

230301-4 Judges 9, Abimelech & the City of Shechem Judged—CThurman

Israel was under severe Midianite/Ishmaelite oppression for seven years, living in dens in the mountains, in caves and along the rock crevasses. And Israel began to cry out to the LORD. Then the LORD sent a prophet reminding Israel why they were in such a terrible predicament: because they had not obey His voice. But the LORD called Gideon to be a judge or deliverer for them. So Gideon proved the messenger and the message as truly being the LORD and His word. This being done the Lord then proves Gideon by reducing his military force to a mere 300 men. And the LORD gave a great victory against the Ismaelites so that they never again lifted up their head against Israel again. And the land of Canaan enjoyed rest for 40 years, until Gideon died. Afterward Israel turn to the gods of the nations again and trouble began to increase for them. Gideon had many wives, and by them he had seventy-one sons (cf. Jud.9.5). Of them he had a son born of a concubine, a handmaid turned wife. His name was Abimelech. What follows in the next two chapters concerns for the most part the wicked deeds of Abimelech.

Chapter 9

1 ¶ And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren,

(uncles)

Abimelech's mother was evidently of Manasseh but she was a concubine, a handmaid-turned wife. The city of Shechem is a city of Manasseh (cf. Jos.17.2) and one of the three cities of refuge. It is centrally located in the land of Canaan. (cf. Jos.20.7)

and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

Abimelech desires to set himself up to rule in the place of his father Gideon. So, he turns to his uncles for help. He provokes them to jealousy in his behalf against all of the other sons of Gideon.

בעל

2 Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem,

lords, masters

Abimelech would have his uncles to speak in the ear of the lords, the prominent figures of the city of Shechem.

Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you?

either ... reign, Qal infin. of the verb מָשַׁל, mah-shal, tss. *to reign, to rule, to have dominion, to have power, to be governor*. Twice in this verse.

remember also that I am your bone and your flesh.

Abimelech poses the either-or question. He did this to solicit the response that he desires. But neither question was correct.

Be watchful for questions like this.

3 And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the

בָּעַל

men

lords, masters, leaders

of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother.

inclined, Qal fut. of the verb נָטַח, nah-tah, *to spread, to stretch out, to pitch, to turn, to extend, to stretch forth, to go down, to bow down, etc.*

4 And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberith,

(The master of the covenant)

Baal, בָּעַל, a masc. noun tss. *man* (i.e., a man's wife) and *husband, owner, master, possessor, captain*. The Septuagint (LXX, The 70), the Greek version of the OT Scriptures has for בָּעַל, κύριος, *lord, Lord, master, God, owner, Sir*.

berith, בְּרִית, a fem. noun tss. *covenant, confederate, league*.

So after the uncles of Abimelech spoke to the leaders of Shechem they agreed that this would be an endeavor of interest to everyone that worshipped Baalberith, therefore they gave him 70 shekels of silver out of Baalberith's treasury to secure the deaths of Abimelech's brethren.

Who knows, but perhaps Abimelech's brethren were not worshippers of Baalberith and were obstacles to the spread of this apostacy. For certain religious men will use any means to accomplish their goal. Here the religion of Baalberith and the men of this place pool their resources for evil and political purposes. This is what a religion of men will do.

wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him.
(of the 70 pcs. of silver) purposeless unstable

hired, Qal fut. of the verb שָׂכַר, sah-kar, tss. *to hire, to reward, to earn wages*.

vain, רֵיק, an adj. tss. *vain, empty*; the adv. רֵיקָם, adds the sense of *purposeless*.

light, only twice in the OT, Qal part. of the verb פָּחַז, pah-chaz, *light*. The noun פָּחַז, pah-chaz, is tss. with reference to water with the English *unstable* (Gen.49.4).

Vain and light persons are easily manipulated by those that have wealth, power or influence.

Ac.6.9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called [the synagogue] of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said,

The religious leaders of a particular synagogue, in the name of God, put these men under false notion that Stephen really did speak blasphemous words ...

