

# Judges 19:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

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

The phrase **they passed on and went their way** (vaya'avru vayelechu, וַיַּעֲבֹרוּ וַיָּלֹכְדוּ) emphasizes continued travel despite approaching darkness. The critical detail follows: **and the sun went down upon them** (vatavo lahem hashemesh, וַתָּבֹא לָהֶם שֶׁמֶשׁ), literally "the sun came/entered upon them," a Hebrew idiom for sunset. This fulfilled the inevitable consequence of delayed departure (v. 8) and refusing closer lodging (v. 12). The travelers now faced darkness without secured lodging, vulnerable and exposed.

The specification **when they were by Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin** (etsel hagiv'ah asher le-Vinyamin, אֵתל הַגִּבְעָה אֲשֶׁר לְבִנְיָמִן) serves double purpose: geographically locating events and theologically emphasizing tribal identity. Gibeah was unquestionably Benjamite—part of Israel, descendants of Jacob's beloved youngest son (Genesis 35:16-18). Yet this covenant identity provided no protection against the horror to come. The narrative's careful identification of Gibeah as Benjamin's inheritance heightens the tragedy: covenant people becoming indistinguishable from Sodom.

Sunset carries symbolic weight throughout Scripture. God's creative work established day and night (Genesis 1:5), marking time and seasons (Psalm

104:19-23). Darkness often symbolizes spiritual blindness, ignorance, or evil (John 3:19, Romans 13:12, Ephesians 5:8). The sun setting on the Levite's party as they approached Gibeah foreshadows the moral darkness they would encounter—an Israelite city whose inhabitants walked in darkness despite covenant light (Isaiah 9:2). Only Christ, the light of the world (John 8:12), can dispel such darkness through regeneration and sanctification.

## Historical Context

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Sunset timing in Israel varies by season, occurring as early as 4:45 PM in winter and as late as 7:45 PM in summer. The narrative's timing suggests late afternoon departure from Bethlehem (v. 8), making sunset at Gibeah consistent with summer travel when longer daylight allowed reaching this point before total darkness. However, arriving at sunset meant twilight only—insufficient time to arrange lodging before darkness made movement difficult and dangerous.

Gibeah's identification as Benjamite carries historical significance. Benjamin occupied territory between Judah (south) and Ephraim (north), making it a strategic buffer zone. The tribe descended from Rachel's second son, born as she died (Genesis 35:16-20), creating special connection to the patriarchal promises. Jacob's blessing called Benjamin "a ravenous wolf" who "shall divide the spoil" (Genesis 49:27), a prophecy later fulfilled through warriors like Ehud (Judges 3:15-30) and King Saul (1 Samuel 9-31). However, Judges 19-21 shows this "ravenous" character turned inward, producing civil war.

The late arrival pattern appears throughout biblical narratives, often preceding crisis. The bridegroom came at midnight (Matthew 25:6), workers hired at the eleventh hour received full wages (Matthew 20:9), and Christ died at the ninth hour (Matthew 27:45-46). Late timing creates urgency and tests preparedness. The Levite's party faced the consequence of poor planning—arriving too late to ensure safety, forced to accept whatever hospitality Gibeah offered, if any.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 2:1 — Judging others**

## Study Questions

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1. How does the "sun going down" on the travelers illustrate the consequences of accumulated small compromises and delays in obedience?
2. What does Gibeah's careful identification as belonging to Benjamin teach about the danger of trusting covenant status while neglecting covenant faithfulness?
3. In what areas of life do you experience the "darkness" of consequences from delayed obedience or poor planning?

## Interlinear Text

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And they passed on	H5674	וַיַּעֲבֹר וְיָמָם	H1980	וַיַּתַּבְּאֵל כֵּן	H935	וְיָמָם	H0	וְיָמָם	H8121
upon them when they were by	H681	אֲלֵיכֶם		גִּבְעָה	H1390	רַבְנִים	H834	בְּנֵי	H1144

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