

BOOK OF JUDGES
MICAH'S IDOLATRY
JUDGES 17

The late British Evangelist, G. Campbell Morgan, had this to say about **Judges 17-21**: “*The events here...give us a picture of the internal condition of the people, and it is probable that they were added with that intention by the historian.*”

This text primarily concerns a man named **MICAH** from the tribe of **EPHRAIM**.

I. WE SEE MICAH WAS A THIEF. (Judges 17:1-2)
HERE HE RETURNED TO HIS MOTHER A LARGE AMOUNT OF SILVER HE HAD STOLEN FROM HER!

We've already seen up to this point many examples of how bad the **JUDGES** were! Let's see a little more!

Judges 17-18 present to us another detailed example of just how bad both the **SPIRITUAL CONFUSION** and the **SIN** were in the nation of **ISRAEL** during the days of the **JUDGES**.

MICAH had stolen **1,100 shekels of silver** from his mother and then here he returned it to her. By doing so, his mother **blessed him** for returning the money, even though he had originally taken it. (She previously **uttered a curse** on the stolen silver that he heard!)

This reveals a lot about this man named **MICAH**, his mother, and the general **SPIRITUAL STATE** of **ISRAEL** during this period.

Judges 17:10 indicates that ten shekels a year was an adequate wage. Therefore, 1,100 shekels was a great fortune.

II. WE SEE MICAH'S MOTHER DIRECTED SOME OF THE SILVER TO BE USED TO MAKE AN IMAGE TO BE USED IN WORSHIP! (Judges 17:3-4)

She tried to give all the silver to **MICAH** to make a *graven image* and a *molten image*, but **MICAH** returned it all back to her again! She then had a little more than 18% of it (200 shekels) made into both a *graven image* and a *molded image* by a “*founder*”.

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Some believe that this was an image of a false god (such as **BAAL** or **ASHTORETH**). Others believe that it was possibly an image made to represent the **LORD** (i.e. **JEHOVAH**) (*Vs 3*)

Either way, the **LORD** clearly and strictly forbade any such *images* by **HIS LAW**, whether it was meant to represent the true **GOD** or not!

e.g. Remember when AARON made the golden calf, it was actually meant to represent the LORD (Exodus 32:4-5).

But that violated the second commandment found in **Exodus 20:4-5**, “*4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God,*”

By his fallen nature, man wants to fashion a **GOD** into his image. Many religious people carve their own concept of **GOD** and equate it as being the **GOD** of the **BIBLE**. But the **GOD** of the **BIBLE** doesn't line up with mankind's reasoning and concept of **HIM!**

The sense of this passage is that **MICAH'S mom** did all this easily. It wasn't hard to have an *idol* made in **ISRAEL** at that time. This shows how **ISRAEL'S** society was bent towards *idolatry*.

These *idols* that were made for her were placed in **MICAH'S** house.

III. WE SEE MICAH ESTABLISHED AN ELABORATE WORSHIP! (Judges 17:5)

We see **MICAH** had a **HOUSE OF GODS** (i.e. a **SHRINE**), made an **EPHOD** (*priestly garments*), and had **TERAPHIM** (*a word generally used for small, portable sacred objects, especially idols or items used for divination; i.e. portable household idols*).

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At a minimum, he had the two *images* his mom had made from the silver. In addition to those *idols*, it appears that MICAHA also had some household *idols (TERAPHIM)* - *i.e. gods that were worshiped in hopes of gaining prosperity and guidance.*

And then we see he *consecrated* one of his sons to be his *priest*.

It appears that MICAHA was possibly seeking to imitate the worship at the true **TABERNACLE** of the **LORD** by making an **EPHOD**—a specific garment worn by *priests* of **ISRAEL**.

The culmination of all this together is that MICAHA actually set up a rival religion in **ISRAEL** to the one true worship of the **LORD GOD JEHOVAH** instituted by the **LORD HIMSELF!**

All of this came from MICAHA and not from the **LORD GOD or HIS WORD!** This was a completely *man-originated* and *man-centered religion*. The purpose of the **SHRINE**, the **EPHOD**, the **IMAGES or IDOLS**, and the established **PRIESTHOOD** was to **SERVE AND PLEASE MAN, NOT THE LORD GOD!**

Sadly, this pattern of *man-pleasing religion* continues to be common with many *religions* and *churches* even today.

IV. **WE SEE A SUMMARIZATION OF THE SPIRITUAL STATE OF ISRAEL DURING THE TIME OF THE JUDGES.**

(Judges 17:6)

It says here that there was no king in **ISRAEL**. Actually, there was, in fact, a **KING** in **ISRAEL** that should have been recognized by them but was rejected by them instead—the **LORD GOD**. But since **ISRAEL** rejected the **LORD GOD**, they were without any good and effective leadership.

