

Joshua Chapter 7

Verses 1-5:

Israel's defeat here is similar to an earlier setback against the Amalekites (Num. 14:39-45).

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 expression "committed a trespass" refers to a breaking of trust between two parties.

The people of Israel broke trust with God when Achan took what was "accursed" in spite of the LORD's command that nothing should be taken from Jericho except the items that were consecrated to Him. (6:18-19).

Achan's "trespass" (literally "treacherous-secret act"), while personally condemnable (verses 20-21), also compromised the holiness of the entire nation.

As a covenant nation, Israel functioned under the twin mandates of corporate solidarity (compare Deut. 6:18), and individual responsibility (Deut. 24:16).

Accordingly, Israel had "committed a trespass" (compare verse 11), in Achan's sin.

The incident was serious because such transgressions bring the holy name and reputation of God into disrepute (compare Deut. 9:26-29).

Achan is referred to as "Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the accursed thing" (1 Chron. 2:7).

He was stoned to death for violating the "ban" during the conquest of Jericho (verse 1).

Achan stole 200 shekels of silver, a Babylonian garment, and a wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels and hid them in the earthen floor of his tent (verse 21).

The sin of Achan was imputed to the whole nation (verses 11-12), and thus they were soundly defeated in the battle of Ai (verses 4-5).

Israel learned the hard way that what one person does could affect the well-being of the whole nation.

He was buried in the valley of Achor ("trouble"), verse 26).

Achor is used in a figurative sense (in Isaiah 65:10 and Hosea 2:15), to describe the messianic age or the time of restoration that would result for the nation of Israel only after they passed through trouble (Joshua 7:1-26).

In the last lesson, we found that God had forbidden the people to take anything from this evil city.

It appears from this, that Achan has done the very thing God had forbidden them to do.

He has been tempted, and taken of the accursed things.

Notice that this is just one man who brought this terrible thing on the entire company of Israelites.

This is similar to one minister going bad, and all Christendom suffering for it.

Sin of this nature, has an effect upon this man, the family he was born into, the tribe he came from, his immediate family and the people of God in general.

This cannot be tolerated.

Verses 2-5

Success makes people more vulnerable to temptation.

Coming off of their victory at Jericho, the Israelites expected Ai to be easily conquered, especially since “they are but few”.

But in a shocking reversal, the Israelites were soundly defeated and suddenly they lost their courage (their “hearts” ... melted”).

This defeat was humiliating, but God’s judgment against Israel’s sin would be horrifying.

Joshua 7:2 "And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which [is] beside Beth-aven, on the east side of Beth-el, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai."

The location of “Ai” has been disputed.

The most commonly held theory that Ai was to be identified with Et-Tell ran into the problem that this site was not occupied during the time of the conquest.

However, recent archaeological evidence convincingly suggest that Et-Tell is not the site of ancient Ai.

Rather, the biblical location is to be identified with Khirbet Nisya, an identification that not only accords with the biblical data but is in harmony with the location of Ai given by the early historian Eusebius.

Ai was also famous as one of the geographical places for the spot where Abram first pitched his tent and built an altar to the LORD (Gen. 12:8; 13:3-4).

“Ai” was a Canaanite city of Palestine (Gen. 12:8; Joshua 10:1), east of Bethel (Gen. 12:8), “Beside Beth-aven”, and north of Michmash (Isa. 10:28).

Abraham pitched his tent here before journeying to Egypt (Gen. 12:8).

Ai figured prominently in Israel’s conquest of Palestine (chapters 7 and 8).

After the Israelites conquered Jericho, they were soundly defeated at Ai due to Achan’s sin.

Then Joshua sent 30,000 soldiers against Ai and captured the city by a clever military tactic.

Although Ai was previously identified with Et-tell, a mound situated southeast of Bethel, recent archaeological discoveries at Khirbet Nisya, 10 miles north of Jerusalem, suggest strongly that it is the proper location.

Ai is also called Aiath (Isa. 10:28), Aija (Neh. 11:31), and Hai (Gen. 12:8; 13:3).

This is the same as sending the spies to Jericho to search it out.

Joshua sent these men, so there is nothing wrong with them searching out Ai, to take it.

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 labor thither; for they [are but] few."

After they had reconnoitered the place, they came back to their general, and gave it as their opinion, that there was no need for the whole army to go up against the city.

"But let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai":

Such a number they judged were sufficient to take it.

"And make not all the people to labor thither":

Carrying their tents, bearing their armor, and going uphill.

