



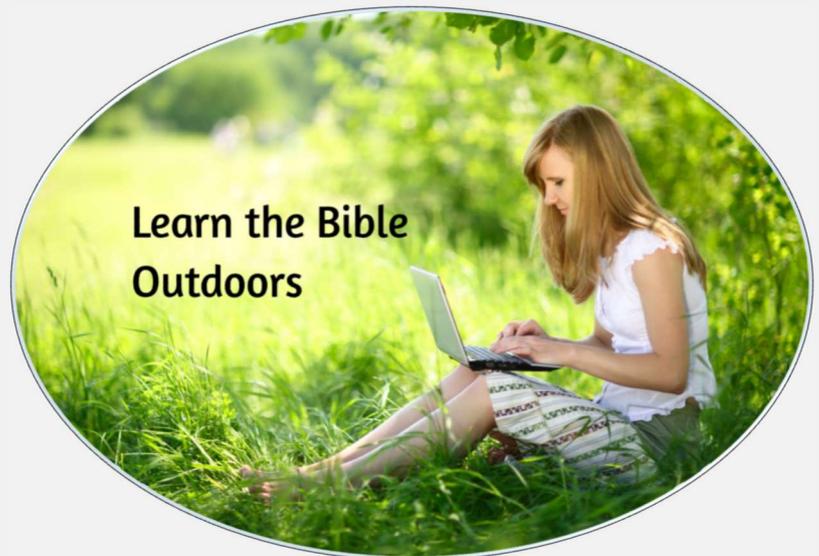
# WELCOME TO BIBLE HOUSE OF GRACE

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## Judges 18

(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 18

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### Topics.

- Five men of Dan leave Zorah and Eshtaol to spy out the land.
- After seeing the city of Laish the five men return to Zorah and Eshtaol.
- The people of Dan travel to Laish and stop at the house of Micah.
- The Danites steal Micah's gods and his Levite priest goes with them.
- The people of Dan take possession of Laish and rename the city Dan.
- The Danites set Micah's carved images up in the city.

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF JUDGES

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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:

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### THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER

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Micah paid a craftsman to make two images and set them up in a room in his house as a shrine/chapel, and ordained his son a priest. Sometime later a Levite came to his door and Micah asked him to be his priest, the Levite accepts the invitation and Micah ordains him to be his personal priest.

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### FIVE MEN OF THE TRIBE OF DAN LODGE IN MICAHS HOUSE

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#### JUDGES 18:1-2

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- **Judges 18:1-2:** In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the people of Dan was seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in, for until then no inheritance among the tribes of Israel had fallen to them.<sup>2</sup> So the people of Dan sent five able men from the whole number of their tribe, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to explore it. And they said to them, "Go and explore the land." And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

The statement, "in those days there was no king in Israel," is stated in these last five chapters, with the added words, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes), 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. This no doubt is one of the reasons Micah was able to establish his own private worship centre in his home (see the previous chapter), totally against the law of God. The statement is most likely repeated to emphasise the reasons such misdeeds, wrongdoing and irregularities occurred at this time.

The events of these last five chapters seem to have taken place not long after Joshua's death, most likely, between his death and the death of the elders who survived him and the time of Othniel, who was the first judge God raised up for Israel.

**The people of Dan were seeking an inheritance:** (v1), the Danites had a territory assigned them as did the other tribes, their allotted inheritance is described in the following verses:

- The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the people of Dan, according to their clans.<sup>41</sup> And the territory of its inheritance included Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh,<sup>42</sup> Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah,<sup>43</sup> Elon, Timnah, Ekron,<sup>44</sup> Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath,<sup>45</sup> Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon,<sup>46</sup> and Me-jarkon and Rakkon with the territory over against Joppa. (Joshua 19:40-46).

