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## The Destruction of Shechem

### 9: 22-25

**The destruction of Shechem DIG: What characterized Abimelech's reign as king? Why? How long did Abimelech reign compared to others that we see in Judges? How can evil proceed from ADONAI (First Samuel 16:14 and 18:10)? How did God punish Abimelech for murdering Gideon's [sixty-nine] sons?**

**REFLECT: Sooner or later, Ha'Shem repays wickedness. What does that inspire in you? Awe? Comfort? Guilt? Fear? Is there any wicked thing that you'd like to rid yourself of? Do you know a modern-day Abimelech? What can you do to not be affected by his or her evil? Read Psalm 73 and be comforted.**

**Ha'Shem will not allow the murderer to escape; but will punish him in some dreadful way.**

Self-seeking opportunists and those capable of treacherous murder never make easy companions, and it was not long before hostility broke out between **Abimelech** and **the men of Shechem**. Perhaps it's significant that **Abimelech** didn't seem to live in Shechem, but delegated that oversight to **Zebul (9:30)**. The sovereignty of **ADONAI** can be seen in these verses (**First Samuel 16:14, 18:10** and **First Kings 22:19-23**).<sup>230</sup> The main thread of the narrative is resumed here after the interlude of **Jotham's** fable (**to see link click Bj - Jothan's Fable**). But rather than opening with an account of the events of **Abimelech's** reign, it moves almost at once to **his** downfall.<sup>231</sup>

**And Abimelech was prince** (Hebrew: *sar*) **over Isra'el. Abimelech** was seated on the throne **his father** refused. But how long did it last? In a mere **three years (9:22 NLT)** we see **the thornbush (9:14-15)** withered and burned. The prosperity of the wicked is short and fickle. The author used the Hebrew word *sar*, which means *prince, captain, or official*, and not the word *melech*, which means *king*. By using *sar*, the author states that **Abimelech** governed, but the narrator didn't

accept **him** as a king; thus showing that **he** didn't fulfill **Isra'el's** need for a king. The term **Isra'el** is not always used of the whole nation, but sometimes used more locally, as it is here. In this case, **Isra'el** refers to **Greater Shechem**, which included **Shechem, Beth-Millo, Arumah, and Thebez (9:6)**. Here, the length of **his three-year** rule is announced at the beginning of **his** reign rather than the end, which is the norm in this book. This signaled that **his** attempt to be "king" would not last as long as any of the oppressions by the enemies of **Isra'el** or any of the periods in the rest of the book.



After **three years** of relative success, **Abimelech** found **himself** in trouble. It's one thing to acquire a throne and quite another to defend and hold onto it. The divine vindication of **Jotham's** judgment began with a divine action. **Elohim sent an evil spirit, a demon, between Abimelech and the men of Shechem.** As a result of the **demonic** attack **the men of Shechem revolted against Abimelech (9:23 Hebrew)**, as was predicted by **Jotham three years** earlier. **God was punishing Abimelech for murdering Gideon's [sixty-nine] sons (9:5a), and the citizens of Shechem for supporting him in this treachery of murdering his half-brothers (9:24 NLT).**<sup>232</sup>

The result was that a series of events were set in motion that had a relentless, repeating pattern to them. **Abimelech** going to **Shechem** to incite **the rulers** to conspire against **the sons of Gideon (9:1-2)** is answered by **Ga'al's** arrival in **Shechem** to incite **its rulers** to conspire with **Ga'al** against **Abimelech** (see **BI - The Boasting of Ga'al**). The ambush set by **the men of Shechem (9:25)** is

answered by the ambush set by **Abimelech** on the advice of **Zebul (9:34)**. Finally, **Abimelech**, who killed **the sons of Gideon on one stone (9:5a and 18)**, is **himself** killed by **a millstone** which was dropped on **his head** by **a woman of Thebez (9:53)**. Therefore, in the working out of the plot, act answers to act, and **evil** to **evil**. So **God** used **a demon** to bring about the death of **Abimelech**, showing that **He** is able to use **demons** to carry out **His** purposes. **Ha'Shem** will do this again in the case of **Ahab** (see the commentary on **Elijah and Elisha Bf - The Death of Ahab**). And that **demon** is not eliminated until **Abimelech, the chief instigator of evil** is struck down; after that, **his followers**, as if walking away from a bad dream, put down **their** weapons and **went home (9:55)**.<sup>233</sup>

**The rulers of Shechem**, who had helped crown **Abimelech** as king, **set men on the mountains and robbed everyone who passed that way. The mountains** in view here were probably **Gerizim** and **Ebal**, which overlook **Shechem** and would have provided excellent vantage points from which to see anyone approaching the narrow **Shechem** valley below.<sup>234</sup> As the caravans were coming to pay tribute to **Abimelech, the men of Shechem robbed** them. This highway **robbery** would discredit the government of **Abimelech**. All this was from **Ha'Shem**, who was about to punish both **Abimelech** and **the men of Shechem** for the slaughter of **Gideon's [sixty-nine] sons (9:5a)**.<sup>235</sup> The fact that **someone warned Abimelech about their plot (9:25 Hebrew)** shows that the seat of government was not in **Shechem**. The actions of **the men of Shechem** achieved two things: First, **they** showed that **Abimelech** could not guarantee the safety of travelers in **his** own domain; and secondly, the caravans would hear about the danger, take a different route, and not have to pay **Abimelech** whatever tribute money levied upon them.<sup>236</sup> The destabilizing of **Abimelech's** fledgling kingdom created a situation like the one existing in the terrible days of **Shamgar and Ja'el (5:6-7a)**. **Abimelech** was informed about what was going on, but before **he** could take action to stop it, another, more ominous development took place with the boasting of **Ga'al**.

Although **Abimelech** thought **he** was still in control of **his** destiny, the cracks were beginning to show. Men may do **evil**, and think they have profited; they may imagine that they have strengthened themselves in their wickedness, and are quite secure (**Psalms 73**). That they have friends who will stand by them, and save them; but **ADONAI** can, with great ease, make all their schemes crumble around them, turn their best plans into ruin, and punish those on whom they depended for help and security. The example of **Abimelech** and **the men of Shechem** may assure

us that **Ha'Shem** will not allow **the murderer** to escape; but will punish **him** in some dreadful way (see **Bn – The death of Abimelech**).<sup>237</sup>

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for how wonderful **You** always are (Psalms 63:3)! **You** offer those who trust in **You** an eternity that is much better than any momentary earthly thrill. This world will pass away but life with **You** will last forever! Even when I have hard earthly trials, I am comforted by knowing that they will be over soon! **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18)**. Those who live separating themselves from **Your** love on earth will live separate from **You** after they die. By loving themselves the most and giving into all kinds of selfish desires, they will have chosen an eternity of pain and suffering. **He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36)**. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*