# Judges 18

**Judges 18:1–31**          **Dan Rejects Their Inheritance and Takes Laish Instead**

**Outline of Chapter 18:**

**Special Charts:**

     **Idolatrous Items in Micah's House**

**Introduction:** In Judges 18, we see the degenerate tribe of Dan. What they had been ordered to do by God was clear. Joshua had distributed land to them, the land did have some Canaanites living in it, and they were to defeat the Canaanites. Dan, which is shaped like a boot, is one of the smaller possessions, but they actually only occupied a small portion of the land given them. They were sandwiched between the Mediterranean Sea on the west (where there was the city of Joppa, inhabited by the Philistines); Judah to their south (on their border was Ekron, another Philistine city); Benjamin and Ephraim to the east and Ephraim and Manasseh to the north. According to Judges 1:34, the Amorites pushed the tribe of Dan into the hill country. By my maps, the land of Dan is in the valley, meaning that they were pushed all the way into Judah and/or Ephraim. In other words, not only had they not taken the land from the hands of the people who occupied it, the tribe of Dan no longer even occupied that land. Therefore, in Judges 18 (which may not be far removed from Judges 1 in time, as Judges 1 gives a brief summary of the movement of the tribes of Israel throughout the period of the judges), the tribe of Dan needed some of their own land. Now, their options were to go against the very well organized and foreboding Philistines and Amorites, or find somewhere else to live. Dan chose to do the latter. We have no indication that this was God's will for them to do this. In fact, their actions at the end of this chapter seem to indicate that the tribe of Dan was out of fellowship as a whole for a long time.

I mentioned time in the previous paragraph so I need to clear that up. Most of the commentators which I have read place this story early in the history of Israel, occurring not too long after Judges 1 and 2. However, I think we can be a bit more precise than that. It is reasonable to place the events of these two chapters (17 and 18) after Judges 4–5, as it would be unlikely that the tribe of Dan would move north while Canaan was under a powerful Canaanite king as we find in Judges 4. However, once this king was conquered, Dan could freely move toward the north. Our real problem is that, with this chapter, we appear to have a migration of the tribe of Dan to the far north of the Land of Promise. Our final judge, Samson, is said to have been moved by the Holy Spirit while living between the two cities of Zorah and Eshtaol (Judges 13:25). If the tribe of Dan entirely deserted those cities early on in the period of the judges, then it would make little sense for Samson to live in that general region as a member of the tribe of Dan. Therefore, initially, it would seem to make more sense that this took place near the end of the life of Samson, if not after his death. No doubt, the Amorites, hearing of his exploits, though childish that they were, would not be interested in tangling with someone of his prowess. However, it would neither make sense for Judges 18 to take place years after Judges 13–16, as Samson lived in the area of Dan as Samson was stirred up in Mahaneh-dan, which was named by the soldiers in this chapter, meaning this chapter had to precede the exploits of Samson. Therefore, the only explanation that makes sense is that the tribe of Dan did go north and conquer Laish prior to the time of Samson, but they did not leave this area in the south entirely abandoned. They primarily occupied two cities, and these were over-crowded, so they did not relocate to Laish in the north but they expanded to that area.

Let me add that the reason some place these two chapters at the beginning of the period of the judges is that the priest is said to be the grandson of Moses in v. 30.  This is not entirely true, however.  Because of the use of the word *son,* we know simply that the priest herein found is a direct descendant of Moses, which therefore does not tie these events to the beginning of this book.

The tribe of Dan sends spies out to the north to see if there is any area where they might conquer and settle and they find an small patch of land at the northernmost border of Israel, which is occupied by a peaceful people that surrounding nations have let alone.  It's as though they discovered the mid-Eastern equivalent of Costa Rica. Costa Rice is a little Paradise in Central America with no standing army, sandwiched between less than stable nations with strong military forces.  They are reasonably prosperous, whereas some of the nearby nations are not.  This little portion of land in the northern part of Israel is just like that.  Israel has done most of the conquering that it is going to do for awhile, and did not go that far north. The other nations, primarily Sidon, have also let this land alone. These people apparently are living in a beautiful country with no standing army, at peace with those around them. Essentially, they are a helpless nation, so the tribe of Dan chooses to attack them.

During the time that the tribe of Dan heads north to attack these people, they come across the home of Micah, who we met in the previous chapter.  They steal his idols, offer his priest a better position, and go on their way.  Micah is furious, and gives chase, and bitches them out.  The leaders of the tribe of Dan lay out the basic statistics to Micah and tell him that he is lucky just to be alive at this moment.  Micah realizes the truth of this and backs off. You would think that Dan may practically be in the right about this matter; however, once they conquer this peaceful land to the north, they set up Micah's idols to worship.

Again, this chapter, as those around it, are not a depiction of God's will for the tribe of Dan.  The book of Judges chronicles what the Israelites did, not what God necessarily wanted them to do.  Particularly in the end few chapters, Israel behaves despicably.  This information is recorded so that we have a complete and full understanding of the nation Israel in its inception.

We have a tendency to want to figure out who is the good guy and who is the bad.  We want to see things in terms of black and white, right and wrong.  In this chapter, we have no such thing going on.  Micah is wrong for having all these idols and hiring a priest; the priest is wrong for allowing himself to be a priest for hire.  The people of Israel in general are wrong for not paying the Levites enough money to survive on.  The Danites here are wrong to steal the idol and the priest from Micah; they are wrong to have these things in the first place, they are wrong to steal them from Micah; and they are wrong that they do not execute Micah, as per the Law.  In other words, there are no good guys in this chapter; there is no one who will wear a white hat and come into town and clean things up.  The book of Judges covers a time of great degeneracy.  For some of us, that will make it all the more interesting.

In the previous chapter, we spoke of an editor putting the book of Judges together as a cohesive whole.  This becomes obvious in v. 30, where the captivity of the northern kingdom is spoken of (which occurred circa 723 B.C.). This, along with the line, *in those days, there was no king in Israel,* appear to be later additions to this book.  There is nothing in the **Doctrine of Inspiration** which indicates that the final form of the book, a small part of which is the work of an editor from a later century, is not inspired by God the Holy Spirit.

There is another extremely important topic which I will briefly cover in this chapter and that is the topic of editing. It is clear to any exegete that the Bible was edited.  Many books were based on more than one manuscript of differing origins and often, a writer who pieced two or more manuscripts together (and don't become confused; this is not that goofy JEPD theory; this is not documentary hypothesis).  What I am saying is that we do not have a situation where someone took four or five difference source materials and interweaved them into a cohesive whole.[1] However, there are several verses throughout the Bible where it is obvious that an editor was at work and that such

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[1] You may or may not be aware of these theories.  They are quite pervasive, finding their way into such scholarly efforts as BDB's Lexicon.  However, these theories are completely wrong, and Josh McDowell deals with them quite effectively in *More Evidence that Demands a Verdict;* ©1975 by Campus Crusade for Christ; pp. 25–169.  When I first read this book, I thought, *just what the hell is he talking about?*  However, I have since found out that this is a hot and important topic, and that documentary hypothesis, or the JEPD theory, is a lie that many Christians fall for, under of guise of scholarship.

additions were not covered up or slipped in to make some goofy theological statement. There are several books which are the work of more than one author (and these were pieced together differently[2]). There are also some bogus additions to Scripture. How to tell the difference will be covered at the end of this chapter.

## Spies from Dan Speak to Micah's Priest, Then Go up North to Find Land for the Tribe of Dan

Slavishly literal:

**In the days the those no king in Israel and in the days the those, a tribe of Dan seeking for him an inheritance to inhabit because she had not fallen to him until the day the that in a midst of tribes of Israel as an inheritance.**

Judges 18:1

Moderately literal:

**In those days, [there was] no king in Israel; furthermore, in those days, the tribe of Danites was seeking for itself a property to inhabit because it [an inheritance] had not fallen to them until that day in the midst of the tribes of Israel by inheritance.**

**In those days, there was no king in Israel. Also, during that time, the tribe of Dan was seeking a land to occupy, as their inheritance had not worked out for them.**

Since the REB says that the Hebrew is unclear, whereas the Greek is clear, the English rendering based upon the Greek is: In those days there was no king in Israel and in those days the tribe of Dan sought for itself an inheritance to inhabit, because no inheritance had fallen to it until that day in the midst of the tribes of the children of Israel. I don't know that there is, actually, much difference between the Hebrew and the Greek here. This particular phrase is closely associated with the book of the Judges, although it only occurs in the final five chapters. The entire phrase is, In those days, there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. However, it occurs enough in these final chapters as to set a thematic environ for this book. Man can simply choose between two sets of standards: God's or his own; the people of Israel during the time of the judges relied upon their own judgments and standards. We are warned in Prov. 3:5–8: Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; respect Jehovah and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones. It is a clear choice in Scripture, and in the philosophies and religions espoused today, it is clear that they would prefer that you lean toward your own reasoning rather than that of your Maker.

What the tribe of Dan is doing is Piel participle of bâqash (בָּקַשׁ) [pronounced *baw-KAHSH*], which means *to seek, to search, to desire, to strive after, to attempt to get, to require, to demand, to ask, to seek with desire and diligence*. This verb is not found in the Qal stem. Strong's #1245 BDB #134. What they are seeking for is the feminine singular of nachălâh (נַחֲלָה) [pronounced *nah-khuh-LAW*], which means *inheritance, possession, property*. Strong's #5159 BDB #635.

What they want to do with this property or inheritance is the Qal infinitive construct of yâsha<sup>b</sup>v (יָשַׁב) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH<sup>B</sup>V*] and it means *to remain, to inhabit, to sit, to dwell*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442.

This is followed by an explanation as to *why* they were looking for such a property. We have the explanatory preposition, a negative and the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply*. This word is used to refer to the choosing of the land for each tribe by the casting of lots. Strong's #5307 BDB #656. I mention the verb is the 3rd person feminine singular, so that you realize that the subject of the verb refers back to *inheritance*. In the second half of the book of Joshua, the land was distributed to the tribes of Israel by casting lots (we don't know exactly the mechanics here), and the tribe of Dan was given a portion of land to inhabit. The distribution of

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[2] Genesis was pieced together much differently than was Joshua or Judges.

cities to Dan is given in Joshua 19:40–46, 48.  However, as was discussed in the introduction, at this time, they had essentially been pushed out of the land.  What if they had decided to conquer the land which God had given them?  That would have been a good start.  However, they allowed the foreign nations (primarily the Amorites) to push them out of their own land.  They apparently barely occupied two cities on the border of Dan and Judah.  So, as far as they were concerned, they did not really receive an inheritance.

At the end of this verse, we have the kaph preposition, which means  *like, as, according to*.  No Strong's # BDB #453.  This is followed again by *inheritance*.

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**And so sent sons of Dan from their tribe five men out from their ends—men, sons of strength from Zorah and from Eshtaol to tread the land and to search her.  And so they said unto them, "Go explore the land."  And so they came to a hill country of Ephraim as far as a house of Micah and so they stayed there.**

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Judges 18:2

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**So the sons of Dan sent five men from their tribe out from their borders—men, sons of strength, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to walk the land and to explore it.  Therefore, they said to them, "Go out—explore the land."  And they came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah and they stayed there.**

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**So the tribe of Dan sent out five men from their borders, professional soldiers, from Zorah and Eshtaol, to walk through the land, exploring it.  They had said to them, "Go out and explore the land."  They made their first stop in the hill country of Ephraim and stayed at the estate of Micah.**

The five men were sent out from the masculine plural of qâtsâh (קָצֶה) [pronounced *kaw-TSAW*], which means *end*.  There is a very similar masculine noun which differs only in one vowel point, which makes me wonder if the words are not identical (see Strong's #7097).  Strong's #7098  BDB #892.

In describing the men, we have the expression *sons of* and the masculine singular of chayil (חַיִל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil* ] and it means *efficiency, army, strength, valour, power, might*.  The TEV gives the interesting suggestion *qualified*.  Strong's #2428  BDB #298.

Zorah is a border town which lies between Judah and Dan.  Zorah, called Zoreah in Joshua 15:33, was originally given over to the tribe of Judah (however, see below...).  The cities were to be given to the various tribes by lot, and, afterwards, redistributed to even everything out.  Therefore, this was redistributed to the tribe of Dan in Joshua 19:41.  Manoah, the father of Samson, was from Zorah (Judges 13:2).  Samson was both first moved by the Spirit when he was between Zorah and Eshtaol, and he was buried between these towns (Judges 13:25  16:31).  In fact, since these are the only towns which are consistently mentioned with regards to the tribe of Dan, this appears to be the only area which Dan every really occupied (see also Judges 18:8).  Then it appears as though the tribe of Dan no longer occupied those cities.  A few centuries later, Rehoboam, the ruling son of Solomon, fortified this city, along with several others, in order to protect Jerusalem (II Chron. 11:10).  This was one of the cities which the exiles occupied when they returned to Israel after the first deportation (Neh. 11:29).  In fact it was Judæans who populated this area after the first dispersion (II Chron. 11:10  Neh. 11:29).

