

# BIBLE BRIEFING

## “Micah’s Ministerial Mess”

JUDGES 17 & 18

### Introduction

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As far as I have researched it, it all began with Micah – in Judges 17 & 18. He formed his own ordination committee and appointed his own personal priest. It was Micah’s Ministerial Mess.

Judges 17:1 Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah.

Judges 17:2 And he said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears - here *is* the silver with me; I took it.”

And his mother said, “*May you be blessed by the LORD, my son!*”

Micah ripped-off his mother. However, knowing that his mom had placed a curse on whoever took the money, Micah confessed to the theft.

It seems somewhat common to pronounce blessings or curses in the Old Testament. We shouldn’t think of it as some kind of hex or spell or voodoo curse.

All the same, we should not really pronounce curses. The Christian is encouraged to let **no** corrupt communication proceed from his or her mouth; to speak **as if** you were the oracle of God; to use speech that is **seasoned with grace**. Our words should be *redemptive, restorative, healing, and helpful*.

Having confessed to her, his mom blessed Micah. She was undoubtedly happy to have her money returned. But, as far as we can tell, Micah was not disciplined in any way for his actions. The seriousness of what he had done was overlooked.

Parents can be too quick to excuse their children's bad behavior; too quick to dismiss it as insignificant. They don't like to see their kids have to suffer any consequences for their actions. I'm not suggesting that you should be unforgiving when there is confession and repentance. But often there must still be consequences.

Instead of suffering any consequences, Micah's mom indulged him:

Judges 17:3 So when he had returned the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you."

Judges 17:4 Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah.

Micah's mom was confused, to say the least. She believed that the money belonged to the Lord... *But she used it to make two idols for her son!*

Wanting what is 'best' for our kids, we can purchase them idols. For example: We can purchase them a four-wheeled idol. It's amazing to me how many kids, who aren't even old enough to drive on their own, yet they already have a brand new vehicle.

Just about anything can be an idol. Be cautious about the things you give your kids. Don't set them up to fall into sin by giving them things they either haven't earned, or don't really need.

Just to summarize: Micah's mom not only refused to discipline him, she rewarded him.

Judges 17:5 The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

Micah grew up and, as a [man](#), continued down the path of idolatry his mom had set him upon. His idols needed a [shrine](#). The [ephod](#) was the garment of a priest. He selected one of his sons to wear the ephod as the priest of their own private religious system.

These Old Testament accounts are accurate and historical and literal. They also hold subtleties that speak to every generation of readers. We may not know anyone who has built a shrine and then made their son a priest by giving him an ephod. But that doesn't mean we don't sometimes immerse our children in a way of life that puts visiting God's household on an equal par with their activities in the world.

Instead of an ephod, kids might wear a uniform. Hear me out on this. Everyone needs to examine for themselves the extent of involvement in activities that take you away from regular fellowship. I can't tell you that you are right or wrong for missing Church services for other activities. But I should at least be able to bring it up. And you should be confident that what you are doing is something that is pleasing to the Lord.

A lot of youth activities take place on Sunday. It didn't used to be that way. Sunday was set-aside for Church. Then, it was just Sunday morning that was avoided by leagues. Now, Sunday morning is a regular time to play tournaments. The general public used to avoid Sunday mornings, now they don't. Christians now seem to be following that trend.

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

Not only was there no king, sitting on a throne; they were not recognizing God as their King. Either God is your King, or you do what is right in your own estimation. It's scary to think of the behaviors mankind has justified in our history – things that at the time seemed right, but were horribly, awfully wrong and evil.

The Holy Spirit injects this commentary here to remind us to base our decisions upon God's ways as discovered in God's Word. As I just said: You should be confident you are pursuing a path that God has set before you.

Judges 17:7 Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he was a Levite, and was staying there.

Judges 17:8 The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find *a place*. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

Judges 17:9 And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?"

So he said to him, "I *am* a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find *a place* to stay."

Judges 17:10 Micah said to him, "Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten *shekels* of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance." So the Levite went in.

According to God's Law, only sons of Aaron, from the tribe of Levi, could serve as priests. This Levite was not qualified.

Judges 17:11 Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him.

Judges 17:12 So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah.

The Levite was Micah's priest, and he became *like one of his sons*. I suggest to you that, since he was both, he did neither very well. It's hard to know which hat you are wearing. In my own life, there are times when I think I am talking to someone as their friend, only to discover years later they received my words as counsel from their pastor. Vice-versa, I have sometimes sought to counsel or correct someone as pastor, only to be blown-off as just a friend.

Judges 17:13 Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!"

