

[35] And Gaal, son of Servant, went out and stood at the entrance of the city gate. And Abimelech arose, and the people who were with him from the ambush. [36] And Gaal saw the people and said to Zebul, “Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains.” And Zebul said to him, “You are seeing a shadow of the mountains as men.” [37] And Gaal yet again spoke and said, “Look, people coming down from the center high¹ of the earth, and one company² comes from way of soothsayers³ terebinth.” [38] And Zebul said to him, “Where then is your mouth where you said, 'Who is Abimelech that we should serve him?' Is this not the people who you rejected? Go out now, please, and fight against him.”

[39] And Gaal went out before lords of Shechem and fought against Abimelech. [40] And Abimelech pursued him, and he fled from his face. And many fell slain⁴ as far as the entrance of the gate. [41] And Abimelech dwelt in Arumah.⁵ And Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers from dwelling in Shechem.

[42] And it was, on the next day, so the people went out to the field and told Abimelech. [43] And he took the people and divided them into three companies,⁶ and he lay in wait in the field. And he looked, and look, the people were going out from the city. And he arose against them and struck them. [44] And Abimelech and the companies that were with him rushed and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city, and two companies rushed upon all who were in the field and struck them. [45] And Abimelech fought against that city all that day. And he captured the city and killed the people who were in it. And he tore down the city and sowed it with salt.

[46] And all lords of Shechem's tower heard, and they went into a stronghold⁷ of Covenant god's House. [47] And it was told to Abimelech that all lords of Shechem's tower were gathered together. [48] And Abimelech went up to mount Zalmon,⁸ he and all the people who were with him. And Abimelech took the axes⁹ in his hand and cut a tree branch and lifted her and put upon his shoulder. And he said to the people who were with him, “What you see me doing, quickly do like me.” [49] And all the people also cut each one a branch. And they went after Abimelech and set them against the stronghold. And they set on fire the stronghold above them, and so men of Shechem's tower died, about a thousand men and women.

1 טָבוּר (tabbur) “center high” - YLT, Green, DARBY “high part”; NAS “highest part”; NKJV “center”; KJV “middle” – found also in Ezekiel 38:12. BDB “central and prominent in the earth”

2 רֹאשׁ (ro'sh) “company” - more literally, “head”

3 מְעוֹנְנִים (me'onniym) “soothsayers” WYC; “diviners” NKJV, NAS; “Sorcerers” Green - see footnote for Leviticus 19:26.

הַעֲוֵנָה (te'onênu) – “soothsaying” NKJV, NAS; KJV “observe times” – found also in Deuteronomy 18:10; Judges 9:37 (NKJV “diviner”); 2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Isaiah 2:6; 57:3 (NKJV “sorceress” עֲוֵנָה [’onenâh]); Jeremiah 27:9; Micah 5:12(H11). A soothsayer is one who predicts the future.

4 חָלָלִים (chalâliym) “slain” DRA, LEB, NABRE; “wounded” NKJV, NAS, YLT, etc. - same exact word in e.g. Numbers 23:24 (“slain” NKJV, KJV, NAS); Joshua 11:6 (“slain” NKJV, NAS, KJV); Judges 20:31, 39 (“kill” NKJV, KJV, NAS).

5 אַרומָה ('rumâh) “Arumah” - only here.

6 רִאשִׁים (râ'shiym) “companies” - more literally, “heads.”

7 צָרִיחַ (tsiyach) “stronghold” NKJV, etc.; “inner chamber” NAS; “hold” KJV – exact meaning unknown. Found also in Judges 9:49; 1 Samuel 13:6 (“holes” NKJV).

8 צַלְמוֹן (tsalmon) “Zalmon” - found also in 2 Samuel 23:28; Psalm 68:14(H15).

9 קֶרְדָּמוֹת (qardummot) “axes” (plural) GNV, OJB; “ax” NKJV; “axe” KJV, NAS, YLT etc. - this is a different word for “ax” than what is found in e.g. Deuteronomy 19:5; 20:19, גִּרְזֵן (garzen).

[50] And Abimelech went to Thebez¹⁰ and encamped against Thebez and captured her. [51] And there was a strong tower in the midst of the city, and all the men and the women and the lords of the city fled there and shut themselves in. And they went up upon the top of the tower. [52] And Abimelech went unto the tower and fought against it and drew near to the entrance of the tower to burn it with fire. [53] And one woman cast an upper millstone upon Abimelech's head, and it crushed his skull. [54] And he quickly called to the young man carrying his things and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say about me, 'A woman killed him.'"¹¹ And his young man pierced him, and he died. [55] And men of Israel saw that Abimelech died, and they went each to his place. [56] So Gods, he brought back the bad of Abimelech which he did to his father for killing his seventy brothers. [57] And Gods, he brought back all the bad of men of Shechem on their heads. And curse¹² of Jotham, son of Jerubaal, came to them.

10 תִּבְעַז (têvêts) "Thebez" - found also in Judges 9:50; 2 Samuel 11:21.

11 See 2 Samuel 11:21

12 "a curse without cause shall not come in" (Proverbs 26:2 TT), but here there was a cause.