

Judges 19:1 ¶ And it came to pass in those days, when *there was no king in Israel*, that there was a certain Levite sojourning on the side of mount Ephraim, who took to him a concubine out of Bethlehemjudah.

Judges 19:2 And his concubine played the whore against him, and went away from him unto her father's house to Bethlehemjudah, and was there four whole months.

Judges 19:3 And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, *and to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.*

This begins the last and very bizarre narrative in the book of Judges. Again the writer emphasizes that there is no king in Israel at the time—no ruling authority. We know of course that the LORD was their ruling authority, but He was not recognized as such.

The narrative is about a Levite and his concubine, a term often used to refer to a secondary wife. The Levite was from mount Ephraim, and his wife was from Bethlehemjudah. Sadly, it is noted that the wife was unfaithful to her husband and decided to go back to her father's house. The Hebrew for the word "whore" is used to describe one who has committed adultery.

Adam Clarke provides an interesting note considering the fact that the Hebrew uses the word "whore": "Neither the Vulgate, Septuagint, Targum, nor Josephus, understand this word as implying any act of conjugal infidelity on the woman's part. They merely state that the parties disagreed, and the woman returned to her father's house. Indeed all the circumstances of the case vindicate this view of the subject. If she had been a whore, or adulteress, it is not very likely that her husband would have gone after her to speak friendly, literally, to speak to her heart, and entreat her to return."

After four months, the husband decided to try to get his wife to come back to him. He took his servant and a couple of donkeys. When they met, she took him to her father's house; and the father was very glad to see him.

Judges 19:4 And his father in law, the damsel's father, retained him; and he abode with him three days: so they did eat and drink, and lodged there.

Judges 19:5 And it came to pass on the fourth day, when they arose early in the morning, that he rose up to depart: and the damsel's father said unto his son in law, Comfort thine heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way.

Judges 19:6 And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.

Judges 19:7 And when the man rose up to depart, his father in law urged him: therefore he lodged there again.

Judges 19:8 And he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart: and the damsel's father said, Comfort thine heart, I pray thee. And they tarried until afternoon, and they did eat both of them.

Judges 19:9 And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and

his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

Judges 19:10 But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem; and *there were* with him two asses saddled, his concubine also *was* with him.

The Levite's father-in-law urged him to stay a while, so he stayed for three days of fellowship. He got up early ready to leave on the 4th day, but his father-in-law ended up talking him into staying another night. The 5th day started in the same way, but this time the man refused to stay another night. So the Levite, his wife and servant headed towards Jebus, also known as Jerusalem, on their two saddled donkeys.

Judges 19:11 *And when they were* by Jebus, the day was far spent; and the servant said unto his master, Come, I pray thee, and let us turn in into this city of the Jebusites, and lodge in it.

Judges 19:12 And his master said unto him, We will not turn aside hither into the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel; we will pass over to Gibeah.

Judges 19:13 And he said unto his servant, Come, and let us draw near to one of these places to lodge all night, in Gibeah, or in Ramah.

Judges 19:14 And they passed on and went their way; and the sun went down upon them *when they were* by Gibeah, which *belongeth* to Benjamin.

Judges 19:15 And they turned aside thither, to go in *and* to lodge in Gibeah: and when he went in, he sat him down in a street of the city: for *there was* no man that took them into his house to lodging.

When they got to Jebus, it was late afternoon; so the servant urged his master to turn in there for the night. The Levite answered that they would not stay in a city of foreigners; they would go on to Gibeah or Ramah. As they reached Gibeah, a town of the tribe of Benjamin, the sun was going down; so they decided to lodge there for the night. When no one offered them a place to stay, he sat down in the street.

JFB offers this insight: "...we conclude that the custom, which is still frequently witnessed in the cities of the East, was then not uncommon, for travellers who were late in arriving and who had no introduction to a private family, to spread their bedding in the streets, or wrapping themselves up in their cloaks, pass the night in the open air."

