

Joshua 23-24 יהושע

Judges 2-5 שופטים

Chapter 4

DEBORAH JUDGES ISRAEL

30

Many years passed. The people settled in the Land of Israel and for a while, all was peaceful. Then Joshua called the Israelites together at Shechem. Joshua said, "I have grown old. Soon I must die. You have seen what God has done for you. Because God fights for you, each of you is like a thousand warriors." Then Joshua repeated their history. He told them about Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, and about the years of wandering. Joshua asked, "Do you promise to serve God always?" And the people said, "We will serve only God. We will obey only God."



On that day, Joshua made a covenant with the people. He wrote all this in a book of God's teachings. He set up a great stone at Shechem to be the sign of the covenant between God and Israel.

Then Joshua, the servant of God, died at the age of one hundred and ten years. And the people of Israel buried him on his own farm in the Land of Israel. The people served God as they had promised, for they had seen the mighty deeds which God had done for them. But their children had not seen these marvels, and soon they began to worship foreign gods. So the enemies of Israel grew stronger.

Then God gave Israel Judges to lead them against their enemies. And God was with the Judges while they lived. Yet, when the Judges died, the people would grow weak and forget God again, bowing down to idols. So it was, for many years, as God tested the Israelites.

In time, the prophetess Deborah was made Judge over Israel. She sat beneath the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-El in the mountains of Ephraim. And whenever the Children of Israel had an argument, they came to her to be judged.

Once she sent for the famous soldier, Barak, and said to him, "God has commanded you to go to Mount Tabor. There you will battle against Sisera, who commands the great army of Jabin, with all its chariots. Fear not, for God will defeat them." Barak said, "If you will go with me, then I will go. But if you will not go with me, I will not go."

"I will surely go with you," Deborah answered. "But know this: God will not let you kill Sisera. Sisera will fall at the hand of a woman."

Now Sisera had nine hundred chariots of iron, and all his army. Barak's army was all on foot, and their weapons were few. So it was God who defeated Sisera and all his chariots and all his army. And of all his mighty army, only Sisera escaped.

Sisera ran to the tent of Yael, the wife of Heber, a friend of King Jabin. And Yael said, "You can rest here with me." She brought him into the tent and covered him with a blanket. He said, "Stand at the door of the tent. If anyone asks, 'Is there a man here?' you shall say, 'No.'"

But when Sisera was asleep, Yael took a tent peg and a hammer and went softly to his bed. Then she drove the peg into the side of his head. So Sisera died.

Yael came out of the tent and saw Barak. She knew that he was looking for Sisera. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you seek." And when he went into her tent, there he saw the dead Sisera. That is how God destroyed the army of Jabin, king of Canaan.

Then Deborah and Barak sang on that day:

Hear, O kings!

Give ear, O princes!

I, even I, will sing to God.

I will sing praise to the God of Israel.

And the land was peaceful again for forty years.

Here at Mount Tabor, Deborah and Barak defeated the army of Sisera.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

God gave Israel judges...

Jethro – the priest of Midian and the father-in-law of Moses – joined Moses in the wilderness. He saw Moses judging the Israelites from morning to night.

Jethro said, “Moses, this is not right. You must find judges among the people to share the work of judging.” Moses liked Jethro’s idea, and he set many judges over Israel. Then Jethro said, “Now I will leave you.”

Moses was sad, “Stay with me, please,” he said. “I need you and I need your wonderful ideas.”

“I am only a lamp,” Jethro answered, “but you are the sun and Aaron is the moon. Where the sun and moon give light, no lamp is needed. I must return to my people and teach them God’s ways. The lamp is best in a place of darkness.”



The palm tree on this ancient Jewish coin was used as a symbol of the Land of Israel.



WHAT DOES IT TEACH?

Deborah

The Prophetess

The Bible calls three women by the title prophetess: Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah. Miriam was the sister of Moses. She looked after the baby Moses and later helped her brother lead the Israelites. At the Sea of Reeds, Miriam led Israel in singing and dancing when the Egyptians were drowned.

Deborah lived one hundred and fifty years after Joshua. She judged Israel for many years, and all the people loved her. Barak knew that the people would follow Deborah into battle. For that reason, Barak asked Deborah to join him in leading the army.

