

**JOSHUA 8:1-18 SACK (Part I)**  
**23 March 13 by Glenn Palmer**  
**Review**

Joshua 1: *Strong in the Lord*  
Joshua 2: *Spies*  
Joshua 3: *Surge*  
Joshua 4: *Stones*  
Joshua 5: *Sacrament*  
Joshua 5: *Supreme Commander*  
Joshua 6: *Sound of the trumpet*  
Joshua 7: *Sin*

**SACK**

TROUBLESOME CHAPTER

John Calvin: "The course of the battle is rendered somewhat obscure by the same thing being told twice, but the substance is sufficiently plain."

Edward J. Young: "I grant that it is extremely difficult."

How many ambush units?

1. The texts:
  - a. Vs. 1: "Take the whole army with you."
  - b. Vss. 3-4: Joshua chooses 30,000 men" and sets an ambush "behind the city" (to the west)
  - c. Vs. 12: "Joshua had taken about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city."
2. Options
  - a. Option 1: Army of 30,000 & ambush with 5,000 men
    - 1.) Joshua takes 30,000 of "the best fighting men" to defeat Ai and sets another 5,000 in an ambush.
    - 2.) 30,000 is ten times the size of 3,000
    - 3.) "best fighting men" is better than the average GI Josephs of Joshua 7:4
    - 4.) John Calvin, Marten Woudstra
    - 5.) Difficulties: Vs. 1. The Lord said to take the whole army. If the Lord said to take the whole army (@ 530,000 men<sup>1</sup>), do you think Joshua would have disobeyed the Lord and taken only 30,000 men?
  - b. Option 2: Army of 500,000 men and two ambushes - one of 30,000 and one of 5,000 men
    - 1.) vs.1: Take the whole army means the whole army. Thus, there were two ambushes:
      - a.) Vs. 2-4: 30,000 behind the city (or to the west)
      - b.) Vs 12: 5,000 between Ai and Bethel

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<sup>1</sup>: Numbers 26 gives the total number of 601,730 soldiers. From that deduct Reuben 43,700 (vs. 7) and Gad 40,500 (vs. 18), and half of the tribe of Manasseh (vs. 34). Manasseh was 52,700 but we do not know how large the half tribe of Manasseh. Was it exactly half or was it a 40/60 split? If so, did the 40% stay east of the Jordan or did 40% cross the Jordan? For ease of math, let us say that exactly one half, 26,350, stayed behind. So that means that 110,580 (43,700 Ruebenites, 40,500 Gadites, and 26,350 Manassehites) stayed behind. That means that there were 491,150 who crossed. Then in Joshua 4:13 we read that 40,000 of the Ruebenites, Gadites, and half tribe from Manasseh crossed over. So that means the army was roughly 530,000.

- 2.) Davis, Arthur W. Pink: "They were a separate force which was now assigned to another position.", Palmer
- 3.) Difficulties:
  - a.) Is there a scribe error? Should the 30,000 of vs. 3 really be 5,000 of vs. 12?
  - b.) Setting an ambush with 5,000 men would be difficult. Imagine setting two ambushes - one with 5,000 men and one with 30,000 men - and nobody sees it for an entire day.
  - c.) Would the king of Ai leave the city with 6,000 men to fight 500,000 men? He might leave the city with 6,000 to fight 30,000 men, but would he leave the city to fight against 500,000?
  - d.) The Bible appears to say this, but
  - e.) There is a lot of duplication in this chapter: vs. 20-23 are repeated in vs. 24-27.
  - f.) Hebrew writing is different than Western writing.

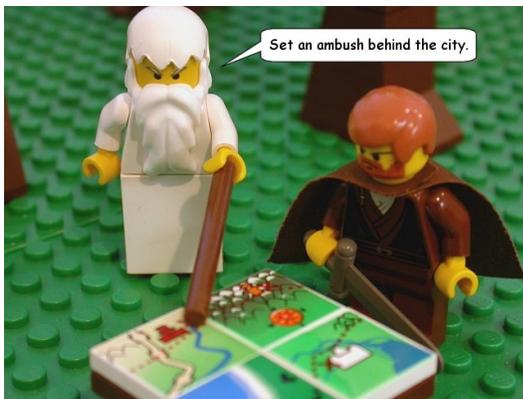


Figure 1: <http://walkwiththewise.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/ai-ambush.jpg> accessed on 23 Mar 13

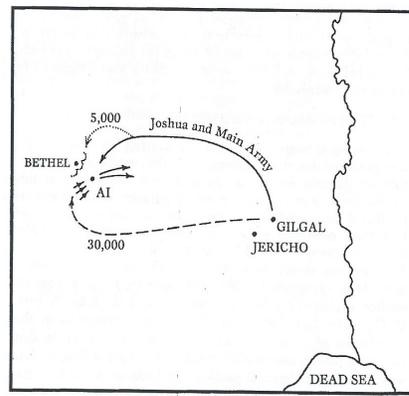


Figure 2: John J. Davis, *Conquest and Crisis*

## B. The sighting of Joshua's Javelin

1. The texts
  - a. Vs. 12: Ambushers are to the west of Ai.
  - b. Vs. 16: Joshua, in the north, flees to the east. Joshua may be 2 miles from the ambush site
  - c. Vss. 18-19: As soon as Joshua raised his javelin, the men in ambush see the it.
2. The problem:
  - a. How can the ambushers see a man raise a javelin when they are so far away?
  - b. In the middle of the fight, how can the ambushers see that that fighter is Joshua?
  - c. Calvin: "For it is scarcely possible to believe that the spear [NIV: javelin] was seen by them."
  - d. Woudstra: "But was the javelin in Joshua's hand visible to those west of the city?"
3. Possible Solution:
  - a. A. W. Pink: "Joshua must have occupied some position of eminence [e.g., a hill or an outcrop], from which he gave orders to his troops."
  - b. Palmer: Was he also the only Israelite on *horseback* on the outcrop? He had to be visible by the troops in ambush and also by his own troops so that they would know when to turn around and start fighting the king of Ai.?