"For they are but few":

The inhabitants of Ai.

Men and women making but twelve thousand Joshua 8:25).

This is not a heavily fortified area, and it does not have many people to fight.

The Hebrew spies, say it will take only two or three thousand men to take it.

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

Joshua detached from the army the largest number proposed, that there might be strength enough to take the place.

And those he sent under proper officers to Ai, who went up to the very gate of the city, as appears from (Joshua 7:5).

"And they fled before the men of Ai":

For upon their appearing at the gate of their city, they came out with all their forces against them.

And as soon as they did, the children of Israel durst not face them, but without engaging with them fled at once.

God having forsaken them, their courage failed, the dread of their enemies falling on them.

Their confidence in their own ability sent them to a war not blessed of their God, and Israel fled before them.

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."

In the pursuit of them, which were but few, but a sufficient rebuke of Providence.

Their loss was but small, but their shame and disgrace great.

"For they chased them from before the gate":

The gate of the city of Ai.

"Even unto Shebarim":

Not that there was a place of this name before, but it was so called from hence, because there they were broken, as Kimchi observes.

And the Targum and Jarchi render it, "until they were broken, "their lines broken, not being able to retreat in order, but were scattered, and fled to their camp as they could.

"And smote them in the going down":

The hill from Ai; "Morad", rendered "going down", may be taken for the proper name of a place, and which, Kimchi says, was a place before Ai.

In which there was a downward slope, and in that place they smote them when they fled.

"Wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water":

That is, the whole body of the people, when this little army returned defeated.

Their spirits failed them, their courage was lost, their nerves were loosed, and they became fatigued, faint, and feeble.

Not that their loss was so great, but that they perceived God had forsaken them, and what the issue of this would be they dreaded.

When the Israelites saw they were defeated, they ran in fear.

Israel lost 36 men in this battle.

The Israelites had become over confident in their own ability, instead of knowing God had won Jericho for them.

When they saw their men killed, they ran in fear.

Verses 6-15

God responded to Joshua's confusion by telling him to "get thee up" and deal with the sin in the camp.

Sin has consequences, often far beyond the individual sinner.

And that was particularly true among God's chosen people.

In this case, an army was defeated "could not stand before their enemies"), 36 men died (7:5), and a man, his entire family, and all his possessions were destroyed (7:24-25).

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 rent his clothes":

In testimony of great sorrow, as (Gen. 37:34 44:13), for the loss felt.

The consequent mischief feared, and the sin which he suspected.

"Fell to the earth upon his face":

In deep humiliation and fervent supplication.

"Until the eventide":

Continuing the whole day in fasting and prayer.

"Put dust upon their heads":

As was usual in case of grief and astonishment (1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:2; 13:19; Jonah 3:6; Micah 1:10).

This is a sign of great mourning.

Joshua knows that God was not with the men who went against Ai.

He does not understand why God was not with them.

God had told them to take this land.

He and the elders fell on their faces before God and threw dust on their heads, trying to reach God.

This was near the ark, where the LORD's presence was.

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!"

What a miserable and distressed condition are we in!

Have pity and compassion on us.

Who could have thought it, that this would have been our case?

"Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us"?

Who are mentioned either for the whole people of the land of Canaan; or rather, because the people of Israel were now in that part of the country which they inhabited.

These words discover much weakness, uncertainty, and distrust, and bear some likeness to the murmurs of the children of Israel in the wilderness.

But not proceeding from that malice of spirit theirs did, but from a concern for the good of the people and the glory of God, they are not resented by him.

"Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan":

In which he seems to cast the blame, not upon the LORD but upon himself and the people.

Who were not content to dwell on the other side, but were desirous of a larger and better country.

And now ruin seemed to be the consequent of that covetous disposition and discontented mind.

These are words that came from Joshua, because he didn't understand why they had failed at Ai.

He reminds God that this was God's request for them to come and take this land.

They would have been perfectly satisfied with the land Gad, Reuben, and the half tribe of Manasseh received on the other side of Jordan.

Joshua is like so many Christians today.

When troubles come, he immediately decides God is not with them.

It is almost as if he is blaming God for their failure.

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

For the comfort and encouragement of the people of Israel, in vindication of thy power and faithfulness.

And against the charge of weakness in thyself, unfaithfulness to thy promises, and unkindness to thy people, brought by our enemies.

"When Israel turned their backs before their enemies?"

Or after they have done it; what is to be said now, this being the case?

