

# Judges 20:18



Then the children  
of

**I  
S  
R  
A  
E  
L**

arose 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?"

**The**

**LORD**

said, "**Judah** first!"

וַיִּקְמוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ בֵּית־אֵל,  
וַיִּשְׁאַלוּ בְּאֱלֹהִים,  
וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
מִי יַעֲלֶה לְבָנוּ  
בְּתַחֲלָה לְמִלְחָמָה עִם־בְּנֵי בְנֵי־מִן.  
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, יְהוּדָה בְּתַחֲלָה.

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## **Judges 20:1-18** **(No King in Israel, Part VII)**

In the passage today, Benjamin will be presented with the choice to give up the sons of worthlessness that led to the Levite's concubine being dismembered and sent throughout Israel. As you know, they were not willing to do so.

Israel cannot allow this to stand. Thus, preparations for war are made. As we have seen throughout Judges to this point, the physical trials and battles presented have typologically anticipated real spiritual events that have taken place or will take place.

The world is often at war, but the true war that all people face is a spiritual one. This then extends to families and family members, political parties and politicians, churches and congregants, and so forth.

Anyone who can't see the spiritual implications of the moral wars we are facing right now simply doesn't want to see them. The very existence of the United States is dependent on whether we will stand against the unholy tide of perversion being thrust upon us or not.

The same is true with denominations and churches. Many have completely capitulated to the moral perversion they were originally set up to fight against. Thus, they are Christian in name only with no actual connection to Christ Jesus.

If leaven is introduced into bread, it will spread throughout the whole lump. If sin is allowed into a Christian entity, the entire body will eventually yield to sin. Walk into a church in most major denominations, and you will see sin is either on the rise or has fully taken over. They are becoming or have become lifeless bodies without Christ and are set for a sad end.

**Text Verse:** *"For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? <sup>13</sup> But those who are outside God judges. Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person.'" 1 Corinthians 5:12, 13*

Paul warned the churches about what was coming. He did so concerning direct sin, such as in 1 Corinthians 5, and also about sin and wickedness in general as well. He warns against the inclinations of the heart. He explains the remedy for immorality and wickedness, and he implores his audience to hold fast to the word of God, never yielding to the temptations of this world.

And his words aren't just "judgmental Paul being Paul." Rather, he repeats and expands on what the Bible has warned against all along, including the words of Jesus. The unbalanced "Jesus of love without consequences" proclaimed in churches today is not found in Scripture.

Israel will prepare for war because the tribe of Benjamin is unprepared to purge wickedness from his own house. When Jesus returns for His church at the rapture, He will for those who have accepted Him by faith. When Jesus returns after that, it will be to purge wickedness from the world.

We all have choices to make. In the passage today, Benjamin will make a choice that will be costly. For now, let us get into it. Sobering lessons are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again, and... May God speak to us through His word today, and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Machination and Foolishness (verses 1-11)**

Chapter 19 ended with these words –

“When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. <sup>30</sup> 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, and speak up!’” Judges 19:29, 30

With the terrible evidence of the misdeeds of Benjamin reported throughout Israel, the narrative of Chapter 20 begins with...

**<sup>1</sup> So all the children of Israel came out,**

The NKJV jumbles the clauses: *vayetse kal b'ne Yisrael vatiqahel ha'edah k'ish ekhad* – “And come all sons Israel, and assemble the congregation according to man one.” The meaning here is that all of the men of the households, and in particular, the men of war have assembled, as will be seen in the coming verses.

Also, two words are used that have similar meanings. The first is *qahal*, to assemble. That is the verb form of the noun *qahal*, an assembly. The other is *edah*, a congregation. That is derived from *yaad*, to appoint.

The words are used almost synonymously in the Pentateuch, but there is a subtle difference that necessitates care in how the words are translated and considered. In this case, they have assembled as a congregation...

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **from Dan to Beersheba,**

*l'midan v'ad b'er sheva*– “to from Dan and until Beersheba.” This is the first of seven times this phrase is used in the Old Testament. It will be used twice in reverse in the Chronicles, saying, “from Beersheba to Dan.” It signifies the entirety of the land and people of Israel within the borders of Canaan. Dan is the northernmost point of reference, while Beersheba is the southernmost.

This may indicate that the migration of Dan, as recorded in Judges 18, may have already occurred chronologically, or it may mean that the author, who is probably Samuel, may have used it based on his time compiling the narrative. Either way, it is used to speak of Israel within Canaan in an all-encompassing way.

