THE RISE OF ABIMELEK BEN-JERUBBAAL

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THE NARRATIVE OF Judges 9 presents some of the more intriguing puzzles of the early Deuteronomistic History, largely because it is so comprehensive of its subject. It stands apart, for a variety of reasons, from the Gideon epic (Judges 6–8) and histories of salvation which precede, and from the list of minor judges (10:1–5; 12:7–15) and Jephthah cycle (10:6–12:6) which follow. Scholars have long recognized that the chapter is anomalous. Sellin (1922), for example, suggested that it detailed how Shechem became an Israelite city. Others (see, e.g., Mayes, 1977, p. 316; Malamat, 1971, pp. 147–151) have held that the account deals fundamentally with Canaanite, rather than Israelite, concepts and traditions. At the same time, little doubt as to its historicity has been mooted. Richter (1963, pp. 286–292) has even argued that the literary origin of Jotham's fable (9:7–20) is in the earliest period of the Divided Monarchy.

Nevertheless, significant questions remain to be answered. While the literary and historical associations of Judges 9 with the Gideon saga have been explored at some length (see especially Richter, 1963, pp. 247–318), it is not clear from what source Judges 9 itself stems. Was it an independent document incorporated with only minor changes into the Deuteronomistic edition of the book? Or was it an integral part of some longer, pre-Deuteronomistic source now present only in an attenuated form? What, in fact, does it reveal about Northern politics of the Judges era? And how does it relate to the historical phase reflected in the preceding narratives?

It is important first to appreciate in which ways precisely the Abimelek narrative deviates from those of the rest of the book of Judges. The most signal disparity is that there is in this account no external threat posed to the Israelite tribes. Unlike the tales of Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Baraq, Gideon and Jephthah, Judges 9 does not concern itself with YHWH's delivery of derelict Israel. There is no oppressor, no oppressed. Judges 9 treats, rather, of an internal political dispute. In so doing, it places itself in a class with the early court history of David, and with the chronicle of the Benjaminite war (Judges 19–21).

Second, Judges 9 is a narrative cycle centered entirely about Shechem. Though the major actor, Abimelek, appears to dominate a wider area than that of the city-state (9:25, 41, 50), the action, with the possible exception of vv. 50–54 (the siege of Thebez) occurs exclusively in the vicinity of Shechem.[1] There is no mention of any of the Israelite tribes; Abimelek appears to fight with a private army against an individual town. For the first time in the book of Judges, siege warfare is in point.[2] There are no routs, no pursuit and plunder. Abimelek is concerned with the systematic reduction of resisting forts. The story is therefore more localized than customary to the Judges pericopes.

Third, Judges 9 deals with a "king" in the era when "there was no king in Israel" (Judg 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Though the Shechemites alone are responsible for his coronation, Abimelek's domain encompasses a wider area than that of the polis. The editor's impression is that Abimelek mustered "the men of Israel" (9:55) and reigned over the entire confederacy (9:22; see Tadmor, 1968, pp. 46–68 for "the men of Israel" as the electorate and army). Yet there is no indication of a conflict over the transition from oligarchy (or

1. Thebez is probably to be located in the region of Shechem; possibly it represents a corruption of Tirzah. In the cursive paleo-Hebrew script of the pre-exilic era, *bet* and *reš* would at certain periods differ only insofar as the former manifested an elbow and longer tail. This emendation has already seen able defense by Malamat (1971, p. 320, note 61). However, the error would have had to have occurred prior to the evolution of final *matres lectionis* (*trs* = *tbṣ*, not *trṣh* = *tbṣh*), that is, before the tenth or ninth century B.C.E. The error would also have preceded the origin of 2 Sam 11:21, which cites Judg 9:50–54 directly. Finally, the oral tradition of Abimelek's death—to judge from 2 Sam 11:21, this was proverbial—would need to have been obscured by a scribal error. While attractive, therefore, the identification of Thebez with Tirzah cannot be considered certain. Abimelek's residence, Arumah (9:41), and the Abiezrite center of Ophrah (Judg 9:5; cf. 1 Sam 13:17; a Benjaminite Ophrah appears in Josh 18:23) seem from the narrative to be in close proximity to Shechem.

2. Cf. 8:16–17. Here, in addition to the obscurity of the first verse, the detail of Judg 9:34–37, 40, 42–45, 46–49, 50–54 is lacking, though an identity of tactics seems likely. In point is the character of the siege as differing from the old defensive wars, as of Gideon.

possibly theocracy) to the monarchy. The same transition, in the period of Saul, evoked bitter opposition from the religious establishment (1 Sam 8:4–22; 12:1–25). A contrary tradition (to argue *ex silentio*) is therefore somewhat jarring in the supposedly pre-monarchical period of the Judges.

Fourth, after three millenia, the question, "Who is Abimelek?" (Judg 9:28) remains pertinent. That he was a "son of Jerubbaal" seems to be beyond dispute (Judg 9:1, 28b; 2 Sam 11:21). But Jerubbaal's identity is less clear. Although he is equated with Gideon, who delivered Israel from Midian, the equation rests on a particularly narrow basis in the text. Its etiology appears in Judg 6:25–32. This unit, inserted between the vocation of Gideon in 6:1–24 and the Holy War muster of vv. 33–40 (cf. 1 Sam 10–11), is not geographically fixed. Its insertion appears to be motivated by the preceding narrative concerning the construction of an altar at Ophrah, for which it is a partial doublet.[3] Thus the originality of its traditions is subject to some doubt.

By the same token, of the two verses in which Jerubbaal and Gideon are specifically identified (Judg 7:1; 8:35), the second belongs to the editorial rubric of the narrative (and may depend on the gloss in Judg 9:16b); the first is suspect on the ground that it ties 6:(35) 36–40 to the selection of the troops in 7:2–8 (see Richter, 1963, pp. 175–187. The verbal peculiarities are decisive). It appears to presuppose the muster of the tribes. Given the participation in the rout of only three "hundreds" (7:16–22; 8:4–21), and the doublet 6:35//7:23, the last is subject to historical indictment.[4] Finally, the equation of Gideon and Jerubbaal in both 7:1 and 8:35 might be imputed to scribal expansion. LXX^{B} and 4QSam^{a}, for example, level Mephiboshet through in 2 Samuel 4, while Josephus correctly preserves, as the name of the assassins' victim, Ishboshet (*Ant. Jud.* 7.46–52). Thus the literary evidence for Jerubbaal's identity with Gideon must fall under considerable suspicion.

To a certain extent, these difficulties find their resolution in a literary-critical overview of the Abimelek episode. The key to the conundrum resides in the confused and confusing summary of the Gideon epic, Judg 8:28–35.

