

The Concubine And the Cross

The concubine as martyr in Judges 19-21; the ravished Galilean as redeemer in the Gospels.

by Jean Sheldcn

THE STORY OF THE LEVITE AND THE CONCUBINE of Judges 19, with the resulting inter-tribal warfare in chapters 20-21, has not been the most favored narrative in the Hebrew Bible for scholarly research until recently.¹ At times, its moral value has been questioned.² Nevertheless, the account is starkly composed, exposing ideological and sociological tensions within the Israelite community rarely found. In addition, its moralistic elements—though brutal in their frankness—contribute the opportunity for a timely modern reading of Israel's story together with ours.

This reading will examine the entire narrative with the purpose of attempting to understand the moral reasons for its telling and retelling, the narrator's intent by subtle shadings of the various characters involved, the tensions developed in the retelling,³ and the insights revealed.⁴ The story will be analyzed

as a complete unity together with the tensions,⁵ in an effort to answer the two most important questions it raises: "Who are the guilty?" and "What were the crimes?" Finally, analogies will be made, wherever applicable, to the current Adventist story.

I. The Ravishment of the Concubine—The Characters in the Plot

The story opens with a number of ambiguities pertaining to the characters. To begin with, the exact status of the concubine is uncertain. The terms describing her fluctuate throughout, and it is not clear whether she was merely a slave woman bought to be a concubine or was later elevated to wifedom.⁶

A textual question is raised when the concubine leaves her husband to return home. Was she angry with him (LXX)⁷ or did she become a prostitute (MT)?⁸ The difference cannot easily be explained by a textual error.⁹

The status of the concubine in the story

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seems to fluctuate, then, between that of a wife acquired by payment who turns to prostitution and thus might be blamed for what follows, and a daughter sold as concubine-slave, who becomes angry at what she perceives as mistreatment on the part of the Levite and so returns home. Elements in the narrative favor the latter interpretation.¹⁰

Further ambiguities appear regarding the woman's father and the Gibeon host. The father seems extremely friendly to the Levite, but in the end appears reluctant to let the Levite (and thus his daughter) go. Does he have premonitions of a tragedy? On the other hand, the host in Gibeah is congenial and hospitable, but in the end his hospitality and protection exclude the concubine.¹¹

Finally, the Levite also seems bewildering. At the outset, he starts out intending to "speak kindly" (Judges 19:3, RSV)¹² to his estranged wife and bring her back, yet when he arrives he focuses his attention solely on her father. Indeed, he says nothing to her throughout the rest of the story—until the sad morning when he opens the door to resume his journey, finds her ravished body, hands stretched out imploringly on the threshold, and says two short, chilling words: "Get up! Let's go!" *These are the only two words the Levite speaks to her in the entire narrative.*¹³

Turning to the terrible event itself, one finds further clues regarding the woman's status and the Levite's character.

The Night of Horror—the Nature of the Case

By passing Jebus, then a non-Israelite town, over the suggestions of his servant, the Levite continues to Gibeah. The sun has set before they arrive and they sit in the open square of the city, planning to spend the night there unless someone takes them in. The one who offers them lodging has performed the

usual duties of a host when the men of Gibeah, characterized as "sons of Belial," surround the house and keep pounding on the door. This is the first indication of violence and force in the story. The second lies in their base order: "Bring out the man who came into your house so we may know him." The implications of sexual violence do not escape the host, who pleads, "Do not do so wickedly, my brothers"¹⁴—words that recall Lot's plea to the men of Sodom.¹⁵ His continued pleadings—similar to those of Lot's—fall on deaf ears. Like Lot, he offers his daughter and the Levite's concubine as substitute victims, but unlike Lot's brief, "do to them as you want," the host of Gibeah bargains, "*Ravish them* and do to them what you want."¹⁶

Like the men of Sodom, the men of Gibeah refuse to bargain. The Levite then seizes his concubine and makes her go forth to them. Both verbs are significant. The first is used of the stronger vis-à-vis the weaker and here the stronger prevailing over the weaker. The second verb is used to describe divorce.¹⁷ Thus, in a literary sense, it may be said that the Levite overpowers his concubine and "divorces" her to the mob which, in turn, rapes and brutalizes¹⁸ her all night.

The next section of the story is perhaps the most pivotal of the entire episode. The description of the gang rape and torture takes but a brief sentence, albeit it lasted all night. Its brevity can be interpreted as crafted to dull the pain and horror of the abuse, but more likely, it was intended to emphasize the intensity of the tragedy. At this point the narrator relies on a typical Hebrew literary strategy of redundant and overdrawn detail to put the story in slow motion and thus heighten its poignancy.

