

# Finer Grounds

## Judges and Ruth

### Lesson 10: The Appearance of Piety (Judges 17-18)

The next few chapters of Judges don't necessarily occur chronologically within the book. The writer is trying to give us an overview of the state of morality in Israel during the time of the judges. As we approach the end of Judges, let's take a minute to review.

**What are some of the major themes throughout this book?**

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**What is the state of Israel at this time?**

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**Describe the cycle of Judges.**

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**Bible Marking: Underline every time you see the phrase "In those days there was no king in Israel."**

**Read Judges 17:1-6**

This passage reveals an encounter between mother and son that seems strange. However, this account will reveal some crucial truths about many Israelites who were claiming to worship Yahweh.

**What crime did Micah commit?**

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This was no small amount of silver; it would have been a fortune at this time. After Micah's mother pronounces a curse on the thief, he returns the silver. In what seems like a very pious action, his mother proceeds to dedicate the silver to Yahweh.

**What did Micah's mother do with the dedicated silver?**

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**According to Exodus 20:4, what law did Micah's mother violate?**

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**In Judges 17:5 what did Micah do?**

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The term translated as "household idols" in this verse is TERAPIM in Hebrew. This is not just a mere statue, but would have been used like the Urim and Thummim that Yahweh had sanctioned (Exodus 28:30). Micah had created an item that would have been used to circumvent God's method of decision-making. In addition to this, Micah was in open violation of the laws of the priesthood by making his sons priests.

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According to Numbers 18, the priests must be descendants of Aaron from the tribe of Levi.

This family was great at giving lip service to Yahweh. They may have even felt as if they were faithful worshippers. However, a close look at this passage reveals that they were in blatant violation of so many of God's laws. They appeared pious to those around them, but they were not serving God as He would like.

This is a common problem in our society today. So many people claim to be spiritual, but that spirituality doesn't line up with God's desires. It is not enough to merely say you love God and then proceed to follow your own path. We must completely submit ourselves to His will.

**Read Romans 12:2 and rewrite this verse in your own words.**

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**What can you do today to prevent yourself from being conformed to the world around you like Micah and his family were?**

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Judges 17:6 speaks volumes about the people of this time. Their king should have been God (Judges 8:23) but they decided to follow their own desires, which will ultimately lead to a disastrous end.

**Read Judges 17:7-13**

The house of Micah continues to act as a symbol of the degradation of the Israelite nation. Micah understands that his sons shouldn't be

priests, so he decides to hire a Levite (who unless he were from the family of Aaron wasn't technically qualified for the priesthood either).

**What did Micah offer the Levite to be his priest?**

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**How should the Levites have earned their living (Numbers 18:24, Deuteronomy 18:1)?**

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According to the Law, because the Levites dedicated themselves to service in the temple, their income was taken from the tithes and offerings to the Lord. The fact that this Levite had to travel and look for support indicates that this system was not functioning properly. The funds were either being wrongly distributed, people weren't offering their sacrifices and tithes or perhaps both of these were taking place. Whatever the case, the Israelites were not subjecting themselves to God's will.

**Read Judges 18:1-10**

**In Joshua 19:40-48 we see Dan awarded an inheritance. What happened to this land in Judges 1:34?**

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The sons of Dan did have an inheritance; however their lack of faithful follow-through caused them to lose it to the Amorites. We now see them wandering searching for a place to live.

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**What request did the Danites make of the Levite in Judges 18:5?**

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**What was the Levite's response?**

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Once again, we see Israelites giving lip service to Yahweh. They appear pious; however, there is a conspicuous absence of any action on God's part. The Levite tells them that their path has God's approval, but there is no indication that he actually received this message from God. In fact, the events leading to this point in the passage seem to indicate that these people had no problem throwing God's name around with no intention of actually seeking His will.

**Read Judges 18:11-31**

**What did the Danites take from Micah?**

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None of these things should have been a part of either of these households. This false priest and the idols from Micah's house illustrate the utter disregard for God. In addition, these idols become a source of division and fighting among God's people.

**What are some idols in your life that have caused division between you and your Christian brothers and sisters?**

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**What is a practical way that you can begin to rid yourself of one of these idols this week?**

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Once they had robbed Micah, the Danites continued and conquered a new land. In the end, Dan received what their hearts truly desired. Unfortunately, this meant abandoning God's will and following after Canaanite values.

**According to Judges 18:30-31, what did the Danites do as soon as they established their city?**

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The accounts we have studied in this lesson are heartbreaking. The most disturbing thing here is the fact that these are the people that still claim Yahweh as their God. There were plenty of people at this time that were openly acknowledging the Canaanite gods. This acts as a sobering reminder to us that just because we call ourselves Christians doesn't mean that we are actually submitting ourselves to God's will. Fake piety can be more damaging than blatant sinful behavior. This week, be sure to behave in a way that demonstrates to the world that you do have a king: the almighty Yahweh!