The inheritance had been assigned to them, but because of the opposition of the Philistines and the Amorites they were not able to possess all of it. Their failure to possess it, is somewhat unexpected, when it is remembered, during their time in the wilderness they were the strongest of all the tribes, numbering 62,700 and were allotted the smallest portion of land of all the tribes, which means they would also have had the least amount of opposition to overcome. Their failure to possess their inheritance was probably due to the following three reasons:

1. Their apathy and a love for luxury and pleasure.
2. The lack of help from the other tribes.
3. The opposition of the Philistines and Amorites.

For these reasons a considerable portion of their inheritance had not yet been possessed.

**The whole number of their tribe:** (v2), meaning they selected five men from the whole number of the tribe of Dan.

**Zorah and Eshtaol:** (v2) were near to each other, and were the first two cities allotted to the tribe of Dan (Joshua 19:41). Zorah was situated on the crest of a hill overlooking the valley of Sorek, which was on the border of Philistia and in the territory of the tribe of Dan. Sorek was about 23 kilometres west of Jerusalem.

**Mount Ephraim:** (v2) it would have been easier for them to pass along the Shephelah (i.e., the lowlands), but it was mostly occupied by the original inhabitants.

**They came to the house of Micah:** (v2) as the five spies travelled northward, they came to the house of Micah, and lodged with him. It is not necessary to think all five men lodged in Micah's house for it is likely there were places around or near his house where travellers who came to visit his priest and consult his gods could lodge, similar to the lodgings Israel's synagogues had for travellers and wanderers.

**In those days there was no king in Israel:** which shows that these events occurred, before the time of the monarchy. This verse is most likely repeated here to show why the Danites were able to openly practice the following evil things.

- Their consulting Micah's oracle.
- Taking away his priest and his gods.
- Setting up his graven image in the city of Dan.

By these evils' idolatry was spread in Israel, and brought on their servitude to Chushanrishathaim.

- Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. (Judges 3:8).

Othniel the first judge delivered Israel from Cushan-rishathaim oppression.

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## THE LEVITE TELLS THE MEN OF DAN THE LORD IS WITH THEM

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### JUDGES 18:3-6

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- **Judges 18:3-6:** When they were by the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. And they turned aside and said to him, “Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What is your business here?”<sup>4</sup> And he said to them, “This is how Micah dealt with me: he has hired me, and I have become his priest.”<sup>5</sup> And they said to him, “Inquire (ask counsel in KJV) of God, please, that we may know whether the journey on which we are setting out will succeed (prosperous in KJV).”<sup>6</sup> And the priest said to them, “Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the LORD.”

It is supposed that the five men knew the voice of the young Levite for one of the following reasons:

- They had been acquainted with him prior to him living with Micah.
- By dialectic differences in his language, since he was a visitor to the area.
- By hearing him performing in the shrine/chapel his service before the Micah’s gods.
- By the sound of the bells on his priestly robe (Exod. 28:35).
- By the celebration of some part of his religious duty.

Some feel that it is unreasonable to think they had known him beforehand and recognized his voice, suppose it more likely they heard him speaking prayers or giving sacred counsel in God’s name and recognised it was a priest speaking, so from curiosity went into the shrine/chapel.

**Who brought you here?** (v3), it was most natural to ask the young Levite questions for the following reasons:

- They were curious why he would have travelled from Bethlehem Judah to Micah’s house.
- They knew he was a Levite, and that as such the only place he should minister was at the tabernacle, not a private home.
- Only Levites descended from the line of Aaron could be appointed priests, not common Levites.
- They were curious how he supported himself.

The Levite tells the five men the whole story, how Micah inquired of him when he came to his door, and invited him to be his priest to offer sacrifices for his family, and consult his oracle for him, and for whoever enquired, and that Micah paid him ten shekels of silver year by year, and gave him lodgings, clothes and food and by this means he was supported.

**Inquire (ask counsel in KJV) of God:** (v6), by the ephod and teraphim, or by the images of the gods Micah’s had set up in his shrine/chapel. Blinded by superstition Micah believed he had set this sanctuary up for the worship of the true God, and not to idols, which shows how ignorant and deluded he and these Danites, where to suppose God would be pleased to be worshipped and consulted in such a manner.