They knew her, and abused her all night long *until the morning*.

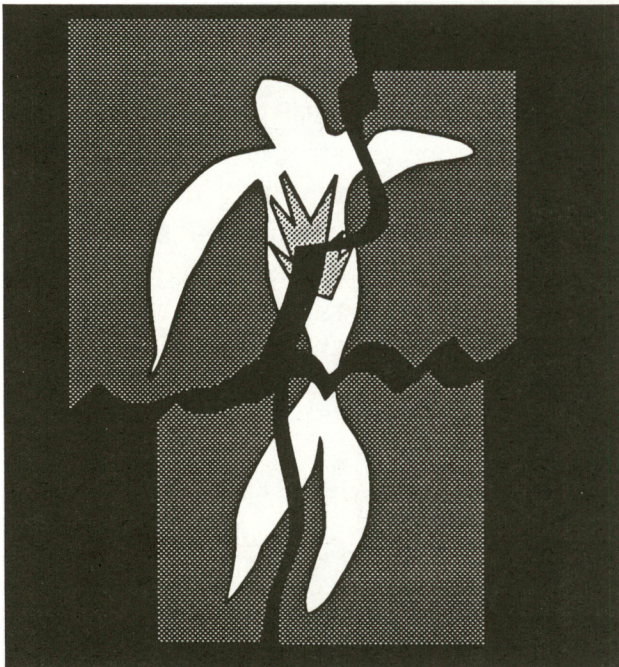
And they let her go *as dawn broke*.

Then the woman came *as morning appeared*

And she fell at the entrance of the man's house where her master was *until the light*.

The focus on dawn, morning, light is the device used to emphasize the tragedy of a long night, filled with rejection, torture, agony, brutality, hopelessness, and despair. First, she has been the pawn used by the man who came to speak tenderly to her; he throws her to the beasts to satisfy their lust for power and save himself. He “divorces” her and after the night ends, he is no longer her husband but her slave master. Secondly, she is the Raggedy Ann in the power of dogs who do to her whatever their lascivious hearts desire. Finally, at daybreak they let her go.¹⁹

The redundancy captures the first fingers of light, the defusing of the darkness that has hid the slinking away of her brutalizers. Slowly, objects take shape and form until a bent figure can be seen, shuffling painfully toward the house. The morning’s shadows lift as she falls before the entrance. Inside is the man who should have been her caretaker but who thrust her out—outside—into the night and its power of Belial. When light fully comes, it focuses on the fallen ravished body, motionless and silent. The sun exposes²⁰ what night conceals: unspeakable torture by human beings without their humanity.



This is the only instance where the narrator’s spotlight focuses on the woman herself. *Though she is the centerpiece of the story* (all events and issues affect her or are affected by her in some way) *she herself does not speak, nor does she behave on her own, until that fateful hour when men have ravished her, forsaken her, and let her go.* Then she acts out of the pain, despair, and brutalization of a victim. She stumbles and falls. Her only words are those mimed by one desperate action as she reaches both of her hands until her fingertips touch the threshold. The sun rises on her inert body, stretched out, hands pointed toward a closed door, in a plea that goes unheeded.

Here the mood of the story abruptly changes. From slow motion, the narrator moves in to the start of the day where everything is punctilious, determined by economic and familial needs. Here everything has its prescribed time and place in accordance with the rhythm of living things.²¹

And her master got up in the morning
And he opened the door of the house
And he went out to go on his way.

The rhythm of the three lines is almost uniform;²² they achieve the cadence of an ass plodding steadily down the road. The Levite is about to resume his journey with no thought about the night before. An intrusive set of lines, interrupting the beat, form the peak of the story:

And behold, the woman, the concubine, was fallen
in the entrance of the house and her hands were upon
the threshold.

These words are meant to change the current of the story. They depict a scene which should have moved the hardest heart to pity. The sight of that once living human being, now brutalized, with hands stretched imploringly in the doorway, should have evoked a change in the Levite’s rhythm.

The rhythm changes, but not with sorrowful overtones. Instead it quickens, with terse brevity:

And the Levite said, "Get up! Let's go!"

The explosive words jar the reader with their utter heartlessness; they also emphasize the tragedy, which to the Levite is but an intrusion on his plans. She has interrupted his rhythm, given him pause, rekindled his dormant conscience. Unappreciative of her forced sacrifice for him, he only wants her to fall into line behind him as he distances himself from the previous evening's horror. He uses command and expects action.

