

Judges 18:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye?

Analysis

And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? The spies returned to their tribal base to report findings. The question "What say ye?" (mah attem, מה אתם) expresses eager anticipation—the tribe awaited the reconnaissance report that would determine their future. This moment parallels Israel's reception of the twelve spies' report in Numbers 13-14, though with opposite outcome. At Kadesh-barnea, ten spies counseled fear and unbelief despite God's promise; two (Joshua and Caleb) counseled faith and obedience. Here, the five Danite spies will unanimously recommend abandoning God's assigned territory for easier conquest elsewhere.

The setting—Zorah and Eshtaol—emphasizes the irony. These were established Danite towns in good territory (Joshua 19:41), proving Dan had successfully settled portions of their allotment. Rather than building on partial success to complete the conquest God commanded, they chose wholesale abandonment for perceived easier gains. From a Reformed perspective, this illustrates the temptation to abandon God's difficult assignments when partial progress seems insufficient. Sanctification requires perseverance through difficulty (Romans 5:3-5, James 1:2-4), not perpetual seeking of easier paths.

Historical Context

Zorah and Eshtaol were located in the Shephelah (lowlands) on the border between Danite and Philistine territory. Zorah was Samson's hometown (Judges

13:2), and both cities feature in his narrative (Judges 13:25, 16:31), showing they remained Danite even after the northern migration. Archaeological surveys suggest the Shephelah experienced settlement growth during the early Iron Age, indicating Israelites were successfully establishing themselves despite Philistine pressure. Dan's choice to abandon this territory was thus unnecessary—with faith and perseverance, they could have possessed their full inheritance.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How do we sometimes abandon God's assignments when progress seems slow or incomplete rather than persevering in faith?
2. What does Dan's choice teach about the difference between strategic wisdom and faithless pragmatism?
3. In what areas of your life might God be calling you to persevere through difficulty rather than seeking easier alternatives?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------|-----------|
| וַיָּבֹאוּ | אֶל | אֶחְיָהָם | צֹרָה | וְעִשְׁתָּאֵל | וַיֹּאמֶר |
| And they came | | and their brethren | to Zorah | and Eshtaol | said |
| H935 | H413 | H251 | H6881 | H847 | H559 |
| לָהֶם | אֶחְיָהָם | וְהָ | אֲתָם: | | |
| H0 | and their brethren | H4100 | H859 | | |
| | H251 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

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 18:2 (Parallel theme): 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.

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