Those who lived in this city are called Zareathites or tsorê ʿâthîy[3] (צָרְעָתִי) [pronounced *tzor--aw-THEE*], which is Strong's #6882   BDB #864 (I Chron. 2:53); Zorites or tsorê ʿîy (צָרְעִי) [pronounced *txohr-EE*], which is also Strong's #6882 BDB #864 (I Chron. 2:54); and Zorathites (I Chron. 4:2), which is the same Hebrew word as we find in I Chron. 2:53.  According to *The New Bible Dictionary,* the Tell el-Amarna letters refer to this as Zarkha.[4]  This writer also suggests also that there may be more than one Zorah, his reasoning being that some of the cities named near Zorah in II Chron. 11:10 are not close to Zorah.  ZPEB identifies Zorah with the modern Sarʿah, which is *on the north side of the wadi es-Sarar on a hill overlooking the wadi some fifteen miles north of Beit Jibrin*.[5]

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[3]  The vowel point Qâmêts is pronounced like the *a* in *all*.  I perhaps overdo this, rendering it as *aw*.  There is also the Short Qâmêts (which, to me, is indistinguishable from Qâmêts), which is pronounced *o* as in *nor*.

[4] *The New Bible Dictionary;* editor J. D. Douglas; ©Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1962; ®by W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; p.1361.

[5] *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible;* ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 1070.

Eshtaol, like Zorah, was originally give over to Judah, and then redistributed to Dan to even out the allotment of the land (however, see below...). ZPEB: *Scholars have differed in their explanation of the anomaly that Eshtaol is listed as one of the cities of Judah (Josh. 15:33) and also as one of the cities of Dan (Josh. 19:40, 41).*[6] The reason that people are confused as to why the same city is listed under two different tribes is that they do not realize that it was in the book of Numbers, not Joshua, that Moses was told to redistribute the land, if necessary, due to population differences. In the book of Numbers, God told Moses that, after some of the land was distributed, that it was to be redistributed to make the allotments proportional. God said to Moses: "Among these the land will be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To the larger, you will increase their inheritance and to the smaller, you will diminish their inheritance; each will be given their inheritance according to those who were numbered of them. But the land will be divided by lot. They will receive their inheritance according to the names of the tribes of their fathers, according to the selection by lot, their inheritance will be divided between the larger and the smaller." (Num. 26:53–56). Now, we don't have much to really add concerning the city of Eshtaol, seeing that it is mentioned in conjunction with Zorah in much of the Old Testament (Joshua 15:33  19:41  Judges 13:25  16:31  18:1–2, 11–12). From these passages, it is obvious that this area is populated with Danites (in fact, these cities might be the only two cities of their allotment which they do occupy at this time). It would be reasonable to suppose that when the tribe of Dan removed itself to move north, that Judah repopulated this area (I Chron. 1:53  4:2). Keil and Delitzsch suggest that Eshtaol is preserved today in Um Eshteiyeh, which is southwest of Zorah.

Now, I could be wrong, but it is possible that these two cities were in the valley—it's really difficult to tell with the maps; besides which, we do not know for certain where the cities were. My thinking is that most of the people had been forced into the hill country of Judah and Ephraim, completely outside of Dan. Dan had left to it two cities, inhabited mainly by warriors, who barely hung onto those cities. When they left to go north, they pretty much left those cities deserted. This is why we are told that the tribe of Dan had been pushed into the hill country, because that is where most of them were. Now, if the territory of Dan went all the way to the hill country, with these two cities in the hill country (and recall that ZPEB places Zorah on a hill which overlooks a Wadi), then no additional explanation is needed.

Now, after studying the book of Chronicles (principally the first couple chapters), I have another possible explanation as to the ownership of Eshtaol and Zorah. These cities may have originally been given over to Dan, but Dan did nothing to take them, finally moving far north and taking land from a peaceful group of people. This left the cities open for the taking, which two groups of people from Judah, the Zorathites and the Eshtaolites, did. They named the cities after themselves (or, more probably, took the names of the cities to themselves) and this information was then *updated* in the book of Joshua (which has been the source of some problems to exegetes ever since).

Barnes suggests that these past two chapters, as well as the several chapters dealing with Samson, all came from the same source, perhaps the annals of Dan. They were not necessarily written by the same person, but the records may have been kept together. At this time, most of the Israelites, if pressed, would recognize the Pentateuch as the Word of God. Other things written after that time would not be necessarily so classified.

What these men were to do to the land was the Piel infinitive construct of râgal (רָגַל) [pronounced *raw-GAHL*], and it means *to foot it, to tread, to go about, to go about as an explorer, to go about as a spy, to go on foot to scope something out*. In the Piel, it means *to go about [on foot];* when followed by a bêyth preposition, it means *to go about with the intention of exploring or spying out*. Strong's #7270  BDB #920. The second verb is the Qal infinitive construct of châqar (חָקַר) [pronounced *khaw-KAHR*], which means *to search out, to search for, to thoroughly investigate*. Strong's #2713  BDB #350.

What they did when they arrived at the house of Micah was the Qal imperfect of lûn (לוּן) [pronounced *loon*], which means *to lodge, to pass the night, to spend the night*. Strong's #3885  BDB #533. Although it is not specifically stated here, it would not make sense for them to all stay inside the house of Micah; however, they were probably camped out next to him, and it is likely that their generals received special lodging with Micah. It appears as though Micah was quite well-off financially.

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[6] *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible;* ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 364. As a matter of fact, the author of this short article spent more time dealing with this problem than he did with the city of Eshtaol.

Barnes suggests that there were at least three houses—one for the Levite, one for worship, and then Micah's residence.  If there were three houses, there were probably several others, all which surrounded a court and were accessed by means of one gate.  The entire layout was probably called Beth-Micah (or, *the house of Micah*).

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| They [were] near a house of Micah and they [even] they recognized a voice of the young man, the Levite.  And so they turned aside there and so said to him, "Who brought you here and what [are] you doing here and what [is] to you here?" | Judges 18:3 | [While] they [were] near the house of Micah, they [even] they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite.  So they turned aside there and said to him, "Who brought you here and what [are] you doing here and what [is] to you here?" |

While they were near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite.  They stopped there and inquired from him, "Who brought you here?  What exactly are you doing here?  What arrangement has been made for you to be here?"

Let's see what others have done with this verse:

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| *The Emphasized Bible* | They being by the house of Micah knew the voice of the young man, the Levite, —so they turned aside there, and said to him— Who brought thee in hither?  and what art thou doing in this place, and what hast thou here? |
| NASB | When they were near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite; and they turned aside there, and said to him, "Who brought you here?  And what are you doing in this place?  And what do you have here?" |
| Owen's Translation | When they were by the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite, and they turned aside there and said to him, "Who brought you here?  What are you doing in this place?  What is your business here?" |
| *Young's Lit. Translation* | They *are* with the household of Micah, and they have discerned the voice of the young man, the Levite, and turn aside there, and say to him, 'Who hath brought thee hither? and what art thou doing in this *place?*  and what to thee here?' |

This verse begins with the 3rd person plural pronoun followed by the preposition ´îm (עִם) [pronounced *ǵeem*], which means *with, at, by near*.  Strong's #5973  BDB #767.  As has been mentioned in the past, *house,* because it is in the construct, does not have a definite article; and *Micah,* because it is a proper noun, also does not carry a definite article.  However, the way that we speak in the English demands one here.

While near the house of Micah, they did the Hiphil perfect of nâkar (נָכַר) [pronounced *naw-KAHR*], which is not found in the Qal.  In the Hiphil, it means *to contemplate, to behold, to recognize, to acknowledge, to be acquainted with, to know, to know how, to care for*.  Strong's #5234  BDB #647.  These five men were probably not hanging out inside Micah's house.  Whether they were thanking their host Micah, whether they were just traveling by the house after sleeping in the barn, we don't know.  However, the hired Levite priest did have occasion to say things in the house, or perhaps when he went outside, and he was heard and recognized.  Although, *what* he said might have been what was recognized, more than likely, those who heard him had actually heard his voice before.  Now, it is not said how they happened to recognize his voice; it is just that they did.  As we have studied before, Levites were assigned to particular cities to assist the Aaronic priesthood.  That they would have known this Levite is possible, albeit somewhat of a coincidence; that they may have recognized the words that he said would seem more reasonable.  However, what they *recognized* was the masculine singular construct of qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced *kohl*], which means *sound, voice*.  Strong's #6963  BDB #876.  This would indicate not the content of what was said but the voice of the young man.  This is obviously a coincidence of sorts to run into this priest-wanna-be, and we are not privy as to the details.  Both Keil and Delitzsch and the NIV Study Bible suggest that they recognized his dialect or accent, rather than the man himself, and the word used here would allow for that.  In other words, he did not sound like a person from the hill country.  Barnes also suggests that they heard the voice of the Levite, were attracted to it, and went into whatever sort of a makeshift chapel that Micah had set up (it was probably quite nice).

What this causes them to do is the Qal imperfect of çûwr (סוּר) [pronounced *soor* ], which means *to turn aside, to depart, to go away*. Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693. What was occurring was that they were heading out to go north, heard this young man's voice, and stopped, turning aside to the voice.

We have two different interrogative particles in this verse. The first is the pronominal adverb mîy (מִ) [pronounced *mee*], which is generally translated *who*. Strong's #4310 BDB #566. Most adverbs in the Hebrew imply the verb *to be*. This is followed by the Hiphil perfect *to bring* (with the 2nd person masculine singular suffix) and the adverb *here*. This gives us: "Who brought you here?"

The next interrogative particle is mâh (מֶה) [pronounced *maw*], which means *what, how*. Strong's #4100 BDB #552. Then we have the 2nd person personal pronoun and the Qal active participle of *to do* followed by the demonstrative adjective zeh (זֶה) [pronounced *zeh*], which means *here, this*. Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260. This gives us: "What [are] you doing here?"

The last question is the difficult one. It is literally "...and what to you here?" which is obviously a colloquialism which probably means something like "What is here for you?" You see, this man is a Levite, so what exactly is he doing there, not serving the priesthood, not where the Levites are to be living?

| | Judges 18:4 | |
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| **And so he said unto them, "As this and as this does for me Micah and so he hired me and so I am to him for a priest."** | | **And he answered them, "Like this and like that, Micah does for me. He hired me and so I am to him a priest."** |

**And he answered them, "We have our own arrangement. Micah hired me and I am his priest."**

The first thing that the Levite says is rendered: 'Thus and thus hath Micah done to me...' (Young); "Thus and thus has Micah dealt with me..." (Owen); "Thus and so has Micah done to me..." (NASB); and 'Micah has made certain arrangements with me. He pays me a wage and I act as his priest.' (NJB). This refers back to Judges 17:10, 12, where Micah hired this Levite.

We begin with the prefixed kaph preposition (*like, as*) and the demonstrative adjective zeh (זֶה) [pronounced *zeh*], which means *here, this*. Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260. Literally, the first line that the Levite says is, "As this and as this does for [or, to] me Micah..." It essentially means that they have their own arrangement, which is fair and equitable. The terms which the Levite chooses to reveal to these men is the Qal imperfect of sâkar (שָׂכַר) [pronounced *saw-KAHR*], which means *to hire, to recompense*. Strong's #7936 BDB #968.

The Levite does not answer the three questions exactly; however, it is unlikely that one person posed those questions in the first place. Probably a half-dozen guys approached him and these were three of the questions which were asked. Micah explained, albeit vaguely, that they had their own personal arrangement; however, he certainly would reveal that Micah hired him and that he was his priest. This in itself is quite an admission. There is no provision anywhere in all of the Law for a person to have his own private priest.

I also need to mention something which you would not get from my translation, but from others. At the end of this verse, we have the Qal imperfect of the verb hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*], which means *to be*. Without a specific subject and object, it often means *and it will come to be, and it will come to pass, then it came to pass* (with the wâw consecutive). Several translators, Owen, the NASB and Rotherham among them, render this *become*. I mention this because we have the Qal imperfect of hâyâh in Gen. 1:2, where it should be rendered, And the earth *became* a waste and barren. Strong's #1961 BDB #224.

| | Judges 18:5 | |
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| **And so they said to him, "Ask, please, in God, and we may know whether will be made successful our way which we are going upon her."** | | **So they said to him, "Ask, please, at God, that we may know whether our journey, which we are going on, will be made successful."** |

**So they said to him, "Please, ask of God whether our journey will be caused to be successful."**

What they ask him to do is the Qal imperative of shâʾal (שָׁאַל) [pronounced *shaw-AHL*], which means *to ask, to petition, to request, to inquire, to question, to interrogate*.  Strong's #7592  BDB #981.  This is followed by the particle of entreaty; even though they used the imperative, it was the imperative of entreaty.  It was a polite request.  This is followed by the bêyth preposition and masculine plural noun *God*.  It is possible that when they saw the ephod that they thought to ask about the success of their venture.

