**Judges 16-18** - March 14th

Samson and Delilah

**16**One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her. **2**The people of Gaza were told, “Samson is here!” So they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the city gate. They made no move during the night, saying, “At dawn we’ll kill him.”

**3**But Samson lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

**4**Some time later, he fell in love with a woman in the Valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. **5**The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, “See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+16-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-6955a)] of silver.”

**6**So Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.”

**7**Samson answered her, “If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”

**8**Then the rulers of the Philistines brought her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she tied him with them. **9**With men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you! ”But he snapped the bowstrings as easily as a piece of string snaps when it comes close to a flame. So the secret of his strength was not discovered.

**10**Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied.” **11**He said, “If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I’ll become as weak as any other man.”

**12**So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads. **13**Delilah then said to Samson, “All this time you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied.”

He replied, “If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric **14**and tightened it with the pin.

Again she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and pulled up the pin and the loom, with the fabric.

**15**Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you won’t confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven’t told me the secret of your great strength.” **16**With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it.

**17**So he told her everything. “No razor has ever been used on my head,” he said, “because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother’s womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.”

**18**When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, “Come back once more; he has told me everything.” So the rulers of the Philistines returned with the silver in their hands. **19**After putting him to sleep on her lap, she called for someone to shave off the seven braids of his hair, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him.

**20**Then she called, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and thought, “I’ll go out as before and shake myself free.” But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

**21**Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison. **22**But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

The Death of Samson

**23**Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, “Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.”

**24**When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, “Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land     and multiplied our slain.” **25**While they were in high spirits, they shouted, “Bring out Samson to entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them.

When they stood him among the pillars, **26**Samson said to the servant who held his hand, “Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.” **27**Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. **28**Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” **29**Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, **30**Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

**31**Then his brothers and his father’s whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel twenty years.

Micah’s Idols

**17**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[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+16-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-6985f)] 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[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Judges+16-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-6989g)] 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.”

The Danites Settle in Laish

**18**In those days Israel had no king. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking a place of their own where they might settle, because they had not yet come into an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. **2**So the Danites sent five of their leading men from Zorah and Eshtaol to spy out the land and explore it. These men represented all the Danites. They told them, “Go, explore the land.”

So they entered the hill country of Ephraim and came to the house of Micah, where they spent the night. **3**When they were near Micah’s house, they recognized the voice of the young Levite; so they turned in there and asked him, “Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? Why are you here?”

**4**He told them what Micah had done for him, and said, “He has hired me and I am his priest.” **5**Then they said to him, “Please inquire of God to learn whether our journey will be successful.”

**6**The priest answered them, “Go in peace. Your journey has the Lord’s approval.”

**7**So the five men left and came to Laish, where they saw that the people were living in safety, like the Sidonians, at peace and secure. And since their land lacked nothing, they were prosperous. Also, they lived a long way from the Sidonians and had no relationship with anyone else.

**8**When they returned to Zorah and Eshtaol, their fellow Danites asked them, “How did you find things?”

**9**They answered, “Come on, let’s attack them! We have seen the land, and it is very good. Aren’t you going to do something? Don’t hesitate to go there and take it over. **10**When you get there, you will find an unsuspecting people and a spacious land that God has put into your hands, a land that lacks nothing whatever.”

**11**Then six hundred men of the Danites, armed for battle, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol. **12**On their way they set up camp near Kiriath Jearimin Judah. This is why the place west of Kiriath Jearim is called Mahaneh Dan to this day. **13**From there they went on to the hill country of Ephraim and came to Micah’s house.

**14**Then the five men who had spied out the land of Laish said to their fellow Danites, “Do you know that one of these houses has an ephod, some household gods and an image overlaid with silver? Now you know what to do.” **15**So they turned in there and went to the house of the young Levite at Micah’s place and greeted him. **16**The six hundred Danites, armed for battle, stood at the entrance of the gate. **17**The five men who had spied out the land went inside and took the idol, the ephod and the household gods while the priest and the six hundred armed men stood at the entrance of the gate.

**18**When the five men went into Micah’s house and took the idol, the ephod and the household gods, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”

**19**They answered him, “Be quiet! Don’t say a word. Come with us, and be our father and priest. Isn’t it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man’s household?” **20**The priest was very pleased. He took the ephod, the household gods and the idol and went along with the people. **21**Putting their little children, their livestock and their possessions in front of them, they turned away and left.

**22**When they had gone some distance from Micah’s house, the men who lived near Micah were called together and overtook the Danites. **23**As they shouted after them, the Danites turned and said to Micah, “What’s the matter with you that you called out your men to fight?”

**24**He replied, “You took the gods I made, and my priest, and went away. What else do I have? How can you ask, ‘What’s the matter with you?’”

**25**The Danites answered, “Don’t argue with us, or some of the men may get angry and attack you, and you and your family will lose your lives.”**26**So the Danites went their way, and Micah, seeing that they were too strong for him, turned around and went back home.

**27**Then they took what Micah had made, and his priest, and went on to Laish, against a people at peace and secure. They attacked them with the sword and burned down their city. **28**There was no one to rescue them because they lived a long way from Sidon and had no relationship with anyone else. The city was in a valley near Beth Rehob.

The Danites rebuilt the city and settled there. **29**They named it Dan after their ancestor Dan, who was born to Israel - though the city used to be called Laish. **30**There the Danites set up for themselves the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land. **31**They continued to use the idol Micah had made, all the time the house of God was in Shiloh.