

Judges 19:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold.

Analysis

And her lord rose up in the morning, and opened the doors of the house, and went out to go his way: and, behold, the woman his concubine was fallen down at the door of the house, and her hands were upon the threshold. The Levite's callousness shocks. "Her lord rose up in the morning" (vayaqom adoneyha baboqer, וַיָּקֹם אֲדֹנֶיה בָּבָקֵר) suggests he slept peacefully while she suffered. "Opened the doors... and went out to go his way" (vayyiftach daltot habait vayyetse lalekhet ledarko, וַיַּפְתַּח דַּלְתֹּת הַבַּיִת וַיַּצֵּא לְלֶקֶת לְדַרְקוֹ) indicates he intended to leave without checking on her—the phrase "to go his way" suggests indifference to her fate.

"Behold" (vehinneh, וְהִנֵּה) marks shocking discovery. "The woman his concubine was fallen down" (ha'ishah pilagsho nofelet, הָאִשָּׁה פִּילָגְשׁוֹ נָפְלָת) uses a participle suggesting she lay collapsed. Most haunting: "her hands were upon the threshold" (veyadeyha al-hasaf, וַיַּדְיָהּ עַל-הַסָּף). The threshold (saf, סָף) represents the boundary between safety and danger. Her outstretched hands suggest she died reaching for safety, for her "lord" who should have protected her but instead sacrificed her.

The narrative's restraint makes the horror more powerful. No editorial comment condemns the Levite; the facts speak. He handed his concubine to rapists to save himself, slept while she was brutalized, and prepared to leave without concern. Reformed theology recognizes this as exposing the depth of human depravity—

religious leaders are not exempt from profound moral failure. The Levite's subsequent actions—cutting her body into pieces and sending them through Israel (v. 29)—show he weaponized her suffering for political purposes rather than mourning her death. This contrasts utterly with Christ the Good Shepherd who "giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11) rather than sacrificing the vulnerable to save Himself.

Historical Context

The threshold held symbolic significance in ancient Near Eastern thought—it marked the boundary of the household's protection. Archaeological excavations reveal thresholds sometimes had dedicatory deposits or inscriptions, marking them as liminal sacred spaces. The concubine's hands on the threshold thus carry theological weight—she reached for the boundary of safety but was denied entry. Ancient readers would recognize the Levite's failure: a man's honor demanded protecting household members, especially women under his authority. His survival while she died outside inverted proper order. The Hebrew term *pilegesh* (פִּלְגֵשׁ, "concubine") indicated a wife of secondary status, lacking full bride-price and inheritance rights. While legally married, concubines had fewer protections—as this narrative tragically demonstrates.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the Levite's indifference to his concubine's fate while he slept safely expose the spiritual bankruptcy of external religious status without genuine love?
2. What does the image of her hands on the threshold reveal about those who reach for safety and protection but are denied it by those who should provide it?

3. How does Christ's willing sacrifice of Himself to save His people provide ultimate contrast to the Levite's sacrifice of another to save himself?

Interlinear Text

הַבָּיִת זֶלֶת וְתַּפְתַּח בְּבֵב קָרָא אֶדְנָה יְבָרֶכֶם^{וְתַּפְתַּח בְּבֵב קָרָא אֶדְנָה יְבָרֶכֶם}
rose up And her lord in the morning and opened the doors of the house
H6965 H113 H1242 H6605 H1817 H1004

פִּילְגָּשׁ וְ פָאֵשׁ הָ וְהַבָּה לְדַרְכֵךְ וְ לֹל כְּתָא אֵא
and went out his way and behold the woman his concubine
H3318 H1980 H1870 H2009 H802 H6370

עַל יְדֵיָה נָפְלָת הַבָּיִת פְּתַח וְתַּפְתַּח
was fallen down at the door of the house and her hands
H5307 H6607 H1004 H3027 H5921

בְּפָנָיו

were upon the threshold

H5592

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