

## In those days ...

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“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.” (Judges 17:6, NIV)

Having stolen a fortune (13 kg) of silver from his mom, Micah returns it in fear of the curse she spoke because of the theft. Weirdly, she blesses him for his confession, consecrates that silver to the Lord, but uses 2.3 kg of it to get a couple of idols made. As if that's not weird enough Micah puts those idols in his private shrine and hires a Levite to become his private priest for free clothing, lodging, food and a year-salary of 110 g of silver in return.

These rather strange events are part of Israel's history, a time when they had no godly leader guiding them. As believers today, we do have the King of king's governor (Holy Spirit) living right within us, and yet it seems we often act as wacky and ungodly as those people then. So let's scrutinize a few of those issues:

- **THEFT** - How low do you have to sink to steal from your own family? And we're not talking about peanuts here but a fortune that Micah took from his mom, by his own standards enough to fend for more than 100 priests for a whole year! We might not steal blatantly as he did, but sometimes I wonder how much of our heavenly Father's funds we misappropriate under all sorts of holy disguises, spending it for things (not even people) that are abhorrent to Him?
- **IDOLATRY** - Isn't it odd and contradicting that the mom solemnly dedicates the silver to God and then gets a couple of idols made from part of it, which is a total disgust to the Lord? And mind you, they weren't cheap. She invested silver to an equivalent of 21 priest's year-salaries into this dead material, clearly violating God's first and second commandment (Exodus 20:2-6; Leviticus 19:4). So I'm pondering, in a church and believers context, how much money do we put into dead stuff/images (buildings, vehicles, equipment, ...) that can't help and save us in any case, rather than preferably investing it into God's living images (His children), and then even believe we are pleasing the Lord?
- **HIRING** - And isn't it even more bizarre that Micah hires (!) a Levite, ostensibly a man of God, to be his private (!) priest? As if we could buy God's services with money. Think of it, the attempt of buying God's favor, insight, guidance, etc. with money is a subtle but very common technique in our days, too. Just ask those who believe they can wield any influence in the Kingdom based on their financial wealth, no matter the context.
- **TWISTED APPROACH** - Its highly questionable that this Levite was willing to serve idols for money. That's like a double fault in tennis. “You cannot serve both God and money” we read in Matthew 6:24 but how many believers exhaust themselves by unwittingly trying to do just that? People become pastors, evangelists, teachers, prophets for money. They see serving God as a means to get hold of money (an idol). Others want to make lots of money (an idol) in the marketplace to finance God's Kingdom, as if God would depend on it. And so the list of twisted approaches and contradictions is long.
- **DISPROPORTION** - Perhaps the crowning glory of it all was this: the Levite received only a fraction as a years salary of what the mom was prepared to invest into those idols. In other words, there was more value put into dead material, that opposed the living God, than into a living person, who represented the living God. Does that ring a bell regarding our lifestyle and priorities today?

With Christmas and then a new year approaching, perhaps we should take some time to reflect on those issues? Wouldn't it be sad if history books revealed of our time, “In those days believers didn't listen to their King of kings; everyone did as he saw fit”?