
Joshua 8

Joshua 8:1–35

The Successful Attack on Ai

Outline of Chapter 8:

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Introduction: Joshua 8 continues the book of Joshua as a book of action. Despite the fact that the evil of Israel has been rotted out in the previous chapter, Joshua has to be a little shaken and a little uneasy. After all, this was only their second battle in the land, against a small enemy force, and it had to unnerve Joshua somewhat to have had his men beaten down and to have taken some casualties. God tells Joshua and his men not to be afraid and to attack the city of Ai. Recall that *Ai* means *a heap of ruins*. I would think that it is very likely that Ai had a different name, but Israel saw it for a long time afterward as *a heap of ruins* and that name stuck more than did the real name of the city.

We have real military tactics in this book, which allows for a huge number of Israelites, giving Joshua and his armies a number of great options. The men of Ai had already chased Israel off and it would not surprise them to do it again. What Joshua tells his men to do is for a large army to situate themselves behind Ai; for a medium-sized group to hide along the front portion of Ai; and for a small group to put on a frontal attack. The small group was to turn and run in battle; the army of Ai, not suspecting a thing, would run after them, and thereby leave their walled-in fortress. The hidden army behind the city would invade the city and burn it to the ground. The Israelites fleeing would suddenly turn and fight, assisted by another battalion hidden off along the flank of the pursuing army. The pursuing men of Ai will suddenly have no where to turn to. They will be surrounded on three sides, and behind them they will see their city being burnt with fire.

Christians are goofy about a lot of things. Some believers have a hard time dealing with the fact that Joshua used strategy and tactics in his attack on Ai. Apparently, they want Joshua to march around Ai, like he did Jericho, and watch the walls fall down. These are the same believers who refuse medical treatment because they think that God should heal them directly. Joshua was in direct contact with God. Although we are never exactly told in what way God communicated to Joshua, we do know that there was direct contact between God and him. However, even though Joshua was told that God had given him the city of Ai, Joshua still used military strategy and tactics and he was never reprimanded for that. People who think that God must heal them directly are crazed. They do not base their opinions on Scripture. They believe that because there are a few dozen miraculous healings in the Bible that they can therefore conclude that whenever they are sick that God should miraculously heal them, or that is a sign of weakness in their faith. When a person refuses normal medical treatment, that is a sign of weakness in the head. God can, has and does heal miraculously apart from medical science. How often does He? Damn few times and it is likely that most of us will go through our entire lives and never know of a single person who was miraculously healed by God. The gift of healing was given by God during the time of the Apostles and during the time of our Lord to establish their credentials. We do not have to establish their credentials today. Paul left Trophimus behind sick; he gave medical advice to Timothy (“Take a little wine for your stomach’s sake”); and he had a personal painful medical problem with his eyes which he suffered from throughout the greater part of his Christian life. Now, if Paul is surrounded by situations where he of all people is unable to miraculously heal his friends or himself, then how stupid can we be to think that God is going to see that we get healed directly and

miraculously by Him? Similarly, Joshua, being in direct contact with God, being assured that God had given him the victory over the city and people of Ai, still used military strategy and tactics. Being a Christian does not preclude us using common sense, although there are several believers out there who give that impression.

In the book of Joshua, it appears as though, right after this great victory, that Joshua will take the people to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim for the reading of the blessings and the cursings, as Moses required them to do back in Deuteronomy 27–28, which, as you will recall, was a pre-history primer about Israel. Barnes makes an excellent argue that this was the correct timing. Although we have no manuscript evidence which indicates that the end of Joshua 8 was misplaced, there is strong reason, both Scriptural and logical, that the reading of the blessings and the cursings occurred after Joshua 11. However, Keil and Delitzsch make a reasonable argument that the end of Joshua 8 is correctly placed. Therefore, it will remain at the end of this chapter. We will go into greater detail on those arguments when we get to v. 30.

In this chapter, I have quoted extensively from Edersheim's book *Bible History Old Testament*. When I first began to refer to this book, I did not completely appreciate it. However, his descriptions of the geography of Palestine add immensely to my understanding of what went on and why many things which seem arbitrary are not. For instance, it would seem to me, from a cold read of Scripture, that the blessings spoken of at the end of this chapter could be responded to from Mount Ebal as well as from Mount Gerizim. However, with Edersheim's poetic description of the views from both mountains, it is clear that He had reasons to associate one mountain with blessing and the other with cursing. Believers sometimes get goofy about reference books apart from Scripture. God has given gifts to men, some of which involve literary works and research which add immeasurably to our understanding of Scripture. What I write is not Scripture; what Edersheim writes is not Scripture. The intention behind our writing is to help you to better understand what is being said in the Bible, and why things are done this way rather than that.

McGee's summation of this book is succinct: *As we have seen in chapter 7, Israel suffered an ignoble defeat at the little city of Ai, and the reason for the defeat was sin in the camp. Now the sin has been dealt with, and God is prepared to give Israel the victory.*¹

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Preparations for the Attack on Ai

Literally:

And so Y^ehowah said unto Joshua, "You will not fear and you will not be dismayed. Take with you all of the men of the war and arise. Go up to the Ai; see I have given into your hand a king of the Ai and his people and his city and his land.

Joshua
8:1

Smoother English rendering:

And then Jehovah said to Joshua, "You will not be afraid and you will not be dismayed. Take with you all of the men of war and arise. Go to up Ai and observe that I have given into your hand the king of Ai, along with his people, his city and his land.

The second verb is the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of châthath (חָתַת) [pronounced *khaw-THAHTH*], which means *dismay, discourage*. Strong's #2865 BDB #369. The first two verbs are in the Qal imperfect and not in the imperative, and are so translated. Recall what Moses said to the people early in Deuteronomy: "See, Jehovah your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as Jehovah, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed." (Deut. 1:21). And again: "Do not be afraid of them; you will remember what Jehovah your God did to the Pharaoh and to all Egypt." (Deut. 7:18; also see Deut. 31:6). And Moses spoke to Joshua, saying, "And Jehovah is the One Who goes ahead of you. He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear, or be discouraged." (Deut. 31:8). And God has already

¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 53.

said to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or become discouraged, for Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9).

Now, a little personal application. We can start anywhere in God’s Word and we can find application to us. Here, in this portion of Joshua, for instance. It does not matter what is occurring in our lives. We are told by God not to be afraid and not to become discouraged. Our lives are carefully tracked by God. There is nothing in our lives which God has not foreseen, and there is nothing for which He has not made careful provision for us. It does not matter that we are not the commander-in-chief about to enter into war against twenty some cities. For those of us who are caught in a war, we are not to be afraid and not to become discouraged. God is with us every step of the way. We confused human-viewpoint safety with God’s provision and care. We are taken care of by God no matter what the circumstances happen to be. Nothing which occurs in our lives ever catches God off-guard. I can’t tell you about how many times I have wasted an hour worrying about this or that, and, a day later, I found out that my worry was a total waste of time. I have become discouraged with people, with work, with situations—that is a waste of time. God goes ahead of us. He knows everything in our lives which will befall us. All we have to do is to take in His Word, therein listen to His direction, stay in fellowship, and God will take care of the rest. It is all under His control. We need merely rest in Him. “Only, do not rebel against Jehovah; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them and Jehovah is with us. Do not fear them.” (Num. 14:9).

In the next sentence, the first four verbs are in the imperative. “Take with you all of the men of the war and arise. Go up to the Ai; see...” The adjective which describes the men Joshua is to take is *mil’châmâh* (מִלְחָמָה) [pronounced *mil-khaw-MAW*], and it means *battle, war* (when used in the construct with *men*). Strong’s #4421 BDB #536. It would be reasonable to assume that one would require armaments to be a *man of the war*.

Ai, like a great many cities in the Palestine area, was small, ruled primarily by one person, called a king in our Bibles, but much less grandiose than his title implies. We find that there were at least 31 such cities in Joshua 12:7–24, where 31 different kings are mentioned that Israel conquered in the Land of Promise. Ai itself was located on a conical hill, ten miles west of Jericho. To the west of Ai was Bethel, with a hill between them—the very hill where Abram set up an altar to God at his entrance into the land. It was also on this hill where Abram and Lot stood, overlooking the Jordan valley, when Lot chose to take his cattle and graze in that valley, seeing that it was lush and well-watered (Gen. 13:1–13). From this same hill, God told Abram to look in all directions—north, east, west and south—and all that he saw would be given to his progeny (Gen. 13:14–16).

McGee: Notice that God says to take all the men of war when they go against Ai. As we have said, Ai represents the flesh. The flesh is the greatest enemy you have, and you need all the resources you have to get the victory. Because Ai represents the flesh, we learn from this episode great spiritual lessons. First of all there must be a recognition of the enemy and the potential. We must realize that the greatest enemy you and I have is ourselves. I hear folk saying, “The devil made me do it.” Well, he didn’t. It is that flesh of yours which is responsible. Secondly, we must examine very carefully the reason for our defeats. Primarily the reason for defeat is our dependence upon our own ability. You remember that the spies said to Joshua, “You will need only about two or three thousand men to overcome little Ai.” And we think the flesh will be easy to overcome. We depend on ourselves to do it. We will have to come to the same place to which Paul came when he cried, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). My friend, you and I cannot control the flesh. Only the Spirit of God can do that. The tragedy is that thousands are trying to control and eradicate it in their own strength. You might as well take a gallon of French perfume out to the barnyard, pour it on a pile of manure, and expect to make it into a sand pile in which your children might play. You cannot improve and control this thing we know as the flesh or the sin nature. God says you cannot. Only the Holy Spirit can control it. Christ died not only that you might have salvation, but He died that this sin nature might be dealt with. “...God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). This simply means that when Christ came to this earth, He not only died for your sins that you might have salvation, but He died to bring into judgment this old sin nature. Otherwise God could not touch us with a forty-foot pole, because we are evil. Christ died because I have a sin nature and you have a sin nature. The Holy Spirit could not touch us until Christ had paid that penalty. When the penalty was paid, and our sin nature was condemned, then the Holy Spirit could and did come into our lives and bring victory out of defeat. As Paul expressed it, “I am

crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). The flesh, like Ai, will defeat us unless we are depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit to win the victory.²

When I first read through this passage, I doubted that this was a separate time when God spoke to Joshua. My thinking was that these instructions could have come out of Joshua’s meeting with God when he went to God in severe depression after the defeat at Ai. Now, I still believe that there are times when God speaking to Joshua in several different chapters may have occurred at one time, but Joshua is recalling these things topically. However, in this instance, I must admit to being conflicted here. Did God first tell Joshua what to do about Achan, and then tell him how to take Ai; or did God tell Joshua what to do about Achan, wait till that was taken care of; and then tell Joshua how to proceed with the attack on Ai?

An additional comment: many commentators make a big deal out of Joshua not sending up all of his men to defeat Ai. To illustrate an analogy, as McGee has done, that is fine. However, you are missing the big picture if you think the defeat at Ai was because Joshua did not send enough forces into battle. Joshua could have sent up all of his troops against Ai in the previous chapter and they would have still suffered casualties and they would have still have been put on the run. The key was not that Joshua went the route of economy of forces, but that *Israel was out of fellowship with God*. That no longer being the case, had God chosen for Joshua to send a small detachment against Ai, then that would have worked. We will later find battles fought in Scripture where the forces were scaled back to a minimum.

Now we have another problem to deal with. It does not appear as though Joshua took with him all of the men of war; that is, it does not appear as though Joshua took with him every man who was capable of bearing arms. We already know that from the tribes which have chosen to live on the other side of the Jordan, there are 40,000 men equipped for war, and those from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. My guess from the numbers alluded to in this chapter is these at the men of war called upon in this instance. We also don’t know how many men were actually armed. There may have been 200,000–300,000 men who were of the proper age to engage in warfare, but we have heard precious little of making weapons, of taking weapons as spoil in previous victories, etc. My point being is that out of the number of men who could potentially go into battle, there might be a much smaller number of men equipped for battle. My guess is that it is the 40,000 mentioned in Joshua 4:13, who go with Joshua. This number of men would be more than sufficient to conquer Ai, now that Israel is back in fellowship with God. My second guess is that only a portion of the total men go with Joshua—those who are armed, and the exact number is not given to us. I just don’t see Joshua’s entire army, armed and unarmed, as going up to Ai.

And you will do to Ai and to her king as that you did to Jericho and her king; only her spoil and in her cattle, you [all] will pillage for yourselves. Put in place for yourself an ambushing for the city behind her.”

Joshua
8:2

And you will do to Ai and her king just as you did to Jericho and her king, except that you may take from her possessions and cattle. Position yourselves behind the city in order to ambush it.”

Although *Ai* is a proper noun, the accompanying possessive pronouns are all in the feminine singular. Then we have *Jericho and her king*. What Joshua is to do is to burn the city with fire and to kill all the inhabitants. We have special instructions here, because in general, Joshua and his army would be able to keep the women, children, cattle and goods as their spoil (Deut. 20:14). We next have the adverb *raq* (רַק) [pronounced *rahk*] means *only, provided, altogether, surely*—it carries with it restrictive force. Strong’s #7534 & #7535 BDB #956. One of the verbs is the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *bâzaz* (בָּזַז) [pronounced *baw-ZAHZ*], which means *to spoil, to plunder, to pillage, to despoil, to depredate, to freeboot, to ransack*. The best modern rendering is *to pillage*. Strong’s #962 BDB #102. The people had reached a point of degeneracy where they had to all be destroyed—however, their cattle and personal goods were free game for the Israelites. Achan, of the previous chapter, should have waited until the attack on Ai before he began to gather plunder.

² J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; pp. 53–55.

McGee: *You will recall that at the battle of Jericho they were not to take any of the prey or the spoil for themselves. But here God tells them to take what they want. Why the difference? Well, we now know that in Jericho social diseases were running rampant. Moses didn't know about disease germs, but God did.*³ I had theorized that this could have had something to do with the setting aside of Jericho as corban, but my sources did not mention this specifically until here in McGee's book. Some more documentation would have been great.

The next verb is the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative of *sîym* (שׂוּם) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set*. Here, we might render this *put in place* or *position* (yourself). Strong's #7760 BDB #962. What follows is the Qal active participle of *ʿâraḇ* (אַרַב) [pronounced *aw-RA^hV*], which means *to ambush, to lay in wait*. As a participle, it means *an ambushing*. Strong's #693 BDB #70.

At the end of this verse, we have a compound preposition, *mê'achar* (אַחַרָּ) [pronounced *may-ah-KHAHR*], which is made up of *ʿachar* (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*], which means *behind, after* (Strong's #310 BDB #29) and *min* (מִן) [pronounced *min*], which means *from, out of* (Strong's #4480 BDB #577). Together, they mean *from behind, from following after, from after*. God's tactics were designed to give them victory.

And so Joshua arose and all men of the war to go up [to] the Ai; and so Joshua chose 30,000 men, mighty of the army and so sent them forth [at] night.

Joshua
8:3

And then Joshua got up and he and all the men of war went up to Ai. Then Joshua chose 30,000 military types and deployed them at night.

Joshua took with him all of the fighting men of Israel, but he only deploying some of them behind Ai. The army of Joshua had to be nearly a half million men at the most and perhaps 200,000 at the least. Only the highly organized system of command could cause them to move out on such short notice. I don't see this as being the case, as I have stated before. The principle battle will be engaged in by the armed military types.

In describing the men, Joshua uses the masculine plural construct of *gibbôwr* (גִּבּוֹרִים) [pronounced *gib-BOAR*], which means *strong men, mighty men, soldiers*. As an adjective, it means *strong, mighty, valiant*. Strong's #1368 BDB #150. It is followed by the masculine singular noun *chayil* (חַיִל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil*] and it means *efficiency, army, strength, valour, power*. Strong's #2428 BDB #298. Together, Thieme would render this *military types*.

The next verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect, with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix of *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHKH*], which means *to send, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy*. Strong's #7971 BDB #1018. This is followed by the word *night*.

In this verse, we have 30,000 men; in v. 12, we have 5000. Joshua chooses 30,000 and sends them out at night, which is quite an extensive maneuver. In v. 12, 5000 men are placed in ambush position between Ai and Bethel. We don't know if there was a copyist's mistake here and if these two numbers should match up; it is possible that only 5000 of the original 30,000 were positioned specifically between Ai and Bethel, directly behind Ai. The others could have been to the side and they could have traveled with Joshua. The NIV suggests that the additional 25,000 served as a covering force or a buffer force which was in place just in case of an attack from Bethel. During all of the fighting which ensued and the burning of Ai, they remained on alert between the two cities. After having exegeted both verses and reading and re-reading both verses in context, it first appeared to me that the 30,000 men and the 5,000 men are going to be in essentially the same place. Keil and Delitzsch came to the same conclusion. I do not see any way to really reconcile the numbers and Keil and Delitzsch agree again. If this is the case, then all we have is a discrepancy of numbers. Out of curiosity, I checked the Septuagint and v. 12 lacks any number v. 13 is missing altogether. The manuscripts used for the Septuagint are much older than the manuscripts which we have used for our own Hebrew text. On the negative side, the Septuagint is not altogether accurate and it is rather free-wheeling in some places. One reasonable explanation is that the problem of the numbering is one of a textual mistake which occurred after the Septuagint (or was intentionally left out of the Septuagint because of the discrepancy), and, in any case, it is not an important issue as this disparity is all found

³ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 53.

within the same chapter. It is also suggested that the difference between the two numbers—5,000 and 30,000—is slight, and that all we have is a clerical error.⁴ Edersheim suggests that the difference is between the letters hê (ה) and lâmed (ל). First of all, those letters are quite different; and, secondly, that is not exactly the difference; the actual differences between the numbers are much more pronounced than he suggests in the Hebrew text. If the Bible was intentionally altered many times over, certainly a simple problem like this would have been fixed long ago. The fact that the transcribers of the Hebrew over hundreds of years saw these numbers in such close proximity and still wrote them just as they stood indicates a very healthy respect for inerrancy of Scripture. Finally, and this is the most important discrepancy, the groups of men are sent out at different times and under different circumstances. This cannot be interpreted in any other way than Joshua sending out two different groups of men.

According to Keil and Delitzsch, it should be quite possible for a detachment to travel from Gilgal up to Ai along the northwest road for a distance of fifteen miles, accomplishing this march at night and settling in before daylight.