But there was no answer.

The narrator's emphasis on dawn and day light seem intended to convey the impression that the concubine possibly dies needlessly. It is clear that the Levite did not get up till morning and that the concubine had to lie with her hands on the threshold until it was light. This, with other elements in the story,²³ casts suspicion on the Levite's role in her death. When she actually died is left unknown.

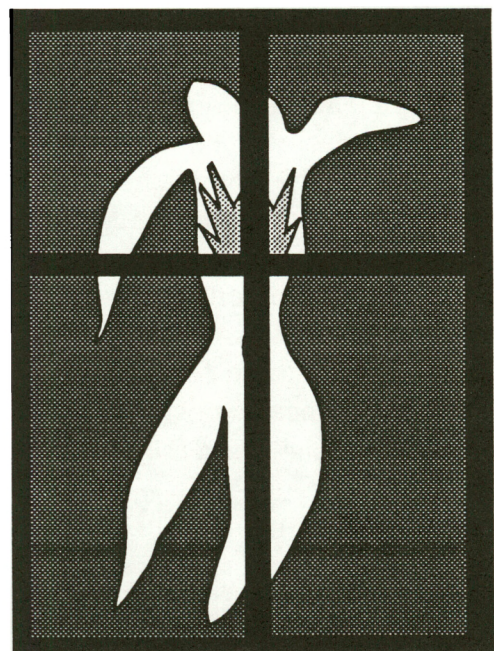
The words—"there was no answer"—also complicate the picture. One would expect instead, "she did not answer." Even more peculiar is the fact that "an answer" was not invoked but rather an action.

Though a play on words may be intended here,²⁴ it is more likely that the author chose this line to convey one of his main points: All of the victims in the tragedy (including those in the subsequent horrors) are silent. They serve no other purpose than that of voiceless pawns who have no will of their own. No less is true of this main character over whose life thousands of others will lose theirs. She has no voice. And there is no one to answer her mute call from the threshold where her hands rest.

The subsequent actions of the Levite raise further questions about his role in the murder of his concubine. When there is no answer, he puts her on his ass and resumes his journey home. Entering his house, he picks up *the* knife²⁵ and then proceeds to seize or prevail over his concubine,²⁶ divides her into 12 pieces (by her limbs) and sends her throughout all of the territories of Israel. The Hebrew narrative leaves open the possibility that this is the moment of her death.²⁷

The Levite's dismembering is suggestive of several motifs. The concubine could be a sacrificial victim, if she is linked to the binding of Isaac.²⁸ She could be a reprobate devoted to total destruction (*cherem*), like Agag, whom Samuel hewed "in pieces before the Lord."²⁹ Or she could be the equivalent of a starkly slaughtered beast whose service and usefulness had ended only to become a vivid message calling Israel to war—just the purpose King Saul's oxen served when Jabesh-Gilead was besieged by the Ammonites.³⁰

But perhaps the Levite intended symbolism with a different meaning attached. He had bypassed a non-Israelite town for the sake of being with his own people. He was a Levite,



his concubine of the tribe of Judah, his host an Ephraimite, and all were staying in a Benjaminite town. What could have been a harmonious inter-tribal social event was shattered by a dreadful night in which brutality, sexual torture, and death were enacted, not by the reprobate heathen, but by some of Israel's own. Though not herself responsible, the concubine was now a "whore" and thus a fitting symbol for what Israel had become to the Levite. Like Israel, her cohesiveness and unity were fiction, and thus, like Israel, she was to be hewn into 12 non-cohesive parts. She was sent to all tribes as a sign of warning of impending disaster to inter-tribal unity if action were not taken.³¹

II. The War—Judgment and Guilt

The 12 body parts of the concubine have the effect desired by the Levite. "All the people of Israel" come out and present themselves "in the assembly of the people of God."³² When the assembly demands an explanation from the Levite, his testimony does not follow events exactly as narrated.³³ Instead, he neatly crops the terrible tragedy with a few devices intended to explain the gravity of the incident. First, he embellishes the crime. The guilty are not evil scoundrels, "sons of Belial," but rather the town fathers, entrusted with its protection and just judgment. The crime committed is not one of sexual abuse and brutality³⁴ but an intent to murder a Levite who was innocently traveling through and had found lodging there for the night. They have risen up in attack against a man of sacred office, an act which necessitates response from all Israel.

