

Judges 9

Verses 1 - 6

Abimelek son of Jerub-Baal went to his mother's brothers in Shechem and said to them and to all his mother's clan, ² "Ask all the citizens of Shechem, 'Which is better for you: to have all seventy of Jerub-Baal's sons rule over you, or just one man?' Remember, I am your flesh and blood." ³ When the brothers repeated all this to the citizens of Shechem, they were inclined to follow Abimelek, for they said, "He is related to us." ⁴ They gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, and Abimelek used it to hire reckless scoundrels, who became his followers. ⁵ He went to his father's home in Ophrah and on one stone murdered his seventy brothers, the sons of Jerub-Baal. But Jotham, the youngest son of Jerub-Baal, escaped by hiding. ⁶ Then all the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo gathered beside the great tree at the pillar in Shechem to crown Abimelek king.

Abimelek son of Jerub-Baal went to his mother's brothers in Shechem and said to them and to all his mother's clan,

Shortly before Joshua died he assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem and said, "Choose this day whom you will serve". This took place in 1375 BC

See Joshua 24

However, here in Judges Chapter 9, it is now 1144 BC, 231 years after Joshua died.

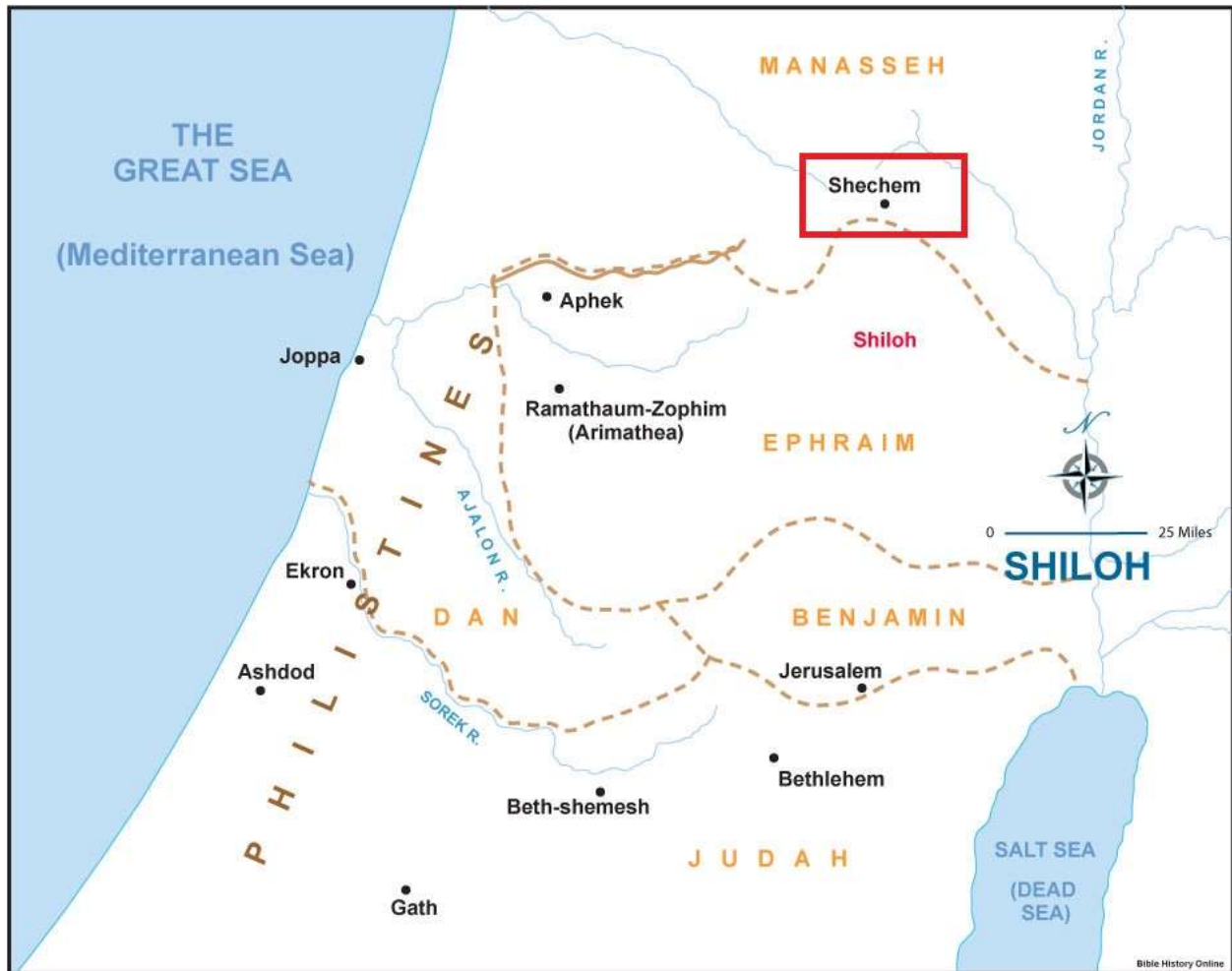
Just to put things in perspective, America became a nation in 1776, 248 years ago.

