

# The Immorality of the Benjamites

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's take our Bibles tonight and open them to Judges.

! And tonight we're going to finish it up, chapters 19-21.! That's three chapters, that's a lot. And a new plan on reading here from the beginning.

Not here from the beginning. But when we're finished, I really read it all. And in fact, it's kind of one of those texts where to reduce it to some outline, quite difficult because of the storyline and such. And so I think tonight kind of approach it in narrative form. Now I do have three main points, and I'll get to those here in a minute. And so we can kind of divide this, three chapters, three kind of movements of the story or emphases.

And we'll get to that here in a little bit. All right, so that's going to be our text tonight. I entitled this kind of two-part message, because we started this last week.

[ 1 : 15 ] Not these chapters, but the last five chapters of the book. A two-part message. Under this title, Israel left to her own devices.

And that's what we have. But really not just in these five chapters. We kind of can see this throughout the book of Judges. But chapter 5, I put it that way, that they're left now to their own devices, because very little mention of the actual working of God or leadership of God.

Now the Lord is mentioned here, as we shall see. And he's mentioned in a way that seems a little bit troubling. We'll get to that by and by.

But besides that, in five chapters, unlike the previous chapters of Judges, we don't have God seemingly all that active in these five chapters.

And so that's why it just kind of seems that Israel's just left to go their own way. As the book ends, you know, everyone did what was right in their own sight.

[ 2 : 28 ] And so they're left to their own devices. Some commentators, and I mentioned this last week too, have described this as kind of an epitaph on the complete canonization of Israel.

They have completely abandoned Yahweh God and the worship of Yahweh God, at least abandoned him in heart.

They still maintained the forms and rituals and such. We even saw some of that last week in chapter 17 and 18.

Even though a mixture of paganism and Yahweh worship is just really pitiful. And so it's a canonization of theirs. They went into the land with strict orders from God to clean the land, completely purge the land of all idolatry.

And to do that, to purge the land of the Canaanites. And instead, they became Canaanites in many different ways. All right, so the final five chapters we need to kind of remember.

[ 3 : 33 ] Do not present the usual pattern that we've had, remember? All throughout the book of Judges. Defined this way, rebellion, retribution, then repentance, then rescue.

And then it starts all over again. We have that cycle that keeps occurring throughout the book of Judges. We don't have that anymore in these last five chapters of the book of Judges.

I mentioned that last week. There are no more Judges identified. And again, we see very little activity, direct activity, very obvious activity, words spoken by the Lord.

We just don't have that in these five chapters. And so these chapters are not really a continuation of the story in some chronological order.

So don't get the idea that, you know, the Judges now have come and gone. And now these last five chapters, just the, you know, the history after the Judges. That's really not the case.

[ 4 : 37 ] The first, so it's not the first period being the Judges and then the events that follow in chapters 17 through 21. What we have here is an appendix, an appendix to the book of Judges.

Kind of the end material for the book. We could say it's the author's conclusion. As you kind of look back over the entire period of the Judges.

It's kind of a summation. You call it that as well. And we could call it that if this was just simply comments on the people of Israel during this period.

But we have stories here. So this is an appendix, kind of additional material. And so these are events that took place at various times throughout the period of the Judges.

And when did these events take place? I don't really know. Did they take place early on in the period? In the middle somewhere? At the end somewhere? Or all of the above? We don't really have any real clear idea.

[ 5 : 42 ] Although we do have a point of reference that will be given to us in the text that we're going to be looking at tonight. And that is in chapter 20 and verse 28.

And you can look at it if you want to. But I'm not going to read it. But we have a reference there to Phinehas, the priest. Phinehas, the priest.

And even identifies him as the Phinehas that we should already know, who is the grandson of Aaron. And so there's a reference to a person.

And we know about when he lived and so forth. It is interesting, by the way, that Phinehas is the only person identified in all of these three chapters.

We have all these various characters and such. But no one is named. Everybody is anonymous. Except for Phinehas, the priest. And I don't know if he's just inserted there by name so that we have some point of reference.

[ 6 : 41 ] But if that's the case, then we can conclude that the events that transpired here in these last three chapters, which comprise a complete, you know, a story that goes together, that they occurred probably less than 100 years after Moses died.

And maybe decades, one or two decades, decades after Joshua died. So that would put it pretty early on in this period known as the judges.

Nevertheless, we're not to focus on chronology and try to fit this in in some, you know, system dates and when did this transpire and so forth.

