

Judges 5:6, 7 New Living Translation

“Learning from an ancient mother”

“In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, and in the days of Jael, people avoided the main roads, and travelers stayed on winding pathways. 7 There were few people left in the villages of Israel—until Deborah arose as a mother for Israel.”

The Bible encourages mothers of all ages.

Anne Mollegen Smith, former editor of McCall’s Magazine wrote: “Once it seems, society’s idea of a good mother was someone who gave her children each a Bible verse, a dose of castor oil, and a good spanking every day—whether they needed it or not.”



In mothering, she noted, there’s strong appeal in certainty.

“A good mother,” Smith said, “was someone who went

faithfully through the generally approved motions, regardless of their effectiveness or relevance in the specific case. If the sons grew up to be outlaws and the daughters became dance-hall girls—well, they were black sheep.”

Some mothers lose certitude and confidence.

They seem tentative and unsure.

Not only do they lose their certitude, conflicts discourage them.

Think of the tasks for which family members hold moms responsible:

One day a father and son were looking at family photos. When they came across his parents’ wedding pictures, the little boy looked up and asked, “**Dad, is that the day Mom came to work for us?**”

More than thirty years ago, a column in the Detroit Free Press cited a study by attorney Michael Minton on the monetary value of a wife/mother’s services in the home.

He listed the various services mothers perform: chauffeur, gardener, family counselor, maintenance worker, housekeeper, cook, errand runner, book/budget manager, interior decorator, caterer, dietician, secretary, and public relations woman/hostess.

Minton calculated the then worth of a mom’s work in the labor market.

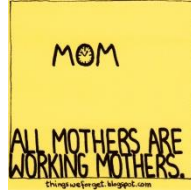
He came up with a total of \$785.01 a week.



Many moms still perform all those home/family duties and now also work fulltime outside their homes.

One mother lamented the distinctions some draw between working and non-working mothers.

She calculated that by the time her three children would reach the age of 18, she would have put in 18,000 hours of "child-generated house work"—work she would not have to do if she didn't have kids.



A few years ago, a cartoon showed a psychologist speaking to a patient-mother: "You spend 50% of your energy on your job. You spend 50% of your energy on your husband. You spend 50% of your energy on your children. I think I can see your problem."

Maybe you heard the story about the four-year-old and the six-year-old who presented their Mom with a house plant.

They bought it with their own money and she was thrilled.

The older of them said sorrowfully, "There was a bouquet that we wanted to give you at the flower shop. It was real pretty, but it was too expensive. It had a ribbon on it that said, 'Rest in Peace,' and we thought it would be just perfect since you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest."

Extended families from second and third marriages create challenges that would have stumped Solomon.



Mothers do their best to cope but often feel guilty, overworked, and misunderstood, let alone lonely and unappreciated.

Some years ago, before the Covid-19 era was even imaginable, I conversed with a woman on a flight from Los Angeles to San Francisco.

At the time, I hoped to get ideas for my annual Mother's Day sermon at the Hollywood church.

I asked this young mother,

"What is important to you as a mother?"

"Something of what I've taught my children will survive and live on," she responded.

She wanted her life to have some lasting meaning and impact.

We address a few questions to mothers today, but they really have meaning for all of us.

- **Do you as a mother worry that all of your effort will be in vain?**
- **Do you carry great anxiety about your kids and their future?**

- **Do you feel that you have failed in some respects, worrying that your children appear to be more sinners than saints?**

I recall conversations with my mother during my teen years when I’m sure she strongly pondered these questions.



Three encouragements for mothers today.

1. Our text indicates the first one:

“In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, and in the days of Jael, people avoided the main roads, and travelers stayed on winding pathways. 7 There were few people left in the villages of Israel—until Deborah arose as a mother for Israel.”

Let’s fill some blanks in this text.

Who was this Shamgar guy?

For several hundred years after Israel settled in the Promised Land, they existed as a tribal confederation with no central government.

During that time, judges led and ruled parts of Israel.

The first three judges were Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar

Only one verse in the *Book of Judges* tells about Shamgar: As military leader, Shamgar saved the nation by killing 600 Philistines; nothing else.

Some people gain notoriety for doing one deed and capitalize on it the rest of their lives.

After he killed those Philistines, Shamgar evidently performed nothing further of value because other enemies overran Israel, e.g. Jabin, a Canaanite king.