Huldah was a prophetess in Jerusalem long after Deborah’s time. When King Josiah found the Book of the Torah after it had been lost for many years, Huldah spoke God’s words to the king.

The rabbis taught: It makes no difference if a person is a man or a woman – God’s spirit enters the person who follows God’s ways.

A LESSON FROM THE PROPHETS

The Book of Judges

Joshua brought the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle to Shiloh. The Children of Israel divided the land, giving each tribe a portion. But the tribes seldom went to Shiloh. They worshipped near home. In the north, they worshipped at Dan. In the center of the country, they worshipped at Shechem, Shiloh, or Gilgal. And in the south, they worshipped at Hebron or Beersheba. In each place, they worshipped “the God of Israel,” but they did not think of themselves as one people.

“Then God gave Israel judges...” When a tribe was attacked by an enemy, other tribes came to help in the battle. (When Deborah called, Barak’s army came from the tribes of Naftali and Zebulun.) The leaders who brought the tribes together were called “judges.” Some, like Deborah

Local legend says that Joshua was buried here, near the city of Shechem.



beneath her palm tree, also settled arguments. Perhaps that is why they were called judges.

The Book of Judges tells the story of twelve leaders. Deborah was the only woman, but she was one of the three most important judges. The other two were Gideon and Samson. From first to last, the judges were favorites of the people, ruling because the people wanted them to rule.

[Sources: Joshua, 13ff.; Judges]



These three sealed-up gates in the walls of Jerusalem are called the Huldah Gates. It is said that Huldah trained prophets nearby.

NAME SCRAMBLE

Unscramble the letters to see the names of people you have read about.

O S J H A U _____
O S M S E _____
B H A R A M A _____
C A J B O _____
S E J O P H _____
E T H J O R _____
B E R H A D O _____
K A B A R _____
E S I S A R _____
A B J N I _____
A Y L E _____

THE CORRECT ORDER

All these things happened in the story, but they are not in the right order.

Number the sentences in the order that they happened.

- _____ When the Children of Israel had an argument, they came to Deborah to be judged.
- _____ Joshua called the Israelites together at Shechem.
- _____ Barak defeated the great army of Jabin.
- _____ Joshua set up a stone to be the sign of the covenant between God and Israel.
- _____ God gave Israel judges to lead them against their enemies.
- _____ Yael killed Sisera while he lay sleeping.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN

What happened when Joshua called the Israelites together at Shechem?

