

*1 Now the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. 2 “And you shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it.”*

After failure & correction, encouragement *‘do not fear’* is found thru out the bible from Genesis to Revelation—Abraham *‘Do not fear I am your shield and exceeding great reward’* Gen 15:1 *‘Do not fear I am the first and the last...I live was dead & am alive...have keys of death and hades’* Rev 1:18; 2:8 Smyrna

God tells Joshua to *‘go up to Ai’* retrace the steps you took when defeated w/o my counsel 15 miles from Gilgal ascending 3,200 feet. Lessons of failure can bring a lifetime of victory. Ai *‘heap of ruins’* a type of the flesh

**Alan Redpath** May the Holy Spirit write it w/ power on your hearts: lost ground in Christian living is very hard to recover. This is the essential background on which this chapter is based. The people of God experienced at Ai the difficulty of recovering lost ground, & what happened immediately afterward was to be expected. No sooner had they slipped up & been beaten, & recovered ground, than there was written on their minds the principles by which they might possess all that God had for them in the land of Canaan. Here was the secret of insuring that the same disaster might not happen again.

*3 So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night. 4 And he commanded them, saying, “See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 5 “Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And it will come about when they come out to meet us as at the first, that we will flee before them. 6 “And they will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, ‘They are fleeing before us as at the first.’ So we will flee before them. 7 “And you shall rise from your ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8 “Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall **set the city on fire**. You shall do it according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you.”*

Likely two forces 30K & 5K or 30K divided into 25K & 5K--taking up two different positions--first not allow Bethel sending reinforcements--second cut off escape route of men of Ai destroying the enemy completely.

*If Ai being a type of the flesh Rom 8:13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 2Cor 10:5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.*

*Set city on fire*—Fire cleanses & consumes-- Three times in Scripture, God is explicitly called a "*consuming fire*" Deut 4:24;9:3; Heb 12:29 *Our God is a consuming fire* Matt 3:11 *He will baptize you with the HS and fire-cleanses & transform-consume*

*9 So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people. 10 Now Joshua rose early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people to Ai. 11 Then all the people of war who were with him went up and drew near and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now there was a valley between him and Ai. 12 And he took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13 So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city, and Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley.*

Leaders lead-Joshua up early & roused/mobilized his men *Let him who leads, lead w/ diligence Rom 12:8.*

*Mark 1:35: In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. Pr 20:13 Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; Open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.NKJ*

In ambush hidden (5000) between Bethel & Ai. Joshua spent the night in the valley the place of battle. He will not lead men where he himself has not gone-courageous leader & *cowards Oceania ship* David went out to battle w/ his men until old age & his men wouldn't let him go out. *2Sam 21:17*

*"Never again will you go out with us to battle, so that the lamp of Israel will not be extinguished."*

We want leadership who, not just tells us what to do, but those who have been there & done that--battling the enemy & still standing in victory. Experience of battling the enemy is important for leaders w/ scars to prove it

**Amy Carmichael (1867-1952)**

a missionary to India where she rescued hundreds of orphans in the midst of terrible suffering.

No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?  
 I hear thee sung as mighty in the land;  
 I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star.  
 Hast thou no scar?  
 Hast thou no wound?  
 Yet I was wounded by the archers; spent,  
 Leaned Me against a tree to die; and rent  
 By ravening beasts that compassed Me, I swooned.  
 Hast thou no wound?  
 No wound? No scar?  
 Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,  
 And piercèd are the feet that follow Me.  
 But thine are whole; can he have followed far  
 Who hast no wound or scar?

**14** And it came about when the king of Ai saw it, that the men of the city hurried and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people at the appointed place before the desert plain. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. **15** And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. **16** And all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. **17** So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel.

God given strategy was working to humble Israel, pretended to be beaten also defeat Ai. Bethel 3 miles away a sister city partner w/ Ai joint forces-Cop

**18** Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. **19** And the men in ambush rose quickly from their place, and when he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it; and they quickly set the city on fire.

