
Judges 5

Judges 5:1–31

The Song of Deborah and Barak

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Introduction: Judges 5 is a repeat of Judges 4, except from Deborah's poetic point of view. You will recall that in the last chapter, my educated guess is that Deborah wrote most of it, although it is a tough call whether the final version was a result of exceptional editing on the part of someone like Samuel, or whether she wrote the entire chapter, inserting the standard language at the beginning. You will recall that the transition from the introduction to her experience was pretty much seamless. What we found in the book of Genesis were many generations of men who were examined, some closely, some just by family line. Throughout this book, we found the similar phrasing, [And these are the generations of...](#) Whether this was the work of an editor, who pieced this information together at a later date, or whether believers inspired by God the Holy Spirit, wrote these words in order to hold the book together, is a matter of debate (and, of course, there are other opinions).

Similarly, we have a pattern in this book. Israel sins, is placed under outside control; calls out to God, God hears, God sends them a deliverer, the deliverer saves them, the country has rest; and they fall into apostasy again. As we have discussed before, the language is very similar throughout—although not precisely so. We have the two most likely options: either a later editor, e.g., Samuel—pieced all of this together later, and included this language; or, believers, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, wrote these words—even following the pattern of what came before.

This chapter is somewhat of a parenthesis or an interlude to this pattern. However, there are things in this chapter which help to explain God's view of what happened in the previous chapter. Recall, one of the great debates of the previous chapter is Jael—is she this lying, deceptive bitch who just happened to do God's will; or is she a woman to be honored throughout history for her deeds?

In this chapter, Deborah and Barak sing, and it is reasonable to suppose that she wrote the song. Barak was fairly good at taking orders and he did have the ability to lead a large group of Israelites (which is no small feat); however, few of them probably realized that it was Deborah who was running the show. The writer of this song is quite clear—in v. 7, we have the use of the first person in reference to Deborah, so Deborah wrote this song.

There are several songs and psalms found within the narrative portions of Scripture listed below:

Psalms and Songs Scattered Throughout Scripture

Scripture	Author	Description
Ex. 15:1–19	Moses	God is victorious over Egypt and drowns the Egyptian army in the sea; the peoples of Canaan become fearful as the Jews draw near to them.
Ex. 15:21	Miriam	Miriam praises God for His destruction of the Egyptian army.
Deut. 32	Moses	God is a great and just God; Israel is unfaithful and God disciplines Israel; God's compassion for a humbled Israel.
Deut. 33	Moses	Moses blesses the 12 tribes of Israel and then Israel as a whole.
Judges 5	Deborah	The victory of Israel over Canaan is celebrated in this song.
1Sam. 2:1–11	Hannah	Hannah praises God. The occasion is the birth of her son Samuel, when she believed herself to be barren.
2Sam. 22	David	This psalm celebrates God delivering David from his enemies and from Saul. God delivers and God avenges.
2Sam. 23:1–7	David	David's last song; God's covenant with Israel and with David.
Luke 1:46–55	Mary	God's mercy in His provision of a Son through Mary.

Given that all of these psalms and songs express divine viewpoint, I think it would be reasonable to assume that what we find here is not simply a song which Deborah felt like she had to write, but a song which relates God's viewpoint to us as well.

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Now, Judges 5 is poetic, making it different all of the rest of the book of the Judges. Because it is poetic, we have to be careful about being too literal, and, at the same time, keep from being too *out there*. Let me give you a good explanation is to limitations. The analogy of Moses and Joshua and leading the children of Israel into the land and Jesus Christ being able to do what the Law cannot do, is a marvelous analogy. The events of the lives of Moses and Joshua are historical events; however, we have seen in many instances, God's plan put into motion great historical events which shadowed His salvation which was to come (e.g., Abraham and the sacrificial offering of his son Isaac). However, to take the book of Joshua and start speaking about how the Israelites walking through the Jordan was a kind of baptism foretelling of the water baptism to come—that's weird. People who celebrate baptism as some great central point of Christian doctrine are confused and often very legalistic, although they don't realize it (and, many times, not even saved). That an analogy could be drawn? Certainly, I will grant anyone that. That the point of the analogy is the importance of water baptism? No, that misses the point entirely. God did not have Joshua cross over the Jordan so that we would be forever reminded how important water baptism is. He and the people of Israel crossed over dry-shod; they were not immersed. We as believers are all baptized into the body of Christ, and that is a real baptism, not a symbolic baptism, and there is no water involved. If we want to draw some analogies, then what we should compare are things which are important, like being baptized into Christ, rather than things which are divisive, symbolic and non-essential, like water baptism. Although this is not the time nor the place for it, at some time we will need to examine the doctrine of baptisms.

One of the negatives (to some people) about poetry, is that it will require a fully analysis of the original language than simple narrative would. There will be dozens of words which are found in this chapter and this chapter alone. At times, we can find some cognates in order to better determine the meaning; however, there are times we will have to make reasonable guesses (of course, based upon the work of Gesenius and BDB).

Once we have a reasonable translation, then we have to determine *just what the heck does Deborah mean by that*. Even though this will be tough sledding at times, particularly for those of you who grimace when we get into the Hebrew, let me reassure you that by the time we are done, you will understand almost every detail of this chapter. Furthermore, you will have a full, graphic description of what transpired when Sisera was killed.

There is also the interesting phenomenon of repetition in this chapter. That is, certain phrases will be repeated once or twice; or Deborah will make a slight change here or there, and repeat some words—words found nowhere else but in this chapter of Judges. These various eccentricities of the language here tell us a number of things: the author of the book of Judges did not write this psalm; it is possible that the person who wrote this psalm had a very regionalized language—that is, Deborah spoke in a slightly different fashion than most of the writers of Scripture. Finally, the language of this psalm gives great credence to the idea that this was written by a different author; and it also gives us great insight as to Jewish poetry.

The Bible is a hell of a long book. Sometimes, when reading through in some translation, done by the same handful of men, we don't really notice a difference in style; however, we have a marked difference in style and vocabulary in this chapter which just jumps out at you in the Hebrew. One of the nice things about the Bible is, we do not find a repetitive style of writing throughout, but there are a variety of styles and approaches, which makes reading Scripture and exegeting it more entertaining. Had one man or a handful of men written the Bible, we would find it to be a very boring book indeed.

One of my own personal weaknesses as a teacher is that I have a tendency toward sarcasm. When I come across poetry like this, I feel somewhat vindicated, however. There are places in this chapter where Deborah will be extremely sarcastic and demeaning toward those tribes who did not participate in the war against the Canaanites. Now, there are a lot of things which are completely missed by the casual reader, and even by the careful exegete in this chapter. Poetry is difficult for anyone. When it comes to verses 15–16, Deborah is being biting sarcastic. However, I defy you to find commentary one which catches this and points it out.

Now, what might be important to bear in mind is that this is an epic poem which is not set in any sort of chronological order. Vv. 2–3 are somewhat of an introduction; vv. 4–5 looks back to God's power as demonstrated on Mount Sinai; and vv. 6–11 give an overview of the entire campaign against Canaan. In this overview, we go from the life that Israel was forced to lead while under the thumb of the Canaanites (they were both disarmed and were subject to restricted movement). Although we do not have a clear proclamation of victory, Deborah, the author, praises those who volunteered to fight and indicates in vv. 10–11 that a great debt is owed those who fought for the freedom of Israel. Then, in vv. 13–18, Deborah speaks of those who participated and those who did not participate in the war against the Canaanites (this would really be subsequent to the battle against Sisera). Then she goes back in time and speaks specifically of the battle against Sisera, the assassination of Sisera, and the pining away of Sisera's mother for him (vv. 19–30). In other words, there is very little concept of chronology in this epic poem.

Let me add in an outline here from another exegete:

Matthew Henry's Outline of Judges 5

I. It begins with praise to God (Judges 5:2–3).

Matthew Henry's Outline of Judges 5

- II. The substance of this song transmits the memory of this great achievement.
1. Comparing God's appearances for them on this occasion with his appearances to them on Mount Sinai (Judges 5:4–5).
 2. Magnifying their deliverance from the consideration of the calamitous condition they had been in (Judges 5:6–8).
 3. Calling those to join in praise that shared in the benefits of the success (Judges 5:9–13).
 4. Reflecting honour upon those tribes that were forward and active in that war, and disgrace on those that declined the service (Judges 5:14–19, Judges 5:23).
 5. Taking notice how God himself fought for them (Judges 5:20–22).
 6. Celebrating particularly the honour of Jael, that slew Sisera, on which head the song is very large (Judges 5:24–30).
- III. It concludes with a prayer to God (Judges 5:31).¹

It is kind of interesting how outlines can vary so much.

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[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Keil and Delitzsch essentially set up somewhat of an outline, which I will duplicate with an appropriate change of form:

Keil and Delitzsch's Outline of Judges 5

- I. Introduction: a general summons to praise the Lord for the courage with which the people rose up to right against their foes (vv. 1–2)
- II. Deborah the singer dilates in the first section (vv. 3–12)
- A. Glorious times when Israel was exalted to be the nation of the Lord (vv. 3–5)
 - B. The disgraceful decline of the nation in the more recent times (vv. 6–8)
 - C. The joyful turn of affairs which followed her appearance (vv. 9–11)
- III. A lively picture of conflict and victory (vv. 12–21)
- A. A fresh summons to rejoice in their victory (v. 12)
 - B. The mighty gathering of the brave to battle (vv. 13–15a)
 - C. The cowardice of those who stayed away from the battle and the bravery with which the braver warriors risked their lives in the battle (vv. 15b–18)
 - D. The successful result of the conflict (vv. 19–21)
- IV. An account of the glorious issue of the battle and the victory (vv. 22–31)
- A. A brief notice of the flight and pursuit of the foe (vv. 22–24)
 - B. A commemoration of the slaying of Sisera by Jael (vv. 24–27)
 - C. A scornful description of the disappointment of Sisera's mother, who was counting upon a large arrival of booty² (vv. 28–30).
 - D. This song then closes with the hope, founded upon this victory, that all the enemies of the Lord might perish, and Israel increase in strength (v. 31).³

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Introduction/Recipients of Psalm

¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5 introduction.

² Not *that* kind of booty, you freak.

³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 223.

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

And so sang Deborah and Barak ben Abinoam in the day the that, to say: Judges 5:1

So Deborah and Barak ben Abinoam sang, in that day, saying:

So, in that day, Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam, sang:

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text
Septuagint

And so sang Deborah and Barak ben Abinoam in the day the that, to say: ...
And Debbora and Barac son of Abineem sang in that day, saying, ...

Significant differences: None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

After the battle was over that day, Deborah and Barak sang this song: ...

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™
HCSB

On that day Deborah and Barak, son of Abinoam, sang this song: ...
On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang: ...

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV
Young's Updated LT

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day: ...
And Deborah sings—also Barak son of Abinoam—on that day, saying:.

What is the gist of this verse? Deborah and Barak both sing the following song.

Judges 5:1			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shîyr (שִׁיר) [pronounced <i>sheer</i>]	<i>to sing</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7891 BDB #1010
D ^e bôwrâh (דְּבוֹרָה) [pronounced <i>d^{eb}-voh-RAW</i>],	<i>bee; transliterated Deborah</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1683 BDB #184
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
Bârâq (בָּרַק) [pronounced <i>baw-RAWK</i>]	<i>lightening, lightening flash; transliterated Barak</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #1301 BDB #140

Judges 5:1

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
ʾĀbīynôʿam (אָבִינֹעַם) [pronounced <i>u^b-vee-noh-ḠAHM</i>]	<i>my father is a delight; father of pleasantness; transliterated Abinoam</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #42 BDB #4
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i>]	<i>day; time; today (with a definite article)</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
hûwʾ (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>that, this</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun (with the definite article)	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
The bēyth preposition, yôwm and hûw (with definite articles) mean <i>in that day, on that day, in [on] the same day</i> .			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l^e</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #559 BDB #55

Translation: [So Deborah and Barak ben Abinoam sang, in that day, saying: ...](#) The first verb is the Qal imperfect of *shîyr* (שָׁיַר) [pronounced *sheer*], which means *to sing*. We first encountered this verb when Moses and the sons of Israel sang a victory song to Jehovah in Ex. 15:1. We will find it many times throughout the psalms (e.g., Psalm 7:title 13:6 33:3 21:13), as well as scattered throughout the Old Testament (1Sam. 18:6 1Chron. 16:9 Eccles. 2:8 Isa. 5:1). We'll cover this in greater detail when we get to Psalm 144 (to be studied while we are in 1Sam. 18).

First thing, *in that day* does not refer to the day of the battle between Barak and Sisera. Don't forget that in between that battle and this verse came Judges 4:31, which read: [And the hand of the sons of Israel pressed heavier and heavier on Jabin, king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin, the king of Canaan.](#) In other words, the last battle was not between Barak and Sisera, but the war continued between Jabin and Israel, with Israel as the eventual victor. Furthermore, when the war between Jabin and Israel continued, many of the tribes of Israel began to join in. The phrase *in that day* does not refer to a particular day (although it did occur on a particular day), but at a particular period of time when victory over Jabin and the Canaanites had been achieved. Then a song of celebration was in order. We are not given any time frame over which this took place. It could have been a relatively short period of time, lasting less than a year following the battle between Barak and Sisera.

In the Bible, the word *day* does not always refer to a 24 hour period of time. In the Gen. 1, there, *one day* referred to a 24 hour period of time (Gen. 1:5, 7). However, the phrase, *The Day of the Lord* refers to the 7 years of the tribulation and the millennium, which a total of 1007 years (Isa. 2:12 13:6 Joel 2:1). The *day of salvation* refers to the period of time during which we are saved, which is instantaneous (2Cor. 6:2). In other words, a day can be longer or shorter than 24 hours, or it can be precisely 24 hours. For more detail, refer back to the **Doctrine of Days**—from Gen. 1:5. In this particular context, this song was written and sung either after victory had been secured against the Canaanites or when such victory had been assured (which could have been soon after the

defeat of Sisera). The participation of the other tribes indicates that this was written after the battle in Judges 4, but not immediately after. The emphasis on the defeat of Sisera in particular indicates that was the turning point in this struggle between Israel and the Canaanites.

Keil and Delitzsch: *The historical introduction...takes the place of a heading, and does not mean that the song of Deborah and Barak which follows was composed by them jointly; but simply that it was sung by them together, in commemoration of the victory [which they together affected]. The poetess or writer of the song, according to Judges 5:3, 7, 12, was Deborah.*⁴

**In a letting loose of those who let loose in
Israel;
in a free volunteering of people;
bless Y^ehowah.**

Judges
5:2

**When [there is] a cutting loose of those who
cut loose [or, when there is vengeance cut
loose by military types] in Israel;
when [there is] a free volunteering of the
people;
bless Y^ehowah.**

**During a time when those who vowed in Israel to avenge, when the people volunteered.
Blessed is Jehovah.**

And now I remember why I stopped exegeting the book of Job. It was a royal pain in the neck. Poetry in the Hebrew is much more difficult to work with than prose, and I suspect that in this chapter, you will see a lot of different translations as we attempt to zero in on what has actually been said.

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	O you of Israel, that have willingly offered your lives to danger, bless the Lord.
Masoretic Text	In a letting loose of those who let loose in Israel; in a free volunteering of people;
Peshitta	With requital has Israel been avenged; praise the LORD with a song for avenging Israel.
Septuagint	A revelation was made in Israel when the people were made willing: Praise ye the Lord.

Significant differences: The Hebrew is rather difficult, and I believe the translators of the LXX gave it their best guess. The Peshitta seems only barely similar here, and the Vulgate only slightly more so.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	We praise you, LORD! Our soldiers volunteered, ready to follow you.
NAB	Of chiefs who took the lead in Israel, of noble deeds by the people who bless the LORD.
NJB	That the warriors in Israel unbound their hair, that the people came forward with a will, bless Yahweh!
NWT	For letting the hair hang loose in Israel for war, For the people's volunteering, Bless Jehovah.
REB	For the leaders, the leaders in Israel, for the people who answered the call, bless the LORD. [or, in the alternative: 'For those who had flowing locks in Israel, for the people who answered the call, bless the LORD.']
NLT	"When Israel's leaders take charge, and the people gladly follow— bless the LORD!

⁴ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 223.

TEV Praise the LORD! The Israelites were determined to fight; the people gladly volunteered.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ Praise the LORD! Men in Israel vowed to fight, and people volunteered for service.
 HCSB When the leaders lead in Israel, when the people volunteer, praise the LORD.
 JPS (Tanakh) When [In many parts of this poem the meaning is uncertain] locks go untrimmed [Apparently an expression of dedication; compare Num. 6:5] in Israel, When people dedicate themselves— Bless the LORD!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Emphasized Bible For the leadership of leaders in Israel, For the volunteering of the people, Bless ye Yahweh!
 Edersheim For the loose flowing of the long hair, For the free dedication of the people, Praise ye Jehovah!
 LTHB For the loosing of locks of hair in Israel; for the willing offering of the people, bless Jehovah!
 MKJV Praise Jehovah for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.
 NASB That the leaders led in Israel, That the people volunteered, Bless the LORD!
 NKJV (alternate reading) When locks⁵ are loosed in Israel, When the people volunteer themselves, Bless the LORD!
 Owen's Translation That the leaders took the lead in Israel; that offered themselves willingly the people; bless Yahweh.
 NRSV "When locks are long in Israel, when the people offer themselves willingly—bless the LORD." [or, in the alternative: "When locks are long in Israel, you who offer yourselves willingly among the people, bless the LORD."]
 Robinson "Praise ye Jehovah; for the free are freed in Israel--the people have willingly offered themselves"
 Thieme When the strong showed themselves strong in Israel, when the people volunteered, [you] bless the Lord.
 WEB Because the leaders took the lead in Israel, because the people offered themselves willingly, be blessed, Yahweh!
 Young's Updated LT "For freeing freemen in Israel, For a people willingly offering themselves. Bless you Jehovah.

When you see this many translations, then you know that something is up; in this case, we have a number of difficulties with the translation of several words in this verse.

What is the gist of this verse? Because Israel is willing to fight, Jehovah is blessed.

⁵ This refers to *hair* and not the *lock* on a door.

Judges 5:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88qic
pâra ^c (פָּרַע) [pronounced paw-RAHÇ]	<i>to let go, to let loose, to let alone</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #6544 BDB #828
<p>This verb appears to have a plethora of meanings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>to let go of, to let loose of</i> in the sense of <i>to remove, to take off, to uncover</i>; 2) <i>to let go of, to unleash [vengeance]</i>; 3) <i>to let go of, to take [from oneself] [learning, counsel, doctrine]</i>; 4) <i>to let go of, to let loose [of someone]; to let the reins loose; to unbridle; to become lawless, unrestrained.</i> 			
<p>To be quite frank with you, I am not completely happy with this set of definitions which I have put together; however, I find it to be a superior handling of this verb than I find in Gesenius or in BDB.</p>			
p ^o râ ^o th (פְּרָאוֹת) [pronounced p ^o râw-ÇOATH]	<i>long-haired leaders; warriors [with shaved heads]; military types</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #6546 BDB #828
<p>The difficulty of this word is related to the difficulty of understanding the verb above (from which it is derived). We may be reasonably certain that this refers to <i>military types, leaders, warriors</i>; as <i>pharaoh</i> is derived from the same root verb. The word for <i>pharaoh</i> was probably the original word; but, since the Pharaoh of Egypt let the Israelites go, a verb was possibly constructed in the common vernacular, so that one might say <i>He pharaoh-ed me</i>; i.e., <i>he let me go</i>; or, <i>he pharaoh-ed my hair</i>; i.e., <i>he let go of [cut] my hair</i>. A vow might be taken by soldiers to not cut one's hair; or to begin with one's head shaved (as is done in our military); the word to represent these men who were military types would be p^orâ^oth, which had the connotation of the removing of one's hair for military service; and at the same time, infer that the rank of such of one was similar to the ranking of pharaoh.</p>			
<p>This is, to be sure, all conjecture; however, it is just as reasonable if not more so than anything which I have read in BDB or in Gesenius.</p>			
<p>The infinitive construct, when combined with the bêyth preposition, can often take on a temporal meaning and may be rendered <i>when [such and such happens]</i>. It can serve as a temporal marker that denotes an event which occurs simultaneously with the action of the main verb.</p>			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88qic
Yis ^o râ ^o êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: *When [there is] a cutting loose of those who cut loose [or, when there is vengeance cut loose by military types] in Israel;...* The verb here has four primary meanings, which must be determined according to the context: 1) *to let go of, to let loose of* in the sense of *to remove, to take off, to uncover*; 2) *to let go of, to unleash [vengeance]*; 3) *to let go of, to take [from oneself] [learning, counsel, doctrine]*; 4) *to let go of, to let loose [of someone]; to let the reins loose; to unbridle; to become lawless, unrestrained*. Given the context, only the second option makes any sense.

Following this word, we have the masculine⁶ plural of its noun cognate, and this word is found only here and in Deut. 32:42. Now, there is another cognate, the word for *locks* (as in locks of hair), found in Num. 6:5 Ezek. 44:20. One explanation found in BDB,⁷ was that there would be a vow taken by the soldiers, when in war, not to cut their hair. I prefer to think that the men involved were degenerate and one of the exterior signs of degeneracy was their long-hair (1Cor. 11:14). In the book of Judges, we are either dealing with men who have made a vow not to cut their hair until victory has been achieved, or with men who have cut all of their hair off (i.e., they let loose of their locks) as a sign of going to war. In my opinion, it is the latter. So, what I've got so far is: [In a letting loose of those who let loose in Israel...](#) The NRSV reads: "[When locks are long in Israel...](#)" The NJB reads: [That the warriors in Israel unbound their hair.](#) It is possible that we are dealing with something akin to the Nazarite vow here as well (a Nazarite was not to cut his hair).

Judges 5:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בֵּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88qic
nādab (נָדַב) [pronounced naw- DAHB ^v]	(without an object): <i>to volunteer [oneself], to be willing to, to offer oneself freely; (with an object) to willingly offer, to give generously [spontaneously, willingly]; to offer up</i>	Hithpael infinitive construct	Strong's #5068 BDB #621
The infinitive construct, when combined with the bēyth preposition, can often take on a temporal meaning and may be rendered <i>when [such and such happens]</i> . It can serve as a temporal marker that denotes an event which occurs simultaneously with the action of the main verb.			
ʿam (אָם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

Translation: [...when \[there is\] a free volunteering of the people;...](#) BDB gives several meanings of the verb here; among them *to incite, impel, volunteer, to offer free-will offerings*. Without a direct object, we could probably render this as *freely volunteer*. In other words, these men were not drafted; no one had to talk them into volunteering to fight the Canaanites. They appeared of their own volition on behalf of the entire nation Israel. The bēyth preposition and an infinitive construct together may be rendered as a temporal clause; i.e., the bēyth can be reasonably rendered *when*.

I was raised during a strong anti-war movement (during the Vietnam War) and during the time of the Jesus freaks, where Christianity was presented to some as a hip, counter-culture approach to life; like Jesus, a long-haired hippy who wandered around peacefully in sandals. We find this throughout the history of Christianity; Christianity is made palpable to the hoi polloi by incorporating some popular culture into the doctrine. This is how we got our Christmas and Easter traditions, as a matter of fact.

⁶ *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament* lists this as a feminine; Owen, Gesenius and BDB call it a masculine.

⁷ *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*; Hendrickson, ©1979, p. 828.

The Bible presents an entirely different viewpoint. What you cannot find in Scripture is an anti-war stance, or any of this hippie view of peace and love. Here, men are praised for going to war; those who do not volunteer are cursed (Judges 5:23). We find this again and again in the Old Testament. In the New, when Jesus spoke to a Roman centurion, He did not tell the man to “Lay down your weapons, and follow Me.” What Jesus did say was, “I have not found such a great faith in all Israel.” Over and over again, Paul and Peter had run-in’s with the Roman government; not one time do they cite civil disobedience as the Christian approach (except when it came to evangelizing and teaching God’s Word, and there, “we ought to obey God and not man”). Now, you may not like this, but it is divine viewpoint. This is the way God sees things, which is quite different from the way that we see things. I was brought up to admire Gandhi and his non-violent approach to removing the British from India; however, India fell into great lawlessness and bloodshed as a result of Gandhi’s actions. When I was raised, I only got half of the story. So, the point of view that we find in Scripture is 180° out of sync with the way I was brought up. I had to get over it.

Application: Today, as I write this (September 2006), we have the phenomenon of suicide bombers and radical Islamic fanatics. There are many in our culture who want to take the same approach: you reason with these men, and, when reasoning fails, you take some sort of economic sanctions against them, until they are so uncomfortable that they are won over to our western ways. This is pure, unadulterated foolishness! These men are our godless enemies. They seek to kill us in any way possible. They raise their children from the youngest age to aspire to kill us and to destroy freedom and democracy. Their hatred of us and of Jesus Christ is so deeply engrained in their souls that they would kill themselves if they knew that they could take with them dozen or more English speaking men, women or children. If they take out a military target, that is fine; but they are just as comfortable taking out non-military targets—in fact, more so. Non-military targets tend to have a lot less security attached to them. All of the western world is anathema to them. There is no approach that we can take to these kind of fanatics apart from force, that will work. We cannot reason with them; we cannot levy sanctions against them. A few years ago, in the middle of summer, a bee flew into my car with me. I stepped out, closed the door, and determined that, an exceptionally hot car is going to teach this bee not to fly into cars. These were my sanctions against this bee. A few hours later, when I stepped into the car, the bee stung me—immediately. Sanctions did not work against this bee.

Application: The culture and beliefs of Islamic fascists does not mean that we should round up Muslims wherever we can find them, and haul them off to jail, shoot them, or otherwise persecute them. Like Christianity, the Muslim religion is multi-faceted. One cannot lump them altogether as Islamic fascists, because that is just plain wrong. However, setting up battle fronts against them throughout the world is reasonable and intelligent. Our CIA should be doing everything it can to infiltrate mosques here in the United States with right thinking, eastern types, under deep cover—to uncover those within our borders whose mind-set and intentions are the same.

Judges 5:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK</i> ^e]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Piel imperative	Strong’s #1288 BDB #138
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong’s #3068 BDB #217

Translation: ...bless Y^ehowah. The very last line has the 2nd person masculine singular, Piel imperative of the word *to bless*; we are ordered *to bless Jehovah*. This was mentioned in Deut. 8:10, but it bears mentioning again.

When the word *ble*ss is presented in Scripture and in churches, it is too often this vague religious term of little meaning. That is, if you cannot express what it is that it actually means, then it doesn't mean anything to you. When man *bles*ses God, man recognizes that God has provided him with what he has received. *Blessing*, in this case, is gratitude and recognition of God's provision which comes out of God's character. When we say a *bles*sing at meal time, ideally, this is what we are doing. When God *bles*ses us, He is providing us with prosperity which overflows from His perfect character. When we *bles*s other men, we are asking for God to give them His blessings—His prosperity and grace.

Now pull this together with what has come before: we are called upon to bless Jehovah because Israelites have volunteered to enter into a military action against the Canaanites.

Application: Don't get out of control when it comes to understanding God's relationship to the military. This does not mean that the military is the correct approach to each and every situation. Furthermore, given that we have an all-volunteer army, we can only fight on so many fronts. However, what we have done in the Middle East during this time period is brilliant. We are facing one nation which may develop nuclear capabilities in the near future (Iran); we have terrorist training grounds in a number of different Middle Eastern countries; so we need our troops in the Mideast. We need strong allies in the Mideast.

Application: I know I might seem like I am getting far too political here, and, to some extent, I am. Let's clarify the situation. The only true solution is spiritual. As a nation, we must do certain things in order to protect ourselves, and these are honorable and Biblically sanctioned. However, our biggest mistake in both Afghanistan and Iraq is not insisting upon their adopting a Bill of Rights similar to our Bill of Rights. We should require them to allow freedom of speech and freedom of religion. The people there need the ability to choose Jesus Christ as their Savior. They should not have to hide their faith; and they should not have to face persecution for believing in Jesus Christ. We should be able to send missionaries over there. Apart from a spiritual revival, all we are doing is standing with the finger in the dyke. The military can provide, at best, a temporary solution; faith in Jesus Christ can provide a permanent solution.

Listen, O kings, give ear, O princes,
I to Y^ehowah, I will sing;
I will make music [in praise of God] to
Y^ehowah, God of Israel.

Judges
5:3

Listen, O kings [and] give ear, O princes:
I—even I—will sing to [or, with regards to]
Y^ehowah;
I will make a melody to [or, with regards to]
[or, I will make music in praise of] Y^ehowah,
the God of Israel:...

Kings, listen to me, and princes, pay attention to me;
I will sing to Jehovah; I will make music to Jehovah, the God of Israel:...

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Listen, O kings, give ear, O princes, I to Y ^e howah, I will sing;
Septuagint	Hear [this], you kings, and listen [carefully] you rulers: I will sing, it is I who will sing to the Lord, it is I, I will sing a psalm to the Lord the God of Israel.

Significant differences: There is some interpretation and shifting of the order of the words; however, there are no significant differences between the Greek and Hebrew.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Listen, kings and rulers, while I sing for the LORD, the God of Israel.
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NLT
 “Listen, you kings!
 Pay attention, you mighty rulers!
 For I will sing to the LORD.
 I will lift up my song to the LORD, the God of Israel.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™ Listen, you kings! Open your ears, you princes! I will sing a song to the LORD. I will make music to the LORD God of Israel.
 HCSB Listen, kings! Pay attention, princes! I will sing to the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.
 JPS (Tanakh) Hear, O kings! Give ear, O potentates!
 I will sing, will sing to the LORD,
 Will hymn the LORD, the God of Israel.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

LTHB Listen, O kings; give ear, O princes. I, even I, will sing to Jehovah; I will sing praise to Jehovah the God of Israel.
 Young’s Updated LT Hear, you kings; give ear, you princes, I, to Jehovah, I—I do sing, I sing praise to Jehovah, God of Israel.

What is the gist of this verse? Deborah asks for kings and princes to listen to her as she sings praises to Jehovah, the God of Israel.

Now, in reading this verse apart from the other verses, This verse appears to be what is said prior to the song itself. However, the poetic alliteration of the previous verse indicates that we are already into the song and that this verse is simply a part of it. In fact, we have precedent and subsequent substantiation for this sort of verse found early in a song (see Ex. 15:1 Deut. 32:1 Psalm 27:6b–7a).

Judges 5:3a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
shâmaʿ (שָׁמַע) [pronounced shaw-MAHG]	<i>listen [intently], hear, listen and obey, [or, and act upon, give heed to, take note of], hearken to, be attentive to, listen and be cognizant of</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong’s #8085 BDB #1033
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong’s #4428 BDB #572

Translation: Listen, O kings... There were no kings in Israel at this time—Deborah was singing this, as it were, to the heathen nations, in glory to God.⁸ Essentially, she is evangelizing the heathen nations who will hear this psalm.

⁸ Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 224.

Judges 5:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâzan (אָזַן) [pronounced aw-ZAHN]	<i>to broaden out the ear with the hand in order to hear; give ear and answer; to listen and obey; to listen; to weigh</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperative	Strong's #238 BDB #24
râzan (רָזַן) [pronounced raw-ZAHN]	<i>to be weighty, to be judicious, to be commanding; princes, rulers [in the participle]</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #7336 BDB #931

This word is only found as a participle.

Translation: ...[and] give ear, O princes:... Again, there are no princes in Israel; the intent is that this psalm be sung throughout the surrounding lands, and that heathen from all around hear what God, through Deborah, has to say to them.

Some have suggested that this is addressed to the kings and princes of the Canaanites, but many of them died in this war between Israel and the Canaanites. Furthermore, bear in mind, this is an evangelical song; not a *nyah, nyah, we kicked your butts* psalm. There are imprecatory songs and psalms, where the writer asks that God deal with those who are evil; but, I don't recall any psalms where the writer later rubs salt in the wound after the fact.

God uses Israel as a missionary of sorts during the Jewish Age; therefore, we would expect to find certain psalms and songs addressed to the surrounding unbelievers.

God Speaks to Foreign Unbelievers during the Age of Israel

Scripture	Quotation/Explanation
Deut. 32:1-4	Listen, heaven, and I will speak. Earth, hear the words from my mouth. Let my teachings come down like raindrops. Let my words drip like dew, like gentle rain on grass, like showers on green plants. I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Give our God the greatness he deserves! He is a rock. What he does is perfect. All his ways are fair. He is a faithful God, who does no wrong. He is honorable and reliable. Moses proclaims to all the earth the faithfulness and honor of Jehovah God, the Rock of Israel.
Psalms 2:10-12	Now, you kings, act wisely. Be warned, you rulers of the earth! Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, or he will become angry and you will die on your way because his anger will burst into flames. Blessed is everyone who takes refuge in him. David here makes it clear that, even though Jehovah is the God of Israel, He is the God of all mankind.

God Speaks to Foreign Unbelievers during the Age of Israel	
Scripture	Quotation/Explanation
Psalm 49:1–9	<p>Listen to this, all you people. Open your ears, all who live in the world—common people and important ones, rich people and poor ones. My mouth will speak wise sayings, the insights I have carefully considered. I will turn my attention to a proverb. I will explain my riddle with the music of a lyre. Why should I be afraid in times of trouble, when slanderers surround me with evil? They trust their riches and brag about their abundant wealth. No one can ever buy back another person or pay God a ransom for his life. The price to be paid for his soul is too costly. He must always give up in order to live forever and never see the pit. This is exactly what we would expect to hear directed to the unbeliever; you are unable to pay the necessary ransom for your own soul; the price is too high. The message is, do not trust in your own riches; trust in Jesus Christ.</p>
Psalm 119:46–50	<p>I will speak about your written instructions in the presence of kings and not feel ashamed. Your commandments, which I love, make me happy. I lift my hands in prayer because of your commandments, which I love. I will reflect on Your laws. Remember the word You gave me. Through it You gave me hope. This is my comfort in my misery: Your promise gave me a new life. Note how evangelical this is: <i>Your promise gave me a new life.</i> When heathen are addressed, evangelism is the focus.</p>
Psalm 138:4–8	<p>All the kings of the earth will give thanks to you, O LORD, because they have heard the promises you spoke. They will sing this about the ways of the LORD: "The LORD'S honor is great!" Even though the LORD is high above, he sees humble people close up, and he recognizes arrogant people from a distance. Even though I walk into the middle of trouble, you guard my life against the anger of my enemies. You stretch out your hand, and your right hand saves me. The LORD will do everything for me. O LORD, your mercy endures forever. Do not let go of what your hands have made. This tells us that, at some point, all the kings of the earth will give thanks to Jehovah God. They can depend upon His promises and they can depend upon His integrity.</p>

A song or a psalm has a better chance of reaching heathen populations than does simple text. Throughout our own history as a nation, we have had songs which began in one small geographical location and spread throughout the land because the words and music appealed to so many. God the Holy Spirit would speak through His Word to men in other lands by these songs, which proclaimed the power, faithfulness, integrity and mercy of Jehovah, God of Israel.

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Judges 5:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾānôkîy (אָנֹכִי) [pronounced <i>awn-oh-KEE</i>]	<i>I, me;</i> (sometimes a verb is implied)	1 st person singular personal pronoun	Strong's #595 BDB #59
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ʿ) ʾ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʾānôkîy (אָנֹכִי) [pronounced <i>awn-oh-KEE</i>]	<i>I, me;</i> (sometimes a verb is implied)	1 st person singular personal pronoun	Strong's #595 BDB #59
shîyr (שִׁיר) [pronounced <i>sheer</i>]	<i>to sing</i>	1 st person singular, Qal imperfect; with the Voluntative hê	Strong's #7891 BDB #1010

The hê at the end is called a voluntative hê and the verb itself is known as a cohortative and is often translated with the additional word *let, may, might, ought, should*.

Translation: ...*I—even I—will sing to* [or, *with regards to*] *Y^ehowah*,... This portion of v. 3 could read *I—even I—will sing to Jehovah*; or, *I—even I—will sing with regards to Jehovah*. If it is the former, we would have expected the preposition *unto*, which indicates respect or deference. In the latter case, Deborah is asking heathen kings and princes to listen, as she will *sing with regards to Jehovah*. She is going to tell them about *Jehovah*. She does not use the term for the Godhead, Elohim; she uses the specific name of each member of the Godhead (although, that there is a Godhead has only been hinted about previously). In any case, the name *Jehovah* identifies the specific God of Israel; not just God as a concept and not just the idea of a God, but of a God Who is above all other gods, and Who has chosen to work in, through and by the nation Israel.

Judges 5:3d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zâmar (זָמַר) [pronounced <i>zaw-MAHR</i>]	<i>to sing; to make music in praise of God, to make melody; properly to cut off (i.e., to divide up [a song] into its various parts)</i>	1 st person singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #2167 & #2168 BDB #274

This verb is a synonym for the previous verb, but it has additional meanings. Edersheim suggests that this involves the accompaniment of a musical instrument.

lâmed (ל) (pronounced ʿ) ʾ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Judges 5:3d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #430 BDB #43
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: ...I will make a melody to [or, with regards to] [or, I will make music in praise of] Y^ehowah, the God of Israel. The phrase *God of Israel* should not be ignored; the Bible has always presented a very specific God, with a specific identity and specific characteristics. During the Age of Israel, God worked primarily through the nation Israel. This does not mean that there was not evangelization far outside the nation Israel—it is possible that the book of Job found its way to heathen far from Israel. What we know, is God did deal with Israel and the nations which came into contact with Israel. That relationship is so powerful, that huge numbers of Arabs despair over the nation Israel—a nation that is a mere spec in the Arab world—and see the Jews as the cause of many, if not all, their ills. Their unreasonable hatred is a testimony to God and God's working through Israel.

I believe that the gist of this verse is, Deborah is singing to the kings and princes of the surrounding heathen, and that she is singing to them about Jesus Christ, the God of Israel; and that her song praises Jesus Christ, the God of Israel.

A case could be made, however, for this psalm to be addressed to God, as God is spoken to directly in the next verse. What I think is the case is, this tiny preposition, affixed to the noun *Elohim*, acts in both ways. To the heathen, Deborah speaks of the God of Israel; and in this psalm, she speaks directly to God.

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God's Power in Israel's March is Made Manifest at the Battle of Barak and Sisera

Psalm 68:7–9 Habakkuk 3:3–16

After sitting in one place for 38½ years,⁹ Israel began to march into the Land of Promise through Edom and northward on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. This followed Israel's initial march out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, and then to the southern border of the Land of Promise. These two marches, and God's power manifest at that time, are seen as a whole here, and are also reviewed in Psalm 68 and (of all places) Habak. 3.

Y^ehowah, in a going forth from Seir
in Your marching from a region of Edom,
[the] ground quaked
furthermore, [the] heavens dripped;
yea, clouds dropped water.

Judges
5:4

Y^ehowah, when You went forth from Seir,
when You marched from the region of Edom,
the ground quaked;
moreover, the heavens dripped;
yea, clouds dropped water.

Jehovah, when You went out from Seir and when You march out of the region of Edom,
the ground quaked and the heavens began to rain;
in fact, the clouds poured down rain.

⁹ Many people believed that Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text Y^ehowah, in a going forth from Seir
in Your marching from a region of Edom, [the] ground quaked
furthermore, [the] heavens dripped;
yea, clouds dropped water.

Septuagint O Lord, in your going forth on Seir, when you went forth out of the land of Edom, the
earth quaked and the heaven dropped dews, and the clouds dropped water.

Significant differences: No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Our LORD, God of Israel, when you came from Seir, where the Edomites live,...

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™ O LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the country of
Edom, the earth quaked, the sky poured, the clouds burst,...

HCSB LORD, when You came from Seir, when You marched from the fields of Edom, the
earth trembled, the heavens poured rain, the clouds poured water.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV "LORD, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom,
the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, yes, the clouds dropped water.

MKJV Jehovah, when You went out of Seir, when You marched out of the field of Edom, the
earth trembled and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

Young’s Updated LT Jehovah, in Your going forth out of Seir, In Your stepping out of the field of Edom,
Earth trembled, also the heavens dropped, Also thick clouds dropped water.

What is the gist of this verse? Deborah is setting up an analogous situation—God’s great power revealed as Israel marched from Egypt to the Land of Promise. Here, we begin where Israel began to march again, from Edom.

It is in this verse where we begin to get an idea as to what exactly happened which allowed Israel to win the battle against Sisera and all of his chariots. What Deborah gives us here is verification of God’s power in relation to the elements. She will first establish God’s power, and then later incorporate it into her song.

Judges 5:4a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as Jehovah, Yahweh, Y ^e howah	proper noun	Strong’s #3068 BDB #217
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity	No Strong’s # BDB #88

Judges 5:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The infinitive construct, when combined with the bêyth preposition, can often take on a temporal meaning and may be rendered <i>when [such and such happens]</i> . It can serve as a temporal marker that denotes an event which occurs simultaneously with the action of the main verb.			
yâtsâ' (יָצָא) [pronounced yaw-TZAWH]	<i>to go out, to come out, to come forth; to rise; to flow, to gush up [out]</i>	Qal infinitive construct with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3318 BDB #422
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
Sê'îyr (שֵׂעִיר) [pronounced say-GEER]	<i>hairy, shaggy; transliterated Seir</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #8165 BDB #973

Translation: *Yehowah, when You went forth from Seir,...* Deborah begins with Seir, when the Jews began to develop some forward momentum again.

Easton tells us that Seir is *the name of a mountainous region occupied by the Edomites, extending along the eastern side of the Arabah from the south-eastern extremity of the Dead Sea to near the Akabah, or the eastern branch of the Red Sea.*¹⁰ Fausset tells us that *Seir* is probably more of a title or a descriptive name, rather than the proper name for this mountain region.¹¹

Let's get a little background here. Israel marches from Egypt to the Land of Promise, stopping first at Mount Sinai; later at the southern border of the Land of Promise; apparently remains in the southern desert for 38½ years; and then begins their march again, heading toward Edom this time and traveling northward on the east side of the Dead Sea. In other words, we are actually viewing 2 marches, with one stop. During this time, God manifests Himself in raining upon the desert and by the quaking of the earth. In the Pentateuch narrative, interestingly enough, we see references to the quaking of the earth (at the foot of Mount Sinai), but I do not recall any references to heavy rainstorms. However, bear in mind that we have as many as 2,000,000 Jews in the desert, so something must have occurred in order to provide them with water. Also, interestingly enough, whereas, we might be willing to dismiss the references herein to rainstorms, we find them mentioned again in Psalm 68:9 and Habak. 3:9–10, 15.

Judges 5:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^o (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{oh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88qic
tsâ'ad (צָעַד) [pronounced tzaw-GAHD]	<i>to step, to march; to mount up</i>	Qal infinitive construct with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6805 BDB #857

¹⁰ M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Seir.

¹¹ Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Seir.

Judges 5:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
sâdeh (שָׂדֵה) [pronounced <i>saw-DEH</i>]	<i>field, land, country, open field, open country</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7704 BDB #961
ʿĒdōwm (עֲדוֹם) [pronounced <i>eh-DOHM</i>]; also ʿĒdôm (אֲדוֹם) [pronounced <i>eh-DOHM</i>]	<i>reddish; and is transliterated Edom, Edomites</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #123 BDB #10

Translation: ...when You marched from the region of Edom,... Seir, as mentioned, is associated with Edom (Gen. 36:9) and the Edomites. The Edomites are descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother. God had already told Israel not to try to displace the Edomites: Deut. 2:4–6 (these would have been given prior to Deut. 2): "Give the people these instructions: 'You're going to pass through the territory of your relatives, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They'll be afraid of you, but be very careful. Don't start a fight with them, because I'm not giving you any of their land-not even enough to stand on. I've given Esau's descendants the region of Mount Seir as their property. You must pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.' "

Judges 5:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced <i>EH-rets</i>]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land, ground, soil</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75
râʿash (רָעַשׁ) [pronounced <i>raw-GAHS</i>]	<i>to quake, to tremble, to shake; to be moved [shaken]</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #7493 BDB #950

Translation: ...the ground quaked;... One of the negative aspects of breaking the Bible into verses is, we associate the earth quaking and the rain of this verse with Seir in Edom; because, quite obviously, they are all in the same verse. However, we do not have an historical record of this occurring in Edom. This is not to say that it did not occur; but we simply don't have a record of it. On the other hand, we do have indications of seismic events when Israel was in Sinai and God met Moses on Mount Sinai. Sinai will be mentioned in the next verse.

Judges 5:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168

Judges 5:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced shaw-MAH-yim]	heavens, skies	masculine dual noun	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029
נָאֵטַף (נָאֵטַף) [pronounced naw-TAHF]	to drop, to fall in drops, to drip	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #5197 BDB #642

Translation: ...moreover, the heavens dripped;... The psalmist David recognized God's power in the storms as well, and he seems to have taken from this passage when he wrote: O God, who You went before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness (Selah); Then earth quaked, the heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God. Sinai itself quaked at the presence of God, the God of Israel. You shed abroad a plentiful rain, O God; You confirmed Your inheritance when it was parched (Psalm 68:7–9). When we get to Sinai, we will try to pull all of this together.

Judges 5:4e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm]	both...and, furthermore...as well as, also...also, that...so; either...or (but not used disjunctively)	when gam is repeated	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
Since this is poetry, it is possible that the primary meaning of gam (<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>) is what should be understood here.			
עָב (עָב) [pronounced gaw ^v]	cloud, dark cloud, cloud-mass, darkness [caused by an overcast sky]; a dark thicket [of woods]	masculine plural noun	Strong's #5645 BDB #728
Spelled the same as Strong's #5646 BDB #712, which is an architectural term that possibly means <i>threshold, steps [up to a porch]; landing; pitched roof</i> .			
נָאֵטַף (נָאֵטַף) [pronounced naw-TAHF]	to drop, to fall in drops, to drip	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #5197 BDB #642
mayim (מַיִם) [pronounced MAH-yim]	water, waters	masculine plural noun; pausal form	Strong's #4325 BDB #565

Translation: ...yea, clouds dropped water. You will note the poetic imagery here, even though it can be all taken literally. We speak first of the land, then of the heavens, and then of what is between them, the clouds. Poetic images does not mean that this is not to be literally understood. If this song had the line, *and Barak's army came like a fierce storm*, we would not interpret this passage in the same way; we would realize that *storm* is being used metaphorically. However, here, we are looking back on literal events which occurred—while Israel was in Sinai, as Israel marched on from Edom, there were earthquakes and there were rainstorms, even in desert areas where rainstorms did not generally occur.

So, what does this mean? Why does Deborah begin talking about literal earthquakes and literal rainstorms? This is because she is going to describe a battle between Barak and Sisera, and she wants to make it clear that Barak's army was not *like* a rainstorm, but that there apparently was a sudden and intense rainstorm, the result of God's power. This happens in the battle between Barak and Sisera, and it is the result of God's power, much like previous events in Israel's history.

Whereas the information was not clearly conveyed in the previous chapter, it will be quite clear in this chapter that there was a storm which worked against Sisera. Now, by strict interpretation, this verse does not refer to that storm; we will get that in vv. 20–21. It is the way that Sisera was defeated that brings to mind what God has done in the past. God has often unleashed the forces of nature against His enemies. So, what we have in this verse is not an attack by God against Sisera, but Deborah is establishing God's awesome power with respect to the use of the elements of nature. This passage in particular is a poetic remembrance of what God had done before when He appeared to Israel as a cloud in the desert, leading them through the desert. This is brought to mind because we have a similar situation occurring at this time.

Barnes comments that this passage, Psalm 68:7–9 and Habak. 3:3–16 are parallel passages which (1) cover the march of Israel into the land of Canaan; and (2) that these three passages serve to explain one another.¹² Barnes sees the victory of Deborah and Barak as being parallel to God's guidance to Israel from Seir on up to Jericho and then into the land, rather than the origin of the storms as coming out of the south.

Interestingly enough, God is often associated with storms and earthquakes throughout Scripture. David alludes to this in 2Sam. 22:7–12: [In my distress, I called up Jehovah. Yes, I cried to my God and from His temple He heard my voice and my cry for help went out to his ears. Then the earth shook and quaked and the foundations of heaven trembled and they were shaken, because He was angry. Smoke went up out of His nostrils and fire from His mouth devoured. Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and He came down, with thick darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub and flew and He appeared on the wings of the wind. And He made darkness canopies around Him, a mass of waters, thick clouds out from the sky.](#) Psalm 77:17–18: [The clouds poured out water, the skies gave forth a sound, Your arrows flashed here and there. The sound of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightning lit up the world. The earth trembled and shook.](#) Isa. 13:13: ["Therefore, I will make the heavens tremble and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of Jehovah of the armies, in the day of His burning anger."](#) Jer. 10:10: [But Jehovah is the true God. He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath, the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation.](#) See also Psalm 18:7 Isa. 2:19, 21 24:18–19 64:3 Jer. 51:29 Nahum 1:5.

Meteorology has become quite an important and dynamic science today. We know about pressure, wind velocity and direction, what seems to draw a weather system this way or that, the location of clouds, the meaning of clouds. We have a variety of radar, we can track storms; and yet, our ability to predict weather and to predict heavy storms is weak. In the year 2005, forecasters were surprised by about twice as many tropical storms and hurricanes in the Atlantic than they expected; so far, this year, it appears as though the opposite will occur. However, in eternity past, God knew everything there is to know about every storm; and it is all set into motion to concur with His plan for this earth and for our lives.

A topic which one might ponder is, do these storms follow natural, scientific laws or does God choose for them to behave as they behave? First of all, scientific laws is a misnomer, because science does not make these laws and science cannot enforce them; the weather and all things natural function according to God's laws. However, we cannot look at this within the confines of time. We might see a situation and determine that, "Now would be a good time to bring in a storm" because we are in time and confined to time. God invented time and is not bound by time. God does not view a situation here on earth and say, "Holy crap, I didn't know this would happen; I had better make a storm to fix it." God is never surprised; God is never caught off guard. God never saves one of us, and then later, thinks, "I did not know that boy was going to end up being such a weasel; he is out of my Book of Life." These things in mind, I believe that God, in eternity past, determined weather patterns, determined each and

¹² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:4.

every storm, each and every earthquake; and set up a system of divine laws which they invariably obey, which science is still working to discover. Furthermore, God took into account each and every person's volition; each and every prayer which we would offer up—as well as the motivation behind each and every prayer—and set up all natural events to coincide perfectly with His plan. From our viewpoint, it may appear as though God suddenly brings on a storm for this or that reason (the case in point is Sisera and his charioteers doing battle with Barak); but God determined the path and direction and function of each and every storm from eternity past.

