

**BOOK OF JUDGES
ISRAEL PURGING EVIL
JUDGES 20:1-48**

Introduction

Last week we saw in **JUDGES 19** how a band of men from **GIBEAH of the TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** desired to **SODOMIZE** an unnamed **LEVITE** that was staying overnight in **GIBEAH** with an elderly man who was originally from **MT. EPHRAIM** where that **LEVITE** lived.

To pacify these perverts, the **LEVITE'S CONCUBINE** was given over to these men who raped her and abused her all night and she died after the attack. The **LEVITE** responded by hauling her back home and then hacking her up into 12 pieces and sending those pieces throughout the 12 tribes of **ISRAEL** as a call to arms to galvanize troops to take action against these men in **GIBEAH of BENJAMIN**.

What may have seemed like just an isolated event impacting one woman of low standing and her **LEVITE** husband who lived in **EPHRAIM** escalated into a national crisis.

This story highlights the great **PERVERSTY** that had consumed the nation during the time of the **JUDGES**. Sadly, **ISRAEL** had sunk into the depths of both **RELIGIOUS** and **MORAL DEPRAVITY!**

SIN impacts more people than we will ever realize. It is described in the NT as **LEAVEN WHICH LEAVENS THE WHOLE LUMP**. It is like a cancer that may be unseen but grows and spreads in malicious fashion.

People try to minimize the **EFFECTS OF** what **GOD** calls both a **SIN** and an **ABOMINATION** and they want us who follow **GOD** to just back off. They not only want us to leave others alone to pursue their **"ALTERNATIVE LIFE CHOICES"** but they want us to **SUPPORT** them and even **APPLAUD** them in their **CHOICES** even when the **BIBLE** clearly reveals it to be **DESTRUCTIVE** to a **SOCIETY**.

We will see here that a civil war erupted over this wickedness that left over 65,000 choice fighting men slaughtered on the field of battle in just a very brief time period.

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Think about those numbers and all of the heartache associated with those families. Also, the **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** was almost eradicated by what we will see here. These are just some of the sad consequences of **SIN!**

I. WE SEE ISRAEL GATHERED TOGETHER IN MIZPEH TO JUDGE GIBEAH. (Vs 1-2)

The nation came to **MIZPEH of BENJAMIN** and gathered at the **LEVITE'S** request. It was a positive sign to see **ISRAEL** gather for such a reason. This showed that they were willing to deal with the problem of gross **SIN** in their midst, even though most of the nation had strayed far from the **LORD**.

It seems that this great **PERVERSENESS** in **GIBEAH** shocked the conscience of **ISRAEL** as well it should have!

Deuteronomy 13:12-18 instructed **ISRAEL** how to deal with such **ABOMINATIONS** among them. It said they must first **TEST THE TRUTH OF THE ACCUSATIONS**. If the charges were true, they then had to utterly destroy those who committed such a deed.

II. WE SEE THE LEVITE DESCRIBED THE ABUSE AND MURDER OF HIS CONCUBINE. (Vs. 3-7)

The children of **ISRAEL** wanted to know what happened, so they could determine what they should do. (*i.e. Due diligence!*)

The **LEVITE** spun the story to his own advantage. What he said was true, but he didn't mention the cruel and callous way he abandoned his **CONCUBINE** to the mob.

III. WE SEE PREPARATIONS FOR WAR WERE MADE. (Vs 8-11)

This was an encouraging response in a very dark time. They came together in unity and decided to bring justice to the people of **GIBEAH**. What they would do was extreme, but it was a valid and proper fulfillment of **GOD'S** command to **ISRAEL**.

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IV. WE SEE THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN'S HELP WAS SOUGHT BUT NOT GIVEN. (Vs. 12-17)

The other tribes of **ISRAEL** did the right thing in asking the **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** to deliver up the men who committed this crime. They sought to justly resolve the crisis without a full scale war. But the **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** committed a great **SIN** by putting loyalty to their tribe before **OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAW**.

The **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** not only failed to support the just cause of the other tribes, they actively resisted the other tribes with an assembled army.

So, we see that the **TRIBES OF ISRAEL** prepared for a small civil war against the **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN**. **ISRAEL** was right in believing that the greatest good was not **UNITY**. **UNITY** apart from **JUSTICE** and **TRUTH** is **UNITY** not worth having.

