

Lessons from Deborah' Inspiration and Implications on the Plight of Women Leadership in A Male Dominated Society: Significances for Today's World

By

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Abstract

Though this is a bible-centered article, it partly falls under the 5th of the 17 sustainable development goals namely *to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world (un.org/sustainable-development/sustainable-development-goals). The Jewish culture was a male dominated society yet women had great roles and contributions in the social, economic, religious and political fields. The male Jews used to have the morning prayers that included “Blessed are you, LORD our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has not made me a woman.” This view openly expressed a quintessential misogyny that lies at the core of a patriarchal religion.” Other examples included being left out in the counting those that Jesus fed (Matt.14:21). They couldn't be counted as the Israelites were leaving Egypt (Ex.12:37). They couldn't be allowed to speak in the church (1 Cor.14:33b-36). Women couldn't be placed in higher positions of leadership in the Jewish community yet women like Deborah the prophetess and judge in the Old Testament (Judges 4 & 5) inspired the Israelites who later defeated the Canaanite oppressors. Though Deborah was a heroine and the only woman among the twelve (12) judges of Israel, she was not included in the Hall of Faith in the Book of Hebrews 11. What was the nature of male-dominance among the Israelites? Therefore, this is an assessment of a bible-based article but with other extra biblical sources about the plight and position of women leadership in a male dominated society based on Deborah. The implications of her achievements will inspire this 21st century world that experiences gender- based challenges in leadership at various levels.

Key words: Leadership, Plight, Male-dominated, women leadership, Male-dominated, Plight

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Introduction

The Jewish culture was a male dominated society yet women had great roles and contributions in the social, economic, religious and political fields. The male Jews used to have the morning prayers that included “Blessed are you, LORD our God, Ruler of the Universe, who has not made me a woman”. This view openly expressed a quintessential misogyny that lies at the core of a patriarchal religion” (Weekly Israel Bible Centre, 2023).. Other examples included being left out in the counting those that Jesus fed (Matt.14:21). They couldn't be allowed to speak in the church (1 Cor.14:33b-36). Women couldn't be placed in higher positions of leadership in the Jewish community yet women like Deborah the prophetess and judge in the Old Testament (Judges 4 75) inspired the Israelites who later defeated the Canaanite oppressors. Though Deborah was a heroine and the only woman among the twelve (12) male judges of Israel, she was not included in the Hall of Faith in the Book of Hebrews 11. Could it be because she was a woman? Deborah brought victory for the Israelites after twenty years of oppression. Therefore, this is an assessment of a bible-based article but with other extra biblical sources about the plight and position of women leadership in a male dominated society based on Deborah. The implications of her achievements will inspire this 21st century world that experiences gender-based challenges in leadership at various levels.

There is adage which states that “Wise leaders are rare. They accomplish great amounts of work without direct involvement because they know how to work through other people. They are able to see the big picture that often escapes those directly involved, so they make good mediators, advisors, and planners.” Deborah fit this description perfectly. She had all these leadership skills and she had a remarkable relationship with God. The insight and confidence God gave this woman placed her in a unique position in the Old Testament. Deborah is among the outstanding women of history. Her story does not show that she was power hungry. She didn't deny or resist her position in the culture as a woman and wife, but she never allowed herself to be hindered by it either.” (Commentator on Deborah, Judges 4 in the Application Bible)

Historically, after settling in Canaan, however, the Israelites lost their spiritual commitment and motivation. When Joshua and elders died, the nation experienced a leadership vacuum, leaving them without a strong central government. Instead of enjoying freedom and prosperity in the Promised Land, Israel entered the dark ages of her history. Why? How? Because the book of Judges spans a period of over 325 years recording successive periods of oppression and deliverance, and the careers of 12 deliverers Deborah being one of them. Their captors included the Mesopotamians, Moabites, Philistines, Canaanites, Midianites and Ammonites (Judges 3:7-16:31)

Regarding her name (Deborah), like any other Jewish naming- names were very important in the world of the Old Testament. Hebrew names usually had a meaning that could become an important part of the person's life. Jewish people believed that they must first know a

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person's name before they could know the person himself. Deborah is the Hebrew word for 'bee' which was a parental wish desiring that she would mature into an industrious and busy 'bee'. Often the name referred to a personality trait that the parents hoped would describe the child as he reached adulthood. (Parker, J.I., Tenney, M. C et.al, 1995).

