

The Book of  
**JUDGES**

*Testing the Heart of God's Children*



Self-Appointed Rule

Judges 9:1-57

Lesson 9

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### Introduction

Though Gideon rejected Israel's offer to become their king, his actions suggest otherwise. Accepting spoils from his battle with Midian and establishing a large number of wives, suggests possible alliances with surrounding communities. Arranged marriages were often used to strengthen alliances with other rulers, the harem enabled a king to be allied simultaneously with many outside rulers.

Gideon named the son of his concubine Abimelech, meaning "my father is king", further underscoring his divided allegiance to the Lords rule over Israel. Abimelech, with the help of his mother's family in Shechem grasped for position and power for himself. He hired ruthless and reckless men and called on the Canaanite god Baal-Berith, to establish his self-appointed rule.

This time the consequences of Israel's idolatry comes, not from outsiders but from within Gideon's divided family. Scripture never calls Abimelech a judge, he is a self-appointed ruler, a usurper. It is interesting that Gideon in this chapter, is always referred to as Jerubbaal (let Baal contend). Here before us is a picture of Baal contending for the rule of God's children through the illegitimate heritage of Gideon. Israel chooses to follow the self-appointed king for themselves resulting in God's righteous judgement in the end.



## LOOKING FOR GOLD - WHAT DOES IT SAY?

The first step in mining for gold is getting the lay of the land. **Carefully observe the text** looking to see where you might dig to find hidden treasure. **Mark your text** looking for repeated words, contrasts or similarities. Look for answers to, Who? What? When? Where? Why or How?

*Setting the scene: Read Galatians 6:7-9, 2 Peter 2:18-19 for more insight into the heart of God. Use an atlas or other sources to place the cities in the appropriate place on your map. Pay attention to who's inheritance they are occupying.*

### **Judges 9:1-6**

1 Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, 2 "Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I am your own flesh and bone."

3 And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." 4 So they gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him. 5 Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself. 6 And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that was in Shechem.



## Digging Deeper

Dig deeper using other resources such as a dictionary, concordance, maps, cross-references. Notate where you found it to share with the group. Look for commands to obey or questions to be answered. What does God want you to know about Himself?

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### Judges 9:7-21

7 Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them:

"Listen to me, you men of Shechem, That God may listen to you!

8 "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' 9 But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I cease giving my oil, with which they honor God and men, and go to sway over trees?'

10 "Then the trees said to the fig tree, 'You come and reign over us!' 11 But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to sway over trees?'

12 "Then the trees said to the vine, 'You come and reign over us!' 13 But the vine said to them, 'Should I cease my new wine, which cheers both God and men, and go to sway over trees?'

14 "Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'You come and reign over us!' 15 And the bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you anoint me as king over you, then come and take shelter in my shade; But if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon!'



## **Judges 9:22-41**

**22** After Abimelech had reigned over Israel three years, **23** God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, **24** that the crime done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be settled and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who aided him in the killing of his brothers. **25** And the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was told Abimelech.

**26** Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. **27** So they went out into the fields, and gathered grapes from their vineyards and trod them, and made merry. And they went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and cursed Abimelech. **28** Then Gaal the son of Ebed said, "Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Jerubbaal, and is not Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; but why should we serve him? **29** If only this people were under my authority! Then I would remove Abimelech." So he said to Abimelech, "Increase your army and come out!"

**30** When Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was aroused. **31** And he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, "Take note! Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem; and here they are, fortifying the city against you. **32** Now therefore, get up by night, you and the people who are with you, and lie in wait in the field. **33** And it shall be, as soon as the sun is up in the morning, that you shall rise early and rush upon the city; and when he and the people who are with him come out against you, you may then do to them as you find opportunity."

**34** So Abimelech and all the people who were with him rose by night, and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. **35** When Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood



### **Judges 9:42-57**

**42** And it came about on the next day that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech. **43** So he took his people, divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the field. And he looked, and there were the people, coming out of the city; and he rose against them and attacked them. **44** Then Abimelech and the company that was with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city; and the other two companies rushed upon all who were in the fields and killed them. **45** So Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city and killed the people who were in it; and he demolished the city and sowed it with salt.

**46** Now when all the men of the tower of Shechem had heard that, they entered the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith. **47** And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. **48** Then Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who were with him. And Abimelech took an ax in his hand and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it and laid it on his shoulder; then he said to the people who were with him, "What you have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done." **49** So each of the people likewise cut down his own bough and followed Abimelech, put them against the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire above them, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.





## BOILING IT DOWN – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



What **lesson** can I draw from my observations?

State each lesson in a simple sentence (aim for 10 words or less).

Judges 9:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 9:7-21 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 9:22-41 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 9:42-57 \_\_\_\_\_

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## REFINED AS GOLD - HOW CAN I APPLY IT?

How should it change me? Ask yourself, "What **course of action** do I need to take to apply each lesson?" (aim for 10 words or less)

Judges 9:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 9:7-21 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 9:22-41 \_\_\_\_\_

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Judges 9:42-57 \_\_\_\_\_

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**CHALLENGE:** Use cross-references to find correlating scripture that backs up a main point of the chapter. Summarize your findings in your own words.

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## STORING UP YOUR TREASURE . . .

What is God doing in this chapter?

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What caused Israel's desertion? Ch. 8:33-35

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Does Israel cry out to God for help?

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In raising up the next 2 judges, what do we learn about God? Ch. 10:1-3

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What words or phrases are repeated?

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**CHECKING FOR CLARITY:** See if you can boil down the meaning of **each section** into one or two words. This helps you fully understand what the author is trying to convey. (It's fun to alliterate if you want to try) Did you catch his vision?

Judges 9:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_  
Judges 9:7-21 \_\_\_\_\_  
Judges 9:22-41 \_\_\_\_\_  
Judges 9:42-57 \_\_\_\_\_

**BARS OF GOLD:** State the main **point** of the passage in the form of a title.

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**FLEX YOUR MUSCLES:** Can you discover an N.T. example of this O.T. truth?

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### HIDE YOUR TREASURE IN YOUR HEART

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? Romans 6:16

Radiating His Truth . . .

If we reject the true king, we will be ruled by a usurper. -Gary Inrig