But that's not the point. The point of the appendix, as I think it's proper to call it, is that the author is grouping these stories together in order to emphasize what is a disturbing spiritual reality in Israel. One that's been coming on all along throughout the book, and we've been able to identify and see it. But here in the end material, the five chapters at the close, he's making a very clear statement about their spiritual darkness in Israel.

[ 7 : 57 ] And really, again, something that started very shortly after Joshua died. All right, so that's what we have here. Picture of the true spiritual condition of God's people after the departure of Joshua.

And if I might kind of fit this in and go forward from there, think about it. This is the spiritual condition, kind of a summary of it, for Israel between Joshua and really not until David the king comes on the scene.

That period of time is pretty troubling. Their spiritual condition is very dark. We don't have a high spot until we get to David. And, I mean, even the first part, better part of 1 Samuel is a continuation of the religious and moral degeneration of the people of Israel until David comes to the throne.

And Israel, you might say, enjoys golden years there, years they'll never forget. But then soon after David dies, what? Start going back the same direction.

Kind of a spiral downward once again and to a place from which they really will never recover.

Because, you know, after David, very soon they're ruled by corrupt and wicked kings who did not do what was right in the sight of God.

[ 9 : 29 ] Ultimately leading to a divided kingdom. Ultimately leading to the captivity of Israel. Both kingdoms, ultimately. And ultimately then leading to the end of Israel as a nation.

I mean, it's a pretty sad story. The Old Testament is, you know, the history of a pretty sad history for the people of Israel.

And then when you get into the New Testament, what? You find Israel under the thrall of the Roman Empire. And so this is just kind of an epitaph, not only on the book of Judges itself or the time period of the Judges.

But it really is a very clear description of Israel, really in general, throughout most of their history. And yet God still loves them. And we should love them too.

All right, now recalling what I said last week. This appendix to Judges can be divided thematically into two parts. First you have the idolatry of the Danites.

[10:33] That's what we studied last Sunday night. The tribe of Dan. Chapters 17 and 18. We could call it religious degeneration. Be another way to call it. That's the focus.

Religious degeneration. And then second part of it, three chapters. The immorality of the Benjamites.

The immorality of the Benjamites. The tribe of Benjamin. Chapters 19 through 21. We could call that the moral degeneration. So religious degeneration.

That's out front and on the surface. And we can see that. But all the time, under the surface, there was a moral degeneration taking place in the nation of Israel.

All right, so idolatry of the Danites. That's last time. And finally tonight, the immorality of the Benjamites. Now, chapters 19 through 21 consist of a very long and somewhat complicated story.

[11:44] But it's all one story. And the author kind of encapsulates the story with a twice-repeated description.

And I want to point that out to you. The first one, first time it's made, this description, this statement, is in chapter 19, verse 1. And it came to pass in those days when there was no king in Israel.

All right, that's what he says right at the opening of this story that takes up three chapters. And then if you look over at chapter 21 and verse 25, you have in those days there was what?

No king in Israel. No king in Israel. So those are two identical statements. And by the way, this is not the first time that this statement is made about Israel. Chapter 18, chapter 17, we have the same thing said there.

But these two statements kind of put parentheses on this whole story. And then after that, to conclude it all, there is this final verdict that is made concerning the spiritual condition of Israel.

[12:58] And it is this. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. And that's a period. And that's the end of the book of Judges. What a way to end it. And yet it is a statement about Israel for the entire period.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. It kind of sums it up. And that's where Israel was at the close of this period.

Now, remember the progression. If you were here last week, you remember the progression that we saw in chapter 17 and 18.

We were talking about the religious decline, the religious degeneration of Israel. There was a progression here. And it started with the religious degeneration in the home.

It began in a home, a household, an Israelite household. And then it progressed to the corruption of the priesthood. And then from there, it led to the corruption of an Israelite tribe.

[14:07] And so that was the natural progression. We can see that repeated in so many civilizations. Starts in the home, moves to the church, then moves to the nation.

What's interesting, we have the same thing really here in this story, in this final long story, final chapters of the book, where the moral degeneration began in a home, in a household.

And we'll see that here in a minute. Okay. Progressing then to a city, a particular city. And then from there, progressing to a tribe. And then ultimately to an entire nation.

So there, again, is the progression of the evil, the wickedness. In this case, the decline of morality. And when I say morality, I'm not just talking about, you know, the issue of sexual immorality.

But morality in all facets of life were declining. And much of it had ceased even to exist. Now, the trigger event then, the trigger event that sets in motion everything in this story, this moral crisis that expands ultimately to the entire nation, is given to us in the first, really the first three verses or so.

[15:32] And so let's just look at that. Chapter 19, verse 1. You can follow along as I read. And it came to pass, in those days, when there was no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim.

