

Judges 19:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place.

Analysis

And he said unto her, Up, and let us be going. But none answered. Then the man took her up upon an ass, and the man rose up, and gat him unto his place. The Levite's first words to his dying or dead concubine reveal stunning insensitivity: "Up, and let us be going" (qumi venelelah, קומֵי וְנַלְכָה). The imperative "arise" (qumi, קָמֵ) and cohortative "let us go" (venelelah, נַלְכָה) suggest he expected her to simply get up and continue the journey. No tenderness, no inquiry about her condition, no acknowledgment of what she endured—only concern for his travel schedule.

"But none answered" (ve'ein oneh, עֲנֵה אֵין) is devastating in its brevity. The negative particle ein (אֵין, "there is no") with the participle oneh (עֲנֵה, "answering") indicates silence—whether death's silence or trauma's inability to respond remains ambiguous. The ambiguity matters: did the Levite realize she was dead or assume she was merely unresponsive? His subsequent actions suggest he didn't investigate her condition with any care.

"Then the man took her up upon an ass" (vayyiqqachehah al-hachamor, וַיַּקְרַב עַל־הַחֲמֹר) uses language typically reserved for loading cargo, not caring for an injured person. "The man rose up, and gat him unto his place" (vayyaqom ha'ish vayyelek limqomo, וַיַּעֲמֹד הָאִישׁ וַיֵּלֶךְ לִמְקוֹם) concludes with shocking normalcy—he simply returned home. The threefold repetition of "the man" (ha'ish, הָאִישׁ) in this verse emphasizes his agency and responsibility. From a Reformed perspective, this

epitomizes covenant unfaithfulness—using religious status (Levite) while utterly failing to love as God commands (Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:5). Jesus condemned such hypocrisy: external religion while "omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matthew 23:23).

Historical Context

The Levite's treatment of his concubine's body—first as cargo on a donkey, then dismemberment and distribution (v. 29)—violates Torah principles regarding the dead. While the law permitted symbolic actions calling Israel to witness (Deuteronomy 21:1-9), dismembering a human body echoed pagan practices foreign to Israelite religion. His actions served political purposes (rallying Israel against Benjamin) but demonstrated no genuine grief. Ancient Near Eastern mourning customs included loud lamentation, tearing garments, sitting in ashes (2 Samuel 13:19, Job 2:12-13)—none of which the Levite performed. His silence about her death contrasts his volubility when demanding justice (20:4-7). The narrative's designation "the man" rather than "the Levite" or using his name suggests moral distancing—his actions disqualified him from covenant respect.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the Levite's command 'Up, and let us be going' to a dying woman reveal the heart's capacity for self-centered indifference even to extreme suffering?

- What does the Levite's subsequent use of his concubine's death for political purposes (v. 29) teach about the danger of weaponizing others' suffering rather than genuinely mourning it?
- How does Christ's tender care for the suffering and marginalized (healing the bleeding woman, raising Jairus's daughter, weeping at Lazarus's tomb) provide the ultimate contrast to religious leaders who burden rather than care for people?

Interlinear Text

וְאָמַר	יְהִי	עָמֵד	וְאָמַר
And he said	rose up	and	and
H559	H413	H1980	H369
וְאָמַר	יְהִי	עָמֵד	וְאָמַר
But none answered			took
			H3947
וְאָמַר	יְהִי	עָמֵד	וְאָמַר
her up upon an ass	rose up	Then the man	him unto his place
H2543	H6965	H376	H4725
וְאָמַר	יְהִי	עָמֵד	וְאָמַר

Additional Cross-References

Judges 20:5 (Parallel theme): And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead.