

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** (לִקְרָא שָׁלוֹם, שָׁלוֹם) to the 600 survivors at the rock of Rimmon. The Hebrew shalom (שָׁלוֹם) encompasses peace, wholeness, reconciliation—Israel sought to restore covenant brotherhood after nearly annihilating an entire tribe.

The "rock Rimmon" (selah Rimmon, סֵלָה 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

בְּנֵי	אֶל	יִדְבָּרוּ	בְּעֵד הַ	כָּל	יְשָׁלָחוּ
sent	H3605	And the whole congregation		some to speak	H413
H7971			H5712		
				H1696	
					H1121
לְבָם	וְיִקְרָא	וְרִמְמָה	בָּשָׁלָע	אֲשֶׁר	בְּנֵי
of Benjamin	H834	that were in the rock		Rimmon	and to call
H1144			H5553		H7121
				H7417	
שָׁלֹום:					H0
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.

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