

Wives for the Benjamites

Judges 20 – 21

by Don Falkos

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Israel united in a demand to the tribe of Benjamin, "Surrender the wicked men of Gibeah so that we may put them to death."

The Benjamites were not willing to give up their brothers. Instead, they mobilized for war.

The rest of Israel also assembled for war. They swore an oath, "Any city that fails to send fighters will be destroyed." They also swore, "Cursed is anyone who gives his daughter in marriage to a Benjamite."

Once battle was engaged, the Benjamites were victorious for two days. Then the tide turned. The men of Israel won a major battle, destroying the bulk of the Benjamite army in one fell swoop. They went throughout the territory of Benjamin killing everyone and setting all the towns on fire. In the end, only six hundred men remained; all the women and children were dead.

The tribe of Benjamin had been completely wiped out. The Israelites grieved, "What have we done! We must rebuild our lost tribe. But we swore an oath. How can we provide wives for those who are left?"

There was one city that had not sent anyone to fight in the war. The army of Israel destroyed that city; everyone was killed. But four hundred young virgin women were spared and given as wives to the Benjamites.

The two hundred Benjamites who still needed wives were sent to Shiloh during the annual festival of the Lord. They hid in the vineyard. When the girls of Shiloh came dancing by, each man caught one of them and carried her off to be his wife.

The girls' families were told, "The oath you swore does not apply. You didn't give your daughters, they were taken."