Application: Since God has planned each and every storm, and God knows every decision that I will ever make; if there is a weather related warning, can I therefore ignore it, because I am a believer in Jesus Christ? Don't be silly! Some believers will find themselves in precarious situations with respect to weather; as some will be caught in unexpected natural phenomena; and some believers will even lose their lives over natural events (we will all die). If you are in a city under mandatory hurricane evacuation, don't be an idiot and refuse to go. If there is a severe weather alert, and you have been warned to remain inside, don't just hop in your car, based on God's omnipotence and omniscience, so that you can catch the sale at Macy's. You are in the same world as the unbelievers around you; you are subject to the same things which all unbelievers are subject to. If your city is under a mandatory evacuation, then don't barricade yourself in your home, deciding that you are staying right there because God will provide. Did you ever think that maybe there is a reason that you, and 200,000 of your neighbors, are being moved for a reason? Did you ever think that you might be rubbing shoulders with the great unwashed out there for a reason? You do not get to simply enjoy day in and day out what you have begun to take for granted. Things change, but God governs this. There are times that you just go with the flow.

I am reminded of a person who is facing a heavy storm; and an evacuation bus goes down her street, offering her a ride. She refuses, saying, "Don't worry; God will provide." The rain keeps on going and, at some point, she finds herself sitting on top of their home during heavy flooding, and she is praying and praying to God for deliverance. A crowded boat goes by and they offer her a ride, and she calls out, "Don't worry, God will take care of me." The waters continue to rise, even though the storm has subsided; and a rescue helicopter comes to remove any victims that it can find; but she says, "Don't worry about me; I have prayed to God; He will deliver me." She dies in the storm, her house overrun with water, and when she meets God she asks Him about why He did not deliver her; and He answers, "I sent you a bus, a boat and a helicopter. I finally decided that you were too dumb to live and brought you home."

I have run into a number of people who, from the outside, it is obvious to see God's prodding. I am recalling one prospective tenant from the Katrina hurricane; and God had given her a place to stay; the people who became acquainted with her were going to get her set up in a new home; and had furniture and other things for her; and I was going to accept her as a tenant. It was obvious to me that everything had come together to provide her with pretty much all that she had lost in that storm; and yet, the last time I was in touch with her benefactors, she had overstayed her welcome and was unable to make a decision of what to do (at the time, she could not determine if she wanted to remain in the Houston area or move up to Dallas where her grown son, also an evacuee, was). Now, to me, when all of the doors open as they did, then you walk through those open doors.

Application: What's the problem? How can God open so many doors; how can He make it so obvious; and yet, some believers cannot make a decision to save their lives? It is a lack of doctrine and a lack of the filling of the Holy Spirit. You know this or that Scripture, which you tout over all others; you have this or that phoney holy attitude; and the result is, you either cannot make a decision or you are unable to make the correct decision. Personally, I can't tell you what is going to happen in my life tomorrow. I do not know what I will be faced with, or what is going to happen, or what decisions I am going to make; however, I do know that looking back on my life, divine guidance has never been a difficult thing. I've never had to pray and pray and pray for days on end in order to make a decision; and I have made some big, life-changing decisions.

I know that I have gone off-topic here, but let me continue in this vein:

Divine Guidance

1. You need to be filled with the Spirit. This is not a second blessing or some emotional experience, but

Divine Guidance

- achieved simply by naming your sins to God.
- 2. You need doctrine in your soul; you must know divine viewpoint. This has to be a day-in and day-out thing. If you don't know what God is like; if you do not have any concept of His plan; then how will you be able to figure out your place in it?
- 3. Consider your motivations for your decisions. Many times, you make the choices that you make out of pride, arrogance, stubbornness, or hard-headedness.
- 4. As I haven't mentioned before, I have known a number of people who seem to ponder over simple decisions and their general arrogance and lack of doctrine seems to stand in the way of their making a relatively simple decision.
- 5.

We don't know everything there is to know in this life; however, God guides us and makes our pathways reasonably easy.

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Back to the narrative at hand:

A Summary Interpretation of Judges 5:4

Scripture	Incident
<p>Y^howah, when You went forth from Seir, when You marched from the region of Edom,</p>	<p>The language used here can be interpreted temporally, as I have done. We can take this in two separate ways: (1) This happened around the time that Israel marched around Seir; or (2) this happened <i>when</i> or very close to the time that Israel marched around Seir.</p>
<p>the ground quaked; moreover, the heavens dripped; yea, clouds dropped water.</p>	<p>The things which occurred were <i>natural</i> events. Israel did have a run-in with the Edomites, who did not want Israel to pass through their territory. It appears as though Israel took a more extended journey (Num. 20:14–21). We are not really given much by way of specifics, but it is possible that God kept the Edomites separate from the Jews by earthquakes and rainstorms.</p>

In general, Deborah is looking back to Jehovah God and the power He used against Israel's enemies in the past, and she is claiming that this is being repeated before her eyes.

This interpretation may not be as definitive as you would like, but you cannot assume too much.

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Mountains quaked from faces of Y^howah;
this Sinai from faces of Y^howah,
God of Israel.

Judges
5:5

Mountains quaked from before the face of
Y^howah;
This Sinai [quaked] from before the face of
Y^howah, the God of Israel.

The mountains quaked in the presence of Jehovah;
even this mountain Sinai quaked before the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Mountains quaked from faces of Y ^e howah; this Sinai from faces of Y ^e howah,
Peshitta	The mountains melted from before the LORD, even this Sinai from the presence of the LORD, the Holy one of Israel.
Septuagint	The mountains were shaken before the face of the Lord Eloi, this Sina before the face of the Lord God of Israel.

Significant differences: The LXX adds in another word for *God* in this verse. The Peshitta has *the Holy One* instead of *God*. Apart from those things, there are no significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV ...rain poured from the sky, the earth trembled, and mountains shook.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> TM	...and the mountains shook in the presence of the LORD God of Sinai, in the presence of the LORD God of Israel.
HCSB	The mountains melted before the LORD, even Sinai before the LORD, the God of Israel.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	The mountains quaked before the LORD, even Sinai before the LORD, the God of Israel.
WEB	The mountains quaked at the presence of Yahweh, even Sinai, at the presence of Yahweh, the God of Israel.
Young's Updated LT	Hills flowed from the face of Jehovah, This one—Sinai—From the face of Jehovah, God of Israel.

What is the gist of this verse? God even causes earthquakes, including those which occurred on Mount Sinai.

Judges 5:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
har (רַהַר) [pronounced <i>har</i>]	<i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #2042 (and #2022) BDB #249
nâzal (נָזַל) [pronounced <i>naw-ZAHL</i>]	<i>to drip, to distill, to flow, to trickle; to melt; to run [down]; to descend</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #5140 BDB #633
Owen offers the following alternative:			
zâlal (זָלַל) [pronounced <i>zaw-LAHL</i>]	<i>to be shaken, to tremble, to quake; to be agitated</i>	3 rd person plural, Niphal perfect	Strong's #2151 BDB #272

Judges 5:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
This verb appears to be a homonym with <i>to be a glutton, to look to satisfy one's own appetites, to satiate one's own lusts</i> .			
The Tanakh understands this in the same way, and points to the Aramaic Targum as justification. However, we do not need to obsess on this as, mountains <i>flowing</i> or <i>melting</i> is really not much different from the results of a quake.			
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
pānîym (פְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i>]	<i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, mipānîym mean <i>from before the face of; out from before the face, from the presence of</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that</i> .			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: [Mountains quaked from before the face of Yehowah;...](#) One of the things that you should like about Hebrew poetry is the order in which it is written. The subject of the verse comes first and then the verb, rather than vice versa. This makes Hebrew poetry sound like normal English and Hebrew prose sound somewhat poetic when literally rendered with regards to the word order.

There is some disagreement with regards to the first verb. The MT has *to drip, to distill, to flow, to trickle*.¹³ The word which possibly should be here is the 3rd person plural, Niphal perfect of *zâlal* (זָלַל) [pronounced *zaw-LAHL*], which means *to shake, to be agitated, to quake*. This latter view agrees with the Septuagint. However, you need not obsess on this, as I mention in the Hebrew exegesis. Certainly, there is a relationship; the quaking would result in a mountain which would tumble, flow, and become almost liquid in its behavior. What we might expect to find is both verbs, as they could be used to describe the same phenomena from a different perspective.

Gill comments: *The sense is, the mountains melted, just as the famous mountain Sinai in a literal sense did, when it trembled and quaked at the presence of God on it; the tokens of it, the fire and smoke, thunders, lightnings, and tempests there seen and heard*.¹⁴

You will recall the violent quaking and the thunderstorms of Mount Sinai when Israel first stopped there: [So it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thundering sounds and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because Jehovah descended upon in it fire; and it smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace and the whole mountain quaked violently](#) (Ex. 19:16–18). [Now when all the people saw the thunder and](#)

¹³ This is NOT the verb found in Psalm 97:5.

¹⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:5.

the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off (Ex. 20:18).

Judges 5:5b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
Çîynai (סִינַי) [pronounced see-NAH-ee]	<i>thorny; transliterated Sinai</i>	singular proper noun	Strong's #5514 BDB #696
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
pânîym (פְּנֵים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, mipânîym mean <i>from before the face of; out from before the face, from the presence of</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that</i> .			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: *This Sinai [quaked] from before the face of Y^ehowah, the God of Israel.* Apparently, there was apparently a terrific earthquake in north-central Israel during the war of Deborah and Barak, as well as a rainstorm which neutralized the chariots of Sisera. Actually, we don't know about the earthquake, but we have a mention of the Torrent Kishon sweeping them away in Judges 5:21, which suggests a rainstorm. In any case, there are natural phenomenon during this battle which cause Deborah to recall Israel at Mount Sinai, and to cite it as a similar example of God's power and involvement. So, even though she is historically pointing back to Moses and the people of Israel at Sinai, she is, at the same time, drawing a parallel to what occurred during the war against the Canaanites. She therefore calls it *this* Sinai. This indicates to me that, while the Jews were on Mount Tabor, and charging down to the Canaanites, that God caused great natural phenomenon which accompanied their charge.

It was well understood by all peoples of that area that there was a special relationship between Israel and Jehovah. It was recognized that Jehovah's power might be greater than the average heathen god; although the extent of that acknowledgment was usually the difference between salvation and damnation. However, to understand the psychology here, these men of Sisera had control over Israel for two decades, although they did have this understanding of this peculiar relationship between Israel and Jehovah. Now that they are going to war against Israel, the sudden thunder, lightning and quaking of the earth makes these people realize that they are facing more than just an army of foot soldiers. Israel expects the help of God and Sisera and his men fear that such a thing could occur. So when all of the elements appear to conspire against the army of Sisera, they are struck with a terrific fear. Many people are themselves struck with great fear when faced with earthquakes or tremendous storms. Imagine further if you realized that this storm was brought upon by God for the purpose of being against you. This made the storm all the more frightening.

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I've mentioned and quoted from the parallel passages; now let's put them all together:

The Parallel Passages	
Scripture	Text
Judges 5:4–5	<p>Y^ehowah, when You went forth from Seir, when You marched from the region of Edom, the ground quaked; moreover, the heavens dripped; yea, clouds dropped water. Mountains quaked from before the face of Y^ehowah; This Sinai [quaked] from before the face of Y^ehowah, the God of Israel.</p>
Deborah looks back to	God's great power being revealed when Israel was marching from Egypt to the Land of Promise. The phrase <i>this Sinai</i> suggests that there was an earthquake at Mount Tabor, and the natural phenomena of Mount Sinai were also experienced at Mount Tabor. In fact, I would think that <i>this Sinai</i> is a poetic reference to Mount Tabor, where God's presence was clearly made know.
Psalm 68:7–9	<p>O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, Selah. the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished.</p>
Psalm 68 looks back at	Israel's history and this particular passage briefly alludes to the wilderness march, where God brought earthquakes and rainstorms.

The Parallel Passages	
Scripture	Text
Habak. 3:3–16	<p>God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. Selah. His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power. Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels. He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation? You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. Selah. You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you and writhed; the raging waters swept on; the deep gave forth its voice; it lifted its hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their place at the light of your arrows as they sped, at the flash of your glittering spear. You marched through the earth in fury; you threshed the nations in anger. You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. Selah. You pierced with his own arrows the heads of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter me, rejoicing as if to devour the poor in secret. You trampled the sea with your horses, the surging of mighty waters. I hear, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come upon people who invade us.</p>

Habbakkuk probably observed the Babylonian invasion of Judah, and he asks God how can He allow such a ruthless people to overpower His Own nation. The answer is, God has delivered His people in the past (our passage above), and therefore, He will deliver them in the future, causing Habakkuk to conclude: *I will rejoice in Jehovah, and I will be joyous with the God of my deliverance* (Habak. 3:18).

What we seem to have very little mention of in narrative is that God provided Israel with water during the journey from Egypt to the Land of Promise. This would obviously come in the form of rain (although, during some dry spells, God provided water miraculously, by the rock which represents our Lord).

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Deborah Establishes Time and Place

In days of Shamgar ben Anath; in days of
Jael,
ceased highways
and goers of paths went [on] highways
crooked.

Judges
5:6

In the days of Shamgar ben Anath [and] in
the days of Jael,
the highways ceased and travelers of paths
traveled on crooked highways.

**During the time of Shamgar ben Anath and Jael, free movement on the highways nearly ceased;
travelers took the back routes instead.**

We lose a lot of the alliteration in the English, as well as the repetition of certain words in slightly different forms. It is a very playful use of words. Perhaps some of the looser translations can help to convey this and some might help to convey the meaning of all this:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	In days of Shamgar ben Anath; in days of Jael, ceased highways and goers of paths went [on] highways crooked.
Septuagint	In the days of Samegar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, they deserted the ways, and went in by-ways; they went in crooked paths.
Significant differences:	No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	In the time of Shamgar son of Anath, and now again in Jael's time, roads were too dangerous for caravans. Travelers had to take the back roads,...
NAB	In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of slavery caravans ceased; Those who traveled the roads went by roundabout paths.
NJB	...there were no more caravans; those who went forth on their travels took their way along by-paths.
NLT	"In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, and in the days of Jael, people avoided the main roads, and travelers stayed on crooked side paths.
TEV	In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, caravans no longer went through the land, and travelers used the back roads.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> [™]	In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, roads were deserted. Those who traveled took back roads.
HCSB	In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the main ways were deserted, because travelers kept to the side roads.
JPS (Tanakh)	In the days of Shamgar son of Anath [or, <i>the Beth-anathite</i>], In the days of Jael, caravans [or, <i>roads</i>] ceased, And wayfarers went By roundabout paths.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

MKJV	In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were empty, and the travelers walked through crooked ways.
NRSV	"In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, caravans ceased and travelers kept to the byways.
WEB	In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied. The travelers walked through byways.

Young's Updated LT

In the days of Shamgar son of Anath—In the days of Jael—The ways have ceased,
And those going in the paths go in crooked ways.

What is the gist of this verse? During the time of Shamgar and Jael, there was no real freedom in Israel; when traveling, Israelites kept to the off-roads, and did not go on the main highways (for fear of the Canaanites).

Judges 5:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
yāmîym (יָמַיִם) [pronounced yaw-MEEM]	<i>days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
The construct phrase is literally <i>in days</i> ; and this phrase is properly rendered <i>in the days of, during the time of, at the time of</i> . The concept here refers to a <i>particular</i> time.			
Shamgar (שִׁמְגָר) [pronounced shāhm ^e -GAHR]	<i>sword; transliterated Shamgar</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #8044 BDB #1029
bên (בֶּן) [pronounced bane]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
ʿĀnāth (עֲנָת) [pronounced ʿawn-AWTH]	<i>answer, answer [to prayer]; indemnity, fine; transliterated Anath</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #6067 BDB #779

Translation: *In the days of Shamgar ben Anath...* Shamgar is mentioned twice in Scripture—here, and in Judges 3:31, but all we know is that he struck down 600 Philistines with an ox-goad, thus delivering Israel. We are not told of the precise circumstances.

Judges 5:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
yāmîym (יָמַיִם) [pronounced yaw-MEEM]	<i>days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
The construct phrase is literally <i>in days</i> ; and this phrase is properly rendered <i>in the days of, during the time of, at the time of</i> . The concept here refers to a <i>particular</i> time.			
Yâ'êl (יָעֵל) [pronounced yaw-GALE]	<i>transliterated Jael</i>	feminine singular, proper noun	Strong's #3278 BDB #418

Translation:...[and] in the days of Jael,... Here, it is implied that Shamgar and Jael are contemporaries. Possibly, his old age coincided with her in her youth. This does help to set up a time line for this time period, however. Recall that I mentioned that some judges would be contemporaries and that they would function in different parts of Israel. In Judges 3, we discussed Ehud, and, in the final verse, Shamgar is mentioned. Again here, he is mentioned, and in conjunction with Jael, suggesting that they are contemporaries. Furthermore, Judges 4 take place *after Ehud dies* (Judges 4:1). All of this suggests that, Ehud delivered Israel from the hand of Moab; he died, and Israel went apostate again. During this time of apostasy, there was a judge, Shamgar, who killed 600 Philistines (he probably lived in northern Judah or in far western Israel); and there was Deborah, a judge who presided simultaneously in north central Israel. Because Shamgar and Deborah are contemporaries, we do not have a separate listing of how long he ruled, the period of rest, and then have this repeated for Deborah. In fact, all we will be told is, *[after these things] the land had rest for 40 years* (Judges 5:31c).

Judges 5:6c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châdal (חָדַל) [pronounced <i>khaw-DAHL</i>]	<i>to cease and desist, to leave off, to cease, to leave, to forsake</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #2308 BDB #292
ʿôrach (אֲרָח) [pronounced <i>OH-rahkh</i>]	<i>a [well-trodden] road; way, path; metonyms: traveler; traveling company, caravan; metaphorically: a course [way] of living [or action]; mode, manner, way; a path of life</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #734 BDB #73

Translation: ...the highways ceased... The verb is the Qal perfect of *to leave off, to cease, to desist*. What ceased was the masculine plural *paths, ways, highways*. This is elliptical. The highways didn't cease, per se (i.e., they did not disappear, they were not destroyed), but traveling along the highways did cease almost entirely. When ancient roads fell into disuse, weeds and trees and bushes grew up in them, causing the roads themselves to degenerate into countryside.

Judges 5:6d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hâlak ^e (הֹלְכִים) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>those walking, those going, those who are departing; walkers, travelers</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
n ^e thîybâh (נִתְיַבָּה) [pronounced <i>n^ethee^v-BAW</i>]	<i>path, pathway, footpath, a trodden down path</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #5410 BDB #677
hâlak ^e (הֹלְכִים) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK^e</i>]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229

Judges 5:6d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>ʿôrach (אֹרַח) [pronounced OH-rahkh]</p>	<p>a [well-trodden] road; way, path; metonyms: traveler; traveling company, caravan; metaphorically: a course [way] of living [or action]; mode, manner, way; a path of life</p>	<p>masculine plural noun</p>	<p>Strong's #734 BDB #73</p>
<p>ʿăqal^oqâl (אֶקַל^oקַל) [pronounced guh-kahl^o- KAWL]</p>	<p>crooked, winding; torturous</p>	<p>feminine plural, intensive adjective</p>	<p>Strong's #6128 BDB #785</p>

Translation: ...and travelers of paths traveled on crooked highways. The participle of *to go, to come, to depart, to walk* is found here, and rendered variously as *those going* (Young); *travelers* (KJV, NASB and Owen, who all ignore the noun which follows); *frequenters* (Rotherham, whose translation does not make sense without the noun that follows). What follows this construct is the feminine plural *path, course of life, path of life*. So our subject is *the travelers of paths*.

The verb which follows is the Qal imperfect of *to go, to com, to depart, to walk* (we just had the participle). This is followed by the feminine plural of *ʿôrach*, again, which *path, way, highway*. These *paths* or *highways* are described by the adjective which means *crooked, roundabout paths*.

What has happened is that free trade has become restricted and travel has either ceased or done along back routes. One of the signs of a dictatorship is the restriction of travel and the restriction of free trade; or, as was probably the case at this time, the roads were unsafe due to enemy garrisons and marauding bands.¹⁵ We have a similar situation spoken of when Israel will fall under the judgment of God again: *The highways are desolate, the traveler has ceased. He has broken the covenant; he has despised the cities. He has not regard for man* (Isa. 33:8).

Matthew Henry describes the life like this: *[There is little or] no trade. For want of soldiers to protect men of business in their business from the incursions of the enemy, and for want of magistrates to restrain and punish thieves and robbers among them (men of broken fortunes and desperate spirits, that, having no employment, took to rob on the highroad), all commerce ceased, and the highways were unoccupied; no caravans of merchants, as formerly...[Furthermore, there was] no traveling. Whereas in times when there was some order and government the travelers might be safe in the open roads, and the robbers were forced to lurk in the by-ways, no, on the contrary, the robbers insulted on the open roads without check, and the honest travelers were obliged to skulk and walk through by-way.*¹⁶

Gill suggests: *The public roads were so infested with thieves and robbers, who stopped all they met with, and robbed them of what they had, that travellers and merchants with their carriages were obliged either to quit their employments, and not travel at all; or, if they did, were obliged to go in private roads, and roundabout ways, to keep clear of those rapparees the highways and public roads abounded with.*¹⁷

Interestingly enough, freedom of movement (or lack of) is alluded to several times in Scripture: Lev. 26:22 2Chron. 15:5 Isa. 33:8 Lam. 1:4, 18 Micah 3:12.

¹⁵ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 333.

¹⁶ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:6–11.

¹⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:6.

I have rewritten most of the points on this list:

Matthew Henry's List of What Israel's Oppression Consisted Of

1. Israel lacked free trade. There were no Israeli soldiers who protected businessmen and traders from the attacks of bandits and thieves; there were no magistrates to restrain and punish these actions. Even worse, *men of broken fortunes and desperate spirits, that, having no employment, took to rob on the highroad. All commerce ceased, and the highways were unoccupied; there were no caravans of merchants.*
2. Israel lacked freedom of movement. *Whereas in times when there was some order and government the travelers might be safe in the open roads, and the robbers were forced to lurk in the by-ways, [under Canaanites oppression], the robbers moved unchecked on the open roads and the honest travelers were forced to stay off the beaten path, to avoid thieves and Canaanites.*
3. Israel's farming was cut way back. *The fields must needs be laid waste and unoccupied when the inhabitants of the villages, the country farmers, ceased from their employment, quitted their houses which were continually alarmed and plundered by the banditti, and were obliged to take shelter for themselves and their families in walled and fenced cities.* A farmer is going to grow crops in order to feed the country; and his food would be traded for other items. Restrict trade and travel, and there is no reason for the farmer to grow very much.
4. There was no administration of justice in Israel. *There was war in the gates where their courts were kept (Judges 5:8). The continual incursions of the enemy deprived the magistrates of the dignity, and the people of the benefit, of their government.*
5. There was *no peace to him that went out nor to him that came in. The gates through which they passed and repassed were infested by the enemy; the places of drawing water were places where thieves would lie in wait.*
6. Israel lacked arms, leadership and the spirit with which to help themselves. *There was not a shield nor spear seen among forty thousand (Judges 5:8). Either they were disarmed by their oppressors, or they themselves neglected the art of war; so that, though they had spears and shields, they were not to be seen, but were thrown by and suffered to rust, they having neither skill nor will to use them.*

The italicized portions are slightly edited and from Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:6–11.

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**Ceased true leadership in Israel
ceased until which I arose,
Deborah, I arose,
a mother in Israel.**

Judges
5:7

**True leadership ceased in Israel.
It ceased until I—Deborah—arose,
I arose, a mother in Israel.**

**True leadership had ceased in Israel;
It ceased until I, Deborah, arose; a mother in Israel.**

There are a few significant differences between translations, so I will list them here:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

Ceased true leadership in Israel ceased until which I arose,
Deborah, I arose, a mother in Israel. .

Septuagint

The mighty men in Israel failed, they failed until Debborn arose, until she arose a
mother in Israel.

Significant differences: The meaning of this first noun is discussed below; but there are disagreements when it comes to the interpretation of it. More importantly, the Hebrew is emphatically 1st person; the Greek is a 3rd person approach. The Latin and the Greek agree; the Syriac and the Hebrew agree.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV ... and villagers couldn't work in their fields. Then Deborah took command, protecting Israel as a mother protects her children.

NLT There were few people left in the villages of Israel—
until Deborah arose as a mother for Israel.

REB Champions there were none, none left in Israel, until you, Deborah, arose, arose as a mother in Israel.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ Villages in Israel were deserted- deserted until I, Deborah, took a stand- took a stand as a mother of Israel.

HCSB Villages were deserted, they were deserted in Israel, until I, Deborah, I arose, a mother in Israel.

JPS (Tanakh) Deliverance ceased,
Ceased in Israel,
Till you [*Hebrew: qamti, archaic second-person singular feminine*] arose, O Deborah, Arose, O mother, in Israel!

NIV Village life [or, Warriors] in Israel ceased, ceased until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Amplified Bible The villages were unoccupied, *and* rulers ceased in Israel, until you arose, you Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel.

The Emphasized Bible There was a failure of rulers In Israel, a failure, Until I arose, a Deborah, arose a mother in Israel:—

NASB “The peasantry ceased, they ceased in Israel, Until I, Deborah, arose, Until I arose, a mother in Israel.

WEB The rulers ceased in Israel. They ceased until I, Deborah, arose; Until I arose a mother in Israel.

Young's Updated LT Villages ceased in Israel—they ceased, Till that I arose—Deborah, That I arose, a mother in Israel.

What is the gist of this verse? True leadership did not exist in Israel until Deborah arose, as she herself tells us in this verse.

Judges 5:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châdal (חָדַל) [pronounced <i>khaw-DAHL</i>]	<i>to cease and desist, to leave off, to cease, to leave, to forsake</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #2308 BDB #292

Judges 5:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>פְּרָאזֹדָן (פְּרָזֹדָן)</p> <p>[pronounced p^{er}rāw-ZOHN]</p>	<p><i>rule, dominion; rural expansion; true leadership</i></p>	<p>masculine singular noun</p>	<p>Strong's #6520 BDB #826</p>
<p>This word is translated as follows: <i>peasantry</i> (NASB, Owen), <i>villages</i> (Young), <i>villagers</i> (ESV); <i>rulers</i> (Rotherham), <i>mighty men</i> (Septuagint) and <i>village life</i> (NIV).</p>			
<p>This word is very similar to the masculine noun פְּרָאזִי (פְּרָזִי) [pronounced p^{er}raw-ZEE], which means <i>villages, hamlets, country area, country dweller</i>. (Strong's #6521 BDB #826). It is also similar to the word which means <i>country, villages, open region</i> (Strong's #6519 BDB #826). However, it is also similar to the word פְּרָאזִי (פְּרָזִי) [pronounced paw-RAWZ], which means either <i>villages</i> or <i>leaders</i>. This word is found only in Habak. 3:14. Strong's #6518 BDB #826.</p>			
<p>בֶּ (בְּ) [pronounced b^{eh}]</p>	<p><i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i></p>	<p>a preposition of proximity</p>	<p>No Strong's # BDB #88</p>
<p>יִשְׂרָאֵל (יִשְׂרָאֵל)</p> <p>[pronounced yis-raw-ALE]</p>	<p>transliterated <i>Israel</i></p>	<p>masculine proper noun</p>	<p>Strong's #3478 BDB #975</p>

Translation: [True leadership ceased in Israel](#). What first ceased is discussed above. This word occurs here and in v. 11. We might could get away with the rendering *rural expansion*. In examining this in context—Deborah saying, *until I arose*—makes me think that this word should be rendered *true leadership*. There was not a leadership; there was no police force, there was no army in place. There was nothing to insure the protection of the individual. We do not have personal freedom without an umbrella of authority. Furthermore, traveling and free trade in Israel were restricted or simply ceased until Deborah arose, a mother in Israel.

What the NIV Study Bible suggests is that *the inhabitants of villages fled to walled towns for protection*.¹⁸ Clarke gives essentially the same interpretation (*The people were obliged to live together in fortified places; or in great numbers, to protect each other against the incursions of bands of spoilers*).¹⁹ Gill goes into greater detail: *Not only did those Canaanitish robbers go upon the highway, and robbed all they met with, which made travelling difficult and dangerous; but entered into the villages and unwalled towns, and broke into houses and plundered them; so that the inhabitants of them were obliged to quit their dwellings, and go into the fortified cities for security; by which means the villages were left empty, and in time fell to ruin, and ceased*.²⁰ You see, when some hostile rulers take over an area, they provide some modicum of protection for the inhabitants of the area. Jabin and Sisera were interested in ruling over the land and collecting their due from the people, but they did not give back anything in return.

The alternate interpretation which I am going with is, the local rulership and control ceased; Jabin and Sisera control these areas, as well as the men under them. This makes even better sense, but is more difficult to support from the original languages.

Even given those two interpretations, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown gives a generalized approach: *The song proceeds in these verses to describe the sad condition of the country, the oppression of the*

¹⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 333.
¹⁹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:7.
²⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:7.

people, and the origin of all the national distress in the people's apostasy from God. Idolatry was the cause of foreign invasion and internal inability to resist it. The idea is, they are being oppressed by a foreign power due to their idolatry and apostasy; and this is what we would have expected. It is my view that Deborah cites something more specific for her era, and that is a complete lack of spiritual leadership (in Israel, that would mean a lack of spiritual and political leadership).

Judges 5:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châdal (לָדַל) [pronounced <i>khaw-DAHL</i>]	<i>to cease and desist, to leave off, to cease, to leave, to forsake</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #2308 BDB #292

Translation: [It ceased...](#) We are going to have a repetition of words here. This entire verse has a lot of repetition and when viewed as a whole, the poetic nature of the verse will be clear. What has ceased is, true leadership in Israel, a void which Deborah fills.

Judges 5:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿad (עַד) [pronounced <i>gahd</i>]	<i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>	preposition	Strong's #5704 BDB #723
ʿăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81

Together, ʿad and ʿăsher mean *until that, until*. Generally used of an event which occurred in the past.

The word which we actually find here is...

she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle:	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
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This appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun ʿăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *uh-SHER*], which means *that, which, when, who* or *how*. Strong's #834 BDB #81. Its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring.²¹

I list the other relative pronoun, as it has a common meaning when combined with ʿad; therefore, we should expect that ʿad + this particle also means *until that, until*.

qûwm (קָוַם) [pronounced <i>koom</i>]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
D ^{eb} bôwrâh (דְּבוֹרָה) [pronounced <i>d^{eb}-voh-RAW</i>],	<i>bee; transliterated Deborah</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1683 BDB #184

²¹ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

Translation: ...until I—Deborah—arose,... Whatever was lacking, Deborah arose and filled the gap. My interpretation comes from this portion of the verse; something is missing; Deborah arises to replace that which is missing. What makes sense is, there is a lack of leadership in Israel; and, as unusual as it may seem, Deborah, a woman, rises up to take a position of leadership. I say *unusual*, as women are not generally portrayed as leaders or as those in authority in Scripture. However, in a period of time when men do not assume positions of leadership, then sometimes it is necessary for a strong woman to do so.

The interpretation that peasantry, or rural population or something of that nature ceased, until Deborah arose, just does not seem to make much sense.

Judges 5:7d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qûwm (קוּמ) [pronounced <i>koom</i>]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
ʿêṃ (אֵם) [pronounced <i>aim</i>]	<i>mother</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #517 BDB #51
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Yis ^e rá ^ʿ êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: ...I arose, a mother in Israel. F.F. Bruce suggests (and *The Amplified Bible* as well as others go along with him) that the doubling of the verb here could be understood not as a 1st person (which is how it reads in the Hebrew), but as an archaic 2nd person singular—you arose. To add to this confusion, the Greek reads that *Deborah arose*. I don't see any pressing reason why we should stray from the actual Hebrew. The doubling of the second verb would match poetically with the doubling of the first.

Let's look at this verse as a whole:

The Poetic Nature of Judges 5:7	
Scripture	Explanation
True leadership ceased in Israel.	<i>Ceased</i> actually begins this and the next line.
It ceased until I—Deborah— arose ,	The repetition of the word <i>ceased</i> emphasizes the dire straights that Israel is in. We begin this line with despair, but we end with hope—I, Deborah, arose .
I arose , a mother in Israel.	Deborah emphasizes her humble beginnings; she is not the daughter of a judge or the wife of a great, fallen warrior; she is simply a mother in Israel who had to rise to the occasion.

Since no man rises to a position of leadership, Deborah herself must rise to the occasion. This is not some power-hungry female who wants the chance to tell men what she wants them to do; this is a woman who takes a stand because it is necessary for her country. She is not grabbing whatever power that she can; she is filling a void.

McGee concurs with my opinion, as you will see.

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McGee: *Deborah confesses that she is a mother in Israel and was not looking for a job at all. The fact that she took the lead is no reflection on her. She was God's choice. History affords man such examples. There was Molly Pitcher, the wife of a Revolutionary soldier, who, at the battle of Monmouth, manned the cannon at which her husband had just fallen. Other examples are Joan of Arc, the French heroine, and Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra.*²² And, of course, Xena, warrior princess.

McGee, again: *Deborah was one of the outstanding judges. She far exceeded Othniel in ability. It is an evidence of decline, however, when women come in into the position of authority. It is a sign of weakness and of a flabby age. We have already seen that weak-kneed general, Barak. He was a sissy. He wanted to stay home and did not want to fight at all. Deborah had to agree to go with him before he was willing to go and battle the enemy...Regardless of what you might think (and I know I may sound very out of date, especially in this day of women's rights), America is paying an awful price for taking women into its defense system and into industry. I made this statement as far back as 1948, and I am no prophet, but I predicted a backwash of immorality if women left the home. Well, it certainly came to pass. First there was an epidemic of women shooting their husbands, deserting their children, becoming dope peddlers and committing suicide. There are many things that are considered a menace in our country—inflation, crime, foreign aggression—but I feel that the greatest danger is that women are leaving their place in the home.*²³

What McGee did not mention, and something which was probably unthinkable to him at that time, was the incredible sexual immorality which would befall American women as well, who have debased themselves with lewdness, promiscuity and Lesbianism. And it begins early. Female children barely entering puberty dress provocatively. Very few associate their first sexual experience with marriage and very few associate marriage with a forever commitment.

Let me quote from the well-known article from Forbes Magazine, written by Michael Noer, Aug. 22, 2006, which caused quite a stir, because it does not fit feminist doctrine: *Guys: a word of advice, don't marry a woman with a career. Why? Because if many social scientists are to be believed, you run a higher risk of having a rocky marriage. While everyone knows that marriage can be stressful, recent studies have found professional women are more likely to get divorced, more likely to cheat and less likely to have children. And if they do have kids, they are more likely to be unhappy about it. A recent study in Social Forces, a research journal, found that women—even those with a "feminist" outlook—are happier when their husband is the primary breadwinner.*²⁴

By the way, when I went to www.dogpile.com in order to find this article, I had to wade through dozens upon dozens of commentaries from those who literally threw a fit over the article. The article deals with simple correlation studies; career women and homemakers are compared in areas of divorce, infidelity, happiness; and, apart from the nebulous concept of happiness, these are simple, correlative statistics; and very difficult to argue with. However, people do, of course, because their vision has been colored by feminism doctrine. Yes, I am sure that some can blow this off by saying, *statistics lie*, and not give it another thought (this is the simple-minded

²² J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 137.

²³ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; pp. 137–138.

²⁴ From http://www.forbes.com/opinions/2006/08/23/Marriage-Careers-Divorce_cx_mn_land.html

response of someone who does not like the statistics he is confronted with, so he dismisses them altogether). When the analysis is done, questions dealing with happiness could be suspect (not because the survey is inaccurate, but because quantifying and measuring relative happiness is difficult). However, when it comes to divorce and fidelity (or infidelity), that's hard to fake. A career woman is more likely to get divorced; a career woman is more likely to cuckold her husband. No matter what philosophical or sociological view you want to take, you cannot argue with those facts.

One might be able to make an argument about the happiness factor, as happiness is difficult to gauge, but also realize, divorce and infidelity are key indicators of an unhappy or unsatisfied person. So, even though that aspect of sociological research can be questioned, it is, nevertheless, logical and reasonable.

It is also important to note that Noer's article is not based on one, but on several studies, which include the following information: *If they [career women] quit their jobs and stay home with the kids, they will be unhappy (Journal of Marriage and Family, 2003). They will be unhappy if they make more money than you do (Social Forces, 2006). You [the husband] will be unhappy if they make more money than you do (Journal of Marriage and Family, 2001). You will be more likely to fall ill (American Journal of Sociology). Even your house will be dirtier (Institute for Social Research).*²⁵

And what did McGee predict as far back as 1948? As women go into industry and into the military, there will be an increase of immorality. If anyone reading this knows anything about the 50's and 60's and compares it to the 21st century, it should be clear that the United States has become extremely immoral by comparison. Infidelity was flat out wrong in the 50's. There were even laws against it. This was an agreed upon more. 50–60 years later, a common movie theme of many love stories is a man or a woman stepping out on their present husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend, and finding a more fulfilling, enriching relationship elsewhere. Sex before marriage? Almost non-existent in the 50's; and when it did exist, it was rarely casual. Today, sexual exploration is presented as the norm; a relationship may or may not follow. In the 50's, divorce was rare and not easy to get. Some of those who divorced were even cut off from other social relationships because of the divorce. Today, over 50% of those who get married also get divorced.

So, was Deborah wrong to rise to the occasion? Should she have stayed home with the kids and the laundry? Obviously not; God spoke to her; God guided her; and God blessed her. Israel, through Deborah, was blessed. The key is, there was no true male leadership in Israel, so Deborah had to arise to fill the void. Remember, that the greatest male leader in Israel would not go to war against the Canaanites, even though God had so ordered him to; unless Deborah went with him.

**He chose gods new
then war gates.
A shield if seen and spear [or, A shield, was
it seen? And spear]
in forty thousand in Israel.**

Judges
5:8

**He chose new gods
then war [of the] gates.
Was a shield seen?
or spear among forty thousand in Israel?**

**Israel chose new gods and then, suddenly, war was within her gates.
Was there even a shield or a spear to be found among forty thousand in Israel?**

We had better look at some other translations first:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

The Lord chose new wars, and he himself overthrew the gates of the enemies.
a shield and spear was not seen among forty thousand of Israel.

Masoretic Text

He chose gods new

²⁵ Ibid.

then war gates.

A shield if seen and spear [or, A shield, was it seen? And spear]
in forty thousand in Israel.

Peshitta

The LORD will choose new things; then the barley bread,
and a sword or a spear will not be seen among 40,000 in Israel.

Septuagint

They chose new gods; then the cities of rulers fought;
if there should be seen a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel.

Significant differences:

The problem is the second phrase, which is rather confusing in the Hebrew. The Latin is different in the first two lines, as is the Syriac. Because there is such a difference between all 4 ancient texts, I'll stick with the Hebrew when it comes to explaining what is here.

One thing which should be noted: this is one of the most problematic verses when it comes to differences between the ancient texts; however, there are no major doctrines (or minor ones, for that matter) which are affected by the difference in text.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	The Israelites worshiped other gods, and the gates of their towns were then attacked. But they had no shields or spears to fight with.
<i>The Message</i>	God chose new leaders, who then fought at the gates. And not a shield or spear to be seen among the forty companies of Israel.
NLT	When Israel chose new gods, war erupted at the city gates. Yet not a shield or spear could be seen among the forty thousand warriors in Israel!
REB	They chose new gods, they consorted with demons. Not a shield was to be seen, not a lance among forty thousand Israelites.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	When the people chose new gods, war broke out inside the city gates. Not a weapon was seen among 40,000 in Israel.
HCSB	Israel chose new gods, then war was in the gates. Not a shield or spear was seen among 40,000 in Israel.
JPS (Tanakh)	When they chose new gods, Was there a fighter then in the gates? [<i>Meaning of Hebrew uncertain; others "then was war in the gates."</i>] No shield or spear was seen Among forty thousand in Israel!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	They chose gods that were new, Then [suddenly], [there is] war at the gates! Was there a shield to be seen? Or a spear? Among forty thousand in Israel?
ESV	When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates. Was shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand in Israel?
NASB	New gods were chosen; Then war was in the gates. Not a shield or a spear was seen Among forty thousand in Israel.
Young's Updated LT	He chooses new gods, Then war is at the gates! A shield is not seen—and a spear Among forty thousand in Israel.

What is the gist of this verse? When Israel became idolatrous, there was war within their gates; and they lacked shields and swords to defend themselves with.

Judges 5:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bâchar (בָּחַר) [pronounced <i>baw-KHAHR</i>]	<i>to choose</i> ; Gesenius also lists <i>to prove, to try, to examine, to approve, to choose, to select; to love, to delight in [something], to desire</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #977 BDB #103
ʿēlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
châdâsh (חֲדָשׁ) [pronounced <i>khaw-DAWSH</i>]	<i>new, new thing; fresh</i>	masculine plural adjective	Strong's #2319 BDB #294

Translation: **He chose new gods...** *Chosen* is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect. The subject of the sentence is likely *Israel*. What Israel chose were new gods. This is in keeping with the pattern which occurs throughout the book of Judges: Israel goes from peace to idolatry; when Israel falls into idolatry, then they are put under pressure, as per Lev. 26.

Judges 5:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâz (אָז) [pronounced <i>awz</i>]	<i>then, at that time, in that case (when following an if or though), now, as things are; that being so</i>	adverb	Strong's #227 BDB #23
lâchêm (לַחֵם) [pronounced <i>law-KHAIM</i>]	<i>war; siege; battle</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3901 BDB #535
This word is only found here in Judges 5:8; it appears to be a Piel form of the word <i>to fight, to do battle, to war</i> . Strong's #3898 BDB #535.			
shaʿar (שַׁעַר) [pronounced <i>SHAH-ğahr</i>]	<i>gates [control of city can be implied]; entrance [through the gates]</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #8179 BDB #1044

Translation: **...then war [of the] gates...** Suddenly, there was war of [the] gates. *War* is in the construct state, which is simply a difference of vowel points (in other words, this may or may not be in keeping with the original). The best indication is that war was brought right to the gates of Israel's cities, if not inside the gates themselves. We have no preposition prior to the word *gates*; neither do we have a connective, which is what we would have if it were not in the construct. I will pass off the lack of a connective to the poetic nature of this verse or accept that *war* is in the construct.

Israel would always suffer when she turned away from Jehovah to other gods. This is a scene which is predicted in several places and played out throughout the Old and New Testaments. “But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked. You are grown fat, thick, and sleek. Then he forsook God Who made him and scorned the Rock of his salvation. They made Him jealous with strange gods, with abominations they provoked Him to anger. The sacrificed to demons *who were not-God, to gods whom they had not known, newer gods who had come in later, whom your fathers did not dread.* You neglected the Rock Who begot you and you forgot the God Who gave you birth. And Jehovah saw this and He spurned *them*, because of the provocation of His sons and daughters. Then He said, ‘I will hide My face from them and I will see what their end *will be.* For they are a perverse generation, sons in whom there is no faithfulness. They have made Me jealous with *what is not-God*; they have provoke Me to anger with their idols. Therefore, I will make them jealous with not-[My]-people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in My anger and it burns to the lowest portion of Sheol; and it consumes the earth with its yield and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap misfortunes on them and I will use My arrows on them. They will be wasted by famine and consumed by plague and bitter destruction. And the teeth of beasts I will send upon them with the venom of crawling things of the dust. Outside, the sword will bereave and inside, terror, for both young men and virgins, the nurslings and the old men.’” (Deut. 32:15–25). The general idea here is that Deborah is giving a little history lesson. Israel, in her down cycle, chose new gods, heathen gods, then, suddenly, they were faced with war.

McGee: *Israel denied God—as men do today—only instead of becoming atheists, they became polytheists.*²⁶ Throughout the entire Bible, there is One God; man does not simply have a variety of ways or worshiping Him. There are not a variety of names (Buddha, Mohammed, Allah) by which we access Him. In this time period, the God of the Jews is the God of the Universe.

Judges 5:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mâgên (מָגֵן) [pronounced <i>maw-GAYN</i>]	<i>shield, smaller shield; protection</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4043 BDB #171
ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced <i>eem</i>]	<i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event)</i>	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong's #518 BDB #49
râ`âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i>]	<i>to be seen, to be visible; to let oneself be seen, to appear; to present oneself; to be provided [cared] for (i.e., looked after)</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
romach (רֹמַח) [pronounced <i>ROH-mahkh</i>]	<i>spear, lance, javelin</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7420 BDB #942
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88

²⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 139.

Judges 5:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿarḇâʿîym (אַרְבַּעִים) [pronounced ar ^e -BAW-GEEM]	forty	undeclined plural noun	Strong's #705 BDB #917
ʿelep (אֶלֶף) pronounced EH-lef]	thousand, family, (500?); military unit	masculine singular noun	Strong's #505 (and #504) BDB #48
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	transliterated Israel	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: ...Was a shield seen? or spear among forty thousand in Israel? The hypothetical particle could also be an interrogative particle; both Rotherham and Young took it as an interrogative particle; the translators of the NASB ignored it; and Owen took it to be a hypothetical particle (although he did not translate as such). In any case, the point is that there was not a shield or a spear to be found in 40,000 men in Israel, meaning that Israel had been disarmed. They were without the proper amount of military equipment. Time to haul out those ox-goats, I guess.

Matthew Henry comments: *Either they were disarmed by their oppressors, or they themselves neglected the art of war; so that, though they had spears and shields, they were not to be seen, but were thrown by and suffered to rust, they having neither skill nor will to use them.*²⁷

Now, oft times Thieme would launch into a military preparedness lecture at this point. And, if the lack of weapons occurred prior to the war, this would be an apt place to do it. Because of what follows, it appears as though we are dealing with preparations to go to war with Jabin and Sisera. That is, the entire previous history of Israel's down cycle, ala Judges 2:13, is covered in the first two lines of v. 8; in fact, this information is given more or less by way of explanation, just as the arising of Deborah. After that, we are dealing with preparing for a war for independence. Therefore, their lack of weaponry is a result of being under the control of the Canaanites (similar to 1Sam. 13:19–22), and not the prelude to that. The NIV Study Bible suggests that their lack of weaponry could also be a result of an allegiance to the Canaanites or a peace with the Canaanites (as per Judges 3:5–6).

One thing is clear in history—you can be an essentially peaceful people, and, for that reason, believe that you can chunk all of your weaponry—but there will be countries around you who will see this as weakness, not as some higher level of evolution, and will exploit the situation.

We should deal with the actual number 40,000. In Judges 4:6, 10, we have the number 10,000. It is clear in Judges 4 that we are speaking of the troops from Naphtali and Zebulun. In Judges 5, this is a reference to Israel, although I would take it as a reference to northwestern Israel (as opposed to Gad, Reuben and half of Manasseh in the east; and Simeon and Judah in the south). From this standpoint, the numbers would compliment each other quite reasonably.

Deborah is not really dealing with the *why* and the *wherefor's*; she merely sets the stage. Israel had pursued other gods; their was war at Israel's gates; the people lacked the proper equipment and preparation for war. All this was the scene as Deborah arose as a leader in Israel.

²⁷ Matthew Henry's Commentary. [Web link](#).

Clarke paints an interesting picture of the conflict, which makes perfect sense, given what we have read so far in this and the previous chapter: *“The Lord chose a new species of war, and himself subverted the gates of the enemy.”* [Clarke is quoting the Latin Vulgate here]. Now, what was this new species of war? A woman signifies her orders to Barak; he takes 10,000 men, wholly unarmed, and retires to Mount Tabor, where they are immediately besieged by a powerful and well-appointed army. On a sudden Barak and his men rush upon them, terror and dismay are spread through the whole Canaanitish army, and the rout is instantaneous and complete. The Israelites immediately arm themselves with the arms of their enemies, and slay all before them; they run, and are pursued in all directions. Sisera, their general, is no longer safe in his chariot; either his horses fail, or the unevenness of the road obliges him to desert it, and fly away on foot; in the end, the whole army is destroyed, and the leader ingloriously slain. This was a new species of war, and was most evidently the Lord’s doings. Whatever may be said of the version of the Vulgate, (and the Syriac and Arabic are something like it), the above are all facts, and show the wondrous working of the Lord.²⁸ Whether or not there is anything to this new species of war, it is clear from this verse that, of 40,000 men, there was not a sword or a shield to be found; yet we have them charging down the hill toward the Canaanites in the previous chapter. I personally doubt that they were weaponless; however, what they probably used to begin with is farm implements, along the lines of Shamgar who used the ox goad to kill 600 Philistines.

Deborah merely sets the stage here, but does not give us any explanation as to why Israel is unarmed. There are several possible reasons for this.

Theories as to Why was Israel Unarmed

1. The Israelites developed some strong bonds between themselves and the indigenous Canaanites, worshiped their gods, and decided that being armed was not necessary to their society.
2. The Canaanites and/or the Philistines had placed controls over the Israelites with respect to forging weapons (along the lines of 1Sam. 13:19–22).
3. The Canaanites, in their several decades of oppression, disarmed the Israelites.
4. Israel was not armed due to negligence and sloth; what weapons they had may have been forged back into farming implements.
5. Israel did not need any weapons, as God fought for them. Although this seems very holy and all that, we already know that Israel was in a low spiritual state; so attributing great faith to them seems misplaced at this point in their history. On the other hand, one could see this as a misapplication of faith. However, even that seems like an incorrect understanding, as their faith seems to be in idols and the gods of other peoples.
6. Deborah states the lack of weapons as a fact; but the fault here goes back to Israel’s idolatry. That is, it is unfortunate that Israel is without weapons here, but the real problem is their spiritual condition.

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Let’s take these last two lines as a whole: [Was a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?](#) As we will observe later on in this chapter, more tribes participate in Israel’s revolt against the Canaanites than just Zebulun and Issachar. Their initial battle puts 10,000 men from just those two tribes against Sisera and his army. However, more tribes participated to fully defeat the Canaanites, so that an army of 40,000 is reasonable. Deborah makes the observation that of these 40,000 men, they had no offensive or defensive military gear.

There are other interpretations: one suggests that, out of several hundred thousand men, there was only enough military gear for 40,000. That is a nice thought, but it is problematic for two reasons: (1) this is not what the text

²⁸ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:8.

says; (2) given that some of the tribes participated and many did not, an army of 40,000 weaponless men seems more reasonable than an army with several hundred thousand, given what is said in this and the previous chapter.

Application: I come from a background that believes in pacifism, and Gandhi was held up as a role model for me. However, I have to repudiate that background, as there is no Scriptural backing for it. As a nation, we should and must be militarily prepared. We cannot expect to lay down our weapons, and that our enemies will then let us be. This is like saying, *let's get rid of policemen so that crime will become non-existent*. It is foolish and makes unwarranted assumptions about the human condition. War is not a thing of the past; war is not something that mankind, through evolution and spiritual enlightenment, will learn to overcome.

