
JOSHUA 7:1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the devoted things; for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. Therefore the LORD's anger burned against the children of Israel.

The trespass of the Israelites, Jos 7:1. Joshua sends men to view the state of Ai, Jos 7:2. They return with a favorable report, Jos 7:3. Three thousand men are sent against it, who are defeated, and thirty-six killed, Jos 7:4, Jos 7:5. Joshua is greatly distressed, prostrates himself, and inquires of the Lord the reason why he has abandoned Israel to their enemies, Jos 7:6-9. The Lord raises him, and informs him that, contrary to the command, some of the people had secreted some of the spoils of Jericho, Jos 7:10-12. He is directed how to discover the delinquent, Jos 7:13-15. Joshua inquires in what Tribe the guilt is found, and finds it to be in the tribe of Judah; in what Family, and finds it to be among the Zarhites; in what Household, and finds it to be in that of Zabdi; in what Individual, and finds it to be Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, Jos 7:16-18. Joshua exhorts him to confess his sin, Jos 7:19. He does so, and gives a circumstantial account, Jos 7:20, Jos 7:21. Joshua sends for the stolen articles, Jos 7:22, Jos 7:23. And Achan and all that belonged to him are brought to the valley of Achor, stoned and burnt, Jos 7:22-26.

Verse 1

The children of Israel committed a trespass - It is certain that one only was guilty; and yet the trespass is imputed here to the whole congregation; and the whole congregation soon suffered shame and disgrace on the account, as their armies were defeated, thirty-six persons slain, and general terror spread through the whole camp. Being one body, God attributes the crime of the individual to the whole till the trespass was discovered, and by a public act of justice inflicted on the culprit the congregation had purged itself of the iniquity. This was done to render every man extremely cautious, and to make the people watchful over each other, that sin might be no where tolerated or connived at, as one transgression might bring down the wrath of God upon the whole camp. See on Jos 7:12 (note).

The accursed thing - A portion of the spoils of the city of Jericho, the whole of which God had commanded to be destroyed.

For Achan, the son of Carmi, etc. - Judah had two sons by Tamar: Pharez and Zarah. Zarah was father of Zabdi, and Zabdi of Carmi, the father of Achan. These five persons extend through a period of 265 years; and hence Calmet concludes that they could not have had children before they were fifty or fifty-five years of age. This Achan, son of Zabdi, is called, in 1Chr 2:6, Achar, son of Zimrie; but this reading is corrected into Achan by some MSS. in the place above cited.

JOSHUA 7:2 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 land." The men went up and spied out Ai.

Verse 2

Sent men from Jericho to Ai - This is the place called Hai, Gen 12:8. It was in the east of Beth-el, north of Jericho, from which it was distant about ten or twelve miles. From Jos 7:4, Jos 7:5 it appears

to have been situated upon a hill, and belonged to the Amorites, as we learn from Jos 7:7. It is very likely that it was a strong place, as it chose to risk a siege, notwithstanding the extraordinary destruction of Jericho which it had lately witnessed.

JOSHUA 7:3 They returned to Joshua, and said to him, "Don't let all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and strike Ai. Don't make all the people to toil there, for there are only a few of them."

JOSHUA 7:4 So about three thousand men of the people went up there, and they fled before the men of Ai.

Verse 4

About three thousand men - The spies sent to reconnoitre the place (Jos 7:3) reported that the town was meanly garrisoned, and that two or three thousand men would be sufficient to take it. These were accordingly sent up, and were repulsed by the Amorites.

JOSHUA 7:5 The men of Ai struck about thirty-six men of them, and they chased them from before the gate even to Shebarim, and struck them at the descent. The hearts of the people melted, and became like water.

Verse 5

They chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim - They seem to have presumed that the men of Ai would have immediately opened their gates to them, and therefore they marched up with confidence; but the enemy appearing, they were put to flight, their ranks utterly broken, and thirty-six of them killed. שברים Shebarim signifies breaches or broken places, and may here apply to the ranks of the Israelites, which were broken by the men of Ai; for the people were totally routed, though there were but few slain. They were panic-struck, and fled in the utmost confusion.