In every era of American history, the country has suffered some problem or another.

Imagine what it would be like in this country if a foreign government controlled all the main roads.

We’d need to sneak on the back roads to evade enemy troops.

In Shamgar’s day, viruses didn’t keep people from the markets; foreign soldiers did.

I can’t tell you if TP was in short supply; people stole, however, from the backyards of others to feed their families.

In similar circumstances today, you couldn’t drive your vehicle or be seen on the streets.

While all this misery occurred, the male politicians would be mostly talking sports.



Under these circumstances, the Lord used Deborah, a prophetess, to save the nation.

The Bible tells us Deborah's husband's name (Lapidoth), and informs us they lived in the hill country of Ephraim, central Israel.

We don't know whether "Lapi" and "Deb" had any children.

We don't know if she was a mother.

These curiosities might interest you:

Barak means lightning;

Lapidoth also means torches or lamp.



From appearances, neither her husband Lapidoth nor General Barak acted like lightning or a torch.

According Judges 4, Deborah held court near Bethel in the hill country north of Jerusalem.

Deborah communicated God's will in certain difficult matters.

At the time, most of Israel's enemy opposition came from farther north and west of her home.

The Lord directed her to summon General Barak to command Israel's army.

Judges 4:6-10 NLT reads:

"One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam, who lived in Kedesh in the land of Naphtali (in the north). She said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God

of Israel, commands you: Call out 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor. ⁷ And I will call out Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him."

Jabin had a huge, well equipped army led by a successful commander named Sisera.

Deborah didn't command Barak; she did her prophetic duty by telling him God's command.

What do you think of General Barak's answer?

⁸ Barak told her, "I will go, but only if you go with me."

⁹ "Very well," she replied, "I will go with you. But you will receive no honor in this venture, for the LORD's victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. ¹⁰ At Kedesh, Barak called together the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and 10,000 warriors went up with him. Deborah also went with him. "

Deborah needed to mother General Barak by putting a spark under him.

You can see why our text says:

"Deborah arose as a mother for Israel."

Judges 4:15-24 gives us "R" rated for violence details of how another woman dealt the fatal blow to the fleeing enemy general (see the map on the last page for locations of events).

Deborah definitely encouraged General Barak and his troops.

The special encouragement husbands and children need most includes backing, praise, and reassurance to do God's will.

I'm deeply grateful to Norma and also the women of the church for their encouragement. May I also mention that the encouragement that every husband treasures most comes from his wife.

2. Our second encouraging word to moms.

Do you feel frustrated because so many hardships come from circumstances beyond your control?

Some years ago I spoke at length with a mother who sensed that she had failed.

Most of her family didn't turn out as she hoped.

Some experienced painful difficulties and serious consequences.

She loved God.

She did her best.

Most of the kids did not attain what they could have become.

Events were largely beyond her control.

Two observations seem timely here.

A) Honest parents admit that they made mistakes along the way.

No one possesses perfect knowledge.

"We see through a glass darkly."

We confess our failures, pray for wisdom, and try to do God's will in the choices He gives us today.

God promises to always answer our requests for wisdom (see James 1:5).



B) The two children God himself designed and placed in Eden made poor choices.

The Bible tells of no perfect parents.

That Mary was sin-free is a fabrication.

She likely deeply regretted the times she sided with Jesus' jealous siblings instead of supporting him.¹

¹ See Mark 3:20, 21 & John 7: 1-5

3. Encouragement three: parents never fully know the hearts of their kids; only the Lord knows the end of the story.

Jesus "Prodigal Son" parable illustrates this.

We all know how the younger son cashed in early on his inheritance and wasted all he had on reckless living in a foreign country.²



The elder son stayed home acting respectfully and responsibly. He probably earned honors in the FFA, PTA, Chamber of Commerce, school board, attended church every Sunday, and won Citizen of the Year awards multiple times.



Though we tend to focus on the father forgiving the errant son, Jesus mainly emphasized the behavior of the "respectful," but self-righteous, hard-hearted, unforgiving son who thought he'd done no wrong.

We human beings do not know others' hearts.

Real truth and the end of each life story remain unknown until God Judges.

Don't consider yourself a failure too soon. Norma and I knew mothers in the Hollywood church whose hearts ached because their children did not walk with the Lord.

