

-Title: 'As We See Fit': A study of the book of Judges- Part 23- "Terrible Odds"

Key text: Judges 20:1-48

Suppl. texts:

Introduction: Last time, we met another traveling Levite, one who remained unnamed. We saw that this man had little regard for God's design in marriage, as he had a concubine or second wife. Sadly, the spiritual leaders of Israel didn't uphold the sanctity of marriage. Next, we met a hospitable stranger who invited the Levite & his concubine to spend the night. But then a shocking evil took place: the men of Gibeah wished to violate the Levite. More sadly, the hospitable stranger offers up his daughter & the Levite offers his concubine. The concubine is horribly mistreated by the men of the town, so badly that she passes away. The Levite then sends a gruesome & shocking call to action to all Israel. Tonight, we will see if Israel answered the Levite's call & what the repercussions were.

Outline: *read Judges 20:1-48.*

1. The verdict is in

- The Levite, who is far from innocent in this story, brings the charge against Gibeah.
- **Vs. 1;** *"Then all the Israelites from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead came out as one man and assembled before the LORD in Mizpah."*
- Despite his own culpability, the **response** is **resounding**. All Israel showed up!
- It's funny to me that during the time of the Judges, Israel is disunified & rarely shows up to support another tribe. Sometimes, they showed up to **accuse** & **attack** a fellow tribe of Israel. The shocking call to arms gets everyone's attention.
- **Vs. 2;** *"The leaders of all the people of the tribes of Israel took their places in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand soldiers armed with swords."*
- Many of these leaders would've traveled a great distance to get there.
- When the force is assembled, it numbers 400,000 armed men ready for battle.
- The Levite now recounts what happened to him & his concubine in Gibeah.
- **Vs. 4-7;** *"So the Levite, the husband of the murdered woman, said, "I and my concubine came to Gibeah in Benjamin to spend the night. During the night the men of Gibeah came after me and surrounded the house, intending to kill me. They raped my concubine, and she died. I took my concubine, cut her into pieces, and sent one piece to each region of Israel's inheritance, because they committed this lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. Now, all you Israelites, speak up and give your verdict."*
- The verdict is **unanimous**; all of Israel agrees the sins of Benjamin must be avenged.
- **Vs. 8;** *"All the people rose as one man, saying, 'None of us will go home. No, not one of us will return to his house.'"*

2. The death sentence is passed

- Now, all of Israel will appeal to the sensibilities of Benjamin, in a last-ditch effort to avoid war. However, they would not listen.
- If they had listened, it would've meant the death penalty for the guilty according to the Law in Lev. 20:13 (homosexuality) & Deut. 22:22, 25 (adultery/rape). They would've died, but the rest of Benjamin would've been saved.
- **Vs. 12-13;** *"The tribes of Israel sent men throughout the tribe of Benjamin, saying, 'What about this awful crime that was committed among you? Now surrender those wicked men of Gibeah so that we may put them to death and purge the evil from Israel.' But the Benjamites would not listen to their fellow Israelites."*
- Benjamin could've come to the meeting of all Israel, & pled for mercy, or attempted to explain the actions of the men of Gibeah, but they didn't come nor show remorse.
- In fact, all of Benjamin comes out to fight all of Israel.
- **Vs. 14-17;** *"From their towns they came together at Gibeah to fight against the Israelites. At once the Benjamites mobilized twenty-six thousand swordsmen from their towns, in addition to seven hundred chosen men from those living in Gibeah. Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. Israel, apart from Benjamin, mustered four hundred thousand swordsmen, all of them fighting men."*
- So the sentence is passed; it will be war against all of Benjamin.
- Benjamin comes out with 26,000 warriors & a special left-handed (or ambidextrous) group of special forces numbering 700. These aren't regular enlisted men.
- Understand, Benjamin is one-fifteenth the size of the larger army.
- We know Benjamin to be the smallest tribe. But they aren't that small yet.
- The reason why Benjamin becomes the smallest tribe by the time of King Saul's coronation is because of this war.
- Suddenly, all Israel wants to consult the Lord, but has already decided to go to war.
- **Vs. 18;** *"The Israelites went up to Bethel and inquired of God. They said, 'Who of us shall go first to fight against the Benjamites?' The LORD replied, 'Judah shall go first.'"*
- Again, this points to the fact that Judah will lead the way in deliverance.
- It also casts back to Judges 1:1-2, where Judah is to go & lead the battle.

3. The overconfident tribes

- Brother vs. brother. We've gone from the judges leading a tribe or two to fight a common foe to infighting. It's a civil war.
- **Vs. 19-21;** *"The next morning the Israelites got up and pitched camp near Gibeah. The men of Israel went out to fight the Benjamites and took up battle positions against them at Gibeah. The Benjamites came out of Gibeah and cut down twenty-two thousand Israelites on the battlefield that day."*

