



Judges - Chapter Nine

II Judges 3:7-16:31 - The Downward Spiral of Israel's Apostasy (continues)

Summary of Chapter Nine

This is an extended account of Abimelech's violent grab for power. The seeds of his offence are found in Israel's continuing apostasy, in its request for a warrior-king and rejection of the Lord, and in his father Gideon's misdeeds and mistakes. The account starts with Abimelech seeking the backing of his mother's kin in Shechem to sponsor him to kill almost all of his own brothers so that he alone can rule over the people. Only Jotham remained alive.

Using the Parable of the Trees Jotham challenges the leaders on Shechem to consider if they had done what was right by the house of Gideon by appointing Abimelech as their leader. God turned the people of Shechem against Abimelech and he was eventually killed, thus God avenged the deaths of his brothers.

II.f Judges 9:1-57 - Abimelech, Apostate King

Refer to the chapter summary above.

II.f.i Judges 9:1-6 - Abimelech Attempts to Establish a Monarchy

Abimelech rose to power by ruthlessly killing his own brothers with the help of the Shechemites. He was then 'made king' at Shechem.

¹ Now Abimelech son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother's kinsfolk and said to them and to the whole clan of his mother's family,
² 'Say in the hearing of all the lords of Shechem, "Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you, or that one rule over you?" Remember also that I am your bone and your

flesh.’³ So his mother’s kinsfolk spoke all these words on his behalf in the hearing of all the lords of Shechem; and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, ‘He is our brother.’

Judges 9:1-3

That all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal rule over you. Gideon was a polygamist and had his children by several wives as seen in the previous chapter: <<*Jerubbaal son of Joash went to live in his own house. Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives. His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech*>> (Judges 8:29-31). It is interesting that it should be the son he had with his concubine, who is described as his slave later in this chapter (v.18), who should be the one who becomes the central character in the following account.

Abimelech means ‘my father is king.’ His father Gideon had declined kingship yet had acted as if he were the king. The influence of his father’s later apostasy was clearly a contributing factor to the story told in this chapter. He was not the clear successor to his father’s place of leadership. This was for two reasons: God had not established a hereditary monarchy in Israel, and there were sixty-nine other sons of Gideon who might also want to succeed their father. Indeed, it was Abimelech’s mother’s kinsfolk who support him rather than the direct relatives of his father.

Jerubbaal means ‘let Baal contend’ and was the name given to Gideon by the people after he had destroyed Baal’s altar and sacred pole in Chapter Six.

Their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech. At the city of Shechem, Abimelech convinced his kinsfolk on his mother’s side to support him as king rather than his brothers on his father’s side. So, the lords of Shechem agreed to accept Abimelech as the new leader, perhaps even as the king of Israel. The reference to the lords of Shechem is literally ‘the baals of Shechem,’ the word having here its original meaning of owner.



Shechem is located between Mounts Gerizim and Ebal

⁴ They gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the temple of Baal-berith with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows, who

followed him.⁵ He went to his father's house at Ophrah, and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone; but Jotham, the youngest son of Jerubbaal, survived, for he hid himself.

Judges 9:4-5

They gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the temple of Baal-berith. The relatives of Abimelech on his mother's side gave him some campaign money to establish his leadership. He did this, but in a way that they never imagined, he hired dangerous villains to kill all his brothers, making certain there would never be a challenger to his leadership. Abimelech received his pay from the temple dedicated to Baal. A work begun under the name and influence of the devil is not likely to end to the glory of God, or to the welfare of humankind.

Abimelech hired worthless and reckless fellows. Abimelech's character can be judged by the company that he kept, as can that of Jephthah: <<*Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and lived in the land of Tob. Outlaws collected around Jephthah and went raiding with him*>> (Judges 11:3).

Killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone. Therefore Abimelech killed his brothers with the support of his relatives on his mother's side. The lords of Shechem (vv.2-3) supported the plan because it was good for them, not because it was morally good or right.

⁶ Then all the lords of Shechem and all Beth-millo came together, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar at Shechem.

