

14.06b Benjamin Finds Wives (Judges 21)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Since very few pictures are available of this story, I suggest using 3-dimensional figures or stick figures drawn on a white board.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- A page from the classifieds section of a newspaper
- A white “flag” of surrender (can be made with a white handkerchief and a dowel rod)

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- (none for this lesson)

Scripture:

Judges 21:1 Now the men of Israel had sworn at Mizpah, “No one of us shall give his daughter in marriage to Benjamin.” 2 And the people came to Bethel and sat there till evening before God, and they lifted up their voices and wept bitterly. 3 And they said, “O Lord, the God of Israel, why has this happened in Israel, that today there should be one tribe lacking in Israel?” 4 And the next day the people rose early and built there an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5 And the people of Israel said, “Which of all the tribes of Israel did not come up in the assembly to the Lord?” For they had taken a great oath concerning him who did not come up to the Lord to Mizpah, saying, “He shall surely be put to death.” 6 And the people of Israel had compassion for Benjamin their brother and said, “One tribe is cut off from Israel this day. 7 What shall we do for wives for those who are left, since we have sworn by the Lord that we will not give them any of our daughters for wives?”

8 And they said, “What one is there of the tribes of Israel that did not come up to the Lord to Mizpah?” And behold, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh-gilead, to the assembly. 9 For when the people were mustered, behold, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead was there. 10 So the congregation sent 12,000 of their bravest men there and commanded them, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead with the edge of the sword; also the women and the little ones. 11 This is what you shall do: every male and every woman that has lain with a male you shall devote to destruction.” 12 And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead 400 young virgins who had not known a man by lying with him, and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan.

13 Then the whole congregation sent word to the people of Benjamin who were at the rock of Rimmon and proclaimed peace to them. 14 And Benjamin returned at that time. And they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh-gilead, but they were not enough for them. 15 And the people had compassion on 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 not be blotted out from Israel. 18 Yet we cannot give them wives from our daughters.” For the people of Israel had sworn, “Cursed be he who gives a wife to Benjamin.” 19 So they said, “Behold, there is the yearly feast of the Lord at Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.” 20 And they commanded the people of Benjamin, saying, “Go and lie in ambush in the vineyards 21 and watch. If the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in the dances, then come out of the vineyards and snatch each man his wife from the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin. 22 And when their fathers or their brothers come to complain to us, we will say to them, ‘Grant them

graciously to us, because we did not take for each man of them his wife in battle, neither did you give them to them, else you would now be guilty.” 23 And the people of Benjamin did so and took their wives, according to their number, from the dancers whom they carried off. Then they went and returned to their inheritance and rebuilt the towns and lived in them. 24 And the people of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family, and they went out from there every man to his inheritance.

25 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Introduction/Review:

Men in the town of Gibeah of Benjamin had been so wicked that all the rest of Israel had gone to war against them. At first, Benjamin won two battles, but then God gave victory to Israel. Liers in wait ambushed and then burned Gibeah. Then Israel went to other cities, burning them and slaying all the people. Only 600 Benjaminite soldiers escaped, running to the wilderness and hiding by the rock of Rimmon four miles east of Bethel. There they hid four months. Only 600 men and zero women were left in the tribe. How could this tribe survive unless wives were found for these men?

Story:

Men have gotten wives for themselves in various ways throughout history. Some have even advertised in the newspaper. For example, “Wanted: a woman between the ages of 25-35; strong; to marry a farmer, age 35, in Kansas.” Soldiers who conquered other nations often took women of the conquered country to be their wives. God, however, forbade Israel to do this. This Bible story today is about Israelites who “caught” wives.

Great remorse

Israel, after their terrible slaughter of many, many Benjaminites, were remorseful. They went to the nearby town of Bethel [locate] and cried all day until evening, saying, “Why, O Lord God of Israel, has this terrible thing happened—that one tribe of Israel has been demolished?”

The next day they built an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, but they still were grieving that one tribe had been cut off, all except for those 600 Benjaminite soldiers. They had no wives, for all the women had been slain in their cities by Israel! If Benjamin would ever be restored, these 600 men would need wives.

