

Judges 18:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

Analysis

And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

This verse narrates the violent conquest of Laish by the Danite tribe, revealing the spiritual and moral chaos that characterized the period of the Judges. The phrase "the things which Micah had made" refers to idolatrous religious objects—carved and molten images—stolen from Micah's private shrine (Judges 17-18). These were not Yahweh-sanctioned worship items but syncretistic idols that violated the second commandment.

The Danites' seizure of both idols and the hired Levite priest demonstrates their corrupted worship. Rather than seeking God's authorized priesthood at Shiloh or consulting the high priest, they established unauthorized worship with stolen religious paraphernalia. The irony is profound: they sought divine blessing (Judges 18:5-6) through objects God explicitly condemned. Their conquest of Laish—"a people that were at quiet and secure"—is presented without the divine sanction that characterized earlier conquests under Joshua. This was not holy war but opportunistic aggression against a peaceful, unsuspecting population.

The brutality—"smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire"—mirrors the language of authorized conquest, but the context indicates this

was unauthorized violence. Theologically, this passage illustrates how religious corruption breeds moral corruption. When worship becomes self-serving rather than God-centered, violence and injustice follow naturally. The recurring refrain "In those days there was no king in Israel" (Judges 18:1, 21:25) highlights the spiritual anarchy resulting from rejecting God's kingship.

Historical Context

The events of Judges 18 occurred during the early settlement period (c. 1200-1100 BC), after Joshua's initial conquest but before the monarchy. The tribe of Dan had been allotted territory in the western lowlands between Judah and Ephraim (Joshua 19:40-48), but Amorite resistance prevented them from fully possessing it (Judges 1:34-35). Rather than trust God to give them victory, the Danites sought easier conquest elsewhere, ultimately settling in the far north.

Laish (later renamed Dan) was a prosperous Phoenician/Sidonian city in the fertile northern valley near Mount Hermon. Archaeological excavations at Tel Dan confirm the city's destruction and rebuilding in this period. The biblical description of Laish as 'quiet and secure' matches ancient sources describing Sidonian settlements—wealthy, complacent, and poorly defended due to isolation from their mother city.

The phrase 'after the manner of the Sidonians' (Judges 18:7) indicates Laish followed Phoenician customs, possibly including Baal worship. The Danites' attack was motivated by convenience, not divine command. Establishing their idolatrous shrine at Dan created a lasting center of false worship. Centuries later, King Jeroboam I placed one of his golden calves there (1 Kings 12:28-30), making Dan synonymous with Israel's apostasy. This historical trajectory shows how initial compromise compounds over generations.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the Danites' choice to seek easier conquest rather than fight for their God-given inheritance mirror our tendency to choose convenience over obedience?
2. In what ways do we, like the Danites, try to secure God's blessing while simultaneously violating His commands through unauthorized worship or compromised ethics?
3. What does this passage teach us about the relationship between false worship and injustice toward others?
4. How might our churches or communities be perpetuating religious traditions that, like Micah's shrine, originated in human innovation rather than divine authorization?
5. What warning does the long-term impact of Dan's idolatrous shrine (leading to Jeroboam's golden calves) give us about the generational consequences of spiritual compromise?

Interlinear Text

וְהֵמָּה	לָקְחוּ וְ	אֵת	אֲשֶׁר	עָשָׂה	מִיָּכָה	וְאֵת
H1992	And they took	H853	H834	had made	the things which Micah	H853
	H3947			H6213	H4318	
הַכֹּהֵן	אֲשֶׁר	הָיָה	לוֹ	וַיָּבֹאוּ	עַל	לְיֵשׁ
and the priest	H834	H1961	H0	which he had and came	H5921	unto Laish
H3548				H935		H3919
עַל	עַם	שָׁקֵט	וּבֵטָח	וַיִּכּוּ	אוֹתָם	
H5921	unto a people	that were at quiet	and secure	and they smote	H853	
	H5971	H8252	H982	H5221		
לְפִי	חֶרֶב	וְאֵת	הָעִיר	שָׂרְפוּ	בָּאֵשׁ:	
them with the edge	of the sword	H853	the city	and burnt	with fire	
H6310	H2719		H5892	H8313	H784	

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 19:47 (Word): And the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them: therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their father.

Judges 18:7 (Parallel theme): Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man.

Judges 18:10 (Parallel theme): When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth.

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