

JUDGES: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A WOMAN OF THEBEZ VERSUS ABIMELECH CHAPTERS 8:29-9:57

A USERPING MURDERER CROWNED Religious emphasis	A MASS MURDERER CRUSHED Civil emphasis
<p>8:29-35 Trust in Baal</p> <p>Gideon had a son whom he named Abimelec. After Gideon died <u>Israel prostituted itself after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god</u>. They forgot the Lord and that He rescued them from their enemies. They showed no kindness to Jerubbaal's (Gideon's) family.</p>	<p>9:25-41 Trust in Gaal</p> <p>Gaal and his brothers moved into Shechem and <u>the city put its confidence in them</u> against Abimelech. Abimelech fought Gaal and Zebul, Abimelech's ally, drove Gaal and his brothers out.</p>
<p>9:1-6 The Temple of Baal-Berith</p> <p>Abimelech sought the throne in Shechem (a city of refuge, and Levitical, Josh 21:21). He asked the men of Shechem, "Which is better, to have all 70 of Jerubbaal's sons rule over you, or just one man who is your kith and kin (ignoring the Lord)? Shechem gave Abimelech 70 pieces of silver from <u>the temple of Baal-berith</u> to hire a ruthless gang. He killed his 70 (69) brothers on one stone. Jotham, the youngest son, escaped because he hid himself. Shechem crowned Abimelech king.</p>	<p>9:42-49 The Fortress of Baal-Berith</p> <p>The Shechemites went into the fields to fight and Abimelech attacked them in three companies. He destroyed and sowed the city of Shechem with salt. The people of the tower of Shechem hid in <u>the stronghold of the god Berith</u> and Abimelech burned the 1000 people of the tower of Shechem hiding in the stronghold.</p>
<p>9:7-21 A Parable</p> <p>Jotham <u>told a parable</u>, from Mt. Gerizim (mount of blessing, Deut. 11:29), of the trees seeking a king. He concluded pronouncing either blessings or cursings (fire) on Abimelech and Shechem for what they had done, anointing Abimelech king and killing the sons of Gideon.</p>	<p>9:50-55 A Saying</p> <p>Abimelech captured Thebez and attacked its tower to burn it. A woman dropped an upper millstone on his head crushing his skull. Abimelech commanded his armor-bearer to thrust him through with his sword killing him, lest they <u>said of him</u>, "A woman killed him".</p>
<p>9:22-25 God Sends</p> <p>After Abimelech reigned three years <u>God sent</u> an evil spirit between Abimelech and Shechem to avenge their crime against the 70 sons of Jerubbaal. Men of Shechem started ambushing travelers.</p>	<p>9:56-57 God Repays</p> <p>Thus, <u>God repaid</u> Abimelech and Shechem for their evil for murdering the sons of Jerubbaal (Gideon).</p>

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LESSONS:

The theme of Revenge found in Romans 12:17-21 is illustrated by this story.

Changes in allegiance in Israel towards the Lord and subsequently, towards Abimelech. 8:33-35 Israel prostitutes after Baal-Berith. They forget the Lord, although he rescued them from their enemies. They showed no kindness to Jerubbaal's family. Israel was proving fickle; from Yahweh they turned to Baal-Berith, in Shechem, at the very place where the blessings & cursings were called out, on Mts. Gerizim and Ebal. Baal-Berith meant Lord of the Covenant.

Shechem = city of refuge. It became the refuge of a true murderer. Numbers 35:6-34 "The avenger of blood". Man slaughterer stays in the city till the death of the high priest.

God's patience - He allowed Abimelech 3 years in which to repent. 9:22. How long do I give to someone to repent who has hurt me? Do I even want them to repent? Would I prefer revenge? Romans 12:17-21.

Compare Abimelech with Athaliah in 2 Chronicles 22:10-12.

Israelite "strong man" became the enemy. God saw to it that Abimelech was killed by a woman who crushed his head with a mill stone, symbolic of God's rejection of him as head over Israel. No one could face him so the Lord used an unnamed woman to destroy him. This was a dishonor. Genesis 3:15 "He will bruise his heel and He his head". The Lord used the weak over the mighty.

So in these two stories in chapters 4-5 Deborah, Barak and Jael versus Sisera, and 8:33-9:57 A woman of Thebez versus Abimelech, we see the Lord crushing the heads of two very powerful leaders, Sisera and Abimelech. Sisera attacked Israel from the outside and Abimelech attacked from the inside. Remember that attacks on the family, on the church, or on a mission can come from very powerful leaders either from without or from within, but God wants to, and can help His people, and deliver them.