Have things changed very much in the last 250 years? The same was true with Israel.

The people of Shechem are now worshipping Baal and seem to have no knowledge of God. Think about how far they have fallen

Just as a reminder the following map is provided.

See map 905 Shechem



² **“Ask all the citizens of Shechem, ‘Which is better for you: to have all seventy of Jerub-Baal’s sons rule over you, or just one man?’ Remember, I am your flesh and blood.”**

Gideon’s concubine, the mother of Abimelek, was from Shechem making him a little closer to the people of Shechem.

⁴ **They gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, and Abimelek used it to hire reckless scoundrels, who became his followers.**

These men were willing to do anything for a piece of silver.

This included killing the 70 sons (minus 1) of Gideon, a man who had saved the people of Israel from the Midianites not long ago.

⁵ He went to his father's home in Ophrah and on one stone murdered his seventy brothers, the sons of Jerub-Baal. But Jotham, the youngest son of Jerub-Baal, escaped by hiding.

All of Gideon's sons, except Jotham, were executed on that one rock.

⁶ Then all the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo gathered beside the great tree at the pillar in Shechem to crown Abimelek king.

When the people of Israel asked Gideon to be their king he told them, **"I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you."**

While it is not stated here, the nation of Israel must have gone along with making Abimelek King because in verse 22 it says he ruled Israel for 3 years.

Verses 7 -15

⁷ When Jotham was told about this, he climbed up on the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted to them, "Listen to me, citizens of Shechem, so that God may listen to you.

⁸ One day the trees went out to anoint a king for themselves. They said to the olive tree, 'Be our king.'

⁹ "But the olive tree answered, 'Should I give up my oil, by which both gods and humans are honored, to hold sway over the trees?'

¹⁰ "Next, the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come and be our king.'

¹¹ "But the fig tree replied, 'Should I give up my fruit, so good and sweet, to hold sway over the trees?'

¹² "Then the trees said to the vine, 'Come and be our king.'