Though this is a bible-centered article, it partly falls under the 5th of the 17 sustainable development goals namely *to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world (the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022). Throughout much of history both among the Biblical Jewish community and the contemporary society, a lot of challenges concerning the place and role of women have been an ongoing social, political, economic and religious concern. In The Universal declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) articles 1 and 2 provide that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reasons and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion or social origin". The Convention of the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Article 1 says: "Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or vilifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civic or any other field". Here, Ang'awa (2005) underlines that the above definition has been understood to be gender specific having its main emphasis on the eradication of laws and practices which hinder women from exercising human rights.

The Bible affirms that whether in leadership roles both in family or society, a woman didn't have an opportunity to have such responsibilities which to a greater extent is happening in Africa and beyond. An example in the Bible is this: (Leviticus 27:1-8).

1 The LORD said to Moses,

2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate a person to the LORD by giving the equivalent value,

3 set the value of a male between the ages of twenty and sixty at fifty shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel;

4 for a female, set her value at thirty shekels;

5 for a person between the ages of five and twenty, set the value of a male at twenty shekels and of a female at ten shekels;

6 for a person between one month and five years, set the value of a male at five shekels of silver and that of a female at three shekels of silver;

7 for a person sixty years old or more, set the value of a male at fifteen shekels and of a female at ten shekels.

8 If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount, the person being dedicated is to be presented to the priest, who will set the value according to what the one making the vow can afford.

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The above text suggests that a woman was worth only about half as much as a man. Thus a female child was less welcome than a male. Boys were taught to make decisions and to preside over their families. Girls were raised to get married and have children. It was even noted that a young woman didn't even think about a career outside home. Her mother trained her to keep house and to raise children. She was expected to be a helper to her husband and to give him many children. However, women were also of great value apart from child bearing except that top roles and responsibilities in the political area were very limited. What is the situation in Africa today? A lot will be exposed in this article. However, we need to note that that even though women spent their days as housewives and mothers, there were some exceptions. For example, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), Esther who were more than good wives- they were political and religious leaders who proved that they could guide the nation as well any man could do. It here that Deborah the main character in this article plays a vital role despite being in a male dominated Israel society.

Regarding Deborah, Adeyemo (2006) describes the environment under which she lived during the Judges period by first mentioning that the name Debora means 'bee'. She was the only woman among the twelve judges. She was a contemporary of Shamgar (c.f Judges 3; 31, 4:1; 5:6) but was more prominent than he was. Despite living in a male dominated culture, she served as head of state, commander-in-chief and chief justice (Judges 4:4-5; 5:7). Adeyemo (2006) further notes that her achievement should put an end to debates about whether women can provide leadership. Deborah was an unusual woman of wisdom who did the tasks of a judge. This simply implied that God can use women mightily for civil, religious or other tasks. In brief, chapters four and five are about Deborah. This is the summary of Judges Chapter 4:

Deborah, a judge, used to hold court while sitting beneath a palm tree. She was wise and helped people solve their problems. She told Barak, commander of an army of Israel, that the Lord wanted him to fight an enemy named Sisera. Barak refused to fight unless Deborah accompanied him. She went along and they defeated Sisera's army. During the battle Sisera escaped and hid in the tent of a woman named Jael. During the night Jael killed Sisera in his sleep by driving a tent peg through his temple and it went down into the ground thereby killing him instantly.

Thus, this article seeks to respond to these questions:

To what extent was the Jewish culture male-dominated in relation to leadership?

(b) What are the implications for us today based on male-dominance on Deborah's story in the book of Judges on leadership?

Review of Related Literature

This section of the review of related literature is about one major objective: *To what extent was the Jewish culture male-dominated in relation to leadership?* Both the bible and other extra-biblical literature will be employed in this section of the review of related literature.