3. Richter (1963, pp. 157–162) argues that 6:25–27a, and 31b–32 belong to a redactor who equated Gideon with Jerubbaal in order to bridge the gap between chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 166–167). This presumes a certain facility with historical traditions, however, which I am reluctant to credit. That is, if Richter's redactor did not believe Gideon and Jerubbaal to be one and the same, it is difficult to imagine that he would arbitrarily equate them. This is one of the cases in which literary-critical results should not lightly be cited as disproving the traditions on which the literature is based.

4. See especially Beyerlin (1963, pp. 1–25). Richter (1963, pp. 114–120) arrives at the same conclusion. He demonstrates that on a literary level, 7:2–8 should be secondary to the original Abiezrite muster.

Verse 28 here recalls Judg 3:11,30; 5:31, all of which ensue upon statements of prevalence over the subjugators of Israel: it states that the land had forty years of rest after Gideon's victory. This formula and sequence Richter has demonstrated belonged to the framework of the pre-Deuteronomistic "Retterbuch," a book of the wars of YHWH against Israel's oppressors.[5] The characteristic phrase, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of YHWH" (3:7,12; 4:1; 6:1) is here replaced by a fuller but dependent redactorial expression of apostasy (8:33b; cf. 2:11b–13; 10:10–13); this must have derived from the original editorial rubric of the older "Retterbuch"[6] and attached itself later to the beginning of the previously excluded Abimelek cycle.

On the other hand, the expression "And Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his house" (Judg 8:29) calls to mind the conclusive "And Abimelek dwelt at Arumah" of Judg 9:41. Similar expressions appear particularly in 1 Sam 10:26; 25:22; 26:25. Each seems close to the refrain of Judg 21:20–21; 1 Sam 8:22; 10:25b (cf. Judg 9:55; 1 Sam 14:46).[7] Together with another, similar statement in Judg 9:21, these data indicate that Jerubbaal was the first character in an editorial entity which stretched through the account of Jephthah, and into the Kingdom itself. This may explain why Jerubbaal, not Gideon, is alluded to in 1 Sam 12:11, even though it is to Gideon that the "Retterbuch" ascribes rescue from Midian. The "Retterbuch," by contrast, ended at Gideon's delivery of Israel (see note 5).

A third hand is also discernible in the summary of Gideon's accomplishments. The annalistic record 8:30,32 belongs to the source responsible for the list of the "minor judges" in 10:1–5; 12:7–15. This annal, into which the Jephthah narratives are inserted at their proper place, appears to begin at 8:30. At all events, no trace of it occurs in the earlier records of Israel's deliverers (on Judg 4:4b-5, see Richter, 1963, pp. 39–42). The burial traditions that characterize the list (Judg 8:32; 10:2,5; 12:7,10,12,15) might be compared to those of Joshua (Josh 24:29–30; Judg 2:8–9) and Eleazar (Josh 24:33). They are verbally distinct from those preserved in the books of Kings and Chroni-

5. See Richter (1963, pp. 319–342); especially Richter (1964) where Judg 3:12–8:35 is isolated as the pre-Deuteronomistic "Retterbuch" (so p. 68). See especially pp. 4–6, in which the pre-Deuteronomistic structure of the literary units is isolated, and assigned to the hypothetical first redactor (Rdt^1) of the "Retterbuch" (see pp. 113–115 for summary). Only the relative chronology of the edition can be determined: it antedates the compilation of the Deuteronomistic History, however, and of the second part of the book of Judges.

6. Judg 13:1 suggests this edition may have followed the incorporation of part of the Samson cycle, but antedated that of chapters 17–21. This evidence is to be appraised with caution, however.

7. Compare also 1 Sam 7:17; 16:34; 19:18; 22:4; 24:14; 25:29. Joshua likewise returns to the camp at Gilgal after each episode in the Conquest history. See Josh 10:9, 15, 43. Cf. 2 Sam 18:17; 20:1; 1 Kgs 12:16.

cles.[8] It is noteworthy, then, that Gideon, not Jerubbaal, appears in the annal (Judg 8:30,32). It seems that Gideon is both the last character of the pre-Deuteronomistic "Retterbuch" and the first of the magisterial archon-list. Another source, which knew him as Jerubbaal, was interwoven into the seam of the two.

This division elucidates the narrative distinction between Judges 9 and the preceding units. The Abimelek tradition, simply, fell outside the scope of the "Retterbuch." It marks the first distinct chapter of a more comprehensive historical work, the concern of which exceeded Yahwistic saving acts and encompassed the political history of the confederacy. YHWH, in fact, plays no part in the pericope; Elohim appears peripherally, twice in the editorial summary (9:56–57), and only once in the course of the narrative (9:23). Even this statement merely anticipates the Shechemite revolt, attributing it by implication to the god. However, most of the action occurs without divine motivation and free from divine interference—again like the books of Samuel, and in marked contradistinction to the more theological historiography of the "Retterbuch."

At the same time, the literary segregation of Judges 9 from the Gideon epic puts to proof Gideon's identification with Jerubbaal. On the one hand, it might be argued that the equation of the two is a literary device intended to weld together two disparate histories (as Richter, 1963, pp. 157–162, 166–167). On the other, it might be maintained that the editorial disjunction accounts for the nominal disjunction. The only indication, apart from the apostils of 7:1; 8:35, that Gideon and Jerubbaal are the same, is that the "sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men" are said to have dominated Shechem (9:2,5, 18–19, 28). This adumbrates a position of some authority for Jerubbaal: thus, to the Transjordanian judge Jair are ascribed thirty sons, who ruled the "settlements" (*ḥawwôt*) of Jair in Gileadite Bashan (Judg 10:3–4).[9] To the judge Ibzan of Bethlehem are ascribed thirty sons and daughters (Judg 12:9), while

8. Note, "he slept with his fathers" in the royal annals. Cf. 1 Kgs 14:18; 1 Sam 25:1 (=28:3), which are closer, but not of precisely the same form. Cf. also Judg 16:31, which approximates, but does not duplicate, the list form.