McGee goes a little off-topic at this point, but makes an interesting observation: *Do you remember the hopes that this country had after World War II? Everyone in the United States thought they were going to have peace at last. Many people thought they would live in peace and sin, and it would be nice. They forgot to read Psalm 85:10 which says, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have killed each other." Friends, peace and righteousness do not even speak to each other today—I do not even think they know each other! It is interesting that God did not let us live comfortably in peace and sin. God did not let Israel live that way either. It is also interesting to not that Israel lacked a defense. They has nothing with which to meet the enemy.*²⁹ Quite simply, you don't get to have peace and immorality. Only in the Great Tribulation will people be under the mistaken impression that they have achieved both under the leadership of the beast (which is why he will be worshipped).

**My heart to lawmakers of Israel
the ones willingly volunteering in the
people;
you [all] bless Y^ehowah.**

Judges
5:9

**My heart [goes out] to the lawmakers of
Israel,
the ones willingly volunteering among the
people;
[All of] you, bless Y^ehowah.**

**My heart goes out to the scribes in Israel, the ones who have willing volunteered to lead the people;
Bless Jehovah, all of you.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	My heart loves the princes of Israel: O you, that of your own good will offered yourselves to danger, bless the Lord.
Masoretic Text	My heart to lawmakers of Israel the ones willingly volunteering in the people; you [all] bless Y ^e howah.
Peshitta	My heart said to the lawgiver of Israel, "They who are chosen among the people, bless the LORD."
Septuagint	My heart <i>inclines</i> to the orders given in Israel; you who are willing among the people, bless the Lord.

Significant differences: No significant differences; it is more of a matter of interpretation. There is no verb in the first line, so it ends up being a matter of interpretation. The Latin and Syriac make reasonable guesses here, as we find in many English translations.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

²⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 139.

CEV	I praise you, LORD, and I am grateful for those leaders and soldiers who volunteered.
NLT	My heart goes out to Israel's leaders, and to those who gladly followed. Bless the LORD!

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	My heart goes out to Israel's commanders, to those people who volunteered. Praise the LORD!
HCSB	My heart is with the leaders of Israel, with the volunteers of the people. Praise the LORD!
JPS (Tanakh)	My heart is with Israel's leaders, With the dedicated of the people— Bless the LORD!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless the LORD.
MKJV	My heart is toward the lawgivers of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless Jehovah.
Young's Updated LT	My heart is to the lawgivers of Israel, Who are offering themselves willingly among the people, Bless you Jehovah! .

What is the gist of this verse? Deborah's heart is with the leaders of Israel who offer up themselves willingly to an enemy with much greater weaponry. She blesses Jehovah God [i.e., thanks Him] for His power and grace {I am assuming that to be the interpretation here}.

Judges 5:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b ṽ]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^ə)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
châqâq (חָקַק) [pronounced khaw-KAK]	<i>lawgivers; those who carve out; those who cut up [their enemies in battle]; engravers, scribes; painters; those who ordain or make decrees</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #2710 BDB #349

Given the variety of Qal meanings, any of these are possible. In the KJV, we primarily see the participle rendered as *lawgivers, governors*. Zodhiates seems to think that we may understand this, in the participle, to mean *ruler, lawgiver, leader, commander*. Given the variety of things that this could mean, we are probably safe with one of those three renderings.

Yis ^ə rá ^ˈ êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis ^ˈ -raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
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Judges 5:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâdab (נָדַב) [pronounced naw- DAHbʹ]	<i>volunteers, those freely offering themselves; those who give generously [willingly, spontaneously]; those offering up</i>	masculine plural, Hithpael participle	Strong's #5068 BDB #621
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿam (אָם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

Translation: My heart [goes out] to the lawmakers of Israel, the ones willingly volunteering among the people;... We have two participles in this portion of the verse, which are covered in detail above. The first reasonably means *lawmakers, lawgivers*, and possibly the *leaders* or *governors* of Israel. It's use as a *lawgiver* is unusual here because (1) God gave Israel the Law; and (2) Israel is not governing herself but is being governed by Jabin and that is enforced by Sisera. The key is that these are the men who would have a position of leadership, if they were not under the rule of Jabin.

The second participle means *volunteers*; I think the idea is, we have the commanders and we have the grunts, both of whom are necessary to a military force. These are the men who stood up to go out to war. In meandering through several message boards the other day, I came across a person who asked a question, and then answered it himself (very typical of Bible answer call in shows and places where people post. They don't really have a question; they just want to spread their own opinions, which are generally incorrect. This person asked if it was alright for a Christian to go to war; then he quickly answered *no*, because Jesus said, "Turn the other cheek" and "Love your enemies." (Matt. 5:39b, 44a). In the Bible, the highest honor is always afforded those in military service. We just finished the book of Joshua where Joshua, although not brimming with intelligence, is still portrayed as quite honorable. What many Jewish scholars who are not Christian recognize is that Jesus did not teach a lot of new doctrines; He taught primarily the Law of Moses and its correct applications. A lot of Christians think that the teaching of our Lord was all totally brand new and that's why the Jewish authorities despised Him. "Turn the other cheek" and "Love your enemies" applied to personal relationships, not to national relationships. When our Lord spoke to the centurion, He did not tell him to put down his sword and follow Him. He did not berate him for fighting in wars and leading others to fight in wars. Our Lord said, "I have not found a greater faith; no, not in all of Israel." (Matt. 8:10b). These men who rallied to the call of Barak and presented themselves for war—these men are heroes, to be respected and emulated. The Bible always affords the highest honor to those who serve in the military.

Barnes comments: *In this deplorable weakness of Israel how noble was the conduct of the governors who volunteered to lead the people against their oppressors. Deborah's heart was filled with admiration as she thought of their patriotic devotion.*³⁰

³⁰ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 427.

Judges 5:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK^e</i>]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yohh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: [All of] you bless Y^ehowah. The final phrase is the 2nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative of *bless*, which is Deborah directing those who hear her song to give thanksgiving to God for providing these men the strength and the wherewithal to step up to the plate and defend their country. Recall that our *blessing* God is a show of thanksgiving and a recognition of what He has done on our behalf.

Riders of donkeys light-colored [or, white] sitters upon saddles [or, carpets] and walkers upon a way, speak.

Judges
5:10

Riders of light-colored donkeys, those sitting upon saddles [or, carpets], and those walking along the way, speak.

Those of you who ride upon expensive donkeys and those of you who sit upon carpets, and those of you who are walking about freely and in safety—verbally acknowledge and recognize those who provided you your freedom.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	Speak, you that ride upon fair asses, and you that sit in judgment, and walk in the way.
Masoretic Text	Riders of donkeys reddish-grey [or, <i>white</i>] sitters upon saddles [or, <i>carpets</i>] and walkers upon a way, speak.
Peshitta	O you who ride on white asses, you who dwell in houses, and you who travel on the highways,... [the next verse tells them to <i>meditate on the words of the inquirers</i>].
Septuagint	You that mount a she-ass at noon-day, you that sit on the judgement-seat, and walk by the roads of them that sit in judgement by the way; declare....

Significant differences: The color of these donkeys is unclear; the Peshitta has them as white, the Vulgate as light; the MT as reddish-grey or white; and the Septuagint calling them simply she-asses. I think the difficulty of the MT causes the translators to make their best guess.

The next problem is, *where do they dwell?* In the Vulgate and LXX, it is in judgment (or the *judgement-seat*); in the Peshitta, it is in houses; in the MT, it is probably

saddles. Again, the uncertainty of the meaning of the MT, I believe, brought out the creative streak of the ancient translators.

There seems to be an agreement that they are all *walking in the way* or *on the highways* or *roads*. The LXX adds the phrase *of them that sit in judgment*, identifying where these roads are.

All, but the Peshitta ask these people *to speak*; the Peshitta, in the next verse, asks them *to meditate*.

Because of these substantial differences, we will stay with the Masoretic text as much as possible when interpreting this verse; and, I suspect, we may not get much in the interpretation.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Listen, everyone! Whether you ride a donkey with a padded saddle or have to walk.
 NLT "You who ride on fine donkeys
 and sit on fancy saddle blankets, listen!
 And you who must walk along the road, listen!"

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ You people who ride on brown donkeys, who sit on saddle blankets, and who walk on the road—think.
 HCSB You who ride on white donkeys, who sit on saddle blankets, and who travel on the road, give praise!
 JPS (Tanakh) You riders on tawny she-asses,
 You who sit on saddle rugs,
 And you wayfarers, declare it!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

LTHB You that ride on white asses, you that sit on rich carpets, and you going on the way, sing out!
 MKJV Speak, you who ride on white asses, you who sit in judgment and walk by the way.
 Young's Updated LT Riders on white asses—Those sitting on a long robe—And walkers by the way—meditate!

What is the gist of this verse? Certain types of people—those who ride white donkeys, those who sit upon saddles, and those who walk upon the way, are asked to speak out (or *to meditate, study*).

Judges 5:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râkab (רָכַב) [pronounced raw-KAH ^B V]	<i>the one riding, rider</i>	masculine plural construct, Qal active participle	Strong's #7392 BDB #938
ʾâthôwn (אֲתוֹן) [pronounced aw-THORN]	<i>ass, she-ass, donkey</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #860 BDB #87

Judges 5:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tsâchôr (צַחֹר) [pronounced tsaw- KHOHR]	<i>white, tawny; possibly light-colored or reddish brown with lighter spots?</i>	masculine plural, adjective	Strong's #6715 BDB #850

Gill goes into great detail about similar words in other languages, in order to support that this word means *white*.³¹

Translation: [Riders of light-colored donkeys,...](#) The adjective which describes the donkeys is an adjective which means *tawny, reddish-gray*. Young and the NIV have *white* instead; the NASB has both. One commentator, whose name I can't recall, but whose comments were generally worthless, spoke of all white asses; whereas Keil and Delitzsch, whose opinions I respect, claim that no such animal exists and that these were donkeys spotted with white (although, they claim the word means *dazzling white*). James Freeman, whom I generally trust, says that these were white asses, and therefore quite expensive and ridden on only by the very wealthy.

Gill goes into great detail, citing several references, that even as recently as the last century (2 centuries ago for us), there were herds of wild asses seen along the Euphrates which were white. In fact, let me just quote from Gill, as he has a lot to say here: *The ass in the Hebrew language has its name from redness, that being the usual colour of them in those parts; and hence they were hateful to the Egyptians, because that their Typhon was of that colour,³² but there were some that were white, as there are wild ones now of that colour. A traveler³³ in those parts in the beginning of the last century tells us, that on the banks of the Euphrates they beheld every day great droves of wild beasts, as wild asses "all white", &c. The word we translate "white" is "zechorot", and perhaps may describe the same animal the Ethiopians call "zecora", and some "zebra"; said to excel in beauty all four footed creatures in the whole world. It is an animal of the size of a mule, found in the woods beyond Abyssinia, is easily tamed, and is the frequent and chief present of the kings of that country; about its loins is a circle of a black colour, in the form of a girdle, which is followed with more on each side, according to the part of the body, some broader, others narrower, both black and white, or of an ash colour, so neat that they seem to exceed the art of the most eminent painter; its only deformity are its ears, which are long; hence it is called by the Portuguese the wild ass, though wrongly; of what value and esteem it was appears from the large price it has been sold for; one, that was the gift of a king to a Turkish governor, was sold to an Indian for 2,000 pieces of Venetian money, to make a present of to the great Mogor, king of the Indians,³⁴ which was the value of nine hundred pounds. Those that rode on these creatures were the princes and nobles of Israel; though they are generally interpreted by the Jewish commentators of merchants that rode from place to place about business.³⁵*

And certainly, another possibility is that they could have been a very light tan. We do not have enough Biblical references to this word to tie it down any better than that. However, Gill makes a compelling case for these being *white* asses. In any case, it appears that those who owned these donkeys and rode upon them were the rich and prosperous.

Societies vary as to how riding on donkeys is viewed. This area had few horses, and it was the elite and royalty who rode donkeys. You may recall that our Lord came into Jerusalem riding a donkey. Furthermore, by Judges 10:4 12:14, it is clear that those of a royal family were the ones to ride donkeys during that era.

³¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:10.

³² Plutarch. de Iside.

³³ Cartwright's Preacher's Travels, p. 106.

³⁴ Ludolph. Ethiop. Hist. I. 1. c. 10. Vid. Philostorg. Eccles. Hist. I. 3. c. 11.

³⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:10. The references from within this paragraph are those cited by Gill.

Judges 5:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yāshab (יָשַׁב) [pronounced yaw-SHAHBV]	<i>those inhabiting, those staying, those dwelling in, the inhabitants of, the ones dwelling in, dwellers of, those sitting [here], the ones sitting</i>	masculine plural construct, Qal active participle	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ǵahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752
maddīym (מַדְיִים) [pronounced mahd-DEEM]	<i>measure, cloth garments, outer garments; armored coat; carefully tailored clothing; a thick piece of cloth; leather garments, nice carpet; a hand-crafted saddle?</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4055 BDB #551

Translation: ...those sitting upon saddles [or, carpets],... What they are sitting upon is *measure, cloth garment*, and possibly, in this context, a thick piece of cloth, akin to a *carpet*. Barnes suggests that this is a saddle, which makes even more sense. My thinking, after examining some of the other passages where this noun is found (Lev. 6:10 Judges 3:16 1Sam. 17:38–39), is that this should be rendered *a carefully-tailored clothing*; however, this would make little sense for people to be sitting *upon* carefully-tailored clothing. Perhaps, in the context, this is a hand-made saddle? Maybe this is not related to the donkey in the previous line, and simply means that, in their tents, instead of the bare earth, they had some sort of carpeting. The implication is, they, again, are the wealthy.

Judges 5:10c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hālak ^e (הֹלְכִים) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	<i>those walking, those going, those who are departing; walkers, travelers</i>	masculine plural construct, Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ǵahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752
derek ^e (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced DEH-rek ^e]	<i>way, distance, road, path; journey, course; direction, towards; manner, habit, way [of life]; of moral character</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1870 BDB #202

Translation: ...and those walking along the way,... We also have another class of people called *walkers*; people who are not rich enough to afford the ancient, tricked-out automobile (a donkey with a saddle), walked to wherever they needed to go.

Some interpret this as a reference to rulers or judges who sat upon carpet where they functioned as rulers or judges.

Bullinger calls this a three-fold naming of princes, rulers and merchants.³⁶ These would be men who are successful because of the freedom that they enjoy in Israel which is no longer tyrannized because of the Canaanites. They are to speak of righteous deeds of God and to celebrate their freedom.

Judges 5:10d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sîyach (נִשַׁח) [pronounced SĒE-ahkh]	<i>communicate, declare, speak of, talk about; meditate, study</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #7878 BDB #967

Translation: ...speak! What they are all to do is the Qal imperative of sîyach (נִשַׁח) [pronounced SĒE-ahkh], and it means *to communicate, to declare, to speak of, to talk about*. This could also mean *meditate* or *study*. This is quite a thing, don't you think? We are not really 100% sure of whom we are speaking to; and, as if that were not enough, we do not even really know what we want them to do—should they speak out? Should they be meditating? Furthermore, isn't meditating and speaking pretty much the opposite of one another? What is that all about? Therefore, we should stop and take a look at the **Doctrine of Sîyach** (only a bare summary is presented below).

And, in case you do not want to examine the entire doctrine of this word...

A Summary of the Doctrine of Sîyach

1. One theory is, this word originally meant *to complain*, and that it gradually came to mean something different. However, by examining all of the places where sîyach occurs, we find that we do not need the meaning *to complain*.
2. Although there are several instances where this word could mean *to sing*, such a rendering seems unnecessary, as there are other and equally good options for the same passage.
3. There are even fewer instances where sîyach could mean *to pray*; and in all instances, other meanings are equally likely.
4. Therefore, that leaves us with two possible sets of meanings:
 - a. *To communicate, to speak, to verbalize, to say what is on your mind* and
 - b. *To think, to ponder, to meditate, to keep something at the forefront of your mind*.

What I had hoped to do in this examination is to eliminate one of the final two sets of meanings above; however, that seems to be impossible, given the several times this word seems to mean one or the other.

I should point out that I did not spend any real time examining the cognates; however, they could mean what they mean, and still allow for sîyach to be rendered as above.

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How you interpret this verse essentially depends upon *where you place these 3 sets of people in time*. The strictly western mind, which sees narrative always in a chronological form, might assume that these groups are those from before the war, which is covered in later verses. However, in v. 6, we just spoke of how much traveling had been restricted: *In the days of Shamgar ben Anath [and] in the days of Jael, the highways ceased and travelers of paths traveled on crooked highways*. However, these 3 examples speak of those who travel (at least the 1st and 3rd who are listed). They are told *to speak*. The idea is, movement and travel had been seriously restricted, *in the days*

³⁶ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 420.

of Shamgar and Jael; but now, those who travel, should speak out, or at least meditate, upon the freedom that they now enjoy. Apparently, even the very wealthy and the royalty, as it were, are able to move about freely. This did not just happen; this was not magic; there is a reason that we have gone from restricted movement to free and safe travel. It is this reason that these travelers should meditate on, and even speak of.

What Deborah is saying here is that, as a result of those who came forward and volunteered to serve God, to throw off their oppressors—they provided the peace and the prosperity. We are all to praise God for these men (v. 9) and those who became prosperous as a result, those who now sit on carpet rather than upon the ground, those who enjoy a freedom of travel—they are also to speak, to testify, to praise and to give thanks to God. In other words, there is a place in our lives for patriotism. There are times when we should recognize and extol the virtues of those who paid for our freedom with their lives and with their blood.

Application: There is a place for patriotism in your life as a believer. There have been men of great noble souls who have been willing to give all that they had for your freedom. In our passage, those who are enjoying great freedom are told to take time to reflect upon this, and even to speak of their freedom and how it was achieved.

At this time as I write, the United States is in Iraq, and we are in the process of training the Iraqis to handle their own newly established freedom. I recall hearing one special where our troops had to spend no little time convincing the Iraqi police to go out and patrol the streets with them. There are two reasons for this: (1) we did not require that their constitution include a Bill of Rights, which I believe to be a grave mistake. As recently as a year ago, a man was arrested, either in Iraq or Afghanistan for being a believer in Jesus Christ. (2) They do not value freedom enough to die for it. Our freedom in the United States was purchased by hundreds of thousands of lives, from those who signed the Declaration of Independence, right down to those who have fought in our wars overseas. If and when we leave (and, in my opinion, I believe we should establish semi-permanent bases there as we have in Germany, the Philippines and Japan), there is the very real possibility that they will fall into tyranny once again.

**From a sound of dividers at watering places,
there they [celebrate and] recount the
executed righteousness of Y^ehowah,
the executed righteousness of His true
leadership in Israel.**

**Then they went down to the gates, people of
Y^ehowah.**

Judges
5:11

**From the sound of those who have been
liberated [or, *the dividers*] at the watering
holes;
there they [celebrate and] recall the
righteous acts of Y^ehowah,
the righteous acts of His true leadership in
Israel.
Then the people of Y^ehowah went down to
the gates.**

**From the sound of the traders at the watering holes,
where they celebrate and recall the righteous acts of Jehovah—the righteous acts of His leadership
in Israel.
Then the people of Jehovah went down to the gates.**

We had better look at a couple of different translations here:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

Where the chariots were dashed together,
and the army of the enemies was choked,
there let the justices of the Lord be rehearsed,
and his clemency towards the brave men of Israel:
then the people of the Lord went down to the gates, and obtained the sovereignty.

Masoretic Text

From a sound of dividers at watering places,
there they [celebrate and] recount the executed righteousness of Y^ehowah,
the executed righteousness of His true leadership in Israel.

Then they went down to the gates, people of Y^ehowah.
 Peshitta Meditate on the words of the inquirers, who are among the teachers;
 they will execute the righteousness of the LORD,
 even His righteousness which He has multiplied in Israel;
 then the people of the LORD will march to the gates.
 Septuagint ...the noise of noisy ones among the drawers of water; there shall they relate
 righteous acts: O Lord, increase righteous acts in Israel: then the people of the Lord
 went down to the cities.

Significant differences: As in the previous verse, there are a great many differences, which is common for, say, the book of Samuel; but rather uncommon in this book. What is rare is, the LXX and the MT roughly agree in the first line, whereas the Latin and Syriac seem to be completely different.

The second line brings the Syriac into closer agreement with the Hebrew and Greek text; however, in the Syriac, they are *executing* the righteousness of the LORD; in the Greek and Hebrew, they are meditating upon it or speaking of it.

The Latin, all the way through, appears to be entirely different—as if it is a different verse. Only in the final line (2nd to the last line in the Latin), is there any general agreement among the ancient texts.

Because there is so much dissent here, I will cover only the Hebrew text; but bear in mind, there may be great inaccuracies in the text.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Even those who carry water to the animals will tell you, "The LORD has won victories, and so has Israel." Then the LORD's people marched down to the town gates...

The Message Gather at the town well and listen to them sing, Chanting the tale of GOD's victories, his victories accomplished in Israel. Then the people of GOD went down to the city gates.

NLT Listen to the village musicians gathered at the watering holes.
 They recount the righteous victrys of the LORD,
 and the victories of his villagers in Israel.
 Then the people of the LORD
 marched down to the city gates.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

*God's Word*TM Listen to the voices of those singing at the wells. Over and over again they repeat the victories of the LORD, the victories for his villages in Israel. Then the LORD'S people went down to the city gate.

HCSB Let them tell the righteous acts of the LORD, the righteous deeds of His warriors in Israel, with the voices of the singers at the watering places. Then the LORD's people went down to the gates.

JPS (Tanakh) Louder than the sound of archers [Or "thunder peals"; meaning of Hebrew uncertain],
 There among the watering places
 Let them chant the gracious acts of the LORD,
 His gracious deliverance of Israel.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	In the place of the noise of bowmen among the wells There speak boldly of the righteous acts of Yahweh, righteous acts of his rule over Israel, Then had come down to the gates the people of Yahweh.
ESV	To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the righteous triumphs of the LORD, the righteous triumphs of his villagers in Israel. "Then down to the gates marched the people of the LORD.
LTHB	<i>Louder</i> than the voice of the dividers between the watering places there, they shall tell of the righteous acts of Jehovah, the righteous acts of His leaders in Israel. Then the people of Jehovah went down to the gates.
NASB	"At the sound of those who divide <i>flocks</i> among the watering places, There they shall recount the righteous deeds of the LORD, The righteous deeds for His <i>peasantry</i> [or, <i>rural dwellers</i>] in Israel. Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates.
Owen's Translation	To the sound of musicians (archers) at the watering places; there they repeat the triumphs of Yahweh; the triumphs of his peasantry in Israel; then they marched down to the gates, the people of Yahweh.
Young's Literal Translation	By the voice of shouters Between the places of drawing water, There they give out righteous acts of Jehovah, Righteous acts of His villages in Israel, Then ruled in the gates have the people of Jehovah.

What is the gist of this verse? Those at the watering holes recount the great deeds of Jehovah. They also speak of the great righteous acts of their leaders, although there appears to be a lot of disagreement here. Finally, it appears as though the people of Jehovah march down to the gates, although the significance of this is rather nebulous.

I should warn you that determining what we have in this verse is going to be difficult, if not impossible.

Judges 5:11a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6963 BDB #876
châtsats (חָצְצוּ) [pronounced <i>khaw-tsahts</i>]	<i>singers; shouters, those who yell; those who are spread out; those who have been set free [liberated]</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Piel participle	Strong's #2686 BDB #346
bêyn (בֵּינַי) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>	preposition	Strong's #996 BDB #107
mash ^{er} âb (מַשְׁאֵב) [pronounced <i>mahsh^e-AW^{er}V</i>]	<i>a drawing place for water; a channel; a place to water cattle</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4857 BDB #980

Translation: From the sound of those who have been liberated [or, the dividers] at the watering holes;... We begin this verse with the *mîn* preposition, which means *from, out from*. It is followed by the masculine singular construct of *qôwl* (קוֹל) [pronounced *kohl*], which means *sound, voice*. What this is the *sound of* is the Piel participle,

masculine plural of *châtsats* (חַטְסָטִים) [pronounced *khaw-tsahts*], which is said to mean *to divide*. In the Piel participle, we have the possible renderings *dividers [or spoil]*, *sharpeners*, *archers*. This word is found only in three places, and in each case it is a different stem. In Prov. 30:27, it is the Qal participle; in Judges 5:11, it is the Piel participle; and in Job 21:21, it is a Pual perfect. This also has a noun cognate, which is also found but three times in Scripture (Strong's #2687 BDB #346), once rendered *arrows* (Psalm 77:17) and once rendered *gravel* or *gravel stones* (Prov. 20:17 Lam. 3:16). Strong's #2686 BDB #346. The best way to deal with this is to first list the verses which are in question, and then show what other good translators have done in each of the six cases:

How is Châtsats Generally Translated?						
Verse	Verb	Greek	NRSV	NASB	Rotherham	Young
Judges 5:11	By the voice of [a masculine plural, Piel participle] between the places of drawing water...	Disturbers (or, noisy ones)	musicians	those who divide flocks	bowmen	shouters
Job 21:21	For what is his delight in his house after him, and the number of his months [verb]	cut off	cut off	cut off	cut in twain	cut off
Proverbs 30:27	A king there is not to the locust, and it goes out—each one [Qal participle]	orderly	in rank	in ranks	in swarms	shouting
Verse	Noun	Greek	NRSV	NASB	Rotherham	Young
Psalm 77:17	Poured out waters have thick clouds; the skies have given forth a noise. And, Your [plural noun] go up and down	arrows	arrows	arrows	arrows	arrows
Proverbs 20:17	Sweet to a man is the bread of falsehood and afterwards his mouth is filled [with] [singular noun]	[verse missing]	gravel	gravel	gravel	gravel
Lam. 3:16	And He breaks my teeth with [plural noun], He has covered me with ashes	gravel	gravel	gravel	gravel-stones	gravel

Obviously, this chart does not bring us to any clear conclusions about this word or its noun cognates.

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What we have here is pretty obvious; these translators agree amongst each other, probably a combination of going back to the Greek translation and deference to the KJV. However, they do not internally agree; that is, there is more of a difference between any translator in his own Bible than there is between various translators in the same verse. Now let me offer an entirely different translation, suggested in part by the NRSV and by Young: the verb means *to sing*; and the noun means *song*. Whereas, I am not enthralled by these renderings, and perhaps someone, in studying these verse, can come up with a better rendering. My translation does violence to the interpretation of Prov. 20:17 (in my opinion, it is unacceptable in that case). In re-examination, perhaps *shouting* or *yelling* would work for the verb; and *shout* or *yell* for the noun. The third possibility is that this means *to cut up*, *to divide* for the verb and the noun is the result of what has been cut up or divided, which would be *arrows*, *stones*, or *gravel*. The dividing up alluded to could be flocks which have gotten mixed up while being watered. There is a peaceful, if not amiable, division of the herds. Let's add to this that Keil and Delitzsch rightly point out that this word is never used

for *dividing up spoil*; there is another word for that. They suggest *archer* as a representative of a warrior.³⁷ As you can see, the job the translator is not easy.

Those who have been liberated (the Israelites) are at the watering holes; freedom of movement speaks of their freedom in general. When gathered at these watering holes, this would be a great feeling, and the people would be animated, happy and joyous. This would be reflected in their speech, their greetings, in their general conversation. When they gather at these watering holes, it would be loud and one could hear them from a ways off. [From the sound of those who have been liberated at watering holes;...](#)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The wells which are at a little distance from towns in the East, are, in unsettled times, places of danger. But in peace they are scenes of pleasant and joyous resort.*³⁸ Edersheim also points out that, apart from the difficult language, that this verse contrasts a time of peace with a time of war and/or oppression.

Judges 5:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâm (שׁוֹם) [pronounced <i>shawm</i>]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
tânâh (תָּנְאוּ) [pronounced <i>taw-NAW</i>]	<i>to recount, to celebrate</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect	Strong's #8567 [& #8566] BDB #1072 [& #1071]
There is an entirely different meaning (<i>to hire; to hire a prostitute</i>), which is Strong's #8566 BDB #1071. The other usage is only found in the Qal and Hiphil.			
ts ^o dâqâh (צְדָקוֹת) [pronounced <i>ts^odâw-KAW</i>]	<i>righteousnesses, executed righteousnesses and justice, righteous acts, righteous vindication</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #6666 BDB #842
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: [...there they \[celebrate and\] recall the righteous acts of Yehowah,...](#) What they do at the watering holes is the Piel imperfect of *tânâh* (תָּנְאוּ) [pronounced *taw-NAW*], which appears to mean both *hire* or *procure* [a prostitute]; and *to recount, to celebrate*, the difference being determined by context. Whoever is at the watering places, whether it is those who have been victorious over the Canaanites and are now dividing the booty, or whatever; they are to celebrate and recount the feminine plural construct of *righteousness, executed righteousness and justice, righteous vindication*. What this gives us so far is: [From the sound of those who have been liberated at the watering places, there they \[celebrate and\] recall the righteous acts of Y^ehowah...](#)

This generation, at least for a short time, understands the function of God in their lives; they understand that He has liberated them from their oppressors, and that God is the source of freedom in their lives.

³⁷ Freeman suggests two sets of people here; those who would lie in wait for flocks to be watered, and then they would swoop down and take and divide the flocks amongst themselves; and a group of people who protected against this. I just don't think that we have these two sets of people in this verse. To read Freeman's opinion, see *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 123.

³⁸ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's Commentary. [Web link](#).

Judges 5:11c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ts ^e dâqâh (הַקָּדָשׁ) [pronounced ts ^e dâw-KAW]	<i>righteousnesses, executed righteousnesses and justice, righteous acts, righteous vindication</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #6666 BDB #842
p ^e râzôwn (רִצּוֹן) [pronounced p ^e râw-ZOHN]	<i>rule, dominion; rural expansion; true leadership</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6520 BDB #826
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Yis ^e râ`êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis ^e -raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: ...the righteous acts of His true leadership in Israel. The word for *executed righteousness* is repeated; first it is of *Jehovah*, and secondly, it is of Israel's *peasantry* or *rural expansion* or *true leadership* (see v. 7). You must understand that the executed righteousness of God can be manifest as a variety of actions; in this case, it is the securing of the freedom of Israel. Part of their freedom is the simple ability to leave the gates of the city and to go to their water sources. Apparently, this was not a safe thing to do while under the oppression of Sisera and Jabin.

Clarke gives his take: *As wells were very scarce in every part of the East, and travelers in such hot countries must have water, robbers and banditti generally took their stations near tanks, pools, and springs, in order that they might suddenly fall upon those who came to drink; and when the country was badly governed, annoyances of this kind were very frequent. The victory gained now by the Israelites put the whole country under their own government, and the land was cleansed from such marauders. Dr. Shaw, in his account of the sea-coast of the Mauritania Caesariensis, page 20, mentions a beautiful rill of water that runs into a basin of Roman workmanship, called shrub we krub, "drink and be off," because of the danger of meeting with assassins in the place. Instead of such danger and insecurity, Deborah intimates that they may sit down at the place of drawing water, and there recall the righteous acts of the Lord; the land being now everywhere in peace, order and good government being restored.*³⁹

We in the United States, having been given such great freedom, have difficulty imagining life under great oppression. There is a segment of our population which compares George W. Bush to Hitler and our own POW camps to the Gulags of Russia. Such people have no historical concept of what real tyranny and oppression is, so, when they do not like the seated president, they compare him and policies of his administration to tyrannies that they themselves really could not imagine. They barely grasp the symbology; Hitler is bad, so, because they view Bush as bad, Hitler and Bush must be equivalent; Gulags are bad, therefore, our interment camps for war prisoners must be bad, as Bush is president while they exist. A complete lack of any true historical knowledge; a complete lack of appreciation for what true tyranny and oppression is. However, this generation of Israelites fully understands what real oppression is; and the contrast of true freedom.

³⁹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:11.

Judges 5:11d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâz (אָז) [pronounced awz]	<i>then, at that time, in that case (when following an if or though), now, as things are; that being so</i>	adverb	Strong's #227 BDB #23
yârad (יָרַד) [pronounced yaw-RAHD]	<i>to descend, to go down</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #3381 BDB #432
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ʿ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shaʿar (שַׁעַר) [pronounced SHAH-ğahr]	<i>gates [control of city can be implied]; entrance [through the gates]</i>	masculine plural noun; with the definite article	Strong's #8179 BDB #1044
ʿam (עַם) [pronounced ġahm]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: *Then the people of Y^ehowah went down to the gates.* Part of their celebration is to go down to the gates. What this is all about is that these were gates which restricted their travel; these were gates which would have kept them in or out of certain cities. They were more or less safe within the gates of their cities, but they were not when they left their cities. Now they can go in and out, as they have regained their personal freedom and their safety. In these past three verses, the people are to celebrate their freedom and to speak of the heroic acts of those who delivered them, and to praise God for what has occurred. In other words, the Israelites are celebrating the freedom which was secured for them by Deborah and Barak, which will be alluded to in the next verse, and then covered in greater detail in subsequent verses.

Wesley on the gates of the city: *[These] were where both city and country gathered for public business and matters of justice, from which they they had been debarred by their oppressors; but now they had free access and passage, either in or out of the gates, as their occasions required; and they who had been driven from their cities, now returned to them in peace and triumph; so the citizens deliverance is celebrated here.*⁴⁰

**Awake, awake, Deborah, awake, awake;
utter a song.
Arise Barak and lead away captive your
captives,
O son of Abinoam.**

Judges
5:12

**Awake, awake, Deborah, awake, awake,
and utter a song.
Arise Barak and lead away captive your
captives,
O son of Abinoam.**

**Wake up, Deborah, wake up, sing a song!
Get up, Barak, son of Abinoam, and lead away captive your captives.**

⁴⁰ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Judges 5:11; slightly edited.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Awake, awake, Deborah, awake, awake; utter a song. Arise Barak and lead away captive your captives, O son of Abinoam.
Septuagint	Awake, awake, Debbora; awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead your captivity captive, son of Abineem.

Significant differences: None. We had two difficult verses, but we might be in for smoother sailing now.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	...and said, "Deborah, let's go! Let's sing as we march. Barak, capture our enemies."
<i>The Message</i>	Wake up, wake up, Deborah! Wake up, wake up, sing a song! On your feet, Barak! Take your prisoners, son of Abinoam!.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	Get up! Get up, Deborah! Get up! Get up and create a song! Barak, attack! Take your prisoners, son of Abinoam.
HCSB	"Awake! Awake, Deborah! Awake! Awake, sing a song! Arise Barak, and take hold of your captives, son of Abinoam!"

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	"Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, break out in a song! Arise, Barak, lead away your captives, O son of Abinoam.
Young's Updated LT	Awake, awake, Deborah; Awake, awake, utter a song; Rise, Barak, and take captive thy captivity, Son of Abinoam.

What is the gist of this verse? Deborah and Barak are called upon to go into action here.

Judges 5:12a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿûwr (עוּר) [pronounced <i>goor</i>]	<i>rouse onself, awaken, wake up; be raised up [stirred up or lifted up]; be induced, be persuaded</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #5782 BDB #734
ʿûwr (עוּר) [pronounced <i>goor</i>]	<i>rouse onself, awaken, wake up; be raised up [stirred up or lifted up]; be induced, be persuaded</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #5782 BDB #734
D ^e bôwrâh (דְּבוֹרָה) [pronounced <i>d^{eb}-voh-RAW</i>],	<i>bee; transliterated Deborah</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1683 BDB #184

Translation: [Awake, awake, Deborah,...](#) At least this verse will not be near as rugged as the previous. We have the Qal imperative of *rouse yourself, awake*. This is used four times. It is a call to Deborah to take action. The psalmist speaks to God in a similar way. To the psalmist, it appears as though God is no longer to be found in Israel, although the psalmist knows that God has not forgotten Israel. He writes: [Arose, Yourself! Why do you](#)

sleep, O Jehovah? Awake and do not reject us forever. Why do You hide Your face and forget our affliction and our oppressions? (Psalm 44:23–24). Barak, in the next line, is also called to take action.

By the way, there is no lethargy in Deborah, and so she has to tell herself to wake up (as per Gill); Deborah is writing the song, and she does not come off remiss either in the song or in the narrative of Judges 4. Now, what is occurring is, Deborah is being called by God—being pressed into service—for a national crisis; she is whom God will use. So, even though she is a faithful vessel through whom God works, it is clear at this juncture that God has a plan for her to guide Barak in the deliverance of Israel. Therefore, these Qal imperatives are not simply artistic license, and they don't simply sound nice repeated; but God is calling Deborah to play an important part in Israel's history.

The call for a believer to *wake up* or to *take a stand* can refer to several different things.

What it Means When a Person is Told to Wake up or to Rise up

Meaning	Scripture and Further Commentary
Deborah is called upon to become a spiritual atlas in her day.	Judges 5:12a: Awake, awake, Deborah,... Deborah is a mature believer with a spiritual impact; however, in this case, she is going to have an effect on her nation.
Deborah is called upon to record poetically what happened.	Judges 5:12b: ...awake, awake, and utter a song. Deborah is called upon to record poetically what has happened, which gives the divine viewpoint.
David is calling upon God's glory and honor within him to be awakened.	Psalm 57:8a: Wake up, my glory,... This is a more difficult call; in the same verse, David calls for musical instruments to awaken, which is easier to explain, and a lot less interesting (the musical instruments <i>awaken</i> when they are played—which explanation also applies to Psalm 108:2).
This is a call to God to become actively involved in the destiny of Israel, as it appeared for some time that He had not been.	Isa. 51:9: Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, that pierced the dragon? Even though Isaiah calls for God to act, this does not mean that He had no function in Israel's history immediately prior to this call, nor does it mean that God sort of forgot about Israel; this is an anthropopathism where to us, it appears as though God did not function in Israel, although He has all along.
There are no men of spiritual integrity in Jerusalem, so the city seems to be falling apart and under God's wrath.	Isa 51:17–18: Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering. There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne; there is none to take her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up.
I believe that we are speaking of the ultimate sanctification of Israel here. Not only do the Jews come back as the people of God, but the city Jerusalem goes into the Millennium as a holy city.	Isa 52:1–2: Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake yourself from the dust and arise; be seated, O Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion.
The interpretation is similar to that above; the Jews and Jerusalem will assume a leadership position spiritually.	Isa. 60:1–3: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

What it Means When a Person is Told to Wake up or to Rise up

Meaning	Scripture and Further Commentary
Paul rouses the Corinthians to do that which is right; to get back into fellowship, and to grow spiritually.	1Cor. 15:34: Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame. Some great teachers have been at Corinth, and some believers there understand little or no theology.
The context does not appear to apply to unbelievers who awaken to the gospel of Jesus Christ, but rather to believers whose actions are the same as the actions of unbelievers. They are to get back into fellowship.	Eph. 5:12–14: For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." This appears to be a rather free translation of Isa. 60:1 (above).

When the Scripture has language which says, *awake, awake*, it is apparent by the context of these passages that it does not always refer to the same thing.

There are many other examples where believers are simply told to *take a stand*.

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Judges 5:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
עָוַר (עוּר) [pronounced <i>goor</i>]	<i>rouse oneself, awaken, wake up; be raised up [stirred up or lifted up]; be induced, be persuaded</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #5782 BDB #734
עָוַר (עוּר) [pronounced <i>goor</i>]	<i>rouse oneself, awaken, wake up; be raised up [stirred up or lifted up]; be induced, be persuaded</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #5782 BDB #734
דָּבַר (דְּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw^p-VAHR</i>]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Piel imperative	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
שִׁיר (שִׁיר) [pronounced <i>sheer</i>]	<i>song, singing</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7892 BDB #1010

Translation: ...*awake, awake, and utter a song*. I suspect that the idea behind Deborah singing a song is, this is one way that she communicates the Word of God. This second set of *awake, awake*, God calls upon Deborah to write this song, which also contains doctrine, just as the narrative of the previous chapter did.

Judges 5:12c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qûwm (קוּמ) [pronounced <i>koom</i>]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
Bârâq (בָּרַק) [pronounced <i>baw-RAWK</i>]	<i>lightening, lightening flash; transliterated Barak</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #1301 BDB #140

Translation: *Arise Barak...* A male leader is needed to lead Israel into combat against the Canaanites. Deborah, as we know, is the one who summons him.

Judges 5:12d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
shâbâh (שָׁבַח) [pronounced <i>shaw^b-VAW</i>]	<i>to lead away captives, to take captive</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #7617 BDB #985
shê ^b vîy (שֶׁבִי) [pronounced <i>sh^{eb}-VEE</i>]	<i>captives, captivity</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7628 BDB #985
bên (בֵּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
ʿĂbîynô'am (אָבִינֹעַם) [pronounced <i>u^b-vee-noh-GAHM</i>]	<i>my father is a delight; father of pleasantness; transliterated Abinoam</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #42 BDB #4

Translation: *...and lead away captive your captives, O son of Abinoam.* What Barak is to do, after rising up, is the Qal imperative of *lead away captives, take captive*. This is followed by its noun cognate, the masculine plural *captives, captivity*. Barak, after soundly defeating the enemy, is to lead away his captives.

One of the things I need to explain here is, how can Barak lead away anything captive, if all of Sisera's army is destroyed (Judges 4:16: *And Barak pursued the chariots and the army to Harosheth-hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left*).

If Sisera's Army is Destroyed, Who is Led Away Captive?

1. One explanation is, Deborah is speaking of leading away the possessions of the Canaanites (their sheep, their cattle, etc.).
2. Even more likely, Jabin has more than one division (his primary army is led by Sisera), and that captives are made from some of those from Jabin's other divisions. It is obvious, by what follows (which tribes

If Sisera's Army is Destroyed, Who is Led Away Captive?

participate and which do not, as compared to the two tribes used in Judges 4) that the war continued, even after this very decisive victory.

3. A third explanation is, Israel took civilians as prisoners, later using them as slaves.
4. There is the possibility that even though Judges 4:16 sounds as if there is no a single man remaining, that does not have to be taken in an absolute literal sense. I.e., there was not a man left to oppose Barak's army; i.e., they surrendered; or, virtually, the entire army was wiped out, but there were a few dozen remaining who were taken as prisoners.

Personally, I would go with the second explanation, but any of these easily explain the apparent contradiction of this verse and Judges 4:16.

By the way, the second explanation appeals to me, not because I do not like the implications of Israel taking Canaanite slaves, but because passages which follow indicate that other tribes joined in later to continue this fight. That is, we have additional Scripture which backs up the second explanation.

This fourth explanation could be applicable as well in addition to the second.

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One of the things which I find to be the most disconcerting about the Hebrew writers is the complete disregard, at times, for chronology. What we have been given, so far, is the general state of Israel prior to Israel's fight for independence. We have a mention of Deborah and Barak, who are called upon to take a stand; and then we have the results of their fight for freedom. What comes next is not what comes next chronologically, but the participation or lack of participation of the allied tribes of Israel, followed by the battle against Sisera. Let me be more specific: the next six verses do not precede the subsequent verses in time. In fact, Judges 5:19–30 precede in time Judges 5:9–18.

David, who wrote many of the psalms, no doubt studied the songs found elsewhere, and was inspired by this line. He wrote: *You have ascended on high; You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men—the rebellious also; that Yah God may dwell [there]* (Psalm 68:18). Paul saw this as prophecy, and quoted this centuries later: *But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it reads: When He ascended on high, He led captive an army of captives, and He gave gifts to men* (Eph. 4:8; Psalm 68:18).⁴¹ So this is an interesting series; what Deborah writes here apparently inspires David, who writes something very similar; and then Paul takes it and is inspired as well. So, the phrase has one meaning here; it has a completely different meaning at David's hand, possibly even a two-fold meaning, and Paul uses this to get across a different point in Eph. 4:8.

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Let's see if I can organize this a little better:

⁴¹ As a side note, Paul was not quoting from the Greek Septuagint, as it reads the same as the Hebrew. Either it had been changed or Paul changed the reading himself.

The Trip from Judges 5:12 to Ephesians 4:8		
Scripture	Passage	Interpretation
Judges 5:12	Awake, awake, Deborah, awake, awake, and utter a song. Arise Barak and lead away captive your captives, O son of Abinoam.	Barak is seen by Deborah as already victorious, when she calls upon him to take a stand; his captives would be Canaanite people (and possibly soldiers) whom he leads away into captivity.
Psalms 68:18	You have ascended on high; You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men —the rebellious also; that Yah God may dwell [there].	The context is God's presence in certain mountains, e.g., Sinai. This verse is directed toward God (<i>You</i>). God ascending on high refers to his special presence going from the mountains to His royal throne room (as in Job 1). <i>Taking captivity captive</i> means that God has achieved a complete and total victory in the angelic conflict; and that Satan and his fallen angels would be bound. The gifts <i>in men</i> , as the Hebrew reads, would be the change in man, including Christ's indwelling, and the divine good that they produce. This may refer to Jesus Christ when He is among men, and the gifts He would receive would be these men who believe in Him. <i>The rebellious</i> indicates that these are men who formerly were in rebellion against God, and they are in Him. God dwells with man, as He has made Himself manifest on Mount Sinai.
Ephesians 4:8	But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it reads: When He ascended on high, He led captive an army of captives, and He gave gifts to men (Eph. 4:8; Psalm 68:18). ⁴²	First of all, Paul changes the text which he quotes here; he is not quoting the Hebrew or the Greek. Paul begins this chapter by calling himself a prisoner of the Lord. He then speaks to the unity of the faith, and makes two points from this passage which he quotes: (1) Jesus Christ had to descend into the lower parts of the earth (where believers and unbelievers were kept, in separate areas), and that He would ascend from there into heaven, where He would receive approval from God. That He would lead these believers out of Abraham's bosom is probably the intent of Paul, but he does not elaborate. (2) Jesus Christ gave spiritual gifts to believers, which Paul later elaborates on.

You will note that David the psalmist merely uses the phrase found in Judges 5:12, but none of the meaning of our passage. Paul essentially does the same thing; he quotes the passage out of context and even misquotes a portion of it, and gives it another application altogether.

The gifts *in men* and the gifts which God give *to men* are related. Believers are gifts to Jesus Christ; He indwells man and they belong to Him. Because they are His, God the Holy Spirit gives gifts to men so that we may have a real function in this earth.

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⁴² As a side note, Paul was not quoting from the Greek Septuagint, as it reads the same as the Hebrew. Either it had been changed or Paul changed the reading himself.

After reading Clarke's commentary on v. 28, and studying this song from a distance, I note that this song is apparently sung by Deborah and Barak, both individually and together. There was possibly even a chorus, and that this, for a time, was sung by a man and a woman and a chorus. If I put my mind to this, I might be able to come up with a very imperfect of line distribution—that is, who sang which lines. However, that may be better left to a music director, and his choir.

In any case, I do want to note that certain lines could only be spoken by a specific person.

Who Sings What in Deborah's Song?

Person	Lines	Comments
Deborah or Barak	<p>During a time when those who vowed in Israel to avenge, when the people volunteered. Blessed is Jehovah. Kings, listen to me, and princes, pay attention to me; I will sing to Jehovah; I will make music to Jehovah, the God of Israel: Jehovah, when You went out from Seir and when You march out of the region of Edom, the ground quaked and the heavens began to rain; in fact, the clouds poured down rain. The mountains quaked in the presence of Jehovah; even, this mountain Sinai quaked before the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel.</p>	<p>Immediately in v. 3, it is clear that only one person is singing. It would be reasonable for Deborah to sing up until <i>I will make music to Jehovah, the God of Israel</i>, at which point, Barak sings.</p>
Deborah	<p>During the time of Shamgar ben Anath and Jael, free movement on the highways nearly ceased; travelers took the back routes instead. True leadership had ceased in Israel; It ceased until I, Deborah, arose; a mother in Israel. Israel chose new gods and then, suddenly, war was within her gates. Was there even a shield or a spear to be found among forty thousand in Israel? My heart goes out to the scribes in Israel, the ones who have willingly volunteered to lead the people; Bless Jehovah, all of you. Those of you who ride upon expensive donkeys and those of you who sit upon carpets, and those of you who are walking about freely and in safety— verbally acknowledge and recognize those who provided you your freedom.</p>	<p>At least portions of this passage had to be sung by Deborah.</p>
Barak	<p>From the sound of the traders at the watering holes, where they celebrate and recall the righteous acts of Jehovah—the righteous acts of His leadership in Israel. Then the people of Jehovah went down to the gates. Wake up, Deborah, wake up, sing a song!</p>	<p>Deborah is not going to call to herself!</p>
Deborah	<p>Get up, Barak, son of Abinoam, and lead away captive your captives.</p>	<p>Barak will not call to himself.</p>

From this point on, it is more difficult to assign vocals to either person specifically. What I have done to this point is imperfect, I am sure. However, the point I am getting across is, as only portions of this song can be sung by a specific person, some information in this song can only come from a specific person. Near the end of this song, we will hear an account of Sisera's death which could have only come from Jael. At the end of this song, we get the viewpoint of Sisera's mother, who gives us information about Sisera and his raiding parties which we would not otherwise have had.

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I did a little searching on the internet, and apparently Dr. Kennicott also distributed the lines of this song:

Dr. Kennicott's Division of Vocals		
	Deborah	For the leaders who took the lead in Israel,
2	Barak	For the people who offered themselves willingly,
	Both	BLESS YE JEHOVAH!
	Deborah	Hear, O ye kings!
	Barak	Give ear, O ye princes!
3	Deborah	I unto JEHOVAH will sing.
	Barak	I will answer in song to JEHOVAH;
	Both	THE GOD OF ISRAEL!
	Deborah	O JEHOVAH, at thy going forth from Seir At thy marching from the field of Edom,
4	Barak	The earth trembled, even the heavens poured down; The thick clouds poured down the waters
	Deborah	The mountains melted at JEHOVAH'S presence.
5	Barak	Sinai itself, at the presence of JEHOVAH
	Both	THE GOD OF ISRAEL!
6	Deborah	In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, In the days of Jael, the highways were deserted.
	Barak	For they who had gone by straight paths, Passed by ways that were very crooked.
7	Barak	Deserted were the villages in Israel.
	Deborah	They were deserted till I, Deborah, arose; Till I arose a mother in Israel.
8	Deborah	They chose new gods!
	Barak	Then, when war was at the gates, Was there a shield seen, or a spear, Among forty thousand in Israel?
	Deborah	My heart is towards the rulers of Israel;
9	Barak	Ye who offered yourselves willingly among the people.
	Both	BLESS YE JEHOVAH!
10	Deborah	Ye who ride upon white asses; Ye who sit upon the seat of judgment.