We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and [against] God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon [him], and caught him, and brought [him] to the council,

13 And set up false witnesses, which said,

These supposedly religious, holy men of God that serve God in the Temple, set up false witnesses to say ...

This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law ...

We should not be surprised what men will do in the name of God, using any means possible to compel others to think as they think and do as they do.

Ac.17.1 ¶ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

...

5 But the Jews which believed not (Jews which professed to believe in God, Jews that were part of the synagogue), moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

5 And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

was hidden

he hid himself, Niphal (simple pass.) pret. of the verb **חָבַה**, *chah-vah*, tss. *to be secret, to be hid, to hold*.

בְּעַל

6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo,
lords, masters

Perhaps the house of Millo is Abimelech's mother's house.

	לְמַלְכָּם	
<i>and went, and made</i>	Abimelech	<i>king,</i>
caused [to reign]	for [their]	

and made [to reign], Hiphil (causative act.) fut. of the verb **מָלַךְ**. (vss. 16, 18, also Hiphil fut.

by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.
pillar of the oak (cf. Ge.35.4)

the pillar, Hophal (causative pass.) part. of the verb **נָצַב**, *nah-tzav*, tss. *to stand upright, to stand, to set over, to appoint, to erect*.

The prominent figures, the lords of Shechem caused Abimelech to reign in Shechem. But probably some among the common folks understood what was going on and said something about this to Jotham.

7 ¶ And when they told it to Jotham,

they – Perhaps referring to the inhabitants of Shechem that were not related to Abimelech.

he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim,

Mount Gerizim being located to the south side of the city of Shechem. Ebal would be to the north. Mounts Gerizim and Ebal was the place where Joshua was commanded to gather Israel to pronounce the blessing (on the

south side of the valley where mount Gerizim was located) and the cursing (on the north side of the valley where mount Ebal was located).

and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me,

בְּעַל

ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

lords, masters

listen

(and note what you have done).

What follows are four occasions where Israel seeks for a king, represented by asking the olive tree, the fig tree, the vine tree, and the bramble bush. No, no, no is the answer given of the first three. As is to be expected, if you keep asking you'll finally get the answer you're looking for. And so, the bramble bush accepts the opportunity to rule over them. It's not even a true like the others. It's a useless, unfruitful, purposeless bush.

Be watchful against doing as these men do; to keep asking the same question again and again simply because we do not like the answers we are getting.

8 The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them;

to anoint, Qal infin. of the verb מָשַׁח, mah-shach, tss. *to anoint, to pain*.

and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

Reign, Qal imper. of the verb מָלַךְ, mah-lak. (**vss.10, 12, 14**, *reign over us*)

I think the olive tree could be representative of Gideon as it appears that this is the first occasion shown in Scriptures where they begin asking for a king to rule over them.

Jud.8.22 ¶ Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.

23 And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.

But there doesn't have to be a person represented in any of these. Perhaps others of the sons of Gideon had made or whispered this proposal. We don't know. We do know that the bramble will be an allusion to Abimelech.

The main point is that the people *are asking* for a king to be appointed over them. And my opinion is that the reason they are asking for a king is because they think that it will somehow give them stability from the back and forth of oppression and deliverance, oppression and deliverance, oppression and deliverance. They think that that the land has rest because they have a judge. The truth is, the land rests when they repent of their immoral and idolatrous practices, and (humanly speaking) walk with God. We already know that Israel's history, even after they have a king, continues as it has until now, a repetitious cycle of oppression and deliverance, apostasy and repentance, apostasy and repentance.

***9 But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness,
cease***

should I leave, of the verb לִיָּן, tss. to cease, to forbear, to unoccupy, to fail, to forbear.

fatness, שֶׁן, deh-shen, a masc. noun always tss. with the English fatness (7); fatness refers to abundance, luxuriousness.

The things that I have done have been of benefit to everyone. Why should I seek honor some other way?

wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

10 And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us.

11 But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?

Again, the fig tree produces what it should without necessity to rule over others.