**The journey on which you go is under the eye of the LORD:** (v6), after the Levite had in some superstitious manner inquired of the LORD, whether they would find a proper place to dwell and be successful in getting possession of it, the Levite answers them in a such a vague manner that

many clairvoyants do today, for he gives them no specific detail, but simply states, "Go in peace, the journey on which you go is under the eye of the LORD." Naturally if he was a true priest or prophet of God, this would mean, "God is with you and will give you success, for you are under his direction, protection and care." but, since he is a self-appointed priest, consulting before idols, no such confidence could be placed upon what he says in the name of God. Nevertheless, they did have success as the following verses show. We would be safe to suppose from this encounter that Micah and his Levite priest had led people to believe they could lawfully and safely inquire of God at their shrine/chapel as they did at the tabernacle of Shiloh.

**SNAPSHOT:** the Danites lack of indignation, offense and outrage at a Levite daring to assume the priestly duties, and acting as God's priest before man made idols, and the fact they sought counsel by him through the Ephod or teraphim, shines a spotlight upon how far they had fallen from the law of Moses and how much superstition prevailed in all parts of the land of Israel.

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## THE FIVE MEN OF DAN ARRIVE AT LAISH

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### JUDGES 18:7

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- **Judges 18:7:** Then the five men (of Dan) departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were there, how they lived in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting, lacking nothing that is in the earth and possessing wealth, and how they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone.

**Laish:** is called Leshem in (Joshua 19:47) and sometimes called el-Leddán, because it is at the source of the leddán, which is the chief stream of the Jordan river. It lay at the furthest northern border of the land of Canaan, at the foot of Mount Lebanon, near the sources of the Jordan river. It was on a round hill covered with trees, the people were secluded, the soil was rich in an abundance and variety of produce, and the inhabitants, laboured in the peaceful work of agriculture. It was later called "Dan" (Judges 18:18) and is now called Tel el-Kadi meaning, "the mound of the judge."

When the five spies discovered this northern land, they were satisfied their mission had been successful (an accomplishment of the priest's prediction), so they returned to their brethren in the south and informed them of their discovery and how easily it could be taken.

**They lived in the manner of the Sidonians (Zidonians in the KJV):** (v7) meaning they lived:

- Securely and happily and at ease among themselves.
- With little or no communication with the rest of the world.
- Independently, having no need to trade with others for their land was sufficient for them.
- Wealthy, for the land was fertile and provided an abundance of livestock, crops and fruit etc.
- Peacefully and unsuspecting of any enemy, which means they were not in alliance with any others to call on for assistance in case of an attack upon them, which obviously made them easy prey.

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## THE FIVE MEN OF DAN ARRIVE AT ZORAH AND ESHTAOL

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### JUDGES 18:8-10

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- **Judges 18:8-10:** And when they (the five men of Dan) came to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers said to them, "What do you report?"<sup>9</sup> 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 do

nothing? Do not be slow to go, to enter in and possess the land. <sup>10</sup> As soon as you go, you will come to an unsuspecting people. The land is spacious, for God has given it into your hands, a place where there is no lack of anything that is in the earth.”

The five spies returned to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol. After telling them that the land was very fertile, and good pasture land for livestock and was abounding with crops and fruits of all kinds, and how easy it would be to possess it, they then told their brethren, not to delay, but prepare for war and go up and take possession of the land.

**God has given it into your hands:** (v6), they felt confident of this for two reasons:

1. The people of the land were defenceless farmers, not soldiers and had no expectation of being attacked.
2. The priest they asked to inquire of the LORD if their journey would be successful, told them, “Go in peace, the journey on which you go is under the eye of the LORD,” (v6) and to this they gave credit that God would give them success.

**There is no lack of anything that is in the earth:** (v10), meaning, there was nothing in the whole land of Canaan, that could not be found in the land that the five spies had discovered, such as wheat and barley, vines of grapes, fig trees, pomegranates, olives, and honey, and all other necessities and conveniences of life.