Barnes: *The neighborhood in which Ai was situated is described as “A wild entanglement of hill and valley;” and amidst its recesses, the detachment could easily shelter itself from observation until Joshua’s other measures were taken.*⁵

And so he commanded them to say, “Look, you will be lying in wait for the city from behind the city. Do not go very far from the city, and all of you will be ready.

Joshua
8:4

And then he commanded them, saying, “Listen up, you lie in wait behind the city, but not too far from the city; and all of you be on red alert standby.

The first verb is the Qal imperative of râ`âh (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*], which means *to see*. In the imperative, it means *look, see, see here*. There is also a use of this verb which means *to see* [so as to know or so as to learn]. This would not be unlike our colloquialism *listen up!* Strong's #7200 BDB #906.

The Joshua says *you* (masculine plural) followed by the masculine plural, Qal active participle of `âra^bv (אָרַב) [pronounced *aw-RA^BV*], again, which means *to ambush, to lay in wait*. As a masculine plural participle preceded by a 2nd person masculine plural means *you will be ambushing* or *you will be lying in wait*. Strong's #693 BDB #70. This is followed by *for the city from behind the city*. Joshua gives them the exact same orders as delivered to him from God.

This is followed by the negative particle and the 2nd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect of râchaq (רָחַק) [pronounced *raw-KHAKH*], and, in the Hiphil, it means *to put at a distance, to remove, to place far away from oneself*. With the adverb and the prepositional phrase to follow, this is rendered: **ye go not very far off from the city** (Young); **do not go very far from the city** (*The Amplified Bible*, NASB, Rotherham). Strong's #7368 BDB #934.

Joshua adds the wâw conjunction, the Qal perfect of *to be*, the word(s) *all [of] you* and the masculine plural, Niphal participle of kûwn (כּוּן) [pronounced *koon*] and its definition seems to be a little obscure, despite the fact that this word occurs in the Old Testament almost 250 times. It appears to mean *erect (to stand up perpendicular)* and by application, *to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized*. In the Niphal, it means *to be prepared, to be ready* (along with several other meanings). Strong's #3559 BDB #465.

According to Keil and Delitzsch, northwest of the site of Ai is Wady es Suweinit, which forms almost a perpendicular wall to the mountain where Ai was. However, it is far enough away so that inhabitants of Ai could not look down their walls into that portion of the valley.

⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 315, footnote.

⁵ *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 368.

“And I and all the people who [are] with me will draw near unto the city and it will come to pass when they come out to encounter us as which in the first; and we will flee before their faces.

Joshua
8:5

“Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city and when they come out to meet us—as before—we will flee before them.

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of *qâra*^{bv} (קָרַב) [pronounced *kaw-RA^bV*], which means *to come near, to approach, to draw near*. Strong's #7126 BDB #897. This is followed by the phrase *unto the city*.

Then we have the very Biblical sounding 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*] simply means *to be*. Without a specific subject and object, it often means *and it will come to pass, and it will come to be*. Strong's #1961 BDB #224.

The conjunction *when, that, because* is next and the phrase *they are coming out to meet [or, to encounter] us*. This next portion is a bit confusing. We have the kaph compound *ka`ăsher* (כַּאֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *kah-uh-SHER*], which is the compound of the preposition *kaph* (כ) (No Strong's # BDB #453), which, means *like, as*; and the relative pronoun *ăsher* (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *uh-SHER*] (Strong's #834 BDB #81), which means *which, when or who*. Together, literally, we have *as which*; however, it means *as which, as one who, as, like as*. BDB classifies these two together as a separate word, and gives the meanings *according as, as, when*. Gesenius does likewise, giving the meanings *as as who, as one who, according to [that] which, according as, according to what manner, because, as if, as though, as, just as, so as* (used of time). Strong's #834 BDB #455. This is followed by the *bêyth* preposition, the definite article and the feminine singular adjective *rîshôwn* (רִשׁוֹן) [pronounced *ree-SHOWN*], which means *first, chief, former, beginning*. In the feminine with prepositions, its meaning is narrowed further. With *bêyth*, it means *before, formerly*. Strong's #7223 BDB #911. This is rendered: *as at the first* (NASB, Rotherham, Young), *as before* (NRSV), *as they did the last time* (NEB). This phrase apparently refers to both what occurs prior and what occurs after it. This simply means that they will flee before the faces of the men of Ai just as they had done before. **So about 3000 men from the people went up there, but they fled from the end of Ai. And the men of Ai struck down about 36 of their men, and pursued them from the gate to as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became like water** (Joshua 7:4–5). Since there were no repercussions and since God did not upbraid Joshua for these tactics, that would indicate to us that it is Biblically acceptable to use some deceit in war against an enemy. A similar tactic was tried with less success in Judges 20:32–44.

And they will come out after us until our drawing them away from the city, for they will say, ‘They are fleeing before our faces as which in the first’; and so we will flee before their faces.

Joshua
8:6

And they will come on out after us and drawn away from the city, for they will say, ‘They are fleeing away from us just as they had done before.’ Therefore, we will feign a retreat.

The first preposition is *ăchar* (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*], and it essentially means *after*. Strong's #310 BDB #29. This is followed by the preposition *until* and the Hiphil infinitive construct, 1st person suffix of *nâthaq* (נָתַק) [pronounced *naw-THAHK*], which means *to pull, to draw, to tear away, to tear apart, to tear off*. Strong's #5423 BDB #683. This is all followed by the direct object with the 3rd person suffix, and then by the phrase *away from [or, out from] the city*. This would give us: **“And they will come out after us until our drawing them away out from the city...”**

Joshua then examines how they will think. He says, “For they will say...” and follows this with the Qal active participle, masculine plural of *nûwç* (נוּוַח) [pronounced *noose*], which means *to flee*. Strong's #5127 BDB #630. This could be rendered *their fleeing* or *they are fleeing*. Then we have the phrase *before our faces*, and the phrase *as which at the first*, the exegesis of which we have covered in a previous verse. So far, this gives us: **And they will come out after us until our drawing them away out from the city, for they will say, ‘They are fleeing before our faces as which at the first...’** “

The Joshua tells his men what they will do: **“And so, we will flee before their faces.”** Now I want you to notice something important in this verse. God has made it completely clear to Joshua that He has given Israel the city of Ai. Israel has the entire town greatly outnumbered. There is no comparison between the two in terms of the comparative sizes of their armies. However, this does not preclude military strategy. Joshua does not run outside and yell “Attack!” and that is the end of it. He plans a strategy, based in part upon some deceit, and carefully executes this strategy. When I was first saved, I recall thinking that when it came to important decisions, it didn’t matter exactly what I did—God would see to it that everything worked out okay. Therefore, I made some really stupid decisions early on in my Christian life. Having God on your side does not mean that you can just do whatever you want to do, that you can make any decision that you want at the spur of the moment, and that everything is just going to be hunky dory. You still have to think things through, you still have to make responsible decisions, and you still need to act with integrity. I recall hearing about testimonies of believers who cannot believe that God *allowed this to happen to me!* when they were the problem; they were the one who made it happen to themselves. God didn’t do it. They ended up with serious problems because they acted like a dipstick immediately after salvation. How should I put this? After salvation, you don’t close your eyes and go running out in the middle of a busy street. You may be thinking, *no duh!* Most believers, after salvation, do the equivalent of closing their eyes and running out in the middle of a busy street. Yes, it is true that **God works all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose** (Rom. 8:28). This doesn’t mean that you should carry on with your life like some Nimrod. Joshua acts intelligently using well-thought out military tactics. He does not willy nilly do just everything, knowing that God will pick up the pieces at the end. God gave us intelligence and discernment, and we are to use that. And, furthermore, when it comes to major decisions and spiritually related decisions, these should wait until we are able to spiritually evaluate these decisions. **Only as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And thus I direct in all the churches. Was any man called already circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not become circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what is important is keeping the commandments of God. Let each man remain in the condition in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord’s freedman; likewise, he who was called while free, is Christ’s slave. You were bought with a price, so do not become slaves of men. Brothers, let each man remain with God in that condition in which he was called** (I Cor. 7:17–24). Becoming a Christian does not give you the liberty to make bonehead decisions and becoming a Christian means that you should put off momentous, life-changing decisions. Once you get a little spiritual discernment under your belt—okay, a lot of spiritual discernment under your belt—then you can begin making intelligent spiritually-discerned, life-changing decisions. Again, there is guidance and Bible doctrine to be found throughout all of God’s Word.

“And you [even] you will rise up from the lying in wait and you will possess [or, occupy] the city and Y^ehowah your God will give her into your hand.

Joshua
8:7

“And then you will rise up from your hiding and your lying in wait and you will capture the city, as Jehovah your God will give it into your hand.

This verse is quite straightforward in the Hebrew. One of the verbs is the 2nd person masculine plural, Hiphil perfect of *yârash* (יָרַשׁ) [pronounced *yaw-RAHSH*] means *to possess, to take possession of, to occupy [all] geographical area—by driving out the previous occupants, to inherit, to dispossess*. Strong’s #3423 BDB #439. Obviously, Joshua is not speaking to several hundred thousand soldiers but to the battalion commanders. In v. 4, he addresses those who will hide behind the city; in vv. 5–6, he addresses a small group who will attack the city from the front and then retreat; and in vv. 7–8 he speaks to the group who will move into the city from behind once the men have been drawn out of the city. The expression *and Y^ehowah your God will give her into your hand* is used several times in Scripture (Judges 7:7 | Sam. 23:4). It simply means that God will give control of the city to Joshua and his army.

Now it would be easy to imagine this sleepy town minding its own business which is attacked by Joshua, wherein all the town and its defenseless inhabitants are destroyed by Joshua’s army, but in reality, this is a degenerate, heartless people, whose minds are set against God, who are devoid of natural affection, who are cruel and vicious. You have to realize that God knows their hearts and that God has given them the opportunity to repent of their evil. During the first attack by Joshua, they could have come out waving the old world equivalent of a white flag,

and ask to make peace with the Israelites, knowing that God was with them and that God had led them into the land to take the land. Quite to the contrary, the men of Ai knew that they opposed the God of the Universe when they chased the fleeing Israelites, and were giddy in their victory over these people and over their God. The Bible does not go into any great detail concerning these inhabitants as it did not go into the background of the inhabitants of Jericho. However, the pictures that we have portrayed for us back in Genesis of the people of the land in general is one of homicidal homosexual rapists whose only law is one of greater force; these are people who routinely sacrificed their own children in order to get what they want. We know of the latter via the commandments against Israel committing the same acts (Lev. 18:21 20:2–5). Furthermore, we read in II Chron. 28:3: **Furthermore, he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom, and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom Jehovah had drive out before the sons of Israel.** See also II Chron. 3:1–6. **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them (for God made it evident to them). For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse, for even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to immorality, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped the served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever, Amen. For this reason, God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards one another, men with men, committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness; wickedness, greed, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worth of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them (Rom. 1:18–32). And we will see a flurry of such activity in the end times: But realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of Godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoice such men as these (II Tim. 3:1–5).**

In our country, we have only an inkling of this kind of behavior. We have young adults giving birth and then killing and abandoning their newborn, whose conscience strikes them when faced with the real-life penalties of what they have done, rather than with the incredible degeneracy of their acts. Similar to this old world environment, we have prisons with men who routinely perform anal rape on the weaker prisoners. We read about a similar situation in Gen. 19, wherein the male population of Sodom is that way. To me, a painful, public execution of such a one should be automatic. We can trust that these horrible aberrations in our society, which stand out because they are so repulsive, were more common place throughout the Land of Promise. These people defiled the land with their sick perversions and they were receiving the appropriate discipline for their degeneracy. God did not just go into this land and destroy these people because He wanted to give a nice area to His people Israel. The people being dispossessed of this land were cruel degenerates, exhibiting such behavior that, had we witnessed it, we would be willing to personally execute them ourselves. The general behavior of this population was much worse than we have ever seen in this land, except by way of rare instances which receive a great deal of media attention.

“And it will come to pass as your seizing the city, you [all] will be caused to set fire [to] the city in the fire. According to a word of Y^ehowah, you will do. See, I have commanded you [all].”

Joshua
8:8

“And it will come to pass when you seize the city that you will set the city on fire, just as God has commanded you. Observe, you have been so commanded by me.”

The second verb in this verse is the Qal infinitive construct, 2nd person masculine plural suffix, of tâphas (טַפְּסוּ) [pronounced *taw-FAHS*] and it means *to manipulate, to seize*. Strong's #8610 BDB #1074. It is preceded by the kaph preposition.

We also have in this verse a verb that we don't see too often, then 2nd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect of yâtsath (תַּצִּיטוּ) [pronounced *yaw-TSAHTH*], which means *to burn, to kindle*. Strong's #3341 BDB #428. It has a synonymn, yâqad (תַּקִּיטוּ) [pronounced *yaw-KAHD*], which also means *to burn, to kindle*. Strong's #3344 BDB #428. I don't know the difference between the two.

When Joshua said, “According to the word of Jehovah, you will do,” he was, in part, referring to Deut. 20:16–18: “Only in the cities of these people that Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance, you will not leave alive anything that breathes, but you will completely destroy them—the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as Jehovah your God has commanded you, in order that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against Jehovah your God.” He was also referring back to God speaking to him, both in Joshua 8:2a (“And you will do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king...”). What we do not have recorded, but implied, is that God had specifically ordered the execution of these peoples. Up until that point in time (Joshua 8:2), I believe this is the first time that we have that specific command from God to Joshua. However, the Bible is God's Word, and I believe that Joshua was beginning to grasp that fact.

An interesting sideline here. God has twice used the Qal imperative of râ`âh (רֹאֵה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*], which means *to see*; on Joshua. As we have seen, this would not be unlike our colloquialism *listen up!* Joshua liked this and decided to use it. Strong's #7200 BDB #906. We have all taken on phrases which we have heard others use and liked the way they sounded. As of this writing, I have used the word *ciao* a billion times. I was the person who originated the phrase *talk to you soon*, at the end of a phone conversation, which has been used a billion times by other people. All Joshua is doing is using a phrase which he likes, which he first heard from God (Joshua 6:2 8:1).

And so Joshua deployed them and so they went unto the place of ambush and so they were waiting between Bethel and between Ai from seaward with respect to the Ai. And so Joshua spent the night the that in a midst of the people.

Joshua
8:9

And so Joshua deployed his troops, and they moved into position, laying in wait between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai. Then Joshua spent the night with the people.

We've seen the first verb before in this chapter; the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect, with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix of shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHKH*], which means *to send, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy*. Strong's #7971 BDB #1018. Where they went to begins with the preposition `el (אֵל) [pronounced *el*], which means *in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding*. Strong's #413 BDB #39. This is followed by the definite article and the masculine singular noun ma`ârâb (מַאֲרָב) [pronounced *mah-uh-RAW^BV*], and it is the noun cognate for the verb *to ambush*. It means *ambush vicinity, place of ambush, ambushment*; we could use the terms *concealment, hiding place, hideaway*, as long as we understood that we were referring the *place from where they would ambush* the people and city of Ai. Strong's #3993 BDB #70.

What they did in that place of ambush was the Qal imperfect of yâsha^{bv} (יָשָׁבוּ) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH^BV*], which means *to remain, sit, dwell*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442.

What follows is a preposition which is used twice: bayin (בַּיִן) [pronounced *bah-YIN*] or bêyn (בֵּינָם) [pronounced *bane*]. When found once, this word is translated *in the midst of*; when it is found twice, it means *between*. Strong's #996 BDB #107. Then we have the min preposition (*from*) and the masculine singular noun yâm (יָם) [pronounced *yawm*], and it means *sea or lake* (Gen. 14:3 Num. 34:11 Deut. 4:49 Zech. 14:8). This word has also denoted the direction of the Mediterranean from the Palestine area, so it meant *seaward*, and came to mean *west, westward*, in reference to direction. Strong's #3220 BDB #410. This should place them west of Ai.

Between Ai and Bethel was a hill, as we have discussed, and there are an abundance of olive trees surrounding that hill, so these men were hidden by both the hill and the trees. This group of men went in south of Ai and circled up until they were south-southwest of Ai. They would then, when called into attack, circle around Ai in a counterclockwise motion and go in and take the city. Now, little or nothing is said of the troop movement of the those lying in wait and nothing is said of their meeting behind Ai, between Ai and Bethel. Their specific movements and activities are not recorded in Scripture because Joshua wrote the book bearing his name and he was not back there with the groups of men lying in wait, so he does not know all the particulars. He is merely recording what he commanded and what he saw, many years after the fact, which easily accounts for the lack of detail here or there.

At first, I did not grasp the meaning of that last line, *and so Joshua spent the night in the midst of his people*. Certainly, what is said is plain enough, but why does Joshua mention this? We are never given a clear understanding of the tent which is Joshua's. We know he spent a lot of time in the Tent of God; but he certainly spent his evenings in his own tent and he received visitors and attended to governmental functions probably elsewhere unspecified by Scripture. In any case, this would have been in the midst of the people. The implication here is that Joshua did not go with his men to Ai originally and he did not necessarily bivouac with his troops at the conquest of Jericho. However, for this invasion, he accompanied his men and was with them the entire time.

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Joshua Draws the Soldiers out of Ai

And so Joshua arose early in the morning and then he mustered the people; and so they went up—he and elders of Israel—before the faces of the people of the Ai.

Joshua
8:10

And so Joshua got up early the next morning and he put into place the remainder of his men. Then he and the elders of Israel went up and stood face to face with the people of Ai.

Once Joshua got up in the morning, he did the Qal imperfect of *pâqad* (פָּקַד) [pronounced *paw-KAHD*], which means *to attend to, to muster, to visit, to bless, to discipline*. The key to all of these definitions is personal contact of some sort. Strong's #6485 BDB #823. Personally, I like Joshua's style. I like the idea of getting up early in the morning to take care of things. During this most recent time period of writing this, I get up anywhere between 2 am and 4 am and work on my study of God's Word. I might take off 45 minutes to run and I might even do a little housework or pay a few bills prior to the rising of the sun. I get an awful lot done when I get up early in the morning. I am at my greatest energy level, my mind functions at its very best, so for me, it is an outstanding time during which to take care of business.

Notice how sly Joshua is—he doesn't bring his fierce warriors and young men into stance against the people of Ai, but his elders. They had sent up a detachment before of probably moderately tough men who likely even volunteered for the job. Now, he faces off Ai with the elders. It was as though they sent the young men to do the job and they couldn't, so now the elders, their fathers are there, to show them how it is done, but who are going to appear a bit less formidable, nonetheless.

