

Judges 18:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. The spies disclosed Micah's religious treasures: an ephod (ephod, אֲפֹוד), teraphim (terapim, תְּרֵאֵפִים), graven image (pesel, פֵּלֶל), and molten image (massekah, מַסְכָּה). The ephod was a priestly garment (Exodus 28:6-14) but could also refer to an idolatrous object (Judges 8:27). Teraphim were household idols (Genesis 31:19, 1 Samuel 19:13). The graven and molten images directly violated the second commandment (Exodus 20:4-5). This collection represented comprehensive idolatry—objects that appeared religious but were unauthorized substitutes for true worship.

The phrase "consider what ye have to do" (u-atah de'u mah ta'asu, וְעַתָּה דָּעַ מָה־תָּעִשֶּׂ) was a suggestive prompt to theft, not a moral question about whether they should steal. They assumed their fellow Danites would recognize the 'opportunity' these religious objects presented. From a Reformed perspective, this demonstrates how apostasy progresses: first abandoning God's assignments (seeking new territory), then seeking religious validation for disobedience (consulting unauthorized priest), then actively acquiring false worship objects (stealing

Micah's shrine). Each step seems logical given the previous compromise, illustrating sin's progressive, enslaving nature.

Historical Context

Ephods, teraphim, and carved images were common in ancient Near Eastern religion but strictly forbidden to Israel. The teraphim were likely small figurines representing household deities or ancestor spirits. The graven and molten images violated Exodus 20:4, Leviticus 19:4, and Deuteronomy 27:15. Micah's collection represented syncretism—mixing Yahweh worship with pagan practices, evidenced by his Levite priest serving alongside idolatrous objects. The Danites recognized these objects as valuable assets for establishing their own worship center, not as covenant violations requiring destruction.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does sin's progressive nature make each successive compromise seem reasonable based on previous ones?
2. What does the Danites' eagerness to acquire idolatrous objects teach about the danger of valuing religious appearance over genuine faithfulness?
3. In what areas of your life might you be accumulating 'religious objects' (practices, traditions, achievements) as substitutes for authentic relationship with God?

Interlinear Text

בְּאַרְצָה	אַתָּה	לְבָגֶל	בְּהַלְכִים	בְּאֶנְשָׁהִים	חַמְשָׁת	לִיְעַנְתָּה
Then answered	the five	men	that went	to spy out	H853	the country
H6030	H2568	H582	H1980	H7270		H776
לִשְׁאֵן	אֶל	אֶחָיוֹת	דָּעַת	כִּי	וְשָׁ	
of Laish	and said	H413	unto their brethren	Do ye know	H3588	that there is
H3919	H559		H251	H3045		H3426
בְּבֵיתֵיכֶם	בְּבֵיתָה	בְּאֶלְהָה	אֶפְרַיִם	וְתְּרָפָה	וְלִבְנָה	
in these houses	H428	an ephod	and teraphim	and a graven image	H8655	H6459
H1004		H646				
וּמְסֻכָּה	וְעַתָּה	דָּעַת	מָה	תְּעַשָּׂה		
and a molten image	H6258	Do ye know	H4100	what ye have to do	H6213	
H4541		H3045				

Additional Cross-References

Judges 17:5 (Parallel theme): And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

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