

Jonathan – The Compromising Levite: The Danites and Jonathan (Judges 18:1-31)

Judges 17:6 In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

<p>¹ In those days <i>there was</i> no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them.</p> <p>² So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, "Go, search the land." So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.</p>	<p>1. The Danite Spies Come to Micah's House</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The continued condemnation b. The Danites were seeking an inheritance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not where they were supposed to be <p style="margin-left: 20px;">Joshua 19:40-41 The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to their families. ⁴¹ And the territory of their inheritance was Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh...</p> c. The Danites come to Ephraim <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Micah's house • They lodged there
<p>³ While they <i>were</i> at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. They turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this <i>place</i>? What do you have here?"</p> <p>⁴ He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest."</p> <p>⁵ So they said to him, "Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous." ⁶ And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD <i>be</i> with you on your way."</p>	<p>2. The Danite Spies Inquire of Micah's Priest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. They recognize the Levite b. They question the Levite c. The Levite Answers d. They Ask the Levite to Inquire of God <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want a blessing on their venture • They do not tell the Levite he is wrong e. The Levite answers them <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He tells them what they want to hear
<p>⁷ So the five men departed and went to Laish. They saw the people who <i>were</i> there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. <i>There were</i> no rulers in the land who might put <i>them</i> to shame for anything. They <i>were</i> far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone.</p> <p>⁸ Then <i>the spies</i> came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brethren said to them, "What <i>is</i> your <i>report</i>?"</p> <p>⁹ So they said, "Arise, let us go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it <i>is</i> very good. <i>Would you do</i> nothing? Do not hesitate to go, <i>and</i> enter to possess the land.</p> <p>¹⁰ "When you go, you will come to a secure people and a large land. For God has given it into your hands, a place where <i>there is</i> no lack of anything that <i>is</i> on the earth."</p>	<p>3. The Danite Spies Give a Good Report</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The spies spy out Laish <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was a safe place • There were no strong rulers • They were isolated b. The spies give their report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Danites should attack Laish • The land is very good • It is a secure and large place <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><i>The Danites, instead of doing what was _____ , chose to do what was _____ .</i></p>
<p>¹¹ And six hundred men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war. ¹² Then they went up and encamped in Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore they call that place Mahaneh Dan to this day. There <i>it is</i>, west of Kirjath Jearim.) ¹³ And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.</p> <p>¹⁴ Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their brethren, "Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a molded image? Now therefore, consider what you should do."</p> <p>¹⁵ So they turned aside there, and came to the house of the young Levite man – to the house of Micah – and greeted him. ¹⁶ The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who <i>were</i> of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate.</p>	<p>4. The Danite Army Comes to Micah's House</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Danite army marches from Zorah and Eshtaol to Ephraim b. The spies report Micah's shrine c. The Danites decide to come to the house of Micah <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 600 Men • They stood at Micah's gate

<p>¹⁷ Then the five men who had gone to spy out the land went up. Entering there, they took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image. The priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men <i>who were</i> armed with weapons of war. ¹⁸ When these went into Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" ¹⁹ And they said to him, "Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. <i>Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?</i>" ²⁰ So the priest's heart was glad; and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image, and took his place among the people. ²¹ Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them.</p>	<p>5. The Danites Steal Micah's Idols and Priest</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The spies enter the house and take the idols The Levite "priest" was at the gate with the army He questions the Danites The Danites tell him to not question them The Danites offer a promotion The priest accepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> His heart was glad He helped to steal the idols The army departed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They put the children livestock and goods in the front of the army
<p>²² When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who <i>were</i> in the houses near Micah's house gathered together and overtook the children of Dan. ²³ And they called out to the children of Dan. So they turned around and said to Micah, "What ails you, that you have gathered such a company?" ²⁴ So he said, "You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, 'What ails you?' " ²⁵ And the children of Dan said to him, "Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives of your household!" ²⁶ Then the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they <i>were</i> too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.</p>	<p>6. Micah Confronts the Danites</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The men from Micah's house pursued and overtook the men of Dan The Danites question Micah Micah answers The Danites command Micah not to pursue this matter. Micah retreats to his home
<p>²⁷ So they took <i>the things</i> Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and went to Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. ²⁸ <i>There was</i> no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no ties with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth Rehob. So they rebuilt the city and dwelt there. ²⁹ And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly <i>was</i> Laish.</p>	<p>7. The Danites Conquer Laish</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Danites took Micah's idols and priest to Laish They attacked Laish The people of Laish had no one to deliver them The Danites rebuilt the city and dwelt there. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They named the city Dan <p>Josh 19:47 And the border of the children of Dan went beyond these, because the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem and took it; and they struck it with the edge of the sword, took possession of it, and dwelt in it. They called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.</p>
<p>³⁰ Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. ³¹ So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.</p>	<p>8. The Danites Set Up Micah's Idols</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Danites set up a worship site for the idols The Levite's identity revealed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonathan – Moses' grandson He and his sons served as priests to Dan The true place of worship was at Shiloh

