

DEBORAH THE PROPHETESS

Dr. E.M. Ernst, Th.D.

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Abstract

God used many different types of people in the Bible to communicate His message. Most of which he used men, but in some cases He would use a woman. In my search over the past 16 years to hear God's voice and being told repeatedly that He doesn't speak to or through women, I am drawn to Deborah. I know that the Almighty speaks to all of His children just as a good father does.

Outside of the book of Judges there is not much material on Deborah. Therefore, I had to dig. I will use several different sources including, printed books, on-line sources, and PC based computer programs.

Deborah was a prophetess and she did speak for God and led an army into battle. I believe that she, as well as most women can be underestimated resources in the Body of Christ.

I will try to establish the importance of women in the church through my study and how they are underdeveloped vessels that can still be used today.

CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
CHAPTER I What is a prophet/prophetess?	1
CHAPTER II Deborah, a unique women ahead of her time.....	2
CHAPTER III Victory for a nation	4
CHAPTER IV Who Does God Use Today?.....	5
References/Bibliograpghy.....	8

CHAPTER I

“What is a prophet?”

According to the dictionary, the definition of a *prophet*; one who delivers divine messages or interprets the divine will; one who foretells the future; a religious leader; or an interpreter or spokesman for the cause. (Webster illustrated contemporary dictionary, 1988, pp. 583) (a prophetess is the female version of the prophet.)

In the Old and New Testaments there are many women that are mentioned as being obedient vessels for God’s service. However, the title of prophetess is only given to three women in the Old Testament; they are Miriam, (Exodus 15:20) Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) and Deborah (Judges 4:4)

The first mention of a prophet is Abraham in Genesis 20:7. In this verse we read that Abraham would pray in the office of a prophet. In Exodus chapter 7 it is written that Aaron, Moses’ brother is also a prophet. Aaron would speak to the people on God’s behalf.

In the book of Numbers chapter 12:6 we are told that God uses dreams and visions to speak to/through prophets. In the book of Amos chapter 7:12 the prophet Amos is called a “Seer”, which meant he could have had opened eye visions and interpret the message and speak to the people.

The term “Seer” is also interchangeably with the term “Vision” that is used in the Old Testament 77 times. God can also use dreams to speak to the nonbelievers like he did to Abimelech in Genesis 20:3. According to scripture it appears that God can use whatever means necessary to speak to whomever He needs to in order get His message across.

CHAPTER II

“Deborah, a unique woman ahead of her time”

According to the book of Judges (chapters 4 & 5), Deborah possessed many unique qualities; not only uncommon for women, but also uncommon for most prophets. The Bible describes Deborah as a wife, mother, prophetess, judge, singer, poet and political leader. Deborah would have been a woman who had it all.

As a respected judge of the Old Testament we read that Deborah serves her God in a special governmental capacity. We can assume from the text that she possessed great talents and had an abundance of faith, wisdom and discernment. She would not shy away from confronting any wrongdoing.

It would have been Deborah's main responsibility to hear cases that were brought against people to right wrongs and render godly decisions.

During the time of Judges it is referenced in Scripture that the children of Israel were in a spiritual decline and their nation was full of sin and corruption. In Psalm 33:10-12 we read that when a nation fails to give honor to God they end up in chaos. In I Corinthians 15:33 we read that bad company corrupts good character.

Deborah is an intricate part of Israel's history during the time when they were oppressed by the Canaanites. This was the time after Joshua's leadership and this generation would not have been taught godly principles. It would have been important for Deborah to offer godly counsel, words of encouragement and to assist the nation how to distinguish right from wrong according to God's Word.

There are references that Deborah possessed such a keen sense of discernment that people came from great distances to seek her judgment and wisdom in judicial actions.

We read in chapter 4 of Judges that Deborah used words of victory when she faced the enemies of God and she chose her words wisely. We can learn much from Deborah as she carefully spoke and thought about what she would say beforehand as she was God's prophetess.

In her position of authority she would have been able to exercise great influence over the nation and she earned the respect of many.

As Deborah hears the message of the word of the Lord and goes to Barak; she agrees to go with them into the battle at his request and she sets aside her own preconceived notions with regard to her role as a judge of Israel. She puts the will of God before her own and actively serves God with her whole heart.

I believe that Deborah possessed such great faith that even before the battle had started she knew the word of the Lord to be true, bore witness in her heart and believed that when they entered the battle it had already been won.

CHAPTER III

“Victory for a nation”

Deborah possessed a combination of authority and responsibility held only by two other people mentioned in the Bible; Moses and Samuel.