In his book, *Managing Conflicts*, Birch (2008), brings out how leaders manage and resolve conflicts to the reconciliation of the parties where he notes that for the most part, women

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are not publicly recognized as being capable of handling conflicts between men or groups. Not only that, he points out that most African cultures practice male headship in various forms which, to the Western mind, appears discriminatory and unfair to women. There is a quotation among the Kikuyu that he quotes: "A woman's testimony can only be accepted as true the following day." But this apparent silence and subordination of women in dealing with conflicts is not necessarily the true picture. In practice when the community faces a disruption in a relationship between its members, women engage in quiet diplomacy behind the scenes using their informal social networks. This is also attested by Mulugeta (2005) who however emphasizes that the women's role in formal and traditional peace negotiation is not sufficiently recognized or at times ignored. They do not become loud or aggressive in public confrontations but engage in casual, informal conversations where possible are discussed. Men are normally the ones seen participating publicly in the process of conflict resolution and they are given credit for the result. Quite often, the real work of reconciliation is often done by the invisible mediation of women working through the networks of women working through networks and personal relationships. Despite Birch's arguments, these may however be relevant among the Kikuyu communities but not in every community. But, it as an emphasis that in top leadership and decision making, men usually take the lead; they dominate the scene.

Ruyendo (2005) while quoting Alexander (1986) in his book *Lion Encyclopedia* notes that in the ancient Jewish worldview, a woman was considered a constant danger to the man. Women were kept away from the public eye in order to protect them from this danger. It was believed that if women and men came into social contact, lust was unavoidable and adultery in the Jewish laws was always against husbands' property. Though a man and woman were supposed to be equal in the eyes of God (Gen. 1:27). Alexander (1986) points out that the woman was owned by her husband and looked up to him as her maker though women did much of the hard work, they had a low position both in society and in the family. Elsewhere, in Israelite society it was assumed that a woman's place was in the home. She was expected to find fulfillment in life as a wife and mother. Thus, a woman to a greater extent had a low status which impeded her to take top and higher positions of leadership.

Largely due to social and political environment that was surrounding the Israelite women, most of them never became public leaders, but there were exceptions. Scripture records the names and deeds of several women who became prominent in political, military or religious affairs. The two famous military heroines mentioned are Deborah and Jael; both had a part in the same victory. God spoke through Deborah to tell the general named Barak how the Canaanites could be beaten. Barak agreed to attack the Canaanites but he wanted Deborah to go with him into the battle and which she did and the Canaanites were duly defeated. However, the Canaanite general Sisera escaped on foot. Jael saw him and housed him but as he felt asleep, she hammered a tent peg through his head killing him

Regarding religious leaders, in Israel, God did not ordain priestesses. A woman could not, in any case have become a priest because her monthly cycle made her unclean. Priestly ministry was restricted to the male descendants of Aaron. But they also performed other tasks (Ex. 38:8, 1 Sam. 2:22). It is noted that the legal position of a woman in Israel was weaker than that of a man. For example, a husband could divorce his wife if he 'found some uncleanness in her' but the wife was not allowed to divorce her husband for any reason (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). The law stated that the wife who was suspected of having sexual relations with another man must

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take a “jealousy test” (Num. 5:11-31). However, there was no test for man of being unfaithful with another woman. The law said that a man could make a religious vow and that it was binding on him; but a vow made by a woman could be cancelled by her father or (if she were married) by her husband (Num. 30:1-15). A woman's father could sell her (Ex. 21:7), and she could not be freed after six years, as a man could (Lev. 25:40). In at least once instance, a man offered his daughter to be used sexually by a mob (Judg. 19:22-25).

Since Israel was a male-dominated society, women's rights were sometimes overlooked. Jesus told of a widow who had to pester a judge who would not take time to listen to her side of the case. Because he didn't want to be bothered by her the judge finally agreed to her wishes (Luke 18: 1-8). However, despite the lowly position that women had both in church and in civil authorities Nyambura, 2006) argues that the role of women in institutions like church is a contentious issue:

a. (1 Corinthians 14:34 Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

b. 1 Timothy 2:11-14 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

These texts above are regarded as laying down absolutes rather than general principles within a particular culture and there can be no denying that women and men are created equal in the image of God. Thus, we must not focus on gender roles that society, church and African cultures have assigned to women. The focus should fall on the biblical call for all human beings to discern what the will of God in their lives is. (Romans 12:2) Jesus' radical mission of transformation for liberation (Luke 4:18-27) and fullness of life (John 10:10) means that women and men are equally called and empowered to participate in the same mission in the church. Nyambura (2006) further notes that because of deeply entrenched patriarchal, hierarchical and sexist attitudes and practices, and the male-dominated leadership in many of the churches in Africa, women have a critical and prophetic role to play in ‘stirring the waters’ and ‘speaking the truth’ by asserting their God-given humanity and gifts-not for their own sake but for the sake of the integrity of the gospel. A small but significant number of women are contributing to the search for an authentic Christianity, church and theology in Africa through research and the writing and publishing scholarly books disseminating theological knowledge though the same women still face a daunting task in advocating and modelling gender justice in church and in society.

