

## Judges 20

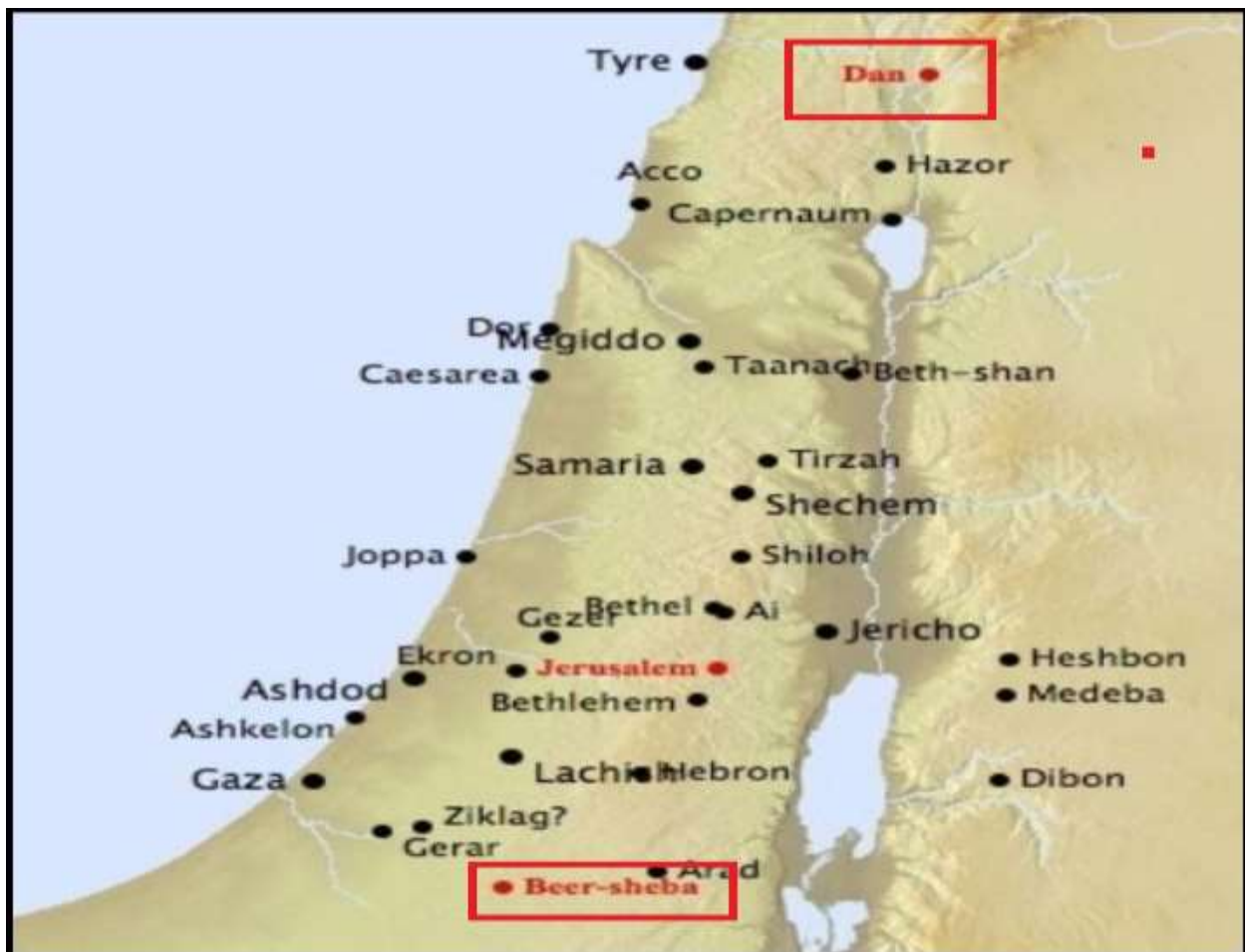
Verses 1 - 3

Then all the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out, and the congregation assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah.

<sup>2</sup>The chiefs of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, took their stand in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword. <sup>3</sup>(Now the sons of Benjamin heard that the sons of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) And the sons of Israel said, “Tell *us*, how did this wickedness take place?”

Then all the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out, and the congregation assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah.