Judges 9:6

Beth-millo. The word *millo* derives from a verb meaning to be filled, and originally referred to a rampart or earthwork; but its association with fortifications may have developed into a reference to fortresses generally. Thus Beth-millo may be identical with the pillar of Shechem, that is, a defensive tower or stronghold.

They went and made Abimelech king. It is almost hard to tell who was worse; Abimelech who did the murdering, or the lords of Shechem who sponsored it. This was an ungodly leader given to an ungodly people, who first rejected God's leadership over the nation and then embraced a cruel and brutal man.

By the oak of the pillar at Shechem. Ironically, Abimelech's coronation took place at the same tree where Joshua had solemnly placed a copy of the law of God: <<*Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord*>> (Joshua 24:26). The law was right there, but Israel refused to read or heed it.

II.f.ii Judges 9:7-21 - The Parable of the Trees

Jotham, the only brother of Abimelech who escaped his murderous rampage, provided a strong indictment of Abimelech's actions by means of a fable or parable (vv.7-20). The fable depicts the noble trees of the forest each in turn rejecting the call to kingship, which is finally accepted by the ignoble bramble bush.

In this context, it is an indictment of the Shechemites who have chosen the ignoble Abimelech as king, of Abimelech himself, and of the process by which this 'king' was chosen; refer especially to Jotham's comments in vv.16-20. It is not an indictment of the institution of kingship in general, however, since the overall thrust of the book is that a proper king would have been good for Israel.

One of the primary failures throughout the history of Israel in the Promised Land is that they kept forgetting that God was their King: <<they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful>> (Revelation 17:14).

⁷ When it was told to Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and cried aloud and said to them, 'Listen to me, you lords of Shechem, so that God may listen to you.'

Judges 9:7

When it was told to Jotham. Jotham was the only son of Gideon to escape the massacre at the stone. Here he told a parable to rebuke the men of Shechem for their choice of Abimelech as a king.

Mount Gerizim. When Israel had entered the land, they proclaimed the blessings of the covenant from this mountain, which is recorded in Joshua 8:30-35, just as Moses had commanded them to do in Deuteronomy 11:26-32. Now Jotham utters curses from this 'mountain of blessing.'

Shechem is referred to as Sychar in the NT and Mount Gerizim is the mountain referred to by the woman Jesus met at Jacob's well: <<Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth'>> (John 4:20-24).

8 The trees once went out
to anoint a king over themselves.
So they said to the olive tree,
“Reign over us.”

9 The olive tree answered them,
“Shall I stop producing my rich oil
by which gods and mortals are honoured,
and go to sway over the trees?”

10 Then the trees said to the fig tree,
“You come and reign over us.”

11 But the fig tree answered them,
“Shall I stop producing my sweetness
and my delicious fruit,
and go to sway over the trees?”

12 Then the trees said to the vine,
“You come and reign over us.”

13 But the vine said to them,
“Shall I stop producing my wine
that cheers gods and mortals,
and go to sway over the trees?”

14 So all the trees said to the bramble,
“You come and reign over us.”

15 And the bramble said to the trees,
“If in good faith you are anointing me king over you,
then come and take refuge in my shade;
but if not, let fire come out of the bramble
and devour the cedars of Lebanon.”

Judges 9:8-15

The trees once went out to anoint a king over themselves. In the parable told by Jotham, the worthy trees, such as the olive, the fig, and the vine, did not want to be king; but the unworthy bramble agreed to be king.

Shall I stop producing my wine that cheers gods and mortals, and go to sway over the trees? The vine was a symbol of prosperity and its produce was keenly sought for the good cheer it brought: <<*I searched with my mind how to cheer my body with wine – my mind still guiding me with wisdom – and how to lay hold on folly, until I might see what was good for mortals to do under heaven during the few days of their life*>> (Ecclesiastes 2:3). That is the meaning used in this fable. Wine was also commonly consumed in areas where fresh water was in short supply for contaminated water brought disease.

The promise of the bramble, take refuge in my shade, was intended as ironic and ridiculous. The bramble was a low, thorny bush and offered shade to no one, especially to trees. Hence, Abimelech as king could not offer protection to the either the noble or anyone else in society. This is a rebuke against both Abimelech and the lords of Shechem who sponsored him.

