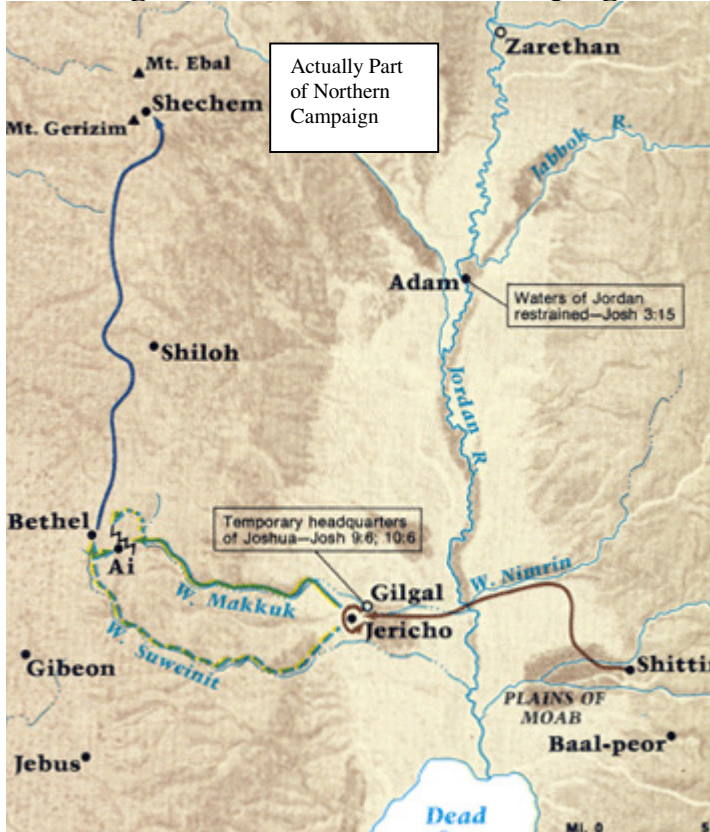


# Joshua

## October 4, 2009

### Joshua 7-8

#### I. Crossing the Jordan/Central Campaign: Chapters 2-8



The purpose of this chapter is clear. The LORD has given the land to the Israelites as their victory based on His power has demonstrated. Yet, they cannot take the land without obeying the LORD.

#### II. Achan's Sin Becomes Israel's sin: Josh 7:1

Josh 7:1

**7:1 But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the LORD's anger burned against Israel.**

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God ordered the devoted things to be totally destroyed or given for use to the LORD. Even though Achan appears to have acted alone, the LORD's anger is directed not just at Him, but also against all Israel. The point is that the Israelites should have taken precautions to assure that nothing was taken.

#### III. Ai Is Not Yours: Josh 7:2-5

The Israelites attacked Ai and are immediately repulsed. For the first time, we see casualties recorded. The battle was likely very short. It probably went something like the Israelites attacked, and a few of the Israelites were killed. Seeing these deaths happening so quickly and so easily, they would have immediately turned and run. The men of Ai would have

chased the Israelite army and killed some more of them. If the attack had taken more time, the death toll would have been much larger.

Was it fair for God to punish the whole nation, and specifically the 36 men killed and their families, for the sin of one man?

Presumably, the answer to this question is obvious. The text also makes it clear that the Israelites were over confident. Note the following:

- i. There is no indication that the LORD's advice was sought.
- ii. Josh. 8:25 says that there were 12,000 men in the city, but two to three thousand are sent to take it.
- iii. There is no documentation that the Israelites had put controls in place in Jericho to assure that the devoted things were destroyed.

#### **IV. Prayer Is Always Good: Josh 7:6-9**

Like Moses, Joshua was able to approach the ark better than the High Priest who could only approach it on the Day of Atonement or when moving it. In verse 7, Joshua sounds a little like the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, but his use of Sovereign LORD (*adonay YHWH*) shows his respect. In verses 8 and 9, he sounds like Moses pleading for the Israelites.

#### **V. Stop Moaning and Get to Work: Josh. 7:10-15**

Apparently, the LORD does not want Joshua lying down on the job; there is work to be done!

After explaining to Joshua why the Israelites failed at Ai by allowing some of the devoted things to be stolen and not devoted to the LORD as commanded, He tells him to get the congregated ready by consecrating them and how to find the guilty party. It is not clear how the guilty party was determined, but the procedure of starting with all Israel and then working down to the man through tribal hierarchies is clear. In a similar situation later in history, lots were cast:

**1 Sam 14:41-42**

**41 Then Saul prayed to the LORD, the God of Israel, "Give me the right answer." And Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot, and the men were cleared. 42 Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and Jonathan my son." And Jonathan was taken.**

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#### **VI. Guilty Party Found: Josh. 7:16-23**

The Israelites follow God's commands to the letter, and the guilty party is discovered.