Dr. Kennicott's Division of Vocals

	Barak	And ye who travel upon the roads, Talk of Him with the voice of praise.
11	Deborah	Let them who meet armed at the watering places There show the righteous acts of JEHOVAH,
	Barak	And the righteousness of the villages of Israel: Then shall they go down to the gates;
	Both	THE PEOPLE OF JEHOVAH!
12	Barak	Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, lead on the song.
	Deborah	Arise, Barak! and lead thy captivity captive, Barak, thou son of Abinoam.
13	Barak	Then, when the remainder descended after their chiefs, Jehovah's people descended after me, Against the mighty.
14	Deborah	Out of Ephraim was their beginning at Mount Amalek; And after thee was Benjamin, against the nations.
	Barak	From Machir, came masters in the art of war; And from Zebulun, those who threw the dart.
15	Deborah	The princes in Issachar were numbered Together with Deborah and Barak.
	Barak	And Issachar was the guard of Barak, Into the valley sent close at his feet. Deb.
	Deborah	At the divisions of Reuben, Great were the impressions of heart.
16	Barak	Why satest thou among the rivulet? What! to hear the bleatings of the flocks?
	Deborah	For the divisions of Reuben, Great were the searchings of heart.
17	Barak	Gad dwelt quietly beyond Jordan; And Dan, why abode he in ships?
	Deborah	Asher continued in the harbour of the seas, And remained among his craggy places.
18	Barak	Zebulun were the people, and Naphtali,
	Deborah	Who exposed their lives unto the death,
	Both	ON THE HEIGHTS OF THE FIELD.
19	Deborah	The kings came, they fought; Then fought the kings of Canaan;
	Barak	At Taanac, above the waters of Megiddo: The plunder of riches they did not receive.
20	Deborah	From heaven did they fight; The stars, from their lofty stations, Fought against Sisera.
21	Barak	The river Kishon swept them away, The river intercepted them; the river Kishon: It was there my soul trod down strength.
22	Deborah	It was then the hoofs of the cavalry were battered. By the scamperings, the scamperings of its strong steeds.
	Barak	Curse ye the land of Meroz, Said the messenger of JEHOVAH:
23	Deborah	Curse ye heavily its inhabitants, Because they came not for help.
	Both	JEHOVAH WAS FOR HELP! JEHOVAH AGAINST THE MIGHTY!

Dr. Kennicott's Division of Vocals		
24	Deborah	Praised among women will be Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Among women in the tent will she be praised.
25	Barak	He asked water, she gave him milk; In a princely bowl she brought it.
26	Deborah	Her left hand she put forth to the nail; And her right hand to the workman's hammer.
	Barak	She struck Sisera, she smote his head; Then she struck through, and pierced his temples.
27	Deborah	At her feet he bowed, he fell!
	Barak	At her feet he bowed, he fell!
	Both	WHERE HE BOWED. THERE HE FELL DEAD.
28	Deborah	Through the window she looked out and called, Even the mother of Sisera, through the lattice;
	Barak	'Why is his chariot ashamed to return? Why so slow are the steps of his chariot?'
29	Deborah	Her wise ladies answered her; Nay, she returned answer to herself:
30	Barak	'Have they not found, divided the spoil; Embroidery, double embroidery for the captains' heads! A prize of divers colours for Sisera!'
	Deborah	'A prize of divers colours of embroidery; A coloured piece of double embroidery for MY NECK, a prize!'
31	Both	So perish all thine enemies, O Jehovah! Grand Chorus, by the whole procession. AND LET THOSE WHO LOVE HIM BE AS THE SUN GOING FORTH IN HIS MIGHT.

Dr. Kennicott's version does make a great deal of sense. It is quite reasonable for Deborah to speak of the leaders of Israel answering God's call (which included Barak); and then for the people in general to respond to God's calling, something which Barak would have observed more closely.

Taken from <http://www.studylight.org/com/acc/view.cgi?book=jud&chapter=005>. I did some rearranging here to make it easier to follow.

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I will subdivide the next section, rather than break it down into separate sections for two reasons: (1) We begin with the tribes who did participate, spend time with the tribes that did not participate, and then speak of the two tribes who gave the most. (2) This subdivision occurs in the midst of v. 15, which is one of the poorest verse divisions in Scripture. The three subdivisions are:

The Tribes who Participated,
The Tribes Who Did Not Participate,
The True Heroes of this Time.

The Tribes Which Participated in Battle and the Tribes Which Did Not

The Tribes who Participated

Then came down a remnant to noble ones,
people of Y^ehowah came down to me against
the mighty ones.

Judges
5:13

Then the remnant came down to the noble
ones,
the people of Y^ehowah came down to me
against the mighty ones.

Then those of Israel who still remained came down to help their brothers;
the people of God came down to me to fight against the Canaanite soldiers.

We will need to examine some translations in this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	The remnants of the people are saved, the Lord has fought among the valiant ones.
Masoretic Text	Then came down a remnant to noble ones, people of Y ^e howah came down to me against the mighty ones.
Peshitta	Then the deliverer went down to sing praise before the LORD; you have given me victory by the hand of a man out of Ephraim.
Septuagint	Then went down the remnant to the strong, the people of the Lord went down for him among the mighty ones from me.

Significant differences: *The strong* (as found in the Greek) is another interpretation of the Hebrew word I rendered *noble ones*.

The primary difference between the Greek and Hebrew texts is, the Hebrew reads that the people of Jehovah came down *to me* (i.e., *to Deborah*), and the Greek reads that they came down *to him* (i.e., *to Barak* or *to God?*).

The final difference is the word *against* and *among*; the same Hebrew word, the b^eyth preposition, can be rendered in either way. In these words, there is only one significant difference between the Greek and Hebrew texts.

On the other hand, it is particularly disconcerting just how different the Latin and Syriac texts are from each other and from the Greek and Hebrew. It does not even appear to be the same verse. Bear in mind that, there seems to be a great deal of corruption with this portion of Judges 5.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	The LORD's people who were left joined with their leaders and fought at my side.
NLT	"Down from Tabor marched the remnant against the mighty. The people of the LORD marched down against the mighty warriors.
REB	'Then down marched the column and its chieftains, the people of the LORD marching down like warriors.' [the probable reading is <i>column...marching down</i> ; it is <i>survivor...adds to me</i> in the Hebrew].

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	Then those mighty men who were left came down. The LORD'S people went into battle for me against the mighty soldiers.
HCSB	The survivors came down to the nobles; the LORD's people came down to me with the warriors.
JPS (Tanakh)	Then was the remnant made victor over the mighty,

The LORD's people won my victory over the warriors.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Then came down a remnant to the nobles—a people—Yahweh came down with me against the mighty,
NASB	“Then survivors came down to the nobles; The people of the LORD came down to me as warriors.”
ESV	Then down marched the remnant of the noble; the people of the LORD marched down for me against the mighty.
LTHB	Then <i>He caused me</i> to tread on the remnant of the noble ones of the people; Jehovah trod for me among the warriors.
MKJV	Then He <i>made me</i> tread on the remnant of the nobles among the people. Jehovah made me have dominion over the mighty. Notice that both the MKJV and the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible have italicized words; that means, these words are not found in the original.
WEB	Then a remnant of the nobles and the people came down. Yahweh came down for me against the mighty.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Then him who is left of the honourable ones He caused to rule the people of Jehovah, He caused me to rule among the mighty.

You will notice several significant differences between the translations. The first primary difference is that, in *The Emphasized Bible*, it is Jehovah Who comes down with Deborah against the Canaanites; however, in the NASB and Septuagint, it is the *people of Jehovah* who march down to (or, *with*) Deborah.

What is the gist of this verse? Certain men of Israel (the *remnant*) came down to complete this war against the Canaanites.

Judges 5:13a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâz (אָז) [pronounced awz]	<i>then, at that time, in that case (when following an if or though), now, as things are; that being so</i>	adverb	Strong's #227 BDB #23
yârad (יָרַד) [pronounced yaw-RAHD]	<i>to descend, to go down</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3381 BDB #432
The actual verb that we find here is yârar (יָרַר) [pronounced yaw-RAHR], which occurs here and only here, and its meaning can only be guessed at (e.g., <i>to participate</i>). I have given what I believe to be the correct verb above (which is the verb most translators see as being here). However, there is a third possible verb which this could be. It is possible that the verb here is...			
râdâh (רָדָה) [pronounced raw-DAW]	<i>to tread with the feet; to rule, to have dominion over, to subdue; to take possession of</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7287 BDB #921
The imperfect will drop the hê' (ה) and throw in a yohd (י) at the beginning of the word. I include this possibility to help to explain the difference between the various translations. The problem with this verb is, we would not expect the lâmed preposition to go with it. It often will be followed by the bêyth preposition. Given that this translation works fine and makes perfect sense without assuming a minor copyist error here; and given that we do not find a bêyth preposition here, I would conclude that this alternate hypothetical reading is incorrect.			

Judges 5:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
One must be careful, when presented with an alternate hypothetical reading, not to grab onto it with both hands and embrace it as the proper reading. Once and awhile, such an hypothetical reading makes perfect sense; at other times, as in this verse, it obfuscates the meaning of the verse (note that the MKJV and the LTHB both needed to add in additional text in order for this verb to make sense).			
To sum up, there is a 3-fold problem with this alternate verb: (1) we have a lâmed preposition rather than a bêyth preposition, as would be the case with yârad but not with râdâh; (2) additional text must be added in order for râdâh to make sense; and (3) those who assume that râdâh is the correct verb here find that they must render this verb in the Hiphil form in order for this verse to make sense.			
sârîyd (סרִיַד) [pronounced saw-REED]	survivor, remnant, the one remaining, those who are left	masculine singular noun	Strong's #8300 BDB #975
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l̄)	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿaddiyr (אֲדִיַר) [pronounced ah'd-DEER]	majestic, powerful, magnificent, glorious	masculine plural adjective with the definite article	Strong's #117 BDB #12

That's the short version. According to Gesenius, this means ❶ *large, very great, mighty* (Psalm 93:4 Isa. 33:21); ❷ *powerful* when used of kings and kingdoms (1Sam. 4:8 Psalm 136:18 Ezek. 32:18); ❸ *prince, leader, chief, noble* (when used as a substantive); ❹ *magnificent, illustrious, glorious* (Psalm 8:2); and, ❺ *noble* (when applied in a moral sense, as in Psalm 16:3).

Translation: *Then the remnant came down to the noble ones,...* You may have noted a significant difference between some of the more literal translations. This is explained above in the exegesis of the Hebrew text. There is an alternate verb which may have been meant here, but that hypothetical reading ends up causing more problems than it solves. The two different readings would be: *Then came down a remnant, to noble ones*; or, *Then He caused to rule a remnant, to noble ones*. The latter reading is rejected because, in order for it to make sense, we must translate it as a causal (Hiphil) verb, and it is not found that way here; we have to add in additional verbiage in order for it to make sense; and it is followed by the wrong preposition. In making our choice, context would indicate that *to come down* is the most likely translation. The other possibility is that this is an actual word (yârar), which occurs only here in Scripture, and that it means something like *to participate*. Again, the accepted reading seems to make the most sense, and I have probably spent far too much time here exploring the other options.

The two tribes which went up with Barak were Zebulun and Issachar. There were remaining tribes (*the remnant*) in the Land of Promise, who will be specifically named in this context. Those remaining tribes are examined here, and they are said to *come down to the noble ones* (those who began this war against the Canaanites; Zebulun and Issachar).

Judges 5:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿam (עַם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i>]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
yârad (יָרַד) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAHD</i>]	<i>to descend, to go down</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #3381 BDB #432
It is possible that the verb here is...			
râdâh (רָדָה) [pronounced <i>raw-DAW</i>]	<i>to tread with the feet; to rule, to have dominion over, to subdue; to take possession of</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7287 BDB #921
This was fully discussed above in Judges 5:13a.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition; with the 1 st person singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
gibbôwr (גִּבּוֹר) [pronounced <i>gib-BOAR</i>]	<i>strong man, mighty man, soldier, warrior, combatant, veteran</i>	masculine plural noun/adjective	Strong's #1368 BDB #150

The original word would be properly applied to one of rank or distinction; a man of “power” — power derived either from office, from talent, or from wealth. It is a word which is often applied to a hero or warrior: Isa. 3:2 Ezek. 39:20 2Sam. 17:10 Psalm 33:16 120:4 127:4 Daniel 11:3 Gen. 6:4 Jer. 51:30.⁴³

Translation: ...the people of Y^howah came down to me against the mighty ones. The same discussion which we find in the previous portion of this verse applied here; there is the same difficulty with the verb. There is the difference that here we do have a b^eyth preposition; however, that is not the case with Judges 5:13a.

Next, we should examine is the concept of the construct in the Hebrew. When two nouns are placed together, side-by-side, the result is often what is known as the construct state of the first noun. In English, to translate this, we generally add the word *of* (although, sometimes *with* or *for* are also apropos). Although the second noun may be preceded by a definite article, the first noun will never be preceded by a definite article. If the second noun is preceded by a definite article, it is proper to, in the English, use a definite article with the first noun as well.

The construct state also gives us a better understanding of adjectives. We, in the English, place our adjectives before the noun that they modify. In the Hebrew, the adjectives follow the nouns that they modify. What we actually have is something akin to the idea of the construct state. What might be translated *a strong man* in the English,

⁴³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 52:1.

is actually *a man strong* in the Hebrew. However, it is better understood as *a man of strength*, something like the construct state between two nouns. Now, other than there being no definite article prior to the first noun, sometimes we do not have any other way of determining that we have a construct state; i.e., there is no suffix, vowel point or anything else which clearly points us to the fact that it is a construct (in some cases, the ending of the noun *does* tell us that it is a construct state). Therefore, sometimes the construct is determined by linguistic interpretation—that is, we are pretty sure that it is, so therefore we say it is. In this case, what will follow is not God’s hand in the battle against the Canaanites (which would make sense if it were Jehovah coming down with Deborah to battle—ala Rotherham; but what will follow is a list of the tribes which participated and which did not participate; therefore, it is the *people of Jehovah* who come down with Deborah.

The two very different possibilities for the verbs gives us two very different possibilities for a translation: either, *Then came down a remnant to [or, belonging to] the noble ones; people of Y^ehowah came down to me against the mighty ones*. Or, *Then He caused to rule a remnant belonging to the noble ones; a people of Y^ehowah He caused to rule to me against the mighty ones*. Although I tend to go with Young against the majority most of the time, here I will have to go with the majority. The overall verse, particularly the last portion, makes more sense that way. In the Hebrew exegesis, I have given more greater space to this alternative reading.

By way of interpretation, the *remnant* refers to the tribes of Israel who were not yet involved, but to be specifically named in the following verses. The *noble ones* are the believers in Israel already engaged in war against the Canaanites. The people of Jehovah are, obviously, Israel, and they march down to fight against the Canaanites, who are the *mighty ones*.

We have a parallelism here, common to poetry. *A remnant [of Israel] comes down to the noble ones*—those who have begun the war against the Canaanites; *and the people of God*—who are equivalent to the remnant of Israel—*come down against the mighty ones* [the Canaanites].

All the players are named below, so that it might be easier to follow:

The Players Named in Judges 5:13

Scripture	Who is Who
<i>Then the remnant came down</i>	The remnant refers to those who still remain in Israel, but have not participated in the war.
<i>to the noble ones,</i>	The noble ones are Zebulun and Issachar who have begun their war for independence against the Canaanites.
<i>the people of Y^ehowah came down</i>	The people of Jehovah are equivalent to the remnant above; those who did not volunteer originally to war against the Canaanites. This makes complete sense, as both subjects are associated with the same verb.
<i>to me</i>	<i>To me</i> is a reference to Deborah; these troops reported to her, the prophetess, and she put them with Barak.
<i>against the mighty ones.</i>	They will war against <i>the mighty ones</i> , the Canaanites.

A correct translation coupled with a correct interpretation is a wonderful thing. After correctly translating and interpreting this, I now have the pleasure of going back to see what others have done with this verse, by way of explanation.

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I considered putting up a chart to indicate the incorrect ways that this verse has been understood—Clarke, for instance, calls Barak the remnant. Others misinterpret this verse because they accept the wrong verb here.

Let me close out this verse with a quotation from the Psalms: [It is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another](#) (Psalm 75:7). It was the proper time, and God lifted the Israelites over the Canaanites.

Application: A friend of mine once pondered, *why do fundamentalist Christians seem to line up politically with conservatives; particularly, with patriotic conservatives?* The Bible supports the status quo in society; the Bible never encourages revolution, whether national or personal (e.g., a slave liberating himself from his master). With regards to men who must go to war, the Bible treats soldiers with great respect and deference. Our Lord, when face to face with a Roman centurion, did not encourage this man to lay down his arms and follow Him in peace; Jesus remarked, instead, **“Never have I found such a great faith in Israel!”** Now, I have seen a big change in the conservative party in the United States during my tenure on this earth; when I was in my teens and early 20's, there was a despicable amount of anti-Semitism which pervaded the conservative movement; which helps to explain the corruption and dishonesty which was often found in conservative officials. Since Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, it is the conservatives which have begun to ally themselves clearly with Israel and it is the liberals who have begun to distance themselves from Israel, and have, to some degree, taken up the side of the Arabic peoples and nations. Along with this, the conservative party has seemed to have developed a conscience and a personal integrity, whereas the liberals are the ones who rift with scandals and dishonesty, both personal and ideological (I write this in 2006). But, the primary reason I take this aside is to note, the Bible consistently honors the soldier, the warrior, the man who is willing to lay his life down for the freedom of his people (Communism, by the way, and radical Islam, are antithetical to freedom; so a soldier who is willing to die for either of these causes is one who wants others to be tyrannized).

In case you are wondering, *what is the connection between this verse and that application;* let me point out the Deborah, in song, is celebrating here the Israeli soldiers who come down to continue the fight against the Canaanites. We have a number of patriotic songs which recall those who have fought and died for our freedom in the United States—e.g., the *Star Spangled Banner*—we must hold onto these songs as well as to their meaning.

From Ephraim their root in Amalek [or, From Ephraim they came down into the valley]; after you Benjamin with your peoples; from Machir marched down lawgivers and from Zebulun those drawing out in a rod [or, staff] of a scribe or, writer.

Judges
5:14

From Ephraim [they came down] into the valley; after you, Benjamin, with your people. From Machir, the lawgivers marched down; and from Zebulun, those marching with a tribe of scribes [or, with a general's staff].

**They came down into the valley from Ephraim; and Benjamin then followed you down.
The lawgivers marched out from Machir and the scribes came down from Zebulun.**

You need to brace yourself, as this will be a rather difficult verse. We will definitely need to look at other translations:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

Out of Ephraim he destroyed them into Amalec,
and after him out of Benjamin into your people, O Amalec.
Out of Machir there came down princes,
and out of Zabulon they that led the army to fight.

Masoretic Text

From Ephraim their root in Amalek [or, From Ephraim they came down into the valley];
after you Benjamin with your peoples;
from Machir marched down lawgivers
and from Zebulun those drawing out in a rod [or, staff] of a scribe or, writer.

Peshitta

And Barak's works are known in Amalek;
after you marched Benjamin with affection for you;
out of Machir came forth a seer,

Septuagint and out of Zebulun those who write with the pen of a scribe.
 Ephraim rooted them out in Amalek,
 behind you was Benjamin among your people;
 the inhabitants of Machir came down with me searching out the enemy;
 and from Zabulon came they that draw with the scribe's pen of record.

Significant differences: Again, we have very little agreement. Part of the problem is possibly interpreting the Hebrew, which can account for some differences. In the first line, the MT is unclear; therefore, we have first lines in the Latin and Syriac which barely have anything in common with the Hebrew (or Greek).

The Latin adds *Amalek* to the second line and has the phrase *into your people*, which is actually a reasonable translation of the Hebrew phrase (so is the Greek translation, *among your people*).

When it comes to *who comes down from Machir*, the Latin and Hebrew are somewhat similar (*princes; lawgivers*); but the Syriac has *a seer* and the Greek has the inhabitants of Machir coming down *with me searching out the enemy*. Previously, the LXX left out the little phrase *to me*, but they add in *with me* here; and offer an entirely different scenario.

The final line, which on the surface appears to be the most obscure, is essentially agreed upon with the exception of the Latin). Often, poetry is be extremely demanding.

When it comes to the translations below, you will note that in some of the paraphrases, there is a little similarity between the Masoretic text and their translation; and, as we move into the more accurate renderings, the translations tend to line up with the MT.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Troops came from Ephraim, where Amalekites once lived. Others came from Benjamin; officers and leaders came from Machir and Zebulun.

The Message The captains from Ephraim came to the valley, behind you, Benjamin, with your troops. Captains marched down from Makir, from Zebulun high-ranking leaders came down.

NJB The princes of Ephraim are in the valley; behind you, Benjamin is in your ranks, captains have come down from Machir, those who wield the commander's staff, from Zebulun.

NLT They came down from Ephraim—a land that once belonged to the Amalekites, and Benjamin also followed you.
 From Makir the commanders marched down;
 from Zebulun came those who carry the rod of authority.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ Those who had settled in Amalek's country came down from Ephraim. Benjamin came with its troops after Ephraim. Commanders from Machir went into battle. The officers from Zebulun also went.

HCSB Those with their roots in Amalek came from Ephraim; Benjamin came with your people after you. The leaders came down from Machir, and those who carry a marshal's staff came from Zebulun.

JPS (Tanakh) From Ephraim came they whose roots are in Malek;
 After you, your kin Benjamin;

From Marcher came down leaders,
From Zebulun such as hold the marshal's staff.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Albert Barnes (revised)	Of Ephraim came down those whose root is in Mount Amalek; after you came Benjamin among your people; of Machir there came down the chiefs, and of Zebulun, they that handle the staff of the officer.
Barnes (with commentary)	Of Ephraim (Deborah's own tribe) came down those whose root is in Mount Amalek (Judges 12:15); after you (O Ephraim) came Benjamin among your people; of Machir (the west-Jordanic milies of Manasseh; see Joshua 17:1-6) there came down the chiefs, and of Zebulun they that handle the staff of the officer.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Out of Ephraim came down they whose root was in Amalek, After you Benjamin, among your tribes,—Out of Machir had come down governors, And out of Zebulun such as bear aloft the staff of the marshal;...
NASB	"From Ephraim those whose root is in Amalek <i>came down</i> , Following you, Benjamin, with your peoples; From Machir commanders came down, And from Zebulun those who wield the staff of office."
NRSV	From Ephraim they set out into the valley, following you Benjamin, with your kin; from Machir marched down the commanders, and from Zebulun those who bear the marshal's staff;
Owen's Translation	From Ephraim their root in Amalek; following you, Benjamin with your kinsmen; from Machir, marched down the commanders; and from Zebulun those who bear the marshal's staff.
Young's Updated LT	Out of Ephraim their root is against Amalek. After you, Benjamin, among your peoples. Out of Machir came down lawgivers, And out of Zebulun those drawing with the reed of a writer.

What is the gist of this verse? Once this war against the Canaanites was kicked off with a spectacular victory, other tribes joined in the fight: Ephraim, Benjamin, and those in the Machir area. Apparently, history record keepers came from Zebulun.

Judges 5:14a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
minnîy (מִנִּי) [pronounced <i>min-NEE</i>]	<i>from, off, away from, out from, out of, from off; on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿEph ^h rayim (אֶפְרַיִם) [pronounced <i>ef-RAH-yim</i>]	<i>to bear fruit, to be fruitful; transliterated Ephraim</i>	masculine proper noun; pausal form	Strong's #669 BDB #68
shôresh (שֹׁרֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>SHOH-resh</i>]	<i>root; figuratively: root (of people involving firmness or permanence); root, bottom (as lowest stratum)</i>	masculine singular noun; with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #8328 BDB #1057

Judges 5:14a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
We often use the expression <i>that is where we put our roots down</i> ; we are using the word just as the Greeks did.			
ʿAmâlêq (עמלֵק) [pronounced ʿah-maw-LAYK]	transliterated <i>Amalek</i>	masculine proper noun; used infrequently as an gentilic adjective	Strong's #6002 BDB #766

Translation: [From Ephraim \[they came down\] into the valley;...](#) We begin with *Out from Ephraim* and then we run into trouble. Because this passage seems to indicate that a myriad of tribes are coming down, *The Emphasized Bible* and the NASB both add in the verb *came down*. Then we have the masculine singular noun *shôresh* (שֹׁרֶשׁ) [pronounced *SHOH-resH*], and it means *root*. However, you're looking at the NJB ([The princes of Ephraim are in the valley](#)) and the NRSV ([From Ephraim they set out into the valley](#)) and you wonder, *where the heck did they get that?* After all, if there was a difference in the Greek which made the verse make more sense, then Rotherham, who translated *The Emphasized Bible*, would have made that change. What we have is a phrase that doesn't make a lot of sense, indicating that the text possibly suffered inaccuracies in transmission and that we have no other versions which give us a clue as to what should actually be there. Therefore, several scholars have suggested that this be the correct reading, that Ephraim gathered in the valley (*Amalek* = ʿAmâlêq (עמלֵק) [pronounced ʿah-maw-LAYK]; valley = ʿemeq (עֵמֶק) [pronounced ʿEH-mek]). The REB suggests that they *rallied in the valley*. That certainly does make a lot more sense, as *Amalek* does not appear to be involved here at all and exactly what it means from Ephraim's root to be *in* or *against* *Amalek* is also somewhat confusing.

In general, the Amalekites are located south-southwest of Judah; however, back in Judges 3:13, they had moved up to take Jericho, which was at the border of Ephraim and Benjamin. If we go with the wording of the Hebrew, then that would indicate that there had been a lot of intermarriage between Ephraim and Amalek, which is possible. We could also understand this to mean that the Amalekites had an established substantial foothold in Ephraim and that Ephraim had taken firm root in their territory. That they lived in the area of Ephraim is confirmed by Judges 12:15: [Then Abdon ben Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.](#) In any case, whether Ephraim was intermixed with the Amalekites⁴⁴ or not; whether the Ephraimites conquered a land previously dominated by the sons of Amalek, still, this tribe came down to help in the war against the Canaanites.

Let's summarize the problems of this line:

A List of Problems with the First Phrase of Judges 5:14

1. The first problem is the ancient renderings; they disagree considerably here:
 - a. The Hebrew reads: [From Ephraim their root in Amalek](#) [or, From Ephraim *they came down* into the valley]. The problem here is, *Amalek* does not equal *valley*, although the words are similar (*Amalek* has an additional lamed in it).
 - b. The Greek reads: [Ephraim rooted them out in Amalek...](#); which is the closest to the Hebrew of the ancient texts (usually, the Latin, Syriac and Hebrew agree when the Greek is different).
 - c. The Latin text reads: [Out of Ephraim he destroyed them into Amalec...](#); which is fine, except that, it doesn't really make sense and does not match with the Hebrew text.
 - d. The Syriac text reads: [And Barak's works are known in Amalek](#); to which we comment, *huh?* We

⁴⁴ We covered the **Doctrine of the Amalekites** back in Num. 24:20.

A List of Problems with the First Phrase of Judges 5:14

- do not have a clue as to where the translators of the Peshitta got this translation, which has exactly one word in common with the previous texts.
2. Then we have problems with the Hebrew text itself, which probably is the reason why the other ancient texts are so different at this point (i.e., they tried to make sense of the Hebrew, and possibly just gave up and made up what they think should be here). First, we have *From Ephraim, their root*; Now, we do understand that some troops probably came out of Ephraim; but who does *their* refer to? To Ephraim? To those from the previous verse? And what does it mean for them to have a root?
 3. The final problem is, *their root* is *in Amalek*, which is rather confusing, as Amalek, an evil, anti-Semitic population, is not generally found in this area (they are associated with southern Judah); and we have no idea what Ephraim has to do with Amalek.

In stating these problems with the text and the interpretation of the text, do not think that I believe that I will figure it out or explain it. My intention is to set this up, look at what others say, and, if it is possible, draw a conclusion; if not, then I throw up my arms and say, *you've got me; I don't know what it means either*. Given the radical differences of the ancient texts, my ego will probably survive this.

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Without even reading any commentaries, I am assuming that there must be a variety of interpretations of this phrase, so I will include those here:

Various Commentators Explain Judges 5:14a

Exegete	Explanation
Barnes	Barnes gives a simple, reasonable explanation here: <i>Render Of Ephraim (Deborah's own tribe) came down those whose root is in Mount Amalek (Judges 12:15—Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died, and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill-country of the Amalekites).</i> ⁴⁵ In other words, the Amalekites were associated with the hill country of Ephraim, and the Ephraimites had, prior to this, been more or less tucked away in their hill country during the first offensive of Israel.
Clarke	<i>Deborah probably means that out of Ephraim and Benjamin came eminent warriors.</i> ⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:14.

⁴⁶ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:14.

Various Commentators Explain Judges 5:14a

Exegete	Explanation
Gill	<p><i>In this and some following verses, Deborah makes mention of the tribes that were siding and assisting in this war, and of those that were not; and begins with Ephraim, where she herself dwelt (Judges 4:5) who was the root, foundation, and source of this expedition, that under a divine influence directed, animated, and encouraged to it; and by whom, and from whence, a detachment was sent against the Amalekites, who upon all occasions were ready to assist the Canaanites, and now were about to do it; and to prevent their junction, a party was sent from Ephraim, and by the Ephraimites; though the Targum, and the Jewish commentators in general, refer this to a past action, which Deborah here commemorates and celebrates; and understand by "root", Joshua, who was of that tribe, and who discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword (Ex. 17:13).⁴⁷</i></p> <p>Gill also adds that Benjamin, mentioned in the next portion of this verse, will go out against Amalek to prevent them from assisting Jabin, king of Canaan.⁴⁸ If Amalek somehow belongs with Benjamin in this song, these lines lose their balance, and fitting them together in such a way to make any sense is difficult, if not impossible. Essentially, we would have <i>Amalek</i> following you, which makes little sense, as opposed to Benjamin following Ephraim, which makes more sense.</p>
Henry	<p><i>Ephraim is here said to act against Amalek (Judges 5:14), probably intercepting and cutting off some forces of the Amalekites that were upon their march to join Sisera. Amalek had helped Moab to oppress Israel (Judges 3:13) and now had helped Jabin; they were inveterate enemies to God's people – their hand had always been against the throne of the Lord (Ex. 17:16); and therefore they were the more dangerous.⁴⁹</i></p> <p>Matthew Henry later revisits this portion of v. 14, writing: <i>Out of Ephraim was there a root: and life in the root, against Amalek. There was in Ephraim a mountain called the mount of Amalek, mentioned (Judges 12:15) which, some think, is here meant, and some read it, there was a root in Amalek, that is, in that mountain, a strong resolution in the minds of that people to make head against the oppressors, which was the root of the matter.⁵⁰</i> This did not make much sense to me either.</p> <p>Then Henry adds: <i>Ephraim was at a distance from the place of action, and therefore could not send forth many of its boughs to the service; but Deborah, who was one of them, knew there was a root of them, that they were hearty well-wishers to the cause. Dr. Lightfoot gives quite another sense of this. Joshua, of Ephraim, had been a root of such victories against Amalek (Ex. 17), and Ehud of Benjamin lately against Amalek and Moab.⁵¹</i> It sounds to me as though Henry struggled with this verse as much as I have.</p>

⁴⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:14.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:12–23.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Various Commentators Explain Judges 5:14a

Exegete	Explanation
Keil and Delitzsch	<i>From Ephraim there came fighting men; not the whole tribe, but only nobles or brave men, and indeed those whose roots were in Amalek, i.e., those who were rooted or had taken root, i.e., had settled and spread themselves out upon the tribe-territory of Ephraim, which had formerly been inhabited by Amalekites, the mount of the Amalekites, mentioned in Judges 12:15 (for the figure itself, see Isa. 27:6 Psalm 80:10 Job. 5:3).⁵²</i>
Wesley	<i>By root Deborah seems to mean a branch, as that word is sometimes used. By which also she may note the fewness of those that came out of Ephraim, yielding but one branch or an handful of men to this service. Amalek – The constant enemy of the Israelites, who were confederate with their last oppressors the Moabites (Judges 3:13) and in all probability took their advantage now against the Israelites in the southern or middle parts of Canaan, while their main force was drawn northward against Jabin and Sisera. Against these therefore Ephraim sent forth a party, and so did Benjamin.⁵³</i>

I must admit, if I were teaching this verse live, I would be very tempted to give **Barnes' summary statement**, and move right along to the next verse.

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Judges 5:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾachar (אָחַר) [pronounced ah-KHAHR]	<i>after, following, behind</i>	preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #310 BDB #29
Bin ^e yâmîyn (בִּן יָמִין) [pronounced bin-yaw-MEEN]	transliterated <i>Benjamin</i> , it means <i>son of [my] right hand</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1144 BDB #122
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿam (אָם) [pronounced ʿahm]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

Translation: ...after you, Benjamin, with your people. The second line begins with *after you*; in order for the lines to be of a roughly similar length, we would place this here. This is followed by *Benjamin* (possibly used here as a vocative?). Then we have the phrase *in your peoples, among your peoples or with your peoples* (it is the bêyth preposition). So far, this gives us: ...following you, Benjamin among your people.

⁵² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Judges 5:14.

⁵³ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Judges 5:14.

The first problem here is to understand who is being addressed here; to whom does the 2nd person masculine singular suffix refer? Deborah speaks of the Lord in the 3rd person singular in v. 3, but in the 2nd person singular in v. 4, and then back to the 3rd person after that. There are two other more reasonable substantives to whom this refers: to Ephraim or to Barak. You may automatically gravitate to the first suggestion, which does make sense. The fighting is north of Ephraim and Benjamin; Benjamin sends in a small army which moves through Ephraim and follows after them. In moving north, Ephraim would go first, Benjamin second. I have no real problem with this interpretation, as we have Deborah changing person constantly when referring to others.⁵⁴

Another interpretation would be: Deborah is addressing Barak here, which is in line with v. 12, where Barak is spoken to with a 2nd person masculine singular imperative (*Arise, Barak, and take captivity captive*). Following after Barak, who is point on this assault, is Benjamin, found among or with the people of Barak (his army). Either interpretation gives us essentially the same thing.

Judges 5:14c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
minnîy (מִנִּי) [pronounced <i>min-NEE</i>]	<i>from, off, away from, out from, out of, from off; on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
Mâkîyr (מַכִּיר) [pronounced <i>maw-KEER</i>]	<i>sold; salesman; transliterated Machir; used poetically of Manasseh</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #4353 BDB #569
yârad (יָרַד) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAHD</i>]	<i>to descend, to go down</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #3381 BDB #432
châqaq (קָטַק) [pronounced <i>khaw-KAK</i>]	<i>lawgiver, lawmaker; leader, governor; scribe [engraver]; a scepter</i>	masculine plural, Poel participle	Strong's #2710 BDB #349

Translation: *From Machir, the lawgivers marched down;...* Then we have *from Machir, marched down the commanders*. Machir was the son of Manasseh who occupied the land east of the Jordan (Deut. 3:15 Joshua 13:29–31 17:1).⁵⁵ The one who is marching down is the masculine plural, Poel participle of châqaq (קָטַק) [pronounced *khaw-KAK*], which means *to cut in, to decree, to inscribe*. In the participle, we can take it to mean, strictly speaking, *lawmaker, lawgiver*; and more generally, *leader* (we went into greater detail about this word in v. 9). What this would indicate is that Jabin and Sisera did not have a foothold east of the Jordan and that the legislative leaders in that portion of Israel still have somewhat of a normal function.

You may ask, *what are lawgivers and scribes marching down to battle for?* The idea is, these are normal citizen-soldiers; these are men whose primary function in life is not that of a soldier, but these are the ones who make laws or record laws and history; however, even they came down to make war against the Canaanites.

⁵⁴ Keil and Delitzsch give essentially the same explanation in Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Judges 5:14.

⁵⁵ The NIV Study Bible has them living on both sides of the Jordan, citing Judges 5:17 and Joshua 17:5 as *proof*. They're wrong.

John Wesley gives essentially the same opinion: *[These are] either civil governors, princes and great persons, who were as ready to hazard themselves, as...military officers, valiant and expert commanders. Such as some of Machir's posterity are noted to have been.*⁵⁶

I have looked all over the internet to find a speech given by General Douglas MacArthur at the dedication of MacArthur Park (January 26, 1955), about citizen soldiers.

Douglas MacArthur on Citizen-Soldiers

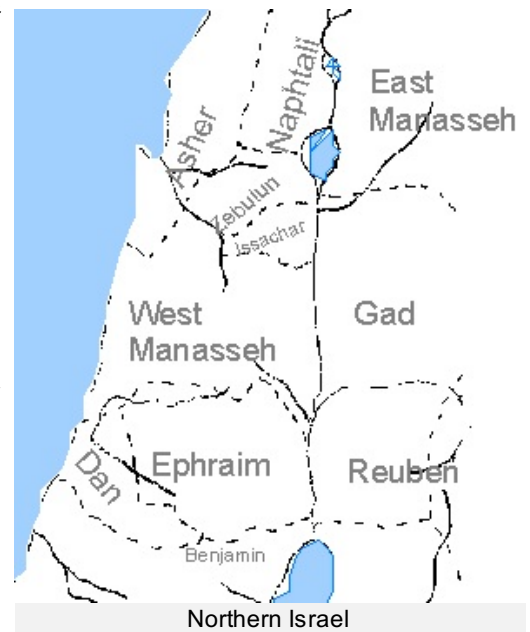
"They went on, and on, and on, when everything within them seemed to stop and die. They grew old in youth. They burned out in searing minutes all that life owed them of tranquil years. When I think of their patience under adversity, of their courage under fire, and of their modesty in victory, I am filled with an emotion of admiration I cannot express. Many of them trod the tragic path of unknown fame that led to a stark white cross above a lonely grave. And from their tortured, dying lips, with the dreadful gurgle of the death rattle in their throats, always came the same gasping prayer that we who were left would go on to victory. I do not know the dignity of their birth, but I do know the glory of their death, and I am sure a merciful God has taken them unto Himself."

There is much more to this speech, and, unfortunately, I am unable to find it.

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You may ask, *Given that Machir is the only son of Manasseh, why isn't the name Manasseh used here?* Keil and Delitzsch suggest that only those from western Manasseh join in the fight, and that those who occupied territory on the other side of the river (in Trans Jordanian) remained there.⁵⁷ The idea is, by naming a son of Manasseh, the implication is not all of Manasseh participated. Probably what it means for these men *to come down* is, they occupied primarily the mountainous region and hilly country which runs through Manasseh (and continues down through Ephraim and Judah), so they came down to the battlefields, which were near Issachar and Zebulun (adjacent tribes to Manasseh and to the north of western Manasseh). There is also the vague possibility that this refers the East Manasseh, which is actually northeast of all the action. Their *coming down* would be a movement from the north down to the south. I think that this is a less likely possibility. Furthermore, Deborah will later state that Gilead did not join in (v. 17), which area she means that which is occupied by Gad and East Manasseh. She does not even name those tribes by name, but the previous owner of their land.



Even though I have a map of Israel in my head, you may not. This will give you a quick reference as to where, approximately, these tribes are located with reference to one another.

Judges 5:14d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (י) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

⁵⁶ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Judges 5:14.

⁵⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Judges 5:14.

Judges 5:14d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
Z ^e bûwîûn (זְבוּלֹן) [pronounced z ^e b-oo-LOON]	<i>exalted, honored; transliterated Zebulun</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #2074 BDB #259
mâshak ^e (מַשְׁכֵּה) [pronounced <i>maw-SHAK^e</i>]	<i>those drawing [dragging] out, ones who continue [with something]; those marching [proceeding] to</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #4900 BDB #604
This word can mean ❶ <i>to draw up and lift out</i> ; ❷ <i>to draw [a bow]</i> ; ❸ <i>to proceed, to march</i> ; ❹ <i>to draw out a sound, to make a continuous sound</i> ; ❺ <i>to draw out, to prolong a condition, to continue</i> ; and ❻ <i>to trail seed (to draw out seed while you are sowing)</i> .			
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
shêbet (שֵׁבֶט) [pronounced <i>SHAY^b-vet</i>]	<i>rod, staff, club, scepter and figuratively for a tribe, subdivision of a tribe or family</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7626 BDB #986
çôphêr (סֹפֵר) [pronounced <i>soh-FAIR</i>]	<i>enumerator, secretary, scribe; learned man; military scribe; general</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5608 BDB #708

BDB lists this word as a noun, and *The Englishman's Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament* lists it as a verb (as does my KJV+ in e-sword). It is probably a participle of the verb, which acts like a noun.

Translation: ...and from Zebulun, those marching with a tribe of scribes [or, with a general's staff]. There are apparently more who join in from the tribe of Zebulun who more or less fit into the group of citizen-soldiers, and moved with the scribes—those listed above.

Another interpretation is, Zebulun leads them, as veterans of a previous battle or two. Zebulun functions as a lead in this war, guiding the others.

It is also possible that this means *those who draw out the rod of a scribe*. I'm sure you are wondering *what the hale does that mean?* Simple: even those who generally have a quiet responsibility (e.g. mine, for instance); those with a quiet profession will be drawing out their staff or club as a weapon. They don't have much to fight with, but even they showed up with whatever they could find, to draw out against the enemies of Israel and the enemies of God. Or, it is also reasonable that they are simply described here as those who would normally *draw out the pen of a scribe*, but that they join their brothers in battle; the concept being, these men are citizen-soldiers.

John Wesley: [These are] the Scribes, who gave themselves to study and writing, whereby they were exempted from military service; [they] voluntarily entered into this service.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Judges 5:14.

Barnes is of a different opinion; he believes that these are the men who keep the roster of the troops (referencing 2Kings 25:19). These men are in addition to the men of Zebulun who had already engaged in battle against Sisera. Matthew Henry offers a similar opinion: *With men of learning and ingenuity for secretaries of war, and with such they were supplied out of Zebulun: thence came men that handle the pen of the writer, clerks that issued out orders, wrote circular letters, drew commissions, mustered their men, and kept their accounts.*⁵⁹ Henry later suggests the position which I have taken: *I know it is generally understood of the forwardness even of the scholars of this tribe, who studied the law and expounded it, to take up arms in this cause, though they were better skilled in books than in the art of war. So Sir Richard Blackmore paraphrases it: -*

*The scribes of Zebulun and learned men,
To wield the sword, laid down the pen.*⁶⁰

At one time, critics disparaged the idea of writing during this time (circa 1150 B.C.). Because of the lack of evidence and because it did not fit with popular archeological theories, there was a time when critics dismissed the idea that there would be a reference to *writers* in this passage, as well as in others (e.g., Moses or Joshua writing down what they wrote down).

The Amplified Bible quotes from Lang's Commentary: *Writing, and alphabetical writing at that, had been practiced for some centuries along the Syrian Coast...Quantities of papyrus (the pith of the papyrus was used for writing) were exported from Egypt to Phœnicia c. 1100 B.C. Cp. Judges 8:14 (condensed from "The New Bible Commentary"), "Zebulun, formerly known only for his experts with the ciphering-pencil, had now become a people courageous unto death."*⁶¹

In terms of translation and specific interpretation, I feel as though I have not done a good job with this verse, despite the amount of time which I took with it. However, the overall picture is easy. We have additional participation in the war against the Canaanites. Our participants, so far, are from Ephraim, Benjamin, East Manasseh (Machir) and either more men from Zebulun or Zebulun leads the present troops. These tribes became involved after the defeat and death of Sisera.

Clarke takes quite a different view here that Deborah is speaking of warriors and wars from the past: *Ehud, who was of the tribe of Benjamin, slew Eglon, and defeated the Moabites, the friends and allies of the Ammonites and Amalekites. Machir, in the land of Gilead, produced eminent warriors; and Zebulun produced eminent statesmen, and men of literature. Probably Deborah speaks here of the past wars, and not of any thing that was done on this occasion; for we know that no persons from Gilead were present in the war between Jabin and Israel.*⁶²

It is possible that I have made too much of this verse, Barnes seems to dispense with it and its intricacies quite neatly: *Of Ephraim (Deborah's own tribe) came down those whose root is in Mount Amalek (Judges 12:15); after you (O Ephraim) came Benjamin among your people; of Machir (the west-Jordanic milies of Manasseh; see Joshua 17:1-6) there came down the chiefs, and of Zebulun they that handle the staff of the officer (the military scribe, whose duty it was, like that of the Roman tribunes, to keep the muster roll, and superintend the recruiting of the army—see 2Kings 25:19)*⁶³

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown give an equally brief explanation: *Then follows a eulogistic enumeration of the tribes which raised the commanded levy, or volunteered their services—the soldiers of Ephraim*

⁵⁹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:12-23.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; p. 294, which quoted from *Lang's Commentary*.

⁶² Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:14.

⁶³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:14.

who dwelt near the mount of the Amalekites, the small quota of Benjamin; "the governors," valiant leaders "out of Machir," the western Manasseh; out of Zebulun.⁶⁴

Let me explain my approach: I attempt to explore every reasonable and semi-reasonable opinion when it comes to the commentary on a verse; my intention is, that this should be a *one-stop* commentary on the few books I am able to provide an extensive commentary on (as I write this, I expect this to be at least Judges, Samuel, and a few of the psalms as well as a few chapters of 1Chronicles—although I would love to do more). If you are a teacher, and it takes you 30 minutes to plow through my text of this verse, bear in mind that it is the result of several hours study from me. Your presentation of same might be a quick 25 second explanation, along the lines of Barnes or Jamieson, et. al.

**And my princes of Issachar with Deborah;
and Issachar, so [he was with] Barak.
In the valley, he was sent forth at his feet.
In divisions of Reuben, mighty [personal]
decrees of heart.**

Judges
5:15

**And my princes of Issachar [were] with
Deborah; and Issachar, so [he was with]
Barak.
In the valley, he [Issachar] was sent forth at
his [Barak's] feet.
Among divisions of Reuben, great [personal]
decrees of the heart.**

**The princes of Issachar remained with Deborah, while the tribe of Issachar remained with Barak.
In the valley, Issachar was sent out behind Barak.
However, in the tribe of Reuben, they could not decide whether or not to participate.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	The captains of Issachar were with Debbora, and followed the steps of Barac, who exposed himself to danger, as one going headlong, and into a pit. Ruben being divided against himself, there was found a strife of courageous men.
Masoretic Text	And my princes of Issachar with Deborah; and Issachar, so [he was with] Barak. In the valley, he was sent forth at his feet. In divisions of Reuben, mighty [personal] decrees of heart.
Peshitta	And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar is like Barak among the peoples; He was sent on foot to a portion of Reuben; great are those who give oracles to comfort the heart.
Septuagint	And princes in Issachar were with Debborn and Barak, thus she sent Barak on his feet in the valleys [Alexandrian LXX: <i>Barak also sent forth his footmen into the valley</i>] into the portions of Ruben; great reachings to the heart.

Significant differences: Again, there are almost too many differences to name. The first lines are almost identical in all 4 ancients texts.

The second line has Issachar mentioned again by the Hebrew and Syriac. I have continued the thought of the first line into the second, *inserting he was with*. The Latin has roughly the same meaning, but the Syriac gives what I believe is their own interpretation, inserting words which are not found in any of the other texts. The Greek simply leaves out the additional *Issachar* at this point.

⁶⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Judges 5:11–14.

In the third line, the Masoretic text has, presumably, Issachar being sent into the valley behind Barak. In the Greek, it is Deborah sending Barak into the valleys; in the Latin, there is practically no resemblance at all, with a whole host of words being added at this point (to be fair, we do not know what Hebrew manuscript they used; theirs could have been embellished).

Finally, with respect to Reuben, it sounds like there are misgivings in this tribe concerning this war, which seems to be roughly the same meaning as we find in the Greek. The Latin conveys this as well, adding an additional phrase, which obfuscates the text (again, this may have come from their version in the Hebrew). Finally, in the Syriac, it is Barak who goes to the tribe of Reuben who appear to comfort him with oracles? This makes little sense to me as well.

Bear in mind, with all of these differences which we find in the ancient texts in this passage, not one time do we have any particular doctrine in God's Word assaulted. That is, there appears little effort to change any doctrines in God's Word, but that the intent is to explain the poetry which we find here; and, as you have seen, it is difficult to explain.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	The rulers of Issachar came along with Deborah, and Issachar followed Barak into the valley. But the tribe of Reuben was no help at all!
NLT	The princes of Issachar were with Deborah and Barak. They followed Barak, rushing into the valley. But in the tribe of Reuben there was great indecision.
REB	The princes of Issachar were with Deborah, Issachar with Barak; down into the valley they rushed in pursuit. Reuben however was split into factions; great were their heart-searchings.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	Issachar's commanders were with Deborah. They were also with Barak, sent into the valley under his command. Among Reuben's divisions important men had second thoughts.
HCSB	The princes of Issachar were with Deborah; Issachar was with Barak. They set out at his heels in the valley. There was great searching of heart among the clans of Reuben.
JPS (Tanakh)	And Issachar's chiefs were with Deborah; As Barak, so was Issachar— Rushing after him into the valley. Among the clans of Reuben Were great decisions of heart.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Emphasized Bible

And my princes in Issachar⁶⁵ were with Deborah, Yea, Issachar was the support of Barak, Into the vale rushed they forth at his feet. Among the divisions of Reuben great were the resolves of the heart:

NASB

And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah; As *was* Issachar, so *was* Barak; Into the valley they rushed at his heels; Among the divisions of Reuben *There were* great resolves of heart.

Owen's Translation

The princes of Issachar with Deborah; and Issachar so Barak. Into the valley they rushed forth at his heels. Among the clans of Reuben great searchings of heart.

Young's Updated LT

And princes in Issachar are with Deborah, Yea, Issachar *is* right with Barak, Into the valley he was sent on his feet. In the divisions of Reuben, Great *are* the decrees of heart!.

What is the gist of this verse? Although Deborah's place in this war is not clear (Barak required her to accompany him), the tribe of Issachar appears to be fully invested in this attack against the Canaanites. The tribe of Reuben, on the other hand, seems to have misgivings over the whole thing, and probably does not participate at all.

Judges 5:15a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sar (רַשָׁרָיִם) [pronounced sar]	<i>chieftain, chief, ruler, official, captain, prince, leader, commander</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #8269 BDB #978
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Yis ^e sâkâr (יִשְׂשַׁכָּר) [pronounced yis ^e -saw-AWR]	<i>he will bring a reward; there is recompense; transliterated Issachar</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3485 BDB #441
<i>Issachar comes from the word sâkâr (שָׂכָר) [pronounced saw-KAWR], which means remuneration, hire, wages. (Strong's #7939 BDB #969).</i>			
îm (עִמָּ) [pronounced geem]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
D ^e bôwrâh (דְּבוֹרָה) [pronounced d ^{eb} -voh-RAW],	<i>bee; transliterated Deborah</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1683 BDB #184

Translation: *And my princes of Issachar [were] with Deborah;...* This verse, in the Hebrew, literally begins: *And my princes of in Issachar with Deborah.* This explains the difference between the NASB and Young. One went

⁶⁵ Rotherham and the NKJV both point out that the Aramaic, Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate all have *the princes of Issachar*. *My* is the personal, pronominal suffix from the Hebrew ending.

with the construct of *princes* and the other went with the preposition which precedes Deborah.⁶⁶ There are no verbs there, which is why Rotherham, Young and the NASB inserted various forms of *to be*.

I think that it would be fair to say that Deborah is not fighting the battle with Barak, but she is nearby. This tells us that the princes of Issachar are with her. Let me suggest that there is some strategic planning occurring here, while Barak leads the troops into battle. I do not believe that there is any insult intended here.

