

**Joshua 7:1 ¶ But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.**

The narrative in this chapter is very sad and ends in another harsh judgment. We are told that “the children of Israel” as a whole committed a trespass (an intentional disregard of God’s command) in the aftermath of the battle of Jericho. Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah of the tribe of Judah secretly took spoils for himself. He thought no one else knew what he had done, but didn’t think about the fact that God knows everything. Because of his actions, the LORD’s anger was directed at the whole congregation.

This poses a challenge to our understanding. We know that scripture is clear in declaring that each person is held accountable for his own sin.

*Ezekiel 18:20 “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”*

I think the key to making sense of it is found in recognizing the LORD as their captain. It was necessary for the people to understand that He needed their commitment as a whole to gain the victory as a whole. Rebellion in the ranks needed to be identified and rooted out before its evil influence could spread.

**Joshua 7:2 And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai.**

**Joshua 7:3 And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither; for they are but few.**

**Joshua 7:4 So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.**

**Joshua 7:5 And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.**

Not knowing what Achan had done, Joshua proceeded to prepare for their next conquest—the city of Ai which was on the east side of Bethel. He sent some men to scope out the area. Chuck Smith notes: “...when you’re in Jericho you’re about twelve hundred feet below sea level. When you get up to Bethel, you’re about twenty-eight hundred feet above sea level.”

When they returned, they reported that it would only take 2000-3000 men to take possession of that city. Joshua sent about 3000 men to attack the city; however, they were beaten back by the men of Ai. In fact, 36 men lost their lives as they men of Ai chased them away from the gate as far back as Shebarim. When the people heard what had happened, they became very afraid.

**Joshua 7:6 ¶ And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads.**

**Joshua 7:7 And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!**

**Joshua 7:8 O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies!**

**Joshua 7:9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?**

Joshua was distraught and rent his clothes and fell before the ark of the LORD. The leaders of the people joined him, and they put dust on their heads as a sign of their mourning. Finally, Joshua asked the LORD why this had happened. He couldn't believe that the LORD had brought them over Jordan only to be destroyed by the Amorites. He even reasoned that it would have been better for them never to have crossed the Jordan. Then he wondered how he could possibly explain why Israel fled from their enemies. He concluded that once the inhabitants of Canaan and its surrounding areas heard what had happened, they would come and destroy the people of Israel. Then, he wondered, how that would affect the honor of the name of the LORD.

**Joshua 7:10 ¶ And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?**

**Joshua 7:11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put *it* even among their own stuff.**

**Joshua 7:12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.**

The LORD asked Joshua why he was lying on his face. The NIV Commentary noted: "Since the gift of the land was part of God's covenant with Israel, Joshua should have known that defeat was not due to any fickleness on God's part but had been caused by Israel's failure to be faithful to the covenant."

He told Joshua that Israel had sinned because they had disobeyed His command and taken booty from the spoils of Jericho and hidden it among their stuff. It was because of this sin that the troops of Israel had been defeated by the men of Ai. The LORD declared that He would no longer fight for them until the stolen items were destroyed.

Several commentators seem to take the position that Joshua was acting without consulting the LORD. I don't agree. I think he was proceeding as the LORD expected him to as the military leader of Israel with the mandated objective from

God to take possession of the land. I believe He would have given them the victory if not for the actions of Achan.

Guzik makes a good application regarding Israel not being able to stand before their enemies: "Israel was under a covenant with God that promised blessing on their obedience, and also promised curses upon their disobedience. We are not under that kind of covenant. Our position with God is made by the work of Jesus on our behalf, not our own works. Yet if we want God's power and presence in our own battles, we must walk in fellowship with Him, and this fellowship is hindered by our own sin and rebellion."

**Joshua 7:13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, *There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.***

**Joshua 7:14 In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, *that* the tribe which the LORD taketh shall come according to the families *thereof*; and the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households; and the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man.**

**Joshua 7:15 And it shall be, *that* he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel.**

Joshua immediately proceeded to rectify the situation. He told the people to make sure they were ceremonially clean for the next day. Someone had brought an accursed thing into the camp, and they would not be allowed to gain the victory over their enemies until it was destroyed. He told them that the next day the LORD would reveal by tribe, by families, by households and by man until they identified the responsible person. The guilty person would be burned with fire, along with everything belonging to him, because he deliberately disobeyed the LORD's command and disgraced the congregation.

**Joshua 7:16 ¶ So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes; and the tribe of Judah was taken:**

**Joshua 7:17 And he brought the family 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:**

**Joshua 7:18 And 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 got up early the next day and did exactly as he had said. The tribe of Judah was identified, the family of the Zarhites, the family of Zabdi, the family of Carmi, and finally his son Achan.

**Joshua 7:19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide *it* not from me.**

**Joshua 7:20** And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:

**Joshua 7:21** When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they *are hid* in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.

Whatever the process used, Joshua knew without doubt that Achan was the guilty party. He urged Achan to make a full confession of what he had done. To his credit, Achan immediately confessed that he had coveted and taken a beautiful garment from Babylon, 200 shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels and hidden them in the ground in the middle of his tent.

**Joshua 7:22** So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, *it was hid* in his tent, and the silver under it.

**Joshua 7:23** And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

**Joshua 7:24** And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor.

Joshua immediately sent men to Achan's tent and found the hidden booty and brought it to Joshua in the sight of the people; they laid it out before the LORD (at the front of the tabernacle I assume). Joshua then took Achan, the silver, the garment, the gold, his sons, his daughters, his livestock, his tent and everything he owned and took them to the valley of Achor.

I think we have to reason that Achan's family were guilty as accomplices to his actions since he could hardly have hidden the things underground in the middle of their living quarters without their knowledge.

**Joshua 7:25** And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.

**Joshua 7:26** And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

Before executing judgment Joshua questioned Achan as to why he had chosen to bring trouble to Israel. He then declared that he would now suffer at the hands of the LORD. Though executed by the people, the judgment was the LORD's. The people then stoned Achan and his family and burned their bodies and belongings with fire. They raised a heap of stones over the body of Achan as a memorial of warning to future generations regarding the consequences for rebellion against the LORD. They named the valley Achor because it means "trouble."