The hearts of the people melted - They were utterly discouraged; and by this gave an ample proof that without the supernatural assistance of God they could never have conquered the land.

JOSHUA 7:6 Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the LORD's ark until the evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.

Verse 6

Joshua rent his clothes, etc. - It was not in consequence of this slight discomfiture, simply considered in itself, that Joshua laid this business so much to heart; but

1. Because the people melted, and became as water, and there was little hope that they would make any stand against the enemy; and

2. Because this defeat evidently showed that God had turned his hand against them. Had it not been so, their enemies could not have prevailed.

Put dust upon their heads - Rending the clothes, beating the breast, tearing the hair, putting dust upon the head, and falling down prostrate, were the usual marks of deep affliction and distress. Most nations have expressed their sorrow in a similar way. The example of the distressed family of King Latinus, so affectingly related by Virgil, may be adduced in illustration of many passages in the history of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, etc.

Regina ut testis venientem prospicit hostem -

Purpureos moritura manu discindit amictus -

Filia prima manu flavos Lavinia crines,

Et roseas laniata genas. -

It scissa veste Latinus -

Canitiem immundo perfusam pulvere turpans.

Aen. lib. xii., ver. 594. "The queen, who saw the foes invade the town,

And brands on tops of burning houses thrown,

She raves against the gods, she beats her breast,

And tears, with both her hands, her purple vest.

The sad Lavinia rends her yellow hair,

And rosy cheeks; the rest her sorrow share.

Latinus tears his garments as he goes,

Both for his public and his private woes;

With filth his venerable beard besmears,

And sordid dust deforms his silver hairs."

Dryden.

JOSHUA 7:7 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 cause us to perish? I wish that we had been content and lived beyond the Jordan!"

Verse 7

Alas, O Lord God - Particles of exclamations and distress, or what are called interjections, are nearly the same in all languages: and the reason is because they are the simple voice of nature. The Hebrew word which we translate alas is אהא ahah. The complaint of Joshua in this and the following verses seems principally to have arisen from his deep concern for the glory of God, and the affecting interest he took in behalf of the people: he felt for the thousands of Israel, whom he considered as

abandoned to destruction: and he felt for the glory of God, for he knew should Israel be destroyed God's name would be blasphemed among the heathen; and his expostulations with his Maker, which have been too hastily blamed by some, as savouring of too great freedom and impatience are founded on God's own words, Deu 32:26, Deu 32:27, and on the practice of Moses himself, who had used similar expressions on a similar occasion; see Exo 5:22, Exo 5:23; Num 14:13-18.

JOSHUA 7:8 Oh, Lord, what shall I say, after that Israel has turned their backs before their enemies!

JOSHUA 7:9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and will surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. What will you do for your great name?"

JOSHUA 7:10 The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why are you fallen on your face like that?"

Verse 10

Wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? - It is plain there was nothing in Joshua's prayer or complaint that was offensive to God, for here there is no reprehension: Why liest thou thus? this is no time for complaint; something else is indispensably necessary to be done.

JOSHUA 7:11 Israel has sinned. Yes, they have even transgressed my covenant which I commanded them. Yes, they have even taken of the devoted things, and have also stolen, and also deceived. They have even put it among their own stuff.

Verse 11

Israel hath sinned - It is impossible that God should turn against his people, if they had not turned away from him. They have taken of the accursed thing, notwithstanding my severe prohibition. They have also stolen, supposing, if not seen by their brethren, I should either not see or not regard it. They have dissembled - pretended to have kept strictly the command I gave them; and have put it among their own stuff - considered it now as a part of their own property.

JOSHUA 7:12 Therefore the children of Israel can't stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will not be with you any more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you.

