

Unlocking The Mystery & Treasure Of My Inheritance

Lesson #16 Benjamin

Benjamin: Youngest son of Jacob by Rachel, who died on the road between Bethel and Ephrath, while giving birth to Benjamin. [Gen. 35:17-18] Death Accompanied His Birth.

a. Benjamin was conceived in fasting and prayer. Jacob was >100 years old.

b. One's name was extremely important to ancient Hebrews. It identified one's blood and tribal lineage. Its meaning carried significance, and often shaped the identity and nature of its bearer. Rachel, on her deathbed, named her newborn son Ben-oni; son of my sorrow.

c. Such a name was unacceptable for Jacob's newborn baby boy, despite the death of his beloved Rachel. He loved her the most, and the two sons she gave him were his favorites. Jacob was obviously displeased with the name, and renamed the child Ben Yamin. Benjamin translates as *"the son of my right hand"*. This was a name fitting for a son of Israel.

Jacob's Prophecy: Gen. 49:27 *"Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, and in the evening he divides the spoil."*

Take Note: Death; Sorrow; Ravenous Wolf; Devouring Prey; Fierceness; Wickedness

I Chron. 8 All 40 verses list the sons of Benjamin. These men were *"mighty men of valor."*

I Chronicles 12:2 further sheds light on the Benjamite's ability to fight.

"They were equipped with bows, using both the right hand and the left to sling stones and to shoot arrows from the bow; they were Saul's kinsmen from Benjamin."

They were a ravenous tribe on the battlefield and were known for their skill in war and killing.

These men were ambidextrous warriors, capable of fighting and killing with both hands.

The Benjamites were experts with the bow and the sling. Their craft required them to be capable from many angles, directions, and with both hands.

This is a most difficult task, reserved only for the most athletic of individuals.

The tribe of Benjamin possessed unique warriors. Throughout much of the reign of David's descendants, the tribe of Benjamin appears often as the muscle behind the crown of Judah.

Scripture shows at least 4 great people came from Benjamin's tribe.

1. Ehud, a great warrior, carried out a left-handed assassination of Eglon, and delivered Israel from Moab. Judges 3:12-30

2. Saul, the first king of Israel, was from Benjamin. During his career, he tried to kill David. He ruthlessly murdered everybody in the priestly city of Nob. [I Sam. 19: 22]

3. Later in Jewish history, many Jews lived in Persia. God used Mordecai & Esther, from the tribe of Benjamin, to deliver the Jews from death. [Esther 2:5-7]

4. Saul of Tarsus from the tribe of Benjamin was like a wild animal when he persecuted the church and tracked down Christians to imprison them.

Other Benjamites:

1. Men of this tribe helped defeat Sisera. Judges 5:14

2. Other Benjamites known for their ferocity were Abner, Sheba, and Shimei.

The Dark Side Of Benjamin's Tribe: Their warlike nature came out not only in defense of their country but also in depravity within their country.

1. Their swordsmen [Judges 20:15-16; I Chronicles 8:40, 12:2; II Chronicles 14:8, 17:17]
2. Their ungodly defense of their extreme wickedness in Gibeah revealed the ravenous wolf in action. They were fierce and aggressive. [Judges 19-21]

Judges 19:1 It came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel,...

The Relationship Between Genesis 19 and Judges 19

Judges 19 has a connection to the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

1. The sin of homosexuality and its judgment is a primary theme.
 2. In both accounts, the wicked men of the city wish to rape the male guest of an outsider who is sojourning in their city.
 3. In both accounts the host offers his daughter(s) to the men of the city in place of his guest.
- Consider: Israel has now stooped to the moral level of the Canaanites.

Note: The focus in Judges 19-21 is on another LEVITE whose testimony results in the destruction of an Israelite town and the near annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin. We find wife abuse, blatant homosexuality, gang rape leading to murder, injustice, brother killing brother and kidnapping.

Hospitality [19:1-10] To Horror	19:11-30
Civil War: Israel Vs. The Benjamites	20:1-48
Brides For The Benjamites	21:1-25

Act I Scene I Hospitality Judges 19:1-10

1. A Levite who lived in the hill country of Ephraim: As a priest in the nation of Israel, He is charged with spiritual leadership, and commanded to separate himself from the lusts and desires of the normal Israelite.
 - a. Marriage for a Levite was stringent as to what type of priest may marry and what type of woman he may marry.

Note: The following account shows the consequences of spiritual apathy and moral decay which had led to the depraved state of affairs.