12 Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us.

13 And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?

And as the olive tree and the fig tree, so the vine, produces what it should. There is no need for them to be over the trees.

14 Then said all the trees unto the bramble,

bramble, טֹבֵא, a masc. noun tss. the name of a place, *Atad* (cf. Ge.50.10, 11), and *bramble* (margin, thistle, and so 'prickly shrubs'), *thorns* (Ps.58.9).

'There is probably no country on earth of the same extent which has so many plants with prickles and thorns as the Holy Land.' *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, 751

The bramble represents Abimelech.

Come thou, and reign over us.

15 And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

**16 Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely,
in truth and in uprightness**

sincerely, יָמֵן, an adj. tss. *just, without blemish, whole, complete, sincerity, upright, undefiled, sound.* (cf. v.16, 19)

in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands;

17 (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life far,
overcame, prevailed threw off, cast aside his life

fought, Niphal (simple pass.) pret. of the verb לָחַם, lah-cham, tss. *to fight, to eat, to devour, to war, to overcome, to prevail.*

adventured, Hiphil (causative act.) fut. of the verb שָׁלַךְ, shah-lak, tss. *to throw, to pluck, to hurl, to cast down, to cast away, to cast out.*

and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:
caused you to escape from Midian's hand

delivered, Hiphil (causative act.) fut. of the verb נָצַל, tss. *to deliver, to be without fail, spoil, to pluck, to escape, to take, to recover, to rescue, to save.*

18 And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech,

the son of his maidservant, king over the ^{בְּעָלִים} **men of Shechem,**
leaders, masters, lords

men, בְּעָלִים, bah-[g]al, a masc. noun, tss. *man, husband, owner, master, captain.* (vss. 2, 6, 7, 18, 20 (twice), 23 (twice)-26, 39, 46, 47, 51)

because he is your brother;)

Notice it was such men, prominent men of the city that not only killed 69 of his sons, but they were the sodomites that attempted to prevail against the Levite when he stopped for the night in Gibeah. Instead they abused and killed his concubine. (cf. Jud.19.22, 23; 20.5, leaders, masters, lords that were sodomites.

19 If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and
in truth and in uprightness

with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you:

rejoice, שָׂמַח, sah-mach, Qal imper. and fut. verbs, respectively, tss.
to be merry, to joy, to be glad, to rejoice, to cheer.

בָּעַל

20 But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of
lords, masters

בָּעַל

Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men
lords, masters

Millo – very likely the house of his mother.

of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.

If you have treated Gideon in truth and uprightness then be merry, but if you have dealt treacherously God work so that you both consume yourselves until you are destroyed.

21 And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there,
fled hasted The Place of a Well

ran away, of the verb נָס, tss. to fell, to abate, to flee away.

fled, of the verb בָּרַח, tss. to flee, to shoot, to make haste, to flee away, to run away.

Beer – is said to be located about 8 miles east of the city of Hebron, which is the southernmost city of refuge in the land of Canaan. (cf. Jos.20.7) So, when Jotham fled he fled a good ways off.

for fear of Abimelech his brother.

22 ¶ When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel,

23 Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the

בְּעַל

men

lords, masters

Notice that God did this. Because of what Abimelech and the lords of Shechem, and the house of Millo had done, God sent an evil spirit, a demonic spirit to cause strife between them. The LORD sent an evil spirit to trouble Israel's, first, legitimate king, named Saul.

1Sa 16:14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

(Read 2Chr.18.18-22, *the LORD hath put (נָתַן, nathan) a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets*)

The LORD gave these evil men over to receive the kind of judgment that they judged others with. (cf. Ro.1.24, *uncleanness, 26, vile affections, 28, reprobate mind*)

בְּעַל

of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

lords, master

deceitfully

dealt treacherously, of the verb בָּגַד, tss. to transgress, to deal deceitfully, to offend, to be unfaithful; treacherously is to violate their allegiance, to commit treason.