He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. But his concubine played the harlot against him and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah and was there for whole months.

Now, that's the trigger event. Gets all this started. Now, so what's happening here? Well, a Levite, we understand he's of the tribe of Levi.

And so Levites did not have a territory. They were the ones that were given charge of the spiritual leadership of Israel. And so Levites lived all over the territory among all the 12 tribes.

And so here's a Levite. We don't know anything about him, don't know his name. Again, most of the characters, really only one person is named in the entire story. And so we have a Levite and he's got a concubine.

[16:54] And that's a bit interesting. Did he have a wife? Well, it doesn't say he had a wife. It just says he had a concubine. So if he had no wife, then why is this woman referred to as a concubine?

We don't know. But I think we're supposed to understand that in reality, in relationship, officially, she is his wife.

She is his wife, even though she's referred to as a concubine. And what does she do? It says here in the New King James, she played the harlot against him.

Some versions, I think the NIV says unfaithful, which could mean the same thing. But it's interesting that the language in the Hebrew language, it also could simply describe that she got angry with him. I don't know how you put, how you get those two things out of the same word or expression. But it really doesn't matter. She either got angry with him and left him, left the house, or she went and played the harlot.

[18:02] It could be, and some of them tried to explain it this way, that maybe she got angry at her husband and left and went home. And her father, let's be hard to believe, but not so hard considering the moral condition of the nation.

The father required that she be a prostitute to gain income for the family. She's unmarried, and so that would bring income into the family. So it may be a statement about that.

But this is the event that gets it all started. Everything else that we have in the story starts or happens as a result of this Levite and his concubine.

And she leaving and going back to her father's house. And that starts things in motion that ultimately, nearly, tear apart the entire nation.

Not just one tribe, but all the tribes, the entire nation of Israel. Israel. And so, you know, it's interesting as we're going to discover that Israel is outraged over, you know, the obscure Levite whose concubine is later in the story we're going to find out is raped and murdered.

[19:21] They're morally outraged by that. And yet their response to it sorely lacks any morality, as we're going to see. And this is the point of the story.

The whole story reveals the moral degeneration of Israel. All right, so let's get... That gets us kind of well on our way to identifying the reason for all that happens hereafter in the story.

And so that's number one in my outline, if you take notes. The reason. The reason for the outrage.

We're going to discover Israel is going to be outraged by what happens to this concubine.

And what is the reason for it? Well, it starts with a Levite and a concubine. And the concubine leaving. And then verse 4. We pick it up there in verse 4.

Now, his father-in-law... Actually, verse 3. Then her husband arose and went after her. All right, so she's gone home to her daddy in Bethlehem.

[20:24] And so the husband leaves to... Arose and went after her to speak kindly to her and bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him.

So she brought him into her father's house. And when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. That's interesting, isn't it? That's his son-in-law.

Now, his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him. And he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there.

All right, up to that point, well, pretty nice story. You know, except for the fact that the concubine left and possibly went into harlotry. But at least the father-in-law was being pretty civil.

Then it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning and he stood to depart.

But the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, refresh your heart with a morsel of bread and afterward go your way.

[21:28] That is, stay another day. So they sat down and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the young woman's father said to the man, please be content to stay all night.

Let your heart be merry. And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him. So he lodged there again. Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart.

But the young woman's father said, please refresh your heart. So they delayed until afternoon and both of them ate. And when the man stood to depart, he and his concubine, his servant, his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, look, the day is now drawing toward evening.

Please spend the night. So the day is coming to an end. Lodge here that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early so that you may get home.

However, I'd say it's just really comical, isn't it? It's really kind of hard to believe that, you know, that this guy would just, all right, I'll stay another day.

[ 22 : 33 ] And I'll leave tomorrow. And then have dinner together and drink a little wine and be merry tonight. Have a little party. And then you can go, all right, well, you know, three, four times.

And now on the fifth time, he says, and when the man stood to depart, he and his concubine, his servant's father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, look, the day is now. Now, drawing toward evening, please spend the night.

See, the day is coming to an end. Lodge here that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early so that you may get home. That is, go early. Good, great, great plan.

However, the man was not willing to spend that night. So he rose and departed. Now, what time of the day is it? It's evening time.

We don't know exactly what time, but not a really good time to be starting a journey. That's pretty key to what happens next, the fact that he left in the evening. If he had not listened to his father-in-law and, you know, either started out early that morning or spent the night early and started out early the next morning, then the thing that happens after would have never happened.