Secondly, his statement—"they intended to kill me"—shifts the focus away from the lesser victim (she was only his slave girl) to himself, a member of the Levites. His goal seems

intentional: to avoid any personal implication in the woman's murder as well as to justify his extreme actions³⁵ in cutting up his concubine like a mere beast and sending her around the territory of Israel.

The Crime

It is this testimony of the Levite—that the Gibeon town fathers plotted to kill a man of sacred office—that determines the rest of the narrative. To him, the crime was murder, yet his conclusion—"They have committed a wanton outrage"³⁶—recalls the inhospitable actions of Nabal and suggest this as the crime.³⁷ Yet it must be asked if this crime would evoke such retaliation as depicted in chapter 20.

Whether the crime was the intended murder of one in sacred office, attempted sodomy (which the Levite does not mention) or the torturous death of the concubine (which would be of little consequence in ancient eyes),³⁸ there is still a question regarding the necessity of such complete retaliation. In the end, perhaps the 12 body parts themselves, circulating throughout the land, mobilizes the forces that bring about the tragedies that follow. Perhaps it is this, the final ravishment of the concubine, that leads to war against Benjamin.

Whatever the cause, and whatever the crime, the question of culpability is the beginning of a frightful descent downward to further acts of ravishment and violence.

The War Justified as *Cherem*

In order to understand the extreme lengths to which Israelite warriors go, the intent of the war must be addressed. Putting aside suggestions of vengeance, mere punishment of the Gibeon scoundrels as inadequate,³⁹ the best proposal seems to be that the war was

considered a kind of purge of evil (*cherem*), in which Israel judged Benjamin worthy of devotion of total destruction. It is applied to Achan and his family who, because he clung to what was banned (*cherem*), was placed under a ban himself.⁴⁰ Though not used explicitly to denote the wholesale destruction of Benjaminites towns, the phrases employed to depict the war seem to be deliberately chosen from the laws of *cherem* in Deuteronomy 13. In both cases, the crime deserving the ban is committed by "certain base fellows"⁴¹ in an Israelite city.⁴² In accordance with *cherem* law, those devoted to destruction are put to death "by the edge of the sword"—including the cattle⁴³—and the cities burnt, though the gathering of the spoil into the open plaza is not mentioned in the Judges account.⁴⁴ As in the law of *cherem* against the Canaanites in Deuteronomy 7:1-5, the Benjaminites were banned from marrying Israelite women.

Such a proposal provides an explanation for the extreme lengths to which the destruction of Benjaminites cities was carried. If the war was intended to purge Gibeah from evil by devoting the evildoers to destruction, Benjamin's refusal and advancement in defense would be indication that the tribe was clinging to *cherem* and thus was to be destroyed also.

Nevertheless, some mitigating factors must be considered. First, a *cherem*-war was only to be carried out in cases of idolatry, against the Canaanites, or against an Israelite town that was led into idolatry. There is no hint of any idolatrous practices involved in the story of the Levite's concubine, and there seems to be

a subtle application of the wording used in the story of Sodom—with its inhospitable actions toward the angels—to explain how Israel could have waged such a war in Judges 20.⁴⁵ Yet this appeal to the Sodom story contains several problems and cannot be solely justified.⁴⁶

Secondly, the term *cherem* is not used in connection with the war against Benjamin at all, while it is applied, in verbal form, to the destruction of every male of Jabesh-Gilead, in Israel's attempt to recover virgin women to replenish the loss to the 600 survivors of

Benjamin.⁴⁷ Yet this usage assumes the earlier application of *cherem*: only virgin women from an Israelite city also under *cherem* could be given to the Benjaminites who were now banned from marrying members of the Israelite community.

Thirdly, the growing intensity of Israel's anguish throughout the warfare suggests that the tribes themselves questioned the justifi-

cation for such a war. Fourthly, this story seems to be the reverse of the Achan and Ai episodes, since loss of battle in the latter is due to holding onto an item devoted to destruction, whereas in the former the losses follow an attempt to purge out those apparently holding onto those under *cherem*. Israel's guilt stems from the fact that they have gone to war against fellow Israelites and have virtually devoted the entire tribe to destruction;⁴⁸ the comparison to Ai⁴⁹ suggests that *cherem* could not be legitimately applied to this case.

All of these difficulties contribute to a very important point: *the alignment to the laws of cherem was not the original reason for war*

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against Benjamin but was appealed to later in order to justify the means used to replenish the tribe as well as the destruction of Benjaminite towns.