He speaks as a man confounded, and at the utmost loss how to account for the power, the providence, and promises of God.

The only reason God allows Joshua to say all of this, is the fact he is unaware of the problem.

It is a shame for them to turn their backs on the enemy.

It is also saying, their God is not sufficient for these battles.

Joshua sees this as a shame they have brought on God.

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?"

“What wilt thou do unto thy great name”?

The main issue is the glory and honor of God (compare Daniels’s prayer in Dan. 9:16-19).

This would give their enemies confidence to come against Israel.

The name of the LORD was glorified in the victories of Israel.

This will bring shame to the people of God and to the LORD.

When Christians, who are God's representatives on the earth go bad, it defames God as well as the person.

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

From the ground where he lay prostrate, with his face to it.

This he said, not as refusing his supplication to him, but rather as encouraging and strengthening him.

Though chiefly he said this in order to instruct him, and that he might prepare for what he was to do.

“Wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?”

In this manner, so distressed and dejected.

Or for this thing, as the Targum.

For this defeat of the army; something else is to be done besides prayer and supplication.

This is almost a reprimand of Joshua by the LORD.

He says get up from there, and find out the reason for the problem.

It is not God's fault that they failed, it is theirs.

Praying to God will not fix this.

Joshua must root out the problem and deal with it.

Verses 11-13

This is delivered as a summary of charges against “Israel”, even though all the fighting men except one had complied with God’s commands.

God accused them of having: “sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant” (literally, “passing beyond a boundary”), “taken of the accursed thing stolen ... dissembled”, and put stolen goods with their own things.

As punishment, the entire nation “turned their backs before their enemies”.

This phrase had previously been used only of Israel’s enemies, but now God threatened to bring destruction on Israel (6:17; Deut. 7:26).

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."

For though one only had committed the sin, others might have known of it, and connived at it.

However, there was sin committed among them, and it must be discovered, the guilt charged, and punishment inflicted.

"Transgressed my covenant":

I.e. broken the conditions of my covenant which I have commanded them, and they have promised to perform.

In other words, obedience to all my commands (Exodus 19:8; 24:7).

Whereof this was one, not to meddle with the accursed thing.

"Of the accursed thing":

Which I charged them not to meddle with.

"And have also stolen":

I.e. taken my portion which I had reserved (Joshua 6:19).

"Dissembled":

Covered the fact with deep dissimulation, and a real, if not verbal, profession of their innocence.
Possibly Achan might be suspected; and being accused, had denied it, or was resolved to deny it.

"Put it even among their own stuff":

Converted it to their own use, and added obstinacy and resoluteness to the crime.

Thus, he loads this sin with different crimes.

Now we see the cause of the problem.

Israel has sinned.

God will not bless them, when there is sin in the camp

God's blessings on Israel depended on their obedience to His commands.

They have done the very thing He told them not to do.

They have taken of the accursed things.

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."

Being forsaken of God for the sin committed among them.

"But turned their backs before their enemies":

Had not courage to face them, but fled as soon as they appeared.

"Because they were accursed":

Of God for the accursed thing that had been taken. As was threatened would be their case, should they take any of it (Joshua 6:18).

"Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you":

That is, until they had put to death the person who had taken of the accursed thing, and made himself thereby accursed.

And even all the camp of Israel; till this was done.

The LORD would not be with them to protect and defend them, and give them success against their enemies.

God has removed His blessings from the entire house of Israel, until they rid themselves of this accursed thing and the accursed people who did this.

The people became accursed, when they took the things.

Joshua 7:13 "Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: 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."

The first step to dealing with their sin was for the entire nation to “sanctify” themselves (3:5).

This means engaging in prescribed physical purification rites as a reminder of their inward sinfulness and God’s holiness.

Israel is like the church in this.

They are thought of as one body.

They must remove the accursed, before the whole nation becomes accursed.

"Sanctify" is to set aside for the purposes of God.

They must ceremonially cleanse themselves and be ready to stand before God.

The sin in the camp must be removed, before God will go with them in battle.

Verses 14-21

The threefold repetition of the phrase “the LORD shall take” (or taketh; in verse 14), reveals that God was behind the process of elimination that uncovered “Achan” as the disobedient one.

Notice his verbs (in verse 21): after covetousness comes sin and hiding.

This is reminiscent of Adam and Eve’s behavior (in Genesis chapter 3).

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."

One or more of every tribe, according to the number of them.

Were to be brought the next morning before Joshua and the elders of Israel, the Sanhedrim and council of the nation, and very probably the tabernacle, where they assembled for this purpose.