<sup>1</sup> (con't) **as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the Lord at Mizpah.**

*v'ere'ts ha'gilad el Yehovah ha'mitspah* – “and land the Gilead unto Yehovah the Mizpah.” The term land the Gilead is used in reference to the two-and-a-half tribes east of the Jordan. Thus, the assembled congregation now refers to the entirety of Israel, minus the tribe of Benjamin. They have united together unto the Lord at the Mizpah.

This is a different Mizpah than was seen in the Jephthah narrative in Judges 11. It is believed to be a location from which Jerusalem is visible. It is likely the same location ascribed to Judah in Joshua 15:38 and Benjamin in Joshua 18:26. Thus, it is a border city.

The meaning of “unto the Lord” is debated. Does it mean the ark was brought there? Does it refer to the use of the Urim and Thummim? Or is it simply that as a congregation, they are gathered, acknowledging the Lord as their Head?

Verse 27 will place the ark at Bethel, but this doesn't mean it was not brought to the Mizpah for this gathering, but if it was, it would be a giant omission in the text. Regardless, these men have gathered to discuss what happened and to decide on what to do to rectify the situation.

Israel means He Strives With God. Dan means Judge. Beersheba means both Well of Seven and Well of Oath. The Gilead means The Perpetual Fountain. The Mizpah means The Watchtower.

<sup>2</sup> **And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel,**

*vayithyatsvu pinoth kal ha'am kol shivte Yisrael* – “And station, corners all the people, all tribes Yisrael.” Here is a word being used in a new way, *pinnah*. It signifies a corner. As a

corner provides strength, support, and stability to a wall or a side of something, so is the leader of a group of people. Thus, the word is used to describe Christ –

“The stone *which* the builders rejected  
Has become the chief cornerstone [*pinnah*].  
<sup>23</sup> This was the Lord’s doing;  
It is marvelous in our eyes.” Psalm 118:22, 23

These corner supports from all of Israel’s tribes stand to hear the details and render a decision concerning the matter at hand.

<sup>2</sup> (con’t) **presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword.**

The way the sentence reads, the words are difficult because it seems like the corners are defined by the number being mentioned: *biqhal am ha’elohim arba meoth eleph ish ragli sholeph kharev* – “in assembly people the God: four hundreds thousand man afoot, drawing sword.”

The words say, “the God.” Thus, it refers to those who are in a right standing with God. This assembly has come together as the people of the God, meaning Yehovah, to prepare for war. The number defines the entire assembly, not the corners within the assembly.

“And station, corners all the people, all tribes Yisrael, in assembly people the God: four hundreds thousand man afoot, drawing sword.”

Although translations are all over the place, this appears to be the intent of the words. Otherwise, the “corners” would be referring to all four hundred thousand. If so, it would mean that each is the “corner” of his own home, which is unlikely. The only other option is to add words or rearrange things within the verse.

Of the number of men, Cambridge says, as if they were there filming the whole encounter, “The number 400,000 is obviously exaggerated.” Rather, a short study will show the number is perfectly in line with what would be expected at this time.

The number is derived from four and ten, four being the number of material completeness, the world number, and the city number. Ten signifies “Completeness of order, marking the entire round of anything... It implies that nothing is wanting; that the number and order are perfect; that the whole cycle is complete” (Bullinger).

<sup>3</sup> **(Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.)**

*vayishmu b'ne Binyamin ki alu b'ne Yisrael ha'mitspah* – “And hear, sons Benjamin, for arisen sons Israel the Mizpah.” Most scholars agree that this means Benjamin was summoned to the meeting but willfully avoided coming. If that was so, why wouldn't the text simply say that?

Rather, it appears that they were purposefully not summoned because a decision had to be made, which would then be presented to them. The gathering of Israel is strategically positioned in a location on the border of Benjamin. As such, the note that Benjamin heard they had gone up to the Mizpah would be a result of the choice of the assembly's location.

Benjamin means Son of *the* Right Hand. Whether they were invited to this gathering or not, once gathered, it next says...

<sup>3</sup> (con't) **Then the children of Israel said, “Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?”**

*vayomru b'ne Yisrael daberu eikhah nihy'tah ha'raah hazoth* – “And say, sons Israel, ‘Speak how the wicked, the this?’” The address is in the plural, and so it either means the Levite and his servant (who isn't mentioned) or something like, “Any of you who knows what's going on, speak up.” Next, it says...

