

Judges Chapter 18

Verses 1-2

Having failed to conquer their territory due to laziness and cowardice (1:34; Joshua 19:40-48), the “Danites” were still looking for a place to settle.

Unlike the two previous spy missions (Num. chapters 13 and 14 and Joshua 2:1-24), this mission lacked the LORD’s authorization.

Judges 18:1 "In those days [there was] no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day [all their] inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel."

Because the “Danites” were severely restricted by the Amorites (compare 1:34), they sought an area that would give them adequate territory for their people.

Having failed to possess their original tribal allotment (compare Joshua 19:41-46; see the note on Joshua 14:14), the Danites compounded their sin by inaugurating their settlement in the newly won territory in the north by the institution of Micha’s apostate religion!

The Danites had the northernmost inheritance.

They had an uncertain northern border.

The bulk of the tribe of Dan had already received their inheritance, but some of the people were still trying to settle in land in that area for themselves.

The Danites we are reading of here, are dwelling in Zorah and Eshtaol.

Judges 18:2 "And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valor, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there."

According to Abarbanel one out of a family, as Moses sent one out of a tribe to spy the land.

And so there must be five families concerned in this affair.

"From their coasts, men of valor, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it":

These men were sent from the borders of the tribe, the extreme parts of it, as the word may signify.

Where perhaps they were the most pressed and overcrowded.

Zorah and Eshtaol are particularly mentioned, and were the first cities in their lot.

And were the coast of their inheritance (see note on Joshua 19:41).

And their errand was to observe in what condition they were, and whether fit for their purpose, and easy to obtain.

And how they might get the possession of any of them.

"And they said unto them, search the land":

And see if some convenient place cannot be found out to enlarge their inheritance.

And give them more room and liberty for their families, now pent up.

And a pasturage for their flocks and herds.

"Who when they came to Mount Ephraim":

Which lay upon the borders of them.

"To the house of Micah, they lodged there":

That is, when they were come near to the house of Micah, as Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it.

They took up their lodging in the neighborhood of it, perhaps at a public house or inn.

For the sense is not, that they lodged in Micah's house, for after this we read of their turning into it, as in the next verse.

According to Bunting, this place was twenty four miles from Zorah and Eshtaol, from whence these men came.

On the migration by the tribe of Dan to a new territory (see note on 1:34).

Dan was an example of tribal idolatry.

We see that they have gone around the Philistines, so they would not have to fight with them.

These five men are spies, to see how easily it would be to take the land.

We read of Micah in the last lesson.

This seems to be a place where they were welcomed to rest for a while.

Judges 18:3 "When they [were] by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this [place]? and what hast thou here?"

At their inn, which might be next to it, or as they were passing by it.

"They knew the voice of the young man the Levite":

Who had been in their country, and they had been in his company and conversation, and they knew the tone of his voice when they heard it.

A particular brogue he could have.

Abarbanel conjectures, that he was singing to Micah's idol, or multiplying his prayers before him.

"And they turned in thither":

Into Micah's house, and into the apartment where the young man was.

"And said unto him, who brought thee hither?"

They knew he was of Beth-lehem-judah.

They inquire therefore how he came there, who sent for him, and by what means he was brought to that place.

"And what makest thou in this place?"

They knew he was a Levite, and that such a one had no business to minister but at the tabernacle.

And therefore, they inquire what his employment here was:

"And what hast thou here?"

To support himself with, what he had for his maintenance, or how he lived.

It appears, these five spies know the Levite that went to work for Micah in his house as his priest.

They hear him, and go in to talk for a moment with him.

These men inquire of the Levite, what is he doing here?

Verses 4-6:

The priest disobeyed several Levitical laws: he performed priestly duties in a house rather than in the tabernacle; he used idols; he claimed to speak for God when he had not even inquired of God, let alone received a message from Him.

This priest knew religious phrases, "Go in peace".

"Before the LORD is your way wherein ye go", but he was far from knowing God.