This is most significantly supported by a very glaring omission of the story's application of the Deuteronomic laws of *cherem*. Before destroying the cities, Israel was to "inquire and make search and ask diligently" to determine whether the report of idolatry was true.⁵⁰ Further evidence is supplied by Niditch,⁵¹ who notes that in the case of the Joshua 22:10 to 34 story—potential for the carrying out of *cherem*—the law is followed exactly: (1) idolatry is the issue here; (2) inquiry is diligently made; and (3) a disastrous war is averted in consequence.

In the narrative of Judges 20, no such inquiry is made. Israel's armies advance with force of arms against Gibeah and demand that they hand over the men who committed the crime for punishment.⁵² The Levite's testimony—colored as it is and hiding his own culpability in the case—is accepted without question. *Indeed the testimony of a single witness⁵³ is used to determine the fate of an entire city and ultimately of nearly an entire tribe.* No one raises a question regarding who the villains actually are. No one inquires into the role the Levite played in the rape and murder of his concubine. No one asks whether his later ravishment of her body was appropriate.

This failure of the story to align fully to the laws of *cherem* is pivotal to an understanding of the response of Benjamin. Both the use of force and implication of war override the

suggestion that justice was about to take place. Without investigation into the truth of the Levite's claims, it can be assumed that the tribe of Benjamin considered the actions of Israel's armies as extreme and even unjustified.⁵⁴

One could, of course, hold the tribe of Benjamin fully responsible for the devastation that follows.⁵⁵ Had the tribe handed over the men, surely the cities would have been spared. Yet the case may not be that open-and-shut. There is a problem regarding the identification

of the guilty—were they town fathers or villains? The incident took place at night when visibility was poor and the brief encounter would not necessarily produce reasonable evidence for determining the criminals.⁵⁶ Thus, though one cannot assume innocence on the part of the Benjaminites, the weight of evidence points to greater culpability of the Levite and the woman's ravishers.

The Levite comes out in those early judgment hours to find the concubine sprawled on the ground, her body re-sculptured by the horrors of bestiality and torture into cold cruciform. The soldiers grasp Jesus' arms to find them relaxed and nearly in place. He has already been crucified thousands of years ago.

In the end, the attempts to align the story with the laws of *cherem*—though aiming to soften the horrors Israel inflicted on the tribe—leave the reader feeling somewhat deceived. And self-justifying deception is indeed one of the key implications of the story. The Levite colors his testimony in order to defend his actions toward his concubine. The tribe of Benjamin appears to rationalize that, since war seems imminent, they must fight rather than seek out the guilty for punishment. The horrors of extensive destruction seem exonerated by association with Deuteronomic injunctions of a holy purging. And finally, after the war, the people tearfully blame God for nearly extinguishing one of the 12 tribes,⁵⁷

even though they did not originally seek his counsel as to whether a holy war was justified.

The Redemption of Benjamin; The Institutionalization of Evil

The account of the war, with city after city burned and their inhabitants put to the sword, is tragic enough to leave the reader stunned, especially when it is learned that all females, male children, and elderly men have been killed.⁵⁸ Apart from the attempts at self-justification noted above, it is possible to view the story as a like reaction to the original crime. Parallel with the ravishment of the concubine and the subsequent dismemberment of her body is the war that, like a fire out of control, eventually ravishes town after town, dismembering the community of an entire tribe. The reluctance of God to grant Israel victory over Benjamin recalls the father's reluctance to let his daughter go with the Levite.

And the assault and abuse continue. Horrified at what "God" has done to the tribe of Benjamin, Israel sets out to create redemption. But due to the overriding desire to justify her previous actions and to act in harmony with them, the people redeem Benjamin by ravishing one more town—Jabesh-Gilead, which is placed under *cherem* due to a suddenly remembered oath—and preserving alive the 400 virgins found there to be handed over to the survivors of the mutilated tribe. Still, the reparation is incomplete. So Israel orders the remaining wifeless Benjaminite survivors to "lie-in-wait" and kidnap⁵⁹ the virgin women of Shiloh.⁶⁰ The Israelite justification for this last command is unclear.⁶¹

The redemption of Benjamin is created out of a form of the same crime as originally started the war. Thus the narrative ends where it begins.⁶² In an attempt to "put away evil from Israel"⁶³ by means of destruction and force,

though justified as a *cherem* judgment, the tribes merely accomplish the perpetration and institutionalization of the original corruption they have tried to expunge.