C. Where is Ai and Bethel?

1. Ai is often thought to be at a site called et-Tell, and therefore modern Beitin would be Bethel.
2. Et-tell was destroyed @ 2400 BC and was not occupied until 1200 BC, 200 years after Joshua conquered it (1406 B.C.)
3. Khirbet el-Maqatir may be Ai which is located just a ½ mile west of et-Tell. Bethel would still be Beitin.

**Day 1**

**JOSHUA 8:1**

1. The Lord is no longer angry and He *encourages* Joshua.
2. How much of the army is going to attack? Compare 7:3-4. *The whole army*
3. What tense is “For I have delivered into your hands . . .”? Has the battle been fought?  
*Prophetic past tense - it is so sure that it is going to happen, God sees a future event as if it as already happened*

Practical Application: What comfort do we have in this verse?

- A. God will encourage us if we follow his will!!!
- B. God is sovereign - past tense.

**Joshua 8:2**

4. How is Jericho going to be treated? *Burned just like Jericho, king killed, all people killed*
5. What is the major difference between the plunder of the battles Ai and Jericho? *“Except that you may carry off the plunder and livestock for yourselves.”*
6. How is Ai going to be captured? *By human means, with an ambush*
7. Calvin writes “The order to burn the city like Jericho, appears to be *concession to the popular feeling*, the vengeance thus taken serving to wipe out the remembrance of of their disgrace.” [emphasis added]

Look up :

Genesis 15:16

Joshua 10:20

Joshua 10:28

Joshua 10:30

Joshua 10:32

Joshua 10:34-35

Joshua 10:36-37

Joshua 10:38-39

Joshua 10:40

etc.

Is Calvin right about burning the city being a “concession to the popular feeling”? *No. Joshua is acting as the Lord had commanded.*

**Joshua 8:3**

8. “So Joshua and the whole army moved out to attack Ai.” Anticipatory of what will happen.

## NIGHT 1

9. Joshua sends out 30,000 man ambush force at night. Since Ai is about 15 miles away, it will take all night to march up hill through rather rough terrain.

*Practical Application: Since the Lord has already promised the city to Joshua, why does Joshua fight? Since God has predestined the victory, why should Joshua march 500,000 men 15 miles?*

*What is the role of humans since God is sovereign?*

*Since God controls everything, why pray?*

*Acts 27:22-24, 31-34, 42-44*

### Joshua 8:4

10. What three specific orders does he give the ambuscaders?

- a. *Where: Set an ambush behind the city - to the west of Ai*
- b. *Where: Don't go very far*
- c. *How: Be on alert*

11. Why such specific orders? *Wants to follow the Lord's instructions closely cf. vs. 2*

### Joshua 8:5-6

12. Dangerous movement: Trying to prevent a pretend rout from becoming a real rout. Trying to retreat without anyone being killed is also difficult.

### Joshua 8:7

13. Describe the human responsibility: *You are to rise up and take the city*

14. Write out the divine decree: *The Lord your God will give it into your hand.*

### Joshua 8:8

15. What are the ambuscaders supposed to do when they capture the city? *Set it on fire*

16. When are they supposed to do that? *Immediately - "when they take the city"*

17. Would there be some reluctance to set the city on fire? *Yes - that is why he commands them "Do what the Lord commands."*

*Practical Application: What would happen if they ambuscaders had not set fire to the city?*

*A. W. Pink writes "The tardiness on our part acts as a hindrance to our brethren."*

### Joshua 8:9

18. "Then Joshua sent them off." Divide and conquer. What would have happened if the ambush party had been discovered? They were to the west of the city and the Israelites were to the east.

## Day 2

### Joshua 8:10-11

19. When does Joshua start the march? *Early in the morning!*

20. March up hill would have taken most of the day - Getting 500,000 men, "mustered," i.e., up, armed, organized and then to climb over 3,500 feet in altitude over a 15 mile rocky path is going to take all day.

### Evening of Day 2

21. "They set up camp, north of Ai, with the valley between them and the city."

#### Joshua 8:12

22. How many men does Joshua set up in the second ambush? *5,000*

23. What was the total number of men that went up the first time? *3,000*. So here in the secondary ambush, he sets up a force 2/3 larger than the total first force.

#### Joshua 8:13

24. Where does Joshua place them? *To the west of the city*

### Night 2

25. Where does Joshua go? *Into the valley*

26. Why? Bible does not say, so put on your thinking caps. Hint: look up Numbers 13:16 & Joshua 5:13

*To spy out the land*

### Day 3

#### Joshua 8:14

27. What does the king of Ai do? *March out to meet them.*

#### Joshua 8:15

28. In which direction do the Israelites flee? *East towards the desert.*

#### Joshua 8:16

KJV/ESV: "and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city."

NIV: "were lured away from the city."

29. Cf. Exodus 14:4

30. Cf. Judges 4:7

*Practical Application: The king of Ai, pharaoh, and Sisera all think that they are in charge. Thus, they charge headlong into disaster. Who really is in charge?*

#### Practical Application:

*A. W. Pink: "Thus does Scripture uniformly present together the two sides of man's free agency and God's invisible operations . . . God "draws" irresistibly, yet without the slightest violation upon man's will or the least impairment of his accountability. If we deny either the one or the other, then we flatly repudiate what is clearly revealed in the Holy Writ."*

#### Joshua 8:16-17

31. What happens? *Joshua feigns retreat.*

#### Joshua 8:18

32. Who commands Joshua to hold out his javelin? *God does*