

# Joshua 7-9

Bible Study

## Review

### Chapter 4—Memorial stones set up to mark the crossing of the Jordan

- The people crossed the Jordan on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month [v.19]
- They camped in Gilgal—would be their headquarters for a good while

### Chapter 5

- The renewal of circumcision—preparation for the Passover [Ex. 12: 48]
  - The Passover kept on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month [v.10]

### Chapter 6—The siege of Jericho

- God gave Joshua the instructions for taking Jericho
  - A march around the city for seven days by seven priests bearing seven trumpets
- The 7<sup>th</sup> day they marched seven times...a shout was made by the people and the walls fell

### Joshua 6:18-19

- <sup>18</sup> And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.
- <sup>19</sup> But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD."

## Chapter 7

### Achan's sin and the defeat at Ai

- <sup>1</sup> But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel.
- <sup>2</sup> Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai.

v. 1 "**trespass**" (Heb. *maal*) = to act undercover or treacherously, secretly  
(NICOT) "It indicates a breach of trust generally against the Lord, as here, by withholding what was sanctified to him"

"the accursed things" (*herem*)= devoted—things devoted to God (spoils), they were **not** to take any from the city

- Joshua had pronounced this previously, pertaining to everything in Jericho including its inhabitants (Jos. 6: 17-19)

v. 2 Joshua unaware that God's instructions had been violated, in order to plan the conquering of the next town Ai, sent spies to gain information

v. 3-5 Israel defeated at Ai—because God was not with them

<sup>3</sup> And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the people of Ai are few.*"

<sup>4</sup> So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.

<sup>5</sup> And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them *from* before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

(NICOT) "The tables have turned, the result of the people's disobedience of God's command. Defeat at this juncture was symbolically as significant as had been the miraculous capture of Jericho."

v. 6-9 The humiliation of Israel

<sup>6</sup> Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.

<sup>7</sup> And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all--to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!

<sup>8</sup> O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?

<sup>9</sup> For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it*, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?"

**v. 6** Tearing of clothes, dust on the heads—part of the ancient rites of mourning

“the ark of the LORD”—1<sup>st</sup> time mentioned in chapter 7—as a symbol of God’s presence it was not mentioned in the first five verses showing the lack of God’s support in their battle

v. 7-9 Joshua seems to be blaming God without realizing there was another cause for the disaster...

▪ His chief concern is that the news of the defeat might tarnish the respect among the Canaanites of God’s great name

v. 10-12 God explains the problem to Joshua

<sup>10</sup> So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?"

<sup>11</sup> Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.

v. 11 God explains to Joshua that the cause of the defeat was with Israel—spoils that should have been dedicated to God were stolen and hidden

v. 12 Israel was defeated, “doomed to destruction” because of the sin...and God tells them He will not be with them anymore unless they make judgment on the sin

v. 13-15 The steps to be followed

<sup>13</sup> Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: "*There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.*"

<sup>14</sup> In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man.

<sup>15</sup> Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.' "

v.14 "takes" (Heb. *lakad*)—normally describes taking of an enemy...God is going to capture or take the one who took the divine property

(NIV App. Com.) "Probably, God '**takes**' through the casting of lots, although the text does not specify"

v. 16-21 Process of finding the offender and Achan's confession

<sup>16</sup> So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken.

<sup>17</sup> He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarahites; and he brought the family of the Zarahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken.

<sup>18</sup> Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

<sup>19</sup> Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me."

<sup>20</sup> And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done:

<sup>21</sup> "When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

v. 19 "give glory to the LORD"—only occurs here

(Tyndale) "but something similar occurs in Mal. 2:2 where priests are admonished to 'set your **heart** to honor my name' in the context of faithfulness to God's covenant with them"

v. 21 "beautiful" (Heb. *tob*)—same word in Gen. 3: 6 "good"

200 shekels of silver— six pounds

50 shekels of gold— 1 1/4 pounds

v. 21 "covet"—same Hebrew word used in the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment

v. 22-26 Dealing with the sin

<sup>22</sup> So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it.

<sup>23</sup> And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.

<sup>24</sup> Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor.

<sup>25</sup> And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.