Judges 18:4 "And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest."

He told them the whole story of how he came to the door of Micah's house.

And how he inquired of him who he was, and from whence he came, and where he was going.

And then invited him into his house to stay with him.

"And hath hired me":

By the year, for ten shekels of silver, a suit of clothes, and meat and drink.

And by this means he received a livelihood, and was supported.

"And I am his priest":

And that was his business to offer sacrifice for his family, and to consult his oracle for him, and for whomsoever should apply.

He explains to these five men, how he came to be in Micah's house.

Micah had hired him to serve in the office of priest.

Judges 18:5 "And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous."

They did not reprove him for assuming the priestly office, when they knew he was a Levite.

Such was the corruption of those times, and the great depravity and declining they were fallen into.

Nor even for the idolatry he was guilty of, but encourage him in it.

And thought they had got a fine opportunity, which they readily laid hold on, to have counsel asked for them of God.

About the success of the errand they were sent about.

To this they were led at sight of the ephod, which was like that in the tabernacle.

And of the teraphim.

Images which, according to a notion that prevailed, when consulted, foretold future things.

Whether by God they meant the true God, who they thought would give an answer by these, or Micah's gods, is not certain.

According to the Targum of Jonathan, they meant the true God, which paraphrases it, "ask of the Word of the LORD".

"That we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous":

Whether they should find out a proper place to dwell in, and be able to get possession of it.

We do not read it here, but perhaps this Levite had already been one of the priests, because these men accept him as a priest.

They ask his guidance on whether this will be a rewarding journey for them or not.

They want him to pray to God for them.

Judges 18:6 "And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD [is] your way wherein ye go."

The priest said ... Before the LORD is your way":

Your design is under the eye of God; that is, under his direction, protection, and care.

The priest undoubtedly feigned this answer.

For it is not to be imagined that he could, in such a case, have any answer from God, either through his ephod and teraphim, or in any other way.

From hence, however, we may infer, Micah and his priest gave out that God might be inquired of by their means as well as at his oracle at Shiloh.

His answer was that the LORD would be with them on their journey.

He probably had on the ephod which the LORD spoke to the people through.

When the high priest had on the ephod, God spoke through the Urim and Thummim.

Judges 18:7 "Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that [were] therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and [there was] no magistrate in the land, that might put [them] to shame in [any] thing; and they [were] far from the Zidonians, and had no business with [any] man."

“Laish”, formerly Leshem (Joshua 19:47), was situated in the far northern portion of the land.

Renamed Dan (verse 29), its northerly location gives rise to the phrase “from Dan to Beer-sheba” to mark the northern and southern limits of the land of Israel.

This was a secluded, rich land.

It seems the people of Laish were living a quiet, peaceable life of semi-luxury.

They did not even have a magistrate in the land.

This is speaking of easy living.

They did not get acquainted with them.

They just spied out their information and left the populace alone.

Judges 18:8 "And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What [say] ye?"

After they had well viewed the city, and made their remarks on the inhabitants of it.

The condition and circumstances in which they were, and took notice of the goodness of the land about it, they returned to their brethren that sent them.

Particularly those that dwelt at the two places mentioned.

"And their brethren said unto them, what say ye?"

What tidings do you bring?

What account of the place and country where you have been?

The spies came back to Eshtaol and Zorah, and gave their report of what they had seen.

Judges 18:9 "And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it [is] very good: and [are] ye still? be not slothful to go, [and] to enter to possess the land."

That is, prepare for war, and go up in a hostile manner against the present possessors of the land.
Not doubting of being masters of it easily.

"For we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good":

Adrichomius says it was very good pasture land, and fertile, abounding with fruits of all kinds.

And the same is attested by Josephus.

"And are ye still?"

Can ye sit still, and be easy, and not bestir yourselves to go up and possess so good a country, of which an easy conquest may be made?

