

Judges 19:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I am now going to the house of the LORD; and there is no man that receiveth me to house.

Analysis

And he said unto him, We are passing from Beth-lehem-judah toward the side of mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and I went to Beth-lehem-judah, but I am now going to the house of the LORD; and there is no man that receiveth me to house. The Levite's response provides crucial information. His journey from Bethlehem-Judah (Beit Lechem Yehudah, בֵּית לְקֵם יְהוּדָה, "House of Bread") to Ephraim's hill country traces the same route Ruth would later travel in reverse (Ruth 1:1-2), connecting these narratives thematically. The Levite identifies himself as Ephraimite, establishing kinship with the old man.

Most significantly, he states "I am now going to the house of the LORD" (et-beit Yahweh ani holek, אֶת-בֵּית יְהוָה אַנְיָה הַלֵּךְ). This phrase traditionally refers to the tabernacle, likely at Shiloh during this period (Joshua 18:1, Judges 18:31, 1 Samuel 1:3). That a Levite traveling to serve at Yahweh's house finds no hospitality in Israel indicts the nation's spiritual state. The irony is devastating: religious professionals travel to worship centers while covenant people fail basic moral obligations.

"There is no man that receiveth me to house" (ve'ein ish me'asef oti habbaitah, אֵין אִישׁ מְאַסֵּף אֹתְךָ בְּבַיִתָּה) uses the verb asaf (אָסַף, "gather in, receive"), suggesting the Levite had been waiting publicly, hoping for hospitality. The universal negative "no man" (ein ish, אֵין אִישׁ) emphasizes comprehensive failure. Reformed theology sees

this as depicting total depravity—sin so pervasive that entire communities abandon basic righteousness. Christ later experienced similar rejection: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

Historical Context

"The house of the LORD" during Judges refers to the tabernacle, most likely located at Shiloh in Ephraimite territory (about 20 miles north of Gibeah). Archaeological excavations at Shiloh (modern Khirbet Seilun) have revealed a major religious center from this period, destroyed around 1050 BCE (possibly by Philistines, referenced in Psalm 78:60, Jeremiah 7:12). Levites served in rotation at the tabernacle, explaining this journey. The Levite's secondary wife status (concubine) connects to Judges' theme of declining moral standards—even religious leaders compromised biblical marriage ideals. Bethlehem, meaning "house of bread," would later gain significance as David's birthplace and ultimately the Messiah's (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the Levite's journey to worship while Israel abandons covenant hospitality illustrate the disconnect between external religion and heart transformation?
2. What does the universal failure to receive the Levite teach about corporate sin and the danger of communal moral drift?

3. How does Christ's experience of rejection by His own people (John 1:11) provide hope for those rejected by religious communities despite genuine faith?

Interlinear Text

מִבֵּית	אֶבֶן	חַנּוֹן	עֹבֵר	יָם	אֵל	יְהוָה	אָמֵר
And he said	H413	unto him We are passing	H5674		H587	H0	
	H559						
לְ	חַמּ	עַד	יְהוָה	יַרְכֵּת	וְ	כִּר	אֶפְרַיִם
from Bethlehemjudah	H1035	H3063	H5704	toward the side	H3411	H2022	Ephraim
							H669
לְ	חַמּ	בְּ	יְהֹוָה	הַלְּ	גַּם	לְ	
H8033	H595	but I am now going	H1980	H5704	H0	חַמּ	from Bethlehemjudah
							H1035
אֵל	יְהוָה	בְּ	בְּ	הַלְּ	גַּם	אֵל	
H3063	H853	me to house	H1004	H3068	H589	but I am now going	H369
אֵל	יְהוָה	בְּ	בְּ	הַלְּ	גַּם	אֵל	
and there is no man	that receiveth	H853	me to house	H1004			
H376	H622						

Additional Cross-References

Judges 18:31 (Parallel theme): And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.