

Abimelech's Illegitimate Rule (c. 1172 – c. 1169 BC)

Judges 8:29–9:57

Gideon's Legacy—His Sons

8:29 Jerub-Baal son of Joash lived in his own house.

30 Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives.

31 His concubine who *was* in Shechem also bore for him a son, and he named him Abimelech.

32 And Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age, and he was buried in the tomb of Jehoash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

The Cycle of Idolatry Continues

33 And it happened, as soon as Gideon died, the Israelites returned and prostituted *themselves* after the Baals, and they made for themselves Baal-Berith as god.

34 The Israelites did not remember Yahweh their God, who had delivered them from the hand of their enemies from all around,

35 nor did they show favor to the house of Jerub-Baal (*that is*, Gideon) in accordance with all the good that he did for Israel.

Abimelech Kills His Step-Brothers and Seizes Power

9:1 And Abimelech son of Jerub-Baal went to Shechem, to the relatives of his mother, and he said to them and to the house of his mother's father,

2 "Speak to the lords of Shechem, 'What *is* better for you, that seventy men all from the sons of Jerub-Baal rule over you, or that one man rules over you?' Remember that I *am* your bone and your flesh."

3 And his mother's relatives spoke all these words concerning him to all the lords of Shechem; and they supported Abimelech, for they said, "He is our relative."

4 And they gave to him seventy *pieces* of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, and Abimelech hired with them worthless and reckless men, and they followed him.

5 And he went to his father's house at Ophrah, and he killed his brothers, the sons of Jerub-Baal, seventy men, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerub-Baal survived, because he hid himself.

6 All the lords of Shechem and Beth-Millo gathered, and they went and made Abimelech as king, near *the* oak of *the* pillar that *is* at Shechem.

Jotham's Speech Against Abimelech's Crime

7 And they told Jotham, and he went up and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and he cried out loud and said to them, "Listen to me, lords of Shechem, so that God may listen to you.

8 "The trees went certainly, to anoint a king over themselves. And they said to the olive tree, 'Rule over us.'

9 And the olive tree replied, 'Should I stop *producing* my oil, which by me gods and men are honored, to go sway over the trees?'

10 Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You, come rule over us.'

11 But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I stop *producing* my sweetness, and my good crop, to go sway over the trees?'

12 And the trees said to the vine, 'You, come rule over us.'

13 But the vine said to them, 'Should I stop *producing* my wine that makes the gods and men happy, to go sway over the trees?'

14 So all the trees said to the thornbush, 'You, come rule over us.'

15 And the thornbush said to the trees, 'If in good faith you *are* anointing me as king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; if not, may fire go out from the thornbush and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

16 "So then, if you have acted in good faith and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerub-Baal and his house, and have dealt with him according to his accomplishments—

17 for my father fought and risked his life for you and delivered you from the hand of Midian;

18 but today you have risen against the house of my father and killed his sons, seventy men on one stone, and you have made Abimelech, the son of his slave woman, a king over the lords of Shechem, because he is your relative—

19 if you have acted in good faith and sincerity with Jerub-Baal and his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you.

20 But if not, let a fire come out from Abimelech and let it devour the lords of Shechem and Beth-Millo; and let a fire come out from the lords of Shechem, and from Beth-Millo, and let it devour Abimelech."

21 And Jotham escaped and fled, and went to Beer; he remained there because of Abimelech his brother.

22 Abimelech ruled over Israel three years.

God's Retribution on Abimelech

23 And God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem, and the lords of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech,

24 so that the violence done to the seventy brothers of Abimelech would be avenged and their blood be placed on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the lords of Shechem, who helped to kill his brothers.

25 And the lords of Shechem set for him ambushes on the top of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along the

road; and it was reported to Abimelech.

Gaal's Conspiracy

26 And Gaal son of Ebel and his relatives came, and they crossed over into Shechem, and the lords of Shechem gave him confidence.
27 They went out *into* the field and harvested their vineyards and trod *them*, and they held a festival. And they went *into* the temple of their god, and they ate and drank and cursed Abimelech.

