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The Defeat of the Canaanites

5: 19-23

The defeat of the Canaanites DIG: What had YHVH promised Isra'el? Why did the Canaanites think they had the advantage? Who were the stars from heaven? How did the sovereignty of ADONAI turn the tide of the battle? Why did Sisera flee on foot? Who was the Angel of ADONAI? Why was Meroz cursed?

REFLECT: When did the sovereignty of ADONAI show up in your life? When have you thought, "This is a God thing!" Who are the "Canaanites" you are fighting in your life today? Who are the people in your life who are aiding the enemy that you need to stay away from? How can you pray for them this week?

Suddenly, what had previously been an immeasurable advantage became a death trap.

As **Deborah's** victory **song** continues (**to see link click At - Deborah's Victory Song**), we have a poetic account of **the battle** described in **4:13-16**. It's one thing to show up for duty and quite something else to go into battle. **Sisera** had organized an alliance of **the Canaanite kings**, and **their** united forces (with **900 chariots**) met **the Jewish army** at **Megiddo** on **the plain of Jezreel**. Since it was the dry season of the year, **the charioteers** expected to annihilate **the army of Isra'el**. But **ADONAI** had other plans. He sent a tremendous rainstorm that turned **the Kishon River** to overflow and **it** turned the battlefield into a swamp. **The army of Isra'el** trusted **YHVH** to give **them** the victory because that is what **He** promised in **4:6-9**.¹¹⁹



The Sixth Stanza (5:19-23): **Sisera** undoubtedly expected a swift and easy victory for his vastly superior military forces. **The kings of Canaan came and fought at Taanach near Megiddo's springs** at the western end of **the Jezreel Valley**. This shows that **Barak's** forces crossed the whole valley from the eastern side. But there was no way that **Sisera** could have prepared for what actually happened. Suddenly, what had previously seemed to be an immeasurable advantage became a death trap. **Sisera and all his chariots and all his army were slain with the edge of the sword before Barak. The stars fought from heaven. The stars in their orbits fought against Sisera (5:19a-20 NLT).** **Heaven and stars** are used here symbolically, meaning **angels** engaged in a war on behalf of **Isra'el** in the **heavenly** realms (see the commentary on **Ephesians Ca - The Spiritual Battle**). **The Canaanites** thought of **the stars** as heavenly powers that controlled the weather. Here, **they** are pictured as **a heavenly army** which fought against **Sisera** in a most unusual way. At the western end flowed **the Kishon River**, which would prove to be **the Canaanites** undoing. **The Kishon River swept them away - that ancient river, the river Kishon (5:21a Hebrew).** This is the equivalent of the avalanche of water that did the same thing to **Pharaoh's horses, chariots and charioteers** in the Sea of Reeds.¹²⁰

The Kishon River overflowed its banks, causing the battlefield to become muddy. This neutralized **the chariot** force, which was the primary military advantage that **the Canaanites** had over **Isra'el**. **The flooding** would also explain why **Sisera fled on foot (4:17)**, since normally **he** could escape faster if **he** had **a chariot**, but

not if **his chariot** was stuck in the mud.¹²¹ The phrase: **March on, o my soul, with courage (5:21b Hebrew)**, is likened to: **Bless ADONAI, o my soul**, of **Psalm 103:1**, and is an indication of the strong encouragement that **the singer**, probably **Barak**, felt as **he** recalled the marvelous victory. **Then** the rhythm and sound of the stampeding **Canaanite horses** is captured in the next verse. **The horses' hooves hammered the ground, the galloping, galloping of mighty steeds of Sisera's calvary fleeing the scene (5:22 NLT).**¹²²

But Isra'el's enemies took no plunder of silver (5:19b NLT). The “**taking**” the **plunder of silver** is the poetic equivalent of what is described more matter-of-factly in **5:30**. Stripping defeated enemies of anything of value was normal practice, except in **Isra'el**, where **the plunder** of a **God-given** victory was presented to **Ha'Shem** as its rightful owner. **The Canaanites took no plunder** in this case because **they** were either **dead** or **fleeing** the battlefield as the following verse describes.