<sup>26</sup> Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

v.23 "laid them out before the LORD"—symbolized that they were dedicated to God in the first place

Achan's family were stoned as well for having common knowledge of the crime, the goods were in the parental tent and no one reported it or stopped it

Valley of Achor= 'valley of trouble'

▪Great pile of stones—an ancient form of a humiliating burial

## Chapter 8

## Ai conquered and destroyed, burned

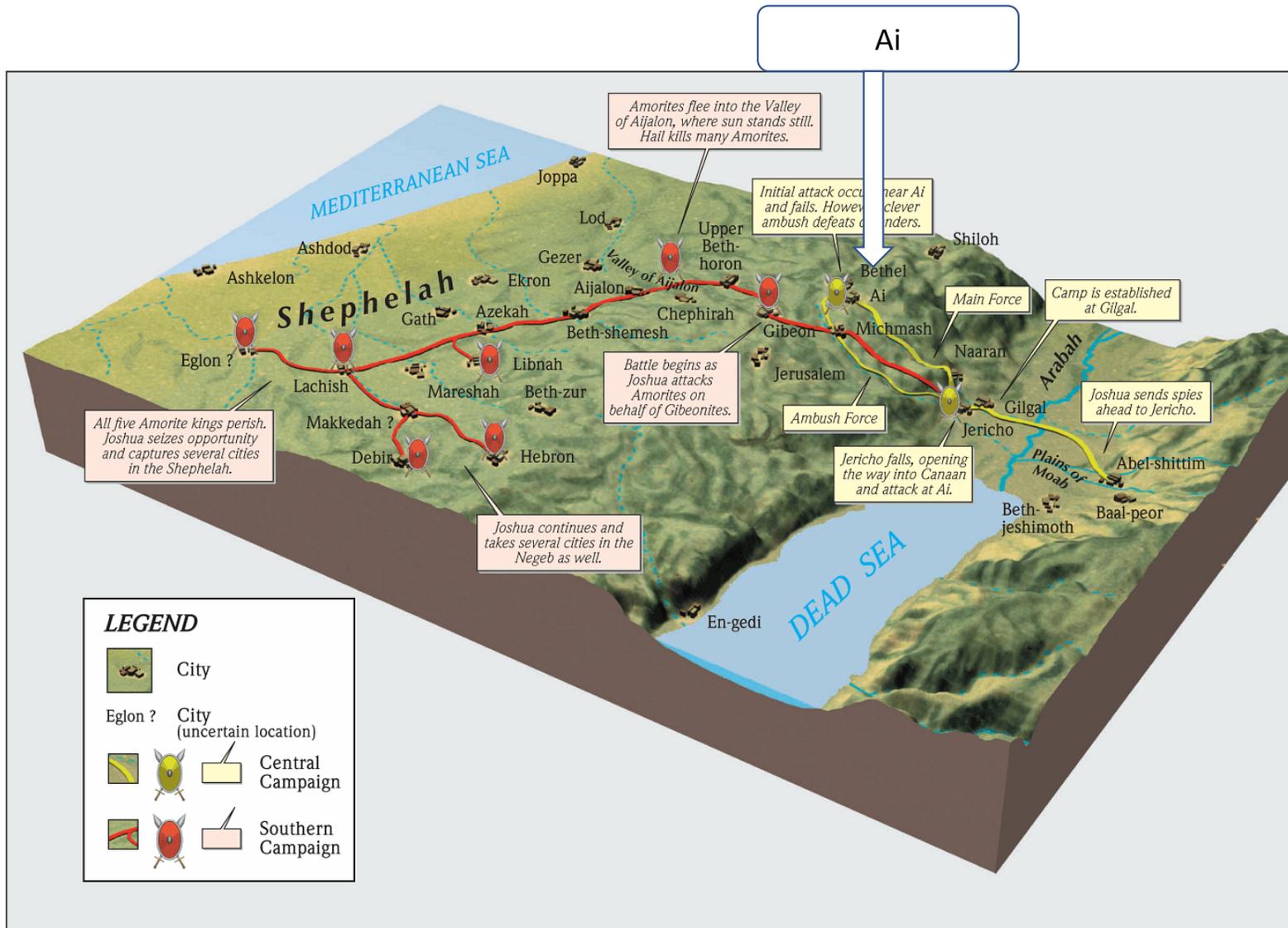
<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land.