And all of the people—the [people of] war—who [were] with him went up and so drew near and so they came near to the city and then they encamped from north of Ai and the valley [or, ravine] between him and between the Ai.

Joshua
8:11

And all of the men of war who were with him also went up and moved in closer to the city, camping north of Ai with a valley between them and Ai.

First of all, don't become lost or confused with the action. Vv. 11–13 occur before v. 10. These verses more or less expand on what occurred in v. 10, and mention those troops who will be lying in wait for the soldiers of Ai on the side. Or, better yet, vv. 11–13 expand upon what is being said in v. 10, giving the particulars. He and the

elders move in front of the city of Ai, and his other troops are positions in the following verses to ambush the soldiers of Ai. What Joshua does is good military strategy, but it is based upon having a large number of troops to work with—in fact, far more than your enemy has. I want to view a few translations first and work from there:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> | And all the people of war who were with him went up and drew near, and came in right before the city,—and pitched on the north of Ai, with a valley between them and Ai. |
| KJV | And all the people, <i>even the people</i> of war that <i>were</i> with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now <i>there was</i> a valley between them and Ai. |
| NASB | Then all the people of war who <i>were</i> with him went up and draw near and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now <i>there was</i> a valley between him and Ai. |
| <i>Young's Lit. Translation</i> | ...and all the people of war who <i>are</i> with him have gone up, and draw nigh and come in over-against the city, and encamp on the north of Ai; and the valley <i>is</i> between him and Ai. |

This verse begins with a wâw conjunction (remember that Joshua prefers the wâw consecutive), the construct of the word *all*, a definite article and the noun *people*. *People* is not in the construct and it is followed by the definite article and the feminine singular substantive mil^echâmâh (הַמִּלְחָמָה) [pronounced *mil-khaw-MAW*], and it means *battle, war* (when used in the construct with *men*). As you see, Rotherham, the NASB and Young all translated it as a simple construct. The KJV makes a reasonable attempt to indicate that we have more than a construct here and that mil^echâmâh is preceded by a definite article. We might similarly indicate this by a hyphen and then the translation *the fighting one(s), even the men of war, even the men of battle, even the men of the fight*. Strong's #4421 BDB #536. These are the men who are going to appear to be Joshua's main fighting force.

We have three verbs in quick succession describing the movement of the troops. First we have the Qal perfect of ʿâlâh (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means *to go up, to ascend, to rise*. It is one of the verbs which Joshua uses many times throughout his book. Strong's #5927 BDB #748. Ai is above where they are, so they must make a trip up the mountain to the area where Ai is located. This is the troop movement which before had been suggested that Joshua not make the entire army do (Joshua 7:3). The next verb is the Qal imperfect of nâgash (נָגַשׁ) [pronounced *naw-GASH*], which means *to come near, to draw near, to approach, to come hither*. Strong's #5066 BDB #620. So they are going up the mountain, moving in closer to the city. The Qal perfect seems to indicate that there is a plateau—that is, they ascend the mountain, perfect tense (completed action), but they continue to approach or move closer to Ai. The third verb is the Qal imperfect of bôw' (בָּוֵא) [pronounced *boh*], which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go*. Strong's #935 BDB #97. Then we have the preposition neged (נֶגַד) [pronounced *NEH-ged*], which means *in front of, in the sight of, opposite to*. Strong's #5048 BDB #617. This gives us: **And all of the people—the [people of] war—who [were] with him went up and so drew near and so they came before the city...** I don't exactly see the difference between the last two verbs, or what both are required here. The repetition of thought may be similar to our phrase *and they moved closer and closer and closer*.

Once they are almost in position, they set up camp. It has taken about a day to mobilize the troops into position. The compass directions are given by the min preposition and the feminine singular noun tsâphôwn (צָפוֹן) [pronounced *tsaw-FOHN*], which mean *north*. Together, they would mean *from [the] north* or *from northward*. Strong's #6828 BDB #860.

And so he took about five thousand men and so he placed them an ambushing between Bethel and between the Ai from west of the city.⁶

Joshua
8:12

And so he took about five thousand men and so he positioned them a concealed area between Bethel and Ai from west of the city.

⁶ To give you an idea as to how minor some of the differences are in manuscripts, one school of Massorites has *the city* and another has *Ai*.

The second verb is the Qal imperfect of *siym* (סִיַּם) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set, to position*. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. These are the soldiers who waited in ambush behind Ai.

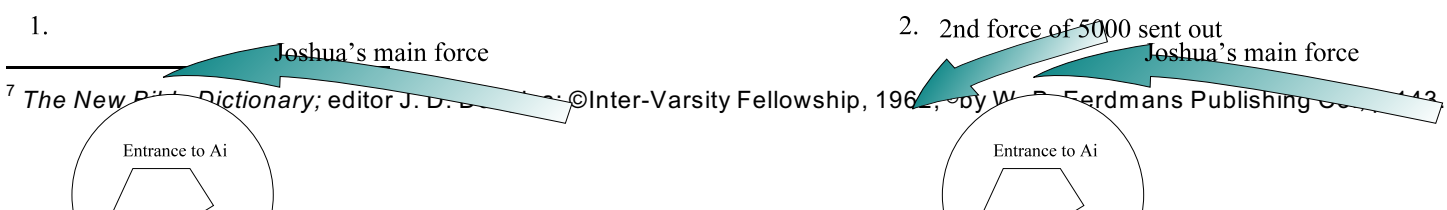
Bethel is located west, slightly northwest from Ai, less than five miles away. It will be mentioned again in v. 17. Bethel was mentioned several times in the book of Genesis, and then not again until now (which makes sense, as locality of the books of the Law would be in Egypt and en route to the Land of Promise). It means *House of God* and this contingent of soldiers have been placed right in the exact spot where we first here of these cities 500 years before when Abraham camped between them, built an altar to Jehovah and called upon Jehovah's Name (Gen. 12:8 13:3). This is where Jacob has a spiritual awakening and this is where he eventually moved to when he decided that he was not going to work on Laban's farm no more (Gen. 28:19 31:13 35). It does not appear as though Bethel was taken by the Israelites at this time, as, in the list of cities taken and kings overthrown, Bethel is included in Joshua 12:9 only to help locate Ai. In the Hebrew, it is said that Israel capture Bethel (Joshua 12:16), but, curiously, no details are given beyond this chapter and the Greek Septuagint does not have the city Bethel listed. Later, during the time of the judges, we read that the tribe of Joseph conquers the city of Bethel (Judges 1:22–26).

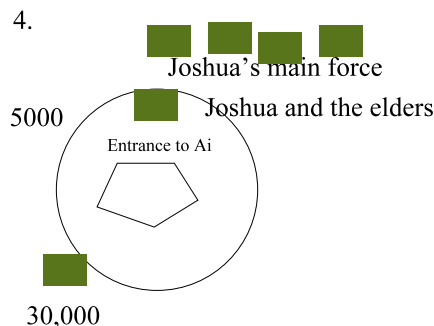
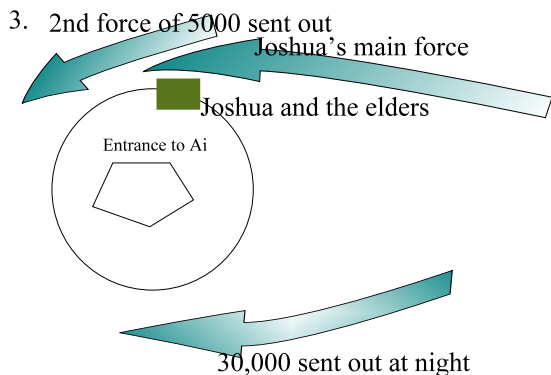
According to *The New Bible Dictionary*, *At the beginning of the Late Bronze Age a strong city wall was built [for Bethel], and a prosperous period with well-built houses and Egyptian luxuries ensued. The gradual decline which followed was ended by a violent destruction of the city, the burnt debris lying 5 feet deep in places. On the evidence of potsherds found in this debris and of the different cultural nature of the following settlement, this destruction is assigned to the Israelites invasion in the latter part of the 13th century B.C. (Jos. xii. 16: Jdg. i.22–26).*⁷

As has been mentioned, several theories have been proposed to reconcile this passage with v. 3. Most commentators agree that we have an additional 5,000 men sent out to ambush Ai. It does appear as though Joshua originally sent out 30,000 soldiers at night, then advanced with his men, setting the majority of them to the North of Ai, as he advanced with the elders—the older soldiers. Then it appears as though, maybe as an afterthought, that given the number of men with him and stationed north of Ai, that he sent an additional attachment of 5,000 to join those in hiding behind Ai. The main problem with this explanation is that it does not sound as though they are joining forces with a group which are already behind Ai.

Let me offer another possible solution (as you can see, details like this drive me crazy): most of the commentaries seem to imply that the entrance to the city of Ai faces east. It is possible that it faces north or northeast. My thinking is that this first detachment moves in south of the city, or southwest. Then Joshua and his army comes in from the west, but stations themselves so that they are north of the city (v. 13). He sends a small detachment from the north to the west of the city so that they station themselves west, northwest of Ai. Then, Joshua and some grizzled soldiers, looking as though they are going to do what the younger previous soldiers could not do, take Ai. They move into position. There are soldiers hidden to the north of the city, almost facing their main entry. There are 30,000 soldiers who are south of Ai, behind it. There is another 5,000 soldiers who are west of Ai. As Joshua lures the men of Ai out to battle, and lures them far enough away so that they can barely see their city, then the other two groups will come around from both directions from behind the city, the 30,000 from the south coming in a counterclockwise motion and the 5,000 from the west advancing from behind the city in a clockwise motion. The only problem that I see with the suggestion which I have made is the number of men sent out in the first place—30,000. That does seem to be somewhat excessive for a city of 8000 women and children. Again, whereas I am not 100% confident of any of the explanations (and I should remind you that there are no numbers to be found in v. 12 in the Septuagint and that the Septuagint lacks a v. 13); still the two detachments which Joshua sent out appear to be sent out at different times anyway—making the difference in the number of troops less of a problem. For these reasons, I am thinking that my explanation is the best.

Joshua's Attack on Ai





And so they placed the people—all of the camp which was from north with respect to the city and its [lit., his] heel from west with respect to the city; and so Joshua went in [alternate reading: lodged] the night the that in a midst of the valley.

Joshua 8:13⁸

So they stationed the people, all of the army which was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city. Joshua then spent that night in the midst of the valley.

In working through this, I am running into some problems, so we should look at a couple of translations first:

The Emphasized Bible And when the people had set all the host that was on the north of the city, with the rear thereof on the west of the city then went [alternate reading: lodged] Joshua during the night, into the midst of the valley.

NASB 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.

Young's Lit. Translation ...and they set the people, all the camp, which is on the north of the city, and its rear on the west of the city, and Joshua goeth on that night into the midst of the valley.

Sometimes, in order to be able to determine what the subject and the direct object are of a verb, we find the untranslatable word *ʾeth* (אֶת) [pronounced *ayth*]. Strong's #853 (and #854) BDB #84 (and #85). Mostly, we determine this by the gender and number of the verb and the nouns in its vicinity. We have the verb, the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *to set, to place* again; this is followed by *the people* (which is a singular masculine noun). We have no masculine plural subject in the near vicinity, which makes the subject *they*. The Hebrew does not require pronouns for the basic sentence structure, but uses them for emphasis and instead of the absolute status quo verbs *to be*. Now, *all of the encampment* is also two singular masculine nouns, so they cannot be the subject; furthermore, *all* is preceded by the direct object indicator. After the word *all*, we have the masculine singular of *machāneh* (מַחֲנֶה) [pronounced *mah-khuh-NEH*], which means *camp, encampment*. It can refer to the *camp* or to those in the camp, who are often *soldiers* (Ex. 14:24 Judges 4:16). It can even refer to a moving group or to a group which *camp* together temporarily, without that being the emphasis of the noun (Gen. 33:8 50:9). In fact, this word seems to have enjoyed a metamorphous from the book of Genesis to its later use, where it came to mean *camp, those in the camp*. This word is used with locusts in Joel 2:11. The plural of this word has three different meanings, which we will take up at another time. Strong's #4264 BDB #334. The unnamed *they* in this verse refers to Joshua and his four star generals.

The camp is further identify is being that camp *from north with respect to the city*. Then we have Joshua's typical use of a conjunction. Moses uses a *wāw* conjunction both to begin a new thought or sentence, to tie together thoughts and sentences, and to combine groups of things. Joshua uses the *wāw* consecutive to tie together different thoughts and sentences; he uses the *wāw* conjunction primarily to combine groups of things. What he

⁸ This verse is not found in the Greek Septuagint.

combines here is the sign of the direct object, the 3rd person masculine singular suffix and the masculine singular noun עָקַב (עָקַב) [pronounced *aw-KA^BV*], and it means *heel, footprint, hinderpart*, and therefore figuratively for *a rear guard, troops in the rear*. This word is found only 14 times in Scripture and is used only this once by Joshua. Moses never uses the word himself, although it is found four times in Genesis (Gen. 3:15 25:26 49:17, 19). From here, we find it only scattered in Scripture, David being the only author who might have used this word more than once (in the Psalms). Strong's #6119 (and #6120) BDB #784.

Then we have Joshua's wâw consecutive and the Qal imperfect of הָלַךְ (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK^e*], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229. Three early printed editions of the Massoretic text have the verb *lodged in* instead.

This verse is simply a summary verse of what has occurred. It indicates that Joshua camped almost in full view of the occupants of Ai. That is, he camped in a place which he knew would be observed by the city of Ai so that they would put a force of men together to attack Joshua. What Joshua had hoped for is to draw most or all of the army of Ai out of Ai so that he will be defenseless against his contingent of soldiers lying in wait behind Ai. Barnes: *The king of Ai, in the morning, would see neither the ambush in his rear, nor the whole of the great host of Israel amongst the hills away to the north on his left; but supposing, as it appears, that the Israelites before him were a body detached as on the former occasion to assail his city, he sallied out promptly to attack them.*⁹

And so it came to pass as soon as a king of the Ai saw and so they made haste and so they arose early and so they went out, men of the city, to meet Israel for the battle, he and all of his people to the [appointed] time before faces of the Arabah.¹⁰ And he did not know that an ambushing with respect to him from behind the city.

Joshua
8:14

And so it came to pass when the king of Ai saw, the men of the city quickly prepared, arose early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people before the Arabah. Furthermore, he was unaware of the ambush from behind the city.

The second verb is the Qal infinitive construct of *to see*; it is preceded by the kaph preposition *as*. When an infinitive construct is prefixed with kaph, it can be translated as a temporal clause, to be understood as *when, as, just as, or as soon as*.

The subject is listed later—*all the men of the city*. In fact, the subject seems to be mentioned as two sets of subjects: *men of the city* and *he* (the king of Ai) *and all of his people*. As soon as they saw, the first thing they did was the Piel imperfect of מָחָה (מָחָה) [pronounced *maw-KHAHR*], which means *to hasten, to hurry, to make haste*; its transitive use is *to prepare quickly, to bring quickly, to do quickly*. Strong's #4116 BDB #554. It is evening, possibly even in the middle of the night. Despite their previous victory over the Israelites, there must have been some apprehension in Ai when they saw the Israelites again. However, they will do the same thing that they did before—pour out of Ai and charge the Israelites. The men quickly assembled, got their weapons ready, made all the preparations that one does prior to a war, and then waited. There certainly was little sleeping which occurred that night, as soon as they saw the Israelites out in their front yard. There were certainly guards watching from the gate or the towers and they spotted some movement out before them. Whether they had to send some one out to confirm this or whether they could see it from the city, we are not told. In any case, that night the king was told and the men were assembled. The verb for *arose early* is the Hiphil imperfect of שָׁחַם (שָׁחַם) [pronounced *shaw-KAHM*], which means *to start, to rise, to rise early, to make an early start*. This verb was originally used for leading the backs of beasts for a day's journey and came to mean arising early. It is found only in the Hiphil, so we don't necessarily give it a causative meaning. Strong's #7925 BDB #1014.

What they purpose to do or the result of what they do is the lamed prefixed preposition and the Qal infinitive construct of קָרַע (קָרַע) [pronounced *kaw-RAW*], which means *to encounter, to befall, to meet*. Strong's #7122

⁹ Barnes' Notes, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 369.

¹⁰ The Greek Septuagint lacks the phrase *to the appointed time before the Arabah*.

& #7125 BDB #896. What they meet Israel for is the lamed preposition (*to, for*), the definite article and the feminine singular noun *mil'châmâh* (מִלְחָמָה) [pronounced *mil-khaw-MAW*], and it means *battle, war*. How appropos that such a word would be in the feminine. Strong's #4421 BDB #536.

After the phrase *he and all of his people*, we have the lamed preposition again, the definite article and the masculine noun *môw'êd* (מוֹעֵד) [pronounced *moe-GADE*], which means *a specific time, a pre-determined time, an appointed time*. How apropos that this would be a masculine noun (having been on some dates where the woman did not seem to have a grasp of the concept *pre-determined time*). Strong's #4150 BDB #417. This does not mean that he and Joshua had decided upon a time, but that the king of Ai had discussed the situation with his commanding officers and they determined at what time they would advance.

So far, this reads: *And so it came to pass as soon as a king of the Ai saw and so they made haste and so they arose early and so they went out, men of the city, to meet Israel for the battle, he and all of his people to the [appointed] time before faces of the Arabah*. The Arabah, when found with the definite article, as it is here, is generally a reference to *the great rift valley running south from the Sea of Galilee including the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea and extending all the way to the gulf of Aqabah*.¹¹ Most of the time in the KJV, we find this Hebrew word rendered *desert, plain* or *wilderness*. My understanding of the use of *Arabah* in the verse, is to indicate that Ai is on a hill, surrounded by valley and wilderness and desert; and then the men of Arabah, with their king, step out of their fortified city to face the wilderness or desert which is before them. When they step outside the gate of their city, this gate is the *entrance of the depressed tract of land which runs down to the Jordan valley, up which lay the route of the Israelites from Gikal to Ai*.¹² The soldiers of Ai will fall into formation, march through their gate, and they will see a few men, maybe a thousand or so, Joshua and the elders, but mostly what they see before them is the wilderness valley, not realizing that hidden throughout it are thousands upon thousands of Israeli soldiers.

