
Judges 17

Judges 17:1–13

Micah, his Shrine and his Live-In Priest

Outline of Chapter 17:

- Vv. 1–3 **Micah returns money to his mother which he had stolen from her**
- Vv. 4–6 **This money is used to set up an unauthorized holy house**
- Vv. 7–13 **Micah hires a real Levite to be his personal priest**

Special Charts:

The Re-ordering of Judges 17:2–4

Introduction: With Judges 17 and through to the end of this book, we leave the chronological presentation of this time period and cover essentially two incidents which took place during the time of the judges which gives us an insight into the spiritual lacking of the people of Israel. Up until this time, we have been examining the leaders of Israel. And, while some of shined, many of these leaders seem less than savory. As Thieme often taught, a nation gets the leaders it deserves. So it is with Israel.

In the next few chapters, we will get some insight into the people themselves who occupied the land at this time and see that it was not simply a matter of accidentally choosing the wrong leader, but that there just wasn't much to choose from. As Keil and Delitzsch put it: *the...deep roots [of] the moral corruptions of the Canaanites had struck among the Israelites at a very early period.*¹ Now, in contrast to this, we will then cover the Book of Ruth, which also takes place during the time of the judges, yet does not paint the same bleak spiritual picture as do these five chapters. But then, Ruth is not an Israelite, she is a Moabite.

We also do not know when these events occurred. There is very little which ties us into specific points of Israel's history. Josephus, the great historian who wrote a millennium later, places this immediately after the death of Joshua. If this is so, you may be asking yourself, then why was it placed at the very end of the book of Judges? After the death of Joshua, as recorded in the book of Judges, we have an introduction which deals with the idolatry of Israel and how God would allow their enemies to rule over them, and then He would raise up judges in order to deliver Israel. In fact, the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3 essentially set up a general scenario that the following dozen or so chapters would replicate. Therefore, it would have seemed incongruous to leave that introduction, deal with Micah and his mom and the Danites seeking a different territory, and then return to the chronological progression of the judges. Therefore, the editor allowed the introduction to lead seamlessly into the history of the judges, after which he will present three stories which will give us great insight into the character of the people at that time.

As was mentioned in the introduction, the recurrent statement that **there was no king in Israel and every man did what was right in his own heart**, indicates that this was authored or edited by someone from the monarchy, either from the time of Saul, David or Solomon (possibly even Samuel). However, since David completely removed the Jebusites from Jerusalem, and since the writer of Judges tells us that the Jebusites lived in Jerusalem among the Benjamites to this very day, that narrows the time frame down to the time of Samuel and Saul.

The detail in these chapters indicates an eyewitness report in both cases and the vocabulary and style is very similar in the two general incidents recorded in the next few chapters, which indicates that there were two different manuscripts which an author used and completely rewrote later on; or, one author-historian, and probably, eyewitness, recorded these incidents, and this was later copied over by believer in a later era, inserting a line of commentary here and there. And then, due to its general time era, this was appended to the book of the Judges.

¹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 2, p. 308.

None of these possible scenarios wreak any sort of havoc with the verbal plenary interpretation of God's Word. The Bible is at once written by man, without sacrificing literary style, vocabulary, human emotions; and, I should add, without precluding that some of this material was edited a few hundred years after it was originally written. It is natural for man to edit, and, prior to a book being entered into the canon by God, there may have occurred some editing. There is no reason to run wild with this idea, nor does this at all make parts of the Bible not the Word of God. In other words, just because some editing took place, that does not mean that an author, several hundred years later, did not like the doctrine which was suggested by the earlier version, and changed things to suit his own theological taste. We're talking about narrative here, and these incidents either occurred or they didn't. The verbal-plenary interpretation of Scripture assures us that these are valid, historical incidents and that they were accurately recorded. Whether they were edited or not, and whether the editing was severe or superficial, does not change that. My person thinking is that these incidents were copied almost word-for-word by a later author, who inserted fewer than a half-dozen verses, those being of oft-quoted refrain. Taking this view in no way detracts from this being the Word of God, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, Who carried along the authors as they wrote. Just as an author's personality, writing style, and vocabulary remains etched within the fabric of Scripture, distinguishing it from the writings of any other author, it is not just possible, but likely, that some editing of Scripture took place, prior to it being added, by God, into the canon of Scripture. At the point at which the writing was entered into the Word of God, that autograph then stands as the Word of God, and all subsequent changes are aberrations thereof.

What do I think happened? Someone like Samuel discovered the manuscript of the book of Judges and the manuscript with these last five chapters as separate books. Recognizing that they came from the same era, and that they complemented each other, Samuel (or, whoever) appended the book of Judges with these five chapters, adding a comment here and there; the result was the book of Judges that we know today. So there is no misunderstanding, this scenario is educated speculation.

With regards to the placement of these next few chapters in time, Scofield writes: *It is not possible to assign the events in the last five chapters to any particular period. They may however, be considered an appendix which shows the utter apostasy of Israel in their religious, civil, and moral life. These chapters picture the climax of the downward path of Israel resulting from departure from the Word of God.*²

McGee gives us some general comments: *We have seen it illustrated in Judges as the hoop of history rolls over and over. It starts with Israel in the place of blessing. They are serving God. Then there is a departure from God and they do evil. They follow their own way. Then they are sold into slavery. In their slavery and servitude they cry out to God for deliverance. Then they turn to God and repent. Then God raises up judges to deliver them. Then Israel comes back to the place of blessing and becomes a nation that serves God. Just when everything is back in order, they lapse into sin and turn from God again. Altogether Israel went through seven apostasies. This gives us the philosophy of history. Every nation goes down in this order: (1) religious apostasy; (2) moral awfulness; (3) political anarchy. Deterioration begins in the temple, then to the home, and finally to the state. That is the way a nation falls.*³

The NIV Study Bible gives us an excellent abbreviated overview of what is to come: *The first episode illustrates corruption in Israelite worship by telling of Micah's establishment of a local place of worship in Ephraim, aided by a Levite claiming descent from Moses. This paganized worship of the Lord is taken over by the tribe of Dan when that tribe abandons its appointed inheritance and migrates to Israel's northern frontier.*⁴ In fact, these are almost two different stories which are loosely tied together by the fact that the tribe of Dan came across the person of Micah, and, rather than squelch his idolatry, they just flat out steal it.

In this first short story about Micah of Ephraim, we get a glimpse of the confused religious leanings of the people of Israel. Micah's mother was relatively wealthy and Micah stole her savings from her. He feels guilty, so he returns it to her. She is thrilled that he was so honest and gives it back to him,⁵ dedicated, as it were, to Jehovah, in order

² *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; pp. 309–310.

³ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 203.

⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 352.

⁵ Although this is questionable.

to construct a silver idol out of a portion of it. Micah's mother has this image cast, making the entire family aware of their idolatry. It does not matter if this idol is designed to represent Jehovah God. Then Micah sets aside one of his sons as a priest, meaning that the rest of his family is pretty much involved. Finally, a Levite is traveling through, and Micah hires him as his private Levite priest. The commandment of God was clear: **"You will not make for yourself an idol—any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth below or in the water under the earth. You will not worship them or serve them, for I, Jehovah your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me."** (Deut. 5:10).