1. The Levite obtains a concubine from Bethlehem-judah. [~5 miles south of Jerusalem]
2. She is unfaithful & goes home to her father. 4 Months Pass
3. The Levite returns to Bethlehem-judah to sweet talk her into returning home with him.
4. She and her father welcome the Levite and smother him with Middle Eastern hospitality.
5. Levite is "wined and dined" for 3 days. On day 4, the Levite rises early to get on his way.
6. Her father detains him and encourages him to eat before departing. He stays again!
7. Day 5 > Levite is determined to leave, but her father detains him until late afternoon.
8. Since he is determined to leave for home, the Levite plans on spending the night in an Israelite city along the way.
9. It was late when they approached Jebus. [Jerusalem: controlled by the Jebusites]

10. Levite's servant: Let us spend the night here. The Levite does not want to stay in a "foreign city" whose citizens are EVIL. He wants to reach an Israelite town so he can be assured of his safety. He determines to press on until they reach Gibeah or Ramah.

Note: Gibeah was ~3 miles north of Jerusalem or Jebus which was inhabited by Canaanites (until the time of David, ~ 300 years later). Ramah, was about 1½ miles north of Gibeah.

Gibeah and Ramah were inhabited by Benjamites [Israelite relatives].

"We will pass over to Gibeah." Let us go another 3 miles north.

11. The sun is setting as they reach the Benjamite city of Gibeah.

They enter the city gates and sit in the town square. This is a sign they were passing through and need lodging for the night, but NO ONE INVITES THEM IN.

a. The Benjamites were not hospitable. The traveler was a Levite priest; evident by his distinctive garb. Someone should have taken him in.

12. Darkness is nigh. An old man [NOT a Benjamite] from the remote hill country of Ephraim sees the weary travelers. Where are you from? Where are you going?

13. The Levite explains: We only need a roof over our heads.

We have supplies for our needs and our animals.

14. The old man insists they stay with him. It is not safe to spend the night in the city square.

Judges 19:16b The old man sojourned in Gibeah: but The Men Of The Place Were Benjamites.

Recall: Lot did not want his guests to remain in the streets at night in Sodom.

15. As they settled for the night, the peace and safety is abruptly interrupted.

Act I - Scene II From Hospitality To Horror - Mistreatment Of The Levite's Concubine

Judges 19:22

Now as they were making their hearts merry, behold, the men of the city, [Benjamites]

certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about, and beat at the door,

and spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying,

Bring forth the man that came into your house, that we may know him.

a. These sons of Belial demand homosexual rape.

b. Hebrew word "know" = sexual relations in this context

Question: Why else would he offer his virgin daughter who had "never known a man"?

Note #1: Just like Sodom and Gomorrah, the Benjamites Use The Same Words when the angels stayed with Lot in Sodom. The people also beat on the house doors. Those cities were destroyed from the face of the earth. These Benjamites have not been in Canaan very long and are steeped in debauchery. Are they ravaging like a wolf?

Note#2: The sin of Sodom is now a sin within Israel. It does not appear the entire population of Gibeah practiced homosexuality, but some did. The Benjamites who weren't involved seemed willing to tolerate it. This is clearly our culture today; it is embraced as an alternative lifestyle. The citizens' tolerance is due to spiritual apathy and moral decay.

Judges 19:23-24 And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, No, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this disgraceful thing. ²⁴ Behold, here is my daughter a virgin, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and you can abuse them and do to them whatever you like: but unto this man do not so vile a thing.

Consider: The covenant nation had indeed fallen to the level of the sins of Sodom & Gomorrah. Instead of driving the Canaanites out of the land, Israel becomes like the Canaanites.

1. The crowd would not back down so the Levite compelled his concubine to go out to the men who abused her the rest of the night.

The scene is one of blood-thirsty lust and immorality. The woman was gang raped and beaten "*all night until morning*". These were not local Canaanites. These were Benjamites, sons of Israel, members of the chosen nation of God Almighty. Their actions were those of Sodomites.

2. Barely alive, they let her go. She managed to get back to the door of the old man's house where she lay grasping the threshold with her hands.

3. Next morning: As he walks out the door, the Levite encounters his concubine, still clinging to the threshold.

4. He gruffly orders her to get up and get going!

After no response from her, he apparently loaded her on his donkey like a sack of potatoes.

