

Mourning Lost Tribe

21:1 **N**OW the men of Israel ^ahad sworn in Mizpah, saying, “None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin ¹in marriage.” 2 ^aSo the people came to Bethel and sat there before God until evening, and lifted up their voices and wept ¹bitterly. 3 And they said, “Why, O LORD, God of Israel, has this come about in Israel, so that one tribe should be *missing* today in Israel?” 4 And it came about the next day that the people arose early and built ^aan altar there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings.

5 Then the sons of Israel said, “Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up in the assembly to the LORD?” For ¹they had taken a great oath concerning him ^awho did not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, “He shall surely be put to death.” 6 And the sons of Israel were sorry for their brother Benjamin and said, “One tribe is cut off from Israel today. 7 “What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since we have ^asworn by the LORD not to give them any of our daughters in marriage?”

Provision for Their Survival

8 And they said, “What one is there of the tribes of Israel who did not come up to the LORD at Mizpah?” And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead to the assembly. 9 For when the people were ¹numbered, behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there. 10 And the congregation sent 12,000 of the valiant warriors there, and commanded them, saying, “Go and ^astrike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword, with the women and the little ones. 11 “And this is the thing that you shall do: you ^ashall utterly destroy every man and every woman who has ¹lain with a man.” 12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with ¹him; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

13 Then the whole congregation sent *word* and spoke to the sons of Benjamin who were ^aat the rock of Rimmon, and ^bproclaimed peace to them. 14 And Benjamin returned at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had kept alive from the women of Jabesh-gilead; yet they ¹were not enough for them. 15 And the people were sorry for Benjamin because the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.

16 Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since the women are destroyed out of Benjamin?” 17 And they said, “*There must be* an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe may not be blotted out from Israel. 18 “But we cannot give them wives of our daughters.” For the sons of Israel ^ahad sworn, saying, “Cursed is he who gives a wife to Benjamin.”

19 So they said, “Behold, there is a feast of the LORD from year to year in ^aShiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south side of Lebonah.” 20 And they commanded the sons of Benjamin, saying, “Go and lie in wait in the vineyards, 21 and watch; and behold, if the daughters of Shiloh come out to ¹take part in the dances, then you shall come out of the vineyards and each of you shall catch his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. 22 “And it shall come about, when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, that we shall say to them, ‘Give them to us voluntarily, because we did not take for each man *of Benjamin* ¹a wife in battle, ² ^anor did you give *them* to

them, *else* you would now be guilty.’” 23 And the sons of Benjamin did so, and took wives according to their number from those who danced, whom they carried away. And they went and returned to their inheritance, and ^arebuilt the cities and lived in them. 24 And the sons of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and each one of them went out from there to his inheritance.

25 ^aIn those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

i

^a Judg. 21:7, 18

¹ Lit., *for a wife*

^a Judg. 20:26

¹ Lit., *with great weeping*

^a Deut. 12:5; 2 Sam. 24:25

¹ Lit., *there was a great oath*

^a Judg. 5:23

^a Judg. 21:1

¹ Or, *mustered*

^a Num. 31:17; Judg. 5:23; 1 Sam. 11:7

^a Num. 31:17

¹ Lit., *known lying with*

¹ Lit., *a male*

^a Judg. 20:47

^b Deut. 20:10

¹ Lit., *did not find it so*

^a Judg. 21:1

^a Josh. 18:1; Judg. 18:31; 1 Sam. 1:3

¹ Lit., *dance*

^a Ex. 15:20; Judg. 11:34

¹ Lit., *his*

² Lit., *because*

^a Judg. 21:1, 18

^a Judg. 20:48

^a Judg. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1

ⁱ*The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.