

Deborah

In the Haftarah too we read another song, that of the Prophetess and Judge Deborah. We often seem to forget that in the past we were led by this amazing woman who functioned on several levels. She was a Judge, a moral and just leader and she was a prophet who had a special relationship with God. She was also an inspirational military leader. Another woman, Yael, also played an important part in disposing of the Canaanite general Sierra.

Of course we value the roles of home- builder, wife and mother above rubies. But these are not the only roles for women.

Deborah has a husband called Lapidot. We know nothing of him. Indeed the Midrash even suggests he was not a person altogether but an idea. Lapidot means flames, and Deborah was married to her mission of keeping the flames of her people alive. It is possible to manage without a husband.

If such positions as Deborah's and the other women were acceptable then, logically they ought to be even more so today. The Torah message is that we need anyone who has something to offer our people, regardless of gender. It encourages every one of us to try to take up the challenge in our own way.