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Judges 17

(2020)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Judges 17

Topics.

- Micah stole his mother's 1,100 pieces of silver.
- Micah places a carved image in his house and ordains his son a priest.
- A Levite comes to Micah's house and Micah asks him to be his priest.
- Micah ordains the Levite to be his priest.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The Israelites forgot the LORD, and worshipped false gods, so the LORD removed His protection and blessings from them, which resulted in them being oppressed by their enemies and crying to the LORD for deliverance. In answer to their prayer the LORD raised up twelve Judges to deliver them, but not Judges as we think of Judges today or preachers of righteousness, but rather military leaders and fighters, that led Israel to triumph over their enemies and delivered them from their wicked behaviour. Most suppose that Samuel (considered by some to be the last Judge) wrote some parts of the book, while other parts were written at a later time by someone of his generation or a later generation. The primary purpose of the Judges is best articulated in the following words, "The LORD raised up Judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them. (Judges 2:16). For an overview of the entire book see the title:

- Overview of the Book of Judges (at the beginning of the index).

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

The five lords of the Philistines each offered Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver to seduce Samson and discover the secret to his strength. She discovered his secret, told Philistines, they blinded him and put him in prison. Later he was placed between two pillars, and called upon the LORD, his strength returned, he crushed the pillars and brought the house of Dagon down killing over 3000 Philistines. Samson ruled Israel twenty-two years and was buried.

MICAH STOLE HIS MOTHERS 1,100 PIECES OF SILVER

JUDGES 17:1-2

- **Judges 17:1-2:** There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah.
² And he said to his mother, "The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it." And his mother said, "Blessed be my son by the LORD."

INTRODUCTION: the following five chapters give a record of Israel's history in or about the time of the judges, it is probably given here so it would not interrupt, the flow of the story so far. These final five chapters show:

1. How idolatry came into the tribe of Ephraim. (Chapter 17).
2. How idolatry was introduced into the tribe of Dan. (Chapter 18).

3. How a few Benjamites committed a most barbarous and shameful act. (Chapter 19).
4. How the tribe of Benjamin was totally destroyed except for six hundred men, because they tolerated the men of Benjamin to commit a horrific and shameful act. (Chapter 20).
5. How the tribe of Benjamin was kept from being totally extinguished. (Chapter 21).

The following three facts show that the things mentioned here, and in the following four chapters, did not happen in the order in which they are recorded here; but rather sometime after the death of the elders (Judges 2:7).that out lived Joshua.

The first: is the fact the place called Mahaneh-dan, or the camp of Dan (Judges 13:25), was given this name, because of what was as done in (Judges 18:12).

The second: is because the Danites had not yet gotten all their inheritance (Judges 18:1), which over three hundred years after Joshua's death is not credible.

The third: is the fact that Phinehas the son of Eleazar was priest at this time (Judges 20:28), which means if the following events had taken place after Samson's death, he would have been about three hundred and fifty years old.

- The only point of contact with the previous history of Samson is, that the focus is still concerned with the tribe of Dan.

Mount Ephraim: refers to the hill-district of Ephraim.

Whose name was Micah: the name Micah means, "Who is like Jehovah," which implies he had been raised by godly parents. Other than his name and the fact he lived in the hill country of Ephraim we are not told anymore about him, except what is recorded in this story.

Micah and his mother: the story is condensed, leaving many details, such as how Micah's mother acquired the money to speculation. Their intention to honour God may have been sincere, but their faith was blended with ignorance, superstition and delusion. Under the law the course they pursued and practised, subjected such worshippers to the penalty of death.

Eleven hundred shekels of silver: this is the same amount that each of the lords of the Philistines promised to give Delilah (Judges 16:5), because of this, some have thought, that this woman was Delilah; but this is a mistake; for this woman lived long before the times of Samson and Delilah. We are not told how Micah's Mother could have amassed such a large sum of money.

The curse that was uttered: (v2) when Micah's mother found that her 1,100 silver shekels had been taken, she uttered a curse upon the thief who had stolen it, Micah, heard this, and told her he was the one that took it, perhaps for one of the following two reasons:

1. Hearing his mother's curse, he was convicted which caused him to repent and confess.
2. Hearing his mother's curse, he being somewhat superstitious feared her curse would come upon him.

Upon hearing her son's confession, his mother blesses him, that her curse would be turned into a blessing upon him, no doubt happy to hear that her money was still within her reach.

JUDGES 17:3-4

- **Judges 17:3-4:** And he (Micah) restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, “I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you.”⁴ So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image (graven image in KJV) and a metal image (a molten image in KJV). And it was in the house of Micah.