<sup>4</sup> **So the Levite, 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.**

*vayaan ha'ish ha'Levi ish ha'ishah ha'nirtskhah vayomar ha'givatha asher l'binyamin bathi ani uphilagshi lalun* – “And answers, the man, the Levite, husband the woman, the murdered, and says, ‘The Gibeah-ward which to Benjamin went, I and my concubine, to lodge.’” Saying “husband” must be inferred. It simply says, “man.”

However, in the previous chapter, it noted that he was the affinity of the old man in Bethlehem. Thus, it is a relationship through marriage. However, despite being a husband, she is clearly also called his concubine.

As noted in Chapter 19, the word is *pilegesh*. It is supposed by some to be a compound of the word *palag*, to split or divide, and *nagash*, to draw near or approach. If so, it would mean that the man divided his attention between his wife and his concubine. She is technically a wife but without the rights of a full wife.

Gibeah means Hill. It is etymologically connected to the word Gabbatha. Together they were traveling toward Gibeah from Bethlehem, intending to lodge there. Though unstated, the implication is that they did arrive and lodge. That is evidenced from the next words...

**<sup>5</sup> And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and surrounded the house at night because of me.**

*vayaqumu alay baale ha'givah vayasobu alay eth ha'bayith lay'lah* – “And arise upon me, masters the Gibeah, and surround upon me the house night.” Without giving all the details of being taken in, tended to, enjoying the evening, and so forth, he goes directly to the evil of the event that was requested in verse 3.

The *baale*, masters or lords, of Gibeah arose upon him. The meaning is on account of him. They wanted to violate him. In using the term masters, he appears to be implying that it is the leaders of the city. If so, whether he means this literally or not isn't said, but the implication is that they were either the ones who came against him or they were accountable as if it were so.

**<sup>5 (con't)</sup> They intended to kill me, but instead they ravished my concubine so that she died.**

*oti dimu laharog v'eth pilagshi inu vatamoth* – “Me intended to kill, and my concubine abased, and died.” He doesn't give all the facts, but the substance is essentially correct.

Though nothing was said of killing him, they wanted to know him carnally. He would have refused, and they would have either raped him and killed him or simply killed him. Anything less is unlikely. Instead of getting the chance, they took out their intentions on his concubine, leading to her death. Because of this...

**<sup>6</sup> So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel,**

Rather: *vaokhez b'philagshi vaanatkheha vaashalkheha b'khal s'deh nakhalath Yisrael* – “And grasp in my concubine, and divide her and send her in all field, inheritance Israel.”

The concubine was dead. As such, to alert all of Israel to what occurred, he divided her up and sent her out. In the previous chapter, it said *g'vul*, border. Now it says *s'deh*, field. All of the field, meaning the inheritance where Israel is, had received a tangible portion of what took place...

**<sup>6 (con't)</sup> because they committed lewdness and outrage in Israel.**

*ki asu zimah unvalah b'Yisrael* – “for did machination and foolishness in Israel.” The word is *zimah*. Rather than lewdness, which may describe the act depending on the situation, it means a plan, especially a bad one. The word comes from *zamam*, to consider, purpose, devise, etc. As such, it is a machination.



In other words, this was with purposeful intent, not just some impulsive event in a moment of indiscretion. As such, a decision about what should be done in response is needed...

**<sup>7</sup> Look! All of you *are* children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!"**

*hineh khulakhem b'ne Yisrael havu lakhem davar v'etsah halom* – “Behold! All you sons Israel, give to you word and counsel hither.” The word “are” is inserted by many translations. Thus, it would give the sense of, “Because you are this, therefore do this.” But that is unnecessary. Rather, he is making an appeal, “Hey, you all, render a decision.” That seems apparent from the next verse...

**<sup>8</sup> So all the people arose as one man, saying,**

*vayaqam kal ha'am k'ish ekhad l'mor* – “And arise all the people according to man one, to say,” The call was made for a unified decision. That is exactly what transpires...

**<sup>8</sup> (con't) “None of us will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house;**

*lo nelekh ish l'aholo v'lo nasur ish l'beito* – “Not walks man to his tent and not veers man to his house.” The entire congregation arises and speaks in unison. Tent and house are to be taken synonymously for one’s residence. It is a poetic way of saying that everyone felt the same, regardless of his profession, location, or abode. They will remain as they are until this matter is resolved...