One small problem: Israel had vowed they would not give any of their daughters to the Benjaminites. Where could they find wives for these guys? They couldn’t get them from another nation, and they couldn’t give them Israelite wives either.

400 wives

Someone came up with an idea. Let’s listen to a ✓supposed conversation among the Israelites.

“Well, is there any part of Israel that didn’t come to war?”

“There’s one way to find out. Call a roll call of areas.”

“Okay. Here goes. Dan?”

“Here.”

“Mount Ephraim?”

“Here.”

“Asher?”

“Here.”

“Jabesh-Gilead? . . . Jabesh-Gilead? . . . It looks as if Jabesh-Gilead [locate] didn’t send anyone to help us

in this war. We have vowed that we will fight those who did not come. In fact, we will fight them, and that's where we'll find some wives for these men. We'll get their daughters for Benjamin."

And they did—they warred against Jabesh Gilead and found there 400 wives. How many total Benjaminite soldiers had survived and were hidden? Six hundred.

Benjaminite men

Were 400 women enough wives for those 600 men? No. But it was a start; so Israel sent some men to call the Benjaminite soldiers out from the rock at Rimmon. ✓Maybe they said, "Hey, you guys up there. We come in peace. [Wave your white flag.] Come down from there; we won't hurt you. The wickedness of those evil men of Gibeah has been avenged."

Then when all 600 came down from the rock, ✓they might have said, "We regret to tell you that all the Benjaminite women are dead. However, we have found wives for 400 of you."

[Sarcastically.] "Great! What about the other 200 of us?"

The men of Israel recognized the problem and agonized over it. They had vowed not to give their daughters, and Jabesh-Gilead had yielded only 400 young women. What could they do about getting 200 more wives? Here is the crazy idea they came up with.

200 wives

"There is a feast coming up in Shiloh [locate], where the tabernacle is. The custom has been that unmarried ladies come out to dance ✓on the way to the feast. Let's have the 200 Benjaminite soldiers who still need wives hide in the vineyards outside the city. When the girls come out to dance, the 200 Benjaminites can each catch a girl, and she will become his wife. In that way we won't be actually *giving* them our daughters because the men will be *snatching* wives for themselves. If the fathers or brothers complain, ask them to allow the marriage, please, for our sakes, or else the tribe of Benjamin will die out."

That's what happened. Each of the 200 men caught a bride for himself. Then the Benjaminites went back to their land, repaired their cities, and lived there. The tribe survived, but from then on it was smaller than the other tribes.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
Israel, in the end, had compassion on the tribe of Benjamin. Matthew 9:36 tells us that Jesus, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."
- Love your enemies.

Activities:

- Play dough: grapes; numerals 600, 400, 200
- Snack: Grapes
- Review questions: (Game: Make six cardstock silhouettes of men (see below), each one representing 100 men. For each correct answer a student may place a man in a pocket chart.)
 1. How did the other tribes feel after nearly destroying the whole tribe of Benjamin? [Sorry, regretful.]
 2. Why didn't the other tribes give their own daughters to the 600 men left in the tribe of Benjamin? [Because they had vowed not to do so.]
 3. From what area did Israel get 400 wives for the remaining Benjaminites? [Jabesh-Gilead.]
 4. Why Jabesh-Gilead? What had they not done? [They had not come to help fight against Benjamin. The other tribes fought against Jabesh-Gilead and captured 400 unmarried women for Benjamin.]

