

Dangerous Stories

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I have an interesting subject today. The title of my sermon is:

Dangerous Stories

You can probably figure out that the most dangerous stories we can tell are the ones we tell ourselves. These are the ones that we tell ourselves, to justify what we are doing and to make sense of what we are thinking. Today we are going to be “stalking” a particular biblical character through the Bible and asking the question, what stories was this person telling and listening to? Then we can apply that to ourselves. What stories do we tell ourselves to justify the things that we are thinking and doing?

Before I start the “stalking” of this particular character, I want to explain how I became a student of cognitive psychology. But first turn to Romans 7:14—a very, very familiar scripture.

Romans 7:14 *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

15) For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. (NKJV)

I know that we may have looked at this verse and found some comfort there by saying that Paul was battling the same things we are battling. But we still want to figure out why this works the way it does and what we can do to be better “soldiers”. I was searching for answers regarding this subject of “why I don’t do what I want to do and I do those things that I don’t want to do”. What is this carnal mind that I am dealing with?

I came across a man named Lou Tice and he had an international institute called The Pacific Institute. My company and I became involved with them to try and solve some of the problems we were experiencing. One of the men there, who became a close friend, was Danny Acres and his dad’s name was Fred Acres; if you are college football fans you may know who he was. He was the coach of the University of Texas and their football team. They were involved with Pacific Institute for the same reason I was; to learn how psychology works, how our minds work and what we can do to break through our barriers. Instead of doing the things we don’t want to do to but actually doing the things we want to do to get on track and get our intentions and activities in line. Ultimately that is the battle; getting our good intentions in line with our good activities.

One of the things Fred Acres taught me was that, if you look at where you are right now, what your thoughts are right now. Then you can look at your habits, your attitudes, your beliefs and your expectations from six months ago and this will explain where we are right now and what we’re doing—habits attitudes, beliefs and expectations.

Why do we believe the things that we believe? We take what we believe or our opinion of what it is we believe and then we call that “the truth”. Is it really “the truth”? Turn to Jeremiah 17, you probably know exactly where I’m going—another memory scripture, in verse 9.

Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*

10) *I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.*

11) *As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, So is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool.” (NKJV)*

We are dealing with a deceitful heart, a deceitful mind that is desperately wicked. How does all of this work? The way that it was explained to me is you can take the mind and you can break it up into:

The conscious mind which is the dialogue, the ongoing conversation that we have with ourselves—that’s our conscious mind.

Then you have

The subconscious mind which stores a whole lot of information, but it also runs the “factory”, makes your heart beat and just keeps the factory running.

We also have this other part called

The creative subconscious mind which has three functions. These three functions make sure our internal blueprint, the way we think things ought to be, matches with the outside world.

In actuality our brain is not compartmentalized—there is a slice here that does this—it’s a whole mess like a cobbler.

The way it does this is through a part of the brain called the Reticular Activating System. This filters out information so that we build blind spots known as scotomas—things that are right in front of us yet we can’t see them. Even though they are right there in front of us, we can’t see them. One of the ways I was introduced to this, to prove this point, was a card was passed out by someone and everybody was asked to read the card. It said,

“Finished files that are the result of years of scientific study, combined with the experience of years”.

We read the card and then we were told to set it down. Then he said to pick it up and read it again.

“Finished files as a result of years of scientific study combined with the experience of years.”

Again, we had to put it back down then again pick the card up and count the ‘F’s. We all read through looking for the letter F. The consensus in the room was that there were two F’s. You have “finished files” as a result of years of scientific studies combined with the experiences of years. He said, that no, there were more and to look again. So, we looked again and said that there were three F’s. Then somebody said, “I see four.” Again, he said that there were more than that there. We kept reading over and over to the F’s? It turned out there were six F’s in that sentence. Three times it uses the word “of”. We pronounce “of” with a ‘v’. Even though our eyes are seeing six F’s, our mind is not seeing all the F’s. We were just seeing the one in scientific but we missed the others when the word ‘of’ was read, even though they were right in front of our faces.