McQuilkin (1996), notes that God authorized certain women to be judges, prophets and teachers, so there is nothing inherently sinful in such roles for women on some occasions; Miriam (Exod.15:20, Deborah (Judge 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14ff.; 2 Chron. 34:22ff.), Noadiah (Neh.6:14), Isa.8:3), Anna (Luke 2:36-38), Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:9), Priscilla (Acts 18:24ff.), and many other women (1 Cor.11:5 Acts 2:17). McQuilkin (1996) further argues that the issues to address is the issue of ethics. That is; is sin for a woman ever to be cast in a role of leadership over men? The question –at least outside the realm of the home and the church-

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cannot be argued from Scripture on moral grounds. Those who address the issues must do so from pragmatic or other grounds. It is argued that the only possible way for Scripture to be introduced would be in drawing analogies from what the Bible teaches about husband/wife relationships, but such analogies must not be pressed as having scriptural authority. Elsewhere, Michelle (2015) simply observes that that Deborah with a mighty combination of judge, intercessor, Prophetess, mother of Israel and military strategist which is an inspiration for a today's woman.

The story of Deborah calls for promotion of justice for the down trodden. Thus, treating woman as inferior-as most societies throughout history have done- is clearly sinful. From the original creation statement (Gen. 1:27) through the example of Christ in his words and actions toward men to Paul's affirmation (Gal.3:28), men and women stand on level ground before the Lord. This does not mean that men are equal to women in all tasks nor that women are as competent as men in every role. God views men and women as equals. It is noted that Scripture enjoins us to fight for justice in behalf of the downtrodden and the oppressed. Therefore, the record of inactivity on the part of Christian men who have allowed women to be oppressed, even when not participating in the oppression, is shameful. It's noted that sin encroaches on both sides of the issue of women's 'rights. Guilty are those who do not treat women as Jesus did, and who do not aggressively seek to build homes, churches, and societies in which this ideal advances. It is thus noted that guilty also are those who fight for true causes in unbiblical ways.

Another implication is that society should oppose all forms of segregation in leadership not only based on gender but also on religion or race. For instance, Asmus and Grudem (2013), in their book *The Poverty of Nations*, they emphasize various cultural beliefs that will encourage economic growth. One of them is that the society should oppose discrimination against people on the basis of race, gender or religion. Here, leadership in various economically productive issues should not be discriminatory. Too often nations have discriminated on the basis of race, gender, or religion, typically producing harmful consequences for economic development. They base themselves on the bible that all human beings are descended from Adam and Eve, our first parents as indicated in Genesis 1-2. Thus, every human being shares in the exalted status of being "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26-27); 5:1; 9:6; James 3:9). In this respect, that means that no one should be thought to be superior or inferior too to others because of his or her racial background or religion. However, they do not go deep to give details of actual gender discrimination in relation leadership and economic growth. Also, this idea about economic growth and gender is being discussed from a biblical basis. Other faiths may not necessarily buy the truth behind its assertions.

In addition, Dube (2010) while writing on *Religion, race, gender and identity*, notes that research shows that women and men in different societies are given different roles. However, these ascribed roles do not distribute power equally. He emphasizes that in most cases, gender has been constructed from an androcentric point of view; that is from a male perspective. It gives public power of decision making, leadership and property ownership to men. He affirms that women on the other hand, are confined to the home as wives and mothers. They exist under the leadership of fathers, husbands or brothers and depend on the property of the same. Gender therefore does not distribute power equally between men and women, hence the women's movement towards gender, justice or gender empowerment, which seeks to build better relationships. However, this is not enough to expose the dominance of men in leadership. It is a

confirmation that man is over and above a woman in leadership related issues in various cultures and societies.

Methodology

This is a bible-centered piece of work on *The Biblical Deborah: the plight of women leadership in a male dominated society. Implications for today's society*. That is; the Bible is the main source of information regarding Deborah (main character) though there are other extra-biblical sources for the related facts. This chapter is based on Practical theology, the main message being Judges 4 & 5 about Deborah in relation to the plight of women leadership in a male dominated society. Judges 4 & 5 have been purposely chosen because Deborah is a prototype and original biblical model of a female leader in the Bible among the Jews and from whom other contemporary Christian women should emulate in a male dominated community. The text concerns me, the church and the community around as far as its application is concerned.