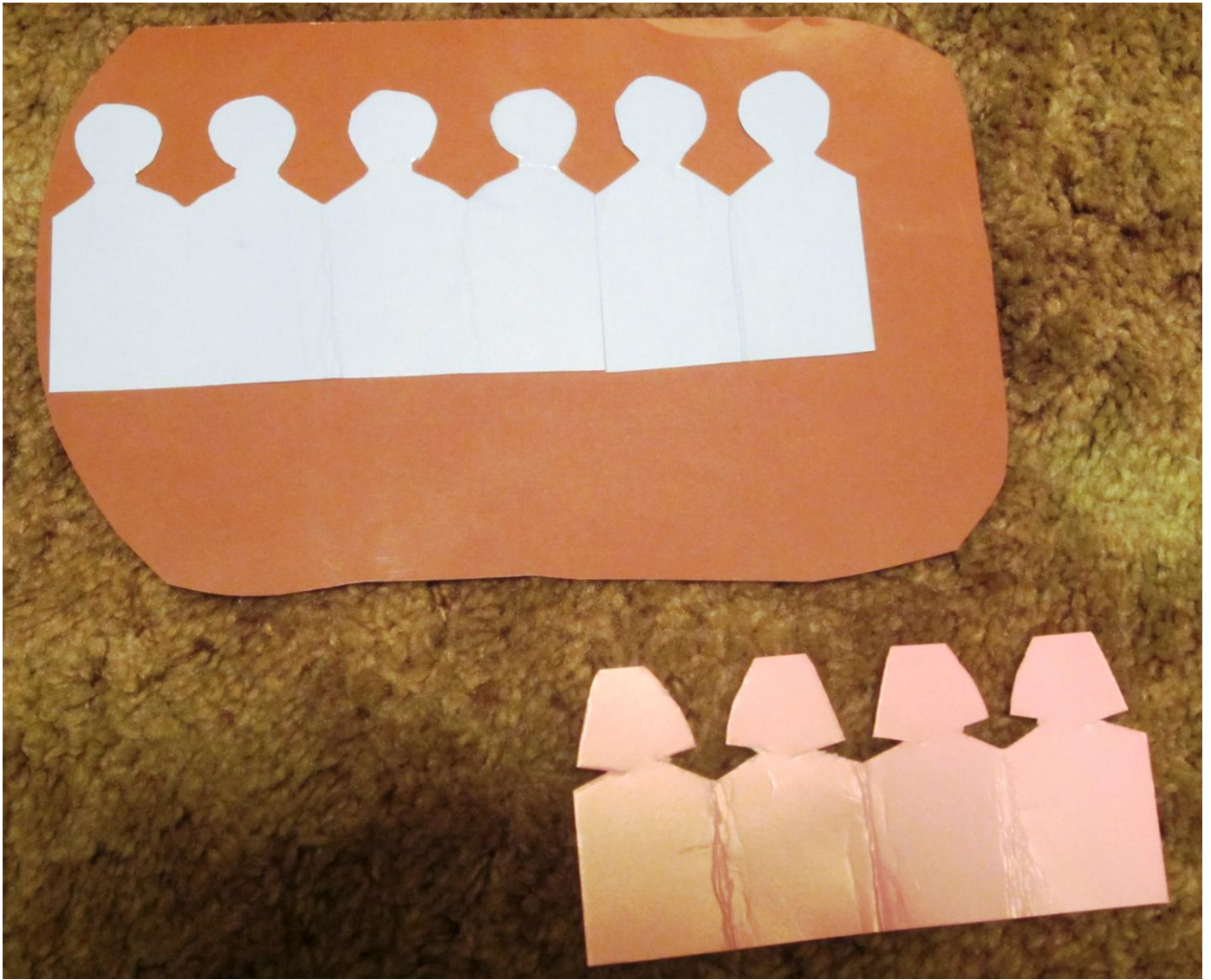
5. How were the remaining Benjaminites to catch their wives? [They were to hide in the vineyards at Shiloh and then catch the maidens who danced there when going to a feast.]
6. What did the Benjaminites do after they had their new wives? [Returned to their land, rebuilt their cities, and lived there.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Matthew 11:28: [Jesus said,] “I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Handwork:

- Make a picture of grapes with bubble wrap. See <https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2009/01/what-a-bunch-of.html> for instructions.



The Benjaminites needed 200 more wives

The Battle at Gibeah

Judges 19-21

The Congregation of Israel

Gathers at Mizpah.

12,000
Israelites here
cut the sons of
Benjamin.

In day 1, the Benjaminites
struck down 22,000 men.

