

## Final section of Judges

After Samson's death the country fell into anarchy.... reaching its lowest point

The nation **forgot the Exodus** & all that God had done for them

They **forgot Moses and Joshua** & all the miracles God had worked **through them**

They **forgot their Covenant** with God, and kept a vague memory of being the Chosen People

Moses's warning came to pass: Deut 7: 1-16. They were a people consecrated to God and were forbidden to have anything to do with idolatry and its accompanying immorality.

Here at the end of Judges, they have gradually adopted the pagan ways at great cost to themselves and their relationship with God..... and their future.

**God** was no longer their king and Lord – except in theory. They had gods and lords in plenty!

Pagan worship allowed low standards of morality – was easy on the flesh....

So, God's Commandments now seemed harsh – **just like the world of 2023!**

Result: they were no different from the surrounding pagans who merited God's Judgement! Their Testimony to being the Chosen People was gone.... Just like the world of today where the testimony of Christians to being the Chosen Ones is dead to society...which is ready to persecute and kill....

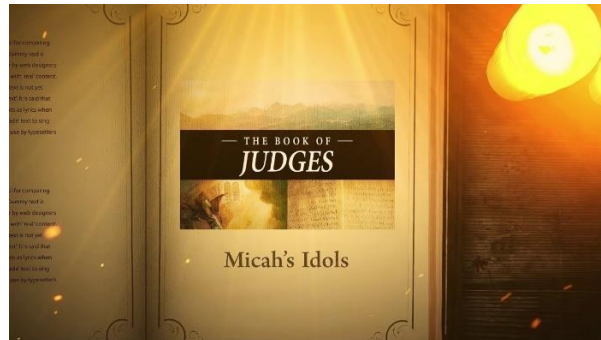


This refrain is repeated 4 times to explain **why** they had descended to such a low place.

There was a great need for a true leader – like Moses or Joshua – but **not** like Samson!

## Judges Chapter 17

Taking the law into our own hands



### 1-2: Micah was from the tribe of Ephraim

Micayehu = Who is like the Lord? But he **did not live up** to this great name at all!

He went into total apostasy & set up his own version of religion thinking that this would be acceptable to God! This is Man dictating to God....

This presumes that the human will and all its chaos should be acceptable to the Divine Will with all its order, harmony and beauty!

This story illustrates the spiritual confusion which was prevalent in Israel at that time, and today among Christians.

Micah had stolen 1,100 shekels from his mother. 10 shekels was a yearly wage (Judges 17:10) so, this was a fortune!

### 3-4: His mother had dedicated this money to make a carved idol for her son!

She is so **confused** that she thinks that this is **for The Lord!** The Baals were also called “lord”

They no longer knew the True God... nor the worship of the True God... nor His Covenant:

Cf Deut 4:16, 23.

This is the work of the Enemy who works secretly among us to cause confusion and deception so as to draw people away from God and Truth.

This **confusion began early** in their history, when **AARON**, the first high priest, made a golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai – “under God’s nose”! Ex 32: 4-5

**Making a carved image** violated the Second Commandment:

Ex 20: 4-5 **You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven** (ancient religions all have strange carved images of strange creatures that they claim came from the heavens) **or that is on the earth beneath, or in the water beneath the earth** (Egypt worshipped animals as 'gods') **you shall not bow down to them or serve them for I, the Lord, am a Jealous God.**

Here God was trying to get humans to live a spiritual life and stop worshiping created things.

Fallen Man **wants to make God in his own image**, whereas the reverse is truth; we are made in His image (Gen 1:27; 2:7). This involves taking **the divine** out of worship, bringing the standard down to the human level.

This phenomenon has been expressed throughout history: there are 30,000 sects of Christianity today, all claiming to be guided by the Holy Spirit – who is the **Spirit of Unity!**

On a personal level we can reduce faith **to our own ideas**: e.g. “My Jesus is the Good Shepherd” when he was not a shepherd at all!

True religion accepts God’s own revelation of Himself in the Sacred Scriptures.

We worship Him in the way He wants.... And on His own terms: Cf Jn 4:23-24 **But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**

Lev 19:2: **“You shall be holy for I am holy” says the Lord.**

Hence, true religion has high moral standards, while false religion has the opposite.

Vs 5: **Micah establishes his own religion and priesthood**

- (i) He set up his own shrine for the idol
- (ii) He made an **EPHOD**, thus mimicking the true worship of God at **Shiloh**, for the Ephod was worn by the High Priest seeking God’s guidance for the people
- (iii) He added the **TERAPHIM** for good measure! These were household ‘gods’ used for protection and guidance.
- (iv) He then consecrated one of his sons to act as the priest of this shrine.

**NB:** None of this came from God! He had no authority to act like this, so his actions were meaningless. This was man-centred religion for man's purposes. It had nothing to do with God at all!



Vs 6: **In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes**

Of course, God **was** their **true King** (Judges 8:22), but since they had drifted away from His Covenant there was no one to lead the nation, so **individualism** took over

- Radical individualism brings a nation down. The **ego** reigns and you get the survival of the fittest....
- God taught us to love Him and our neighbour
- If we serve them both, society will thrive. Remember Joshua! He got them all united as one serving both God and the good of the whole nation...