Judges 5:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
Yis ^e sâkâr (ישׁשכר) [pronounced <i>yis^e-saw-AWR</i>]	<i>he will bring a reward; there is recompense; transliterated Issachar</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #3485 BDB #441
kên (י כן) [pronounced <i>kane</i>]	<i>so, thus; upright, honest; rightly, well; [it is] so, such, so constituted;</i>	properly, an active participle; used primarily as an adverb	Strong's #3651 BDB #485
Bârâq (ברק) [pronounced <i>baw-RAWK</i>]	<i>lightening, lightening flash; transliterated Barak</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #1301 BDB #140

Translation: ...and Issachar, so [he was with] Barak. The next line begins with *And Issachar* and the adverb *so*. This is followed by *Barak*. The word *so* is the short way of repeating the content of the previous line. So, just as the princes of Issachar are with Deborah, the tribe of Issachar *was with* Barak. What this means is that strategy and tactics were planned between the princes of Issachar and Deborah. The actual fighting included Barak and the tribe of Issachar. This would have been after the defeat and assassination of Sisera and prior to the complete defeat of Jabin and the Canaanites.

In any case, the tribe of Issachar is fully invested in this fight for their freedom. This will set up a contrast between them and the tribe of Reuben, which will follow shortly.

Judges 5:15c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿemeq (עמק) [pronounced <i>GEH-mek</i>]	<i>valley, vale, lowland, deepening, depth</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #6010 BDB #770

⁶⁶ Let me explain this as a footnote. In the Hebrew, *prince* is sar (שר) [pronounced *sar*]; in the plural, it is sârîym (שרים); in the plural construct it is sârêy (שרים); and the plural with the 1st person singular suffix is sârây (שראי). You will note that in the latter two cases, the difference is in the vowel point.

Translation: *In the valley,...* The next sentence begins with *in the valley* or *into the valley*. Historically, wars are generally fought between large groups of infantry in fields and valleys; retreat often takes place in hills and forests, where those retreating might have a better chance to evade their pursuers.

We know by the historical narrative of Judges 4 that the first battle had Barak with the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun coming down from Mount Tabor to meet Sisera and his chariots in the valley below (Judges 4:12–16). This can refer to that particular battle and it becomes representative of the subsequent times that Issachar followed Barak into battle.

Judges 5:15d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced shaw-LAKH]	<i>he was sent forth, he had been sent forth; he has been cast away, cast aside; he has been dismissed; he has been let go, set free</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Pual perfect	Strong's #7971 BDB #1018
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
regel (רַגְלֵי) [pronounced REH-ge]	<i>foot, feet</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7272 BDB #919

Translation: *...he [Issachar] was sent forth at his [Barak's] feet.* We have the 3rd person masculine singular, Pual perfect of *to send, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy*. The Pual is the passive of the Piel, which is the *accomplished intensive* stem. We could render this *he was sent forth, he had been sent forth*. What follows is the b^eyth preposition and the words *his feet*. What this means is that the tribe of Issachar was sent forth under the command (*at his feet*) of Barak. Barak led them into battle. Again, their first battle involved following Barak into the valley to war against Sisera; and this poetically represents the many times after that Issachar continued to follow Barak into war.

The Tribes Who Did Not Participate

So far, we have examined the tribes which did participate. Now we will examine the tribes which did not participate, or who could not seem to decide. This *should* have been the division point for this verse, as the Tanakh rightly observes in its own translation. This is one of the worst verse divisions found in Scripture.

Judges 5:15e			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
p ^e ûggâh (פְּלוּגָה) [pronounced p ^e loog-GAW]	<i>division, section; possibly a class</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #6391 BDB #811

Judges 5:15e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
R ^e ûwbên (רֹוּבֵן) [pronounced r ^e oo-BANE]	<i>behold a son; transliterated Reubenite</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #7206 BDB #910

Translation: *Among divisions of Reuben,...* In the next line, we have a new thought. We have the bêyth preposition again and the masculine singular construct *divisions*. It comes from the word *to split, to divide* and is only found in Judges 5:15–16 and Job 20:17. Now there are two ways of interpreting this: some might look at the word *divisions* and think of the tribe of Reuben being split up into divisions for war. However, the tribe of Reuben appears to be divided in purpose and intention. That is, some might support this war for independence and others may not.⁶⁷ They do not appear to know they should participate or not. In retrospect, we think to ourselves, *of course you should participate; these are your brothers!* However, that is not the case. In our Revolutionary War—our war for independence—there were a significant number of people who did not favor separation from England or were not willing to go to war to gain this independence. So it is with the tribe of Reuben; they disagree about this war against the Canaanites; they are divided.

Judges 5:15f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gâdôwl (גָּדוֹל) [pronounced gaw-DOHL]	<i>large, great or mighty [in power, nobility, wealth; in number, or magnitude and extent], loud, older, important, distinguished; vast, unyielding, immutable, significant, astonishing</i>	masculine plural adjective	Strong's #1419 BDB #152
chêqeq (חֵקֵק) [pronounced CHAY-kek]	<i>personal decree, individual resolve [after a great deal of thought], statute, action prescribed</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #2711 BDB #349
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3820 BDB #524

Translation: *...great [personal] decrees of the heart.* After the proper noun *Reuben* we have the adjective *strong mighty*. Following this we have the masculine plural construct of *chêqeq*, which is only found in Judges 5:15 and Isa. 10:1. However, it has several cognates; the verb means *to cut, to engrave, to decree*. This would refer to personal decrees or things determined after a great amount of thought. This is followed by the word *heart*. This gives us: *In divisions of Reuben, mighty [personal] decrees of heart.*

Even though, to Deborah, their choice should be obvious, there was possible great debate and disagreement. At the time, to some, this debate may have even seemed meaningful.

Gill: *Either (1) for their divisions among themselves in their own councils, some being for going over Jordan to assist their brethren the Israelites against Jabin, and free them from his yoke, pitying their distressed state and condition; and others were for keeping at home, and taking care of their flocks,*

⁶⁷ Both Barnes and Thieme suggest that this should be *Among the brooks of Reuben*. I'm not certain that this interpretation explains more than what I have given you.

*and not intermeddle in the quarrel; judging it to be most for their worldly peace and profit to observe a neutrality: by reason of which divisions no assistance was given. Or (2) for their divisions and separations from their brethren the Israelites, from whom they were not only separated by the river Jordan, but in their affections to them, and regards for them; keeping at a distance from them, when their help was required: and this conduct of theirs caused many thoughts of heart in Deborah and Barak, in the princes and people of Israel, who could not well understand the reason of it; and which caused much grief and uneasiness of mind, that so powerful a tribe, and who had been assisting to them in the conquest of the land, and lay convenient to help them, yet should be so very indifferent to them.*⁶⁸

Application: Today, there are those who believe that the debate concerning Iraq is reasonable; that it is okay to commit troops to a position, and then, suddenly withdraw them when results are not immediate or imperfect. Many of these do not believe that the withdrawal of troops will mean anything, even though it will be seen among millions as a victory of Allah and Islam over America. I don't mean to get too political (although, there is no telling at what period of time you will read this), but the Bible, over and over again, castigates those who do not participate in a war of their country.

This has all been rough sledding, so let me offer some general help here:

Hebrew Poetry (as Opposed to Prose)

- (1) Hebrew Poetry has a slightly new or different vocabulary.
- (2) The sentence structure is often altered.
- (3) Thoughts are not presented as full sentences, but are often fragmented.
- (4) Words sometimes have a slightly different meaning.
- (5) The overall meaning might be less than perfectly literal. Therefore, when dealing with Hebrew poetry, there is a lot with which we need to struggle.

This may help to explain why translators of eras gone by struggle so much with the meaning of these verses; and why we struggle so much ourselves.

Furthermore, in this particular poem, we are dealing with more ancient Hebrew than that of the Psalms. In the psalms, there are so many from the same era that we can more easily draw conclusions about the structure and the slightly altered meaning of the words. We have less to compare this song to.

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In v. 16, we continue with the tribe of Reuben.

**Why did you remain in the saddlebags?
To hear a hissing of flocks.
For divisions of Reuben,
[there were] mighty searchings of heart.**

Judges
5:16

**Why did you remain between the
saddlebags?
To hear the hissing of [your] flocks?
For divisions of Reuben,
[they had] great examinations of the heart.**

Was there a reason that you remained with your saddlebags instead of joining your brothers in the fight?

**Was it to hear the hissing of your flocks?
For there were disagreements in Reuben and serious strugglings of the heart.**

Again, we will need to go to a couple of other translations, but this won't be quite as difficult as the previous verse.

⁶⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:15.

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	Why do you live between two borders, that you may hear the bleatings of the flocks? Ruben being divided against himself, there was found a strife of courageous men.
Masoretic Text	Why did you remain in the saddlebags? To hear a hissing of flocks. For divisions of Reuben, [there were] mighty personal decrees of heart.
Peshitta	Why do you stay on the highways? To hear the bleatings of the wild asses? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.
Septuagint	Why did they sit between the sheep-folds to hear the bleating of flocks for the divisions of Ruben? there were great searchings of heart.

Significant differences: There is a difference of opinion as to where the tribe of Reuben stayed. In the Hebrew, they remain with the saddlebags, as if they had saddled up to go, but could not make the final decision to join their brothers. In the Latin, they are between two borders—which, I suppose, could be the Jordan and the eastern border of Reuben. The meaning is, they did not leave their territory. In the Syriac, they stay on the highways, and in the Greek, they remain with their sheep. In all cases, except the Syriac, Reuben is remaining to listen to their flocks make noise.

The final line is a repetition of the final lines of v. 15.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Reuben, why did you stay among your sheep pens? Was it to listen to shepherds whistling for their sheep? No one could figure out why Reuben wouldn't come.
<i>The Message</i>	Why all those campfire discussions? Diverted and distracted, Reuben's divisions couldn't make up their minds.
NLT	Why did you sit at home among the sheepfolds— to hear the shepherds whistle or their flocks? In the tribe of Reuben there was great indecision.
REB	Why did you linger by the sheepfolds to listen to the shrill calling of the shepherds?

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> TM	Why did you sit between the saddlebags? Was it to listen to the shepherds playing their flutes? Reuben's divisions of important men had second thoughts.
HCSB	Why did you sit among the sheepfolds listening to the playing of pipes for the flocks? There was great searching of heart among the clans of Reuben.
JPS (Tanakh)	Why then did you stay among the sheepfolds And listen as they pipe for the flocks? Among the clans of Reuben Were great searching of heart!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	Why do you live among the folds? To hear the mocking of the flocks? The divisions of Reuben had great counselings of heart.
NASB	“Why did you sit among the sheepfolds, To hear the piping for the flocks? Among the divisions of Reuben <i>There were</i> great searchings of heart.

Young's Updated LT

Why have you abode between the boundaries, To hear lowings of herds? For the divisions of Reuben, Great are the searchings of heart!

What is the gist of this verse? Deborah chides Reuben for remaining where he is. She asks, "Did you stay there in order to hear the bleating of your herds?" Then v. 15c–d is repeated. .

Judges 5:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^f)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâh (ה מ) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
Lâmed + mâh can be rendered <i>why, for what reason, to what purpose, for what purpose</i> , indicating an interrogatory sentence.			
yâshab (י ש ב) [pronounced <i>yaw-SHAH^fV</i>]	<i>to remain, to stay; to dwell, to live, to inhabit; to sit</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
bêyn (י ב י) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>	preposition	Strong's #996 BDB #107
mishpâth (ת פ ש מ) [pronounced <i>mish^e-PATH</i>]	<i>fire-places, ash-heaps; sheepfolds; saddlebags</i>	masculine dual noun	Strong's #4942 BDB #1046

This word found only here and in Gen. 49:14, both poetical portions of God's Word. We are given several guesses as to what this means, including *fire-places, sheepfolds, ash-heaps*. However, I think the key to this word is its dual number and its use in Gen. 49:14: [Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the \[two whatever's\]](#). The NASB suggests *saddlebags*, which seems the most logical. Other renderings include *sheepfolds* (or, *saddlebags*) (NASB); *pens* (as in, *sheep pens*) and *folds* (Rotherham); *saddlebags* and *campfires* (NIV); and *folds* and *boundaries* (Young).⁶⁹ My thinking is that the saddlebags are removed from the donkeys and used as sort of a makeshift pillow/bed in between which a person might lie for some comfort.

This may help to explain why we see this word translated in so many ways.

Translation: [Why did you remain between the saddlebags?](#) It is in this verse that we see that Reuben did not immediately come to the rest of Israel. Where they are remaining is the dual masculine of a word found only here and in Gen. 49:14, both poetical portions of God's Word. We are given several guesses as to what this means, including *fire-places, sheepfolds, ash-heaps*. However, I think the key to this word is its dual number and its use in Gen. 49:14: [Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the \[two whatever's\]](#). The NASB suggests *saddlebags*, which seems the most logical. Other renderings include *sheepfolds* (or, *saddlebags*) (NASB); *pens* (as in, *sheep pens*) and *folds* (Rotherham); *saddlebags* and *campfires* (NIV); and *folds* and *boundaries* (Young). My thinking is that the saddlebags are removed from the donkeys and used as sort of a makeshift pillow/bed in between which a person might lie for some comfort. Reuben has not moved swiftly toward the fighting but has held

⁶⁹ I need to say something in defense of Young; even though he is not always consistent in his translation, this tends to be in areas where we are dealing with rather difficult words, e.g. this one where no one can unequivocally say what it means.

back. The overall implication is, they never got as far as to saddle up. They remained with their saddlebags, unwilling to help their brothers.

Judges 5:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ʾ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâmaʿ (שָׁמַע) [pronounced shaw-MAHG]	<i>to listen [intently], to hear, to listen and obey, [or, and act upon, give heed to, take note of], to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
shʿrîyqâh (שִׁרְיָקָה) [pronounced shʿree-KAW]	<i>hissing, shrieking, piping, whistling</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #8292 BDB #1057
This word is onomatopoeic and is pronounced <i>shree-KAW</i> , which indicates the noise of the flocks. See Strong's #8319 BDB #1056 and Strong's #8322 BDB #1056.			
ʿêder (עֵדֶר) [pronounced ĠAY-der]	<i>flock, herd</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #5739 BDB #727

Translation: *To hear the hissing of [your] flocks?* The question is continued with the Qal infinitive of the verb to *hear*, which is followed by the feminine plural construct of a noun which occurs here only, but very likely means *hissing*. It is onomatopoeic and is pronounced *shree-KAH*. Reuben chose to stay with their flocks, only to hear the reproof of their own cattle. Do you see how clever this is? As Reuben stays behind, their own animals hiss at them; their own animals condemn them for their non-involvement.

Gill has a slightly different take on this: *The bleatings of their flocks, and the whistlings of the shepherds that kept them, sounded louder in their ears, and more engrossed their attention, than the groans and cries of Israel under oppression; or than the soundings of the trumpet, the alarm of war, or the loud calls of Deborah and Barak.*⁷⁰ Or, *perhaps the bleatings of their own sheep simply drowned out the calls for help from Deborah and Barak.*⁷¹

Judges 5:16c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
p ^e lûggâh (פְּלִגָּה) [pronounced p ^e loog-GAW]	<i>division, section; possibly a class</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #6391 BDB #811

⁷⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:16.

⁷¹ This is quite a paraphrase from John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Judges 5:16.

Judges 5:16c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
R ^o ûwbên (רֹוּבֵן) [pronounced r ^o oo-BANE]	<i>behold a son; transliterated Reubenite</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #7206 BDB #910

Translation: [For divisions of Reuben,...](#) This begins a repetition of the end of v. 15; however, it is not exactly replicated, which suggests that this is not simply a copyist error. This short portion is exactly the same as v. 15.

Judges 5:16d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gâdôwl (גָּדוֹל) [pronounced gaw-DOHL]	<i>large, great or mighty [in power, nobility, wealth; in number, or magnitude and extent], loud, older, important, distinguished; vast, unyielding, immutable, significant, astonishing</i>	masculine plural adjective	Strong's #1419 BDB #152
chêqer (חֵקֵר) [pronounced KHAY-ker]	<i>a careful investigation, a searching out or a searching for, an investigation, research, investigation, inquisition, study, examination, survey</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #2714 BDB #350
This word is different from what we have in v. 15.			
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3820 BDB #524

Translation:...[\[they had\] great examinations of the heart.](#) The end of v. 15 is very nearly repeated, with the exception of one word. The Revised English Bible suggests that this is a mistake, and that the verse was re-copied as a copyist's error. However, this is not exactly the same as the end of v. 15. My impression here is that these men of Reuben thought long and hard about their responsibilities, yet, in the end, just sat out with their flocks of sheep listening to the hiss of their flocks. The indication is that Reuben did not assist in the war against Jabin. Therefore, I don't believe that we have a copyist's error here, but that it simply and poetically indicates that Reuben did nothing but think about this situation.

Gill: *This [line] is repeated to show how much the prophetess, the general of the army, the princes and people, were affected with this conduct of the tribe of Reuben; it gave them much pain and uneasiness, occasioned many inquiries, caused much discourse and conversation, and put them upon thinking, and greatly exercised their minds, what should be the meaning of their behaving after this manner. Cocceius takes these words to be spoken ironically, and renders them, "at the rivers of Reuben were great men in searchings of heart;"there were wisdom, prudence, counsel, searching, and discerning of spirits, preferring their flocks to the people of God.*⁷² So two interpretations are given: Reuben's choice not to help their brothers caused great discourse among those they would not help; but I think the latter interpretation is the accurate one: that, after great discussion and personal introspection, the Reubenites simply decided to stay with the accusatory bleating of their sheep.

⁷² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:16.

Keil and Delitzsch give a succinct interpretation: *In this tribe there did arise a lively sympathy with the national elevation. They held meetings, passed great resolutions, but it led to no practical result; and at length they preferred to remain quietly at home in their own comfortable pastoral life.*⁷³

As Paul writes about such men: **They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ...For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things** (Philip. 2:21 3:18–19).

Application: This reminds me of the time in which I live; we have two madman who just recent spoke at the United Nations: Hugo Chavez and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (president of Iran); and we have two rogue rulers who desire nuclear weapons: Kim Il Sung of North Korea and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran. Kim Il Sung, on several occasions, has tested missiles which fly over Japan; and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has, on several occasions, called for the destruction of the nation Israel. These are men who take an antagonistic stance against the United States; they hate and disrespect our president (Chavez has called him Satan over and over again the other day⁷⁴); and there is no reason to assume that they would not be sympathetic to terrorist groups who would like to destroy Israel and the United States as well. 10–20 years from now, their hatred and implacability will be clearly known throughout the world; and if we in the United States simply take this time to debate the issues, to have great searchings of the heart, and to ultimately remain here, without taking a stand, among the bleatings of our Wal-marts and McDonald's, we will pay with our own blood on our own soil. We are choosing inaction at this point, although what these men intend to do is not hidden; it is not spoken behind closed doors; there is no confusion that these are our enemies and that they mean to do us and Israel harm. How long will we hold meetings, pass great resolutions without practical result, and remain quietly at home while these men plot our destruction? Those who know history look back at Hitler and wonder, *how could we stand by and let him rage all over Europe?* However, we face a similar and even less-veiled threats today, and still sit unmoved, the bleatings of our ipods drowning out the threats from all around us.

Application: In the believer's life, there is a time to think and there is a time to spring into action. It is God's Word in our soul and the gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit which leads us to grasp the difference.

Application: Since I mention the guidance of God the Holy Spirit, I need to point out that God is not going to light up your left side for you to go left; nor will He place a gray cloud overhead to guide you in this or that direction. If you get into fellowship (name your sins to God) and you learn God's Word. Doing this means that you will not have to worry about guidance; that will be taken care of.

**Gilead beyond the Jordan pitched a tent
and Dan, why does he abide [in] ships?
Asher remained for a coast of seas
and from his ports he pitched a tent.**

Judges
5:17

**Gilead pitched a tent beyond the Jordan;
and why does Dan abide [by the] ships?
Asher remained by the sea coast [or, the
west coast]
and he pitched a tent from his ports.**

**Gilead is not moving from beyond the Jordan and the tribe of Dan remains by the ships.
Asher has stayed by the coast, pitching a tent at his ports.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

Gilead beyond the Jordan pitched a tent
and Dan, why does he abide [in] ships?

⁷³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Judges 5:15–16.

⁷⁴ To cheering and clapping crowds, might I add; and many from a Baptist church!

Asher remained for a coast of seas
and from his ports he pitched a tent.
Septuagint Galaad is on the other side of Jordan where he pitched his tents;
and why does Dan remain in ships?
Aser sat down on the sea-coasts, and he will tabernacle at his ports [or, *places of egress, etc.*].

Significant differences: The Greek and Hebrew, finally, are almost identical.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV The people of Gilead stayed across the Jordan. Why did the tribe of Dan remain on their ships and the tribe of Asher stay along the coast near the harbors?
The Message Gilead played it safe across the Jordan, and Dan, why did he go off sailing? Asher kept his distance on the seacoast, safe and secure in his harbors.
NLT Gilead remained east of the Jordan.
And Dan, why did he stay home?
Asher sat unmoved at the seashore,
remaining in his harbors.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ Gilead remained east of the Jordan River. And Dan . . . Why did he stay by the ships? Asher sat on the seashore and remained along the inlets.
HCSB Gilead remained beyond the Jordan. Dan, why did you linger at the ships? Asher remained at the seashore and stayed in his harbors.
JPS (Tanakh) Gildea tarried beyond the Jordan;
And Dan—why did he linger by the ships [Or “at Onioth,” a presumed designation of Dan’s region]
Asher tarried at the seacost
And tarried at his landings.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Updated Emphasized Bible Gilead beyond the Jordan took his rest, But why did Dan remain with the ships? Asher abode by the shore of the seas, And by his creeks must needs rest.
NASB “Gilead remained [or, dwelt] across the Jordan; And why did Dan stay in ships? Asher sat at the seashore, And remained [or, dwelt] by its landings.
Young’s Updated LT Gilead beyond the Jordan did tabernacle, And Dan—why does he sojourn *in* ships? Asher abides at the haven of the seas, And by his creeks he tabernacles.

What is the gist of this verse? Gilead (Manasseh east of the Jordan) remained there; the tribe of Dan remained with his ships. Asher abides by the seas.

Judges 5:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Gil ^ē ād (גִּלְעָד) [pronounced <i>gil-GAWD</i>].	<i>rocky region</i> ; transliterated <i>Gilead</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1568 BDB #166

Judges 5:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿêber (עֵבֶר) [pronounced ĠAY ^e -ver]	<i>region beyond [across]; region on the other side [of a valley, stream, sea]; the opposite region [side]; beyond, side</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #5676 BDB #719
The bēyth preposition with the masculine noun ʿêber literally mean <i>in the opposite region, in the opposite side</i> ; together, they often act as the single preposition <i>beyond, on the other side of</i> .			
Yâr ^e dên (יַרְדֵּן) [pronounced yar ^e -DAYN]	transliterated <i>Jordan</i>	proper noun with the definite article	Strong's #3383 BDB #434
shâkan (שָׁכַן) [pronounced shaw-KAHN]	<i>to tabernacle, to pitch a tent; to dwell, to reside, to live in, to domicile at, to settle, to settle down, to encamp</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7931 BDB #1014

Translation: [Gilead pitched a tent beyond the Jordan](#);... The first verb is the Qal perfect of *to tabernacle, to pitch a tent*. By application, it means *to dwell, to reside, to live in, to domicile at, to settle, to settle down, to dwell, to encamp, to tabernacle*.. The use of the name *Gilead*, as opposed to *Gad and Manasseh*, the tribes which settled Gilead, is an insult. East Manasseh and Gad did not come to help their brothers and is therefore not called by their name but by the name of the area that they inhabited. This is also an easy way to separate east Manasseh from west Manasseh, by referring to the land which is occupied.

There is an irony that you might miss. Gilead is really a place, and, as such, will always be on the other side of the Jordan. Gilead, because it is a place, cannot be anywhere else but on the other side of the Jordan. Obviously it domiciles or lives or dwells on the other side of the Jordan—that is where Gilead is. It is like saying that Seattle has pitched a tent in the state of Washington. Gad and East Manasseh, who reside in Gilead, act as though they cannot leave their place in Gilead—as though it is physically impossible. At least with the tribe of Reuben, there apparently was some discussion and thought given to helping their brothers.

Although, separated into tribes, Israel is one nation. When planes struck New York City on 9/11/01, I felt just as personally struck as if they had taken out the Transco tower in Houston. Even though I may not have a lot in common with New Yorkers, they are a part of my nation, and striking them is the same as striking me. Those on the other side of the Jordan did not quite see it that way.

In a way, this is what Moses had warned against. When Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh requested the land Israel conquered east of the Jordan, Moses sternly warned them that they must continue to assist their brothers take the land on the other side of the Jordan (Deut. 3:12–20). With regards to Joshua's initial incursion into the land, these 2½ tribes functioned as their brothers. However, since then, the cries of their brothers are drowned out by the bleating of the sheep; and they are simply too far away.

Judges 5:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
Dân (דָּן) [pronounced <i>dawn</i>]	<i>judge and is transliterated Dan</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1835 BDB #192
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâh (מַה) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
Lâmed + mâh can be rendered <i>why, for what reason, to what purpose, for what purpose</i> , indicating an interrogatory sentence.			
Owen lists this here and in v. 16a as BDB #554.			
gûwr (גּוּר) [pronounced <i>goor</i>]	<i>(1) to temporarily reside, to sojourn, to stay temporarily; (2) to stir up, to strive with, to quarrel with; and, (3) to dread, to be afraid of, to stand in awe of</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect (this verb is a homonym; all basic meanings are given)	Strong's #1481 BDB #158
ʿānīyyâh (אֲנִיָּיָהּ) [pronounced <i>uh-nee-YAW</i>]	<i>a ship; shipmen, seamen</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #591 BDB #58

Translation: ...and why does Dan abide [by the] ships? Then Dan is mentioned. The verb is the Qal perfect of *to sojourn, to [temporarily] reside*. This is followed simply by *ships*; there is no preposition. This is a bit difficult to grasp, as we don't really hear much about Israel and sailing vessels. However, Dan is near the shore. This is extremely sarcastic. It is as though Dan is behaving like he's too busy with the ships that he doesn't have. Or, the tribe of Dan is too busy with the ships of Israel's enemies—the Phœnicians—by being engaged in trade with them. I believe that one of those meanings is what Deborah intends to say.

Judges 5:17c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿĀshêr (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>aw-SHARE</i>],	<i>happiness; transliterated Asher</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #836 BDB #81
yâshab (יָשַׁב) [pronounced <i>yaw-SHAH^{BV}</i>]	<i>to remain, to stay; to dwell, to live, to inhabit; to sit</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

Judges 5:17c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
chôwph (חֹפִי) [pronounced <i>khohf</i>]	<i>sea shore, shore, coast; [sheltered] cove</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2348 BDB #342
yâm (יָם) [pronounced <i>yawm</i>]	<i>sea, lake, river, seaward, west, westward</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #3220 BDB #410

Translation: *Asher remained by the sea coast* [or, *west coast*]... What Asher did is the Qal perfect of *to remain, to sit, to dwell*. This is followed by the lamed preposition and two words which mean, together, *the west coast, the sea coast*. Asher had a huge coastline along the Mediterranean Sea. Throughout much of their tenure in the land, the Phœnicians controlled their shores.

Another possibility is, they did not want to leave their sea coast unguarded, so they could not come out and help their brothers.⁷⁵

Judges 5:17d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wê (or vê) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752
miph ^e râts (מִפְרָצִים) [pronounced <i>mihf^e-RAWTS</i>]	<i>a break in the shore, a haven, a landing place</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4664 BDB #830

This word found only here, and variously rendered *landing places* (BDB), *creeks* (NASB and Rotherham), *landings* (Owen and Young), and *ports* (NJB).

shâkan (שָׁכַן) [pronounced <i>shaw-KAHN</i>]	<i>to tabernacle, to pitch a tent; to dwell, to reside, to live in, to domicile at, to settle, to settle down, to encamp</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7931 BDB #1014
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Translation: *...and he pitched a tent from his ports*. In the final line, we have the preposition *upon, against, above*.. This is followed by the masculine plural of a word found only here, and variously rendered *landing places* (BDB), *creeks* (NASB and Rotherham), *landings* (Owen and Young), and *ports* (NJB). The verb is, again, *to tabernacle, to pitch a tent*. Now, this also appears to have a meaning that we don't quite get. Asher does not have control of her coastline. The Phœnicians have the control of the coasts. However, Asher is remaining as close to the coast as is possible in order to avoid supporting their brothers in war. They are almost risking their lives in order to avoid risking their lives. You will recall the verse, *"Your sin will find you out!"* This is its proper application—as an indictment against Asher and Dan, Gad and Reuben.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:17.

⁷⁶ This is a partial quotation from Num. 32:23; the sin referred to is the sin of pacifism while the remainder of Israel is at war.

Quite simply, what we have in this past verse and a half are those who did not participate, although they should have. You have further noted, now that it has been pointed out to you, that Deborah does this in sarcasm, something which some people do not realize is in the Bible. Reuben thinks and thinks and thinks; and then puts his head between two saddlebags to rest his mind from all that thinking. The tribe of Gad and some of the tribe of Manasseh are behaving like a piece of real estate which cannot be moved from its present position. Dan, although a possessor of some shore line, does not possess any ships; however, the lack of help of Dan is though he is busy with his ships. And Asher, who has a tremendous coast line, but who does not control that coast line, remains near his coast line, in an area which might even be more dangerous than the battlefield. Deborah has castigated these tribes for their cowardice in warfare; for their cowardice when it comes to assisting their brothers in war—and, quite unfortunately, her poetic sarcasm strikes a level beyond the expertise of 99% of those who read this passage. And don't forget who is making these vicious remarks—a woman, a woman involved in a war against the Canaanites; a woman whose nerve and heroism is greater than that of the men from the tribes she has disparaged herein.

It might be easier to see this if I explain this next to the Scripture itself.

A Summary of the Tribes who Failed

Tribe	Scripture	Explanation\Implication
Reuben	Among divisions of Reuben, great [personal] decrees of the heart. Why did you remain between the saddlebags? To hear the hissing of [your] flocks? For divisions of Reuben, [they had] great examinations of the heart.	Reuben thought about this situation and argued about it; but, when all was said and done, they rested their heads on their saddlebags, the noise of their flocks drowning out the calls for help from their brothers.
Gad and ½ tribe of Manasseh	Gilead pitched a tent beyond the Jordan;	Gilead is not the name of a tribe, but the name of the territory that Gad and half of Manasseh occupied. The land of Gilead could not move across the Jordan, and Gad and half of Manasseh behaved the same way.
Dan	...and why does Dan abide [by the] ships?	The tribe of Dan has no ships; in fact, at this time, they probably did not even possess any coast line (Judges 18). This is nothing more than a lame excuse.
Asher	Asher remained by the sea coast [or, the west coast] and he pitched a tent from his ports.	Asher did not control their own coastline and living on the coast could be as dangerous as being in battle. Still, instead of moving in the direction of their brothers, they pitched a tent as far away from them as possible.

Although there are other commentaries who treat Deborah's observations differently, I believe that her intent here is sarcasm.

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Let's see what others think:

Other Commentators Discuss the Tribes who Did not Help		
Tribe	Gill	Henry
Reuben	<p><i>The bleatings of their flocks, and the whistlings of the shepherds that kept them, sounded louder in their ears, and more engrossed their attention, than the groans and cries of Israel under oppression; or than the soundings of the trumpet, the alarm of war, or the loud calls of Deborah and Barak; being under the influence of a carnal worldly spirit, and wanting affection and sympathy towards their brethren, about which Deborah here expostulates with them.</i>⁷⁷</p>	<p><i>Reuben basely declined the service, (Judges 5:15–16). Justly had he long ago been deprived of the privileges of the birthright, and still does his dying father's doom stick by him: unstable as water, he shall not excel. Two things hindered them from engaging: [1.] Their divisions. This jarring string she twice strikes upon to their shame: For in the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts, impressions, and searchings of heart. Not only for their division from Canaan by the river Jordan, but it means either that they were divided among themselves, could not agree who should go or who should lead, each striving to gain the posts of honour and shun those of danger, or that they were divided in their opinion of this war from the rest of the tribes, thought the attempt either not justifiable or not practical, and therefore blamed those that engaged in it and did themselves decline it. This occasioned great searchings of heart among the rest, especially when they had reason to suspect that, whatever Reuben pretended, his sitting still now proceeded from a cooling of his affections to his brethren and an alienation of mind from them. [2.] Their business in the world: Reuben abode among the sheepfolds, a warmer and safer place than the camp, pretending they could not conveniently leave the sheep they tended; he loved to hear the bleatings of the flocks, or, as some read it, the whistlings of the flocks, the music which the shepherds made with their oaten reeds or pipes, and the pastorals which they sung; these Reuben preferred before the martial drum and trumpet. Thus many are kept from doing their duty by the fear of trouble, the love of ease, and an inordinate affection to their worldly business and advantage.</i>⁷⁸</p>

⁷⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:16.

⁷⁸ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:12–23. I edited his comments somewhat.

Other Commentators Discuss the Tribes who Did not Help		
Tribe	Gill	Henry
Gad and ½ tribe of Manasseh	<i>The tribe of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, on that side Jordan, came not to the help of Israel; but abode where they were, attending their flocks and herds, and preferring their own private profit to the public good; yet as Gilead was given to Machir (Deut. 3:15) and some are said to come out from thence to serve in this expedition, (Judges 5:14). West Manasseh came out to help their brothers; east Manasseh stayed put.⁷⁹</i>	Henry believed that east Manasseh did come to help their brothers, but that is because he associates <i>Machir</i> (Manasseh's only son) with Gilead, east of the Jordan (not all commentators think this way; Keil and Delitzsch see Gad and half Manasseh as not fulfilling their proper duties ⁸⁰). However, all of Manasseh was descended from Machir. <i>Machir</i> spoke of those west of the Jordan and <i>Gilead</i> referred to those east of the Jordan (my comments, not Henry's).
Dan	<i>The Danites inhabiting Joppa, and other places bordering on the Mediterranean sea, attended their navigation and merchandise; and which they chose rather to do, than to appear in the field of battle in the behalf of their brethren; judging this to be a sufficient excuse, though the question put implies the contrary; according to the Targum, they were meditating a flight, and put their goods into ships to flee with them, should Sisera get the day.⁸¹</i>	<i>Dan pretended he could not leave his ships but they would be exposed, and therefore I pray thee have me excused. Those of that tribe perhaps pleaded that their sea-trade made them ill-fitted for land-service and diverted them from it; but Zebulun also was a haven for ships, a sea-faring tribe, and yet was forward and active in this expedition. There is no excuse we make to shift off duty but what some or other have broken through and set aside, whose courage and resolution will rise up against us and shame us.⁸²</i>
Asher	<i>Asher continued on the sea shore; on the shore of the Mediterranean sea, attending traffic and business, and did not concern themselves at all in this war; and abode in his trenches; in his towns and cities, the walls of which had been broken down by the Canaanites, and remained unrepaired, nor were they suffered to repair them; and therefore excused themselves on this account from engaging in the war, being obliged to stay at home to keep and defend their cities; which were in such a ruinous and weak condition, that the enemy might enter at any time: some render it, "in their creeks" bays and havens where they had much shipping, and which required their attendance.⁸³</i>	<i>Asher pretended he must stay at home to repair the breaches which the sea had in some places made upon his land, and to fortify his works against the encroachments of it, or he abode in his creeks, or small havens, where his trading vessels lay to attend them. A little thing will serve those for a pretense to stay at home who have no mind to engage in the most necessary services because there are difficulty and danger in them.⁸⁴</i>

⁷⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:17.

⁸⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Judges 5:17.

⁸¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:17.

⁸² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:12–23.

⁸³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:17.

⁸⁴ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:12–23.

Although I believe my comments to correctly cover the material, I print these so that you can see what others think.

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The True Heroes of this Time

**Zebulun scorned their soul to die;
and so Naphtali, unto heights of the field.**

Judges
5:18

**Zebulun scorned their soul to die;
Naphtali also, to the heights of the field.**

Both Zebulun and Naphtali placed their lives in jeopardy on the battlefield.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate
Masoretic Text

But Zabulon and Nephthali offered their lives to death in the region of Merome.
Zebulun scorned their soul to die;
and so Naphtali, unto heights of the field.

Peshitta

Zebulun and Naphtali were peoples who jeopardized their lives on the high places of his field.

Septuagint

Zaboulun a people exposed their soul to death,
and Nephthali came to the high places of their land.

Significant differences:

The differences between the Greek and Hebrew are not too striking. We have a different verb in the first line; and the Greek inserts a verb in the second.

The Latin and Syriac have a different sentence structure altogether, and they are somewhat different from one another as well.

The general idea is the same: these two tribes put their lives on the line to achieve independence from the Canaanites.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV
The Message
NJB

But soldiers of Zebulun and Naphtali risked their lives to attack the enemy.
But Zebulun risked life and limb, defied death, as did Naphtali on the battle heights.
Zebulun is a people who have braved death, Naphtali too, on the high ground of the country.

NLT

But Zebulun risked his life,
as did Naphtali, on the battlefield.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™
HCSB

But Zebulun mocked death, and Naphtali risked his life on the battlefield.
Zebulun was a people risking their lives, Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield.

JPS (Tanakh)

Zebulun is a people that mocked at death [*Literally, "belittled its life to die"*],
Naphtali—on the open heights.

NIV

The people of Zebulun risked their very lives; so did Naphtali on the heights of the field.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Emphasized Bible

Zebulun—a people scorned their souls unto death; And Naphtali—upon the heights of the field.

NASB

Zebulun was a people who despised their lives *even* to death, And Naphtali also, on the high places of the field.

Young's Updated LT

Zebulun is a people who exposed its soul to death, Naphtali also—on high places of the field.

What is the gist of this verse? In contrast to the tribes who failed to come to the aide of their brothers, Zebulun and Naphtali put their lives on the line to achieve independence from the heathen Canaanites.

Judges 5:18a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Z ^e bûwûn (זְבוּלוֹן) [pronounced z ^e b-oo-LOON]	<i>exalted, honored; transliterated Zebulun</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #2074 BDB #259
ʿam (עַם) [pronounced ǵahm]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
châraph (חָרַף) [pronounced khah-RAHF]	<i>to defy, to reproach, to scorn, to reproach, to scornfully defy; to discredit, to shame, to rebuke</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #2778 BDB #357 & #358
nephesh (נֶפֶשׁ) [pronounced NEH-fesh]	<i>soul, life, living being, desire</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5315 BDB #659
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ʿ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced mooth]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #4191 BDB #559

Translation: Zebulun scorned their soul to die;... The first verb is the Piel perfect of *to scorn, to reproach*. We might have a better understanding of this if we think of it as *they jeopardized their lives*. Then we have the Qal infinitive construct of *to die*. The meaning here is that they were willing to risk their lives in battle. If you are willing to give your life in battle for the freedom of your country, then this is described here in Hebrew poetry as *scorning your own soul to die*. This does not mean that those from the tribe of Zebulun actually hated their own lives so much that they would rather die in battle; this Hebraism simply means that they were willing to lay down their lives for their country.

Application: Should we not admire terrorists who willingly give their lives for their cause? Absolutely not! They are not fighting for freedom, but so that their oppressive religion and its laws might be forced upon everyone. They are not fighting for the independence of a nation, but that whatever land wherein they die will be placed in subjection to Islam. Their targets are their own people as often as not, including Muslims of a different stripe. Their targets are innocent civilians more often than not, civilians who may be neutral toward their cause, favorable toward their cause, or be apolitical altogether. Their reward, in their own minds, are the things which satisfy the lusts of the

flesh—72 virgins, for instance—which lusts run counter to their religious beliefs if pursued on earth. For this reason, their motivations are selfish, and often the result of a lifetime of brainwashing.

Application: Aren't *freedom fighters* to be admired in their selfless acts to overthrow this or that regime? God has instituted governments to maintain order and to allow for the function of evangelism. No matter how good a government is, it is going to be imperfect and there will be injustices; even our own government, in the greatest nation in history, has great imperfections and injustices. Almost invariably, a freedom fighter is fighting to overthrow one system of government with the intention of replacing it with a different form of government; one leader is being replaced by another leader whom they find to be more charismatic. The end result is, they will do whatever it takes to oppress those who disagree with them.

Application: One of the recent events as I write this (September 2006), is the bloodless coup in Thailand; and I know of several people who think this is the greatest thing in the world. Their former prime minister is seen by some as favoring the rich and favoring big business over the people (I got this by a conversation with one Thai who thinks that this coup is a good thing). What happened is, their prime minister came to the US to speak at the United Nations, and the military staged a bloodless coup, surrounding his house and (if I recall correctly) government buildings, and that a head of the military will be installed as a temporary prime minister, and that elections will be held off in the near future (a year or so from now). At this point in time, no one has died in this revolution, and this man has been warned not to return to Thailand. Furthermore, there is a strong support of the people for this bloodless revolution. So, can there be anything wrong with this? There are a number of problems. First of all, you are replacing one man with an old sin nature with another man with an old sin nature. Although the new leader apparently has widespread support, the election was only a year away. Having the military play the primary role in choosing a leader is a very dangerous precedent, particularly in a democracy. The person I spoke to thought all of this was great because, the leader she wanted would take over, and she felt that their ousted prime minister might win reelection, as he was friends with people with money and with big business. Now, I personally know nothing about these two men—I barely recall the name of the ousted prime minister. What I do know is, anyone in an elected government is going to have some friends and acquaintances who are rich—it simply comes with the territory. Furthermore, it is big business which provides jobs and economic benefit for a nation, not a government. At best, a government can steal from big business and give a small portion of that to bribe poor people (don't misunderstand me; I believe that there is nothing wrong with a government providing some sort of subsistence to those who are unable to do so for themselves). However, in our own country, we have a huge population who has become dependent upon government for their bread and butter and housing; and the vast majority of these people are able to work and to pay their own way. Government has robbed many of them of initiative and their ability to provide for themselves. Whereas, many see that as a compassionate government, and big business as something evil, I think that 80% of those on welfare would be benefited by a loss of their free ride and by working for big business. My point is, even though this new prime minister of Thailand is seen by many as a friend of the people instead of big business, he was jockeyed into position by a military coup, not by a popular election; and most government programs involve huge sums of money, much of which is skimmed off the top by those at the top, and the small amount which trickles down serves more as a bribe than as a stop gap measure. And finally, the biggest problem is, the military has chosen the country's leader by military coup in a democratic government. I should add one thing: as a part of this bloodless coup, foreign news networks were removed from Thailand cable systems, another dangerous precedent.

Application: How do the men of Zebulun and Naphtali differ? Why are they to be honored? They are risking their lives to throw off the shackles of an outside power (the Canaanites). They are restoring Israel to a theocracy, which is the only true theocracy in world history. Their motivations are for their loved ones and family and countrymen; not so that their lusts may be satiated in eternity (much less is said about eternity in the Old Testament as compared to the New).⁸⁵

Application: Since I have gone off on this tangent, let me continue with our US soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq—how do they differ from suicide bombers? US soldiers fight for two complementary ends: (1) to oppose terrorism in a countries where most of the terrorists are, thus keeping the terrorist attacks in their own region; and

⁸⁵ And there is a definite reason for this.

(2) to (hopefully) establish two democracies in the Middle East. Whereas terrorists will specifically target civilian populations, our forces do whatever is possible in order to avoid the killing of civilians (I do not know the exact statistics here, but by far, the majority of civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan are attributable to terrorist attacks rather than by stray bullets or bombings by Americans—it is 9 out of 10 or 19 out of 20?). And there is a big difference in attitude and intention; the vast majority of American soldiers would prefer that there are no deaths of innocents; but to the suicide bomber, the greater the devastation, the more successful his mission, and the greater his reward in heaven. The vast majority of American soldiers would prefer to leave Iraq and Afghanistan on friendly terms, with newly installed democracies and self-rule, and resultant friendly relations with the west; the terrorists would like to see every Christian (white) killed or converted, and every nation subjugated to Islam. Do you see how different the aims and motivations of our soldiers are compared to those of Muslim fanatics and terrorists?

Acts 20:24: **But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.** 1John 3:16: **By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.**

Judges 5:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore; because</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
Naph ^{ta} lîy (נַפְתָּלִי) [pronounced nahf ^{ts} -taw-EE]	<i>wrestling; possibly cord, thread; twisted; transliterated Naphtali</i>	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #5321 BDB #836
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced gahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752
mârôwm (מְרוֹם) [pronounced maw-ROHM]	<i>height, that which is high; the Most High; a lofty fortified place; high-mindedness, pride; collectively for leaders, princes</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4791 BDB #928
sâdeh (שָׂדֶה) [pronounced saw-DEH]	<i>field, land, country, open field, open country</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7704 BDB #961

Translation: ...[Naphtali also, to the heights of the field](#). This is followed by *and so Naphtali*. Owen renders this *Naphtali too*; the KJV places it up as a part of the subject; and the NASB and Young place it in the next line where it belongs. The last words of this are *on the high places of the field*. This is probably a reference to where Naphtali and Zebulun first gathered with Barak, on Mount Tabor, a height which overlooks the battlefield (Judges 4:6).

The NIV Study Bible suggests that this compliments Naphtali as being described as *a doe set free* in Gen. 49:21. The idea is that both tribes risked their lives, or placed their lives in jeopardy and perhaps the last phrase refers to them being willing to do this anywhere in the land.⁸⁶

The picture that is being painted is a contrast here. In the previous two verses, we listed the tribes who did not participate in the war against the Canaanites; and here we list the two tribes who fomented a war for independence.

To summarize: Naphtali and Zebulun were primarily involved in the battle, being the two tribes which initiated a show of force against the Canaanites (Judges 4:6–15 **5:18**). Ephraim, Benjamin, Machir (the half tribe of Manasseh on the west side) and Issachar join in (**Judges 5:14–15a**). Reuben vacillates and Gad + half Manasseh

⁸⁶ I am not satisfied with my own explanation; or with that of anyone else when it comes to this final phrase.

(called Gilead), Dan and Asher, though nearby, do not join their brothers in war (**Judges 5:15b–17**). Levi is not mentioned, as they are not involved in war; and Judah and Simeon are not mentioned, very likely because they are involved in a skirmish in own their territory (see Judges 1:1–26). You will also notice in this summary organization. Deborah’s song was also organized. She begins with the tribes who pitched in to help, mentions those that didn’t, and then names the two tribes who got the ball rolling.

How different this is from the time when Joshua was alive and the time immediately following his death. When we get to Judges 19–21, which took place a century prior to Barak and Deborah, we will find such a response from the other tribes, that it will be determined that one family group is missing from all Israel (Judges 21:8–9). This also helps to explain why Judges 21 seems so different from this chapter; Judges 21 actually occurs in time closer to life of Joshua, so that a non-participating tribe or city really stood out; by the time of Deborah and Barak, the failure of a tribe is noted, but nothing is done about it.

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The Battle Between Israel and the Canaanites

**Came in kings—they fought
then they fought kings of Canaan in Taanach
beyond waters of Megiddo.**

Judges
5:19

**Kings came in—they fought;
then they fought kings of Canaan in Taanach
beyond the waters of Megiddo.**

Looting of silver they did not take!

They did not gain looting of silver!

**Kings came in and they fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach beyond the waters of Megiddo.
They did not gain silver by looting.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

The kings came and fought,
the kings of Chanaan fought in Thanac, by the waters of Mageddo
and yet they took no spoils.

Masoretic Text

Came in kings—they fought
then they fought kings of Canaan in Taanach beyond waters of Megiddo.
Looting of silver they did not take!

Peshitta

...they took no goods nor money.

Septuagint

Kings set themselves in array, then the kings of Chanaan fought in Thanaach at the
water of Mageddo;
they took no gift of money.

Significant differences:

The Latin, Syriac and Hebrew are in almost complete agreement; the last line expresses the same sentiment for all 3 texts, but in different words.

In the Greek, the kings set themselves up in [battle] array; in the other languages, they come and fight.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

Canaanite kings fought us at Taanach by the stream near Megiddo -- but they couldn't rob us of our silver.

NLT

“The kings of Canaan fought at Taanach near Megiddo’s springs,
but they carried off no treasures of battle.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	Kings came and fought. Then the kings of Canaan fought. They fought at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo. But they didn't carry off any rich loot.
HCSB	Kings came and fought. Then the kings of Canaan fought at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo, but they took no spoil of silver.
JPS (Tanakh)	Then the kings came, they fought: The kings of Canaan fought At Taanach, by Megiddo's waters— They got no spoil of silver.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	"The kings came, they fought; then fought the kings of Canaan, at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; they got no spoils of silver.
MKJV	Kings came and fought. Then the kings of Canaan fought in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo. They took no gain of silver.
Young's Updated LT	Kings came—they fought; Then the kings of Canaan fought, In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo; they did not take a gain of money [in order to fight]!

What is the gist of this verse? Canaanite kings came and Israel fought them; their war is for freedom, not for money.

Judges 5:19a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bōw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
lâcham (לָחַם) [pronounced law-KHAHM]	<i>to engage in battle, to engage in war, to wage war; to fight, to battle</i>	3 rd person plural, Niphal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #3898 BDB #535

Translation: Kings came in—they fought;... There are apparently several Canaanite groups; and it appears as though *city-states* may have been the order of the day; that is, each city had a different ruler, and, apparently, Canaanites controlled several king cities inside the Land of Promise. When Barak clearly defeated Jabin and Sisera, apparently other Canaanite kings came to oppose Israel.

Arabic nations which surround Israel hate Jews—not every Arab, obviously, but there are huge numbers of Arabs who absolutely despise Jews; and so it was at that time. God's people are going to be despised in the devil's world. When they appeared as though they would break the shackles of Jabin, other Canaanite kings came to assist him.

There is a great deal of evidence to indicate that this war was not over in one battle. We have the assistance of other tribes from Israel, and here we have other Canaanite kings joining in the fight. What I need to do is to make this completely clear.

Israel's War Against the Canaanites was not Completed in one Battle

Barak's Initial Battle with the Canaanites	The War with the Canaanites is Continued
There is one king and one commander mentioned: Jabin and Sisera. Judges 4:2	Other Canaanite kings are said to be involved in the war. Judges 5:19
Barak charges down from Mount Tabor against the Canaanites; they retreat westward. Judges 4:11–19	Additional fighting takes place in Taanach near the waters of Megiddo. Judges 5:19
The tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun are involved in the battle against the Canaanites. Judges 4:6	Ephraim, Benjamin, a portion of Manasseh, and Issachar join in the fray. Judges 5:14–15

Barak's first battle against the Canaanites was decisive, and completed routed what appears to be the main Canaanite army. Although the Canaanite kings apparently come in to push down the Israelis, additional tribes of Israel also join up with Zebulun and Naphtali.