9. Cf. Num 32:41; Deut 3:14, where Jair's conquest of the Argob—the Bashan bordering on Geshur and Maacah—is assigned to the Mosaic era. In Josh 13:30; 1 Kgs 14:13, sixty cities are attributed to a region that includes the *ḥawwôt yā'îr*. 1 Chr 2:22–23 indicates that the *ḥawwôt yā'îr* comprised twenty-three cities, within the area taken by Jair; this contained sixty cities. In view of this, it is possible to reckon the thirty cities attributed to the "sons of Jair" in Judg 10:4 to a consonantal dittography of the preceding "thirty ass-colts" (*'ayyārîm*). But note Knudtzon, 1915, #283:17–20, probably coincidental. Noth (1950, pp. 404–417) has argued that Jair is not to be identified with the conqueror of the Bashan. See, similarly, Smend (1963, pp. 33–55); Schunck (1966, pp. 252–62); McKenzie (1975, pp. 118–121). But cf. Dus (1963, pp. 444–469) and Richter (1965 pp. 40–72) for a sound analysis.

to the judge Abdon ben-Hillel of Pirathon forty sons and thirty grandsons are attributed. These, like the sons of Jair, were "riders on ass-colts" (Judg 12:14), a term that, under certain circumstances, denoted the delegate(s) of authority (Judg 5:10; 1 Kgs 1:33; Zech 9:9; note, too, Josh 9:4; 1 Sam 16:20; 25:18; 2 Sam 16:1–2; 2 Chr 12:38–40).[10]

Indeed, both Eli's sons (1 Sam 2:12–17, 22–25) and Samuel's (1 Sam 8:1–3; 12:2) held power within the league. This serves to indicate, in conjunction with the foregoing, that the "sons of Jerubbaal" were the progeny of a man of civil prominence.[11] Together with the attribution to Gideon of "seventy sons" (8:30), and the localization of the "sons of Jerubbaal" in a region near Shechem, which would suit Abiezrite Manasseh, the construct speaks in favor of Jerubbaal's identity with Gideon.

Gideon's civil authority appears from the present narrative to have derived from his martial prowess. Judg 8:22–23 preserve a tradition that the "men of Israel" (i.e., the muster and assembly) offered to serve a Gideonite dynasty, which he rejected. The rejection is couched, however, in terms reminiscent of Samuel's attack on kingship (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; 12:12–13). Its rather sudden introduction of the "men of Israel," a decided departure from the tribal, and even clannish matrices of the previous narratives, is striking, and therefore historically suspect. Further, the rejection appears to disrupt the contentual continuity of v. 21b with vv. 24–26 (cf. Gen 35:1–4; Exod 32:1–6; so Richter, 1963, pp. 235–236). Finally, the episode concludes in v. 27a with Gideon's construction of an ephod. Since this represents the arrogation of oracular authority to himself and to his house (8:27c), Gideon's rejection becomes meaningless.[12]

The solution to this problem is rather more simple than it would seem. The words, "I shall not rule you, nor will my son rule you; YHWH will rule you," indicate that Gideon's intention is to mediate divine intentions to Israel.

10. The last passages suggest that it was common practice for the minor party to a suzerainty pact to dispatch its embassy and tribute specifically by donkey; this would again associate the donkey with the delegation of authority. But see Noth (1957, pp. 142–54) and Fensham (1963, pp. 185–186).

11. The "sons of the prophets" (1 Kgs 20:35; 2 Kgs 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38; 5:22; 6:1; 9:1; Amos 2:11; 7:14), though delegates of prophetic sanctity, can hardly be characterized as the products of some discreet deme. Thus the idiom gave rise to the memorable quip, "And who is their father?" (1 Sam 10:11–12). One should perhaps read, with the editor who inserted this sneer, "Is Saul, too, a son of the prophets?" (1 Sam 10:11, 12; 19:24). It must be added, therefore, that the "sons of judge X/king X" may not have been biological offspring, but a council of some sort. See below.

12. Davies (1963, pp. 151–157) has in fact argued that Gideon accepted the kingship against which he is said to protest. But his argument is syntactically too subtle, and historically too precarious, to carry weight.

He has rejected monarchy, it is true. Nevertheless, he appropriates authority. His authority devolves, however, not as the imperium of a king, partly from the people (see especially Deut 17:14–20; Fohrer, 1959, pp. 1–22, among others), but as the authority of a priest, directly from the god. Samuel, who takes exception to the monarchy on the ground that it denies YHWH's "direct" suzerainty (through Samuel), makes the same distinction (1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; 12:12–13). Gideon, then, is priest and judge. His rejection of kingship in 8:22–23 is mainly a claim to the cloth.

The assumption of oracular, therefore theocratic authority, elucidates the name Jerubbaal, literally "let Baal plead," more adequately than the etiology of 6:25–32. The priest, with his ephod, is the final arbiter of all disputes in Israel (Deut 17:8–13; 1 Sam 10:20–21; 14:38–44), at least in the pre-dynastic period (cf. 2 Sam 15:2–6; 1 Kgs 3:15–28). Indeed, Jehoiarib, a name contentually congruent with Jerubbaal, is prominent in the priestly genealogies (1 Chr 9:10; 24:7; Ezra 8:16; Neh 11:5,10; 12:6,19; cf. 1 Chr 4:24; Ezra 10:18). The name Jerubbaal might well occur in the pre-monarchic Yahwistic community (*pace* Mayes, 1977, p. 316)—Saul (1 Chr 8:33) and Jonathan (1 Chr 8:34) compounded filial names with *b'l*, probably in reference to YHWH. The etiology of Judg 6:25–32, however, can approach the theophoric element *b'l* only with the animus that reflects the religious conflict of succeeding centuries. In other words, though Jerubbaal is a name suspicious for its felicity in describing Gideon's primatic post, the tradition takes no account of this. At the same time, the inaccuracy of the etiology testifies that the equation was imbedded already in a prior stage of Israelite tradition-history; in a limited sense, it represents testimony to the tradition's historicity.

Even if one were reluctant to adopt this approach, Gideon's assumption of the priesthood would tend to verify the tradition of his "seventy sons" (Judg 8:30). There can be little doubt that the establishment at Ophrah of Gideon's ephod represented the establishment of an hereditary hierocracy over the northern confederate tribes. Apart from the dynastic implications of Gideon's consecration (Judg 8:22–27), Gideon orders his first-born, Jether, to execute two captured Midianite chieftains, Zebah and Zalmuna (8:20): this is a privilege undertaken at Saul's default by Samuel (1 Sam 15:32–33); Ahab, like Saul, forfeits the kingship for failure to execute just such a captive (1 Kgs 20:30–42). In attempting to transfer the principal role in the ceremony to Jether—albeit unsuccessfully[13]—Gideon evinces a dynastic concern.[14] It is,

13. Jether was "still a youth," and did not "wield a sword." The second expression sounds a bit stereotyped, and might be synonymous with the first. The response of Zebah and Zalmuna that Gideon should kill them, out of respect for their station, is of interest as implying his captaincy over a large host.

14. Note that Pinhas secures the priestly franchise through the liquidation of an apostate

for example, no coincidence that Zadoq, "a young man, mighty of valor" is among David's Levitic contingent at Hebron (1 Chr 12:27–29),[15] but later succeeds to the high priesthood. His heir, Ahimaaz, acts as a runner during the revolt of Absalom (2 Sam 18:18–30). These data strengthen the impression of a dynastic concern in the report of Judg 8:22–27, as does the Midianites' affirmation that Gideon and his "brothers" resemble "the sons of the king" (8:18–19).

