

21[1] And men of Israel swore in the Mizpah saying, “Each from us will not give his daughter to Benjamin for a woman.” [2] And the people came to House of God and stayed there until the evening before the Gods. And they lifted up their voice and wept weeping greatly. [3] And they said, “Why, Yehvah Gods of Israel, was this in Israel, one tribe to be lacking today from Israel?”

[4] And it was on the next day, and the people rose early and built an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. [5] And sons of Israel said, “Who did not go up in the assembly from all tribes of Israel to Yehvah?” For the great oath was to him who did not go up to Yehvah at Mizpah saying, “Dying he shall die.” [6] And sons of Israel were sorry for Benjamin his brother and said, “One tribe from Israel today was cut down.”

[7] “What shall we do for them for those remaining for woman, and we have sworn in Yehvah not to give to them from our daughters for women?” [8] And they said, “What one from tribes of Israel that did not go up to Yehvah at Mizpah?” And behold, no man came to the camp from Jabesh Gilead¹ to the assembly. [9] And the people were counted, and behold, there was no man from inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead.

[10] And the congregation sent there twelve thousand men, from the sons of valor, and commanded them saying, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with a mouth of a sword, and the women and the children. [11] And they found from inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known a man by lying with a male.² And they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in land of Canaan.

[13] And all the congregation sent and spoke to sons of Benjamin who were in rock of Pomegranate and announced peace to them. [14] And Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave to them women whom they had kept alive from women of Jabesh Gilead. And they did not find enough for them. [15] And the people were sorry for Benjamin, because Yehvah made a breach³ in tribes of Israel.

[16] And the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for those remaining for women, since a woman from Benjamin has been exterminated?” [17] And they said, “A possession of an escapee for Benjamin, and a tribe from Israel shall not be wiped out. [18] And we are not able to give to them women from our daughters, because sons of Israel swore saying, ‘Cursed is he who gives a woman to Benjamin.’”

[19] And they said, “Behold, a feast of Yehvah is in Shiloh from days to days⁴ which is north of House of God towards the rising of the Sun to the highway going up from House of God to Shechem and south of Frankincense.”⁵ [20] And they commanded sons of Benjamin saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards [21] and

1 יַבֵּשׁ גִּלְעָד (yāvêsh gil’âd) “Jabesh Gilead” - found also in Judges 21:9-10, 12, 14; 1 Samuel 11:1, 9; 31:11; 2 Samuel 2:4-5; 21:12; 1 Chronicles 10:11.

2 לְמִשְׁכַּב זָכָר (lemishkav zâkhâr) “by lying with a male” KJV, Green; “by the lying of a male” YLT; “by lying with him” NAS; “intimately” NKJV – see also Numbers 31:17.

3 פְּרָץ (perets) “breach” Green, YLT, KJV, NAS; “void” NKJV – this is the same word for “Perez,” see Genesis 38:29.

4 מִיָּמִים יָמִימָה (miyyâmiym yâmiymâh) “from days to days”; YLT “from time to time”; Green “from year to year”; NKJV “yearly” - see footnote for Judges 17:10.

5 לְבוֹנָה (levonâh) “Frankincense”; NKJV, etc. “Lebonah” - same word for “frankincense” e.g. in Exodus 30:34.

watch. And behold, when daughters of Shiloh go out to dance in the dances, so go out from the vineyards and grab for yourselves each his woman from daughters of Shiloh and go to land of Benjamin. [22] And it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to contend with us, so we shall say to them, 'Favor us with them, because we did not take each his woman in the war; for you did not give to them at the time, you becoming guilty.'

[23] And sons of Benjamin did thus, and they carried women to their number from the dancers whom they stole.⁶ And they went and returned to their inheritance and built the cities and dwelt in them. [24] And sons of Israel went from there at that time each to his tribe and to his family. And they went from there each to his inheritance. [25] In those days there was no king in Israel. Each did the right in his eyes.

6 גָּזְלוּ (gâzâlu) “stole” - CEB, NRSV “abducted”; YLT “taken violently away”; NKJV, KJV “caught”; NAS “carried away” - same word as “robbed” (NKJV) e.g. in Judges 9:25.