We don't know how good the G-2 force of Ai was. They were a small city, comparatively speaking, and, although they had certainly heard of Israel and their exodus from Egypt, they may or may not have been aware of the immensity of the size of Israel's army. In any case, the king of Ai will assume here that the few troops which stood here before Ai were all that he had to be concerned with. Because of the previous attack by Israel, the king of Ai assumed that what he saw was all he had to contend with.

The remainder of this verse reads: *And he did not know that an ambushing with respect to him from behind the city*. Eccles. 9:12 reads: *Moreover, man does not know his time; like fish caught in a treacherous net, and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls upon them*.

And so Joshua and all of Israel feigned being defeated before their faces and so they fled [the] way of the wilderness.

Joshua
8:15

So Joshua and his soldiers pretended to be defeated before the men of Ai and fled into the wilderness.

The first verb is the Niphal imperfect of *nâga'* (נָגַע) [pronounced *naw-GAHG*], which means *to touch, to reach out and touch, to strike*. This verb is very similar to another verb which means *to strike down, to kill*; this verb is not quite as strong, but there is a potential for harm indicated. In the Niphal (the passive stem), it means *to be striken down, to be defeated*; and here, it means *to feign defeat*. Strong's #5060 BDB #619.

The last verb is the Qal imperfect of *nûwç* (נוּחַ) [pronounced *noose*], which means *to flee*. Strong's #5127 BDB #630. This is followed by the masculine singular construct of *derek'* (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced *DEH-rek'*] and it means *way, distance, road, journey, manner, course*. It could even mean *toward, to* (we must get our word *direction* from this). Strong's #1870 BDB #202.

¹¹ Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible; ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 233.

¹² Barnes' Notes, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 369.

Recall that Joshua is with all the elders. What occurred before is a crack team of 3000 had been sent and Humiliated . They were certainly a younger group in their 20's perhaps. They were routed. What the soldiers of Ai see before them now are Joshua and the elders, which are going to be a more grizzled version of what they saw before, but probably less intimidating. When the men of Ai fought them, Joshua and the Israelites appeared to be suffering defeat and so retreated. We are not given details as to what sort of weapons were used here. We don't know if we have bows and arrows, if everyone is slinging rocks, or what. My guess is that some had javelins and that much of this was from a distance apart. The book of Job, written sometime prior to this, gives us a clue as to the weapons used in the ancient world. **"The sword that reaches him cannot avail; nor the spear the dart, or the javelin. He regards iron as straw, bronze as rotted wood. The arrow cannot make him flee. Slingstones are turned into stubble for him. Clubs are regarded as stubble.; he laughs at the rattling of the javelin."** (Job 41:26–29). As the men of Ai unloaded their arsenal on them, the Israelites backed up, and then they backed up again, and then ran at a full speed away from the men of Ai. This was exactly what Joshua had planned and there is a good chance that, even though much of the battle was at first a retreat, there is no indication of any loss of life on the part of the Israelites as before in Joshua 7:5.

And so all of the people were called who [were] in the city to pursue after them; and so they pursued after Joshua and so they were drawn away from the city.

Joshua
8:16

And then all of the men in the city were summoned to pursue them; and they were thus drawn away from the city in to pursue after Joshua.

The first verb is the Niphal imperfect of *zâ' aq* (קָוַעַ) [pronounced *zaw-ḤAHK*], which means *to cry out, to call, to cry*, often used for an utterance of horror, anxiety, alarm, distress, sorrow. Strong's #2199 BDB #277. Here, it was a call of victory over the Israelites. It must have been some heady feeling to put the Israelites on the run after the stories of their defeat of Egypt had been spread for these part several decades.

The last verb is the Niphal imperfect of *nâthaq* (קָנַח) [pronounced *naw-THAHK*], which means *to pull, to draw, to tear away, to tear apart, to tear off*; in the Niphal, it can mean *to be drawn out of the water, pulled out of the water*. Strong's #5423 BDB #683. Every male wanted a piece of this action. Not every male of age was sent out of the city of Ai at first, but now they came out in droves, every single one of them, to join in the sport of defeating Israel. God's plan to pull the men out from the city was working perfectly. What a surprise that God's plan is working perfectly, right?

We are never given much personal information about the inhabitants of Ai except that God wanted them and their city destroyed. You would think that a great fortified city would be something that the Israelites would covet; that Joshua would want as a base of operations—however, the existing structures and most of the artifacts were off limits to Joshua and his army, as per God's instructions. We can only speculate what was on the minds of the men of Ai—torture, male rape, excruciatingly slow deaths for their enemies. We can assume, since it was God's call here for them all to die, that they were incredibly degenerate, probably beyond what we can even grasp.

There are people out there who have absolutely no respect for human life. If a human life stands between them and their fulfilling some immediate desire, they will end to human life to obtain the desire. When it comes to the pain, physical and emotional, or another person, this is completely out their ability to comprehend. When they are made to feel pain or discomfort unjustly, they are outraged and thoroughly mad. However, they are unable to empathize, to understand the pain and discomfort that they cause. These are criminals whose demeanor and dress change considerably in court, and they appear almost as different people, so as to manipulate the jury. This is surely the kind of males we had in Ai; males who infected their women and children with their self-centered, manipulative behavior. These would be the men whom Joshua would completely wipe out.

And not remaining a man in the Ai and Bethel who did not go out after Israel. And so they left the city opened and so they pursued after Israel.

Joshua
8:17

And there did not remain a single man in Ai or in Bethel who did not go out after Israel. And so they left their city open while they pursued Israel.

The first verb is the Niphal perfect of *shâ'ar* (שָׁאַר) [pronounced *shaw-AHR*] and it means *to remain, to be left over*. Strong's #7604 BDB #983. It might make better English sense to us if we read this as *And no man remained in the Ai or Bethel; or, And a man of Ai and Bethel was not remaining...* This phrase is followed by the relative pronoun *who*, the negative particle and the Qal perfect of *yâtsâ'* (יָצָא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*], which means *to go out, to come out, to come forth*. Strong's #3318 BDB #422.

The first verb of the second sentence is the Qal imperfect of *'âza^bv* (אָזַב) [pronounced *aw-ZA^bV*], which means *to leave, to forsake*. Strong's #5800 BDB #736. The city is described by the Qal passive participle of *pâthach* (פָּתַח) [pronounced *paw-THAHKH*], which means *to open* (Gen. 8:6 Joshua 10:22). Strong's #6605 BDB #834 & 836. Knowing that Israel had a relative good-sized force, all of the men went after them, likely in hopes of wiping them out.

We have a point of confusion here. *Bethel* is not found in the Septuagint in this verse. The king of Bethel is on the list of defeated kings (Joshua 12:16) and there is no other mention of a battle against Bethel, but this does not prove or confirm anything, as Bethel is not found in that passage in the Septuagint either (although Bethel is mentioned by way of oriented Ai in the Septuagint). Furthermore, apart from v. 9, Bethel has not even been mentioned in this narrative. One possible scenario is that the two sets of ambushing troops are hiding between Ai and Bethel. Bethel is not even involved here and suddenly all the men from Bethel are coming out as well. We don't know if there was an alliance here and the men had moved from Bethel to Ai. In any case, they never saw the troops who were lying in wait to ambush Israel. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that the people of Ai had expected another attack, since they did not decimate the army of Israel and that they had, previous to Israel's troop movement, already consolidated their forces and the men of Bethel and Ai were all gathered in Ai (and this would make sense, as given the movement of Israel, Bethel would be next so it made more sense to face Israel as an allied force rather than as two separate armies.

The other option is that Bethel was not attacked at this time and, as Bethel certainly observed some of this battle, they chose not to become involved. Not but a few decades later, we will read of an attack on Bethel, and of the defeat of the city of Bethel in Judges 1:22–26 (and this is found in the Septuagint). Although it is not impossible that Bethel is defeated here in the context of Joshua, and then repopulated and defeated again in Judges, my thinking is that someone added Bethel to this verse and to the list of kings, thinking that is only logical, and that Israel did not take out Bethel in this sweep over the Land of Promise.

What might clear this up is that *and Bethel* is not found in the Greek Septuagint (the first translation of the Bible into another language), although it is found in the Hebrew. It is possible that, working from earlier manuscripts, this word was not found and had been inserted later by a copyist's error. The other possibility is that the Greek translator removed it, as it didn't seem to really fit or make sense. The Septuagint was, at times, a rather *free* translation, comparable to our *Living Bible* or to Philip's translation.

Our second main option is that, having found out that Israelites are moving west, the two cities of Bethel and Ai might have become allied to fight as one against Israel. Joshua and the Israelites would have had no way of knowing this if all of the men came out of Ai at the first attack and at the second attack. We're not speaking of men who are going to be racially different from one another. Because of the direction which Israel was heading, prior to the first attack, the men of Bethel may have moved over in Ai and fought with them during both attacks. My only problem with this option is that, given the way that Joshua writes, if there were men from Bethel there, then I think it would have been mentioned twice or more my Joshua. Furthermore, it would have been reasonable for Israel to send up spies who recommended 3000 troops be send for a total 12,000 population (Joshua 7:4 8:25). The implication would be that the 12,000 massacred in Joshua 8:25 were the men and women of Ai and the men from Bethel. Barnes, Scofield and the NIV Study Bible seem to take this position. When the Bible reads that Israel killed 12,000—*all the men and women of Ai*—in v. 25, this does not preclude the 12,000 including the male population of Bethel; it just means that the entire population of Ai was killed that day.

A third option is that the men of Bethel, knowing that Israel was moving that way, came out to battle against those waiting in ambush. There was a large enough force in ambush to both deal with all the men of Bethel and still invade Ai, which had in it no men. Since Joshua was not with the troops in hiding, he would not have been aware

of that immediately. However, certainly later, this would have been told to him and I would think that he would have included this information in this chapter 8. That is, if the men of Bethel had been dispensed with during that particular skirmish, then I think that Joshua would give more mention to that than just this one verse, and that he would do more than give us that information by implication. Therefore, my first choice remains that this is a very early copyist's error (or insertion) and that the word *Bethel* was added; just don't ask me to bet money on this one.¹³

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Joshua's Army Is Victorious in Battle Against Ai

And so Y^ehowah said to Joshua, "Stretch out with the javelin which [is] in your hand unto the Ai for in your hand I will give her." And so Joshua stretched out with the javelin which [was] in his hand unto the city.

Joshua
8:18

And Jehovah had said to Joshua, "Stretch out your javelin against the Ai, for I will give her into your hand." And so Joshua stretched out the javelin in his hand against the city.

The verb used twice in this verse is *nâṭâh* (נָטָה) [pronounced *naw-TAWH*], which means *to stretch out, to spread out, to extend*. Strong's #5186 BDB #639. We first find it in the Qal imperative and then in the Qal imperfect. We are also given some idea as to the kind of force used. Joshua attacked with javelins. We don't know if each man had one or if each had several. These would certainly be weapons which were gotten partially from their confrontations with the armies east of the Jordan. *Javelin* is preceded by the definite article and the *bêyth* preposition, which can mean *in, into, by, with*. They have drawn these men out away from the city. Joshua had a sign, apparently, which he would use to signal the other troops to move in on the city. When he raised the javelin, this set off a series of runners or a series of signals which indicated that the city of Ai was to be attacked from behind. Barnes suggests that he moved to a higher point on a mountain, to where he could be seen by both his men in front and by the men in back (or seen by runners who conveyed his orders). When he lifted up the javelin and pointed it toward the city, this was the signal for the men in hiding to attack Ai. One group was out of sight of the inhabitants of Ai, south-southwest of Ai; and a second group were to the west of Ai. Both groups could not be seen by the people of Ai, but they certainly had someone posted in such a place to be able to see the signal of Joshua. The comment of Keil and Delitzsch: *The raising of the javelin would probably be visible at a considerable distance, even if it was not provided with a small flag, as both earlier and later commentators assume, since Joshua would hardly be in the midst of the flying Israelites, but would take his station as commander upon some eminence on one side. And the men in ambush would have scouts posted to watch for the signal, which had certainly been arranged beforehand, and convey the information to the others.*¹⁴

And the ambushing rose quickly out from his place and so they ran as a stretching of his hand; and so they entered the city and so they captured her and so they hurried and so they caused the city to burn with the fire.

Joshua
8:19

And those in hiding behind Ai rose up quickly from where they were just as Joshua stretched out his hand; and they quickly entered the city, capturing it, and then they burned the city with fire.

We have the Qal active participle of *ʾāraḅ* (אַרַב) [pronounced *aw-RA^BV*], which means *to ambush, to lay in wait*. As a participle, it means *an ambushing*. Strong's #693 BDB #70. In this context, it stands for the men in the ambush. This is followed by the Qal perfect of *qûwm* (קָוַם) [pronounced *koom*], which means *to stand, to rise up*.

¹³ Let me add one more thought to this—in v. 9, we have the words *between Bethel and between the Ai*, and in this verse we have *in the Ai and Bethel*; that would mean that a copyist would not have looked at v. 9 and copied this in v. 17, leaving us with the possibility that he intentionally inserted this (highly unlikely) or that his mind was wandering and he wrote it in here (also unlikely). For that reason, I am not 100% happy with any of the three options.

¹⁴ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 65.

Strong's #6965 BDB #877. This is followed by the feminine noun which is also used as an adverb: m^ehêrah (מְהַרָּה) [pronounced *m^e-hay-RAW*], which means *quickly, hastily*, when used as an adverb. Strong's #4120 BDB #555.

The next verb is the Qal imperfect of rûts (רָצַח) [pronounced *roots*], which means *to run*. Strong's #7323 BDB #930. We then find the kaph preposition, which is used here to denote time: when combined with an infinitive, it means *as, often, when, as soon as*. Strong's #none BDB #453.

We find in this verse a series of four imperfect verbs held together by four wâw consecutives, which is used for emphasis or, as in this case, quick successive action. The first is the Qal imperfect of *entered*; the second is the Qal imperfect of lâkad (לָקַח) [pronounced *law-KAHD*], a verb quite apropos for the book of Joshua, which means *to capture, to seize, to take*. Strong's #3920 BDB #539. We then have the Piel imperfect of mâchar (מָחַר) [pronounced *maw-KHAHR*], which means *to hasten, to hurry, to make haste*; its transitive use is *to prepare quickly, to bring quickly, to do quickly*. Strong's #4116 BDB #554. The fourth verb is the Hiphil imperfect of yâtsath (יָצַח) [pronounced *yaw-TSAHTH*], which means *to burn, to kindle*. Strong's #3341 BDB #428. We have no men left in the city to oppose them.

This was a very fast attack. The men of Ai were perhaps drawn away a distance of a mile. In fact, this distance was designed to be far enough to where they could not see men attacking their city, but close enough to where they could see the smoke from the burning of their city. From Joshua's vantage point, he could determine when the men of Ai had moved into position.

And so the men of Ai turned [or, looked] behind them and so they saw and, behold, went up smoke of the city towards the heavens and there was not within them hands to flee this way or that and the people the fleeing ones [into] the wilderness were turned back against the pursuers.

Joshua
8:20

And then the men of Ai turned and looked behind them and—holy shit!—saw the smoke of their city ascending to heaven. Suddenly, they no longer had the strength to flee this way or that and those who had been fleeing from them turned around and became the pursuers.

Again, as with much of Joshua, the meaning is fairly easy to grasp, but there are nuances of the Hebrew which will require some time to deal with. Dealing with them here, where Joshua is easy to grasp, will help us later when these same nuances show up in the writings of a more difficult author:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> | And the men of Ai turned behind them and looked and lo! the smoke of the city had risen up towards the heavens, and there was in them no strength to flee this way or that way,—moreover the people that were fleeing to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers. |
| NASB | When the men of Ai turned back [lit., behind them] 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. |
| <i>Young's Lit. Translation</i> | And the men of Ai look behind them and see, and lo, the smoke of the city hath gone up unto the heavens, and there hath not been in them power to flee hither and thither—and the people who are fleeing to the wilderness have turned against the pursuer,— |

The first verb is the Qal imperfect of pânâh (פָּנָה) [pronounced *paw-NAWH*], which means *turn, to turn toward, to turn away from*. Since this is related to the face, *look [at something]* would be a reasonable rendering. Strong's #6437 BDB #815. What follows this is the phrase *behind them* and the Qal imperfect of the verb *to see, to look*.

Then we have the conjunction and the demonstrative particle hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced *hin-NAY*] *lo, behold*. More freely, we can go with *observe, look here, look, listen, pay attention, get this, check this out*. What might

be more correct here would be the rendering *holy crap*, or words to that effect. Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243.

What they observe is the Qal perfect of *ʿâlâh* (עָלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means *to go up, to ascend, to rise*. Strong's #5927 BDB #748. The subject is *smoke of the city*. Then we have the definite article and the masculine plural of *shâmay* (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced *shaw-MAH*], which means *heaven, sky*. This verb is found only in the plural (according to BDB and Gesenius; The New Englishman's Concordance says the dual), and is written *shâmayîm* (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced *shaw-MAH-yeem* (or, *yim*)]. When preceded by the letter *hê* (ה), it means *toward heaven* or *towards the heavens*. Strong's #8074 BDB #1029.

Then, again, we have the *wâw* conjunction (which Joshua doesn't use quite as often), the negative particle, and the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*], which means *to be*. Then we have the *bêyth* preposition with the masculine plural suffix and the dual noun *hands*. This could be rendered *and it was not in them hands*, or, *it was not within them hands*, or, *it was not with them hands*. Although the absolute status quo verb can be rendered *have* in rare instances, this does not mean *and they did not have hands*, as the verb has a masculine singular subject, making it an unnamed subject here. The hand is the *organ of enterprise and labour*,¹⁵ so the concept behind *hands* is *power, strength, ability*. Here they are pursuing the Israelites, and they look behind them and see their city and all that they cherished going up in smoke, suddenly realizing that they had been duped, and then quickly realizing that they did not have the upper hand in this battle. Suddenly, their power and strength was gone, dissipated. So far, this gives us: **And so the men of Ai turned [or, looked] behind them and so they saw and, behold, went up smoke of the city towards the heavens and there was not within them hands...**

What they did not have the strength to do was the Qal infinite construct of *nûwç* (נוּוַח) [pronounced *noose*], which means *to flee*. Strong's #5127 BDB #630. It is preceded by the *lâmed* prefixed preposition and can be rendered as our English infinitive. This is followed by the adverb *hênâh* (הֵנָּה) [pronounced *HAYN-naw*], which means *hither, here*. Here, we find it twice strung together with a conjunction, and so it means *hither and thither, this way or that, here or there, hither and yon*. Strong's #2008 BDB #244.