With regards to the authorship of this portion of Scripture: again, we do not know who wrote this, but the style and the vocabulary is quite different than the previous few chapters. In the portion of the book of Judges dealing with Samson, we were forever quoting from three or four different translations in order to get a sense of the meaning and flow of the passage. In this chapter, although we will certainly look at the Hebrew and the syntax, most of the words will be those which are relatively familiar to us and the general structure of the Hebrew is fairly simple. The point of mentioning this is to indicate that these portions of God's Word had different human authors. The only connection between the previous few chapters and this is that Samson was a Danite and Micah will have some dealings with the Danites in the next chapter. Now, as to *who* wrote this, that is much more difficult. You must understand that an unbeliever cannot write God's Word. A man out of fellowship cannot record God's Word. This pretty much lets out Micah, Micah's mother, and the Levite, who are the principal players in this chapter.

The NIV Study Bible suggests that this portion of the book of Judges, if not the entire book, was written by someone who lived under the rulership of King David. In these two chapters, we will have the repeated refrain, **In those days, there was no king in Israel; a man did what was right in his own eyes** (Judges 17:6, 18:1–19:1). My own personal thinking is that this book was organized by an editor, also filled with the Holy Spirit as he recorded these events anew from existing manuscripts, with an occasional comment, the refrain in question being an example of that. This would account for the divergence of styles found in this book, as well as the comments that seem to be written from the perspective of a century later.

Micah's story will be continued in the next chapter with a whole new host of characters.

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Micah Returns Money to His Mother Which He Had Stolen from Her

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

And so was a man from [the] hill country of Ephraim and his name, Micah. Judges 17:1

There was a man from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name [was] Micah.

There was a man from the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.

Micah is a man to whom money is king. If he needs something, then he buys it.

The name Micah is spelled with one *yodh* throughout most of this chapter, with the exception of Judges 17:1, 4, where it is spelled with two *yodh*'s. We find these same two different spellings for the prophet Micah. The primary spelling found for the Micah in this book is *mīykâh* (מִיכָה) [pronounced *mee-KAW*]. Strong's #4318 BDB #567. This proper name is also spelled *mīykâyâh* (מִיכָיָה) [pronounced *mee-kaw-YAW*]. Strong's #4320 BDB #567. Micah the prophet also spells his name these two different ways, using the latter more often than the former.

Now, as a point of interest, we do not know the name of the father of Micah, which could mean that he is no longer on the scene. However, both the tribe and the father of most of the historical figures in the book of Judges are mentioned. For instance, Gideon's father is Joash, who is mentioned in Judges 6:11. Tola, about whom we know very little, has a father whose name is Puah (Judges 16:1). Gilead was the father of Jephthah (Judges 11:1–2). Micah's father? Who knows? Micah's mother is mentioned several times in this chapter, but we do not know her

name. Micah has a son whom he appoints as the family priest; we don't know his name. Micah hires a Levite to be a better family priest—we won't hear his name until the next chapter. What does all of this mean? It means that the world revolves around Micah and all of these people in his own periphery are merely extras in his movie. They are nameless faces, almost interchangeable characters. It is one thing to be a thief, but then to steal from your own mother—Micah is particularly reprehensible, and his mother plays such an insignificant part that doing such a thing is not out of the ordinary for Micah. Micah, in this way, represents all of Israel, who confuse the little Scripture that they know; and whose world revolves around them. The choices he makes, the behavior that he exhibits, all belie a total lack of character, as well as give us insight into the hearts of the people of Israel during this unsettled time of degeneracy in Israel.

And so he said to his mother, “Eleven hundred of the silver which was taken for you and you [even] you cursed and also you said in my ears—behold, the silver with me—I [even] I took it.”

Judges
17:2a

And he said to his mother, “The eleven hundred silverlings which were taken from you—[about] which you cursed and also said in my ears—observe, the silver [is] with me—I [even] I took it.”

And he said to his mother, “You know those eleven hundred pieces of silver which were stolen from you—the loss of which cause you to curse the thief in my hearing? Listen, I've got the silver; I was the one who stole it.”

We have spoken of the silver before and the amount and here, it is pretty clear that this is a great deal of money. We are dealing with roughly 28 lbs. (or, 13 kg) of silver. Later on, Micah will offer a priest a salary of ten pieces of silver a year and the priest will accept this as a living wage. This is enough money to pay a living wage for 110 years.

After *silver*, we have the relative pronoun referring to *silver* and the Pual perfect of *lâqach* (לָקַח) [pronounced *law-KAHKH*] which means *to take, to take from, to take in marriage, to seize*. The Pual is the passive intensive, and it means *was stolen, was taken*. Strong's #3947 BDB #542. This is followed by the *lâmed* preposition (with a 2nd person, feminine singular suffix); *lâmed* means *to, for, of, belonging to*.

What she did was the Qal perfect of *ʿâlâh* (אָלַח) [pronounced *aw-LAW*], which means *to swear, to curse, to take an oath*. You may think that this word is very close to one of the names for *God* and you are correct. In a curse, this is taking *God's* name in vain or using *God's* name casually. Strong's #422 BDB #46. In this curse, she obviously cursed the person who had taken the money. In the ancient world, what was said was taken very seriously by all of those who heard. From *Hard Sayings of the Bible: The Israelites of Old Testament times believed that God monitored all speech and saw to it that vows, oaths and even idle words fulfilled their mission. Theirs was not a magical view of words, but they did know that talk is not cheap and words often carry consequences.*⁶

Recall that many of the Israelites lived in tents; there were no banks that I am aware of—so when they had money, it was very difficult to secure it. Obviously, one did not show off one's wealth then as people do now, as it was easier to steal back then. We learn several things about Micah in this portion of one verse. He was greedy. (2) He was greedy enough to steal from his own mother. (3) He developed a guilt complex. However, probably most of all, (4) he feared the results of the curse of his mother. It is one thing to be cursed, but to be cursed by the woman who gave birth to you (even though she was not aware that he was the one who stole her money).

Now, let me offer you a more reasonable explanation as to why Micah returned this money to his mother. We will find Micah to be very religious—in fact, at this incident, he became particularly religious. What I think happened is that the mother cursed whoever took the money in his hearing, and then he began to notice that certain things went wrong in his life. Whether these were the result of *God's* discipline (which I doubt) or his own imagination running wild because of what he has done combined with what she said, we are not told—however, I favor the latter.

⁶ *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 197.

Furthermore, he certainly had a guilty conscience over this. Based upon the fact that Micah immediately launches into this religious fervor after this incident seems to indicate that a few things went wrong in his life after stealing this money from his mother, and that he wants to put things on the right track.

