

# JOSHUA: CONSEQUENCES OF ACHAN'S SIN

Joshua 7 - 8

## STRUCTURE

**Key-persons:** Joshua and Achan

**Key-locations:** Jericho and Ai

### Key-repetitions:

- Forbidden plunder: Achan took things that should have been offered to the Lord (Jos 7:1); the Lord told Joshua that Israel took forbidden plunder (Jos 7:11); the Lord revealed to Joshua that Achan had taken forbidden plunder (Jos 7:16-18); Achan confessed that he took forbidden plunder (Jos 7:20-21).
- Israel's despair after defeat by Ai: the people's hearts melted (Jos 7:5); Joshua ripped his clothes and fell face down to the ground (Jos 7:6); Israel's leaders threw dirt on their heads (Jos 7:6); Joshua prayed a prayer of despair (Jos 7:7-9).

### Key-attitudes:

- Achan's greed.
- Israel's self-confidence over conquering Ai.
- Israel's despair after Ai defeated the Israelites' army.
- God's condemnation of disobedience.

### Initial-situation:

The Israelites were camped along the east bank of the Jordan River. On the other side of the river was the Promised Land of Canaan. Joshua chose two men and sent them to spy out the city of Jericho. A prostitute named Rahab hid the two spies.

The Lord stopped the flow of the flooding Jordan River and the Israelites walked across the Jordan River into Canaan.

The Israelites followed God's instruction to march around the city of Jericho. The city walls of Jericho collapsed and the Israelites destroyed every living thing in it – people and animals, except Joshua spared Rahab, the prostitute, and her family. God had commanded that the Israelites put silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron into the Lord's treasury, and to burn everything else.

### Initial-problem:

Achan, a man from the tribe of Judah, took some things from the city of Jericho that should have been offered to the Lord.

### Final-situation:

God gave the Israelites victory over the city of Ai and it was totally destroyed.

## BIBLE STORY

Achan, a man from the tribe of Judah, took some things from the city of Jericho that should have been offered to the Lord. The Lord's anger burned against the Israelites (Jos 7:1).

Joshua sent men from Jericho to spy out the region of the city of Ai. The men spied out Ai, returned to Jericho, and reported to Joshua, "Don't send many warriors against Ai. Send two or three thousand men since only a few men are there." So about three thousand Israelite men went, but the men of Ai defeated the Israelites and killed thirty-six Israelites. The hearts of the people melted and became like water (Jos 7:2-5).

Joshua ripped his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the Lord's Ark, remaining there till evening. Israel's leaders did the same, and they threw dirt on their heads.

Joshua said, "Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you bring this people across the Jordan River to defeat us by the Amorites? O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been defeated by its enemies? The other people of the country will hear about this. They will gang up on us and wipe out our name from the earth. Then what will you do for your own great name?"

The Lord told Joshua, "Stand up! Why are you down on your face? Israel sinned; they took forbidden plunder and put it with their own possessions. They stole from me what was supposed to be destroyed. They hid what they stole. The Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They turned their backs and ran because they have been made subject to destruction. I will not help you unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction" (Jos 7:6-13).

The Lord revealed to Joshua that Achan, of the tribe of Judah, had taken some forbidden plunder from Jericho. Joshua confronted Achan, "Give glory to the Lord God of Israel. Tell me what you have done."

Achan replied, "I sinned against the Lord God of Israel. I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, five pounds of silver, and one and one-quarter pounds of gold. I wanted them, so I took them. They are buried inside my tent, with the silver under the robe."

Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan and everything connected with him: the silver, the robe, the gold, his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys and sheep, and his tent to the Valley of Achor. Then all Israel stoned Achan. Then they stoned the rest of his family and burned them. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger (Jos 7:14-26).

The Israelites again attacked the city of Ai. God gave them victory, and the city of Ai was totally destroyed (Jos 8:1-29).

## GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard

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|    | to understand?                              | 6. | How have you faced similar problems?  |
| 3. | Who are the main characters in the story?   | 7. | Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you? |
| 4. | What problems did the characters face?      | 8. | What does the story tell about God?   |
| 5. | How did the characters face their problems? |    |   |

### SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did the Israelite spies report to Joshua about the city of Ai?
2. What happened when the Israelites attacked the city of Ai?
3. How did Joshua's failure to consult God before sending the soldiers to Ai, contribute to the Israelites' defeat?
4. How did Joshua and the Israelites react to being defeated by the soldiers at Ai?
5. How did Achan's sin bring disaster to all the Israelites?
6. Why does hidden sin have a negative impact on people who know nothing about the sin?
7. Today, how does someone's sin affect the lives of other people?
8. What can the prayer of Joshua teach us about how to pray when disillusioned?
9. Today, what would cause God to remove his presence from a local church or a Christian organization and make them subject to destruction?

### LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God is omniscient. He is aware of a person's secret actions.** God knew when Achan disobeyed divine instruction by taking forbidden things and hiding them (Jos 7:1).
2. **The person who is experiencing God's actions in his life and chooses to disobey clear commands from God, will suffer terrible consequences.** Achan was the first Israelite to disobey clear orders from God in the land of Canaan. He took things that were devoted to the Lord. The Israelites tasted the first sin in the Promised Land which God was giving them. That first sin brought terrible consequences:
  - Many men died (Jos 7:5).
  - Israel's army melted in fear (Jos 7:5).
  - Joshua questioned God (Jos 7:7-9).
  - God threatened to withdraw his presence from the people of Israel (Jos 7:12).
  - Achan and his family were destroyed (Jos 7:24-26).
3. **Failure on the part of God's people should result in spiritual examination instead of mourning and blaming God.** When Ai defeated the Israelites, Joshua fell facedown, mourning and blaming God. The Lord told Joshua to stand up and discover the sin in the community (Jos 7:6-15).

4. **Seeing and desiring that which is prohibited will tempt a person to sin.** Achan confessed that he saw a robe and it was beautiful (Jos 7:21). This reminds us of Eve's temptation where she saw the forbidden fruit and it was pleasing to the eye (Gen 3:6).
5. **God welcomes honest prayers by people who express their true feeling to him.** Joshua was afraid and confused by the defeat at Ai, and he poured out his true feelings to God in prayer (Jos 7:7-9).
6. **When God's people eliminate sin and obey him, they are victorious.** God gave the Israelites victory over the city of Ai after the Israelites eliminated the sin of Achan and they obeyed divine instruction (Jos 8:10).

### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

#### Interaction with Characters in the Story:

Invite listeners to interact with characters in the story with a question. What would you like to say:

- To Achan who is looking at the beautiful forbidden plunder?
- To self-confident Israelites who don't take time to pray before marching to attack Ai?
- To Joshua, who is crying out in despair to the Lord after Ai defeated the Israelites?
- To the Israelites after Ai was defeated?