Note: The callous reaction from the Levite towards the woman's death is almost as disturbing as the Benjamites' treatment of her. The Levite, a representative of God, was supposed to nurture the sick and dying. He was to exhibit the compassion of God.

5. Upon his safe arrival at home, he cuts her dead body into 12 pieces and sends a portion to every Israelite tribe. This got Israel's attention!

He wants the guilty parties punished. However, he is really responsible for her death.

Act II Israel's Civil War: A Call To Action Judges 20:1-14

1. His action produced the desired effect. Israel Was Shocked And Energized To Action.

2. 400,000 armed Israelites assembled IN UNITY before the Lord at Mizpeh.

[2½ west of Gibeah] Purpose: Teach the Benjamites a lesson!

3. It seems in verse 3 the Benjamites heard what happened but didn't show up at Mizpeh.

4. The Israelite warriors gather and asked the Levite to explain what happened at Gibeah.

What caused you to take such drastic measures to summon us?

a. It was the LEADERS of the city who rose against him and intended to kill him.

b. He does not emphasize the perversion of homosexuality. Why does he fail to mention the men with evil intentions were offered his concubine and the old man's virgin daughter if they would not harm him? Why does he fail to inform them that he was the one who thrust his concubine out the door into the hands of these vile men?

Consider: The Levite looks good and ALL the Benjamites of Gibeah look bad!

The Levite avoids any recommendation of what should be done. Let the crowd decide!

The armed Israelites conclude the entire Benjamite city should be annihilated.

Resolved: We will see to it this evil is purged from Israel.

Note: Their plans are made after the Levite's speech. They do not consult God first.

1. Israelites called upon the Benjamites: Hand Over The Wicked Men Of The City For Judgment.
2. The Benjamites conclude: "Blood Is Thicker Than Water."

We Choose To Stand With The Wicked Men of Gibeah rather than against them.

The Benjamites had made their minds up to go to war, despite the odds being stacked heavily against them. Such a willingness to fight against extreme odds shows their mindset. They were ravenous wolves, ready to pounce on their prey, with no care of being badly outnumbered.

Result: CIVIL WAR

Consider: NOW the tribes are acting in unity but not against the Canaanites!
They Are Unified In Their Quest For Vengeance.

Act III - The Battle: Near Annihilation Of The Benjamites Judges 20:15-48

1. We don't need 400,000 soldiers for this task.
2. 1 in 10 will be chosen by lot to actually go into battle. 40,000 Israelite Warriors!
3. The Benjamites mustered 26,700 men to fight the Israelites in defense of the wicked men of Gibeah.

Judges 20:16 Among all this people there were 700 Chosen Men Left-Handed; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss.

Once again Scripture speaks of Benjamites as being left-handed.

4. Judges 20:17-18 The men of Israel mustered 400,000 sword-wielding soldiers, everyone an experienced warrior. The Israelites went to Bethel to ask God, "Who should lead the charge against the Benjaminites? The Lord said, "Judah should lead."

Compare: Judges 1:1-2 After Joshua died, the Israelites asked the Lord, "Who should lead the invasion against the Canaanites and launch the attack?" The Lord said, "The men of Judah should take the lead." Behold, I have delivered the land into his hand.

Note: God gives NO assurance of victory against the tribe of Benjamin.

5. The tribe of Benjamin PREVAILED in the 1st battle & slaughtered 22,000 Israelite soldiers. Spiro Zodhiates on Judges 20:23 in his Greek-Hebrew NASB Study Bible states:

"Apparently the Israelites trusted in their army and the righteousness of their cause, and they did not include God in their planning."

6. After the 1st defeat, the Israelites wept before the Lord and inquired as to whether they should attempt a 2nd attack.

- a. The Lord said yes, but He gave NO assurance of victory.
- b. Benjamin prevailed again and slaughtered 18,000 Israelite soldiers.

7. All Israel gathered at Bethel and wept before the Lord, fasted and offered sacrifices.

The men of Israel showed a true heart of seeking after God's will, rather than a precursory trip to Bethel and then off to fight. The previous two days had confirmed what they had only witnessed before; the Benjamites were fierce and skilled warriors.

- a. They ask the LORD if they should continue the battle or go home.
- b. God instructs them to again engage the Benjamites. He GIVES them assurance of victory.