According to the REB, the NAB, and the NRSV,⁷ the words from the end of v. 3, *now, therefore, I will return it to you* should be relocated here. That is, his mother does not tell Micah that she is returning the silver to him, but he tells her that he will return it to her. Whereas this is quite reasonable, we do not have any backing manuscript evidence of this. When we get to the end of v. 3, we will look at the two renderings.

And so said his mother, “Blessed my son for Y^ehowah”

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17:2b

And so his mother said, “Blessed [be] my son in regards to Y^ehowah.”

Then his mother said, “Blessed be my son by Jehovah.”

What does his mother say? The first word out of her mouth is the Qal passive participle of *bârak*^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced *baw-RAHK*^e], which means *to bless, to make happy, to prosper*. Strong’s #1288 BDB #138. This is followed by *my son* and then *lâmed Jehovah*. This can either be rendered “*Blessings, my son, of Jehovah.*” or “*Blessed my son with reference to Jehovah.*” or “*Blessed be my son by Jehovah.*” The purpose of blessing her son immediately is that she had placed a curse on the person who stole this money from her—a curse, which, although pretty much bogus, caused her son to return the money. This blessing will counteract the curse (in their eyes, anyway). As I had mentioned, making a curse in the ancient world was taken quite seriously; and this was by both the mother and the son. Being the overindulgent mother that she is, she is very concerned that her curse might remain in effect, so this blessing that she pronounces is more than merely perfunctory.

In any case, she was happy that the money was back and she had no harsh words for her son. McGee: *Instead of his mama turning him across her knee and applying the board of education to the seat of knowledge, she congratulated him.*⁸ One of the television shows which I watch is *Seventh Heaven* and in it the children as always doing wrong, as children are wont to do, and they often confess their wrongdoings to their parents, as they should. Even though they get points for honesty, they still expect and receive punishment for what they did that was wrong. This is basic, solid parenting.

Now you know the problem. In the eyes of this woman, her son can do no wrong. You cannot have a worse parent than this. We have no mention of a father, but we obviously have an overindulgent mother (and perhaps he is the reason she is overindulgent; or his non-presence is the reason). We can speculate and say that the father was successful but that he is no longer on the scene, and she and her son were left together. Now, under any circumstance—death of a spouse, divorce, separation—if there is only one parent who remains with a child, then it is that parent’s responsibility to properly raise that child. We have mothers who use their children as teddy bears or as a doll to which they go to for emotional support. They feel guilty and lavish them with gifts and they hold back when it comes to discipline. The modern woman often has different men from time to time sleeping over—irreparably damaging the child with false values and a confusion about love. So was Micah’s mother. Sure—Micah was a worthless ass of a man—but he did not get there on his own. I’ve met Micah’s mother in several parent-teacher conferences. Their child could do no wrong and I was always the person at fault. I can’t tell you how many parents I have had pull children out of my class because I was too difficult; yet the same parents will turn right around, two or three years later, and blame the my high school for not properly preparing their child for college.

⁷ in fact, had it not been for the REB and the NRSV, I would have never caught this.

⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 204.

And so he returned eleven hundred the silver to his mother and so said his mother, “A consecration I will consecrate the silver to Y^howah: from my hand for my son to make a graven image and a molten image. And now, I return him [the silver] to you.”

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17:3

Then he returned the eleven hundred silverlings to his mother, and she said, “I will certainly declare this silver holy with respect to Y^howah: from my hand to my son to make a sculpted and a metal-cast image. Therefore, I return it to you.”

So he returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother and she said, “I will now dedicate this silver to God—I will give it to my son to make a sculpted and a metal-cast image. I hereby return it to you.”

One of the things which you do not see in the Hebrew is the very last suffix, which is in the 2nd person, feminine singular. This is a slip of the pen of the scribe from many centuries ago—he took this from v. 2a.

What the mother is going to do with some of the money is the Hiphil infinitive absolute of *qâdash* (שׁוֹדֵחַ) [pronounced *kaw-DAHSH*], which means *consecrate, sanctify, dedicate, hallow, set apart*. The Hiphil means *to declare something holy, to consecrate [or, set apart to God] [something, e.g., a priest], to regard [something or someone] as holy*. Strong's #6942 BDB #872. She follows this with the Hiphil perfect of the same verb.

For just a moment, it sounds reasonable; then she makes this pledge, perhaps looking out to the sunset, perhaps in front of all of the servants. She says that she is going to dedicate this money to Jehovah. Now, doesn't that sound really nice? Then she tells her son is to make part of the silver into the masculine singular noun *peçel* (פֶּסֶל) [pronounced *PEH-cell*], which means *sculpted image, carved image, graven image, engraved image*. The NIV Study Bible suggests that this is a carved, wooden image, overlaid with silver.⁹ Strong's #6459 BDB #820. She uses the *wâw* conjunction and the feminine singular of *maççêkâh* (מַצְעֵקָה) [pronounced *mahs-say-KAW*], which means *molten metal, metal image, molten image, libation*. If this word seems familiar to you, we covered the word in the previous chapter. Both BDB and the *New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance to the Old Testament* treat them as separate words. Gesenius treats it as one word with two divergent meanings. The NIV Study Bible suggests that this is a metal cast idol, with a cheaper metal as the bulk of the object, coated with silver.¹⁰ Now it appears as though there is only one idol which is being made, as the end of v. 4 is in the masculine singular. However, as we will see, the end of v. 4 probably belongs at the end of v. 3, which would solve this problem. Therefore we would be looking at two different idols. In Judges 18:14, it also appears as though they are two different images. Strong's #4541 BDB #651.

You will note the great inconsistency here—she dedicates the money to Jehovah, the God of Israel, and then has her son go out and have some idols made for their house. She sounds as though she is sincere and holy, and then she commissions her son to do one of the most anti-Jehovah things that she can think of—to make some idols. Christians are often inconsistent. They might act as though they would give anything to know the will of God; however, God's will is clearly reveals in His Word and very few believers study God's Word under the established authority of a pastor-teacher. There are hundreds of ministries that beg for money; but, whereas the focus of any ministry should be teaching the Word of God (whether it be Bible doctrine or the gospel), as well as such things as the distribution of Bibles and food and clothing, the monies received are often poured into other things; and the organization in question often ignore what is important. One of my fond memories as a young believer was hearing this show on the radio where the speaker, for the greater portion of his 30 minute show, begged for money so that, presumably, he could return the next day and have another opportunity to beg for money.

Now, I want you to please understand her motivation. Taking this silver and having it made into an idol is not some act of Micah's mother that comes straight out of left field. This can be explained. Her son has just confessed to stealing a small fortune from her and what she is thinking is that maybe she did a crappy job of raising this kid. What they need is a little more religion in their lives. He approach is to have some of this silver, which, in her mind,

⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 352.

¹⁰ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 352.

was gone for good, made into an idol, so that this idol could both be worshiped as well as watch over their household. That is, she does not want to lose this silver again. In other words, it is what is typical of some people after things go bad—they get a little religion.