- Shockingly, & though they consulted & seemingly obeyed the Lord, 22,000 Israelites died in one day. On par with the Battle of Antietam in the Civil War (23,000+/- dead).
- **Why did God allow so many from Israel to obey?**
- While not expressly mentioned in detail, it appears that the Israelites were too proud & overconfident in their numerical advantage over the Benjamites.
- **Vs. 23;** *"The Israelites went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and they inquired of the LORD. They said, 'Shall we go up again to battle against the Benjamites, our brothers?' The LORD answered, 'Go up against them.'"*
- They humbled themselves & asked the Lord's permission to go again the next day.
- **Vs. 24-25;** *"Then the Israelites drew near to Benjamin the second day. This time, when the Benjamites came out from Gibeah to oppose them, they cut down another eighteen thousand Israelites, all of them armed with swords."*
- **Staggering** losses! They lost a huge number again! **Forty** thousand people in two days is a terrific loss! If this continues, **100,000+** will be dead in a week.
- There's no record of one death on Benjamin's side.
- At first glance, this is the greatest underdog story ever. Such a small, trained number twice defeating the massively larger force. They must believe God is on their side.
- **Vs. 26-28;** *"Then the Israelites, all the people, went up to Bethel, and there they sat weeping before the LORD. They fasted that day until evening and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the LORD. And the Israelites inquired of the LORD. (In those days the ark of the covenant of God was there, with Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, ministering before it.) They asked, 'Shall we go up again to battle with Benjamin our brother, or not?' The LORD responded, 'Go, for tomorrow I will give them into your hands.'"*
- Notice what is different: go tomorrow; this will be the day of **victory**!
- **Vs. 29-32;** *"Then Israel set an ambush around Gibeah. They went up against the Benjamites on the third day and took up positions against Gibeah as they had done before. The Benjamites came out to meet them and were drawn away from the city. They began to inflict casualties on the Israelites as before, so that about thirty men fell in the open field and on the roads-the one leading to Bethel and the other to Gibeah. While the Benjamites were saying, 'We are defeating them as before,' the Israelites were saying, 'Let's retreat and draw them away from the city to the roads.'"*
- Now, it's Benjamin who becomes overconfident. Two days of victory, inflicting massive casualties on Israel, have swelled their pride. However, as always, pride goes before the fall, & the fake retreat is all part of Israel's plan.
- **Vs. 34-36;** *"Then ten thousand of Israel's finest men made a frontal attack on Gibeah. The fighting was so heavy that the Benjamites did not realize how near disaster was. The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel, and on that day the*

- Israelites struck down 25,100 Benjamites, all armed with swords. Then the Benjamites saw that they were beaten. Now the men of Israel had given way before Benjamin, because they relied on the ambush they had set near Gibeah.”*
- Israel called out its own special forces & ambushed Gibeah, but it was God who gave the victory.
 - **Vs. 41-48;** *“Then the men of Israel turned on them, and the men of Benjamin were terrified, because they realized that disaster had come upon them. So they fled before the Israelites in the direction of the desert, but they could not escape the battle. And the men of Israel who came out of the towns cut them down there. They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them and easily overran them in the vicinity of Gibeah on the east. Eighteen thousand Benjamites fell, all of them valiant fighters. As they turned and fled toward the desert to the rock of Rimmon, the Israelites cut down five thousand men along the roads. They kept pressing after the Benjamites as far as Gidom and struck down two thousand more. On that day twenty-five thousand Benjamite swordsmen fell, all of them valiant fighters. But six hundred men turned and fled into the desert to the rock of Rimmon, where they stayed four months. The men of Israel went back to Benjamin and put all the towns to the sword, including the animals and everything else they found. All the towns they came across they set on fire.”*
 - Unwillingness to hold one town of sinful men accountable destroyed many towns & almost the whole tribe of Benjamin, as only 600 men escaped.

As We See Fit

A Study of the Book of Judges- Part 23

Last time, we met another traveling Levite, one who remained unnamed. We saw that this man had little regard for God's design in marriage, as he had a concubine or second wife. Sadly, the spiritual leaders of Israel didn't uphold the sanctity of marriage. Next, we met a hospitable stranger who invited the Levite & his concubine to spend the night.

But then a shocking evil took place: the men of Gibeah wished to violate the Levite.

More sadly, the hospitable stranger offers up his daughter & the Levite offers his concubine. The concubine is horribly mistreated by the men of the town, so badly that she passes away. The Levite then sends a gruesome & shocking call to action to all Israel. Tonight, we will see if Israel answered the Levite's call & what the repercussions were.

1. The _____ is in

- Despite his own culpability, the _____ is _____.
- Sometimes, they showed up to _____ & _____ a fellow tribe of Israel.
- The Levite now recounts what happened to him & his concubine in Gibeah.
- The verdict is _____; all of Israel agrees the sins of Benjamin must be avenged.

2. The _____ sentence is _____

- Now, all of Israel will _____ to the _____ of Benjamin, in a last-ditch effort to avoid war.
- Benjamin could've come to the meeting of all Israel, & _____ for mercy, or attempted to _____ the actions of the men of Gibeah, but they didn't come nor show remorse.
- Understand, Benjamin is _____ - _____ the size of the larger army.
- We know Benjamin to be the _____ tribe.

3. The _____ tribes

- _____ vs. _____. We've gone from the judges leading a tribe or two to fight a common foe to infighting. It's a _____ war.
- ***Why did God allow so many from Israel to obey?***
- While not expressly mentioned in detail, it appears that the Israelites were too proud & overconfident in their _____ advantage over the Benjamites.
- They _____ themselves & asked the Lord's permission to go again the next day.

- _____ losses! They lost a huge number again! _____ thousand people in two days is a terrific loss! If this continues, _____ + will be dead in a week.
- There's no _____ of _____ death on Benjamin's side.
- At first glance, this is the greatest _____ story ever.
- Notice what is different: go tomorrow; this will be the day of _____!