

Judges 21:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

Analysis

And the whole congregation sent some to speak to the children of Benjamin that were in the rock Rimmon, and to call peaceably unto them.

After the devastating civil war that killed 25,100 Benjamites (20:35, 46), the congregation sent messengers **to call peaceably** (liqro shalom, לקרא שְׁלוֹם) to the 600 survivors at the rock of Rimmon. The Hebrew shalom (שְׁלוֹם) encompasses peace, wholeness, reconciliation—Israel sought to restore covenant brotherhood after nearly annihilating an entire tribe.

The "rock Rimmon" (sela Rimmon, סֶלַע רִמּוֹן) was a limestone fortress where Benjamin's remnant had sheltered for four months (20:47). Archaeological surveys identify this as a rugged outcrop east of Bethel providing natural defense. The shift from total war to peace negotiations demonstrates belated recognition that their excessive vengeance had violated the unity of God's covenant people. From a Reformed perspective, this teaches that even justified discipline must be tempered with concern for restoration—the goal is reconciliation, not destruction (2 Corinthians 2:6-8, Galatians 6:1).

However, the subsequent "solution"—providing wives through violence against Jabesh-gilead (21:8-12) and kidnapping from Shiloh (21:19-23)—shows Israel's repentance remained superficial. They sought to solve the consequences of one sin through additional sins rather than genuine covenant renewal.

Historical Context

The rock of Rimmon served as refuge for Benjamin's 600 survivors during four months of siege conditions (20:47). Ancient fortress refuges like this were common in the hill country, offering caves, springs, and defensible positions. The congregation's peace overture reflects ancient Near Eastern diplomatic protocol where formal envoys negotiated between warring parties to establish terms for ending hostilities.

Israel's concern for Benjamin's survival stemmed from covenant theology—the twelve tribes represented God's chosen structure for His people, descended from Jacob's sons. Allowing a tribe's extinction would rupture this divinely ordained pattern. However, their rash oath not to give daughters to Benjamin (21:1) created a dilemma requiring increasingly desperate and violent "solutions."

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do we sometimes seek reconciliation through human schemes rather than genuine repentance and covenant renewal?
2. What does Israel's peace overture teach about the balance between necessary discipline and concern for restoration in church discipline?
3. How can rash vows or rigid commitments made in emotional moments create problems requiring sinful solutions?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁלַחְוּ כָּל הָעֵד הַזֶּה וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵל בְּנֵי י'
sent H3605 **And the whole congregation** **some to speak** H413 **to the children**
H7971 H5712 H1696 H1121

בְּנֵימָן אֲשֶׁר בָּסָ לָע רִמּוֹן וַיִּקְרָא וּלְהָם
of Benjamin H834 **that were in the rock** **Rimmon** **and to call** H0
H1144 H5553 H7417 H7121

שְׁלוֹם:
peaceably
H7965

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 20:10 (Peace): When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.

Judges 20:47 (Parallel theme): But six hundred men turned and fled to the wilderness unto the rock Rimmon, and abode in the rock Rimmon four months.