The construction of this idol certainly flies in the face of all recorded Scripture. Ex. 20:4–5a, 23 “You will not make for yourself an idol or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You will not worship them nor will you serve them, for I, Jehovah your God, am a jealous God...You will not make any gods besides Me—not gods of silver or gods of gold will you make for yourselves.” Or, Lev. 19:4: “Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves metal-cast gods; I am Jehovah your God.” (see also Ex. 34:17 Deut. 4:16 5:8 Judges 8:27).

The concluding remarks of Micah’s mother begin with the wâw conjunction and ʿattâh (הַתָּא) [pronounced *gah-TAWH*], which is an adverb of time meaning *now*. Together, they can be translated *and so, thus, things being so, therefore*. Strong’s #6258 BDB #773. She finishes her little speech by saying she’s returning the silver to her son. Have you ever seen such a lame, mealy-mouthed, over-indulgent mother? It doesn’t matter how old or how young this kid is—the idea of stealing from one’s own mother is absolutely reprehensible.

However, so that I do not castigate this woman too much, I should point out that the end of this verse may have been misplaced; several translations (the NRSV, the NAB and the REB) place the end of v. 3 in the midst of v. 2.

Judges 17:2–4	
As found in the Hebrew:	The revised version:
<p>And he said to his mother, "The eleven hundred [pieces of] silver which were taken from you—[about] which you cursed and also said in my ears—observe, the silver [is] with me—I [even] I took it." And so his mother said, "Blessed [be] my son in regards to Jehovah." Then he returned the eleven hundred [pieces of] silver to his mother, and she said, "I will certainly declare this silver holy with respect to Jehovah: from my hand to my son to make a sculpted and a metal-cast image. Therefore, I return it to you." And so he returned the silver to his mother and his mother took two hundred [pieces of] silver and gave it to the metal-worker and he made it into a sculpted, metal-cast image. Then the image was in the house of Micah.</p>	<p>And he said to his mother, "The eleven hundred [pieces of] silver which were taken from you—[about] which you cursed and also said in my ears—observe, the silver [is] with me—I [even] I took it. Therefore, I return it to you." And so his mother said, "Blessed [be] my son in regards to Jehovah." Then he returned the eleven hundred [pieces of] silver to his mother, and she said, "I will certainly declare this silver holy with respect to Jehovah: from my hand to my son to make a sculpted and a metal-cast image." And so he returned the silver to his mother and his mother took two hundred [pieces of] silver and gave it to the metal-worker and he made it into a sculpted, metal-cast image. Then the image was in the house of Micah.</p>

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As you can see, this passage flows more freely and makes more sense when the end of v. 3 is placed in the middle of v. 2. There appear to have been times in the past when there was only one surviving manuscript of God’s Word and, when a scribe copied that manuscript, it was not always copied 100% correct. Therefore, this would be thought to be a very early error. Recall, that our earliest manuscripts were copies made a little over a millennium ago, almost two millenniums after the original manuscripts were penned.

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This Money Is Used to Set up an Unauthorized Holy House

And so he returned the silver to his mother and so took his mother two hundred silver and so she gave him [the silver] to the metal-smith and so he made him [the silver] a graven image and a molten image and so he [the image] was in a house of Micah.

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17:4

And so he returned the silver to his mother and his mother took two hundred [pieces of] silver and gave it to the metal-worker and he made it into a sculpted, metal-cast image. Then the image was in the house of Micah.

After he returned the silver to his mother, she took two hundred pieces of silver and gave it to a metal-worker who made it into a sculpted and metal-cast image. Then the image was set up in the house of Micah.

At the very first, I had assumed that these two hundred pieces of silver had come from 1100, but Keil and Delitzsch suggest that this is the 20% penalty assessed to a thief (it is obviously not exactly 20%; however, we are not dealing with someone who adheres completely to the Law). It is also possible that he gave her exactly 20% and she used the remainder to buy a microwave oven or something. The person that Micah gives the two hundred pieces of silver to is the Qal active participle of *tsâraph* (תַּרַּף) [pronounced *tzaw-RAHF*], which means *to smelt, to refine, to assay*. As a participle, this means *metal-smith, smelter, refiner, silversmith, goldsmith metal-worker*. The same word is rendered *goldsmith* in Isa. 40:19 and Jer. 10:9. Strong's #6884 BDB #864. This was probably not a fellow Israelite, as the Philistines seemed to have the corner on metal-smithing at this time. Isaiah warned about this very thing a few centuries later: "Those who lavish gold from the purse and weigh silver on the scale. Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god—they bow down, and they certainly worship it." (Isa. 46:6).

And the man Micah to him a house of gods [or, God] and so he made an ephod and teraphim and so he filled a hand of one from his sons and so he was to him for a priest."

Judges
17:5

And the man Micah had [lit., to him] a house of gods [or, God] and he constructed an ephod and teraphim. Then he consecrated [lit., filled the hand of] one of his sons, so he was his priest [he was to him for a priest].

And the man Micah had a house of gods. He had constructed an ephod and teraphim as well as installing one of his sons as a priest.

Let's see how others have rendered this verse:

The Emphasized Bible

Now the man Micah had a house of gods, —and he made an ephod and teraphim, and installed one of his sons, who became his priest.

NASB

And the man Micah had a shrine [lit., house of gods] and he made an ephod and household idols [lit., teraphim] and consecrated [lit., filled the hand of] one of his sons, that he might become his priest.

Young's Lit. Translation

As to the man Micah, he hath a house of gods, and he maketh an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrateth the hand of one of his sons, and he is to him for a priest;...

Now, it is clear from God's Word that there would be one nation honored by Jehovah-God and the tent of worship was to be found in one place only. Micah has become ultra religious and he is putting together his own very local cult. He had an image of cast metal, one which was carved (both probably coated with silver); he had an ephod, used for divination, and then he had some smaller household idols. The idea of some man, particularly someone who is a charlatan, putting together a cult of sorts is not something brand new. Here we have a record of it occurring over 3000 years ago.

As you have noticed, other translators render the beginning as a *house of gods*; however, it could be rendered it as a *house of God*. This is the word *Elohim*, which can refer to heathen gods as well as to the Creator of the Universe. Here, it is difficult to ascertain. Micah is obviously not worshiping the True God, but he seems to think

that he is. What appears to be the case is that he originally did all of this in honor of Jehovah God (v. 3), but it has become a home where one worships a host of heathen gods. The NASB's rendering of a *shrine* is very good, and takes in the concept of personal shrines that people put together in their own homes. They may be as sincere as can be, but it has nothing to do with the God Who created us.

Essentially, what we have here is the first Catholic. Micah originally believed that he was worshiping and honoring the One True God, Jehovah, the God of Israel. In his own mind, he at first was not worshiping heathen gods, nor is he even necessarily worshiping these idols. They are just a part of his shrine which help him to focus, just as someone may have that goofy picture of Jesus with the long hair and the sincere look hanging in their hallway¹¹ or a plastic statue of Mary.

