

Judges 18:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there.

Analysis

And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it. The tribe of Dan faced a crisis: Amorite pressure prevented them from possessing their allotted territory (Judges 1:34-35). Rather than seeking God's help to defeat their enemies, they sent spies to find easier conquest elsewhere. The phrase "men of valour" (anashim benei chayil, אֲנָשִׁים בְּנֵי-חַיִל) typically commends military prowess, yet their mission reveals faithlessness—courage misdirected toward abandoning God's assignment.

The Hebrew verbs "spy out" (leragel, לְרָגֶל) and "search" (lachkor, לְחַקֵּר) echo the reconnaissance mission in Numbers 13-14 that ended in unbelief and judgment. Like their ancestors at Kadesh-barnea, Dan looked at circumstances rather than God's promises. The parallelism is deliberate: both involved sending spies, both faced strong enemies, both chose unbelief over faith. God had given Dan their inheritance; their responsibility was to trust Him for victory, not seek alternatives. From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates the danger of pragmatism over obedience—choosing what seems achievable by human strength rather than what God has commanded.

Historical Context

Zorah and Eshtaol were Danite towns in the Shephelah (lowlands) bordering Philistine territory (Joshua 19:41). This was prime agricultural land, but Philistine military superiority (iron weapons, chariots) and Amorite resistance made conquest difficult. Rather than persevere, Dan sought conquest elsewhere. The five-man reconnaissance mission mirrors the twelve spies Moses sent (Numbers 13:3-16), though with only five representing Dan's diminished faith. Archaeological evidence confirms Philistine expansion into the coastal plain during this period (c. 1200-1100 BC), creating pressure on Israelite settlement.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do we sometimes abandon God's clear assignments when they become difficult, seeking easier alternatives?
2. What does Dan's response to opposition teach about the difference between faith-filled perseverance and pragmatic compromise?
3. How can we discern whether obstacles indicate we should change course or persevere in faith?

Interlinear Text

אֶנְשׁוּ יִם סְמִשׁ הַמִּמְשְׁפְּחַת מִצְרָעָה
And the children of Dan of their family five
בְּנֵי דָן מִמְּשְׁפְּחַת מִצְרָעָה
H1121 H1835 H4940 H2568 H376

מִצְרָעָה הַמִּלְצָוֹתָם אֶנְשׁוּ יִם
from their coasts And the children of valour from Zorah
H7098 H376 H1121 H2428 H6881

וְמִאֲשָׁתָּא לְבָגָל אֶת חַקָּר וְיִאָמֵר
and from Eshtaol to spy out the land and to search it and they said
H847 H7270 H853 H776 H2713 H559

לְכָל אֶלְפָתָה
and to search
H1980 H2713 H853 H776 H935 H2022

שָׁמָן יָבָא
they lodged
H8033 H3885

Additional Cross-References

Judges 13:25 (Parallel theme): And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.

Joshua 2:1 (Parallel theme): And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

Numbers 13:17 (Parallel theme): And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain:

Judges 18:11 (Parallel theme): And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war.

Judges 18:8 (Parallel theme): And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye?

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