Concerning verse 19-20, the act of confessing will give glory and praise to God. The Pharisees say something similar to the no-longer blind man:

**John 9:24**

**24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."**

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The word translated as "praise" ( i.e. "glory") can also be translated as "confess." Perhaps that is the meaning in this section.

In verse 21, Notice the transactional progression of sin:

- Saw
- Coveted

- Took
- Hid

## VII. Punishment: Josh. 7:24-26

Was it fair that Achan's sons and daughters were killed as punishment for his sin?

They were apparently stone and burned. Their things were apparently burned as well. Then all of the destroyed stuff was put under the heap. Given that other silver and gold was given to the LORD for actual use, it is not clear if they were burned (which would merely oxidize their surfaces) and then buried (which would have caused the heap to be visited by gravediggers) or if they would have been given directly to the LORD.

“Achor” means trouble. So, the place is the valley of trouble. The place name became Achan's name in later genealogies:

**1 Chron 2:6-7**

**6 The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol and Darda-five in all. 7 The son of Carmi: Achar, who brought trouble on Israel by violating the ban on taking devoted things.**

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## VIII. Do Not Be Afraid: Josh. 8:1-2

Given the size of Ai and the size of the Israelite full force, there should not have been any question as to whether the city could be taken. However, the earlier defeat and the fact that God had told them that they could not beat anyone without Him would have caused concern in the Israelite camp.

As with Jericho, we see that both God's support and human effort are used in conquering the cities. Obviously, the LORD could do it without help. Why do you think that He chose to use imperfect vessels to help Him?

**Critic's Rebuke:** Did the LORD learn anything from Achan incident, such as not being keeping too restrictive with them for fear that the Israelites would rebel? Of course not, the LORD would have known that Achan was going to do what he did before he did it.

## IX. Ambushing Ai: Josh. 8:3-13

In verse 3, the whole army does not appear to go into the battle. Apparently though, it was ready if needed. Joshua is not repeating his mistake of being overly confident again. However, only 30,000 are actually going into battle.

The chronology of these events is sometimes debated. My take is the following:

- i. Joshua prepares the entire army for battle.
- ii. Then he sends out 30,000 men at night to do the actual fighting.
- iii. From this force, 5000 men will act as the ambush force.
- iv. Joshua spent the night with the full Israelite army.
- v. Then he joined his forces for battle in the night or early the next morning while it was still dark.

The ambush is set apparently this way, the 25,000 man force (30,000-5,000) attacked Ai and Bethel from the front. The 5,000 man force sneaks behind the cities. The rest of the army remains in reserve. The Israelites are ready for battle.

The mention of Bethel in verse 12 is a little surprising, but the two cities are very close together and often mentioned together in Scripture. Perhaps the men of Bethel had become brave after Ai single-handedly defeated the Israelites.

## **X. The Battle and Follow Up: Josh. 8:14-29**

The battle is told in some detail. The Israelites are totally victorious.

In verse 26, while Joshua's act was a symbol to begin the destruction, it was also apparently more than that as it was also a motion like Moses raising his hands in Exodus 17 enabling God's power to lead Joshua's troops to victory.

Concerning the humiliation of the Ai king, this punishment is noted for lawbreakers in Israel in Deuteronomy and applies apparently even to evil, enemy kings:

**Deut 21:22-23**

**22 If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, 23 you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.**

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## **XI. Curses and Blessings: Josh. 8:30-35**

The ceremony commanded by Moses in Deut. 27 will now occur.

**Deut 27:4-5**

**4 And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I command you today, and coat them with plaster. 5 Build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool upon them.**

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There is some question as to exactly when this occurred. The usual assumption is that it occurs shortly after the battle at Ai since it is located here in our Bible.

In a sense, the Israelites broke the covenant through the actions of Achan. So, a covenant renewal is appropriate here; also for the first time, the Israelites have seen the "curses" in action in the Promise Land. The book of Joshua does not record the military conquest around the two mountains. Perhaps, they were not yet conquered. Clearly with the victories already completed, the LORD could scare the people sufficiently to keep them away.

The blessings and curses go together. In chapters 8 and 9, the Israelites have seen both in action. See Deuteronomy for more them. In the final verse, exactly what is read is uncertain. The law can refer to different things, such as the 10 Commandments, some summary of the laws such as the 613 laws or the laws mentioned in Deut. 27, or the entire Pentateuch.

## **XII. When Should We "Bother" God?**

Why is it important to obey God and follow His lead fully? Is He interested in the minute details of our lives? Do we want to bother Him with the tiny details of our lives, when He has a whole universe to run? How much of ourselves do we give over to God?