

221228-4 Judges 21, The Restoration of the Tribe of Benjamin to Israel— CThurman

It is quite unfortunate that Benjamin stood against their own nation to defend certain sons of Belial, but they did. For their sin the nation was by the word of God duty-bound to destroy Benjamin, which they did. But to Israel's commitment to destroy Benjamin they swore not to give to the of their daughters for wives.

So Israel went to war. The first two battles did not go well at all for them. They suffered great losses. Before the third battle Israel went back up to Shiloh and inquired of the LORD. They Phinehas offered for them their burnt offerings and peace offerings, and the LORD granted them the victory over this errant tribe. And, Micah was avenged for the murder of his concubine. But in all of this we should remember that it was in the time of suffering loss that Israel was reminded that Benjamin was, not an enemy but their brother. It was in their loss that Israel drew nearer to seek the LORD, to fast, pray and to offer voluntarily their burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. Good things come out of hard trial.

Benjamin is now reduced to a mere 600 men and hiding at the Rock of Rimmon. And in this chapter Israel repents from the administration of war against Benjamin to an administration of restoration.

Chapter 21

1 ¶ Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh,

Mizpeh is where the nation had gathered together to ascertain the facts of the case concerning Micah's complaint against the tribe of Benjamin. (cf. Jud.20.1) Evidently there are at least three responses of Israel to the horrible things they have heard.

saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

Israel also swore death to any of the cities that refused to come to Mizpeh to help in the fight.

Jud.21.5 ... He shall surely be put to death.

And then declared war.

Jud.20.9 But now this shall be the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up by lot against it ... (Jud.20.8, 9) Evidently, this is when they also had sworn concerning giving to Benjamin their daughters in marriage. (cf. Jud.21.1)

Note here that Israel's vow not to give of their daughters only pertains to their generation. It is not an oath binding upon the succeeding generations.

Jud.21.1 ¶ Now the men of Israel had sworn in Mizpeh, saying, There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife.

2 And the people came to the house of God,

Three times Israel has come to Shiloh. The first time they came to Shiloh was to determine which of the tribes of Israel should be the first to go up to war against Benjamin. (cf. Jud.20.18) The second time they came to Shiloh was after Israel had suffered two great losses at Benjamin's hand. (cf. Jud.20.26) And now, after the battle is over to try to recover the tribe of Benjamin.

and abode there till even before God, and lifted up their voices, and wept sore;

This is what happens in strife between brethren. There is really no winner, in one sense of the word. Sure there might be a right side or a just cause but when the result is the loss of a brother the victory is not a joyous occasion.

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?

Missing

that there should be ... lacking, Niphal (simple pass.) infin. of the Hebrew verb פָּקַד, pah-qad, tss. to visit, to number, to appoint, to remember, to miss, to want, to count, to muster.

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.

Here the people evidently erect an altar of stones at Shilah to offer upon it their sacrifices. Why not the brazen altar?

5 And the children of Israel said, Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD?

congregation, the masc. noun, קָהָל, tss. a multitude, a company, a congregation; vss.5, 8.

For *they had made a great oath*
(The reason for asking this question is because)

concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.

6 And the children of Israel repented them for Benjamin their brother,

And ... repented them, Niphal (simple pass.) fut. of the Hebrew verb נָחַם, nah-cham, tss. to repent, to comfort, to ease; vss. 6, 15.

Israel did not need to repent for the war against evil. This conflict was for a just cause. They were acting according to that word which the LORD had given them.

*Deu.13.12 ¶ If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,
13 Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;*

14 Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you;

15 Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.

16 And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again.

17 And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;

18 When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

Repentance in this sense is that they were turned now from destroying them to trying to help to restore the tribe.

and said, There is one tribe cut off from Israel this day.

cut off, Niphal (simple pass.) pret. of the Hebrew verb, גָּדַד, gah-da[g], tss. *to cut off, to cut down, to cut asunder, to hew down, to be sundered.*

7 How shall we do for wives for them that remain,

that that remain, Niphal (simple pass.) part. of the Hebrew verb יָתַר, yah-thar, tss. *to remain, to be left, to be left behind, to be reserved;* vss. 7, 16.

seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them of our daughters to wives?

Again, here notice the limited extent of their oath. It applies only to their generation and is not binding upon the successive generation of Israel.

8 And they said, What one is there of the tribes of Israel
(Perhaps of any of Israel's cities.)

that came not up to Mizpeh to the LORD?

While we that have convened together at Mizpeh can't give of our daughters who didn't come up that we might give of *their* daughters.

These that failed to come to Mizpeh to support the nation in the conflict were condemned to die, but because of their absence they also had not sworn against giving their daughters to be wives for Benjamin. So, Israel, could destroy the inhabitants of this place while at the same time take their daughters and give them to Benjamin for wives.