Let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon. The bramble warned that he would be an oppressive ruler and destroy anyone who disagreed with him. One test of the character of a man is to see how he treats those who disagree with him. If his only desire is to destroy those who disagree, then he is much like the bramble, plenty of good points, but no real substance for good.

Scripture contains a further analogy between a bramble and the mighty cedar of Lebanon when King Amaziah of Judah wanted to fight against King Joash of Israel. The latter warned Amaziah not to come out against him, saying: <<*A thornbush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, “Give your daughter to my son for a wife”*>> (2 Chronicles 25:18b). Amaziah was captured, Judah lost the battle and all the treasures in the temple were taken.

¹⁶ ‘Now therefore, if you acted in good faith and honour when you made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as his actions deserved – ¹⁷ for my father fought for you, and risked his life, and rescued you from the hand of Midian; ¹⁸ but you have risen up against my father’s house this day, and have killed his sons, seventy men on one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his slave-woman, king over the lords of Shechem, because he is your kinsman – ¹⁹ if, I say, you have acted in

good faith and honour towards Jerubbaal and towards his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you; ²⁰ but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the lords of Shechem, and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the lords of Shechem, and from Beth-millo, and devour Abimelech.’ ²¹ Then Jotham ran away and fled, going to Beer, where he remained for fear of his brother Abimelech.

Judges 9:16-21

Now therefore, if you acted in good faith and honour when you made Abimelech king. Jotham raised this issue just for the sake of argument. He did not believe that sixty eight of his brothers were murdered for the sake of good faith and honour.

Because he is your kinsman. The real reason the men of Shechem supported Abimelech was because he was from their clan. Abimelech’s mother, although only a slave-woman to Gideon, was from Shechem. It seems possible that Abimelech grew up in Shechem: <<*His concubine who was in Shechem also bore him a son, and he named him Abimelech*>> (Judges 8:31). Abimelech’s mother is called a slave-woman, a term usually referring to a wife’s servant who is also a concubine, such as Hagar or Bilhah.

Let fire come out. Jotham’s warning to the men of Shechem was that their unwise choice would come back to hurt them. He predicted that fire would come forth from Abimelech and devour them. After this bold warning he ran away and fled in fear of his life. Jotham’s challenge to the Shechemites and Abimelech was dramatically resolved when fire from Abimelech devoured a large number of Shechemites (v.49), before a Shechemite woman killed Abimelech (v.54). Thus the prophecy of Jotham was not to be immediately fulfilled. The fire smouldered for three years but at last manifested itself.

II.f.iii Judges 9:22-55 - The Downfall of Abimelech

The Shechemites and Abimelech deserved each other. Abimelech, who was aided by the Shechemites, was himself now the target of their lawlessness, and discord prevailed between them (vv.22-25), a discord that spread into open revolt under Gaal (vv.26-33). Abimelech was able to quell the revolt, and he razed Shechem (vv.34-45). He also destroyed the stronghold of Shechem, i.e. its tower, burning it with fire (vv.46-49). Abimelech himself met his end at nearby Thebez (vv.50-55), where he also attempted to burn its tower but instead was mortally wounded by a stone dropped from it by an unnamed woman.

²² Abimelech ruled over Israel for three years.

Judges 9:22

Ruled has the nuance ‘rule as prince or commander’; it is not the more usual word for ‘rule as king’ used in Judges 8:22-23. The ignoble Abimelech, who had been ‘made king’ by the people, not by God (v.6), could only rule as a secondary commander, not as a true king.

The writer of Judges used an interesting word to say that Abimelech had reigned over Israel. This word is unique to the book and is perhaps chosen to distinguish Abimelech’s ill-fated rule from that of the true judges. Abimelech was more like a tyrant than a king.

²³ But God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the lords of Shechem; and the lords of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech. ²⁴ This happened so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be avenged and their blood be laid on their brother Abimelech, who killed them, and on the lords of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers. ²⁵ So, out of hostility to him, the lords of Shechem set ambushes on the mountain tops. They robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was reported to Abimelech.

