

Judges 08-08-13b

Let's resume our study now. We're in the book of Judges, about to begin chapter 18. We have been introduced to this personage who lives up in the mountains of Ephraim, whose name is Micah, who's got a superstitious mother, and a real lack of knowledge of the law of Moses, and a real lack of concern about it.

This is not the first time in the book of Judges we have seen someone create an ephod, and create a false place of worship, and we know that this never bodes well. Time passes, people think that they are prospering, they think that God is approving, but this is a sowing of wind that will result in reaping the whirlwind. The author of the book of Judges knows that we have seen this before in the days of Gideon, and he was the guy that tore down his father's idolatrous place of worship, and then he wound up establishing one that was even worse.

Well, Micah initially took away the silver that would have been used for this purpose, but he restores it, and he ends up being complicit, and he builds this entire false worship, but it is centered in God, and he thinks that God is going to bless him. I know the Lord will be good to me, because I have a Levite as priest. Well, this Levite is as messed up as Micah is.

What Levite in his right mind would have anything to do with this? And this particular Levite really ought to know better, as we will soon see. Well, we are reminded once again in chapter 18, 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. Well, this is one of the two notations that tells us that this is fairly early in the period of the judges.

This is probably a hundred years or more before the times that we have just finished looking at with the days of Samson, Samuel, Eli, and so on. This is some time earlier. It could be as much as a hundred or two hundred years earlier.

And you will recall that in the allocation of the land, the Danites had originally been assigned territory in the southern part of Israel. This is back in Joshua chapter 19, verse 40 and following. The seventh lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their family.

Is the number seven significant at all? I am the seventh son of the seventh son. My daddy was a pistol and a son of a gun. You know, this whole thing.

Seven is the number of perfection, right? Seven is a good number. Lucky number seven. You roll a seven.

Seven is a good number. Why do you think the tribe of Dan ends up drawing the seventh lot in Israel? Well, when they mess up later on, when they end up with no inheritance, when they end up going down the tubes, when they end up disappearing from the list of tribes in the book of Revelation, they can't say, well, we drew a bad hand. We got dealt a bad set of cards.

They got the seventh lot. They got the perfect lot back in Joshua chapter 19. They are without excuse.

The seventh lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families. The territory of their inheritance was Zorah and Eshtoel and Ir-Shemesh. Ir-Shemesh, this is the house of the son.

Shemesh is son. Ir-Sha'alabim. I-Jah-lan.

Remember I-Jah-lan? Sun stand thou still and moon over the valley of I-Jah-lan. This is the place of one of Israel's greatest victories, divine providence, divine deliverance. It's a tourist attraction right there in the middle of the land.

Israelites coming in saying, where was it where Joshua stood when these words were spoken? I-Jah-lan. Ith-lah-ee-lan. Tim-nah.

Tim-nah. Remember the whole area where Samson is and so on. Well, there is no mention of Samson and Eshtoel and all these other places.

This is their inheritance, but they haven't taken possession of it. They don't have it. El-teh-keh gib-a-thon ba-alath.

Ji-hud ben-e-barak. Gath-rim-in. You'll notice that there is territory all the way over against Joppa.

Joppa is going to figure later on in New Testament history with the Apostle Paul. The territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them. The sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it.

They struck it with the edge of the sword and they possessed it and settled it. They called Leshem Dan, after the name of Dan, their father. This was the inheritance to the tribe of the sons of Dan.

According to their families, these cities were their villages. When they finished apportioning the land for inheritance, the sons of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua. Remember there were already five tribes that had received an inheritance.

You do seven more and you get twelve, thirteen actually. But that was the end of the allotment. It tells us initially that the sons of Dan went up and began to take possession of their inheritance.

But eventually they never did finish. They're like Israel as a whole. They don't completely take possession and they end up losing the whole thing.

Dan is going to end up going from down in the southwestern portion of Eshtoel and Timnah and the place where the Samson story takes place. They're going to end up all the way up in the

north. And that's why Israel will eventually be described in its totality as from Dan to Beersheba, from the far north to the far south.

Why are they all the way up north? They have to keep going up there before they can find a place that they can hang on to. But in earlier days, they were originally assigned an inheritance down here. They couldn't hang on to any of it.