Curiously, the impression is borne out by an entry in the royal records of David. In 2 Sam 20:26, after the enumeration of the high priests Zadoq and Abiathar, the note appears "And Ira the Jairite was also a priest for David." This Ira is probably to be identified with Ira the Jethrite (2 Sam 23:38; 1 Chr 11:40):[16] the distinction between Jairite (*y'ry*) and Jethrite (*ytry*) is a consonantal distinction between *'alep* and *taw*, letters easily confused in the paleo-Hebrew scripts of the pre-Herodian era. Furthermore, the Jethrite family is associated with Qiryath-Jearim (1 Chr 2:53), the Hivite city that housed the ark prior to its procession into Jerusalem.[17] It is not too much to associate David's priest with this clan of devotees.

David's religious policy was characterized by a profound caution. His perspicuity as politician has never been in issue, and the appointment of two high priests can only be considered exemplary in this regard. Abiathar, scion of the Shilonite line responsible for the ark, represented the northern confederacy of Israel, which had fallen under the domination of Ephraim and Benjamin, the Rachel tribes. Zadoq, David's second high priest, traced his descent to Aaron; his Judahite connections, as 1 Chr 12:29 and Exod 6:23 (where Aaron marries into the Davidic line) indicate, were particularly strong.[18] Ira's

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Israelite and a Midianite princess or priestess (Num 25:7–13), just as the Levites are consecrated in the blood of Israelite idolators (Exod 32:25–29). More immediately striking, Ehud achieves prominence by the assassination of the Moabite king Eglon (Judg 3:15–22), while Jael the Kenite is "blessed" for her execution of the Canaanite general (Judg 4:21; 5:24–27). Benaiah ben-Jehoiada (the Levitic chieftain of 1 Chr 12:27) secures the army command by playing a key role in the Solomonic purge (especially 1 Kgs 2:26–46).

15. It is interesting to speculate that the "youth" entrusted with the execution of Saul's slayer in 2 Sam 1:1–16 might be Zadoq, who by the act secured the high priesthood to his line. Especially v. 14 here is reminiscent of Judg 8:18–19, where the slaughter of the anointed (Gideon's "brothers") is cited as justifying taking steps of revenge. Cf. 2 Sam 18:9–15.

16. His presence in this list may be due to the influence of the following "Gaber the Jethrite," or may reflect a military record, like that of Zadoq, Ahimaaz, and Abiathar's son, Jonathan (2 Sam 15:27–36; 17:17–20).

17. Blenkinsopp (1972, pp. 65–83) has argued that the ark was located not at Qiryath-Jearim, but at Gibeon. Note, in any case, the Hivite character of the town, as of Shechem (Gen 34:2), where Gideon's descendants held sway. See further, Blenkinsopp (1966, pp. 207–19).

18. On the character of the conflict between these two priestly houses, see F. M. Cross's ground-breaking essay, "The Priestly Houses of Early Israel" (1973, pp. 195–215). Noteworthy

association with this duo seems, at first, superfluous. If, however, the Jethrite line traced itself to the son of Gideon, then it represented the ancient league community over which Gideon the warrior had established a dynastic primacy. The inclusion of this religious community in David's Yahwistic establishment would be less than surprising: nothing could be more natural, considering the Judahite monarch's concern for Northern sensitivities.[19] It might be, indeed, that this appointment represented the co-option of the priesthood which had stood steadfast behind Saul after the defection to David of the Shilonites (1 Samuel 21–22). The Zadoqite line, it may be presumed, had supported the Judahite's royal ambitions from the start.[20]

It is Gideon's erection of a dynasty of prelates, then, that underlies the rather extensive narrative of his vocation and mission (Judges 6–8). His consecration of an altar at Ophrah (6:24) after an angelic epiphany (6:11–21; but Richter, 1963, pp. 133–137 argues for a vision of YHWH), together with his construction of an ephod for his descendants, and as a shrine for Israel (8:27), testifies to his interest in establishing the city of Ophrah and the house of Gideon as centers of the Israelite league. This interest is further corroborated by indications that the prelacy was passed on by Gideon through his first-born son, Jether. Additonal confirmation may be found in the circumstance that the construction of the ephod has a striking parallel in Aaron's construction of the golden calf (Exod 32:1–6; cf. Exod 33:6).[21]

in support of his thesis of dual priesthood representing dual constituency are the participation of the Shilonite Ahijah in the coup of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 11:29–40), and the political division between Abiathar and Zadoq over the Solomonic succession (1 Kings 1). Abiathar's ejection from the high priesthood (1 Kgs 2:26–27, 35) symptomized the evolution of the union between Judah and Israel into Solomon's imperial subjugation of the North. See Halpern (1974, pp. 519–532). On Zadoq's obscure antecedents, see Rowley (1939, pp. 113–141); Hauer (1963, pp. 89–94); Rosenberg (1965, pp. 165–170); Cody (1969, pp. 88–93); especially Cross (1973, pp. 206–215).

19. In this connection, it is suggestive that Absalom's military commander, Joab's cousin, Amasa, is sired by an Israelite (2 Sam 17:5; cf. 1 Chr 2:17—"Ishmaelite") named Jether (Ithra). David subsequently elevates Amasa to Joab's position (2 Sam 19:13), although Joab then murders him (2 Sam 20:10; 1 Kgs 2:5). Perhaps Amasa was well-connected among the religious leaders of the northern league.

20. Given the present penumbral state of knowledge, ramification on the basis of the preceding is at best premature. Nevertheless, it is not inconceivable that the Midianite priest Jethro—and Midianite Yahwism with him—derives from a memory of Gideon's domination. Conversion in the wake of conquest was no Islamic innovation, and for Midian may have occurred at the point of a "sword for Gideon—and YHWH" (Judg 7:21).

21. Cross (1973, pp. 198–199) argues forcefully that the Exodus 32 account represents a polemic against Aaronic bull iconography at Bethel. Cf. Halpern (1976, pp. 31–42) for the argument that Mushites (Shilonites excepted) served the Bethel sanctuary. Against both, it is possible to argue that a Gideonite line may have supported Jeroboam's reforms at Bethel. This is suggested by the similarity of Exod 32:1–6; 33:4, 6 to Gideon's construction of the "ephod"; Gen 35:1–4 ties the procedure to the Shechem area. It is, in fact, a possibility that the Gideonite priesthood provided the original Israelite precedent for the bull iconography.

