

Judges 17:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.

Analysis

And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. This verse describes the culmination of unauthorized ministry. The phrase "Micah consecrated the Levite" (vayemalle Mikhah et-yad haLevi, וַיִּמְלֵא מִיכָה אֶת־יַד הַלֵּוִי) uses the technical terminology for priestly ordination—literally "filled the hand of the Levite." This was the same phrase used for Aaron's legitimate ordination (Exodus 28:41; 29:9, 33). However, Micah had no authority to consecrate anyone. Only the high priest at the legitimate sanctuary could ordain priests through prescribed rituals (Leviticus 8).

The Levite "became his priest" (vayehi-lo lakkohen) emphasizes the possessive relationship—"his priest," not God's priest or Israel's priest. This privatization of sacred office violates the entire structure of Israelite worship. From a Reformed perspective, this teaches crucial truths about ordination and church authority. The Westminster Confession (23.3) states that civil magistrates may not "take to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments." Similarly, no individual—however wealthy or influential—can usurp the church's authority to ordain ministers. Valid ordination requires proper authority, theological examination, and ecclesiastical accountability.

Historical Context

The unauthorized ordination described here violates multiple aspects of Torah. Legitimate priestly consecration required specific rituals performed at the

tabernacle over seven days, including sacrifices, anointing with holy oil, and investiture with priestly garments (Leviticus 8). Moreover, only descendants of Aaron could serve as priests; other Levites assisted but couldn't offer sacrifices or enter the Holy Place (Numbers 3:10; 18:7). This Levite, even if from Aaron's line, was being ordained for an unauthorized shrine with idolatrous objects—compounding multiple violations.

The phrase "was in the house of Micah" indicates the Levite took up permanent residence, abandoning any pretense of serving at Shiloh or fulfilling Levitical duties. This arrangement created a rival worship system in central Israel while the legitimate tabernacle stood nearby. Similar unauthorized worship centers proliferated during the Judges period, contributing to the religious chaos that ultimately required prophetic and kingly intervention to address. When Jeroboam later established rival shrines at Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:28-31), he built on precedents like Micah's unauthorized sanctuary.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does this passage underscore the importance of proper ecclesiastical authority and accountability in ordination?
2. What warnings does Micah's unauthorized consecration give about independent churches or ministries operating without denominational or presbyterial oversight?
3. How do we sometimes treat ministry as a commodity that can be controlled by those who pay for it rather than a sacred calling accountable to God and His church?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּמַּלְ א	מִיכָה:	אֶת	יְדֵי	הַלֵּוִי	וְיֹהִי	לְוָ	הַנָּעַר
consecrated	And Micah	H853	H3027	the Levite	H1961	H0	and the young man
H4390	H4318			H3881			H5288
לָכֵה	וְיֹהִי	בְּיֵית	מִיכָה:				
became his priest	H1961	and was in the house	And Micah				
H3548		H1004	H4318				

Additional Cross-References

Judges 18:30 (Parallel theme): 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.