This is followed by the phrase *and the people—the ones fleeing [to] the wilderness—*, giving us: **And so the men of Ai turned [or, looked] behind them and so they saw and, behold, went up smoke of the city towards the heavens and there was not within them hands [or, strength] to flee this way and that; and the people—the ones fleeing [to] the wilderness—...** What follows is the Niphal perfect of *hâphak*^e (פָּחַק) [pronounced *haw-FAHK^e*], which means *to turn, to overturn*. Strong's #2015 BDB #245. This must have been the most awful feeling to look behind you and see your city being torched; and then to look in front of you, and the army which you thought you had on the run, suddenly turns and attacks you. This is called having a very bad day. My first impression is to feel empathy for these men, but keep in mind that God has given them centuries to turn toward Him and all they are doing is having more and more children that they either murder in religious rituals or they pervert. Everyone has made the observation over the past thirty years that educated, middle class couples, with means and with foresight, are having one or two children; and unmarried teens, mothers on welfare, uneducated mothers in poverty, mothers with four or five different boyfriends or husbands—they are having all of the children. They are having three or four or five children and, if the children are fortunate, their grandparents are often stuck with raising them (in these situations, sometimes, a second chance for the grandparents to make up for how they screwed up in the first place with their own children). With the exception of the children raised by their grandparents, we have seen statistically that welfare recipients raise more welfare recipients. Similarly, drug addicted parents often raise children who become addicts. What we have in Ai are the prison inmates who think nothing about homosexual rape; we have welfare mothers who keep having babies; we have the fathers who desert them; we have people without any sort of morality; and we have people without any interest whatsoever in God—and they are raising their children in the same manner. Finally, worst of all, we have a group of peoples here who sacrifice their own children to their gods as if their children were animals. This people is a cancer; and they are a cancer who will spread and infect the Israelites. We have to depend upon God's character, and we can be assured because of His character that this cancer needed to be eliminated from this earth and that He had given them more than enough chances.

¹⁵ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 65.

Those who had been pursued became the pursuers. Following the verb, we have the directional preposition *ʿel* (*towards, to, unto*) and the Qal active participle of the verb *pursue*. The pursuers have become the pursued. As mentioned before, Joshua's men from in front of Ai drew these soldiers out far enough to where they could not see a full frontal attack upon their city, but they were close enough to see the smoke go up when fire was set to it. Suddenly, they realized how helpless they were, with Joshua's men in front of them and Joshua's men behind them at their city.

And Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambushers had seized the city and the smoke of the city ascended, and so they turned back and they struck down men of the Ai.

Joshua
8:21

When Joshua and all of Israel observed that the rear guard had captured the city and that there was smoke ascending from it, they suddenly turned around and struck down the men of Ai.

The last verb in this verse is the Hiphil imperfect of *nâkâh* (נָכַח) [pronounced *naw-KAWH*] which means *smite, assault, hit, strike*. It is not found in the Qal, so the Hiphil does not necessarily carry with it causative action. Strong #5221 BDB #645. As Barnes suggested, Joshua is probably at the side, on a mountain, directing his men from there. That would place him on the northern slopes with the bulk of the troops. A small, grizzled force had made a frontal attack, and retreated, drawing the men of Ai out. Behind Ai, to the west, had been the troops waiting in ambush. At this point in time, all these three groups began to move in on the men of Ai.

And these came out from the city to meet them and so they were with respect to Israel in the midst, these from this and these from this. And so they struck them down until none were caused to remain—a survivor and a fugitive.

Joshua
8:22

And these came out from the city to meet them and so they were with respect to Israel in the midst, some on this side and some on that side and so they struck them down until none remained—not one prisoner and not one escaped.

There are a couple of problems in this verse, so we will look at what others have done:

The Emphasized Bible

And the others came forth out of the city to meet them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side,—and they smokte them, until there was left them none to remain or to escape.

NASB

And the others [lit., these 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. [lit., And these came out from the city to encounter them, so that they were in the midst of Israel, these on this side and those on that side; and they smote them until no one was left for it who survived or escaped.].

Young's Lit. Translation

...and these have come out from the city to meet them, and they are in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that, and they smite them till he hath not left to them a remnant and escaped one;

We begin with a *wâw* conjunction and the plural demonstrative adjective *ʿêlleh* (אֵלֶּה) [pronounced *EEHL-leh*], which means *these, these things*. This is actually the plural of *zeh*, and is called a pronoun by Gesenius and in the BDB; and a demonstrative adjective by Owen. It is always in the plural. Strong's #428 (verb is #422) BDB #41. This is a reference to those who had been in hiding behind the city of Ai and had gone in to burn the city. They were finished, so they emerged from the front, so that the men of Ai had Israelites before and aft. Afterwards, we have, literally, **came out from the city to meet them. And so they were with respect to Isreal in the midst...** *With respect to* is the preposition *lâmed*, which also means *to, for*.

This is followed by the demonstrative adjective *ʿêlleh* again, followed by the *mîn* preposition (*out of, from, away from*) and the singular of *ʿêlleh*, *zeh*. This is followed by a conjunction and then a repetition of these words. Literally, this is *these from this and these from this*. According to BDB, this should be *these from this and those*

from that. What is being described is being in the midst of Israel, with one group of Israelites emerging from Ai to fight (*these from this*) and the other group, who had appeared to be retreating, who suddenly turned and advanced toward the men of Ai. Joshua and his men would be *these from that*. Trapped in the midst of them are the soldiers of Ai.

What follows is, literally, *And so they struck them down until* and then we have the negative particle *bil'tîy* (בִּלְתִּי) [pronounced *bilP-TEE*], and it can be used as ❶ an adverb of negation (*not*); ❷ as a preposition meaning *without, besides except*; ❸ as a conjunction which means *besides that, unless that, unless*. With prepositions, it takes on a different meaning. With the preposition *ʿad*, it means *so long as* when followed by a noun; *until not* when followed by a verb in the perfect tense. Strong's #1115 BDB #116. This is followed by the Hiphil perfect of *shâ'ar* (שָׂאָר) [pronounced *shaw-AHR*] and it means *to remain, to be left over*. Strong's #7604 BDB #983. This could be rendered *until none remained* or *until none were caused to remain*. So far, this gives us: *And these came out from the city to meet them and so they were with respect to Israel in the midst, these from this and these from this. And so they struck them down until none were caused to remain...*

This is followed by the masculine singular noun *sârîyd* (סַרְיָד) [pronounced *saw-REED*], and it means *survivor*. The KJV usually renders this as some form of the word *remain*, often *remaining*; and occasionally as *left*. Strong's #8300 BDB #975. Then we have the conjunction and *pâlîyt* (פָּלִיט) [pronounced *paw-LEET*], which means *escaped one, fugitive*. Strong's #6412 BDB #812.

Moses had already instructed Israel: “*And when your God delivers them before you, and you have defeated them, then you will completely destroy them. You will make no covenant with them and you will show them no grace.*” (Deut. 7:2).

And a king of the Ai they seized alive and so the caused him to be brought near to Joshua. Joshua 8:23 **And they seized the king of Ai alive and brought him to Joshua.**

The first verb is the Qal perfect of *tâphas* (טָפַס) [pronounced *taw-FAHS*] and it means *to manipulate, to seize*. Strong's #8610 BDB #1074. The adjective which describes his condition is *chay* (חַי) [pronounced *KHAH-ee*] and it means *living, alive*, and it used of God, man, animals and here, of flesh. Strong's #2416 BDB #311.

As Thieme was fond of saying, a people deserve the leader (or leaders) that they get (or words to that effect). The leadership of a country is a reflection of that country. I am writing this during the Clinton administration of 1998—he has simply done what almost any other married male would do. His immorality is no worse and no better than any other person in this country; and his immorality is certainly no worse than any president of recent memory. Presidents FDR, Eisenhower, and Kennedy all had an affair or affairs. The people of Ai, whose degeneracy is certain, but not fully known to us, have a leader who exemplifies all that they are. He will be executed by Joshua and company.

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The Body Count, Spoil and Aftermath

And so it came to pass as a finishing of Israel to kill all those inhabitants of the Ai in the field, in the wilderness where they pursued them. And so fell all of them to a mouth of a sword until a finishing of them. And so all of Israel returned to the Ai and struck her with respect to a mouth of a sword.

Joshua
8:24

And so it came to pass as Israel completed the execution of the men of Ai in both the field and in the wilderness where they had pursued them. And all of them fell by the edge of the sword until they had all be finished off. Then Israel returned to Ai and was caused to strike her down with the edge of the sword.

We begin this verse with *and so it came to pass* and the prefixed kaph preposition along with the Piel infinitive construct of *kâlâh* (כָּלָה) [pronounced *kaw-LAWH*], which means *to complete, to bring an end to, to finish*; (these are Piel meanings). Strong's #3615 BDB #477. This is followed by *Israel* and the Qal infinitive construct of *hârag* (רָחַץ) [pronounced *haw-RAHG*] means *to kill, to slay, to execute*. Strong's #2026 BDB #246. This gives us: **And so it came to pass as a finishing of Israel to kill...** Who was killed was the masculine singular construct of *kôl* (כָּל) [pronounced *kole*], which means *the whole, all of, the entirety of, all, every*. When used with a plural noun, as we find here, we often translate it *all of*. Strong's #3605 BDB #481. What we have *all of* is the masculine plural construct, Qal active participle of *yâsha^bv* (יָשָׁבוּ) [pronounced *yaw-SHAH^bV*] and it means *to remain, sit, dwell*. In the Qal participle, masculine plural, it should be rendered *those inhabiting, those dwelling in, the inhabitants of*. Strong's #3427 BDB #442. This is followed by *the Ai*.

What follows describes where these men were killed—in *the field, in the wilderness*. This is followed by the relative pronoun and the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect (with a 3rd person masculine suffix) of *pursue*. This gives us: **And so it came to pass as a finishing of Israel to kill all those inhabitants of the Ai in the field, in the wilderness where they pursued them...**

We begin the next thought with the *wâw* consecutive and the Qal imperfect of *to fall, to lie [down]*; the phrase *all of them* (i.e., *all* with the 3rd person masculine suffix), and then the *lâmed* prefixed preposition and the phrase *a mouth of a sword*. Literally, this would read: **And so fell all of them to a mouth of a sword...** Then we have the preposition *until* and the Qal infinitive construct of *to be complete, to finish, to complete* (Strong's #8552 BDB #1070) with the 3rd person masculine plural suffix. This gives us: **And so fell all of them to a mouth of a sword until a finishing of them.**

Now apparently what had happened is the fire was set in Ai. It had not been burned to the ground and the inhabitants, for the most part, had been left untouched. The first order of business was to neutralize their army, which was done by killing all of the males.

The final sentence begins, literally, **And so returned all of Israel [to] the Ai; and so...** Then we have the Hiphil imperfect of *nâkâh* (נָכַח) [pronounced *naw-KAWH*] which means *smite, assault, hit, strike*. Again, since it is not found in the Qal, so the Hiphil does not necessarily carry with it causative action. Strong's #5221 BDB #645. With have the mark of a direct object and the 3rd person feminine suffix (referring back to Ai), and the preposition *lâmed* again and the phrase *a mouth of a sword*. After killing the enemy army and burning most of Ai, the Israelites returned to the city of Ai and executed all of the inhabitants therein. This is interesting, as Joshua's army numbered at least 30,000 and these could have been split between executing the inhabitants of Ai and executing the army of Ai; however, these tasks were chosen to fall one after the other.

And so it came to pass all of the fallen ones in the day the that, from men and even to women, twelve thousand—all of the people of Ai.

Joshua
8:25

And then it had come to pass that the number of the slain was 12,000 men and women—the entire population of Ai.

The entire population of men and women was wiped out during that one day. The Israelites were fulfilling the mandates which Moses had given them: **"When Jehovah your God gives it [a city] into your hand, you will strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city you will take as booty for yourself; and you will use the spoil of your enemies which Jehovah your god has given you. Thus you will do to all the cities that are not very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby. Only in the cities of these peoples that Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance, you will not leave alive anything that breathes. And you will completely destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as Jehovah your God has commanded you, in order that they might not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you will not sin against Jehovah your God."** (Deut. 20:13–18).

Again, we are uncertain about the men of Bethel, whether they really participated or not. This verse would not preclude their involvement, but it would indicate that the population of Ai was even smaller than 12,000. When

it reads *all the population of Ai*, that does not mean that 12,000 equaled all the population of Ai, but that it included all of that population (again, this depends upon whether the men of Bethel were a part of this or not).

And Joshua did not turn back his hand which he stretched out with the javelin until which he had devoted [or, utterly destroyed] all of the inhabitants of the Ai.

Joshua
8:26

And Joshua did not shirk back from the execution of the entire population of Ai.

The third verb is the Hiphil perfect of *châram* (חָרַם) [pronounced *khaw-RAM*], which means *completely devoted to, devoted to, or completely destroyed*. Strong's #2763 BDB #355 (& #356). Now, let me remind you that after the 38 years of desert life had passed, and both Miriam and Aaron had died, along with the thousands of Israelites who were of the older generation who rebelled against had died. Israel began to move out and...**When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming by way of Atharim; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive. So Israel made avow to Jehovah, and said, "If You will indeed deliver this people in my hand, then I will completely destroy their cities."** And Jehovah heard the voice of Israel, and He delivered up the Canaanites; then they completely destroyed them and their cities. Thus the name of the place was called Hormah [literally, *a devoted thing, a thing devoted to destruction*] (Num. 21:1–3).

Throughout this book, most of you will have problems with the execution of women and children along with the men. If it is any consolation at all, this is done under God's orders, and God knows all. We cannot second guess God. If God expected Israel to kill every man, woman and child, then God knows what He is doing. This is the same God Who killed every living creature but a relative handful during the flood. And this is the same God of Israel **Who took away our illness and He carried our sorrows. Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. He He was wounded for our transgression, He was crushed for our iniquities; and the chastening for our peace was upon Him and by His scourging, we are healed (Isa. 53:4–5). He was delivered up because of our transgressions and He was raised because of our justification. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand; and let us exult in confidence of the glory of God (Rom. 4:25–5:2). And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were reconciled for you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls (I Peter 2:24–25). For all of us like sheep have gone astray, each one of us has turned of his own way, but Jehovah has caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him (Isa. 53:6).** Jesus Christ bore the sins of every man, woman and child of Ai and of the rest of the land of Canaan. The suffering which He endured was the equivalent of hell for each and every person who has ever walked this earth, including every man woman and child who was executed that day. Most of them, perhaps 99% of them, outright rejected God and His mercy. The children who were killed, those who died prior to God-consciousness, were saved and are now in Abraham's bosom. The adults who died were fully aware of the Israelites and their God. Certainly a handful of them at least believed in their God at their execution. There are a number of people on death row, who, because of their impending death, have believed in Jesus Christ; knowing what lies in their immediate future has caused them to ponder eternal things.

Only the cattle and spoil of that [city] they took as plunder for themselves according to a word of Y^ehowah which He commanded Joshua.

Joshua
8:27

Only the cattle and spoil of that city did they take as a reward, according to the word of Jehovah which He commanded Joshua.

The second noun in this verse is the masculine singular construct of *shâlal* (שָׁלַל) [pronounced *shaw-LAWL*], which refers to that which was taken directly in war. It means *booty, spoil, plunder*; all of which are old King James' words, and, because of the culture that we live in, we don't really use words like this. Therefore, we might think of it as *recompense* or their *reward* for believing God and carrying out His plan. Strong's #7998 BDB #1021. Recall in v. 2 of this chapter, God allowed Israel to take from the cattle of the men of Ai. No information is given as to how the cattle was apportioned.

Now, the skeptical would view this all as a ploy by Joshua to fire up his men to plunder all of Canaan. All he has to do is to tell them that this is the will of God that they do this or that and they will, being ignorant barbarians, just go along with it. Certainly, I will admit that this is a reasonable stand to take if you do not believe in God. Joshua just stands up before his generals and tells them what God has told him and then they will go out and fire up all the people to take what is there. Or one could think that they were just a blood-thirsty people who took the Land of Canaan by force and some author who recalled Israel's history threw in this stuff about God later.

People are generally truthful or not. If we have a historian of later years dealing with all of this, then some of this material would be inaccurate due to the time which has passed; or falsified, and therefore, be inaccurate. That great ancient historian, Will Durant, has pointed out that the Bible is far too often presented as being historically inaccurate, which representation is undeserved and repeatedly contradicted by archeological findings. It is his position that the Bible should be accepted as accurate, apart from the supernatural events, until shown to be otherwise, as it has held up to be historically reliable again and again. Now, if the author is repeatedly correct about historical events, why would he misrepresent the truth in other areas? If people fudge on the truth in one or two areas, then they fudge on the truth elsewhere. That is, even though the book would be generally accurate, there would certainly be incidents which an author would change or alter or edit carefully to suit his view; which alterations would be later found out by archeologists. Even our history books that we have today in the schools are carefully edited and material is presented in such a way to get across the viewpoint of the editor or author. There is a certain amount of affective learning—in fact, a lot of affective learning—which occurs in the schools, both public and private. However, we do not have any clear examples of historical fudging in the book of Joshua (or in any book of the Bible), so it is more reasonable to assume that what is presented with regards to God is also accurate and reliable.

Now, another reason to assume that that which is presented in the Bible with regards to God is accurate is the devotion of Jericho to Him. It is obvious that some of the inhabitants of Jericho, while not necessarily rich, had some marvelous possessions. How unlikely it would be to have only one occurrence of unrighteous pilfering if we are dealing with thousands upon thousands of barbarian soldiers. Furthermore, why on earth would Joshua, if this were all a con, tell his people to burn all of Jericho. Why would he not tell them to take all which was in Jericho and take over the city itself? He could easily present this as God's will and his people would have gone along with that even more willingly? What we have is a huge population of people who either saw these marvelous events or works of God; or they did not. They either went along with Joshua with respect to what he said about God; or they did not. The evidence indicates that the population of Israel went along with Joshua, under his authority because they all witnessed supernatural events which showed God to be working through Joshua. This is why they would willingly destroy an entire population and all of their possessions and why they would burn a city—a great fortress like Jericho—to the ground. In the case of Ai, we have a smaller city, with fewer goods and probably not as good; and this is the city that they plunder. Unless these things are done under the directives of God, this is rather incongruous. Again, playing the devil's advocate, one could judge some of these historical recordings as inaccurate—but then, you can take any position that you want, as long as you are given the opportunity to reject whatever portions of the book of Joshua that you deem inaccurate because, for all intents and purposes, it does not agree with your stand which you are taking thousands of years after the events in question.