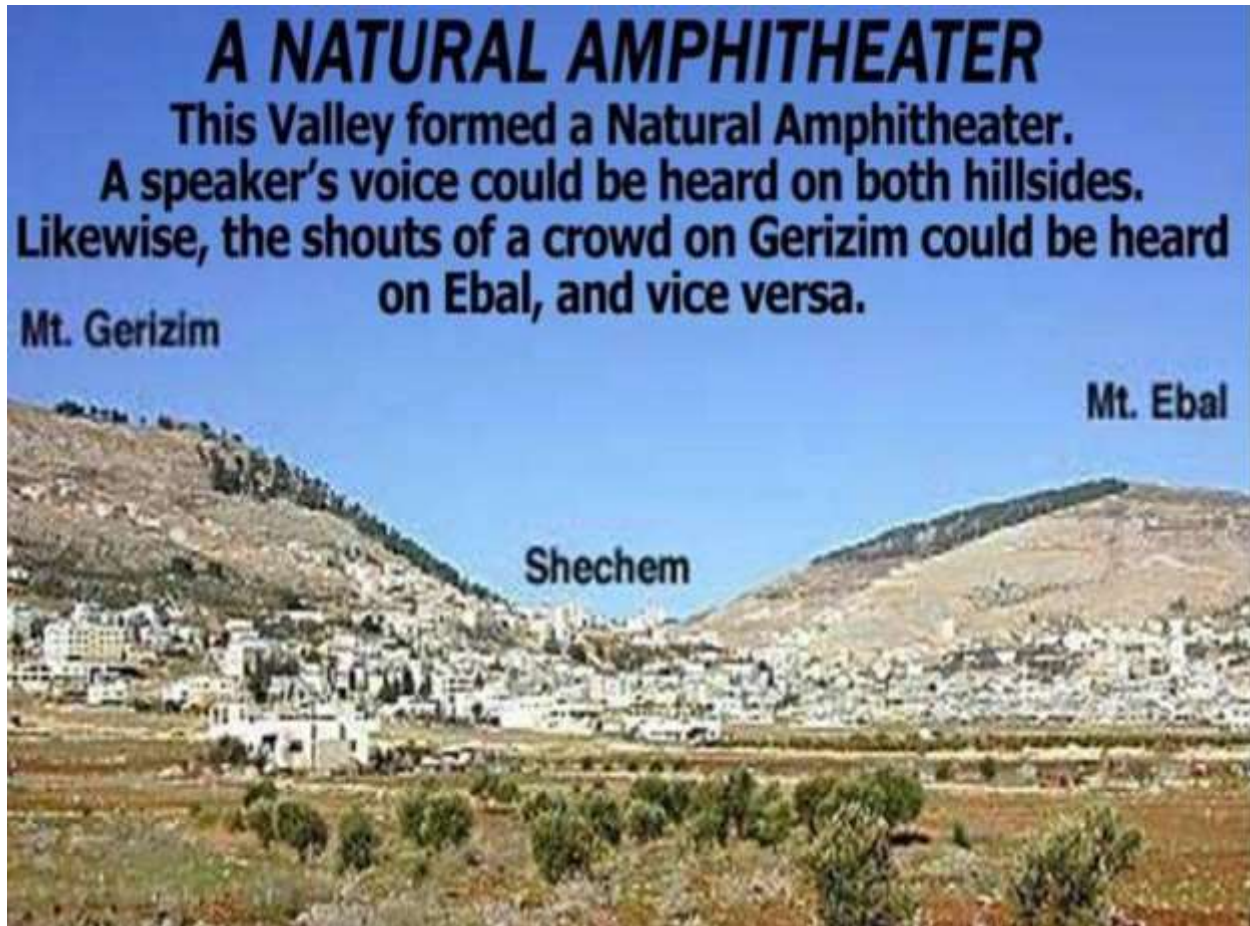
¹³ "But the vine answered, 'Should I give up my wine, which cheers both gods and humans, to hold sway over the trees?'

¹⁴ "Finally all the trees said to the thorn bush, 'Come and be our king.'

¹⁵ "The thorn bush said to the trees, 'If you really want to anoint me king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, then let fire come out of the thorn bush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!'

⁷ When Jotham was told about this, he climbed up on the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted to them, “Listen to me, citizens of Shechem, so that God may listen to you.

See pic 910



Jotham could be heard by a great multitude because this area formed a natural amphitheater.

THE FABLE OF THE TREES

There are only two fables that were spoken in the Old Testament.

