

A COMPARISON OF NARRATIVE AND POETRY IN JUDGES 4 & 5

Judges 4:4-13 (ESV)

⁴ Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. ⁵ She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment.

⁶ She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh-naphtali and said to him, *“Has not the Lord, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking 10,000 from the people of Naphtali and the people of Zebulun.*

7 And I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand?”

⁸ Barak said to her, *“If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”*

⁹ And she said, *“I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.”*

Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.

¹⁰ And Barak called out Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh. And 10,000 men went up at his heels, and Deborah went up with him.



Judges 5:12-23 (ESV)

¹² “Awake, awake, Deborah!

Awake, awake, break out in a song!
Arise, Barak, lead away your captives,
O son of Abinoam.

¹³ Then down marched the remnant of the noble;
the people of the Lord marched down for me against
the mighty.

¹⁴ From Ephraim their root they marched down into the
valley,
following you, Benjamin, with your kinsmen;
from Machir marched down the commanders, and
from Zebulun those who bear the lieutenant’s staff;

¹⁵ the princes of Issachar came with Deborah,
and Issachar faithful to Barak;
into the valley they rushed at his heels.

Among the clans of Reuben there were great
searchings of heart.

¹⁶ Why did you sit still among the sheepfolds,
to hear the whistling for the flocks?
Among the clans of Reuben there were great
searchings of heart.

¹⁷ Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan;
and Dan, why did he stay with the ships?
Asher sat still at the coast of the sea, staying by his
landings.

¹⁸ Zebulun is a people who risked their lives to the
death;
Naphtali, too, on the heights of the field.

Judges 4:11, 17-23 (ESV)

¹¹ Now Heber the Kenite had separated from the Kenites, the descendants of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, and had pitched his tent as far away as the oak in Zaanannim, which is near Kedesh.

¹⁷ But Sisera fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite.

¹⁸ And Jael came out to meet Sisera and said to him, "Turn aside, my lord; turn aside to me; do not be afraid." So he turned aside to her into the tent, and she covered him with a rug.

¹⁹ And he said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink, for I am thirsty." So she opened a skin of milk and gave him a drink and covered him.

²⁰ And he said to her, "Stand at the opening of the tent, and if any man comes and asks you, 'Is anyone here?' say, 'No.' "

²¹ But Jael the wife of Heber took a tent peg, and took a hammer in her hand. Then she went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple until it went down into the ground while he was lying fast asleep from weariness. So he died.

²² And behold, as Barak was pursuing Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, "Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking." So he went in to her tent, and there lay Sisera dead, with the tent peg in his temple.

²³ So on that day God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the people of Israel.



“Jael went out to meet Sisera.”—Judges 4, v.18.

Judges 5:24-31 (ESV)

(from the Song of Deborah)

²⁴ “Most blessed of women be Jael,
the wife of Heber the Kenite,
of tent-dwelling women most blessed.

²⁵ He asked water and she gave him milk;
she brought him curds in a noble’s bowl.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Between her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still;
between her feet he sank, he fell;
where he sank, there he fell—dead.

²⁸ “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?’

²⁹ Her wisest princesses answer,
indeed, she answers herself,

³⁰ ‘Have they not found and divided the spoil?
A womb 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?’

³¹ “So may all your enemies perish, O Lord!
But your friends be like the sun
as he rises in his might.”