

## Judges Chapter 18 Part 1

The content of my lessons sometimes doesn't have a lot of preaching. I try to make application of lessons from the narrative where I can. Here is some worthwhile preaching from Robby Dean. This concerns lessons to learn from the deterioration of the society in the book of Judges which are applicable today.

“1) When a nation rejects the historical evidences for Christianity as being objectively valid, the people always become subjective. Once you begin to reject the fact that Christianity is an objective reality, that there was a man named Jesus who walked on the earth and His ministry extended from about 30-33 AD, and that He went to the cross and died for our sins, and that He was buried and on the third day rose again, Jesus becomes just some idealized figure of morality, or some figure of somebody who is to motivate us to live for what we believe in, or any of the myriad of other ideas that destroy the person of Jesus Christ. Then, if there is no objectivity all you can know is your own impression, emotions, feelings. Once you destroy objective truth the only thing to replace it with is subjectivity.

2) Once you replace objectivity with subjectivity, then everything goes to mysticism and emotion. Subjectivity always leads to emotion and mysticism. Objectivity is based on clear, rational, objective thought. But once you destroy that, then all you are left with is emotion. So the masses of people in a nation are moved by their emotions, not fact, not by thought, not by content. They are motivated by whatever the emotional appeal is of the day.

3) Subjectivity in a nation always leads to the destruction of that culture. It will always deteriorate and will always fall apart, because once you get into subjectivity it destroys values, it destroys objective absolutes,

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everything becomes relative, and then you get into the same situation Israel got into where everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Once you get into working out over time in history the results of relativism is fragmentation. The more people do what is right in their eyes the more desperate they become. One group wants this and another group wants that, and everybody is into political action. It just drives people further and further away until eventually you see some form of internal collapse.”

As a review, let us read Judges chapter 17.

Today we start a new chapter in the book of Judges. But, this chapter is really a continuation of the narrative from the previous chapter.

The narrative started out with Micah stealing a lot of money from his mother. When he gave it back, she commissioned a silversmith to make an idol. All of this is demonstrably sinful from the Torah. That was covered last week in a review of the Ten Commandments.

Then an impostor priest (he was too young and may not have been a full Levite and was not serving in a priestly capacity) was hired by Micah to be his private priest. Micah was going to accept him as “father” and a priest, and at the same time treat him as a son.

Now, along comes five men from the tribe of Dan, a reconnaissance team.

Micah (Michaiah) → Priest → Danite recon team

**Judges 18:1 In those days there was no king of Israel; and in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for themselves to live in, for until that day an**

**inheritance had not been allotted to them as a possession among the tribes of Israel.**

**In those days there was no king of Israel.** Literally, it is “there was no king in Israel.” This gives us a clue as to when this book was written. The phrase, “in those days there was no king” assumes there is a king when the book of Judges was written. That means this was written under king Saul or later.

Another clue as to when this book was written is in Judges chapter 1. There is indication that the Benjamites were living with the Jebusites in Jerusalem.

**Judges 1:21 But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day (when the book of Judges was written).**

**To this day.** This indicates that David has not yet conquered Jerusalem and cleared it of the Jebusites.

David captured Jerusalem in 2 Samuel chapter 5:

**2 Samuel 5:6 Now the king (David) and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, and they said to David, “You shall not come in here, but the blind and lame will turn you away”; thinking, “David cannot enter here.”**

**2 Samuel 5:7 Nevertheless, David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David.**

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**2 Samuel 5:8 David said on that day, “Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him reach the lame and the blind, who are hated by David’s soul, through the water tunnel.” Therefore they say, “The blind or the lame shall not come into the house.”**

**2 Samuel 5:9 So David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built all around from the Millo and inward.**

**2 Samuel 5:10 David became greater and greater, for the Lord God of hosts was with him.**

The spiritual leader in Israel at the time of Saul and David was Samuel. So, it is possible, although not explicitly stated, that Samuel was the author of the book of Judges during the reign of Saul or early in David’s reign before he captured Jerusalem.

Consider the event of anointing Saul the first king of Israel with God’s permissive will from Samuel’s perspective. Remember there is the directive will of God, the permissive will of God and the overriding will of God. Samuel is familiar with the Torah. He knows that prophetically, Deuteronomy 17:14-20 says there will be a king. And now Samuel presides over setting up the first king. If I were Samuel, I would want to document how Israel got to this point for posterity’s sake. Part of documenting that is the deterioration of the society as portrayed in the book of Judges.

