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The Lord Delivers

Watch the video Ep. 6 The Holy Land by John A. Beck prior to this study.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHl0HaMGga0&list=PLPOUA7GLxXIGkhikntfiT4ida1IKbSNNB&index=7&t=0s>

Opening:

1. Water. Every farmer knows that it is the critical factor to agricultural production. You can have the best soil, the best seed, good fertility and plenty of sunshine, but without water there can be no crop.
2. Ancient farmers were no less aware of this than modern farmers.
3. As Israel came into the promised land under the leadership of Joshua they were promised a land flowing with milk and honey. This is another way of saying that they were going to be given a land that was agriculturally very productive.
4. This kind of production is clearly evidenced in the Jezreel Valley.
5. But during Deborah's day it was dominated by the Canaanites.

Into the Text: Reading of Judges 1:1-4

1. Remember the cycle of the period of the Judges. Israel would be faithful to the Lord for a while and then fall under the influence of the idol worshipers of the land. Judges 2:11 says, "They forsook the Lord and served the Baals."

Baal was the Canaanite deity who controlled rain and fertility. The use of the plural in Judges 2:11 may be the result of Baals being associated with a particular locality. Sometimes the name Baal is qualified by a place-name. Ex. Baal-peor, Baal-gad, Baal-hermon. Some statuettes of Baal show him brandishing a thunderbolt, recognizing him as the weather god.