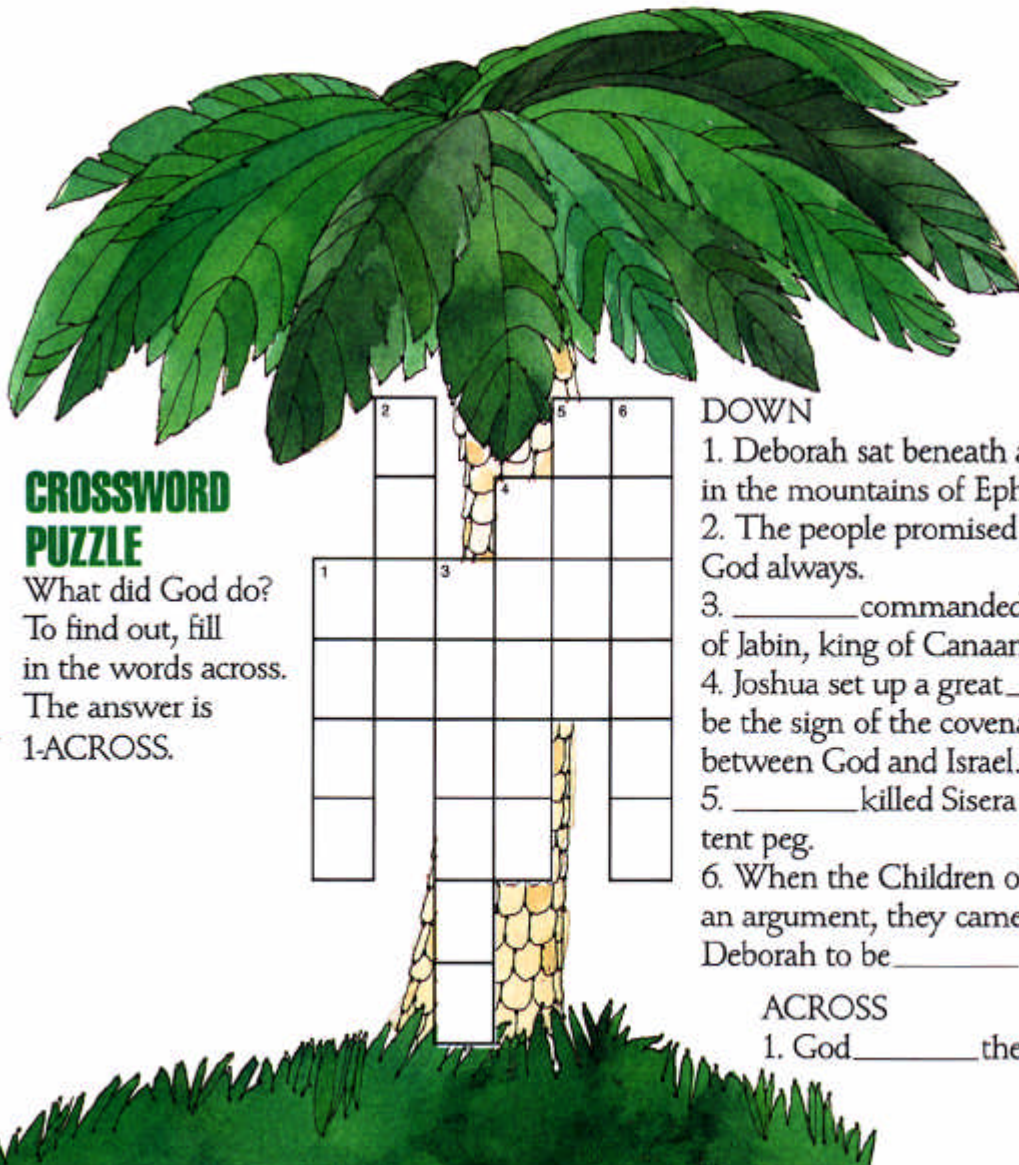
What happened when the Children of Israel had an argument?

What happened when the Judges died?

What happened when the people began to worship foreign gods?

What happened when Deborah sent for Barak?

What happened when Sisera escaped?



**CROSSWORD
PUZZLE**

What did God do?
To find out, fill
in the words across.
The answer is
1-ACROSS.

DOWN

1. Deborah sat beneath a palm _____ in the mountains of Ephraim.
2. The people promised to _____ God always.
3. _____ commanded the army of Jabin, king of Canaan.
4. Joshua set up a great _____ to be the sign of the covenant between God and Israel.
5. _____ killed Sisera with a tent peg.
6. When the Children of Israel had an argument, they came to Deborah to be _____.

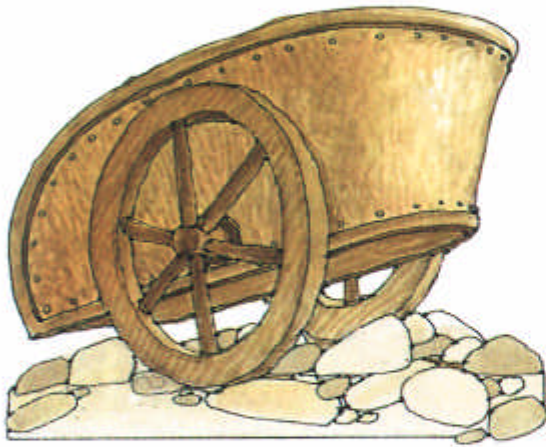
ACROSS

1. God _____ the Israelites.



WHAT IS TRUE?

Put a T in each box next to a true statement. Put an F in each box next to a statement which is false.



- Joshua died at the age of ninety-eight.
- Joshua made a covenant with the people.
- Jethro told Moses to hire many leaders for the people.
- Deborah sat beneath a palm tree in the mountains.
- Barak killed Sisera with a tent peg.
- Jabin's army had no chariots.
- Deborah went with Barak to lead the people in battle.
- Sisera asked Yael to kill Barak and Deborah.
- Yael sang a song to God.
- After Deborah, the land was peaceful for forty years.