At the same time as he developed Ophrah as a religious and federal center, Gideon maintained his authority through a council of seventy "sons." This council, which derived its authority in turn from Gideon in his role as "judge," traced itself to Gideon's magistrate: this explains the appearance of "seventy sons of Jerubaal," as well as the nominal disjunction accompanying the editorial. The construct is buttressed by the association of Gideon's change of name with his construction of an altar (6:25–32), that is, with his assumption of official function.[22] Thus the change of historical sources that occurs with Gideon's advent is to be imputed to the dynastic shift that that advent effected; Gideon's nominal metamorphosis, as a result, has suffered from an appearance of literary disjunction.

The "sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men" fit into a pattern of legislative assemblies that stretches across Israelite history, from the seventy children of Jacob (Gen 46:27; Exod 1:5; Deut 10:22) to the Sanhedrin, the ruling assembly of the Maccabean Commonwealth (see especially Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 1:6). In Exod 24:9–11, one of Israel's most antique traditions of the revelation at Sinai, a group of seventy elders ascends the mountain to make covenant with the deity (see Nicholson, 1975, p. 78). The representatives of Israel's community similarly involve themselves in the covenant meal after Joshua's negotiations with the Gibeonites (Josh 9:14–15, 18–21).[23] Most appertinent to the Abimelek cycle, however, is the fate of the sons of Ahab, "seventy men," related in 2 Kings 10. The function of this congeries is difficult to determine; what is clear is that from the "seventy" the successor to Ahab's throne must come. Thus Jehu, having staged and executed a successful coup in the field (2 Kings 9), corresponds with the captains of the capital, Samaria, challenging them to enthrone the pick of the royal litter to do battle with him. The officers, elders and stewards steer a different course, of lesser resistance, in decapitating the "sons of the king, seventy men" (2 Kgs 10:1–7). Jehu, left without a rival, lays the responsibility for these deaths on the shoulders of

22. Although the etiology is historically secondary, the fact remains that it emphasizes Jerubbaal's role as a cultic figure. Given Gideon's association with such a role, it is possible to maintain that the etiology is indeed anchored in a reinterpretation of historical tradition.

23. Rabbinical commentators associated the meal in Joshua 9 with the covenant feast of Gen 26:30–31. See Kiel (1959, p. 67); see, too, Noth (1953, pp. 57–58); Kaufman (1959, pp. 134–136). Note further the council of seventy elders denounced in Ezek 8:11. The institution is also attested in the Ugaritic pantheon: my father, Professor Sidney Halpern, calls my attention to the seventy sons of Asherah. See Gordon, 1949, pp. 23 (V. 'Anat: 45–48), 35 (51.VI:46). Note also the designation "son of the assembly" applied to Koshar (p. 36; 51.VII:15–16). Kirta has at Ḫubur an assembly of seventy nobles, which he convokes to feast. See Herdner, 1963, #15.4:6–7; on this, see Miller (1971, pp. 177–186).

the pretorians, and proceeds to eradicate Ahab's remaining partisans (10:9–17; see Alt, 1959, pp. 285–286).

The similarities of this event to the incident of Abimelek's accession should not escape notice. As the successor to the throne must be selected from among a council of seventy in 2 Kings 10, so is the pretender of Judges 9 a "son of Jerubbaal," a member of the elite political council (see Malamat, 1965, pp. 34–50 on the council's character). In each instance, it is the ruling assembly of a central city-state that has power to acclaim the councillor king over a wider geographic domain. Finally, the ensuing slaughter of the "seventy men," the "sons" of the previous ruler, is imputed to the electoral body (2 Kgs 10:9–10; Judg 9:16b–19a, 24b).[24] As a legal process, the election of Abimelek seems to have a close parallel in another narrative concerned with the succession.

At the same time, certain distinctions between the two accounts are worthy of remark. Foremost among these is the fact that in the Abimelek episode, the king is not crowned in the capital city; neither does he take up residence in the city whose oligarchs proclaim him king. The Gideonite capital has been Ophrah, according to the historian; it is there that Abimelek eradicates the "seventy sons of Jerubbaal" (Judg 9:5). Abimelek further appears to take up residence at a third site: he is located by Judg 9:41 at Arumah.[25] In any case, there is no reason to associate him with a royal residence at Shechem (Judg 9:23–25, 30–41, 42–49).[26]

One clue to the cypher is Abimelek's plea, in Judg 9:2, "Which is better: that seventy men, all the sons of Jerubbaal, should rule you, or that one man should rule you? Remember, I am your bone and flesh!" The last is the catch-phrase. It is succeeded by repeated affirmations of brotherhood between

24. On the monarch's enthronement by the *'am*, see von Rad, 1963, pp. 62–66; Weinfeld, 1972, p. 88 n. 2; especially von Rad (1947, pp. 206–216). I hope to treat the issue in a study now in progress.

25. This location, consonantal *b'rm(h)*, is probably identical with *btrmh* (v. 31), which is where or how Abimelek is contacted by Zabul. Dossin (1957, pp. 166–167) argues that this expression should be rendered "perfidiously," on the basis of Dossin, 1955, pp. 1–28 (*tur-mi-im* in 3:17, 20–21). However, the similarity of *'alep* and *taw* in the late paleo-Hebrew script, and in the pre-exilic cursive, and Jotham's flight to *b'rh* (Judg 9:21), make likely an original identity of the words in point. On the possible location of Arumah, see Malamat (1971, p. 319, note 56).

26. It might be objected that Rehoboam travels to Shechem from the Solomonic capital at Jerusalem in order to receive the kingship of Israel (1 Kgs 12:1). However, there are no indications of the presence of a national assembly in Judges 9; this is critical in 1 Kings 12, where the northerners attempt to impose conditions on Rehoboam's suzerainty. On the role of the capital in ancient Near Eastern enthronement, see Buccellati (1964, pp. 54–61).

Abimelek and the Shechemites (9:3, 18, 24). The phrase itself, however, is familiar from four other biblical passages. It precedes the pronouncement that man and wife must "cleave" to each other in Gen 2:23–24 (J); it colors Laban's sanguine greeting to Jacob in Gen 29:14 (J). In these two cases, the expression denotes nothing more than a blood-relationship.

2 Sam 5:1; 19:11–13 evince a different understanding of the declaration. In the first instance, the representatives of the Israelite confederacy affirm, "We are your bone and your flesh" as they come to make David their king (2 Sam 5:1–3; cf. 1 Chr 11:1–3; 12:23–40). In the second case, Zadoq and Abiathar are instructed to plead that David is the "bone and flesh" of the men of Judah, who should therefore enthrone him (2 Sam 19:11–12). The same message is sent to Amasa, with the promise of command in David's army, and the hope that Absalom's former commander will recognize David's restoration (2 Sam 19:13; cf. 2 Sam 17:25).[27] So, in the first case, the elders of Israel are making a pact to crown David king; in the second, David is requesting restoration and recognition of his right to the throne. The employment of the term "bone and flesh" in each case suggests a formulaic association with the royal covenant.[28]

This corroborates the recorded tradition that Abimelek sought from the Shechemites dominion and dynasty; their recognition of his aspirations, however, constitutes an election to dominion only over the polis, which proceeds to fund an armed force (9:4). Abimelek uses the force to slay the "sons of Jerubbaal, seventy men, on one stone."[29] It is this act that presumably effects his ascent to leadership over the Israelite tribes.[30] Under these circumstances, it is moot whether Abimelek's position is that of king; to all appearances the

27. See note 19. Amasa's appointment represents a concession to placate the Judahite elders, who had supported Absalom against David. The encumbrance of his presence is removed in the same manner as that of Abner's (2 Sam 20:8–12; cf. 2 Sam 3:27; cf. 1 Kgs 2:28–34).