And it's really sort of a memory when you get to the days of Samson and they say, Well, this was the land of Dan. There's a whole vacuum there that anybody can walk in. The Philistines walk all over Timnah and Eshtoel and that whole region.

Those are the days of the Philistines. And the reason is the tribe of Dan has all evacuated the area. There's just a few scattered families left down there.

So that's what we know about the inheritance of Dan that is mentioned in Judges 18. There's no king in Israel. In those days, the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for themselves to live in.

For until that day, an inheritance had not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel. So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtoel. Why would they be from Zorah and Eshtoel? Because that was their original... And when it says an inheritance had not been allotted to them, it literally says that they were seeking an inheritance for themselves to live in.

For until that day, it had not fallen to them as a possession. It had not fallen to them. You conquer something, it falls.

You conquer a city, the city fell. Well, it had not fallen to them. They couldn't take possession of it.

It doesn't mean that it had not yet been allotted by Joshua. It had been allotted by Joshua before Joshua even got his own inheritance. They just couldn't hang on to it.

So you might want to scratch that out. It doesn't say an inheritance had not been allotted. It says it had not fallen to them.

And that's what your New King James says. I was reading out of the New American Standard. So anyway, the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtoel, to spy out the land and search it.

So they're going to hunt around and see if there's any holes, any vacuum, any easy pickings that they can go take that's easier than their assigned portion. Now, there is a principle here. We sometimes have an allotted task, an allotted circumstance.

And we don't like it. We think it's too hard. I tire of this.

I'm weary of this. I can't conquer this. It's too much for me.

And we want to go find something else. There are people who, and this doesn't apply in all situations, and don't anybody read anything into what I'm saying, but spouses might have difficulty with one another. They say, well, things are getting rocky.

Well, you don't necessarily just say, well, that's it. I need a different spouse. Your first obligation is to try to work your marriage out.

You can have a friendship. You can have a parent-child relationship that gets very difficult. Well, you don't just necessarily throw the kid out or kick your parents out or call up Child Protective Services or whatever and say my parents are abusing me, lock them up.

Work situation. Work can get really difficult. You can suddenly be oppressed.

You can suddenly be mistrusted. You can be demoted. People can be promoted over you.

Your first choice of action is not, well, I'm leaving this thing and I'm going to go flip burgers at the McDonald's or something. We are often given difficult assignments and we have to endure. That ought to be the first approach.

I'm not saying that you always endure, that you never divorce or you never kick a kid out of the house or you never leave a bad job. But our default answer, our first course of action should be persevere, endure. Just because it's difficult doesn't mean it's wrong.

Just because something's hard doesn't mean it shouldn't be happening. Jesus told us you're going to have hard things in this world. Be of good cheer.

The world has been overcome. The world is just here to give you occasions to grow. The only reason the world is still here offering any resistance is we're practicing on it.

This is the great thing about fighting wars overseas. Our troops get practice. It's not belittling or diminishing the tragedy of those who die in war.

But when the chips are down and it's necessary for us to defend ourselves and defend our country, it's much better to have an experienced military than people who have been sitting around watching films of a war 30 and 40 years ago. There is a cost and there is a price. And believe me, as one who knows, there's nothing small or little or you don't say light things about the price in blood that is paid for any war that we fight.

But there is a benefit to the nation in that difficulty. And we've got seasoned troops. Everybody in the Army is getting rotated through our overseas obligations right now.

We don't have any green troops. Our divisions, our battalions, our fighting forces know what it's like to be in conflict. The United States is going to reap the benefit of that, just like we did from the Vietnam War.

A lot of bad things happened in Vietnam, taking nothing away from the losses and so on. But we benefited. Anybody who was in the service for the 25 or 30 years after the Vietnam War, we gained huge benefits from the experienced NCOs and staff NCOs and officers who had fought in Vietnam and knew how to train the next generation of troops.

And that's why we didn't get our helmets handed to us later on when we had to fight other conflicts. So there is an upside even when there's difficulty, even when there's a hard price to pay. That's my point.

The Tribe of Dan didn't want to stick. They got their nose bloodied a couple of times trying to take a few towns. We've got to get out of here.

This is too hard. We've got a bad allotment. The cards we got dealt are bad.

