

5 | MICAH & HIS LEVITE

INTRO:

As we come to the final installment of our journey through the Book of Judges, we've seen how God faithfully raises up deliverers in Israel's darkest moments—from Othniel's Spirit-empowered victory to Ehud's courageous deliverance from Moab. We also saw how God called Gideon out of fear and hiding, naming him a "mighty warrior" and calling him into a purpose far beyond his circumstances. The cycle continued, culminating in the life of Samson—a man set apart by God yet comfortable in compromise, doing what was right in his own eyes until his downfall. Yet God's mercy met him and enabled him to achieve one final victory over their enemies. Now in [Judges 17](#), we shift from national deliverers to personal devotion, where Micah and his Levite expose the deep religious confusion of the time. This final chapter in our series warns us that true faith is not shaped by what seems right to us, but by obedience to God's Word and His ways.

Judges 17 NIV

¹ Now a man named Micah from the hill country of Ephraim ² said to his mother, "The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you and about which I heard you utter a curse—I have that silver with me; I took it." Then his mother said, "The LORD bless you, my son!" ³ When he returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, she said, "I solemnly consecrate my silver to the LORD for my son to make an image overlaid with silver. I will give it back to you." ⁴ So after he returned the silver to his mother, she took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to a silversmith, who used them to make the idol. And it was put in Micah's house. ⁵ Now this man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and some household gods and installed one of his sons as his priest. ⁶ In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit. ⁷ A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, who had been living within the clan of Judah, ⁸ left that town in search of some other place to stay. On his way he came to Micah's house in the hill country of Ephraim. ⁹ Micah asked him, "Where are you from?" "I'm a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah," he said, "and I'm looking for a place to stay." ¹⁰ Then Micah said to him, "Live with me and be my father and priest, and I'll give you ten shekels of silver a year, your clothes and your food." ¹¹ So the Levite agreed to live with him, and the young man became like one of his sons to him. ¹² Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house. ¹³ And Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest."

THIS STORY IS FULL OF CONFUSING AND CONFLICTING DETAILS.

The story isn't mixed up... the people are.

They have names, words, and actions that seem to describe faith and devotion to Yahweh, but then the story describes blatant idolatry and sin.

- Honestly, that describes the judges/deliverers at times too.

This is a story full of DECEIVED people, but no one knows (that's a scary time).

- This is what describes the period of the judges.

- And its relatable to the culture we live in today.

PART 1: MICAH AND HIS HOUSE OF GODS (V1-5)

INTRODUCTION TO MICAH:

- His name in Hebrew in v1 & v4 is actually Mikayahu (who is like Yahweh?)
 - This is known as a theophoric name — shows allegiance or worship to a deity (Yahweh being named SHOULD be significant here)
 - This would reflect the faith of the parents in naming their child with honor and faith shown to the LORD.
- His first words are essentially: “I took the silver you’re missing and I heard the curse you pronounced over it”
 - So, Micah STOLE FROM HIS MOM
 - He’s not sorry, he’s just afraid of the effects of the curse.

MICAH’S MOM:

- Named her son Mikayahu... good start.
- Uttered a curse over the stolen silver... meh
- Pronounces a blessing of Yahweh over her son for returning the silver... okay
- I solemnly consecrate the silver to the LORD... alright, that’s great!
- ...to make an image overlaid with silver... what is happening!?
- Also, I’m only giving 200 of the shekels... so, you’re not giving it all to the LORD?
- Everything is wrong here... everything.

MICAH’S HOUSE OF GODS

- The idol made from the silver was placed in Micah’s house. (v4)
- V5: we have a name change for Micah (from here on out)
 - He is no longer Mikayahu... he is Micah
 - The theophoric part of his name (allegiance and honor to Yahweh) has been removed.
 - This is significant, either in the story OR by work of the writer (thought to be Samuel)
 - Micah, and his house of gods is no longer to be identified with Yahweh
 - Even though he will still try and appeal to the Lord’s name and ways (Micah is deceived, confused, and wrong)
- The word for shrine is literally “house of elohim”
 - This could be used for the proper house of God, but in context this is to be understood “house of gods” (emphasis on the plural)
 - Not to mention, at this time they were strictly forbidden to do this—They were supposed to go to the Tent of Meeting with the ark to worship.
 - Their is a privatizing of worship—separate from what God had ordained.

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- Today it sounds like “MY relationship with God”
- While cut off from the community of God AND improper worship being offered
- (One that is “A private faith disconnected from God’s Word and God’s people.”)
- Inside the ‘house of gods’ Micah has:
 - An Ephod - not the priestly garment, but an idolatrous garment/fabric draped over the cultic image
 - Teraphim (NIV household gods) - these have been thought to be related to ancestral worship OR practices associated with divination (discovering the will of a deity)
 - The image of silver made by his mother
- Lastly, Micah has installed one of his sons to be his priest.
 - This is blatantly contrary to the Law - only the sons of Aaron of the tribe of Levi were to be priests.
 - Is this a matter of convenience?
 - Is this a matter of control?
 - Is this because he knows he’s not following the rules exactly, but thinks its ok because its in Yahweh’s name?