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Judges 5:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore; because</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
`âz (אָז) [pronounced <i>awz</i>]	<i>then, at that time, in that case (when following an if or though), now, as things are; that being so</i>	adverb	Strong's #227 BDB #23
lâcham (לָחַם) [pronounced <i>law-KHAHM</i>]	<i>to engage in battle, to engage in war, to wage war; to fight, to battle</i>	3 rd person plural, Niphal perfect	Strong's #3898 BDB #535
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
K ^e na'an (כְּנַעַן) [pronounced <i>k^eNAH-gahn</i>]	which possibly means <i>merchant</i> and is transliterated <i>Canaan</i>	masculine proper noun; territory	Strong's #3667 BDB #488
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Ta ^e nâk ^e (תַּנְחֵם) [pronounced <i>tahg^e-NAWK</i>]	transliterated <i>Taanach</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #8590 BDB #1073
`al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
mayim (מַיִם) [pronounced <i>MAH-yim</i>]	<i>water, waters</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #4325 BDB #565

Judges 5:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
M ^o giddôwn (מִגִּדּוֹן) [pronounced <i>m^og-ihd-DOHN</i>]	transliterated <i>Megiddo</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #4023 BDB #151
here, it is spelled Megiddôw (מִגִּדּוֹ) [pronounced <i>meh-gihd-DOH</i>].			


Translation: ...then they fought kings of Canaan in Taanach beyond the waters of Megiddo. In between the repeat of the verb *fought*, we have the adverb *then*, at that time. Israel had faced several coalitions in the past; in Joshua 11:5, we read: *So all of these kings, having agreed to meet, came and encamped together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.* In this verse, although we are given but sparse information, apparently Sisera did not strike Israel alone, but was met by a coalition of Canaanite armies. Considering that Israel had 10,000 men and that Sisera had 900 chariots, he certainly gathered outside forces for this battle.

All of this foreshadows the great war which is to come: *And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs; which spirits goes out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. And they gathered them together to the place which, in the Hebrew, is called Har-Magedon (or, Mount Magedon) (Rev. 16:13–14, 16).*


Taanach and Megiddo were five miles apart in a line of cities on the northern side of the great plains of Jezreel during the time of the judges which remained unconquered by Israel throughout the time period of the judges (Joshua 17:11 Judges 1:27). In fact, now might be a good time to examine in detail the **Doctrine of the City of Megiddo**.

Although I have gone into much greater detail in the actual doctrine, what follows is a summary of that doctrine.

A Summary of the Doctrine of Megiddo

Topic	Information
Location:	<p>Megiddo is located roughly between Manasseh, Issachar, Asher and Zebulun, above the Jezreel Valley, as can be seen on the map.</p>  <p>Taken from http://www.anova.org/sev/atlas/htm/038.htm</p>

A Summary of the Doctrine of Megiddo

Topic	Information
Second Map	 <p>From http://www.anova.org/sev/atlas/htm/039.htm; shown here so that you can see Megiddo in relation to the tribes of Israel.</p>
Pre-Israeli History:	<p>The Hyksos dominated this city during the 18–17th centuries B.C.⁸⁷ They apparently had an upper and a lower city, the latter being, a suburb of Megiddo.</p> <p>The famous battle between the Syrian states and Thutmose III, circa 1500 B.C., took place here. The NIV Study Bible calls it 1468 B.C. and says that Thutmose III defeated a Canaanite coalition. There is such a great amount of detail given this battle in ancient literature as to <i>provide the starting point for the history of military science</i>.⁸⁸</p> <p>We have extensive information from the El-Amarna period of Megiddo, including a treasure which was hidden under the floor of a palace and a portion of a tablet with a few lines from the Gilgamesh Epic has been found. This would have been around the time that Joshua entered into the land of Canaan and began to conquer it.</p>
S c r i p t u r e References	<p>Joshua 12:21 17:11 Judges 1:27 5:19 1Kings 4:12 9:15 2Kings 9:27 23:29, 30 1Chron. 7:29 2Chron. 35:22 Zech. 12:11</p>
History During Joshua’s Time	<p>Megiddo is one of the cities <i>conquered</i> by Israel when they moved into the northern portion of Palestine. We do not have many details of the northern campaign of Joshua and Megiddo is not mentioned at all specifically in Joshua’s northern campaign (Joshua 11). However, Joshua did conquer the king of Megiddo, as is testified to in Joshua 12:21, the first Scriptural reference to Megiddo. This northern campaign took approximately six years, and then some time was spent dividing up the land. This too place during the Iron Age.</p>

⁸⁷ These would be levels XII–X.

⁸⁸ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 294. Details of that battle, including a picture describing troop movement can be found in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 4, pp. 172–175.

A Summary of the Doctrine of Megiddo	
Topic	Information
History During the Time of the Judges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This city was given over to (West) Manasseh in the division of the land, but apparently fell into the hands of the Canaanites once again and remained unconquered by Israel throughout the period of the Judges (Joshua 17:11 Judges 1:27 1Chron. 7:29). 2. Deborah and Barak were victorious over Sisera at the waters of Megiddo. It is during this time period the Megiddo is probably laying in ruins, unoccupied. Very likely, the approximate time period of this battle is 1125 B.C. 3. Gideon was victorious here over a coalition of Midianites, Amalekites and a mishmash of peoples from the east (Judges 6:33 7:1–25). 4. Megiddo, in level VII A,⁸⁹ appears to be destroyed in the last third of the 12th century B.C., which would not be attributable to either Joshua or to Deborah, because <i>the principal structures of the city, the gate, the palace and the temple, were completely destroyed and were never rebuilt.</i>⁹⁰ A half a century later, Israel probably occupied Megiddo.
History During the Time of Saul and David	<p>Saul was defeated southeast of Megiddo on Mount Gilboa by the Philistines, although he had one of his own men kill him (1Sam. 29:1–11 31:1–13). David was almost a part of this force against King Saul, but he was removed from the battle by their commander, Achish, under pressure from his commanders.</p> <p>Although we have no specific Scripture to support this, we suppose that King David conquered Megiddo during his wars with the Canaanites and Philistines. This would be the first time that we have a continuous settlement of this land by the Israelites.</p>
History During the Time of Solomon and Rehoboam	<p>After David's capture of the city (something which we have assumed), Solomon fortified Megiddo along with several other cities as a part of his military network and did some rebuilding (1Kings 9:15). Whether or not Solomon built stables at Megiddo is a matter of strong debate.</p> <p>Apparently, Pharaoh Shishak conquered Megiddo during the 5th year of King Rehoboam (circa 924 B.C.); the evidence which we have is a fragment of a victory stele and the display inscription of Pharaoh Shishak (some non-specific correlative Scripture is 1Kings 14:25–26 2Chron. 12:2–12).⁹¹ This was apparently a huge raid where 156 specific sites are mentioned as having been taken by Shishak, including Taanach, Beth-Shean, Gibeon, Bethhoron, Ajalon and Socoh. Shishak did not have the strength to occupy these territories, however, and the purpose of his raids upon Israel are hypothesized as being to plunder Israel for its wealth and to affect the trade routes of Palestine.</p>

⁸⁹ The levels were further broken down in retrospect of the University of Chicago excavations. This is why level 24 is called XX.

⁹⁰ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 168.

⁹¹ King Shishak is mentioned specifically in 1Kings 11:40; Jeroboam fled to Egypt and to Shishak and remained there until Solomon's death. Shishak is apparently Sheshook I, one of the Libyan rulers over Egypt. When we get to 1Kings, we will cover him in greater detail.

A Summary of the Doctrine of Megiddo	
Topic	Information
History after Rehoboam	<p>The king of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser III, conquered Megiddo (733–732 B.C.) and <i>made it the capital of an Assyrian administrative district.</i>⁹²</p> <p>When Assyria fell, Megiddo fell under the control of Judah once again, as is <i>evidenced by the confrontation between King Josiah and Pharaoh Neco</i> in the valley of Megiddo, where Josiah subsequently died (2Kings 23:29 2Chron. 35:22).⁹³ The time of Josiah was probably the last period a great prosperity of Megiddo, however, when he died, it is possible that this prosperity ended. Furthermore, Josiah was probably the last great king over Judah. Therefore, there appears to be some kind of a ritual mourning there during the time of Ezekiel which may be tied to Josiah’s death (Ezek. 12:11).</p> <p>The last level of Megiddo, stratum I, is an unfortified city with no large buildings and it is a part of the Persian period. There was practically no information on this period of time for Megiddo in ZPEB.</p>
Battles Fought at or near Megiddo	<p>Because Megiddo was a strategic point commanding the plain of Jezreel and the plain of Sharon, the area around Megiddo was the locale for several important battles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deborah and Barak defeat Sisera here. Judges 4–5 2. Gideon defeats a coalition of the Midianites and Amalekites here. Judges 6–7 3. Saul will be killed by the Philistines a little southeast of here in Jezreel. 1Sam. 29–31 4. King Josiah will die here battling Pharaoh Necho in 609 B.C. 2Kings 23 2Chron. 35

There is probably more than enough information herein; the complete doctrine contains more archeological references, as well as the levels which have been unearthed in Megiddo.

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I believe that the city of Megiddo was known to Deborah, although it was apparently not much of a city at this time. Apparently, the waters of Megiddo refers to the torrent Kishon. Now you may recall from the maps in Judges 4 that the city of Megiddo is a bit of a distance from Mount Tabor, where Barak gathers his troops. However, here, we are not really speaking specifically of the city of Megiddo, but of the waters of Megiddo. Furthermore, we have one great battle mentioned in Judges 4, where Barak charges down from Mount Tabor into the midst of the Philistines (Judges 4:11–16), but he also chases the Canaanites westward, which would move us toward Megiddo; and, as has been mentioned, there were subsequent battles against the Canaanites.

Judges 5:19c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
betsaʿ (בֵּטְסָאֵ) [pronounced <i>BEH-tsayáh</i>]	<i>greed, materialism lust; unjust gain or profit [taken by bribery, violence, looting]</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong’s #1215 BDB #130

⁹² *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 176.

⁹³ Quoted and paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 176.

Judges 5:19c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
E-sword KJV+ lists this Strong's #1214, which is the verb that it is derived from.			
keṣeph (קֶסֶף) [pronounced KEH-sef]	silver, money	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3701 BDB #494
lô' (ל' or לו') [pronounced low]	not, no	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]	to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect; uasal form	Strong's #3947 BDB #542

Translation: *They did not gain looting of silver!* What they did not get was the masculine singular construct of *unjust gain or profit taken by violence, looting*. In other words, the tribes were not motivated by financial gain. A great deal of war finds its motivation in material gain of some sort; either the taking of a choice piece of land or robbing a nation of its material wealth. This was not the motivation of the Israelites. They were fighting for their God-given freedom and independence.

**From heavens fought the stars
from their courses they fought with Sisera.**

Judges
5:20

**The stars fought from heaven;
from their courses, they fought with Sisera.**

Even the stars fought from heaven; from their orbits, they fought with Sisera.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Chaldean	From heaven, from the place where the stars go forth, war was waged against Sisera.
Latin Vulgate	There was war made against them from heaven; the stars, remaining in their order and courses, fought against Sisera.
Masoretic Text	From heavens fought the stars from their courses they fought with Sisera.
Septuagint	The stars from heaven make war, From their order, they fought with Sisera.

Significant differences: The Greek and Hebrew are almost identical.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	From their pathways in the sky the stars fought Sisera,...
NLT	The stars fought from heaven. The stars in their orbits fought against Sisera.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	The stars fought from heaven. They fought against Sisera from their heavenly paths.
HCSB	The stars fought from the heavens; the stars fought with Sisera from their courses.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	From heaven the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera.
WEB	From the sky the stars fought. From their courses, they fought against Sisera.
Young's Literal Translation	From the heavens they fought: The stars from their highways fought with Sisera.

What is the gist of this verse? The stars from heaven are set to have set themselves up in array against Sisera to fight him.

Judges 5:20a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAH-yim</i>]	<i>heavens, skies</i>	masculine dual noun	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029
lâcham (לָחַם) [pronounced <i>law-KHAHM</i>]	<i>to engage in battle, to engage in war, to wage war; to fight, to battle</i>	3 rd person plural, Niphal perfect	Strong's #3898 BDB #535
kôwkâb (כּוֹכָבִים) [pronounced <i>koh-KAW^{BV}</i>]	<i>star; figuratively, it is used of Messiah, brothers, youth, numerous progeny, personification, God's omniscience</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #3556 BDB #456

Translation: The stars fought from heaven;... This is poetic language, which is not a cop-out. It is clear that the stars in heaven did not army themselves with bows or spears and charge against Sisera. Therefore, we must search out a different meaning. The sense is, everything with respect to the weather that could go wrong did. Whether it be the rain, hail, thunder and lightning, or the sudden increase of the Kishon torrent, it was all against Sisera. It was *as though* the heavens fought against him.

It is interesting that *stars* should be mentioned, as stars are seen only at night. This suggests that the battle extended into the evening or that the day became dark as night. I've been in storms with a low, violent cloud cover, and it can go from daylight to dusk in the matter of 15 minutes or even sooner. Obviously, stars would not be seen during a magnificent storm. This could be seen as completely metaphorical, where the day turns suddenly dark because of the storm which moves into the valley, and stars speak of the darkness; or, the battle could have gone into the night, and that the later light of the stars and moon allowed the Israelites to pursue their enemies.

Judges 5:20b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

Judges 5:20b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
m ^e çîllâh (הַלָּחַם) [pronounced <i>mesial-LAW</i>]	<i>highway, raised way, public road</i> ; metaphorically for <i>orbits, courses</i> [of stars]	feminine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #4546 BDB #700
lâcham (לָחַם) [pronounced <i>law-KHAHM</i>]	<i>to engage in battle, to engage in war, to wage war; to fight, to battle</i>	3 rd person plural, Niphal perfect	Strong's #3898 BDB #535
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
Çîyç ^e râʿ (אָרְצוֹת) [pronounced <i>sees^e-RAW</i>]	<i>battle array</i> [according to BDB]; and is transliterated <i>Sisera</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #5516 BDB #696

Translation: ...from their courses, they fought with Sisera. The second line begins with the mîn preposition and then the feminine plural of *highway, raised way, public road*. It is not used of a street in the city. Here it is used metaphorically for the orbits of the stars. Deborah knew that the stars had a specific course or highway or orbit in which they moved. Mankind has long been fascinated by the stars and the heavens, and they, in turn, have turned out to be grander than ancient man could have ever imagined.

Obviously, it was not the literal stars in the heavens which waged war against Sisera. Nevertheless, at first, it appears as though it is up for interpretation whether the *stars* refer to angels or to the star light (so that the Israelites could see in battle at night) or to what. The next verse will indicate that Sisera faced a war waged from heaven as well as a war on the ground with Barak. So, in all actuality, the *stars fighting from heaven* actually refers more to an attack upon Sisera from God above.

What appears to be the case is that we are in hilly country; and Israel's forces are actually located upon a hill or mountain (Judges 4:14). Below are the forces of Sisera in their chariots. Next to them is the wadi Kishon. A storm will hit with such ferocity as to completely demobilize Sisera's chariot driven army. A wadi can go from being a dried up stream to a raging river and suddenly; the storm can be further upstream; and suddenly, the water rushes through its ancient course. The storm may have arrived at the same time. I don't know what the soil is like there, but here, where I live, the soil seems almost like rock unless we've had a serious rain, and it turns into a swampy mush. Sisera could have been there poised for battle, much of his army in chariots, who would charge first, and take out the bulk of their enemy; then his ground forces would kill the few who remained. However, this chariot force was suddenly grounded. They were unable to move, and this set Sisera and his men into a panic.

It might be instructive to see how others have understood this verse:

The Stars Fight from Heaven—Various Interpretations

Scripture	Incident
Barnes	Barnes describes all of this, borrowing somewhat from Josephus, as though he were there: <i>God fought on the side of Israel, and gave them the victory. Josephus relates that, just as the battle began, a violent tempest came on with a great downfall of rain; and hailstorm, which, driving full in the faces of the Canaanites, so blinded and benumbed them with cold, that they could neither use their bows with effect nor even hold their swords.</i> ⁹⁴
Gill	<i>Either the angels of heaven, afterwards called stars; or the heavens, the elements, fought for Israel, and against Sisera; a violent storm of rain and hail falling at this time, which discomfited Sisera's army; or this victory was obtained in such a manner as plainly showed it was not of man, but of God from heaven; so the Targum, "from heaven war was made with them;" with the kings before mentioned; God fought against them, and no wonder they were conquered...it seems as if it was in the night that this battle was fought, at least that the pursuit lasted till night, when the stars by their brightness and clear shining favoured the Israelites, and were greatly to the disadvantage of the Canaanites; unless it can be thought, as is by some, that the stars had an influence to cause a tempest of rain, hail, thunder, and lightnings, by which the army of Sisera was discomfited in the daytime, as before observed.</i> ⁹⁵
Henry	<i>The stars in their courses, according to the order and direction of him who is the great Lord of their hosts, fought against Sisera, by their malignant influences, or by causing the storms of hail and thunder which contributed so much to the rout of Sisera's army. The Chaldee reads it, from heaven, from the place where the stars go forth, war was waged against Sisera, that is, the power of the God of heaven was engaged against him, making use of the ministration of the angels of heaven. Some way or other, the heavenly bodies (not arrested, as when the sun stood still at Joshua's word, but going on in their courses) fought against Sisera. Those whom God is an enemy to the whole creation is at war with. Perhaps the flashes of lightning by which the stars fought was that which frightened the horses, so as that they pranced till their very hoofs were broken (Judges 5:22), and probably overturned the chariots of iron which they drew or turned them back upon their owners.</i> ⁹⁶
Keil and Delitzsch	<i>These words explain the statement in Judges 4:15, "the Lord discomfited Sisera;" though in our opinion not so clearly as to enable us to define more precisely the natural phenomenon by which God threw the enemy into confusion. In all probability we have to think of a terrible storm, with thunder and lightning and hail, or the sudden bursting of a cloud, which is poetically described as though the stars of heaven had left their courses to fight for the Lord and His kingdom upon earth.</i> ⁹⁷

As you see, on the whole, their interpretations are very similar.

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⁹⁴ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 428.

⁹⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:20.

⁹⁶ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword; Judges 5:12–23.

⁹⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Judges 5:20.

That God would work using the weather is spoken of in several places, including Psalm 77:17–18: *The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook.*

Although there might be some disagreement as to exactly what is meant by *the stars from their orbits fought against Sisera*; it will be clear in the next verse that part of what worked against Sisera and his army was the river Kishon.

**A torrent Kishon swept them away;
torrent of [the] east, a torrent Kishon.
You have marched, my soul, [with] might.**

Judges
5:21

**The torrent Kishon swept them away;
an eastern [or, *onrushing*; *ancient*] torrent,
the torrent Kishon.
My soul, you have marched with strength.**

**The torrent Kishon swept them away—the eastern torrent, the torrent Kishon.
I have marched along side the men with great strength.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	The torrent of Cison dragged their carcasses, the torrent of Cadumim, the torrent of Cison: tread thou, my soul, upon the strong ones.
Masoretic Text	A torrent Kishon swept them away; torrent of [the] east, a torrent Kishon. You have marched, my soul, [with] might.
Peshitta	The river Kishon and the river Karmin swept them away, O my soul, you have defeated an army!
Septuagint	The brook of Kison swept them away, the ancient brook, the brook Kison: my mighty soul will trample him down.

Significant differences: The only disagreement is in the final line, where the Hebrew addresses her soul in the 2nd person; and the Greek verb is questionable.

The Latin refers to two different torrents, as does the Syriac (the problem is one word in the Hebrew, which they transliterate rather than translate).

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	...and his soldiers were swept away by the ancient Kishon River. I will march on and be brave. .
<i>The Message</i>	The torrent Kishon swept them away, the torrent attacked them, the torrent Kishon. Oh, you'll stomp on the necks of the strong!
NLT	The Kishon River swept them away— that ancient river, the Kishon. March on, my soul, with courage!

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> [™]	The Kishon River swept them away- that old river, the Kishon. I must march on with strength!
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HCSB The river Kishon swept them away, the ancient river, the river Kishon. March on, my soul, in strength!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV The torrent Kishon swept them away, the ancient torrent, the torrent Kishon. March on, my soul, with might!

LTHB The Kishon torrent swept them away, the ancient river, the Kishon torrent. You trod, my soul, in strength.

MKJV The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, you trampled in strength.

MKJV The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, you trampled in strength.

Young's Updated LT The brook Kishon swept them away, The brook most ancient—the brook Kishon. You tread down strength, O my soul!

What is the gist of this verse? The river Kishon sweeps Sisera's army away; Deborah's soul (or the souls of the soldiers) marches on with great strength.

Judges 5:21a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nachal (נַחַל) [pronounced NAHKH-al]	brook, torrent	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5158 BDB #636
Qīyshôwn (קִישׁוֹן) [pronounced kee-SHOWN]	winding, curving, twisted; torturous transliterated Kishon	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #7028 BDB #885
gâraph (גָּרַף) [pronounced gaw-RAHF]	to sweep away, to sweep	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect; with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #1640 BDB #175

Translation: The torrent Kishon swept them away;... The first verb means *to sweep away* and it is only found here. This gives us a better idea as to what happened. Although the specifics are not completely clear, it appears that the Kishon River suddenly increased in size, taking out the Canaanite force. It is my thinking that a huge storm came up in the east, out of their range of vision, and that the almost dry creek bed suddenly turned into a raging river which charged at these men in chariots with the force of any army, sweeping them away. Along with this came the sudden fierce storm—with hail, thunder, lightning and a fierce drenching rain—raging against the Canaanites. I picture Barak and his men atop Mount Tabor, observing the Canaanites set themselves up in battle array, and suddenly, a storm moves in, tearing their front line to pieces. At that point, Barak calls for his men to charge.

Judges 5:21b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nachal (נַחַל) [pronounced NAHKH-al]	brook, torrent	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5158 BDB #636

Judges 5:21b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qâdûwm (קָדוּמַי) [pronounced kaw-DOOM]	<i>onrushing; horrendous storm of a river; ancient; eastern</i>	masculine plural, Qal passive participle	Strong's #6917 BDB #870
This word is probably the passive participle of <i>to hasten, to flee; to lead; to meet, to confront</i> (Strong's #6923). This substantive form is found only once in Scripture; the verb is found 26 times in Scripture. This should explain the variety of meanings which has been assigned to this word.			
nachal (נַחַל) [pronounced NAHKH-al]	<i>brook, torrent</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5158 BDB #636
Qîyshôwn (קִישׁוֹן) [pronounced kee-SHOWN]	<i>winding, curving, twisted; torturous transliterated Kishon</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #7028 BDB #885

Translation: ...an eastern [or, *onrushing; ancient*] torrent, the torrent Kishon. In the second line, there is another word unique to this verse which is a descriptor of torrent. It falls between several words for *east*, and would indicate a storm out from the east. My most logical guess would be *storms out of the east*. Owen renders this *onrushing*, NASB *ancient*, Young *most ancient*. It's a plural noun. I think what we have are two or three storms coming in from the east and converging almost right on Sisera. The runoff waters for a storm will head toward the nearest rivers and streams. Rotherham describes the Kishon as *rising on Mt. Tabor and flowing into the Mediterranean near Mount Carmel*.⁹⁸

Others, including some ancient texts, transliterate this word, making it into a proper noun (*Kedumim*). Although it is possible that we have two torrents which suddenly meet, a faraway storm suddenly increasing these from trickling streams, to raging rivers, I still think that this simply indicates the direction from which the waters came.

It is possible that the storm hit the enemy troops from one side and the sudden rush of the Kishon hit them from the other. Their chariots and horses were almost drawn as well as forced toward and into the torrent, which came with a sudden fierceness. It was difficult for both sides, but God directed the storm and the River Kishon against Sisera.

I have seen storms which can be very centralized; and it is not impossible for two storms to be pulled together by a low pressure area, which could have been the case here. This is strictly theorizing in terms of determining exactly what happened. It is just as likely that the storm and the sudden rush of the Torrent Kishon came from the east.

Judges 5:21c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dârak ^e (דָּרַךְ) [pronounced daw-RAHK ^e]	<i>to march, to trample, to walk over, to walk; to bend [a bow—by stepping on it]; to enter [a place by walking]</i>	2 nd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1869 BDB #201

⁹⁸ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 265.

Judges 5:21c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nepshesh (נֶפֶשׁ) [pronounced NEH-fesh]	soul, life, living being, desire	feminine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #5315 BDB #659
ʿôz (רֹז) [pronounced góhz]	strength, might; firmness, defense, refuge, protection; splendor, majesty, glory praise	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5797 BDB #738

Translation: *My soul, you have marched with strength.* The last line is rather difficult, even though the words in it are fairly simple. It begins with the 2nd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of *to march, to tread*. Then we have the word for *soul* (the subject of the sentence) with the 1st person singular suffix. The third and final word is the masculine singular noun *strength, might*. Literally, we have: *you marched my soul [with] strength*. Young renders this: *Thou dost tread down strength, O my soul*; NASB: *O my soul, march on with strength*; and Rotherham: *Let my soul march along with victorious strength!* I believe that Deborah is simply congratulating herself for marching along with the soldiers and keeping up with them.

Bullinger suggests that the Qal imperfect can also stand in for the Imperative, so the Deborah is ordering her own soul to be strong. This at first appears to have some merit, except that Bullinger only offers one other instance of this occurring in the Old Testament (Psalm 5:11).⁹⁹ That just isn't enough to convince me.

Then they beat down a hoof of [the] horse from galloping; a galloping of his mighty ones.

Judges 5:22

They [the storms] beat down the hoof of the horse from galloping [or, the hooves of the horses were broken up from the galloping]; the galloping of his [Sisera's] mighty ones.

The storms beat down the horses of Sisera; they put an end to the galloping of his cavalry.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

- Latin Vulgate The hoofs of the horses were broken whilst the stoutest of the enemies fled amain, and fell headlong down.
- Masoretic Text Then they beat down a hoof of [the] horse from galloping; a galloping of his mighty ones.
- Peshitta Then the hooves of his horses fell down, [they] were broken because of the prancing of his mighty ones.
- Septuagint When the hoofs of the horse were entangled [cut off, amputated?], his mighty ones earnestly hasted...

Significant differences: In the first line, all of the ancient versions reference the *hooves of the horses*; but what happens to them is unclear. In the Hebrew, they are *hammered down, struck down, beat down; broken up, dissolved*. Because this verb is unclear, I think the ancient translations gave it their best shot. The Hebrew, in the same line, tells us that these hooves were *galloping*; the other ancient versions leave this out.

⁹⁹ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E.W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 523.

The second line in the Hebrew repeats the participle verb, applying it to *his mighty ones*. The Greek gives us a close rendering to this; and the Syriac is similar. Again, since the Hebrew is difficult to understand, ancient translations may not be as literal as we would like.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Sisera's horses galloped off, their hoofs thundering in retreat.
<i>The Message</i>	Then the hoofs of the horses pounded, charging, stampeding stallions.
NLT	Then the horses' hooves hammered the ground, the galloping, galloping of Sisera's mighty steeds.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	Then the horses' hoofs pounded. The mighty war horses galloped on and on.
HCSB	The horses' hooves then hammered--the galloping, galloping of his stallions.
JPS (Tanakh)	Then the horses' hoofs pounded As headlong galloped the steeds [<i>Literally, "From the gallopings, the gallopings of his steeds"</i>].

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	"Then loud beat the horses' hoofs with the galloping, galloping of his steeds.
MKJV	Then did the hooves of horses beat, from the galloping, the galloping of their mighty ones.
WEB	Then did the horse hoofs stamp By reason of the prancings, the prancings of their strong ones
Young's Updated LT	Then broken were the horse-heels, By pransings--pransings of its mighty ones.

What is the gist of this verse? It appears as though the hooves of Sisera's horses were broken or beat down; it is not clear *why* in this verse, although some translate this *by prancing of their mighty ones*.

Judges 5:22a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâz (אָז) [pronounced awz]	<i>then, at that time, in that case (when following an if or though), now, as things are; that being so</i>	adverb	Strong's #227 BDB #23
châlam (חָלַם) [pronounced khaw-LAHM]	<i>to hammer down, to strike down, to beat down; to break up, to be dissolved</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #1986 BDB #240
ʿâqêb (אָקֵב) [pronounced aw-KA ^B V]	<i>heel, footprint, hinderpart, and therefore figuratively for a rear guard, troops in the rear</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #6119 (and #6120) BDB #784
çûwç (סוּוּ) [pronounced soos]	<i>horse, chariot horse; swallow, swift</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5483 BDB #692

This word is taken from an unused root word which means *to skip [jump] [with joy]; to leap [with joy]*.

Judges 5:22a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
dahāhār (דָּהָהָר) [pronounced <i>dah-huh-HAWR</i>]	<i>rushing, dashing; [frantic] galloping</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #1726 BDB #187

Translation: *They [the storms] beat down the hoof of the horse from galloping [or, the hooves of the horses were broken up from the galloping];...* The verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal perfect of *to hammer down, to strike down, to beat down; to break up; to dissolve*. This accounts for the very different renderings *Then loud beat the horses' hoofs* (Owen); *Then broken were the horse-heels* (Young). Because this is the Qal stem (the normal stem of a verb), we do not have the passive. However, the nouns which follow, *hoof of horse*, are both masculine singular. We could possibly have a singular noun and a plural verb, as there are many hooves; however, that is usually not done in the Hebrew. *They*, therefore, probably refers to the *storms* from the previous verse.

Clarke tells about the hooves of horses in ancient times: *In very ancient times horses were not shod; nor are they to the present day in several parts of the East. Sisera had iron chariots when his hosts were routed; the horses that drew these, being strongly urged on by those who drove them, had their hoofs broken by the roughness of the roads; in consequence of which they became lame, and could not carry off their riders. This is marked as one cause of their disaster.*¹⁰⁰ Gill writes: *Either through the force of the waters of the river, where they pranced and plunged, and could have no standing; or through the swift haste they made to run away, striking the earth so quick, and with such force and vehemence, that their hoofs were broken thereby, especially on stony ground, and so their speed retarded.*¹⁰¹ Jamieson, Fausset and Brown add: *Anciently, horses were not shod; nor are they at the present day in some parts of the East. The flight was so rapid that the hoofs of their horses were splintered and broken by the roughness of the roads; in consequence of which they became lame, and could not carry off their riders.*¹⁰²

Barnes: *[this is] probably an allusion to the frantic efforts of the chariot-horses to disengage themselves from the morass.*¹⁰³ This does make perfect sense in terms of the context; but it cannot be tied directly to the verb.

The repetition of the word *galloping* indicates frantic movement on the part of the horses. Recall that they are in the middle of an intense storm and they are being dragged down into the Kishon River, and the horses are galloping frantically and erratically, out of control and in a great panic.

¹⁰⁰ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:22.

¹⁰¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:22.

¹⁰² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Judges 5:22.

¹⁰³ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 429.

Judges 5:22b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dahăhâr (דַּהֲהָר) [pronounced <i>dah-huh-HAWR</i>]	<i>rushing, dashing; [frantic] galloping</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #1726 BDB #187
ʿabbîyr (אַבְיָר) [pronounced <i>ahb-BEER</i>]	<i>mighty, valiant, mighty one; bull; powerful; noble; chief</i>	masculine plural adjective; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #47 BDB #7

It could be interpreted, by Psalm 103:20, as angels. This same word is applied to *ordinary man* (Judges 5:22 Lam. 1:15 Jer. 46:15), to animals (Psalm 22:13), to princes (Psalm 58:31), to nobles (Job 24:22). This adjective is used for *bulls* (Psalm 22:12), *horses* (Jer. 8:16 47:3 50:11) and everywhere else to *men*.

We have a problem here—if ʿabbîyr is used as an adjective, then we would expect it to match the noun which it follows in gender, but it does not. However, if the adjective acts like a noun, then we would expect dahăhâr to be in the construct form; however, it matches the previous use of dahăhâr, which is not in the construct form. However, the spelling of some words remains unchanged as constructs. Therefore, understanding dahăhâr as a construct is the most reasonable interpretation here.

Translation: *...the galloping of his [Sisera's] mighty ones.* The final word is the masculine plural adjective *mighty, valiant, mighty ones*. This adjective is used for *bulls* (Psalm 22:12), *horses* (Jer. 8:16 47:3 50:11) and everywhere else to *men*. With it is a masculine singular suffix. This probably refers to Sisera's horses, or to Sisera's cavalry. Gill suggests that this refers to the riders of the horses who frantically try to control their horses and guide them in all this confusion (commentators seems to come down evenly on both sides of this).

Let me give you the description of Josephus of this battle: *So the battle began; and when they were come to a close fight, there came down from heaven a great storm, with a vast quantity of rain and hail, and the wind blew the rain in the face of the Canaanites, and so darkened their eyes, that their arrows and slings were of no advantage to them, nor would the coldness of the air permit the soldiers to make use of their swords; while this storm did not so much incommode the Israelites, because it came in their backs. They also took such courage, upon the apprehension that God was assisting them, that they fell upon the very midst of their enemies, and slew a great number of them; so that some of them fell by the Israelites, some fell by their own horses, which were put into disorder, and not a few were killed by their own chariots. At last Sisera...saw himself beaten, [and] fled away...Barak also fought with Jabin at Hazor; and when he met with him, he slew him: and when the general was fallen, Barak overthrew the city to the foundation, and was the commander of the Israelites for forty years.*¹⁰⁴

I enjoy the writing of Edersheim, so let me give you his description of the battle: *Sisera had chosen his position with consummate skill. Marching in almost a straight line upon the plain of Megiddo, his army was now posted at its entrance, resting upon the ancient Canaanitish town of Taanach (Judges 5:19, compare Joshua 12:21). Behind, and at his left flank, were the mountains of Manasseh, before him opened the basin of the valley, merging into the plain of Esdraelon, watered by the Kishon. Into this plain must Barak's army descend "on foot," badly armed, without experienced officers, without cavalry or chariots—and here Sisera's 900 war-chariots would operate to his best advantage. It was not even like one of those battles in which mountaineers hold their own fastnesses, or swoop down on their enemies in narrow defiles. On the contrary, all seemed to tell against Israel—all but this, that God had previously promised to draw Sisera and his army to the river Kishon, and to deliver them into Barak's hand. Then once more did the Lord appear as "a man of war," and fight on the side of His people. It*

¹⁰⁴ Flavius Josephus, Book 5, chapter 5; verse 4. [Web link](#).

is said: “*And Jehovah discomfited,*” or rather, “*threw into confusion, Sisera and all his chariots, and all his host.*” The expression is the same as when Jehovah fought against Egypt (Ex. 14:25), and again when before Gibeon Joshua bade sun and moon stand still (Josh. 10:10). It indicates the direct interference of the Lord through terrible natural phenomena; (compare Also its use in 2Sam. 22:15; Psalm 18:14; 144:6). As we gather from Judges 5:20–22, a fearful storm swept down from heaven in face of the advancing army...Presently the war-chariots were thrown into confusion, and instead of being a help became a source of danger. The affrighted horses carried destruction into the ranks of the host. Soon all were involved in common panic. A scene of wild confusion ensued. It was impossible to retreat, and only in one direction could flight be attempted. And now the waters of Kishon had swollen into a wild torrent which swept away the fugitives!¹⁰⁵

The tribes of Zebulun and Issachar were drawn to Barak and Deborah on Mount Tabor. Sisera mustered his forces beneath Mount Carmel in the Canaanite area known as Harosheth-hagoiim. He took his chariot forces through the valley which ran from Mount Carmel, advancing between Megiddo and Taanach. Barak and Deborah brought their forces down from Mount Tabor, but what appears to happen next is an incredible thunderstorm comparable to even the shaking of the land at Mount Sinai (Judges 5:4, 20). It appears as though some additional forces were brought in to assist Sisera. Sisera, having an army which included 900 chariots, had to travel primarily along the plain or the flat land of the valley. They are joined as they moved in that valley by other Canaanites and possibly from other groups of Canaanites (Judges 5:19a). Beneath Taanach, at the waters of Megiddo, the storm strikes with such incredible force as to turn the valley into a raging torrent, which carries the corpses of the enemy soldiers, along with their horses and chariots, right out to the torrent Kishon, which runs into the Mediterranean (Judges 5:19–21). The direction from which the other Canaanites come is not really given—it could have been from several different directions. Also, the striking by the Israelites is not explained in any detail either. My thinking is that they came down from one or both sides of the valley and performed more of a mopping up action rather than a flank assault. The army of Sisera and his Canaanite allies are pushed back from where Sisera first organized his troops, at the foot of Mount Carmel in Harosheth-hagoiim (Judges 4:13, 16). Their courage is praised by Deborah, but the battle was won by God.

There is only one tiny thing that we need to clear up and that is Psalm 83:9–10: *Deal with them as with Midian, as with Sisera and Jabin, at the torrent of Kishon, who were destroyed at Endor, who became as dung for the ground.* The battle itself moved toward Mount Carmel, toward where the River Kishon nears the sea. However, Sisera apparently does not go with his troops, or he keeps himself at a safe distance from the fighting. When there is no chance of victory, Sisera makes his escape. He has no intention of going down with the ship. It is every man for himself at this point. Although we are not told where exactly Jael and her husband Heber lived, we can suppose it was closer to Endor than to Harosheth-hagoiim. Whether it was in Endor¹⁰⁶ or not, we can't be certain, but Endor was the area closest to where both Sisera and Jabin met their final end.

**“Curse Meroz,” says an angel of Y^howah.
“Curse [and continue] cursing her
inhabitants because they came not to a help
of Y^howah;
to a help of Y^howah against the mighty
ones.”**

Judges
5:23

**“Curse Meroz,” says the Angel of Y^howah.
“Curse [and continue] cursing her
inhabitants because they did not come to a
helping of Y^howah;
to the aid of Y^howah against the mighty
ones.”**

**“Curse Meroz,” says the angel of Jehovah.
“Curse her inhabitants continually because they did not come to assist Jehovah;
to assist Jehovah against the mighty ones.”**

¹⁰⁵ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 352.

¹⁰⁶ Edersheim suggests that it was in southern Judah that Sisera fled to, noting that in Judges 1:16, this is where most of the Kenites settled. Although that is possible, the fact that Deborah and Barak are aware of the death of Sisera and that the mother allowed some time to go by until it sunk in, indicates that it probably occurred closer to the battle field.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

"Curse Meroz," says an angel of Y^ehowah.

"Curse [and continue] cursing her inhabitants because they came not to a help of Y^ehowah;

to a help of Y^ehowah against the mighty ones."

Septuagint

"Curse Meroz," said the angel of the Lord;

cursed is every one that dwells in it, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to his help among the mighty.

Significant differences:

Sometimes the English rendering of the LXX (Brenton is the one I am aware of and use) does not match the Greek text, as we have here. In the Greek and Hebrew, the first lines are the same; but the English rendering of the Greek is not (I have changed it).

The slight differences in the final line can be attributed to a translation of the Hebrew.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

The LORD's angel said, "Put a curse on Meroz Town! Its people refused to help the LORD fight his powerful enemies."

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™

"Curse Meroz!" said the Messenger of the LORD. "Bitterly curse those who live there!

HCSB

"Curse Meroz," says the Angel of the LORD, "Bitterly curse her inhabitants, for they did not come to help the LORD, to help the LORD against the mighty warriors."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV

"Curse Meroz, says the angel of the LORD, curse its inhabitants thoroughly, because they did not come to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

Young's Updated LT

Curse Meroz—said a messenger of Jehovah, Cursing, curse its inhabitants, For they came not to the help of Jehovah, To the help of Jehovah among the mighty!

What is the gist of this verse? The Angel of Jehovah calls for Meroz to be cursed, and all of its inhabitants, because they did not come out to help Jehovah in this battle.

Judges 5:23a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾârar (אָרַר) [pronounced aw-RAHR]	<i>to curse, to bitterly curse</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #779 BDB #76
Mêrôwz (מֵרוֹז) [pronounced may-ROSE]	<i>refuge; transliterated Meroz</i>	masculine singular, proper noun; location	Strong's #4789 BDB #72

Translation: “Curse Meroz,”... The first question is, *where is Meroz?* From the context, it sounds like a Jewish city where the inhabitants did not come out to help their brothers.

The text of this verse is to the right; it sounds as though this is a reference to a Jewish city which did not support their fight for independence from the Canaanite rulers.

“Curse Meroz,” says the Angel of Y^ehowah. “Curse [and continue] cursing her inhabitants because they did not come to a helping of Y^ehowah; to the aid of Y^ehowah against the mighty ones.”

Where is Meroz? Various Theories

Commentator	Quotation/Comments
Barnes	<i>The inhabitants of Meroz (a village 12 miles from Samaria) hung back, and gave no help in the day of battle, although it was Yahweh who called them. Hence, the curse pronounced by the Angel of the Lord.</i> ¹⁰⁷ No idea where Barnes gets this from.
Clarke	<i>Where Meroz was is not known; some suppose it was the same as Merom, which is near to Dotham. The Syriac and Arabic have Merod; but where this was is equally uncertain. It was certainly some city or district, the inhabitants of which would not assist in this war.</i> ¹⁰⁸
Gill	<i>It is some name of a city or place near where the battle was fought, so Kimchi, Ben Gersom, and Ben Melech: some take Meroz to be the same with Merom, at the waters of which Joshua fought with Jabin, Joshua 11:5 and supposed to be the same with the waters of Megiddo, and the river Kishon, where this battle was fought; and Jerom (Jerome?), under the word Merom, observes, that there was in his time a village called Merrus, twelve miles from the city Sebaste near Dothaim.</i> ¹⁰⁹
Jamieson, Fausset and Brown	<i>[Meroz is] a village on the confines of Issachar and Naphtali, which lay in the course of the fugitives, but the inhabitants declined to aid in their destruction.</i> ¹¹⁰
Kraeling	<i>Meroz is thought to be a city of the Canaanites near or in the valley of Esdraelon. E.G. Kraeling in the “Rand McNally Bible Atlas” suggests that the city was not Israelites but rather a “Canaanite city in a covenant obligation with a Hebrew tribe, probably that of Manasseh.”</i> ¹¹¹
NIV Study Bible	<i>A city in Naphtali.</i> ¹¹²
Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge	<i>This city of Meroz seems to have been, at this time, a place of considerable importance, since something great was expected from it; but probably, after the angel of the Lord had pronounced this curse, it dwindled and like the fig-tree which Christ cursed, withered away; so that we never read of it after this in Scripture.</i> ¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:23.

¹⁰⁸ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:23.

¹⁰⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:23.

¹¹⁰ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Judges 5:23.

¹¹¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 193.

¹¹² *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 334.

¹¹³ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Judges 5:23.

Where is Meroz? Various Theories	
Commentator	Quotation/Comments
Unknown	The reasoning given behind this not being a city of Israel is the continued curse placed upon it. The covenant obligation means that Israel had an agreement with the inhabitants of this city to assist them in war. Since Israel has been under Canaanite rule for a couple decades, I think that we can rule out the idea that Israel has a side covenant with some Canaanite city just in case Israel gets in a war against other Canaanites.
Wesley	Wesley provides the best explanation, in my opinion: <i>A place then, no doubt, eminent and considerable, though now there be no remembrance of it left, which possibly might be the effect of this bitter curse; as God curses Amalek in this manner, that He would utterly blot out their remembrance. And this place above all others may be thus severely cursed; because it was near the place of the fight, and therefore had the greatest opportunity and obligation to assist their brothers.</i> ¹¹⁴

Suffice to say that is a lot to deduce from this very short Scriptural reference. I believe that the explanations of John Wesley and the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge give us the straight dope on this otherwise unknown city.

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Application: Billions of people have lived on this earth, and we each know a little about, perhaps, a few hundred of them. Apparently, the same is true of certain cities, countries and peoples. Some people are even a little obsessed about their legacy, and how they will be remembered (a recent interview—9/25/06—which I saw with former president Bill Clinton causes me to think about this). There is one thing which results in an eternal remembrance, and that is the application of Bible doctrine from your soul. It might be witnessing, it might be giving, it might be your behavior in a particularly difficult situation. The men we might recall from history may be gone from our memory come eternity; the famous cities and countries may or may not be remembered; but what we do in this life as a result of believing in Jesus Christ and knowing His Word will be remembered.

We will find similar cursings in Judges 8:15–17 21:5–10. This city is not named in the book of Joshua, which would make it a new city. Whereas, this is certainly possible, still the Israelites had a number of conquered cities to choose from. It is possible that this is a city of Kenites, as Jael will be mentioned in the next verse. A group of Kenites may have moved to this area to work for the Canaanites and established a city. Although the Kenites have enjoyed a warm relationship with the Israelites, this time they did not come to Israel's aid. However, Jael quickly threw her lot in with the Israelites, which is spoken of in the next verse. It is the mention of Jael in the next verse is the only reason to think that Meroz was a city of Kenites.

Judges 5:23b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
malʾâk (מַלְאָךְ) [pronounced mahP-AWK]	<i>messenger or angel; this word has been used for a prophet (Isa. 42:19) and priest (Mal. 2:7)</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4397 BDB #521

¹¹⁴ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Judges 5:23.

Judges 5:23b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: ...says the Angel of Y^ehowah. We covered the **Doctrine of the Angel of the Lord** in Gen. 16:7 and alluded to Him in Judges 2:1. This is generally a reference to Jesus Christ. This is because the Angel of Jehovah is both identified with God (Gen. 16:10 22:15–17 31:11–13 Ex. 3:2–6 Judges 2:1) and distinguished from God (Isa. 63:7–10 Daniel 3:19–28 Zech. 1:12–13). A great many more details can be found back in Judges 2:1 and Gen. 16:7.

Deborah is not pronouncing this curse out of her own personal anger; this is the Word of God, and this curse is made by God.

Judges 5:23c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾārar (אַרַר) [pronounced aw-RAHR]	<i>to curse, to bitterly curse</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #779 BDB #76
ʾārar (אַרַר) [pronounced aw-RAHR]	<i>to curse, to bitterly curse</i>	Qal infinitive absolute	Strong's #779 BDB #76
yāshab (יָשַׁב) [pronounced yaw-SHAHBV]	<i>those inhabiting, those staying, those dwelling in, the inhabitants of, the ones dwelling in, dwellers of, those sitting [here], the ones sitting</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle; with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #3427 BDB #442

Translation: "Curse [and continue] cursing her inhabitants... Then we have the Qal imperative of *to curse* followed by the Qal infinitive absolute of *to curse*. When the infinitive absolute is used after the same verb, what is suggested is an indefinitely prolonged state of the action; that is, what is emphasized is continuance or prevalence, rather than intensification of the verb.¹¹⁵ God calling for these inhabitants to be cursed is quite strong here and this curse apparently is to last for a long time, this very city being blotted from history entirely.

Judges 5:23d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>when, that, for, because</i>	explanatory conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471

¹¹⁵ J.C.L. Gibson, *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar-Syntax*; 4th Edition, © T&T Clark Ltd., 1994, p. 125.

Judges 5:23d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לֹא or לֹא') [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i>]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿezrâh (עֲזָרָה) [pronounced <i>gez'-RAW</i>]	<i>help, aid</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #5833 BDB #740
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿezrâh (עֲזָרָה) [pronounced <i>gez'-RAW</i>]	<i>help, aid</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #5833 BDB #740
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
gibbôwr (גִּבּוֹר) [pronounced <i>gib-BOAR</i>]	<i>strong man, mighty man, soldier, warrior, combatant, veteran</i>	masculine plural noun/adjective	Strong's #1368 BDB #150

The original word would be properly applied to one of rank or distinction; a man of “power” — power derived either from office, from talent, or from wealth. It is a word which is often applied to a hero or warrior: Isa. 3:2 Ezek. 39:20 2Sam. 17:10 Psalm 33:16 120:4 127:4 Daniel 11:3 Gen. 6:4 Jer. 51:30.¹¹⁶

Translation: ...because they did not come to a helping of Y^ehowah; to the aid of Y^ehowah against the mighty ones.”

One noun which is used twice with the lâmed prefixed preposition, and is generally translated as a verb, is the masculine singular construct of *help, aid*. This is the word found in Gen. 2:18, describing the role of the woman in Adam's life and throughout the Psalms (Psalm 22:19 27:9 35:2).

You may notice a difference between your Bible and this translation with respect to the final preposition: you might have either *with* the mighty ones or *against* the mighty ones. The preposition can mean *in, against, with*; the key is proximity and not necessarily relationship. The word used that is translated *mighty ones* is not the one found in the previous verse, but the adjective found back in vv. 15–16; and here it is used as a substantive. What I am saying is that I don't know whether to interpret *mighty ones* as being for or against Jehovah. Whichever side they are on would determine the particular use of the preposition.

¹¹⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 52:1.

ZPEB provides a good summary of the confrontation between Israel and Canaan: *Deborah, who was a civil judge (Judges 4:5) before she became a military judge, encouraged Barak to break the Canaanite yoke, the initial movement being confined to the tribes principally affected, Naphtali and Zebulun. A considerable success was gained between Tabor and Kishon, which was followed by a general summons to the tribes, with the exception of Judah and Simeon, who were isolated because of geographical and political factors. The rout of Sisera's army was completed by this reinforced Israelite army in the vicinity of Taanach (Judges 5:19), which resulted in the precipitant westward flight of the Canaanites. Sisera's attempted escape was foiled by the treachery of Jael, who efficiently dispatched the man whom she had lulled into a false sense of security. Hazor itself, and Jabin, survived the events of this campaign (Judges 4:23, 24), but the Canaanite power was shattered.*¹¹⁷

What gave Israel the edge over Sisera and his troops was the unseasonable thunderstorm which paralyzed Sisera's chariots (Judges 5:4–5, 20–21), apart from which, his soldiers felt powerless. They were trained to fight with and from chariots, and were at a loss under the conditions that they found themselves.

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Jael Kills Sisera

Judges 4:17–22

**Blessed from women [is] Jael,
woman of Heber the Kenite;
from women in the tent—blessed.**

Judges
5:24

**Blessed [happy and prosperous] of women
[is] Jael,
woman of Heber the Kenite;
of women in the tent—blessed [happy and
prosperous].**

**Happy and prosperous of women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite;
She is happy and prosperous of the women in tents.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Blessed from women [is] Jael, woman of Heber the Kenite; from women in the tent—blessed.
Septuagint	Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

Significant differences: None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	But honor Jael, the wife of Heber from the Kenite clan. Give more honor to her than to any other woman who lives in tents. Yes, give more honor to her than to any other woman.
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Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

¹¹⁷ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, pp. 747–748.

God's Word™

Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, should be the most blessed woman, the most blessed woman living in a tent.

HCSB

Jael is most blessed of women, the wife of Heber the Kenite; she is most blessed among tent-dwelling women.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV

"Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, of tent-dwelling women most blessed.

Young's Literal Translation

Blessed above women is Jael, Wife of Heber the Kenite, Above women in the tent she is blessed.

What is the gist of this verse? Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, I blessed above all women of her time for her killing of Sisera the Canaanite general.