לְבוֹא

24 That the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons

injustice come

cruelty, חֲמָסָה, chah-mas, a masc. noun tss. violence, wrong, injustice.

Which cruelty included Jothan, except that he escaped when the others did not.

of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them;

בַּעַל
and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing
lords, masters strengthened, hardened

aided, Piel (intensive act.) pret. of the verb קָזַק, tss. to be sore, to prevail, to be strong, to be courageous, to be confirmed, to be established, to be stout, to be encouraged, to be strengthened, to be hardened, etc.

of his brethren.

בַּעַל **אָרַב**
25 And the men of Shechem set liers in wait for him in the top
lords, masters placed 'ambushers' (Abimelech)

of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them:

robbed, of the verb גָּזַל, tss. to to violently take away, to catch, to spoil, to take by force, to rob, to consume.

and it was told Abimelech.

And when someone told Abimelech of the ambush he was able to avoid those places.

Not only do the people of Israel have to deal with the nations of the Gentiles that live all around them, but to compound matters their own brethren treat each other so evilly.

26 And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to

בַּעַל
Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him.

lords, masters

confidence, of the verb **בטח**, tss. *to trust, to hope, to be secure, to have confidence*.

So here comes another man named Gaal with aspirations of being king. He isn't related to Gideon at all. This man gains the confidence, of what are likely the common people of Shechem, rather than of the lords of Shechem.

27 And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode the grapes, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech.

reviled [by saying the following ...]

cursed, of the verb **קלל**, tss. *to despise, to revile, to set light by*, etc.

Now here's some real *fellowship in the Spirit*. We'll never cease be amazed at what folks will do in the house of God. Be careful and sensitive about what we allow to come into this place. It is a building, but it is to be used for good.

28 And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him?

Gaal reviles Abimelech. But who is Gaal? Perhaps he is an Hivite. He suggests to the inhabitants of Shechem that it would be better to be subject to him than to *any* of the sons of Jerubbaal.

The city of Shechem has a history that goes back to Genesis chapter 33. It is named after Shechem is the son of Hamor. These are Hivites (cf. Ge.34.2), Gentiles that Jacob bought a parcel of land from. (cf. Ge.33.19) While Jacob and his family were here at Shechem, Hamor's son had raped Jacob's daughter, Dinah, and desire to have her for wife. Well, Simeon and Levi put that notion to rest by killing all the males.

29 And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech.

remove, of the verb סִוַּר, tss. to turn aside, to take away, to put away, to remove.

יָצָא

And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out.
Multiply proceed.

שָׂר

30 And when Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words
prince, chief, captain

of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.

31 And he sent messengers unto Abimelech privily, saying, Behold,
(*marg. craftily*)

Gaal the son of Ebed and his brethren be come to Shechem; and, behold, they fortify the city against thee.

fortify, of the verb צוֹרַע, tss. to being up, beset, besiege, to fashion, to inclose, etc.

Zebal tells Abimelech that Gaal has in effect won the city over to him and against you.

32 Now therefore up by night, thou and the people that is with thee, and lie in wait in the field:

33 And it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city:

invade

set from the verb פָּעַט, also tss. to invade, to make a road, to strip, to strip off, to flay. (vss. 33, 44)

and, behold, when he and the people that is with him come out against thee, then mayest thou do to them as thou shalt find occasion.

thy hand shall find

34 And Abimelech rose up, and all the people that were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

heads, divisions

פְּתָחַ

35 And Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entering

opening, door

of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people that were with him, from lying in wait.

36 And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, Behold, there come people down from the top of the mountains. And Zebul said unto

are people descending

him, Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as if they were men.

37 And Gaal spake again and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of mēō'nenim.

division, head comes

oak

38 Then said Zebul unto him, Where is now thy mouth, wherewith thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him? is not this the people that thou

Time to back up your words with actions.

