

Judges 19:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Persistent Hospitality and Delayed Departure: This verse appears in one of Scripture's darkest narratives—the Levite and his concubine (Judges 19-21). Here the Levite attempts to leave his father-in-law's house after reconciling with his concubine, but the father-in-law repeatedly delays their departure through insistent hospitality. "And when the man rose up to depart" (vayaqom haish lalechet, **וַיָּקֹם הָאִישׁ לְלַכֵּת**) shows the Levite's intention to leave. Yet "his father in law... said unto him, Behold, now the day draweth toward evening" (hineh na rafah hayom la'arov, **הִנֵּה-נָא נִפְהָר פִּיּוֹם לְעָרֹב**) is another plea to stay overnight.

Cultural Context of Ancient Near Eastern Hospitality: The father-in-law's repeated invitations reflect ancient Near Eastern hospitality customs where hosts felt obligated to provide generous, extended hospitality. The phrase "lodge here, that thine heart may be merry" (linu po veyitav levavkha, **לִינּו-פָה וַיְיִתְבָּא בָּהּ**) reveals the relational dimension—the father wanted fellowship and his son-in-law's happiness, not merely formal obligation. "To morrow get you early on your way" (umachar tashkimu ledarkekhem, **וּמְחַר תְּשִׁקְמֹו לְדַרְכֵיכֶם**) promises early departure the next day, yet this was the fifth such delay (Judges 19:4-9).

The Tragic Irony of Delayed Departure: While the father-in-law's hospitality seems benign, it sets in motion catastrophic consequences. Had the Levite departed earlier, he wouldn't have traveled at night, wouldn't have stopped at Gibeah, and the subsequent atrocities (gang rape and murder of his concubine, civil war, near-genocide of Benjamin's tribe) might have been avoided. The chapter concludes with Israel's shocked response: "There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of Egypt" (Judges 19:30).

Moral and Spiritual Lessons: This verse, within its horrific context, warns against procrastination and the dangers of seemingly innocent decisions that lead to disaster. The father-in-law meant well, but his insistence contributed to tragedy. The Levite's compliance—prioritizing comfort over wisdom—proved fatal. Judges repeatedly illustrates the consequences of "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25) during Israel's moral chaos before the monarchy.

Historical Context

Judges 19 occurs during Israel's tribal confederation period (c. 1375-1050 BC), before the monarchy when "there was no king in Israel" (Judges 19:1). This was an era of moral, spiritual, and political chaos, as the book of Judges repeatedly emphasizes. The Levite lived in the hill country of Ephraim, and his concubine was from Bethlehem in Judah—the same town where Ruth would later settle and David would be born, highlighting Bethlehem's enduring biblical significance despite this dark episode.

The cultural context involved concubinage, a practice distinct from both marriage and prostitution. Concubines had legal status and protections but less honor than wives. The woman in Judges 19 "played the whore against him" (19:2), meaning she left him—whether through unfaithfulness or simply desertion is debated. The Levite's journey to Bethlehem to retrieve her shows some commitment to reconciliation, though his later callousness (Judges 19:25-29) reveals his moral bankruptcy.

The subsequent events at Gibeah (Judges 19:22-30) parallel the Sodom narrative (Genesis 19), demonstrating how far Israel had fallen into Canaanite depravity. The

civil war that followed (Judges 20-21) nearly annihilated the tribe of Benjamin, leaving only 600 men (Judges 20:47). This internal conflict exceeded Israel's casualties in any battle against foreign enemies, illustrating the self-destructive nature of moral corruption. The entire Judges 19-21 narrative serves as a stark warning about society without godly leadership and the horrific consequences of rejecting divine law. Early Jewish interpreters (Talmud, Midrash) viewed this period as one of Israel's darkest hours, second only to the golden calf incident.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How can seemingly innocent decisions or delays lead to unforeseen and tragic consequences?
2. What does this passage teach about the importance of discernment and knowing when to refuse well-intentioned but potentially harmful invitations?
3. How does the broader narrative of Judges 19-21 illustrate the societal breakdown that occurs when people reject God's moral standards?
4. In what ways does the Gibeah atrocity (paralleling Sodom) demonstrate that God's covenant people can fall into the same depravity as pagan nations when they abandon His law?
5. What is the relationship between individual moral choices and broader societal consequences, as illustrated by this tragic narrative?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעֲמֹד	בַּאֲישׁ	וְלֹכֶת	וְאֵת	הַיּוֹם	וְיִלְגֶּשׁ
rose up	And when the man	that thou mayest go	H1931	he and his concubine	
H6965	H376	H1980		H6370	
וְאֵבֶן	לֹא	חֶתֶן	אָבִי	הַבְּנָה	
and his servant	said	H0	his father in law	father	the damsel's
H5288	H559	H2859	H1	H5291	H2009
לְעֵרֶב	וּבְ	בְּיֹם	לְיָמִן	לְאַיִלָּה	
draweth	behold the day	toward evening	I pray you tarry all night		
H4994	H7503	H3117	H6150	H3885	H4994
וְתַחַת	בְּיֹם	לְיָמִן	לְיָמִן	פֶּה	
growtheth to an end	behold the day	I pray you tarry all night			
H2009	H2583	H3117	H3885	H6311	
לְבָבְךָ	וְהַשְׁפִּמְתָּה	מִמְרָא	וְלִדְרִיכְךָ		
may be merry	here that thine heart	get you early	and to morrow	on your way	
H3190	H3824	H7925	H4279	H1870	
וְאֵלֶּךְ	וְלֹכֶת				
that thou mayest go	home				
H1980	H168				