

# Judges 19:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

## Analysis

**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.** This verse introduces the narrative's tragic hero—an old man (ish zaqen, אִישׁ זָקֵן) returning from field work at evening. The narrator emphasizes he is from Ephraim, not a native Benjamite, making him a fellow sojourner (gar, גָּר) with the Levite. This detail is theologically significant: only a sojourner, an outsider, shows covenant hospitality in Israel.

The contrast "he sojourned in Gibeah: but the men of the place were Benjamites" indicts the native population. The conjunction "but" (ve, ו) creates deliberate tension—the Ephraimite immigrant displays covenant loyalty while native Benjamites abandon it. This inverts expectations: Israelites should exemplify hospitality (chesed, חֶסֶד), yet only the stranger fulfills Torah obligations (Leviticus 19:33-34, Deuteronomy 10:18-19). The phrase "men of the place" (anshei hamaqom, אֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם) echoes Genesis 19:4 describing Sodom's men, reinforcing the typological parallel. When covenant people fail to practice covenant love, strangers must become examples—a theme Jesus develops in the Good Samaritan parable (Luke 10:25-37).

## Historical Context

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The time marker "at even" (ba'erev, בָּאֶרֶב) indicates late afternoon, when field laborers returned home before sunset. Ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs made evening a critical time for welcoming travelers, as spending the night in the open exposed them to bandits, wild animals, and exposure. The Levite's earlier delay at his father-in-law's house (vv. 4-9) had forced late departure, resulting in this dangerous evening arrival. Gibeah's residents violating hospitality norms constituted serious covenant breach—Abraham (Genesis 18:1-8), Lot (Genesis 19:1-3), and Reuel (Exodus 2:20) all exemplified urgent hospitality to strangers. The old man's Ephraimite origin connects him to the Levite (v. 1), creating kinship bond and shared vulnerability in Benjaminite territory.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the old man's status as a sojourner showing hospitality while native Israelites refuse challenge assumptions about who truly lives out covenant faith?
2. What does this reversal—outsiders demonstrating covenant loyalty while insiders fail—teach about the nature of genuine faith versus external religious identity?
3. How does Jesus use similar reversals (Good Samaritan, Canaanite woman, Roman centurion) to challenge religious pride and expand understanding of kingdom citizenship?

## Interlinear Text

מְלֵא	מְעִשָּׂה	הָוֹ	מִן
H2009	<b>man</b>	<b>an old</b>	<b>And behold there came</b>
H376	H2205	H935	H4480
			<b>from his work</b>
			H4480
			H4639
בְּרֵךְ	וְהָא	אֶפְרַיִם	בְּרֵךְ
<b>out of the field</b>	<b>at even</b>	<b>man</b>	<b>of mount</b>
H7704	H6153	H376	H2022
			<b>Ephraim</b>
			H1931
			<b>and he sojourned</b>
			H1481
בְּגִבְעָה	יְמִינֵי	בְּגִימָן	בְּגִבְעָה
<b>in Gibeah</b>	<b>man</b>	<b>of the place</b>	<b>were Benjamites</b>
H1390	H376	H4725	H1145

## Additional Cross-References

**Psalms 104:23** (Parallel theme): Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

**Judges 19:1** (Parallel theme): 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 Beth-lehem-judah.

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