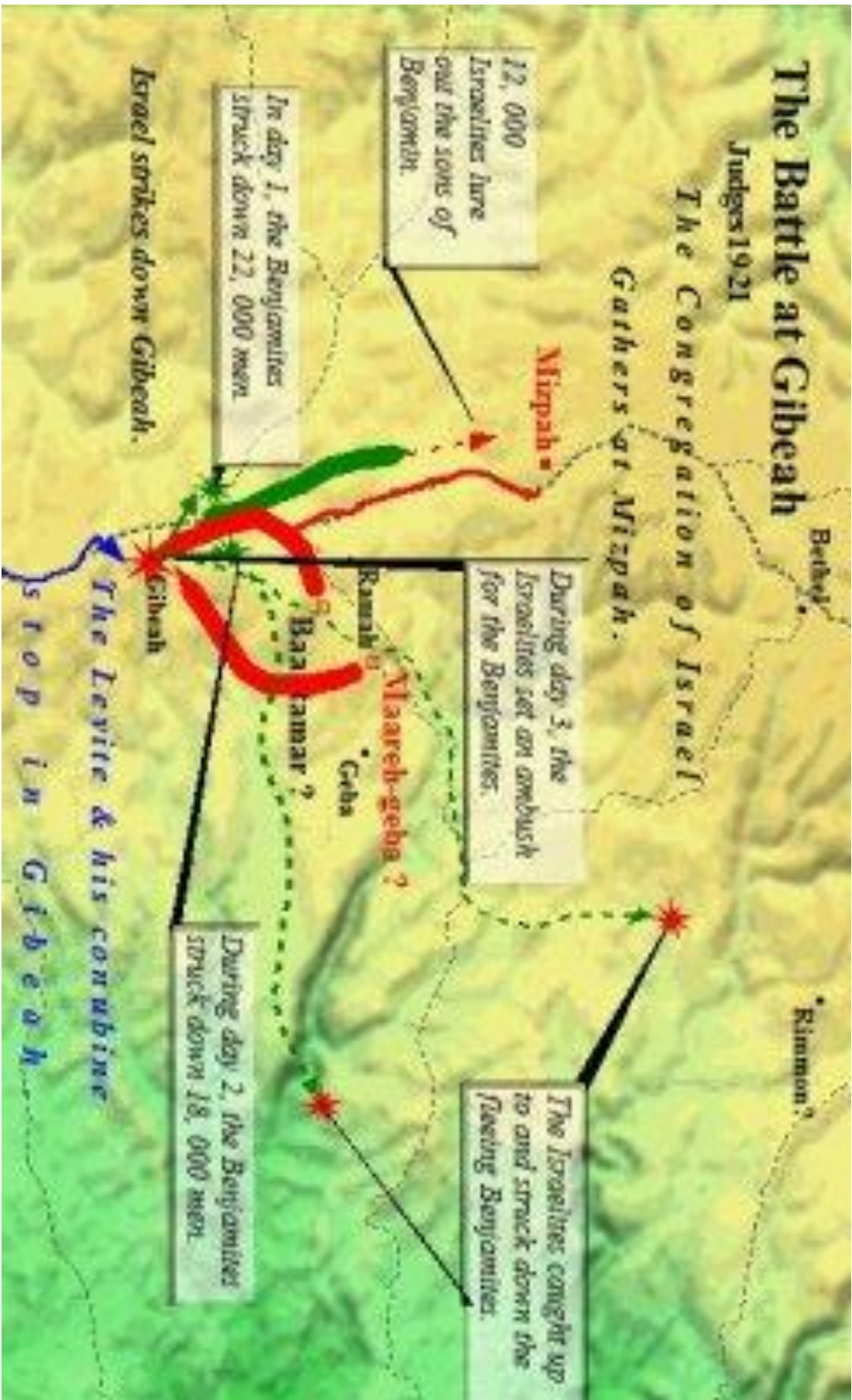
Israel strikes down Gibeah.

During day 3, the
Israelites set an ambush
for the Benjaminites.

The Israelites caught up
to and struck down the
fleeing Benjaminites.

During day 2, the Benjaminites
struck down 18,000 men.

The Levite & his concubine
stop in Gibeah.





Judges 21

THE BENJAMITES AT SHILOH.—*Judges xxi. 23.*