

# Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

## Part 36 –Abimelech’s Deception Through The Keeping Of Jephthah’s Vow (Judges 9-11)

1. Who was Abimelech?

- The son of Jerubbaal [Gideon - **Judges 7:1**] (**Judges 9:1**).

2. What was Abimelech’s goal in meeting with his mother’s brethren?

- To become their leader, through subtlety: “*And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh*” (**Judges 9:1-2**).

3. How far did Abimelech go to get what he wanted?

- “*And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baalberith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him. And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem*” (**Judges 9:3-6**; cf. **Proverbs 1:10-19; 15:27**).

4. In the context of Jotham’s words to the men of Shechem, what are some things that should have caught their attention?

- **Judges 9:7:** And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, **Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.**
- **Judges 9:8:** **The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them;** and they said unto **the olive tree, Reign thou over us.**
- **Judges 9:9:** But the olive tree said unto them, **Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man,** and go to be promoted over the trees?
- **Judges 9:10:** And **the trees said to the fig tree,** Come thou, and reign over us.
- **Judges 9:11:** But the fig tree said unto them, **Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?**
- **Judges 9:12:** Then said **the trees unto the vine,** Come thou, and reign over us.
- **Judges 9:13:** And the vine said unto them, **Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?**
- **Judges 9:14:** **Then said all the trees unto the bramble,** Come thou, and reign over us.
- **Judges 9:15:** And the bramble said unto the trees, **If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.**

- **Judges 9:16:** Now therefore, **if ye have done truly and sincerely**, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands;
- **Judges 9:17:** (For **my father fought for you, and adventured his life far, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:**
- **Judges 9:18:** **And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant**, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother;)
- **Judges 9:19:** **If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech**, and let him also rejoice in you:
- **Judges 9:20:** **But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech.**

5. Will God be with Abimelech and the men of Shechem after what they've done (think outside of the context to answer this question)?

- No, (**Isaiah 1:13-16** and **Isaiah 59:1-3**).

6. Did Jotham stick around and submit to his brother Abimelech?

- No, he fled for fear of his life (**Judges 9:21**).

7. What did God do in the third year of Abimelech's reign?

- *"When Abimelech had reigned three years over Israel, Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech"* (**Judges 9:22-23**).

8. What was God's reason for doing what is discussed in the previous question?

- *"That the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them; and upon the men of Shechem, which aided him in the killing of his brethren"* (**Judges 9:24**; cf. **Job 4:8**).

9. What did the men of Shechem do against Abimelech?

- *"And the men of Shechem set liers [ambush] in wait for him in the top of the mountains, and they robbed all that came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech. And Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brethren, and went over to Shechem: and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. And they went out into the fields, and gathered their vineyards, and trode the grapes, and made merry, and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink, and cursed Abimelech. And Gaal the son of Ebed said, Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? is not he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: for why should we serve him? And would to God this people were under my hand! then would I remove Abimelech. And he said to Abimelech, Increase thine army, and come out"* (**Judges 9:25-29**).

10. Was Gaal successful against Abimelech's attack?

- No, since Abimelech had the support of Zebul and the element of surprise, Gaal failed (**Judges 9:30-41**).

11. How did Abimelech die?

- *“And Abimelech came unto the tower, and fought against it, and went hard unto the door of the tower to burn it with fire. And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech's head, and all to brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died”* (**Judges 9:52-54**).

12. Did God do unto Abimelech and the men of Shechem according to the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal?

- Yes: *“And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place. Thus God rendered the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: **And all the evil of the men of Shechem did God render upon their heads: and upon them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal”*** (**Judges 9:55-57**).

13. Who led Israel after the death of Abimelech?

- *“And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel **Tola the son of Puah**, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim. **And he judged Israel twenty and three years**, and died, and was buried in Shamir”* (**Judges 10:1-2**).

14. Were the children of Israel faithful to God after Jair died?

- No: *“And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon”* (**Judges 10:6-7**).

15. How did God respond to Israel’s confession of sin and cry for help against the children of Ammon?

- *“And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation”* (**Judges 10:11-14**).

16. What did Israel do to grieve the soul of God for their misery?

- *“And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel”* (**Judges 10:15-16**).

17. Before Jephthah is summoned for help, what do we find out about him?
- *“Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman. Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob: and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him” (Judges 11:1-3).*
18. Were the elders of Gilead fair with Jephthah or were they just out for their own interests?
- They were out for their own interests as they mistreated Jephthah until they needed his assistance (**Judges 11:5-8**).
19. What condition did Jephthah put in place before he'd answer the plea for help that was made unto him?
- To be their head [leader] of which they agreed (**Judges 11:9-11**).
20. Did Jephthah seek a peaceful resolution with the king of the children of Ammon?
- Yes, he did (**Judges 11:12-27**).
21. Did the king of the children of Ammon heed to the words of Jephthah?
- No, (**Judges 11:28**).
22. Was God with Jephthah?
- Yes: *“Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon” (Judges 11:29).*
23. What did Jephthah vow unto God if God would grant him victory against the children of Ammon?
- *“And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering” (Judges 11:30-31).*
24. What did Jephthah have to do to keep his vow unto God?
- He had to offer his daughter as a burnt sacrifice unto God: *“So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands. And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded*

*out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows. And he said, Go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, That the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year” (Judges 11:32-40).*

25. List three things that you can learn from Jephthah’s account concerning the vow which he made unto God.

- You must keep your vows to God (**Judges 11:35**; cf. **Psalms 50:14-15**; **66:13-14** and **Ecclesiastes 5:4-6**).
- You better think before you speak (**Judges 11:35**; cf. **Proverbs 21:23** and **Ecclesiastes 5:2**).
- Jephthah’s daughter shows the love a true family member should have for another in not wanting to stand between God and Jephthah (**Judges 11:36**; cf. **Matthew 10:37**).
- Truly, one can be dead and still speak (**Judges 11:40**; cf. **Hebrews 11:4**).