



Women in the Bible

Women Warriors

Interpreting the Text:

1. Barak agrees to the prophetess Deborah's plan and says he will only go into battle if she goes with him. Why might he have made such a request of a woman?
2. Re-read the passage of Sisera's death in Judges 5. What are the erotic layers of his murder? How might it be different if he had been killed by a male warrior?
3. Explore the different roles of the three women in Judges 5. How do each of them have power, and how are each of them subjugated to someone else's power?
4. How do Jael and Judith fit into the tropes of women we have seen so far: having their power stripped away or using sneaky means to take control of their situation? To what extent do they diverge from these tropes?
5. What does it add to our interpretation of these stories to learn about the ancient Near East context? What are the limitations of what the context can tell us?

Applying the Text:

1. Jael and Judith are both fierce warriors in worlds where we might imagine women only allowed to procreate and to serve men. How have these two women been empowered to step out of the roles society might expect of them? Is there anything we can learn from their empowerment and apply today?
2. How do violence and sex factor into a book about God? How do you see these stories as being a part of a larger collection of religious texts?
3. How does your own tradition view the Book of Judith? How does that affect your interpretation of it?