One of the things which strikes us about the Bible is what an incredibly holistic book it is. It is as if one genius author with a very particular and peculiar point of view, sat down and developed all of this material. Not only was he historically accurate over a period of thousands of years, which no historian could claim today, but he presents this very unified theology. Now, since the Bible was written over a period of thousands of years (and we have manuscripts which indicate this), this could not have been one man. Furthermore, the styles of the authors is strikingly different throughout. We often miss this in the KJV, which has its own sound and rhythm, but that is not how it is in the original languages. When exegeting the books of Moses, of Joshua and of Job, it is clear that we are dealing with three different authors with very different sentence structures, vocabularies and thought processes. Now, if you in college, have sat down to a few midnight bull sessions (I'm not referring to partying down), you can appreciate that different people have very different views. The joke which caused the rabbi who taught one session of my Jewish History course was, "If you can get any two rabbis to agree on any one thing at any one time, Messiah will come." It is obvious that there are hundreds of *Christian* factions and even in any one

church, there are a plethora of viewpoints. However, one of the things which I noticed, as a brand new believer, is that those teachers of Scripture who teach verse by verse, book by book, often agree in almost all areas of theology. I noticed that some groups of people taught by jumping from verse to verse and primarily what they did was do this in order to support their own peculiar views. However, those few who taught God's Word verse by verse seemed to see eye-to-eye on all of the major issues and most of the minor ones. If you have an interest in the historical accuracy of the Bible and the issues pertaining thereto, you may either refer to my **Study of Inspiration** or allow me to recommend two of the most outstanding books which deals in part with the subject, either Josh McDowell's *A Ready Defense* or *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. If you have an open mind prior to reading the book, you will have a closed mind at the end.

And so burned Joshua the Ai and so he made her a mound of forever, ruins until the day the this.

Joshua
8:28

And so Joshua burned the city Ai, making it a heap for a long time, in ruins even until today.

Again, the meaning is clear, but I would like to clear up some Hebrew nuances. First, how the more literal translators handled this verse:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> | So then Joshua burned Ai,—and made it an age-abiding heap—a desolation, as it remaineth until this day. |
| NASB | So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. |
| <i>Young's Lit. Translation</i> | And Joshua burneth Ai, and maketh it a heap age-during—a desolation unto this day. |

The second verb is the Qal imperfect of *sîym* (סִיַּם) [pronounced *seem*], which means *to put, to place, to set*. It also can mean *to make, to transform into*. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. What Joshua made Ai into was the masculine singular construct of *têl* (תֵּל) [pronounced *tale*], which means *mound, ruins, heap*; it can mean the *mound* or *hill* where a city stood. Strong's #8510 BDB #1068. What follows *heap* is the masculine singular substantive *'ôwlâm* (עוֹלָם) [pronounced *ô-LAWM*], a word indicating *long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity*. Strong's #5769 (& #5865) BDB #761. Ai remained a heap for a long time is all this is saying. According to the NIV Study Bible: *If the ruins of Ai have been correctly identified...the site shows signs of later occupation only from c. 1200 to 1100 B.C.*¹⁶

It is described by the feminine singular noun *shammâh* (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced *shahm-MAWH*] and it is typically translated, in the KJV, *astonishment, waste, desolation*. Strong's #8047 BDB #1031. Let me remind you of what Moses had instructed his people to do with regards to Israelite cities which tolerated paganism: "If you hear in one of your cities, which Jehovah your God is giving you to live in, anyone who says that some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known); then you will investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly, and if it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, you will certainly strike down the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. Then you will gather all its wealth into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to Jehovah your God; and it will be a ruin forever. It will never be rebuilt. And nothing from that which is put under the ban will cling to your hand, in order that Jehovah may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers." (Deut. 13:12–18).

Edersheim: *But of what had been Ai "they made a Tel (or heap) for ever." Never was a Scripture saying more literally fulfilled than this. For a long time did modern explorers in vain seek for the site of Ai, where they knew it must have stood. "The inhabitants of the neighbouring villages," writes Canon Williams, to whom the merit of the identification really belongs, "declared repeatedly and emphatically that this was Tel, and nothing else. I was satisfied that it should be so when, on subsequent reference to the original text of Josh. 8:28, I found it written, that 'Joshua burnt Ai, and made it a Tel for ever, even a desolation unto this day!' There are many Tels in modern*

¹⁶ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 299.

Palestine, that land of Tels, each Tel with some other name attached to it to mark the former site. But the site of Ai has no other name 'unto this day.' It is simply et-Tel—the heap par excellence.' ”¹⁷

Alan Millard goes into more detail concerning the identification of Ai, which should herein be included: It was Edward Robinson in 1838 who suggested that Ai was possibly Et-Tell, which is 2 miles east-southeast of Bethel, although he personally preferred another place. W.F. Albright in 1924 argued persuasively that Et-tell is the correct mound and most scholars have agreed with him. A French team explored this mound between 1933 and 1935 and an American team continued the work between 1964 and 1970. Both groups of archeologists discovered the remains of a large town surrounded by a very imposing wall which was still 23 feet high at one point. Inside this town were houses, a reservoir and a temple. They estimated the site to have been first occupied in 3000 B.C. and that it was destroyed circa 2400 B.C. No pottery or buildings dated from around 1200 B.C. were found, and they believe that there was no occupation of that mound in the Middle or Late Bronze periods. They estimate it to be one of the most well-fortified cities circa 2900–2500 B.C., but have determined that only villagers settled there from 1200–100 B.C.¹⁸ The three explanations offered were (1) Et-Tell may not be the correct site for the ancient Ai; (2) the Biblical record could be faulty; or, (3) the name *Ai* means *ruin*, just as *Et-Tell* does. The walls which remain to this day are also impressive. This partially ruined fortress could have been in use at this time, although not repaired, but used in case of an emergency. There would be no pottery or artifacts from this period, as Israel carted them all off (v. 27). (4) A possible fourth explanation is that the dates are inaccurate and based upon the lack of artifacts from the 1200 B.C. time period (which, as we said, would have a dearth of artifacts).¹⁹

And a king of the Ai he had hanged upon a wood until a time of the evening and as a going down of the sun. Joshua commanded and so they took down his corpse from the tree and so cast her at an entrance of a gate of the city and so raised over him a heap of stones great until the day the this.

Joshua
8:29

And he hanged the king of Ai on a wooden post and left him there until the evening came and the sun went down. Then Joshua commanded his men to remove the corpse and to place it at the entrance to a gate to the city and then to lay a heap of stones over it.

What the king of Ai was hung upon was the masculine singular noun *ʿêts* (עץ) [pronounced *gayts*], and it means *tree, wood*. In the singular it can be used collectively for an whole host of trees (Gen. 2:16–3:1), in the singular for *wooden post, stake, gallows, wood stake* (Gen. 40:19 Deut. 21:22–23 Joshua 10:26 Esther 8:9); in the plural for *trees felled for building* (I Kings 5:20, 32), in the plural for *lumber* (Gen. 6:14 II Kings 12:13), *sticks* or *logs for fuel* (Gen. 22:3 Lev. 1:7). One of the reasons that I go into detail like this is that Jehovah's Witnesses will take an iota of the Greek or Hebrew and they will warp the meaning. Strong's #6086 BDB #781.

The period of time that the king of Ai hung on a tree is marked by the feminine singular construct of *ʿêth* (עת) [pronounced *gayth*], and it means *time, the right time, the proper time*. Strong's #6256 BDB #773. What follows is the definite article and the word for evening. Joshua adds, in his own ponderous way, a *wâw* conjunction and the Qal infinitive construct of *to go*, the definite article and the feminine singular noun *shemesh* (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced *SHEH-mehsh*], which means *sun*. Strong's #8121 BDB #1039. This gives us: **And a king of the Ai he had hanged upon a tree until a time of the evening and as a going down of the sun.** This may seem at first to be unnecessary, but this is no different than us saying that the king of Ai was left hanging from the tree until the evening came and the sun went down.

The word generally rendered *body* is the feminine singular (with a masculine singular suffix) of *n^{eb}vêlâh* (נֶבֶלָה) [pronounced *n^{eb}vay-LAW*], which means *corpse, carcass*. Strong's #5038 BDB #615. When it says that Joshua's men cast *her* down, we do not have a neuter in the Hebrew as we do in the English. Therefore, we would say they

¹⁷ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 316.

¹⁸ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 707.

¹⁹ The information herein was taken from Alan Millard; *Treasures from Bible Times*; ©1985 by Lion Publishing; p. 99.

cast *it* down, and the Hebrews would say they cast *her* down. However, interestingly enough, they raise a great heap of stones over *him*.

The NIV Study Bible points out, and I believe that I agree here, that the Israelites did not execute by hanging. Primarily, they executed by stoning. **If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you will not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be certain to bury him on that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under god's curse. You must not desecrate the land that Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance** (Deut. 21:22–23). The hanging is simply a way to demonstrate to those that were interested that capital punishment is practiced.

The next few verses appear to have been misplaced. Moses told Joshua that when they came into the land, they were to go to Mount Ebal and to Mount Gerizim, they were to split Israel into two parties, and one would read out the blessings which could potentially come to Israel and the other was to read out the cursings which could come to Israel. Joshua 9 and following continue with the conquest of the land. For that reason, we will go immediately to Joshua 9, and pick this passage up at the end of Joshua 11.

Recall that in the beginning, there were very few copies of Scripture—in the beginning, one, and, as time progressed, less than a half dozen. There would have been periods of time when no known copies of God's Word existed (we will see when the people rejoice to find a copy of the Law in the ark). So all it would take is for one copy to survive and for that one to have manuscript errors or revisions on it and those would be what would survive. The how this could happen, we can only speculate. They didn't have pages, but they had scrolls. The scribe may have been copying one scroll, went to the next, noticed that he had moved to the wrong scroll and went back to pick up where he had left off. However, this would place only Joshua 9–11a on one scroll, and that seems to be far too little. I am thinking that the scrolls had degenerated to a point that they were in pieces and this piece was put in here. Again, this is strictly guessing on my part.

Now, not all commentators agree that the end of Joshua was misplaced. Keil and Delitzsch: *After the capture of Ai, Israel had gained so firm a footing in Canaan that Joshua was able to carry out the instructions of Moses in Deut. 27, that, after crossing the Jordan, he was to build an altar upon Mount Ebal for the setting up of the covenant...The distance from Ai to Shechem between Gerizim and Ebal is about thirty miles in a straight line. Robinson made the journey from Bireh (Beeroth) to Sichem on mules in eleven and a half hours, and that not by the most direct route..., and Ai was not more than an hour to the south of Beeroth; so that Joshua could have gone with the people from Ai to Gerizim and Ebal in two days without any excessive exertion. Now, even if the conquests of the Israelites had not extended further north than Ai at that time, there was no reason why Joshua should be deterred from advancing further into the land by any fear of attack from the Canaanites, as the people of war who went with him would be able to repulse any hostile attack; and after the news had spread of the fate of Ai and Jericho, no Canaanitish king would be likely to venture upon a conflict with the Israelites alone. Moreover, Shechem had no king, as we may gather from the list of the thirty-one kings who were defeated by Joshua. To the further remark of Knobel, that "there was no reason for their hurrying with this ceremony, and it might have been carried out a a later period in undisturbed security," we simply reply, that obedience to the command of god was not a matter of such indifference to the servant of the Lord...There was no valid reason after the capture of Ai for the postponing any longer the solemn ceremony of setting up the law of Jehovah which had been enjoined by Moses; and if we consider the reason for this solemnity, to which we have already referred, there can be no doubt that Joshua would proceed without the least delay to set up the law in of the Lord in Canaan as early as possible, even before the subjugation of the whole land, that he might thereby secure the help of God for further conflicts and enterprises.²⁰ To this, let me add, that it is often customary to thank God for what He has given us prior to the reception of the gift.*

Another possibility is that in v. 29, we have mention of an altar which stands to this day. This may have caused the author, Joshua, to consider another altar which was raised up—the limestone covered stones on which was written the Word of God. With the engraving of God's Word on those stones, there was also to be an accompanying ritual of the reading of the blessings and cursings on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. What we

²⁰ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 66.

might have here is a similarity of subject matter, and, as we have seen many times, writers of Scripture often ordered their material more from a topical standpoint than from a chronological one.

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After examining this very carefully for several months, I will leave this portion of Scripture here in the written exegesis; however, if I ever teach this, I will move this portion to the end of Joshua 11 or to the end of Joshua 21.

Joshua and the People on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim

What we have next is quite unusual. From v. 29, it appears as though we should move over to Joshua 9:1. You will notice the easy segue from 8:29 to 9:1: [So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. Furthermore, 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 which is there even to this day. Now it came to pass when all the kings who were beyond the Jordan, in the hill country and in the lowland and on all the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, heard of it, that they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel \(Joshua 8:28–92\).](#) However, what we have at the end of this chapter is a fulfillment of what Moses had commanded the people several months previous.

Barnes writes: *It is difficult to escape the conviction that these verses are here out of their proper and original place. The connection between viii. 29 and ix. 1, is natural and obvious...It is, moreover, extremely unlikely that a solemnity of this nature in the very centre of the country should be undertaken by Joshua whilst the whole surrounding district was in the hands of the enemy; or that, if undertaken, it would have been carried out unmolested. And the strangers that were conversant among them" (v. 35), were present at it. The distance from Gilgal in the Jordan valley to Mount Ebal is fully thirty miles, unless—as is unlikely—another Gilgal...is meant; and so vast a host, with its non-effective followers (v. 35), could certainly not have accomplished a march like this through a difficult country and a hostile population in less than three days. Moreover in ix. 6, x. 6, 15, 43, the Israelites are spoken of as still encamping at Gilgal. It is on the whole likely that, for these and other reasons, this passage does not in our present Bible, stand in its proper context; and it has been conjectured that the place from which these six verse have been transferred is at the end of chapter xi. And "then" with which v. 30 opens in our present text may well have served to introduce the account of the solemnity on Gerizim and Ebal at the end of the record of Joshua's victories, to which indeed it forms a suitable climax.*²¹ Furthermore, you would expect, if the people of Israel were going to make a long trip up to these mountains, perform this worship service, and return, that something would be said to that effect. That is, between vv. 28 and 30 we would have a short travelogue, an indication that Israel packed their things up and moved up to the mountains for a few days. Furthermore, once they were up there, would there have been any reason to return to Gilgal? For throughout Joshua 9 and 10, Gilgal appears to continue to be Joshua's base of operations. Another reason that this event, whether misplaced or not, is not placed chronologically, is because the few words said about the *temporary residents* living among Israel would not apply to very many people. If Israel has just wiped out the populations of Jericho and Ai, then the number of added citizenry is going to be pretty small. And, between the two mountains was Shechem, a city then dominated by Hivites.²² Nothing up to this point has been said about this city or about the Hivites being subdued, so we would have a national worship service in the midst of the enemy, which is also an unlikely event. Finally, a worship service such as Moses directed take place would be a solemn response of the people to the conquering of the better part of the land, as opposed to a dangerous worship service in the midst of their enemies after two victories.

²¹ *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 370.

²² This city, by the way, was where Abram built an altar to God and God promised Abram to give him the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:6–7). That the Hivites dominated this area is found in Gen. 33:18–34:2.

The NIV Study Bible concurs, writing: *How Israel could assemble peacefully between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim without further conquest is a worrisome question—and has led to some radical reconstruction of Israel's history. It must be noted, however, that Biblical narrators at times followed a thematic rather than a strictly chronological order of events. That may be the case here, since it is clear that the story of the Gibeonite deception and submission (ch. 9) is included in the thematic development of how Israel came into possession of the rest of Canaan.*²³

Not all of the commentators had a problem with the placement of the next few verses. Edersheim wrote: *By the miraculous fall of Jericho God had, so to speak, given to His people the key to the whole land; with the conquest of Ai they had themselves entered, in His strength, upon possession of it. The first and most obvious duty now was, to declare, by a grand national act, in what character Israel meant to hold what it had received of God. For, as previously explained, it could never have been the Divine object in all that had been, or would be done, merely to substitute one nation for another in the possession of Palestine; but rather to destroy the heathen, and to place in their room His own redeemed and sanctified people, so that on the ruins of the hostile kingdom of this world, His own might be established.*²⁴

Now, although Keil and Delitzsch favor retaining the placement of this passage here, they take serious note of what is missing. *Nothing is said about the march of Jehovah and all Israel to Gerizim and Ebal. All that we know is, that he not only took with him the people of war and the elders or heads of tribes, but all the people. It follows from this, however, that the whole of the people must have left and completely vacated the camp at Gilgal in the valley of the Jordan. For if all Israel went to the mountains of Gerizim and Ebal, which were situated in the midst of the land, taking even the women and children with them, it is not likely that they left their cattle and other possessions behind them in Gilgal, exposed to the danger of being plundered in the meantime by the Canaanites of the southern mountains. So again we are not informed in what follows in which direction Joshua and the people went after these solemnities at Ebal and Gerizim were over. It is certainly not stated that he went back to Gilgal in the Jordan valley, and pitched his tent again on the old site.*²⁵ Keil and Delitzsch go on primarily to discuss if there is a second Gilgal and if that is the Gilgal later referred to. However, the point they inadvertently make is that nothing is said about the trek to and from the mountains.

It might help to sum up these arguments below. What I should mention, however, is that the arguments which are dealt with are those which concern the chronological placement of this portion of Joshua. Even though the NIV Study Bible has said some nice things to indicate that Joshua 8:30–35 is thematically placed, there is no real *theme* here which would call for that. It would be reasonable to place this passage here if this were the correct chronological placement for it, but I do not see any compelling reason to place it here because it thematically agrees with the rest of Scripture surrounding it.

²³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 299.

²⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 317.