[ 23 : 45 ] Interesting. Interesting. How the story unfolds. And so he came opposite Jebus, that is, Jerusalem.

That's put in there parenthetically. That's the city that would one day be named Jerusalem. At this time period, it was inhabited by the Jebusites.

They had not been driven out of the land, and that's another story altogether. But anyway, so he came to that place, Jerusalem. With him were the two saddled donkeys.

His concubine was also with him. They were the near Jebus, and the day was far spent. And the servant said to his master, come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it.

But his master said to him, we will not turn aside here into the city of foreigners who are not of the children of Israel, who will go on to Gibeon. We will go on to Gibeon.

[ 24 : 46 ] Now, all right, makes sense, doesn't it? They're not Israelites. They're Jebusites. Maybe it's not safe in the city. In hindsight, as we go through the story, I think in hindsight, the man may have wished that he had stayed in Jebus.

We'll get to that here in a minute. All right, so let's go on to Gibeon. So he said to his servant, come, let us draw near to one of these places and spend the night in Gibeon or in Ramah.

And they passed by and went their way, and the sun went down on them near Gibeon, which belongs to Benjamin. So Gibeon is a city within the territory of the tribe of Benjamin.

They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeon. And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into his house to spend the night.

Now, that's unusual. Either it was just too late and everyone was already, you know, in their homes and, you know, door is shut and kids are in bed.

[ 25 : 52 ] And, you know, I don't know, we could make all kinds of possibilities there. Or they're just simply not a very hospitable town, Gibeon. Actually, we're going to find out that at least some of the people in the city were very hospitable in a very immoral and sinful way.

But and so what do they have to do? They have no place to stay. And so they're out in the city. It's kind of the city central. We can imagine a well there and so forth. And so they had to be there to spend the night.

Just then, verse 16, an old man came in from his work in the field at evening who also was from the mountains of Ephraim. He was staying in Gibeon, whereas the men of the place were Benjamites. All right. So this is an Ephraimite staying there in the city. And and so he sees them. And when he raised his eyes and he saw the traveler in the open square of the city and the old man said, where are you going and where do you come from?

So he said to him, we are passing from Bethlehem to in Judea toward the remote mountains of Ephraim. I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah.

[ 27 : 12 ] Now I am going to the house of the Lord. But there is no one who will take me into his house. Although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant and for the young man who is with your servant, there is no lack of

anything.

The old man said, peace be with you. However, let all your needs be my responsibility. Only do not spend the night in the open square. Above all else, don't stay out here.

See, this old man knows something that we're going to discover here. So he brought him into his house and gave fodder to the donkeys and they washed their feet and ate and drink.

And as they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door.

They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, bring out the man who came to your house that we may know him carnally. That's how it's translated in the New King James.

[ 28 : 17 ] Carnally is in italics. It's not there. But the idea, that is the idea, to know them sexually, immorally. They wanted to rape this man.

I mean, this reminds you of another story, doesn't it? And it's very similar to Sodom and the angels that went into Sodom and these men come to Lot's house and so forth.

In fact, the rest of the story kind of reminds you of it as well. But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and he said to them, No, my brethren, I beg you, do not act so wickedly, seeing this man has come into my house.

Do not commit this outrage. Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man's concubine. Let me bring them out now, humble them, and do with them as you please.

But to this man, do not do such a vile thing. But the man would not heed him. So the man took his concubine. Now let's think about that statement there.

[ 29 : 23 ] Grammatically, the owner of the house, who's offered his daughter and also offered his guest's concubine, He is the one that puts the other man's concubine out and gives her to them.

Or is it the man who's married to the concubine? Grammatically, it's a little difficult. But the best guess or the best conclusion is that the man gave his own concubine to these men who wanted to, well, do whatever and ultimately did do to her.

Brought her out to them and they knew her and abused her all night until morning. And when the day began to break, they let her go. Now let's stop here a minute and think back again to this man in the home of his father-in-law.

And his father-in-law delaying him and delaying him and delaying him and talking him into having a little more wine, a little dinner, and get a little bit merry. And say, well, now he's late.

Just spend the night. And if he had not listened to any of that, this would have never happened. And so these perverted men. And we can only guess that, by the way, the man who allowed them to come into his home.

[ 31 : 02 ] The one who said, please don't stay out here in the square of the city. See, he knew what would take place out there in the square of the city. Probably at night this was the normal kind of thing. This kind of activity.

And so here they are beating on the door. And so he gives, the man gives his concubine. It's unthinkable. We can't even imagine it. But he gives his concubine to these men and they rape her all night and then let her go.