<sup>2</sup> And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it."

v. 1 (BKC) "with Achan's crime judged, God's favor toward Israel was restored and He assured Joshua the He had not forsaken him or the people"

v.2 Jericho had been under the ban—no spoils were to be taken...here Ai is not under the same ban, the people could take the spoils  
(Achan could have taken them here)

v. 2 "lay ambush"—would be the key to victory



### Battle instructions from Joshua

- <sup>3</sup> So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor and sent them away by night.
- <sup>4</sup> And he commanded them, saying: "Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind the city. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready.
- <sup>5</sup> Then I and all the people who *are* with me will approach the city; and it will come about, when they come out against us as at the first, that we shall flee before them.
- <sup>6</sup> For they will come out after us till we have drawn them from the city, for they will say, '*They are* fleeing before us as at the first.' Therefore we will flee before them.
- <sup>7</sup> Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand.
- <sup>8</sup> And it will be, when you have taken the city, *that* you shall set the city on fire. According to the commandment of the LORD you shall do. See, I have commanded you."

v. 3 "by night"—night warfare was rare in the ancient middle east...would be used for surprise

Decoy and ambush was the strategy in taking Ai

v. 9-13 The placing of the forces in position

- <sup>9</sup> Joshua therefore sent them out; and they went to lie in ambush, and stayed between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua lodged that night among the people.
- <sup>10</sup> Then Joshua rose up early in the morning and mustered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.
- <sup>11</sup> And all the people of war who *were* with him went up and drew near; and they came before the city and camped on the north side of Ai. Now a valley *lay* between them and Ai.
- <sup>12</sup> So he took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.
- <sup>13</sup> And when they had set the people, all the army that *was* on the north of the city, and its rear guard on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.

The army of Israel is called 'the people' in verses 10, 11, 13  
▪The 'elders of Israel'—are probably tribal leaders who serve as officers in the battle

v. 10-11 These soldiers led by Joshua acted as a diversionary force to draw the defenders of Ai out of the city

v. 12-13 Another contingent of 5,000 men were positioned between Bethel and Ai to prevent reinforcements to come from Bethel in aid to Ai

v. 14-17 The king of Ai and his forces take the bait

<sup>14</sup> Now it happened, when the king of Ai saw *it*, that the men of the city hurried and rose early and went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at an appointed place before the plain. But he did not know that *there was* an ambush against him behind the city.

<sup>15</sup> And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness.

<sup>16</sup> So all the people who *were* in Ai were called together to pursue them. And they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city.

<sup>17</sup> There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. So they left the city open and pursued Israel.

v. 17 Apparently all the men of Bethel were drawn out as well and did not realize and passed by the forces waiting in ambush

v. 18-23 God takes charge of the battle

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the spear that *is* in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the spear that *was* in his hand toward the city.

<sup>19</sup> So *those in* ambush arose quickly out of their place; they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, and they entered the city and took it, and hurried to set the city on fire.

<sup>20</sup> And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended to heaven. So they had no power to flee this way or that way, and the people who had fled to the wilderness turned back on the pursuers.

<sup>21</sup> Now when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and struck down the men of Ai.

<sup>22</sup> Then the others came out of the city against them; so they were *caught* in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side. And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape.

<sup>23</sup> But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.

v. 18 "stretch out the spear"—the signal to attack...which was relayed to those waiting in ambush [v. 19]

The victory had similarities to the victory at the Red Sea crossing...hand stretched out:

- spear Joshua/ staff Moses
- Strength or power symbolized in the hand...leads to the defeat

<sup>24</sup> And it came to pass when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness where they pursued them, and when they all had fallen by the edge of the sword until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword.

<sup>25</sup> So it was *that* all who fell that day, both men and women, *were* twelve thousand--all the people of Ai.

<sup>26</sup> For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.

<sup>27</sup> Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as booty for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua.

<sup>28</sup> So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day.

<sup>29</sup> And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening. And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones *that remains* to this day.

v. 26 “Joshua did not draw back his hand”— a symbol of God’s presence during the battle

v. 28 Ai “a heap”—of ruins, it was not rebuilt

v. 29 The king of Ai was hanged (after stoning) as a mark of shame and humiliation, not hung by the neck. Hanging corpses of defeated enemies was a practice in the ancient world.

But the principle that a corpse should not remain overnight was a practice of Israelite warfare common to the criminal legislation in Deut. 21: 23



Mt. Ebal  
Mt. Gerazim

Ai

v. 30-35 The covenant ceremony at Mount Ebal (Deut. 27)

<sup>30</sup> Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal,

<sup>31</sup> as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron *tool*." And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings.

