

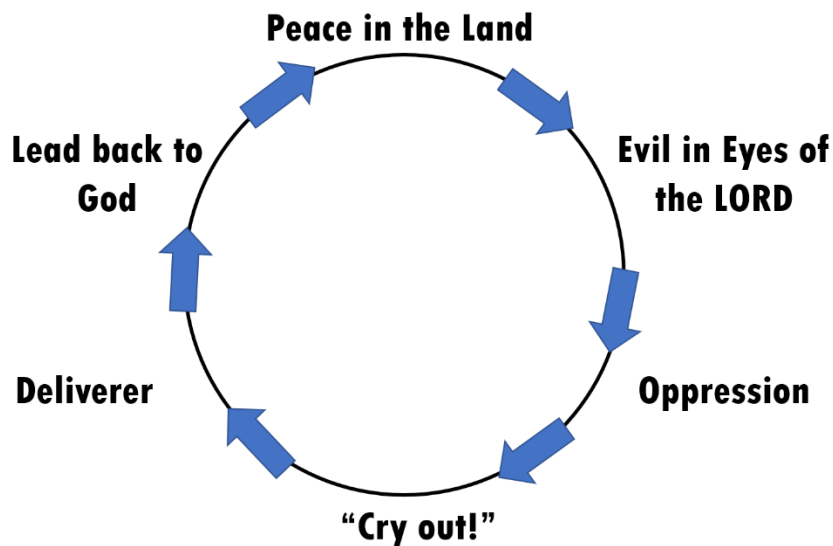
Overview:

- Repeating downward cycle (Judges 2:19)
- First parable (Judges 9:7-15) – a warning about choosing leadership
- Judges was written to and communicated to an ancient culture. Messages are communicated symbolically (God communicates culturally), making it difficult for modern readers.

1. Judges -

- The Hebrew word *Shapat* (verb) – the primary sense has to do with “exercising the process of government.”¹
- The “Judges” are leaders – usually military – that are also labeled as a “deliverer” or “savior.” They lead the Israelites out of the chaos back to God and peace.

2. The Cycle:



- Judges 2:10-19 – Overall description of the cycle. Notice v. 19; each cycle is worse than the last.
- Judges 3:7-11 – first of the six (major) cycles
- Judges 3:12-15 -
 - v. 3:30 – peace in the land.
- Judges 4:1 – “Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD.”

¹ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, #2443.

3. “Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD.” (six times)

1. Othniel	Judges 3:7-11
2. Ehud	Judges 3:12-30
3. Deborah	Judges 4 & 5
4. Gideon	Judges 6 – 8
5. Jephthah	Judges 10:6 – 12:7
6. Samson	Judges 13 - 16

- After Samson, the phrase “In those days Israel had no king” (Jg. 18:1) is repeated.

4. Parable of the Trees:

- Judges 9 – a parable after the people of Shechem chose Abi-melech (means “my father is king”) as their leader.
- Abimelech puts to death any competition for the throne – his other brothers – and is hailed as king by the people of Shechem.

5. *Atad* Tree -

- Understanding the characteristics of the *Atad* tree is essential to understanding the parable.
- Characteristics of *Atad* (*Ziziphus Spina-Christi*)²
 - A fruit tree – but the fruit is rarely marketable.
 - A large tree that is used for its shade.
 - Beneficial to shepherds and wheat farmers for its shade – the *Atad* is harmful to other fruit trees
 - The roots of the *Atad* are so strong that they will drain the water needed for the other fruit trees.
 - Dried *Atad* wood is excellent for kindling and fire as it catches fire quickly and generates significant heat.

6. Judges 9:7-15

- Olive, Fig, Grape will not give up their fruit to be king
- The *Atad* will easily give up his fruit and then demand that the other fruit trees “come and take refuge in my shade” (Jg. 9:15)

7. Measure for Measure - God judges Abimelech by sending an evil spirit (9:24)

- Abimelech killed 70 brothers on one stone (9:5)
- Abimelech is killed with one stone (9:53)
- “Thus, God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech had done...” (9:56)

² Hareuveni, Nogah. *Tree and Shrub in our Biblical Heritage*, 1984, pp. 59-65.