**<sup>9</sup> but now this *is* the thing which we will do to Gibeah: *We will go up* against it by lot.**

Despite translations which complicate these words in one way or another, the words are simple, direct, and emphatic: *v'atah zeh ha'davar asher naaseh lagivah aleha b'goral* – “And now, this the word which do to the Gibeah, “Upon her in lot!” The men of Gibeah have committed great wickedness and they must be held to account. This is perfectly understood and agreed upon.

Therefore, they will let the Lord decide who will engage the battle against them. Despite this being contextually obvious from the coming verses, some scholars imply that this is incompatible with going to Benjamin in verse 13 and telling them to deliver the inhabitants of Gibeah.

But the battle is not against Benjamin yet. It is only against Gibeah. The Lord, through the lot, will determine who is to go up against Gibeah if Benjamin refuses to give them up.



Others say that using the lot means “to divide its territory when conquered” (Ellicott, et al). This cannot be the meaning. By law, the inheritance of one tribe was never to be transferred from one tribe to another. Rather, this is simply a call to have the Lord determine who will come against the city for destruction.

Though under a different context, this is essentially what is referred to in Deuteronomy –

“If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the Lord your God gives you to dwell in, saying, <sup>13</sup> ‘Corrupt men have gone out from among you and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, “Let us go and serve other gods”’ —which you have not known— <sup>14</sup> then you shall inquire, search out, and ask diligently. And *if it is* indeed true *and* certain *that* such an abomination was committed among you, <sup>15</sup> you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock—with the edge of the sword. <sup>16</sup> And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the Lord your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again. <sup>17</sup> So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers, <sup>18</sup> because you have listened to the voice of the Lord your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you today, to do *what is* right in the eyes of the Lord your God.” Deuteronomy 13:12-18

Though Gibeah is not under a total and permanent ban and will be reinhabited, the city is to be judged for its wickedness. The Lord determines who will be the executors of that judgment.

**<sup>10</sup> 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,**

*v’laqakhnu asarah anashim lameah l’khol shivte Yisrael u-meah la’eleph v’eleph larvavah* – “And took ten men to the hundred to all tribes Israel, and hundred to the thousand, and thousand to the myriad.” These words are given in anticipation of battle.

The people had gathered to decide what to do about a matter. They had not gathered to engage in warfare. Therefore, before taking that course of action, they had to have supplies. As such, the entire congregation would except for ten percent, meaning forty thousand, of them...

**<sup>10 (con’t)</sup> to make provisions for the people, that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel.”**

*laqakhath tsedah laam laasoth l'voam l'geva Binyamin k'khal hanvalah asher asah b'Yisrael* – “To take provision to the people to do to their coming to Geba Benjamin according to all the foolishness which done in Israel.” The ten percent who are drawn off are to obtain provisions and provide them to whoever is chosen by lot to engage in the battle.

Provisions are especially needed if the city has to be besieged, something that could take an extended period. As for the name of the city, it is now spelled differently –

Gibeah - גִּבְעָה

Geba - גֶּבַע

The fifth letter, *hey*, is missing. However, the meaning of the name, Hill, remains unchanged. With the supplies gathered, it next says...

**<sup>11</sup> So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man.**

*vayeaseph kal ish Yisrael el ha'ir k'ish ekhad khaverim* – “And gathered all man Israel unto the city according to man one –comrades.” Only with the provisions for battle secured does it say this, as evidenced from verse 17, which again cites the number as four hundred thousand. True to their word, none returned home but stayed where they were, preparing for battle.

In these words is a new adjective, *khaver*. It signifies an associate, coming from the verb *khavar*, to be joined together. Using this word is intended to show that they are not just warriors ready for battle, but they are united in fraternal bonds over an issue that directly affects them all. Because these are fighting men, translating the word as comrades more appropriately conveys the sense.

One can get the feel of the word from Ezekiel 37 –

“As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: ‘For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions [*khaver*].’ Then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel, his companions [*khaver*].’ <sup>17</sup> Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.