UNDERSTAND:

- Micah and his mom THINK they are worshipping the Lord (Yahweh)
- In reality, so many of their actions are blatantly condemned in the scriptures
- What they think is worship is actually sinful rebellion
- It’s confusing because their worship bears Yahweh’s name and terminology, but is actually more similar to the pagan religions around them.
- They have syncretized and privatized their faith.
 - It is a faith that combined the elements of paganism convenient or desirable to them
 - Yet attempted to keep Yahweh in the mix
 - While not stated in the text, it would seem that their version of faith was one that tried to MANIPULATE the Lord to do their will AND answer at their beckoning WITHOUT their true OBEDIENCE.

PART 2: THE WAYWARD LEVITE (V7-13)

THE LEVITE’S INTRODUCTION

- He’s introduced as a Levite from Bethlehem
 - Bethlehem wasn’t a Levitical city, so he’s already (most likely) out of place
- He is searching for a new place to stay
 - He’s not content with his calling and station in life and looking to improve his circumstance
 - We could read this a few different ways, but what follows makes his course of action certainly wrong.

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THE LEVITE SELLS OUT

- He agrees to become Micah's priest and oversee his idolatrous shrine and syncretized religion.
- From Micah's perspective, this validates his religion by having a Levite as the priest.
 - V13: "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest."
- The Levite profited from Micah as he sold out his Lord and master.
- Micah 'installed' (ESV: ordained) the Levite.
 - The Hebrew here and in all ordination passages mean's "fill the hand"
 - It's supposed to be of the ordination ram as part of consecration to God
 - Here the word play is that Micah "filled the hand" of the Levite with silver to become priest of his house of horrors/gods.
- Further, we see the relationship get distorted
 - In Micah's offer, he said "come be my father and priest"
 - In reality, the Levite became like "one of his sons"
 - The priest had been bought and paid for and would do whatever Micah wanted him to do... because he filled his hand.
 - Later, the Levite will abandon Micah for a better position, becoming the priest for the tribe of Dan and will take the idols with him (ch18)

UNDERSTAND:

- Micah needed (a sellout for) a priest to validate his counterfeit religion
- The Levite was introduced as a wanderer physically (geographically), but in reality he was wandering far from the LORD
- This wayward priest was deceived (willfully or not) and continued the deception of Micah (and his household) for a price.

PART 3: THE NATURE OF THE TIMES: DECEPTION & CONFUSION (v6)

New International Version (2011) Chapter 17

6 In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit.

THIS IS THE HINGE-POINT OF THE WHOLE NARRATIVE

- It explains Micah
- It explains the Levite
- It explains the whole period of the Judges
- BTW:
 - In chapter 18 the Levite is identified as Jonathan the son of Gershom—he was the grandson of Moses!

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- The point is that the corruption and deception was so thorough and complete EVEN the household of Moses had fallen into it!
- “Spiritual heritage does not guarantee spiritual faithfulness.”
 - Just because Jonathan had the right lineage — one that was faithful to the Lord — doesn’t mean that he is right with God.
 - He needed to pursue and worship the Lord for himself.

THEY HAD NO KING

- There was no central authority to enforce compliance and obedience to the LAW and the LAWS OF GOD
- Every ruler, judge, man and woman simply did what their eyes determined as ‘right for them.’
- Ultimately, they didn’t even recognize the LORD (Yahweh) as their king — which is one of the ways he had revealed himself to them previously.
 - Can you imagine the chaos?
 - Can you imagine the depravity and wickedness? (read ch19-20—its meant to shock and disgust you—its horrifying)
 - This is the result of deception and sin — absolute darkness and the degradation of society and culture.

RESPONSE: WHAT DO WE DO WITH THIS TEXT?

1: RECOGNIZE THE RELEVANCE

- We again live in a world where everyone seems to do ‘what is right in their own eyes’ (you do you)
 - Rather than seeking out the Lord’s will and truth — we consult our own teraphim who will guide us
 - Culture (and some churches) have rejected God’s authority
- Yet many still appeal to the Name of God and try to identify as Christians
- Syncretized faith and apostate clergy
 - people create their own religions (without fully knowing it) in the name of Jesus, but in direct violation of his word.
 - clergy who contradict the clear teaching of scripture for the approval of culture

2: EXAMINE YOURSELF

- Where have I reshaped God to fit my preferences?
- Do I actually obey God—or just speak/use His name?
- Is my version of Christianity formed by Scripture or convenience or what culture determines as acceptable in the moment?

3: SURRENDER TO THE LORD

- Come under the authority of the Lord and his word.
 - This requires us to be a people who KNOW the word.
 - Read it, listen to it, study it, talk about it, GET IT IN YOUR HEART
- Determine in your heart to honor God above all else and anyone else.
- We must do this as individuals, families, and as a church (churches)
- Repent when and where we have gone astray