

BOOK OF JUDGES
GIDEON'S LEGACY IN ABIMELECH-PT 1
JUDGES 8:33-35; 9:1-6

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Introduction

In last week's message we saw how the **LORD** used **GIDEON** to deliver **ISRAEL** from the **MIDIANITES** just as the **HE** raised him up to do!
But we also began to see that not everything in the rest of **GIDEON'S** life was positive! There were a few negatives that we saw:

GIDEON'S ACTIONS SPOKE LOUDER THAN HIS WORDS!

GIDEON knew in his heart that only the **LORD** had saved **ISRAEL** from the **MIDIANITES** and that only **HE** deserved to rule **HIS** people and **GIDEON** even gave lip service to that (8:23)! However, we can see that **GIDEON** leveraged the people's desire to make him king and he used it for his own comfort though he may not have actually had the title of king!

GIDEON is seen behaving himself as a **KING**.

He asked for himself and received GOLDEN EARRINGS and other things that came from the enemy that he really didn't deserve! (8:24-25)

He had many wives—as kings were known to have! (8:30)

He fathered 70 sons with his many wives+1 w/concubine! (8:30-31)

He named one of his sons "Abimelech" which means "my father is king". (8:31)

SOME OF GIDEON'S ACTIONS CAUSED A SNARE TO ISRAEL AND TO HIS OWN HOUSE!

GIDEON made a **GOLDEN EPHOD** from **GOLD** that his men gave him from off of the dead bodies of the **MIDIANITES** they had slain in battle!

We should note that the **golden earrings, nose rings, etc. were engraved with images and other things associated with the idol worship** of the **MIDIANITES** who were **ISHMAELITES!** That which had previously been dedicated to **IDOLS** was melted down and formed into a **GOLDEN EPHOD**, whose purpose is not given us but was, possibly, for a reminder of the **VICTORY** over the **MIDIANITES!**

GIDEON put that **GOLDEN EPHOD** in his city of **OPHRAH** where he lived. The **BIBLE** tells us in **JUDGES 8:27** that **all ISRAEL went their WHORING after** it and that **it became a snare unto GIDEON and to his house**. And there is no indication from **SCRIPTURE** that he ever corrected his error by getting rid of or removing the **GOLDEN EPHOD!** It was seemingly more important to him to have this vain reminder of his **VICTORY** than to do what was right in the sight of the **LORD!**

Nevertheless, the **SCRIPTURE** says that the country "*was in quietness forty years in the days of GIDEON*" (**Judges 8:28**), and that **GIDEON "dwelt in his own house"** (**Judges 8:29**), and that he "*died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of JOASH his father*" (**Judges 8:32**). And let's not forget that he is mentioned by name for his **FAITH** in **Hebrews 11:32!**

But sadly, whatever **positive influence GIDEON** may have had on the **children of ISRAEL** died with him (**Judges 8:33!**)

And **GIDEON'S snare**, that **GOLDEN EPHOD**, gave rise to **IDOLATRY** in the nation once again! When **GIDEON** made a **GOLDEN EPHOD** he distracted people from the **PRESCRIBED WORSHIP OF GOD** and led them one step closer down the path of **IDOLATRY** again!

We may not be our brother's keeper, but the ethic of brotherly love says that **we must avoid anything that makes it easier for another person to SIN!**

GIDEON'S LEGACY here shows us how one's **ACTIONS** are clearly more important than their **WORDS!** Let's now consider **GIDEON'S LEGACY** in just one of his sons—**ABIMELECH!** ("*My father is king*")

ABIMELECH, as we will see, is one truly bad apple! This guy was all bad! There is nothing good to say about **ABIMELECH** because **GOD'S WORD** has nothing good to say about him either!

ABIMELECH never fought for nor obtained any VICTORY for ISRAEL! (Everything we will see that he fought for was for himself personally!)

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ABIMELECH provided no DELIVERANCE from IDOLATRY and the false gods that plagued ISRAEL again after GIDEON'S death!

ABIMELECH gave NO MORAL DIRECTION for ISRAEL!

ABIMELECH was so wicked that GOD rendered to him after his own wickedness and brought about his demise!

There is absolutely nothing good here in **SCRIPTURE** about **ABIMELECH!**

I. ABIMELECH'S BACKGROUND! (Judges 8:31)

ABIMELECH was a son of **GIDEON** by way of **GIDEON'S** concubine, a maidservant that lived in **SHECHEM** which was about 25-30 miles away from where **GIDEON** lived! We can imagine that with **GIDEON** fathering 71 sons total, it may have been quite difficult to have a proper influence on them all, especially this one that appears to have lived so far away from him!

II. ABIMELECH'S RISE TO POWER IN SHECHEM!

(Judges 9:1-6)

A. Let's Understand And See The Rich History Of SHECHEM!

ABRAHAM built an **ALTAR** there to worship the **LORD GOD** back in *Genesis 12:6-7* as he first came into the land of **CANAAN!** He did that after the **LORD** told him that he was going to give him and his seed that land. (called **SI'-CHEM**) That's the first time **SHECHEM** shows up in **BIBLE** history.

