

Weekly Word

May 5, 2008

By Mary Ruth Stone

Devotion

Mothers in the Bible: Deborah

Deborah described herself as, "a mother in Israel." The writer of the book of Judges called her "a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth." He did not call her "a mother." That is a title she gave herself in a song she and General Barak sang after they had defeated Jabin's army.

The story of Deborah is interesting in several ways not the least of which is that a woman was serving as a judge over Israel at all. She had a spot under a palm tree where she sat and spoke both wisdom and judgment. People came to her for that purpose.

Early in the biblical account of Deborah's story, she sent for the general of the Israeli army, Barak. She gave him a specific directive. He was to take 10,000 troops and deploy them against the army of Sisera, commander of Jabin's army. Interestingly, Barak responded with these words: "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go" (Judges 4:8).

What was Barak thinking? Was he reluctant to go into battle against such a formidable enemy? Did he think Deborah would be afraid to go, and did he want to use her absence as an excuse? Or did he trust her spirituality so much that he wanted her near during the battle? We do not have all those answers. However, in Deborah's response we get a clue that she did not approve entirely of Barak's answer. Here is her reply: "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman" (verse 9). True to the prophecy, a woman named Jael killed Sisera as he fled.

The victory complete, Deborah and Barak sang a song of thanksgiving. In it, Deborah identified herself as "a mother in Israel." Biological children are not mentioned. She may or may not have been a biological mother, but she was a spiritual mother. Among her qualities were: bravery, courage, spirituality, sensitivity, leadership, charisma, wisdom, faith, fore-knowledge, gratitude, and other laudable traits. Those of us who wish to be "mothers" would do well to cultivate these qualities.

Scripture

"Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7).

This 'n That

"Peace floods our lives when we remember that all our needs are safely encompassed by God's brilliant sufficiency."

— Anna Britt Chole

Prayer

Lord,

Help me to be the mother and grandmother You planned for me to be.
Amen.

Needing more,
Mary Ruth