<sup>18</sup> “And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, ‘Will you not show us what you *mean* by these?’— <sup>19</sup> say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions [*khaver*]; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.”’ <sup>20</sup> And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.” Ezekiel 37:16-20

*None of us will return to his tent  
Nor will any go back to his house  
Until our energy is spent  
This raging fire to douse*

*If we don't quench it now  
Things will get thoroughly out of hand  
And so we must adamantly avow  
That we will comply with the Lord's demand*

*We must purge the sin from us  
And live for the Lord all of our days  
Let us walk in a manner pleasing to Jesus  
And not let sin set our lives ablaze*

## **II. Slings the Stone (verses 12-18)**

**<sup>12</sup> Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What is this wickedness that has occurred among you?"**

The word "Then" may not be correct: *vayishlekhu shivte Yisrael anashim b'khal shivte Binyamin lemor mah haraah hazoth asher niyethah bakhem* – "And sends, tribes Israel, men in all tribes Benjamin, to say, 'What the evil, the this, which done in you?'"

It may be that these words were sent out when those who went out for supplies were sent out. Otherwise, it seems like there would be an unnecessary waste of time while people sat around waiting for a reply. Regardless, the offer of peace between the tribes is made in this manner.

As for the plural "tribes of Benjamin," this is not without precedence. In Numbers 4:18, it says, "Do not cut off the tribe [*shevet*] of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites." The Kohathites were a family within the tribe of Levi, but they are called a tribe in that verse.

There are two general words for tribe, *mateh* and *shevet*. The meanings are very similar, but *mateh* looks more to the genealogical side of the tribe whereas *shevet* looks more to the political side. Thus, the use of *shevet* makes sense. The political entities within the overall tribe are inquired of.

**<sup>13</sup> Now therefore, deliver up the men, the perverted men who are in Gibeah,"**

*v'atah t'nu eth ha'anashim b'ne v'liyaal asher bagivah unmithem* "And now, give the men, sons worthlessness, who in the Gibeah. And we will put them to death." The

petition acknowledges the sovereignty of Benjamin as a people and in relation to their tribal inheritance.

Thus, it is appropriate to go to all tribes within the tribe to make this appeal. The onus for relinquishing the worthless men of Gibeah falls on the entire tribe. The petition is made so...

**13 (con't) that we may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel!"**

There is no article before "evil": *unvaarah raah miyisrael* – "and we will consume evil from Israel." A state of evil exists which cannot be tolerated. For the tribes of Benjamin to turn down the petition for its removal would be to take the side of evil. As such, it would be an acceptance of war against Israel in defense of the indefensible.

**13 (con't) But the children of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of Israel.**

Rather: *v'lo avu Binyamin lishmoa b'qol akhehem b'ne Yisrael* – "And no willed, Benjamin, to hear in voice their brothers, sons Israel." The word "sons" (of Benjamin) is inserted into the verbal reading of the Hebrew, but that is an unwarranted addition. The tribal name, Benjamin, stands for the tribes of Benjamin. They have collectively stood against Israel.

And more, it says that this was *avah*, willingly. There was a purposeful rejection of the offer of peace. Benjamin sided with evil and thus they have assumed the state of being evil. It is an intolerable state for Israel to accept. Benjamin knew this...

**14 Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities to Gibeah, to go to battle against the children of Israel.**

*vayeastphu v'ne vinyamin min hearim ha'givathah latseth lamilkhamah im b'ne Yisrael* – "And gather, sons Benjamin, from the cities the Gibeah-ward to go to war with sons Israel." The words are not intended to mean there were none who dwelt outside of cities. Rather, the cities stand for the area in which they exist, just as they do today. All of those in Benjamin who were able to fight came forward and headed toward Gibeah for battle.

**15 And from their cities at that time the children of Benjamin numbered twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword,**

*vayithpaqdu v'ne vinyamin bayom ha'hu mehearim esrim v'shishah eleph ish sholeph kharev* – "And visited, sons Benjamin, in the day, the it, from the cities twenty and six

thousand man drawing sword.” The word *paqad* means to visit, but that has many connotations. In this case, it would be to number or muster.

The repetition of the phrase “from the cities,” is probably noted to highlight the close affiliation and affection with their brothers in the Gibeah. Cities are places where peoples and ideas coalesce and unite in thought, direction, and purpose. The other cities of Benjamin are united with their brothers in these ways.

As for the number 26,000, its basic units are two, ten, and thirteen. Ten has been explained. Two is the number of division or difference. As for thirteen, Bullinger says that “every occurrence of the number thirteen, and likewise of every multiple of it, stamps that with which it stands in connection with rebellion, apostasy, defection, corruption, disintegration, revolution, or some kindred idea.”