And when her master, and then the woman came as the day was dawning and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master was till it was light.

And when her master arose in the morning and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine. Falling at the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. It's, I mean, it's just a heartbreaking story and scene. Now, this idea of the description of her hands on the threshold is a picture of her reaching for her protection.

[ 32 : 11 ] Her husband, her, you know, and she's reaching for his safety. And what, by the way, was he doing while they were having their way with this concubine?

Was he in the house eating and drinking and then later sleeping? And then it says that he rose in the morning to go his way. I guess he was going home. He didn't care anything about this concubine.

It's just a terrible story. Just really terrible. And there she is. How pitiful. And he said to her, get up and let us be going. Goodness gracious.

Let us be going. But there was no answer. What does that mean, you think? I think she just died. Commentators go both ways on this.

Some say that she was still alive. And then later she dies. And we'll get to that part of the story. Or that she had died because of the abuse of her body throughout the night.

[ 33 : 18 ] And I think that is the clear answer. She had died. She didn't answer any words. She couldn't. She couldn't speak. She was dead. So what did he do? The man lifted her onto his donkey. And the man got up and went to his place.

Went home. So it's just a picture of taking a dead body, putting the body on the donkey and traveling home. All right? Now, up to this point, the story is bad enough, isn't it?

And it gets worse. When he entered his house, he took a knife, laid hold of the concubine, of his concubine, divided her into 12 pieces.

Sorry, we've got a few kids in here. Divided her up 12 pieces, limb for limb, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel.

So the idea is, obviously, you don't need that to be described or explained. Cut her up in pieces. 12 pieces, to be exact. And sent a piece to every tribe of the nation.

[ 34 : 25 ] And along with it, even though it doesn't say this, we're to assume, because of what transpires later, a little kind of cover letter with it, if you want. You know, explaining.

I mean, this man is, you know, he's outraged by this. And so he sends her body throughout the land.

And so it was that all who saw it said, No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day.

Consider it. Confer. Speak up. So they're responding to their little, neat little package that the leaders of each of these tribes received.

And again, I'm assuming a letter that goes along with it. Now, what deed are they talking about when they say it's never been seen? Surely not the deed of some gang rape.

[ 35 : 31 ] I mean, that surely has been done before. Maybe not. Maybe they're thinking not within the people of Israel. I mean, really. These were Israelites, these perverted men, doing what they did to this poor woman.

Or is it the deed of cutting her up? I think that's what they're referring to. Because they don't have all the story yet. And they're going to get the whole story a little bit later. All right, so chapter 9, that's the reason for the outrage that now has been kindled in the people of Israel, the leadership of Israel.

And they're going to do something about it. And so that leads us to the second kind of movement in the story. And that is the response. They're going to respond to this. And even though you might say, well, you know, yeah, they should respond.

Should do something about this. Now, as thinking people and moral people, we might sit down and devise a plan to put those guys who were guilty of this to death or bring them to justice.

And certainly under the law would be put them to death. But that's not what they do, as we're going to find. So here is the response. And the response is still an indicator of the moral decline of the nation of Israel.

[ 36 : 56 ] So all the children of Israel came out from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead. And the congregation gathered together as one man before the Lord at Mizpah.

And this is not just kind of a community get-together. This is a military camp that's been established here. And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword.

That's a bunch. Big army. Now, the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah. Then the children of Israel said, tell us how did this wicked deed happen?

All right, now, there's a little parentheses here about Benjamin. And the idea is they did not go to this meeting. And I guess maybe their leaders thought that if they did, they'd probably get cut up into pieces like that concubine was.

And so they didn't go. But the children of Israel said, you know, they want to know the whole story. Tell us how did this wicked deed happen? And they're asking, of course, the Levites.

[ 38 : 11 ] So the Levites, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, My concubine and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night. And the men of Gibeah rose against me and surrounded the house at night because of me.

They intended to kill me, but instead they ravished my concubine so that she died. So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel

because they committed lewdness, Benjamin, committed lewdness and outrage in Israel. I just want everybody to know of this terrible deed that was done. And these lewd people, these wicked, lewdness is another word for fornicators, fornication. And, of course, outrageous, this outrageous act. And so he wanted everybody to know that. And so he said, Look, all of you are children of Israel. Give your advice and counsel here and now. So all the people arose as one man, saying, None of us will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house.