We took our little cards home and showed them to our families and we tricked them. Then we showed it to other people and tricked them. The important thing to recognize is that you can be looking right at something and not see it. I’ve seen it over and over again. How many times have you said, ‘I’ve lost my keys and can’t find them anywhere?’ Then, sure enough when you’ve convinced yourself because you can’t find them anywhere, the keys can be right in front of you. Then you said the magic words—“I know they are here”—then all of a sudden you see them. They just appear.

I had an experience like that recently; I knew I had bought a bottle of a certain oil of oregano and couldn’t find it. Where do you think I finally found it? Right where I knew it was supposed to be, right at the very beginning, I just couldn’t see it. Our Reticular Activating System is very strong; it is only going to let through things that we think are important or relevant.

There is another concept I want to introduce; it’s called “lock on, lock out”. The way I learned about this was when we were shown a card that had a picture of an old lady on it. If you look at the picture a certain way, instead of the old lady you see a young lady. If you look at it another way, you see the old lady instead of the young lady. They passed the card out and announced that everybody had a different card and asked each person, which card did they receive, the one with the old lady or the one with the young lady. You then go around the room and we say, “I got the old one” or “I got the young one”. It was split about 50-50. The fact was, everybody had the same card. They just saw something different. Then it was just a matter of taking all the ones who had the old lady and showing them the young lady or vice versa for those who had the young lady, show them the old lady. You showed them what you were seeing. This is where it really got interesting because no matter how hard we tried to get somebody to see what we were seeing; they couldn’t see it. They were locked onto their first impression, their first picture. Once they saw that young lady, they were locked on.

We could break the pattern, but it took about ten or fifteen minutes of convincing people; “no, it’s really there, you can do it, look at this, here’s the cheek bone, here’s the nose.” What was amazing was understanding that when we lock onto something, our mind—

our Reticular Activating System—locks out all the other options because we want to be right. More than anything else we want to be right, so our mind will lock out things that prove us wrong.

Now let's begin the "stalking" through scripture of this biblical character. We are going to be talking about is Jeroboam. The guy that built the two calves in Dan and Bethel and was one of the very evil people in the Bible. He caused all of Israel to sin. He was just a really bad guy. That is who we are going to track. But before we track him through scripture let's look at our own history. There was a time when we didn't keep the Sabbath. Maybe some of us—not me—were born in the church and we have always kept the Sabbath. But for some, they went to church on Sunday and then all of a sudden, they saw stuff they hadn't seen before and now they understand about the Sabbath. The Church of God kept the Feast of Pentecost on Monday for years and couldn't see anything else. Then all of a sudden, some truth broke through the barrier and then everybody kept the Feast of Pentecost on Sunday. The information to show when Pentecost was, it didn't suddenly appear; it was always there, we just couldn't see it.

Turn to 1 Kings 11:26 to begin.

1 Kings 11:26 *Then Solomon's servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king. (NKJV)*

We're going to find out why in a little bit.

27) And this is what caused him to rebel against the king: Solomon had built the Millo and repaired the damages to the City of David his father.

28) The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph. (NKJV)

We see here that Jeroboam was a young, natural born leader who got things done and was noticed by Solomon. Also notice that at the time, that he was being elevated, who was his hero? Jeroboam's hero would have been Solomon. So to learn a little bit about Solomon we will go to 1 Kings 1:39.

1 Kings 1:39 *Then Zadok the priest took a horn of oil from the tabernacle and anointed Solomon. And they blew the horn, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" (NKJV)*

There was obviously a story that led up to that scene. Look at 1 Kings 3:3.

1 Kings 3:3 *And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.*

4) Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. (NKJV)

Lock onto that; Solomon burned a thousand offerings on that altar at Gibeon, because we are going to join the dots a little bit later.

5) At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask! What shall I give you?"

6) And Solomon said: You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.

7) Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.

8) And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted.

9) Therefore, give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

10) The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

11) Then God said to him: Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,

12) behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.

13) And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.