"And it shall be, that the tribe which the LORD taketh":

How a tribe and so a family or household were taken is differently understood.

It seems best to understand the whole affair as done by casting lots; so Josephus and Ben Gersom.

And they might in this way be said to be taken by the LORD, because the disposition of the lot is by him (Prov. 16:33).

Now it is said, that the tribe that should be taken, as Judah was, from what follows.

"Shall come according to the families thereof":

That is, the families in that tribe, meaning the heads of them, as Kimchi well observes.

These were to come to the place where the lots were cast.

"And the family which the LORD shall take shall come by households":

On whatsoever family in the tribe the lot should fall.

The heads of households in that family should appear and have lots cast on them.

"And the household which the LORD shall take shall come man by man":

That household that should be taken by lot, the men thereof.

The heads of the house, should come each of them and have lots cast on them, that the particular man that sinned might be discovered.

For the casting of lots, see the note at (1 Sam. 14:41-42).

All of the tribes must appear before the LORD.

The LORD will separate out the tribe where the problem is.

Then that tribe will pass before the LORD, and He will separate out a family where the problem is.

The households of that family, in turn will pass before the LORD in judgement, and God will separate out the household with the problem.

The last judgement will separate the individual man that caused the problem.

Verses 15, 24 and 25

Achan's family faced execution with him.

They were regarded as co-conspirators in what he did.

They helped cover up his guilt and withheld information from others.

Similarly, family members died in Korah's rebellion (Num. chapter 16), Haman's fall (Esther 9:13-14), and after Daniel's escape (Dan. 6:24).

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."

He that is taken by lot, and the accursed thing found with him, this should be the death.

Burning, one of the four capital punishments with the Jews.

This was ordered in this case, because the city of Jericho, accursed or devoted, was burnt with fire (Joshua 6:24).

"He and all that he hath":

The particulars of which are enumerated (Joshua 7:24).

"Because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD":

(see notes on Joshua 7:11).

"And because he hath wrought folly in Israel":

As all sin and every transgression of the law is, and was the cause of Israel's turning their backs on their enemies.

Which, as Abarbanal says, was folly, and made the people of Israel look foolish, mean, and contemptible.

The word has also the signification of a dead carcass, and may possibly have respect, to the thirty-six men whose death he was the occasion of (Joshua 7:5).

And therefore, justly ought to die himself.

The cleansing of the camp has to be with fire.

The accursed thing, and everyone who has come into contact with it, must be burned to cleanse the camp.

Even all his possessions shall be burned, because they have become accursed too.

The sin is the breaking of the covenant with the LORD.

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

Which showed his readiness and diligence to obey the command of God.

And as there was much work to do, it required that he should rise early.

"And brought Israel by their tribes":

Before the LORD, at the tabernacle, where he and the high priest and elders attended.

Each tribe was brought by their representatives.

"And the tribe of Judah was taken":

Either his stone in the breastplate of the high priest looked dull, as some say, or rather the lot being cast fell on that tribe.

God first revealed that the person was of the tribe of Judah.

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:"

That is, the tribe of Judah, as Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it.

Or rather, the several families in that tribe, even the heads of them.

"And he took the family of the Zarhites":

Which descended from Zerah the son of Judah.

That was taken by lot.

"And he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man":

And cast lots on them.

"And Zabdi was taken":

That part of the family of the Zarhites which sprung from Zabdi, a son of Zerah.

Now we see the family of Zabdi separated out as the guilty family.

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."

The household of Zabdi, the heads of each house therein.

"And Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken":

The lot fell upon him, and he was laid hold on, and detained.

The household of Achan was separated out.

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."

To show that this severe inquisition and sentence did not proceed from any hatred to his person, which he loved as a father doth his son.

And as a prince ought to do each of his subjects.

"Give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel":

As thou hast highly dishonored him, now take the shame and blame to thyself, and ascribe unto God the glory of his omniscience in knowing thy sin.

Of his justice in punishing it in thee, and others for thy sake.

Of his omnipotence, which was obstructed by thee.

And of his kindness and faithfulness to his people, which was eclipsed by thy wickedness.

All which will now be evident by thy sin confessed and punished.

"And make confession unto him":

Of the sin he had been guilty of.

This Joshua might urge, partly for his own good, who might more reasonably expect the forgiveness of his sin.

So it is said in the Mishnah, whoever confesses has a part in the world to come, for so we find concerning Achan (Joshua 7:19).