Significant use of Joshua’s javelin—sign of authority & command to action.

Moses held up his staff & Red Sea parted Israel passed over. Ex 14:16

Moses w/ staff in hand-Joshua at Rephidim go out against Amalek Ex

17:12 A/H Rod in hand speak to rock water come out Nu 20:8 – Revealing

God’s power not mans.

*20 When the men of Ai turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to the sky, and they had no place to flee this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers. 21 When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and slew the men of Ai. 22 And the others came out from the city to encounter them, so that they were trapped in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they slew them until no one was left of those who survived or escaped. 23 But they took alive the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua.*

Canaanite wickedness, idolatry & demon worship judged yet Ai king to be made an example to other pagan kings of land who defy the God of Israel.

*24 Now it came about when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. 25 And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000—all the people of Ai. 26 For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. 27 Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua.*

The wickedness of a nation & people knows no bounds—*“the heart is deceitful desperately.....”* God told Saul to eliminate the Amalekites—**He knows what the future hold when we don't obey** **1Sam 15:2** *“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. 3 ‘Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’”*

Years later Haman a descendant of Agag whom Saul spared, conspired to annihilate the Jewish people (Esther). Incomplete obedience can bring disaster. God knows the future & it is why He says destroy these nations or they will destroy you by leading you into idolatry & detestable lifestyle-- sacrificing your children to their gods—Moloch, Baal, Astaroth

*28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. 29 And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset Joshua gave command and they took his body down from the tree, and threw it at the entrance of the city gate, and raised over it a great heap of stones that stands to this day.*

Ai means ‘*heap*’ and the stones memorialized all that is evil in God’s sight. A lifestyle of wickedness & idolatry, all that opposes the true & living God. Only way for our victory & entering God’s promises— **Sri Aurobindo 1872-1950 Indian, yogi, maharishi-I burned ‘The Life Divine’**

Dt 21:22,23 *sin worthy of death hang on tree, not all night-he who hanged is accursed of God* Now the place of defeat is the place of victory w/ memorial—dead body of king of Ai in public place, gate of city—for all to recall victory of Israel & defeat of Ai—A curse upon all opposed to God

**30 Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, 31 just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones, on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.**

Mt Ebal place to pronounce curses--Dt 27:2 **“So it shall be on the day when you shall cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones, and coat them with lime 3 and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, in order that you may enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. 4 “So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime. 5 “Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron tool on them. 6 “You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones; and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God; 7 and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God. 8 “And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly.”** Dt 27:12,13 Mt Gerizim to bless, Mt Ebal to curse

Why offerings and sacrifice on Ebal side? Jesus became a curse for us, He redeemed us from the curse of the Law—**Gal 3:13 Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’**

**Henry Morris** A huge stone altar has been discovered on Mount Ebal that may well be the altar built by Joshua. It seems to date from the time of Joshua and is surrounded by the bones of many animals possibly used in sacrifice

God told Moses make an altar of uncut stones Dt 27:4 God doesn't want anyone to glory in His altar by creative, artistic work of mans hands in shaping the stones—plain and simple, natural.

*Burnt offerings*—to ascend, going up or whole offering up in smoke to Lord, a pleasing aroma—voluntary—laying hands on sacrifice as substitute & blood sprinkled on altar—A life freely dedicated-not part but total offering

*Peace offering*-thanksgiving & fellowship—entering into unity of relationship, voluntary in a state of peace w/ God

*32 And he wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. 33 And all Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. 34 Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. 35 There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.*

A copy of blessings & curses given by Moses in the law. The Ark is in the center of blessing & cursing—*which side are you on*. *Strangers*, proselytes, residents not Jewish who identified w/ God of Israel and enjoyed the blessings.

Conquest of the land took seven years w/ only one battle lost, 36 men dying. Ai is detailed for our instruction, learning the lessons of defeat that we not repeat. *Successful business man asked How so successful? Right decisions! How? Experience! How do you get experience? Wrong decisions!*