I dedicate the silver to the LORD: (v3) it appears that Micah told his mother he would return the 1,100 pieces of silver to her, and upon hearing this, she told him that she would dedicate it to the LORD so that he could make two images, one carved and one of silver, but when Micah returned the 1,100 pieces of silver to her, rather than give the full amount to a silversmith to make the images, she only gave him 200 pieces and kept the remaining 900 pieces of silver.

Some have thought there was only one image, that is referred to as being carved image (graven image in KJV) and a metal image (molten image in KJV), because after the silver was melted, and cast into a mould, its final form was shaped with a graving tool, but this is a mistake, for the following verse shows that there were two set up in a room in the house of Micah:

- The five men who had gone to scout out the land went up and entered (Micah’s house) and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image. (Judges 18:17).

Following are two reasons Micah’s mother may have kept the 900 pieces of silver:

1. To have an ephod made for a priest or other things relating to worship.
2. To support herself and for her own use.

The fact Micah rejoiced when he had a priest from the tribe of Levi (v13), indicates that neither he or his mother intended to utterly forsake the true God, but intended to worship God by the images they had made, in the same way that Jeroboam later set up images for Israel to stand before and worship God.

- So, Rehoboam the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”²⁹ And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. (I Kings 12:28-27)

It is also likely that Micah had the images made so that he and his mother would not need to be continually travelling to Shiloh to worship the LORD (especially since they were living in very dangerous times), but could worship Him by these images.

A graven and a molten image: images were made from of all sorts of materials, such as wood, brass, stone and clay etc., in the book of Daniel, Israel is rebuked for praising the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know. (Dan. 5:23).

Throughout Old Testament Scripture we often read of faithful prophets and kings commanding Israel to break down their pillars and Asherim, burn their carved images with fire, and chop down their carved images that their craftsmen had made of their gods, so that the names of these gods would be utterly destroyed from the land of Israel (Deut. 7:5) (Deut. 12:3-4) for they were not to worship the LORD their God in this way. Since only two hundred shekels were given to the making of Micah’s

images, it is very likely one image was carved from a block of wood or stone and then plated over with silver, while the other image may have been moulded from a cheaper metal or clay and then covered over with silver. This type of superstitious worship was against God's law, and utterly forbidden.

- You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them. (Exodus 20:3-5).

It appears that Micah and his mother had no intention of forsaking the true God, but rather desired to worship Him by these images, that they had a craftsman make for the use of their household, perhaps so that he and his family, would no longer need to travel to Shiloh to worship at the tabernacle during such dangerous times. However, regardless of their motive bowing and worshipping before an idol was totally forbidden.

MICAH ORDAINS HIS SON A PRIEST

JUDGES 17:5-6

- **Judges 17:5-6:** And the man Micah had a shrine (house of gods in KJV), and he made an ephod and household gods (teraphim in KJV), and ordained (consecrated in KJV) one of his sons, who became his priest. ⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

A teraphim: the word teraphim is mostly translated as images, idols and household gods. Some suppose it was some type of domestic image (similar to the Urim and Thumin) that was used when seeking an answer from the LORD. it is very likely Micah proposed to have some type of oracle in his house, whereby he might consult the LORD about future things, without having to travel to the tabernacle at Shiloh.

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An ephod: was a well-known and important part of the priestly garments:

- These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. (Exod. 28:4).

The mention of the ephod, that Micah had made, maybe put forward for the rest of the priestly garments.

Micah had a shrine (house of gods in KJV): this carries the idea, that Micah had made, or at least intended to make, in his own house, an imitation of the House of God in Shiloh (i.e., the tabernacle). We know that Micah had set up at least two images in this shrine/chapel and a teraphim, which was another type of idol, and not only made his son a priest, but also fitted him out in the robes the priests wore, it could be rightly stated, he had set up a domestic chapel, for his families own private religious use.

Consecrated one of his sons: to become his priest, one of the reasons for this would have been the fact the Levites at this time neglected their sacred duties, and were in a corrupt state, therefore the people neglected them, but this kind of priesthood was condemned. (Num. 16:40) (Num. 3:10) (Num. 18:7). Micah would have known enough of the law to know that making one of his own sons his priest was against the law of Moses, which shows how far he had fallen from the law, and into superstition, and how true the following words were, "Everyone did what was right in their own eyes" (v6).

There was no king in Israel: (v6) this statement is mentioned four times in the last five chapters of this book (Judges 17:6) (Judges 18:1) (Judges 19:1) (Judges 21:25), which shows that that the author of these final chapters lived after the establishment of the kingly government of Israel.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes: (v6), meaning they did what suited them and what they pleased, and not what pleased God, for there was no one to call them to account, which is why Micah was able to establish his own private worship centre in his home, totally against the law of God. This statement may be added here to show that there was no authority of a king, prince or ruler to prevent Micah setting up such an idolatrous shrine and lawless practise.