[ 39 : 26 ] But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah. We will go up against it by lot. We will take ten men out of every hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every ten thousand, to make provisions for the people that when they come to Gibeah and Benjamin, they may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel. So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man. Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, What is this wickedness that has occurred among you? Now, therefore, deliver up the men, the perverted men, who are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel. But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel. Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities in Gibeah to go to battle against the children of Israel. So the stage is now being set for a civil war in Israel. All the tribes, at least a goodly representative of all the fighting men of Israel, the tribes of Israel, against Benjamin. And Benjamin bowed his neck or their necks, and they're going to fight against them.

[ 40 : 50 ] So a battle is being staged. And from their cities, at the time, the children of Benjamin numbered 26,000 men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered 700 select men. Among all this people were 700 select men who were left-handed. Everyone could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss. That's an interesting reference there. And the advantage of being left-handed, it's a little bit vague here. Actually, in reality, a left-handed soldier was considered a liability. But if you had a group of them, a large number of them, hundreds of them, then they could be kind of a mighty force because left-handed against right-handed, and it just kind of gave them an advantage. But it may just simply mean that they were ambidextrous. The term could mean that, that they could use both left and right. And then it adds to this their skill with the sling.

[ 42 : 01 ] What verse was I on? Yeah, 17. Yeah, 16. That's not 17. 16. Not quite too 17. All right, so they could sling a stone at a hair's breadth. I mean, that's pretty minute. And they would hit the target every single time. All right, so pretty skilled people. Now, besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered 400,000 men who drew the sword. All of these were men of war. Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God. Now, here is battle number one. There are actually going to be three battles. Here's battle number one. And I want to point out, even before we look at these three battles, that there is a kind of a system, a kind of a formula.

[ 42 : 59 ] Things that happen that are repeated with each battle. In fact, there are four things. First, there is an inquiry of the Lord. Then an answer from Him, supposedly. And then they attack. And the first battle, they're defeated. Then the second battle, they inquire of the Lord. He gives an answer. They attack. And they're defeated again. That is, Israel is defeated. And then the third time, they inquire of the Lord. He answers. It gives them a guarantee that they will win the battle. They attack. And they're victorious. So, with each of the three battles, you have kind of that formula. All right, so let's just read it. Then the children of Israel rose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God. They said, which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin? So, that's their first question. They inquire of God. By the way, at least with this first one, it does not say Yahweh.

[ 44 : 00 ] It says, actually, it's the word Elohim. And so, how serious the question was and how serious they are in really inquiring of the Lord is in debate here.

Elohim, more of a generic kind of description of God. But then the question itself seems to me to be the wrong question. You know, not who should go first, but should we go at all?

But they ask, who should go first? And God appears to answer. And I have to stand here and tell you, I take it at face value.

God answered. And what did he say? He said, Judah goes first. Judah goes first, which makes sense. Why? Because the concubine was from Bethlehem of the tribe of Judah.

So, Judah should be the one to go first. And so, the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. And the men of Israel went out to battle.

[ 45 : 03 ] So, there's the third step. First, the inquiring of the Lord. Then, his answer. And then, they attack. They attack the battle against Benjamin.

And the men of Israel put themselves in battle array to fight against them at Gibeah. Then, the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah. And on that day, cut down to the ground 22,000 men of the Israelites.

So, they were defeated. Benjamites were victorious. Second battle. Then, the children of Israel went up and wept.

Remember, all of this is because of a concubine that was raped. All of this is because of that. And the fact that happened was because the Levite stayed a little bit longer than he should have at his father-in-law's house.

That got all this started. And so, now, we've had one battle. 22,000 people are dead. And now, we have a second battle. The children of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until evening.

[ 46 : 10 ] And asked counsel of the Lord. This time, they're talking to Yahweh. Or, at least, they're using his sacred name. Saying, shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?

And really, that's still the wrong question. That's closer. But not really the right question. Shall I go again? Actually, Lord, should I have even gone the first time?

But, God answers. What does he say? He says, go up against them. Go. Well, let me go on and then we'll make a comment about all of this.

So, the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second day. And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day. And cut down to the ground 18,000 more of the children of Israel.

All these drew the sword. These are all soldiers that they killed. These are people they're killing in battle. All right. Defeated again.

[ 47 : 17 ] They inquired of the Lord. God gave them an answer. And they attacked and they were defeated. Second battle. Third battle. Then all the children of Israel, that is all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept.

Now, they're really serious about this. They sat there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.

So, the children of Israel inquired of the Lord. Here's the third time they're asking God for counsel. And to kind of add a little extra kind of validity to all this.

The Ark of the Covenant of God was there in those days. And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days saying, Shall I yet, so he's inquiring of the Lord, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?

Or shall I cease? And we would expect the Lord to say, Cease. But he didn't, did he? How did he answer?