²⁵ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 68.

| The Placement of Joshua 8:30–35 | |
|--|---|
| Arguments for the placement of Joshua 8:30–35 elsewhere: | Arguments for keeping Joshua 8:30–35 right where it is: |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are quite a distance away and Joshua has only just begun to conquer the land. 2. It would be difficult for Israel to engage in such a worship service without falling under the attack of a Canaanite alliance. 3. It makes more sense for Joshua and his people to worship God in response to Him giving them the land. 4. There is a smooth transition between Joshua 8:29 and 9:1. There also appears to be a smooth transition between Joshua 11 and 8:30. 5. In Joshua 9:6 10:6, 15, 43, the Israelites are spoken of as still encamping at Gilgal. 6. If you will notice at the end of Joshua 10, and at Joshua 10:15, Joshua refers to returning to his camp in Gilgal. However, here, there is no mention of a journey to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, nor a journey back is ever mentioned. Although Joshua does not always list everything which occurs, he does seem to mention just about every activity that the Israelites engage in. To me, these last two reasons are the strongest ones in favor moving this portion of Scripture to another locale. 7. Shechem is a hostile city in the immediate vicinity of the two mountains and it is not mentioned. 8. The temporary residents of Israel are mentioned specifically in Joshua 8:35; however, we have not had a sufficient period time in order to build up a population of non-Israelites. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is no manuscript evidence indicating that Joshua 8:30–35 has been misplaced. 2. The Israelites could have made the journey to these mountains in two days and returned in two days. 3. Thanksgiving can be expressed prior to the reception of the gift. Such thanksgiving is based upon the faithfulness of God. 4. While the Israelites are engaging in worship, the kings of the Canaanites are meeting, discussing their options. 5. The Israelites were a formidable force. It is unlikely that 2,000,000 people will be suddenly attacked, particularly since they had just been victorious over at least two cities (and not every place that they conquered is spoken of). Furthermore, the Canaanites had not enough time to prepare an attack against the Israelites. The entirety of this worship service, travel included, would have taken place within just a few days. 6. God is able to protect His people from attack while they are worshiping Him. |
| <p>General Comments: When I first began to study this, I was certain that I should move this portion of God’s Word to the end of Joshua 11; however, in reading Keil and Delitzsch’s arguments, I have had to re-think this position; and, after careful study of the following two chapters, I have flip-flopped back again. I do not find evidence which is compelling enough to move this portion of Scripture, either due to its being misplaced or simply for chronological reasons. However, I am not convinced that this portion of Joshua belongs here in time. There is no reason why the end of Joshua 8 has to be in some kind of chronological order with the rest of Joshua. As we are well aware, Hebrew literature does not always proceed linearly. However, we do not have a clear topical similarity here which would place the first portion of Joshua 9 with the latter portion.</p> <p>Important Note: I need to stress that I am not trying to explain away a contradiction in all of this. There is nothing in this particular topic area which gives us an actual or an apparent contradiction. All I am doing is trying to chronologically arrange these events to suit my linear, goy way of thinking.</p> <p>Conclusion: I personally believe that this portion of Joshua is misplaced with regards to time. That is, we should find it occurring either immediately prior to or immediately after the attack on northern Palestine. Also, a related topic, is the 2nd Gilgal. There is another <i>Gilgal</i> which is near Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, which we will discuss in the next chapter. I do not believe that to be another and different campsite for Joshua and the Israelites. However, I will go into the details in the next chapter.</p> | |

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What is found in this section is not a complete repetition of what Moses told the people to do in Deut. 27–28, but this portion is written as though the author is quite familiar with the passage and just hits the highlights. Moses commanded his people to, once they had crossed over into the Land of Promise, to set up large stones, whitewash them, and write on them the book of the Law. These stones were to be set up in Mount Ebal (Deut. 27:1–5, 8). Then an altar to God was to be built—however, there was to be no intrusion of man’s works; that is, the rocks were not to be carved or cut or show any sign of man’s handiwork (Deut. 27:5). On these stones, Israel was to offer up peace offerings and burnt offerings (Deut. 27:6–7). On Mount Ebal would stand six tribes who would be cursed as Israel (Deut. 27:13–26 28:15–68), and on Mount Gerizim would stand six tribes which would be blessed as Israel (Deut. 27:12 28:1–14).

Then built Joshua an altar to Y^howah, a God of Israel, in Mount Ebal.

Joshua
8:30

The Joshua built an altar in Mount Ebal to Jehovah, the God of Israel.

The first word of this verse is *ʾāz* (אָז) [pronounced *awz*], which means *then, at that time, in that case* (when following an *if* or *though*), *now, as things are; that being so*. This adverb also gives us logical progression or logical sequence, so it means *in that case, now as things are, that being so, then*. The latter rendering is particularly apropos as the apodosis of a conditional, which is how it functions here. *ʾāz* is also used *in cases where the historian either wishes to introduce contemporaneous facts, that do not carry forward the main course of the history, or loses sight for the time of the strictly historical sequence and simply takes note of the occurrence of some particular event.*²⁶ Strong’s #227 BDB #23.

There is a minor problem introduced with this verse. Throughout later portions of Scripture, we find again and again the condemnation of the high places, that is, mountain-top areas where altars are built (I Kings 12:31 15:14). So, the superficial question is why is it okay here, but not elsewhere? The answer is simple. The *high places* were not so much characterized by where they were located but by what occurred there. Altars were built not to Jehovah God, but to groups of gods, which are demons, and child and human sacrifice was a part of this evil practice. Less objectionable to most, but just as insidious, was the human effort involved in the building of the altars in these high places. Human effort is not a part of our salvation. Moses prescribed that uncut rocks be piled upon one another for the altar and the pagan religions no doubt had very ornate altars, the result of hours of human labor. We cannot be saved by our works, and this is a model which God maintains throughout the history of Israel. Jeroboam I (circa 930 B.C.), also built some rival shrines which were received a great deal of Scriptural condemnation, the reason being that these shrines were an attempt to siphon away his own people from worshiping in Jerusalem, giving them a place closer to home to worship. This violated God’s demand that the Israelites worship in one primary place only (Deut. 12:2–14), which was to eventually be Jerusalem. Prior to that time, the location of the tent went from Gilgal to Shiloh to Gibeon, until the Israelites settled into the land. Even after that, there will be occasions where an altar and Jehovah worship will be allowed elsewhere—e.g., Elijah on the summit of Mount Carmel. The emphasis upon one altar alludes to the fact that there is but one sacrifice at one time in one place for all mankind, the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross.

Now, according to the maps which I have, Mount Ebal is 30 miles north-northwest of Jericho and Ai. Given the size and the population of Israel, this is not that far away, but it is still quite a distance, particularly for 2,000,000 men women and children. My thinking, however, is that maybe there were some cities in between which were also conquered prior to this altar or maybe not; all which is in the book of Joshua is not in chronological order.

This order that was given goes back to Deut. 27:1–8: **Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, “Keep all the commandments which I command you today. So it will be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which Jehovah your God gives you, that you will set up for yourself large stones, and coat them with lime, and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, in order that you may enter the land**

²⁶ Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 66. They are referring back to Ewald, §136 b.).

which Jehovah your god gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as Jehovah, the God of your fathers, so promised you. So it will be when you cross the Jordan, you will set up on Mount Ebal these stones, as I command you today, and you will coat them with lime. Furthermore, you will build there an altar to Jehovah your God, an altar of stones. You will not raise an iron tool over them. You will built the altar of Jehovah your God of uncut stones and you will offer on it burnt offerings to Jehovah your God, and you will sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and you will rejoice before Jehovah your God, and you will write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly.” What is important is that these stones were taken just as they were; there was no human works added to them. They were taken as found and stacked up as a memorial to God. Then, on the first set of stones, they were coated with lime and the Law was written upon them. This makes me think that if, in later years, they required the Law in order to make a copy of it, they may have come here. Being that the Law was written on various stones that were stacked upon one another, it would be possible to get a section or two out of order. Now, I have assumed here that the book of Joshua was added to the Law. We do not know if we are speaking only of the four books written specifically by Moses, whether Genesis or Job were a part of Scripture at that time or what. Our records do not go back far enough to determine when those two books were added into the canon of Scripture. They were certainly recognized as such, and Genesis, as far back as we know, has always been placed at the first; and this would indicate that Genesis was a part of the book of the Law by this time. That Job is always placed later in Scripture, this would indicate that it was not a part of Scripture yet.

The second group of stones built was an altar built to Jehovah over which they would offer sacrifices. In other words, what we have here are two sets of stones—one coated with lime and over which was written the book of the Law; and the other was an altar which would be used to offer sacrifices. Neither set of stones, like all altars built to God, would not be a product of man’s hands. God was never pleased with the work of man’s hands, even from the very beginning.

As which command Moses, servant of Y^ehowah, sons of Israel, as the writing in the book of law of Moses, an altar of stones, whole, which none have lifted over them an iron tool. And so they caused to ascend on it burnt offerings to Y^ehowah and so they slaughtered [whole] peace offerings.

Joshua
8:31

This was just as Moses, the servant of Jehovah, had commanded the sons of Israel, as it stands written in the book of the Law of Moses: it was to be an altar of uncarved and un-hewn stones. And then they offered burnt offerings to Jehovah and sacrificed to Him peace offerings as well.

We have a marvelous first statement in here. Joshua obeys God’s written Word. The Hebrew goes as follows: it begins with the kaph preposition (*as*), the definite article and the Qal passive participle of *kātha^bv* (כָּתַב) [pronounced *kaw-THAH^bV*] means *to write, to write down, to chronicle, to record, to document*. As a passive participle, it means *that which was written, the writing*. Strong’s #3789 BDB #507. What follows is in a *çêpher* (סֵפֶר) [pronounced *SAY-fur*], which means *book, document, writing, scroll*. Strong’s #5612 BDB #706. The next word is the feminine singular construct of *tôwrah* (תּוֹרָה) [pronounced *TOH-rah*], and it means *direction, instruction, law, protocol*. Strong’s #8451 (and #8452). BDB #435. This is further modified by the proper noun *Moses*. Joshua at least studied the book of Moses, possibly wrote some of it at the end, and may have even taken dictation from Moses near the end times. In any case, he was closely associated with God’s Word.

The stones had to be *shâlêm* (שָׁלֵם) [pronounced *shaw-LAIM*], which means *whole, complete, safe, at peace*. Strong’s #8003 BDB #1023. When making an altar to God, there was never to be something which even hinted at man’s works. Man was never to have placed any visible effort into an altar to God. This is followed by the negative and the Hiphil perfect of *nûwph* (נִוַּף) [pronounced *noof*], which means *to move to and fro, to wave, to besprinkle, to wave up and down, to agitate (the hand or with the hand), to shake*. This verb is not found in the Qal. According to BDB, the technical use of this word is that priest would take an offering and lift it up toward the altar and then move it away, back to himself, as it were, to represent that this is being offered to Yahweh and Yahweh has given it back to them. What is occurring in this verse is man’s handiwork being executed upon the stone. That is, careful stone work being done on the stones used in the altar. You have heard this argument put the other way, haven’t you? *This is going to be God’s house, so we should pay for the best. This is God’s house we are going to, so you must wear your Sunday best*. Had God not been specific, then there would have been

men who would have specialized in cutting and hewing stones in order to get them to look holy and pretty. It would have taken little time before images of God would have become a part of these altars and the idea that God did all the work and man receives the benefits would be completely lost to the observer. Strong's #5130 BDB #631. As an addendum to the Ten Commandments, God also said, **“And if you build an altar of stones for Me, you will not build it of cuts stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it.”** (Deut. 20:25).

As we saw in Leviticus, there was a lot of fast and dirty playing with the translation, and we see some of that here. The next line reads: And they offered on it burnt offerings to Yahweh and sacrificed peace offerings (Owens); ...and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings (NASB). However, the first verb in that sentence (or phrase) is the Qal imperfect of *ʿālāh* (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means *to go up, to ascend, to rise*. We have already seen this word several times in this chapter. Strong's #5927 BDB #748. Since this is in the Qal and not in the Hiphil, we have to be careful as to the subject of this verse. However, *burnt offerings* is in the 3rd person plural and the verb is in the 3rd person masculine plural, so *they* (referring to the Israelites under the direction of Joshua) is the subject. This gives us: **And so they caused to ascend upon it burnt offerings to Y^ehowah and slaughtered peace-offerings.** The last word in this verse should be quite interesting. It is the masculine plural substantive *shelem* (שְׁלֵמִים) [pronounced *SHEH-lem*], which means *peace-offerings, sacrifice for alliance or friendship*. Strong's #8002 BDB #1023. You will notice that this noun and the adjective which describes the stones are cognates of one another, something you would never guess in the English.

As we have studied back in Leviticus, the burnt offerings represent Christ being judged for our sins (Lev. 1:1–17) and the peace offerings represent the peace which is made between ourselves and God (Lev. 3:1–17 7:11–18). Lev. 7:38 is where I covered all of the offerings in general. One of the things which should receive a great deal of time in the church are the doctrines of Christology and Soteriology—the Doctrines of Christ and of Salvation. This does not mean that every day that the teaching from the pulpit should include the gospel, but when it comes up in Scripture, it should be taught. The entire basis for our relationship with God is based upon Jesus Christ and His work on our behalf on the cross. Apart from Him, we have no relationship to God. No amount of morality, good intentions, good deeds or anything else which smacks of human good can be successfully brought to our defense before God. We stand condemned before Him because we have personally sinned; we have an old sin nature; and we carry with us the guilt of Adam's original sin. **Your iniquities have made a separation between you and our god and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear you** (Isa. 59:7). Christ's dying for our sins are represented in the Old Testament by the burnt offerings—that which is burnt represents complete and final judgment from God; the fellowship between God and ourselves—the peace thereby made between God and ourselves—is illustrated by the peace offerings. We are at enmity with God; we stand in opposition to Him—the peace offerings indicate that we are now at peace with Him.

And so he wrote there upon the stones a copy of a law of Moses, which he wrote before faces of sons of Israel.

Joshua
8:32

And then Joshua wrote a copy of the Law of Moses upon the stones in the presence of the people.

What we did not have during those times is a printing press. There was no way to disseminate the Word of God amongst the people except through readings of God's Word and placing it at sites like this. When we read that Joshua did this or that, most of the time, he has ordered someone to do something. However, I personally like to think that Joshua himself got out there and wrote God's Law—the books of Moses—on these rocks himself. I must admit that I have no reason to have a viewpoint one way or the other, except that Joshua was a man of God's Word.

The king was, in the presence of the Levites, to write for himself a copy of the Law (Deut. 17:18). Moses charged the people to write the Words of God on the stones of Mount Ebal. Also, notice that the words of the Law were written at Mount Ebal, which is from where the people called out the cursings. It was Mount Gerizim from whence the people called out the blessings. The Law of God is associated with the cursing of God, not with His blessing.

And all of Israel and his elders and officers²⁷ and his judges were standing on this side and that [lit., from there and from there] with respect to the ark in front of the priests, the Levites those carriers of [the] ark of a covenant of Y^ehowah; as the temporary resident, as the native, his half towards a front of a mountain of Gerizim and the half of his towards a front of a mountain of Ebal as which commanded Moses, a servant of Y^ehowah, to bless the people of Israel in the first;

Joshua
8:33

And all of Israel and her elders and officers and her judges were standing on both sides of the ark, facing the priests, the Levites, those bearing the ark of the covenant of Jehovah; the temporary resident as well as those born Jews, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses, the servant of Jehovah, commanded, to first bless the people of Israel;

Now, here, we have a verse division which almost makes sense. Throughout the Bible, we have sentences cut in half in one verse, and then in two verses, down, we have two and three sentences together. Here, we have a long sentence—unfortunately, it is continued in v. 34.

I have done v. 33 quite literally. Let me cover a few of the linguistic highlights: Israel is a proper noun, not given as having gender per se, but referred back to with the masculine singular suffix on *elders* and *judges*. *Elders* is a masculine plural adjective *zâkên* (זָקֵן) [pronounced *zaw-KANE*], which means *old, elderly*; and alone in the plural, it means *elders*. Strong's #2205 BDB #278. With it is the masculine singular suffix. Connected to this is the masculine plural noun for *officers* and then the Qal active participle masculine plural of the verb *shâphaṭ* (שָׁפַט) [pronounced *shaw-FAHT*], which means *to judge, to govern*. Strong's #8199 BDB #1047. It is a sentence structure like this which tells us that both adjectives and present active participles both can behave like nouns.

Where they are standing is the prefixed preposition *mîn* (מִן) [pronounced *min*], which means *from, out from*; and the demonstrative adjective *zeh* (זֶה) [pronounced *zeh*] (Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260), which means *here, this*; when found together twice and repeated, they mean *on this side and on that side*. The next preposition is *lâmed*, which means *with respect to* and it is followed by *the ark*. We then have the preposition *neged* (נֶגֶד) [pronounced *NEH-ged*], which means *in front of, in the sight of, opposite to*. Strong's #5048 BDB #617. This is followed by the phrase *the priests, the Levites*. Properly speaking, as has been pointed out on several occasions, the priests are those who are descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses, which would be a very small number at this time. The Levites were given to them to help with the priestly functions. Moses and Aaron were of the tribe of Levi. Most Bibles translate this *Levitical priests* (NASB, *The Amplified Bible*, NRSV, NEB, NAB, NJB), but some are careful to render this correctly (KJV, NKJV, *Young's Literal Translation*, Rotherham). NIV renders this *the priests who were Levites*. It is a tough call, as an adjective phrase would be set up like this—the noun and then the adjective, often both preceded by definite articles and both in the same number and gender (masculine plural here). However, *Levites* here is a plural, proper noun. There is much discussion concerning this, as implied by BDB's references on BDB #533. Strong's #3881 BDB #532.

We then have a repetition of the prepositional phrase *as the* with the masculine singular noun *gêr* (גֵּר) [pronounced *gare*] which means *sojourner, stranger, immigrant [or, outsider], temporary resident*. Strong's #1616 BDB #158. With the other *as the*, we have the masculine singular noun *ez^erâch* (עֶזְרָאֵךְ) [pronounced *ez^e-RAWKH*], which means *arising from the soil, homeborn, native*. Strong's #249 BDB #280. This means *the immigrant as well as the native*. This is quite the interesting statement, as they are all immigrants to that land; they are all strangers. Not one of them is a native-born Israelite (I take that back—there could be a small handful of newborns with that claim). So far, this gives us: **And all of Israel and his elders and officers and his judges were standing on this side and that [lit., from there and from there] with respect to the ark in front of the priests, the Levites those carriers of [the] ark of a covenant of Y^ehowah; as the temporary resident, as the native...**

²⁷ The Aramaic and Syriac codices read *their officers*.