A slight detour: Since I inserted an extended quote from that book, and it references the blind and lame I need to say something on that. If I didn’t

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explain that someone would ask what that means. OK, here is the explanation from Thomas Constable:

“The interchange concerning the blind and the lame (vv. 6, 8) seems to be "pre-battle verbal taunting" (cf. 2 Kings 18:19-27). The Jebusites claimed that their town was so secure that even disabled inhabitants could withstand an invasion. Another view is that the Jebusites meant that they would fight to the last man. A third option is that the expression refers to the custom of parading a blind and lame woman before the opposing army as a warning of what would befall treaty-breakers. This view assumes David had previously made a treaty with the Jebusites. David countered by taking them at their word and applying "the blind and the lame" to all the Jebusite inhabitants of Jerusalem. His hatred was for the Jebusites, using the figure that they themselves had chosen to describe themselves, not for literally blind and lame people. "The blind and the lame" evidently became a nickname for the Jebusites as a result of this event.”

**There was no king.** As a reminder, this is not just an observation that there was no human king in Israel, but also that God was supposed to be their king. But, they had rejected the God of the covenant, Yahweh.

**1 Samuel 8:6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the Lord (Yahweh).**

**1 Samuel 8:7 The Lord (Yahweh) said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.”**

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**1 Samuel 8:8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.**

Just to cement this in your mind, read Zephaniah 3:15 when writing about the Millennium (i.e. for the Jews it is the Kingdom):

**Zephaniah 3:15 The Lord (Yahweh) has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord (Yahweh), is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more.**

Just one more verse on this topic, Deuteronomy 33:5. Deuteronomy chapter 33 is Moses' blessings on the tribes before he dies. The context is God/Yahweh. So, when he says "He" it refers to Yahweh.

**Deuteronomy 33:5 "And He was king in Jeshurun, When the heads of the people were gathered, The tribes of Israel together.**

Jeshurun is a reference to a spiritually mature Israel. So He (God/Yahweh) was God in Israel... If the people knew their Torah, they would have at least known the concept that God was their king.

A Jewish commentator, Jeffrey Tigay, agrees. "This probably refers to God. He became Israel's king after coming to them from the south and delivering them from their enemies. Similarly, after God saved Israel from Egypt, Israel acclaimed God's kingship and accepted His sovereignty in Exodus 15:18 and 19:3-8, respectively. Compare also Joshua 24:1-28, cited above. This is a natural sequence of events,

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paralleled in human political affairs in Judges 8:23, where the people offer the kingship to Gideon after he leads them to victory and saves them from Midian.”

**Exodus 15:18 “The Lord shall reign (from the same Hebrew root for king) forever and ever.”**

The reason I am emphasizing this so much is that this is never said very much. Also, I didn’t realize there were so many passages that indicated God was “king.” The Israelites should have known this. But one problem the Hebrews had is they needed to see God...until they saw His power. They wanted someone else to talk to God:

**Exodus 20:18 All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance.**

**Exodus 20:19 Then they said to Moses, “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.”**

**Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.”**

**Exodus 20:21 So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.**

OK, enough on God as king.

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**Danites.** This is the tribe of Dan. We have already encountered them several times in the book of Judges. Let us take a more in-depth look at them.

Dan was a son of Jacob/Israel by Rachael's maid Bilhah. His full brother was Naphtali. In a tribal society, there is a closer bond between full brothers than between half-brothers.

Jacob gave the following "blessing" to Dan:

**Genesis 49:16 "Dan shall judge his people, As one of the tribes of Israel.**

**Dan shall judge.** Dan is a word for judging. It is not the same as the term used in the book of Judges for judges. Jacob is making a play on words since "Dan" comes from the word "to judge" as Rachael gave him his name (Genesis 30:6)

From Gary Kukis: "The name Dan is based upon the word for judge. Some believe this to be a reference to Samson, who would be a very famous judge of the people, yet a man often beset with his sin nature. The reason that it is important and notable that any leader would come out of Dan is this: Dan is the son of a concubine (in this case, the maidservant of Rachel, a wife of Jacob) and, as such, comes with a lower status. There are 4 sons of Jacob born of servants, and their status and expectations tend to be lower."

**Genesis 49:17 "Dan shall be a serpent in the way, A horned snake in the path, That bites the horse's heels, So that his rider falls backward.**

**Genesis 49:18 "For Your salvation I wait, O Lord.**



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I haven't seen any commentaries that truly explains this "blessing." The verse does not identify the rider or the horse.

According to Merrill Unger, "Dan was the last of the tribes to receive his portion, which was the smallest of the twelve. It had, however, great natural advantages, was very fertile, and had also a line of seacoast, which seems to have led them to engage in fishing and commerce, for in the war of Sisera and Barak Dan remained in ships (Judg. 5:17)."