And, behold, there came none to the camp from Jabeshgilead to the assembly.
9 For the people were numbered, and, behold, there were none of the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead there.

Ah, there is one city that did not come up to Mizpeh to support the cause of truth in the nation. It is located on the other side of the Jordan River in Gilead, on the River called the Brook of Cherith, about fifty miles away from Mizpeh as the *crow flies*. By the description of Gad's borders in Jos.13.24-28, the city Jabeshgilead belongs to the tribe of Gad.

Notice that Gad, unlike Benjamin that divided along tribal or family lines, stood for the truth with the nation even when it meant that judgment must fall upon some of their own *kinsmen*.

10 And the congregation sent thither twelve thousand men of the valiantest,
sons of valour

congregation, the fem. noun עֲדָתָא, tss. *congregation assembly, company, multitude; vss. 10, 13, 16.*

valiantest, the masc. noun **חַיִל**, *chah-yil*, tss. *wealth, activity, army, host, **able**, valiant, substance, valour, virtuous [woman], strength, power.*

and commanded them, saying, Go and smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the children.

11 And this is the thing that ye shall do, Ye shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman that hath lain by man.

So Israel would destroy Jabeshgilead as thoroughly as they destroyed the tribe of Benjamin except for their daughters, and these would be given to Benjamin for wives.

12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead four hundred young virgins,

Notice the self-interpretive device built into the word of God. As is often the case the Bible acts as its own dictionary defining terms for us. There is no question what it means to be a virgin.

that had known no man by lying with any male: and they brought them unto the camp to Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

These of the valiantest men returned to Shiloh after they had destroyed Jabeshgilead and brought with them these four hundred maidens.

13 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.

cried out to them, 'Peace.'

An indeterminate number of men went to the Rock of Rimmon, south of Shiloh about ten miles, to tell them there was peace and that they should come up to Shiloh. And so the children of Benjamin came.

14 And Benjamin came again at that time;

Returned

and ... came again, Qal fut. of the Hebrew verb שׁוּב, shoov, tss. to return, to go again, to bring again, to come again, to turn, to retire, to turn back.

and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabeshgilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

By the numbers, 600 men and 400 maidens, the number was one-third short (200 maidens). So the chiefs of Israel searched against for some way to provide wives for the rest of the sons of Benjamin.

15 And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

gap

breach, a masc. noun, פֶּרֶץ, peh-retz, tss. breach, breaking forth, breaking in, gap.

See again the term *repented*. Israel turned from the effort of destroying the tribe to restoring it. Repentance is used in the same way with reference to the LORD.

Ge 6:6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. (cf. Jud.2,18; 21.6, 15; 1Sa.15.11; 2Sa.24.16; Joel 2.13)

Of course God cannot change (cf. Mal.3.6; Ja.1.17), but what men experience is different from that which they previously experienced. Instead of mankind continuing as they had been there is a change in the administration of things so that from this point forward they live under another administration of the LORD (i.e., shorter life span, cursed animal-kind, institution of civil government).

The breach or gap what was the result of following the word of God. Obviously Benjamin must continue as a tribe among the other tribes of Israel and receive their inheritance. So, Israel searches against how it is that

the might help restore their *fallen* brother. So, they once again begin to test ideas and find an answer.

16 ¶ Then the elders of the congregation said, How shall we do for wives for them that remain, seeing the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?

destroyed, Niphal (simple pass.) pret. of the Hebrew verb שָׁמַד, shah-mad, tss. *to destroy, to perish, to overthrow, to bring to nought.*

17 And they said, There must be an inheritance for them that be escaped of Benjamin, that a tribe be not destroyed out of Israel.

inheritance, a fem. noun of the Hebrew יְרוּשָׁה, y'roosh-shah, tss, a *possession, inheritance, heritage.*

18 Howbeit we may not give them wives of our daughters: for the children of Israel have sworn, saying, Cursed be he that giveth a wife to Benjamin.

Since we can't GIVE wives to them without violating our oath, and since the daughters of Jabeshgilead weren't enough ...

19 Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the LORD in Shiloh yearly [in a place] which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah.

feast, of the masc. noun חַג, chag, tss. *a feast, a sacrifice, a solemn feast, a solemnity.*

there is a feast of the LORD – There were three feasts in which all the males of Israel were to present themselves before the LORD.

De 16:16 Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty ... (cf. Ex.34.22, 23)

The LORD has not revealed to this time where He shall put His name. (cf. Deu.12.5, 21) That will not happen until the reign of King Solomon. (cf. 1Ki.9.3) It is only my opinion, but they might have begun observing something of these feasts there where the tabernacle was located in Shiloh. But we do know that Israel had not observed the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) since the days of Joshua. (cf. Ne.8.17) We are left with either the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread or the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost. Whichever it is this feast does appear to be obligatory and even entire families would travel here to keep it. For example, Joseph and Mary came with their family to Jerusalem to observe Passover.