Micah had a superstitious relationship with the Lord. Having a genuine Levite was like a good-luck charm. The Lord was some distant force to him – someone or some thing that needed to be appeased.

The story continues, with a twist:

Judges 18:1 In those days *there was* 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.

The portion of land that had been given to the descendants of Dan was in the south. We read in chapter one how the Danites were unable to defeat the Canaanites dwelling in their inheritance. So they make a mass migration to find an easier place to settle.

We can easily tire of the place God has called us to possess. The battles seem too hard – even impossible. The only real question to ask and answer is this: Are you in the place God has placed you? If so, you must stay and fight the battles, using spiritual weapons and resources.

The Danites left for easier digs:

Judges 18:2 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.

Judges 18:3 While they *were* 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 *place*? What do you have here?”

Judges 18:4 He said to them, “Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest.”

The young Levite revealed his true motives by his answer. He emphasized his hiring by Micah – not any call of God on his life. We would call him a *hirling* – someone looking for the best salary, benefits, retirement, and the like. **Trouble with a person like that is they are always susceptible to a better offer somewhere else.** Neither they or you can be sure they are committed to serving.

Judges 18:5 So they said to him, “Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous.”

Judges 18:6 And the priest said to them, “Go in peace. The presence of the LORD *be* with you on your way.”

This is a surface-kind of religion that we must be careful not to practice by accident. Don’t automatically tell people that everything will be OK; or that their decisions will be blessed.

Judges 18:7 So the five men departed and went to Laish. They saw the people who *were* there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. *There were* no rulers in the land who might put *them* to shame for anything. They *were* far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone.

They seemingly had it made, in that they did whatever they wanted without any consequences. They were their own law, and so lived lawlessly and indulged themselves. Their motto was probably, *As long as no one gets hurt*. We'll see in a moment that government would have been good for them – because they are going to get wiped-out by the Danites.

Judges 18:8 Then *the spies* came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brethren said to them, “What *is* your *report*?”

Judges 18:9 So they said, “Arise, let us go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it *is* very good. *Would you do* nothing? Do not hesitate to go, *and* enter to possess the land.

Judges 18:10 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 *there is* no lack of anything that *is* on the earth.”

They equated the ease of their effort with the leading of God. **God isn't always into easy!**

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

Judges 18:12 Then they went up and encamped in Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore they call that place Mahaneh Dan to this day. There *it is*, west of Kirjath Jearim.)

Judges 18:13 And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.

Wait a minute! I thought they were on their way to Laish? Detour!

Judges 18:14 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.”

Judges 18:15 So they turned aside there, and came to the house of the young Levite man - to the house of Micah - and greeted him.

Judges 18:16 The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate.

They were going to make Micah an offer he couldn't refuse! They wanted his priest for themselves.

Thinking back on the initial meeting between the young Levite and the Danites: Could he have been posturing to get hired by them?

Judges 18:17 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 *who were* armed with weapons of war.

Judges 18:18 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?"

The five men of the pulpit search committee confiscated the things the young Levite would need in his new job. Then they closed their negotiations:

Judges 18:19 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. *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?"

The answer is, *It's better to be in the will of God!*

Judges 18:20 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.

He had just been promoted. He probably thought God was somehow honoring him. In reality, he was a hireling who did not tell people the things that they most needed to hear.

It's more than just sad when a minister uses people to gain greater success for himself. I'm not saying that every pastor who moves on to another ministry is in sin. *But some are!* It's a matter of the heart that is worthy of self-examination.

Judges 18:21 Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them.

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

Judges 18:23 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?"

Judges 18:24 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?’”

Judges 18:25 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!”

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

Even though he had been wrong in setting up this young Levite as a priest, remember that Micah loved him as a son. This hurt deeply.

Relationships are so important – much more important than the outward trapping of success. The Levite might not have thought he had much of a choice; but we read that he was actually **glad** to go. One relationship, as a son, was better than hundreds as a stranger.

Judges 18:27 So they took *the things* 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.

Judges 18:28 *There was* 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.

Judges 18:29 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 *was* Laish.

You need to have **ties** with God’s people. Enemies *are* coming – spiritual enemies – and you need to be a part of God’s people. So many people – many who consider themselves Christians – have little or no formal contact with the Church. Sooner or later, they get overwhelmed. It would be so much less overwhelming if they were in the midst of an army of saints!

Judges 18:30 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.

Judges 18:31 So they set up for themselves Micah’s carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

Micah’s house was only about a two-hour walk to Shiloh, where God was supposed to be worshipped. How hard is it, really, for folks to get plugged-in to a Church? Or to attend on a regular basis?



## Conclusion

It's not usually a hardship, so much as it is a matter of preference and priorities.