Then we have *and we will know* followed by the interrogative particle hă (הַ) [pronounced *heh*], which can be used as an indirect interrogation and be rendered *whether*.  Strong's #none  BDB #209.  This is followed by the 3rd person feminine singular, Hiphil imperfect of tsâlach (צָלַח) [pronounced *tsaw-LAHCH*], which means *to come upon, to rush upon, to prosper, to be prosperous*.  In the Hiphil, it means *to make successful, to prosper, to accomplish prosperously, to finish well*.  Strong's #6743  BDB #852.  This verb is not in the 1st person plural, as we might expect, but has the subject, the feminine singular of derekᵉ (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced *DEH-rekᵉ*], which means *way, distance, road, journey, manner, course*.  This is one of the few times this noun is found in the feminine gender.  Strong's #1870  BDB #202.  This is followed, literally, by *which we are going upon her*.

There is a subtlety that is rarely caught by the reader or the exegete.  Note what they do not ask.  They do not ask this priest to ask God *to make* their journey successful.  They do not ask for guidance or direction.  What they ask for is like asking a soothsayer or a psychic to predict the success of an endeavor.  God, to them, is not the ruler of the universe, but a really smart person who generally knows what will happen in the future and what will not.  They are not being polite, not wanting to bother God to do something; and, instead, just asking the outcome.  They simply don't believe that He has much to do with the outcome.  These are obviously very confused men, whose religion is perfunctory at best.  At least they came to the right priest.

Also, you should notice that they say nothing about the priest and his job here.  There is no provision in the Law for someone to hire their own priest.  This indicates that they have no clue as to what the Law says, or, if they do, they consider it to be unimportant.  Worse yet is the priest himself—if anyone should know the Law, it is him.  Yet he has allowed himself to be hired out and now he is doing a little soothsaying on the side (which is not a function of the priesthood either, apart from the true Urim and Thummim).

Now, here we have unbelievers asking another unbeliever to predict the future—we have this in our present society all the time.  We have psychic hotlines where one can call and have his future told.  You would expect people of great degeneracy to do oddball things as we find in this chapter.  They may seem to be religious things, so to speak, but just a bit off-kilter.  Keep in mind that degeneracy for some people does not mean that they go out and drink to excess and chase women.  One of the great things which I learned early on in studying under Thieme is that every old sin nature has its own predilection—some towards lasciviousness and others toward legalism.  The pharisees of the first century were men who were generally moral; they prayed in public places and they went to the synagogue every Sabbath day.  They had their failings, of course.  There are implications in the New Testament that some consorted with prostitutes and, quite obviously, the plotted the death of our Lord—but apart from that, they were quite moral in their actions.  Take those of many religions: Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc.—these can be very moral, kind and wonderful people.  Scratch the surface and you might discover their old sin nature, but, apart from the religious doctrine, they would be people that you would befriend and trust.  These people are not saved.  They will not spend eternity in heaven.  They are in rebellion against God.  That is simply the predilection of their old sin nature.  So it is with these men from Dan and this priest.  They are not immoral; they are not skirt chasers; they are not drunkards.  These five spies are, in fact, five of the bravest and most intelligent men of the tribe of Dan—this is why they were chosen.  They are probably unbelievers, or, if they are believers, they have fallen a long ways from the truth.

I had a friend of mine who was quite moral and, whenever she wanted something, she would ask me to pray for it.  Now, she had no interest in salvation, even though she considered herself to be a Catholic.  But, she realized that having a religious person pray on her behalf couldn't hurt anything.  If she had any Buddhist friends, I am certain that she asked them to pray for her as well.  She was not opposed to covering all bases.

Understand, the church you go to has unbelievers who attend—they might be very nice and very moral, but, at some point in their lives, they asked Jesus into their hearts, or they poured out their hearts about the sins that they committed and promised never to commit those sins every again; or they asked Jesus to come into their lives and have tried their very best to lead kind, decent lives every since to continue to stay in God's grace. What they did not do is place their trust in Jesus Christ—they have never realized that their salvation is based 100% on what Christ did for us on the cross and 0% on anything that they have done or will do. Their asking Jesus into their hearts or lives does not save. Their regretting the sins that they committed, that does not save them. What saves a person is for him to place his faith in Jesus Christ and, in effect, he then rests from his works to earn salvation. God has set up some very precise mechanics, and these are repeated over and over again in Scripture (John 3:16, 18, 36  6:28–29  Eph. 2:8–9  Titus 3:5). This means that we do not get to do things our own way. Micah—he may or may not know what the Scripture says—but his hiring a personal priest is like your telling a person to ask Jesus into their hearts. Its similar, its related to salvation, its close to the truth, but it is not what we find in the Bible. Hell will be filled with very religious people. The unbeliever who says they would prefer to go to hell than to be stuck with all these religious types—boy, are they in for a surprise!  Just go back to the days of our Lord in His incarnation—who was saved? The prostitutes and the tax collectors and those who were filled with demons. Who were lost? The religious types and the political heads of state. In other words, don't think that you will get away from the religious types by going to hell. Now that I think about it, this does offer an alternative to the way that the gospel is presented. Do you want to spend eternity in the company of prostitutes? Believe in Jesus Christ. I have no clue as to why evangelists have not picked up on this winning approach. It is accurate and there are some unbelievers to whom this approach would be palatable as well as appropriate.

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| **And so said to them the priest, "Go with reference to peace [and prosperity] in front of Yᵉhowah your way which you are going upon her."** | Judges 18:6 | **Then the priest said to them, "Go in peace [and prosperity] before Yᵉhowah [in] the way that you are going upon."** |

**Then the priest reassured them, "Go in peace [and prosperity] in the eyes of Jehovah along the way that you have determined to go."**

this priest is well-schooled in the art of holy pronouncements. He tells them to go, and this is followed by the lâmed prefixed preposition lâmed (לְ) (which is often given with a short *e*), generally means *to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to*. No Strong's #  BDB #510. This is followed by the very well known masculine singular noun shâlôwm (שָׁלוֹם) [pronounced *shaw-LOHM*], which means *completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, safe, secure, tranquil, undisturbed, unagitated*. Thieme often rendered this *prosperous* or *prosperity*. Strong's #7965  BDB #1022.

nôkach (נֹכַח) [pronounced *NOH-kahkh*], which means *front, in front of, opposite to, towards the front of, on behalf of*. In this passage, this word is rendered variously as *before, under the eye of, over-against;* some translators render this in such a way as to completely obfuscate their translation of this word. Strong's #5227 (#5226) BDB #647. This is followed by the proper name for Christ Jesus in the Old Testament. The NKJV gives the literal rendering of this translation as The LORD is before the way in which you go.

This Levite did just what he was paid to do. He gave them the answers that they wanted to hear. He said the nice things that they wanted him to say. That was his purpose in life was to say nice things so that people would feel good about themselves and what they were doing. Furthermore, he used the proper name of God, to give what he said added credibility and holiness.

Now, God had given Moses and Joshua directions as to how the land was to be distributed, and the various tribes were to take their land and clear it of the Canaanites and Amorites who occupied the land. This is what the tribe of Dan should have been doing. Instead, they were going to search out the land for a place which would be easier for them to take. The priest says, "Sure, go ahead and do that. Travel in peace and prosperity under the watchful eye of Jehovah." People will search out those who will tell them what they want to hear.

**And so went five of the men and so they came to Laish and so they saw the people who [were] in her midst—[a land] dwelling for security as a manner of the Sidonians, quietly and securely, and none humiliating a word in the land, possessing a magistrate [or, a restraint] and far they [were] from Sidonians and a word not to them with a man.**

Judges 18:7

**So the five men went and the came to Laish and they saw the people who were in her midst—[a land] dwelling in security after the manner of the Sidonians, peacefully and securely, and no one was humiliating them [in] a thing in the land, [and no one] possessing a magistrate. And, they [were] far from the Sidonians and no word to them with [any] man.**

**So the five men left and came to Laish and they observed the people in its midst, living in security, who appeared to be Sidonians. They were living peacefully and securely, and no one humiliated them in anything in the land, they did not possess a magistrate, and there were no communications to the outside world with anyone.**

We have got a lot going on in this verse, and need to look at a couple of other renderings.

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| Barnes | ...after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and none of them doing any injury to the land, possessing wealth (or, dominion)... |
| CEV | The five men left and went to the town of Laish, whose people were from Sidon, but Sidon was too far away to protect them. Even though their town had no walls, the people thought they were safe from attack. So they had not asked anyone else for protection, which meant that the tribe of Dan could easily take over Laish. |
| *The Emphasized Bible* | So the five men went their way, and entered Laish, —and saw the people who were therein dwelling securely, after the manner of the Zidonians quietly and securely, and there was no one to reproach them with anything in the land, none to possess himself of dominion, they being far away from the Zidonians, and having no dealings with any one. |
| NASB | Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were in it living in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure; for there was no ruler [lit., a possessor of restraint] humiliating *them* for anything in the land, and they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone. |
| The Septuagint | And the five men went on, and came to Laisa; and they saw the people in the midst of it dwelling securely, at ease as the custom of the Sidonians, and there is no one perverting or shaming a matter in the land, no heir extorting treasures; and they are far from the Sidonians, and they have no intercourse face to face with men. [some Greek manuscripts have *Aramæans* here, rather than *men;* others apparently have *Syrians* here]. |
| *Young's Lit. Translation* | And the five men go, and come in to Laish, and see the people which *is* in the midst, dwelling confidently, according to the custom of Zidonians, quiet and confident; and there is none putting to shame in the land in *any* thing, possessing restraint, and they *are* far off from the Zidonians, and have no words with *any* man. |

The general idea of this verse is fairly easy to grasp—we have some people living out in the far northern portion of Israel (or, just outside of Israel), who live their peacefully. This Laish is perhaps 10 miles north of Zorah and Eshtaol. They chose this area, it appears, to be away from the more aggressive peoples of the ancient world, in order to live peacefully. You might view these people as the ancient Costa Rica. Barnes describes these people: *The genius of the Zidonians being mechanical and commercial, not military, their colonists were apt to neglect fortifications and similar warlike precautions. In Solomon's time the Zidonians were especially skilful in hewing timber...and it is high probably, from their proximity to Lebanon, that such was the occupation of the men of Laish.*[7]

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[7] *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2,* reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 460.

Laish was actually first mentioned back in the book of Joshua, chapter 19:47, where a summary of this chapter is given: And the territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them; for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured it.  Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it, and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father.  In giving this verse, it is difficult to know what to deal with first.  Authorship and time of writing is an important issue to me; however, God the Holy Spirit makes much less importance out of it.  As Joshua divided up the land by lots, it was likely that a secretary was present recording all of this (as Joshua did on behalf of Moses) and that this became a portion of the book of Joshua.  One of two things happened. This was appended to the book of Joshua after his death, with the inclusion of this incident, which likely occurred early on in the dispersion of the tribes throughout the land; or, a later scribe (or, historian) added this verse to the book of Joshua.  In any case, it was an event which took place well after the distribution of the land to the tribes of Israel—in terms of number of years, we do not know.  A reasonable guess would put it perhaps twenty years after the distribution of land; and, at the most, maybe a hundred years later.  In any case, Joshua 19:47 was not written the same time that the rest of Joshua 19 was first recorded.  However, it is certainly possible, if not likely, that this portion of the book of Joshua (Joshua 13–22) was added to the book of Joshua.  It is also likely that the final two chapters of the book of Joshua were written down by a person who was present at that time, and then added to the end of this book as a fitting ending (but that is another story).

The next thing that we need to deal with is the name of this land which Dan will take.  In Joshua 19, it is Leshem (לֶשֶׁם) [pronounced *LEH-shem*], which is found only in Joshua 19:47.  Strong's #3959  BDB #546.  In this verse, the noun is Layîsh (לַיִשׁ) [pronounced *LAH-eesh*], and it means *lion*.  Strong's #3919  BDB #539.   Certainly, the first thing that should come to mind is, *why the two names?*  The first is probably a transliteration from the original language (Sidonian?) and the second is probably a translation from the same language.  That the two names are similar probably has more to do with the commingling of the people than anything else.