And partly for the glory of God, this being the instance in which he is directed to give it to him.

"And tell me now what thou hast done, hide it not from me":

What were the particular things he had taken.

The lot showed he had taken something, but what that was, as yet was unknown, and where it was.

And this Joshua desires him he would inform him of and satisfy him about, and without any reserve openly declare the truth.

Now that God has singled Achan out, Joshua wants him to tell what he has done and repent.

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:"

He made a free and open confession of his sin.

"Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel".

Against him who had been so good to Israel in many instances, and particularly in delivering Jericho into their hands in so extraordinary a manner.

Against a law of his, respecting the spoil of that city, which sin was the more aggravated thereby. And that he had committed the sin he was taken for and charged with, he owns was a true and real fact.

"And thus and thus have I done":

Such and such things have I taken, and in the manner as follows.

Achan knows he is caught and begins to confess his sin in detail.

He knows his only chance lies in forgiveness.

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."

"I saw":

There are 4 steps in the progress of Achan's sin. "I say ... I coveted ... took ... hid".

David's sin with Bathsheba followed the same path (2 Sam. chapter 11; compare James 1:14-15).

"A goodly Babylonish garment":

A costly, ornate robe beautified by colored figures of men or animals, woven or done in needlework, and perhaps trimmed with jewels.

The word is used for a king's robe (in Jonah 3:6).

One of the ten commandments of God is, "Thou shalt not covet".

He has broken God's law.

He did not confess until after he was found out.

It is too late for forgiveness.

The silver and gold belonged to God, so he has stolen from the LORD.

The garment was unclean and should have been burned.

He knew how bad this was, he had buried the things in the floor of his tent.

Verses 22-25

Achan's sin was dealt with swiftly ("messengers ... ran"), publicly "took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them ... before the LORD", and completely so that at this pivotal point in Israel's history, the people would understand the need for complete obedience.

There is no victory where sin is present.

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."

Directly to Achan's tent, to see if it was as he had said, and to bring the things with them.

"And they ran unto the tent":

Either for joy that the iniquity was discovered, as Kimchi.

Or that none of the tribe of Judah or of Achan's family or relations should get there before them, and take them from thence and make void the lot; so Jarchi, Ben Gersom, and Abarbanel.

But, no doubt, it is remarked, to show the readiness and diligence of the messengers to obey the order of Joshua.

"And, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it":

As Achan had said.

This is immediately checked out and found to be true.

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."

Out of the place, hole, or pit in which they were hid.

"And brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel":

To Joshua as the chief ruler, and to the elders and heads of the tribes assembled together.

"And laid them out before the LORD":

Or "poured them out".

The golden wedge, out of the garment in which it was wrapped, and the two hundred shekels of silver found under it.

It seems as if these were poured or laid out separately upon the ground before the tabernacle, where the ark of the LORD was.

They belonging to the spoils which were devoted to him.

As well as hereby they were plainly seen by the Israelites, that these were the very things which Achan had confessed.

This is speaking of the accursed things found in the possession of Achan.

The sin is exposed to the entire camp.

The punishment here, will serve as a warning to the others not to commit a similar sin.

Verses 24-26:

All Israel” bore Achan’s guilt, so it must participate in carrying out the divine sentence.

Two different Hebrew words are used for the act of stoning; *ragam* (verse 25a), stresses that the act was a form of capital punishment; *saqal* (verse 25b), emphasizes that the resultant “heap of stones” (verse 26), would serve as a grim memorial of the fruits of selfish lust and willful disobedience.

Achan means “Trouble”:

Achan’s name is rendered Achar (in 1 Chron. 2:7).

“Achan” sounds similar to the Hebrew term for “trouble”.

Since the accursed things were hidden in his tent, Achan’s family was probably complicit in his sin.

They were killed along with him so that the sin could be rooted out completely.

This thorough response abated the “fierceness” of the LORD’s “anger”.

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 and all Israel are mentioned, to show the perfect agreement between Joshua and the heads of the people in this affair of Achan.

And in the nature and manner of his punishment.

"And the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold":

Which, though devoted to sacred uses, yet having been converted to another's use, and made his property.

Was not to be employed in the service of the sanctuary, but to be burnt with him.

"And his sons, and his daughters":

Though, as Achan may be supposed to be a man in years, being but the fourth generation from Judah.

His sons and daughters were grown up in all probability, and might be accessories in this affair.

And so, as some Jewish writers remark, were worthy of death.

Because they saw and knew what was done, and were silent and did not declare it.

