

Moses and Deborah¹

Deborah is a judge, and the judicial activity is the same word used to describe Moses (Exodus 18:33) and Samuel (1 Samuel 17:6) as well as rulers/judges appointed throughout the tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 16:18-20) as representing God's own authority (Deuteronomy 17:12).

Deborah exercise authority analogous to Moses. She is pictured as a second Moses.

Action	Moses	Deborah
Judge	Exodus 18:13	Judges 4:4
People Came to Them	Exodus 18:13	Judges 4:5
Proclaimed Word of Lord	Exodus 7:16	Judges 4:6
Prophets	Deuteronomy 18:5	Judges 4:4
Pronounced Blessings	Exodus 39:43	Judges 5:24
Pronounced Curses	Deuteronomy 27:15	Judges 5:23
Both had military generals	Joshua	Barak
Instructed Israel about how to defeat enemies	Exodus 14:14	Judges 4:6
Lord caused enemies in chariots to panic and flee	Exodus 14:24	Judges 4:15
God's victory told in prose	Exodus 14	Judges 4
Then told in poetry	Exodus 15	Judges 5
Led people in worship	Exodus 15:1 (& Miriam)	Judges 5:1 (& Barak)

Reading Strategies:

1. Deborah usurped authority illegitimately? But there is no indication in the text this was illegitimate.
2. Deborah's ruling was private rather than public? But "tree of Deborah" is a public place where she "judged" (using the same word as Samuel) Israel (the nation).
3. Deborah was a substitute for weak men who would not lead? But see Judges 5:2, 9 where leaders are commended for following Deborah's lead.
4. Deborah only exercised political authority? But Israel is a theocracy under the rule of God, and Deborah commands in the name of the Lord (Judges 4:6) and Israel's rulers led on the basis of the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 17:18).
5. "Since God himself raised up Deborah as a judge, and that which God chooses to do can not [*sic*] be *intrinsically wrong*, it cannot be intrinsically wrong for a woman to exercise authority over a man" within a covenant community.

¹ Based on John Jefferson Davis's article here:
https://www.cbeinternational.org/sites/default/files/First_Davis.pdf