This is followed by the masculine singular noun *chătsîy* (חֶצֵי) [pronounced *khuh-TSEE*], which means *half*. Strong's #2677 BDB #345. With this word is the masculine singular suffix, so literally we have *his half*; *his* refers back to Israel and a case could be made for *half of him*, but this doesn't make sense in the English, so we generally render this *half of them*. This is followed by the compound preposition *el* (אֶל) [pronounced *el*] (Strong's #413 BDB #39), which means *in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding*, and *mûwl* (מִוֶּלַד) [pronounced *mod*] (Strong's #4136 BDB #557), which means *in front of*. Together they mean *towards the front of*. What they are standing in front of is Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. The Israelites use a construct here, giving us *a mountain of Ebal* and *a mountain of Gerizim*.

At the end of this verse we have the Piel infinitive construct of *b ârak*^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced *baw-RAHK^e*], which means *to bless, to make happy, to prosper*. Strong's #1288 BDB #138. It is preceded by the *lâmed* preposition so it is rendered like our English infinitive. What will be blessed will be the people of Israel; they will enumerate the blessings (or, prosperity and happiness) which God would give them. The last phrase is *at the first*; in the English, we would place this immediately after the verb and render it simply *first*. The word is *rîshôwn* (רִישׁוֹן) [pronounced *ree-SHOWN*], which means *first, chief, former, beginning*. In the feminine with the *bêyth* preposition, its meaning is narrowed further. With *bêyth*, it means *before, formerly, previously*. With reference to time, it refers to what has been done first. Strong's #7223 BDB #911. Keil and Delitzsch used this phrase to connect Deut. 11:29 with Deut. 27–28; that is, they claimed that this prepositional phrase went back into time and referred to what Moses *first* or *formerly* commanded, which was found in Deut. 11:29. I find this to be too much of a stretch from how one would normally understand this sentence. It is much easier to understand that Moses simply had given these commands *formerly* or *previously*. That Moses alluded to this event twice before is not something that you could get out of the wording of this verse.

Now, let's get a picture of what is going on. On Mount Ebal, we have the stones upon which are written the Words of God—the book of the Law, the Law of Moses. From Mount Ebal will stand the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. They were the illegitimate sons from Jacob's concubines, the maids of his true wives; with the exception of Reuben, who was placed with them because of his inability to lead his brothers. They will read the curses (see Deut. 11:29 27:13–26 28:15–68). On Mount Gerizim will stand the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin and they will read the blessings from there (see Deut. 11:29 27:12 28:1–14). These were the sons of the lawful wives of Jacob. Together, they all represent true Israel and false Israel—those who are the proper sons of Israel by the second birth vs. those who are not really the sons of Israel.

Edersheim: *An historical parallel here immediately recurs to our minds. As, on his first entrance into Canaan, Abraham had formally owned Jehovah by rearing an altar unto Him (Gen. 12:7), and as Jacob had, on his return, paid the vow which he had recorded at Bethel (Gen. 35:7), so Israel now consecrated its possession of the land by receiving it as from the Lord, by recording His name, and by taking upon itself all the obligations of the covenant.*²⁸

Edersheim again: *From where the priests with the Ark took up their position on the gentle rise of the valley, both Gerizim and Ebal appear hollowed out, forming, as it were, an amphitheatre (which was noticed both by Canon Williams and Cap. Wilson, R.E., who wrote: ...the limestone strata, running up in a succession of ledges to the top of the hills, have all the appearance of benches. Edersheim, in a footnote, mentions which all travelers have agreed that there could be no difficulty whatever in distinctly hearing both from Ebal and Gerizim anything that was spoken in the valley...[and] that these two mountains afforded sufficient standing-ground for all Israel.*²⁹

Edersheim also points out another nuance, that we would normally miss: *...they who stood on Mount Ebal must have had their view bounded by the mountains of Benjamin. Not so they who occupied Gerizim, the mount whence came the responses to the blessings. For the view which greeted those who at early morn crowded the top of the Mount of Blessings, was only second to that vouchsafed to Moses from the summit of Pisgah. If less in extent than the latter, it was more distinct and detailed. All Central Palestine lay spread like a map before the wondering gaze of Israel. Tabor, Giboa, the hills of Galilee rose in succession; in the far-distance snow capped*

²⁸ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 318.

²⁹ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; pp. 318–319.

Hermon bounded the horizon, with sweet valleys and rich fields intervening. Turning to the right, they would descry the Lake of Galilee, and follow the cleft of the Jordan valley, marking beyond it Bashan, Ajalon, Gilead, and even Moab; to their left, the Mediterranean from Carmel to Gaza was full in view, the blue outline far away dimly suggesting thoughts of the "isles of the Gentiles," and the blessings in store for them. Far as the eye could reach—and beyond it, to the uttermost bounds of the earth—would the scene which they witnessed in that valley below be repeated; the echo of the blessings to which they responded on that mount would resound, till, having wakened every valley, it would finally be sent back in songs of praise and thanksgiving from a redeemed earth. And so did Israel on that spring morning consecrate Palestine unto the Lord, taking sea and lake, mountain and valley—the most hallowed spots in their history—as witnesses of their covenant.³⁰

Between the blessings and the cursings is the Ark of God; between the cursings of the Law and the blessings from God is the Ark of the Covenant, the Ark which represents Jesus Christ, Who is our peace with God. **"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."** (John 14:27). **But now in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both and broke down the barrier of the divided wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, the Law of commandments, in ordinances, that in Himself, He might make the two into one new man, establishing peace, and that He might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far way, and peace to those who were near; for through Him, we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:13–18 Isa. 57:19). For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind by means of evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you by means of His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him, holy and blameless and beyond reproach (Col. 1:19–22). Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! (II Thess. 3:16). For thus says Jehovah, "Behold, I extend peace to her [i.e., to Jerusalem and to those who love Jerusalem] like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream. And you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees as one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you. And you will be comforted in Jerusalem. Then you will see this and your heart will be glad, and your bones will flourish like the new grass and the hand of Jehovah will be made known to His servants; but He will be indignant toward His enemies."** (Isa. 66:12–14). The aliens who are with the Israelites are those whom they have converted, those who came out of Egypt with them; those who have been gathered from the countries that they traveled through; and those who have joined them as they conquered the various cities of the Land of Canaan. However, these temporary residents also represent us, the Church, who have been called in this era, the branches which have been grafted in.

And afterward he has read all of [the] words of the law, the blessing and the curse as all that was written in a Book of the Law.

Joshua
8:34

And then afterward, he will read all of the words of the law, both the blessing and the cursing, according to all that was written in the Book of the Law.

This verse begins with the wâw conjunction (there are a lot more of them in this chapter), the preposition *ʾachar* (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*] (Strong's #310 BDB #29), which means *after* and the adverb *kên* (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*] (Strong's #3651 BDB #467 & BDB #485), which is generally rendered *so*. Together, they mean *after so* (literally) and *afterward*, in more plain language. What follows is, literally, *he has read [perfect tense] all words of the law, the blessing and the...* The next word is the feminine singular noun *qâlâlâh* (קָלָלָהּ) [pronounced *k^e-law-LAWH*], which means *cursing*. *Q^elâlâh* seems to be onomatopoeic, as in almost a taunt to go with the cursing. Strong's #7045 BDB #887.

This is followed by the kaph preposition (*as, like, according as, according to*), the construct of *all*, the definite article, and Qal passive participle of *kâthab^v* (כָּתַב) [pronounced *kaw-THAH^PV*], which means *to write, to write down, to chronicle, to record, to document*. As a passive participle, it should be rendered *the writing, that which is written, that is written*. Strong's #3789 BDB #507. This verse ends with the phrase *in a book of the law*. I would

³⁰ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 319.

think that what was read were the blessings and the cursings of Deut. 27–28 (which is a fairly long section of the Bible—nearly a hundred verses). Barnes is of the opinion that Joshua read more than just that and read at least the legislative portion of God’s Word as well. Keil and Delitzsch take the same view, writing: *The words “the blessing and the curse” are in apposition to “all the words of the law,” which they serve to define, and are not to be understood as relating to the blessings in Deut. 28:1–14, and the curses in Deut. 27:15–26 and 28:15–68. The whole law is called “the blessing and the curse” with special reference to its contents, inasmuch as the fulfilment of it brings eo ipso a blessing, and the transgression of it eo ipso a curse.*³¹ In other words, the phrase, *the blessing and the curse*, does not refer back to Deut. 27–28, but it refers to the entirety of the Law; a synonym, if you will, for the entirety of the Law. Although I would rather that Joshua taught and exegeted the entire Law to the congregation; at this time, according to the words we find here, I think that is too much of a stretch. I believe what is being taught here is that all that Moses commanded Joshua and the Levites to say—all of the blessings and the cursings—that is what was read. That is, the phrase *the blessing and the curse* is a limiting, defining phrase, describing just exactly what was read to the people—and that portion was read in all its entirety, without editing.

Now, if I thought that I could, in good conscience, tell you that what is found here is Joshua seeing to it that the entire Book of the Law was read to Israel, then that is what I would teach. I believe strongly in the teaching of God’s Word. However, that is not what is taught here; and, furthermore, herein we have a fundamental difference between the Age of Israel and the Church Age. Each and every person in the Church Age has been given the Holy Spirit and is responsible for assimilating the entirety of God’s truth. We all play a very important part in the Church Age. There is no distinguishing between the importance of *clergy* and *laymen*. Each and every believer has a part to play in the Church Age and the importance of the individual believer is too often underestimated. A pastor or an evangelist or a missionary cannot think even for an instant that his life is more important and that it has a greater spiritual impact than the life of some unattractive, older, quiet and maybe not-too-bright member of a congregation that nobody knows and nobody knows anything about. **But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ’s body and individually members of it (I Cor. 12:18–27).** God has given each and every one of us in the Church Age a gift or gifts and that, when we grow spiritually, this gift begins to function and by it, many are blessed and God is glorified. No one else would necessarily even see the function of this gift or even be aware of it; however, the life of every single person in the Christian realm has meaning and definition and worth. Now, back in the Age of Israel, the greater responsibility was placed upon leaders, priests and prophets. God dealt with Israel as a nation, as a whole, and there were citizens of Israel whose impact was limited. That is, most believers in the Age of Israel did not have the Holy Spirit; they did not have a spiritual gift; they did not have a particularly important role to play in the Age of Israel. They were redeemed with Christ’s blood, they had limited responsibilities, but God primarily dealt with the nation of Israel as a whole and with certain believers as individual spiritual Atlas’s, as Thieme was wont to call them.

I mention this because God has been revealing to the angels over the past several thousand years different scenarios and how man continually fails no matter what. Let’s say that the bulk of the believers on earth are gathered together into one nation, a nation which God leads and blesses—how would that play out in the devil’s world? Let’s say that believers were scattered throughout the earth, but that every believer would be given the Holy Spirit to depend upon, and every believer would be given the opportunity to learn God’s Word—how would that turn out in the devil’s world? When all is said and done, all angelic creation, both the elect and fallen angels, will have to agree that God’s plan is perfect, that Satan and his angels deserve to spend eternity separated from all the rest of creation in a Lake of Fire. There will be no one who can say, “Well, what if you tried this?” Or, “What if you did it that way?” No one will be able to say, “Is this sentence imposed upon Satan and his servants

³¹ Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, pp. 67–68.

a just sentence.” Once human history has been played out, there will be no way that anyone can object to what God has decreed; no one will be able to find fault with God’s plan. Right now, on earth, there are people shaking their fist, crying out to God in their human suffering or in the suffering of others, asking *why*. Right now, in court, Satan is bringing up your name and all that you have done, and asking for your punishment; and, at the same time, appealing his own case, demanding leniency and grace. All of these issues will be resolved by human history. That God knows what He is doing will become clear. That God is just and righteous—there will be no question about that. That suffering and pain were necessary in this life—we will fully understand that. That some will be saved and some will choose to live their entire lives apart from God—all of that will make sense and we will see God as justified in all of His actions. We will be grateful for the incredible amount of grace and mercy which He has given us and for the individual way which He has treated us.

Since there was no real distribution of the Book of the Law among the people, there was an emphasis put upon the public reading of the Law. We find at least the blessings and cursings read here; the entire Book of Law was read every seven years at the Feast of Booths (Deut. 31:11); and Ezra and a dozen plus other men read the Book of the Law and exegeted it when Israel returned to the land from their captivity (Neh. 8:1–8). This was during a dispensation when only a small percentage of believers were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The leaders were the ones most responsible to God, at that time, and they were enjoined to: “**This book of the Law will not depart from your mouth, but you will study in it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous and you will have success.**” (Joshua 1:8).

There was not a word from all which Moses commanded that Joshua did not read in front of all of an assembly of Israel, and the women and the little ones and the temporary residents, the ones living in their midst.

Joshua
8:35

Joshua read the entirety of what Moses commanded in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, including the women and the little ones and the temporary residents who were living in their midst.

In terms of Joshua speaking to the entire congregation at one time, that is unlikely. However, they did gather the two groups on the two mountains, and they spoke the words back to one another as Moses had commanded.

It is a tough call as to what exactly did Joshua read. McGee believes that the entire law was read; Barnes, that at least the legislative portion of the Law was read. These two verses together read: **And afterward he has read all of [the] words of the Law, the blessing and the curse as [or, according to] all that was written in a Book of the Law. There was not a word from all which Moses commanded that Joshua did not read in front of all of an assembly of Israel, and the women and the little ones and the temporary residents, the ones living in their midst.** When it says that Joshua read *all words of the Law*, this is further defined as *the blessing and the curse* and then we have the phrase *as all that was written in [the] Book of the Law*. What I want this to say is that Joshua read the Israelites the entire Book of the Law. However, I do not believe that is what is being said here. If Joshua wanted to say that, he would have written, *And afterward, he read all the words of the Law*. And then stopped. But Joshua then defined all of the words that he *read—the blessing and the curse*. This would be according to all that Moses had commanded him to do. All that Moses commanded Joshua to read, Joshua read. Moses was very particular in what he commanded Joshua to read (or to oversee the reading of) in this situation—two chapters of the blessings and the cursings. Joshua saw to it that all of these words were read, according to all of the commands of Moses—or the entirety of the command of Moses. I do believe in saturation and I believe in the teaching of as much of God’s Word as is possible. However, can you imagine at one sitting hearing all of the Pentateuch? Okay, then, just all of Deuteronomy? By the time Joshua got to the blessings and the curses, the most important section for the Israelites to focus in on, all of Israel would be shifting their weight, half asleep, and checking their watches, wishing that they had come to the shorter service. There are times when one can go on a marathon approach to teaching. When I was unaccustomed to good face to face teaching, when Thieme came to town, it was easy to listen to a first session of an hour and fifteen minutes, take a break, and then another 45 minutes or so for a second section. Once and awhile, like for New Year’s Eve, it was easy to hear an hour or so, take a 45 minute break, and come back for a 30 minute or so capper. I know that Bob used to teach double sessions at times, twice a day during special conferences. I think that right there, you are pretty close to the end of your ability to listen and take in God’s Word. And this is only through the power of the Holy Spirit. I just don’t

realistically see Israel as standing through the reading of a significant portion of God's Word. I think what they heard were the blessings and the cursings, which would be a rather short service. However, this is what the people needed to hear.

You would think that such a thing would be simple—what I mean is, you would think that you could teach these people that this is what God expects, and if you deliver that, He would bless them; and if they did not, then He would curse them—and you would think that the people would simply choose blessing over cursing. This is not how human nature works. Our sin nature, our flesh, our human nature, does not always take the path of least resistance. A mother who has shown several years of love and care to a young child, when he reaches toward a stove, will say *No!* and some kids will stop and others will not; and others will return later to check it out. That is human nature. Children have old sin natures as well as adults. It is actually not always in our nature to take the path of least resistance. The argument of the homosexual is that *being homosexual has made my life extremely difficult; don't you think that I would stop being a homosexual if I could?* And, if one does not understand the old sin nature, one would have to agree with that argument. However, given the old sin nature being what it is, we do not always choose the easiest path. We are our own worst enemy. We often do that which causes us the most pain and grief. It is in our nature to do so. Certainly, this is more one person's leanings than another, but it is a fact of life that we do not always take the route which causes us the least trouble. I have taught school for over twenty years—I have students who, with a little effort, could pass a course and not have to sit through the entire course a second time. I.e., it would be easier, when all is said and done, to do it right the first time, and many of them realize that. Will they do it right the first time? Not all of them. There are some fashions, clothing and styles a child will adhere to—now, they might lose their chances with this girl that they have a crush on, they might spend time in the principal's office or in discipline, and they may not be able to get a job looking like they look, even though they want one—and this is all for the sake of looking stupid, a fact that they will admit to several years later (recall the bell bottoms of my generation, the muttonchops; or the hair cut where the sides of the head were shaved bald; or the super baggy pants). Any person who participated in the wearing of these items or the participation in these styles did not make their lives easier and a vast majority will look back at pictures of themselves and go *what was I thinking?* But they wore things like that and they went with the contemporary styles because of their old sin nature.³² All Israel needed at that time was to hear clearly the blessings and the cursings. They needed to know what to expect from God. Their participation here stood as a witness against them.

With respect to the immigrants: we find several periods of time when those not born Jewish had joined in with the Israelites. In Ex. 12:38, when Israel exited Egypt, we read: [And mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.](#) See also Deut. 31:12, which indicates that during the time of Moses, there was a group of aliens as a sub-population of Israel. That God was as concerned for them as for the rest of Israel is reiterated in Lev. 16:29 17:12, 15 19:33–34 Num. 15:14–16, 26, 29–30 Deut. 29:11 31:12 Joshua 8:33. In fact, I doubt that there is anywhere else in ancient history where you see laws so carefully protecting the immigrants and their rights as you find in the Mosaic Law.

God, in the Old Testament, worked through the agency of Israel, but the gospel was given to all of mankind. Those who were positive at God consciousness were given the opportunity to believe in the God of the Jews, Jehovah, the God of Israel, Jesus Christ. Geographical location was not an issue; race and language were not issues—to God, all that matters is positive volition. What happened most of the time is that these heathen heard of the God of Israel and His mighty works and they believed in Him. What also happened is that a significant number of people *became Jews*; i.e., they joined with the Israelites and were then called strangers, or immigrant, temporary resident, etc. Ideally speaking, they continued to live with the Jews for the rest of their lives, bringing with them their families or marrying into the Jewish family.

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³² Yes, I fully realize that it is a manifestation of teenage independence and an identification with their peers, and that there are a host of psychological reasons for this—but when all is said and one, it boils down to the operation of the old sin nature.