[ 48 : 28 ] Go up. For tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand. How did he reconcile that? Clearly, Israel is in rebellion.

They're into idolatry. They're as far away from Yahweh God as they possibly could be. Their religion is a mixture of pagan and Yahweh worship, which negates the validity of their Yahweh worship altogether, because it's all just the form of it.

And so, And so, they're asking the Lord, not if he will give them victory over the Canaanites, but this time victory over their own people. The people of Israel.

And we would expect God to not sanction any of this. And yet God says, Go up and I will give you victory.

And indeed he does, and we shall see. See, here's my conclusion. God is judging the people of Benjamin. See, I think, if you think about it, we're not talking about just a few isolated perverts living

in this city.

[ 49 : 43 ] In raping this woman until she dies, and only because she couldn't rape her husband. I'm thinking that this, this is kind of a description of where the tribe of Benjamin had, had sunk to the level they had sunk to morally.

And even though God is not sanctioning what Israel is doing, they're not acting rightly. But God is using them, just as God has always used, even pagans, and almost always used pagans to judge his people.

He's using his own people to judge a tribe, a tribe of Israel. And so God says, Go up and you will have the victory. And so then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah.

And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day and put themselves in battle array against Gibeah as at the other times. So the children of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city.

They began to strike down and kill some of the people as at the other times. In the highways, one of which was up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah.

[ 51 : 01 ] And in the field, about 30 men of Israel. And the children of Benjamin said, They are defeated before us as at first. But the children of Israel said, Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways.

So all the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar. Then Israel's men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Geba.

And 10,000 select men from all Israel came against Gibeah and the battle was fierce. But the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them.

The Lord defeated Benjamin before Israel. So who defeated them? The Lord did. This is His judgment. And the children of Israel destroyed that day 25,100 Benjamites.

All these drew the sword. So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites because they relied on the men in ambush whom they set against Gibeah.

[ 52 : 13 ] And the men in ambush quickly rushed upon Gibeah. The men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword. So first, the people killed in battle were soldiers, the ones who had swords.

But now Israel's going a step further, are they not? And they've gone now to the city, ambushed the city with the edge of the sword.

Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city, whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike and kill about 30 of the men of Israel, for they said, Surely they are defeated before us as in the first battle. But when the cloud began to rise from the city and the column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them and there was the whole city going up in smoke in heaven.

And when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw the disaster had come upon them. Therefore they turned their backs before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness.

[ 53 : 26 ] But the battle overtook them and whoever came out of the cities they destroyed in their midst. They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, and easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east.

And 18,000 men of Benjamin fell. All these were men of valor. Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness of the rock of Reman. And they cut down 5,000 of them in the highways.

Then they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom and killed 2,000 of them. So all who fell of Benjamin that day were 25,000 men who drew the sword.

All these were men of valor. But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Reman. And they stayed at the rock of Reman for four months.

And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin and struck them down with the edge of the sword. From every city, men and beasts, all who were found, they also set fire to all the cities they came to.

[ 54 : 34 ] What's happened here? The near annihilation of the entire tribe of Benjamin. The only survivors? 600 men.

Every man, woman, child, animal, everything. Not just in Gibeah, but in all the cities. destroyed.

You think that's what God intended? It's hard to believe that. Would God sanction that? And that is, was it right for the armies of Israel to do such a thing so brutally and such total annihilation? I don't really think so.

But we've got to get the scene here. 600 people left in the entire tribe of Benjamin. And they're all men. And no women. All their wives are dead and no women in their tribe to remarry and continue, you know, with the tribe of Benjamin.

[ 55 : 40 ] This could mark and would have marked the end of that tribe. And so that leads us then to the final part of the story and what I would call the restitution.

The restitution. Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, this is something they did way back before this started, saying, None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife.

All right, so 600 men, all their women are dead. And the rest of Israel has taken an oath that they can't marry any of their women. So the only thing they have left is to marry pagan women.

And they're not going to want to do that. But this is how it's set up for us. Then the people came to the house of God and remained there before God till evening.

They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly. Now get this. And said, O Lord God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel? That day there should be one tribe missing in Israel.

[ 56 : 46 ] What? It's like they're saying, how did this happen? How did this happen?

We're going to be one less tribe in Israel. How could we have come to this? I don't know if it's they're coming to their senses or they just really are just deluded.

And they said, Lord God, why has this come to pass? Verse 4, So it was on the next morning that the people rose early and built an altar there and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

The children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly of the Lord? So they're getting together to decide on a solution. We have annihilated the tribe of Benjamin.