Or, affirmatively, "ye are still or silent"; ye make no answer to what we say, and seem careless and indifferent about the matter.

Or by way of exhortation, "be silent".

Either that the people may remain in their quiet, easy, careless state, and lest, on hearing designs against them, should prepare for their defense.

Or, as Abarbanel, lest any of the other tribes of Israel should hear of it, and go take it before them.

"Be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land":

They suggest that there was scarce anything more to be done than to go and take possession.

And that it would be altogether owing to their sloth and indolence if they did not.

The five spies encourage them to go into the land and take it over.

They believe the people are so at ease, that it will be easily taken.

They have witnessed the fact that the people have a comfortable living, because the land is fertile.

They are encouraging their brethren to get up and go now to take the city.

Judges 18:10 "When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where [there is] no want of any thing that [is] in the earth."

"God hath given it into your hands ":

This they gather partly from God's promises, which they supposed they had from the Levite's mouth, and partly from his providence, which had so disposed them that they would be an easy prey.

"A place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth":

In the land of Canaan.

Meaning, that there was nothing in the whole land but might be found there, as wheat and barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olives, and honey, with all other necessities and conveniences of life.

The people have a large fertile land, and they have want of nothing.

They are living the easy life, not expecting anyone to come against them.

The 5 spies believe it will be very easy to take them.

Judges 18:11 "And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war."

Or families, the singular being put for the plural.

For it can hardly be thought that such a number of men, as after mentioned, went out of one family.

"Out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol":

The two places the spies were sent from, and now had returned unto.

And upon their report, and at their instigation, and by the encouragement they gave.

There were; "Six hundred men appointed with weapons of war":

That set out armed from the above places, on the expedition to take Laish.

This is a small army, but they believe they will not encounter much opposition, so these are all they need.

Judges 18:12 "And they went up, and pitched in Kirjath-jearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day: behold, [it is] behind Kirjath-jearim."

Of which place see (Joshua 15:9).

According to Bunting it was sixteen miles from Zorah and Eshtaol, and this was their first day's march.

"Wherefore they called that place Mahaneh-dan unto this day":

Which signifies the camp of Dan, or of the Danites.

So it was called in the times of Samson (Judges 13:25).

And is a proof that this expedition was before his time.

And it was so called, it seems, in the time of Samuel, the writer of this book.

"Behold, it is behind Kirjath-jearim":

To the west of it.

For though they are said to pitch in that place, the meaning is, that they pitched near it.

In the fields adjacent to it, which were the most proper and convenient for a camp.

It seems the army stopped here to rest, before going the entire way.

"Kirjath-jearim":

Means city of forests.

Perhaps, that is why they stopped here, so they would not be out in the open.

"Mahaneh-dan":

Means camp of Dan.

Judges 18:13 "And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah."

Steering their coast still northward.

This, according to Bunting, was eight miles from Kirjath-jearim, or Mahaneh-dan, in which Micah's house was.

For as yet they were not come to it (see Judges 18:15).

Verses 14-26

The Danites sinfully seized the idols of Micah by force, probably because they believed those false idols were the source of power to give them the land they had spied.

The apostate Levite who had served Micah as priest, named Jonathan, sold out again to be a priest for the Danites (verses 18:20, 30), who were not bothered by his defection, but rather believed in his spiritual power.

Judges 18:14 "Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do."

That were sent by their brethren (Judges 18:5).

And, as it seems from hence, were sent particularly to Laish.

They had some notion of that place as proper for them, and therefore sent those men to reconnoiter it.

And now as they had passed this way before, when they came within sight of Micah's house, it put them in mind of what they had seen there.

Wherefore one in the name of the rest, and with their approbation, acquainted the company with it.

"And said unto their brethren, do ye know that there is in these houses":

In one of them, pointing to the houses of a village or town in sight.

"An ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image?":

Of which see (Judges 17:4).

And no doubt but they acquainted them, only that they had seen them, and so were certain but had consulted them, and that with success.