Thus, after analysis of Judges 4 & 5 has been done in relation to the topic, the articles tackle how we should then live and draws implications out of it. What does the text mean for me, the church and the society today? Today's women need to live wisely and counteract the male-dominated society regarding leadership but with a biblical worldview.

Discussion with Implications

Regarding this section, it is where the implications out of Chapter 4 & 5 of Judges are found. It is discussed and based on the research/objectives of the study. From the ongoing discussion, it has been noted that since time immemorial, the Jewish community and even in African communities, male dominance is generally not a new. It is also common in leadership where the male dominates like in the history of the Jews as read in the Holy Bible. As noted, other extra-biblical literature also has a lot they expose on male dominance in relation to leadership.

We need to note that real heroes are hard to find these days. Modern research and the media have made foibles and weaknesses of our leaders very apparent; we search in vain for men and women to emulate. The music, movie, and sports industries produce a steady stream of 'stars' who shoot to the top and then quickly fade from view". Deborah, an exceptional woman liberated the Jews from the oppression for twenty years as attested by Moore, (2019). Though a woman she spearheaded that liberation. Ruele (2010), supports and calls for liberation- freedom from what they call male dominance and a second-class status in society but basing on Liberation theology. However, based on Liberation theology deeply rooted in Catholic belief system, Mary the mother of Jesus is looked upon with exceptionally high regard as being a woman of liberation and an example of how God does not sanction women's oppression. It is argued that Mary is seen as an example for others of how God has used women as equal partners. Thus, Mary is on the side of the oppressed and looked up to as a great example of giving faith an opportunity. Likewise, Deborah (Judges 4 & 5) should be taken as an example to emulate and courageously stand out without fear or favour in society. She is an inspiration to the down-trodden women in a contemporary society that is male-dominated. Smith (2016) describes her as outspoken and fearless.

The Bible shows that all human beings are descended from Adam and Eve, our first parents as indicated in Genesis 1-2. Thus, every human being shares in the exalted status of being 'in the image of God'. It also implies that no one should be thought to be superior or

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inferior to others because of his or her racial background, gender or religion. Grudem (2000) attests to this example where he notes that we must affirm at the outset that the creation narrative in Genesis 1:27 views men and women as equally created in the image of God. Therefore, men and women have equal value to God, and should be seen by us as having absolutely equal value as persons and equal value to the church. But it should be noted that though it is bible-based knowledge and teaching that both man and woman share in the exalted status of being 'in the image of God', practically, it is different practically in the society today.

Furthermore, Grudem (2000) argues that we must also admit that the evangelical churches have often to recognize the full equality of men and women, and thereby even failed to recognize that God often gives women equal or greater spiritual gifts than men, a failure to encourage women to have full and free participation in the various ministries of the church, and a failure to take full account of the wisdom that God has given to women with respect to important decisions in the life of the church. It is argued that if the present controversy over women's roles in the church can result in the eradication of some of the past abuses, then the church as a whole will benefit greatly. Males still dominate in various ways especially in leadership. A commentary on Gal.3:28 reminds us that some Jewish males greeted each new day by praying "Lord, I thank you that I am not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman."

The role of women was enhanced by Christianity. Faith in Christ transcends differences between men and women by making them as one, believing in the Lord.

However, it is written in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 that: ¹¹ A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. Ayedemo (2006) notes that this advice from Paul has raised much debate among Christians in Africa, especially since the rise of feminist theology that asserts, among other things, the right of women to express themselves. Certain versions of the Bible have tried to get around the problem by translating 2:11 in a more acceptable way while still being true to the spirit of the text. Thus, the message translates this as "I don't let women take over and tell the men what to do". This translation assumes that Paul gave this advice because women were taking position of authority and even of dominance over men, which was unacceptable in the culture of that day (2:12) The requirement for silence in association with teaching may also indicate that women were talkative during times of teaching or worship. However, we don't have evidence or supportive biblical texts at all. Grudem (2000) however believes that the quoted text applied only to a specific situation that Paul was addressing probably one where women were actually teaching heretical doctrine within the Ephesian church- however, there is no statement to support this argument.

