

Episode #544 Judges 18 Part 2 – Micah Versus Dan

I. In the book of Judges, we have a brief record of the early history (the first centuries) of the history of the land of Israel. We see the leaders God chose, judges, who ruled under Jehovah, the King. Through the lives and work of these judges, we can learn about God's works and ways.

II. Starting in Judges 17 we see the religious decline of Israel. Micah of Ephraim makes an idol and hires a Levite priest to serve it. Meanwhile, the tribe of Dan finds the territory the LORD gave them too hard to take, and spies out a place in another tribe's territory to appropriate for themselves. Their spies discover Micah and his setup on the way. They find Laish up in the territory of Naphtali or Manasseh, and bring their tribal family word. As they head for their chosen territory, they stop at Micah's house in order to do something about his idolatry.

III. Dan's Idolatrous Theft. Judges 18:11-26.

- A. Verse 14. The spies report what they found in this house as they come to it. They tell them to consider what to do. What should they have done? Deuteronomy 17:2-7.
There were five witnesses; plenty to qualify. They should destroy it all! By becoming idolaters all there were worthy of death by the law. This is not their plan.
- B. Verse 15. They go to Micah's house and greet the young Levite "priest."
- C. Verse 16. The six hundred men stand with their weapons by the entrance. This would have been plenty to carry out judicial destruction on these people and city.
- D. Verse 17. Instead of destroying this corruption they want these false gods for themselves. The five spies start bringing out Micah's idolatrous paraphernalia. The Levite priest stands with the armed men and sees them doing this.
- E. Verse 18. The priest sees his livelihood leaving. He asks what they are doing?
- F. Verse 19. They tell him to shut up and come with them. They want him to be their "father" instead. They argue it is better for him to be priest of an entire tribal family rather than to one man's household. They offer the hireling a better position!
- G. Verse 20. He proves again he is a hireling and is happy to take a better offer. Micah may have viewed him as a son, but he shows no loyalty for his "father." He takes charge of the idolatrous accoutrements and joins their procession.
- H. Verse 21. They carry away their stolen booty. Before the armed men were going in front of the livestock and children. Now, they are expecting trouble from the rear, and so they put them in front with the armed men behind to look for trouble from Micah.
- I. Verse 22. They had gotten a good way by the time Micah learns of it. He is joined by the men in the houses near his, and together they pursue Dan.
- J. Verse 23. They come near and call out to the Danite soldiers. They turned around and asked what was wrong that he had gathered such a company? Of course, they knew. The tribe of Dan shows the same kind of hypocrisy as Micah did. We should remember that and not feel sorry for Micah. These are two weasels facing off.
- K. Verse 24. Micah points out the obvious: they have stolen his manufactured gods and his priest: he has lost it all. How can they act like they don't know the problem? The consummate hypocrite doesn't like hypocrisy so much when it is in others!
- L. Verse 25. The sons of Dan threaten them. They tell him to shut up like they did the Levite. If not, bitter souls of men might attack him, and then he would lose his soul along with the souls of his household. They mean they will kill him if he doesn't go.
- M. Verse 26. The sons of Dan go on their way. Micah sees they are greatly outnumbered and so they have no choice but to give in and go back home.

IV. The Conquest of Dan. Judges 18:27-31.

- A. Verse 27. The sons of Dan take Micah's things and priest and take them to Laish. They attack the peaceful people and destroy them and burn their city.
- B. Verse 28. No serious opposition was aroused because they were far from their capital of Zidon and had no allies. We are told it was in the valley by Beth Rehob (House of the Street). Dan took the easy victory and credited God, but this was not the victory God had set for them. They built a new city and lived in it.
- C. Verse 29. They name the new city Dan after their ancestor. They are proud of this. But the very name testifies to the fact that they are no longer in Dan's rightful place.
- D. Verse 30. They set up the graven image and make the young Levite the priest, along with his sons after him. His name is revealed: Jonathan (Jehovah Has Given) son of Gershom (Foreigner) son of Manasseh. But Manasseh = Moses, see Companion Bible note. "This word is one of the four that has a suspended letter. Here the letter nun is written partly in the line and partly above the line, to show that originally it formed no part of the word, but was put in to make it spell "Manasseh" instead of "Moses." Jonathan was the grandson of Moses (his contemporary Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, being mentioned in 20:28). This was done for two reasons: (1) to spare the honor of Moses' memory and name; (2) to put the sin upon one who committed so gross a sin. The Talmud gives this latter as the reason. Jonathan's name is omitted in I Chron. 23:15, 16, and 26:24. The Chald. Paraphrase says that "Shebuel," there substituted, is meant for Jonathan after his repentance and restoration. Shebuel = "he returned to God." The A.V. follows Sept. and Chald. By putting "Manasseh" in the text; R.V. follows Vulg., and those codices and early editions which have "n" suspended, by putting "Moses" in the text and "Manasseh" in the margin." This idolatry never put down until the captivity! Note the possible later insertion by a later prophet. Not uncommon in Scripture. Or could mean to the Philistines in I Samuel 4-6, see next verse.
- E. Verse 31. This idolatrous place of worship was a rival to God's chosen place. Shiloh the first place chosen by God, later Jerusalem. So we only know for sure that this went on until Shiloh was destroyed. Later, Dan was a place where Jereboam set up a golden calf, so it was an idolatrous center to the end. This could be what Jacob meant about Dan in Genesis 49:17. Dan being the start of idolatry in Israel could be the reason Dan is not listed as one of the tribes in Revelation 7:4-8.

V. Judges 18 further shows us the religious decline of Israel. The tribe of Dan, finding the idolatrous worship of Micah, instead of wiping it out, as the law would have demanded, steal it for themselves. Micah's priest shows his character as a hireling by eagerly accepting a better offer. Micah is foiled by hypocrisy as great as his own. Are we more faithful to our duties and the truth of God than the blatant and ignorant hypocrites of Ephraim and Dan? Dan takes land not their own because it was easy. Do we go for easy victories when the Lord set out something harder for us instead? Jonathan Moses' grandson becomes the idolatrous priest of Dan. Family background means little; it is what you do before God that matters.