For this shrine, Micah had constructed an ephod. This is the masculine singular of ʿêphôwd (אֶפְדָּוּד) [pronounced *ay-FOHD*], which means is transliterated *ephod*. In this case, it apparently was made into some sort of an idol. We do not know exactly what exactly an *ephod* is. It was apparently some sort of an outfit that the priest wore when determining God's will (Ex. 28, 39). In Judges 8:27, it appears to be some sort of an idol, although the gold could have been made into something shaped like an ephod that the priests would wear. The *Good News Bible* offers this explanation: *The Hebrew term traditionally transliterated as "ephod" is of uncertain meaning in a number of contexts. Generally, it refers to some type of priestly garment which was worn over the shoulder by the High Priest and with which the Urim and Thummim were association. In certain contexts, however, the Hebrew term refers to an object of worship, and in some other passages, it evidently refers to an object used to foretell future events.*¹² In this passage, we don't know for certain—it appears as though Micah is making his own home shrine with a few of his own religious icons. Therefore, this would be like the outfit worn by the priest (since he already constructed an idol); although it could be more of an idol. Strong's #646 BDB #65. However, with regard to the ephod and the teraphim, it appears as though we are talking about two different things, as this is in the singular and teraphim, below, is in the plural. My guess is that this was probably some article of clothing intended to be used for divination rather than an idol of sorts. In fact, there is no passage which requires that the ephod be anything other than an article of clothing (although, in Judges 8:27, it would have been like a shirt of armor which eventually was idolized).

The second thing that Micah had made was masculine plural noun tʳâphîym (תְּרַפִּיִּים) [pronounced *tʳaw-PHEEM*], which is obviously a transliteration. BDB gives it as *a kind of idol, an object of reverence, and a means of divination*. They were small enough to carry in a hidden place (Rachel hid them on her camel; Gen. 31), in at least one case it was the size of and shaped like a man¹³ (I Sam. 19:13, 16); and they are used for divination (Ezek. 21:21). The NASB renders this *household idols*; the NIV as *some idols*; and Young, Owen and Rotherham transliterate this as *teraphim*. I picture these as a human counterfeit of *guardian angels*. Strong's #8655 BDB #1076. I will cover this in greater detail in the **Doctrine of Teraphim** in I Sam. 19:13.

What Micah does with one of his sons is the Piel imperfect of mâlēʾ (מָלֵא) [pronounced *maw-LAY*], which means *to fill, to make full, to be full*. It is used in *to fill the hand*, which means to give someone a full-time vocation in service to God (Ex. 32:29). Strong's #4390 BDB #569. Here, it is a part of the cult which Micah is developing. He is rich enough to indulge himself. Some people would chase women, others would drink too much; Micah builds himself a religion. It is doubtful that many of you could relate to that. Unlikely that you would, given enough money, spend it on building idols and other religious crap (I meant to say artifacts).

One of the great problems in the Church Age is the confusion of the Age of Israel with the Church Age. Theologians have the church beginning in Abraham's tent; cults tell us that we have to observe the Sabbath (and many of them

¹¹ One of the very few things about our Lord's physicality that we know is that He did have a beard, as the Romans and Hebrews pulled much of it out prior to the crucifixion; and we know that He was so average-looking (i.e., His physical appearance was not striking like that of Saul, Samson or John the Baptist), so that he would fit into any crowd and often walked out of a crowd, unrecognized by those who wanted to kill Him. In fact, even in His third year of ministry, when the Jewish leaders were going to seize Him, they had to have Judas point out which One He was.

¹² *Good News Bible; Today's English Version*; The American Bible Society, ©1978; The New Testament, p. 259.

¹³ Since this is in the plural, there were probably two or more and David put several in his bed, meaning that they were not quite the size of a man.

are goofy enough to think that the Sabbath is Sunday); others spiritualize Israel to a point to where her eternal relationship to God is degraded and compromised. This isn't new. Micah here is organizing one of the first recorded *Christian* cults. He confuses the Age of the Gentiles with the Age of Israel. In the previous dispensation, there were household members who acted as priests and the worship was often very localized, being held in homes for family members. However, with the advent of the Law, God prescribed a very precise way of doing things in this regard, which included an inherited priesthood, and a tent of worship which was to be in one place in one nation, Israel, at any given time. Well, Micah takes a little bit from each era, to suit his own tastes, and, in this way, is a precursor of the many cults, short-lived¹⁴ and otherwise, which have come down to us throughout the ages.

In the days the those, no king in Israel; a man the right in his eyes did. Judges 17:6 **In those days, [there was] no king in Israel; a man did [was what] right in his [own] eyes.**

In those days, there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes.

This is a refrain that we will hear throughout the rest of the book of the Judges, which ties these last few chapters together under the same author. Although this is not a difficult verse, let's see how others have rendered it:

The Emphasized Bible In those days there was no king in Israel, —every man did that which was right in his own eyes.
NASB In those days, there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.
Young's Lit. Translation ...in those days there is no king in Israel, each that which is right in his own eyes doth.

This is a very powerful sentence because, for the longest time, there are no verbs. An Hebrew sentence begins like this: wâw consecutive then a verb. In this verse, that structure is found in vv. 1–4, 7–13. The Jews like the conjunctions and they like to tell you right up front what is going on. The mistake that most people make with this verse is they look at it as a causal relationship. They may read: **In those day, there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes;** but they think: *In those days, there was no king in Israel; **therefore**, every man did what was right in his own eyes.*

This sentence begins: **In the days the those, no king in Israel...** Then we have the masculine singular noun ʿîysh (יִישׁ) [pronounced *eesh*], which means *man*. Strong's #376 BDB #35. This is followed by the definite article and the masculine singular adjective yâshâr (יָשָׁר) [pronounced *yaw-SHAWR*] and it means *right, correct, upright, straight, uniform, even*. Strong's #3477 BDB #449. This is followed by *in his eyes*. The last word of the sentence—and this is an extremely rare place to stick a verb—is the Qal imperfect of ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare*. This is the same verb used when *constructing* those household idols. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. Even if this refrain occurred but once in the book of Judges, it would be the theme of the book of the Judges. It is the most powerful sentence in the whole book, taken from the standpoint of grammar. The writer has grabbed the reader by the collar and is saying, “Dammit, this is how it is.” Moses warned of this back in Deut. 12:8: “**You will not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes.**” This one verse explains the behavior of Micah; it explains the behavior of Samson—in fact, every goofy thing that was done in the days of the judges is explained by this sentence. The key is really not that there was no king—this just means that there was no higher authority, including God's authority. Therefore, men just made up what they should do. This makes me think of the United States from 1960 on. Men removed God from schools and from their consciousness, and then decided how to make things work. On the one hand, a parent is not to strike his child in discipline; on the other hand, they are being

¹⁴ I often think back to the Church of God, the Armstrong cult, that was such a theological force at one time. Gardner Ted Armstrong, the son, was a powerful and engaging speaker, forgoing a lot of the hokey theatrics that we find in TV fundamentalist preachers, who appealed to the reason of the listener, while carefully bending and shaping Scripture to fit his own blasphemous views. Any course dealing with *Christian* cults at that time would have to include the Armstrong cult; and yet, today, a few decades later, it is but a minor footnote in American religious history. His church and school have since come over to evangelical Christianity, now supporting the historic theological doctrines of the reformationists which they had once eschewed.

made responsible for the kids aberrant behavior 15–16 years later. You tie the parents hands behind their back and dare them to hit you.