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## 600 MEN OF DAN GO TO THE HOUSE OF MICAH

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### JUDGES 18:11-13

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- **Judges 18:11-13:** So 600 men of the tribe (of the family in KJV) of Dan, armed with weapons of war, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol, <sup>12</sup> and went up and encamped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. On this account that place is called Mahaneh-dan to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim. <sup>13</sup> And they passed on from there to the hill country of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.

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**Kurjath-jearim:** the name means, "city of forests," its original names were Baalah (Josh. 15:9) and Kirjath-Baal (Josh. 15:60), its modern name is, city of grapes. It was nine miles from Jerusalem, on the Jaffa Road and lay in the northern parts of Judah on the road to Laish

**They camped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah:** not in the city, but in the fields near to it, for they were suitable for a camp, which is why Kiriath-jearim became known as Mahaneh-dan.

**Mahanehdan:** meaning, the camp of Dan, it was where the Danites camped after their first day's march, which is why they called the name of that place Mahanehdan, for it signifies the camp of Dan, or of the Danites. It was called Mahanehdan in the times of Samson (Judges 13:25), which clearly shows that this expedition was before his time. It is most likely they camped here for some time, for it is hardly likely that the place would have received the name Mahanehdan permanently if they had only stayed one night.

**600 men of the tribe (of the family in KJV) of Dan:** (v11) armed with weapons of war set out from Zorah and Eshtaol on the expedition to take Laish. Their journey led them through the territory of Judah, and their first resting place was on the west of Kirjath-jearim, at a spot later called "the camp of Dan." They then travelled around the base of the Ephraimite hills and came to Micah's house.

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## 600 ARMED MEN OF DAN GO TO THE HOUSE OF MICAH

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### JUDGES 18:14-19

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- **Judges 18:14-19:** Then the five men who had gone to scout out the country of Laish said to their brothers, “Do you know that in these houses there are an ephod, household gods, a carved image, and a metal image? Now therefore consider what you will do.”<sup>15</sup> And they turned aside there and came to the house of the young Levite, at the home of Micah, and asked him about his welfare.<sup>16</sup> Now the 600 men of the Danites, armed with their weapons of war, stood by the entrance of the gate.<sup>17</sup> And the five men who had gone to scout out the land went up and entered and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the 600 men armed with weapons of war.<sup>18</sup> And when these went into Micah’s house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”<sup>19</sup> And they said to him, “Keep quiet; put your hand on your mouth and come with us and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?”

The spies told their 600 brothers of Micah’s shine/chapel that he had set up, and that he had a Levite priest, so when they came near his house, they all agreed to take all his religious items for themselves, so they set armed guards at the gates, while the five spies entered Micah’s shine/chapel, stole the graven images, the teraphim, the priestly garments and invited Micah’s priest to go with them.

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### MICAH’S SHRINE CHAPEL

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The words, “in these houses” (v14) implies that Micah had now established lodging places around or near his sanctuary for those coming to inquire of God by his priest and his gods. The following three facts show that Micah’s shrine/chapel began in his home, but sometime later expanded into a much larger sanctuary with its own courtyard and a secure fence surrounding it.

1. Firstly, we read of the five spies lodging at Micah’s house and recognizing the voice of the young Levite when they were near to his house (v2-3), and of the 600 Danites, coming to the house of the young Levite, at the home of Micah (v15). which shows Micah and the Levite had their own homes.
2. Secondly, we read of the five spies telling the 600 Danites that in Micah’s houses (plural) there was an ephod, household gods, a carved and metal image and that the 600 Danites, stood, armed with their weapons of war by the entrance of the gate, while the five spies entered Micah’s sanctuary and took his household gods and the priestly garments. (v14-17).
3. Then we read, When the people of Dan were some distance from Micah’s, home the men who were in the houses (plural) near Micah’s home went out to the people of Dan. (v22).