And it seems by what is said (Joshua 22:20); that they died as well as Achan.

Since it is there said, "that man perished not alone in his iniquity".

Though it may be interpreted of his substance, his cattle, perishing with him.

And indeed from (Joshua 7:25); it seems as if none were stoned but himself, that is, of his family.

No mention is made of his wife, who, if he had any, as Kimchi observes, knew nothing of the matter, it being hid from her.

"And his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep":

In which lay his substance, as that of the eastern people generally did.

"And his tent, and all that he had":

The tent he and his family dwelt in, with all the household goods in it.

"And they brought them unto the valley of Achor":

So called by anticipation here.

For it had its name from the trouble Achan gave to Israel, and with which he was troubled himself.

The reason for all of Israel being involved in the punishment, is to show their disgust of the sin committed.

The family and everything else Achan owned were accursed, because of their near contact with the accursed thing.

They were brought to be destroyed along with Achan.

The valley of Achor was above Jericho.

"Achor":

Means trouble.

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."

Been the occasion of so much trouble to us, by committing this sin.

"The LORD shall trouble thee this day":

By the destruction of him and all that belonged to him.

This is said to show that his punishment was of God, and according to his will.

In the Mishnah an emphasis is laid on the phrase "this day", and it is observed, "this day thou shalt be troubled, but thou shalt not be troubled in the world to come".

Suggesting that though temporal punishment was inflicted on him, yet his iniquity was forgiven, and he would be saved with an everlasting, salvation.

And as it may be hoped from the ingenuous confession that he made, that he had true repentance for it, and forgiveness of it.

"And all Israel stoned him with stones":

Hence some gather, that only Achan himself suffered death, and not his sons and daughters.

"And burnt them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones":

Which the Jewish commentators understand of his oxen, asses, and sheep; so Jarchi, Ben Gersom, and Abarbanel.

Likewise, his tent, and household goods, the Babylonish garment, gold and silver, were burnt, and he himself also, for that is the express order (Joshua 7:15).

The Jews say, as particularly Jarchi observes, that he was stoned because he profaned the Sabbath, it being on the Sabbath day that Jericho was taken.

And stoning was the punishment of the Sabbath breaker, and he was burnt on the account of the accursed thing; so Abendana.

Notice all Israel was involved in their stoning to show their disapproval of their sin.

After they were dead from the stoning, they burned them and everything they owned.

There would be nothing of it left to contaminate the camp.

Joshua's question is valid.

They had brought grief on all of the Israelites with their sins.

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."

As a monument of the sin and judgment here mentioned, that others might be instructed and warned by the example.

And as a brand of infamy (as Joshua 8:29; 2 Sam. 18:17).

"Wherefore the name of the place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day":

From the trouble Achan met with, and the people of Israel on his account (see Joshua 7:24).

And so it was called in the days of Isaiah and Hosea (Isaiah 65:10).

And where it is prophesied of as what should be in time to come.

According to Bunting, it was twelve miles from Jerusalem.

We remember that heaps of stones were done in memorials of things that happened.

This heap would be a constant reminder of what sin will bring.

It is correct for this place to be called valley of trouble (Achor).

God is satisfied the sin is removed, and ceases His anger.

Joshua Chapter 7 Questions

1. How had Israel committed a trespass against God?
2. Who committed the sin?
3. What tribe was he from?
4. This one man bringing this terrible thing is similar to what for the Christians?
5. Where did Joshua send spies?
6. What report did the spies bring back to Joshua?
7. How many men went to Ai to fight?
8. What happened to them?

9. How many of Israel died?
10. What did Joshua do in grief over the lost battle?
11. Who mourned with Joshua?
12. What rash statement does Joshua make to God?
13. The name of the LORD was glorified in the _____ of Israel.
14. When Christians go bad, it _____ God, as well as the person?
15. What does God tell Joshua to do, that is almost a reprimand?
16. What must Joshua do?
17. What was the sin?
18. When will God return to bless Israel?
19. How is Israel like the church in this?
20. What must they do, before standing before God?
21. By what process of elimination shall God set the guilty person out?
22. What will happen to the person found with the accursed thing?
23. Who, besides Achan, was stoned to death?
24. What was done, after they were stoned to death?
25. What had Achan taken?
26. Who did the metals belong to?
27. Where had he hidden the accursed thing?
28. Who stoned them?
29. What was the purpose in this?
30. Who had Achan brought grief upon?
31. What does "Achor" mean?