14) So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

15) Then Solomon awoke; and indeed, it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants. (NKJV)

Solomon got off to a very, very good start as the King of Israel. The people who respected him and honored him and tracked him, saw that he was smart, wise, and blessed by Yehovah. But Solomon didn't end up that way. 1 Kings 11:1 is the sad part when you look at how Solomon started off so strongly.

1 Kings 11:1 *But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—*

- 2) *from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love.*
- 3) *And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.*
- 4) *For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.*
- 5) *For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.*
- 6) *Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David.*
- 7) *Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.*
- 8) *And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.*
- 9) *So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,*
- 10) *and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. (NKJV)*

Verse 11 is interesting.

- 11) *Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, [so this is the third time Yehovah talked to Solomon] Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.*
- 12) *Nevertheless, I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son.*
- 13) *However, I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.” (NKJV)*

Here's why I find that interesting. Whenever we are reading about Solomon's early life, it's all really good. At the very end of his life, we can read the book of Ecclesiastes and it seems like we're reading about a repentant Solomon and yet we're reading here that at the end of his life, he was building temples and bringing in priests and had done all this stuff. But here it says God spoke to him a third time and I'm curious that if God speaks to you the third time and says, here's what you've done and I'm going to take the kingdom away, I wonder if that could have been the inspiration for Solomon to repent and write the book of Ecclesiastes. It's pure speculation but it seems kind of an interesting thought to think about.

As you see Solomon's life progress and he is building all these temples to foreign gods and I'm sure bringing in the priests from his foreign wives' countries, everybody is watching. Jeroboam can see it. Everybody can see what's going on.

1 Kings 11:29 *Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite. (NKJV)*

Shiloh is where the tabernacle was before the temple. You might say that Shiloh was HQ at the time. Here's a guy from HQ.

29 continued) ... met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field.

30) Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces.

31) And he said to Jeroboam, Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you.

32) (but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel) ... (NKJV)

Just take note of that, they are going to get one tribe for the sake of David and for the sake of Jerusalem.

33) because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David.

34) However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes.

35) But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you—ten tribes.

36) And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there.

37) So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel.

38) Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you.

39) And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.

40) Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. (NKJV)

Jeroboam was a natural born leader; he could get things done but Solomon knew that Jeroboam had been told that he was going to get the ten tribes because God had told Solomon in his third meeting, “You are going to lose the ten tribes but not in your lifetime. Solomon saw Jeroboam as a threat—he was a threat.

41) Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

42) And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.

43) Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place. (NKJV)

You can see just from what we have read so far, how Jeroboam would create a picture in his mind of how God had chosen him out of all the people and he was going to get ten tribes—didn’t know how or when—but this would have been the picture in his mind. Judah was going to get Jerusalem and there was going to be one tribe for the sake of David, for the sake of Jerusalem. This is the story.

1 Kings 12:2 *So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard it (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt),*

3) that they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying ... (NKJV)

This is their story.

4) Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, [remember earlier we said he was building this city, rebuilding Milo and we know he built all these temples so he had a lot going on, he was doing a lot of building and working everybody to death] and we will serve you.”

5) So, he said to them, Depart for three days, then come back to me.” And the people departed. (NKJV)

The people were tired of building temples to false gods for the sake of Solomon’s wives. They have had it up to “here”.

6) Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, How do you advise me to answer these people?”

7) And they spoke to him, saying, If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.” (NKJV)

So from good counselors came wisdom, truth and reality.

8) *But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.*

9) *And he said to them, What advice do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, Lighten the yoke which your father put on us ?”*

10) *Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us’—thus you shall say to them: [this was not a good thing to say] My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s waist!*

11) *And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!*
(NKJV)

The young men came up with a different story that was more appealing to the benefit of Rehoboam than, “We are going to lighten the load on everybody.”

12) *So, Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had directed, saying, Come back to me the third day.”*

13) *Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him;*

14) *and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy ... (NKJV)*

Then he’s just giving taking the advice of the young men. Verse 16.