Based on these three facts, it seems that at first Micah had turned one of the rooms of his house into a shrine/chapel, for his household gods, and for himself and his families private use, however, after he employed the young Levite and ordained him priest it appears he built:

- A separate sanctuary for his household gods and for the Levite priest to minister in.
- Houses for travellers to lodge in, who came to inquire of God by his priest and his teraphim and his gods.
- A solid fence surrounding the entire complex with a single gate that allowed entry into the courtyard of the sanctuary.

It is very likely Micah as established a sanctuary based on the layout of the tabernacle during these superstitious times, for once people heard that he had a shine/chapel and a Levite priest, many would have been coming for religious counsel. The Danites blinded by superstition and believing that God’s power was in Micah’s idols and by them they would have God’s favour and great success made a plan to steal them without violence. It appears

that while the 600 Danites feigned friendship at the gate with Micah, the five spies secretly entered the sanctuary and stole the idols and the ephod. The priest sees the five spies stealing the idols, the Danites warn him to say nothing, and give him a tempting invitation to be priest for a whole tribe, rather than one man.

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## THE LEVITE PRIEST GOES WITH THE MEN OF DAN

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### JUDGES 18:20-21

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- **Judges 18:20-21:** And the priest's heart was glad. He took the ephod and the household gods and the carved image and went along with the people. <sup>21</sup> So they turned and departed, putting the little ones and the livestock and the goods in front of them.

The joyful enthusiasm that the priest eagerly abandoned Micah with and gladly took his gods, shows that he was acting as a priest solely for his own self-interest. It is not necessary to think the priest, carried all these sacred objects by himself, it's more likely he put them on a horse drawn wagon that the 600 Danites and their families were carrying their goods and possessions on.

**They turned and departed:** (v21) the 600-armed men of war with their families, livestock and goods, turned from Micah's sanctuary to continue their journey to Laish. Suspecting Micah may pursue after them with his friends and neighbours (which the following verses show they did), they put their wives (though not mentioned), their children their flocks, herds, goods and possessions that they had brought with them from Zorah and Eshtaol, in front of them for safety and protection.

This journey is a migration, for they had no intention of returning to Zorah or Eshtaol. It is almost certain that now they had Micah's gods and his Levite priest, they were fully confident of having success over the inhabitants of Laish and the country surrounding them and settling there. This is another reason they would have put their wagons before them, for they would have been laden with items of silver and gold, and other valuable items of great worth.

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## MICAH CONFRONTS THE PEOPLE OF DAN

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### JUDGES 18:22-25

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- **Judges 18:22-25:** When they (the people of Dan) had gone a distance from the home of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house were called out, and they overtook the people of Dan. <sup>23</sup> And they shouted to the people of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, "What is the matter with you, that you come with such a company?" <sup>24</sup> And he said, "You take my gods that I made and the priest, and go away, and what have I left? How then do you ask me, 'What is the matter with you?'" <sup>25</sup> And the people of Dan said to him, "Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows fall upon you, and you lose your life with the lives of your household."

There is no doubt it took Micah some time to gather together his neighbours, workers and friends to stand with him as he confronted the Danites. They probably had a reasonable force, but it would certainly not be strong enough to resist 600 armed Danites. The fact Micah put his life at risk, and the lives of others to obtain his idols from 600 men of war, shows how attached he was to his graven images. When Micah came close to the Danites, he loudly called out to them, they respond as though they were totally unaware that he should have any complaint against them.

**You take my gods that I made and the priest:** (v25), these words of Micah show how far his mind had become obsessed with religious superstition and idolatry, that he esteemed them above his life and the life of those with him. It is certain, he wasn't so ignorant to think that these,

man-made graven images were the true God that made heaven and earth, but rather lower gods, that acted as mediators, when he offered up his worship to the true God. Mixing and combining pagan idols with Israel's true God and religion, was a common practise amongst many of the tribes of Israel throughout their history.

