

A HERO WILL RISE

The Book of Judges

Text

Judges 5:1-31

Topic

Deborah and Barak sing a duet in which they praise Jael for driving a tent peg through Sisera's skull

Title

"I Had a Hammer & I Hammered in the Evening"

Introduction

It wasn't vintage at the time; it was my daily alarm clock when I was in high school.

You can find it on eBay if you search for the *Vintage Batman & Robin talking alarm clock*, by Janex.

Pam bought one for me some years ago; it's in my office. It's a molded plastic scene of the Dynamic Duo and the Bat-mobile. The clock winds up, and the 'alarm' is a tape recording of the caped crusaders talking. It doesn't work anymore, but I remember the alarm:

"Jumpin' Jehoshaphat, Batman, we're needed again!"

"That's right, Robin, we have to wake our friends."

"Golly, jeepers Batman, I'll make the call!"

"OK, Robin, wake them all."

"Time to get up and out of bed!"

"Good boy, Robin; very well said."

Page 1 of 16

Judges 5:1-31

"I Had a Hammer & I Hammered in the Evening"

In hotels, have you ever been woken up at 3am by the previous guest - who set the alarm as a gag? I say, "Well played," if you're not going to anticipate that, and check the clock radio before you hit the sack.

Then there's the wake-up call. You arrange ahead of time for someone at the front desk to call you at a specified time.

You don't need a 'someone anymore.' If you have access to the internet, wakeupdialer.com will make the call.

By the way... I don't see why you couldn't enter **anyone's** phone number, as a gag. *But you didn't hear it from me.*

"Wake-up call" has expanded to become an idiom in the English language that refers to warning someone that they need to deal with an urgent or dangerous problem, and do something about it.

In our verses in Judges chapter five, we read that Deborah and Barak received spiritual wake-up calls:

[Jdg 5:12](#) "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away, O son of Abinoam!"

Deborah and Barak were *awakened* by the Lord to *arise* and take a stand against their enemies. As we read the first part of the chapter, we'll see an emphasis on them involving the larger congregation of Israel.

Then, as the chapter ends, the emphasis shifts to Jael, who received an individual wake-up call and rose to the occasion.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 As A Congregation, We Are Called Out To Awake & Arise, and #2 As A Christian, You Are Called Upon To Awake & Arise.

#1 As A Congregation.
We Are Called Out To Awake & Arise

(v1-23)

My dad loved a good Western; or, as he liked to call them, "Shoot 'em up Westerns." *Gunsmoke... Maverick... and The Rifleman* were all must-watch shows. One week the network had been advertising a Western movie starring Lee Marvin and Clint Eastwood. Lot's of potential shoot 'em up there, for sure. Plus it was partly filmed right in our neck of the woods, in Big Bear Lake and in the San Bernardino National Forrest.

Our entire family settled around the TV set. I'll never forget my dad's disgusted reaction when he realized *Paint Your Wagon* was **a three-hour movie musical**. Let's just say that Lee Marvin singing wasn't at all what he had anticipated.

Chapter five of Judges is a musical. It was composed to commemorate the events of chapter four, which chronicled a miraculous victory. Unarmed, ten thousand Israelites defeated the nine-hundred iron chariots of Commander Sisera's Canaanite army, as well as multitudes of heavily armed infantry.

[Jdg 5:1](#) Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:

In chapter four Deborah received a prophecy from the Lord to send Barak and ten thousand Israelites from the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali to challenge Sisera.

Barak agreed, but added his own condition - that Deborah accompany them. She agreed and they set out.

The strategy the Lord chose to employ was to have His people merely stand on level ground, unarmed, as the chariots and infantry bore down on them.

Jdg 5:2 "When leaders lead in Israel, When the people willingly offer themselves, Bless the LORD!

As I mentioned, the emphasis in these opening verses (or lyrics) is on the proper functioning of Israel as a larger congregation. Leaders should lead, and the people should follow. When that occurs, the Lord is blessed. We'll see, in a moment, that more than two tribes were involved in this victory.

When you get saved, you become a part of something much greater than yourself. It's called - **you're called** - the church. It is described by several popular metaphors, but each stresses you are a connected part of something greater:

- The church is called the body of Jesus, in which He is the Head, and we are members of His spiritual body, the way your physical body has its connected members.
- The church is called a building, in which each of you is a living stone, made to fit together with the other living stones.
- The church is called the household of faith, in which each of us has our own function and service for the proper running of the home.

Any thought that you might not be a vital, connected member of a local church is foreign to the writers of the New Testament.

