

Judges 20:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.

Analysis

I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces (וָאֵחָז בְּפִילֶגֶשׁ וְאַנְתֹּחָהּ)—the verb 'cut in pieces' (נָתַח, natach) is used for butchering sacrificial animals (Exodus 29:17; Leviticus 1:6). **Sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel**—he distributed her dismembered body as a grotesque summons to action. **For they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel** (זִמְמָה וְנִבְלָה, zimmah u-nevalah)—'lewdness' suggests premeditated sexual depravity, 'folly' indicates covenant-breaking wickedness that brings shame on God's people.

The Levite's action raises profound moral questions. His dismemberment of his concubine's corpse—whether she was already dead or dying (19:27-29 is ambiguous)—shows shocking callousness. He uses her body as a propaganda tool, yet his method demonstrates the same objectification and brutality that characterized her rape and murder. His theological language ('lewdness and folly in Israel') correctly identifies covenant violation but comes from compromised lips. The verse reveals how outrage against sin can coexist with hard-heartedness. The Levite's concern seems directed more toward Israel's reputation than toward his concubine's dignity. He manipulates her death for maximum political impact while showing no remorse for his role in her demise.

Historical Context

The twelve pieces sent to Israel's twelve tribes deliberately evoked tribal unity and covenant obligation. This macabre method recalled covenant ratification rituals where animals were divided (Genesis 15:10; Jeremiah 34:18-19). Later, Saul would use similar tactics—cutting oxen and sending pieces throughout Israel—to summon troops (1 Samuel 11:7), but Saul's use of animals rather than a human corpse demonstrates how far standards had fallen in Judges.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do you use others' pain and suffering as tools for your own agendas?
2. In what ways does your outrage against injustice coexist with hard-heartedness toward victims?
3. What does it mean to pursue justice in ways that honor rather than further objectify the victim?

Interlinear Text

וָאֲנִי ז	בְּפִלְגְּשִׁי	וַאֲנַתְּהָ הָ	וְאֶשְׁלַח הָ	בְּכָל
And I took	my concubine	and cut her in pieces	and sent	H3605
H270	H6370	H5408	H7971	
שָׁמַיָּה הָ	נַחֲלֵי ת	בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:	כִּי	
her throughout all the country	of the inheritance	in Israel	H3588	
H7704	H5159	H3478		
עָשׂוּ וְ	זִמָּה הָ	וּנְבָלָה הָ	בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:	
for they have committed	lewdness	and folly	in Israel	
H6213	H2154	H5039	H3478	

Additional Cross-References

Judges 19:29 (References Israel): And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, together with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel.

Joshua 7:15 (References Israel): And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.

Judges 19:23 (Parallel theme): And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them, and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly; seeing that this man is come into mine house, do not this folly.

Genesis 34:7 (References Israel): And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.