סָאָרָ

hast despised? go out, I pray now, and fight with them.

disdained, rejected, refused

בְּעֵלָי

39 And Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.

lords, masters

40 And Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many were overthrown and wounded, even unto the entering of the gate.

door, opening

chased, the verb רָדַף, also tss. to pursue, to follow, to chase, to persecute, to put to flight. (Jud. 1.6, and they pursued; 3.28, follow; 4.16, pursued; 4.22, pursued; 7.23, 25, and pursued; 8.4, he pursuing; 8.5, am pursuing; 8.12, And ... he pursued; 9.40, And ... chased him; 20.43, chased them)

41 And Abimelech dwelt at Arumah: and Zebul thrust out Gaal and his brethren, that they should not dwell in Shechem.

Arumah is about 5 miles southeast of Shechem.

42 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech.

it was

Abimelech having withdrawn from fighting for the time, but perhaps he left some men to watch the city. Now, there will be a purging of all the dissenters and followers of Gaal.

43 And he took the people, and divided them into three companies,
(that were with him)

and laid wait in the field, and looked, and, behold, the people were come forth out of the city; and he rose up against them, and smote them.

44 And Abimelech, and the company that was with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city: and the two other companies ran upon all the people that were in the fields, and slew them.

the verbs to rush, and to run upon are tss. from the verb רָדַף, also tss. to invade, to make a road, to strip, to strip off, to flay. (vss. 33, 44)

Abimelech came in their one division and blocked access into Shechem and the other two divisions slew the people that were outside. Then he comes into the city.

45 And Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.

beat down, of the verb נָתַץ, nah-thatz, also tss. *to break down, to throw down, to break out, to destroy, to overthrow, to beat down.* (Jud.6.30, 31, 32; 8.17, Qal pret.; 2.2; 8.9; 9.45, Qal fut; 6.28, Pual pret.)

בַּעַל

46 And when all the men of the tower of Shechem heard that,
lords, masters

they entered into an hold of the house of the god Berith.
high place

hold, בַּרְיָה, a masc. noun tss. *hold* (2), *high place* (1Sa.13.6),

בַּעַל

47 And it was told Abimelech, that all the men of the tower of Shechem
lords, masters
were gathered together.

The tower might have had a high place, an hold for many to gather into. Towers appear to be especially for leaders, lords, masters, prominent figures (בַּעַל, bah-[g]al) to gather. Such was the case in Penuel. (cf. Jud.8.17)

48 And Abimelech gat him up to mount Zalmon, he and all the people that were with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it, and laid it on his shoulder, and said unto the people that were with him, What ye have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done.

49 And all the people likewise cut down every man his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them to the hold, and set the hold on fire upon them; so that all the men of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

So Jotham's words were fulfilled. The lords of Shechem, both of men and women represented as the cedars of Lebanon.

Jud.9.15 ... let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

50 ¶ Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

Thebez, looks to be about 10 miles N.E. of Shechem.

51 But there was a strong tower בְּתוֹךְ **within** **the city, and thither fled all**
in the midst, middle, among

strong, עֵז, a masc. noun tss. strength, power, might, boldness.

the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it בְּעַד **to them,**
lords, masters upon

and gat them up to the top of the tower.

52 And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard
unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. came near

and went hard, of the verb נִהַשׁ, tss. to come near, to approach, to draw near, to present, etc.

53 And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head,

and רָצַץ **all to brake** גָּל גֹּלֶת **his skull.**
crushed gool-goh-leth (from which we have Golgotha)

54 Then he called מְהֵרָה **hastily** נְעָר **unto the young man his armourbearer,**
hastily, quickly, shortly

**and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that [men] say not of me,
[they]**

A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.

אִישׁ

55 And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place.

שׁוּב

**56 Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech,
returned, brought again evil**

which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren:

57 And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

Abimelech and the inhabitant of Shechem had wronged the family of Gideon. And the LORD judged them for it. (Mt. 7.1, 2, the measure of judgment we dispense is the measure we shall receive; Hos.8.7, sow the wind & reap the whirlwind; Gal.6.7, sowing and reaping.