"Now therefore consider":

They say.

"What ye have to do":

Whether it may not be proper to consult them again, or rather to take them with us.

To consult as occasion may require, and as tokens and pledges of God being with us.

And so may the rather hope that everything will succeed to our wishes.

These same five spies had sought advice from the priest that was in this house of Micah.

They were not very grateful for the hospitality that Micah had shown them.

You would think if they were to do anything, it would be to destroy the graven image and the molten image.

We will see in the next few verses what they do.

Judges 18:15 "And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, [even] unto the house of Micah, and saluted him."

It seems as if the house lay a little out of their way, and therefore they turned on one hand to go unto it.

"And came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah":

For the young man's house was only an apartment of Micah's, and lay very probably next to that in which the images, and oracle were.

And they made up to the young man's apartment, rather than to Micah's, because the above things were under his care.

"And saluted him":

Asked him of his welfare in a kind and obliging manner, the rather to ingratiate themselves unto him.

It seemed the house of Micah was actually several houses that were connected.

They greeted him as if nothing is wrong.

Judges 18:16 "And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which [were] of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate."

Who were armed men, and marched with their armor about them.

"Which were of the children of Dan":

For no other were concerned in this expedition.

"Stood by the entering of the gate":

Not of Micah's house, but of the city in which his house was.

Here they stood while the five men went up to the house.

Judges 18:17 "And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, [and] came in thither, [and] took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men [that were] appointed with weapons of war."

They first came to Micah's house, and saluted the young man.

And after that salutation told him there was such a number of their brethren at the gate of the city, very probably, who would be glad to see him.

And the young man being desirous also of seeing them, and paying his respects to them, went with them there.

And after they had introduced him, left him discoursing with them, and then returned to his apartment.

"And took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image":

And brought them away with them.

And from hence it appears plainly that there were two images, the one graven, and the other molten.

Since they are so manifestly distinguished, and the ephod and teraphim are spoken of between them.

"And the priest stood in the entering of the gate, with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war":

Who kept him in talk, while the five men went and stole the above things.

They have taken these things by force.

The priest could do nothing but look on, because there are 600 armed men there to see that the five get what they want.

The 600 men stood at the gate waiting, until the five spies came out with the things.

Verses 18-20

Because he was in the priesthood for the money and prestige, the young "priest's heart was glad" to follow the tribe of Dan when it seemed in his best interests.

The New Testament qualifications for church leaders include being motivated to serve God and His people rather than being motivated by dishonest gain (1 Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2).

Judges 18:18 "And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?"

Into that part of it where his gods were.

Not the six hundred men last mentioned, but the five men who knew the house, and the chapel where the things were.

"And fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image":

And brought them away in their hands to their brethren at the gate, where the priest also was.

And when he saw them;

"Then said the priest to them, what do ye?"

What do you mean by this?

Is this your kindness to me, to take away what are my care and charge, and on which my livelihood depends?

And do you consider the wickedness, the sin of sacrilege you are guilty of, to take away these sacred things, these objects of religious devotion?

This is speaking of the five spies.

The priest protested, to no avail.

This is stealing of the worst sort.

Micah had befriended them when they came through the first time, and now they are stealing from him.

Judges 18:19 "And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: [is it] better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?"

Be silent, make no disturbance, and be quiet and easy.

"Lay thy hand upon thy mouth":

As a token of silence.

So the Egyptians used to paint Harpocrates, the god of silence, with his fingers pressing his lips.

"And go with us":

For they wanted him as well as his gods.

Not knowing how to make use of them without him.

"And be to us a father and a priest":

To direct them, instruct them, perform acts of devotion for them, and ask counsel on their account.

It seems as if it was common in those days to call a priest a father (see Judges 17:10).

"Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?"

Suggesting, that it must be much more honorable for him, and more to his advantage, to officiate as a priest to a body of people.