This one and the one in 2 Kings 14:9

⁹ But Jehoash king of Israel sent *messengers* to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, “The thorn bush that was in Lebanon sent *word* to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, ‘Give your daughter to my son in marriage.’ But a wild animal that was in Lebanon passed by and trampled the thorn bush.

The trees (the people of Shechem) had been looking for a king for some time now.

They had asked a number of different men to lead them.

They said to the **olive-tree** (Gideon)

The trees said to the **fig-tree** (maybe a son of Gideon)

The trees said to the **vine** (maybe another son of Gideon)

Then said all the trees to the **thorn bush** (a son of Gideon's concubine)

Each candidate became increasingly worse until they reached the bottom of the barrel.

The thorn bush, Abimelek, becomes king but he is a worthless person.

Something quite similar has happened in our time. The Republican Party has finally reached the bottom of the barrel in Donald Trump. Let's pray this is the bottom.

¹⁵ "The thorn bush said to the trees, 'If you really want to anoint me king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, then let fire come out of the thorn bush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!'

The cedars of Lebanon were greatest trees in the Middle East. The thorn bush (Abimelek) which easily catches fire and burns out quickly, can kindle a fire that will burn and destroy the greatest of trees (Gideon's sons).

Verses 16 -21

¹⁶ "Have you acted honorably and in good faith by making Abimelek king? Have you been fair to Jerub-Baal and his family? Have you treated him as he deserves?

¹⁷ Remember that my father fought for you and risked his life to rescue you from the hand of Midian. ¹⁸ But today you have revolted against my father's family. You have murdered his seventy sons on a single stone and have made Abimelek, the son of his female slave, king over the citizens of Shechem because he is related to you. ¹⁹ So have you acted honorably and in good faith toward Jerub-Baal and his family today? If you have, may Abimelek be your joy, and may you be his, too! ²⁰ But if you have not, let fire come out from Abimelek and consume you, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo, and let fire come out from you, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo, and consume Abimelek!" ²¹ Then Jotham fled, escaping to Beer, and he lived there because he was afraid of his brother Abimelek.

¹⁶ “Have you acted honorably and in good faith by making Abimelek king? Have you been fair to Jerub-Baal and his family? Have you treated him as he deserves?”

The obvious answer to this question is NO.

¹⁷ Remember that my father fought for you and risked his life to rescue you from the hand of Midian. ¹⁸ But today you have revolted against my father’s family. **You have murdered his seventy sons on a single stone and have made Abimelek, the son of his female slave, king over the citizens of Shechem because he is related to you.**

The people of Shechem are accused of killing the 70 sons of Gideon because they choose to fund Abimelek’s campaign and rewarded him for killing Gideon’s sons by making him king.

Jotham then reminds them that Abimelek is the son of a slave woman. In the culture of that time this was an obvious slur on Abimelek.

¹⁹ So have you acted honorably and in good faith toward Jerub-Baal and his family today? If you have, may Abimelek be your joy, and may you be his, too!

Abimelech is letting the town know that they deserve one another. Only an evil town chooses a man like Abimelek.

What does it say about Shechem (the Republican Party) that it has made Abimelek (Donald Trump) their beloved leader?

²⁰ But if you have not (acted honorably), let fire come out from Abimelek and consume you, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo, and let fire come out from you, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo, and consume Abimelek!” ²¹ Then Jotham fled, escaping to Beer, and he lived there because he was afraid of his brother Abimelek.

This was both a curse and a prophecy.

Jotham said that Abimelek and Shechem would destroy each other.

This prophecy was fulfilled within three years (at the end of this chapter).

This writer is no prophet but let’s see what happens to Donald Trump.

Verses 22 - 25

²² After Abimelek had governed Israel three years, ²³ God stirred up animosity between Abimelek and the citizens of Shechem so that they acted treacherously against Abimelek. ²⁴ God did this in order that the crime against Jerub-Baal's seventy sons, the shedding of their blood, might be avenged on their brother Abimelek and on the citizens of Shechem, who had helped him murder his brothers. ²⁵ In opposition to him these citizens of Shechem set men on the hilltops to ambush and rob everyone who passed by, and this was reported to Abimelek.