<sup>15</sup> (con’t) **besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered seven hundred select men.**

The verb is reflexive: *l’vad miyoshve hagivah hithpaqdu sh’va meoth ish bakhur* – “to separation from dwellings the Gibeah – visited themselves seven hundred man, selected.” The meaning of *l’vad*, to separation, is besides or apart from. There are an additional seven hundred men from the Gibeah who appointed themselves to participate in the battle as well. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection.

The term *bakhur*, selected, signifies choice. Those of Gibeah, despite being sexual deviants, were apparently good in battle.

<sup>16</sup> **Among all this people were seven hundred select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair’s breadth and not miss.**

*mikol ha’am hazeh sh’vah meoth ish bakhur iter yad y’mino kal zeh golea ba’even el hasaarah v’lo yakhati* – “From all the people, the this, seven hundreds man, selected, shut hand his right. All this, slinging the stone unto the hair, and no miss.” Because the same number was used in the previous verse, many scholars and some translations unite the men of both verses, saying it is the same group.

This is convenient, but it hardly could be the case. It would then mean that every person from Gibeah was left-handed. But more, the Hebrew doesn’t bear it out. It says, “from all the people.” It would be a pointless thing to say this if it was intended to mean the entire seven hundred from Gibeah.

Rather, there are seven hundred select men from Gibeah and there are seven hundred select lefties from all of Benjamin. This means there are the 26k of the other cities in Benjamin who draw the sword. There are seven hundred from Gibeah added to the total

who are choice men. From this total, there are seven hundred who are also capable of slinging the stone.

In this verse are a few words of note. The first is *iter*, an adjective meaning shut up, and thus impeded. It is used for the second and last time in Scripture. The other use described Ehud of Judges 3.

It either means each is 1) defective in his right hand, 2) lefthanded (this being an idiomatic expression), or 3) that he is ambidextrous. It is probably an idiom, but it may mean ambidextrous. It is unlikely that seven hundred men of Benjamin had defective right hands.

Therefore, it may be an ironic trait common in Benjamin, Son of the Right Hand, to have lefthanded or ambidextrous offspring. Or it may be that they purposefully worked to improve their left hands as a play on their name – “Hey, there is Lefty, the Son of the Right Hand.”

The next word is *new*, *qala'*. It signifies to sling. It also means to carve as if in a singular motion or into light forms. The third word, *saarah*, signifies a hair. It is derived from *se'ar*, hair, but this word speaks of it in an individual manner.

The meaning is clear. These men could sling lefthanded and hit a target as if it was a single hair. As hair in the Bible signifies an awareness, especially of sin, a single hair would most likely speak of acute awareness.

That is an interesting lead-in to the words *v'lo yakhati*, and no miss. The word *khata*, to miss, also means to sin, as in when one misses the mark. This is a common connotation of the word and it answers to the Greek *hamartia* which has the same dual meaning. It is “sin, forfeiture because missing the mark” (HELPS Word Studies).

**<sup>17</sup> Now besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men who drew the sword; all of these were men of war.**

Again, as in verse 15, the verb is reflexive: *v'ish Yisrael hithpaqdu l'bad mibinyamin arba meoth eleph ish sholeph kharev kal zeh ish milkhamah* – “And man, Israel, visited themselves, to exception from Benjamin, four hundreds thousand man drawing sword. All this man war.” Apart from Benjamin, there were 400k of Israel who mustered themselves, all drawing the *kharev*, sword, like the 26k from Benjamin.

**<sup>18</sup> Then the children of Israel arose 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?”**

Rather: *vayaqumu vyaalu beith el vayishalu belohim vayomru b'ne Yisrael mi yaaleh lanu batkhillah lamilkhamah im b'ne vinyamin* – “And arise and ascend Bethel, and ask in elohim. And say, sons Israel, ‘Who ascend, to us, in the beginning to the war with sons Benjamin?’” Some translations say “the house of God” instead of Bethel.

This is incorrect as there is no article to justify this. Rather, they went up to Bethel to inquire of God there. This is more certain because it says in verse 27 that the ark of the covenant was there in those days. It would be superfluous to say this if the ark was at the house of God in Shiloh, especially because Shiloh is never mentioned.