The Moral

Though attempting to justify the rapacious actions of the 11 tribes against Benjamin, the moralizer ends with an emphatic head-shaking conclusion. How could such inhospitable depravity occur in an Israelite town? And why didn't the Levite admit to the whole story? Why didn't the Benjaminites attempt to find the villains? And why did Israel react so violently—without questioning the Levite or making further inquiry—despite a reluctant assent from God? Why the ruthlessness, the total destruction? And finally, could anything really justify the destruction of Jabesh-Gilead and the kidnapping and rape of Shilohite women?

Did they not all—except the voiceless concubine—manifest the symptoms of brutality, ruthless unconcern, and violence?

But if one cannot justify such atrocities, perhaps one can explain them. And so the moralizer—as if picking up the earlier words of the Gibeon host, "Do what you want"⁶⁴—concludes, "In those days there was no king, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes." Does this imply a plea for control and an overthrow of pluralism and ethical subjectivism? Perhaps. Yet the tensions in the narrative point to a more specific interpretation. Doing what is right in one's own eyes is not interpreting Torah's meaning for oneself, but rather, ignoring it to go one's own way or misinterpreting it to justify abuse of another.

And a king would not necessarily have prevented what happened. One of the main functions of ancient kings was to lead out in war.⁶⁵ In the case of Judges 19-21, 11 tribes of Israel went to war without a king (unless the

Levite plays this role). Inspired to unite by a violent message of tragedy and stark horror, Israel responded as one person. Here was not individual subjectivism or even cultural relativism, but collective wantonness excused as holy war against those judged to be immoral.

Ultimately, *all* the freely acting players in the story were guilty. *All* were wrong, though right in their own eyes. *And in the end, those most culpable may have been those who considered themselves most capable of purging evil from Israel.*

III. The Adventist Story

From a canonical perspective, it might well be asked, "Should this dreadful narrative be a part of Scripture?" By itself, apart from a larger context, it has no redemptive value. Yet this study contends that its presence in the canon is not only justified but necessary. In order to appreciate redemption, *all* must be capable of facing the evil in their own story.⁶⁶

Prerequisite to Redemption

Reading the bad in our salvation history is *but* the prerequisite to redemption, not redemption itself. And so the canon continues: *Our story reads on, and redemption comes at the end of the reading.* Were the moralizer's closing words the end of the biblical story, we would have to suppose that tamed violence and dictatorship are indeed the last word and thus that the institutionalization of the violent behaviors in the narrative is the cure. But the Scriptures do not end with Judges 21 or 1 Samuel 8. Beyond the monarchy, with its domesticated tyranny and its slaying of prophets who speak the truth; beyond the abuses of kingly power that led to further ravishment of women and child sacrifices; beyond the snuffing out of prophetic insight and the reigning of priests, we

come at last to the King of kings who wins the war with the beast *as a Lamb*.

He is the real threat to purgings of Israel, with his tolerance for the intolerant and the non-tolerated, with his preference for love and truth over against force and control, with his fearless insistence on new perceptions of Scripture and on behaviors that shake traditional foundations.

Eventually those who would purge evil from Israel gang up on him after dark and ravish his body all night long. No inquiry is raised as to whether the accusations against him are so. And he, like so many of the victims before him, is voiceless before their abuse. As morning begins to break (and the Levites can go to bed), the rabble (or city fathers?) order him to carry his cross, and he moves across the threshold of the city gate toward a bleak Golgotha. His hands slip from the crossbeams and he falls to the ground.

In the wee small hours of dawn, in that wretched town of Gibeah, part of his story was once paralleled, along with so many others. It is reminiscent of Abraham and Isaac, but no voice from heaven stays the hands of the ravishers or the Levite, or the hands of the mob and Roman soldiers. It recalls Lot in Sodom, but no angels intervene to smite the men of Gibeah or the men of Jerusalem with blindness. It favors the laws of *cherem*, except that no one consults God about the morality of their actions, nor do they inquire whether the Levite's indictment is completely true. And likewise, no one raises the question of whether they might be crucifying their innocent Creator atop Golgotha.

The Levite comes out in those early judgment hours to find the concubine sprawled on the ground, her body resculptured by the horrors of bestiality and torture into cold cruciform. The soldiers grasp Jesus' arms to find them relaxed and nearly in place. He has already been crucified thousands of years ago from Abel on. Her hands, imploringly touch-

ing the threshold, cry out a question that goes unheeded. His hands, nailed to a rough wooden cross-beam, embrace that eternal theodicy. The Levite's brusque command, "Get up! Let's go!" is met with silence. The mob's malevolent command, "If you are the Son of God, get off the cross!" is also met with silence.

No one answers. There is no answer.

How can there be an answer when no one makes honest inquiry and investigation, nor scrutinizes their own hearts, but only judges the hearts of others?

