



## Lesson 70

# The Battle of Ai

### Story Elements

- **Text:** Joshua 8:1-35
- **Setting:** circa 1404 B.C., at Ai.
- **Characters:** God and Joshua
- **Plot:** Joshua conquers Ai according to the word of the LORD.
- **Key word(s)** “stretched out the \_\_\_\_\_” (vv 18, 26)
- **Climax** *Joshua 8:18 And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city.*

## Command and Promise

1. (vv 1-2) Having put away the sin in the camp, Joshua and his army are ready to defeat their enemies through God’s commands and \_\_\_\_\_.

APPLICATION → The defeat of the Hebrews at Ai is connected to Joshua’s conversation with the captain of the LORD’s host: it is not the LORD who must pick sides, it is the Hebrews who will decide by their faith and \_\_\_\_\_. When they follow the LORD, they are blessed with victory; when they disobey, they are cursed with defeat.

- a. God told Joshua that he need not fear because Ai had been given to Israel. But this time, Joshua must take all the men of war.
- b. Ai would be treated as Jericho – utterly destroyed. But unlike at Jericho, the Hebrews were allowed to keep the \_\_\_\_\_.

APPLICATION → If only Achan had waited and patiently believed God! The material abundance he coveted would’ve eventually come, and he would’ve saved his life, his families lives, and the lives of thirty-six men. Let us wait on the LORD and honor him in all things.

- c. The victory over Ai would not be directly supernatural, but instead God gave Joshua divine guidance in the use of means: Israel was to lay on \_\_\_\_\_ for the soldiers of Ai.

## Combat and Tactics

2. (vv 3-8) Following God’s command to use an ambush, Joshua deployed his troops in this manner:
  - a. He concealed 5,000 troops near Ai to assault the city. Meanwhile, Joshua would lead the main force to act as \_\_\_\_\_ to the army of Ai.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. When the decoys successfully lured the defenders away, the assault force was to take the city and set it ablaze.
  - c. When the defenders noticed their city was on \_\_\_\_\_, they would cease their pursuit and return to the city.
  - d. The assault force would then come out of the city, sandwiching the defenders between the two Hebrew forces, enclosing them, and ultimately destroying them.
3. (v 18) When it was time to set the trap, God spoke to Joshua, saying, “Stretch out the \_\_\_\_\_ that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand.”

<sup>1</sup> There is disagreement amongst commentators about the numbers and specifics of each band and where exactly they were stationed.

APPLICATION → Once again we see a striking parallel between Joshua and Moses: “His hands in fighting, like Moses’s in \_\_\_\_\_, were steady till the going down of the sun. Those that have stretched out their hands against their spiritual enemies must never draw them back.”<sup>2</sup>

4. (vv 9-22) The strategy worked, the city was left open by the hasty departure of the defenders (v 17), and the two forces of the Hebrews surrounded and destroyed every man from Ai.

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## Conquest and Memorial

5. (vv 23-25) We are told the results of Israel’s victory over Ai:
- a. The \_\_\_\_\_ and all property worth keeping was taken by Israel.
  - b. The city was burned to the ground and made a smoldering heap.
  - c. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Ai was taken alive, but like a condemned criminal, he was publicly executed, and his carcass covered with a huge pile of stones to serve as a memorial of God’s wrath against the wickedness of Canaan.

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## Covenant and Renewal

6. (v 30-35) After the miraculous destruction of Jericho, the embarrassing defeat at Ai, the scandal of Achan’s sin, and the final victory over Ai, Joshua gathered Israel together for a solemn ceremony which Moses had commanded (cf. Deu 27:1-8):
- a. An altar of \_\_\_\_\_ stone was to be erected between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim.
  - b. Peace offerings were to be offered upon the altar.
  - c. Large stones were to be \_\_\_\_\_ over and the law of Moses was to be written upon the large stones.
  - d. The entire Law of Moses was to be read publicly before those assembled. All of Israel was gathered with half on Mt. Ebal’s slope and half on Mt. Gerizim’s slope, and the \_\_\_\_\_ situated in the middle.
  - e. The stones were to be left as a memorial of the covenant God made to Israel, the blessing of their inhabiting the land, and the requirements they must keep to stay in the land.

APPLICATION → Joshua was careful to do everything Moses commanded, showing himself not only a careful follower of Moses but a proper replacement for Moses. *He that is faithful in that which is \_\_\_\_\_ is faithful also in much...* (Luke 16:10)

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Answer Key:** Key word(s): “spear” • 1. promise; → obedience; b. plunder; c. ambush • 2. a. decoy; c. fire • 3. spear; → interceding • 5. a. cattle; c. king • 6. a. uncut; c. plastered; d. ark of the covenant; → least

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**How to use this worksheet for personal Bible study:** (1) Read the Bible passage given in the **Story Elements** section. (2) Read through the worksheet and try to fill in the blanks without looking at the **Answer Key**. (3) Check your answers with the key and make the necessary corrections. (Note: some answers are a matter of opinion, and often more than one answer is correct. (4) Write down your own thoughts, applications, and questions for further study in the **Notes** section.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 305.