Let's bug out. God didn't say, well, here, Tribe of Dan, try this out, and if you really don't like it, we'll send out a five-man working party and see if you can find something better. But that's what they did.

They're advocating their assigned responsibility. They have been assigned an area in Israel. Why are the Philistines going to be such a problem later on? Because the Tribe of Dan bugged out.

It's a weak flank now. The Philistines can just walk into the vacuum and go clear to Hebron practically. They can walk clear over to the Tribe of Judah, to the area of Judah, unopposed, because Dan, who's supposed to be there holding that flank, left.

How would you like it if you're in a military unit, and you've got an enemy all around you, and you assign a company, and you say, okay, company, hold this flank here so that we don't get sneaked up on and destroyed from behind, and the company says, well, you know, this ground is so rocky, we can't dig any fighting holes, and it's uncomfortable. We can't get any good sleep here. You know what? We're going to recon.

We're going to go find some other place to set up. And they just go off and leave. And the enemy says, hey, look, here's a whole undefended sector.

Let's just waltz right in. Well, that's what happened in Israel, because the Tribe of Dan couldn't do their job. Now, listen to me.

You and I have been given assigned tasks, and if we abdicate our responsibilities, say, I'm not going to fight that battle. That's too hard. I'm going to do something different.

You leave a hole where you're supposed to be. You leave a gap, and your assignment is unfulfilled. And, of course, God is going to accomplish His plan one way or another, but we want to be on the positive side of that.

I always think, in terms of positive or negative, Jesus is the rock. He's the rock of our salvation,

but He's also the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. Jesus is the rock either way.

So, do you want to be on top of the rock, depending on it, falling on it for salvation, or do you want to be under it, getting ground to powder? That's exactly the picture the Bible presents. You can either fall upon that stone and ask for God's mercy. The water comes forth from the rock and is deliverance in life.

Or, the rock falls on us. The rock is the rock. God's will will be accomplished.

It's just which side of the rock are you on, up or down? Well, the children of Dan just bug out. They're the weakest, mealy-mouthiest, panty-waistiest, milk-toastiest, pathetic tribe in the whole nation. They're the only tribe where they're given an allotment, and they just leave.

They've got a few hangers-on down there, but the tribe as a whole has bugged out. They sent five men of their family, men of valor. You know, this is ironic.

Men of valor who don't want to stay and defend their own thing. So the five bravest guys they can find in a tribe of cowards, basically, 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. The house of Micah is like a magnet for ne'er-do-wells. People say, well, you look like a surly type.

You look like a weak-kneed. You look like somebody who doesn't want to do his job. You look like a Levite who doesn't want to serve as a Levite down in Judah amongst people who care about God.

You look like five guys who are fleeing and looking for an easy place to live. Well, go to the house of Micah. He's your kind of guy.

So they end up in the same place as this Levite. They lodge there. While they're at the house of Micah, they recognize the voice of the young Levite.

Now, what does it mean that they recognized his voice? Well, there's already a dialect situation going on because now that Israel is not all in one coherent group, they are spread over the land. And so they're starting to get regional differences in their speech, kind of like everybody in the United States speaks American, but you can tell if someone's from the South. I got a phone call from one of my transcribers today, and she lives in South Carolina.

And she called up, and you can tell right away when somebody from South Carolina is talking to you on the phone, there's that South Carolina accent. It's a wonderful accent. But she called up, and she didn't say five words, and I thought, you know, she's not from around here.

And, you know, you can recognize a Valley girl before she says two sentences. You can recognize somebody from Georgia. In many cases, you can recognize someone from Boston.

You can recognize someone from New York. They've all got those little peculiarities, and they say just a couple of words, and you say, oh, I know where you're from. That's what happened here.

These guys, Dan abuts Judah. These are all Southerners. And now they're up north in the mountains of Ephraim, and they recognize a Southern accent when they hear it.

And they say, what are you doing up here, boy, basically. So it isn't that they recognize his individual voice and say, hey, young man, we've seen you before. He's from Bethlehem.

They're from Eshto'o. But they recognize his accent. So they recognize his speech would be a better translation here.

So they turned aside and said to him, who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you have here? Five guys, three questions. They're all inquisitive sorts. He said to them, thus and so Micah did for me.

