

October 25, 2026

“A Lack of Instruction”
Lesson 4

Judges 17:1-6, 18:18-19, 27

Intro

Understanding the book of Judges depends on understanding the covenant God established with Israel. He expressly forbid the making of idols or images in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. He made the tabernacle the central place of worship for His people. He established a priesthood, consecrating and ordaining the priests to be the administrators of the covenant and overseeing the sacrificial system. He also gave regulations concerning what the priests wore. All these examples show a picture of required faithfulness and obedience through attention to detail.

Judges focuses on Israel’s repeated abandoning of their obedience to God’s covenant with them. This was sometimes through outright refusal to obey, sometimes from a gradual slipping away from being obedient. The events of today’s study come from the story of a man named Micah (not the same one a Bible book is named for). Micah lived during the days of Othniel, Israel’s first judge.

Read Judges 17:1-6

1. vs. 1: This Micah is from the “hill country of Ephraim”

Ephraim is about 16 miles north to south and 27 miles east to west

This land is in the middle of Israel on the West Side of the Dead Sea

Micah means “Who is like the Lord?”

This shows Micah’s parents consider themselves Israelites who follow Jehovah

2. vs. 2: We find here that Micah’s mother has been robbed of 1100 shekels of silver

She has uttered a curse against the thief, showing a desire for harm to this person

1100 shekels is 110 times more than Micah’s priest’s annual stipend (17:10)

It is the same amount paid by each of 5 Philistine rulers to Delilah to betray Samson

Readers are expected to connect the amounts to the two stories

Both represent betrayal, faithlessness, and excessive liberality

Micah says he heard the curse, and that he was the one who took the silver

He likely confesses hoping his mother will withdraw the curse

Micah is likely the head of the family, as his father is not mentioned, only his mother

Micah’s mother pronounces a blessing on him here

She likely hopes to reverse the curse she has given earlier

People believed a curse or a blessing was effectively going to do its work

She says “The Lord bless you”, using God’s name to show devotion to Him

However, God has previously warned people not to misuse His name

These two actions of the mother make it hard to see clearly the depth of her devotion

3. vs. 3: Micah returns the silver to his mother, adding to the likelihood of avoiding the curse
She dedicates the silver to the Lord, but says it's to make an image
Making an image is the very thing God said not to do
The making of images was something Israel did frequently in Judges, unfortunately
The process she describes suggests a sculpture overlaid with liquid silver
Micah returns the silver to his mother, who says she will give it back to him
It would be interesting to learn what she intended the silver for before it was stolen
4. vs. 4: Micah's mother gives 200 shekels of silver to a silversmith who makes an idol
She said she was dedicating the entire 1100 shekels to the Lord
She only uses 200 for the making of the idol; no further mention of the other 900
She is having an idol made—exactly what God said not to do in the 10 Commandments
The low point is that it is put on display in Micah's house when completed!
5. vs. 5: A shrine in the ancient world was residence for a deity of some kind
Having a shrine was a way of seeking divine favor
God forbade having a home shrine; the tabernacle was the only place for worship
Having the tabernacle was God's way of preventing idol worship
A further problem is that Micah makes an ephod
Ephods were garments priests used while serving in the tabernacle
Micah then makes one of his sons the priest of the household shrine
6. vs. 6: This verse summarizes the core problem in Israel
There is no central authority leading the people in proper reverence to God
People choose to dismiss God's laws in favor of personal options
This is the first time of many in Judges that this phrase is used
God calls the people to do what is right in God's eyes (Ex. 15:26, Deut. 12:25-28)
Micah and all Israel are in the place that God warned them to avoid

Read Judges 18:18-19, 27

A lot happens between where we left off and this next section. A Levite priest from Bethlehem travels through Ephraim and meets Micah. The priest is invited to stay at Micah's and become a priest for his family. He stays, and Micah pays him an annual salary plus gives him room and board. Micah thinks this action will encourage God's blessing on his household.

Meanwhile, spies from the tribe of Dan show up at Micah's house. They are scouting for a new place for their tribe to settle. The Danites have been unable or unwilling to take possession of their assigned land from the Amorites, so they are looking to relocate. They meet the priest in Micah's house, and ask him to inquire of God if their mission will be successful. He tells them what they want to hear, so they return home, get 600 troops, and head back to Ephraim. On their way to their destination, they stop at Micah's house and rob his sanctuary.

7. vs. 18: Five Danite men come to Micah's house and take the idol, the ephod, and the household gods
The priest asks what they are doing
This is an ironic question
They are dishonoring the "sanctuary", but so is the priest by serving a household cult
The soldiers take the items, believing they have been granted success in their mission
8. vs. 19: Instead of considering what they are doing, the soldiers ask the priest something
They invite him to come with them instead of staying with Micah
They are a whole group, a clan, whereas Micah is just one household
They entice the priest by asking him to be "our father and our priest"
They are putting him in a position of authority
The priest sees an opportunity for greater honor and power
This offer appeals to his sense of self-importance
He does not think of his calling as a priest to God, only of himself
9. vs. 27: The Danite army moves against the city of Laish
They are well beyond the area designated as Dan's inheritance
The army attacks the city, kills many, and burns the city
These are fellow Israelites, but they are treated like enemies
This supports the idea that "everyone did as they saw fit"
Their actions violate the Law of Moses, as vs. 18:28-31 show

Application: Micah, his mother, the Levite, and the Danites all illustrate the problems that come with each person doing what is right in their own eyes rather than what is right in God's eyes. There is a big danger in establishing one's own rules separate from God's, and every person plays one of two roles: either furthering obedience to God or encouraging disloyalty and disobedience.

Today's passage has long-term consequences. Micah's idols and the illegitimate priesthood of the Levite are both continued and reinforced by later generations (see 2 Kings 17:32). Hundreds of years later, Jeroboam and Jehu both describe Dan as a site pilgrims use for idol worship (1 Kings 12:28-30, 2 Kings 10:29).

God's covenant emphasizes remembrance and each person's responsibility to pass along God's instructions. It takes humility to correct and be corrected when we go astray. It takes time and intention to teach the ways of God. Believers must positively reinforce consistency in following God. True discipleship requires lifelong learning, submission to instruction, regular remembrance, and communal accountability.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for preserving Your Word so we know what You say to us. Help us to receive guidance from it in every possible way. Help us to remember Your miraculous and loving provision from one generation to the next. In Jesus' name, Amen.