In fact, if you read between the lines, they're really blaming God for that. Just 600 men left and we've taken an oath they can't have any of our women and so what's going to happen?

[ 57 : 49 ] It'll be the end of Benjamin and so now we will not have what will be one less a tribe and that's something they couldn't even imagine. And so they've got to do something about it so they kind of get together for a little powwow again to try to devise a plan.

And the Israelites said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly of the Lord? For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the Lord at Mizpah saying, He shall surely be put to death.

So they said, If anyone does not join us in this battle, then when it's all over, you know, they should be put to death. They're kind of devising a plan here and they said, Well, there's this option.

You know, was there anybody who didn't come up and join us in battle? And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin, their brother, and said, One tribe is cut off from Israel today.

What shall we do for wives for those who remain seeing we have sworn by the Lord that we will not give them our daughters as wives? And they said, What one is there from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah, to the Lord?

[ 59 : 08 ] And in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-Gilead to the assembly. Aha! Here's a city of people who didn't participate. This may give us an answer here.

For when the people were counted, indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead was there. So the congregation sent out their 12,000 of their most valiant men and commanded them, saying, Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children.

It just gets worse and worse. And this is the thing that you shall do. You shall utterly destroy every male and every woman who has known a man intimately.

So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead 400 young virgins who have not known a man intimately and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

Then the whole congregation sent word to the children of Benjamin, that is, these men, these 600 men who were at the rock of Ramon and announced peace to them.

[ 60 : 17 ] So Benjamin came back at that time and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-Gilead and yet they had not found enough for them.

So they're 200 short. 200 short. Where are they going to get them? I mean, this is just unspeakable what they're doing.

And you know, I'm just kind of reading this and just kind of letting the narration kind of sink into our minds. I mean, just, it's appalling.

We need some wives for these men so let's destroy a city over here, including even their children, except for the virgins. And then we'll give those 200.

Can you imagine what a marriage, what kind of marriage would that make? I mean, you know, someone's just killed your mother and father, your brothers and sisters and taken you alive and give you to a Benjamite man to be his wife by force.

[ 61 : 21 ] I know, it's totally foreign to our way of thinking and our culture, of course, and we do understand the position of women in this day and it wasn't much of a position. But still, this goes even way beyond that.

This is outrageous what they're doing. And the elders of the congregation said, what shall we do for the wives for those who remain since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed? And they said, there must be an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel.

However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters for the children of Israel have sworn an oath saying, cursed be the one who gives a wife to Benjamin. Then they said, in fact, there is a yearly feast of the Lord in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem and south of Lebanon.

Therefore, they instructed the children of Benjamin, these men, these remaining 200 men, saying, go lie and wait in the vineyards. You hide there right next to this feast and watch.

And just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances and, you know, difficult to go in all the details here, but they would have been virgins, unmarried, never knew a man.

[ 62 : 42 ] And when they come out to dance as a part of this feast, then come out of the vineyards and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh, then go to the land of Benjamin.

Can you imagine what this looked like? It's a free-for-all. I mean, you know, you can imagine you're looking for, you know, out of 200 women, not all of them are really pretty.

Right? Is that possible? And so, you know, I don't know if there's some fights going on between these men. You know, I got her first or maybe they grab their hair and, you know, drag them off.

We can only imagine, but, you know, I'm making fun of it, but it's, it's, it's terrible. It's outrageous. Capture them and take them back home with them to be their wives.

Uh-huh. And so, it came to pass, it came to be when there were fathers or their brothers come to us to complain that we will say to them, be kind to them for our sakes because we did not take a wife or any of them in the war for it is not as though you have given the women to them at this time making yourself guilty of your oath.

[ 64 : 04 ] I mean, they still have that oath problem, you know. You know, just let it be on us. And the children of Benjamin did so. They took enough wives for their number from those who danced whom they caught.

Then they went and returned to their inheritance and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them. So the children of Israel departed from there at that time. Every man to his tribe and family, they went out from there.

Every man to his inheritance. So that's the end of the story, but then we have the epitaph attached to the end. In those days, there was no king in Israel. God was not king.

They had no king. And everyone did what was right in his own eyes. It was kind of a democratized wickedness.

every man had freedom to do whatever was right in his own eyes. And it is the final statement that really is a commentary on the entire book of Judges, the moral degeneration of the tribe of Israel, and that's the book of Judges.

[ 65 : 12 ] The book of Judges The book of Judges The book of Judges The book of Judges The book of Judges The book of Judges The book of Judges The book of Judges The book of Judges The book of Judges Thank you.