Laish is obviously in the far northern extremity of Israel, and is so identified in the future by the phrase *from Dan to Beersheba,* which gives the northern and southern extremities of Israel (Judges 20:1  I Sam. 3:20  II Sam. 3:10  17:11  I Kings 4:25).  Barnes places this near the sources of the Jordan River, about four miles from Panium, or Caesarea-Philippi.  It is thought to possibly be where the village Tell-el-Kadi now stands.[8]  ZPEB agrees: *Laish, the modern Tell el-Qâdi, was a large city in a fertile valley, with an assured water supply.  Its secluded nature, shielded as it was by the Lebanon range and Mt. Hermon, had lulled its inhabitants into a false state of security.  The spires recognized a situation that offered rich rewards at minimum cost, and so the remnant of the tribe of Dan moved northward.*[9]

These five spies see the people in the midst of the land; this is followed by the feminine singular, Qal active participle of yâsha<sup>b</sup>v (יָשַׁב) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH<sup>B</sup>V*] and it means *to remain, to inhabit, to sit, to dwell*.  In the Qal participle, masculine plural, it should be rendered *those inhabiting, those dwelling in, the inhabitants of, the ones dwelling in, dwellers of*.  In the Qal participle, it should be rendered *inhabiting, dwelling in*. Strong's #3427  BDB #442. What you would expect here is for this to be in the masculine singular, Qal active participle (referring back to *people*), but, instead, it is in the feminine singular, which could refer back only to the land.  This would make the *land* a metonymy for the *people* who lived in it.  This is followed by the lâmed preposition and the masculine singular noun beṭach (בֶּטַח) [pronounced *BEH-tahkh*], which means *security, safety*.  Strong's #983  BDB #105.  Just as you would have expected the masculine singular for *dwelling,* we would have expected the bêyth preposition, which would mean *in*.  This verse gives you what you do not expect.  The CEV calls this *difficult Hebrew text*.[10]  So far, we have: And so went five of the men and so they came to Laish and so they saw the people who [were] in her midst—[a land] dwelling for security...

Then we have the preposition *as* and the masculine singular construct of mish<sup>e</sup>pâṭ (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced *mish-PAWT*], which means *judgement, a verdict rendered by a judge, manner, custom, fashion*.  Strong's #4941 BDB #1048.  This is followed by the *Sidonians*.  I think that here we need to examine the **Doctrine of the Sidonians—Old Testament (up to the Time of the Judges)**.  Apparently, what we have here are a splinter group

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[8] *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2,* reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 460.

[9] *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible;* ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 753.

[10] *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. 275.

who separated themselves from  Sidonians.  They appeared to be Sidonians to the spies, but they lived far enough away from the shore of Palestine, which was occupied by the Sidonians, that they were not afforded any protection from them.

What follows *Sidonians* is the Qal active participle of shâqaṭ (שָׁקַט) [pronounced *shaw-KAWT*], which means *to be quiet, to be undisturbed, inactive*.  Strong's #8252  BDB #1052.  Then we have the wâw conjunction and the Qal active participle of bâṭach (בָּטַח) [pronounced *baw-TAHKH*], which means *to trust, to rely upon, to have confidence in, to be secure in*.  Strong's #982  BDB #105.  These Sidonians are living there in peace, undisturbed by other nations, with confidence and in security.  They are like Costa Rica, a quiet, peaceful people in a beautiful land, without a standing army.

We have the wâw conjunction again, and then the construct of the negative ʾayin (אַיִן) [pronounced *AH-yin*], which means *naught, nothing;* or it can be used as a particle of negation; *no, not*.  The Hebrew construct is  ʾêyin (אֵין) [pronounced *AYH-yin*].  It can also mean *in the condition of being not = without*.  Strong's #369  BDB #34.  This is followed by the Hiphil participle of kâlam (כָּלַם) [pronounced *kaw-LAHM*], which means *to humiliate, to disgrace, to mortify, to shame, to disgrace*.  In the Hiphil, it means *to reproach, to hurt some one, to treat shamefully, to injure, to put someone to shame*.  Strong's #3637  BDB #483.  This is immediately followed by the masculine noun dâᵇvâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced *daw*ᵇ*-VAWR*], which means *word, saying, doctrine, thing*.  Strong's #1697 (or #1696) BDB #182.  This is followed by *in the land*.  So far, this gives us: <span style="color:blue">And so went five of the men and so they came to Laish and so they saw the people who [were] in her midst—[a land] dwelling for security as a manner of the Sidonians, quietly and securely, and none humiliating a word [or, a thing] in the land...</span>

Then we have the Qal active participle of yârash (יָרַשׁ) [pronounced *yaw-RAHSH*], which means *to possess, to take possession of, to occupy [all] geographical area—by driving out the previous occupants], to inherit, to dispossess*.  Strong's #3423  BDB #439.  This is followed by the masculine singular noun ʿetser (עֶצֶר) [pronounced *ĢEH-tser*], which means *magistrate, leader, restraint*.  The problem is that this occurs in only one passage, this one; therefore, the text is considered dubious.  Strong's #6114  BDB #783.  We render these two words *possessing a magistrate* [or, *possessing restraint*], which would also pick up the previous negative, meaning that they did not possess a magistrate, or one who restrained them.

We then have the wâw conjunction and masculine plural adjective râchôq (רָחוֹק) [pronounced *raw-KHOHK*], and it means, as an adjective, *distant, far*.  Strong's #7350  BDB #935.  This is followed by the 3ʳᵈ person masculine plural pronoun, which the adjective matches.  Then we have *from the Sidonians*.

Then we have *a word* (or, *a thing*), the negative, and the phrase *to them*.  Finally, the last two words are *from* and the masculine singular noun ʾâdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced *aw-DAWM*], which means *a man, a human being, mankind, Adam*.  Strong's #120  BDB #9.

What we have is a group of Sidonians who are living far away from the Sidonians of the western coast of Palestine.  They are not bothering anyone else and no one is bothering them.  They do not appear to have a standing army, a strong leader, nor do they appear to have ties with the Sidonians on the coast.  The NIV Study Bible: *They did not feel threatened by other powers and therefore sought no treaties for mutual defense.*[11]  Now, keep in mind that God had already given the Israelites a place to live and that this would involve conquering some fierce people—people who had driven the tribe of Dan to their own borders.  Dan decided to take the easy way out and find someone who was helpless and take the land from them.  We know nothing about this other people, other than they are probably peaceful Sidonians and they are helpless.  This is perfect for the tribe of Dan.  They do not want to stand up to the heathen that occupy their coastline, so these people are an easier group to conquer.

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[11] *The NIV Study Bible;* ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 353.

## At the Urging of the Spies, the Tribe of Dan Mobilizes to Take Laish in the North

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| **And so they came unto their brothers [in] Zorah and Eshtaol, and so said to them their brothers, "What [are] you all?"** | Judges 18:8 | **Then they came to their brothers [in] Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brothers said to them, "What [is] you[r] [report]?"** |

**When they returned to the other Danites in Zorah and Eshtaol, they were asked, "What do you have to report?"**

V. 8 won't be nearly as scary as v. 7. The only thing which is somewhat difficult is the question, which consists of two words: the interrogative mâh (מָה) [pronounced *maw*], which means *what, how*. Strong's #4100 BDB #552. This is followed by the personal pronoun ʾattem (אַתֶּם) [pronounced *aht-TEM*], which means *you all, you guys, you*. Strong's #859 BDB #61. This is obviously a colloquialism, as the literal rendering is *what [are] you?* or *how [are] you?* We have similar goofy things that we[12] say, like *what up?* They are simply being asked for their report. The Greek give an entirely different picture. The Hebrew seems to indicate that this is asked of the spies and the Greek renders this as: "Why are ye minded to do nothing?" If this were the spies speaking, this would make sense; but it is not. The ones translating the Hebrew into the Greek may have been working with a poor Hebrew manuscript here and did the best that they could. However, it is clearly the Danites speaking to the spies, as we have the spies *coming* to their brothers (it was the spies who were doing the moving); and then they come to their brothers, the other Danites, and the Hebrew clearly says that their brothers asked them.

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| **And so they said, "Rise up and we will rise up against them for we have seen the land and, behold, [it is] fertile very and you are being silent. Do not be sluggish to go, to enter in, to possess the land.** | Judges 18:9 | **So they said, "Rise up and well will rise up against them, for we have seen the land and, observe, [it is] very fertile—and you are being silent? Do not be sluggish to go, to enter in, to possess the land.** |

**So they answered, "Rise up and we will rise up with you against them. We have examined the land and have observed it to be very fertile—why are you being silent? Do not be poky to leave and enter into that land, and take it.**

The first thing that the men say to the Danites is the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative of qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced *koom*], which means, in the Qal stem, *to stand, to rise up*. Strong's #6965 BDB #877. This is followed by the 1st person, Qal imperfect of ʿâlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced *ğaw-LAWH*], which means *to go up, to ascend, to rise*. Strong's #5927 BDB #748. Before even giving the report, these five spies order the Danites to rise up, to take a stand, and they will all rise up against the people of this land.

The spies observed that the land was very fertile and said to the other Danites the 2nd person masculine plural pronoun and the Hiphil participle of châshâh (חָשָׁה) [pronounced *chaw-SHAW*], which means *to be silent, to be inactive, to be still*. In the Hiphil, it means *to exhibit silence, to be silent, to be inactive, to do nothing, to make still, to cause to be quiet*. Strong's #2814 BDB #364. These five men are jazzed about taking the land; they have given the directive to let's get up and get moving, and the other Danites are just standing there (a spy does not have this kind of authority). With the use of this word, they are chiding their brothers. Not to worry, this is a friendly chide.

Then they use the Niphal imperfect of ʿâtsel (עָצֵל) [pronounced *ğaw-TSEL*], which means *to be sluggish*. This word is found only in this verse. Strong's #6101 BDB #782. So that you get the picture here, there is no great power play occurring—these men are asked for their report, in the briefest terms ("What you?"). They respond in kind. They essentially answer by saying, "Let's go." Their superior officers bypassed the formalities in asking what they had found; they bypassed the official orders of their superior officers to move forward.

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[12] This is the editorial *we*.

This passage begs comparison with Num. 13–14 when the Israelites stood on the southern edge of the land and Moses sent in twelve spies, and they returned, two saying that Israel should take the land and ten saying that they should not. Here, we have 100% agreement among the spies; however, they are completely out of God's will. Their desire to take the land is not based upon direction from God here, but because the people they intend to conquer appear helpless and without allies. Their forefathers rejected taking the Land of Promise several hundred years previous because the inhabitants obviously were not helpless.

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| **"When you go, you will come unto people trusting and the land, broad two hands, for has given her [the land] God[13] into your hands, a place where nothing there [is] lacking which is on the land"** | Judges 18:10 | **"When you go, you will come to a people [who are] trusting—and the land, a breadth [of] two hands, for God has given it into your hands—a place where there [is] no lack which [is] in the land."** |

**"When you go there, you will come to a trusting people in a land which is very wide on both sides of them, for God has already given the land into your hands. It is a place where there is nothing lacking in the land."**

This verse begins with the kaph preposition, which means *as, like*. With the infinitive, it can mean *when*. Strong's #none BDB #453. This is followed by the Qal infinitive construct of bôwʾ (בּוֹא) [pronounced *boh*], which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go*. This verb is found no less than a dozen times in this chapter alone. Strong's #935 BDB #97. With it is the 2nd person masculine plural suffix; this gives us *when you go*. This is followed by: *you will come to a people* and then the people are described with the Qal active participle of the verb bâṭach (בָּטַח) [pronounced *baw-TAHKH*], which means *to trust, to rely upon, to have confidence in, to be secure in* ( we just saw this word in v. 7). Strong's #982 BDB #105. Again, the emphasis is upon how helpless these people are. They are a trusting people—they trust enough not to surround themselves with walls or make allies with other peoples.

Then the land is described with the feminine singular construct of râchâᵇv (רָחָב) [pronounced *raw-KHAᵛB*], and it means *wide, broad, space, roomy*. Strong's #7342 BDB #932. This is followed by the feminine dual noun yâd (יָד) [pronounced *yawd*] is the Hebrew word for *hand*. Here, obviously, the literal meaning is *two hands*. Strong's #3027 BDB #388. My thinking is that the land goes on for a long time on both sides of the populated area, making these people isolated from the outside world.

After the spies say that God has given the land into their hands, they add that it is masculine singular mâqôwm (מ) [pronounced *maw-KOHM*], which means *place;* for people in general, it would be their *place of abode* (which could be their house or their town). Strong's #4725 BDB #879. Then we have the relative pronoun, the negative, the adverb shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced *shawm*], which means *there*. Strong's #8033 BDB #1027. We supply the verb *to be* and then we have the masculine singular noun machᵉçôwr (מַחְסוֹר) [pronounced *mahkh-SOHR*], which means *need, something needed, poverty, lack*. Strong's #4270 BDB #341. This means that they have observed trees, plants, and all that is necessary to survive and prosper on.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so departed from there from a family of the Dan from Zorah and from Eshtaol—six hundred men, girded [with] manufactured goods of war.** | Judges 18:11 | **So six hundred men from the family of Dan, from Zorah and Eshtaol, journeyed from there, belted [with] weapons of war.** |

**So six hundred men, from the family of Dan from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war, departed from there.**

What these men did was the Qal imperfect of nâça ʿ (נָסַע) [pronounced *naw-SAHG*], which means *to journey, to depart*. This verb denotes the pulling up the stakes of a tent. Strong's #5265 BDB #652. This is followed by *from*

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[13] The Aramaic and the Vulgate have *Jehovah* here rather than *God*.