Judges 9:23-25

But God sent an evil spirit. Everything seemed fine between the men of Shechem and Abimelech for three years. Then, in judgment, God removed the peace that was between them and sent this evil spirit. This is similar to the evil or harmful spirit God sent to Saul: <<*Now the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him*>> (1 Samuel 16:14).

Both in the case here, and that against King Saul, it seems that God allows evil spirits to come as a form of judgement on the individual. Although God himself never does evil, nor does he tempt people to sin: <<*No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one*>> (James 1:13), he sometimes sends evil agents to accomplish his purposes, such as the Babylonians coming to punish Israel, or allowing sinful people to betray and crucify Christ.

Here, the spirit is between Abimelech and the Shechemites, probably ‘a spirit of ill will’ or ‘a harmful spirit’ between the two parties. In this way, God himself brought about the estrangement between the two sides.

So, out of hostility to him, the lords of Shechem set ambushes on the mountain tops. They robbed all who passed by them along that way. Prompted by the evil spirit, the men of Shechem set ambushes on the mountain roads, hoping to disrupt

the trade routes that profited Abimelech. This would have the effect of reducing the number of travellers and caravans in such a troubled area, thus emptying the treasury of Abimelech as well as damaging his pride and reputation, for he could not guarantee the safety of travel in his domain.

It was reported to Abimelech. It was probably their intention that Abimelech should know what was going on. They were seeking confrontation.

²⁶ When Gaal son of Ebed moved into Shechem with his kinsfolk, the lords of Shechem put confidence in him. ²⁷ They went out into the field and gathered the grapes from their vineyards, trod them, and celebrated. Then they went into the temple of their god, ate and drank, and ridiculed Abimelech. ²⁸ Gaal son of Ebed said, ‘Who is Abimelech, and who are we of Shechem, that we should serve him? Did not the son of Jerubbaal and Zebul his officer serve the men of Hamor father of Shechem? Why then should we serve him? ²⁹ If only this people were under my command! Then I would remove Abimelech; I would say to him, “Increase your army, and come out.”’

Judges 9:26-29

When Gaal son of Ebed moved into Shechem with his kinsfolk, the lords of Shechem put confidence in him. The men of Shechem lost their confidence in Abimelech, so they chose a new leader named Gaal.

Then they went into the temple of their god, ate and drank, and ridiculed Abimelech. The men of Shechem were so confident that their new leader Gaal could protect them against Abimelech that they started throwing drunken parties and openly ridiculing or cursing Abimelech, and challenging him to a fight. Hence Gaal’s challenging and foolish words: I would say to him, “Increase your army, and come out.”

³⁰ When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. ³¹ He sent messengers to Abimelech at Arumah, saying, ‘Look, Gaal son of Ebed and his kinsfolk have come to Shechem, and they are stirring up the city against you. ³² Now therefore, go by night, you and the troops that are with you, and lie in wait in the fields. ³³ Then early in the morning, as soon as the sun rises, get up and rush on the city; and when he and the troops that are with him come out against you, you may deal with them as best you can.’

Judges 9:30-33

When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal son of Ebed, his anger was kindled. Zebul, the city administrator on behalf of Abimelech, told Abimelech all about Gaal and his rebellion. Zebul advised Abimelech to come and attack the city at dawn.

Then early in the morning, as soon as the sun rises, get up and rush on the city. Zebul advised Abimelech to organise a surprised attack against the rebels of Shechem. By attacking at dawn it was anticipated they would catch the city off guard and secure a victory against them.

³⁴ So Abimelech and all the troops with him got up by night and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. ³⁵ When Gaal son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city, Abimelech and the troops with him rose from the ambush. ³⁶ And when Gaal saw them, he said to Zebul, ‘Look, people are coming down from the mountain tops!’ And Zebul said to him, ‘The shadows on the mountains look like people to you.’ ³⁷ Gaal spoke again and said, ‘Look, people are coming down from Tabbur-erez, and one company is coming from the direction of Elon-meonenim.’ ³⁸ Then Zebul said to him, ‘Where is your boast now, you who said, “Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?” Are not these the troops you made light of? Go out now and fight with them.’ ³⁹ So Gaal went out at the head of the lords of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech. ⁴⁰ Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him. Many fell wounded, up to the entrance of the gate. ⁴¹ So Abimelech resided at Arumah; and Zebul drove out Gaal and his kinsfolk, so that they could not live on at Shechem.