This, again, is the Bible telling you that we don't necessarily get verbatim accounts. He basically told them what Micah had done. He has hired me, and I have become his priest.

Now notice, thus and so he has done for me. There are times when God doesn't feel the need to repeat. And there are other times when we get that repetition.

And so if God takes the trouble to repeat a thing in a passage, that's why we slow down and take a look at it. Because other times you can say, well, you know, remember that stuff I gave you several verses ago? Well, thus and so, he filled them in. And we don't get the repetition, because that's not really important.

Not as important as what we're about to see. Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me.

I have become his priest. So they said to him, please inquire of God that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous. Now, let's just think about this for a moment.

God assigned you a territory to live in. You don't like it, and you don't want to live there. And so you've undertaken a journey to leave your divine assignment and go to a place God did not give you.

And now you're going to ask a Levite, who also left his assigned place, and has come up to the mountains of Ephraim, if God is going to prosper the journey or not. How many ways is this wrong? Why would you need the answer to such a silly question? What hope do you have of getting anywhere near a right answer? But this happens in the Christian world today all the time. Believers do this all the time.

I'm in a jam. I've got four things in my life that all look like imminent death and destruction to me. I've got a bad relationship.

I'm about to lose my job. My finances are a wreck. And my health is going south.

Oh, God, what should I do? I need to pray. Oh, God, tell me what to do. Please reveal to me.

Shine a light, bolt of lightning. Send an advisor. Give me a sign.

And none of these are the right thing to ask for because we already know. This is a principle from the Word of God. If you are in a test, you already have the information to answer whatever that test is requiring.

God does not give tests that require us to go... It's not an open book test. It's not like, well, go look up the answer because you don't know it yet. We get tested over what we should already know.

If you're in a test, you know the answer. If you have a test, you have already covered the appropriate promised principle or doctrine in Bible class. You do not get tested over what you do not know.

You get tested over what you know. Unlike public school today where students get tested over what has never been covered in class because we've got the most insane system for curriculum and teaching. I won't even go into it, but suffice it to say that the public school system, as I have seen it here in North Texas, is pathetic beyond belief.

The curriculum is messed up. The textbooks would confuse a PhD. If you knew the subject and went to the textbook, you would come away confused.

Information is not given in a logical manner. It doesn't flow and build on itself. It's kind of like an encyclopedia where the information is given in a random fashion.

You have to skip around. The worksheets don't come out of the book, nor do they come out of the class lecture. I don't know where they come from.

I have worked through homework with both of my daughters, and I'm here to tell you that as a person that's already been through that information and in several cases has taught that at the high school level my own self, the textbook is like the mind of a lot of people in this last few generations. It's mixed up. It's incoherent.

It's disorganized. It's scattershot. It's incomplete.

It's unrelated. It's illogical. It is, well, I guess it's too late to say don't get me started.

But I won't go any further down that road. But here's the thing. We have a God who is organized.

He is methodical. He is consistent. He is perfect.

He does not test us over what we do not know. He tests us over what we know. If you are in a

test, you have the answer.

It is a matter of finding that answer, pointing faith at it, and enduring. Having patience and faith. Operating within the triad of Christian virtues, faith, hope, and love.

Many times there is a situation, and there is not an answer that resolves the situation. There are truths from God's word that sustain us through the crisis. They don't pop us out of it like a piece of toast out of a spring-loaded toaster.

Well, if I could just get the right answer, I would just pop right out of this, and everything would be great. Jesus didn't pop right out of the Garden of Gethsemane. He didn't suddenly disappear from the cross.

There are tests that we are supposed to endure. You have need of patience. You have need of endurance.

After you have suffered a while, you receive the promise. It doesn't say after you figure out how not to suffer, you receive the promise. There are things we are supposed to go through.

The testing of your faith produces patience. Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. Let patience have its perfect work.

Everybody wants an instant answer. We see complex situations. I have never watched the CSI, this, that, and the other.

They have four or five different flavors of that show. Somebody is killed. There are clues.

In 43 minutes plus commercials, they wrap the whole thing up. They figure it all out. They send stuff to the lab, and the answer comes right back.