*there*.   The subject of this verb is the feminine construct of mishpâchâk (מִשְׁפַּחַה) [pronounced *mish-paw-KHAWH*], which means *family, clan*.  Strong's #4940  BDB #1046.  Then we have a rare definite article with the adjective gentis *Dan*.  Now, we have discussed the number of Israelites back in the book of Numbers.  Here we are, several decades later, and the army of Dan is 600 men.  Whether the population figures given in the book of Numbers are inaccurate, or whether this tribe has been decimated, or whether this is all that can be mustered from the tribe of Dan, we don't know.  In any case, with an army of only 600, it is obvious why they want to attack the helpless as opposed to those who occupy their land.  That the tribe of Dan is unable to take the land given them by God would, therefore, indicate that they are not a strong or brave people in the area of warfare.  Since the tribe of Dan is smushed into two cities (which appears to be the case), the 64,400 men of Num. 26:43 seems excessive.

In describing these men, we have the Qal passive participle of châgar (חָגַר) [pronounced *khaw-GAHR*], and BDB gives the meanings *to gird, to gird on, to gird onself, to belt, encircle, bind, tie, rope*.  Rotherham uses the humorous rendering *begirt*.  This appears to demand a preposition like *with*, meaning that it may be implied by the verb.  Strong's #2296  BDB #291.  What they are girded with is the masculine plural construct of kᵉlîy (כְּלִי) [pronounced *kᵉlee*], and it is an all-purpose word standing for anything which has been finished, made or produced.  It could be translated *an artifact, a manufactured good, equipment, utensil, vessel, object, stuff, load, baggage, implement, apparatus, weapon, furniture, receptacle*.  Strong's #3627  BDB #479.  What follows this construct is the feminine singular noun milᵉchâmâh (מִלְחָמָה) [pronounced *mil-khaw-MAW*], which means *battle, war*.  Strong's #4421 BDB #536.

This number also indicates that the people that they are about to attack must be pretty small and without any sort of protection for the tribe of Dan to be able to attack them with only 600 men.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so they went up and so they encamped in Kiriath-jearim in Judah.  Concerning so, they call to the place the that Mahaneh-dan, unto the day the this, behold, after Kiriath-jearim.** | Judges 18:12 | **And so they went up and encamped in Kiriath-jearim in Judah.  On this account, they have named that place Mahaneh-dan, until this day, observe, behind Kiriath-jearim.** |

**Then they went up and camped behind Kiriath Jearim, which is in Judah, and the area behind Kiriath Jearim is, to this day, called Mahaneh-dan, which means *Camp of Dan*.**

This is a moderately difficult verse to exegete, therefore we will look at some other renderings first:

| | |
|---|---|
| CEV | One night they camped near Kiriath-Jearim in the territory of Judah, and that's why the place just west of Kiriath-Jearim is still known as Dan's Camp. |
| *The Emphasized Bible* | And they went up and encamped in Kiriath-jearim, in Judah, —wherefore they have called that place Mahaneh-dan —unto this day, lo! it is behind Kiriath-jearim. |
| The Septuagint | And they went up and encamped in Cariathiarim in Juda; therefore it was called in that place the camp of Dan, until this day; behold, behind Ciriathiarim. |
| *Young's Lit. Translation* | And they go up and encamp in Kirjath-Jearim, in Judah, therefore they have called that place 'Camp of Dan,' till this day; lo, behind Kirjath-Jearim. |

In this verse, we have a compounded preposition and adverb.  The prepositions ʿal (עַל) [pronounced *ahl*], which means, among other things, *in the matter of, concerning, as regards to*.  [Strong's #5920 & #5921  BDB #752].  This is followed by the adverb kên (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*] is generally rendered *so*.  Together, they mean *upon the ground of such conditions, therefore, on this account, on account*.  [Strong's #3651  BDB #485].

We covered Kiriath Jearim back in Joshua 9:17 and it was mentioned in Joshua 15:9, 60.

We then have the Qal perfect of the verb qârâʾ (קָרָא) [pronounced *kaw-RAW*] which simply means *call, proclaim, read, to call to, to assemble*.  This word is often used *to name* something.  When followed by a lâmed, as it is here, it means *to give a name to.*  Strong's #7121  BDB #894.  What this area is called is *Camp of Dan*.

To establish where we are talking about, we have the preposition ʾachar (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*], which means, in reference to *place, behind*. Strong's #310 BDB #29. Where they camped was actually behind the city of Kiriath-jearim and they simply gave it a name. It is this simple name and this passage which gives us the problem of *what came first, the chicken or the egg?* In Judges 13:25, Samson was first stirred by the Holy Spirit in Mahaneh-dan. Therefore, this place had to exist already during this time in Samson's life. This fills in some blanks for us. Even though the tribe of Dan moved up to Laish, after it is conquered in this chapter, the entire tribe did not move up there. Some remained in the only Danite major cities of Zorah and Eshtaol.[14]

## The Tribe Stops at Micah's House and Takes His Idols and His Bogus Priest

| | Judges 18:13 | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so they passed on from there [to] a hill country of Ephraim and so they came in unto a house of Micah.** | | **They passed on from there [to] the hill country of Ephraim, and then came to the house of Micah.** |

**From there they went through the hill country of Ephraim, and came upon the house of Micah.**

In this verse, we suddenly tie the previous chapter to this one. The army of Dan first heads slightly east through Judah, and then they move north through Ephraim. Micah, this cheesy army of Dan, and the itinerant priest all deserve each other and will all meet in this chapter.

| | Judges 18:14 | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so answered five of the men the ones going out to walk the land of Laish, and so they said unto their brothers, "Do you know that there [are] in the house the this an ephod and a teraphim and a graven image and a metal image; and thus know what you will do."** | | **Then the five men—the ones [who] went out to explore the land of Laish, answered and said to their brothers, "Do you know that there [are] in this house an ephod, a teraphim, an engraved image and a cast metal image? Therefore, consider what you will do."** |

**Then the five spies who had scoped out the land of Laish, answered and said to their brothers, "Do you know that there is an ephod, teraphim, an engraved image and a cast metal image? Now determine what you will do about this."**

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of ʿânâh (עָנָה) [pronounced *ğaw-NAWH*] and the official BDB definition is *to answer, to respond*. This word is also used when it would have been apropos to ask a question, but one was not actually asked. Strong's #6030 BDB #772. These 600 men are traveling essentially the same route that the five spies had traveled. They see this rather large estate and, before anyone can say anything, one of the spies answers.

After the kîy conjunction (*that, for, when, because*), we have the substantive yêsh (יֵשׁ) [pronounced *yaysh*], which means *being, substance, existence*. It often acts as a substantive plus the absolute status quo verb *to be*; e.g., *[if] there be* (I Sam. 20:8), *there is* (Esther 3:8), *there shall be* (Jer. 31:6). Strong's #3426 BDB #441.

Then an enumeration of the idolatrous items in the house are given. Recall:

> **Ephod** = ʾêphôwd (אֵפוֹד) [pronounced *ay-FOHD*]
>
> In this case, this is some sort of religious clothing perhaps worn by the priest at Micah's house, and used for divination. Strong's #646 BDB #65

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[14] The other option is that this is a bogus verse, and the life of Samson occurred first.

**Teraphim** = tᵉrâphîym (תְּרָפִים) [pronounced *tᵉraw-PHEEM*]

These were small religious idols, perhaps shaped like a man, and some small enough to hide in a camel's pack. These were probably the ancient world equivalent of *guardian angels*. Strong's #8655 BDB #1076

**A Graven Image** = peçel (פֶּסֶל) [pronounced *PEH-cell*]

This is likely a wooden image overlaid with gold or silver. Strong's #6459 BDB #820

**A Cast Metal Image** = maççêkâh (מַסֵּכָה) [pronounced *mahs-say-KAW*]

This word is rendered *molten metal, metal image, molten image, libation*. It might be a metal image with a coating of expensive metal. Strong's #4541 BDB #651.

Then we have the wâw conjunction and the adverb ʿattâh (עַתָּה) [pronounced *ģaht-TAWH*], which is generally translated *now*. However, the idea of time is lost when it is used as a word of incitement, especially when followed by an imperative. With the conjunction and the imperative which follows, this should be translated *and so, thus, things being so, therefore*. Strong's #6258 BDB #773. The imperative which follows is the Qal imperative of yâdaʿ (יָדַע) [pronounced *yaw-DAHĢ*], which means *to know*. In the imperative, it means *know, consider, discriminate, distinguish*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393. The Law, Deut. 13:6–18, as we found in the last chapter, is clear on what should be done.[15] Micah should be executed, pure and simple. However, keep in mind that we are not dealing with men well-schooled in the Law; nor are they really all that interested in the Law. What they know is up to this time, the portion of the land which had been given them had not really worked out too well, and that they therefore had to partially relocate in the north. They were surrounded by heathen who apparently had gotten the best of them. All of these idols, to their way of thinking, along with this priest, might be put to some very good use.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so they turned aside there and so they came unto a house of the young man, the Levite, a house of Micah. And so they asked to him to completeness.** | Judges 18:15 | **And then they turned aside there and came to the house of the young man, the Levite—the house of Micah. Then they asked of him concerning [his] welfare.** |

**The made a detour at the house of the young man—the Levite (i.e., the house of Micah) and they inquired of him about his welfare.**

The first sentence is fairly straightforward; the second is a little tougher.

| | |
|---|---|
| *The Emphasized Bible* | ...and asked him of his welfare. |
| NASB | ...and asked him of his welfare. |
| *Young's Lit. Translation* | ...and ask of him of welfare. |

We begin this second part of the verse with the Qal imperfect of shâʾal (שָׁאַל) [pronounced *shaw-AHL*], which means *to ask, to petition, to request, to inquire, to question, to interrogate*. When this is followed by a lâmed, the lâmed acts as an identifier of the accusative and together they should be rendered *inquire of*. The lâmed can also indicate about what the inquiry is being made. Strong's #7592 BDB #981. This is followed by *to him* (or, *for him*), the lâmed preposition again and the masculine singular noun shâlôwm (שָׁלוֹם) [pronounced *shaw-LOHM*], which means *completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, safe, secure, tranquil, undisturbed, unagitated*. Strong's #7965 BDB #1022.

This house was a very unusual thing to find. First of all, it is apparent that Micah and his mother are very rich and that the house, or, more properly, settlement, just stands out from all of the other houses. It's as though they have

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[15] See also Micah 5:13.

come across an estate up in the hills.  It was very unusual for a Jew to have all of the idolatrous things which are found in his house and even more unusual that Micah has hired himself a Levite as his own personal priest.  All of this seemed very unusual to these Danites.  The inquiry concerning this Levite's welfare was more along the line of trying to figure out what the hell was going on here.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And six hundred of [the] men girded with manufactured items of warfare, [the] ones standing [by] an entrance of the gate (who were sons of Dan).** | Judges 18:16 | **And six hundred men, who were sons of Dan, belted with weapons of war the ones standing [by] the entrance of the gate.** |

**Meanwhile, the six hundred men, sons of Dan, bearing weapons of war stood right outside the entrance of the gate.**

Their position is described by the masculine plural, Niphal participle of nâtsa^b^v (נָ צ ב) [pronounced *naw-TSAH^B^V*], which means *to station oneself, to take one's stand, to stand up, to set something upright, to erect*.  This is not found in the Qal stem.  In the Niphal, the passive stem, it means *to be stationed, to be left standing, to station oneself, to take one's stand*.  Strong's #5324  BDB #662.

Now, I doubt that you have the image here, but we have six hundred men on their way to slaughter a peaceful people, and they are anxious, alert, and they are standing at attention outside Micah's estate.  If a detachment of 600 military types in full dress uniform suddenly stopped by your house and stood outside, you might have a better feel for what is going on.  The general of the army and the spies have decided to stop here and visit with the Levite.

I should insert that I have manufactured the character of the general.  It is possible that these spies also head the army.  My thinking is that it would be reasonable for the one in charge to be advised closely by the five spies and that they acted as a unit.  However, the narrative only mentions the five men.  In the previous verses, when they report back, they could either be reporting back to a general or to the tribe of Dan in general.  It would not be out of the question to have an army without a general—particularly with these Danites, who have shown, so far, a predilection for all that is incorrect.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so went up five of the men the ones going up to walk the land.  They entered there; they took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image and the priest was standing [at] an entrance of the gate and the six hundred men, the [ones] girded with manufactured goods of the war.** | Judges 18:17 | **And so went up, five of the men, the ones who went up to spy out the land.  They entered there, they took the engraved image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the cast metal image; and the priest was standing at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men, belted with weapons of war.** |

**Then the five spies who had been spying out the land went up, entered into the house, and then they took the engraved idol, the ephod, the teraphim, and the cast metal idol.  Meanwhile, the priest and the six hundred men bearing the weapons of war stood out by the front gate.**

Now that everyone knows what is going on—and this has been on the minds of the five spies throughout the remainder of their trip—they just walked into Micah's house and took what they wanted.  There is really not a lot that anyone can do at this point, as there are 600 men, armed to the teeth, ready to go to war—and they are standing outside in the front yard chatting with the priest (okay, they weren't chatting with the priest; their general and the five men had been chatting with the priest).  After having been here before, the five spies thought this over and decided that the tribe of Dan needed these idols more than Micah.  With an army of 600, there is no way that anyone could say anything.  After all, they could have raped the women and raided the refrigerator.  They pretty much could do what they wanted to.  They decided that these expensive-looking idols, which they associated with the prosperity of Micah, were just what the tribe of Dan needed.