While Deborah rendered her decisions under “The palm tree of Deborah”, she is often referred to as a “The mother of Israel” as she accompanied God's military leader Barak into battle against the Canaanites who are symbolized in the Bible as the flesh of natural man.

I believe this battle not only had physical but also spiritual consequences as the children of Israel had allowed the Canaanites to infiltrate their culture and society. The Israelites adopted idol worship and gross sexual immorality from the Canaanites as they intermarried against God’s direction and thus adopting their religious practices.

Barak is a capable military man who lacks self-confidence against his enemy and he exhibits fear in the midst of the battle. He solicits Deborah to accompany him in this battle as she literally represents God's presence in the nation as a prophetess and judge of Israel.

Deborah prophesies over Barak and tells him that she will accompany him in the battle with the glory for victory over Israel's enemy, Sisera; will go to the hand of a woman.

We read that Sisera is lured into the tent of Jael as he seeks refuge. He is given something to drink and a place to rest. While Sisera lays down to rest, Jael takes a tent peg and drives it through Sisera's temple killing him instantly. The Bible says that God subdued the King of the Canaanites and the children of Israel grew stronger. (Judges 4:23) As a result of the victory Israel was able to withstand against their enemies in a powerful way.

CHAPTER IV

“Who Can God Use Today”

God has always and will continue to use who so ever will hear His voice. As believers in Jesus the Messiah, we were all given a mandate in the Gospels to go therefore and preach the good news to every creature.(Mark 16:15) The Bible does not specify with this mandate only men or only women; God calls everyone that is a Holy Spirit filled believer to preach the Good News.

For centuries the church has twisted and manipulated the Scriptures to devalue and downgrade women in the kingdom. Although, the Bible states there is neither male nor female nor Jew nor Greek each of us has a distinctive role to play according to our gifts, abilities and overall willingness in submission to the Spirit. (Galatians 3:28)

Author, Paul Norman comments in his brochure of “The Palm of Deborah” writes that there is a special role of women for evangelism, training children and to disciple only women, not men. The author uses these two scriptures to state his case. (2 Timothy 1:5, Titus 2:3)

It is true that Biblically men and women fulfill different roles in the family and in the Body of Christ. (Ephesians 5:22-32) If this was not the case, the Apostle Paul would have said this goes for the family, church and any women that holds a job outside the home, but he did not say that.

However, to limit God on who and how he can use a vessel according to their life experiences to minister to others is fruitless. Most believers are taught that the role of women is limited; some how because of their gender they are considered inferior. I totally disagree with that view. I have heard Ephesians 5 quoted that women should submit to “all: men, however when I read this verse, it says we are to submit to our own husbands, not all men in the church.

If that were the case, then the way this verse is commonly taught “all” women should submit themselves in a sexual and financial way as well and we know that is wrong. When doctrine contradicts God’s written word, it is wrong. We are to submit to one another out of love for Christ and His Word.

In these last days God is looking for people to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh to fulfill His call with the kingdom mindset and snatch as many people from the fire as possible. (Acts 2:18-21.)

Hell is a real place, so much so, that Jesus went there in our place so we don't have to go there. (Rev. 1:18) It always amuses me that those who criticize the role of women in the church are the ones least likely to fulfill the kingdom mandate and “pick up the slack” so to speak in any ministry deficiency.

The opinion that women (or race) are somehow subservient or inferior to men while ministering in the church; I believe is a deception of the enemy. We read in the scriptures that all believers can be equipped to share the gospel message and win the lost for Jesus Christ. I believe many people who propagate the deception that somehow women or a specific race are inferior is demonic and only causes division in the Body of Christ.

In ancient cultures women and children were treated as and thought to be property of the husband in the household. This is not the case in the New Testament, as Jesus treats women in high regard, with respect and he offers them the same forgiveness and mercy that he would offer any man because we are all His children. We witness Jesus’ forgiveness and fair treatment of all, in John chapter 4:7 & 4:28 with a woman at the well; as she is caught in the act of adultery and Jesus offer forgiveness (John 8:3-11) and also with Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2). Both of

these women are engaged in sinful conduct and were considered the outcasts of society, yet Jesus loved them! What a friend we have in Jesus!

In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul the Apostle states, *Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some (in the Strong's Concordance # 3588- this denotes feminine as well as masculine noun) to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, NKJV*

I believe this verse is one of many that give women authority to minister as the Holy Spirit needs and to all that seek Jesus as Messiah.

It is clear in scripture that God used and still uses men, women and sometimes children to accomplish His mission and agenda, not ours.