Judges 5:24a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bârak ^o (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK</i> ^o]	<i>to be blessed, to be praised, to be caused to prosper [by God]</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Pual imperfect	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
It makes more sense for this to be a 2 nd person feminine singular noun; the difference is simply one vowel point, which was added thousands of years after this was originally written. Furthermore, there are circumstances which would allow for even the two vowel points to be confounded for one another.			
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾishshâh (אִשָּׁה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAWH</i>]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #802 BDB #61
Yâʿêl (יַעֲל) [pronounced <i>yaw-ĠALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Jael</i>	feminine singular, proper noun	Strong's #3278 BDB #418
ʾishshâh (אִשָּׁה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAWH</i>]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #802 BDB #61
Cheber (חֶבֶר) [pronounced <i>KHĒH^B-ver</i>]	<i>comrade; company, association; transliterated Heber, Cheber</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #2268 BDB #288
Qêynîy (קַיִנִּי) [pronounced <i>kay-NEE</i>]	<i>to acquire and is transliterated Kenite</i>	gentilic adjective with the definite article	Strong's #7017 BDB #884

Translation: Blessed [happy and prosperous] of women [is] Jael, woman of Heber the Kenite;... The first verb means *to bless, to make happy, to prosper*. The Pual stem found here is the passive of the Piel. We will see a quotation like this in the New Testament. When Elizabeth, who would bear John the Baptist, met Mary, who was the mother of the humanity of our Lord, while Mary was pregnant, Elizabeth said, "**Blessed among women [are] you, and blessed [is] the fruit of your womb!**" (Luke 1:42b). The blessing heaped upon Jael is in contrast to the cursing

placed upon Meroz in the previous verse. It is in this contrast that we have the implication that Meroz is a Kenite and not an Israeli city.¹¹⁸

Judges 5:24b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
`ishshâh (אִשָּׁה) [pronounced <i>eesh-SHAWH</i>]	<i>woman, wife</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #802 BDB #61
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
`ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced <i>OH-hel</i>]	<i>tent, tabernacle, house, temporary dwelling</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #168 BDB #13
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK^e</i>]	<i>to be blessed, to be praised, to be caused to prosper [by God]</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Pual imperfect	Strong's #1288 BDB #138

Owen has a different vowel point here; and it would still make more sense for this to be a feminine singular.

Translation: ...of women in the tent—blessed [happy and prosperous]. Interpretation is difficult for most pastors and commentators. Even the very best commentators fell apart when it came to exegeting this passage. They point out that this act of barbarism was apropos, if only in a borderline way, to the time (implying that it would not be for our day).¹¹⁹ Clarke even says that this verse does not indicate divine approbation of Jael.¹²⁰ Because of the genteel nature of these men, the harsh realities and necessities of war don't quite penetrate their theology, and they only grudgingly admit that what Jael did to Sisera was okay, but that was for back then. However, here it is in this verse where we get the divine perspective of what Jael did. The Israelites and the Canaanites were at war; Jael took her side with the Israelites. Her assassination of Sisera was legitimate. We could not necessarily make the same determination during peace time. This also gives us a very important point of interpretation: a poetic portion of Scripture or a song in Scripture authored by a man of God, can be taken as divine viewpoint. It is here that Jael's action is vindicated without qualification.

Clarke writes *I do not understand these words as expressive of the Divine approbation towards Jael. The word bless, both in Hebrew and Greek, often signifies to praise, to speak well of, to celebrate. This is most probably its sense here.*¹²¹ Clarke, who is generally a good commentator, clearly misses the mark here. If what Jael did was wrong, then it seems silly to praise, to speak well of, or to celebrate her; particularly in poetry, which tends to present God's viewpoint.

¹¹⁸ One theory of many, as we have seen.

¹¹⁹ For instance, see *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 426, his notes on v. 21. Or, J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 142, where he calls this *a dastardly deed*.

¹²⁰ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:24.

¹²¹ The exception here, of course, is the book of Job, which is an exploration of various philosophical viewpoints.

Why we Know God Blesses Jael

1. Twice Jael is called *blessed*, in a poetic section of Scripture. Poetry often expresses divine viewpoint, whereas narrative simply gives us events which occurred, who was involved, and where these things took place.
2. This verse is in stark contrast with the previous verse, where Meroz is cursed by God for not helping Israel.
3. Thirdly, God the Holy Spirit devotes one verse to cursing Meroz (and explaining *why*) and He gives 4 verses to Jael, wherein she is blessed and then we are told again *why* she is blessed.

These things alone should settle any unsettled feelings of any commentator.

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Matthew Henry writes: *How honorably Deborah speaks of Jael, who preferred her peace with the God of Israel before her peace with the king of Canaan, and though not a native of Israel, yet she heartily espouses the cause of Israel in this critical conjuncture, jeopardizes her life as truly as if she had been in the high places of the field, and bravely fought for those whom she sees God fight for! Blessed is she above women in the tent. Note, Those whose lot is cast in the tent, in a very low and narrow sphere of activity, if they serve God in that according to their capacity, shall in no wise lose their reward. Jael in the tent wins as rich a blessing as Barak in the field.*¹²²

Geisler and Howe give a very good four-fold explanation (apart from one sentence in the fourth point):

Geisler and Howe's View of Jael

1. *First, it should be remembered that Sisera was a mighty warrior. When he came to Jael's tent, Jael was hardly in a position to refuse him entrance. Although it was Jael who went out to meet Sisera to encourage him to find refuge in her tent, it is clear from 4:17 that he was already planning to go to Jael's tent.*¹
2. *Second, Sisera was a cruel warrior who had viciously oppressed God's people. If Sisera had escaped from the battle, he would most certainly have lived to brutalize God's people again. If Jael had not acted, she would have been party to any future slaughter or oppression of God's people by this godless man.*
3. *Third, Jael's own commitment to the Lord God of Israel dictated the only course of action she could take. The enemies of the Lord and the Lord's people were Jael's enemies. She had to kill him. She could not hope to face such a warrior in combat. Her action had to be swift and certain. She could not take a chance on failing to kill him and perhaps merely wound him. She had to take decisive action that would result in the certain and sudden death of Sisera. Faced with the alternatives, Jael chose the greater good. To prevent the future slaughter and oppression of the people of God, Jael killed Sisera.*
4. *Fourth, although there is no place in the Bible where God honors or praises Jael for the manner in which she killed Sisera, the song of Deborah certainly praises her for her decisive action. Jael was an instrument in the hands of God to bring judgment upon this terrible enemy of God's people.*²

¹ This point is debatable. My thinking is that Sisera ran for his life and, once he got far enough away from the battle, he then looked around and noticed where he was. He probably ran to area that he was familiar with, but not necessarily with the persistent thought that he was going to the tent of Jael.

² *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, pp. 147–148.

I should only point out that the manner in which Jael killed Sisera is immaterial—obviously, she was not going to face him in battle as some kind of a warrior princess, like Xena.

¹²² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:24–31. I did a fair amount of editing him, but I retained the substance of Henry's comments.

Maybe if we brought into this a more modern example, and say Jael had the opportunity to deceive and then kill Adolf Hitler? Would we balk at her lying, saying, "Sure, he had to be killed, but *did you have to lie to him?*" One of the problems with many commentators is, they too often lack logic. They understand that killing, under some circumstances is not only *okay* but warranted; but they do not understand that lying is also called for under certain circumstances (which is going to be discussed in greater detail below).

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Application: There is another book called *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996. On pp. 189–191, they give a fuller explanation of this passage, covering every aspect of Jael's action. One aspect of her action which is covered is the fact that she misled Sisera. She said *fear not*, when he should actually fear her. Whereas, what should proceed out of our mouths 99% of the time should be the truth, this does not obligate the police force to be 100% truthful with criminals when they interview them nor does it mean that in wartime, we are to be 100% forthcoming with our enemies. Generally speaking, lying is a self-centered act. We do it to protect ourselves or to give an incorrect slant on something that we have done or to make ourselves seem good, intelligent, or important. In wartime, when protecting and defending one's country; when fighting for one's freedom, absolute truthfulness is not always going to be a part of our actions. When dealing with the criminal, absolute truthfulness is not necessarily the route that we should take at all times. The bigger picture is that we have a duty to serve, defend and protect, and that these things should be foremost in our minds. Now, when you personally are tempted to lie, you can pretty well count on the fact that you are transgressing God's laws.

Application: You need to think this through: murder is a sin, so noted in every dispensation; however, it is clear to anyone who reads the Bible with any discernment that killing in war is not a sin. It should not require a great logical leap to understand that, in normal, day-to-day life, lying is a sin; but that lying to the enemy in war is as righteous as killing the bastard where he stands.

Application: This is why you need teaching from the entire Bible; this is why you cannot hold just to the gospels, or to Paul's excellent epistles, or to any particular section of Scripture alone. What Jael does here is an act of eternal righteousness; what Rahab the prostitute does at the beginning of the book of Joshua is an act of eternal righteousness. When you understand these facts, you begin to understand that, in war, some things are different.

Application: Speaking of war, there are a huge number of people in today's society who think that, *what if they gave a war, and nobody came?* They think that, with sending out a lot of positive vibrations into the world that they can stop war and killing. They foolishly look at this current president as some kind of a war monger who uses Christian theology to kill and maim thousands of innocents in Iraq and Afghanistan. Let me see if I can take you by the hand and explain this. What you see on television and read in the newspapers is not all there is to world events. In an oppressive society, which essentially describes any sort of rule by radical Muslims (or communists and socialists), there are not going to be free access by the press. When people are being slaughtered by the tens of thousands in Iraq under Saddam Hussein or in Rwanda, or in Cambodia, we aren't going to see this on tv. We won't read about this in any sort of graphic detail in the newspapers. This is because they cannot go into these countries and report what they see. Now, for some people, what they do not see isn't real. If we saw non-stop news on the killings in Rwanda in the 1990's, with special interest stories about families who are wiped out, and what kind of people they were and what their lives are like, we would become incensed and even many peaceniks would want to invade Rwanda and defend the helpless. If we were able to see news video every single night of Saddam killing thousands of his own people or thousands of Kurds (which he apparently did not see as his own people), we might have come to realize what an absolute monster this man is, and that we ought to do something about it. However, what we see is the actions of our army going into Iraq; we view some of the subsequent suffering; and we see the hundreds of bombings which take place, and that concerns us. We are concerned with what we see, and we give little or no thought to what we do not see. There are fewer innocent people dying month by month in Iraq since we entered the country than in the previous months when Saddam ruled with an iron fist. Now, for most liberals, less death is a good thing, and more death is a bad thing. However, many liberals at this time, if they could turn back the clock

and kept the US from invading Iraq, they would be much happier. They would never witness the deaths of thousands upon thousands of innocent Iraqis; they would never see or hear the human interest stories of those killed or injured in this war; and, to their way of thinking, this is better. What you don't see really isn't occurring. To them, when a tree falls in a forest, it makes no noise if there is no camera crew to catch it on video.

Application: Since I am off on this tangent, let me point out one more thing. One of the things which liberals fret about are the many innocents which the US is killing in Iraq. They believe that suicide bombers are merely doing whatever they can to keep their country free. However, for every innocent Iraqi which we kill unintentionally, the resistance in Iraq kills 20 innocents *intentionally*. The mindset and values of our soldiers is so much different from the mindset and values of the radical Muslim groups there. The vast majority of our soldiers would like to kill every Muslim extremist and spare the innocents; for the Muslim extremists, since military targets are so difficult, they are more than willing to kill as many innocents as they can. And, if they are on the run, they will immediately head for a heavily populated area because they know our values. Whereas, they feel nothing at all if a few dozen innocents around them die; they also know that American soldiers do not want to kill the innocents that they are with.

Application: One of the arguments I hear again and again is, *this is a civil war; we need to let the people of Iraq settle this internally*. The translation is, if they fall into civil war and hundreds of thousands die, that is not a bad thing, as we won't see it night after night on tv; therefore, it will not bother us. Some might even suggest, these people are all worthless, so the more of them who die, the better. Or, they may argue, *the people don't want us there*. However, in the last election, 65% of Iraq's population voted. When was the last time we had an election with 65% of the electorate voting? This indicates a strong popular support for elections, as the Iraqis who voted, did so risking their very lives in order to cast their votes. Here, if it is raining or heavy traffic, or we have too many errands to run that day, many of us will not vote.

Application: And let me keep going: one of the great American policies established in this administration is, if a country allows and even supports terrorist groups within its borders, then the US will treat that country as a threat.

Application: Now, for application, because there are a lot of freaks out there. This assassination is a part of a war-time act. Jael, as was true historically of most Kenites in the past, had cast her lot with the Israelites. The Israelites were at war with Sisera, of which she was fully aware. It was only a matter of luck (actually, divine providence) that Sisera escaped being killed on the battlefield. Jael is simply completing a valid, war-time act, which is to kill the enemy. We, as Americans, do not have the option to take the law into our own hands and assassinate the people with whom we vehemently disagree. When it comes to the ruler of a foreign country, that is a different matter, but not necessarily an easy one. After all, if we successfully assassinated a ruler whom we perceived as a madman, we have no guarantee that another madman would not take his place. A country gets the rulers it deserves and the elimination of one man does not insure his replacement by a better ruler.

**Water, he asked—milk she gave;
in a bowl of majestic ones, she brought
yogurt.**

Judges
5:25

**He asked [for] water—she gave [him] milk;
in a bowl of lords, she brought [him] yogurt.**

**When he asked for water, she gave him milk;
in a bowl for kings she brought him yogurt.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

Water, he asked—milk she gave;
in a bowl of majestic ones, she brought yogurt.

Septuagint

He asked water, *and* she gave *him* milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

Significant differences:

None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV Sisera asked for water, but Jael gave him milk— cream in a fancy cup.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God’s Word™ Sisera asked for water. She gave him milk. She offered him buttermilk in a royal bowl.

HCSB He asked for water; she gave him milk. She brought him curdled milk in a majestic bowl.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV He asked water and she gave him milk; she brought him curds in a noble's bowl.

MKJV He asked for water, and she gave *him* milk. She brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

Young’s Updated LT He asked [for] water—she gave [him] milk; In a lordly dish she brought near butter.

What is the gist of this verse? Jael asks for water and Jael brings him yogurt (or some sort of a milk product).

You may ask, *why are the next few verses here? Don't we already know from the narrative what Jael did?* God the Holy Spirit is celebrating Jael and her actions herein. He is praising her and specifically listing Jael’s actions, so that no commentator could look back on this and say, huffily, “Well, I don’t like the idea that she lied to this man, and then killed him in his sleep! That just doesn’t sit well with me.” God the Holy Spirit not only tells us that Jael is blessed and blessed of all women who live in tents, but then He tells us *why* and devotes more Scripture to her than He does to Barak’s actions. Jael is under no obligation to say, “I am allied with the Israeli forces and I need to warn you up front that I will seize any opportunity to kill you, Mr. Sisera.” What she did was right and honorable, and God the Holy Spirit rubs our noses into it for the next few verses (for those of us who are queasy about what she did).

Judges 5:25a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
mayim (מַיִם) [pronounced MAH-yim]	water, waters	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4325 BDB #565
shâ`al (שָׁאַל) [pronounced shaw-AHL]	to ask [petition, request, inquire]; to demand; to question, to interrogate; to ask [for a loan]; to consult; to salute	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7592 BDB #981

Translation: He asked [for] water—... Sisera had gathered the Canaanites to make war against the Israelites who had begun to assemble on Mount Tabor. Then they marched within sight-distance and went to war against each other. When Sisera saw that the battle was lost, he made a run for it, running probably in the opposite direction of his own troops. Under these circumstances, he had probably been awake for at least two days with little or no sleep. At this point, he would have been extremely thirsty.

Judges 5:25b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châlâb (חָלָב) [pronounced <i>khaw-LAW</i> ^{BV}]	<i>milk; cheese</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2461 BDB #316
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i>]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #5414 BDB #678

Translation: ...she gave [him] milk;... This is a milk product, and apparently this word could stand in for several types of milk products. This does not mean that she did not bring him water; she probably brought him water first and this milk product second.

Judges 5:25c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
çêphel (כַּפֵּל) [pronounced <i>ŠAY-fell</i>]	<i>bowl, dish</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5602 BDB #705
`addiyar (אֲדִיר) [pronounced <i>ahd-DEER</i>]	<i>majestic, powerful, magnificent, glorious</i>	masculine plural adjective with the definite article	Strong's #117 BDB #12

That's the short version. According to Gesenius, this means ❶ *large, very great, mighty* (Psalm 93:4 Isa. 33:21); ❷ *powerful* when used of kings and kingdoms (1Sam. 4:8 Psalm 136:18 Ezek. 32:18); ❸ *prince, leader, chief, noble* (when used as a substantive); ❹ *magnificent, illustrious, glorious* (Psalm 8:2); and, ❺ *noble* (when applied in a moral sense, as in Psalm 16:3).

qârab (קָרַב) [pronounced <i>kaw-RA</i> ^{BV}]	<i>to cause to approach, to bring [draw] near, to bring, to offer; to bring together; to cause to withdraw, to remove</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong #7126 BDB #897
chem ^e âh (חֶמְאָה) [pronounced <i>khieh^e-MAW</i>]	<i>butter, curds; yogurt; cottage cheese</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2529 BDB #326

Translation: ...in a bowl of lords, she brought [him] yogurt. Both Owen and Young render this is a *lordly bowl*; the NASB updates to a *majestic bowl*. What she brought him was in a bowl, which is in the construct; and it is followed by the descriptor, the masculine plural adjective *majestic, magnificent*. Even Young gets this translation wrong. This should be *in a bowl of majestic ones*. So, to correctly translate the construct and the plural, this would be a *bowl of lords* or a *bowl of majestic ones*; the adjective is not used as an adjective but as a noun. We know that because it does not agree in number with the noun that we would expect it to modify. This simply means that she brought out her best china.

There are a number of commentators who have their ideas about what was served here.

What Jael Served Sisera

Commentator	Theory
Barnes	<i>Curdled milk, probably a fermented and intoxicating drink. All these marks of respect and friendship would lull Sisera into security.</i> ¹²³
Clarke	<i>As the word chemah, here translated butter, signifies disturbed, agitated, etc., it is probable that buttermilk is intended. The Arabs form their buttermilk by agitating the milk in a leathery bag, and the buttermilk is highly esteemed because of its refreshing and cooling quality; but there is no reason why we may not suppose that Jael gave him cream: Sisera was not only thirsty, but was also exhausted with fatigue; and nothing could be better calculated to quench his thirst, and restore his exhausted strength, than a bowl of cream.</i> ¹²⁴
Gill	<i>[This] signifies either the same, the milk with cream on it, for that is meant by butter; or having first taken off the cream, she gave him milk to drink, and then brought the cream in a dish for him to eat, and thereby the more incline him to sleep; and this she brought in a dish fit for any lord or nobleman to eat out of; in such a polite and courteous manner did she use him, so that he could have no suspicion of her having any ill design against him.</i> ¹²⁵
Henry	<i>[This] is (say some interpreters), milk which had the butter taken from it; we call it butter-milk. No (say others), it was milk that had the butter still in it; we call it cream. Whichsoever it was, it was probably the best her house afforded; and, to set it off, she brought it in a lordly dish, such as she called so, the finest she had, and better than she ordinarily used at her town table.</i> ¹²⁶
Jamieson, Fausset and Brown	<i>[It is] curdled milk; a favorite beverage in the East.</i> ¹²⁷
Kukis	What she brought him is the feminine singular noun <i>butter, curds</i> ; however, a big slab of butter after doing battle with the Israelites just does not sound all that good; I would think that this could be better rendered a <i>milk product</i> ; which, in this case, would be yogurt or cottage cheese or even a cream liquor (like a bottle of Baileys Irish Cream that she might have had in the refrigerator). I suggest the alcohol, as this may have been a part of her plan.
NIV Study Bible	<i>Artificially soured milk made by shaking milk in a skin-bottle and then allowing it to ferment (due to bacteria that remained in the skin from previous use).</i> ¹²⁸

Most of us realize that a little warm milk given before bed, for some, helps to relax and bring on sleep. As we get older, many take a glass of wine for the same reason.

It is somewhat telling that these commentators spent so much time discussing what Jael brought Sisera, that they ignore some of the more important aspects of this narrative.

¹²³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:25.

¹²⁴ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:25.

¹²⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:25.

¹²⁶ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:25.

¹²⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Judges 5:25.

¹²⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 334.

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Although commentators spent a great deal of time discussing what Jael prepared for Sisera, they missed, as a whole, a couple of extremely important points. First of all, what I find to be impressive, and yet not commented on, is how cool and how reassuring Jael is. In her mind, she is plotting the death of this evil man; yet, Jael is not a killer by nature. She is not a soldier; killing, apart from the occasional animal, is not a part of her life. This is the only man she will ever kill. She is entertaining a killer, a man of great consummate evil, who could as easily kill her as not; and yet, she cannot appear nervous; she cannot make him suspicious; she has to be as cool as Fonzi. She has to be gracious, relaxed, engaging; and, at the same time, plot the death of this evil bastard.

Let me point out one more thing: she has no moral ambiguities in her own soul. Confused commentators over the years are troubled by her actions, but she is not. She understands her place in history; she knows why God has brought Sisera to her tent; she does not need a prophet or prophetess of God to explain to her what she needs to do. She is able to quickly assess the situation and to know what she is to do. Commentators for centuries, after giving this situation a great deal of thought, still spout confused rhetoric; but Jael, faces with Sisera, a heathen killer, suddenly showing up at her front doorstep, and she knows exactly what must be done.

Since there are so many freaks out there in Christendom, I need to make this clear. You don't get to, as a believer in Jesus Christ, meet someone, determine that they are probably an evil person, and then plot their death. We have very specific circumstances here:

The Circumstances behind Sisera Deserving to be Killed

1. Israel is at war with the Canaanites. When you are at war, a lot of circumstances change.
2. The Kenites are allied with Israel; they are not neutral; they cannot simply sit by and let whatever happens, happen. Just as Meroz was cursed for not assisting the Israelites, so Kenites who turn their backs on their allies are cursed.
3. Sisera was a killer of Jews. No one becomes a general of an opposing force without having great personal experience.
4. The chariots which Sisera employed, when the ground is dry and the weather clear, were deadly. Apparently, there was some sort of scythe affixed to these chariots, and they could cut down thousands of Israelites in battle.
5. Sisera would have also been in charge of enforcing Canaanite control over Israel. This would have involved making examples of Jews—possibly in every city—where compliance was not as the Canaanites expected. No doubt, some Jews were killed simply to make a statement and to strike fear into the hearts of their brothers.
6. Under Jabin, Sisera sought to enslave a nation whose king is Jehovah God.
7. No one gets to harm the Jews and just walk away scot free.

There are several applications here:

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Application: You do not get to kill abortion doctors, those who work in abortion clinics, nor do you get to take the law into your own hands. This is an actual war which is taking place. If you are in Iraq and dealing with terrorists, you can kill as many as you like on the battlefield (which is often on the streets of the cities in Iraq). However, you do not get to identify people from the streets of New York that you simply don't like or have committed heinous crimes and then end their lives. You don't get to *declare war* against abortion clinics and then commit criminal acts. In other words, you do not get to take the law into your own hands, despite the fact that our justice system in the United States is tremendously flawed. Outside of a courtroom, you do not get to mete out your own system of justice against a fellow citizen or even against an illegal alien whom you believe has done wrong. Don't be an idiot

about this. When you face a home invasion or a burglary, and you feel your life or the lives of your family members are in danger, then you may shoot and shoot to kill.

Application: As I said above, *when you are at war, a lot of circumstances are changed*. Many people in the United States are confused about this. They want to treat terrorists as criminals and not as enemy combatants (I write this in 2006). Several Islamic terrorist groups have declared war on the United States. In a combat situation, especially those as difficult as in Iraq or Afghanistan, soldiers do not have the opportunity to take videos of their enemies or the circumstances of combat, they do not have time to gather evidence, their actions have to be split second responses to very difficult situations; and no CSI team is going to comb the place later for damning evidence. US citizens are guaranteed legal representation under our law; enemy combatants are not. Will innocents occasionally be swept up in military actions? Unfortunately, yes, just as innocent people are sometimes convicted of crimes they did not commit. Here is where we must depend upon the training of our soldiers to make life and death decisions day after day under very difficult circumstances. Once a man is taken as a prisoner of war, we have to recognize that they are going to be treated differently than a criminal who has been arrested. There is no requirement of legal counsel; there is no speedy trial; there may be no trial whatsoever of any sort; and there are no rights conferred to them as we do to those accused of a crime in the United States. The circumstances are much different.

Application: This week, President Bush is pushing through a bill which deals with the capture and imprisonment of enemy combatants. We are dealing with a situation unlike any other in our history. In the past, our enemies wore uniforms, carried weapons, and primarily attacked our armed forces. They were representatives of a particular country. We had some specific rules in place to deal with these men, when captured. If there were those out there who felt we needed to give citizen rights to these enemy combatants, I have never heard of it. Now we have men who do not wear uniforms; they may or may not be carrying weapons; and they will target fellow Muslims as often as they target US citizens in their periphery; and, once and awhile, they even target American soldiers. Furthermore, they do not fight as representatives of a specific country, but for a movement—an Islamic fascist movement—which is anti-freedom and anti-democracy and anti-the-Muslims-they-don't-like. President Bush asked for guidelines from Congress as to how these types of enemy combatants should be dealt with. I spent the other night listening to several people who, because of this bill, bemoaned the loss of our rights, and how this bill trashed our constitution. These are people who cannot think logically; how enemy combatants are treated is different than how we treat United States citizens. Again, when we are at war, circumstances are changed.

**Her hand to the tent pin she sent herself
forth;
and her right hand to a mallet of workmen;
and she struck [or, hammered] Sisera; she
mortally wounded his head
and she [the tent pin] mortally wounded and
she [i.e., the tent pin] passed through his
temple.**

Judges
5:26

**Her hand to the tent pin, she sent herself
[or, her hand] forth;
and her right hand to the mallet of a worker.
She hammered Sisera; she mortally wounded
his head
and it mortally wounded [him] when it passed
through his temple.**

**She went forward with the tent pin in her left hand and the heavy mallet in her right.
She hammered the pin into the head of Sisera, mortally wounding him.
The tent pin morally wounded him, passing through his temple.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

Her hand to the tent pin she sent herself forth;
and her right hand to a mallet of workmen;
and she struck [or, hammered] Sisera; she mortally wounded his head

and she [the tent pin] mortally wounded and she [i.e., *the tent pin*] passed through his temple.

Septuagint

She put her left hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temple.

Significant differences:

There are some minor differences, none of which appear to have an effect upon the sense of this verse.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV She reached for a tent-peg and held a hammer in her right hand. And with a blow to the head, she crushed his skull.

The Message

She grabbed a tent peg in her left hand, with her right hand she seized a hammer. She hammered Sisera, she smashed his head, she drove a hole through his head..

NEB

She stretch out her hand for the tent-peg, her right hand to hammer the weary. With the hammer she struck Sisera, she crushed his head; she struck and his brains ebbed out.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™

She reached for a tent peg with one hand, for a workman's hammer with the other. She struck Sisera. She crushed his head. She shattered and pierced his temples.

HCSB

She reached for a tent peg, her right hand, for a workman's mallet. Then she hammered Sisera—she crushed his head; she shattered and pierced his temple.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Edersheim

Her hand to the tent-nail sends forth, And her right hand to the ponderous hammer of workmen— Hammers she Sisera, shivers his head, Cleaves and pierces his temple!

The Emphasized Bible

Her hand to the tent-pin put she forth, And her right hand to the toilers' mallet,— Then smote she Sisera. She shattered his head, Yah she split open and pierced through his temples:

ESV

She sent her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen's mallet; she struck Sisera; she crushed his head; she shattered and pierced his temple.

MKJV

She put her hand to the peg, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; she hammered Sisera; she smashed his head, she pierced and struck through his temple.

NASB

She reached out her hand for the tent peg, And her right hand for the workmen's hammer. Then she struck Sisera, she smashed his head; and she shattered and pierced his temple.

Owen's Translation

Her hand to the tent peg she put; and her right hand to the workmen's mallet; and she struck Sisera. She crushed his head; she shattered and pierced his temple.

Young's Updated LT

Her hand to the pin she sends forth, And her right hand to the labourers' hammer, And she hammered Sisera—she smote his head, Yea, she smote, and it passed through his temple.

What is the gist of this verse? Jael then grabbed a hammer and a tent peg and killed Sisera, driving the tent peg into his temple.

Judges 5:26a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]	generally translated <i>hand</i>	feminine singular noun; with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388
The Septuagint, Arabic, and Vulgate Latin versions specify her <i>left hand</i> here.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
yâthêd (יָתֵד) [pronounced yaw-THADE]	<i>pin, stake, nail, peg</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3489 BDB #450
shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced shaw-LAKH]	<i>to send, to send for [forth, away], to dismiss, to deploy, to put forth, to stretch out</i>	3 rd person feminine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7971 BDB #1018
Owen suggests that this should be read as a 3 rd person feminine singular with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix. ¹²⁹			

Translation: [Her hand to the tent pin, she sent herself](#) [or, *her hand*] [forth](#);... I don't want you to think that this tent pin is simply a few inches long; this is probably 18 inches long, sharp, and designed to be driven deep into hard earth.

I go to these translations because several critics have examined this chapter and the previous chapter and they believe that they have found some inconsistencies in the two accounts. Therefore, we will need to examine the Hebrew carefully to show that there are not two different, opposing versions of the same story. Let's look at the literal rendering from the previous chapter: [And so took Jael, woman \[or wife\] of Heber, a tent pin and so she took the hammer in her hand and so she went unto him in the surreptitiousness and so she drove the tent pin into his temple and so she \[the tent pin\] went down into the earth and he was sleeping and so he was fluttering and so he died](#) (Judges 4:21). I will match up these two accounts in the next verse.

When Sisera drifted off to sleep, she probably surreptitiously took one of the long, iron tent spikes out of the ground and brought it into the tent. The first verb is the feminine singular, with a feminine singular suffix, Qal imperfect of *to send, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy*. With the feminine suffix, the English rendering could be very clunky: *she sent herself forth* is the best we can do. She is a woman and she is facing one of the greatest warriors of the Canaanites. She is forcing herself to do this; she is sending herself forth. She is forcing herself to do this thing. This is what is meant by the feminine suffix. Even if we understand that she puts forth *her hand* to do this, the idea is the same.

Judges 5:26b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

¹²⁹ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*; John Joseph Owens; Baker Book House, Grand Rapid, Michigan; ©1989; Vol. 2, p. 24.

Judges 5:26b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâmîyn (יָמִיַן) [pronounced yaw-MEEN]	<i>the right hand, the right side, on the right, at the right; the south</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #3225 BDB #411
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l) ^e	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
hal ^e mûwth (הַלְמוּת) [pronounced hah ^e -MOOTH]	<i>hammer, mallet</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #1989 BDB #240
âmêl (עַמֵּל) [pronounced gaw-MALE]	<i>laborer, worker, workman; miserable, one who is exhausted and/or miserable from labor, sufferer, worn out, burnt out</i>	masculine plural noun; also used as an adjective	Strong's #6001 BDB #766

Translation: ...and her right hand to the mallet of a worker. Her right hand goes to the feminine construct of a word we find only here, but we saw its verbal cognate in v. 22. It means *hammer, mallet*. This is a hammer of a *laborer, workman* (this is a masculine plural). I would assume that this hammer is used to pound these tent pins into the ground.

Judges 5:26c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
châlam (חָלַם) [pronounced khaw-LAHM]	<i>to hammer down, to strike down, to beat down; to break up, to be dissolved</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1986 BDB #240
Çîyç ^e râ ^h (צִיִּצְרָא) [pronounced sees ^e -RAW]	<i>battle array</i> [according to BDB]; and is transliterated <i>Sisera</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #5516 BDB #696

Translation: She hammered Sisera;... Then we have the verb cognate of *hammer*. We can render it *hammer, strike*. It is not as if this woman has a 45 laying around that she can use to defend herself; she has to determine what she has that she can use against Sisera, and how this makeshift weapon maybe used.

Judges 5:26d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mâchaq (מַחֵק) [pronounced <i>maw-KHAKH</i>]	<i>to crush into pieces; to utterly destroy, to annihilate</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #4277 BDB #563
We only find this verb here and it has no cognates; the Arabic word thought to be equivalent means <i>to blot out</i> .			
rô`sh (רֶשֶׁת) [pronounced <i>rohsh</i>]	<i>head [of a man, city, state, nation, place, family, priest], top [of a mountain]; chief, prince, officer; front, choicest, best; height [of stars]; sum</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7218 BDB #910
It is this phrase which suggests to some commentators that she first crushed his head with the hammer; then she drove a peg through his temple.			

Translation: ...she mortally wounded his head... She placed the spike at his head, and then pounded it in with the hammer. In the KJV, it sounds as though she is beheading him; however, that is not how the text reads.

Judges 5:26e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mâchats (מַחֵט) [pronounced <i>MAW-khats</i>]	<i>to severely wound, to mortally wound, to smite through, to pierce; to shatter, to smite, to agitate, to shake</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #4272 BDB #563

Translation: ...and it mortally wounded [him]... The next verb is the Qal perfect of *to mortally wound, to smite through, wound severely, shatter, to smite, to pierce*. This verb is only found 13 times in the Old Testament. This word can function without an object (Deut. 32:39 Psalm 68:23) or with an object (Num. 24:17 Job 26:12 Psalm 18:38).

Judges 5:26f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
châlaph (חָלַף) [pronounced <i>chaw-LAHF</i>]	<i>to pass [on]; to pass through, to pierce through; to come on [up], to sprout up; to revive, to flourish; to pass by, to ignore; to change [clothing]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2498 BDB #322

Judges 5:26f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>Châlahph has so many meanings, that I believe it is a homonym, it's two basic meanings being <i>to pass [through, on, by]</i> and <i>to change</i>. Gesenius gives a plethora of meanings for just the Qal: <i>to pass by [on, through]; to perish, to come to nothing; to pass beyond; to transgress; to pierce through; to come on against [someone with hostility]; to come on [up], to sprout up; to revive, to flourish</i>. In the KJV, we have such Qal renderings as <i>stricken through</i> (Judges 5:26), <i>go on forward</i> (1Sam. 10:3), <i>groweth up</i> (Psalm 90:6), <i>is over</i> (SOS 2:11), <i>shall change</i> (Habak. 1:11), <i>shall be changed</i> (Psalm 102:26). BDB gives the meaning as <i>pass on, pass away, pass through, to come on anew, to sprout again</i> (the latter two dealing with grass). In Job 4:15, this verb is given several renderings: <i>doth pass</i> (Young's Translation), <i>glide</i> (Owen), <i>floated along</i> (Rotherham), <i>brushed across</i> (REB) and <i>slip</i> (NJB). It is given so many renderings because it appears to have quite a number of meanings. This is tough to determine how the word should be rendered, so I will go along with Gesenius where he claims this word is the equivalent of ʿābar (עָבַר) [pronounced ʿaw^b-VAHR] (Strong's #5674 BDB #716), which meaning is given as <i>to pass over, to pass through, to pass by</i>. However, with châlahph, according to Gesenius, what we are looking at is the swift motion of anything which is smooth and slippery. Therefore, we will render this <i>[quickly] glide by, to slide on through, to quickly pass through</i>. Barnes: <i>The idea is...that of making a rush upon a man, for the purpose of arresting him and bringing him to trial. There are frequent references to such trials in the book of Job.</i>¹³⁰</p>			
raqqâh (רַקָּה) [pronounced rahk-KAW]	<i>temple, side of head</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7541 BDB #956

Translation: *...when it passed through his temple.* And the next verb in this verse is the Qal perfect of *to glide through, to slide through, to glide by, to quickly pass through*. This time, the subject is the tent pin. Because this is a feminine singular verb, translators tend to associate it with Jael. However, the *tent pin* is in the feminine singular and it would make more sense for *it* to mortally wound him and for *it* to pass through his temple (there is no neuter gender in the Hebrew; only masculine and feminine). Jael does not quickly pass through his head; the tent pin does.

Edersheim: *We almost seem to hear the three strokes of the hammer by which her bloody work is done.*¹³¹

Clarke suggests a two-fold death stroke here:

1. *Observing him to be in a profound sleep she took a workman's hammer, probably a joiner's mallet, and with one blow on the head deprived him of all sense.*
2. *She then took a tent nail and drove it through his temples, and thus pinned him to the earth; which she could not have done had she not previously stunned him with the blow on the head. Thus she first smote his head, and secondly pierced his temples.*¹³²

There is no contradiction between the two accounts. It is the provision of the milk and yogurt which lulls Sisera into a state of relaxation, and the exhaustion of battle hits him. He is fast asleep within minutes. Then Jael hammers the long tent pin through his temple, probably driving it through one ear and out the other.

¹³⁰ Barnes' Notes, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. III, p. 238.

¹³¹ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 356.

¹³² Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:26.

At her feet he bowed down, he fell,
 he lay down.
 At her feet, he bowed down, he fell.
 Where he bowed down, there he fell,
 devastated.

Judges
 5:27

At her feet, bowed down [and] fell
 [and then] lay down.
 At her feet, he bowed down and fell.
 Where he bowed down, there he fell,
 brought to ruin.

He tottered at her feet, then fell, and laid down. He tottered again at her feet and then fell.
 Where he tottered, there he fell before her, helpless and dying.

Let's see what some others have done with this verse:

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	At her feet he bowed down, he fell, he lay down. At her feet, he tottered , he fell. Where he tottered, there he fell, devastated.
Septuagint	At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell afflicted.

Significant differences: None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV <i>The Message</i>	Sisera sank to his knees and fell dead at her feet. He slumped at her feet. He fell. He sprawled. He slumped at her feet. He fell. Slumped. Fallen. Dead.
NAB	At her feet he sank down, fell, lay still; down at her feet he sank and fell; where he sank down, there he fell, slain.
NJB	Between her feet, he crumpled, he fell, he lay; at her feet, he crumpled, he fell. Where he crumpled, there he fell, destroyed.
NLT	He sank, he fell, he lay dead at her feet.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> TM	He sank. He fell. He lay between her feet! He sank. He fell between her feet. Where he sank, he fell dead.
HCSB	He collapsed, he fell, he lay down at her feet; he collapsed, he fell at her feet; where he collapsed, there he fell—dead.
JPS (Tanakh)	At her feet he sank, lay outstretched, At her feet he sank, lay still; Where he sank, there he lay—destroyed.
NIV	At her feet he sank, he fell; there he lay. At her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell—dead.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Between her feet he bowed—he fell, he lay,— Between her feet he bowed—he fell, Where he bowed There he fell—destroyed!
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ESV	Between her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still; between her feet he sank, he fell; where he sank, there he fell—dead.
Young's Updated LT	Between her feet he bowed—He fell, he lay down; Between her feet he bowed, he fell; Where he bowed, there he fell—destroyed.

What is the gist of this verse? It does not appear as though Sisera died immediately; it appears as though he tried to get up, and then sunk back down at her feet.

Judges 5:27a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bêyn (בֵּינַי) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>in the midst of, between, among;</i> when found twice, it means <i>between</i>	preposition	Strong's #996 BDB #107
regel (רַגְלָהּ) [pronounced <i>REH-gehl</i>]	<i>foot, feet</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #7272 BDB #919
kâra' (כָּרַע) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAHG</i>]	<i>to bend the knees, to bow down, to bend down before</i> [usually used for doing obeisance to a king]; <i>to crouch [down];</i> by implication: <i>to fall, to sink</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3766 BDB #502

BDB includes the meanings *to tilt, lean; to totter, to be feeble*.

Translation: *At her feet, he bowed down...* This verse begins with, literally, *between her feet*, rather than *at her feet*. My impression here is, he did not simply die, but he tried to raise himself up, but sunk down to the ground. I think that he is struggling here to get on his feet, but gets as far as a bowed position at Jael's feet.

Judges 5:27b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced <i>naw-FAHL</i>]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply; to desert</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5307 BDB #656
shâkab (שָׁכַב) [pronounced <i>shaw-KAH^BV</i>]	<i>to lie down, to lie down [to sleep, to have sexual relations, to die; because of sickness or humiliation]; to relax</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #7901 BDB #1011

This verb can have several different connotations. It can mean *to lie down with the intention of lodging for the night* (Joshua 2:1 2Kings 4:11); *to have sexual relations* (Gen. 30:11, 14 Ex. 22:15); *to lie down in death* (Deut. 31:16 Isa. 14:8 Ezek. 31:18); and there is the figurative use *to relax* (Job 30:17 Eccles. 2:23).

Translation: *...[and] fell [and then] lay down.* Following this, we have the Qal perfect of *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply*. It is unclear whether Deborah is being poetic about Sisera's

death here, and spends time emphasizing his death, or whether he struggles in vain to get up, falling down possibly once or twice from a bowed over position.

Judges 5:27c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bêyn (בֵּינַי) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>in the midst of, between, among;</i> when found twice, it means <i>between</i>	preposition	Strong's #996 BDB #107
regel (רֶגֶל) [pronounced <i>REH-ge</i>]	<i>foot, feet</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #7272 BDB #919
kâra' (כָּרַע) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAHG</i>]	<i>to bend the knees, to bow down, to bend down before</i> [usually used for doing obeisance to a king]; <i>to crouch [down];</i> by implication: <i>to fall, to sink</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3766 BDB #502
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced <i>naw-FAHL</i>]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply; to desert</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #5307 BDB #656

Translation: *At her feet, he bowed down and fell.* It sounds as though he struggles to get up again, and is still bowed before her, and he falls again.

Clarke suggests the same thing: *He probably made some struggles after he received the blow on the head, but could not recover his feet. Aeschylus represents Agamemnon rising, staggering, and finally falling, under the blows of Clytemnestra. - Agamemnon v. 1384.*¹³³ In fact, several commentators saw it this way, that Sisera tried to get to his feet a couple of times, and that Jael struck him at least twice (although they vary as to whether this was first with the hammer and then the pin, or whether she struck the pin more than once).

Judges 5:27d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81

The bêt preposition and ʾăsher together mean *where, wherever, wheresoever*.

¹³³ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:27.

Judges 5:27d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kāra' (כָּרַע) [pronounced kaw-RAHG]	<i>to bend the knees, to bow down, to bend down before</i> [usually used for doing obeisance to a king]; <i>to crouch [down]</i> ; by implication: <i>to fall, to sink</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3766 BDB #502
shâm (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced shawm]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced naw-FAHL]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply; to desert</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect; pausal form	Strong's #5307 BDB #656
shâdad (שָׁדַד) [pronounced shaw-DAHD]	<i>devastator, destroyer, devastated, destroyed, laid waste to</i>	Qal passive participle	Strong's #7703 BDB #994

Translation: *Where he bowed down, there he fell, brought to ruin.* The impression given in this verse is that Jael did not simply stick him in the head with the pin and then he died; he apparently got up, tottered, fell, lay for a bit; then he got up and tottered, and fell again, and he was devastated. Very likely he suffered muscle spasms and his standing up and tottering could be partly attributable to that. There is also a play on words here as well. Thrice he is said to *bow down, to fall, to lie*; a word often used for doing obeisance. In his part of the world, he was the ruler. Before this woman, he did obeisance. He was unable to resist her. He was unable to put up any sort of a fight. He simply fell at her feet, partially got up, then fell at her feet again. She stood above him, armed with only a mallet or a hammer, ready to strike him if necessary. Geisler and Howe¹³⁴ suggest that he didn't even get up, but that *fell* is used figuratively. It does not describe a literally falling to the ground, but Sisera's demise or Sisera's fall from power. What we are actually witnessing are serious convulsions. She would pound the iron stake in once, and he would convulse. She struck it again, and he would convulse, and then lay quietly. This verse reveals her steel nerve. In any case, she doesn't plant the tent pin in head and then run off to get her husband to make certain the job is finished. She stays right there, standing right above him, ready to do whatever is necessary to complete the job.

Barthel: *The vigor of the language and the hypnotic rhythmic structure of the verses is perfectly suited to the violence of the deed itself.*¹³⁵

You may read these two accounts, both the narrative and the poetic version of Sisera's death, and think, *hmm, this does not sound like the same story; there are some inconsistencies.* Therefore, what I will do below is paint one picture of Sisera's death, pulling Judges 4 and 5 together. This is not the only possible series of events, but one possibility: The idea is to give a chronology to these events:

¹³⁴ From *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, p. 146.

¹³⁵ Manfred Barthel, *What the Bible Really Says*; ©1982; © by Quill; p. 144.

The Chronology of Sisera's Death		
Commentary	Judges 4	Judges 5
Sisera, seeing that all is lost on the battlefield, runs for his own life, which leads him to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber. She brings him into her tent, offering him a blanket and possibly a cot to lay on. He asks for water and she brings him milk and yogurt. We're not certain which came first. I picture him as sitting on the cot, wrapped in a blanket, and, once he stops huffing and puffing and cools down, requests some water. She brings him milk and yogurt instead and, as he cools down, wraps himself in a blanket.	And Sisera fled by his feet unto a tent of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite for [there was] peace between Jabin, king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite. Then Jael came out to meet Sisera and she said to him, "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside unto me. Do not fear." So he turned aside unto her [and went into] the tent. She then covered him with a heavy blanket. Then he said to her, "Cause me to drink, please, a little water, for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin container of milk and caused him to drink; then she covered him (Judges 4:17–19).	He asked [for] water—she gave [him] milk; in a bowl of lords, she brought [him] yogurt (Judges 5:25).
He is tired and asks her to stand guard in front of the tent.	So he said to her, "Stand [at] the opening of the tent and it will be if a man comes and asks you, saying, 'Is there here a man?'; you will say, 'No.'" (Judges 4:20).	
As he falls into a deep sleep, she slips outside and pulls up an iron tent stake (that is conjecture on my part), and returns to the sleeping Sisera with a hammer in her right hand, the tent pin in the other.	He was sleeping and he was in a deep sleep (Judges 4:21c). Then Jael, the wife of Heber, took a tent pin and she took a hammer in her hand and went to him surreptitiously (Judges 4:21a).	Her hand to the tent pin, she sent herself forth; and her right hand to a mallet of worker (Judges 5:26a).
She strikes him the first time, driving the spike part way into his head, and he gets up out of the cot and then stumbles at her feet, and lays there convulsing.		She hammered Sisera; At her feet, he tottered and fell and then lay down (Judges 5:26b, 27a).
She strikes the spike again, driving it almost all the way through his head; he gets up to his knees, convulsing more, and falls at her feet.		She mortally wounded his head. At her feet, he tottered and fell. Where he tottered, there he fell (Judges 5:26c 27b).
She strikes the pin a third time, driving the pin clear though his head and into the ground, pinning him there like a butterfly on a collector's mat.	She then drove the tent pin into his temple and it went down into the earth (Judges 4:21b).	And it mortally wounded and it passed through his temple. Where he tottered, there he fell, brought to ruin (Judges 5:26d, 27c).

The Chronology of Sisera's Death		
Commentary	Judges 4	Judges 5
About this time, Barak meanders on by, looking for Sisera. Jael calls him over. Sisera, pinned to the ground with a tent stake, is still writhing.	And lo! Barak was pursuing Sisera. So Jael went out to meet him and she then said to him, "Come and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went into her [tent] and lo!, Sisera was lying, dying; the tent spike [was] in his temple (Judges 4:22). And then he died (Judges 4:21d).	
There is the possibility that Jael strikes Sisera first with the hammer and later puts the pin through his head; however, I simply wanted to give one possible set of events which match both accounts.		

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Here is how Josephus describes this scenario: *At last Sisera, as soon as he saw himself beaten, fled away, and came to a woman whose name was Jael, a Kenite, who received him, when he desired to be concealed; and when he asked for somewhat to drink, she gave him sour milk, of which he drank so unmeasurably that he fell asleep; but when he was asleep, Jael took an iron nail, and with a hammer drove it through his temples into the floor; and when Barak came a little afterward, she showed Sisera nailed to the ground: and thus was this victory gained by a woman, as Deborah had foretold. Barak also fought with Jabin at Hazor; and when he met with him, he slew him: and when the general was fallen, Barak overthrew the city to the foundation, and was the commander of the Israelites for forty years.*¹³⁶

Now, having gone over this account more times than you wanted to, let me add several pieces of information so that you might warm up to Jael's act. It is possible that she could have been charged with harboring a fugitive by Barak and executed with Sisera. She was in no position to refuse this powerful warrior, despite his tiredness. She could not have told him, "You know, Sisera, I am pretty uncomfortable with all of this; you might want to find another woman's tent further on down the road." Once Sisera awoke, there are several scenarios which could have taken place. He could have raped¹³⁷ her; he could have escaped, only to persecute and take the lives of many more Israelites in subsequent battles. *This meant that Jael herself would have been involved in the guilt of the slaughter of many innocent lives in Sisera's future career of aggression against the norther tribes of Israel.*¹³⁸ He could have killed her husband and taken her as his wife. Now, I doubt that Jael considered all the alternatives and obsessed as much about this as we have. Very likely, she thought about the position she was in, her allegiance to the Jewish people and to their God, and acted upon these motivations.

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Sisera's Mother Anxiously Awaits Her Son

¹³⁶ Flavius Josephus, Book 5, chapter 5; verse 4. [Web link](#).

¹³⁷ One expositor suggested that he did rape her, but the evidence I thought was rather shabby. He pointed to Judges 5:27a for confirmation of that rape, which was really him falling at her feet after the first strike of the hammer.

¹³⁸ *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 163.

In v. 27, we leave Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, and go to another woman, the mother of Sisera. Her son might be the greatest man of her city and the greatest warrior of that area, but he had been gone a long time. Sisera's mother was in a panic for her son.

God the Holy Spirit will include 3 verses specifically on this mother of Sisera and her reaction to Sisera not returning. Now, one reason that we find this here is to be in contrast with Jael, who is blessed of women. Both of these women are Gentiles; but Jael has aligned herself with God's people (and, therefore, with God). A question which occurs to me is, *why is so much time spent here with Sisera's mother?* A second question is, *how does Deborah, the writer of this song, know so much about Sisera's mother and her reaction?* I pose these questions as they occur to me. This does not mean that I have the answers to them.

Through the window she looked out [and down] and cried shrilly, a mother of Sisera, through the lattice, "Why delays [in shame] his chariot to come Why are delayed steps of his chariot?"

Judges
5:28

The mother of Sisera looked out the window and cried shrilly, through the lattice, "Why is his chariot delayed [in] coming? Why are the steps of his chariot delayed?"

The mother of Sisera looked out the window and cried shrilly, out through the lattice, "Why is his chariot slow in coming? Why don't I hear the hoofbeats of his chariot?"

Although this is easy to grasp, we will look at some other translations to nail it down. Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

Through the window she looked out [and down] and cried shrilly, a mother of Sisera, through the lattice, "Why delays [in shame] his chariot to come Why are delayed steps of his chariot?"