Redemption

The longer story doesn't end until the silent Lamb hanging from the cross speaks. Unlike the completely voiceless victims in the narrative—the concubine, women, children, and elderly men—the One in whom our redemption is found does speak: "Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34, NRSV). Not a charge that everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes, but a compassionate plea that they are ignorant.

It is here that our Adventist story and our individual stories can begin anew. At the cross we meet the bad in our story—our ravishments of others' reputations, our judging and condemning, our rationalizations and croppings of our stories to justify unchristlike behavior, our curt orders and dismembering

of reasonable ideas, our refusals to pursue and tell the truth and to make honest inquiry into the rightness of our prejudices, our unwarranted acts of *cherem* and attempts at eliminating those who do not submit to our perception of righteousness—that have recrucified the real King once again.

When at last we discover redemption, we find that he offers us forgiveness and a true sense of sin and righteousness, a true view of himself and his kingdom. Only those who recognize the bad in their story can welcome the graciousness in his voice, obtain a new understanding heart, and perceive truth in new dimensions from the foot of the cross.

There a new story can begin for those who want it. Beyond race, tribalism, and purgings of evil, the nature of the Lamb can be ours and with that nature in our hearts, the tribes can become one. For in Christ there is no north or south, no Ephraim or Benjamin, no NAD or SAD. In Christ there is no east or west, no Jabesh-Gilead or Mizpah, no Centrist or West Coast theology. In Christ, there is no Jew or Greek, no Bethel or Shiloh, no Hutu or Tutsi. In Christ there is no bond or free, no master-Levite or slave-concubine, no ecclesiastical kings or oppressed members in Ethiopia. In Christ there is no male or female, despite the lot-casting of the tribes in the assembly to the Lord at Utrecht.

May Galations 3:28—and not Judges 19 to 21—soon become the concluding chapter of the Adventist story.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This observation, in regard to recent scholarship, is also made by Susan Niditch in "The 'Sodomite' Theme in Judges 19-20: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982): p. 365.

2. Notably Joseph Lewis, who collected the worst, morally speaking, of Bible stories into a book to demonstrate the immorality of the Bible in *The Bible Unmasked* (New York: Freethought Press, 1926).

3. These tensions are examined from an ideological, rather than historical, perspective with a focus on the

literary developments of the story.

4. Assuming the story's basic historicity and treating it seriously, not as absurd (see Stuart Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29 [1984]: pp. 43-57), or as "tragicomic" (Robert G. Boling, *Judges; a New Translation With Introduction and Commentary* in *The Anchor Bible* [New York: Doubleday, 1975], pp. 27, 277).

5. Such an approach focuses on the creative endeavor, the narrative, as is consistent with careful use

of literary principles of interpretation. Admittedly, I have been influenced by the use of rhetorical analysis as done by Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

6. Cf. Judges 19:27 with Exodus 21:7-11 and MAL A 41.

7. Septuagint or Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

8. Masoretic Text, the later official Hebrew Bible of the Middle Ages, but which is deemed to have a long tradition back to the time before Christ.

9. Boling, pp. 273, 274.

10. The fact that the husband goes to speak tenderly to her (indicating a hostile attitude on her part) and the unlikely possibility that she would have returned to her father if she was indeed a prostitute.

11. Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror; Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 72.

12. Biblical references are the author's own translation unless otherwise noted.

13. Noted also by Susan Niditch, p. 370. In her view, the concubine is already dead; thus his words are all the more "crass." Cf. Boling, p. 274.

14. Judges 19:22, 23.

15. Genesis 19:7: The words are identical, though syntactical positioning varies.

16. Cf. Genesis 19:8; Judges 19:24.

17. Especially here when combined with the word *outside*. Cf. Ze'ev W. Falk, *Hebrew Law in Biblical Times; an Introduction* (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1964), pp. 154, 155.

18. Note Trible's rendering: "they tortured her" (p. 76).

19. Trible (p. 77) treats this section in much the same way.

20. The sun was viewed as the god of justice in the ancient Near East, in part, because of its exposure of evil deeds. Cf. Job 38:12-15 and Trible (p. 77) who notes the same.

21. Barry G. Webb notes: "The expression [i.e., the Levite 'got up'] is chilling in what it implies by its sheer ordinariness." *The Book of Judges; an Integrated Reading*, in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series 46, p. 190.

22. In Hebrew, the rhythm is only a little less unvarying than it is in this English rendering.

23. See the full edition of this paper, read at the 1997 ASRS meeting in San Francisco, p. 11.

24. The word used by the Levite and the host for the ravishment of the concubine and the verb "to answer" are identical in root, though not in etymology.