16) *Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying: What share have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now, see to your own house, O David!” So Israel departed to their tents.*

17) *But Rehoboam reigned over the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah.*

18) *Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was in charge of the revenue; but all Israel stoned him with stones, and he died. Therefore King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste to flee to Jerusalem.*

19) *So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.*

20) *Now it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come back, they sent for him and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel. There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. (NKJV)*

An interesting point here is that Jeroboam had been selected by God to be the king but scripture does not indicate that he was an anointed king like David and Solomon were. Instead, it says he was appointed by the congregation. I got to wondering if any of the kings of Israel were anointed and actually, they were. Elijah, as one of his final missions

was to anoint Hazael as king over Syria and Jehu as king over Israel. I thought that was interesting. I had assumed that he would have been anointed king, but he wasn't. We saw how Solomon started out well and then how he went south, now in 1 Kings 12 we're going to see the same thing happened to Jeroboam.

1 Kings 12:26 *And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now the kingdom may return to the house of David:*

27) If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah.” (NKJV)

This was a story that he was telling himself. This whole going to Jerusalem was a threat and it really didn't make any sense. The only reason that he didn't have all the tribes was because God was preserving this one tribe for the sake of David and Jerusalem. They should have them and we have our ten tribes. This was the story.

28) Therefore, the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!” (NKJV)

There was a threat and here was a solution. “We'll just let David's house be David's house and we'll do everything for ourselves.”

29) And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.

30) Now this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.

31) He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi. (NKJV)

He did some bad stuff.

32) Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. (NKJV)

So, what could possibly have been the motivation for what Jeroboam did? What kind of stories was he telling himself in his mind and how was he justifying these decisions so that it made sense to him and everybody else? I am now just going to speculate a little. But I am also going to bring out some parts of scripture and we can just connect the dots and know exactly what was going on.

It's possible that he moved the feasts—the Fall festival—a month later because whenever you looked at when the fall festival was, it was right before the Feast of Tabernacles. If you look at how the calendar works, the calendar shifts forward about

eleven days every year and then after it shifts far enough you have an interlinear month so then you are back to normal. Rushing the harvest would get more of a rush and more of a rush every year until you have your interlinear year then you would be back to having time to do everything. It could have been just inconvenient. But verse 33 says:

33) So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense. (NKJV)

He was doing what he saw Solomon do a long time ago before the temple existed. He would build an altar and make sacrifices. So, what was Jeroboam buying into in order to justify these actions. He looked at Solomon and asked why did Solomon lose the kingdom? He built all these temples to foreign gods, he brought in priests and false religion. We don't want to do that. We do not want to bring in false religion. We only want pure religion; we're going to let David have his religion and we're going to have pure religion right here. How did he justify all that?

There are some stories in the Bible that are nice stories but until I was preparing for this sermon, I did not really connect the dots as to why these stories were so important. First of all, we are going to ask the question: Why did Jeroboam choose Dan? We are going to find out that it had been an ancient place of worship all the way back to the book of Judges, before Israel had its first king. Let's go to Judges 17:1.

Judges 17:1 *Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name was Micah.*

2) And he said to his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears—here is the silver with me; I took it." And his mother said, May you be blessed by the LORD, my son!"

3) So when he had returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you."

4) Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah. (NKJV)

You might be wondering, what does this have to do with Jeroboam. Well, we shall see.

5) The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

6) In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

7) Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he was a Levite, and was staying there.

8) *The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find a place. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.*

9) *And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?" So he said to him, "I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find a place to stay."*

10) *Micah said to him, "Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten shekels of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance." So the Levite went in.*

11) *Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him.*

12) *So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah.*

13) *Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!" (NKJV)*

It's interesting that you see all the synchronism here—you have things that obviously have nothing to do with Yehovah mixed in. They are using the name of Yehovah and they are trying to worship Yehovah but in a twisted way. Also notice, to be a priest, you have to be from the line of Aaron; you can't just be a Levite, Levites weren't priests, they served the priests. They had that wrong too.

We're going to continue in Judges 18:1.