²² After Abimelek had governed **Israel three years,**

It seems Abimelek ruled all of Israel not just Shechem.

²³ God stirred up animosity between Abimelek and the citizens of Shechem so that they acted treacherously against Abimelek.

People have free will but there are times when God intervenes in the history of mankind to bring about a change. This doesn't interfere with our decision to accept or reject God but it does steer history in a different direction.

²⁴ God did this in order that the crime against Jerub-Baal's seventy sons, the shedding of their blood, might be avenged on their brother Abimelek and on the citizens of Shechem, who had helped him murder his brothers.

God did this to punish Abimelek and the men of Shechem because both were guilty of promoting evil.

²⁵ In opposition to him these citizens of Shechem set men on the hilltops to ambush and rob everyone who passed by, and this was reported to Abimelek.

A group of people in Shechem instituted a system of highway robbery hoping Abimelek would come after them and they might get an opportunity to kill him.

But someone turned informer, and warned Abimelek.

Verse 26 - 29

²⁶ Now Gaal son of Ebed moved with his clan into Shechem, and its citizens put their confidence in him. ²⁷ After they had gone out into the fields and gathered the grapes and trodden them, they held a festival in the temple of their god. While they were eating and drinking, they cursed Abimelek. ²⁸ Then Gaal son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelek, and why should we Shechemites be subject to him? Isn’t he Jerub-Baal’s son, and isn’t Zebul his deputy? Serve the family of Hamor, Shechem’s father! Why should we serve Abimelek? ²⁹ If only this people were under my command! Then I would get rid of him. I would say to Abimelek, ‘Call out your whole army!’”

²⁶ Now Gaal son of Ebed moved with his clan into Shechem, and its citizens put their confidence in him.

Currently, very little is known about this man.

However, it is possible he was a distant relative of Hamor, Shechem’s father; because he argues that the people of Shechem should follow a relative of Hamor not a son of Gideon.

²⁷ After they had gone out into the fields and gathered the grapes and trodden them, they held a festival in the temple of their god. While they were eating and drinking, they cursed Abimelek.

Gaal chose the House of Baal, a place that encouraged excessive drinking and mingling with religious prostitutes, as the place to announce his insurrection.

²⁸ Then Gaal son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelek, and why should we Shechemites be subject to him? Isn’t he Jerub-Baal’s son, and isn’t Zebul his deputy? Serve the family of Hamor, Shechem’s father! Why should we serve Abimelek?”

Gaal’s argument was that they should be proud of their own ancestry and follow a son of Hamor who was the founder of Shechem and a fellow Canaanite.

Abimelek on the other hand was a member of the Jewish people who were relatively new to the land of Canaan.

²⁹ If only this people were under my command! Then I would get rid of him. I would say to Abimelek, ‘Call out your whole army!’”

Gaal may have had the attention and vote of the town’s people but bragging that he could defeat the army of Abimelek was a bit hasty.

Verses 30 - 33

³⁰ When Zebul the governor of the city heard what Gaal son of Ebed said, he was very angry. ³¹ Under cover he sent messengers to Abimelek, saying, “Gaal son of Ebed and his clan have come to Shechem and are stirring up the city against you. ³² Now then, during the night you and your men should come and lie in wait in the fields. ³³ In the morning at sunrise, advance against the city. When Gaal and his men come out against you, seize the opportunity to attack them.”

³⁰ When Zebul the governor of the city heard what Gaal son of Ebed said, he was very angry.

Zebul was the governor of Shechem and an ally of Abimelek, so he was not happy to hear about a possible insurrection.

³¹ Under cover he sent messengers to Abimelek, saying, “Gaal son of Ebed and his clan have come to Shechem and are stirring up the city against you.