The inheritance of Dan from the book of Joshua:

**Joshua 19:40 The seventh lot fell to the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families.**

**Joshua 19:41 The territory of their inheritance was Zorah and Eshtaol and Ir-shemesh,**

**Joshua 19:42 and Shaalabbin and Aijalon and Ithlah,**

**Joshua 19:43 and Elon and Timnah and Ekron,**

**Joshua 19:44 and Eltekeh and Gibbethon and Baalath,**

**Joshua 19:45 and Jehud and Bene-berak and Gath-rimmon,**

**Joshua 19:46 and Me-jarkon and Rakkon, with the territory over against Joppa.**

**Joshua 19:47 The territory of the sons of Dan proceeded beyond them; for the sons of Dan went up and fought with Leshem and captured**

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**it. Then they struck it with the edge of the sword and possessed it and settled in it; and they called Leshem Dan after the name of Dan their father.**

**Joshua 19:48 This was the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Dan according to their families, these cities with their villages.**

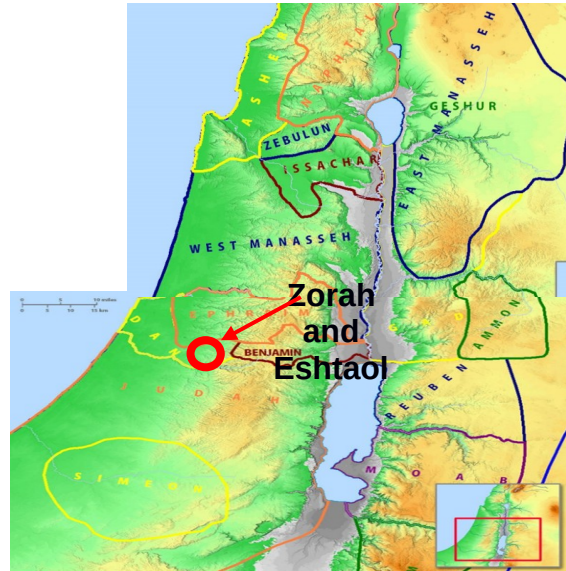
That was their assigned territory. But, they were not able to possess it.

**Judges 1:34 Then the Amorites forced the sons of Dan into the hill country, for they did not allow them to come down to the valley;**

As a result, the tribe of Dan mostly lived in the hills and must have mixed with the Amorites and perhaps later with the Philistines.

**Judges 1:35 yet the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim; but when the power of the house of Joseph grew strong, they became forced labor.**

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A recap from Gary Kukis:

“Dan did not help Barak or Deborah in their fight against Sisera. Although Dan was assigned a particular geographical area by Joshua, they moved northward and established their property at the far north end of Israel. Dan is not named among the tribes of Israel in Rev. 7, and some believe that because of this, the Antichrist comes from him. Dan’s genealogy is not found in 1Chron. 2–12. They are associated with idolatry in 1Kings 12:28-29 Amos 8:14.

Samson’s father and hence Samson was from the family of the Danites.

**Judges 13:2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no children.**

**Family.** There are various words indicating an organizing hierarchy: Tribe, sons of ..., clans, family, house, father.

**Tribe:** From the TDOT: “The overwhelming majority of occurrences of sebet exhibit the meaning “tribe.”

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Paraphrasing from that source now. The word “tribe” comes from the word for “sceptre.” Apparently, the leader of the tribe held a sceptre as a symbol of leadership.

**Genesis 49:10 “The scepter (our word) shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.**

Although Israel is supposedly a “united” entity, in reality, as we have seen, individual tribes operated autonomously. They could be asked to join a judge in a war, but could refuse, as Dan did when Barak called on them. So, although Israel is the top most part of the organization, until there was a king, there was no one leading them after Joshua. Even when kings were appointed, the individual tribes went their own way when they wanted. Hence, Northern Israel and Judah.

The tribes of Israel are named after the sons of Jacob that they descend from.

Perhaps the term “sons of Dan” is a synonym of “tribe,” possibly with emphasis on the people and their heritage.

Underneath the tribe were various clans.

**Judges 9:1 And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother’s relatives, and spoke to them and to the whole clan of the household of his mother’s father, saying,**

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**Inheritance.** From the TDOT, “...the verb means that a joint heir has received his portion by succession, while the noun denotes the portion received.

In the book of Genesis God promised Abraham and his descendants the “Promised Land.” In the book of Joshua, the land is portioned out according to tribes (Joshua 19). Joshua leads Israel as they conquer the land. But individual tribes have to conquer the land portioned to the tribe. In Judges chapter 1, Dan was unable to conquer his portion. The assumption would have to be that Dan was not trusting the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The indigenous people pushed the tribe of Dan to the mountains and did not let them enjoy their full portion as given by God. The two towns mentioned in Judges, Zorah and Eshtaol are located in the mountain area of Dan. The land inheritance had to “fall” to the tribe. The word fall is often used in the sense of a military conquest.

