

Joshua 8:1-29 **Victory at Ai**

God's command to take Ai by Ambush

¹ 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. ² 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."

Joshua commanded the people and sent out the Ambush West of Ai

³ 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. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. ⁸ 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." ⁹ 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.

Joshua and the armies of Israel positioned to go up against Ai from the North – Ambush to the West

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² So he took about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. ¹³ 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 king of Ai led his people out against Israel who were in the midst of the valley

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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.

God commanded Joshua to give the command to attack by holding out his spear toward Ai

¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ 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.

The army of Ai caught in the Ambush

20 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. 21 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. 22 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. 23 But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.

The city of Ai finished off

24 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. 25 So it was that all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand--all the people of Ai. 26 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.

Booty for Israel – King of Ai hanged on a tree

27 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. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day. 29 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. NKJV

Facts Revealed:

God's command to take Ai by Ambush

✧ 1 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.** 2 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.**" [Joshua 8:1-2]

✧ After the punishment of Achan, the people are now sanctified to the Lord and Yehowah is with them and promised to deliver Ai into their hands.

✧ The people of Ai are to be destroyed.

✧ The lands and spoil along with the livestock will belong to the Children of Israel.

✧ Lay an Ambush behind the city.

✧ **Take all the people of war with you**, an overwhelming force.

Joshua commanded the people and sent out the Ambush West of Ai

✧ 3 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.** 4 **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.**

5 **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. 6 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.

7 Then you shall rise from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 8 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." 9 **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. [Joshua 8:3-9]

Joshua and the armies of Israel positioned to go up against Ai from the North – Ambush to the West

☆ 10 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.** 11 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. 12 So he took **about five thousand men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city.** 13 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.** [Joshua 8:10-13]

◇ In the night, Joshua and the army with him went into the midst of the valley where they could be seen from the city by morning light.

The king of Ai led his people out against Israel who were in the midst of the valley

☆ 14 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. 15 And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. 16 **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. 17 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.** [Joshua 8:14-17]

God commanded Joshua to give the command to attack by holding out his spear toward Ai

☆ 18 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. 19 **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.** [Joshua 8:18-19]

The army of Ai caught in the Ambush

☆ 20 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. 21 **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.** 22 **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.** 23 But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua. [Joshua 8:20-23]

The city of Ai finished off

☆ 24 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.** 25 So it was that all who fell that day, both men and women, were twelve thousand--all the people of Ai. 26 **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.** [Joshua 8:24-26]

Booty for Israel – King of Ai hanged on a tree

☆ 27 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.

28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation to this day. 29 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. [\[Joshua 8:27-29\]](#)

◇ A person hanged on a tree must be taken down before night. [\[Deuteronomy 21:22-23\]](#)