

Transfiguration

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Judg 5:31a

(BHS)

כִּן יִאָבְדוּ כָּל־אוֹיְבֵיךָ יְהוָה
וְאֹהֲבָיו
כְּצֵאת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ
בְּגִבּוֹרָתוֹ

(KJV)

So let all thine enemies **perish**, O LORD:
but let them that love **him**
be as the **sun** when he goeth forth
in his might.

Yikes the English is wordy! Of course, “LORD” is readily distinguished. In line 2, note that “love” is from the same root as Ahab. Line 3: I like the prescientific KJV, since it is willing to authentically handle the verb and gloss “goeth forth” for the motion of the sun. Perhaps an ancient cosmology is implied, with the sun departing from a starting point as he traverses the sky. Most translations tend to avoid this astronomical conundrum with expressions like, “as he rises” (ESV), “when it rises” (NIV), “like the rising” (NASB), etc.—which is fine, but the verb doesn’t generally mean “rise.” Finally, in line 4 you might remember that *gibbor* means “manly, hero” as in “Gabriel.” “Might” here is from this root. The manliness of *Shemesh* is in his brightly shining. Whew!

This is the last verse of the Deborah cycle. It is interesting to me that she invokes the sun, since much of her story deals with the weather. Her sidekick is Baraq, which means lightning. Her song cites a rainstorm. I think a flash flood is also part of it, as well as an eclipse. So ending the story by citing the sun shining is a fitting ending. If you want my whole treatment, you can inexpensively read about it [here](#).

As you may know (4:6), the action centers around Mount Tabor. 10,000 Israelites retreated to there, then rushed down to defeat Sisera. So Judges 4 – 5



connects Mount Tabor with lovers of God shining like the sun. Hmm.

The thing is, another momentous thing happened there in sacred history. Matt 17:2 says, “And he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” Is it just me, or is it incredible that the book of Judges connects Mount Tabor with shining as the sun—and Jesus literally fulfilled this! He is the one who loved the Father and so shined like the sun in all its might—on Mount Tabor!

But there is more. Jesus also said, “You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14). He is the light—and in him we are the light. We also are those who (in the words of Deborah) love God and shine like the blazing sun. He told us to let people see our good works and so glorify our heavenly Father. He warned us not to hide our light. Hmm.

Deborah criticized some who hid their light. When the time for action had come, citizens of Reuben engaged in navel gazing and contemplation. Put it this way: the discussion of whether or not to shine their light was tabled and assigned to an ad hoc committee (Judg 5:15 – 16). Dan and Asher seemed more concerned with what it would cost them than in responding to God’s call.

This battle just wasn't in their budget. And the Angel of the Lord actually cursed some of them for holding back (v23).

But other tribes like Zebulun and Naphtali were willing to put their very lives in the Lord's service and were commended (v18). And consider this: God is the one who actually won the day. While Sisera's forces seemed overwhelming and undefeatable, Yahweh was able deftly, effortlessly, to render them helpless (v 20 – 21). All Israel had to do was step out in faith against a frightening foe—and easily mop up!

In the same way, Jesus has won the battle against evil for us. He shines like the sun. But when energized by him—endowed with his Spirit and the knowledge of the gospel—we also can shine.

But how? How do we assert the truth out there? How do we step out in faith against a frightening foe?

Deborah put it this way, “The leaders took the lead in Israel, the people offered themselves willingly, bless the LORD!” (v2). Three elements commanded center stage: 1) the leaders stepped up with decisive spiritual and strategic leadership; 2) the people sacrificially gave themselves to the cause as opposed to demanding to be served; 3) God was blessed and blessed his people in their endeavor on his behalf.

When church leaders biblically lead and church people biblically sacrifice, the light of God shines. As God sent his son, Jesus, to be the light *of* the world, Jesus sends us to be his lights *in* the world.

So let's go forth, and let's shine!