**Lest you and your household lose your lives:** (v25), this statement would embrace Micah's, servants, tenants, workmen and the neighbours with him, they warn Micah to withhold his speaking and complaining lest armed soldiers, are inflamed and run upon him and slay him and his household.

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## THE PEOPLE OF DAN TAKE POSSESSION OF LAISH

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### JUDGES 18:26-29

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- **Judges 18:26-29:** Then the people of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his home. <sup>27</sup> But the people of Dan took what Micah had made, and the priest who belonged to him, and they came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. <sup>28</sup> And there was no deliverer because it was far from Sidon, and they had no dealings with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to (lieth in KJV) Beth-rehob. Then they rebuilt the city and lived in it. <sup>29</sup> And they named the city Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor, who was born to Israel; but the name of the city was Laish at the first.

Micah saw the the people of Dan were too strong for him, and that his speaking was not going to achieve anything good, so he returned to his house and the people of Dan continued onto Laish.

**They burnt the city with fire:** (v27) since their intention was to inhabit the city, it is very likely they only set fire to a part of it as they entered the city, to strike fear and terror into the inhabitants, and throw them into the great confusion so they would have no time to organise, and in this manner make their conquest of the place easier.

**Beth-rehob:** (v28) means, "house of spaciousness." (Named Dan afterward), it is mentioned as the northernmost point of the land of Canaan.

- They went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. (Num. 13:21).

**There was no deliverer:** (v28), for the following three reasons:

1. Laish was far from Zidon, under whose government and protection they seem to have been,
2. They had no dealings (business in KJV) with anyone, meaning they were fully self-sufficient.
3. They were a quiet and unsuspecting people who kept to themselves. (v7).

For these reasons the Danites would have been able to come upon them suddenly, so that there was no time to send for help, or for anyone to come to their aid.

**They rebuilt the city and lived in it:** (v28) at least the parts that had been destroyed, and no doubt added buildings to it making Laish much larger. To manifest to all that they belonged to the new rebuilt city they renamed it Dan. Its location was in the extreme northern end of the land. This was a great distance from the inheritance of their tribe, for it was in the southern part of Canaan.

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## THE PEOPLE OF DAN SET UP CARVED IMAGES

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### JUDGES 18:30-31

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- **Judges 18:30-31:** And the people of Dan set up the carved image for themselves, and Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses (Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh in KJV), and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. <sup>31</sup> So they set up Micah's carved image that he made, as long as the house of God was at Shiloh.

Having succeeded in their expedition, according to the prediction they supposed God had given them by Micah's Levite priest through the idols he had set up in his sanctuary (Judges 17:7-13), they now credited their victory to the images they had stolen from Micah and set them up in their new city Dan, and appointed priests to officiate for them. Its most likely the Levite who had acted as priest for Micah was appointed chief priest, it is also possible they may have built a house/shrine for it, in the same place that Jeroboam, sometime later set up one of his golden calves.

The distance between the Danites here and the rest of the Israelites secluded them from the other tribes of Israel, which maybe one of the reasons for not going to Shiloh and the cause of them perpetuating idolatry for many future generations.

**Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses (the son of Manasseh in KJV):** (v30), we know this is not of the same Manasseh who was the head of the tribe called Manasseh, for he had no son named Gershom. Following is the two most common thoughts amongst commentators concerning who this Jonathan is:

1. **An unknown son:** the son of some unknown Manasseh of the tribe of Levi, because the names Gershom and Manasseh were common in Israel.
2. **A grandson of Moses:** in the Hebrew text the name rendered Manasseh is written MN)- SH. Without the "N" (nun) suspended over the line, which means the word may be read, "Moses, whose son was Gershom."

- Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. <sup>22</sup> She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land. (Exodus 2:21-22).