References

- Paul A. Norman. (November 2000). *The "Palm of Deborah"* [Brochure]. Avondale, Auckland, New Zealand: Author.
- John L Kachleman. (Ed.). (1999). *Personalities of the Old Testament*. (Available from www.churchofchrist.net, http://www.churchofchrist.net/authors/John_L_Kachelman_jr/people_ot_deborah.htm)
- Webster illustrated contemporary dictionary. (1988). prophet/prophetess. In *New Standard Encyclopedia dictionary* (1st ed., Vol. 0, p. 583). Chicago: J.G. Ferguson Publishing Company.
- Webster illustrated contemporary dictionary. (1988). prophet/prophetess. In *New Standard Encyclopedia dictionary* (1st ed., Vol. 0, p. 583). Chicago: J.G. Ferguson Publishing Company.
- International Bible Society. (1996). *The Journey NIV Study Bible* (1st ed., Vol. 1). Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA: Zondervan Publishing House. (Original work published 1996)
- Charles R. Swindoll. (1998). *Moses, A man of Selfless Dedication* (1st ed., Vol. 1). Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing. (Original work published 1978) (International Bible Society, 1996)

Scripture References:

Ex 15:20 Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing NIV

2 Kings 22:14 Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District. NIV

Judge 4:4 Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. NIV

Gen 20:7 Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die." NIV

Ex 7:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet. 2 You are to say everything I command you, and your brother Aaron is to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his country. NIV

Num 12:6-7 he said, "Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions; I speak to him in dreams. 7 But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in my entire house. NIV

Amos 7:12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Get out, you seer ! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. NIV

Gen 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, "You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman NIV

Judges 4:1 When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. 2 So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. 3 And the children of

Israel cried out to the LORD; for Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly oppressed the children of Israel. 4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. 5 And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. 6 Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the LORD God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; 7 and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand'?"

8 And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!" 9 So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.

11 Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh. 12 And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. 13 So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon. 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the LORD has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. 15 And the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot.

16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left. 17 However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; for there was peace between Jabin king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. 18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear." And when he had turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket. 19 Then he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him. 20 And he said to her, "Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and inquires of you, and says, 'Is there any man here?' you shall say, 'No.'" 21 Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. 22 And then, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, "Come, I will show you the man whom you seek." And when he went into her tent, there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple. 23 So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the children of Israel. 24 And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of Canaan.

Judges 5:1 The Song of Deborah Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying: 2 "When leaders lead in Israel, When the people willingly offer themselves, Bless the LORD! 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. 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; 5 The mountains gushed before the LORD, This Sinai, before the LORD God of Israel. 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. 7 Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel,Until I, Deborah, arose,Arose a mother in Israel. 8 They chose new gods;Then there was war in the gates;Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel. 9 My heart is with the rulers of IsraelWho offered themselves willingly with the people.Bless the LORD!

10 "Speak, you who ride on white donkeys,Who sit in judges' attire,And who walk along the road. 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. 12 "Awake, awake, Deborah!Awake, awake, sing a song!Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away,O son of Abinoam! 13 "Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles;The LORD came down for me against the mighty. 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. 15 And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah;As Issachar, so was BarakSent into the valley under his command; Among the divisions of ReubenThere were great resolves of heart. 16 Why did you sit among the sheepfolds,To hear the pipings for the flocks?The divisions of Reuben have great searchings of heart. 17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan,And why did Dan remain on ships? Asher continued at the seashore,And stayed by his inlets. 18 Zebulun is a people who jeopardized their lives to the point of death,Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield. 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. 20 They fought from the heavens;The stars from their courses fought against Sisera. 21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away,That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.O my soul, march on in strength! 22 Then the horses' hooves pounded,The galloping, galloping of his steeds. 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.' 24 "Most blessed among women is Jael,The wife of Heber the Kenite;Blessed is she among women in tents. 25 He asked for water, she gave milk;She brought out cream in a lordly bowl. 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. 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. 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?' 29 Her wisest ladies answered her,Yes, she answered herself, 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?' 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."So the land had rest for forty years. NKJV

Ps 33:10-12 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. 11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations. 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance. NKJV

1 Cor 15:33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." NIV

Mark 16:15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.NIV

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. NIV

2 Tim 1:5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also NIV

Titus 2:3 Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. NIV

Eph 5:22-32 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. NIV

Acts 2:18-21 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' NIV

Rev 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. NIV

John 4:77 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" 8(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) NIV

John 4:28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" 30 They came out of the town and made their way toward him. NIV

John 8: 3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." NIV

Luke 8: 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; NIV