28. On this, see Fohrer (1959, pp. 1–22). The term "bone and flesh" may be misunderstood in Judg 9:1–5 to imply close consanguinity, motivating the insertion of Judg 8:31 into the formula from the list of "minor judges." The appearance here of "bone and flesh," paralleled only in J (Tenth C.) and David's court history, suggests an early origin for the narrative, and ties it once again to the court history. For the relation of the "bone and flesh" formula to the "law of the king" in Deut 17:14–20, see my "The Uneasy Compromise," in Halpern and Levenson, eds., *Traditions in Transformation: Turning-Points in Biblical Faith,* forthcoming.

29. Lipiński (1970, pp. 28–33) suggests the last phrase is to be interpreted as "at once, at the same time" (9:5, 18; cf. 9:24, 56). While possible, this interpretation is not secure.

30. So, in 2 Kings 10, had the Samarian and royal officials elected a new leader, he would have been forced to confront Jehu in order to secure the crown. Jehu has, by the same token, come to attack the king's "sons." Given these parallels, it is conceivable that for Absalom in 2 Sam 13:28–39, the difference between slaying all his brothers and assassinating only Amnon is the difference between high treason and simple murder.

"monarch" produced no hereditary succession (so especially 9:55).[31] And within the pericope, ancient tradents felt the monarchy to be limited to Shechem (see especially 9:18; cf. 9:22, where the verb *śrr* seems to imply strife, perhaps).

Tyranny was no less foreign to Shechem than was kingship to Israel in this period. Oligarchic organization apparently characterized the city throughout Israel's acquaintance with it, in fact.[32] Thus even Hamor's authority appears to have been circumscribed by a council (Gen 34:20–24).[33] And "Gual ben-Ebed"[34] touches off a Shechemite revolt by waving the banner of the city's oligarchic heritage (Judg 9:26–29).[35] For such a city, the coronation of Abimelek must represent a step of serious proportion.

To extrapolate on the basis of these observations, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the elevation of Abimelek should be understood largely as Shechem's reaction to Ophratite competition. Shechem's primacy as a religious center for the north central hill country is strongly suggested by the covenant ceremonies of Josh 8:30–35; 24:1–28. Gerizim and Ebal are thus the twin mountains for blessing and cursing, in the context of the covenant festival, the Israelite confederacy (Deut 27:11–13; see especially Eissfeldt, 1970, pp. 90–101 on this and the preceding passage). Tradition locates a

31. It might be argued that Abimelek's own name has dynastic implications. In Gen 20:1–18; 26:6–31, Abimelek is king of Gerar. At Amarna, Abimilki is the king of Tyre (Knudtzon, 1915, #147:2; 148:2; 149:2, i.a.). Both are tyrants of city-states, however. Note also 2 Sam 8:17 in contrast to 1 Chr 18:16, Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* 6.242, which suggest an Abimelek in the Palestinian text tradition of the Levitic genealogies. Cf. Ps 34:1; 1 Sam 21:2–11, 11–15. The psalm's glossator has taken the wrong name from a Palestinian text of 1 Sam 21. For the correct interpretation of the name, see Boling (1975, pp. 162–163).

32. Such was probably the case in many Canaanite towns. See Knudtzon, 1915, #59:2; 100:1–3, and, with regard to Shechem, #250; 287:30; 289:6. Compare, however, Artzi (1964, pp. 159–166).

33. Oligarchic control over the city executive is also attested at Amarna. See Knudtzon, 1915, #102:22; 138:49 (cf. Ezek 27:9), and, for that matter, the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh and Agga. But cf. Kramer (1964, pp. 149–156) for another view of the Sumerian situation.

34. As vocalized by Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* 5.241–246), this name may be rendered "despised son of a slave," which fits nicely with Zabul (again vocalized with Josephus), literally, "exalted one, prince," and the royal name, Abimelek. These seem almost to be titles, rather than personal names. All have an antique ring; Zabul, while still in use at Ras Shamra, seems to have seen severe lexical restriction in later Hebrew usage. The first two names appear only in vv. 26–41, which, with Lindbars (1973, p. 355, note 1), must be isolated as a unit independent of vv. (23–) 25, 42–49.

35. Josh 9:11; 10:2 suggest that the cities of the Gibeonite confederacy, Hivite (Josh 9:7), like Shechem (Gen 34:2), were also oligarchically governed. For discussion of the ties between Gibeon and Shechem, see Blenkinsopp (1966, pp. 207–219); Halpern (1975, pp. 303–316), where it is argued that the two populations were homogeneous both socially and politically.

sanctuary of YHWH, presumably founded by Jacob, on Shechemite soil (Josh 24:26; cf. Gen 33:18–20). It is here that the revered bones of Joseph are laid (Josh 24:32). Joshua's and Eleazar's graves are probably not far off (Josh 24:30, 33). Shechem may, in addition, have been the embarkation point for an annual pilgrimage to Bethel's sanctuary (Gen 35:1–7; see Alt, 1953b, pp. 79–88). Even after its destruction by Abimelek it remained sufficiently prestigious to serve as a tribal center for the North (1 Kgs 12:1), and, apparently, as Jeroboam's first capital (1 Kgs 12:25). For Shechem, then, the coronation of Abimelek and slaughter of the Ophratite lords would have had the effect of removing a dangerous cultic rival. Gideon's centralization of polity would in itself constitute something of a threat to Shechem; that he should additionally attempt to create a new cultic center in the north central hill country could only magnify the menace, particularly in the economic sphere. It is of interest to note, though, that Abimelek's "fratricide" (Judg 9:5) evidently did not include the destruction of the altar Gideon had erected (Judg 6:24). On the other hand, Ophrah's subsequent obscurity indicates that the effect of the coup was to eliminate it as a potential capital of the North.

