

The complaining started as soon as God delivered them from slavery. As soon as they were freed, as soon as they made it across the Red Sea and no longer had the Egyptian army chasing them, they started complaining.

First they complained they didn't have enough water, so God called water out of a rock and the Hebrews were no longer thirsty. There's not enough food they complained, so God sent manna, which literally means, "what is it?", that covered the ground like dew each morning and was something like bread and they ate and they were filled. And then the same people whom God had miraculously provided water from rock and bread from the sky complained that at least when they were Egyptian slaves they had meat to eat, so this freedom—well, God yet sent them poultry—quail in the desert.

You may remember, this wasn't the end of their shenanigans. They fell away from God again and again. There were idols, golden calves, then came the tablets, the commandments, and more complaining. Elders and military leaders were installed to lead the unruly, but the patterns remained.

Not much changed even after God delivered them into the promised land. However, God tried a new form of administration. Now, judges would provide leadership.

"The events in each Judges' story follow a similar cyclical pattern..."

- Israel sins and worships other gods while living in Canaan.
- God becomes angry and allows enemies to attack Israel.
- The Israelites cry out in pain because of the attack, and God has pity on them.
- God raises up a judge who delivers Israel and returns the people to proper worship of Israel's God for a time.
- When the judge dies, the Israelites return to their old ways. The cycle begins all over again. (Olson, Dennis. [workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-33/commentary-on-judges-41-7-4](http://workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-33/commentary-on-judges-41-7-4))

It's in the midst of this that we land in with our reading, during the tenure of Deborah as judge. However, she was not just a judge, she was also a prophet, speaking for God and communicating God's words to the people among her. This

meant she was the leader of the nation, the spokesperson for God, the deliberative counselor over all conflicts within, and a military advisor.

After the previous judge, Ehud, had died, the Israelites once again strayed from God. Therefore, God sold them to King Jabin in Canaan and Sisera was his military general.

I couldn't let this story go untold because this is the only time in our three year lectionary that we get a passage from the book of Judges, so this is my opportunity to share this story. However, there's another reason I need to speak about the judgeship of Deborah.

50 years ago a barrier was broken. And in the midst of the upheaval of 2020, I imagine this anniversary has not been celebrated at all and we are coming to the end of both the church year and our secular calendar.

On **November 22, 1970**, Elizabeth Alvina Platz became the first woman ordained by the Lutheran Church in America, and as such was the first woman ordained by any Lutheran denomination in America. The first woman ordained by the American Lutheran Church, Barbara Andrews, was ordained in **December 1970**.

Thus, we have been blessed by the inclusion of women on the pastoral rosters of the Lutheran Church for 50 years next Sunday. Platz and Andrews were hardly the first women leaders of Lutherans in America, just as Deborah was hardly the first woman leader among the Hebrews, but she was the first biblically named woman leader to hold her role irrespective of any relationship to a man.

We give thanks for the leadership of women who share God's Word among us through prophecy, teaching, counsel, and ministry. Give us courage to raise women and men of faith to lead us closer to you in every age. Amen.