

Judges 21:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not.

Analysis

And Benjamin came again at that time; and they gave them wives which they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead: and yet so they sufficed them not. The remnant of Benjamin accepted the peace terms and received **wives which they had saved alive** from Jabesh-gilead's destruction (21:8-12). The phrase "saved alive" (chayah, חַיָּה) reveals the brutal context—Israel had executed all male inhabitants and married women of Jabesh-gilead for failing to join the war against Benjamin (21:10-11), sparing only 400 virgins. This "solution" involved genocide against a fellow Israelite city.

The tragic phrase **and yet so they sufficed them not** (velo matsu lahem ken, וְלֹא מִצְרָא לְהַסְכִּין) indicates the 400 women were insufficient for 600 Benjamite men, requiring another violent "solution"—kidnapping 200 women from Shiloh (21:19-23). From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates how sin compounds when people seek pragmatic solutions rather than repentance. Israel's rash oath created a dilemma they "solved" through escalating violence against innocent parties.

Theologically, this exposes the bankruptcy of human wisdom apart from God's guidance. Proverbs 14:12 warns: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Israel's scheme preserved Benjamin technically while violating fundamental covenant principles of justice and mercy.

Historical Context

Jabesh-gilead was a city in Gilead (Transjordan) with later significance in Israel's history—it was the city Saul rescued from Ammonite siege (1 Samuel 11:1-11), creating lasting loyalty between Benjamin and Jabesh-gilead. The men of Jabesh-gilead later honored Saul by retrieving his body from Philistine desecration (1 Samuel 31:11-13).

The slaughter of Jabesh-gilead for not participating in the Benjamin war demonstrates the breakdown of proportional justice during this period. The original offense—protecting Gibeah's rapists—was Benjamin's sin. Jabesh-gilead's neutrality, while perhaps cowardly, hardly merited total destruction. Israel's escalating violence reveals moral disintegration where each attempted solution required fresh injustice.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do pragmatic solutions to spiritual problems often create new injustices while failing to address root issues?
2. What does the destruction of Jabesh-gilead teach about how zealous enforcement of covenant obligations can itself violate covenant principles?
3. How can we recognize when our attempted solutions to problems are compounding sin rather than promoting genuine restoration?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּשֶׁב	בְּתוּ�מָה	בְּעֵת	הַיְאָה	וַיִּתְعַבֵּד	לְפָנָים
came again	And Benjamin	at that time	H1931	and they gave	H0
H7725	H1144	H6256		H5414	
וְאֶשְׁר	חַי	וְאֶשְׁר	מִצְאָה	וְאֶשְׁר	יְבָשָׁה
of the women	H834	which they had saved alive	H2421	of the women	of Jabeshgilead
H802				H802	H3003
וְאֶלְעָזָר	מִצְאָה	לְפָנָים	בְּ		
H1568	H3808	and yet so they sufficed	H0	H3651	
		H4672			

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