28 Then Gaal son of Ebed said, "Who *is* Abimelech, and who *are we of* Shechem that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerub-Baal, and *is not* Zebul his chief officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem. Why should we serve him?"

29 If only this people were in my command! Then I would remove Abimelech, and I would have said, 'Increase your army and come out!'"

Abimelech Defeats the Leaders of Shechem

30 When Zebul the commander of the city heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, he became angry,

31 and he sent messengers to Abimelech in Tormah, saying, "Look, Gaal son of Ebed and his relatives *are* coming to Shechem, and they *are* stirring up the city against you.

32 So then, get up *by* night, you and the army that *is* with you, and lie in ambush in the field.

33 And in the morning at sunrise, get up and rush the city; and look, when he and the troops who *are* with him come out to you, you must act according to whatever opportunity offers itself.

34 So Abimelech and all the army that *was* with him got up *by* night, and they lay in ambush against Shechem *in* four divisions.

35 Gaal son of Ebed went out and stood *at* the entrance of the city gate, and Abimelech and the army that *was* with him got up from the ambush.

36 When Gaal saw the army, he said to Zebul, "Look, people *are* coming down from the top of the mountains!" And Zebul said to him, "The shadows of the mountains look like people to you."

37 And Gaal spoke again and said, "Look, people *are* coming down from Tabbur-erez, and one division *is* coming from the direction of Elon-meonenim."

38 And Zebul said to him, "Where then is your boast, *you* who said, 'Who *is* Abimelech that we should serve him?' *Is* this not the army that you rejected? Please, go out now and fight against them."

39 So Gaal went out before the lords of Shechem and fought against Abimelech.

40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him; many fell slain up to the entrance of the gate.

41 So Abimelech resided at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his relatives from living in Shechem.

42 On the next day the people went out *to* the field; and it was reported to Abimelech,

43 so he took the army and divided them into three divisions, and he laid an ambush in the field. And he saw the people *were* coming out from the city, and he arose against them and killed them.

44 Then Abimelech and the divisions that *were* with him dashed out and stood *at* the entrance of the city gate, and the two divisions dashed out against all who *were* in the field, and they killed them.

45 Abimelech fought against the city all that day, and he captured the city and killed the people that *were* in it; then he broke down the city and sowed it *with* salt.

46 When all the lords of the tower of Shechem heard, they went to the vault of the temple of El-Berith.

47 It was told to Abimelech that all the lords of the tower of Shechem had gathered.

48 So Abimelech went up Mount Zalmon, he and all his army that *were* with him, and Abimelech took the ax in his hand and cut down a bundle of brushwood, and he lifted it and put *it* on his shoulder. And he said to the army that *was* with him, "What you have seen me do, quickly do also."

49 So the whole army cut down each one branch for himself and followed Abimelech, and they put *them* against the vault and set the vault ablaze with fire on those *inside*, so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

Abimelech is Defeated

50 Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and captured it.

51 But there was a strong tower in the middle of the city, and all the men, women, and lords of the city fled there and shut themselves in; and they went up to the roof of the tower.

52 Abimelech came up to the tower and fought against it, and he came near the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire.

53 But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and cracked open his skull.

54 He called quickly to the young man carrying his weapons, and he said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, so that they will not say of me, 'A woman killed him.'" So the young man stabbed him, and he died.

55 When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, each one went to his home.

56 So God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech committed against his father by killing his seventy brothers.

57 And God also repaid all the wickedness of the men of Shechem on their heads, and the curse of Jotham son of Jerub-Baal fell on them.

Judgeship of Tola (c. 1169 – c. 1146 BC)

Judges 10:1–2

1 After Abimelech, Tola son of Puah son of Dod, a man of Issachar, rose up to deliver Israel; and he *was* living at Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim.

2 And he judged Israel twenty-three years. And he died and was buried in Shamir.

Judgeship of Jair (c. 1146 – c. 1124 BC)

Judges 10:3–5

3 After him Jair the Gileadite rose up, and he judged Israel twenty-two years.

4 And he had thirty sons who would ride on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty towns that *are* in the land of Gilead that they called Havvoth Jair until this day.

5 And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

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