

## Joshua 7:1-26 **Defeat at Ai**

### The sin of Achan brought the wrath of God on the whole of the Children of Israel

<sup>1</sup> But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.

### Spies sent to Ai

<sup>2</sup> Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country."

### Advice of the Spies regarding Ai

So the men went up and spied out Ai. <sup>3</sup> And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few."

### 3,000 man army of Israel defeated by the few of Ai – Israel fears

<sup>4</sup> So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. <sup>5</sup> And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

### Joshua's grief and prayer

<sup>6</sup> Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. <sup>7</sup> And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all--to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! <sup>8</sup> O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? <sup>9</sup> For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"

### God knows all – Someone in Israel sinned – God will not help until the sinner is destroyed and the accursed thing is removed

<sup>10</sup> So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? <sup>11</sup> Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff. <sup>12</sup> Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.

<sup>13</sup> Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: "There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."

### Instruction for discerning the guilty and purification of the People – Penalty for the sinner

<sup>14</sup> 'In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man.

15 Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.' "

### Search for the guilty party

16 So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. 17 He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. 18 Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

### Call for confession

19 Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me."

### Achan confessed

20 And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: 21 When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

### Confession confirmed

22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. 23 And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

### Preparation for executing the prescribed punishment

24 Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor.

### Punishment executed by all Israel

25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26 Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day. NKJV

Facts Revealed:

### The sin of Achan brought the wrath of God on the whole of the Children of Israel

- ✧ 1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, **for Achan** the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, **took of the accursed things**; so **the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.** [Joshua 7:1]
- ✧ God knows the secret sin of the individual.
- ✧ The sin of an individual impacts the entire society of which he is a part, to bring against that society the wrath of God, even when the society is unaware of the sin.
- ✧ God is using Israel as an example to demonstrate the character of God to the world.

- ✧ God cannot therefore allow secret sin to go undetected and unpunished, the world is watching.

### Spies sent to Ai

- ✧ 2 Now Joshua sent men **from Jericho to Ai**, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, **"Go up and spy out the country."** [Joshua 7:2]
- ✧ Joshua is ignorant of the sin of Achan, as is the rest of the Children of Israel.

### Advice of the Spies regarding Ai

- ✧ So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, **"Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few."** [Joshua 7:2-3]
- ✧ The people were confident that they could go to war with God helping and come out victoriously.
- ✧ The spies were not aware that God had withdrawn from Israel because of the sin of Achan.
- ✧ There is no obvious evidence when the Spirit of God is present or absent that we can sense or detect naturally. [Judges 16:20]
- ✧ No one prayed and sought advice from God, but they went on their own understanding. [Proverbs 3:5]
- ✧ Ai was small, so it should have been a simple matter to defeat them, since they had defeated much greater forces on their way to this point with the help of God.
- ✧ The spies were attempting to follow the faith of Joshua and Caleb when they had returned from spying out the Promised Land from the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh. [Numbers 13:26, 14:6-9]

### 3,000 man army of Israel defeated by the few of Ai – Israel fears

- ✧ 4 So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai. 5 And **the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men**, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; **therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.** [Joshua 7:4-5]
- ✧ Ignorance of secret sin cost lives.
- ✧ Arrogant over confidence crumbled by the defeat of the Israeli force.

### Joshua's grief and prayer

- ✧ 6 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, **"Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all--to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! 8 O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies? 9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"** [Joshua 7:6-9]
- ✧ Joshua and the Elders of Israel tore their cloths, put dust on their heads, and cried out.
- ✧ **God brought us over Jordan to destroy us.** The complaint of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years had its affect on Joshua's thinking. What a familiar refrain. [Exodus 5:23, 14:11, Numbers 21:5, Deuteronomy 1:27]
- ✧ Why were they not content to remain on the East of the Jordan River? Forgetting that God had commanded them to cross over Jordan.
- ✧ Joshua blamed the defeat on the cowardice of the army.
- ✧ God's great reputation is shot, and the enemy will be encouraged to attack and destroy Israel. Then what will God do for His great Name?

God knows all – Someone in Israel sinned – God will not help until the sinner is destroyed and the accursed thing is removed

☆ 10 So the LORD said to Joshua: "**Get up!** Why do you lie thus on your face? 11 **Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff.** 12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, **because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.**

13 **Get up, sanctify the people,** and say, '**Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow,** because thus says the LORD God of Israel: "**There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.**" [Joshua 7:10-13]

- ◇ God knows the secret sin and will not help His people until they take away the sin and the sinner. It is sin that stands between God and His people. [Isaiah 59:2]
- ◇ This calls for discernment, confession, and correction.
- ◇ God knows the problem and the way for atonement.
- ◇ God freely informs His people of their way back into His grace.

**Instruction for discerning the guilty and purification of the People – Penalty for the sinner**

☆ 14 'In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. 15 **Then it shall be that he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.'** " [Joshua 7:14-15]

**Search for the guilty party**

☆ 16 So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of **Judah** was taken. 17 He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the **Zarhites**; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and **Zabdi** was taken. 18 Then he brought his household man by man, and **Achan** the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. [Joshua 7:16-18]

- ◇ God is able to pinpoint the cause of the problem, because God is omniscient (knowing all).
- ◇ The sins of a man impacts his entire family.

**Call for confession**

☆ 19 Now Joshua said to Achan, "**My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.**" [Joshua 7:19]

- ◇ The sinner is found out and everyone knows, because we do things in secret, but God does it openly. The judgment of a sinner is quite public in order to serve as a deterrent for anyone who might be tempted to follow suit.
- ◇ Though it is known, still confession is required.

**Achan confessed**

☆ 20 And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: 21 **When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.**" [Joshua 7:20-21]

### Confession confirmed

- ☆ 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. 23 And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. [Joshua 7:22-23]
- ◇ The evidence is found and made public, thus the confession is confirmed.

### Preparation for executing the prescribed punishment in the valley of decision named Achor

- ☆ 24 Then **Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor.** [Joshua 7:24]

### Punishment executed by all Israel

- ☆ 25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." **So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. 26 Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day.** So the **LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger.** Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day. [Joshua 7:25-26]
- ◇ God was satisfied when Justice had been carried out speedily.
- ◇ This set an example and warning for all who hear of it. [Deuteronomy 13:11, 17:13, 19:20, 21:21, 31:12-13]
- ◇ Capital punishment is to be carried out at the hands of men according to the Laws of God.
- ◇ It is a deterrent against evil.
- ◇ The valley was called the Valley of Achor until the day of the writing of the book of Joshua.