

בשלה

Judges, chapter 4, verse 4 to chapter 5, verse 31

Introduction

Connection of sidra and haftarah:

Both sidra and haftarah bring us tales of confrontation with an enemy of Israel, and when victory is won the leaders celebrate the occasion with song. But while the *shirah* of Moses is a paean to God alone, Deborah sings of both God and of her people, thereby providing us with insight into the life and relationships of the tribes some hundred years later.

The setting:

The turbulent history of Israel between the death of Joshua and the time of the prophet Samuel is covered by the book of Judges. It describes the long years during which the tribes struggled with Canaanites and Philistines and then sank roots into the land assigned to them. They considered themselves partners in a loose confederation, bound together by historical memory and a common religious cult. Especially in times of external and internal crises (which occurred frequently), they elected a military-judicial head, called judge, to ward off the enemy and to foster their common interests. Deborah was such a leader, one of the five women whom the Tanach calls “prophet.” In the annual cycle of haftarot, this is the longest and—because of its many historical allusions—one of the most challenging.

For more on the book of Judges, see our *General Introduction*.

Content of the haftarah:

1. Introducing Deborah (4:4-5)
2. The battle with Sisera, general of King Jabin of Hazor:
 - Preparation for the battle with Sisera (4:6-8)
 - Decisive victory over the Canaanites (4:9-16)
 - The death of Sisera at the hand of Jael (4:17-22)
 - Postscript to the battle (4:23-24)
3. The Song of Deborah
 - Hymn to the God of Israel (5:1-11)
 - Assessment of the contribution of the tribes (5:12-23)
 - In praise of Jael (5:24-30)
 - Postscript (5:31)