### Examples of EGO decisions

- 1) It seemed right to **Adam / Eve** to eat forbidden fruit – but it was wrong and the consequences were terrible.
- 2) **Jacob's sons** thought it was okay to sell their brother Joseph into slavery... it was wrong
- 3) **Nadab and Abihu** thought they could bring unlawful fire into the Tabernacle.... God thought otherwise and punished them for their presumption.
- 4) **King David** thought it okay to commit adultery and murder... he was wrong!
- 5) **Judas** thought it was okay to sell an Innocent Man to a terrible death.... He was wrong!

How often people have to confess that their decision to sin was wrong in God's eyes

Prov 14:12 **There is a way that SEEMS right to man...but its end is in the way of death**

### **7-8: Micah hires an unscrupulous Levite**

A young man from Bethlehem should not have been looking to Micah for a place to live!

Levites had their own designated cities all over the land (Joshua chapter 21)

Since he wanted to break away and do things his own way he would get on well with Micah

### **9-11: Micah hires the wandering Levite!**

Micah then hired the wandering Levite because he wanted to legitimise his shrine.

He now had someone who represented the legitimate religion. It was now “official”.

Now he could deceive himself that his religion truly **was** that of the Chosen People - even though there was no connection with Shiloh, the true shrine which housed the **Ark of the Covenant**.

**A modern version** of this is the number of churches today who have no connection with the Church that Jesus founded, yet they all consider themselves legitimate.

The Levite is a good example of a **hireling!**

That is: one who will serve either God or an idol **for a fee!** Other hirelings might join the priesthood for other reasons..... like the need for public recognition in society..... the need for security in life and employment.... Or for approval from others etc

Jn 10: 12-13 A hireling is **not the shepherd.... Is not the owner of the sheep....and when he sees the wolf coming he runs away.**

### **12-13: false consecration & false confidence**

Micah consecrated the Levite for his work at this false shrine

- He had no authority to do this from God or Israel. It was meaningless!
- He seems to have degenerated into an ancient position (at the time of Abraham) where the head of the Clan or Household was a ‘priest’ for his own household, so he could appoint someone to represent him in religious matters.
- But this negated the Exodus where **God** established the True Religion under Moses. All the teaching of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers and Leviticus are put aside here!
- We are back to paganism **and the Levite agrees to it!**

The Levite’s position is inexcusable. He is a true priest worshipping a false god for his own convenience and comfort.

Look at today! Priests are “ordaining” women to the priesthood.... the Pachamama etc!  
Human nature hasn’t changed.

Vs 13: **Now I know that the Lord will be good to me....**

- Micah’s confidence is as false as his consecration was
- **His intention** is wrong also for he wants God – or the idol – to be good to him!
- This is self-service..... there is no love of God....no sacrifice to God...**NO LOVE**

## **Chapter 18: The Tribe of Dan**

1-6: **The Danites meet the Levite**

Since the Danite spies came from the west country they recognised the Levite – maybe his accent?

They asked the Levite to enquire of the Lord if their journey would be successful – so they have no problem with the false religion also – indicating national confusion.

This Levite cannot give them God’s will because he is in rebellion against God, **as they are!**

- **he cannot know the mind of God:** 1 Cor 2:11 Rom 11:34
- yet he does have the confidence to say that everything will be okay!

7-10: **The Danites choose a city**

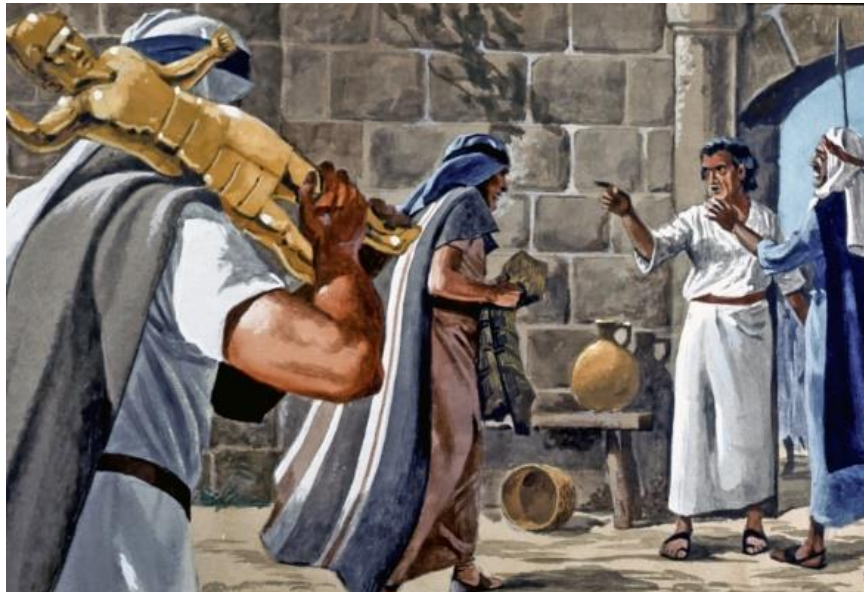
- The spies went to LAISH and found a peaceful secure people with no enemies
- They **appeared** to be safe.... But it was a false security since their moment of destruction had come!
- 1 Thess 5:3 **While people are saying ‘peace and safety’, destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**