As has been mentioned in the introduction, a verse such as this one suggests that at least a portion of the book of Judges was either written during the time of the monarchy of Israel (under David or Solomon, most likely) or edited during that time. It would be goofy to say, *in those days there was no king over Israel* if this was written a few years later when there was still no king over Israel. This particular phrase which is periodically placed in the final five chapters of this book is also peculiar to these final five chapters, indicating that the same author did not write the previous sixteen chapters. This would suggest that the first sixteen chapters existed as a book at that time (or, chapters 3–16) and that these few chapters were appended, having been based on manuscripts from the same era, but added by a third party, not by any original author, who inserted his own periodic observations. Also, recall how different the structure of this verse is compared to the structure of the other verses in this chapter. This further indicates that it was inserted later as a comment or a footnote, and that this comment was written in such a way as to stand out from the rest of the text. In other words, the author meant this as an observation made at a later date, and did not mean for anyone to think that this was in the original text. This was added in order to place this book during a specific time period. Apart from this phrase, we would not know when these events occurred. The scroll wherein was found these final five chapters was placed along with the scrolls of history which took place during the time of the judges, simply because this sentence tells us when this took place.

The second comment is: *Every man did what was right in his own eyes*. This is an editorial comment which simply tells us that what was being done—particularly Micah setting up his very own house of gods or God—was not according to the Law; this was not some great spiritual breakthrough for Micah. He was simply doing what he thought was right. This particular comment will be added again at the end of the book of Judges, at the end of another incident which took place during the time of the judges.

<<return to outline>>

Micah Hires a Real Levite to Be His Personal Priest

And so he was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah from a family of Judah and he [was] a Levite; and he was [temporarily] residing there.

Judges
17:7

There was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, from a family in Judah; and he [was] a Levite and he [temporarily] resided there.

There was a young man who came from Bethlehem in Judah, from a family that lived in Judah. He was a Levite who was temporarily residing in Judah.

Like most of the other verses, this begins with the wâw consecutive and the Qal imperfect of the verb *to be*. This is followed by the masculine singular noun נַעַר (נַעַר) [pronounced *NAH-ġahr*], which means *boy, youth, young man*. Strong's #5288 & 5289 BDB #654. We found this same noun used for the man who led the blind and seemingly helpless Samson around in the previous chapter, prior to his death. This is a young man out on his way to make his fortune. His family lived in Judah; he was not a Judæan. The Levites, as you will recall, were scattered throughout all of Israel; they did not have a place of their own. However, they did have particular cities that God had assigned to them, and, interestingly enough, Bethlehem was not among of them. What this means is that this young man had been doing a little traveling, and one of the places where he stopped and stayed for awhile was Bethlehem. In the Levitical cities, there would be an abundance of Levites; in the cities which were not so designated, there would be no Levites. Therefore, this young man reasoned that he would have better luck getting a job where there were no competing Levites.

In the last sentence, we have the personal pronoun (which is found twice in this verse), followed by the Qal active participle of the verb גִּוַר (גִּוַר) [pronounced *goor*], which means *to [temporarily] reside*. Strong's #1481 BDB #157. All of the Levites *temporarily resided* wherever they happened to live. The land did not belong to them and it never would—not during the Jewish Age. The Levites represent the Church—we are in this world, but we

are not of this world. The Levites do not have a true home, just as the Church does not have a true home on this earth. Our home is with our Lord and when we are not with our Lord, then we are temporarily residing wherever we happen to be. This is followed by the adverb *shâm* (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced *shawm*], which means *there*. Strong's #8033 BDB #1027.

I should mention that the REB gives this verse a re-working, coming up with the rendering: **There was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, from the clan of Judah, a Levite named Ben-gershom.** We have two problems with the rendering of this verse—this man was definitely **not** from a clan of Judah—he was a Levite living in Judah (as the Hebrew says)—his family was in Judah, but they were not Judæans. In order to make the second group of changes suggested by the REB, there would have had to have been the word *ben* (*son of*) in the Hebrew. Therefore, even apart from Judges 18:30 (which they quote in support of this dramatic change), this translation is unwarranted. What we have, if anything, is a play on this person's name.

Now, it was not unusual for a Levite to travel through town, and Moses even gave a commandment to cover that in Deut. 18:5: **“Now, if a Levites comes from any of your towns throughout Israel where he resides, and comes whenever he desires to the place which Jehovah chooses, then he will serve in the name of Jehovah his God, like all his fellow Levites who stand there before Jehovah.”** However, what Moses was dealing with was a Levite who has been sent by God to a particular area. His family, of its own accord, moved to Bethlehem in Judah, and he, taking the lead of his father, also moved to a non-Levite area.

Now, an interesting tie in to the second portion of this epilogue is that we will deal with another Levite, who was living in the hill country of Ephraim who takes a mistress from Bethlehem in Judah (Judges 19:1). However, given the fact that Jonathan, the Levite in Judges 17–18, eventually ended up with the Danites (Judges 18:30), this Levite from Judges 19:1 lived in the remotest portions of Ephraim, meaning that we are speaking of two different people.

And so went out the man from the town from Bethlehem, Judah, to reside in which he would find. And so he came [to] hill country of Ephraim unto a house of Micah to make his way.

Judges
17:8

The man had departed from the town of Bethlehem, Judah, to reside wherever he would happen upon. So he came to the hill country of Ephraim and to the house of Micah to make his way.

So he had left his hometown of Bethlehem in Judah, to live wherever the road might take him. He came to the hill country of Ephraim and to the house of Micah, in order to make his fortune.

In this verse we have the prefixed preposition *lâmed* and the Qal infinitive construct of *gûwr* (גּוּר) [pronounced *goor*] again. Strong's #1481 BDB #157. This is followed by the the *bêyth* prefixed preposition and (בְּ) [pronounced *ash-ER*], which together mean *where, wheresoever*. *Bêyth* = Strong's #none BDB #88; *âsher* = Strong's #834 BDB #81. This is followed by the Qal imperfect of *mâtsâ`* (מָצָא) [pronounced *maw-TSAW*] and it means *to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover*. Strong's #4672 BDB #592. Here we have a young man with a little wanderlust. He has told all of his friends that he can't hardly wait to get out of their little hick town of Bethlehem (which was not even, officially, a Levite town), and he is ready to reside wherever he happens to find himself.