<sup>32</sup> And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.

v. 30 The promises made to the patriarchs of the land of Canaan being given is being realized—thus an **altar for worship** is built on Mt. Ebal

v. 31 "an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron tool" [Deut. 27:5] and [Exodus 20:25]

v. 32 "a copy of the law of Moses"

(BKC) "How much of the Law was inscribed is not stated. Some suggest only the ten commandments were written, while others think the stone inscription included the contents of at least Deuteronomy 5-26."

▪Deuteronomy 27: 1-4, 8 states that large white-washed stones were to be inscribed

(Expositors) "The word 'stones' has an article in Hebrew and refers to special stones covered with plaster that Moses had commanded to be prepared for this purpose." (Deut. 27:4)

The blessings and cursing ceremony (Deut. 27: 12)

<sup>33</sup> Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them *were* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

<sup>34</sup> And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law.

<sup>35</sup> There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

v. 33 All Israel participates, with emphasis on the elders and judges...the ark, the symbol of God's presence forms the center of the ceremony

v. 33 [last part] emphasizes that all was done according to what Moses had commanded

## Chapter 9

### 9:1—10:43 The southern tribes of Canaan conquered

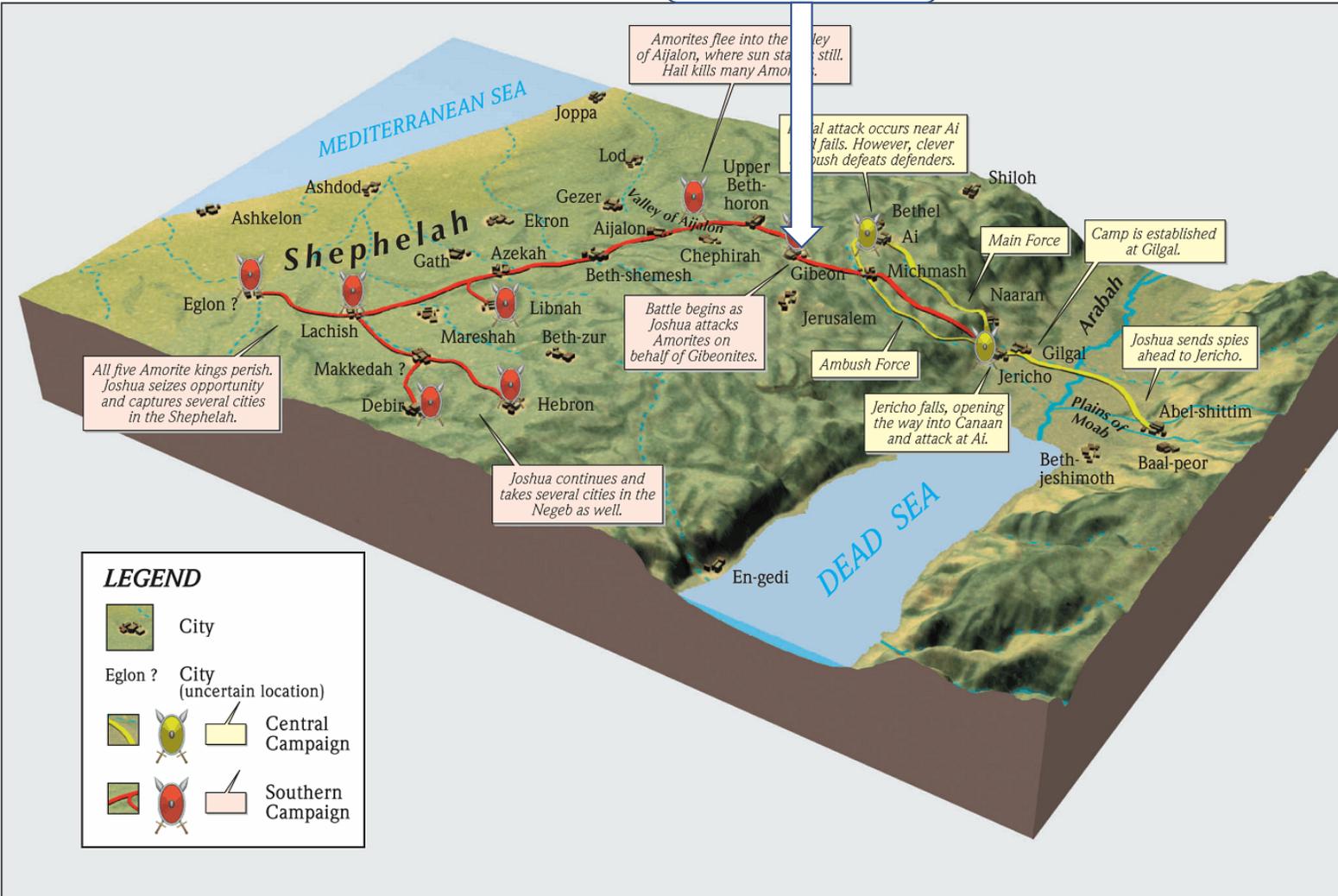
- <sup>1</sup> And it came to pass when all the kings who *were* on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon--the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite--heard *about it*,
- <sup>2</sup> that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.
- <sup>3</sup> But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai,
- <sup>4</sup> they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended,
- <sup>5</sup> old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* moldy.