“Curse Meroz,” said the Angel of ADONAI. Anywhere **the Angel of ADONAI** is mentioned in the TaNaKh, it is always **the Second Person of the Trinity**, the Pre-incarnate **Yeshua Messiah**. Then the reason is given. **Let them be utterly cursed, because they did not come to help the LORD, to help YHVH against mighty warriors (5:23 NLT).** This is the only mention of the town of **Meroz** in Scripture. It was an **Israelite city** that failed to do **its** duty. They sided with **the Canaanites** and let **those** fleeing through **Meroz** to escape when **they** should have blocked **their** path and killed **them** on the spot.¹²³ The **cursing** of **Meroz** is deliberately contrasted with the **blessing** of **Ja'el** (see **Ax - Blessed by Ja'el**).

ADONAI continually demonstrates that **He** will not give up on **His people**. Even though this was the fourth time that they had apostatized, **He** was utterly consistent with **them**. **He** would not allow **them** to do as **they** pleased. As a result of **His** rich compassion, **He** would not leave **them** in prolonged oppression. While there is a decrease in the quality of the type of people **He** could use; nevertheless, **He** was able to bring **restoration** to **His people**. In fact, **He** used **those** who, in the ancient world, were deemed insufficient to fulfill the task.

The entire account is deliberately constructed to emphasize the deliverance provided by **YHVH**. **He** was **the One** behind the scenes, raising the generals, deploying the armies (even the enemy was indirectly controlled by him), dictating strategy, and effecting the victory. In the end, both the story and the song celebrate the saving work of **the LORD**. The text stresses **God's** sovereignty over human

events. Therefore, this passage encourages us to perceive **ADONAI's** sovereignty over history and our own lives. Whether it is **His** discipline, in **His** compassionate deliverance, in **His** financial provision, or in **His** leading and guiding decisions, **Ha'Shem** is sovereign over our lives, and **He's** working to complete **His** plan.¹²⁴

But this wasn't the only time that **ADONAI's** sovereignty saved **Isra'el**. Within hours of becoming a state from UN General Assembly Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947, they were attacked by hostile Arab nations surrounding **Isra'el** on almost every side. However, **Isra'el's** military and governmental systems were not fully organized. The main road to **Jerusalem** was blocked, trapping **Jewish** residents in **the City** without enough food or water. So the new state of **Isra'el** faced severe disadvantages, including a much smaller population, a severe lack of tanks, heavy artillery, or anti-tank weapons, no air force, while Arab nations used bombers and fighter jets, or navy to protect its coasts or stop naval blockades, and an economy that was not ready for total war against multiple professional Arab armies attacking all at once. Ammunition was so low that soldiers were often restricted to just a few rounds per day, or told to hold their fire entirely until the enemy was at point blank range, rather than receiving a standardized daily number of bullets . . . and they still won. **Isra'el** is still battling and defeating the "Canaanites" of today.

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for caring so deeply for **Isra'el** and for helping **her** win battles against all odds. Battles are not won by the number of men fighting, nor by the amount of artillery. **A horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory comes from ADONAI (Proverbs 21:31). You** defeated Pharaoh's army without any army from **Isra'el**. **I will sing to ADONAI, for He is highly exalted! The horse and its rider have been thrown into the sea. ADONAI is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will glorify Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. ADONAI is a warrior - ADONAI is His Name (Exodus 15:1-3)!***

You defeated the great giant **Goliath** without any conventional weapons! **Then David said to the Philistine, "You are coming to me with a sword, a spear and a javelin, but I am coming to you in the Name of ADONAI-Tzva'ot, God of the armies of Isra'el, whom you have defied. . . So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, struck the Philistine down and killed him (First Samuel 17:45, 50).**

Even when all the armies of the world come against **Messiah**, **Messiah** will be victorious by **the sword of His mouth**. No need to fight; **He** wins without even a

fight. **And the armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword - so that with it He may strike down the nations - and He shall rule them with an iron rod, and He treads the winepress of the furious wrath of Elohei-Tzva'ot. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev 19:11b-16).**

Then the beast was captured, and along with him the false prophet who had performed the signs before him by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast, as well as those who had worshiped his image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the One riding on the horse. And all the birds gorged themselves with their flesh (Revelation 19:20-21).

Preparation for battle is necessary, but confidence must rest in **Almighty ADONAI**. **He will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright (Psalms 20:6c-8).**

Thank you, almighty heavenly **Father**, that **You** rule over everyone and over every battle. **You** grant the victory that serves **Your** purpose. We put our trust in **You** and bow before **You** in love and worship! Knowing **Your** presence is within me (**Hebrews 13:5**), gives me the strength to proceed into the battle with my hand held tight in **Yours** and peace in my heart that **You** are in control. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen