

In our last lesson, we talked about how the land was divided among the Israelites. Joshua spoke to the Israelites before he died. Joshua was a very faithful man. He was a good example for the Israelites.

Our lesson this week takes us into the book of Judges. Israel had judges to lead them for about 350 years. The books of Judges, Ruth and the first seven chapters of 1 Samuel tells us about the time of the judges.

Joshua had encouraged the children of Israel to serve only God. Joshua warned them about the Canaanites who were left in the land. The Canaanites worshipped idols.

After Joshua died, the Israelites wanted to know who would be first to fight against the Canaanites. The Lord said that Judah would be first. (Judges 1:2) Judah asked Simeon to go with him and help him fight for his territory. Judah promised Simeon that he would go with him.

Some of the Israelites were living among the Canaanites. They were marrying the Canaanites. The Canaanites did not serve God. They worshipped idols, or false gods. The Israelites cried out to the Lord. The Lord sent judges to help them. In the book of Judges, we read about 13 judges sent by God.

As long as the Israelites had a judge to guide them, they served the Lord. When that judge was gone, they would turn away from God and worship idols like the Canaanites.

The first judge was Othniel. (Judges 3:9) After Othniel died, the Israelites started to sin again. They cried out to the Lord again for help. The second judge was Ehud. (Judges 3:15) The third judge was Shamgar. (Judges 3:31) These judges helped the Israelites against the Canaanites.

The fourth judge of Israel was Deborah. (Judges 4:4) Although she was a woman, she was a good soldier in battle. Deborah was a prophetess. People went to her for advice. Deborah was chosen to help the Israelites against Jabin and Sisera. Jabin was the king of Canaan. Sisera was the commander of Jabin's army. (Judges 4:2)

Deborah sent for a man named Barak. She asked Barak to go to Mount Tabor with an army of 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphthali and Zebulun. Barak sent word to Deborah that he would help only if she went with him. Deborah promised to go with him into battle. Barak found 10,000 men for his army. He went to Mount Tabor with his army.

The scouts of Sisera brought him word that there was an army of Israelites at Mount Tabor. Sisera took his chariot and went with his army to Mount Tabor. When Sisera saw that he was losing the battle, he jumped out of his chariot and ran away.

Sisera stopped at the tent of a man named Heber. Sisera knew this was not a tent of an Israelite. Heber's wife, Jael, was at the tent alone. Sisera asked for something to drink and eat. (Judges 4:19) Sisera wanted to rest and asked Jael to stand at the door of the tent and tell him if anyone came. When Sisera fell asleep, Jael killed him. Barak came to the tent where Jael lived. Jael went out to meet him and told him that she had killed the commander of the Canaanite army.

After the battle, Deborah wrote a song to tell the story of what all had happened. Deborah and Barak sang the song to celebrate their victory.

When the Israelites did wrong, God punished them. But God never left them. When the Israelites had a judge to lead them, they were good. When the leader was gone, they allowed the Canaanites to influence them to do wrong. But God was with them and helped them to defeat the Canaanites.

This is a good lesson for us. When we choose friends that serve God, that helps us in our service to God. When our friends love God, it helps us to remember how much we love God.