A monk wanders around, and somebody will say a thing, or there will be a picture on the wall, and there is the answer. All the clues are there. You just resolve it, and it's all tied up with a neat little bow by the end.

Real life is not that way. Many times, you just have to keep going. We don't find out until eternity what God was doing, why we had to bear a cross or a burden, why we had to go a second mile.

That's what faith is. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. We want to see everything.

Our culture conditions people for fast answers, pat answers, neat, tidy solutions that don't require anything of us. Please inquire of God that we may know whether this journey on which we go will be prosperous. You don't need a Levite to inquire of God and tell you the answer to this question.

The journey is not going to be prosperous. Whatever your definition of prosperous is, in God's

eyes, it's a disaster. You've abdicated your responsibility.

You're a failure. Where are you going to go that's going to be good? It doesn't matter what you find. You might think it's good if you find a bunch of Canaanite prostitutes and a deep well of water.

You're going to say, wow, this is a great town. Let's settle here. Look at all these available women.

Look at this great water. This is good. Thank you, God, for bringing me to this cat house with a well.

That's not an answer. But by their definition, it would be. What's God supposed to say to a query like this? There is no good answer.

And many believers get frustrated with their Christian life because they end up in a situation like this and they say, well, I don't seem to get answers from God. Well, you're asking the wrong questions because you're in the wrong place. You're not using the knowledge you already have.

Joshua told them where to live. The best answer they have is turn right around and go back to Eshtael and Timnah and the other assigned cities that God gave them. That's the place where they're supposed to be.

They should go report back to the tribe of Dan and say, you know what? We've been all over the country. This is where we're supposed to be, right here. We should have never left.

It's not going to happen. The priest said, Go in peace. The presence of the Lord be with you on your way.

This is what Christians get every Sunday, every Wednesday night in myriads of churches all across the land. There's a lot of great churches, don't get me wrong. But there are huge numbers of believers.

There are big auditoriums with TV cameras and lights all over this country where they're essentially getting the message as Danites in the wrong place, doing the wrong thing, the presence of the Lord be with you on the way. Go in peace. Have a good time.

All is well. Aren't you buoyed up by the wonderful assurance that you've heard me speak these words? And it's rubbish. How many ways is this wrong? 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.

So the spies came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtael, and their brethren said, What's

your report? 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 this land. 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.

So 600 men from the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtoel, armed with weapons of war. They couldn't fight anybody they could fight back. But you go up to these secure people that are far from any help, and they are living peaceably.

This is the Star Trek universe. Everybody is just quietly planting barley and living in these little tow sack garments and smiling and folding their hands. It's the peaceable kingdom.

The lion is laying down with the lamb. You are ripe for the picking when you live that way. The Danites say, this is the place where we want to live, because it is quiet and secure and nobody hassles you.

Well, they are about to take people who are living in that situation and rape, pillage, plunder, burn and destroy and slaughter them all, because that is what happens when you dwell in such a place. They can't fight anybody who has a sword in their hand to fight back, but they are going to go take the peaceable kingdom people and just wipe them out and take their land. So, they went up and encamped in Kiriath Yareem in Judah.

Therefore, they call that place Mahana. Mahana means camp. It is the camp of Dan.

To this day, there it is, west of Kiriath Yareem. And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah. What is funny about this is, you go to Kiriath Yareem, it is not that far from Bethlehem.

These people are basically going to go up and follow the same path as that Levite who left Judah and went up north. And he keeps getting interwoven in this story. It is on his advice that he says, God is with you, go in peace.

What should he have said? What is the task of the man of God who has the word of the Lord in his mouth? The word of God is profitable for what? Doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness. Not a bunch of mealy-mouthed falsehoods that encourage people in their evil. But this Levite tells them exactly what they want to hear.

He is like a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets. And these 600 men follow his footsteps literally. These men go over to Judah and then up.

They do like an L-shaped thing. They go east and then north. And they follow in the footsteps of the Levite.

And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim. They came to the house of Micah. All the ne'er-do-wells end up at the house of Micah.

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? Notice two separate things. Carved image and molded image. You get the idea that maybe this is a box with a lid.

One of them is carved, one is molded, whatever. Now therefore, consider what you should do. Here's Micah.

