

THE JOURNEY OF DAN

Introduction:

1. The last section of the book of Judges (chapters 17 – 21) covers the period of time between or around the judges Othniel and Ehud.
2. The events recorded serve to illustrate the departures of Israel from the law of God.
3. Chapter 17 detailed the sins of Micah and his hiring of a Levite to be his personal priest.
4. This chapter shows how the tribe of Dan came in contact with Micah and his false priest and the sinful actions that resulted from their association.
5. Again, this serves to illustrate why God allowed them to suffer punishment at the hands of their enemies.

- I. The First Journey of Dan (18:1-7)
 - A. The chapter begins by reminding us that the Israelites are doing things their own way because to them “there was no king in Israel.”
 - B. The tribe of Dan is looking for a dwelling place as a part of their inheritance.
 1. The reason is because they had not inherited all the land that was to be theirs in Canaan.
 2. This is because they had failed to drive the Amorites out of their land (1:34).
 3. So, instead of doing their duty, the Danites have decided to go looking for land elsewhere.
 4. This is a despicable display of cowardice on the part of God’s people.
 - C. So, they sent out five men to travel about the land and find a suitable place for them to inherit.
 - D. On their journey, these five men came to the house of Micah in Ephraim.
 1. It is both interesting and telling that they came to Micah’s house and not to Shiloh – God’s house.
 2. Remember, God’s instructions were for the Israelites to ask the priest any questions they had concerning God’s will that was not revealed in His Word (Numbers 27:21).
 3. However, the children of Dan did not go to God’s High Priest in Shiloh; instead, they are content to inquire of Micah’s false priest.
 - E. Notice that Micah’s priest gives an accurate picture of the situation at Micah’s house when he says, “[Micah] hath hired me.”
 1. He was a hireling priest and proud of it!
 2. It is a dangerous business to turn one’s religion into a business.
 - F. In spite of his confession that he was a hireling, the Danites ask him to enquire of God concerning their journey and their search.
 - G. Naturally, the hireling tells them exactly what they want to hear!
 1. This sounds like many hireling preachers today (2 Timothy 4:3-4).
 2. Many are willing to hear and believe a “strong delusion.”
 3. Sadly, many are willing to be the one to teach the strong delusion!
 - H. So, the scouting party came to Laish and found a quiet, peaceful, isolated group of people that they could conquer easily.

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- II. The Second Journey of Dan (18:8-21)
- A. Upon returning to their brethren, the spies reported that they had found a perfect place for the tribe of Dan.
 - 1. They said that the land was good, large, secure, and fruitful.
 - 2. They said that they should move immediately.
 - 3. But, they mistakenly claimed that this effort was according to God's will.
 - 4. The spies had consulted with a false priest of an idol worshipper in his house of gods!
 - B. There is an important lesson to be learned from the city of Laish.
 - 1. The people of this city lived like the Zidonians, without a care.
 - 2. The people of Zidon were not known as great warriors or as those who go out to battle.
 - 3. Those of Laish lived as they chose, with no government or unity of the people.
 - 4. They isolated themselves from all others and had no one to turn to in time of need.
 - 5. They cared little for what was going on in the world, content in their self-centered pursuits.
 - 6. Thus, they did not expect and were not prepared for an attack from Israel. {*Goebel Music says, "They had no government, no gates, no guards and asked no gain from anyone."*}
 - 7. Too many congregations and too many Christians choose to live in this same manner (cf. Amos 6:1-6).
 - 8. Thus, they are unprepared for the battle the devil will wage against them – through temptation, sin, and error.
 - 9. The Lord's church must act with wisdom toward our enemies.
 - a. We must be prepared for battle.
 - b. We must be disciplined in our lives.
 - c. We must have unity with and love for one another.
 - d. We must be aware of the efforts of Satan to destroy us.
 - e. We must fight the good fight of faith.
 - C. Nevertheless, 600 men of war from the tribe of Dan decided to make the journey to Laish, with their families (cf. vs. 21).
 - D. On their way, they traveled through Judah to Ephraim and the house of Micah.
 - E. Here, the five spies informed the rest of the group of Micah's priest and his house of gods.
 - F. They ended their talk by saying, "Consider what you have to do."
 - 1. In essence, they were saying, "Let's plan what we are going to do."
 - 2. In other words, they wanted to know how they could take Micah's religious items for their own use.
 - 3. So, they came up with a plan.
 - G. The 600 men of war went to the gate of Micah's house and talked with him while the five spies snuck onto his property and stole his idols and his ephod.
 - H. Micah's priest discovered what was happening and questioned the Danites concerning their behavior.
 - I. Their reply was for him to be silent and to join them on their journey.

