



Lesson 88

Micah's Idolatry

Story Elements

- **Text:** Judges 17:1-18:31
- **Setting:** approx. 1020 B.C. in Ephraim and Dan (Laish)
- **Main Characters:** God, Micah, Micah's mother, and Jonathan the Levite, and 5 Danite scouts
- **Plot:** One man's idolatry eventually corrupts an entire tribe.

- **Key word(s):** *In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was _____ in his own eyes.* (vv 17:6, 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)
- **Climax:** **Judges 18:14** ...*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.*

Stolen Money

1. (17:1-2) This story begins with a wealthy man named Micah who lived in the hill country of Ephraim.
 - a. Micah confessed to his mother that he had stolen from her _____ pieces of silver.¹ Hearing her place a curse on the thief made him feel the need to confess.
 - b. (17:3-4) His mother forgave him his theft and blessed him for his confession. Then she took 200 shekels and paid a silversmith to make a graven image and a molten image dedicated "unto the _____."

APPLICATION → We see the evil sin of _____ creeping back into Israel. It wasn't long after the Hebrews left Egypt that they worshiped the LORD with a golden calf, and now we see that private households are still worshiping God in the manner of idolaters. The LORD forbids the usage of idols for worship, even if it is him we think we are worshiping. (Exo. 20:4)

- c. (18:5) Micah's household idolatry included a private _____, an ephod, teraphim (little idols), and a son whom he consecrated as the family priest.
- d. (18:6) The phrase *In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes* is mentioned here and several other times before the book of Judges ends. It underlines the lawlessness and godlessness of the nation of Israel during the times of the judges. Everyone did what they wanted, and there was no punishment for any crime beyond personal _____.

Roving Levite

2. (18:7-8) Meanwhile, a young Levite from Bethlehem wandered from place to place, seeking a place to live and means by which to support himself.
 - a. His wandering brought him to the estate of Micah, who, when he learned that the young man was a Levite, offered him the job of the family _____ (instead of Micah's son).
 - b. (17:9-13) With the offer of raiment, food, a _____ yearly stipend, and the position of an official priesthood, the young Levite heartily accepted Micah's offer.

APPLICATION → When we disobey God's revealed will, everything begins to breakdown. The Levite man should not have been in Bethlehem but should have been serving as a true priest in one of the forty Levite cities (cf. Jos. 21). Micah should not have been making idols and consecrating his own priests. Their disobedience, when combined, became an even greater evil, as we will see as the story unfolds. *Hosea 8:7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the _____* ...

¹ It is possible that Micah's mother is none other than the infamous Delilah, and that this set of 1,100 pieces was one of the sums she received from the Philistine lords. Her proximity to the area where Delilah lived, the fact that we are never told that Delilah was a Philistine woman, the proclivity to gentile ways, and the conspicuously similar amount of silver pieces all invite us to consider how Micah's mother maybe the dovetail that joins this story to the previous one.

Danite Scouts

3. (18:1) Meanwhile, the tribe of Dan had failed to secure their land allotment, were pushed into the hill country by _____ resistance (Judges 1:24) and were unable to secure enough land to supply their needs.
 - a. (18:2) The Danites sent out five scouts to find a place for some of the tribe to dwell. These five men journeyed until they came to _____ estate where they were given lodging.
 - b. (18:3-4) While at Micah's house, the Danite scouts recognized the voice of the young Levite (perhaps his accent) and asked where he was from and what he was doing in that part of Ephraim. The Levite explained how he had become a priest for hire in Micah's house.
 - c. (18:5-6) Before the scouts left, they asked the Levite to inquire of the LORD whether their mission would be a success, and the idolatrous priest assured them that God would bless their efforts.

APPLICATION → What else could the Levite say? An illegitimate priest has no room to _____, *rebuke, exhort, 2 Ti. 4:2.*

Stolen Idols

4. (18:7-12) The scouts journeyed on and discovered a city in the far northern part of the nation. The city was called Laish and was unprotected from invaders and situated in a fertile area. The scouts returned to their tribal headquarters and mustered a militia of 600 fighters to conquer Laish.
 - a. (18:13-14) *En route* to Laish, the small force stopped at Micah's estate. The original scouts mentioned to the rest that Micah had a priest and all the requisite religious accessories. They encouraged the fighters to _____ the idols and the priest.
 - b. (18:15-21) The Danites convinced the Levite to go with them, saying, *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 _____ and a family in Israel?* The Levite heartily agreed with their logic.

APPLICATION → Matthew Henry said, "If ten shekels won him (as bishop Hall expresses it), eleven would lose him; for what can hold those that have made shipwreck of a good conscience? *The hireling flees because he is a _____.*"²

- c. (18:22-26) Micah tried to intervene with a much smaller force, but he knew he was no match for the Danite war party, so he returned home emptyhanded.
- d. (18:27-31) The Danites conquered Laish and renamed the city *Dan*. They installed the Levite and his idols as their religious leader and his syncretic paganism as their religious identity. At the end of the story, we learn the Levite's name: _____, son of Gershom, son of Manasseh.

CONCLUSION → The spiritual condition of Israel had sunk low indeed. Entire tribes were devoting themselves to pagan systems. When every man does that which was right in his own eyes, society goes from bad to worse, as we will discover in the next story.

Answer Key: Key word(s): right • 1. a. 1,100; LORD; → syncretism; c. chapel; d. retaliation • 2. a. priest; b. ten-shekel; → whirlwind • 3. Amorite; a. Micah's; → reprove • 4. a. steal; b. tribe; → hireling; d. Jonathan

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 366.