .** hints at something both groups might do wrong, namely, simply get on with their lives as though nothing had happened. In effect, it is a call to join in **the song**. What has happened makes it inappropriate for anyone, **rich** or **poor**, to merely go on **riding** or **traveling**, sitting on **soft saddle blankets**, or **walking along the road**.

Verse 11 presents a strikingly different picture from the preceding one. Here, **people** are not acting as though nothing has happened. On the contrary, as **they divided up spoils** between **the watering places** (traditional meeting points), **they remembered the righteous victories of ADONAI** (perhaps in **song**), **the victories of the common people** who participated in **the battle** with **Him**. When **they** remembered those **righteous victories**, and with **their** zeal restored, **the people of ADONAI** marched down to the city gates to face **the enemy (5:11**

Hebrew). What was causing the excitement was not **the spoil**, but the way **the people, rich and poor**, responded to the call from **Deborah**. The reference to **city gates** here looks back to **verse 8**, making it clear that **the people** were eager to engage **the enemy**.¹⁰⁸ This was the first step taken by **them** that showed the change that had taken place after **the LORD's** victory. Beforehand, **they** were **afraid** to go **down to the gates** because of **the war (5:8)**, but now **they marched down to the city gates**. This serves as an introduction to the more detailed account in **5:12-31**. Only here in **Judges** is **Isra'el** called **the people of ADONAI**.¹⁰⁹

ADONAI often uses the weaker things of this world to confound the wise. Certainly in using **Debrah** to raise up **Barak (4:4-10)** and in using **Ja'el** to bring down the mighty **Sisera (4:17-22)**, we see examples of this. **He** continues to work this way today. **He** brings deliverance from unexpected sources and in unexpected ways.

He wants to use us, and we need to be willing. We may not feel up to the task. We may feel that our spiritual gifts don't align with what **He** is calling us to do. In one way or another, we feel inhibited to serve. When we, as believers, do not trust **God** in these contexts, we lose out on the opportunity for **ADONAI** to work through us. We lose out on **His** good gifts. And worse, we may find ourselves expending all kinds of time and energy hopelessly trying to make up the difference. We want to have the assurance up front that the risk will be worth it, that we will succeed. But **God** has often already given the assurance in **His Word** and wants us to be involved so that **He** may work to accomplish **His** plan.

Deborah's willingness to be **the LORD's** spokesperson in calling **Barak** to deliver **His people** illustrates the faithfulness that **ADONAI** is seeking in all of us. Moreover, **her** willingness to go with **Barak** after **his** request demonstrates **her** bravery in the midst of great personal danger. There is nothing in **her** story that indicates any warrior status or abilities on the part of **Deborah**. **She** didn't fight in the battle; **she** only spoke to **Barak God's** reassurance of victory and encouragement to engage **the enemy**. Consequently, **she** was no Xena: Warrior Princess, or Wonder Woman. In fact, the Bible seems to present just the opposite. **She** was simply **a prophetess, the wife of a man** named **Lappidoth**.¹¹⁰

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being so wise and so loving. When a battle is won and the victory is secure, singing **a song of praise** is a wonderful way to remember the joy of winning and to give credit to whom credit is due. When there is a victory, it is important to praise the warriors in the battle; but to also praise **You**,*

our great and **Almighty** winner of battles. It is by **Your** strength and power that victories are won.

You are still worthy of all trust, **praise**, glory and honor!

You never change. **Your** character and purposes do not change, providing a firm foundation for faith in **You**. **“For I am Adonai. I do not change (Malachi 3:6a).**

Your Word, full of promises and teachings, will stand forever! **The grass withers, the flower fades. But the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8).**

You are Not wishy washy for **You** do not change **Your** mind, what **You** say stands. **God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes his mind! Does He speak and then not do it, or promise and not fulfill it (Numbers 23:19)?**

You remain a constant, pure and righteous **King**. **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne. Lovingkindness and truth go before You (Psalms 89:14).**

Your love is everlasting and reaches to the heavens! **Your love, Adonai, is in the heavens, Your faithfulness up to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God. Your judgments are like the great deep (Psalms 36:5-6).**

Praise Adonai, for He is good, for His lovingkindness endures forever (Psalms 136:1).

There is no variation nor shadow due to change in **You**. **You** are always reliable. **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow (James 1:17).**

Messiah Yeshua, you are the same forever-always faithful and always holy! **Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).**

How awesome it is to have such a wonderful, faithful and holy heavenly **Father**, who loves his children so much and nothing can separate us from **Your** love.

You were worthy of all trust, **praise** and glory in the days of **Deborah** and **Barak**, and **You** are still worthy of all trust, **praise**, glory and honor today!

I desire to give **You** my total worship, in words, and also in thoughts and in deeds. Thank **You** for never changing! In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen