**Judges 7-9**- March 11th

Gideon Defeats the Midianites

**7**Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. **2**The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’ **3**Now announce to the army, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

**4**But the Lord said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will thin them out for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

**5**So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the Lord told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues as a dog laps from those who kneel down to drink.” **6**Three hundred of them drank from cupped hands, lapping like dogs. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

**7**The Lord said to Gideon, “With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hands. Let all the others go home.” **8**So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites home but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

Now the camp of Midian lay below him in the valley. **9**During that night the Lordsaid to Gideon, “Get up, go down against the camp, because I am going to give it into your hands. **10**If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah **11**and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp.” So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp. **12**The Midianites, the Amalekites and all the other eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore.

**13**Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. “I had a dream,” he was saying. “A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed.”

**14**His friend responded, “This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands.”

**15**When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, “Get up! The Lord has given the Midianite camp into your hands.” **16**Dividing the three hundred meninto three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside.

**17**“Watch me,” he told them. “Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. **18**When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, ‘For the Lord and for Gideon.’”

**19**Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed the guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. **20**The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, “A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!” **21**While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled.

**22**When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath.**23**Israelites from Naphtali, Asher and all Manasseh were called out, and they pursued the Midianites. **24**Gideon sent messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and seize the waters of the Jordan ahead of them as far as Beth Barah.”

So all the men of Ephraim were called out and they seized the waters of the Jordan as far as Beth Barah. **25**They also captured two of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued the Midianites and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon, who was by the Jordan.

Zebah and Zalmunna

**8**Now the Ephraimites asked Gideon, “Why have you treated us like this? Why didn’t you call us when you went to fight Midian?” And they challenged him vigorously.

**2**But he answered them, “What have I accomplished compared to you? Aren’t the gleanings of Ephraim’s grapes better than the full grape harvest of Abiezer? **3**God gave Oreb and Zeeb, the Midianite leaders, into your hands. What was I able to do compared to you?” At this, their resentment against him subsided.

**4**Gideon and his three hundred men, exhausted yet keeping up the pursuit, came to the Jordan and crossed it. **5**He said to the men of Sukkoth, “Give my troops some bread; they are worn out, and I am still pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian.”

**6**But the officials of Sukkoth said, “Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your troops?”

**7**Then Gideon replied, “Just for that, when the Lord has given Zebah and Zalmunna into my hand, I will tear your flesh with desert thorns and briers.”

**8**From there he went up to Peniel and made the same request of them, but they answered as the men of Sukkoth had. **9**So he said to the men of Peniel, “When I return in triumph, I will tear down this tower.”

**10**Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor with a force of about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of the armies of the eastern peoples; a hundred and twenty thousand swordsmen had fallen. **11**Gideon went up by the route of the nomads east of Nobah and Jogbehah and attacked the unsuspecting army. **12**Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian, fled, but he pursued them and captured them, routing their entire army.

**13**Gideon son of Joash then returned from the battle by the Pass of Heres. **14**He caught a young man of Sukkoth and questioned him, and the young man wrote down for him the names of the seventy-seven officials of Sukkoth, the elders of the town. **15**Then Gideon came and said to the men of Sukkoth, “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you taunted me by saying, ‘Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession? Why should we give bread to your exhausted men?’” **16**He took the elders of the town and taught the men of Sukkoth a lesson by punishing them with desert thorns and briers. **17**He also pulled down the tower of Peniel and killed the men of the town.

**18**Then he asked Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men did you kill at Tabor?”

“Men like you,” they answered, “each one with the bearing of a prince.”

**19**Gideon replied, “Those were my brothers, the sons of my own mother. As surely as the Lord lives, if you had spared their lives, I would not kill you.” **20**Turning to Jether, his oldest son, he said, “Kill them!” But Jether did not draw his sword, because he was only a boy and was afraid.

**21**Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Come, do it yourself. ‘As is the man, so is his strength.’” So Gideon stepped forward and killed them, and took the ornaments off their camels’ necks.

Gideon’s Ephod

**22**The Israelites said to Gideon, “Rule over us - you, your son and your grandson - because you have saved us from the hand of Midian.”

23But Gideon told them, “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.” **24**And he said, “I do have one request, that each of you give me an earring from your share of the plunder.” (It was the custom of the Ishmaelites to wear gold earrings.)

**25**They answered, “We’ll be glad to give them.” So they spread out a garment, and each of them threw a ring from his plunder onto it. **26**The weight of the gold rings he asked for came to seventeen hundred shekels,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+7-9&version=NIV#fen-NIV-6746b)] not counting the ornaments, the pendants and the purple garments worn by the kings of Midian or the chains that were on their camels’ necks. **27**Gideon made the gold into an ephod, which he placed in Ophrah, his town. All Israel prostituted themselves by worshiping it there, and it became a snare to Gideon and his family.

Gideon’s Death

**28**Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon’s lifetime, the land had peace forty years.

**29**Jerub-Baal son of Joash went back home to live. **30**He had seventy sons of his own, for he had many wives. **31**His concubine, who lived in Shechem, also bore him a son, whom he named Abimelek. **32**Gideon son of Joash died at a good old age and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

**33**No sooner had Gideon died than the Israelites again prostituted themselves to the Baals. They set up Baal-Berith as their god **34**and did not remember the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies on every side. **35**They also failed to show any loyalty to the family of Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) in spite of all the good things he had done for them.

Abimelek - 6th Judge

**9**Abimelek son of Jerub-Baal went to his mother’s brothers in Shechem and said to them and to all his mother’s clan, **2**“Ask all the citizens of Shechem, ‘Which is better for you: to have all seventy of Jerub-Baal’s sons rule over you, or just one man?’ Remember, I am your flesh and blood.”

