

Ancient Mosaic Floors in Israel May Depict Biblical Heroines

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(Photos by Jim Haberman)

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA—According to a statement released by the [University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill](#) (UNC), 1,600-year-old mosaic floor panels depicting biblical heroines have been uncovered in the ancient Galilean synagogue at Huqoq by a team of researchers led by UNC archaeologist Jodi Magness and Dennis Mizzi of the University of Malta. The researchers suggest that the images depict an episode in Judges, one of the books of the Hebrew scriptures, in which Israelite forces, led by the prophetess and judge Deborah and the military commander Barak, defeat a Canaanite army led by Sisera. In the story, Sisera took refuge after the battle in the tent of Jael, who killed him as he slept. The first strip, or register, of the mosaic shows Deborah under a palm tree and Barak holding a shield. What is

left of the poorly preserved middle register appears to show a seated Sisera, while the bottom register shows him lying on the ground, bleeding from the head, as Jael hammers a tent stake through his temple. Other recently uncovered mosaics at the site include a fragment of a Hebrew inscription inside a wreath flanked by vases holding sprouting vines. The vines, in turn, frame a hare, a fox, a leopard, and a wild boar eating grapes. To read about other mosaics previously uncovered in the synagogue, go to "[Mosaics of Huqoq](#)."

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