Judges 9:34-41

So Abimelech and all the troops with him got up by night and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. Abimelech agreed with and followed the plan suggested by Zebul.

The shadows on the mountains look like people to you. Zebul deceived Gaal, allowing Abimelech’s troops to take position. With the advantage of their superior position, Abimelech and his soldiers drove out Gaal and his men.

Where is your boast now. When Zebul knew that Gaal was at a disadvantage, he could not resist rebuking him for his proud, arrogant words against Abimelech, an enemy he could not defeat. Gaal probably was not prepared for a siege; so he had little choice but to leave the city walls behind and confront Abimelech out in the

open. However, Gaal did show leadership by going out at the head of the lords of Shechem to confront Abimelech.

⁴² On the following day the people went out into the fields. When Abimelech was told, ⁴³ he took his troops and divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the fields. When he looked and saw the people coming out of the city, he rose against them and killed them.

⁴⁴ Abimelech and the company that was with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city, while the two companies rushed on all who were in the fields and killed them. ⁴⁵ Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city, and killed the people that were in it; and he razed the city and sowed it with salt.

Judges 9:42-45

On the following day the people went out into the fields. With the resistance of Gaal defeated, Abimelech would find it easy to establish his control over the city of Shechem again. Both outside and inside the city, they effectively attacked and killed the people of Shechem, even those not directly involved in the rebellion. The people, apparently confident that the matter was concluded, went out into the fields as usual to engage in their daily occupations.

Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city, and killed the people that were in it. Abimelech then turned his fury against the people of Shechem, and killed as many of them as he could, and he demolished their city.

Sowed it with salt. This physical yet symbolic action signified the turning of Shechem into a barren, uninhabitable desert: <<*The next generation, your children who rise up after you, as well as the foreigner who comes from a distant country, will see the devastation of that land and the afflictions with which the Lord has afflicted it – all its soil burned out by sulphur and salt, nothing planted, nothing sprouting, unable to support any vegetation, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord destroyed in his fierce anger*>> (Deuteronomy 29:22-23), <<*Who has let the wild ass go free? Who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass, to which I have given the steppe for its home, the salt land for its dwelling-place?*>> (Job 39: 5-6), <<*He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the wickedness of its inhabitants*>> (Psalm 107:33-34), and: <<*They shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when relief comes. They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land*>> (Jeremiah 17:6). It was later rebuilt by Jeroboam: <<*Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and resided there; he went out from there and built Penuel*>> (1 Kings 12:25). This shows the problem of following a man who comes to power

through violence. Commonly, it is only a matter of time until the same violence is turned against those who helped him come to power.

⁴⁶ When all the lords of the Tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the stronghold of the temple of El-berith. ⁴⁷ Abimelech was told that all the lords of the Tower of Shechem were gathered together. ⁴⁸ So Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the troops that were with him. Abimelech took an axe in his hand, cut down a bundle of brushwood, and took it up and laid it on his shoulder. Then he said to the troops with him, ‘What you have seen me do, do quickly, as I have done.’ ⁴⁹ So every one of the troops cut down a bundle and following Abimelech put it against the stronghold, and they set the stronghold on fire over them, so that all the people of the Tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women.

Judges 9:46-49

El-berith. ‘El’ was the name of a well-known Canaanite god, the father of Baal. The term here is probably another way of referring to the god ‘Baal-berith’ and would mean ‘El of the covenant.’ Refer to the comment made on Judges 8:33-35.

Mount Zalmon is another name for Mount Ebal overlooking Shechem. It was the mountain on which an altar was built to God and from which the curses were read when Israel first took the land; refer to Joshua 8:30-35.

Abimelech took an axe in his hand, cut down a bundle of brushwood. What you have seen me do, do quickly, as I have done. Although Abimelech was an ungodly and violent man, he did understand some basic principles of leadership. He understood the importance of leading through the example of one’s own actions. He could tell his troops to do as he had done, and they did.