Elsewhere, St. Paul says: ³⁴ Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. ³⁵ If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14: 4-35).

According to Grudem (2000) Paul is against critiques and evaluations of the prophecies by women in the congregation in the congregations and in this way Paul is concerned to preserve male leadership in the teaching and governing of the church and for Paul according to Ayedemo (2006) it was disgraceful for any woman to ignore the requirement of subordination and submission and disrupt the order of holy worship. Whichever argument, it is noted that women were not at equal terms with men since the justifications given are not convincing enough.

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In addition, a woman can as well be as effective as a man or even better. Ayademo (2006) notes that in contemporary Africa, gender is still a major issue, particularly as regards political leadership. Yet Africa, already had its first woman president with the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia. The story of Deborah shows that a woman can be an effective as any male leader, provided she has divine backing, and combine charisma with character, courage with competence and conviction with commitment. She portrayed all these attributes as Barak, a great general of the army had feared to go alone but insisted that Deborah should go with him (Judges 4:9). It is however surprising that Barak, not Deborah, is listed among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:32. This raises a poignant question! Could it be because she was a woman? What about Rahab, a pagan prostitute who took action that saved her life (Josh 2:1-21) who is listed in the "Hall of faith" of Hebrews 11. We need to know that just as God appointed Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, and other great judges God appointed Deborah as a leader over the nation of Israel. Or, was the author of the Hebrews was not emphasizing a gender preference for Barak's leadership over Deborah's. Barak is being used as a person fulfilling God's purposes irrespective of his glaring flaws.

Grudem (2000) observes that throughout the history of the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation, there is a consistent pattern of male leadership among God's people. And, though there were occasionally women such as Deborah and Huldah who were prophetesses, we should note that these are rare exceptions in unusual circumstances. They occur in in the midst of an overwhelming pattern of male leadership in teaching and governance. It is also realized that for Deborah in particular, we must note that the historical events narrated in the entire book of Judges require great care in interpretation before we can assume that they should be taken as models for us to imitate. Additionally, Deborah was different from other male prophets in that she didn't prophesy in public, only in private (Jud. 4:5; Huldah does the same in 2 Kings 22:14-20); she (Deborah) handed over her leadership role to a man (Judg. 4:6-7); and although God did bring blessing through her, it is interesting that there is no explicit affirmation of the fact that the Lord raised her up- making her unlike the other major judges such as Othniel (3:9), Ehud (3:15), Gideon (6:14), Jephthah (11:29) and Samson (1:25; 14:6), for whom there is explicit statement of their calling from God. However, despite the arguments and implications raised regarding Deborah's place and role in the book of Judges it opens a new chapter that inspires both men and women in a male dominated society.

Conclusion

The Biblical Deborah is an inspiration to those African women who still have inferiority and are bogged down by cultural and other forms of prejudice as far as taking higher positions of leadership is concerned in this 21st century. Deborah's legacy is so significant as she is one of the great influential women known for great wisdom, obedience, courage, faith and action amidst a patriarchal Israel. She is depicted as the only female judge, warrior, prophet as well as a singer and song writer and above all with a motherly characteristic. With great faith, she relied on God, not herself to accomplish leadership roles and as a peace promoter whose courage and wisdom broke her enemies' control leading to a forty-year period of uninterrupted peace. For Deborah's model, God is not limited by any forms of prejudices, culture, stereotypes or gender.

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Recommendations

The article has some recommendations. First, in a patriarchal society, women need to adopt Deborah's courage, boldness, bravery and strong faith in God (Judges 5:12) as part and parcel of their leadership capabilities and characteristics without fear or favour. With these abilities she stood against oppression and injustice by the Canaanites (Judges 4:14).

Second, there is need for the 21st century women to put their trust in God first; since He created male and female (Gen.1:27) and to appreciate that God uses any person irrespective of gender, or race in leadership of his people. Her trust and faith were theocentric.

Third, those surrounded by culture, race and other forms of injustices need to take courage (Gary, 1979) and lead because when leaders lead others follow. She led as a warrior (because her presence bolstered Barak's courage) and others like Barak followed. The battle was won (Judges 4).

Citation: Ruyendo, M. (2024). Lessons from Deborah' Inspiration and Implications on the Plight of Women Leadership in A Male Dominated Society: Significances for Today's World. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 72 – 83.

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