See map 2005



“From Dan to Beersheba” meant all of Israel west of the Jordan River from the most northern point to the extreme south. The land of Gilead meant the 2 ½ tribes east of the Jordan.

Mizpah was a city of Benjamin within three miles of **Gibeah**

See Map 2010



<sup>2</sup> The chiefs of all the people, *even* of all the tribes of Israel, took their stand in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword.

Before Israel entered Canaan they had 600,000 men in the military.

See Numbers 26:51

During the 7 year war there was no mention of troop numbers or how many died in battle. So if we take the 400,000 men mentioned here and add in 27,000 for the tribe of Benjamin, then Israel was down to 427,000 men. Does this mean 173,000 men died during the 7 years of war?

In any case Israel outnumbered the tribe of Benjamin by a ratio of 15 to 1.

However, the battle against the tribe of Benjamin would not be easy with both sides losing a large number of men.

Verses 4 - 7

**<sup>4</sup> So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, “I came with my concubine to spend the night at Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin. <sup>5</sup> But the men of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me; instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died. <sup>6</sup> And I took hold of my concubine and cut her in pieces and sent her throughout the land of Israel’s inheritance; for they have committed a lewd and disgraceful act in Israel. <sup>7</sup> Behold, all you sons of Israel, give your advice and counsel here.”**

**<sup>5</sup> But the men of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me; instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died.**

Is this report a fair account of what happened?

The text does not say that the men of Gibeah intended to kill him but rather they wanted to abuse him sexually.

Also, this group of evil men didn’t want the woman but the Levite forced the concubine on them so he would be safe.

There is no doubt that these men were evil and had done a horrible thing but the Levite was no hero in this story.

Verses 8 - 11

**Then all the people arose as one man, saying, “Not one of us will go to his tent, nor will any of us return to his house. <sup>9</sup> But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah; *we will go up* against it by lot. <sup>10</sup> And we will take 10 men out of 100 throughout the tribes of Israel, and 100 out of 1,000, and 1,000 out of 10,000 to supply food for the people, that when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, they may punish *them* for all the disgraceful acts that they have committed in Israel.”**

**<sup>11</sup> Thus all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man.**

**<sup>11</sup> Thus all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man.**

The unanimous decision was to punish Gibeah.

Verses 12 - 14

**<sup>12</sup> Then the tribes of Israel sent men through the entire tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this wickedness that has taken place among you? <sup>13</sup> Now then, deliver up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove *this* wickedness from Israel.” But the sons of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the sons of Israel. <sup>14</sup> The sons of Benjamin gathered from the cities to Gibeah, to go out to battle against the sons of Israel.**

**<sup>12</sup> Then the tribes of Israel sent men through the entire tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What is this wickedness that has taken place among you? <sup>13</sup> Now then, deliver up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove *this* wickedness from Israel.**

The leader of the Israeli army informed all the people of Benjamin what had happened and asked them to deliver these worthless fellows up to the army of Israel.

This matter was handled in a judicial way and should have produced a positive result.

### **But the sons of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brothers**

This tells us that the problem in the tribe of Benjamin was much deeper than just the small group of evil men that raped and killed this poor woman.

Good people do not support worthless men that have committed a vicious crime. Why was the leadership of Benjamin willing to fight & die for these evil men?

Why does Donald Trump call the criminals, who attacked our capital and injured over 100 police officers, patriots and hostages. The fact that so many conservatives go along with his unconstitutional and criminal behavior indicates there is something seriously wrong within the Republican Party. We can only hope and pray that the party will repent of this duplicity before it is destroyed. You can't fight evil with evil.

Verses 15 - 16

**<sup>15</sup> From the cities on that day the sons of Benjamin were numbered, 26,000 men who draw the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah who were numbered, 700 choice men. <sup>16</sup> Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.**

**<sup>16</sup> Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.**

The slings of ancient armies were deadly weapons. David slew Goliath with a sling.

Stones could be projected at speeds up to 90 miles per hour and could be buried in the knot of a tree from 50 feet.

Verses 17 - 18

**Then the men of Israel besides Benjamin were numbered, 400,000 men who draw the sword; all these were men of war. <sup>18</sup> Now the sons of Israel arose, went up to Bethel, and inquired of God and said, “Who shall go up first for us to battle against the sons of Benjamin?” Then the Lord said, “Judah *shall go up* first.”**

**<sup>18</sup> Now the sons of Israel arose, went up to Bethel, and inquired of God and said, “Who shall go up first for us to battle against the sons of Benjamin?”**

This shows us that while the tribe of Benjamin had turned against God and His decrees, the rest of the nation saw the event in Gibeah for what it was; a terrible criminal act and they sought Gods will in the matter.