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1. They knew that he was a hireling priest who had served Micah for the material things he received.
 2. So, they made him an offer he could not refuse.
 3. Instead of being a priest for one household, he could become the priest for an entire tribe of Israel.
 4. One can almost visualize the priest's eyes lighting up at this suggestion.
 5. He accepted their offer with gladness, joined in their thievery and placed himself in the center of the group of travelers.
- J. So, the Danites left Micah's house and continued on their journey to Laish.
- K. Consider several important lessons from this text.
1. Idolatry has been passed from a mother to her son, to a Levite, and then to a tribe of God's people.
 - a. Sin (and false doctrine) does not stay isolated.
 - b. It will spread like a disease (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:6).
 2. A false understanding of God always leads to immorality.
 - a. In Micah's house we saw lying, stealing, and cursing due to their false religion.
 - b. Likewise, the children of Dan are guilty of lying, stealing and, ultimately, murder because of their false religion.
 - c. We should remember the record of Romans 1.
 3. A hireling cares only for himself, not the flock of God (John 10:13).
 4. Those in error are glad when they see the righteous fall to and follow their wicked ways.
 5. When one abandons the standard of God and His Word, anything goes!
- III. The Third Journey of Dan (18:22-31)
- A. As the tribe of Dan departed from Micah's house, they placed their families and herds at the front of their caravan, apparently expecting some pursuit or retaliation from Micah.
- B. Sure enough, Micah gathered his neighbors and they pursued and caught up with the people of Dan.
 1. Some commentators view the house of Micah as a compound.
 2. They see it as several houses enclosed in one fence.
 3. Of central importance would be the house of gods – the place they gathered to worship.
 4. But there would also be houses for dwelling.
 5. They also assume that Micah had many workers under him who were also followers of his particular religious system.
 6. They claim that they are the ones who assemble to chase down the people of Dan.
- C. As they approach, the Danites rather humorously ask, "What's the problem?"
- D. Micah replies, "You have stolen my gods and my priest – everything that matters to me."
 1. Notice that Micah referred to his gods which he made.
 2. Clearly, Micah was strongly attached to these representations that he claimed were of Jehovah.
 3. It reminds us of the story of Laban (Genesis 31:17-23).

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- E. Basically, the children of Dan told Micah to be silent or someone might become angry and murder him.
 - 1. Isn't it strange what some people will do in the name of an idol?
 - 2. They will lie, steal, and murder for a false religion.
 - 3. Sadly, they seem to think that might makes right.
- F. Micah soon realized that his group was no match for the people of Dan, so he returned home and the Danites continued toward Laish.
 - 1. For all of his devotion to his idols, Micah was not willing to fight or die for them.
 - 2. This is an important distinction between true and false religion.
 - a. When our faith is based upon the absolute, evident truth of God's Word, we are willing to sacrifice, fight and even die for it.
 - b. When we can create or alter on a whim our faith, it is not worth giving up anything for.
 - c. In fact, it is often created so we do not have to give up anything – we can do what we want, how we want, and appease our conscience at the same time.
 - 3. Jesus is worth any sacrifice (Matthew 16:24; Revelation 2:10).
- G. When the children of Dan arrived at Laish, they killed the inhabitants and burnt the city.
- H. They built a new city on the location and named it Dan.
- I. Tragically, they continued the idolatrous practices of Micah and his false priesthood.
 - 1. They set up the graven image in a place where they could assemble and worship it.
 - 2. They continued the priesthood of Jonathan with his children succeeding him as priests.
 - 3. This continued until the Danites became captives of their enemies.
 - a. This possibly refers to one of the captivities during the time of the judges.
 - b. However, it could refer to the final captivity of Israel by the Assyrians.
 - c. Either way, idolatry led to captivity.
 - d. Sin will hold us captive until the great captivity of Hell unless we repent and submit to God's will.
- J. The last phrase of this chapter is vitally important.
 - 1. The children of Dan did all of these things while the house of God was in Shiloh.
 - 2. God had a place where He was to be worshipped and inquired of.
 - 3. The Israelites knew that His house was at Shiloh – not Micah's house or in Dan.
 - 4. Yet, they willfully rejected God and His instructions for their own brand of religion.
- K. Think of the generations of Israelites who were born, lived, and died in the town of Dan, inheriting the false religion handed down from their selfish, rebellious ancestors.

Conclusion: *What is the heritage that we will leave to our children and our community?*