The Lord is going to be good to me because I've got the Levite. What is the avenue by which destruction is about to come on Micah? The Levite and his advice to these men of Dan. They turned aside there.

They came to the house of the young Levite man, to the house of Micah, and greeted him. Hail, fellow well-met. The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war who were of the children of Dan stood by the entrance of the gate.

The five men who had gone to spy out the land went up. Entering there, notice how we're getting such intense detail. Because this is the point.

The camera is in at a close angle now. The five men who had gone to spy out went up to entering. They took the carved image.

They took the ephod. They took the household idols. They took the molded image.

The priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men who were armed with weapons of war. How many times have the weapons been mentioned now? Mighty men of valor, men of Dan, fighting the unarmed man in his house, going to take the unarmed people up there far from the Sidonians. Oh yes, mighty men of valor.

When they went into Micah's house and they took the carved image, they took the ephod, they took the household idols, they took the molded image, the priest said to them, what are you doing? 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 house of one man or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel? Because we are, you know, that will be prestige for you to be the priest of the tribe of Dan.

Because look at what mighty, great warriors we are. So the priest's heart was glad. His church just got bigger.

He took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image and took his place among these people. Then they turned and departed and they put the little ones, the livestock and the goods in front of them. 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 and they called out to the children of Dan.

So the children of Dan turned around and said to Micah, What ails you that you have gathered such a company? So Micah says, 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? The children of Dan said to him, Do not let your voice be heard amongst us. Lest angry men fall upon you and you lose your life with the lives of your household.

The children of Dan went their way and when Micah saw they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house. Now why do we get this whole little confrontation? You have two different people here. You have a bunch of unhappy Danites who have been given something by God and they don't want it.

You have Micah up in his house who feels like he doesn't have anything and he makes his own. That's why he says, Why have you taken away the gods which I made with my hands? I've constructed this whole thing and you've taken it away. The Danites acquire something that is worthless.

They think that this is a big coup and a great victory. Look at this. We've got an ephod, we've got a priest, we've got a shrine, we've got a teraphim, we've got all of this great stuff.

Wasn't that a great idea? God has really blessed us in leaving Eshtaol and Temna and the rest of our inheritance. Look at this. Look how prosperous we are now.

We've got 28 pounds worth of silver stuff here. All for free. We've got our own Levite priest.

We are in great shape. God has richly blessed us. The five spies were right.

This was a good place to come. This was a good... The journey is worth it. We're not even at our destination.

Look how much better off we already are. How easy it is to interpret something that is actually sowing the seeds of destruction as good and interpret something that is actually good as evil. God gave them a land and gave them a promise that they could take it.

They didn't want anything to do with that. And by abandoning it, they've got a false and empty sense of victory and security and strength. They can intimidate Micah.

They can take his stuff. Micah, who had no interest in actually looking anything up about how Levites work or what would actually honor God, has a religion of his own making, and his gods can't protect themselves. If these gods are so great, why are they being carried off? If they are Micah's gods, why does he have to try to run after them and get them back? Why can't he say a little prayer and all the teraphim will just wake up and start slapping around these Danites and come back to Micah's house? It's all a sham.

It's all a revelation of false perceptions. Well, so Micah goes away sorrowing, and now he's got nothing. And the Danites have got all of this idolatrous truck of stuff.

So they took the things Micah had made and the priest who had belonged to him, and they went to Laish, to a people quiet and secure. They struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. 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 Beit Rehob. Now this is mentioned in a couple of places in scripture. It will eventually be occupied by a bunch of Arameans if you go to 2 Samuel.

The Ammonites are going to make a league with these people, but it's far away from everything. And so they rebuilt the city and dwelt there. 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. Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the car, and now, here's the punchline I mentioned at the beginning of the first. Now we find out the name of the Levite that used to live in Bethlehem.

Who is he? He is Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh. This is not Manasseh. It's Moses.

If you've got Manasseh in your Bible, cross it out. Gershom is the son of Moses. The only difference in the continental text between Moshe and Manasseh is one noon.

And the Masoretes were so anxious that nothing bad attached to Moses that they inserted a noon here because Manasseh was one of the last evil kings in Israel. Remember evil Manasseh? But this is a Ketheve K'oreh in the text. And in some cases, Ketheve is what is written.

