

## SUDDEN HOPE VII

### *SUDDENLY BRAMBLES AND INCENSE*

*<sup>7</sup> “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. <sup>8</sup> One day the trees went out to anoint a king for themselves. They said to the olive tree, ‘Be our king.’ <sup>9</sup> “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?’ <sup>10</sup> “Next, the trees said to the fig tree, ‘Come and be our king.’ <sup>11</sup> “But the fig tree replied, ‘Should I give up my fruit, so good and sweet, to hold sway over the trees?’ <sup>12</sup> “Then the trees said to the vine, ‘Come and be our king.’ <sup>13</sup> “But the vine answered, ‘Should I give up my wine, which cheers both gods and humans, to hold sway over the trees?’ <sup>14</sup> “Finally all the trees said to the thornbush, ‘Come and be our king.’ <sup>15</sup> “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!’”*

Judges 9:7-15

- I. Perfect comeuppance / Oreb (the raven) and Zeeb (the wolf), Zebah (the sacrifice) and Zalmunah (protection withheld)
  - A. Oreb and Zeeb were the princes representing the true power behind the Midianite scourge. Their heads were brought across the Jordan to Gideon, as a visible proof that the victory was final. Their defeat and execution became proverbial as a paradigm for the annihilation of the enemies of Israel. (Isaiah 10:26; Psalm 83:11)

*<sup>26</sup> The LORD Almighty will lash them with a whip, as when he struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb; and he will raise his staff over the waters, as he did in Egypt. (Isaiah 10:26 NIV)*

*<sup>11</sup> Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, (Psalm 83:11 NIV)*

B. Zebah (the sacrifice) and Zalmunah (protection withheld) took longer to conquer. They were, also, Midianite leaders who provided important information that brought about the successful conclusion to a blood feud.

\* God is bringing strongholds down. Stay vigilant. Finish well. Gideon did not.

\*\* Don't let anything in your life become a snare to others.

II. The Trees seek a King. / The spirit of Abimelech.

A. Planted plants “grow” everywhere. Potted plants “go” everywhere.

B. We always learn best through contrast. In Judges Chapter 9, Gideon's illegitimate son, Abimelech, seeks to “dominate” or “destroy” anyone who opposes his kingdom. He kills 70 of his brothers, leaving only Gideon's youngest son, Jotham, to give the oldest parable in the Bible.

C. The Olive tree, Fig tree, and Grapevine are asked to rule, reign, and dominate the entire vegetable kingdom.

D. Each fruitful “planted” tree and branch refuses to leave its appointed place for a temporary “potted plant” dominion.

E. The Bramble appoints himself ruler.

\* The Bramble doesn't deliberate.

\* He accepts dominion over others immediately.

- \* He has no “planted” fruitfulness to leave.
- \* He demands everything and gives nothing.
- \* He casts no shadow and has no substance.
- \* He is absurd in his condition and demands. “Serve me or die.”
- \* He treats everyone and everything as a “means to an end,” and, in turn, never treats anyone or anything as an “end” in and of itself.

### III. Can you smell the brambles burning? / 15 facts of our time

- A. Brambles of selfish ambition are fit only for burning.
- B. God’s fire is seeking out and consuming all selfish ambition which would seek to dominate others.
- C. Bloom where you’re planted. Refuse to be anyone but you! Refuse to go anywhere other than where God has planted you.
- D. The least qualified are always the most selfishly ambitious.
- E. The under equipped always seek to rule those who should be ruling them.
- F. What selfishly ambitious people lack in character, they make up for in noise and slaughter.
- G. Never agree to be crowned King or Queen of a lesser kingdom.
- H. Never leave your “planted place” for a lesser “potted” venue.
- I. Selfish ambition always seeks to dominate and control.

- J. Never allow others to promote you beyond the level of your own competence.
- K. Getting isn't always good; Abraham's nephew, Lot, lost everything the more he gained.
- L. Be like the Olive, Fig, and Grapevine. Turn down the opportunity to dominate others. Love never dominates.
- M. A Religious Spirit is always a selfish and ambitious Bramble!
- N. Starting in the midst of His own people, God is burning up every Bramble bush of illegitimate authority that desires to rule, control, or dominate others.
- O. Abimelech always has but a short reign.

#### IV. Thebez / The place of poetic justice

- A. This city in Mount Ephraim refused submission to Abimelech.
- B. The reduction of the grain obtained through the threshing process to flour was associated with sexual imagery. There were two millstones, one on top of another. While the lower of the two stones was especially associated with women, the upper was especially associated with men. This explains the sexualization of the shame of Abimelech, whose head is crushed by a woman dropping an upper--male--millstone from atop the walls of Thebez. (He was trying to penetrate.) It's a sexualized shame that can be compared to Jael's spike piercing the skull of Sisera, when all was set up for a rape scene with the roles reversed. (Judges 4:21,22)

*<sup>21</sup> But Jael, Heber's wife, picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him while he lay fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died. <sup>22</sup> Just then Barak came by in pursuit of Sisera, and Jael went out to meet him. "Come," she said, "I will show you the man you're looking for." So he went in with her, and there lay Sisera with the tent peg through his temple--dead.*

C. God knows how to bring "comeuppance" in a way that will be remembered forever. (2 Samuel 11:21)

*<sup>21</sup> Who killed Abimelek son of Jerub-Besheth? Didn't a woman drop an upper millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you get so close to the wall?' If he asks you this, then say to him, 'Moreover, your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead.'"*

D. The Bramble king's reign begins with pride gained at the stone where he slaughtered his brothers. His reign ends with a millstone that crushes his pride completely.