Judges 19:16 ¶ And, behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even, which *was* also of mount Ephraim; and he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place *were* Benjamites.

Judges 19:17 And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou?

Judges 19:18 And he said unto him, We *are* passing from Bethlehemjudah

toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence *am I*: and I went to Bethlehemjudah, but I *am now* going to the house of the LORD; and there *is* no man that receiveth me to house.

Judges 19:19 Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine also for me, and for thy handmaid, and for the young man *which is* with thy servants: *there is* no want of any thing.

Judges 19:20 And the old man said, Peace *be* with thee; howsoever *let* all thy wants *lie* upon me; only lodge not in the street.

Judges 19:21 So he brought him into his house, and gave provender unto the asses: and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.

An old man returning home from working in the fields noticed the travelers. It is noted that the old man was also from mount Ephraim although he lived in Gibeah. The old man asked them where they were going and where they were from. The Levite answered that they were headed home to mount Ephraim to the house of the LORD from Bethlehemjudah, and no one had offered them lodging. He stated that all they needed was a place to stay because they had food for themselves and their donkeys. The way he references his wife is a term that identifies her as his slave.

The old man then offered them a place to stay as well as food for them and their animals. The fact that he urged them not to stay in the streets indicated that he was aware of the danger they might face. He then received them into his house as a gracious host.

Judges 19:22 ¶ *Now* as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, *and* beat at the door, and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thine house, that we may know him.

As they enjoyed a time of fellowship, a group of men in the city identified as “sons of Belial,” wicked and ungodly men, showed up at the old man’s house. They pounded on the door calling for the old man to give them the man that was staying with him to satisfy their sexual urges.

Already, this is beginning to sound like a mirror of events that occurred in Sodom when the angels went to rescue Lot and his family before its destruction. (See Genesis 19.)

Judges 19:23 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, *nay*, I pray you, do not *so* wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.

Judges 19:24 Behold, *here is* my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

The master of the house went out to the men and begged them not to insist on harming his guest. He offered to give them his virgin daughter and the man’s concubine to satisfy them however they wanted. They could not treat his guest

in such a shameful way.

Again, this mirrors the answer that Lot gave the men that came to his house wanting him to hand over the angels that were there to rescue him. Sadly, women were not highly valued in the culture of that day as a whole; they were looked on more as possessions.

Judges 19:25 But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go.

Judges 19:26 Then came the woman in the dawning of the day, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her lord *was*, till it was light.

“took” = “To seize...constrain...force”

Though the men refused to listen, the man “took” his concubine out to them. It seems the old man's daughter was spared. The men raped and abused her all night long and let her go as day began to dawn. The woman made her way back to the old man's house and fell down in front of the door.

Judges 19:27 And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down *at* the door of the house, and her hands *were* upon the threshold.

Judges 19:28 And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her *up* upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.

Judges 19:29 And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

Judges 19:30 And it was so, that all that saw it said, There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day: consider of it, take advice, and speak *your minds*.

When the Levite got up the next morning to continue his journey, he found his concubine fallen down at the door with her hands reaching out toward it. It's hard to imagine that he couldn't see that she had been abused, and his address to her evidenced no compassion. He told her to get up so they could get on their way. She didn't answer because she was dead. So the Levite put her on one of the donkeys and went home.

When he got home, he took a knife and cut his concubine into twelve pieces. He then sent the pieces throughout the land of Israel. The writer notes that nothing like that had ever happened in Israel since they had come out of Egypt. The deed was so shocking that the men from the various tribes decided that they had to do something to avenge this woman's death. This implies to me that there must have been some type of note of explanation sent out with the parts of her body.

Guzik made a sad, disturbing, but I believe valid observation: "It seems that the crime of Gibeah shocked the conscience of Israel. Today it seems that the crime at Gibeah would be material for tabloid news, cable television, daytime talk shows, and talk radio - more than a national call to righteousness and repentance."