



The Book of Judges - Riding the Handbasket to Hell

Part 4 Abimelek and Jephthah Family Reunions in Ancient Israel

A Reminder

In these Bible studies we could be asking “Why would a loving God command the deaths of all these people, even though they are pagans and oppressing the Israelites?”

Instead, we are asking “What does it mean for us to surrender to the will of God, even though His will seems not only incomprehensible but completely contradictory at times?”



The basic repeating pattern in Judges.

This pattern not only repeats, but descends deeper into sin and depravity with each round; so far -

- 1) Eglon
- 2) Ehud
- 3) Gideon

*4) Abimelek and
5) Jephthah*

GIDEON

70 sons by many wives
No desire to rule Israel, or to have his sons rule
"Make me an ephod and let me retire"

Gideon's concubine

Female slave from Shechem
Her son > ABIMELEK

ABIMELEK

Judges 9

His resentment

His plot

Step 1: Gain the support of Shechem

Step 2: Kill all the sons of Gideon

Step 3: Rule over Israel

But Jotham survived!

Jotham's elegant political curse

God's revenge on Abimelek and Shechem

Animosity of Shechemites

Rebellion of Gaal son of Ebed

Abimelek destroys Shechem

Abimelek besieges Thebez

Abimelek's death

Judges 9:16-20 – Jotham's curse

¹⁶ "Have you acted honorably and in good faith by making Abimelek king? Have you been fair to Jerub-Baal and his family? Have you treated him as he deserves? ¹⁷ Remember that my father fought for you and risked his life to rescue you from the hand of Midian. ¹⁸ But today you have revolted against my father's family. You have murdered his seventy sons on a single stone and have made Abimelek, the son of his female slave, king over the citizens of Shechem because he is related to you. ¹⁹ So have you acted honorably and in good faith toward Jerub-Baal and his family today? If you have, may Abimelek be your joy, and may you be his, too!²⁰ But if you have not, let fire come out from Abimelek and consume you, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo, and let fire come out from you, the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo, and consume Abimelek!"

Judges 9:56-57

⁵⁶ Thus God repaid the wickedness that Abimelek had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers. ⁵⁷ God also made the people of Shechem pay for all their wickedness. The curse of Jotham son of Jerub-Baal came on them.

What were the sins of Abimelek?

What were the sins of the Shechemites?

Why did God punish them rather than forgive them?

JEPHTHAH

Judges 10:6-18	
<p>⁶ Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the LORD and no longer served him, ⁷ he became angry with them. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites, ⁸ who that year shattered and crushed them.</p>	<p>How many different gods did they serve? From how many different peoples?</p> <p><i>How much like today is this?</i></p>
<p>¹⁰ Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord, "We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals." ¹¹ The Lord replied . . .</p>	<p>I'm not sure when or by what means this curious exchange took place!</p>
Judges 11	
1-3 Jephthah's birth and early rejection	

4-10 "So, you come to me now that you're in trouble and you need me?"	
12-33 Jephthah's trash talk	
29-31 Jephthah's vow	
34-35 "I cannot break it"	What's the worst that could happen?
36-40 Jephthah's daughter helps her father save face	

Can you think of another time in Scripture when saving face was more important than saving a life?

Can you think of an example from history when saving face was more important than saving a life?

Was there ever a time in your own personal experience when saving face was more important than saving a life / relationship / another's feelings?

What is it about "face" that is so important to people?

How do you think God feels about "face"?

Next Time: Judges Part 5

High Hopes for a New Son