ABRAHAM'S grandson, **JACOB**, is found to have pitched his tent before **SHECHEM** in *Genesis 33:18!*

JACOB had a lot of members of his family which had worshiped false gods and **JACOB** got them to **REPENT** of their **IDOLATRY** and he buried all their **IDOLS** under a tree in **SHECHEM** before he moved to **BETH-EL** in *Genesis 35:2-4.*

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JOSEPH, the son of **JACOB**, was sold into slavery by his brothers who were originally watching their sheep in **SHECHEM** but had moved them down to **DOTHAN** when **JOSEPH** was sent by **JACOB** to check on them and see how they were doing in **SHECHEM.** (*Genesis 37:12-17*)

In *Joshua 21:21*, **SHECHEM** was made one of the six cities of refuge where people could find safety if they accidentally killed someone. And then right before **JOSHUA** died, he gathered the tribes of **ISRAEL** together at **SHECHEM** and he made them promise that they would stay faithful to the **LORD** after his death! (*Joshua 24:1-28*)

Also, the bones of **JOSEPH**, who had died in **EGYPT**, were carried to and buried in **SHECHEM.** (*Joshua 24:32*)

The next time **SHECHEM** is mentioned in the **BIBLE** is here in *Judges 8:31*, where **GIDEON** had this concubine from **SHECHEM** and she gave birth to a boy who was named **ABIMELECH.**

By the time **ABIMELECH** was born, the city of **SHECHEM** had become a haven for **IDOL WORSHIPERS**, especially **WORSHIPERS OF BAAL.** So, from the time when **JACOB** buried his family's idols underneath a tree in **SHECHEM** until the days of **ABIMELECH**, the people have made a full circle back into **IDOLATRY** a little over 400 years later.

Remember too how we've seen that before the **LORD** called **GIDEON** to fight with the **MIDIANITES**, **HE** had **GIDEON** tear down the altar of **BAAL** which **GIDEON'S** own father had set up in their village of **OPHRAH.**

After the town folk wanted to have a problem with **GIDEON** over that, **HIS** dad gave him another name, **JERUBBAAL**, which translated means, "*Let Baal plead!*"

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Keep that in mind because the author of the book of **JUDGES** calls **GIDEON** by that name—**JERUBBAAL**—as he tells us this story about **GIDEON'S** wicked son, **ABIMELECH!**

B. We See ABIMELECH'S Rise To Power Came After His Dad's Death!

Here in *Judges 9:1* we see that after his dad's death, **ABIMELECH** went back to **SHECHEM**, which was a hot-bed of **BAAL** worship and he talked to his mom's family. In *verse 2* we see that he asked them here, *“Do you want 70 men to be your leaders or just one, one of your own?”*

Again, in *Judges 8:30*, **GIDEON** had 70 other sons by way of his many wives (which was a disaster just waiting to happen!)! But in addition to the 70 he had through his **WIVES**, he also had **ABIMELECH** through this **CONCUBINE** in the city of **SHECHEM!**

So, basically, **ABIMELECH** was asking them, *“Do you want 70 outsiders to rule over you or one of your own?”* He reminded them that he was their *bone and flesh*.

Also, he called his dad by the name associated with his dad's destruction of **BAAL!** This could certainly have implied that **ABIMILECH** knew that his fellow **IDOLATERS** of **SHECHEM** had a problem with what his dad had done to **BAAL** and that maybe it was time for **BAAL** to plead through him and them!

So, these kin-folk with whom **ABIMELECH** talked went to the rest of the men of **SHECHEM** and encouraged them to follow **ABIMELECH** because he was blood-kin. *Verse 3*

Now, *verse 4* helps to clarify the religious context of the city of **SHECHEM**. The men went to the *“HOUSE OF BAAL-BERITH”* to get **70 pieces of silver, one piece for each of ABIMELECH'S** half-brothers.

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This *“HOUSE”* was a **TEMPLE** and *“BAAL-BERITH”* was a designation of the false god, *“BAAL.”* And *“BERITH”*, the **HEBREW** word for *“COVENANT.”* Translation *“BAAL OF THE COVENANT.”* We do not know what this title meant for **BAAL**. Most likely these men made a **COVENANT** with **BAAL** of some sort. But this *“COVENANT”* could have been a mixing of worship of the **LORD** with worship of **BAAL!**

Either way, the men that **ABIMELECH** hired with the silver were worshipers of **BAAL** and the author describes them in *verse 4* as *“vain and light persons”* meaning they were literally *“empty, idle, unprincipled, and worthless.”*

So, **ABIMELECH'S** rise to power was financed by donations to the false god, **BAAL!** **These worshipers of BAAL are about to plead against the house of GIDEON on behalf of BAAL!**

In *verse 5*, we see these men **unprincipled, unscrupulous men** went with **ABIMELECH** to his dad's home village of **OPHRAH** and slaughtered 69 of his half-brothers. There was one, named **JOTHAM**, who was the youngest, who hid and escaped and we'll see the significance of that, **LORD** willing, next week!

So we see in *verse 6*, that it is with these acts of treachery against his father's house that these men of **SHECHEM** got together and they made **ABIMELECH** king by the **PILLAR** that was in **SHECHEM**.

That **PILLAR** may have been the **GREAT STONE** that was erected under an oak by **JOSHUA** before his death as a **MEMORIAL** and witness unto **ISRAEL** that they said they would follow the **LORD** after **JOSHUA'S** death! If that is the case, it was an egregious *“slap in the face”* (so to speak) against the **LORD God and what was promised there!**