He secretly sent loyal messengers to Abimelek to let him know of the plot by Gaal to supplant him.

³² Now then, during the night you and your men should come and lie in wait in the fields. ³³ In the morning at sunrise, advance against the city. When Gaal and his men come out against you, seize the opportunity to attack them.”

Zebul had already put a plan together so the men of the city might be caught off guard by Abimelek and his men.

Verses 34 -40

³⁴ So Abimelek and all his troops set out by night and took up concealed positions near Shechem in four companies. ³⁵ Now Gaal son of Ebed had gone out and was standing at the entrance of the city gate just as Abimelek and his troops came out from their hiding place. ³⁶ When Gaal saw them, he said to Zebul, “Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!” Zebul replied, “You mistake the shadows of the mountains for men.” ³⁷ But Gaal spoke up again: “Look, people are coming down from the central hill, and a company is coming from the direction of the diviners’ tree.” ³⁸ Then Zebul said to him, “Where is your big talk now, you who said, ‘Who is Abimelek that we should be subject to him?’ Aren’t these the men you ridiculed? Go out and fight them!” ³⁹ So Gaal led out the citizens of Shechem and fought Abimelek. ⁴⁰ Abimelek chased him all the way to the entrance of the gate, and many were killed as they fled.

³⁴ So Abimelek and all his troops set out by night and took up concealed positions near Shechem in four companies. ³⁵ Now Gaal son of Ebed had gone out and was standing at the entrance of the city gate just as Abimelek and his troops came out from their hiding place. ³⁶ When Gaal saw them, he said to Zebul, “Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!” Zebul replied, “You mistake the shadows of the mountains for men.”

Abimelek followed the plan of the governor and got his men in position that night. They were put into 4 companies.

Gaal was at the city Gate in the morning and saw the troops of Abimelech coming out of their hiding places.

But Zebul tried to convince him that it was a mirage.

³⁷ But Gaal spoke up again: “Look, people are coming down from the central hill, and a company is coming from the direction of the diviners’ tree.” ³⁸ Then Zebul said to him, “Where is your big talk now, you who said, ‘Who is Abimelek that we should be subject to him?’ Aren’t these the men you ridiculed? Go out and fight them!”

When Gaal sees more people, Zebul informs him that they are in fact the supporters of Abimelek that he had ridiculed and that he better go and fight against them.

⁴⁰ Abimelek chased him all the way to the entrance of the gate, and many were killed as they fled.

Gaal took the lead as the men of Shechem went out against Abimelech but they soon retreated and headed back to the city. On the way back they took a lot of casualties.

Verses 41 - 45

⁴¹ Then Abimelek stayed in Arumah, and Zebul drove Gaal and his clan out of Shechem.⁴² The next day the people of Shechem went out to the fields, and this was reported to Abimelek.⁴³ So he took his men, divided them into three companies and set an ambush in the fields. When he saw the people coming out of the city, he rose to attack them.⁴⁴ Abimelek and the companies with him rushed forward to a position at the entrance of the city gate. Then two companies attacked those in the fields and struck them down.⁴⁵ All that day Abimelek pressed his attack against the city until he had captured it and killed its people. Then he destroyed the city and scattered salt over it.

⁴¹ Then Abimelek stayed in Arumah, and Zebul drove Gaal and his clan out of Shechem.

After the failed coup attempt Gaal and his clan lost favor with the people of Shechem and the governor was able to drive them from the city.

⁴² The next day the people of Shechem went out to the fields, and this was reported to Abimelek.

They most likely went out to recover the bodies of their fellow citizens that had died in the battle the day before.

⁴⁴ Abimelek and the companies with him rushed forward to a position at the entrance of the city gate. Then two companies attacked those in the fields and struck them down.

Abimelek used the same strategy that he had used the day before but this time he made sure the entrance to the city was sealed off by his men so the men of the city could not make it back into the city.

⁴⁵ All that day Abimelek pressed his attack against the city until he had captured it and killed its people. Then he destroyed the city and scattered salt over it.