The phrase “*...but every man did what was right in his own eyes*” refers to the *radical individualism* that marked the time of the **JUDGES**, similar in many ways to what we see manifested today!

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The people of the time of the **JUDGES**, by-and-large, *looked only to themselves as being their own guide to morality and ethics.* The people genuinely felt that they did what was right, but they measured it only by their own eyes, not by the **WORD OF GOD!**

This was very much like the modern, “*follow-your-heart*” or “*let-your-heart-be-your-guide*” thinking. Modern culture regards this as the ideal state of society. Yet the **BIBLE** and common sense tell us that this kind of **MORAL, SPIRITUAL, and SOCIAL ANARCHY** brings nothing but confusion and **DESTRUCTION**.

It may have seemed right in the eyes of **ADAM** and **EVE** to eat the forbidden fruit, but **GOD** said it was wrong.

It may have seemed right in the eyes of the sons of **JACOB** to sell their brother **JOSEPH** into slavery, but **GOD** said it was wrong.

It may have seemed right in the eyes of **NADAB** and **ABIHU** to offer strange fire before the **LORD**, but **GOD** said it was wrong.

It may have seemed right in the eyes of **KING DAVID** to commit adultery with **BATHSHEBA** and cover it with murder, but **GOD** said it was wrong.

It may have seemed right in the eyes of **JUDAS** **ISCARIOT** to betray **JESUS**, but **GOD** said it was wrong.

Proverbs 14:12—“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof are the ways of death.” (also Proverbs 16:25)

When mankind follows his own instincts and passions it leads to ruin. We need to follow **GOD’S** way, not our own.

V. **WE SEE MICAHA HIRED AN UNSCRUPULOUS LEVITE!**

In *Judges 17:7-8* we see an opportunistic **LEVITE** who left where he was in *Bethlehem-Judah* looking for employment elsewhere.

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As a **LEVITE**, he already had a city to live in and a place established by **GOD** for him to minister. Instead, he wanted to *do what was right in his own eyes* and went about offering himself as a *priest* for hire, wherever he could find a place.

Scripture tells us that as this **LEVITE** journeyed, he came to **MOUNT EPHRAIM**, and happened upon the house of **MICAHA**. It doesn't tell us how he chose to stop at **MICAHA'S** house, no doubt *it looked like the right place in his own eyes*. So, this explains somewhat of how this particular **LEVITE** and **MICAHA** were brought together.

Judges 17:9-11 reveals that **MICAHA HIRED** this **LEVITE**!

MICAHA wanted this **LEVITE** to stay with him and work as a *priest* for him. He did this because he wanted to *legitimize* his personal *shrine* by having *an officially recognized priest serving there*. Deep down he should have known that his *idolatry* was false and meaningless, but by this he attempted to make it *legitimate*.

So, for ten shekels of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and his victuals provided for, this **LEVITE** sold himself out to be a *priest* of **MICAHA'S idols**. So this **LEVITE** was a perfect example of a *hireling*, someone who served a *god* (or an *idol*) for what he could get out of it rather than serving to glorify the **LORD**.

There are many different ways that *hirelings* get what they want. The *monetary hireling* is obvious, but there are also *emotional hirelings* who get into the ministry because of their insecurities and their need for approval.

It says that this **LEVITE** was content to dwell with **MICAHA**! The arrangements seemed perfect to everyone and **MICAHA** felt he had gained another son.

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While **MICAHA** was attempting to maintain a relationship with the **LORD** he did so by violating the **LORD'S COMMANDS**! And this **LEVITE hireling** had no problem compromising and becoming involved with **MICAHA'S idolatry** in an attempt to secure his own material comfort!

In *Judges 17:12-13*, we see a **FALSE CONSECRATION** and a **FALSE CONFIDENCE**.

MICAHA'S CONSECRATION meant nothing at all. He had no **AUTHORITY FROM GOD** to declare a renegade **LEVITE** as *set apart (consecrated)* by **GOD** to the service of this *idolatrous shrine*.

This is a very tragic account that shows the **SPIRITUAL CONDITION** of the nation of **ISRAEL** and, quite frankly, leaves us puzzled! Each person in this story is guilty of terrible **SIN**. Yet we could say that the **LEVITE** was guiltier than **MICAHA** was. We can say that because the **LEVITE** was at least supposed to know the **WORD OF GOD**!

MICAHA'S CONFIDENCE was just as false as his **CONSECRATION** was. They were both based on **SUPERSTITION**, not on **GOD'S WORD**!

We can say **MICAHA** was **UTTERLY SINCERE**, but **TOTALLY WRONG**. **SINCERITY** is nice but gets you nowhere if it is not coupled with **TRUTH**.

A person who **SINCERELY** thinks they can swim across the Pacific Ocean will drown just as surely as the person who isn't as **SINCERE**!