Jdg 5:3 "Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes! I, *even* I, will sing to the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.

Israel had no king. Deborah wanted this song to be performed among the Canaanites as an ode to Israel's victory, to remind them that Israel's God was alive while their so-called gods were man-made objects.

Jdg 5:4 "LORD, when You went out from Seir, When You marched from the field of Edom, The earth trembled and the heavens poured, The clouds also poured water;

Jdg 5:5 The mountains gushed before the LORD, This Sinai, before the LORD God of Israel.

To defeat Sisera, the Lord sent a freak storm, overflowing the river, rendering the chariots a liability, and discomfiting the infantry. "Seir" and "Edom" refer back in Israel's national history to God's awesome appearance at Mount Sinai, where the covenant with Israel was established to the accompaniment of a thunderstorm and an earthquake (Exodus 19:16-18).

Jdg 5:6 "In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, In the days of Jael, The highways were deserted, And the travelers walked along the byways.

Jdg 5:7 Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, Until I, Deborah, arose, Arose a mother in Israel.

We met Shamgar earlier. God raised him up as a hero. It was recorded that he killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad. Here we learn he was a contemporary of Deborah and Barak, but he patrolled another part of the Promised Land.

Jael was not a judge, probably not even Jewish, but that didn't prevent her from being used by God.

It was a dangerous time for Israelites. You couldn't count on Shamgar showing up when you were traveling, or when your village was being raided. He was only one man. You certainly couldn't count on a non-Israelite (like Jael) to come to your aid.

But when God called Deborah, a much greater deliverance was realized.

"Arose a mother in Israel" is usually said to refer to the fact that the men were cowering in fear, so God raised up a woman, almost to shame the men. Maybe, but I think it is intended as a contrast to something we will read at the end of the song, where we are introduced to Sisera's mother. We'll get to it.

Jdg 5:8 They chose new gods; Then *there was* war in the gates; Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.

The Israelites embraced Canaanite life and its religion. God gave them over to it, and it wasn't long before they were subjugated and enslaved. Their forty-thousand man army was disarmed.

Christians can become disarmed. When we, for example, doubt the power of prayer, or the truth of God's Word, or the assurance of our salvation - we lay down our spiritual weapons and become easy prey for the roaring lion.

Jdg 5:9 My heart *is* with the rulers of Israel Who offered themselves willingly with the people. Bless the LORD!

Hold this thought for a few verses and Deborah will explain what she meant about the "rulers."

Jdg 5:10 "Speak, you who ride on white donkeys, Who sit in judges' attire, And who walk along the road.

Jdg 5:11 Far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places, There they shall recount the righteous acts of the LORD, The righteous acts *for* His villagers in Israel; Then the people of the LORD shall go down to the gates.

Deborah anticipated a return to normal village and tribal life. The roads would be safe, and merchants on their donkeys would go from well-to-well trading their goods.

It was at those public gatherings that this song ought to be sung. Sort of like we sing the National Anthem before sporting events.

Jdg 5:12 "Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away, O son of Abinoam!

This is a poetic, a lyrical, summary of the prophecy Deborah received and then delivered to Barak. As soon as the words were revealed, the victory was certain, and they could sing about it, anticipating leading away the captives of the enemy.

Jdg 5:13 "Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles; The LORD came down for me against the mighty.

Every translation I consulted gives a totally different slant on this verse. The one that makes the most sense is Young's Literal Translation, which reads, "Then him who is left of the honorable ones [God] caused to rule the people of Jehovah [and] He caused me to rule among the mighty."

In other words, after the battle was won, God restored honorable leaders to rule His people, and He continued to use Deborah even though male leadership was re-established.

Jdg 5:14 From Ephraim *were* those whose roots were in Amalek. After you, Benjamin, with your peoples, From Machir rulers came down, And from Zebulun those who bear the recruiter's staff.

Jdg 5:15 And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; As Issachar, so *was* Barak Sent into the valley under his command; Among the divisions of Reuben *There were* great resolves of heart.

Chapter four specified that ten thousand men exclusively from the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were involved in the battle. These verses make it sound like troops from six other tribes joined them. Is it a contradiction?

Once again, a better translation will help sort this out. In the NIV these verses read,

Some came from Ephraim, whose roots were in Amalek;
Benjamin was with the people who followed you.
From Makir **captains** came down,
from Zebulun those who bear a **commander's** staff.
The **princes** of Issachar were with Deborah;
yes, Issachar was with Barak,
sent under his command into the valley.