### 11-21: Army of 600 take Laish

- i) The Danites travelled to Micah's house. It is strange that they travelled from west to east to take land when their own inheritance was in the west!
- ii) They stole the idol, Teraphim and Ephod while the Levite looked on (Hireling!)
- iii) The Levite then joined the Tribe of Dan to be their priest – a much bigger job! He was happy once he had recognition, fame, house, job and a steady income!

**NB:** This is the moment when an entire Tribe of Israel became idolatrous. They led the whole Northern half into idolatry and eventually were lost to the Chosen People.

**NB:** They **became the lost sheep of the House of Israel**: Mt 15: 21-28



### 22-24: Micah's religion came to nothing!

**You have taken the gods which I made!** If you have to rescue your gods they are not worth much! Cf Psalm 115

Our choice is to worship a god of our own making – or the True God.

False gods are less than ourselves... idol worship is actually self-worship

Following our own EGO is idolatry: AUTOLATRY is self-worship

Micah also lost his worthless priest..... but in this he lost nothing.

Our God is ETERNAL. He never changes. Mal 3:6 **for I am the Lord, I do not change....**

**Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever**

**25-26: Micah goes home empty-handed**

As far as the Tribe of Dan is concerned **might is right...** so Micah had no rights

The Danites were too strong.... and the gods were too weak

What kind of gods were they to need protection from humans?!

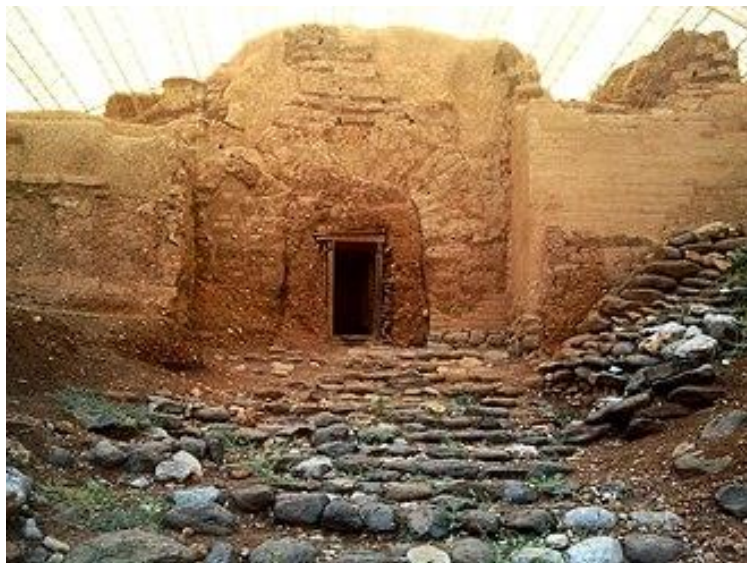
**27-29: Conquered Laish becomes the CITY OF DAN**

The destruction of this peaceful community was truly wicked....

The Danites built it into their capital city which they called the **city of Dan**.

From that time onwards Israel was measured “from Dan (North) to Beersheba” (South)

It became the most prominent city in the north of Israel: Judges 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20







### 30-31: Tribe of Dan officially adopts Idolatry

This was the beginning of **established Idolatry** in Israel...there was individual idolatry before, but this is official. An entire Tribe sees no need for Shiloh or the Ark of the Covenant, or the official priesthood of Aaron, established by God!

Micah's idolatry had far-reaching consequences for the nation which would struggle to keep idolatry under control for the whole of the Old Testament – often failing badly.

City of Dan is now famous for the wrong reason.....and it will remain a **rival** to the House of God at Shiloh (Remember the Protestant revolt against Rome?)

NB: City of Dan is very close to Caesaria Philippi



In later times this place became known as BANIAS (Panias) where the false god **PAN** was worshipped in diabolic rituals – hence it was called **the gates of hell!**

It was to **this place** famous for its idolatry that Jesus took the Apostles to challenge them on their recognition of the True God. Mt. 16: 13-16 **Who do you say that I am?**

Jesus' Church would have to go into the idolatrous world to bring them the **truth** about God; therefore, they themselves would have **to know and recognise God** in truth.

That was the moment of Peter's revelation: **You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!**

**The context** of this incident is VIP. Mt 16: 17-19: .... **And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it.**

The 'gates of hell' is an expression for **the powers of evil**, since the occult opens these gates to us.

The Church would also battle with evil during all of its history, but victory over the evil powers has been won by Jesus. Like Israel, the Church will have good and bad times, but she will prevail in the end because **Jesus is the Vine**; we are only **HIS** branches: Jn 15