

READING PLAN HANDOUT WEEK 4 (PREP FOR WEEK 5)  
The Epic of Eden: Deborah, “Deborah’s Crisis in the Valley”

**Word from the Author:** Before our study is done, I’m going to talk about “stories that matter”. The great narratives of the Old Testament have been preserved for us for a reason. Rehearsing these stories to each other reminds us of who we are. It reminds us of who our God is. “Stories that matter” strengthen us. When I am facing a great challenge, an impossible battle, a diagnosis that has brought me to my knees, a truly hopeless scenario, the only thing that gets me back on my feet is reminding myself who I serve. If the God I serve is the God of the exodus, the conquest, and the resurrection, then there is real hope, real strength, a real reason to get back in the game.

**Day #1:** Deborah’s story is one of the great stories that matter. Every great story needs a great plotline, and great plotlines are created by conflict. On the map (see over), locate Hazor in the north. Find Deborah. Find Kedesh. Now **Read Judges 4:1-6a** and meet some of the cast of characters in this story that matters. Why did the Israelites cry out? The Israelites were being enslaved as forced laborers by Jabin, king of Canaan. Does this scenario sound familiar? (**See Exodus 1:11-14** for a hint to the answer). The Exodus narrative is another story that matters to Israel and, no doubt, informs their actions in THIS story.

**Day #2: Read Judges 4:2-3 (again)** and take a mental inventory of Sisera’s assets for the approaching conflict. **Read Judges 5:7-8** for a glancing inventory of Israel’s assets. Consider the wide discrepancy between the physical assets and skills of the two opponents. Why are we looking at this? Because it has a direct application to us. For the balance of this week’s meditation and preparation for our study, **Read Ephesians 6:10-17**. Try not to breeze through the text because it is familiar. Weigh each and every asset, asking yourself these fundamental questions; “Am I in a (spiritual) battle?”, “Do I have access to these weapons”, “What are the physical assets of my enemy in this conflict?”, “Who empowers my weapons and do they stand a chance against the adversary?” Over the next several days, let the Holy Spirit give you a sense of your role and His needs in our modern-day battle.

**Day #3: Read Judges 3:31 and Judges 5:6-7.** You’ve just read the only mentions of the Israeli Judge Shamgar. Find his territory on the map (see over). As the Green Giant used to say, “Look up. Waaaay up” to see it. FYI, an “oxgoad” is likely a cattle prod made of wood with a metal tip or spur on the end. Following the stories of Israel’s campaigns reminds us that the Israelites did not have a professional army, just as they did not have professional weapons. Consequently, the tribal chieftains made use of what experts call “irregular warfare”. They avoided large-scale combat and focused on small stealthy, hit-and-run engagements. The volunteer soldiers often carried homemade weapons. Recall our previous reading about the judge Ehud, who fashioned himself a short double-edged sword. We’ll see other examples of this in the weeks to come (the defeat of the Midianites with trumpets (ram’s horns), clay jars, and torches; and the battles of Samson who used his bare hands and killed a thousand men with a donkey’s jawbone). Have a look again at **Ephesians 6:10-17** and consider your own irregular weapons.