Judges 18:1 *In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day their inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them.*

2) *So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, "Go, search the land." So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there.*

3) *While they were at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. They turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What do you have here?"*

4) *He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest."*

5) *So they said to him, "Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous."*

6) *And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD be with you on your way."*

7) *So the five men departed and went to Laish. They saw the people who were there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. There were no rulers in the land who might put them to shame for anything. They were far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone.*

8) *Then the spies came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brethren said to them, "What is your report?"*

9) So they said, *Arise, let us go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it is very good. Would you do nothing? Do not hesitate to go, and enter to possess the land.*

10) *When you go, you will come to a secure people and a large land. For God has given it into your hands, a place where there is no lack of anything that is on the earth."*

11) *And six hundred men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war.*

12) *Then they went up and encamped in Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore, they call that place Mahaneh Dan to this day. There it is, west of Kirjath Jearim.)*

13) *And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.*

14) *Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their brethren, Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a molded image? Now therefore, consider what you should do."*

15) *So they turned aside there, and came to the house of the young Levite man—to the house of Micah—and greeted him.*

16) *The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who were of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate.*

17) *Then the five men who had gone to spy out the land went up. Entering there, they took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image. The priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men who were armed with weapons of war.*

18) *When these went into Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image, the priest said to them, What are you doing?"*

19) *And they said to him, Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. Is it better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?"*

20) *So the priest's heart was glad; and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image, and took his place among the people.*

21) *Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them.*

22) *When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah's house gathered together and overtook the children of Dan.*

23) *And they called out to the children of Dan. So they turned around and said to Micah, What ails you, that you have gathered such a company?"*

24) *So he said, You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, What ails you?"*

25) *And the children of Dan said to him, Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives of your household!"*

26) *Then the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.*

27) *So, they took the things Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and went to Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire.*

28) *There was no deliverer, because it was far from Sidon, and they had no ties with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth Rehob. So, they rebuilt the city and dwelt there.*

29) *And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly was Laish.*

30) *Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. (NKJV)*

It is interesting that in the Septuagint and the Vulgate, it reads, “Gershom, son of Moses”.

31) *So they set up for themselves Micah's carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh. (NKJV)*

Looking up in some encyclopedias, one of the accounts of Micah's idol refers to a priest as being a sojourner there. If you remember, the name Gershom means “sojourner” so the accounts of Micah's idol also include reference to Jonathan, son of Gershom as being a priest. The Rabbinic text, known as the Seder Olam, has Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, when it quotes this verse. Was it really that Gershom or was it a different Gershom? It really doesn't matter. The fact is, it makes a good story and if you want to buy into the story, you could say, Jerusalem got Aaron but here in Dan, we have Moses. We have the line of Moses, flesh and blood right here.

Also, it's interesting that many suggest that the bull's—this is pure speculation, I'm not saying this—and calves were like the cherubim and that God would be above the calf like God is above the cherubim in the Ark of the Covenant. They get this because in Baal worship, that's one of the elements that they believe that Baal would be above the golden calf. Did they really believe that or did they not believe it because some did, some didn't—it's speculation, we don't know. It makes a good story and that is all we are really talking about, a story. How do they justify in their minds what they are doing?

Why Dan? Dan had been a place of worship since before there was a king in Israel. They had the sons of Moses, the flesh and blood descendants of Moses as priests and had been worshipping there. They had their own Ephod, they had their own temple, they had everything there. And had had it for a long time. If you look at the archaeological information, they had found more archaeology in Dan to support the fact that there was a big temple there and a big altar there. They found all kinds of items in Dan; more in Dan than Bethel. So, what's true, what's not true? They are finding pieces of the puzzle and putting it together. If you look, Micah thought he could have an Ephod, he could have a Levite, he could have shrines and that he was worshipping Yehovah.

Even though we can look at that and say that's absurd—that's a story. You could say that was the culture around that area.

Also notice in Dan, who did they wipe out? They wiped out the Sidonians. If you remember who Ahab's wife was—Jezebel—a Sidonian princess totally committed to Baal worship. So they wiped out this place that probably already had some calves and idols around—who knows. It makes a good story though.

