

Judges 18:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. This verse establishes the military context of Dan's theft—six hundred armed warriors (anashim chagur keli milchamtam, אֲנָשִׁים חָגָר כְּלֵי מִלְחָמָתָם) positioned at Micah's gate. The number six hundred appears repeatedly in this narrative (vv. 11, 17), emphasizing the overwhelming force Dan deployed not against Israel's enemies but against a fellow Israelite's household. The verb natsav (צָב, "stood/stationed") suggests deliberate military positioning, creating intimidation while the five spies conducted their theft.

The phrase "appointed with their weapons of war" describes warriors fully equipped and ready for combat—swords, spears, shields, and armor. This massive armed presence at the entrance prevented Micah or his priest from resisting the robbery. The contrast is striking: Dan couldn't conquer their God-assigned territory on the coast due to Philistine iron chariots (Judges 1:34), so they redirected their military might against an isolated Israelite in the hill country. This represents covenant betrayal—using strength that should fight Israel's enemies to victimize a covenant brother.

Theologically, this verse exposes the corruption of power divorced from divine authority. The Danites possessed military strength but lacked spiritual direction, having abandoned their assigned inheritance. When God's people reject His

specific calling, they inevitably misuse their gifts and resources. The New Testament warns against similar distortions: using spiritual gifts for self-promotion rather than body edification (1 Corinthians 12-14), employing Christian liberty to dominate weaker brothers (1 Corinthians 8:9-13), or weaponizing truth without love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Historical Context

The six hundred warriors represent a substantial military force for this period. Comparative biblical numbers suggest this was nearly Dan's entire fighting force—enough to conquer and settle Laish but inadequate for displacing the Philistines and Amorites from their coastal inheritance (Joshua 19:40-48, Judges 1:34). Archaeological evidence from Late Bronze/Early Iron Age sites shows typical Israelite settlements numbered 100-300 inhabitants, making six hundred warriors a significant tribal contingent.

The Danite migration northward reflects the tribe's failure to possess their allotted territory. Joshua 19:40-48 describes Dan's original inheritance along the Mediterranean coast between Judah and Ephraim, including cities like Ekron, Zorah, and Eshtaol. However, Amorite pressure (Judges 1:34) and later Philistine dominance made this territory untenable. Rather than trusting God to fulfill His promises through faithful obedience, Dan sought easier conquest elsewhere. This pattern of pragmatic faithlessness versus costly obedience pervades Judges.

Micah's location in Ephraim's hill country (Judges 17:1) put him on Dan's migration route northward. The isolated position made him vulnerable to intimidation. Ancient Near Eastern travel followed established routes through valleys and passes, making encounters with households along these routes inevitable. Dan's abuse of this vulnerable position reveals the moral anarchy characterizing the judges period—tribal self-interest trumped covenant loyalty and legal justice.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Dan's misuse of military strength against a covenant brother illustrate the danger of power without godly character and direction?
 2. What 'assigned inheritances' might modern Christians abandon for 'easier' alternatives that require compromising biblical principles?
 3. In what ways can Christian communities prevent the strong from exploiting the weak, maintaining covenant loyalty over self-interest?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁשׁ	מִא	וֹת	אַיִלִים	כָּל	מִלְחָמָת
And the six	hundred	men	appointed	with their weapons	of war
H8337	H3967	H376	H2296	H3627	H4421

יָם	נַאֲכָל	מִבְנֵי	דָּן
stood	by the entering	of the gate	H834
H5324	H6607	H8179	which were of the children of Dan

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