That might be called a tribe, or to a family consisting of various houses, than in the house of a private person.

This they left him to consider and judge of.

They are speaking to the priest, and offering him the opportunity to go with them and minister to their new community.

He is priest to just one man here.

If he goes with them, he will be priest to the whole family that these 600 represent.

Judges 18:20 "And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people."

He rejoiced that such an opportunity was offered.

It suited well with his covetous, ambitious, rambling, and unsettled disposition of mind.

"And he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image":

And no doubt the molten image also, out of the hands of the five men into his own.

Agreeing to go with them, and officiate for them.

"And went in the midst of the people":

The six hundred armed men, either for the security of himself, if Micah should raise his servants, and his neighbors, to pursue after him, and fetch him back, with his images.

Or, as others think, in imitation of the priests bearing the ark, who in journeying marched in the middle of the camp.

The idea that he would be priest over this large family of people appealed to the priest.

He seemed not to care that the things he would serve with, were stolen from Micah who had befriended him.

Judges 18:21 "So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them."

Turned from the gate of the city where Micah dwelt, and marched forward to Laish.

"And put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them":

Partly for safety from Micah, and his friends and neighbors, and partly that they might not be overdriven.

Their wives, who doubtless were with them, though not mentioned.

And their children, and also their flocks and herds, they brought with them from Zorah and Eshtaol.

As never intending to return again there, and being fully assured they should take Laish, and the country about, and settle there.

And also all their wealth and substance, as the Targum renders the word for "carriage".

Whatever they were possessed of that was movable.

Their vessels, silver and gold, and other movables, as Kimchi interprets it.

Whatever was weighty, valuable and glorious, as the word signifies, or that was of any importance and worth.

We see from this verse that, the wives and children of the 600 fighting men were with them.

They put them and the carriage which had the ephod and the other things they had stolen in front.

They were expecting Micah to attack them from the rear.

Judges 18:22 "[And] when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that [were] in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan."

For it might be some time before Micah knew that his gods were stolen, and his priest was decoyed from him.

And it must take up more time still to get his servants and neighbors together to pursue after those that injured him.

"The men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together":

No doubt at the request of Micah, who informed them of what had happened to him.

And they being not only his neighbors, but deeply involved in the same superstition and idolatry.

And closely addicted to it.

And to whom it might in some respects be advantageous at it brought people from various parts to worship, or to consult the oracle.

These being got together in a body, pursued;

"And overtook the children of Dan":

Who were obliged to move but slowly, because of their wives, little ones, and heavy things they carried with them.

This does not explain how many there were, but certainly they were fewer than the 600 of Dan.

They could move faster, and they caught the men of Dan.

Judges 18:23 "And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?"

When they had got pretty near them, and in their hearing, they called to them aloud, and desired they would stop, having something to say to them.

"And they turned their faces":

That is, the Danites turned and looked at them, and stopped to hear what they had to say to them.

These were they who were in the rear in marching.

"And said unto Micah":

Who was at the head of them.

"What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?"

As if he intended to attack them in a hostile way, and therefore asks what should be the occasion of it?

What affront had been given him, what injury had been done him, that had provoked him to come out and follow them in such a manner?

These with Micah are his family, who lived with and near him.

The men of Dan are accusing Micah and his men of being sick, to come with such a group to go against 600 fighting men.

Judges 18:24 "And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? And what [is] this [that] ye say unto me, What aileth thee?"

Meaning his graven and molten images, which he had made, or caused to be made, out of the silver his mother gave him, or however had paid for the making of.

And though this might be an argument proving his right unto them, it was a very poor one in favor of their deity.

And it is astonishing he should call them gods he knew the making of, and who could not save themselves from being stolen and carried off.

"And the priest, and ye are gone away":

They had not only taken away his gods, but the priest that sacrificed for him unto them.

And assisted him in acts of devotion to them, or to God by them, and were gone off with both.

"And what have I more?"