The whole scene is rather surreal and the Hebrew text confirms this. What we would expect is a series of wâw consecutives—*and then* they went up *and then* they entered into the house *and then* they took the idols out of Micah's house. However, we only have the first wâw consecutive and then we have several wâw conjunctions; but we have nothing between the consecutive verbs. I know that this means nothing to you, but it jumps out at you. You expect to see something and it is not there. My fingers almost automatically typed in the wâw consecutives which I did not find. This calls great emphasis to the action which is taking place. Unfortunately, even Rotherham's *Emphasized Bible* does not indicate that we have such an emphasis upon the action here.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And these went into a house of Micah and so they took a graven image of the ephod and the teraphim and the molten image and so said unto them the priest, "What [are] you doing?"** | Judges 18:18 | **When these went into the house of Micah and took the engraved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the cast metal image, that the priest said to them, "What [are] you doing?"** |

**When these went into Micah's house and took the carved idol, the ephod, the teraphim and the metal cast idol, that the priest said to them, "Just what the hell do you think you're doing?"**

We should see how these verses are rendered by others:

| | |
|---|---|
| CEV | The six hundred warriors left the road and went to the house on Micah's property where the young Levite priest lived. They stood at the gate and greeted the priest. Meanwhile, the five men who had been there before went into Micah's house and took the sacred priestly vest and the idols. "Hey!" the priest shouted. "What do you think you're doing?" (Vv. 16–18) |
| *The Emphasized Bible* | But when these had entered the house of Micah, and taken the graven image and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image the priest said unto them, What are ye doing? |
| NASB | And when these went into Micah's house and took the graven image, the ephod and household idols and the molten image, the priest said to them, What are you doing?" |
| The Septuagint | And the five men who went to spy out the land went up, and entered into the house of Michaias, and the priest stood. And they took the graven image, and the ephod, and the therphin, and the molten image; and the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" (Vv. 17–18) |
| *Young's Lit. Translation* | yea, these have entered the house of Micah, and take the graven image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image; and the priest saith unto them, 'What are ye doing?' |

Now I must admit to being confused. It appears as though we are repeating v. 17 here. However, the order is changed, and a wâw conjunction is missing, meaning that this is not a scribal mistake. We begin with the wâw conjunction and the demonstrative adjective ʾêlleh (אֵ֫לֶּה) [pronounced *EEHL-leh*], which means *these, these things*. Strong's #428 BDB #41. Because of the repetition of these two verses, the NASB and Rotherham insert the adverb *when*. Young treats it like the subject of the verb, and interprets this as *yea, these have entered...and take*...

What is difficult is that *engraved image* lacks a definite article (which is how it is found throughout in the Hebrew), meaning that it is in the construct state (there is no change of spelling). What this suggests is that the ephod was worn by the engraved image. In the Septuagint, we have both the definite article and the connective καὶ, which gives us *the engraved image and the ephod*.

What is happening is that the five walk out with these items, and the priest looks at them and asks just what the hell they think they are doing. What they are doing appear unthinkable. They had just walked into a private residence of a fellow Jew and they are taking whatever it is that they want to take. It is so shocking that the Levite priest, whose life could be in danger, protests their actions directly to these men. This certainly took some nerve on his part, but you must realize that the circumstances were quite unusual, if not surreal.

**And so they said to him, "Quiet! Put your hand upon your mouth and come with us and be to us for a father and for a priest. [Is it] good to your being a priest to a house of a man one or to your being a priest to a tribe and to a family in Israel?"**

Judges 18:19

**Then they said to him, "Silence! Put your hand over your mouth and come with us and be to us a father and a priest. [Is it] better your being a priest to a house of one man or your being a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?"**

**Then they said to him, "Quiet! Put your hand over your mouth and come with us. Be our father and be our priest. Is it preferable to be a priest over one man's house or to be a priest over one entire tribe or over an entire family in Israel?"**

What the men tell the Levite is the Hiphil imperative of chârash (חָרֵשׁ) [pronounced *chaw-RAHSH*], which means *to be silent, to exhibit silence*. Strong's #2790  BDB #361.  Putting the hand over the mouth for silence is almost universal.  We find similar language in Job 21:529:9  40:4  Micah 7:16.

We actually have a series of four 2$^{nd}$ person masculine singular, imperatives, the third one being the Qal imperative of our old friend hâlak$^e$ (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK$^e$*], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*.  Strong's #1980 (and #3212)  BDB #229.  To convince this priest, they ask him, *what is better, to be a priest for one family or for an entire tribe?*  That sentence begins with the interrogative hă (הֲ) [pronounced *heh*], which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence.  This is not the interrogative which would be rendered *what*.  Strong's #none  BDB #209.  This is followed by the masculine singular adjective ţôw$^b$v (טוֹב) [pronounced *toe$^b$v*], which means *good, pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, better*.  Strong's #2896  BDB #373.  The Hebrew language has no special form of the comparative, so the adjective is often used to fill the bill.  When *better* is found, it is often followed by several infinitives.

Note how these men treat this priest.  He is not given a choice.  This question is not for him to decide what he is going to do.  He is looking at 600 men armed for war, ready to do battle, and they have told him to shut up and to come with them.  There was no particle of entreaty or respect.  They were giving the orders.  This *priest-for-hire* was simply good luck to them.  On the other hand, they also spelled out the advantages, which was to be a priest to an entire tribe of Israel, as opposed to being the priest for one family.  Bear in mind, neither function was sanctioned by the Law.

In some tribes in Israel, they were further broken up into families.  However, the only family (or, clan) to come from the family of Dan is Shuham, who is named in Num. 26:42, called Hushim in Gen. 46:23.  When the families are followed out in their genealogies, the tribe of Dan is not even mentioned—only Dan as the son of Jacob is mentioned at all (I Chron. 2:2).  His son Shuham and his family are never mentioned but in the two passages herein noted.

**And so was glad a heart of the priest and so he took the ephod and the teraphim and the graven image and so he went in a midst of the people.**

Judges 18:20

**So the heart of the priest was glad, so he took the ephod, the teraphim and the engraved image and he went in the midst of the people.**

**So the priest was glad, and he took with them the ephod, the household idols and the sculpted idol, and he went along with these men.**

Even though the priest was not given a real choice, this was not a problem for him.  Although he was paid a reasonable wage where he was, becoming a priest over an entire tribe was pretty much the summum bonum of the heretical priesthood.  He did not go into the house to take these idols; they had already been taken from the house.  He was put in charge of them—in other words, he was put in charge of nothing.

## Micah Catches up to Them and Throws a Fit over What They Did

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so they turned and so they departed and so they put the little ones and the livestock and the abundance to their faces.** | Judges 18:21 | **And so they turned and departed and they placed the little ones, the livestock and the abundance [of goods] in front of them.** |

**And so they turned and departed, placing the children, the livestock and their wealth in front.**

This is an odd verse!  What they place in front of them is the masculine singular noun ṭaph (טָף) [pronounced *tahf*], which means *children, little ones, young boys*.  It is not found in the plural or in the construct.  Strong's #2945 BDB #381.  Now, these men are going to war and suddenly we have a bunch of children with them.  This is nowhere explained—have they taken these children from Micah?  Did they bring their children along to go to war?  They are also bringing with them the masculine singular noun mîqᵉneh (מִקְנֶה) [pronounced *mik-NEH*], which means *cattle, livestock* (and refers specifically to *sheep, cows and goats*).  This is used in the collective sense, like our words *cattle* and *livestock*.  Strong's #4735  BDB #889.  The third item which is with them is the feminine singular of kᵉvûwddâh (כְּבוּדָה) [pronounced *kᵉvoo-DAW*], which means *abundance, riches*.  This is found only in Judges 18:21  Psalm 45:13  Ezek. 23:41.  The masculine form of this noun is what is found most often.  Strong's #3520  BDB #459.  Again, it is unclear as to whether these things were all taken from Micah or whether these things were carried with them originally.  Nothing is said about them taking anything apart from the idols and the priest; however, these nouns are not found with the masculine plural possessive suffix.

What appears to be the case is that this group of 600 armed men have taken with them children, women (although not mentioned) and cattle.  They plan to conquer and then to immediately inhabit this area in the north.  Placing the children and cattle in front almost defies explanation.  If they faced a full-frontal attack, the children and cattle would act as a buffer and protection—and these men may just be degenerate enough to require such a thing.  If they were attacked from behind or on the flank, then they would have been directly engaged (unless, of course, they placed women there).  Barnes gives the most plausible explanation: they expected an attack from the rear from Micah and whoever else he could muster, and this gave protection to their children.[16]  Considering that they are 100 miles from their destination and that they have just left Micah's, this is quite reasonable.

Where they placed these things begins with the lâmed prefixed preposition, which is followed by the masculine plural noun pânîym (פָּנִם) [pronounced *paw-NEEM*], which means *faces* (usually referring to one face, however).  Strong's #6440  BDB #815.  With the lâmed preposition, it means *in the sight of, in the presence of, in your face, before the face of, in front of* or, more literally, *to or for the faces*.

Now, although we do not know for certain where all these things came from; it helps to explain the following verse.  Once they moved a distance away from the house of Micah, Micah pursued them.  Micah was able to overtake them as the Danites had so many things with them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **They [even] they had become distant from a house of Micah and the men who [were] in the houses which [were] near a house of Micah were called out and so they overtook the sons of Dan.** | Judges 18:22 | **They [even] they had become distant from the house of Micah, the men in the houses which [were] near the Micah's house were assembled and they overtook the sons of Dan.** |

**Once they had gotten a distance away from the house of Micah, the men who lived nearby Micah were assembled and they overtook the sons of Dan.**

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[16] *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2,* reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 461.

This verse begins with the masculine plural pronoun, followed by the Hiphil perfect of râchaq (רָחַק) [pronounced *raw-KHAHK*] means *to become far, to become distant, to be distant, to move a far off from, to abstain from, to send far away*. Strong's #7368 BDB #934.

Then we begin dealing with the men from the houses which were near Micah's house. Here we have the preposition ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced *ǵeem*], which means *with, at, by near*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767.

The next verb is the Niphal perfect of zâʿaq (זָעַק) [pronounced *zaw-ĢAHK*], which means *to cry out, to call, to cry*. It is often used for an utterance of horror, anxiety, alarm, distress, sorrow. In the Niphal (the passive stem), it means *to call together, to assemble*. Strong's #2199 BDB #277. While it is not stated, this is likely a collection of Micah's servants, workmen and/or neighbors. It apparently took several hours to gather these men and determine what to do. Furthermore, horses, or some form of transportation had to be arranged, as well as weapons. Chasing after an army without weapons would be fairly lame, even for Micah.