LK.2.41 ¶ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

So the chiefs reported that there is in Shiloh, *a place* nearby, just a little south of Lebonah, where we can allow something, just this once, to be done which would not violate the oath we've made against giving of our daughters for wives to the sons of Benjamin.

20 Therefore they commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards;

lie in wait, Qal pret. of the Hebrew verb אָרַב, ah-rav, tss. *to lie in wait, to ambush.*

vineyards, an Hebrew common noun כֶּרֶם, keh-rem, tss. *a vineyard.*

21 And see, and, behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances,

to dance, Qal infin. of the Hebrew verb חָוַל, chool, tss. *to be in anguish, to be in pain, to be in travail with child, to be grieved, to sorrow, to wound, etc.; vss.21, 23.*

then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife
proceed snatch

catch, Qal pret. of the Hebrew verb **חָטַף**, *chah-taph*, only three times in the OT and tss. *catch*. (cf. Jud.21.21; Ps.10.9 (twice)).

Ps 10:9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin.

22 And it shall be, when their fathers or their brethren come unto us to complain, (the chiefs)

to complain, Qal infin. of the Hebrew verb **רִיב**, *reev*, tss. *to strive, to plead, to contend, to debate, to rebuke, to complain, to be an adversary*.

The *us* would refer to the *chief* of all the brethren and tribes. Those men that are the *stays*, a sort of *cornerstone* among the people. (cf. Jud.20.2)

chief, **פִּנָּה**, *pin-nah*, tss. *the corners, the chiefs, bulwarks, stays, towers*. So the most prominent men of the nation, which some say are the *cornerstones* of the people. (cf. Neh.3.24, 31 corner of the wall; Job 1.19, corners of the house; **38.6**, *corner stones*; cf. Is.19.13)

that we will say unto them, Be favourable unto them for our sakes:
gracious, merciful

be favourable, Qal imper. of the Hebrew verb **חָנַן**, *chah-nah*, tss. *to be gracious, to deal graciously, to favour, to be favourable, to intreat, to have mercy, to be fair, to make supplication, to pray, to beseech*.

Be merciful or gracious to them on our account because they are only acting on the counsel that we gave them. (This likely sets aside renewed efforts to war against Benjamin again.)

because we reserved not to each man his wife in the war:
took (enough) (against Jabeshgilead)

reserved, Qal pret. of the Hebrew verb לָקַח, lah-qach, tss. *to take, to marry, to receive, to fetch, to reserve.*

for ye did not give unto them at this time, that ye should be guilty.

War – must refer to the conflict against Jabeshgilead.

The chiefs of Israel gave two reasons for commanding the complainant to be gracious to the manner in which their daughters were taken.

1. We did not reserve enough women in the war against Jabesh Gilead to meet the number of the children of Benjamin. And,
2. You could not give them wives and break our oath.

Therefore suffer the offense this once.

23 And the children of Benjamin did so, and took them wives,
picked, plucked

and took, Qal fut. of the Hebrew verb נָסַח, nah-sa, tss. *to accept, to carry, to lift, to pluck, to lift up, etc.; vss. 2, 23.*

according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught:
captured

they caught, Qal pret. of the Hebrew verb גָּזַל, gah-zal, tss. I to violently take away, to catch, to spoil, to take by force, to rob, to pluck, to consume.

and they went and returned unto their inheritance, and repaired the cities, and dwelt in them.

inheritance, the fem. noun נַחֲלָה, nah-chah-lah, tss. *inheritance*, *possession*, *heritage*; **vss. 23, 24.**

repaired, Qal fut. of the Hebrew verb בָּנָה, *to build, to repair, to build up, to make*; **vss. 4, 23,**

24 And the children of Israel departed thence at that time, every man to his tribe and to his family, and they went out from thence every man to his inheritance.

25 In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

As this section of the Book of Judges began in chapter 17 so it ends in the 21st chapter.

Jud.17.6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

No king meant there was no one to lead the nation forward. Micah was a thief, his mother was a liar, they were both idolators and superstitious. The priest was whoever they appointed. The Levites was an hireling. The men of Dan were fierce, and the men of Gibeah were sodomites. And the whole thing culminated into civil war.

At our next lesson we will turn back to Judges chapter 3. Remember that when we came to the end of chapter 2 we skipped ahead to pick up the history of chs. 17-21. (These chapters could have been inserted at ch. 2, between vss. 10, 11.) Perhaps a note to help us get a perspective of time. Remember that Israel spared Rachab and her family when they overthrew the city of Jericho. Salmon married her sometime later (cf. Mt.1.5), perhaps after Israel had received their land allotments. Salmon fathered Boaz, who could have been born during this time of anarchy that we're reading of here in Judges. Boaz, late in life, marries Ruth and fathers Obed. Obed fathers Jessie, and Jessie fathers David, who shall be King of Israel.