Why does Judges [19-21] tell such a gruesome story about a concubine that was tortured and eventually cut up?

Judges chapters 19-21 tells of a dark time in Israel's history. A Levite priest in Ephraim took a concubine (Judg 19:1-2). She became unfaithful to him and returned to live with her father in Bethlehem (Judg v 1-2). The Levite traveled to Bethlehem to visit with her father and to try to persuade her to return to him (v 3-10). On the return home, the two stayed at an old man's house in the Benjamite city of Gibeah (v 11-21). Wicked men surrounded the man's home (v 22-28) and sought to have sex with the Levite (v 22-28).[1] The old man refused and offered his virgin daughter and the priest's concubine instead. The wicked men refused his offer (v 22-24).

The Levite sent his concubine out to them anyway and the men raped her throughout the night. When the rapists let her go, she crawled back to the house and died on the doorstep (25-28). The Levite carried his concubine's body back to Ephraim and cut her body up into 12 pieces. He sent one piece of her body to each of the tribes of Israel arousing them to punish the wicked men from the land of Benjamin.

The leaders of the tribes met together in Mizpah to decide what to do (Judg 20:1-17). The Levite explained how the men had raped and murdered his concubine (v 1-7). The leaders resolved to attack Gibeah (v 8-11) but the people of Benjamin refused to allow the attack. Instead, they came out to fight against the other tribes (v 12-17).

The tribe of Benjamin lost 25,000 men in the battle leaving only 600 alive after the war with the other tribes (Judg 20:46-48).

The children of Israel were ruled best when they were ruled by God. Kings and judges are a less effective means of leadership. God does not permit a man to take a concubine (Ex 20:14) and he values women—having created them equal to men (Ge 2:21–25).

Regarding these chapters in Judges J. Vernon McGee wrote:

> …[The other tribes] were incensed against the tribe of Benjamin. They believed the law should be enforced. In that respect they had not sunk as low as we have today in our philosophy that lawlessness should be permitted and we should have as little law as possible. They gave Benjamin an opportunity to deliver up the offenders, but instead Benjamin declared war against the other eleven tribes![2]

The bible tells the history of Israel—warts and all. One would hope that nations today would learn from their mistakes.

J. Vernon McGee continued:

> Unfortunately gross immorality had taken place and had set tribe against tribe and class against class. Then what happened? It led to political anarchy. First there was religious apostasy in the

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[1] As was done in Sodom (Ge 19:4-5).

[2] McGee, J. V. (1991). Thru the Bible commentary: History of Israel (Joshua/Judges) (electronic ed., Vol. 10, p. 223). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

temple, then moral awfulness in the home, and finally political anarchy in the state. These are the steps that any nation takes that goes down.[3]

Nations who are wise enough to know and trust God are blessed (Ps 33:12).

[3] McGee, J. V. (1991). *Thru the Bible commentary: History of Israel (Joshua/Judges)* (electronic ed., Vol. 10, p. 224). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.