

# Judges *There was no King in Israel*

## 6. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes: the Levite's concubine *Judges 19.1-30*

**Aim:** This passage tells of a particularly gruesome event in the life of Israel and marks a low point in the history of the nation. As such, this is a sobering study. In looking at it we will consider how man's moral standards deteriorate when he does what is right in his own eyes rather than what is right in God's eyes. *It is suggested that someone experienced lead this study as the content is very difficult.*

### To start with:

In what ways do you think our society has improved or deteriorated over the past 50 years? Why do you think that is the case?

### Background information:

*Judges 19 is the first part of a longer account going through to the end of chapter 21. The events in chapter 19 lead to civil war in Israel, and one of the 12 tribes, Benjamin, is almost completely wiped out.*

*A concubine is a secondary wife, often purchased or gained by military victory as 'spoils of war'.*

*Jewish law was very clear on hospitality - visitors would wait in the market square and it would be expected that someone would offer them hospitality; it was shameful on the community for this not to happen.*

### Engaging with the text:

#### 1. *Read verses 19.1-10.*

Consider the actions of the three characters in this section: the Levite, his concubine and her father. In what ways were they at fault and how should they have acted?

#### 2. *Read verses 19.11-21.*

What can we deduce from the fact that:

- a. The Levite was so specific about where he wanted to spend the night?
- b. Nobody had welcomed them in until the old man arrived?

#### 3. *Read verses 19.22-28.*

- a. What does this passage show about the status and value of women in that day?
- b. Compare this passage with Genesis 19.4-8 and note God's assessment of this moral state (see Genesis 18.20-21 and 19.13).
- c. How would you describe the way in which later generations look back on this incident? (See Hosea 9.9 and 10:9.)

#### 4. *Read verses 19.29-30.*

- a. What is your response to the behaviour of the concubine's 'outraged' Levite husband?
- b. As far as you know how does his behaviour line up with God's laws on:
  - the treatment of the dead? (Deuteronomy 21.22-23)
  - calling Israel's 12 tribes to war? (1 Samuel 11.6-7)

5.
  - a. How is it possible that God's people, who were 'blessed to be a blessing' (Genesis 12.2) had become THESE people? How does degeneration like this happen? (What we have already seen through Judges combined with verses 19.1 and 21.25 might help.)
  - b. Why do you think this awful story is included in Israel's history and scriptures?
6. What would you identify as the 'moral' of this story for us? What might we learn from it and how might it influence us to do what is right in God's eyes rather than our own or other people's?