Signifying, that all he had in the world, wife, children, and substance, were all nothing in comparison of these.

There was nothing he so much valued as he did these.

Nor could he take any pleasure or comfort in anything, being deprived of them, so much was his heart set on them.

"And what is this that ye say unto me, what aileth thee?"

What a question is this you ask, as if the injury done me was none at all.

And that I had no reason to complain.

That it was a trifling insignificant thing, worthy of no regard, when it was a matter of the greater moment and importance to him in life.

This is such a sad thing, that people he had befriended would do this to him.

They have stolen things that belonged to him, and even run off with his priest.

Judges 18:25 "And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household."

Complaining of us as having done an unjust thing.\

Charging and reproaching us with theft and sacrilege, insisting upon a restoration of the things taken, and abusing with odious names and characters.

"Lest angry fellows run upon thee":

Lest men of bitter and passionate spirits, provoked by ill language given them, should draw their swords and fall upon thee.

"And thou lose thy life":

And the lives of thy household.

The life of himself, his family, servants, tenants, and neighbors with him.

Which ought to have been more precious and valuable than his gods.

Of which there was great danger in demanding his gods, which by this they let him know they would not part with.

This is the age old story of the bully.

Just because they were stronger than he was, they had taken these things.

If he complains too loudly, his family will die.

If he tries to take his things back, it is certain death.

He has no alternative but to let them have them.

Judges 18:26 "And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they [were] too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house."

Went on their way, would not stay to have any further talk with him, as being an impertinent man, and unworthy of their regard.

Bidding him defiance, and do his worst, having nothing to fear from him.

"And when Micah saw they were too strong for him":

That he could not prevail upon them by words and arguments.

To take up arms, and use them, he perceived it was to no purpose, since they were more numerous and mightier than he and his neighbors.

"He turned and went back unto his house":

And if he returned from his idolatry to the true God, and the right worship of him, having lost his gods.

It was well for him they were taken away.

At least, Micah and his men went home with their lives.

They were disappointed, but alive.

Verses 27-31

Rather than destroying the cities within their inheritance that were centers of idolatry (Deut. 13:12-15), the tribe of "Dan" conquered cities like "Laish" that were outside their assigned territory (Joshua 19:47).

Dan then set up their own idols, unaware that worshiping images of God was not the same as worshiping God Himself.

Judges 18:27 "And they took [the things] which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people [that were] at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire."

The ephod, teraphim, and the two images, the Danites took them.

Or having taken them kept them, and went on with them.

"And the priest which he had":

Him also they took, and who was willing enough to go with them.

"And came unto Laish, unto a people that were quiet and secure":

Having no sentinels placed at any distance to give them warning of an enemy, nor any watchmen on their walls to discover one.

And perhaps their gates not shut, nor any guard at any of their passes and avenues.

Having no apprehension at all of being visited by an enemy, especially from Israel.

Not being apprized that they had any pretensions to their city, and the land about it.

"And they smote them with the edge of the sword":

Entered their city, and fell on them suddenly, and cut them to pieces.

"And burnt the city with fire":

To strike terror to all about.

Or it may be only they set fire to some part of it, as they entered, only to frighten the inhabitants, and throw them into the greater confusion, that they might become an easier prey to them.

For their intention was to inhabit it, and it seems to be the same city still, though they rebuilt it, and called it by another name.

These cruel men of Dan came in, and brutally killed these quiet people of Laish.

They burned the city as well.

They are a violent, ruthless people.

Judges 18:28 "And [there was] no deliverer, because it [was] far from Zidon, and they had no business with [any] man; and it was in the valley that [lieth] by Beth-rehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein."

Under whose government and protection they seem to have been.

And that city being at a distance from them, and the Danites coming upon them suddenly, there was no time to send to them for help.

Or any to come in to their assistance, and save them from their enemies (see Judges 18:7).