And Jonathan was a son or descendant of Gershom. Some feel the Masoretes were probably grieved that a descendant of Moses would be implicated in idolatrous worship, and therefore adopted this method for disguising the fact without absolutely falsifying the text. The Vulgate has "Moses", the Septuagint "Manasses". At this time Phinehas the grandson of Aaron was still living, (Judges 20:28) which means a grandson of Moses could also be alive at this time.

**Jonathan and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan:** (v30) it is most likely Jonathan was the Levite Micah took into his house, and made a priest who the Danites took with them to Laish, to be their priest, and that he was appointed as the chief priest to the tribe of Dan, but not to the whole tribe, but to those that resided in this new re-built city, called Dan.

**Until the day of the captivity of the land:** (30), this verse tells us that Jonathan's descendants were priests to the tribe of Dan in the city of Dan until a specific captivity. Amongst commentators there are differing ideas concerning which captivity this refers to, following are the three most common thoughts.

1. The priests to the tribe of Dan at the city of Dan continued to serve as priests for nearly two centuries, until the whole land of the ten tribes of Israel, of which Dan was one, were conquered and carried captive by the Assyrian kings Shalmaneser and Tiglath-pileser.
  - In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria and placed them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings 17:6).

Then we read:

- The LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had spoken by all his servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day. (2 Kings 17:23).

The problem with this idea is that it is hardly likely these idolatrous priests and their idols would have continued through the times of Samuel, David, and Solomon, especially since David, zealously set about destroying idolatry, to establish Israel's true faith from Dan to Beer-sheba.

2. When Jabin the king of Canaan, conquered Israel and took them captive but, this timeframe is too short, because the next verse, shows that this idolatry continued through all the time that the House of God was at Shiloh.
3. We are told, the priests and the carved image were set up as long as the tabernacle was at Shiloh, which means the captivity in focus must refer to some captivity prior to the tabernacle being moved from Shiloh, for this reason most suppose the captivity refers to sometime prior to the Philistines taking the ark from the House of Shiloh, after which the tabernacle at Shiloh laid forsaken and the Ark never returned.
  - So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and they fled, every man to his home. And there was a very great slaughter, for thirty thousand foot soldiers of Israel fell. <sup>11</sup> And the ark of God was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died. (1 Samuel 4:10-11).
  - When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. (1 Sam. 5:1)

The people of Israel set the tabernacle up at Shiloh, (Josh. 18:1). The city became a major worship centre for the Israelites, some say that the tabernacle remained at Shiloh for 360 years plus, although modern scholars believe the period to have been shorter. The Philistines defeated the Israelites in a battle between Eben-ezer (where the Israelites camped) and Aphek and took the ark from Ebenezer to Ashdod.

- When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. (1 Samuel 5:1).

From Ashdod they carried the ark into Dagon's temple and set it beside Dagon. After the Ark was captured by the Philistines, King Saul moved the tabernacle (without the ark) to Nob, near his home town of Gibeah, but after he massacred the priests there (because they supported David) (1 Sam. 21:18-21), it was moved to Gibeon. (1 Chron. 16:39) (1 Chron. 21:29) (2 Chron. 1:2-6) (2 Chron. 1:13). For these reasons most conclude, that the captivity of the land spoken of in this chapter must refer to a captivity sometime prior to the Philistines taking the ark from Shiloh and placing it into the temple of Dagon.

**SNAPSHOT:** This story of the Danites shines a light upon the following deep-seated principle of our human nature; those who have a religious sense of God, but are deluded in their understanding of His ways, set their religious affections upon some type of religious object and various external religious ritual and ceremony, according to the influence their religion has over their mind and heart.

The greater the religious influence has over them and the importance attached to keeping and performing the external rituals involved will be determined in accordance to the strength their belief has over their mind. Some will be driven to strictly keep these eternal observances in exact detail, while others are not so driven. Either way, as long as they perform these external outward religious practices according to what they believe, their conscience is fully satisfied, and therefore they have no need to consider their own morals and internal and external sins, which is why many can go to church on a Sunday and live as they please every other day, and never feel convicted or the need for change.

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*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.*

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