25. Not just any knife. This terminology recalls Abraham's actions in the binding of Isaac (Genesis

22:10). Trible notes the same (p. 80).

26. Using the same verb and action employed for describing his seizure of her when he threw her out of the house to the rabble.

27. Trible's interpretation (p. 80); so also Webb, p. 91.

28. See note 19.

29. I Sam. 15:33

30. I Sam. 11:7; note the similar wording to that of Judges 19:29.

31. See Niditch, p. 371.

32. Judges 20:1, RSV.

33. A) Instead of "the men of Gibeah, base fellows," he refers to them as "the lords of Gibeah"; B) in the narrative, the men of Gibeah surround the house and demand to "know" the Levite, whereas according to the Levite, they rise up "against" him (signifying a premeditated attack) with intention to kill him; C) Without telling how he escaped or how the concubine ended up in their hands, he states the barest of facts: "They ravished my concubine and she dies;" D) He states that he then took his (dead) concubine and divided her into 12 pieces, and obvious attempt to soften his actions.

34. The issue here is not the degree of evil committed but rather just what that evil was and therefore what punishment it deserved.

35. See Webb, p. 191.

36. Judges 20:6, Cf. Boling, p. 284.

37. Niditch (pp. 367 and 371), among a number of scholars, proposes this.

38. Though Abraham did not wish to send Hagar away, this was because of her son Ishmael rather than because of solicitude for the slave herself (Genesis 21); Laban's daughters complain that they have been sold like slaves rather raised to war-pitch over the torture and demise of an unknown slave-girl/concubine.

39. See the full paper, p. 16.

40. Josh. 7:1ff.

41. RSV wording.

42. Deuteronomy 13:14 (13); Judges 19:22.

43. An action considered to be taken in Gibeah (Judges 20:48).

44. Deuteronomy 13:16 (15)-17(16); Judges 20:48.

45. For a full description of the similarities in wording between the two stories, see the original paper, pp. 5, 7, and 17.

46. First the term for "abomination" is replaced by "evil" and "senselessness"; secondly, unlike the Sodom story where the whole town comes to molest the angels, the Levite was threatened only by the town's ruthlessness.

47. Judges 21:11.

48. This is signified by the stress on "our brothers, the Benjaminites" in Judges 20:23, 28; cf. 21:3.

49. C.F. Burney, *The Book of Judges With Introduction and Notes*, Harry M. Orlinsky, ed. (New York:

KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1930), p. 455.

50. Deut. 13:15 (14). Even in the case of Sodom, God tells Abraham that he will go down himself and check out the reports to see "whether they have done *altogether* according to the outcry that has come up to me" (Genesis 18:21, RSV).

51. Niditch, pp. 374, 375.

52. Though their words convey the truth according to the narrative—not the coloring given by the Levite—this wording is necessary to align the episodes of war with the law of *cherem* in Deuteronomy 13.

53. Cf. the law of witness for capital crimes in Deuteronomy 17:6; the words in Judges 20:13—"and put away evil from Israel"—recalls the law of the witness in Deuteronomy 17:16.

54. For a discussion on the possibility of "divine endorsement," see the original paper, pages 20 and 21.

55. As does Niditch, pp. 371, 372.

56. The narrator makes it clear that the ravishers had departed before sunrise.

57. Judges 21:3, 15.

58. This is implied rather than stated in the narrative (Judges 21:7, 17, 18).

59. An action considered a capital crime in Exodus

21:16; cf. vss. 12-14. A number of scholars view it as rape. For example see J.A. Soggin, *Judges; a Commentary*, Old Testament Library, John Bowden, trans., Peter Ackroyd, *et al*, eds. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 298.

60. It is not clear whether Shiloh is to be understood as a Canaanite or Israelite town and thus not tied to *cherem*. Cf. Martin, p. 222.

61. The Hebrew wording is difficult and has net varied results.

62. Noted previously by Tribble, p. 83.

63. Judges 20:13, RSV.

64. Also the words of Deuteronomy 12:8-9; see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 169, 170, and Tribble, p. 84.

65. For example, note the Samuel-Saul stories of 1 Samuel.

66. For much of the inspiration for the slant of this final section (and indeed the general direction of the entire paper), I am indebted to Richard Rice, "The Priority of the Particular: Adventist Theology Faces the 21st Century," presented at the 1996 Adventist Society for Religious Studies meeting in New Orleans.