Since Israel inquired of God at Bethel we know that the High Priest was present and in verse 27 we are told that the Ark of the Covenant was there. We know the Tabernacle was still at Shiloh because of Judges 21:4

Here again God choose Judah to be first as He did in Judges 1:1-2

Verses 19 - 23

**<sup>19</sup> So the sons of Israel arose in the morning and camped against Gibeah. <sup>20</sup> The men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel arrayed for battle against them at Gibeah. <sup>21</sup> Then the sons of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and felled to the ground on that day 22,000 men of Israel. <sup>22</sup> But the people, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and arrayed for battle again in the place where they had arrayed themselves the first day. <sup>23</sup> The sons of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until evening, and inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin?” And the Lord said, “Go up against him.”**

**<sup>21</sup> Then the sons of Benjamin came out of Gibeah and felled to the ground on that day 22,000 men of Israel.**

This had to be a shock to Israel. They had sought God's council and they were doing what was right but lost 22,000 men against an army that supported a bunch of criminals. Why would God allow them to lose against a wicked army?

**<sup>23</sup> The sons of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until evening, and inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin?" And the Lord said, "Go up against him."**

The sons of Israel mentioned here refer to the men of war. See verse 26. The men involved in the battle must have questioned whether they were doing the right thing. But the message from God was keep fighting the battle.

Verses 24 - 28

**<sup>24</sup> Then the sons of Israel came against the sons of Benjamin the second day.**

**<sup>25</sup> Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah the second day and felled to the ground again 18,000 men of the sons of Israel; all these drew the sword. <sup>26</sup> Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept; thus they remained there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. <sup>27</sup> The sons of Israel inquired of the Lord (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, <sup>28</sup> and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son, stood before it to *minister* in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?" And the Lord said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."**

**<sup>25</sup> Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah the second day and felled to the ground again 18,000 men of the sons of Israel; all these drew the sword.**

After two days of battle 40,000 men of Israel are dead. We know the number of dead for the tribe of Benjamin is very small in comparison because most of their army will die in a later battle. See verse 35.

The nation of Israel was doing the right thing but was losing the battle. So they went to God again to be sure they were doing the right thing.

**<sup>26</sup> Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came to Bethel and wept; thus they remained there before the Lord and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. <sup>27</sup> The sons of Israel inquired of the Lord**

Not only the armed men, but also all of the general population that had come up to support the army, went up to Bethel.

The people did the following in seeking God's favor; they wept, fasted, and offered burnt and peace offerings before the Lord.

**for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, <sup>28</sup> and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son, stood before it to *minister* in those days, saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?" And the Lord said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."**

As mentioned previously, Phinehas being a grandson of Aaron means the events of chapters 19-21 belong at the beginning of the book.

The appeal by all the people brought a positive answer from God. Israel would defeat the tribe of Benjamin the next day.

Verses 29 - 35

**<sup>29</sup> So Israel set men in ambush around Gibeah. <sup>30</sup> The sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day and arrayed themselves against Gibeah as at other times. <sup>31</sup> The sons of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city, and they began to strike and kill some of the people as at other times, on the highways, one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah, *and* in the field, about thirty men of Israel. <sup>32</sup> The sons of Benjamin said, "They are struck down before us, as at the first." But the sons of Israel said, "Let us flee that we may draw them away from the city to the highways." <sup>33</sup> Then all the men of Israel arose from their place and arrayed themselves at Baal-tamar; and the men of Israel in ambush broke out of their place, even out of Maareh-geba. <sup>34</sup> When ten thousand choice men from all Israel came against Gibeah, the battle became fierce; but Benjamin did not know that disaster was close to them. <sup>35</sup> And the Lord struck Benjamin before Israel, so that the sons of Israel destroyed 25,100 men of Benjamin that day, all who draw the sword.**

## **So Israel set men in ambush around Gibeah**

This time, the Israelites adopted the same strategy that Joshua used at Ai.

In this battle, 10,000 men took part in the ambush.