Apparently, the house of Micah and the people from around there were pretty much in shock over this incident. Had it been a group of heathen, it would have been understandable. They would have understood that the group of heathen had come and raided Micah's wealth. However, it is difficult to understand that their own Israelite brothers were doing this to them.

| | Judges 18:23 | |
|---|:---:|---|
| **And so they shouted unto the sons of Dan and so they turned around and so they said to Micah, "What to you that you have called together [these men]?"** | | **And so they shouted to the sons of Dan and they [the Danites] turned around and said to Micah, "What [is going on] with reference to you that you have assembled [these men]?"** |

**As they approached, they shouted to the sons of Dan. The sons of Dan looked around, and said to Micah, "What's with you that you have assembled these men?"**

We have the abbreviated colloquialism *what to you?* We find this also in II Kings 6:28. Our closest modern equivalent (which may be dead by the time you read this) is *what's up with you?* Or, *what's with you?*

The final verb is the 2nd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect of zâʿaq (זָעַק) [pronounced *zaw-ĢAHK*], which means *to cry out, to call, to cry*. In the Niphal (the passive stem), it means *to call together, to assemble*. In the Niphal, this could be taken to mean *that you have assembled yourself*. Strong's #2199 BDB #277. The leaders of this group confront Micah and ask him what is his deal; they ask him why he has assembled these men. We do not have any idea as to how many people that Micah got together, but it is certainly with less than the 600 men that he has pursued. The leaders of this army are probably relatively condescending to Micah, as he does not stand a chance against this army. They likely find his pursuit of them somewhat humorous.

| | Judges 18:24 | |
|---|:---:|---|
| **And so he said, "My gods which I have made, you have taken; and the priest. And so you [all] have departed and what [is] to me? And what [is] this—you say unto me, 'What [is] to you?' ?"** | | **And so he answered, "You have taken my gods which I have made, and the priest, and then you [all] departed. What [is left] for me? And what [is] this [crap]—you say to me, 'What [is wrong] with you?' ?"** |

**So he answered them, saying, "You have taken away the gods which I have made along with my priest, and then you all left. What remains for me? And what is this crap, you're saying to me, "What's wrong with you?' ?"**

Micah is beside himself, he is so upset. I am thinking that we should see what some of the freer translations did with this:

| CEV | Micah answered, "You know what's wrong.  You stole the gods I made, and you took my priest.  I don't have anything left." |
| *The Emphasized Bible* | And he said— My gods which I had made ye have taken away and the priest, and have departed, and what have I more?  How then is it that ye can say unto me, What aileth thee? |
| NAB | "You have taken my god, which I made, and have gone off with my priest as well," he answered.  "What is left for me?  How, then, can you ask me what I want?" |
| REB | 'You have taken the gods which I made for myself and have taken the priest,' he answered; 'you have gone off and left me nothing.  How can you ask, "What is the matter with you?" ' |
| TEV | Micah answered, "What do you mean, 'What's the matter?'  You take my priest and the gods that I made, and walk off!  What have I got left?" |
| *Young's Lit. Translation* | And he saith, 'My gods which I made ye have taken, and the priest, and ye go; and what to me more? and what *is* this ye say unto me, What—to thee? |

After the second *what* in this verse, we have the demonstrative adjective zeh (ה זֶ) [pronounced *zeh*], which means *here, this*.  It occurs twice in Deut. 13:17.  This is a demonstrative pronoun and an adverb both; it can be rendered *thus*.  BDB: *[Zeh] is attached enclitically, almost as an adverb, to certain words, especially interrogative pronouns, to impart, in a manner often not reproducible in English idiom, directness and force, bringing the question or statement made into close relation with the speaker.*[17]  Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090  BDB #260.

The irony of this verse is that Micah is concerned about his *gods,* as though they are some sort of great power.  However, they could not even protect him from these men.  They could not protect themselves from being stolen.  These idols are 100% worthless, and Micah is chasing after the ones who have stolen them from him, and it never occurs to him that they have no true function.  If they cannot protect him and if they cannot protect themselves, what use are they?

They know exactly what Micah is upset.  He can't believe that they have the nerve to ask him what's wrong.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so they said unto him, sons of Dan, "Do not cause to be heard your voice with us lest fall against you men bitternesses of soul, and you gather your soul and [the] soul of your house."** | Judges 18:25 | **Then the sons of Dan said to him, "Do not cause your voice to be heard, lest men—bitter of soul—fall upon you and you will relocate your soul and the soul of your house."** |

**Then the sons of Dan warned him, "Don't let your voice be heard, because there are men in this group bitter enough to kill you for sport—you and the people with you."**

The Danites pretty much have control here.  They first of all give him a negative, setting that up as the emphasis of what they are about to say, and follow it with the Hiphil imperfect of shâma ʿ (עַ מַ שָׁ) [pronounced *shaw-MAH*], which means *to listen, listen intently*.  In the Hiphil, it means *to cause to hear, to let hear*.  Strong's #8085 BDB #1033.  In v. 23, what they said was somewhat humorous.  The Danite soldiers were being fairly lighthearted about the whole thing.  Now they suddenly get serious with Micah.  They will let him know that his life is in danger, without directly threatening him themselves.  This is a very subtle approach that allows Micah the chance to back down without raising his testosterone level.

The consequences would be the Qal imperfect of pâga ʿ (עַ גֵַ פָּ) [pronounced *paw-GAHG*], which means *to fall upon, to meet, to encounter, to reach* in the Qal and *to cause to light upon, to make entreaty, to interpose*.  This is a word of subtlety, which can imply violence.  Strong's #6293  BDB #803.  Certainly, it is not the men speaking to Micah, but these would be other men.  They are described with the masculine plural construct mar (מַר) [pronounced *mahr*], which means *bitter, bitterness*.  Strong's #4751 (#4755)  BDB #600.  This is attached to the

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[17] *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon;* Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 261.

feminine singular noun nephesh (נֶ פֶ שׁ) [pronounced *NEH-fesh*], which means *soul, life*.   Strong's #5315 BDB #659.  They use this word two more times in this verse, indicating that we are now dealing with a matter of life and death, and that Micah needs to back off.

They warn Micah with the Qal perfect of `âçaph (אָ ס ף) [pronounced *aw-SAHF*], which means *relocate, transfer, transport, gather, to gather and remove, to remove, to commute*.  Strong's #622  BDB #62.  What they warn him that he is going to relocate is his soul and the souls of his household.  It is a very polite way of saying, *back off, little dude, or you and your friends are dead*.

What this reveals is unfortunate.  These men were aware, as was Micah, that idolatry was considered to be an offense punishable by death.  Now, they were not so inclined, being of a more tolerant bend, but they traveled with soldiers who were a lot more conservative and would, if they realized that Micah was claiming ownership of these idols, kill him for this infraction.  In other words, these men and Micah all knew the Law well enough to realize that idolatry was an offense of some sort and that some proscribed death for it.  This means that their ignorance of the Law was not 100%.  What they are doing is giving Micah a thinly-veiled threat.[18]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so went sons of Dan to their way and so saw Micah that strong they [were] from him. And so he turned and he returned to his house.** | Judges 18:26 | **So the sons of Dan went on their way and Micah saw that they [were] stronger than he, so he turned around and returned to his house.** |

**When Micah realized that they were stronger than he, he turned around and returned to his house.  The sons of Dan then went on their way.**

Now Micah examines the situation and realizes that he is far outnumbered.  Furthermore, these men are armed for war, and Micah's people might have a sword or two among them.  What Micah observes about the Danites is that they are the masculine plural adjective châzâq (ק ז ח) [pronounced *khaw-ZAWK*], which means *strong, mighty.*  Strong's #2389  BDB #305.

You will note how the Hebrew works—it tends to look at things the opposite way that we do.  I think in terms of time, in terms of succession of events, in terms of this comes first, and then this follows.  I look at things as sort of a logical progression.  Personally, had I wrote this verse, I would have seen that these men were too strong for Micah, then Micah would go one way and the men would go the other.  The author, who thinks differently than I, turns things around.  He first lists the final result—the story is primarily about the tribe of Dan gathering together an army and going up to Laish to conquer a peaceful people.  The first sentence puts us back on track.  The second sentence is more explanatory as to why this scene was over and why the men of Dan moved on.  Micah observed that the soldiers of Dan were too strong for him (they were, more or less, professional soldiers; and they were armed for war) and Micah had a few of his servants, workmen and/or neighbors with him who grabbed the first thing they saw, if that.  Because Micah made this observation and backed off (*he returned to his house*), the sons of Dan were able to resume their journey northward.

You should come away from this with the idea that these men of Dan were bullies.

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[18] *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible;* ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 753.

**The Danites Take Laish and Set up the Idols and the Bogus Priest**

**And they took what made Micah and the priest who was to him and so they came unto [or, as far as] Laish unto a people, quiet and trusting. And so they struck them to a mouth of a sword and the city they burned in fire.**

Judges 18:27

**And they took what Micah made and the priest who was his, and they came to Laish, to a quiet and trusting people. Then they struck them down with the mouth of the sword and burned the city in fire.**

**So they took what Micah had made, as well as his priest, and traveled to Laish, where the people lived quite and trusting lives. They suddenly attacked them with the edge of the sword and they burned down their city with fire.**

Prior to *Laish,* in one early printed edition and in the Septuagint, we have *as far as* rather than *unto*. It is difficult to determine how these things happen. The corruption could be because a manuscript was in poor condition and difficult to copy. It could be because a copyist—one not completely skilled in Hebrew—might have written down the wrong preposition. It could be a copyist who, after working long hours, made a slip of the pen, and wrote down the wrong preposition. The copyists to follow would stay with the manuscript delivered to them, despite the fact that another preposition or word seems to be a better candidate. In other words, in situations like this where we have a difference of readings, there are times when it is difficult to make a call as to which reading is accurate and which was a mistake. Luckily, in a situation like this, the differing prepositions do little to alter the meaning of the verse.

We've had the people described earlier. We first have the Qal active participle of shâqaṭ (שָׁקַט) [pronounced *shaw-KAWT*] and it means *to be quiet, to be undisturbed, inactive*. In the participle, it would mean *quiet*. Strong's #8252 BDB #1052. We also have the Qal active participle of bâṭach (בָּטַח) [pronounced *baw-TAHKH*], which means *to trust, to rely upon, to have confidence in, to be secure in*. In the participle, this means *trusting*. Strong's #982 BDB #105.

**And no delivering because she [Laish] [was] far from Sidon and a word not to them with a man. And she [is] in the valley which [was] to Beth-rehob. And so they built the city and so they lived in her.**

Judges 18:28

**And [there was] no deliverance because they [were] far from Sidon, and they had [lit., *to them*] not a word with [any] man. And it [is] in the valley which [belongs to] Beth-rehob. Then they rebuilt the city and lived in it.**

**And these men were not delivered, as they lived far from Sidon, and they did not keep up regular communications with anyone. And they were in the valley which belonged to Beth-rehob. So the tribe of Dan rebuilt the city and lived in it.**

Let's just see what our two literal translations say:

| | |
|---|---|
| *The Emphasized Bible* | And there was no one to rescue because it was far from Zidon, and they had no dealings with any one [more literally, with mankind], it being in the valley that pertaineth to Beth-rehob. Then built they the city and dwelt therein,... |
| *Young's Lit. Translation* | ...and there *is* no deliverer, for it *is* far off from Zidon, and they have no word with *any* man, and it *is* in the valley which *is* by Beth-Rehob; and they build te city, and dwell in it,... |

There is no *there is*. This simply begins with the wâw conjunction, the negative and the Hiphil participle of nâtsal (נָצַל) [pronounced *naw-TSAHL*], which means *to deliver [from], to rescue, to recover*. It is not found in the Qal. Without the definite article (as we find it here), the participle would probably be better translated *delivering, rescuing*. Strong's #5337 BDB #664. Because of our Savior, Christ Jesus, we tend not to fully realize that not every nation looks to a deliverer by way of a specific person, but here they were looking simply for deliverance from any man or, more probably, from Sidon. However, they did not even have any sort of contact (literally, *a word*) with anyone from Sidon, as *she* (a reference to the city) was the feminine singular adjective râchôq (רָחוֹק) [pronounced *raw-*

*KHOHK*], which means, *distant, far*. Strong's #7350 BDB #935. This city was so described back in v. 7. *Sidon* is mentioned specifically as these people appear to be Sidonians.

*Beth-rehob* means *house of streets* and is probably the city mentioned in Num. 13:21 as the northern extent of the area covered by the first set of spies which were sent into the Land of Promise. Syrians occupied Beth-rehob during the time of David (II Sam. 10:6). Apparently, Beth-rehob generally controlled the valley in which Laish was found, but the two cities were apparently physically and politically distanced from one another. Although we have people who are more than willing to guess is to the comparable modern site (e.g., Hunin or Banias), we have no conclusive archeological proof.

The small tribe of Dan built a city on the ruins and lived here instead. As of right now, it is unclear whether the tribe of Dan lives in two separate areas or whether they relocated entirely in Laish. However, as we have discussed previously, given that Samson was from the tribe of Dan and was stirred by the Holy Spirit at the Camp of Dan (which was initially designated in this chapter), this would indicate that these 600 men populated the area, and certainly others from the tribe of Dan then came up to live there as well. However, they had to leave other members of the tribe of Dan there in order for Samson to be born to that tribe in that area.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so they called a name of the city Dan in [or, according to] a name of Dan their father who was born to Israel. And yet Laish [is] a name of the city to the first.** | Judges 18:29 | **So they called the name of the city Dan, on account of the name of Dan their father who was born to Israel. However, Laish was the name of the city at the first.** |

**So they called the city Dan, after the name of their ancestor Dan, who was born to Israel (Jacob). The city was formerly known as Laish.**

Most of the translations read something along the lines of *and they named the city Dan **after** the name of Dan*. Actually, the preposition found here is the bêyth preposition, which generally means *in, at, by*. However, here we have the very rare usage *as, in respect to, on account of*.[19] In three early printed editions and in the Septuagint, we have the preposition *according to* instead. Their father's name was *Dan* and he was the Pual perfect of yâlad (יָלַד) [pronounced *yaw-LAHD*], which means *to bear, to be born, to bear, to bring forth, to beget*. The Pual is the passive of the Piel (intensive) stem, so it can be rendered *was born, was sired by*. Strong's #3205 BDB #408. *Israel* does not refer to the nation *Israel* but to the God-given name of Jacob.