Deborah sings that they sent their leaders - *not* their troops. She calls them "captains," "commanders," and "princes." In verse nine she had referred to them as "rulers."

It appears these leaders of the other tribes were summoned to observe the battle, to be able to report back the victory to their tribes, as a tool towards a patriotic reuniting of Israel as one nation, under God. They were 'embedded' leaders.

Four tribes are singled-out for their disobedience:

Jdg 5:16 Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, To hear the pipings for the flocks? The divisions of Reuben have great searchings of heart.

Jdg 5:17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan, And why did Dan remain on ships? Asher continued at the seashore, And stayed by his inlets.

The leaders of the tribes of Reuben, Gilead, Dan, and Asher refused to come:

- The leaders of Reuben used the excuse that, after great searching of heart, they simply couldn't leave their flocks. Of course they could have; other leaders did.
- Gilead is the tribe of Gad. They settled outside the Promised Land. They simply ignored the call.
- The leaders of Dan were busy trading and doing business.
- The leaders of Asher were at ClubMed.

It would be good to look at each excuse, and ask ourselves if we are saying "No" to the Lord for similar reasons. Or any reason.

Four tribes are not mentioned at all - Judah, Simeon, Manasseh, and Levi. We don't know why. But that brings us back to the troops who went out onto the field of battle:

Jdg 5:18 Zebulun *is* a people *who* jeopardized their lives to the point of death, Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield.

I found this interesting, and a cause to pause. If the victory was certain, and it was according to the prophecy, then in what sense were these guys "[jeopardizing] their lives to the point of death?"

They were risking life and limb in the sense that the original prophecy said that God would deliver the enemy into their hand. It did not specify there would be no danger, or loss of life.

Sometimes we are delivered *from* trouble, but other times we are delivered *through* trouble. I am victorious if God heals me; I am victorious if He doesn't, because I have ultimate healing in Heaven.

Jdg 5:19 "The kings came *and* fought, Then the kings of Canaan fought In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; They took no spoils of silver.

"Kings," plural, indicates that other Canaanites joined Sisera against the Israelites, hoping to take spoil from them as in times past. The more you hear about this battle, the more hopeless it seemed for Israel.

Jdg 5:20 They fought from the heavens; The stars from their courses fought against Sisera.

Jdg 5:21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away, That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon. O my soul, march on in strength!

The "heavens" and the "stars" is a lyrical way of describing a freak thunderstorm. Simultaneously, Kishon flooded and overflowed.

I love that scene in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, where the Nazgûl attempt to cross the Fords of Bruinen and are swept away by a sudden supernatural torrent of water. It reads even better than it looks on screen - even though it's fantastic in the film.

Jdg 5:22 Then the horses' hooves pounded, The galloping, galloping of his steeds.

Some of the chariots were swept away; others were mired; some retreated, and were chased, it would seem from chapter four, by Israelites who acquired the weapons being left behind by the Canaanites in defeat and in retreat.

Jdg 5:23 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of the LORD, 'Curse its inhabitants bitterly, Because they did not come to the help of the LORD, To the help of the LORD against the mighty.'

Meroz was a city in the territory of Naphtali. For unspecified reasons, the men there refused to go to battle. Of interest is that the "Angel of the Lord" makes an appearance. We saw in a previous study that this is an appearance of Jesus, the Second Person of the tri-une God, in physical form prior to His incarnation.

Was He part of the battle? Did He show Himself during the storm? Is that another reason why the troops of Sisera fled?

It's time to deliver the application. Deborah had been sitting under the palm tree, hearing legal matters, giving advice, interpreting the Law, for quite some time. She was already a prophetess before she received the prophecy to call upon Barak to lead Zebulun and Naphtali against Sisera.

To over-simplify, we could say she was spiritual, and extremely busy serving the Lord in remarkable ways. And yet she indicates in her song that God came to her and shouted, "Awake, awake, Deborah... Awake, awake."

She awoke in a way that stirred Barak to "arise," and others to rise-up with him.

I love our church family. We're a body of many members; we're a building of living stones; we're a household of servants.

But we, too, need constantly to be ready to hear the Lord shout, "Awake, awake, awake, awake," and then rise-up to His mission.

Some missions, however, are more solo in nature...

#2 As A Christian, You Are Called Upon To Awake & Arise

(v24-31)

In addition to G, PG, PG-13, R, NC-17, and MA (Mature Audiences), the major content warnings you will see preceding cable programming are the following:

AC - Adult Content	V - Violence
AL - Adult Language	GV - Graphic Violence
GL - Graphic Language	BN - Brief Nudity
MV - Mild Violence	N - Nudity
SSC - Strong Sexual Content	R - Rape

The finish of Deborah's song is definitely MA with GV and it touches on SSC and R.