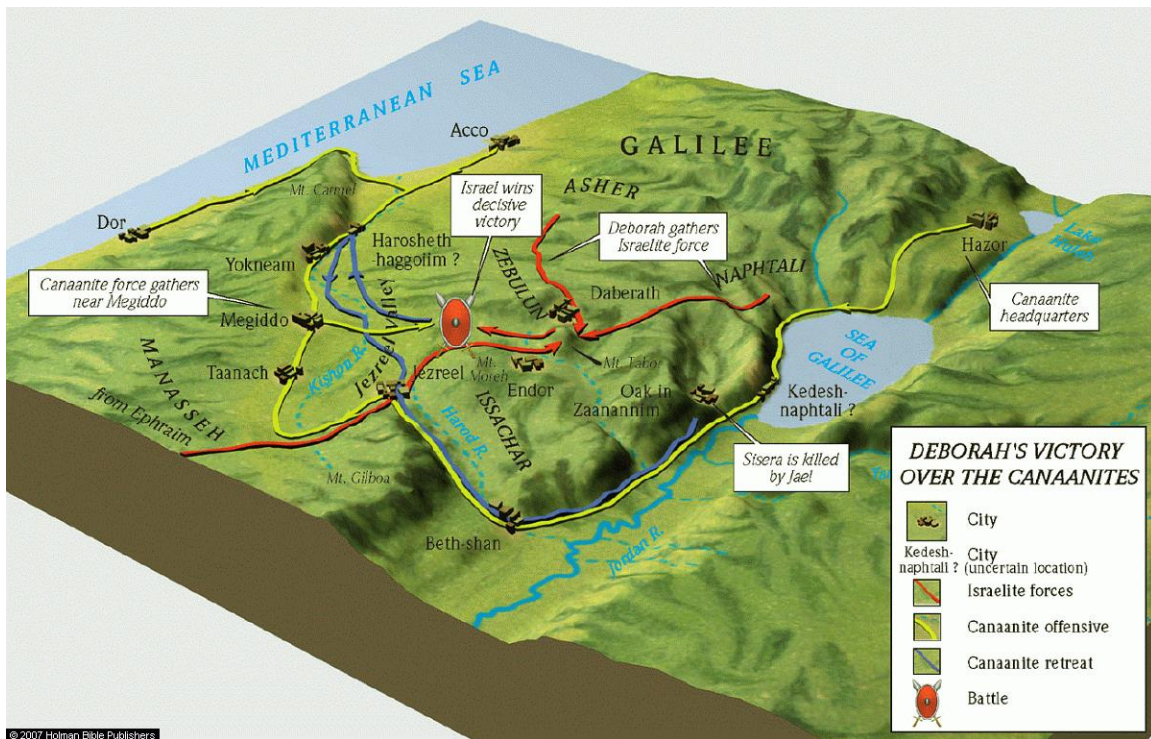
Photo from the
Israel Museum

by W. Galloway

Local Baals were believed to control fertility in agriculture, beasts and mankind. It was especially important to have their favor in a place like Canaan where there are few natural streams or springs and uncertain rainfall. Baal worshipers practiced ritual prostitution (Judges 2:17; Jer. 7:9; Amos 2:7) and child-sacrifice (Jer. 19:5).

2. During Deborah's day Israel was oppressed by the Canaanite king, Jabin, who reigned at Hazor. Joshua had formerly destroyed Hazor (Josh. 11:10-13) but now it is back under the control of the Canaanites. Jabin dominated Israel for 20 years (Judges 4:1-3) with his 900 iron chariots.

3. The Lord raised up Deborah, a prophetess and judge in Israel. She sent and called Barak to lead the Lord's army against the Canaanites. "Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun," God commanded. "I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon and I will give him into your hand." Barak hesitated. Unless Deborah went with him he would not go. Deborah agreed to go but God would give the honor of victory to a woman. Consult the map to see the geographical layout of the conflict.



4. Read what Sisera did and how the Lord routed Sisera and his iron chariots in Judges 4:12-16. Sisera fled away on foot from the battle and was slain by Jael, Heber's wife, when she drove a tent peg through his temple while he slept (Judges 4:17-22). "So God subdued on that day Jabin the king of Canaan before the sons of Israel" (Judges 4:23).

5. One of the key elements of the story is found in Deborah and Barak's song recorded in Judges 5, in a very brief mention. Before we get to that, however, recall that Baal was the Canaanite god of weather, rain and therefore agricultural fertility.

Read Judges 5:19-21.

Tammi J. Schneider in her book: JUDGES, Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry says,

"The poem provides the reason for Israel's victory; the stars fought from heaven, which caused a huge torrent in the Kishon. The Kishon is a wadi, a river bed which, since Israel is a desert, often flash floods in the winter months and dries out during the summer. In other words a massive rain storm suddenly sent water rushing through the valley rendering the feared chariots useless" (p. 91).

Now who is the God of weather? Remember how Elijah prayed and it did not rain for three years and six months (1 Kings 17-18; James 5:17-18)? What god was it that he was proving did not have power over the rain? Although Elijah lived many years after Deborah the people of Israel were still having problems with worshiping Baal in this same region. Ahab and Jezebel lived in the city of Jezreel overlooking the Valley of Jezreel.

5. It is the Lord God who gives water, agricultural production and life. It is He who delivers from death and oppression. All over the world today people are celebrating the resurrection and new life. Let it be understood that it is only the Lord God who delivers from death by giving life. It is only by means of what He has done that we can live. Death is the consequence of sin (Rom. 6:23) but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23b). Romans 6 tells us that those who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death and are then raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4). Paul's argument in this text? Since you have been baptized you cannot let sin reign in your mortal body. Instead you must consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:11-12).

Application:

1. I find it interesting that God often uses water to destroy and to give life. Water resulted in death to Sisera and the Canaanites and yet it brought victory to Deborah and Barak. In the flood it destroyed the wicked, but preserved Noah (1 Pet. 3:20-21). It destroyed the Egyptians at the Red Sea and granted life to Israel (1 Cor. 10:1-

4). Water stands between us and life and death. Peter wrote reminding us of how God brought Noah safely through the water. He said, "Corresponding to that, baptism now save you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). Do you believe that God delivers from death? Do you believe that He raises from the dead? Do you believe He raises people up with Christ from the watery grave of baptism (Col. 2:12)?

2. Why is it so important that we place our trust in this one God who raises the dead? What is it that He has done for us in Christ (Rom. 5:6, 8-10)?

3. What in your life demonstrates that you believe that God is your deliverer? What does His deliverance mean to you?