"When God's people disregard God's authority and instruction, they may become indistinguishable from those around them." (Way, K. C. (2016). *OT217 Interpreting Judges*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.)

- 1. When we disobey God, it becomes easier to _____ to disobey. Obedience takes _____ effort. How are you striving to be obedient to God?**
- 2. God's way is often not the _____ way. Obedience takes commitment and strength. Are you seeking to do what is easiest or are you seeking to do what is right?**
- 3. Parents have a _____ to teach their children and pass the truth on to them. (Deut. 4:9-10; 6:4-12; Prov 22:6; 6:4). While parents are not responsible for their children's actions, we are commanded to train them. Are you taking your responsibility to train your children seriously? What does that look like? Children, are you paying attention to the teaching your parents are giving to you? _____ is the child's duty...**

From *Hearts of Iron, Feet of Clay*, by Gary Inrig, © 1979. Moody Press, Chicago. pp.277-279

Judges 18:1 states that the tribe of Dan “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.” We are not to understand from that statement that Dan had been omitted when Joshua divided up the land. Joshua 19 makes it clear that their assigned portion was between Ephraim and Judah, stretching out to the Mediterranean. Dan had refused to trust God by driving out the Amorites. As a result, Judges 1:34 indicates that Dan was forced into the hills and reduced to living in two towns.

Dan was left with two choices. As a tribe, they could repent of their unbelief and trust God to keep His Word as they entered into battle against their enemies. That was God’s will. Or they could look for a new area, a comfortable place where the natives were unprepared, undefended, and vulnerable to a sneak attack.

Dan chose the easy place and the easy way. They found it far to the north in Laish, a quiet area colonized by some Phoenicians, who were isolated from any allies. God had called Israel to war, and Dan had refused to fight His battle. But it was not because they were committed to peace. They were dedicated to ease. Why fight Philistines when you can blitz Laish? Why stand when you can run?

Dan’s love of ease went hand in hand with their turning to idols. The five spies did not go to Shiloh to discover the will of God. They went to Micah’s shrine and hired a priest. ***They knew what the living God wanted, but they wanted a man-made god who would fit their life-style without making any demands.*** That is why, before they ever attacked Laish, they seized Micah’s idols and set up Jonathan to be their priest.

There is no greater danger faced by North American Christians than the love of ease. It is so tempting to carve out a Laish for ourselves—a quiet little island of peace where we can live in affluence and forget all about the needy world outside, and the enemies of the gospel, and the radical claims of Jesus Christ on our lives. Why fight when we can sleep? Why sacrifice when we can settle down?

One thing is obvious. ***If you want to live in Laish, you must become an idol-worshiper.*** No consistent New Testament Christian can live a life of ease. No lover of the cross can retire from God’s mission in the world. ***If you want to settle down into life as a comfortable Christian, casually unconcerned about the need of men and women and the call of God, you are going to have to serve an idol.***

We need to see the outcome of Dan’s commitment to easy living. In their immediate crusade, they were very successful. In verses 27-31, we see them overwhelming the people of Laish, burning the city and rebuilding a new city. Then they live a life of ease in northern Israel with their own priesthood and their own idolatrous shrine.

It looked like everything had worked out beautifully for Dan. However, ***you do not always read the harvest of your sins immediately.*** There are two things we need to know. In the book of 1 Chronicles, when the list of the tribes and families in Israel is given, Dan is the only tribe which is totally ignored. They had vanished into obscurity, probably because of intermarriage with the Philistines. ***Dan did not take what God had given to them, and they took what God had not given them. In the process, they lost all that they had.***

We can take the process one step further. In Revelation 7, we are introduced to the 144,000 Hebrew believers who will carry out a special ministry for God in the Tribulation, after the rapture of the church. In that list of tribes, Dan is not mentioned. They refused to follow God’s mission for them in the land of Israel, and they chose the easy way. Therefore, God refused to give them this special ministry of blessing for Him in the future.

[All emphasis has been added.]