Two mature women, whom we never saw at services while their mothers were living, later came back to God and faithfully served Him for years.

Blessed are mothers who praise God and who fully hope and trust in their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



*May you have a blessed, rewarding,
Happy Mother's Day!*

² See Luke 15: 11-32 TEV

Harosheth, Sisera's home

Naphtali

Kishon River

Zebulun

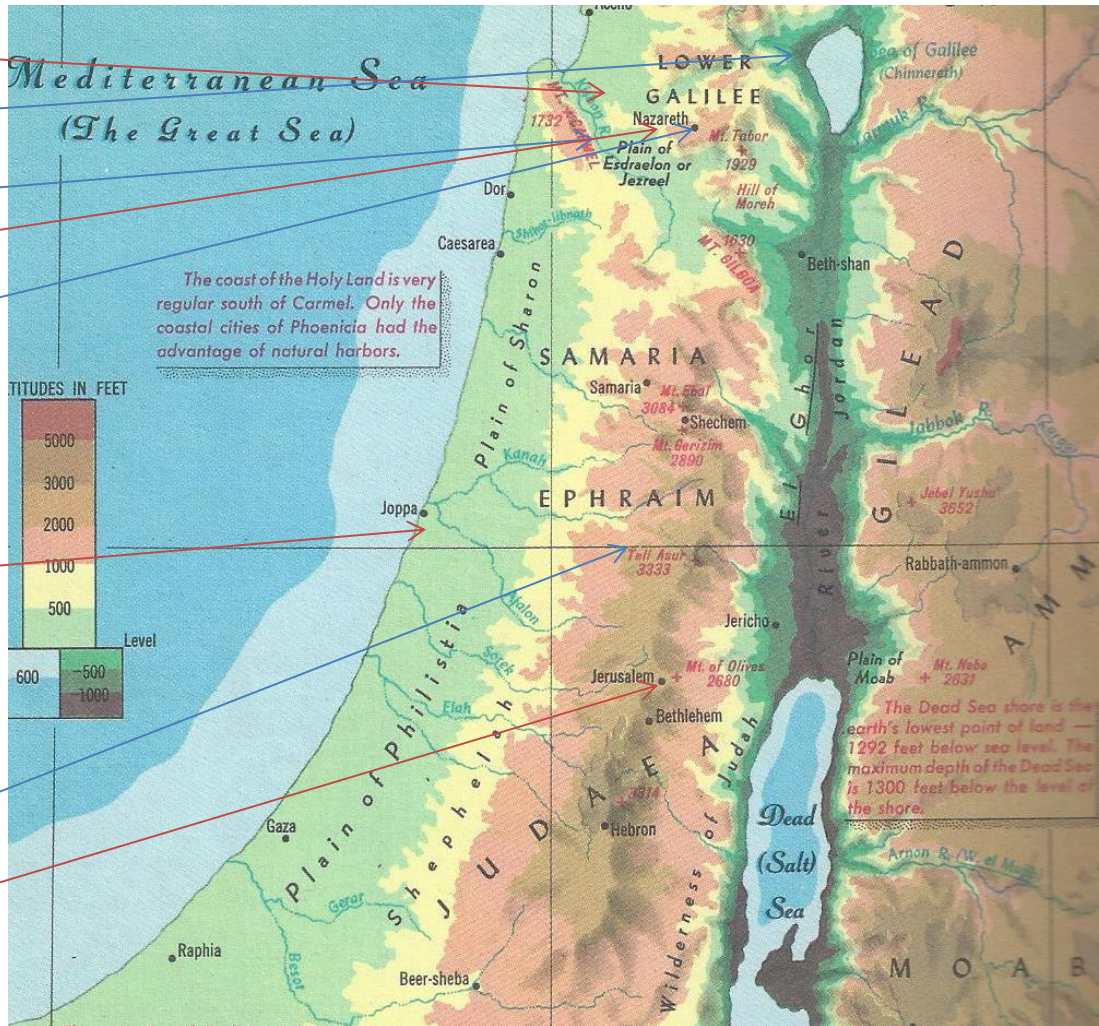
Nazareth

Tel Aviv

Ramah & Bethel

Deborah held court near here.

Jerusalem



Map adapted from Baker's Bible Atlas

**“Virtues are learned at mother’s knees;
Vices at some other joint.”**

Author unknown

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