

In our last lesson, we talked about Gideon. God helped Gideon in the battle with the Midianites. After Gideon died, the Israelites turned away from God again. They forgot all the good things Gideon had done for them.

Gideon was a very good man. He had 70 sons. He also had a son named Abimelech. Abimelech was not like his father. He was not a good man. Abimelech went to his mother's relatives in Shechem and convinced them that it would be better to have one ruler instead of 70 men ruling.

These relatives talked to the other men in Shechem. They decided to make Abimelech their leader. They even gave Abimelech 70 shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith. (Judges 9:4) Abimelech used the money to hire some bad men. He paid the bad men to kill his 70 brothers. The youngest brother, Jotham, hid and was not killed. The men of Shechem made Abimelech their king.

When Jotham heard what happened, he went up on Mount Gerizim and told a parable about the bramble and the trees. (Judges 9:7) In this parable, Jotham told about a group of trees that wanted a king. The group of trees asked the olive tree to be their leader. But the olive tree could not stop giving olive oil long enough to lead the other trees. The group of trees asked the fig tree to be their leader. But the fig tree could not stop making sweet fruit long enough to lead them. The group of trees then asked the bramble to lead them. The bramble was a prickly plant that could stick you and hurt you. It was not a good plant.

Jotham was telling them they had chosen a person to be their leader who was not good for them. He could hurt them.

The people of Shechem started to hate Abimelech very quickly. Abimelech surrounded the city and killed many of the people. When the people thought it was safe again, they went out in the fields to work. Abimelech killed them. The people who were left went into the city to hide.

When Abimelech heard where the people were, he went after them. Abimelech captured the town and destroyed it. He brought trees in and set them on fire. All the people in the tower of Shechem were killed. (Judges 9:49)

Then Abimelech went to the city of Thebez. He took over the city. There was a very strong tower there. The people ran to the tower to hide. Abimelech went to the tower to burn it. A woman in the tower dropped a large stone down on him. It did not kill Abimelech, but he knew he was going to die. He asked his armor bearer to draw his sword and kill him. Abimelech did not want people to be able to say he was killed by a woman.

Abimelech was a very wicked judge. He was the 6th judge. The seventh judge was named Tola. He was from the tribe of Issachar. We are not told much about him. The eighth judge was Jair. He lived in Gilead and had thirty sons. After Jair died, the Israelites started to worship idols again.

The ninth judge was Jephthah. Jephthah was faithful to God. God chose Jephthah to lead the army against the Ammonites. Jephthah won the battle with the Ammonites. When he went back home, his daughter ran out to meet him.

The tenth judge was Ibzen from Bethlehem. The eleventh judge was Elon, the Zebulite. The twelfth judge was Abdon. We are not told much about these three judges.

It is very sad that the Israelites were not grateful to God for all that He had done for them.