The people, whether a delegation or the entire army, went to Bethel and asked God who was to go up to the war. This explains the lot mentioned in verse 9. They would have someone cast the lot before the Lord in order to seek His will. In doing so, the divine response is given...

<sup>18 (fin)</sup> **The Lord said, “Judah first!”**

*vayomer Yehovah Yehuda batkhillah* – “And says, Yehovah, ‘Judah in the beginning.’” The words form a pun. Judah means Praise. The Lord is saying that Praise is to go first. Nothing is said of victory or defeat. The people asked the question and the Lord gave His response.

That is the end of our verses today. We are left in suspense as to what lies ahead concerning the engagement which is sure to take place. But we can see that Benjamin has placed his tribal priority over his duty to the nation and the Lord.

This is something not uncommon in politics and the church. In politics, we are all aware of staunch conservatives who have a family member who turns out to be a morally questionable adult. Instead of holding firm to their convictions, they suddenly begin to support more liberal views on a particular issue.

In the church, people waffle on issues when they touch close to home or with people in their families, in their church, and so forth. Instead of standing up for what is morally right, they modify their doctrine. Entire church denominations have taken this path.

For most, it happens slowly and the individual or congregants simply go along with the subtle changes going on around them. Over time, however, the difference in the person, church, seminary, denomination, etc. is completely contrary to its beginning.

Each of us needs to be settled in our morals, sound in our doctrine, and unwilling to tolerate that which the Lord finds intolerable. Unless we do this, disaster lies ahead. For those who take the right stand, there may be problems as well.



When there is a battle ahead, people will usually not come out unscathed, but it is far better to suffer loss for the sake of the Lord than to suffer temporary supposed gain in this world and have to face the Lord on unhappy terms in eternity.

Israel took a stand in today's passage and a battle against their own kin lies ahead, but that is far preferable than allowing the infection to fester. Let us remember this. The most unloving thing we can do is to tolerate sin in those we love.

When people in today's world use catch phrases like "love wins," they have no idea what they are talking about. The kind of love they are attempting to defend, like Benjamin and the Gibeonites, will only lead to a bad end.

But there is a remedy for the sin problem: Jesus. Without Him in the mix, things will not go well. But when He is properly included in every decision, life will be pleasing to God. Let us remember this and be people of faith who live out our faith faithfully.

**Closing Verse:** *"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.' <sup>34</sup> Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame." 1 Corinthians 15:33, 34*

**Next Week:** Judges 20:19-35 This story is so swell, ain't it great? (No King in Israel, Part VIII) (55<sup>th</sup> Judges Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It is He who judges His people according to their deeds. So, follow Him, live for Him, and trust Him, and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **(No King in Israel, Part VII)**

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, because of the news so sad

And the leaders of all the people  
All the tribes of Israel with one accord  
Presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God  
Four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword

(Now the children of Benjamin heard  
That the children of Israel had up to Mizpah gone)  
Then the children of Israel said  
"Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen? What is going on?"

So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered  
Answered and said about the plight  
“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, sadly

So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces  
And sent her throughout all the territory (so to you I tell)  
Of the Israel’s inheritance  
Because they committed lewdness and outrage in Israel

Look! All of you are children of Israel  
Give your advice and counsel here and now – please tell!

So all the people arose as one man, saying  
“None of us will go to his tent, so we are relaying

Nor will any turn back to his house  
But now this is the thing (this is our plot)  
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 from ‘neath the steeple  
And a thousand out of every ten thousand  
To make provisions for the people

That when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin as well  
They may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel

So all the men of Israel were gathered according to the plan  
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?  
A price for this you will be paying

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 as they did tell

Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together  
From their cities to Gibeah  
To go to battle against the children of Israel  
Maybe shouting out a big oorah

And from their cities at that time  
The children of Benjamin numbered twenty-six thousand men  
Who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah  
Who numbered seven hundred select men, that is seventy times ten

Among all this people were seven hundred select men  
Who were left-handed, slinging like this...  
Every one could sling a stone  
At a hair's breadth and not miss

Now besides Benjamin  
The men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men, a big  
-----number for shor  
Those 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 to inquire of God to be versed  
They said, "Which of us shall go up first to battle  
Against the children of Benjamin?" The LORD said, "Judah first!"

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word  
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You  
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard  
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone  
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise  
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown  
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

*Hallelujah and Amen...*