8. Earlier victories made them arrogant and overconfident which set the stage for their defeat.
 - a. The Israelites appeared to attack in precisely the same manner as before, BUT this time they also set an ambush outside the city of Gibeah.
 - b. The Benjamites initially kill about 30 Israelite soldiers and they ASSUME another victory.
 - c. Israelites drew back as though they were retreating.
 - d. This drew the Benjamite warriors away from the city.
 - e. The Israelites hiding in ambush rushed into the city, put ALL to death and burned the city.
 - f. By the time the Benjamites realized it, it was too late.
 - g. They fled for their lives as the Israelites cut them down from the front and the rear.
 - h. 25,000 Benjamites were killed.

20:41 the Benjamites; *"were terrified, for they saw that disaster was close to them."* Upon seeing the smoke rising from their city, the Benjamites turned and fled back towards the city. However, the Israelites had anticipated this and fell upon the sons of Benjamin.

Scripture portrays the men of Benjamin fleeing in all directions, scattered to the winds.

The tide had turned on day 3 of the civil war, just as God had told the men of Israel it would.

- i. Five thousand Benjamites were caught on the highways and butchered by the pursuing Israelites as they tried to escape.
- j. 600 escaped into the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon where they stayed 4 months.
- k. The Israelites burned the other Benjamite cities.

Act IV - Israelites Bend The Rules To Find Brides For The Few Remaining Benjamites

Scene I: Remorse! Then Another Massacre Judges 21:2-15

Consider: The Israelite warriors virtually wiped out the tribe of Benjamin.

It was unthinkable for a tribe of Israel to become extinct! God turned the hearts of the Israelites in chapter 21 in regards to the future of the Benjamites.

Problem: Israelites Made 2 Vows In Their War!

1. They would NEVER allow one of their daughters to marry a Benjamite.
 2. They would execute anyone who did not appear for battle against Gibeah.
- No one will go home until Gibeah is attacked and destroyed.

Judges 21:2-4 And the people came to the house of God, and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore; ³ And said, O LORD God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to day one tribe lacking in Israel?

⁴ And it came to pass on the morrow, that the people rose early, and built there an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

1. Judges 21:5 The Israelites asked, "Who from all the Israelite tribes has not assembled before the LORD?" They had made a solemn oath that whoever did not assemble before the LORD at Mizpeh must certainly be executed.
2. They inquired and found that No One from Jabesh Gilead had assembled for war at Mizpeh.

Plan: They devised a plan whereby they would play 1 vow against the other.

They would diligently keep the 2nd vow which enabled them to circumvent the first.

3. In order to "keep their vow," they assembled 12,000 warriors and attacked Jabesh Gilead. They killed every man and woman, sparing only the young virgins.

4. Now they have 400 virgins who could be given to the surviving men of Benjamin.

[Technically, this was not breaking their vow. None of the men of Jabesh Gilead had assembled for battle, and thus none of them had vowed not to give their daughters to the Benjamites.]

5. They have provided 400 wives for the remaining 600 Benjamite men.

Judges 21:13-14 And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

There are still 200 men who need a wife to bear offspring to perpetuate the tribe.

Act IV Scene II Girls Of Shiloh Abducted Judges 21:15-25

1. The Israelites devised another devious plan.

Hmm...we vowed we would not GIVE our daughters to the Benjamites.

2. Nothing was said about any virgin being TAKEN from among their daughters!

3. Annual festival at Shiloh is approaching. There will be dancing by the virgin daughters.

4. The unwed Benjamites were commanded to hide out in the vineyards.

When the Israelite virgins came near to dance, they were to SEIZE one of them for a wife.

5. Mission accomplished! Every Benjamite now has a wife! Everyone Goes Home!

Thus, the 600 men got their brides, the 11 tribes kept their vow, the citizens of Gibeah were punished, the tribe of Benjamin was taught a lesson, and the 12 tribes of Israel were saved.

The 600 men of Benjamin, with their brides, returned to their inheritance, cleaned up the debris, repaired the cities, and life started all over again.

These three chapters were given to show the characteristics of the tribe of Benjamin.

Were they ravens as a wolf? Were they going out and dividing the spoil at night, and doing the things that a wild animal would do? The answer is yes. They were fulfilling the prophecy.

Moses' Blessing: Deut. 33:12 And of Benjamin he said, THE BELOVED OF THE LORD

shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long,

and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

Note: Moses called him "the beloved of the Lord" and promised him constant protection from God. Benjamin shall "dwell between His shoulders" which suggests being carried on his back or over his heart. Moses says nothing about the ferocious behavior of an animal.

Will the prophecy of Moses be fulfilled?

Will the "son of my sorrow" be transformed to "the son of my right hand?"