Septuagint

The mother of Sisera looked down through the window out of the loophole, saying, "Why was his chariot turned to come? Why do the footsteps of his chariots tarry?"

Significant differences:

Many of the Greek words in the LXX are difficult in this verse; it appears as though this was an attempt to translate the Hebrew text which we have.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

Sisera's mother looked out through her window. "Why is he taking so long?" she asked. "Why haven't we heard his chariots coming?"

The Message

Sisera's mother waited at the window, a weary, anxious watch. "What's keeping his chariot? What delays his chariot's rumble?"

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™

Sisera's mother looked through her window and cried as she peered through the lattice. "Why is his chariot taking so long? Why don't I hear the clatter of his chariots?"

HCSB

Sisera's mother looked through the window; she peered through the lattice, crying out: "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why don't I hear the hoofbeats of his horses?"

JPS (Tanakh)

Through the window peered Sisera's mother, Behind the lattice she whined [Or "gazed"; meaning of Hebrew uncertain]: "Why is his chariot so long in coming?"

Why so late the clatter of his wheels?"

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Through the window looked out and shrilly cried, The mother of Sisera, through the lattice, Why is his chariot ashamed to come? Why delay the wheels of his chariot?
ESV	"Out of the window she peered, the mother of Sisera wailed through the lattice: 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the hoofbeats of his chariots?'
NASB	"Out of the window she looked and lamented, The mother of Sisera through the lattice [or, window], 'Why does his chariot delay in coming? Why do the hoofbeats [lit., steps] of his chariots tarry?'"
NRSV	"Out of the window she peered, the mother of Sisera gazed through the lattice; 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the hoofbeats of his chariots?'"
Young's Updated LT	Through the window she has looked out—Yea, she cries out—the mother of Sisera, Through the lattice; Why is his chariot delaying to come? Why tarried have the steps of his chariot?

What is the gist of this verse? Sisera's mother calls out through her window, "Why is his chariot late in coming? Why is it taking so long to hear the hoofbeats of the horses?"

Let me make another comment before we begin the exegesis: it is Sisera's mother who looks out the window and waits for him. We do not get the viewpoint of a wife or mistress.

Another observation: both Jael and Sisera's mother are spoken of in the 3rd person. Obviously, Sisera's mother would not be joining Barak and Deborah to sing this song; however, we do get a unique point of view from each of these women.

Judges 5:28a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ba'ad (בֵּאֵד) [pronounced BAH-gad]	<i>by, near; because of; behind, after; about, round about; between [two things], through; into, among; pro, for; away from, behind; on behalf of</i>	generally a preposition of separation or nearness	Strong's #1157 BDB #126
Even though ba'ad is covered in roughly half a page in both BDB and Gesenius, it still has a great many meanings (and only some of their material overlapped). With verbs of falling, letting down, leaning forward so as to look out, it means <i>through, out through</i> (lit., <i>away from</i>) a window, etc. With verbs of shutting, it means to shut <i>behind, after, up or upon</i> . It can be used as follows: to seal <i>up</i> ; to hedge <i>about</i> ; to fence <i>round about</i> . It has metaphorical uses: <i>on behalf of, for the sake of, on account of</i> . This preposition can denote nearness, as in <i>by, near; between [two things]; into, among; pro, for</i> (in the sense of exchanging).			
Owen lists this as a construct, which makes little sense to me.			
challôwn (חַלּוֹן) [pronounced <i>khal-LOWN</i>]	<i>window</i>	masculine singular noun; with the definite article	Strong's #2474 BDB #319
shâqaph (שָׁקַף) [pronounced <i>shaw-KAHF</i>]	<i>to look out and down, to overhang</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #8259 BDB #1054

Translation: ...looked out the window... [Insert below]. Apparently, a window was a hole cut in the side of the house and lattice work was placed in front of the opening (we find the same verbiage in Prov. 7:6).

Freeman tells us: *The walls of Oriental houses present but few windows to the street, and these are high up from the ground. They very seldom have glass in them, but are made of lattice-work, which is arranged for coolness, and also to give the inmates an opportunity of seeing without being seen. These windows are sometimes thrown out from the wall like our bay-windows, and thus afford a good opportunity of seeing what is going on in the street below. They are not hung like our ordinary sashes, but open and shut like doors. The window spoken of in the text was evidently on the street side of the house.*¹³⁹

Judges 5:28b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore; because	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yâbab (בַּבּ) [pronounced yaw]	to cry out, to cry shrilly	3 rd person feminine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #2980 BDB #384
ʿêṁ (אֵם) [pronounced aim]	mother	feminine singular construct	Strong's #517 BDB #51
Ṣîyç ^e râʾ (סִיִּצְרָא) [pronounced sees ^e -RAW]	battle array [according to BDB]; and is transliterated Sisera	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #5516 BDB #696

Translation: The mother of Sisera [insert above]...and cried shrilly,... When she looked out of her window, she cries out shrilly. This verb is found only here.

Gill suggests: *Here she stood and cried with a very loud uneasy tone; the word signifies a sort of a groaning howling noise, discovering impatience and uneasiness; and so the Vulgate Latin and Syriac versions render it, "she howled"; saying in a whining way.*¹⁴⁰

Judges 5:28c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
baʿad (אַחַר) [pronounced BAH-âgad]	by, near; because of; behind, after; about, round about; between [two things], through; into, among; pro, for; away from, behind; on behalf of	generally a preposition of separation or nearness	Strong's #1157 BDB #126

¹³⁹ *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 123.

¹⁴⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:28.

Judges 5:28c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>Even though ba'ad is covered in roughly half a page in both BDB and Gesenius, it still has a great many meanings (and only some of their material overlapped). With verbs of falling, letting down, leaning forward so as to look out, it means <i>through, out through</i> (lit., <i>away from</i>) a window, etc. With verbs of shutting, it means to shut <i>behind, after, up or upon</i>. It can be used as follows: to seal <i>up</i>; to hedge <i>about</i>; to fence <i>round about</i>. It has metaphorical uses: <i>on behalf of, for the sake of, on account of</i>. This preposition can denote nearness, as in <i>by, near; between [two things]; into, among; pro, for</i> (in the sense of exchanging).</p>			
<p>ʿeshnâb (אֶשְׁנָב) [pronounced <i>ehsh^o-NAW^{BV}</i>]</p>	<p><i>window lattice</i></p>	<p>masculine singular noun with the definite article</p>	<p>Strong's #822 BDB #1039</p>

Translation: ...through the lattice,... We find this same verbiage only in Prov. 7:6. We can only make reasonable guesses as to what this word means. Obviously, it has to do with a window, and lattice is the most reasonable idea.

Clarke tells us: *This is very natural: in the women's apartments in the East the windows are latticed, to prevent them from sending or receiving letters, etc. The latticing is the effect of the jealousy which universally prevails in those countries.*¹⁴¹

Gill describes the lattice: *[A lattice] is but another word for a window, which was not of glass, that being of a later invention, but made in lattice form, in a sort of network, full of little holes to let in air and light, and look out at.*¹⁴²

Judges 5:28d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>maddu'a (מַדּוּא) [pronounced <i>mah-DOO-ahg</i>]</p>	<p><i>why, wherefore, on what account, and it is probably a contraction of a word which means what being known</i></p>	<p>adverb</p>	<p>Strong's #4069 BDB #396</p>
<p>bôwsh (בוֹשׁ) [pronounced <i>bôsh</i>]</p>	<p><i>to delay</i> [when followed by a gerund]; properly <i>to put to shame one who waits</i></p>	<p>3rd person masculine singular, Pilel perfect</p>	<p>Strong's #954 BDB #101</p>
<p>Owen lists this as a Polel, which is apparently the same thing.</p>			
<p>reheb (רֶחֶב) [pronounced <i>REH-khe^{bV}</i>]</p>	<p><i>chariot, mill-stone, rider</i></p>	<p>masculine singular noun with the 3rd person masculine singular suffix</p>	<p>Strong's #7393 BDB #939</p>
<p>lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l^e</i>)</p>	<p><i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i></p>	<p>directional/relational preposition</p>	<p>No Strong's # BDB #510</p>

¹⁴¹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:28.

¹⁴² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:28.

Judges 5:28d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced boh]	to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #935 BDB #97

Translation:...“Why is his chariot delayed [in] coming? What she cries out begins with the adverb *why, wherefore, on what account*. This is followed by the Polel perfect of *to delay in shame*. What this is, is a last hope wish of the mother; spoken as a question, she asks if he has lost the war and has delayed his return because of shame.

Judges 5:28e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
maddu'a (מַדּוּא) [pronounced mah-DOO-ahg]	<i>why, wherefore, on what account</i> , and it is probably a contraction of a word which means <i>what being known</i>	adverb	Strong's #4069 BDB #396
ʾāchar (אַחַר) [pronounced aw-KHAHR]	<i>to retard, to delay anyone; to be delayed, to stay behind, to remain behind; to wait; to remain doing something for a long time</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Piel perfect	Strong's #309 BDB #29
pa'am (פַּעַם) [pronounced PAH-gahm]	<i>beat, foot, anvil, occurrence, time, steps; the connotation is the passage of time</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #6471 BDB #821

The gender of this noun is a curiosity; I could not find a rule that would fit it to indicate that it is feminine, although BDB and Gesenius both list it as being feminine (my problem here is that the verb is in the masculine plural). *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance* does not list this as either masculine or feminine. Owen lists it as masculine. If this is in the feminine plural, then we have a problem with the verb, which needs to find a masculine plural subject. All of the translations which I looked at associated the *steps* of the horses with the noun *delayed* (or, *tarry*). Otherwise, we have some undefined *they* delaying Sisera.

reheb (רֶחֶב) [pronounced REH-khe ^b v]	<i>chariot, mill-stone, rider</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7393 BDB #939
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Translation: *Why are the steps of his chariot delayed?* Her second question also begins with *why* and then we have the masculine plural, Piel perfect of *to remain behind, to delay, to tarry*. What is *delayed* is the plural of *steps* (of men or, apparently, of horses in this verse).

The Amplified Bible, quoting *Lang's Commentary: Who should first suffer anxiety (in the palace of the women), if not the mother? Of a wife, nothing is said; such love thrives not in the harem of a prince. He is his mother's pride, the great hero, who had hitherto been invincible. What she has in him, and what she loses, concerns no other woman.*¹⁴³

¹⁴³ *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; p. 294, again quoting *Lang's Commentary*.

An inordinate amount of time has passed since Sisera left on this mission to quell the Israeli uprising.

**Wise ones of her princesses answer her;
Yea, she [even she] causes to return her
words to herself.**

Judges
5:29

**The wise ones of her princesses answered
her;
Yea, she [even she] causes to return her
words to herself.**

**The wisest of her princesses attempted to sooth her with these words;
even she herself said these words to herself again and again:**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Wise ones of her princesses answer her; Yea, she [even she] causes to return her words to herself.
Septuagint	Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,...

Significant differences: No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	She and her wisest women gave the same answer:...
The Message	The wisest of her ladies-in-waiting answers with calm, reassuring words,...
NLT	A reply comes from her wise women, and she repeats these words to herself.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™	Her wisest servants gave her an answer. But she kept repeating to herself,...
HCSB	Her wisest princesses answer her; she even answers herself:...
JPS (Tanakh)	The wisest of her ladies give answer; She, too, replies to herself:...

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV	Her wisest princesses answer, indeed, she answers herself,...
Young's Updated LT	The wise ones, her princesses, answer her, Yea, she returns her sayings to herself:...

What is the gist of this verse? The princesses who are with Sisera's mother (perhaps Sisera's wives?) suggest an answer; and she is thinking the same thing.

Judges 5:29a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châkâm (חָכָם) [pronounced <i>khah-KAWM</i>]	<i>capable of knowing [judging]; intelligent, wise; subtle, crafty</i>	feminine plural adjective construct	Strong's #2450 BDB #314

Judges 5:29a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sârâh (שָׂרָה) [pronounced saw-RAW]	<i>princess, noble woman</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #8282 BDB #979
ʿânâh (עָנָה) [pronounced ʿaw-NAWH]	<i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i>	3 rd person feminine plural, Qal imperfect; with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #6030 BDB #772

Translation: [The wise ones of her princesses answered her](#);... After *wise ones* we have the feminine plural of sârâh (שָׂרָה) [pronounced saw-RAW], which you may recognize as the name of Abraham's wife; it means *princesses*. This verse is separated from v. 30, and they should not be. In v. 30, we have the content of what the princesses tell Sisera's mother and what she keeps telling herself. She keeps telling herself over and over again these things.

Judges 5:29b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿaph (אֶף) [pronounced ahf]	<i>in fact, furthermore, also, yea, even, indeed</i>	conjunction	Strong's #637 BDB #64
hîyʾ (הִיא) [pronounced hee]	<i>she, it; also used as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced shoo ^b v]	<i>to cause to return, to bring, to be caused to turn back mentally, reminisce, to return something, to restore, to bring back, to send back, to regain, to recover, to make restitution, reconsider, think again, to be caused to return</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
ʿêmer (אֵמֶר) [pronounced AY-mer]	<i>utterance, speech, word, saying; discourse; promise; command, mandate</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #561 & #562 BDB #56
Also spelled ômer (אֹמֶר) [pronounced OH-mer]. Gesenius treats these as the same word; Strong gives them two different Strong's #'s.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^ʰ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition; with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: [...Yea, she \[even she\] causes to return her words to herself](#). We do have in these few verses some artistic license. Deborah was not at the palace of Sisera nor did she necessarily hear these things herself nor were

they repeated to her. She is a prophetess and was aware of certain truths which were outside the realm of her immediate five-sensorial perception periphery. Since she was a prophetess and since this is the Word of God, we may take these few verses as an exact representation of what did occur. Sisera's mother was with either her daughters or with the wives of Sisera and they were comforting one another during the long absence of Sisera and his troops.

What this verse is saying is that these women under her and she herself keep affirming that everything is alright, and that Sisera is simply dividing up the loot from their battle.

<p>“Are not they finding, dividing spoil; a womb, two wombs to a head of a man? Spoil of finger-dyed materials for Sisera; spoil of finger-dyed material, embroidered; pieces of finger-dyed material (two) embroidered for necks of spoil?”</p>	<p>Judges 5:30</p>	<p>“Are they not finding [and] dividing [their] recompense; a womb, [or] two wombs, for [each] male chief? Recompense of finger-dyed material for Sisera; recompense of many-colored, finger-dyed material; two pieces of many-colored, finger-dyed material for [each] neck of recompense.”</p>
<p>“Perhaps they are presently dividing up their recompense—one woman or two women for each military leader?</p>		
<p>Perhaps they have taken and are now dividing up carefully dyed and embroidered material—in fact, two pieces of clothing for each man as their recompense?”</p>		

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	<p>Perhaps he is now dividing the spoils, and the fairest of the women is chosen out for him: garments of divers colours are given to Sisara for his prey, and furniture of different kinds is heaped together to adorn necks.</p>
Masoretic Text	<p>“Are not they finding, dividing spoil; a womb, two wombs to a head of a man? Spoil of finger-dyed materials for Sisera; spoil of finger-dyed material, embroidered; pieces of finger-dyed material (two) embroidered for necks of spoil?”</p>
Peshitta	<p>Perhaps he went and found great spoil, dividing the prey, giving to every man a mule and great booty, and to Sisera a prey of diverse colors of needlework and divers colors of embroidered work, just right for the necks of them that take the spoil.</p>
Septuagint	<p>Have they not found him dividing the spoil? to a head of every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?</p>

Significant differences: In the first line, in the Hebrew, they are discovering more spoil and dividing it up. In the Greek, they have discovered *him* [Sisera?] dividing up the spoil. The Latin translation seems to be more freeform at this point.

The Hebrew and Greek are fairly similar in the second line; the Latin has that the best women are being chosen for Sisera and the Peshitta speaks of mules for each man.

The ancient texts are essentially in agreement in the third line, which differences could be simply a matter of translation. In the Hebrew, Latin and Syriac, this is for Sisera, rather than a matter of simply being divided up.

The fourth lines agree, except for the Latin, which has furniture here rather than the specially done clothing (I actually have an early English translation from the Latin, which uses the word *furniture*, but perhaps that has a different meaning then?)

Again, as is invariably the case, the differences in the ancient versions, whether subtle or dramatic, have no effect on any major or minor doctrines of Scripture.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	"Sisera and his troops are finding treasures to bring back-- a woman, or maybe two, for each man, and beautiful dresses for those women to wear."
<i>The Message</i>	"Don't you think they're busy at plunder, dividing up the loot? A girl, maybe two girls, for each man, And for Sisera a bright silk shirt, a prize, fancy silk shirt! And a colorful scarf--make it two scarves-- to grace the neck of the plunderer."
NLT	'They are dividing the captures goods they found— a woman or two for every man. There are gorgeous robes for Sisera, and colorful, beautifully embroidered robes for me.'

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	"They're really finding and dividing the loot: A girl or two for each soldier, colorful clothes for Sisera, colorful, embroidered clothes, and two pieces of colorful, embroidered cloth for the neck of the looter."
HCSB	"Are they not finding and dividing the spoil--a girl or two for each warrior, the spoil of colored garments for Sisera, the spoil of an embroidered garment or two for my neck?"
JPS (Tanakh)	"They must be dividing the spoil they have found: A damsel or two for each man, Spoil of dyed clothes for Sisera, Spoil of embroidered cloths, A couple of embroidered cloths Round every neck as spoil."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Albert Barnes (revised)	Have they not found [and are] dividing the prey; to every man a woman or two; a booty of dyed garments for Sisera, a booty of dyed garments and of party-colored cloth, a dyed garment and two party-colored clothes for the necks of the booty?
ESV	'Have they not found and divided the spoil?-- A woman or two for every man; spoil of dyed materials for Sisera, spoil of dyed materials embroidered, two pieces of dyed work embroidered for the neck as spoil.'
LTHB	Do they not find and divide the plunder? A woman, two women to <i>each</i> man's head; a plunder of dyed <i>garments</i> to Sisera, a plunder of embroidered dyed <i>garments</i> , two embroidered dyed <i>garments</i> for the necks of the plunderers?

Young's Updated LT

Do they not find? —they apportion spoil, A female—two females—for every head,
 Spoil of finger-work for Sisera, Spoil of embroidered finger-work, Finger-work—a pair
 of embroidered things, For the necks of the spoil!

What is the gist of this verse? A list of reasons why Sisera might be late are given here. Maybe they continue to find and divide up more plunder; maybe there is a woman or two for every man; maybe they have come across a lot of dyed clothing which is being divided up.

Judges 5:30a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hă (הַ) [pronounced <i>heh</i>]		interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied.	Strong's #none BDB #209
lô' (ל' or לו') [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
mâtsâ' (אָ מַצְאָה) [pronounced <i>maw-TSAW</i>]	<i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4672 BDB #592

Translation: “[Are they not finding...](#) In this verse, we have what the mother of Sisera and her surrounding women say to one another. Deborah wrote this, but she was not there; and this is what they really said to one another. The reason that she was able to record this is that she had the gift of prophecy; this tells us that she was able to do more than speak divine viewpoint and to tell the near and the far future; she was also able to know about events in the recent past that she did not observe.

Judges 5:30b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châlaq (חָלַק) [pronounced <i>chaw-LAHK</i>]	<i>to divide, to apportion, to allot; to distribute, to disperse</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect	Strong's #2505 BDB #323
shâlal (שָׁלַל) [pronounced <i>shaw-LAWL</i>]	<i>booty, spoil, plunder, recompense, reward</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7998 BDB #1021

Translation: [...\[and\] dividing \[their\] recompense;...](#) Then we have an unusual construction for the Hebrew; without any connectives, we jump into the next verb, which is the Piel imperfect of *châlaq* (חָלַק) [pronounced *chaw-LAHK*], which means *to divide, to apportion, to allot, to share*. We found this word over and over again in the second half of the book of Joshua. What is carried with the verb is the interrogative and the negative of the beginning of the verse. The construction of this sentence is looking for a hopeful *yes* here. What they are dividing is the masculine singular noun *booty, spoil, plunder*. We might think of it as *recompense* or their *reward* of that which was taken directly in war. This is how an armed forces unit was paid—with the spoil from their conquest. Once the enemy was dead, they no longer had any use for their possessions, and these were generally taken by the victorious army (in fact, Joshua's burning all that was in Jericho was quite uncharacteristic of that time period).

Judges 5:30c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
rechem (רֶחֶם) [pronounced REH-khem]	womb; inner parts; poetically used to mean a girl, a woman	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7358 (and #7356) BDB #933
rechem (רֶחֶם) [pronounced REH-khem]	womb; inner parts; poetically used to mean a girl, a woman	masculine dual noun	Strong's #7358 (and #7356) BDB #933
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l) ⁹	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
rô'sh (רֹאשׁ) [pronounced rohsh]	head [of a man, city, state, nation, place, family, priest], top [of a mountain]; chief, prince, officer; front, choicest, best; height [of stars]; sum	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7218 BDB #910
geber (גִּבֹּר) [pronounced GEH ^B -vehr]	men, as separate from women and children	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1397 (& #1399) BDB #149

Translation: ...a womb, [or] two wombs, for [each] male chief? Then the women discuss what would be taken in war that would take so much time. The first thing which is taking so much time to divide up is the masculine—not the feminine—singular of rechem (רֶחֶם) [pronounced REH-khem], and this word is consistently translated *womb*. It's interesting that the word in the Hebrew for *womb* is a masculine word. The men are thought to be dividing up the women just as they divide up the rest of the spoil. The dividing up of the young maidens was one of the most important divisions of spoil and certainly spurred men onto acts of great heroism. Sisera's mother and the princesses speak of this rather disparagingly, using *womb* to describe these women who were taken as a part of the plunder. They might as well be talking about taking cattle in plunder. My thinking is, this is a conversation between Sisera's mother and her attendants and Sisera's wives. They are speaking of the dividing up of Jewish women, and they are not going to be happy with Jewish women being brought back to them; however, it is a plausible explanation for why Sisera is so late.

We have the lâmed prefixed preposition and then the masculine singular construct of *head, top, chief, front, choicest*. This is followed by the masculine singular noun *man*, as separate from women and children. Going with some latitude of translation, this would give us: "Are they not finding and dividing [their] recompense; a womb, [or even] two wombs, for each male chief?" After all, these are men, and if they go into the cities and into the outlying areas, aren't they going to be ferreting out more women for themselves?

Judges 5:30d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâlal (שָׁלַל) [pronounced shaw-LAWL]	booty, spoil, plunder, recompense, reward	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7998 BDB #1021

Judges 5:30d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tseba ^ʿ (טְצָבָה) [pronounced TSEH ^b -vahg ^ʿ]	<i>finger-dyed material</i> ; and is translated <i>finger-work</i> (Young), <i>dyed stuffs</i> (Owen), <i>dyed work</i> (NASB) or <i>divers coloured rainment</i> (Rotherham)	masculine plural noun	Strong's #6648 BDB #840
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^ʰ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Çîyç ^ʳ â ^ʳ (סִיסֵרָא) [pronounced sees ^e -RAW]	<i>battle array</i> [according to BDB]; and is transliterated <i>Sisera</i>	masculine singular, proper noun	Strong's #5516 BDB #696

Translation: *Recompense of finger-dyed material for Sisera*;... *Spoil* (or, *recompense*) is repeated, as a construct, and followed by the masculine plural of a noun which is found only in this verse, but is closely tied to the word for *variegated* or *colored* and to the word for *finger*. For this reason, it is variously rendered as *finger-work* (Young), *dyed stuffs* (Owen), *dyed work* (NASB) or *divers coloured rainment* (Rotherham). We will render this *finger-dyed material*. Freeman goes into some detail on this material, claiming that it was colored either from dye or from embroidery, both of which had been in existence in Egypt for some time.¹⁴⁴ Sisera's mother is assuming that the Israelites had the skills to make this kind of clothing and that her son was dividing it up as they spoke. It is suggested that this is for Sisera (certainly as a present for mom). Then it is added that these are embroidered—it is almost as though someone is doing it right there on the spot, which is why it is taking so long for Sisera to return. The idea is, they have come across a great deal of clothing, and Sisera is taking his time picking out just exactly the clothes he likes.

Judges 5:30e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâlal (שָׁלַל) [pronounced shaw-LAWL]	<i>booty, spoil, plunder, recompense, reward</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7998 BDB #1021
tseba ^ʿ (טְצָבָה) [pronounced TSEH ^b -vahg ^ʿ]	<i>finger-dyed material</i> ; and is translated <i>finger-work</i> (Young), <i>dyed stuffs</i> (Owen), <i>dyed work</i> (NASB) or <i>divers coloured rainment</i> (Rotherham)	masculine plural noun	Strong's #6648 BDB #840
rik ^e mâh (רִיקְמָה) [pronounced rihk ^b -MAW]	<i>variegated garment; a woven fabric [of several colors]; something with several colors</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7553 BDB #955

Translation: *...recompense of many-colored, finger-dyed material*;... The first two words are repeated, which gives the impression that these women are kicking ideas back and forth, and they like this possibility, so one suggests it and another says, "Oh, yes that's what it is, *a recompense of embroidered, finger-dyed material*."

¹⁴⁴ *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 124.

Judges 5:30f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tseba ^ʿ (טְבַע) [pronounced TSEH ^b -vahg ^ʿ]	<i>finger-dyed material</i> ; and is translated <i>finger-work</i> (Young), <i>dyed stuffs</i> (Owen), <i>dyed work</i> (NASB) or <i>divers coloured raiment</i> (Rotherham)	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6648 BDB #840
rik ^e mâh (רִיקְמָה) [pronounced rihk ^b -MAW]	<i>variegated garment</i> ; a woven fabric [of several colors]; something with several colors	feminine dual noun	Strong's #7553 BDB #955
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ʿ) ʿ)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
tsav ^v âr (צַוְאָר) [pronounced tzahv-VAWR]	<i>neck, back of neck</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #6677 BDB #848
shâlal (שָׁלַל) [pronounced shaw-LAWL]	<i>booty, spoil, plunder, recompense, reward</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7998 BDB #1021

The TEV says that the probable text is *necks of the queen*, which really does not make a lot of sense. The NJB reads: "...one scarf, two embroidered scarves for me!"

Translation: *...two pieces of many-colored, finger-dyed material for [each] neck of recompense.* The first two words are a repeat, except that *many-colored* in the dual, referring to two pieces of material. It was first named for Sisera, but then it is added that it is for the masculine plural construct of *neck, back of neck*. This reads *necks of spoil* in the Hebrew. The implication is that, following this victory, these soldiers and their leader, Sisera, went out and got some great clothes. The idea could be that, each person who should receive some recognition in this battle is being treated to a clothing store fest. One possible explanation is, they would have so much so that each man was weighted down with it, carrying it on his back and around his neck.

Gill explains the dual as follows: *[These are] suits of clothes of different colours, such as were the works of the women of Sidon, and those curiously interwoven or wrought with a needle, and that on both sides of the silk or material of which they were made; and so such as were of great worth and esteem, and such it was expected, and with confidence and assurance of it, Sisera would bring with him, and make presents of to his mother and her ladies, or which he would have for his own wear and use, or both.*¹⁴⁵

Again, we have the repetition of several words, as if the women around Sisera's mother chime in, *oh, that's what it is, they have found clothing to divide up!* They are reassuring one another, even though the return of Sisera is long overdue.

¹⁴⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:28. For the works of the women of Sidon, he cites Julian. Opera, par. 1. crat. 2. p. 94. Vid. Homer. Iliad. 6. ver. 289, 290.

McGee: *The mother of Sisera knew in her heart what had happened. She knew he had been slain. She had thought all of the time that he would be coming home but he did not come. Even in this case, the heart of Deborah went out to this woman because she was a mother.*¹⁴⁶

We already know what has happened; we know that Jael has killed Sisera with a tent pin, and that he will not be returning home with any spoil.

We leave these women here as well, their futures a mystery to us. Did Israeli forces move into their cities and wipe them out or take them captive? We do not know. Did Israeli forces simply destroy the Canaanite army and let it go at that? We do not know. However, up until Judges 3, the Canaanites are mentioned over 60 times; after the book of Judges, we find them mentioned in the following 8 passages: 2Sam. 24:7 1Kings 9:16 1Chron. 2:3 Ezra 9:1 Neh. 9:8, 24 Obad. 1:20 Zech. 14:21. No longer will they be a national threat to Israel.

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This final verse should have been two verses. The first two lines complete the song, and they are a conclusion to the song, and therefore, *should* be separate from the previous verse. However, the final line is not a part of the song, but a conclusion to Judges 4–5, which could have just as reasonably be placed at the end of Judges 4 as at the end of 5. For this reason, I have separated these into 2 sections.

Coda

**So perish all Your enemies, O Y^ehowah;
and those loving Him, as a rising of the sun
in His might.**

Judges
5:31a-b

**And so all of Your enemies will perish, O
Y^ehowah;
and those who love Him [will be] as a rising
of the sun in His might.**

**In this way, all of Your enemies will perish, O Jehovah;
and those who love Him will be as the sun rising in His might.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

So perish all Your enemies, O Y^ehowah;
and those loving Him, as a rising of the sun in His might.

Septuagint

So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun
when he goes forth in his might.

Significant differences:

None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

Our LORD, we pray that all your enemies will die like Sisera. But let everyone who
loves you shine brightly like the sun at dawn.

The Message

Thus may all GOD's enemies perish, while his lovers be like the unclouded sun.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

¹⁴⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 143.

God's Word™ May all your enemies die like that, O LORD. But may those who love the LORD be like the sun when it rises in all its brightness.

HCSB LORD, may all your enemies perish as Sisera did. But may those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its strength.

JPS (Tanakh) So may all Your enemies perish, O LORD!
But may His friends be as the sun rising in might!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

ESV "So may all your enemies perish, O LORD! But your friends be like the sun as he rises in his might."

Young's Updated LT So do all Your enemies perish, O Jehovah, And those loving Him are As the going out of the sun in its might!"

What is the gist of this verse? Deborah and Barak conclude, asking that all of Jehovah's enemies perish as have His Canaanite enemies here.

Judges 5:31a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kên (קַן) [pronounced kane]	so, thus; upright, honest; rightly, well; [it is] so, such, so constituted;	properly, an active participle; used primarily as an adverb	Strong's #3651 BDB #485
ʾâbad (אָבַד) [pronounced aw ^h -VAHD]	to be lost, to lose oneself, to wander; to perish, to be destroyed; to be ready to perish, to be wretched [miserable or unfortunate]	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6 BDB #1
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced koh]	every, each, all of, all; any of, any	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʾâyab (אֵיב) [pronounced aw-YA ^h V]	enemy, the one being at enmity with you; enmity, hostility	masculine plural, Qal active participle; with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #340 BDB #33
I don't get the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix.			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as Jehovah, Yahweh, Y ^e howah	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

Translation: And so all of Your enemies will perish, O Y^ehowah;... In this verse, we have the concluding remarks, sort of a final blessing and cursing.

V. 31 begins with the adverb *so*, so *this is how the matter stands thus, it is so*. The verb is the Qal imperfect of *to perish*. The participle is *enemy*, or, more literally, *the one being at enmity with you*. Jehovah is addressed, and the prayer is for all of His enemies to perish as have the Canaanites, who go from being a major force in the Middle East to a few scattered people here and there.

John Wesley: *So should all of Your enemies perish, O Jehovah: That is, so suddenly, so surely, so effectual and irrecoverably.*¹⁴⁷

It might be good to see some similar thoughts expressed in the Psalms.

God and His Enemies as found in the Psalms

Scripture	Passage
Psalm 58:10–11	The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance; he will bathe his feet in the blood of the wicked. Mankind will say, "Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth."
Psalm 68:1–3	God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him! As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God! But the righteous shall be glad; they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!
Psalm 83:9–18	Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, "Let us take possession for ourselves of the pastures of God." O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze, so may you pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane! Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, O LORD. Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace, that they may know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth.
Psalm 92:9	For observe Your enemies, O Y ^e howah; for, observe, Your enemies will perish. All who do iniquity will be scattered.

One must never forget that our God is also a God of vengeance.

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Judges 5:31b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that, so that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾâhêb (אָהֵב) [pronounced <i>aw-HAYV^e</i>]	<i>those who are desired or loved; people that one delights in</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #157 BDB #12
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced <i>k^e</i>]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453

¹⁴⁷ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Judges 5:31.

Judges 5:31b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâtsâ' (יָצָא) [pronounced yaw-TZAWH]	<i>to go out, to come out, to come forth; to rise; to flow, to gush up [out]</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #3318 BDB #422
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced SHEH-mesh]	<i>sun</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's# none BDB #88
g ^e bûwrâh (גְּבוּרָה) [pronounced g ^e voo-RAW]	<i>strength, might; fortitude, military virtue; power; victory</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1369 BDB #150

Translation: ...and those who love Him [will be] as a rising of the sun in His might. We have in this verse the Qal active participle *lovers*. With the masculine singular suffix, this would mean *those loving Him*. In the Syriac, it is *those loving You*. This is followed by, literally, *as a going out of the sun in His might*, which is the end of the poem. What must be explained here is that *sun* is a feminine singular noun, and with the word *strength* or *might*, we have the masculine singular suffix. The nearest masculine singular noun around is *Y^ehowah*, so we apply it to Him. This gives us: **And so all of Your enemies will perish, O Yehowah; and those who love Him [will be] as a rising of the sun in His might.** This is much like: **“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”** (Matt. 13:43 Daniel 12:3a).

The sun is mentioned many times in Scripture; here are some of these instances:

The Sun as found in Scripture

Scripture	Passage
2Sam. 23:2–3	The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.
Psalms 19:4–6	Their measuring line goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.
Psalms 37:6–7	He will bring forth your righteousness as the morning light, and your justice as the noonday. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!
Prov. 4:18–19	But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

You will notice that throughout the Bible, man's relationship to the sun is presented in such a different light than is found with the heathen of that time.

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Although the Bible uses the sun to illustrate certain aspects to God's character, the heathen throughout the time period of Scripture, worshiped the sun. The Bible alludes several times to this heathen worship.

Heathen Worship of the Sun as found in Scripture

Scripture	Incident
Deut. 4:19	And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.
Deut. 17:2–5	"If there is found among you, within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing his covenant, and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden, and it is told you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abomination has been done in Israel, then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones."
Jer. 43:13	And of the city where the sun was worshiped, we read: He [God] shall break the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt, and the temples of the gods of Egypt he shall burn with fire.
2Kings 23:3–5	For he [Manasseh, king of Judah] rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem will I put my name." And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

Even though the Bible is written over a period of 3000 or more years, and even though revelation is progressive, we do not find that God should be worshiped through idols early on nor do we first observe a pantheon of gods or begin with polytheism and work toward monotheism. The Bible's presentation of God, although progressive, is also consistent.

It is kind of amazing, given the surrounding cultures during the time of Israel, and given the many times that they fell into heathen worship, that the Bible merely records these instances, but never supports them.

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John Wesley concludes this verse: *When he [the sun] first rises, and so goes on in his course, which he does with great might, even as a strong man that runs a race, and so as no creature can stop, or hinder him; even so irresistible let your people be. Such shall be the honour and such the joy of all that love God in sincerity, and they shall shine for ever as the sun in the kingdom of their father.*¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Judges 5:31.

Barnes: *[this is] a most striking conclusion...The enemies of the Lord will perish like the host of Sisera, and all their hopes will end, like those of Sisera's mother, in bitter disappointment and shame; but all that love our Lord Jesus Christ shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*¹⁴⁹

The Result of Deborah and Barak's Victory

(And undisturbed was the land forty years). Judges 5:31c (And the land was undisturbed for forty years).
 (And so the land rested for forty years).

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (And undisturbed was the land forty years).
 Septuagint And the land had rest forty years.

Significant differences: None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV There was peace in Israel for about forty years.
 The Message The land was quiet for forty years.
 NLT Then there was peace in the land for forty years.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ So the land had peace for 40 years.
 HCSB And the land was peaceful 40 years.
 JPS (Tanakh) And the land was tranquil forty years.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

WEB The land had rest forty years. [so the ESV, LTHB, and MKJV].
 Young's Updated LT And the land rested forty years.

What is the gist of this verse? After this great defeat of the Canaanites, the land went without foreign incursion or persecution for 40 years.

Judges 5:31c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâqat (שָׁקַט) [pronounced shaw-KAHT]	to be quiet, to be undisturbed, to be inactive; to rest	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8252 BDB #1052

¹⁴⁹ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 429–430.

Judges 5:31c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<i>It means to rest, to lie down, to have quiet. It is used of one who is never troubled, harassed, or infested by others, Judges 3:11 5:31 8:28; and of one who has no fear or dread, Psalm lxxvi 9. The meaning is, that he would not only have lain down, but would have been perfectly tranquil.</i> ¹⁵⁰			
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	earth (all or a portion thereof), land, ground, soil	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75
ʿarḇāʿîym (אַרְבָּעִים) [pronounced ar-BAW-GEEM]	forty	undeclined plural noun	Strong's #705 BDB #917
shânâh (שָׁנָה) [pronounced shaw-NAW]	year	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8141 BDB #1040

Translation: (And the land was undisturbed for forty years). Then, apart from the poem, we have the addendum, *and the land rested forty years*. The verb is not the one that we normally associate with rest, but it is actually the Qal imperfect of *to be quiet, to be undisturbed, inactive*. Although that generation was a mixed bag of people (recall how many tribes did not participate as they should have in the war against the Canaanites), Israel as a whole still benefitted by the victory of those who dedicated themselves to God. This brings to mind one of the things which Thieme used to teach: a country is preserved by its pivot of believers. If you have a dedicated few believers, then God will protect and often bless that nation.

Also note the shortness of this rest—40 years—pretty much a generation. A generation of many strong believers got to old age, and another generation or two were raised up; and those who were raised up, will do that which is evil in the eyes of Jehovah once more. They will have no sense of history, no concept of what has gone before. There will be people who live up to the age of 40 who have no personal remembrance of this time; it is history to them; and for some generations, recent history is no different to them than ancient history. It is all in the past, and not in their past. Therefore, they make their own rules.

Application: I have spent too much time on politics in this study, but allow me another political digression: this is the modern Democratic party. The days of Roosevelt, Truman and Kennedy are long gone. Even though these are prominent and strong presidents in years past, they have little to do today with the present Democratic party. Other generations have come up; other generations have made their own way and their own politics. Those who call themselves Democrats today are barely a shadow of the great party which once existed. The leadership of Roosevelt, the strength of Truman and the eloquence and inspiration of Kennedy have long since left the party. All it takes is a generation or two, and a political party changes; all it takes is a generation or two, an a nation changes; all it takes is a generation or two, and the world changes. You have an impact in this life; you can impact your generation for good or for evil. It rests upon your relationship to Jesus Christ and your interest or lack of it in His Word; it rests upon your walk with God, which means, are you filled with God the Holy Spirit and are you taking in His Word daily?

An additional summary can't hurt.

Summation of Judges 5 by New Analytical Chronicles

Verses	Summation
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¹⁵⁰ Barnes' Notes, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. III, p. 132.

Summation of Judges 5 by New Analytical Chronicles

1	The first verse, as a title, briefly recites the design or subject of the poem, which consists of eight stanzas.
2–3	The first opens with a devout thanksgiving, to which she calls the attention of all, friends and foes.
4–5	The second describes, in the sublime imagery of Moses, the magnificent scenes at Mount Sinai, Seir, etc., in the deserts of Arabia, while they were led by the Divine power and presence from Egypt to Canaan.
6–11	The third states their offending afterwards by their apostasies in serving new gods, as foretold by Moses (Deut. 32:16–17), and their consequent oppression by their enemies; the insecurity of travelling, and desertion of the villages, during the twenty years that intervened from the death of Shamgar till Jael's exploit, and till Deborah became judge. By this time they were disarmed by the Philistines and Canaanites, and scarcely a sword or a spear was to be seen in Israel. This policy was adopted by the Philistines in Saul's time (1Sam. 13:19) and was probably introduced before, when Shamgar, for want of other weapons, had recourse to an ox-goad, which was only left with them for the purpose of agriculture (1Sam. 13:21).
12–15	The fourth contrasts their present happy state of security from the incursions and depredations of their foes, especially at the watering places, which were most exposed to attacks; owing to the Divine protection which crowned the victory, the zeal and exertions of 'a remnant of the people,' or a part of the tribes, against the enemy, under her conduct; these were the midland tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, including, perhaps, Judah and Simeon, which bordered on Amalek southward, and Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali, northward.
16–18	The fifth censures the recreant tribes Reuben and Gad, beyond Jordan eastward; and Dan and Asher, on the Mediterranean Sea westward, who deserted the common cause in consequence of their divisions, and their paltry attachment to their own concerns.
19–23	The sixth records the miraculous defeat of the confederate kings of Canaan, who were swept away by the torrents issuing from the different springs of the river Kishon, swollen by uncommon rains. Meroz was probably a place in the neighborhood.
24–27	The seventh contains a panegyric on Jael, who is here 'blessed above women,' for attempting an exploit above her sex to perform; and a picturesque description of her giving Sisera buttermilk to drink, which is considered as a great treat at present among the Arabs. Then follows a minute and circumstantial description of her mode of slaying him.
28–30	The eighth affords an admirable representation of the impatience of the mother of Sisera at his delay in returning; her sanguine anticipation of his success; in which she dwells, not upon the greatness of his exploits, or the slaughter of his enemies, but upon the circumstances most likely to engage a light female mind, such as captive damsels, and embroidered garments, or the spoils of victory, which she repeats and exemplifies with much grace and elegance.
31	Conclusion: The unexpected and abrupt apostrophe which concludes the poem, So perish all thine enemies, O Lord! tacitly insinuates the utter disappointment of their vain hopes of conquest and spoil more fully and forcibly than any express declaration in words; while it marks the author's piety, and sole reliance upon the Divine protection of His people, and the glorious prospect of a future and greater deliverance, perhaps, by the Sun of righteousness.

Taken from Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Judges 5:31. He takes it from New Anal. Chron. p. 324.

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A Complete Translation of Judges 5

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
Deborah and Barak Celebrate Victory in Song	
So Deborah and Barak ben Abinoam sang, in that day, saying:	So, in that day, Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam, sang:
Deborah and Barak Sing of the Demonstrated Power of Jehovah	
When [there is] a cutting loose of those who cut loose [or, <i>when there is vengeance cut loose by military types</i>] in Israel; when [there is] a free volunteering of the people; bless Y ^e howah.	During a time when those who vowed in Israel to avenge, when the people volunteered. Blessed is Jehovah.
Listen, O kings [and] give ear, O princes: I—even I—will sing to [or, <i>with regards to</i>] Y ^e howah; I will make a melody to [or, <i>with regards to</i>] [or, <i>I will make music in praise of</i>] Y ^e howah, the God of Israel:	Kings, listen to me, and princes, pay attention to me; I will sing to Jehovah; I will make music to Jehovah, the God of Israel:
Y ^e howah, when You went forth from Seir, when You marched from the region of Edom, the ground quaked; moreover, the heavens dripped; yea, clouds dropped water. Mountains quaked from before the face of Y ^e howah; This Sinai [quaked] from before the face of Y ^e howah, the God of Israel.	Jehovah, when You went out from Seir and when You march out of the region of Edom, the ground quaked and the heavens began to rain; in fact, the clouds poured down rain. The mountains quaked in the presence of Jehovah; even, this mountain Sinai quaked before the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel.
The Time and Place of this Psalm	
In the days of Shamgar ben Anath [and] in the days of Jael, the highways ceased and travelers of paths traveled on crooked highways. True leadership ceased in Israel. It ceased until I—Deborah—arose, I arose, a mother in Israel.	During the time of Shamgar ben Anath and Jael, free movement on the highways nearly ceased; travelers took the back routes instead. True leadership had ceased in Israel; It ceased until I, Deborah, arose; a mother in Israel.
He chose new gods then war [of the] gates. Was a shield seen? or spear among forty thousand in Israel? My heart [goes out] to the lawmakers of Israel, the ones willingly volunteering among the people;	Israel chose new gods and then, suddenly, war was within her gates. Was there even a shield or a spear to be found among forty thousand in Israel? My heart goes out to the scribes in Israel, the ones who have willing volunteered to lead the people;

A Complete Translation of Judges 5

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
<p>All of you, bless Y^ehowah. Riders of light-colored donkeys, those sitting upon saddles [or, carpets], and those walking along the way, speak. From the sound of those who have been liberated [or, <i>the dividers</i>] at the watering holes; There they [celebrate and] recall the righteous acts of Y^ehowah, the righteous acts of His true leadership in Israel.</p>	<p>Bless Jehovah, all of you. Those of you who ride upon expensive donkeys and those of you who sit upon carpets, and those of you who are walking about freely and in safety— verbally acknowledge and recognize those who provided you your freedom. From the sound of the traders at the watering holes, where they celebrate and recall the righteous acts of Jehovah—the righteous acts of His leadership in Israel.</p>
<p>Then the people of Y^ehowah went down to the gates. Awake, awake, Deborah, awake, awake, and utter a song. Arise Barak and lead away captive your captives, O son of Abinoam.</p>	<p>Then the people of Jehovah went down to the gates. Wake up, Deborah, wake up, sing a song! Get up, Barak, son of Abinoam, and lead away captive your captives.</p>
Those Who Bravely Fought and Those Cowards Who Stayed Behind	
<p>Then the remnant came down to the noble ones, the people of Y^ehowah came down to me against the mighty ones.</p>	<p>Then those of Israel who still remained came down to help their brothers; the people of God came down to me to fight against the Canaanite soldiers.</p>
<p>From Ephraim [they came down] into the valley; after you, Benjamin, with your people. From Machir, the lawgivers marched down; and from Zebulun, those marching with a tribe of scribes [or, <i>with a general's staff</i>].</p>	<p>They came down into the valley from Ephraim; and Benjamin then followed you down. The lawgivers marched out from Machir and the scribes came down from Zebulun.</p>
<p>And my princes of Issachar [were] with Deborah; and Issachar, so [he was with] Barak. In the valley, he [Issachar] was sent forth at his [Barak's] feet.</p>	<p>The princes of Issachar remained with Deborah, while the tribe of Issachar remained with Barak. In the valley, Issachar was sent out behind Barak.</p>
<p>Among divisions of Reuben, great [personal] decrees of the heart. Why did you remain between the saddlebags? To hear the hissing of [your] flocks? For divisions of Reuben, [they had] great examinations of the heart.</p>	<p>However, in the tribe of Reuben, they could not decide whether or not to participate. Was there a reason that you remained with your saddlebags instead of joining your brothers in the fight? Was it to hear the hissing of your flocks? For there were disagreements in Reuben and serious strugglings of the heart.</p>
<p>Gilead pitched a tent beyond the Jordan; and why does Dan abide [by the] ships? Asher remained by the sea coast [or, <i>the west coast</i>] and he pitched a tent from his ports.</p>	<p>Gilead is not moving from beyond the Jordan and the tribe of Dan remains by the ships. Asher has stayed by the coast, pitching a tent at his ports.</p>
<p>Zebulun scorned their soul to die; Naphtali also, to the heights of the field.</p>	<p>Both Zebulun and Naphtali placed their lives in jeopardy on the battlefield.</p>
God Defeats Sisera Using the Elements of Nature	

A Complete Translation of Judges 5

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
Kings came in—they fought; then they fought kings of Canaan in Taanach beyond the waters of Megiddo. They did not gain looting of silver!	Kings came in and they fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach beyond the waters of Megiddo. They did not gain silver by looting.
The stars fought from heaven; from their courses, they fought with Sisera. The torrent Kishon swept them away; an eastern [or, <i>onrushing</i> ; <i>ancient</i>] torrent, the torrent Kishon.	Even the stars fought from heaven; from their orbits, they fought with Sisera. The torrent Kishon swept them away—the eastern torrent, the torrent Kishon.
My soul, you have marched with strength. They [the storms] beat down the hoof of the horse from galloping [or, <i>the hooves of the horses were broken up from the galloping</i>]; the galloping of his [Sisera's] mighty ones.	I have marched along side the men with great strength. The storms beat down the horses of Sisera; they put an end to the galloping of his cavalry.
Jehovah Curses Meroz for not Aiding Israel	
“Curse Meroz,” says the Angel of Y ^e howah. “Curse [and continue] cursing her inhabitants because they did not come to a helping of Y ^e howah; to the aid of Y ^e howah against the mighty ones.”	“Curse Meroz,” says the angel of Jehovah. “Curse her inhabitants continually because they did not come to assist Jehovah; to assist Jehovah against the mighty ones.”
Jael Kills Sisera	
Blessed [happy and prosperous] of women [is] Jael, woman of Heber the Kenite; of women in the tent—blessed [happy and prosperous]. He asked [for] water—she gave [him] milk; in a bowl of lords, she brought [him] yogurt.	Happy and prosperous of women is Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite; She is happy and prosperous of the women in tents. When he asked for water, she gave him milk; in a bowl for kings she brought him yogurt.
Her hand to the tent pin, she sent herself [or, <i>her hand</i>] forth; and her right hand to the mallet of a worker. She hammered Sisera; she mortally wounded his head and it mortally wounded [him] when it passed through his temple.	She went forward with the tent pin in her left hand and the heavy mallet in her right. She hammered the pin into the head of Sisera, mortally wounding him. The tent pin morally wounded him, passing through his temple.
At her feet, he bowed down [and] fell [and then] lay down. At her feet, he bowed down and fell. Where he bowed down, there he fell, brought to ruin.	He tottered at her feet, then fell, and laid down. He tottered again at her feet and then fell. Where he tottered, there he fell before her, helpless and dying.
Sisera's Mother, When She Realizes her Son Will not be Returning from War	
The mother of Sisera looked out the window and cried shrilly, through the lattice, “Why is his chariot delayed [in] coming? Why are the steps of his chariot delayed?”	The mother of Sisera looked out the window and cried shrilly, out through the lattice, “Why is his chariot slow in coming? Why don't I hear the hoofbeats of his chariot?”

A Complete Translation of Judges 5

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
The wise ones of her princesses answered her; Yea, she [even she] causes to return her words to herself.	The wisest of her princesses attempted to sooth her with these words; even she herself said these words to herself again and again:
“Are they not finding [and] dividing [their] recompense; a womb, [or] two wombs, for [each] male chief? Recompense of finger-dyed material for Sisera; recompense of many-colored, finger-dyed material; two pieces of many-colored, finger-dyed material for [each] neck of recompense.”	Perhaps they are presently dividing up their recompense—one woman or two women for each military leader? Perhaps they have taken and are now dividing up carefully dyed and embroidered material—in fact, two pieces of clothing for each man as their recompense?”
Divine Viewpoint Conclusion	
And so all of Your enemies will perish, O Y ^e howah; and those who love Him [will be] as a rising of the sun in His might.	In this way, all of Your enemies will perish, O Jehovah; and those who love Him will be as the sun rising in His might.
The Result of Deborah and Barak’s Victory	
(And the land was undisturbed for forty years).	(And so the land rested for forty years).

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