K'oreh is what is read. And so, if you read the ancient rabbinical commentaries, the rabbis talking thousands of years ago, they said, well, yes, there's a noon in the text, but if you notice, that noon is raised up above the line. And so you have your choice of reading it or not reading it.

And eventually it just drifted down and the Masoretic text will now always say Manasseh. But you find out from the Septuagint and Jerome's Vulgate and some other things that this was and should be Moshe. Why is the guy a Levite? What tribe is Moses from? Same tribe as Aaron.

He's a Levite. This guy's a Levite. But how illegitimate can you get? He's not even a priest.

The priests are the sons of Aaron. But this guy's got some stock. He's got some reputation because he's the grandson, or he's at least in the line.

There may be a few more generations. But he's a grandson of Moses through Gershom. And so people say, Whoa! You want to talk about some fame? You want to talk about being able to impress people? See this guy over here? See my priest? His great-granddaddy was Moses.

But notice how the spiritual heritage doesn't translate from generation to generation. Moses, perhaps the greatest Old Testament saint certainly in the constellation with Abraham and David

and Joseph. I mean, Moses, come on.

How many guys outdo Moses in the Old Testament? Well, here's a grandson of Moses, and he's the worst ne'er-do-well. He's fostering idolatry and false worship and a fake ephod and a fake Ark of the Covenant and fake images and false worship and telling people a bunch of pack of lies that are going to make them go establish And the worst, most depraved area in all of Israel is going to be this northernmost area where Dan has... You think, well, on a map they floated to the top, but in reality they have sunk to the very bottom. They are so evil that God is going to eliminate the tribe of Dan.

When you go to the 12,000 from each tribe in the book of Revelation, for a total of 144,000 servants of God, Dan's not even mentioned. You've got both of the tribes of Joseph and Dan is left out. That's how evil they are.

And this grandson of Moses, Jonathan, grandson of Moses through Gershom, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. Until the day of the captivity of the land. When is this? 721 B.C. The captivity of the northern kingdom, 721 B.C. And it tells you that there was still some editing going on in the book of Judges at that time.

They set up for themselves Micah's carved image, which he made all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh. And remember I told you we've gone back to an earlier time. Another one of the notations, not only is Dan left the area and that leaves the vacuum for the Philistines, but also if there are not any intermediate generations, you have Moses, you have Gershom, and Gershom's son, Jonathan.

So how far from the 40 years in the wilderness with Moses and his son coming to maturity and then Gershom having a son who is still a young man to leave Bethlehem down there and that part of the Levitical apportionment, how much time could have passed? Even if you have another couple of generations stuck in there, this guy, there are no other prominent ancestors mentioned. It's Moses, Gershom, and Jonathan. So this is early in the time of the land, but this persists all the way down to 721 and it certainly persists all through the time that the Ark of the Lord is at Shiloh.

This is the alternate. This is the alternative to the actual Ark of the Covenant and the actual priests of God like Eli and Samuel and so on up in the northern region. So this is significant.

And when we come back next time, it'll actually be week after next when we resume our study here in chapter 19, we'll see why this appendix is affixed to the end of the Book of Judges and that formal set of cycles that we've seen beginning with chapter 3 and extending through the end of Samson and coming down to... We finished those cycles and now we've got chapter 17 and following and here is this third section. Why is it here? What is the purpose of this section? Well, we've seen lots of individual applications as we have gone through. The importance of recognizing what God has assigned us.

The importance of not leaving and going to something that looks like greener pastures only to perpetrate a huge evil and lead many others astray and to become the very thing that you're trying to get away from. They're unhappy down there in the Danite apportionment because they are afflicted. Now they are the afflictors.

Now they are the murderers and the plunderers and the slaughterers of peaceful people. They have become the very thing they hate and that's what happens to us when we abandon our assignment. We become the very thing that we're trying to get away from.

Well, there's much more that we can talk about in terms of these two chapters and that's what we will look at when we come back next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the clear way that it communicates to us the principles that affect us as individuals and the opportunities and the challenges and the decisions that we are involved in from day to day as we live our lives before you. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these things in our hearts, that we may live in a way that's pleasing in your sight, in a way that reflects the glory of the Lord Jesus. We ask it in his name.

Amen.