

14.05b The Danites (Judges 18:1-31)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Very few pictures are available of this story. I suggest using 3-dimensional figures and silver coins or stick figures drawn on a chalk board or white board.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *to sojourn*: to live in a place temporarily
- *shrine*: a place to worship or honor a god or a person
- *ephod*: a sleeveless garment worn by priests

Scripture: (ESV)

Judges 18:1 In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the people of Dan was seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in, for until then no inheritance among the tribes of Israel had fallen to them. 2 So the people of Dan sent five able men from the whole number of their tribe, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to explore it. And they said to them, “Go and explore the land.” And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there. 3 When they were by the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. And they turned aside and said to him, “Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What is your business here?” 4 And he said to them, “This is how Micah dealt with me: he has hired me, and I have become his priest.” 5 And they said to him, “Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether the journey on which we are setting out will succeed.” 6 And the priest said to them, “Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord.”

7 Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were there, how they lived in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting, lacking nothing that is in the earth and possessing wealth, and how they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone. 8 And when they came to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers said to them, “What do you report?” 9 They said, “Arise, and let us go up against them, for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you do nothing? Do not be slow to go, to enter in and possess the land. 10 As soon as you go, you will come to an unsuspecting people. The land is spacious, for God has given it into your hands, a place where there is no lack of anything that is in the earth.”

11 So 600 men of the tribe of Dan, armed with weapons of war, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol, 12 and went up and encamped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. On this account that place is called Mahaneh-dan to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim. 13 And they passed on from there to the hill country of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.

14 Then the five men who had gone to scout out the country of Laish said to their brothers, “Do you know that in these houses there are an ephod, household gods, a carved image, and a metal image? Now therefore consider what you will do.” 15 And they turned aside there and came to the house of the young Levite, at the home of Micah, and asked him about his welfare. 16 Now the 600 men of the Danites, armed with their weapons of war, stood by the entrance of the gate. 17 And the five men who had gone to scout out the land went up and entered and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the 600 men armed with weapons of war. 18 And when these went into Micah’s house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, the priest said to

them, “What are you doing?” 19 And they said to him, “Keep quiet; put your hand on your mouth and come with us and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?” 20 And the priest’s heart was glad. He took the ephod and the household gods and the carved image and went along with the people.

21 So they turned and departed, putting the little ones and the livestock and the goods in front of them. 22 When they had gone a distance from the home of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah’s house were called out, and they overtook the people of Dan. 23 And they shouted to the people of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, “What is the matter with you, that you come with such a company?” 24 And he said, “You take my gods that I made and the priest, and go away, and what have I left? How then do you ask me, ‘What is the matter with you?’” 25 And the people of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows fall upon you, and you lose your life with the lives of your household.” 26 Then the people of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his home.

27 But the people of Dan took what Micah had made, and the priest who belonged to him, and they came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. 28 And there was no deliverer because it was far from Sidon, and they had no dealings with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth-rehob. Then they rebuilt the city and lived in it. 29 And they named the city Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor, who was born to Israel; but the name of the city was Laish at the first. 30 And the people of Dan set up the carved image for themselves, and Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. 31 So they set up Micah’s carved image that he made, as long as the house of God was at Shiloh.

Introduction/Review:

The book of Judges records a dark period of Israel’s history. Just as God had warned, His people turned away from Him to idols.

Micah, who lived in the hill country of Ephraim [locate on map below], was such a man. His mother made an idol from silver he had stolen and then returned. When a Levite stayed with him, Micah made that Levite the priest for his new religion, which was contrary to God’s ways.

Story:

Five scouts visit Micah

Now, the tribe of Dan had not found a place large enough to settle. Well, actually, they had been given plenty of land by lot [locate Zorah and Estaol], but they had failed to drive out the Canaanites there and were forced to live in the mountains of their land. So this tribe sent out five brave men from the area (where Samson later lived) in order to search for another territory to settle. These five men searched through the hill country of Ephraim, stopped at Micah’s house, and spent the night there.

As they visited, they somehow recognized the voice of Micah’s priest. ✓Perhaps the priest had stayed with them as he had sojourned hither and yon. The Danites asked, “What are you doing here? Who brought you here?”

The priest replied, “Micah hired me to be his priest. ✓Come, look at Micah’s idol house and his idols.”

The five Danites said, ✓“If you’re a priest, ask God if we will successfully find a place to settle.”

The priest answered, “Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord.” In other words, “The way you are going is the Lord’s way.” We don’t read that the priest asked God before he proclaimed ✓his opinion, but, like so many false prophets, he promised peace and prosperity.

The Danites went on outside the land of Israel to a city called Laish [locate] that was peaceful, unprotected, wealthy, and isolated from other cities. It was a place they could easily conquer. This was a place to brag about; so when they returned the 80 miles home, they did brag: “It’s a great land with good food. The people

think they are safe without soldiers. Let's not be lazy but get going, for the Lord has given this area to us."

