

Judges 18:1 ¶ In those days *there was* no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day *all their inheritance had not fallen* unto them among the tribes of Israel.

Judges 18:2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

Again, it is noted that there was no king in Israel—at least they did not recognize their King, the LORD God of Israel.

The people of Dan were not satisfied with the land that had been assigned to them and had not taken possession of it. They decided to send a group of five men to search out the land for a place to call their own. Eventually, they came to the house of Micah in mount Ephraim.

Judges 18:3 When they *were* by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this *place*? and what hast thou here?

Judges 18:4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest.

Judges 18:5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous.

Judges 18:6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD *is* your way wherein ye go.

While they were at Micah's house, they heard the Levite talking and recognized his accent or his voice. This was not a town assigned to the Levites, so they questioned him as to why he was there. The young man explained that he had contracted with Micah to serve as his priest. Upon hearing that, they asked him to seek God as to whether they would prosper in their mission. The young man assured them that they could go in peace because the LORD was with them.

I liked this comment from Guzik: "This shows what a spiritually confused time this was in Israel. These Danites on a sinful mission met with a *sinful* Levite, and wanted to know from a *righteous* God if their mission would be successful. Then the sinful Levite sent the sinning men on their way with God's blessing."

Judges 18:7 ¶ Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that *were* therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and *there was* no magistrate in the land, that might put *them* to shame in *any* thing; and they *were* far from the Zidonians, and had no business with *any* man.

Judges 18:8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What *say* ye?

Judges 18:9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it *is* very good: and *are* ye still? be not slothful to go, *and* to enter to possess the land.

Judges 18:10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where *there is* no want of any thing that *is* in the earth.

The five men went on their way and came to Laish, a Zidonian city near the foot of Mount Hermon and the headwaters of the Jordan River. They saw that the people were quite confident and secure and feared no enemy, even though they were quite distant from Sidon and had no designated ruler. They seemed to exist in their own little world separate from all around them. They returned home to give their report, adding that the land was very good. They urged their brethren to go and take possession of the land immediately. They would encounter a people who felt safe and secure in a large land that lacked nothing. They declared that victory was sure because God had given them this land.

Judges 18:11 And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

Judges 18:12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjathjearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, *it is* behind Kirjathjearim.

Judges 18:13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah.

An army of about 600 men from the tribe of Dan equipped with weapons headed out to war. They made camp in a place called Kirjathjearim in Judah and named the place of encampment Mahanehdan, "the camp of Dan." From there they journeyed on to mount Ephraim and once again went to Micah's house.

Judges 18:14 ¶ Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do.

Judges 18:15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, *even* unto the house of Micah, and saluted him.

Judges 18:16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate.

The five spies told the people of Dan that Micah had an ephod, teraphim, a graven image and a molten image (sounds like there were two of them, not just one). They then basically said, "You know what to do."

So they went to the house to greet the Levite, while the 600 troops waited at the gate.

Judges 18:17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, *and* came in thither, *and* took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men *that were* appointed with weapons of war.

Judges 18:18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto

them, What do ye?

Judges 18:19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: *is it* better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

Judges 18:20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people.

Judges 18:21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them.

The five spies stole Micah's religious icons, but were confronted by the young priest. They urged him to be quiet and come with them to be their spiritual leader and priest. Wouldn't he rather serve a whole tribe than just one family in Israel? The priest happily agreed and took possession of Micah's religious icons. The group continued on their way, putting their children and possessions ahead of them.

I guess they were so confident of victory that they brought their families and everything they owned with them so they wouldn't have to go back and get them.

Judges 18:22 And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that *were* in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan.

Judges 18:23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?

Judges 18:24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what *is* this *that* ye say unto me, What aileth thee?

Judges 18:25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household.

Judges 18:26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house.

They had gone quite a distance when Micah and a group of his neighbors caught up to them. This seems to indicate that Micah had allowed his neighbors to worship at his personal shrine, and they didn't want to lose that privilege.

The leaders of Dan turned to confront Micah and asked him why he had come to them with such a crowd of people. Micah basically said, "You stole my gods and my priest and left me with nothing, and then you have the nerve to ask me such a question."

The leaders of Dan basically told him that he better be quiet and go back home or he and his family might lose their lives as well. Micah knew that he had no chance against such a strong enemy, so he went back home empty-handed.

Judges 18:27 ¶ And they took *the things* which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people *that were* at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

Judges 18:28 And *there was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Zidon, and they had no business with *any* man; and it was in the valley that *lieth* by Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein.

Judges 18:29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city *was* Laish at the first.

The people of Dan continued on to Laish and conquered the city, killing its people and burning the city with fire. There was no one to come to their defense because they were so far away from Sidon and had no close allies. The people of Dan then proceeded to build their own city in place of Laish in the valley near Bethrehob. They called the city Dan, after the father of their tribe.

I believe the only reason God allowed them this victory was because it was His will that they possess the land and the Sidonians driven out.

Joshua 13:1&6 "Now Joshua was old and stricken in years; and the LORD said unto him....All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephothmaim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel...."

Judges 18:30 And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land.

Judges 18:31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

The people of Dan also set up their own place to worship and established Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons to serve as priests. Some translations say "Moses" and not "Manasseh." The New Bible Commentary offers the following explanation: "The Hebrew text has a small 'n' (Heb. *nun*) inserted in the word 'Moses' to change it into 'Manasseh', the wicked king of that name (2 Ki. 21). This was done out of respect for Moses, but it is clear what the original reading was."

So what happened to the Levite? Was this he? If so, it would seem that Moses, a son of Levi, would be correct. This family continued to serve the tribe of Dan until they were taken away into captivity.

It is noted that this was all done during the time that the house of God was in Shiloh. In other words, though there was a place in Israel established and recognized by God as the place from which He was to be worshipped, this tribe was the first tribe to establish their own place of worship in defiance of His will.