**3**When the brothers repeated all this to the citizens of Shechem, they were inclined to follow Abimelek, for they said, “He is related to us.” **4**They gave him seventy shekels of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, and Abimelek used it to hire reckless scoundrels, who became his followers. **5**He went to his father’s home in Ophrah and on one stone murdered his seventy brothers, the sons of Jerub-Baal. But Jotham, the youngest son of Jerub-Baal, escaped by hiding. **6**Then all the citizens of Shechem and Beth Millo gathered beside the great tree at the pillar in Shechem to crown Abimelek king.

**7**When Jotham was told about this, he climbed up on the top of Mount Gerizim and shouted to them, “Listen to me, citizens of Shechem, so that God may listen to you. **8**One day the trees went out to anoint a king for themselves. They said to the olive tree, ‘Be our king.’ **9**“But the olive tree answered, ‘Should I give up my oil, by which both gods and humans are honored, to hold sway over the trees?’ **10**“Next, the trees said to the fig tree, ‘Come and be our king.’

**11**“But the fig tree replied, ‘Should I give up my fruit, so good and sweet, to hold sway over the trees?’ **12**“Then the trees said to the vine, ‘Come and be our king.’ **13**“But the vine answered, ‘Should I give up my wine, which cheers both gods and humans, to hold sway over the trees?’ **14**“Finally all the trees said to the thornbush, ‘Come and be our king.’

**15**“The thornbush said to the trees, ‘If you really want to anoint me king over you, come and take refuge in my shade; but if not, then let fire come out of the thornbush and consume the cedars of Lebanon!’

**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!” **21**Then Jotham fled, escaping to Beer, and he lived there because he was afraid of his brother Abimelek.

**22**After Abimelek had governed Israel three years, **23**God stirred up animosity between Abimelek and the citizens of Shechem so that they acted treacherously against Abimelek. **24**God did this in order that the crime against Jerub-Baal’s seventy sons, the shedding of their blood, might be avenged on their brother Abimelek and on the citizens of Shechem, who had helped him murder his brothers. **25**In opposition to him these citizens of Shechem set men on the hilltops to ambush and rob everyone who passed by, and this was reported to Abimelek.

**26**Now Gaal son of Ebed moved with his clan into Shechem, and its citizens put their confidence in him. **27**After they had gone out into the fields and gathered the grapes and trodden them, they held a festival in the temple of their god. While they were eating and drinking, they cursed Abimelek. **28**Then Gaal son of Ebed said, “Who is Abimelek, and why should we Shechemites be subject to him? Isn’t he Jerub-Baal’s son, and isn’t Zebul his deputy? Serve the family of Hamor, Shechem’s father! Why should we serve Abimelek? **29**If only this people were under my command! Then I would get rid of him. I would say to Abimelek, ‘Call out your whole army!’”

**30**When Zebul the governor of the city heard what Gaal son of Ebed said, he was very angry. **31**Under cover he sent messengers to Abimelek, saying, “Gaal son of Ebed and his clan have come to Shechem and are stirring up the city against you.**32**Now then, during the night you and your men should come and lie in wait in the fields. **33**In the morning at sunrise, advance against the city. When Gaal and his men come out against you, seize the opportunity to attack them.”

**34**So Abimelek and all his troops set out by night and took up concealed positions near Shechem in four companies. **35**Now Gaal son of Ebed had gone out and was standing at the entrance of the city gate just as Abimelek and his troops came out from their hiding place.

**36**When Gaal saw them, he said to Zebul, “Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!”

Zebul replied, “You mistake the shadows of the mountains for men.”

**37**But Gaal spoke up again: “Look, people are coming down from the central hill, and a company is coming from the direction of the diviners’ tree.”

**38**Then Zebul said to him, “Where is your big talk now, you who said, ‘Who is Abimelek that we should be subject to him?’ Aren’t these the men you ridiculed? Go out and fight them!”

**39**So Gaal led out the citizens of Shechem and fought Abimelek. **40**Abimelek chased him all the way to the entrance of the gate, and many were killed as they fled. **41**Then Abimelek stayed in Arumah, and Zebul drove Gaal and his clan out of Shechem.

**42**The next day the people of Shechem went out to the fields, and this was reported to Abimelek. **43**So he took his men, divided them into three companies and set an ambush in the fields. When he saw the people coming out of the city, he rose to attack them. **44**Abimelek and the companies with him rushed forward to a position at the entrance of the city gate. Then two companies attacked those in the fields and struck them down. **45**All that day Abimelek pressed his attack against the city until he had captured it and killed its people. Then he destroyed the city and scattered salt over it.

**46**On hearing this, the citizens in the tower of Shechem went into the stronghold of the temple of El-Berith. **47**When Abimelek heard that they had assembled there, **48**he and all his men went up Mount Zalmon. He took an ax and cut off some branches, which he lifted to his shoulders. He ordered the men with him, “Quick! Do what you have seen me do!” **49**So all the men cut branches and followed Abimelek. They piled them against the stronghold and set it on fire with the people still inside. So all the people in the tower of Shechem, about a thousand men and women, also died.

**50**Next Abimelek went to Thebez and besieged it and captured it. **51**Inside the city, however, was a strong tower, to which all the men and women - all the people of the city - had fled. They had locked themselves in and climbed up on the tower roof. **52**Abimelek went to the tower and attacked it. But as he approached the entrance to the tower to set it on fire, **53**a woman dropped an upper millstone on his head and cracked his skull.

**54**Hurriedly he called to his armor-bearer, “Draw your sword and kill me, so that they can’t say, ‘A woman killed him.’” So his servant ran him through, and he died. **55**When the Israelites saw that Abimelek was dead, they went home.

**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.