

READING PLAN HANDOUT WEEK 3 (PREP FOR WEEK 4)  
The Epic of Eden: Deborah, Meet Deborah!

**Word from the Author:** Over and over, when Israel found themselves decidedly off course from their God-ordained destiny, they cried out for help and God sent a Spirit-empowered leader who helped them face their opponents, win back their territory, and right their walk. There is a lot to recognize in that vascillating pattern even for us today. Just as Israel needed leaders to right their course, so, too, the church needs the same, leaders who will remind us of the central purpose of our own calling, the Great Commission. In the arc of Israel's story, this week we meet Deborah, Israel's leader for their journey back. She is not wonder woman. She's simply a God-appointed leader with humility, integrity, and courage; an unlikely hero, actually, without special qualifications who was called and, simply, said "yes".

**Day #1:** Before we go too far into our study, we need to gain an understanding of what is meant by the term "Judge". Unlike our modern thinking, an ancient Israeli judge was much more than a black-robed adjudicator. In the tribal non-monarchical culture of Israel, the God-appointed judges were central rallying figures, literally chosen to guide Israel's people through tempestuous times with rulings, yes, but specifically toward peace (shalom). First **Read Deuteronomy 17:8-13** for a look at the obedience Israel was called to observe (on pain of death) toward its Judges. Next **Read Judges 3:11, Judges 3:30, Judges 5:31** and **Judges 8:28** (all simple single verses) and take to heart the common phrase that appears in each verse.

**Day #2:** Another important term we visit this week is "Prophet". Why are we talking about prophets? Well, **Read Judges 4:4**. Not only was Deborah Israel's only recorded female judge, she was also a prophet. For a quick reminder of some key attributes of a prophet, **Read Deuteronomy 18:15-18** and consider who raises up the prophet, who the prophet represents and what words the prophet is supposed to speak. Also be reminded the responsibility of the people regarding the prophet. In the days of the judges, prior to the monarchy, the judges were responsible to lead the people both militarily and spiritually. As both a judge and prophet, Deborah's influence was powerfully significant.

**Day #3:** We're looking at the memorable Judge and leader Gideon today. See the map on the reverse to pinpoint Gideon's locale. **Read Judges 6:1-10** to set the stage for the rise of Gideon. Now **Read Judges 6:11-16** as Gideon is chosen a leader of Israel. While he is skeptical of his ability, God is not only undaunted, but consoles Gideon twice by virtue of His presence with him. Finally, **Read Judges 6:17-40**. Yes, it's a bunch of verses, but the narrative is so very relatable and cinematic. What are your take away's from these scenes with Gideon and God? What does it tell you about God's nature? Does this have any application to your own relationship with Yahweh?