The last phrase begins with a wâw conjunction and the adverb ʾûwlâm (אוּלָם) [pronounced *oo-LAWM*], which means *but, but indeed, yet, however;* it is a very strong adversative. Strong's #199 BDB #19. The writer points out that Laish was the name of the city *at the first*. This is the lâmed prefixed preposition and the feminine singular adjective rîshôwn (רִשׁוֹן) [pronounced *ree-SHOWN*], which means *first, chief, former, beginning*. With the lâmed prefixed preposition, it means *at the first, formerly*. Strong's #7223 BDB #911. The tribe of Dan completely takes over this city, destroying the city itself and all of the inhabitants (as far as we know). The writer wants to clearly state the original name of the city. We have no reason to condone the behavior of the tribe of Dan.

Back in Joshua 19, this same incident is mentioned. This was likely the result of an editor who pieced together the public records and what Joshua had himself written. At the time that he pieced these things together (which could have actually been much later), Dan had taken Laish. Therefore, he added to the public records: And the territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them, for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and they captured it. Then they struck it with the mouth of the sword and possess it and settled in it, and they called Leshem Dan after the dame of Dan their father (Joshua 19:47). Interestingly enough, this information is not appended to Judges 1:34, where we are simply told that the Amorites forced Dan into the hill country.

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[19] I am footnoting this, because it is a very rare usage. H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament;* ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 98.

The NIV Study Bible: *Excavations there have disclosed that the earliest Israelites occupation of Dan was in the 12*[th] *century B.C. and that they first Israelites inhabitants apparently lived in tens or temporary huts. Occupation of the site continued into the Assyrian period, but the town was destroyed and rebuilt many times. A large high place attached to the city was often extensively rebuilt and refurbished and was in use into the Hellenistic period.*[20] This would have been the place where they had these idols. It is ironic that the Sidonians who previously occupied this area felt no need to maintain military treaties with other nations, as they felt fairly secure (and they were, until attacked by the Danites). However, after the Danites took over this place, they apparently were attacked and severely decimated on several occasions, although few if any are recorded in Scripture.

I need to add an addendum here: there is a city called *Dan* mentioned in Gen. 14:14 (I mention it, as some Bibles refer to that passage). This is not the same place. The *Dan* mentioned in Gen. 14:14 is much closer to the Dead Sea, first of all. Secondly, when the old name for a city is replaced by a more current designation, there is a specific verbiage found in the context to indicate that. We do not find that in Gen. 14:14. Therefore, we can only assume that *Dan* was simply a very ancient name, and therefore not originally Hebrew.

## Addendum by a Later Editor

**And so they [caused to] set up for themselves, sons of Dan, the graven image and Jonathan ben Gershom, son of Manasseh [probably, Moses]—he and his sons were priests to a tribe of the Danites until the day of captivity of the land.**

Judges 18:30

**So the sons of Dan [caused to] set up for themselves the engraved idol and Jonathan ben Gershom, son of Moses—he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of captivity of the land.**

**So the sons of Dan set up their carved idol and Jonathan ben Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons, became priests for the tribe of Dan until they were all taken out of the land.**

Here, we have just introduced a verse which is one of the more difficult verses to interpret in context in the book of Judges. The first problem is the name *Manasseh*. The tribe of Manasseh was not the priestly tribe nor do we have the name *Gershom* anywhere in the lineage of that tribe. What we have is someone became embarrassed for Moses, knowing his greatness and knowing how lame this tribal priest thing is here, so they changed the name *Moses* to *Manasseh,* in order to protect the reputation of Moses. Goofy, I know. It is even possible that this Jonathan is the grandson or great grandson of Moses, giving a later scribe even more reason to try to remove his stain from the line of Moses. Ginsburg apparently goes into great detail on this topic.[21] Apparently, in the Hebrew, it is written as M[N]SH, with this raised *N*. Without the *N,* this would be *Moses,* and it is possible that a later scribe, who recognized that this was bogus, raised the *N* to call attention to it. However, out of respect for the Word of God, he did not remove it. Another less reasonable theory is that the person who added this letter raised it himself (why try to protect the name of *Moses* and then turn around and essentially undo what you originally did?).[22]

We know that Moses had two sons, one of them Gershom and the other Eliezer (Ex. 2:22  18:3–4). There is another Gershom in the Bible; a son of Levi, who is the ancestor of Moses and Aaron, and after whom Moses named one of his sons. The Gershom referred to here is obviously the son of Moses, placing this Jonathon character in the Levitical line. The Levites were not necessarily priests, but they assisted the priests, who were in the line of Aaron. There was no provision for a priest or his family to be given over to a particular tribe as their own personal priest. This was something that this tribe made up on the spot. So, if you wonder whether or not what they did was the right thing—the wiping out of this peaceful tribe of Sidonians, I would think that their spiritual

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[20] *The NIV Study Bible;* ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 353.

[21] Dr. C.D. Ginsburg's Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical of the Hebrew Bible; ©1897; pp. 335–338. This reference is given by Rotherham.

[22] The Vulgate has *Moses* and the Septuagint has *Manasse*.

temperature reveals their total corruption.  Setting up an idol was completely outside the will of God, as was setting up a man and his family as their personal priests.  In addition, God had distributed a particular portion of land for them to conquer which they had not conquered.  Therefore, we can assume that their attack on these helpless people and the destruction of their city was equally degenerate.

The final sentence in this verse tells us that the final strokes of the pen were possibly put to this book hundreds of years later (vv. 30–31 actually mark the end of one manuscript; the next few chapters are appendices which have an equally early original, yet separate, authorship).  The northern kingdom was carried away into captivity in II Kings 15:29  17:6  circa 721 B.C., meaning that at some point after that, this particular verse was penned (or the last portion of it was added).  In the Hebrew, this is called the day of the Qal infinitive construct of gâlâh (גָּלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means *to depart, to remove*.  In the Qal infinitive construct, it means *the departure, the removal*.  Strong's #1540  BDB #162.  This is more than just the tribe of Dan, otherwise it would have referred to the departure from Laish and not from *the land*.  Since excavations of this area indicate that the city was destroyed and rebuilt on several occasions, the NIV Study Bible offer a second explanation: they suggest that this is not necessarily the complete removal of the northern kingdom but that it could refer to an earlier incident, only affecting the tribe of Dan, an incident unrecorded in the Word of God.[23]  This would make their violation of idolatry relatively short-lived.[24]

This should not cause us grief that an editor handled this manuscript much later after it was originally written.  We find this throughout Scripture.  There are times where the scrolls which were the Word of God were temporarily lost, partially destroyed, or captured.  The books of Joshua and Judges were both obviously pieced together from at least three or more separate sources.  This does not make them any less inspired.  It is routine six for an author today to have an editor; therefore, if such a position exists today, and if they have a reasonable function, then it is not such a leap of faith to understand that there were editors back in ancient times as well.  And, just because someone is an editor, it does not mean that they are operating outside of the will of God, nor does it mean that they added or took from the Word of God (that is more of a case-by-case basis).

Obviously, the next question is how on earth would one distinguish between someone who is editing these manuscripts, trying to place them in order, and someone who is intentionally adding to the Word of God?  In most cases, this is quite simple.  Those who edited the Word of God hundreds of years later did not do damage to the original manuscripts, and when they added a word of explanation, that it was fairly obvious that this was an addition or a bit of explanation or clarification.  For instance, in this case, it is obvious that this verse was added in sometime after the events took place, as the dispersion of the northern kingdom is mentioned, which is several hundred years off.  The editor is not slipping this in to con us with his own personal theological view—he is just giving us some perspective on this incident and why it was meaningful.  The editor does not represent this verse as a work of the original author, but presents this information as pertinent and necessary to the reader of many years hence.  Therefore, such an addition is not necessarily a violation of what God set down.

On the other hand, let me give you a prime example of someone who slips in his own theological predilection and tries to pass off the writing as belonging to someone else.  At the end of the book of Mark, we actually have two endings.  The short ending which you find in many of your Bibles is the correct ending which Mark penned.  There is also the holy roller ending which deals with the Apostles and their followers drinking poison and handling snakes.  Now, that's goofy holy roller stuff added as a misinterpretation of incidents from the book of Acts.  We have the mistaken impression that if something occurred in the book of Acts, then it should continue to occur every day.  There are many incidents from the past which are not repeated today: the animal sacrifices; the incredible, miraculous healings of our Lord (the fakers of today come nowhere close to His miracles; a true healer today would walk into a hospital and heal one person right after the other); tongues and prophecy are no longer in use in this Age; nor is the baptism of the Holy Spirit an experience separate from salvation.  All of these things had their place in a specific time for a specific purpose, none of which is difficult for even baby believers to grasp.  However, the

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[23] My only problem here would be, if the tribe of Dan was completely removed, then why did they go back and re-inhabit it later. The Israelites did return as a whole as a national movement after being removed from the land by the Assyrians.

[24] I pass this theory along more by way of being thorough than to give support to it.  The next verse indicates that this went on at least until the time of David.

holy rollers have distorted all of that, just as they have done as early as the first century when a holy roller added that longer, bogus ending to the book of Mark, and tried to pass it off as Mark's writing.  Now, that is clearly an uninspired addition to the Word of God.

I should also mention that the long-term existence of this shrine is given in I Kings 12:25–30, the final verse in that passage confirming its existence.

<table>
<tr><td><strong>And so they set up for themselves a graven image of Micah's which he made all the days a being of a house of God in Shiloh.</strong></td><td>Judges 18:31</td><td><strong>And so they set up for themselves Micah's engraved idol which he made all the days the house of God was in Shiloh.</strong></td></tr>
</table>

**Thus, they had set up Micah's carved idol during the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.**

This verse is also a part of an editor's addition to this chapter of the book of Judges.  Back in Joshua 18:1 and 8, it appears as though Joshua set up Shiloh as some sort of headquarters, capital city, or place where the ark was to be kept.  If it wasn't at the hand of Joshua, it was at the hand of someone else which made Shiloh the place of the ark, as we find in Psalm 78:60 (this psalm is actually about the abandoning by God of Shiloh as His dwelling place; see also Jer. 7:12, 14).  The ark and the Tent of God appear to continue in Shiloh through to the time of Eli and Samuel (I Sam. 1:3  3:21  4:3). Saul apparently moved[25] the Ten of God to Nob (I Sam. 21) and David moved it to Gibeon (I Chron. 16:1, 39  21:29). The NIV Study Bible: *Archaeological work at Shiloh indicates that the site was destroyed c. 1050 B.C. and was left uninhabited for many centuries*.[26]  This would have been the time of David or earlier, which seems to be in agreement with the time frame of archeology.  The upshot of all this is that the family of Jonathan remained as priests over northern Dan until they were taken out of the land; however, the idols were taken down somewhere during the ministry of Samuel and the rulership of Saul.  Keil and Delitzsch take exception to the continuance of the family of Jonathan as priests in the land of northern Dan until the Assyrian invasion, and suggest that by the time of David, all idolatry ceased, which would include the bogus function of the priesthood in northern Dan.

some reason, Keil and Delitzsch go into great detail as to the fact that the idolatry referred to herein was discontinued somewhere between the ministry of Samuel and the kingship of David, and they cite excellent reasons to back up this opinion (e.g., Samuel apparently got the Israelites as a whole to discard their fascination with Baalim and Astarte in I Sam. 7:4; David's reign placed a strong emphasis upon the worship of Jehovah).  However, this verse, although added later, indicates that this was the case.  The idolatry ceased around the time that the Tent of God was moved out of Shiloh.  As to the time that this bogus priesthood retired, that still appears to be when the northern kingdom was carried away.  There is sinful; and then there is sinful.  It is possible that the priests who occupied northern Dan became more Jehovah-centered, despite the fact that a tribe was not to have their own personal priest.  Still, the priests were scattered throughout Israel and this family could have fallen more and more into line with conservative doctrine.  If this were the case, then the arguments of Keil and Delitzsch would no longer hold water and the ending of this peculiar priesthood at the time of the Assyrian captivity would be reasonable.

The verb here is the Qal imperfect of sîym (שִׂים) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set*.  This was in the Hiphil imperfect in the previous verse, meaning that they *caused to set up* this image.  Strong's #7760 BDB #962.

Note that the setting up of this image along with the priesthood of this Jonathan, continued in Dan until the captivity of Israel (the northern kingdom), and, to emphasize that this was not right, we have that it was set up during the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.  I should point out at this time that, for the most part, the house of God was in Shiloh during the period of the judges. The previous verse was very likely an editorial insert, as you will note that this chapter flows even without v. 30.

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[25] And I am merely presuming that Saul was the one who moved the Tent of God; there is no Scripture to back that up that I know of.

[26] *The NIV Study Bible;* ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 354.

In the  Septuagint, the first half of the next verse is a part of this chapter (in any case, it is a nice bridge between the chapters and the two stories).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **And so he was in the days the those and no king in Israel.** | Judges 19:1a | **So it was in those days [that there was] no king in Israel.** |

**And so it was in those days that there was no king in Israel.**

The editor of the book of Judges, who is affixing these last few chapters, probably added v. 30 and v. 1a of Judges 19 in order to continue the flow of the book, as these last two stories were probably on separate scrolls and not originally together as a whole.