A LEVITE COMES TO MICAH'S HOUSE

JUDGES 17:7-9

- **Judges 17:7-9:** Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. ⁸ And the man departed from the town of Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn where he could find a place. And as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim (Mount Ephraim) to the house of Micah. ⁹ And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" And he said to him, "I am a Levite of Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to sojourn where I may find a place."

Bethlehem Judah: called this to distinguish it from the Bethlehem in Zebulun. In later times, when Bethlehem became famous as David's birthplace, and Bethlehem Zebulun had diminished into insignificance, the descriptive addition of Judah is often dropped.

A young man of Bethlehem of the family of Judah: (v7) the fact it is stated, "he sojourned in Bethlehem, shows that Bethlehem was not his permanent place of dwelling. The young man's father was of the tribe of Levi, however, that does not necessarily mean his mother was, it's very likely she was of the tribe of Judah which might explain why he was a sojourner in Bethlehem, which was not a Levitical city. The expression, "of the family of Judah," means he was dwelling with the tribe of Judah, not that he was born of the tribe, for he was a Levite. It matters little if his mother was a native of Bethlehem for in Jewish genealogies the mother's side is not regarded. Men of the tribe of Levi often became connected to another tribe, as Aaron did (Ex 6:23), by marrying a woman of another tribe. It appears that this young Levite belonged to the tribe of Judah, by his mother's side, which accounts for his being in Bethlehem, not one of the Levitical cities. The fact these were days when everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes, and the Levitical priesthood was neglected and in disarray, may explain why this young man was travelling around the countryside.

Where he could find a place: (v8) meaning find a place of employment that would support him, for Levites totally depended upon the tithes and offerings the people gave to the priesthood, but at this time the people were not bringing their tithes and offerings to the priesthood, because it was in disarray and corrupt, which this young man's life shows many (perhaps all) had to seek their livelihood elsewhere. This gives us a vivid picture of the state of the lives of many Levites at this time.

He came to the house of Micah: (v8), it is possible he may have heard a rumour that Micah was a wealthy and a hospitable man, and had set up a worship shrine/chapel in his home, and since he was a Levite thought there could be a possibility of Micah employing him for his personal priest. Considering this was a time when everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes, and the Levitical priesthood was in disarray, it is almost certain there would be many other Levites doing the same thing.

Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" (v9), a natural question to ask, for the culture of hospitality was such, that travellers would be invited in for a meal, and even offered a night's lodging. One of the reasons for this, was that they had no news-papers, radios and internet, so the only way of finding out what was happening, was to invite strangers in and enjoy long conversations. The young man tells Micah, he was a Levite travelling from Bethlehem to find a place, meaning to find a place where he could permanently lodge and support himself.

JUDGES 17:10-11

- **Judges 17:10-11:** And Micah said to him, “Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes and your living.” And the Levite went in. ¹¹ And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons.

The title “father” is used here as a term of endearment and was given to spiritual authorities as the following verses show:

- And Elisha saw it (Elijah going up in a whirlwind) and he cried, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” And he saw him no more. (2 Kings 2:12).

Here the expression, “My father,” is an expression that shows that the one calling them father looks up to them with great respect as their superior.

- But his (Elisha’s) servants came near and said to him, “My father, it is a great word the prophet (Elijah) has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” (2 Kings 5:13).

Here the expression, “My father,” is an expression that shows that those calling him father look to him as being a man that is superior to them and a man that treats them with kindness.

- As soon as the king of Israel saw them (the Syrians that had been blinded), he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I strike them down?” (2 Kings 6:21).

Here the expression, “My father,” is an expression of exaltation for a man who had brought about a supernatural favour.

- I will clothe him (the LORD’S servant Eliakim) with your robe (Shebna’s), and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. (Isaiah 22:21).

Here the expression, “father,” carries the idea of man having a caring nature and who has authority over a nation,

From these verses we learn that the title, “father” was given to spiritual authorities, and carries the idea of, superiority, endearment, kindness, caring, exaltation, great respect and great authority (especially over a nation). (2 Kings 2:12) (2 Kings 5:13) (2 Kings 6:21) (Isaiah 22:21).

Be to me a father and a priest: (v10) meaning a spiritual father, a teacher to instruct him in the knowledge of divine things and to consult for him by his teraphim and a priest to offer sacrifices for him. Prophets were called fathers, and their disciples their sons;

- As soon as the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I strike them down? Shall I strike them down?” (2 Kings 6:21).
- Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash king of Israel went down to him and wept before him, crying, “My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!” (2 Kings 13:14).
- I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. (Isaiah 22:21).

