### Judges

## Chapter 9

1Well, [one day], AbiMelech son of JeroBaAl [or GideOn] went to see his mother’s brothers in Well, [one day], AbiMelech son of JeroBaAl [or GideOn] went to see his mother’s brothers in <span class="placename">ShiKimaWell, [one day], AbiMelech son of JeroBaAl [or GideOn] went to see his mother’s brothers in <span class="placename">ShiKima</span>, and he spoke to them and all his relatives in his grandfather’s house, saying:  
  
 2‘Please speak to all the men of ShiKima and ask them:  
  
 ‘Which is better for you... To have 70 men –all the sons of JeroBaAl– rule over you, or just one man?  
  
 ‘And remember that I’m your own flesh and [blood]!’  
  
3So his uncles spoke about him to all the men of ShiKima and told them all the things that he said. And this moved their hearts [to follow] AbiMelech... For they said that he was their brother.  
  
4Then they gave him 70 silver coins from the [temple] of BaAl Berith, which AbiMelech thereafter used to hire some vain and cowardly men to be his followers.  
  
5So, he went to the house of his father in EphRatha and killed all of the legitimate sons of JeroBaAl [or Gideon], his own brothers, on a rock… That is, all except JoAtham the youngest, because he ran away and hid!  
  
  
6So after that, all the men of So after that, all the men of <span class="placename">ShiKimaSo after that, all the men of <span class="placename">ShiKima</span> and the house of BethMaAlo got together and appointed AbiMelech to be their king at the So after that, all the men of <span class="placename">ShiKima</span> and the house of BethMaAlo got together and appointed AbiMelech to be their king at the <span class="placename">Oak of SeditionSo after that, all the men of <span class="placename">ShiKima</span> and the house of BethMaAlo got together and appointed AbiMelech to be their king at the <span class="placename">Oak of Sedition</span> in So after that, all the men of <span class="placename">ShiKima</span> and the house of BethMaAlo got together and appointed AbiMelech to be their king at the <span class="placename">Oak of Sedition</span> in <span class="placename">ShiKimaSo after that, all the men of <span class="placename">ShiKima</span> and the house of BethMaAlo got together and appointed AbiMelech to be their king at the <span class="placename">Oak of Sedition</span> in <span class="placename">ShiKima</span>. 7But when [GideOn’s surviving son] JoAtham heard about this, he went and stood on top of Mount GiriZim and shouted to them:  
  
 ‘Listen to me, you men of ShiKima; for God is listening also!  
  
 8‘The trees once went out to anoint a king over them, and they asked the olive tree to be their ruler.  
  
 9‘But the olive tree replied:  
  
 ‘Must I now give up my oil that men use to glorify God in order to be promoted over the [rest of the] trees?’  
  
 10‘Then they said to the fig tree:  
  
 ‘Come rule over us!’  
  
 11‘But the fig tree replied:  
  
 ‘Must I leave all my sweetness and good fruit to be promoted over the [rest of the] trees?’  
  
 12‘Then they said to the [grape] vine:  
  
 ‘Come rule over us!’  
  
 13‘And the vine replied:  
  
 ‘Must I leave my wine that brings happiness to God and to men just to be promoted over the [rest of the] trees?’  
  
 14‘And finally, all the trees said to the brier bush:  
  
 ‘Come rule over us!’  
  
 15‘And the brier bush replied:  
  
 ‘If you’ll really anoint me to be your king, [all of you] must come and stand under my shadow. But if you refuse to do this, I’ll send out fire that’ll burn down the cedars of Lebanon!’  
  
 16‘Now, [judge for yourselves whether] what you’ve done was the right thing when you made AbiMelech your king!  
  
 ‘And ask if you’ve been fair with JeroBaAl and his house… Whether you’ve given him the reward that he deserves...  
  
 17‘Even though my father fought for you and put his life on the line when he saved you from the hands of MidiAn, 18you’ve risen against the house of my father today and you’ve murdered his sons, who had [once] numbered 70 men, on a stone!  
  
 ‘Then you made this AbiMelech, son of his slave [woman], the king over the men of ShiKima, just because he’s your brother!  
  
 19‘Now, if you think that you’ve dealt with JeroBaAl and his house faithfully and righteously, then find joy in AbiMelech, and may he rejoice over you!  
  
 20‘But if you don’t do that, may fire come from AbiMelech to devour the men of ShiKima and the house of BethMaAlo… And may fire come from the men of ShiKima and the house of BethMaAlo to devour AbiMelech!’  
  
21Thereafter, JoAtham ran away and lived at BaeEr, to get way from his brother AbiMelech.  
  
  
22Well, it turned out that AbiMelech reigned over IsraEl for just 3 years, 23for God created a bad relationship between AbiMelech and the men of ShiKima, and the men of ShiKima started dealing treacherously with the house of AbiMelech… 24[Which is what he was due] for the bad things that he’d done to the 70 sons of JeroBaAl [or Gideon].  
  
[God] had laid the blood of his brothers upon AbiMelech who’d murdered them, as well as on the men of ShiKima, since they were the ones who had empowered him to kill his brothers.  
  
