**Joshua**

Chapter 7

*Achan’s Sin*

**But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord’s anger burned against Israel. 2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth Aven to the east of Bethel, and told them, “Go up and spy out the region.” So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3 When they returned to Joshua, they said, “Not all the people will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it and do not weary all the people, for only a few men are there.” 4 So about three thousand men went up; but they were routed by the men of Ai, 5 who killed about thirty-six of them. They chased the Israelites from the city gate as far as the stone quarries and struck them down on the slopes. At this the hearts of the people melted and became like water. 6 Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the Lord, remaining there till evening. The elders of Israel did the same, and sprinkled dust on their heads. 7 And Joshua said, “Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side of the Jordan! 8 O Lord, what can I say, now that Israel has been routed by its enemies? 9 The Canaanites and the other people of the country will hear about this and they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. What then will you do for your own great name?” 10 The Lord said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? 11 Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. 12 That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction. 13 “Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, ‘Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: That which is devoted is among you, O Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove it. 14 “ ‘In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe that the Lord takes shall come forward clan by clan; the clan that the Lord takes shall come forward family by family; and the family that the Lord takes shall come forward man by man. 15 He who is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the Lord and has done a disgraceful thing in Israel!’ ” 16 Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was taken. 17 The clans of Judah came forward, and he took the Zerahites. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was taken. 18 Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. 19 Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give him the praise. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me.” 20 Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: 21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.” 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. 23 They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord. 24 Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold wedge, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. 25 Joshua said, “Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today.” Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. 26 Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.**

**7:1–26** The tragic story of Achan, which stands in sharp contrast to the story of Rahab. In the earlier event a Canaanite prostitute, because of her courageous allegiance to Israel and her acknowledgment of the Lord, was spared and received into Israel. She abandoned Canaan and its gods on account of the Lord and Israel, and so received Canaan back. In the present event an Israelite (of the tribe of Judah, no less), because of his disloyalty to the Lord and Israel, is executed as the Canaanites were. He stole the riches of Canaan from the Lord, and so lost his inheritance in the promised land. This is also a story of how one man’s sin adversely affected the entire nation. Throughout this account (as often in the OT) Israel is considered a corporate unity in covenant with and in the service of the Lord. Thus even in the acts of one (Achan) or a few (the 3,000 defeated at Ai) all Israel is involved (see vv. 1, 11; 22:20). (CSB)

**7:2** *from Jericho to Ai.* An uphill march of some 15 miles through a ravine to the top of the central Palestinian ridge. Strategically, an advance from Gilgal to Ai would bring Israel beyond the Jordan Valley and provide them a foothold in the central highlands. Ai in Hebrew means “the ruin.” It is usually identified with et-Tell (meaning “the ruin” in Arabic), just two miles east of Bethel, but some dispute this precise identification. *Beth Aven.* Means “house of wickedness,” a derogatory designation of either Bethel itself or a pagan shrine nearby (see 1Sa 13:5; Hos 4:15; Am 5:5). (CSB)

 *spy out the region.* See note on 2:1–24. (CSB)

**7:5** *stone quarries.* Or a place called Shebarim (see NIV text note), meaning “breaks,” a fitting term for the rocky bluffs overlooking the Jordan Valley. (CSB)

**7:6** *Joshua tore his clothes.* A sign of great distress (see Ge 37:29, 34; 44:13; Jdg 11:35). Joshua’s dismay (and that of the people), as indicated by his prayer, arose from his recognition that the Lord had not been with Israel’s troops in the battle. And without the Lord the whole venture for which Israel had crossed the Jordan would be impossible. Moreover, the Canaanites would now judge that neither Israel nor her God was invincible. They would pour out of their fortified cities, combine forces and descend on Israel in the Jordan Valley, from which Israel could not escape across the flooding Jordan. (CSB)

**7:9** *your own great name.* Joshua pleads, as Moses had (Nu 14:13–16; Dt 9:28–29), that God’s honor in the eyes of all the world was at stake in the fortunes of his people. (CSB)

**7:11** *Israel has sinned.* One soldier’s theft of the devoted goods brought collective guilt on the entire nation (see 22:20). (CSB)

 *violated my covenant.* See v. 15. This is the main indictment; what follows is further specification. (CSB)

**7:12** *devoted to destruction.* See note on 6:18. (CSB)

**7:13** *Consecrate yourselves.* A series of purifications to be undertaken by every Israelite in preparation for meeting with God, as before a solemn religious feast or a special assembly called by the Lord (see note on 3:5). Here God summons his people before him for his judgment. (CSB)

**7:14** *tribe that the Lord takes.* When the lots are cast, one of the tribes is “taken by the Lord” so that the search is narrowed until the Lord exposes the guilty persons. The lots may have been the Urim and Thummim from the ephod of the high priest (see notes on Ex 28:30; 1Sa 2:28; see also NIV text note on 1Sa 14:41). (CSB)

**7:15** *disgraceful thing in Israel.* An act that within Israel, as the covenant people of the Lord, is an outrage of utter folly (see Dt 22:21; Jdg 19:23–24; 20:6, 10; 2Sa 13:12). (CSB)

**7:19** *My son.* Joshua took a fatherly attitude toward Achan. (CSB)

 *give glory to the Lord*. See NIV text note. *give him the praise.* See NIV text note. (CSB)

**7:21** *robe from Babylonia.* A valuable import. (CSB)

 *two hundred shekels … fifty shekels.* See NIV text notes. (CSB)

**7:23** *before the Lord*. Who is here the Judge. (CSB)

**7:24** *Joshua … all Israel.* Joshua and all Israel were God’s agents for executing his judgment on both the Canaanites and this violator of the covenant. *all that he had.* As the head of (and example for) his family, Achan involved his whole household in his guilt and punishment. This is in accordance with the principle of corporate solidarity—the whole community is represented in one member (especially the head of that community). (CSB)

**7:25** *stoned him.* Because he had been found guilty of violating the covenant of the holy Lord (see Ex 19:13; Lev 24:23; Nu 15:36). Afterward the bodies were burned to purge the land of the evil. (CSB)

**7:26** *large pile of rocks.* A second monument in the land to the events of the conquest—alongside the memorial at Gilgal (4:20). (CSB)

 *Achor.* See NIV text note. Achor was also another form of Achan’s name (see 1Ch 2:7, “Achar,” and NIV text note there). (CSB)