We know how you can build a story around Dan, how you can justify Dan? We've been worshiping in Dan, we've been sacrificing in Dan, we have had a temple in Dan since before Saul was king. So you can see that. Now we'll ask the question, why Bethel? This place, Bethel is mentioned way back in the time of Abraham, even before an actual city existed. We're going to pick up the story of Jacob because Jacob made it famous.

Genesis 29:10 *Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.*
(NKJV)

This is when he was running away from his brother and he headed to Syria so that his brother didn't kill him.

11) So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

12) Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

13) And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

14) Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

15) Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

16) Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."

17) And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, [house of God is Bethel] and this is the gate of heaven!"

18) Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.

19) And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

20) Then Jacob made a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on,

21) *so that I come back to my father s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.*

22) *And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.” (NKJV)*

Genesis 31:13 is a scripture where God is talking to Jacob.

Genesis 31:13 *I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family. (NKJV)*

Now in Genesis 35:1 we can continue to look at the story behind why Jeroboam would choose Bethel.

Genesis 35:1 *Then God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, [so Jacob is in Syria and he’s leaving] who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.”*

2) *And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.*

3) *Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.” (NKJV)*

Before I prepared for this sermon, I never really connected the fact that they were getting rid of the gods. I thought at one time they were getting rid of gods and foreign items because they were going to go see his parents, back to where he lives and you can't have all these pagan items around you. But I never connected it to the location. They were going to the house of God; they had to get rid of everything, they had to be pure so that is what they were doing.

4) *So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.*

5) *And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.*

6) *So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him.*

7) *And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother. (NKJV)*

So, El Bethel is God, House of God.

8) *Now Deborah, Rebekah s nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.*

9) *Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him.*

10) *And God said to him, Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.” So He called his name Israel.*
11) *Also God said to him: I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.*
12) *The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.”*
13) *Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him.*
14) *So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it.*
15) *And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.*
(NKJV)

Can you see how Jeroboam would be thinking?

“We have the house of God right here in Israel, we don’t need Jerusalem, we don’t need all their pagan temples, we don’t need that connection. We’ve got our own rituals.”

We’re going to mention Saul in a little bit because Saul has something to do with Bethel as well.

Judges 21:19 *Then they said, In fact, there is a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh, which is north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah.”* (NKJV)

So, they had the Feast of Tabernacles there.

Now in 1 Samuel 10:1.

1 Samuel 10:1 *Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: Is it not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance?*
2) *When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel’s tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. And now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you, saying, What shall I do about my son?”*
3) *Then you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There three men going up to God at Bethel [which means house of God] will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine.* (NKJV)

You can see that there are so many religious things that are connected to Bethel, including the name, which is house of God. Bethel had history with Abraham, Jacob, Israel and with Saul. All the history was known.

Now back to Jeroboam in 1 Kings 13 and finish up with Jeroboam's sad story.

1 Kings 13:1 *And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.*

2) *Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.*

3) *And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out."*

4) *So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, Arrest him!" Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself.*

5) *The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.*

6) *Then the king answered and said to the man of God, Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me."*

So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as before. (NKJV)

The one thing I want you to notice is that it says, "Please entreat the favor of Yehovah, *your* God—not *my* God." You can see how things had deteriorated.

7) *Then the king said to the man of God, Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward."*

8) *But the man of God said to the king, If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place.*

9) *For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.*

10) *So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel. (NKJV)*

In verse 11 it mentions a sad story associated with this and an old prophet.

11) Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king.

You can read that story yourselves; we don't have time to go through it. But he tricked the true prophet into coming back to Bethel and it was not a good situation.

Continuing in 1Kings 13...

1 Kings 13:33 *After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places.*

34) And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth. (NKJV)

Now let's go to 1 Kings 14, to another story. Jeroboam had so many chances but, what was he thinking? What was he telling himself?

1 Kings 14:1 *At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick.*

2) And Jeroboam said to his wife, Please arise, and disguise yourself, that they may not recognize you as the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Indeed, Ahijah the prophet is there, who told me that I would be king over this people. (NKJV)

He gives his wife instructions to go see Abijah. Now let's go down to verse 7; this is what Abijah is telling her.

7) Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus says the LORD God of Israel: Because I exalted you from among the people, and made you ruler over My people Israel,

8) and tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to you; and yet you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes;

9) but you have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molded images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back—

10) therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel, bond and free; I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as one takes away refuse until it is all gone.

11) The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Jeroboam and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field; for the LORD has spoken!"

12) Arise therefore, go to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die.

13) And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something good toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. (NKJV)

Verse 13 I find very interesting; I'm going to have to dig into that. It says he is the only one that shall come to the grave because in him is found something good toward Yehovah, God of Israel.

14) Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam; this is the day. What? Even now! (NKJV)

So, Jeroboam has got a bad ending too. It says in verse 20:

20) The period that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years. So he rested with his fathers. Then Nadab his son reigned in his place. (NKJV)

When you look at what Jeroboam did, he didn't want the people to go to the temple in Jerusalem. Why would he not want that? He questioned their loyalty. Could they go there and be loyal to him? In his mind, in his story, no they couldn't do that.

Another thing to consider is there were three pilgrimage feasts per year and in those pilgrimaging feasts was when they brought their tithes to the temple. So they had 10% of their harvest, 10% of their animals and everything they would tithe on that they took to the temple. When you have that quantity of goods leaving your country, leaving the ten tribes and going to the one tribe, that would be a reason to say, "Something isn't quite right with that; we need to keep those tithes here. The only way to keep those tithes here within the ten tribes would be to keep the festivals here within our territory."

Another thing to consider is that Dan was 200 miles away from Jerusalem. We think 200 miles we could drive in about four hours but if you are taking carts full of your tithes—your grains or harvests, whether it's fall festival (that would be grapes and figs)—and you're driving 10% of your animals, then you're not going to be travelling very fast. You're going to be going really slowly. Going 200 miles could take three or four weeks. You go a three-week trip, you're there ten days, then three weeks back and it's more than two months to make this trek. So it's really, really inconvenient because it's so far away. "We've got our own place in Dan; we've been practicing worship here for years and years." So, you can see how people could tell the story.

Another thing to consider is that at the time that Jeroboam was alive, you had the Torah written, but it was all they had access to. The job of the Levites was to be teachers. But if you banish all the Levites out of the country or you de-elevate them to where they are no longer doing their job of teaching the Torah, then the accuracy of thinking, the accuracy of God's will is lost. Then the synchronism can creep in really easily because you don't have somebody who is educated telling the truth; helping you through all this stuff.

In conclusion, the most dangerous stories are the ones that we make up ourselves. The ones where we are looking at our habits, looking at our attitudes, our beliefs, our expectations and where our point of view represents truth. It represents sanity. Everything else has to be false. Except, we are dealing with a carnal mind; we are dealing with deception, with scotomas and blind spots and opinions and authority figures who have told us things that weren't true so we have all this "head trash" going on. We can't just assume that we know the truth. We have to search for the truth and we have to search our own heart, our own thoughts, attitudes and beliefs and ask the question, "Is it the truth? Could I have a blind spot?" Now you're trying to look through the blind spot.

Turn to Romans 15:4.

Romans 15:4 *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. (NKJV)*

1 Corinthians 10, another little quick scripture that you're familiar with.

1 Corinthians 10:11 *Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (NKJV)*

I have looked at some of these stories in the Old Testament, about the shrine at Dan and Micah and all that and I thought they were interesting reading but I never really connected that this history is important to answer the question of, "Why Dan?" Then you look at the name Bethel, which means House of God. That's a pretty big deal; it had a lot of history. There were a lot of reasons as to why that could be built into a story to justify what you would think you would need to do to keep your country secure, to keep the money in the country and to keep it all from leaving.

Last scripture is Psalms 119:17.

Psalms 119:17 *Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word.
18) Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law. (NKJV)*

We have to pray that Yehovah will open our eyes and we can see through our blind spots, our preconceived notions. That we can see through incorrect things that we may have been taught and really search for the truth and depend on Yehovah to open our eyes and give us the vision.