Danites visit Micah later

Six hundred men, armed for war, left Zorah and Eshtaol [locate], went through Judah, and on to the mountains of Ephraim [locate]. Whose house do you suppose they found? Yes, Micah's. Micah's priest went out to greet them all at the gate. Then the original five scouts informed the others, "Do you know in these houses are an ephod priest's clothes, small idols, a carved image, and an image made by melting silver? Think about what we should do."

Danites steal Micah's idols

Well, it doesn't seem as if they thought very long about what to do. What they did *not* do was to have a friendly visit with Micah. Rather, they went into the shrine and stole all of Micah's idols, including, the silver idol, and the ephod while the six hundred soldiers, armed for war, waited at the gate with the priest.

"What are you doing?" asked the priest when the five men carried their prizes back to the gate.

"Keep quiet," answered the five. "Put your hand over your mouth. Go with us. Be a priest and a father for us. Wouldn't it better to be the priest for a whole tribe than for just one man?"

✓"Oh, boy!" thought the priest. "This *is* a great promotion!" and he gladly joined the Danites.

All of these Danites, including the women, children, and animals, started on down the road. When they had gone some distance, Micah and his neighbors, who had gathered themselves together, chased and caught up to the Danites.

"What's the matter?" asked the Danites. "Why have so many of you come after us?"

"You took away my gods that I made and my priest, leaving me robbed. How can you say, 'What's the matter?!'"

✓Menacingly, the Danites turned and replied, "Ooo! You'd better hush your voices or some angry fellows will run after you and you will lose your lives."

Micah and company could easily see the Danites were too strong for them; so they reluctantly turned around and retreated back to their homes.

Danites conquer Laish

The Danites marched on to that quiet, peaceful city, Laish. They attacked it; slew the people with the sword; burned the city; and then built their own city, naming it Dan. What do you suppose they worshiped up there in Dan near Mount Hermon, the home of the false god Baal? [Micah's carved image.] Who became their priest? [Micah's priest.]

When the Danites had first come looking for a new city and had asked Micah's priest for a blessing, the priest had said, "Go in peace. The journey on which you go is in the way of the Lord." Did they go in the Lord's way? No. How did they *not* go in God's way? [By stealing, worshiping idols, having a priest who was not ordered by God, worshiping in a place other than at the tabernacle.]

The Danites continued to disobey God by practicing false worship for hundreds of years.* They were far away from the other tribes; so they thought they could substitute their own worship for the true worship God had prescribed. Does it matter where you worship and how you worship? Yes, it matters. We must worship the Lord "in the beauty of holiness," doing what God says, not what we think or what is convenient for us.

*Some students of Biblical history believe that at least some of the Danites "leaped from Bashan" (Deuteronomy 33:22) by crossing the Mediterranean Sea and eventually settling in Greece, becoming the Spartans and Trojans. In the area of Iraq and Turkey there are monotheistic people that are neither Muslim nor

Christian. Some people think they are also descendants of Dan. This tribe is not mentioned in the list of Israel's tribes in Revelation 7. Many Bible scholars believe the antichrist will be from the tribe of Dan, which name means "judge." (Sorry, I've forgotten the resource for these points.)

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

Well, we *don't* see Jesus in this story. Rather, we see how not to worship. On the other hand, Jesus perfectly obeyed every law in the Old Testament concerning proper worship of God the Father. We worship Him, who is God!

- Be careful not to be deceived into worship not prescribed by God.

Activities:

- Play dough: swords; shields (Note: Never include images of idols in any craft or activity.)
- Snack: The Danites were traveling. Serve a healthy version of a trail mix with dried fruits and nuts.
- For further study and thought-provoking questions, see pages 4–9 at the following site: http://www.walkwiththeword.org/Studies/01_OT/07_Judges/07_Judges_17-18.html.
- Review questions: (Game: Print two pages of the clipart of a sword and shield found below. If using a flannel board, back paper with paper towel. Cut out each sword and shield. For each correct answer, a student may place the clipart in a pocket chart or on a flannel board.)
 1. What tribe wanted to seek another territory to live? [Dan.]
 2. Why didn't Dan stay where they had been given an inheritance? [They had not driven out the inhabitants; rather, the inhabitants of the land had pushed them into the mountains.]
 3. When they stayed at Micah's house, whom did the five scouts recognize? [Micah's priest.]
 4. When the five scouts asked Micah's priest to ask God whether their venture would succeed, what did the priest answer? ["Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord."]
 5. Describe the city and inhabitants of Laish. Give two characteristics. [Peaceful, unprotected, wealthy, and isolated from other cities. It was a place they could easily conquer.]
 6. Among the people of Dan who went to live in Laish, how many were soldiers with weapons of war? [Six hundred men.]
 7. What did the five scouts do when they arrived at Micah's house the second time? [Took all his idols, the priest's ephod, and the priest.]
 8. Why didn't Micah and his neighbors take back what the Danites had stolen? [The Danites were too many for them.]
 9. What did the Danites do to the city and inhabitants of Laish? Tell two things. [Destroyed the people with the sword, burned the city, rebuilt the city, lived in it, named the city Dan.]
 10. How did the Danites *not* go in God's way? Tell two things. [By stealing, worshiping idols, having a priest who was not ordered by God, worshiping in a place other than at the tabernacle.]