The epitome of these relationships is contained in the account of a parable delivered by Jotham at the coronation of Abimelek. Jotham, according to the text, is the youngest "son of Jerubbaal," who "was hidden"[36] from the fate that sought out his brothers more successfully (Judg 9:5). At the ceremony of the coronation (9:6), he raises his voice from Mt. Gerizim (9:7—the mount of *blessing* in Deut 27:12) to declaim an apologue considered by critics an Israelite Philippic: it is a tale in which the trees offer kingship to the olive, the fig, and the vine, then finally to the bramble. It concludes with the bramble's address, "If you are anointing me king over you in good faith, come, take refuge in my shade; but if not, let fire come forth from the bramble, and consume the cedars of Lebanon" (9:8–15).

The implication of the fable is an equivalence of Abimelek and the bramble, a comparison not entirely flattering to the Israelite king. This has influenced some critics to label the fable anti-monarchical; they draw support from the following paranesis, in which Jotham moralizes that Shechem and Abimelek should be immolated for betraying "Jerubbaal and his house" (9:16–20).[37] However, the epanalepsis (or rhetorical resumption) 9:16b//19a

36. Probably "flown," a usage attested in Knudtzon, 1915, #256:6–7, where *ḫi-iḫ-bi-e* (most likely a *hip'il*) glosses *innibit* (N *'abātu*). This would again suggest an early source for Judg 9:1–7. Cf. 2 Kgs 11:2–3. Maly (1960, p. 300) notes that Jotham's status as last-born is, in an Israelite context, liable to suspicion.

37. So, e.g., Boecker (1969, p. 27). Nielsen (1955, pp. 145–149) sees the fable as directed against Abimelek and his "inappropriate election." Maly (1960, pp. 301–303) argues that the fable is an attack on those who shirk civic responsibility, i.e. kingship.

casts doubt on the originality to the context of vv. 16b–19a, which derange the continuum 9:16, 19b–20.[38] Nor can even these questionable verses be characterized as anti-monarchical. In the present recension they impugn more the Shechemites' conduct than any political institution. In fact, no blame is reserved for Abimelek, who is let off with the rather etiolate epithet "son of a slave-girl" (9:18; cf. 8:31). The impact of 9:16b–19a is such as to vitiate the force of the apodosis in 9:19b. The verses are thus a preclusion of the covenant blessing, and a pre-ordination of the curse of 9:20a. Perhaps the blessing of 9:19b was thought intolerable in the context of general devastation; in the current text, at least, it is endowed with an ironic aura. In short, whatever the case, 9:16b–19a point, in the context of the parable preceding, to the coming waste of the city (9:40–49).

In strict construction, the exhortations of Judg 9:16–20 constitute a penalty clause, the exercise of which, despite the vitriol of vv. 16b–19a, depends upon the fulfillment of the obligations undertaken. This is a clear clue to the function of the fable. Rather than concluding—even in the present prophetic redaction—with an unqualified condemnation of Abimelek or Shechem, Jotham stipulates that covenant fidelity will bring reward; destruction remains contingent on abrogation of that fidelity. A similar stern warning issues from Samuel's mouth in 1 Sam 12:13–25. There, obedience to YHWH is in point; in Judg 9:8–20, the question appears to be one of a social contract. Nevertheless, the association of the penalty clause with the covenant of kingship is as organic as it is with the covenant between the people and their god. It was, in fact, on the welding of these covenants that the Israelite monarchy depended (especially 2 Kgs 11:17; 2 Chr 23:16).

The fable, similarly, concludes with a conditional covenant curse. The bramble—or buckthorn (so Lindbars, 1973, p. 356, note 2)—will accept the kingship. However, if the trees have determined to have a king, they must enthrone him in good faith. Treason or defection will be grounds for punishment; defectors will be consumed,[39] a conventional treaty curse (see espe-

38. Richter (1964, p. 113) assigns 9:16b–19a to his Rdt[1]. He adduces (1963, pp. 250–251) strong argument for the detachment of the unit, noting 9:16a as a doublet for v. 19a, the compound protases of vv. 16–18, the ascription of Gideon's achievements to Jerubbaal in v. 17, the redundancy of v. 18 in view of v. 5, and the note of Abimelek's low caste as reflecting 8:31. Some of these points carry less weight than others. But particularly the atactic, polysyndetic character of vv. 16b–19a seems almost bizarre in their far more straightforward context.

39. Lindbars (1973, pp. 357–359) detaches the curse itself from the fable, arguing that the abrupt appearance of the cedars marks the intrusion of a poetic proverb, "Fire went forth from the buckthorn, and devoured the cedars of Lebanon." The appearance of the cedars is less abrupt if it is recognized that in the current context of the fable, these represent the "trees" (9:8) seeking a king. Although ingenious, Lindbars' isolation of the "proverb" does not allow for the holistic consinnity of the fable; while it may possibly once have ended differently, it is equally likely that

cially Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5; Num 21:28 [see Hanson, 1968, pp. 297–320]; Deut 13:16; 32:22; Zech 9:4; 11:1; Ps 21:9; 78:21, 63). This corresponds to the protasis of 9:16a and the apodosis of 9:19b–20a. The element, "let fire come forth from the lords of Shechem and from the palace and consume Abimelek" (v. 20b) is without an equivalent in the fable, however, and has probably been added in anticipation of Abimelek's tragically classic death (9:50–54; cf. 2 Sam 11:21; 1 Sam 31:4; 2 Sam 1:6–10). Such a curse, directed against the monarch, should be preceded by a protasis stipulating royal breach of covenant.[40] Since this is lacking before Judg 9:20b, it is possible to maintain that the clause should be excised as an addition. This view draws support from the apparent application of Jotham's "curse" only to the deaths of the men of Shechem (9:57).[41]

Finally, the buckthorn's selection for the throne need not be viewed as a polemical device. The bush does not cut an epic figure. However, in Israelite lore, the abasement of the elected leader is common: it is precisely the most ignoble candidate who rises to the nobility. This is the case not only with Gideon (Judg 6:15), but also with Saul (1 Sam 9:21), who, prior to the ritual coronation in feast with thirty (LXX^B seventy) elders, protests that he stands head and shoulders shorter than the least of the Israelites.[42] David's status as the Benjamin of Jesse's family is skillfully wielded as a literary device (1 Sam

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the parable was composed to be applied in its present situation. Note that the wild beast that requites the thorn's *hubris* in 2 Kgs 14:9 appears with equal or greater abruptness. For the division of the fable itself from the context, see Maly (1960, pp. 301–304); Lindbars (1973, p. 358); cf. Simon (1965, pp. 1–34). Richter (1963, pp. 249–250) makes oversubtle argument to divide off the parable, but later (pp. 282–294) concludes that it in fact satirizes elements of the coronation ceremony.

40. Note that the exercise of the curse against the king hinges on disobedience to the deity (as 1 Sam 12:25; 15:26; 1 Kgs 11:31–33). Oppression of the nation might evoke revilement and revolt (2 Sam 15:1–6; 19:41–20:2; 1 Kgs 12:1–9), but not, from the extant recensionists at least, religious condemnation.