V. WE SEE THE BATTLE AGAINST GIBEAH AND THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN. (Vs 18-21)

In the first battle, **ISRAEL SOUGHT THE LORD** – yet we see they were defeated. Why is that? We are not told.

What we do know is *"The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."* (Psalm 19:9)

Some have speculated that it might have been that even though they **INQUIRED** of the **LORD**, they went out **TRUSTING** in the **MIGHT OF THEIR ARMY** and in **THE GOODNESS OF THEIR CAUSE**, rather than in the **LORD**.

Others point to the dire **SPIRITUAL CONDITION** of **ISRAEL!** i.e The **LORD** may have been **JUDGING SIN** in the rest of the nation at this time as well! We are not told why, but we know that the **LORD** always has **HIS** reasons and **HE IS ALWAYS TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS IN ALL HIS WAYS!**

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The loss of 22,000 men was a staggering, severe loss in the first battle of this small civil war. After this first day of battle it seemed that the single **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** might successfully resist the other tribes of **ISRAEL**.

VI. WE SEE THAT ISRAEL SOUGHT GOD AFTER THE FIRST DEFEAT! (Vs 22-23)

This was a wonderful reaction in the midst of such a dark event. These soldiers did not lose hope! They encouraged themselves and got ready to continue the battle.

To their credit, the children of **ISRAEL** did not stop seeking the **LORD** after the first disaster in battle. They properly humbled themselves wept before the **LORD** and sought **HIM** again regarding the next battle.

VII. WE SEE THAT ON THE SECOND DAY OF BATTLE ISRAEL WAS DEFEATED BEFORE BENJAMIN AGAIN! (Vs 24-25)

This was not going to be an easy or a quick war. After the first day of losing **22,000** they were willing to keep fighting.

However the loss of **18,000** on this second day of battle was also severe. This shows that even though the tribes of **ISRAEL** sought the **LORD** and fought in a just cause, it was still a very difficult struggle.

Sometimes there is a great cost in doing what is right!

VIII. WE SEE ISRAEL HUMBLING THEMSELVES BEFORE THE LORD AFTER THIS SECOND DEFEAT. (Vs 26-28)

ISRAEL was brought low by these two defeats. Could it have been that they needed to be **HUMBLING**, and these days of defeat compelled them to **HUMBLE** themselves.

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GOD used this civil war to **HUMBLE** the whole nation, not just **GIBEAH** and **BENJAMIN**. The whole nation needed to understand that the horror of what **GIBEAH** had done was not merely the result of the **SIN** of just one group of men, or of just one city, or even of just one tribe. The whole nation needed to be **HUMBLED** because they first thought that the **SIN PROBLEM** was only in **BENJAMIN**. **ISRAEL** had to see that the nation as a whole had a **SIN PROBLEM**.

After their first failure, **ISRAEL WEPT** before the **LORD** over their **LOSSES**. But only after this second failure did they **FAST** and make **SACRIFICES FOR SINS**. **SORROW** and **WEEPING** over losses are not enough if they are not offered with **HUMILITY**, **CONFESSION**, and **REPENTANCE** and put under the **BLOOD!**

Part of the demonstration of **HUMILITY** was in **FASTING**. Back in 1827, **Adam Clarke** wrote this about **FASTING**:

“At present it is but little used; a strong proof that self-denial is wearing out of fashion.” Clarke thought this was true of his day; he would probably think it all the more truer today if he were still alive.

The mention of **PHINEHAS** as **HIGH PRIEST** means that this was fairly early in the days of the **JUDGES** (*Numbers 25:7, 25:11*).

The **LORD** didn't want the two days of **HUMBLING** to make **ISRAEL** think that they could never win. They were encouraged to go up the next day and **TRUST** the **LORD'S PROMISE** of **VICTORY**.

**IX. WE SEE THE THIRD DAY OF BATTLE BROUGHT
VICTORY FOR ISRAEL OVER GIBEAH AND BENJAMIN
(Vs 29-48)**

The words of *verse 35* makes the difference in the three days.
“And the LORD smote Benjamin before Israel.”

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The two days of defeat made the tribes of **ISRAEL** ruthless towards the **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN**, and they killed thousands of men of **BENJAMIN**. As a result of the battle, there remained only a 600-man remnant from the tribe of **BENJAMIN**.

The **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** was undeniably guilty, but there was no need for the complete slaughter as described here. This too-severe judgment against the **TRIBE OF BENJAMIN** would soon be regretted by **ISRAEL**.