At the end of the sentence where he comes to the house of Micah, we have *âsâh* (אָסָה) [pronounced *aw-SAWH*] again, followed by the masculine singular noun *derek*^e (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced *DEH-rek*^e] and it means *way, distance, road, journey, manner, course*. Strong's #1870 BDB #202. This seems to sound like our phrase *to make his fortune*. The NIV Study Bible makes an apt observation here: *The failure of the Israelites to obey the law probably resulted in a lack of support for the Levites, which explains the man's wandering in search of his fortune.*¹⁵

Now, on the other hand, Micah's mother is rich, and Micah himself is therefore rich. He would still steal from his mother, but he is rich nonetheless. This young man may have passed by dozens of various residences, but none

¹⁵ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 352.

of them looked promising. In Houston, if you needed a job, would you knock on the door of a house in the fifth ward or would you check into a business run by someone who lives in River Oaks?

And so said to him Micah, “From where are you coming?” And so he said unto him, “A Levite [am] I from Bethlehem, Judah and I am going to [temporarily] reside in which I find.”

Judges
17:9

So Micah said to him, “From where are you coming?” And he said to him, “I [am] a Levite from Bethlehem-Judah and I am going to reside wherever I happen upon.”

Then Micah said to him, “Where are you coming from?” And he replied, “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah. I am going to reside wherever I can make my fortune.”

The Hebrew is quite simple in this verse. This Levite has determined that he will live wherever his feet take him; wherever he can make his fortune, that is where he will stop the train and get off. He may not realize it, but this is his first job interview.

It is important to understand that Micah is not entirely confused about the Law. He does understand some aspects of it. He understands, at the very least, that there is a relationship between the spiritual and the tribe of Levite. My point in stating this is to indicate that Micah became an idolater out of negative volition, not out of complete ignorance of God’s Word. If he knew about Levites, then he certainly knew about God’s prohibition of idolatry. It is obvious that the Word of God was not being taught in Israel, but that was a matter of negative volition on the part of people of Israel. Think about it for awhile—if Micah is able to put together all of this religious nonsense together for a home shrine, and is able to afford his own priest, don’t you think that he might be able to obtain a copy of the Law, or at least a copy of portions of the Law? If he desired to know God’s will, God would have provided that for him. Micah does not desire to know God’s will. He would rather worship the creature than the Creator.

Today, at least in the United States, anyone who wants to can put their hands on a Bible. Knowing God’s will is not some deep, ethereal concept afforded to only a few of the really spiritual. If you have a desire to know God’s will, you’ve got it. It is the easiest thing in the world. The trouble is that very few people really want to know God’s will as that might, in some way, mean they ought to do God’s will. All men have an old sin nature. Often it is more comfortable to choose not to know the truth, rather than to know the truth and determine what one is going to do with it. Micah chose not to know the truth and therefore chose not to obey the truth.

And so said to him Micah, “Remain with me and be to me for a father and for a priest and I [even] I will give to you ten [pieces of] silver for the days and an arrangement of clothes and your living.” And so went the Levite.

Judges
17:10

Then Micah said to him, “Live with me and be to me a father and a priest, and I, [even] I will give you ten silverlings for the days, and an ensemble of clothing, as well as your sustenance.” Then the Levite came [to him].

Micah then suggested, “Stay with me and be to me a father and a priest, and in exchange, I will give you ten pieces of silver a year, as well as some excellent threads and basic living accommodations.” The Levite agreed to this arrangement.

You may have thought that Catholicism began in the fourth century after the incarnation. Think again. The Catholic Church begins here, in Micah’s tent. What Micah tells him to do is the Qal imperative of *yâsha*^v (יָשָׁב) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH^{BV}*] and it means *to remain, to sit, to dwell*. Strong’s #3427 BDB #442. With this verb we have the voluntative *hê*, which means that Micah recognizes the volition of this young Levite, although he does not go so far as to use the particle of entreaty. He’s *you can do whatever you want, but this is what you ought to do*.

Then Micah tells him what he is to be: first the masculine singular of *ʾâb*^v (אָב) [pronounced *aw^{BV}*], which means *father*, both as the head of a household or the head of a clan. Strong’s #1 BDB #3. Here, however, we must recognize that Micah does not need a father, this is a young man, so he is not a father figure to Micah; however, this young man will be a personal spiritual authority (whom Micah pays, and therefore, is beholden to Micah). He

is also to be a *kôhên* (כֹּהֵן) [pronounced *koh-HANE*], which means *priest*. This is a man who represents man to God. He intercedes between man and God. He stands before God in front of man. Strong's #3548 BDB #463. This young man will be his *father* and his *priest*; or, if you will, *his pope and his priest*.

We ought to deal with this term *father*. I shouldn't come down too hard on this use of the word *father*, as it is used elsewhere to indicate a spiritual authority. Elisha called Elijah *father* in II Kings 2:12. It was also a term applied to Elisha (II Kings 6:21 13:14). Joseph used that term of himself in Gen. 45:8 to refer to his relationship to the pharaoh of Egypt. The problem is when the spiritual authority implied by this term *father* rests first in a man and secondly in God. Our Lord said, "And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He Who is in heaven." (Matt. 23:9). The context of this statement is His castigation of the pharisees and the scribes in the day of our Lord. Those who chose this calling did not do so out of any interest in God's will, but their interest was that such a thing gave them great social standing, as well as unwarranted authority and respect. Our Lord castigates their motivations as well as their lack of spiritual knowledge more than he is castigating the use of these terms. However, anytime you have a man who claims to speak *ex cathedra*—that is, with divine authority—that man is wrong unless he can back it up with the Word of God.

There is an additional subtlety here that I don't know if anyone else ever gets. The Levites were not priests, *per se*. They were designed to help out the priests. It was the Aaronic branch of the Levites who were priests. However, Micah decides that this man ought to be his priest.

What Micah is going to give this man is ten pieces of silver *for the days*. This is the lamed prefixed preposition the definite article and the masculine plural of *yôwd* (יָוֵד) [pronounced *yohd*], which means *day*. Strong's #3117 BDB #398. Literally, this means *for the days*. Rotherham renders this *by the year*; the NASB, the NIV, the NKJV and Owen all render this *per year, by the year, for a year, etc.* I could not find confirmation of the in Gesenius or in BDB. However, Bullinger confirms that this means *per year* and cites Gen. 24:55 40:4 Ex. 13:10 Lev. 25:29 Judges 11:40 I Sam. 1:3 27:7 I Kings 17:7 Amos 4:4. Lamed = Strong's #none BDB #510. *Yôwd* = Strong's #3117 BDB #398. Recall that Micah had stolen 1100 pieces of silver from his mother; he could hire this priest for 110 years based upon that. He will also give the priest a very bitchin' uniform. We first have the masculine singular construct of *'êrek*^e (עֵרֶק) [pronounced *Ā-rek*^e], which means *order, row, estimate, arrangement*. It comes from a verb which means *to arrange, to set in order*. When used with clothing, it refers to a coordinated ensemble, a uniform. Strong's #6187 BDB #789. What follows is the masculine plural noun *begeg* (בְּגָדִים) [pronounced *BEH-ged*], which means *garment, clothing*. It is a homonym. Strong's #899 BDB #93.