Memory Verse[s]:

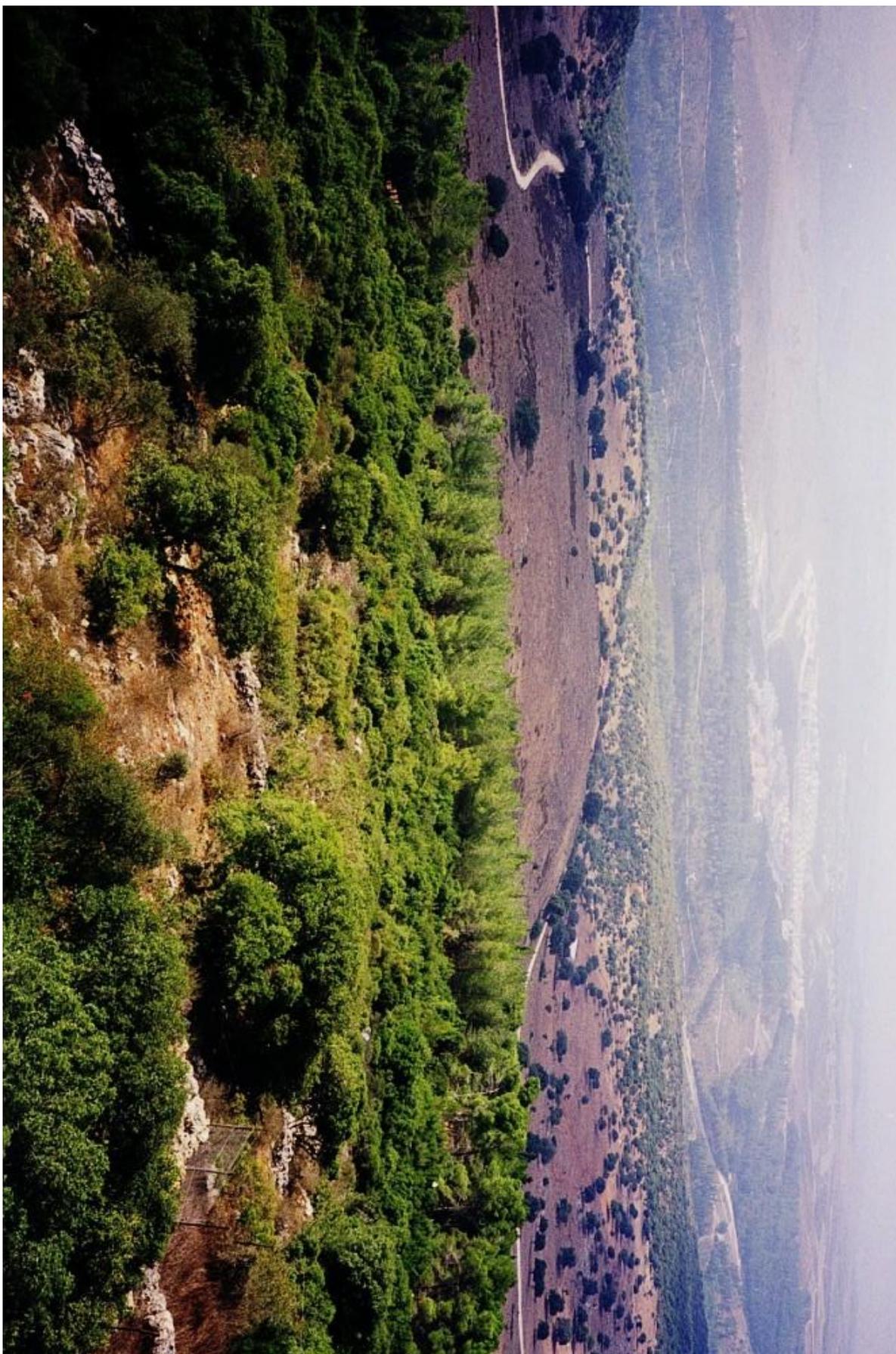
- John 14:6: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- Or 1 Chronicles 16:29: "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Handwork:

- Print a copy of the map found below for each student. Ask students to draw a line with an arrow from Eshtaol/Zorah to Laish. Cross out the name *Laish* and write *Dan* under *Laish*. Students may write, "The tribe of Dan moved" or "The tribe of Dan did not worship God." Add a sad face.

shrine

ephod



Hill Country of Ephraim (<https://www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney2/28-the-israelites-face-continuing-opposition/the-conquest-of-laish/>)





(undocumented source)

MICAH AND THE DANITES

JOSHUA 17—18