25So the men of ShiKima made trouble for [AbiMelech] by sending highwaymen into the mountains, where they robbed everyone who passed that way… And all of this was reported to King AbiMelech.  
  
  
26Well, GaAl (a son of JoBel) and his brothers had moved to ShiKima. And because the men of ShiKima trusted him, 27they all went into his field where they gathered grapes and had a good time pressing them [into wine].  
  
Then they brought the [wine] into the temple of their god, where they ate, drank, and cursed AbiMelech.  
  
28It was GaAl (son of JoBel) that asked:  
  
 ‘Just who’s this AbiMelech? Just who is this son of ShiKima that we should serve him?  
  
 ‘Isn’t he JeroBaAl’s son, and isn’t ZeBul his steward EmMor’s son? Why should we be serving him?  
  
 29‘If these people would [start serving] me, I’d remove AbiMelech… I’d say to him:  
  
 ‘Gather your army and come here!’  
  
30Well, when ZeBul (the ruler of the city) heard what GaAl (son of JoBel) said, it made him very angry. 31So he sent messengers to AbiMelech secretly, who said:  
  
 ‘Look! GaAl (son of JoBel) and his brothers have come to ShiKima and they [are stirring up] the city against you!  
  
 32‘So, come here tonight with your army and lie in wait for them in the fields... 33Then at sunrise, approach the city; and when he and his people come out to confront you, you can do whatever you wish to him…  
  
 ‘That is, if you’re mighty enough!’  
  
34Therefore, AbiMelech and his army marched by night and formed an ambush against ShiKima with 4 companies. 35And when GaAl (son of JoBel) went out and stood before the city gate, AbiMelech’s army came to attack him.  
  
36Well, when GaAl saw them coming, he said to ZeBul:  
  
 ‘Look, there are people coming down from the tops of the mountains!’  
  
And ZeBul replied:  
  
 ‘You’re just seeing the shadows on the mountains [and thinking that they’re] men.’  
  
37But GaAl kept talking. He said:  
  
 ‘Look, there are people coming from the west, near the middle of the land, and another group is coming down the road from ‘Look, there are people coming from the west, near the middle of the land, and another group is coming down the road from <span class="placename">Helon-MaOnenim ‘Look, there are people coming from the west, near the middle of the land, and another group is coming down the road from <span class="placename">Helon-MaOnenim</span>.’  
  
38And ZeBul asked him:  
  
 ‘Just what were you thinking when you said:  
  
 ‘Who is AbiMelech that we should serve him?’  
  
 ‘These men whom you showed so much disdain for, are now coming! So we’d better get ready and form battle lines!’  
  
39So at that, GaAl gathered the men of ShiKima and set up battle lines to fight AbiMelech. 40But AbiMelech attacked and killed many people all the way up to the city gate! And GaAl had to retreat.  
  
41Then AbiMelech returned to AreMa.  
  
But, ZeBul thereafter drove GaAl and his brothers out of ShiKima.  
  
  
42Then the next day, when the people [of ShiKima unlocked the gates] and went out into their fields, someone reported this to AbiMelech. 43So he gathered his army and divided them into three companies, then he once again formed an ambush out in the fields.  
  
And when he saw the people leaving the city, he attacked them and cut them down.  
  
44Meanwhile, AbiMelech and his generals rushed up and attacked the city gate, as the other two companies were outside attacking the people in the fields. 45So AbiMelech fought against the city all that day and captured it.  
Then he killed all the people, [burned] the city, and poured salt over its land.  
  
  
46However, when the men in ShiKima’s citadel saw what was happening, they all gathered inside the temple of their god, [BaAl] Berith.  
  
47And when AbiMelech heard that all the men in the citadel had gathered in one place, 48he took his army up Mount SelMon. Then he grabbed an axe, cut off a tree branch and laid it on his shoulders, and he told his troops:  
  
 ‘Now, do the same thing I’m doing as quickly as you can!’  
  
49So they each cut a branch off of a tree and they followed AbiMelech... Then they laid the [branches] against the temple and set them on fire, burning it and killing all the people in the citadel of ShiKima (about 1,000 men and women).  
  
  
50And after that, AbiMelech left the temple of Berith and then he attacked TheBez, and captured it. 51It also had a citadel in the middle of the city, and all the people ran there and locked the door, then they climbed to the top of the citadel.  
  
52Well, AbiMelech attacked the citadel and laid siege to it; and when he got close to the door, he set it on fire... 53But as he was doing this, a woman dropped a piece of a millstone on his head, fracturing his skull!  
  
54So he quickly called to the young man who was his armor bearer and said:  
  
 ‘Draw your sword and kill me, for I don’t want anyone to say that I was killed by a woman!’  
  
Therefore, the young man ran him through with a sword, and he died.  
  
55Then when the men of IsraEl saw that AbiMelech was dead, they all just went back to their homes. 56And that’s how God paid AbiMelech back for the bad things that he’d done against his father, and for murdering his 70 brothers.  
  
57It’s also how He paid back the men of ShiKima… God brought their guilt down on their heads, and the curse of JoAtham (son of JeroBaAl [or Gideon]) came true.