

A Family Does What Is Right in Its Own Eyes (c. 1380 – c. 1340 BC)

Judges 17:1–6

1 Now there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.

2 He said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *pieces* of silver which were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse in my hearing, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.” And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the LORD.”

3 He then returned the eleven hundred *pieces* of silver to his mother, and his mother said, “I wholly dedicate the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son to make a graven image and a molten image; now therefore, I will return them to you.”

4 So when he returned the silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred *pieces* of silver and gave them to the silversmith who made them into a graven image and a molten image, and they were in the house of Micah.

5 And the man Micah had a shrine and he made an ephod and household idols and consecrated one of his sons, that he might become his priest.

6 In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.

A Levite Does What Is Right in His Own Eyes (c. 1380 – c. 1340 BC)

Judges 17:7–13

7 Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite; and he was staying there.

8 Then the man departed from the city, from Bethlehem in Judah, to stay wherever he might find *a place*; and as he made his journey, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah.

9 Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?” And he said to him, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I may find *a place*.”

10 Micah then said to him, “Dwell with me and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten *pieces* of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and your maintenance.” So the Levite went *in*.

11 The Levite agreed to live with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons.

12 So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in the house of Micah.

13 Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, seeing I have a Levite as priest.”

A Tribe Does What Is Right in Its Own Eyes (c. 1380 – c. 1340 BC)

Judges 18

Joshua 19:47

Dan’s Failure to Conquer Leads to a Search

1 In those days there was no king of Israel; and in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for themselves to live in, for until that day an inheritance had not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel.

47a The territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them;

2 So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it; and they said to them, “Go, search the land.” And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

The Spies Inquire of Micah’s Levite

3 When they were near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite; and they turned aside there and said to him, “Who brought you here? And what are you doing in this *place*? And what do you have here?”

4 He said to them, “Thus and so has Micah done to me, and he has hired me and I have become his priest.”

5 They said to him, “Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether our way on which we are going will be prosperous.”

6 The priest said to them, “Go in peace; your way in which you are going has the LORD’s approval.”

The Spies Discover and Appraise Laish

7 Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were in it living in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; for there was no ruler humiliating *them* for anything in the land, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone.

The Spies Report Back

8 When they came back to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers said to them, “What *do you report?*”

9 They said, “Arise, and let us go up against them; for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you sit still? Do not delay to go, to enter, to possess the land.

10 When you enter, you will come to a secure people with a spacious land; for God has given it into your hand, a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth.”

Some of the Danites Decide to Migrate

11 Then from the family of the Danites, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, six hundred men armed with weapons of war set out.

12 They went up and camped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. Therefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim.

13 They passed from there to the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah.

They Acquire Micah’s Priest and Idols

14 Then the five men who went to spy out the country of Laish said to their kinsmen, “Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod and household idols and a graven image and a molten image? Now therefore, consider what you should do.”

15 They turned aside there and came to the house of the young man, the Levite, to the house of Micah, and asked him of his welfare.

16 The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the sons of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate.

17 Now the five men who went to spy out the land went up *and* entered there, *and* took the graven image and the ephod and household idols and the molten image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men armed with weapons of war.

18 When these went into Micah’s house and took the graven image, the ephod and household idols and the molten image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”

19 They said to him, “Be silent, put your hand over your mouth and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be a priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?”

20 The priest’s heart was glad, and he took the ephod and household idols and the graven image and went among the people.

21 Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the livestock and the valuables in front of them.

Micah’s Futile Pursuit

22 When they had gone some distance from the house of Micah, the men who *were* in the houses near Micah’s house assembled and overtook the sons of Dan.

23 They cried to the sons of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, “What is *the matter* with you, that you have assembled together?”
 24 He said, “You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and have gone away, and what do I have besides? So how can you say to me, ‘What is *the matter* with you?’”
 25 The sons of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, or else fierce men will fall upon you and you will lose your life, with the lives of your household.”
 26 So the sons of Dan went on their way; and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.

The Conquest of Laish

27 Then they took what Micah had made and the priest who had belonged to him, and came to Laish, to a people quiet and secure, and struck them with the edge of the sword; and they burned the city with fire.
 28 And there was no one to deliver *them*, because it was far from Sidon and they had no dealings with anyone, and it was in the valley which is near Beth-rehob. And they rebuilt the city and lived in it.
 29 They called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father who was born in Israel; however, the name of the city formerly was Laish.
 30 The sons of Dan set up for themselves the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh*, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land.
 31 So they set up for themselves Micah’s graven image which he had made, all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh.

47b for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father.

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Chronological Notes

1) Judges 17–21.

- A) Commentators agree that the two appendices of Judges (Judg 17–18 and Judg 19–21) are set in the same general period as the judge narratives from Othniel to Samson, but do not follow them chronologically.¹ The principle pieces of evidence offered in support of this view are the mention of

¹ Barry G. Webb, “The Book of Judges,” *NICOT*, pp. 35, 419. So also Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges: Such a Great Salvation* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2000), p. 211 n. 1; Daniel I. Block, “Judges, Ruth,” *NAC*, p. 511; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, pp. 178–180; Herbert Wolf, “Judges,” *EBC*, Vol. 3, p. 489; Mark J. Boda, “Judges,” *EBC, Rev. Ed.*, Vol. 2, p. 1239; S. Talmon, *King, Cult and Calendar*, pp. 45–48; Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, “Judges and Ruth,” *TOTC*, p. 176; F. Duane Lindsey, “Judges,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 408. C. F. Keil & Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 176; Israel P. Loken, *The Old Testament Historical Books: An Introduction*, p. 70.

“Jonathan the son [or descendant²] of Gershom, son of Moses” (Judg 18:30) and “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron” (Judg 20:28). Unless both genealogical notations have been compressed, these references suggest that the events described in Judges 17–21 took place relatively early in the post-conquest period, probably within a century of the death of Joshua.³ For this reason, I have placed Judges 17–21 after Judges 2:5 in the reading plan and dated them c. 1380 – c. 1340 BC.

Textual Notes

1) Concerning Judges 18:30.

- A) The KJV, NASB, and LEB read “Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh.” The ESV, NIV, HCSB, NET, and NLT read “Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses.” Why the difference of translation? “It appears that certain scribes were uncomfortable with the association between this young Levite and Moses’ clan, and so they opted to connect him to the northern tribe of Manasseh by alluding to that idolatrous southern king Manasseh (2 Kgs 21), whose behavior caused the exile of the southern kingdom (2 Kgs 21:10–15; 23:26–27; 24:1–4).”⁴ Most scholars agree that the original text identified Jonathan as a direct descendent of Moses.

² The term “son of” (*ben*) usually indicates a direct father-son relationship, but it can also mean “descendant of,” as in the case of 1 Chronicles 4:1. In this verse, the sons of Judah are given as Pharez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur and Shobal. We know from Genesis 46:12 that Hezron was the son of Pharez, so Hezron was actually the *grandson* of Judah, not his direct son.

³ Daniel I. Block, “Judges, Ruth,” *NAC*, 511.

⁴ For more detail, see the Note on v. 30 in Mark J. Boda, “Judges,” *EBC rev. ed.*, p. 1253 and Block, p. 513.