"And they had no business with any man":

That could have given them notice of the design of the children of Dan against them, nor to the Zidonians to come soon enough for their protection and defense.

None there were in alliance with them except them.

"And it was in the valley that lieth by Beth-rehob":

Which lay in the northern border of the land of Canaan, as you go to Hamath of Syria (see note on Num. 13:21).

"And they built a city, and dwelt therein":

Not a new one altogether, but they rebuilt and enlarged Laish, and made it convenient for them to dwell in.

This is just saying that, there was no one who came to their rescue.

They lived far away from others who might have helped.

They had been a quiet, private people.

They are now dead, and these cruel men of Dan have taken over their city and rebuilt it.

Judges 18:29 "And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city [was] Laish at the first."

"Name of the city Dan":

This was in the northernmost extremity of the land of Canaan, hence the origin of the phrase, "from Dan to Beersheba", as indicating the land from north to south (compare 20:1).

This is speaking of the new city that they built on the sight of the old city.

Laish was named Dan for the ancestor their tribe was named for.

Verses 30-31

Ironically, while false worship continued at "Dan" throughout the period of the judges, true worship was available to the people in "Shiloh" (Deut. 12:1-32).

Judges 18:30 "And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land."

The unnamed priest of chapter 17 is now identified as “Jonathan”, a descendant of “Gershom”, Moses’ “son”.

The name “Manasseh” is a later scribal reading accomplished by introducing the letter “*n*” into the text after the initial “*M*” in *Moses*, possibly with the intention of protecting his name from being involved in the Danite apostasy.

“The son of Manasseh”:

Some manuscripts say, “son of Manasseh”, others “son of Moses”, which may be more probable as Gershom was a son of Moses (Exodus 2:22; 18:3).

This idolatrous priestly service continued until the captivity.

This is most likely:

- (1) The captivity of Israel by Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 15:29; 17:1-6); or possible
- (2) The Philistine captivity of the ark from Shiloh (in Samuel 4:11; see Judges 18:31).

The graven image was not of a false god, but God had forbidden the making of graven images.

Jonathan was the idolatrous priest of this group of vicious men.

It seems, Jonathan and his sons were the priests here for a very long time.

Judges 18:31 "And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh."

For the importance of “Shiloh” as Israel’s early religious center, see the notes on (Joshua 18:1 and 1 Sam. 7:1-2).

This graven image was supposed to be a visible sign of the One True God.

God is Spirit.

The tabernacle of God was in Shiloh from the time of Joshua until the time of Levi.

Micah's graven image was not of himself.

They tried to worship God, but their worship was mixed in with idolatry.

God does not approve of this type of worship.

Chapter 18 Questions

1. In those days, there was no _____ in Israel.
2. What is the tribe of Dan still seeking?
3. The _____ are the northernmost tribe.
4. They had an _____ northern border.
5. How many spies did they send to search for more land?
6. Where did these spies lodge on their way?
7. Whose voice did they recognize in Micah's house?
8. What questions did they ask him?
9. What did the Levite tell them was the reason for him being in Micah's house?
10. What did they ask of the Levite?
11. How did the priest advise them?
12. Where did the spies go?
13. What was the condition of the people in Laish?
14. Who did they go back and report to?
15. How did they get their brethren to go?
16. How many men went as an army?
17. Where did they pitch their tents?
18. What does "Kirjath-Jearim" mean?
19. Where did they go, before they went to Laish?
20. What did they steal from Micah's house?
21. Why did the priest go with them?
22. Why did they put their little ones and their cattle ahead?
23. What did Micah do, about this?
24. Why were Micah's men able to catch them?

25. What did Micah do when he caught them?
26. Why did they say for Micah not to raise his voice in complaint?
27. What caused Micah to turn and leave?
28. What did the men of Dan do to Laish and its population?
29. Why did no one come to help them?
30. What did the army name the new town?
31. Who was their priest?
32. What happened to Micah's graven image?
33. How long was it in the place of worship in Dan?