After defeating the men of the city that had ventured into the open fields Abimelek was free to attack the city.

He killed all the people, destroyed the city and made it a waste land by scattering salt over it. People who get involved in a coup against a king have no plan B. So how was it possible that Gaal and his clan were able to leave the city? There may be more to this story that we are not aware of for the sake of brevity.

Verses 46 - 49

⁴⁶ On hearing this, the citizens in the tower of Shechem went into the stronghold of the temple of El-Berith. ⁴⁷ When Abimelek heard that they had assembled there, ⁴⁸ he and all his men went up Mount Zalmon. He took an ax and cut off some branches, which he lifted to his shoulders. He ordered the men with him, "Quick! Do what you have seen me do!" ⁴⁹ So all the men cut branches and followed Abimelek. They piled them against the stronghold and set it on fire with the people still inside. So all the people in the tower of Shechem, about a thousand men and women, also died.

⁴⁶ On hearing this, the citizens in the tower of Shechem went into the stronghold of the temple of El-Berith.

This probably included the priests of Baal, the lords (people of high social standing) of Shechem, and the rulers of the city.

⁴⁹ So all the men cut branches and followed Abimelek. They piled them against the stronghold and set it on fire with the people still inside.

Death in battle would have been preferable to dying in a fiery furnace.

So all the people in the tower of Shechem, about a thousand men and women, also died.

The important people of the city died despite their many advantages.

Verses 50 - 57

⁵⁰ Next Abimelek went to Thebez and besieged it and captured it. ⁵¹ Inside the city, however, was a strong tower, to which all the men and women—all the people of the city—had fled. They had locked themselves in and climbed up on the tower roof. ⁵² Abimelek went to the tower and attacked it. But as he approached the entrance to the tower to set it on fire, ⁵³ a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull. ⁵⁴ Hurriedly he called to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can’t say, ‘A woman killed him.’” So his servant ran him through, and he died. ⁵⁵ When the Israelites saw that Abimelek was dead, they went home. ⁵⁶ Thus God repaid the wickedness that Abimelek had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ God also made the people of Shechem pay for all their wickedness. The curse of Jotham son of Jerub-Baal came on them.

⁵⁰ Next Abimelek went to Thebez and besieged it and captured it.

See map 915



⁵¹ Inside the city, however, was a strong tower, to which all the men and women—all the people of the city—had fled. They had locked themselves in and climbed up on the tower roof.

It is interesting to see how cities used different techniques to protect themselves against invading forces. There were city walls with gates, towers with strongholds, towers with a balcony and a parapet that circled the top of the building.

⁵² Abimelek went to the tower and attacked it. But as he approached the entrance to the tower to set it on fire, ⁵³ a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull.

Abimelek used the same tactic against this tower that he had used in Shechem.

However, he misjudged the ingenuity of this woman who used a kitchen appliance to kill the king.

See pic 920



As we can see in the picture above there were two types of millstones:

1. The larger stone on the bottom that served as the base of the mill.
2. The upper stone had a handle in order to make it rotate and grind the grain.

The upper stone averaged ten to fourteen inches in length and weighed about four or five pounds.

⁵⁴ Hurriedly he called to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can’t say, ‘A woman killed him.’” So his servant ran him through, and he died. ⁵⁵ When the Israelites saw that Abimelek was dead, they went home.

When Abimelek was struck by the stone it must have been a glancing blow because if it had hit him directly in the head he would have been unable to call for his armor bearer.

⁵⁶ Thus God repaid the wickedness that Abimelek had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ God also made the people of Shechem pay for all their wickedness. The curse of Jotham son of Jerub-Baal came on them.

The principle that we will all reap what we have sown is undeniable.

God doesn't always bring about justice quickly because there is another principle at work in this world.

God is patient not wanting any one to perish.

But whether it comes quickly or slowly, justice will be served.