Along with this, Micah will give this Levite the feminine singular of *mîch^eyâh* (מִיכָה) [pronounced *mee-kh'YAWH*] which means *life, living, sustenance, life-sustenance, survival*. Strong's #4241 BDB #313.

The final verb is the Qal imperfect of *hâlak*^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK*^e], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229. This is an odd thing to say at the end of this verse, as it generally means that the person is leaving and not coming. The Greek lacks this phrase in the Septuagint and is therefore not found in the NRSV or in the REB or in the NAB. In the Greek, it actually reads: *And the Levite went and began to live with the man...*

It is obvious that, for the Levite, the chief concern here is his own welfare. Micah has a house filled with idols. This priest, if he knows anything, knows that Micah is a wrong guy. The Levite's interest is strictly financial. He is willing to bend the truth if necessary, if it will give him a place to stay, some food, and some extra cash. When a better offer comes along, he will take it (Judges 18:19–20).

And so willingly chose the Levite to remain with the man. And so was the young man to him as one from his sons.

Judges
17:11

So the Levite chose to dwell with the man. And the young man was to him as one of his sons.

The Levite considered the offer, and agreed to stay with the man. He became to Micah as one of his sons.

The first verb is the Hiphil imperfect of *yâ`al* (יָאָל) [pronounced *yaw-AHL*], which means *to willingly chose, to be willing to*. Strong's #2974 BDB #383. What he willingly chose to do was *to remain, to dwell, to stay* with the man.

Then we have this marvelous little play on words. Micah invites the Levite to stay on as Micah's *father*—that is, as Micah's personal spiritual authority. So, the Levite becomes like a *son* to Micah. Obviously, he was not looked to as a father figure, as Micah treated him as one of his sons. The stuff about him being a *father* to Micah referred to a nebulous spiritual authority (which is pretty much whatever spiritual authority Micah allowed him to have over him).

McGee: *Here is a priest who is like a hired preacher who becomes a messenger boy of a church board or of a little group. God have mercy on the church that has this kind of a preacher. This Levite has now become a priest and has a house full of idols.*¹⁶

And so filled Micah a hand of the Levite and so he was to him the young man for a priest and he was in a house of Micah.

Judges
17:12

So Micah filled the hand of the Levite and the young man was to him a priest; and he lived [lit., was] in the house of Micah.

So Micah consecrated the Levite and the young man became his personal priest, living in his house.

As we discussed earlier, *filling the hand* was a term which meant *to consecrate, to make holy* the holy calling and profession of the Levite. The young man acted as a priest to Micah and stayed in the house of Micah. Micah is probably quite pleased with himself. He had installed his son as a priest, but now he has the real deal. He knows that there is something to the Levites and the priesthood and now he has a real live Levite running a little spiritual show at his home.

This Levite had some clue as to his real spiritual duties. He would have had some training in the Law. One of the very few times that God spoke directly to Aaron, He gave him a basic delineation of the responsibilities of the Levites. **So Jehovah said to Aaron, "You and your sons and your father's household with you will bear the guilt of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you will bear the build of the priesthood. And you will bring with you your brothers, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you, while you and your sons with you are before the tent of testimony. And they will therefore attend to your obligation and the obligation of all the tent, but they will not come near to the furnishings of the sanctuary and the altar, so that you and they do not die. And they will be joined with you and they will attend to the obligations of the tent of meeting, for all the services of the tent; but an outsider will not come near you. Therefore, you will attend to the obligations of the sanctuary and to the obligations of the altar, that there may no longer be wrath on the sons of Israel. And behold, I have taken your brothers, the Levites, from among the sons of Israel—they are a gift to you, given to Jehovah to perform the service for the tent of meeting. But you and your sons with you will attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service, but the outsider who comes near will be put to death."** (Num. 18:1–7).

And so said Micah, "Now I know that will do well Y^ehowah to me because he is to me a Levite for a priest."

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Then Micah said, "Now I know that Y^ehowah will cause me to do well because he is to me a Levite as a priest."

Then Micah surmised, "Now I know that Jehovah will bless me because I have a Levite as my personal priest."

¹⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 205.

Micah was relatively well off, although not necessarily rich. He was looking to gain God's blessing by being a really holy guy. It did not occur to him that this was completely outside the Law. We have a lot of people looking for God to prosper them and they do incredibly stupid things like *get slain in the Spirit*. It never occurs to them that there is nothing in Scripture to back this goofy behavior up. Micah thinks what he needs to have is pretty much the holiest place in the land. He just doesn't have a priest, he has a Levite for a priest.

What Micah expects God to do for him is the Hiphil imperfect of *yāṭaʿ*^{bv} (יָטַע) [pronounced *yaw-TA^BV*], which means *to be good, well, to be pleasing, to do good, to deal well, to make glad, to make a thing good*. In the Hiphil, it means *to do well, to cause to do well, to do rightly, to do good, to make merry, to make fit, to adjust*. Strong's #3190 BDB #405. Micah here is not looking for prosperity. He is relatively rich, and he will certainly inherit the money that his mother has. The deal is that he will feel better about everything and that God will bless his inner man as well as blessing him materially. Therefore, we do not use the verb *to bless* here, but one which indicates that God will do right by Micah in all ways.

What we may want to list here are the sins which were committed in this chapter: (1) The second commandment prohibits the construction of an idol, even if that idol is intended to represent Jehovah, the God of Israel. Micah had several idols constructed, the intention being that, as a result, God would bless him and his family. (2) The mother blessed the son in the name of Jehovah. You must realize that we are dealing with a woman who is about to become an idolater. This blessing that she uttered was nothing more than a good luck blessing to counteract the curse that she had already made. In this regard, she took God's name and trivialized it, thus breaking the third commandment. (3) Micah broke the fifth commandment, where all men are mandated to respect their parents. Stealing from one's mother is the antithesis of respect and honor. (4) Micah, when he stole the silver, obviously violated "You will not steal." (5) In order to be motivated in the first place to steal, Micah had to lust after his mother's money, which violates the final commandment. So, in 13 short verses, we find violations of half of the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20 or Deut. 5). However, these are not the only violations of Law which we find in these verses. (6) The establishment of a private shrine in the home was precluded by the tent of meeting being kept in one place and one place only (Deut. 12:3–14). (7) The sons of Aaron were designated as priests to Israel; there was no justification for Micah appointing his son as a family priest. (8&9) The duty of the Levites was to assist the sons of Aaron, who were the actual priests. They were not ever offered out to the public in general for religious hire. Furthermore, the Levites were not designated in Scripture to be priests.¹⁷ These are sins of Micah and the Levite.

I was raised on Scofield's notes, which are outstanding, accurate and concise. He writes: *[This is a] striking illustration of all apostasy. With Micah's entire departure from the revealed will of God concerning worship and priesthood, there is yet an exaltation of false priesthood. Saying, "Blessed be thou of the LORD," Micah's mother makes an idol; and Micah expects the blessing of the LORD because he has linked his idolatry to the ancient Levitical order.*¹⁸

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¹⁷ This is a fine point of doctrine glossed over by most theologians.

¹⁸ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 310.