41. The possibility remains that the curse against Abimelek is original, since, as in 1 Sam 12:13–25, violation of divine law leads to condemnation of king and subjects alike (another connection between Judges 9 and Samuel). Cf., too, Deut 28:36. On the other hand, it may be questioned whether 9:17–18 do not imply a gradual accretion of blame to Abimelek—here innocent of active trespass—motivated by his proverbial death at a woman's hands (2 Sam 11:21). In this construction, 9:17–18 would preserve an older tradition, which has disappeared as the palimpsest of the surrounding narrative evolved. The insertion of these verses may indicate the absence of the content from the inherited material closely preceding (as 9:1–6), which might then motivate the editorial expansion.

42. That 1 Sam 9:21–25 represent Saul's vocation for anointment (1 Sam 10:1) is indicated not only by his presidence over the covenant meal (1 Sam 9:22), but also by his acquisition of the reserved portion (cf. Lev 7:29–36). Compare with Alt (1953a, pp. 206–225).

16:11–12; 17:13–14); he scourges himself verbally at the ark's arrival in Zion (2 Sam 6:22), and, more in conformity to the pattern established by Gideon and Saul, at his matriculation by marriage into the royal house (1 Sam 18:23). Prophetic stammerings of incapacity are well known from Moses (Exod 3:11; 4:10) to Jeremiah (Jer 1:6); the ritual reluctance of the prophet at his vocation is the fodder for the sarcasm of Jonah (see, too, Amos 7:14–15). Again, in the monarchical realm, Solomon insists, in his Gibeonite dream-vision, that he, too, lacks stature (1 Kgs 3:7–9; cf. 1 Chr 29:1). Forty-one-year-old Rehoboam (1 Kgs 14:21) was a "youth and weak-hearted" at his coronation (2 Chr 13:7). Thus, in the cultural milieu of ancient Israel, the ideal monarch was the least member of the least family of the least clan of the least tribe. Isaiah's remark, "a small child will lead them" (Isa 11:6),[43] and Jesus' metathesis of the "first" and the "last" (Mark 10:31; Matt 19:30; 20:16; Luke 13:30; cf. Rev. 1:17) are rooted in the same tradition. They reflect the humility and humiliation of the mundane sovereign *ad maiorem gloriam dei*.[44]

Jotham's fable appears to recognize the identical ethic. The trees entreat first the olive, then the fig, then the vine to reign over them; each candidate affirms his productivity, and refuses to reign (Judg 9:8–13). None of these can in fact be held up as a paradigm among the trees of the manly virtues. Each does produce, however, some commodity which is laid before the monarch at his coronation. Thus the olive produces oil, which might figure the anointment of the elected (1 Sam 10:1; 16:13; 1 Kgs 1:34, 39, etc.);[45] the vine produces wine, an indispensable element of the covenant meal (Josh 9:11–15; 1 Sam 10:3; 16:20; 25:18–35; 2 Sam 6:19; 16:1–4, etc.); the fig may represent the agricultural produce present at the covenant meal and offered to deity and designee (1 Sam 25:18; 30:12; especially 1 Chr 12:40). The "lowly" buckthorn, however, can make no contribution other than that of leadership. He accepts the crown, and the gifts of the other trees, but warns

43. I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Sidney Halpern for calling this citation to my attention.

44. Richter has recognized this phenomenon as an element of the "Deliverer's" vocation; the pattern of this vocation he establishes (1970) as (1) divine cognizance of Israel's oppression; (2) the outcry of the oppressed community; (3) the designation of the savior, who is ordered to proceed to rescue the oppressed; (4) the deliverer's protest of his own incapacity; (5) an assurance of divine accompaniment; (6) the demonstration by "signs" of numinous proximity. For further cases, and discussion, see my "The Ritual Background of Zechariah's Temple Song," forthcoming in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*.

45. Anointment to be king appears extra-biblically in Knudtzon, 1915, #51:4–7. See also Kutsch (1963); especially Weisman (1976, pp. 378–398), for discussion.

sternly against covenant infidelity (9:14–15). As ignominious as his previous station had been, the undertaking of kingship implies the endowment of imperium, and, with the imperium, a majesty.

The fable attributed to Jotham, then, and declaimed from the mount of blessing (Deut 27:12) at the enthronement of Abimelek, is acned with the cliches of Israelite ritual. It appears to represent, allegorically, the conditional curse and blessing of the royal covenant. The fable is in essence a seal: it impresses upon future relations between Abimelek and the Shechemites the face of Janus. Together with the succeeding paranesis, it draws to a close the account of Abimelek's ascent. It prepares the way for the subsequent destruction precipitated by the perfidy of Hivite lords (9:23),[46] who could tolerate service neither to a Gideonite council of Ophratite oligarchs, nor to a Gideonite king, Abimelek.[47]

46. Kearney (1973, pp. 1–19) has demonstrated that the Gibeonites were characterized by Deuteronomistic sources as treacherous and violent. This, together with the treachery of the "children of Jacob," Simeon and Levi, at Shechem (Gen 34:13, 25–31), suggests that the Shechemite perfidy in Judges 9, while quite possibly historical, also had the literarily attractive quality of satisfying the prejudices of at least one editor.

47. Indeed, it appears that Abimelek himself may have been the fabulist of Judges 9. Montgomery (1909, p. 59) writes, "We may also recall how the Semitic kings were proud of boasting that their title to the throne came direct from the Deity, and was not mediated through secular descent, even if they possessed royal birth." So the Jotham (*ytm*) of Judges 9 may have had reference to the designation of the aspirant to the throne—*yatam*, or *yatūm*, "he was orphaned" (cf. Boling, 1975, p. 171). This concept informs Hebrews 7:2–3, " . . . King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent . . . So, too, the disavowal of Abdi-Ḫepa, "Neither my father nor my mother, but the strong arm of the pharaoh set me . . ." (Knudtzon, 1915, #286:9–10). Zakir describes himself as *'š 'nh*, "a humble man" (Donner-Röllig, 1971, #202:2, 4). Most clear is the inscription of Eshmunazar, where that magnate is characterized as *ytm*, "orphan" (Donner-Röllig, 1971, #14:3, 13). Kilamuwa also calls himself *br tm*(?), "an orphan?" (Donner-Röllig, 1971, #24:4; cf. 24:13). The implication is that such denials of ancestry were common practice among monarchs of the Canaanite and Syrian region. If the *ytm* of Judges 9 is in fact Abimelek, as this might seem to suggest, the fable would itself be the royal admonition against violating the new covenant. This fits particularly well with the speech of the buckthorn with which the fable concludes.

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