**<sup>30</sup> The sons of Israel went up against the sons of Benjamin on the third day and arrayed themselves against Gibeah as at other times.**

The war against Benjamin has been very intense but the men of Israel have inquired of God two times during the first two days of war. Since the battle has continued each day the inquiries of God had to take place after the battle on days one and two.

If this can be done during times of intense battle what exactly is our excuse for not seeking God and His will every day.

**<sup>31</sup> The sons of Benjamin went out against the people and were drawn away from the city**

The Benjamites thought the Israelites were fleeing from them but in fact they were being drawn away from the city they were trying to protect.

When they were a sufficient distance from Gibeah, the 10,000 Israelites in ambush attacked Gibeah.

**<sup>35</sup> And the Lord struck Benjamin before Israel, so that the sons of Israel destroyed 25,100 men of Benjamin that day, all who draw the sword.**

In verses 15 and 16 we learned that the men of war in the tribe of Benjamin totaled 26,700.

Since 25,100 die in this battle that would only leave 1,600 men of war alive in the tribe of Benjamin.

Since only 600 men will be left by the end of this chapter we know that 1,000 men in the army of Benjamin must have died in the two previous battles.

For all intents and purposes the tribe of Benjamin will no longer exist unless something is done about this situation.



Verses 36 - 43

**<sup>36</sup> So the sons of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. When the men of Israel gave ground to Benjamin because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah, <sup>37</sup> the men in ambush hurried and rushed against Gibeah; the men in ambush also deployed and struck all the city with the edge of the sword. <sup>38</sup> Now the appointed sign between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise from the city. <sup>39</sup> Then the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Benjamin began to strike and kill about thirty men of Israel, for they said, “Surely they are defeated before us, as in the first battle.” <sup>40</sup> But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, Benjamin looked behind them; and behold, the whole city was going up *in smoke* to heaven. <sup>41</sup> Then the men of Israel turned, and the men of Benjamin were terrified; for they saw that disaster was close to them. <sup>42</sup> Therefore, they turned their backs before the men of Israel toward the direction of the wilderness, but the battle overtook them while those who came out of the cities destroyed them in the midst of them. <sup>43</sup> They surrounded Benjamin, pursued them without rest *and* trod them down opposite Gibeah toward the east.**

**<sup>39</sup> Then the men of Israel turned in the battle, and Benjamin began to strike and kill about thirty men of Israel**

Israel took a few casualties in their retreat from the army of Benjamin but when the men in ambush reached the town and set it on fire the battle turned in their favor.

**<sup>40</sup> But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, Benjamin looked behind them; and behold, the whole city was going up *in smoke* to heaven.**

The burning of the city provided the pre-arranged smoke-signal for the Israelites to turn and engage the Benjamites. At the same time those who had destroyed the city of Gibeah turned to pursue the Benjamites from the opposite direction.

**<sup>43</sup> They surrounded Benjamin, pursued them without rest *and* trod them down opposite Gibeah toward the east.**

The Israelites had the Benjamites surrounded to the north and south so they tried to escape to the east but Israel pursued them until they were destroyed.

Verses 44 - 48

**<sup>44</sup> Thus 18,000 men of Benjamin fell; all these were valiant warriors. <sup>45</sup> The rest turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, but they caught 5,000 of them on the highways and overtook them at Gidom and killed 2,000 of them. <sup>46</sup> So all of Benjamin who fell that day were 25,000 men who draw the sword; all these were valiant warriors. <sup>47</sup> But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they remained at the rock of Rimmon four months. <sup>48</sup> The men of Israel then turned back against the sons of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword, both the entire city with the cattle and all that they found; they also set on fire all the cities which they found.**

**So all of Benjamin who fell that day were 25,000 men**

18,000 men of Benjamin fell in the initial battle. The rest of the men fled but 5,000 of them were killed on the highways and another 2,000 were killed at Gidom.

But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon

**<sup>47</sup> But 600 men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they remained at the rock of Rimmon four months.**

Apparently these men were able to evade that Israelite army.

**<sup>48</sup> The men of Israel then turned back against the sons of Benjamin and struck them with the edge of the sword, both the entire city with the cattle and all that they found; they also set on fire all the cities which they found.**

Israel went back and destroyed the entire city of Gibeah and then destroyed all the cities in the tribal area of Benjamin.