

Judges 19:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.

Analysis

And they sat down, and did eat and drink both of them together: for the damsel's father had said unto the man, Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night, and let thine heart be merry.

Despite the Levite's intention to depart after a quick meal (v. 5), the father escalated from "a morsel" to a full meal where **they sat down** (vayeshvu, וַיֵּשְׁבוּ), indicating extended dining. The father's plea—**Be content, I pray thee, and tarry all night** (ho'el-na velin, הוֹאֵל-נָא וְלִין)—uses ya'al (יֵאָל), meaning to consent, be willing, or take pleasure in something. The phrase **let thine heart be merry** (veyitav libbekha, וַיִּיטֵב לְבָבְךָ) literally means "let your heart be good/glad," suggesting enjoyment and contentment.

The repetition of eating and drinking (vayochlu vayishtu, וַיֹּאכְלוּ וַיִּשְׁתּוּ) without mention of substantive conversation about the marital reconciliation reveals the narrative's critique. The father's hospitality, though generous, facilitated avoidance. Making "your heart merry" through food and drink while unresolved sin remained unaddressed parallels Israel's pattern of seeking comfort in created things rather than covenant faithfulness to the Creator. The same phrase "eat and drink and make merry" characterizes the fool in Jesus's parable who faced sudden judgment (Luke 12:19-20).

The Levite's acquiescence—despite earlier rising "early in the morning" to depart—demonstrates weak resolve. He allowed the father's pressure and the comfort of feasting to override better judgment. This mirrors the pattern throughout Judges where Israel repeatedly chose immediate pleasure over long-term faithfulness. Samson's self-indulgence (Judges 14-16), Gideon's ephod leading Israel astray (Judges 8:27), and the tribe of Dan's idolatry (Judges 18) all illustrate choosing comfort over obedience. Reformed theology recognizes this as total depravity's effect—even religious leaders (Levites) lack moral strength apart from God's regenerating grace.

Historical Context

The father's repeated invitations to "tarry all night" reflect ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs where hosts were expected to insist on guests staying, and guests were expected to initially decline before accepting—a social dance establishing mutual honor. This custom appears when Abraham urged his angelic visitors to stay (Genesis 18:3-5) and when Lot insisted the angels lodge with him (Genesis 19:2-3). The host's honor depended on generous provision, while the guest's honor required not appearing overly eager for the host's resources.

However, the narrative's emphasis on repeated delays suggests critique rather than commendation. The father's hospitality crossed from generosity into manipulation, while the Levite's acceptance crossed from graciousness into foolishness. Ancient readers would recognize the pattern—excessive feasting often preceded disaster (Belshazzar's feast in Daniel 5, Herod's feast leading to John's execution in Mark 6:21-28). The phrase "let thine heart be merry" recalls the wealthy fool (Luke 12:19) and the rich man who feasted sumptuously (Luke 16:19), both facing sudden judgment.

Archaeological evidence from this period shows Iron Age I (c. 1200-1000 BCE) Israelite settlements were modest, with simple domestic architecture and limited luxury goods. Feasting required significant resource investment, suggesting the father's family had some wealth. This detail reinforces that the concubine came from a family of means, making her initial departure and the Levite's pursuit more

comprehensible within ancient social dynamics where marriage connected families of similar status.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do we discern when hospitality and fellowship become enablers of avoidance rather than expressions of genuine Christian community?
2. What does the father's insistence on making the Levite's "heart merry" reveal about using pleasure and comfort to avoid addressing difficult issues?
3. In what areas might you be choosing immediate comfort or social expectations over obedience to God's clear direction?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ ו	וַיֹּאכְלוּ ו	שְׁנֵיהֶם	יחד ו	וַיִּשְׁתּוּ ו	וַיֹּאמֶר
And they sat down	and did eat	both	of them together	and drink	had said
H3427	H398	H8147	H3162	H8354	H559
אָבִי	הַנְּעִמָּה	אֶל	הָאִישׁ	הוֹאֵל	נָא
father	for the damsel's	H413	unto the man	Be content	H4994
H1	H5291		H376	H2974	
וְלִי	וְיִטְבֹּ	לְבָבְךָ:			
I pray thee and tarry all night	be merry	and let thine heart			
H3885	H3190	H3820			

Additional Cross-References

Judges 19:9 (Prayer): And when the man rose up to depart, he, and his concubine, and his servant, his father in law, the damsel's father, said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening, I pray you tarry all night: behold, the day groweth to an end, lodge here, that thine heart may be merry; and to morrow get you early on your way, that thou mayest go home.

Judges 16:25 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

Ruth 3:7 (Parallel theme): And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

Esther 1:10 (Parallel theme): On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,