All the people of the Tower of Shechem also died, about a thousand men and women. With this, Abimelech massacred the last survivors of the city of Shechem, killing about a thousand men and women. This graphically fulfilled the warning of Jotham earlier in the chapter (vv.19-20). For the people of Shechem, even a secure tower could not protect them. Yet there is a more secure tower than the tower of Shechem: <<*for you are my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy*>> (Psalm 61:3), and: <<*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe*>> (Proverbs 18:10). God is the only tower that can offer true safety for he can never be overcome or defeated.

⁵⁰ Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. ⁵¹ But there was a strong tower within the city, and all the men and women and all the lords of the city fled to it and shut themselves

in; and they went to the roof of the tower. ⁵² Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it, and came near to the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire. ⁵³ But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, and crushed his skull.

Judges 9:50-53

A strong tower. The foundations of a square tower (38 feet or 12 m square) from this period were found at the site of Giloh, a city referred to only in Joshua 15:51 and 2 Samuel 15:12. The tower was well-built, having been constructed of large, roughly hewn stones.

Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it. After his brutal victory at the tower of Shechem, Abimelech probably thought he was an expert at attacking and defeating such strongholds. Abimelech went to Thebez and attacked the city and the tower there.

But a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, and crushed his skull. At Thebez, a woman dropped a millstone on Abimelech's head and mortally wounded him. This was probably a stone used to grind grain by hand. Such hand-stones averaged ten to fourteen inches long and weighed five pounds or more. Unlike the account of the killing of Sisera by Jael in Judges 4:21, the woman here is unidentified.

⁵⁴ Immediately he called to the young man who carried his armour and said to him, 'Draw your sword and kill me, so people will not say about me, "A woman killed him."' So the young man thrust him through, and he died. ⁵⁵ When the Israelites saw that Abimelech was dead, they all went home.

Judges 9:54-55

Draw your sword and kill me. A woman killed him. Being killed or overcome in battle by a woman was a disgrace to a warrior. Refer to the comments made on Judges 4:6-9 and 5:24-27.

So the young man thrust him through, and he died. Abimelech considered it more honourable to be killed by his own armour bearer; but he was still dead afterward. Proud even in death, he then had to answer to God for his wicked actions. Yet long after his death, the credit continued to be given to the woman: <<"*Who killed Abimelech son of Jerubbaal? Did not a woman throw an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died at Thebez? Why did you go so near the wall?" then you shall say, "Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead too"*>> (2 Samuel 11:21). Abimelech had killed his brothers upon a single stone

and now he was killed by a single stone. Is that simply one of life's ironies or the hand of God? Verse 56 indicates it was the latter.

II.f.iv Judges 9:56-57 - Final Verdict on Abimelech

Abimelech was not a true king; the institution of a valid monarchy in Israel would have to wait until a later time. God actively opposed Abimelech, in return for the evil he had done in killing his brothers. The 'evil' (Hebrew *ra'ah*) spirit sent by God to effect the discord (v.23) led directly to God's repaying the 'wickedness' (Hebrew *ra'ah*) of Abimelech and the Shechemites.

The fire that was a sign of Abimelech's poor choice (v.15 and v.20) brought the downfall of Shechem and Abimelech (v.49 and v.52), and these two devoured each other, as Jotham's fable had foretold.

⁵⁶ Thus God repaid Abimelech for the crime he committed against his father in killing his seventy brothers; ⁵⁷ and God also made all the wickedness of the people of Shechem fall back on their heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal.

Judges 9:56-57

Thus God repaid Abimelech for the crime he committed against his father in killing his seventy brothers. It is a certainty that God will repay wickedness, either in this life or the life to come. Often God finds a way to do it both in this life and the life to come.

On them came the curse of Jotham son of Jerubbaal. God had warned the men of Shechem through Jotham. Yet they rejected the warning of God, and therefore came to ruin.

Each person should consider whether God is providing warnings about something in the present time. The story of Abimelech, the men of Shechem, and Jotham demonstrate that there is a real and terrible price to pay for rejecting God's warnings: <<*He will repay them for their iniquity and wipe them out for their wickedness; the Lord our God will wipe them out*>> (Psalm 94:23).