v. 1-2 Apparently a grand coalition of Canaanite tribes planned to unite against Israel, but it did not come together as they had planned—

- a coalition does form in the south (Ch. 10) and later in the north (Ch. 11)

v. 3-5 In contrast to most of the kings who prepare for war, the Gibeonites seek peace, pretending to be ambassadors from a far away country

# Gibeon



Gibeon requests a treaty

<sup>6</sup> And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us."

<sup>7</sup> Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?"

<sup>8</sup> But they said to Joshua, "We *are* your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who *are* you, and where do you come from?"

<sup>9</sup> So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt,

<sup>10</sup> and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* beyond the Jordan--to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth.

v. 6 "from a far country"

They deliberately deceived Israel to enter into a peace treaty

v. 7 Israel is suspicious that they might be Canaanites and they are referred to as Hivites—tribes who specifically were to be driven out

v. 11-15 Israel initially falls for the 'truce'

- <sup>11</sup> Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, "We *are* your servants; now therefore, make a covenant with us." '
- <sup>12</sup> This bread of ours we took hot *for* our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy.
- <sup>13</sup> And these wineskins which we filled *were* new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey."
- <sup>14</sup> Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD.
- <sup>15</sup> So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.

v. 11-14 The Gibeonites continue to portray their journey as a long one

v. 14 Two mistakes by Israel:

- 1) They inspected some of Gibeon's provisions to verify their story
- 2) They did not seek God's counsel

v. 15 Joshua entered into a covenant/treaty of peace with them...which was accompanied by a solemn oath on the part of the princes of the congregation

v.16-17 The deception is discovered

<sup>16</sup> And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbors who dwelt near them.

<sup>17</sup> Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim.

v. 16 After three days had passed Israel discovers the Gibeonites live nearby

(NICOT) "The distance between Gilgal and Gibeon was only 19 miles"

v.17 It is found out that Gibeon was a group of four Canaanite/Hivite cities including Chephirah, Beeroth and Kirjath Jearim

v.18-27 The decision of the leaders

<sup>18</sup> But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers.

<sup>19</sup> Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them."

<sup>20</sup> This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them."

<sup>21</sup> And the rulers said to them, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them."

The treaty could not be annulled or it would be a disgrace before God

- A decision was made to let them live but per terms of the treaty but they were to be perpetual servants

<sup>22</sup> Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We *are* very far from you,' when you dwell near us?"

<sup>23</sup> Now therefore, you *are* cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves--woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

<sup>24</sup> So they answered Joshua and said, "Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

<sup>25</sup> And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us."

v. 23 "for the house of my God"

(BKC) "In order to keep the Gibeonites idolatry from defiling the religion of Israel their work would be carried out in connection with the tabernacle where they would be exposed to the worship of the one true God"

<sup>26</sup> So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them.

<sup>27</sup> And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

(BKC) “The Gibeonites desperately wanted to remain free men; in the end they became slaves. But the curse became a blessing.

Later the tabernacle was pitched at Gibeon (II Chron. 1:3); still later some Gibeonites helped Nehemiah rebuild Jerusalem’s wall (Neh. 3:7). Such is the grace of God.”

## Lessons

Israel became overconfident upon the victory in Jericho, assuming that one victory guaranteed another

- They did not seek God as the next battle loomed

We must continually look to God and rely on His help and strength in our battles

Israel relied on their own intellect to determine whether the Gibeonites were truthful

Ch. 9: 14 [last part] “but they did not ask counsel of the LORD”