

## September 14

**Scriptures:** Read Judges 17 & 18

**Key Verse:** “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6)

### Overview

The events recorded from chapter seventeen until the end of the book of Judges do not necessarily follow in chronological order, but are appendices which show the moral degradation, social and political disorder, and religious decay that was found in Israel. This lawless condition during the time of the judges stemmed from their disobedience to God in failing to drive out the heathen inhabitants of Canaan. As our key verse stated, there was no centralized government, because worship at the centralized Tabernacle and other religious laws were disregarded (e.g. 18:31), and “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” which was usually wrong in God’s eyes. This terrible situation was the very opposite of what it had been under the strong leadership of Joshua (Josh. 24:23, 31).

It is evident that many priests and Levites failed in their responsibility to teach the Law of God. The Israelites abandoned their dependence upon God and true worship of Him to mix it with the idolatrous, superstitious ways of the heathen. Such syncretism is clearly evident in the actions of Micah and his Levite, as well as the people of Dan. Since the land was not purged of idolatry from the start, it began to creep into the religious life of the Israelites and spread to have a detrimental effect on whole tribes such as the Danites.

The desire of Micah’s mother to wholly dedicate her silver to the Lord (referring to the God of Israel) seems honorable, but she, out of ignorance, provided the material to make idols! Micah intended the idols, the shrine on his property, and the Levite/priest (which he also seemed to consider as his property) to be a means of not only worshipping God, but mainly as a superstitious means to receive God’s material blessings (17:13).

The Levite was not in the place he should have been—one of the Levitical cities. It seems he was out looking for the best-paying job (17:8-10), even if it meant compromising true worship to God. When the Danites offered him a better job, he was happy to condone their theft of Micah’s idols and go with them (18:19-20). It appears the people of Israel were not obeying God’s law concerning the tithes and offerings which were intended to provide for the Levites. This man served as a priest, who was contrary to the Law of God; for only those from Aaron’s family were to be priests. There were to be no personal priests, only those who served the Lord at His central sanctuary, which, at that time, was in Shiloh (18:31). All those involved in this narrative were terribly misinformed and disobedient to God, especially in breaking the important second commandment regarding idols (Ex. 20:4, 23) which Moses had stressed and warned about so often.

Since the Danites disobeyed God, they were prevented by the Amorites (Judges 1:34) from occupying their territory of inheritance west of Judah. Therefore, a group of six hundred men with their families and possessions headed northward about 160 kilometers to possess Laish, an

area around the headwaters of the Jordan, north of the Sea of Galilee and occupied by some helpless Sidonians (from Phoenicia). We can see by their actions at the home of Micah that these Danites also had a corrupt form of worship to God. Like Micah, they had selfish motives and wanted the idols and the Levite to ensure material prosperity. Whenever religion is used as a means for personal gain, it will surely suffer terrible degradation.

The Danites became the most idolatrous tribe and, before long, their name disappeared from the records of Israel. Possibly because of extensive intermarriage. They established their own center for idolatrous worship in Dan, formerly called Laish, while the true sanctuary was in Shiloh (18:31). We can see by their examples how a sin left unchecked can quickly spread, become rooted, and lead to destruction. We need to fortify ourselves so as not to allow even a little opening for sin to enter our lives, nor even the appearance of sin.

### **Prayer**

Lord, we desire to do only what is right in Your eyes. You have revealed Yourself in your Holy Word which we're reading daily. We reject spiritual anarchy and surrender our rights to You. You are our Sovereign.