Jdg 5:24 "Most blessed among women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed is she among women in tents.

We were introduced to this lady in chapter four. Her husband, Heber, was the spy who told Sisera that Barak was advancing with an unarmed army of ten thousand men.

If her husband had thrown in with the enemies of God, how is it she was "blessed?" Just wait and you'll see.

Jdg 5:25 He asked for water, she gave milk; She brought out cream in a lordly bowl.

When his troops were discomfited, Sisera managed to escape. He fled to the tent of Heber, his trusted spy, thinking he'd find sanctuary there. It was a sanctuary tent.

Jael offered him a hiding place, and she showed him more hospitality than he asked. It was to disarm him, because she had a plan to save herself and her husband from the wrath of God.

We learned in chapter four that after he drank, she covered him, and he fell into a deep sleep.

Jdg 5:26 She stretched her hand to the tent peg, Her right hand to the workmen's hammer; She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head, She split and struck through his temple.

This retelling is quite a bit more graphic and violent than in chapter four. It's visceral. Here I can almost feel the multiple poundings of the peg, hear the cracking of his skull, and see into his gray matter.

There's really no way to sugarcoat it. It was brutal.

You've been on the world famous Jungle Cruise at Disneyland. In one of the displays, the captain points out the lions who are, he or she says, guarding the sleeping zebra. THAT is sugarcoated.

Jdg 5:27 At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; At her feet he sank, he fell; Where he sank, there he fell dead.

He "fell" doesn't mean he was standing during the assault. It's a way of describing a soldier's death. He "fell" covers all manner of deaths - whether on your feet or lying down, awake or asleep.

"Sank" adds to the graphic violence. As she pounded the peg, Sisera's skull depressed the soft ground underneath him.

I don't have time for us to debate the ethics of Jael's choice. It was war; he was Hitler. It was hammer time.

The end of this song is almost surreal.

Jdg 5:28 "The mother of Sisera looked through the window, And cried out through the lattice, 'Why is his chariot *so* long in coming? Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?'

Jdg 5:29 Her wisest ladies answered her, Yes, she answered herself,

Jdg 5:30 'Are they not finding and dividing the spoil: To every man a girl *or* two; For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments, Plunder of garments embroidered and dyed, Two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter?'

Mothers make notoriously bad character witnesses for their murderous sons. Momma Sisera was worse because she seems to be a sociopath.

At first she comes across as normal, wondering as any mom would, about her son's delay. It was unusual. His raids against unarmed men and helpless women usually didn't take long.

Her servants tried to placate her, agreeing with her analysis... Which reveals she was anything but normal.

She casually calls Sisera a "plunderer" and a "looter." Hey, Momma Sisera, you understand that those are crimes, don't you?

She had a thing for hand embroidered, expensive dyed garments, and her son would bring them home to her. He'd get them from the women he sexually assaulted, whom his troops raped, during the robberies; that's what "to every man a girl or two" means.

[Jdg 5:31](#) "Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD! But *let* those who love Him *be* like the sun When it comes out in full strength."

Remember earlier, when Deborah was called "a mother in Israel?" Her character is contrasted with Sisera's mother to expose the awful wickedness of Canaanite culture and religion. It produced mothers like her - sociopaths who raised murderers.

[Jdg 5:31](#) ... So the land had rest for forty years.

Deborah, the Musical, had a forty-year run. The song of Deborah topped the charts for four decades.

Something here, for us, is to notice that Jael acted alone. She wasn't part of Israel. And while I say she was coming to her husband's aid in changing sides so he wouldn't be killed, she didn't consult him.

An opportunity to serve the God of Israel fell in her lap, almost literally; and she rose to the occasion. It was her personal wake-up call.

You are part of the body... the building... the household of faith. But you are mostly out in the world on your own. Ask the Lord for opportunities to fall in your lap, to serve Him.

When one presents itself, rise to it. Don't be like the tribes which refused.

Stand as one who is called upon to, if necessary, jeopardize your life to the death.

What? That sounds harsh. Maybe if we hear Jesus say it:

Luk 9:24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.

Deborah and Barak sang, "when people willingly offer themselves." It sounds a lot like, "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service..." (Romans 12:1).

Awake... Arise... Altar (A-L-T-A-R) your plans.