I will give you ten pieces of silver: (v10) Micah offers to supply the young Levite, with room, food and clothes, these would include ordinary clothes to wear daily, and, robes fit for a priest to wear and perform his priestly functions, and pay him ten pieces of silver a year. Some scholars estimate that a silver shekel was around one to four days wages

depending upon the era, the nation and the country, which means ten pieces would be at best forty days wages, which is a very small salary for a priest, however, when it's taken into account, he never had to pay rent or buy food and clothing, it was a fair offer, especially during these troublesome times. Added to this, is the fact it was unlawful for Micah, being of the tribe of Ephraim, to ordain a man to the priesthood, and it was wrong for the young man, to accept such a position, because though every priest was a Levite, (i.e., of the tribe of Levi), not every Levite had a right to be a priest, for only those who were of the family of Aaron were to be ordained priests. Further to this, priests were only to perform their duties in the House of God, not in people's private homes, considering these facts, the wages Micah offered him was probably a good deal, especially considering at this time there would be many Levites searching for work.

The Levite was content: (v11) being influenced with the common superstition and idolatry of the times the young Levite was content to accept Micah's offer and invitation to dwell with him and be his priest.

The young man became to him like one of his sons: (v11) Micah was so satisfied and happy with the Levites service, he treated him with the same level of kindness and affection, that a father would show toward their own son.

MICAH ORDAINS THE LEVITE TO BE HIS PRIEST

JUDGES 17:12-13

- **Judges 17:12-13:** And Micah ordained (consecrated in KJV) the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. ¹³ Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest."

Ordained: means to make or ordain an individual a priest or minister. It is the process by which individuals are consecrated, meaning set apart and elevated from the laity class (congregation) to the clergy (priesthood and ministers), who are then authorized to perform various religious rites and ceremonies.

Consecration: literally means, "association with the sacred." People, places, and things can be consecrated, it is the action of:

- Making or declaring something sacred, such as declaring bread and wine to represent the body and blood of Christ.
- Ordaining (i.e., dedicating) a person to a special purpose, office or service.

Micah ordained (consecrated in KJV) the Levite: (v11), to be his personal priest. This was an unlawful act of presumption by them both. For it was not right for Micah to consecrate a priest, because he was of the tribe of Ephraim, not Levi). Neither was it right for the young man, to accept such a position, because though every priest was a Levite, (i.e., of the tribe of Levi), not every Levite had a right to be a priest, for only those who were of the family of Aaron were to be ordained priests. Added to this, priests were only to perform their duties in the House of God, not in people's private homes. Instead of Micah's son, who he had consecrated to act as priest, performing the priestly duties, the young Levite now replaces him, for he was of the tribe of Levi, whereas Micah's son was of the tribe of Ephraim.

The LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest: (v13) Micah, believed that a Levite coming to his door was a sign that God would favour him and his images, and now that he had a Levite priest, God would bless him. This shines a spotlight upon Micah's superstitious and irrational mind his and illogical belief system.

SNAPSHOT: It is a principal of life, that when something unexpectedly comes across the path of those who trust in their own superstitious and illogical stories created in their imagination of the mind that supports their delusional belief system, they will embrace it with gladness and without question, believing it is of God and that He is pleased with them.

I know that the LORD will prosper me (do me good in KJV): (v13), worshipping images that were against God's command, in a forbidden place, by a priest illegally appointed, all the while believing he was pleasing God, shines a spotlight upon Micah spiritual blindness and superstition.

Prosperity is a sign of God's blessing: some say that Micah had in his mind, when he stated, "the LORD will prosper me (do me good in KJV), that the people, seeing that a Levite was serving in his shrine/chapel would come with greater confidence, and with offerings that would bring him considerable gain, and in this way, he would greatly prosper. Even today, some covetous ministers whose love for money is greater than their love for God, who desire to enrich themselves teach their congregations that prosperity is a sign of God's blessing, and that the more they give to their church the more God will prosper them, concerning this the apostle Paul wrote:

- People who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagine that godliness is a means of gain, but godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Tim. 6:1-21)

SNAPSHOT: Micah's shrine/chapel was a mixture of the worship of God, and of the worship of images, this chapter gives us:

- Insight into the utter neglect of the law of Moses as it is recorded in the Book of Leviticus
- A picture of the lawlessness of the times.
- The influence of ignorance and superstition from a very early period.
- By superstitious ignorance idolaters persuade themselves of God's favour, when in actual fact he loathes them and detests their practices and worship.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.