So, to summarize the action: a) The land was promised by God (Genesis chapter 15 and other chapters in Genesis) b) Individual tribes have the deed to their designated territory (Joshua 19) but c) they must conquer it so that it falls to them. In Judges chapter 1 this was far from complete for the tribe of Dan. They did have some land in the mountains. Apparently, from the Samson narrative and the narrative here, the two major towns they possessed were Zorah and Eshtaol. What is not said but inferred is that Dan was unwilling or unable to conquer the rest of the area from the Canaanites and subsequently the Philistines. As a result, they are looking for “easy pickings” from a peaceful neighborhood. They will go in and conquer the land. God gave them a territory but they refused to walk by faith and claim the land. Instead, they will attack a peaceful unsuspecting land that is not their own with a patina (a thin covering) of self-righteousness provided by an impostor priest.

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**Judges 18:2** So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it; and they said to them, “Go, search the land.” And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.

**Sons of Dan.** This indicates members of the tribe of Dan who was a son of Jacob.

**Sent.** Sent on a mission.

**From their family.** Here is a place in which it appears that the word for family (clan) is equated with the tribe of Dan. It may have been that there was a single clan comprising the tribe of Dan. It is never fully explained.

**To spy out.** The word means to walk but usually on a reconnaissance mission.

**Search.** Search sometimes implies they are looking for something. The goal of their search is not stated. This scenario is similar to when first Moses and then Joshua sent out spies in the land. The point of that search was a report on what the land contained. Did the description of the land match what God said He was giving them. Here, they are looking for a place to move to. Essentially, the tribe is going to do what the Levite just did. He searched and found a house in which he could act as a priest while getting paid to do it. Dan already had an area assigned by God which they could conquer if they decided to walk by faith. And what they are doing is kind of a reenactment of what happened in Joshua and Judges chapter 1 with the exception that they wanted an easier target to conquer.

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**Judges 18:3 When they were near the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young man, the Levite; and they turned aside there and said to him, “Who brought you here? And what are you doing in this place? And what do you have here?”**

**They recognized the voice.** There are so many unanswered questions here. How did they hear the voice of the priest? Was he shouting prayers? Why did they recognize his voice. Did they know him personally or was it what he was saying or how he was saying it, in other words did the Levites have a different dialect or vocabulary? We just don't know. What is said is that they had some recognition of who he was.

**Judges 18:4 He said to them, “Thus and so has Micah done to me, and he has hired me and I have become his priest.”**

The priest recounts the story of how he came to be at Micah's house including the fact that he is getting paid to be a priest. In their eyes, the priest in Micah's house must be an important priest with a lot of “mojo” with God.

**Judges 18:5 They said to him, “Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether our way on which we are going will be prosperous.”**

**Inquire of God.** Inquire is not the usual word for inquire of God that a king might ask a prophet to do. No, this is simply the word for “to ask.” God is Elohim, not Yahweh. There is perhaps a sense of detachment.

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**Will be prosperous.** The verb to prosper comes from a word meaning to rush. This was used previously in the book of Judges when the Holy Spirit rushed upon Samson in Judges 14:6, 19, 15:14. They are not asking for a blessing from God. They only want to know if they will be successful.

Gary Kukis has some insight into this verse.

“There is a subtlety that is rarely caught by the reader or the exegete. Note what they do not ask. They do not ask this priest to ask God to make their journey successful. They do not ask for guidance or direction. What they ask for is like asking a soothsayer or a psychic to predict the success of an endeavor. God, to them, is not the ruler of the universe, but a really smart person who generally knows what will happen in the future and what will not. They are not being polite, not wanting to bother God to do something; and, instead, just asking the outcome. They simply don’t believe that He has much to do with the outcome. These are obviously very confused men, whose religion is perfunctory at best. At least they came to the right priest.”

“Also, you should notice that they say nothing about the priest and his job here. There is no provision in the Law for someone to hire their own priest. This indicates that they have no clue as to what the Law says, or, if they do, they consider it to be unimportant. Worse yet is the priest himself—if anyone should know the Law, it is him. Yet he has allowed himself to be hired out and now he is doing a little soothsaying on the side (which is not a function of the priesthood either, apart from the true Urim and Thummim).”

**Judges 18:6 The priest said to them, “Go in peace; your way in which you are going has the Lord’s approval.”**



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The NASB has put this into idiomatic English, but the King James is more literal

**Judges 18:6 (KJV) 6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go.**

**The priest said.** There is nothing in the text to indicate that the priest consulted with God or had any communication with God. Perhaps we have here a violation of the Mosaic law on prophets.

From Gary Kukis:

“This Levite did just what he was paid to do. He gave them the answers that they wanted to hear. He said the nice things that they wanted him to say. That was his purpose in life was to say nice things so that people would feel good about themselves and what they were doing. Furthermore, he used the proper name of God, to give what he said added credibility and holiness.”

**Go in peace.** Ironic in that they are about to clobber a peace loving community.