Verse 12

Because they were accursed - From this verse it appears that the nature of the execration or anathema was such, that those who took of the thing doomed to destruction fell immediately under the same condemnation. The inhabitants of Jericho and all that they had were accursed: therefore they and all their substance were to be destroyed. The Israelites took of the accursed thing, and therefore became accursed with it. This was certainly understood when the curse was pronounced: Every man who touches this property shall be involved in the same execration. Achan therefore was

sufficiently aware of the risk he ran in taking any part of the anathematized thing; and when viewed in this light, the punishment inflicted on him will appear to be perfectly just and proper.

JOSHUA 7:13 "Get up! Sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, for the LORD, the God of Israel, says, "There is a devoted thing in your midst, Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted thing from among you.'"

Verse 13

Up, sanctify the people - Joshua, all the time that God spake, lay prostrate before the ark: he is now commanded to get up, and sanctify the people, i.e., cause them to wash themselves, and get into a proper disposition to hear the judgment of the Lord relative to the late transactions.

JOSHUA 7:14 "In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. It shall be that the tribe which the LORD selects shall come near by families. The family which the LORD selects shall come near by households. The household which the LORD selects shall come near man by man.

Verse 14

Ye shall be brought according to your tribes - It has been a subject of serious inquiry in what manner and by what means the culpable tribe, family, household, and individual, were discovered. The Jews have many conceits on the subject; the most rational is, that the tribes being, in their representatives, brought before the high priest, the stone on the breastplate gave immediate intimation by suddenly losing its lustre. According to them, this is what is termed consulting God by Urim and Thummim. It is however most probable that the whole was determined by the lot; and that God chose this method to detect the guilty tribe, next the family, thirdly the household, and lastly the individual. This was nearly the plan pursued in the election of Saul by Samuel. "Now therefore," says he, "present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken," 1Sam 10:19, 1Sam 10:20. If the lot was used in the one case it was doubtless used in the other also, as the procedure in the main was entirely similar. The same mode was used to find out who it was that transgressed the king's command, when it was found that Jonathan had eaten a little honey, 1Sam 14:40-43. It is well known that the promised land was divided by lot among the Israelites; (see Num 26:55; Num 33:54; Deu 1:38, etc.); and that the courses of the priests were regulated by lot in the days of David, 1Chr 24:5, etc. That this was a frequent mode of determining difficult questions, and appointed by God himself, is evident from Lev 16:8; Psa 51:18; Pro 16:33; Pro 18:18; Act 1:26.

JOSHUA 7:15 It shall be, that he who is taken with the devoted thing shall be burnt 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."

JOSHUA 7:16 So Joshua rose up early in the morning and brought Israel near by their tribes. The tribe of Judah was selected.

JOSHUA 7:17 He brought near the family of Judah; and he selected the family of the Zerahites. He brought near the family of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was selected.

Verse 17

And he brought the family of Judah - Dr. Kennicott observes, "All Israel came near by Tribes, and one tribe was fixed on; then that tribe came by its Families, and one family was fixed on; then came that family by its Households, and one household was fixed on, and then that household, coming Man by Man, one man was fixed on. Yet according to the present text, in the execution of this command, all Israel came, and the tribe of Judah was fixed on; secondly came the families of Judah, and the family of the Zarhites was fixed on; thirdly came the family of the Zarhites Man by Man, and Zabdi was fixed on; and fourthly came the household of Zabdi Man by Man, and Achan was fixed on. So that in the third article the word for by households is most certainly left out; and the fourth article, man by man, is improperly expressed twice. Instead of לגברים laggebarim, Man by Man, in Jos 7:17, the true word לבתים labbottim, by Households, is preserved in six Hebrew copies, and the Syriac version. By this method was discovered Achan, as he is here five times called, though the valley in which he was stoned is called Achor. He is also called Achar in the text, and in all the versions, in 1Chr 2:7. He is called Achar in the five places of Joshua in the Syriac version; also in all five in the Greek of the Vatican MS., and twice in the Alexandrian MS., and so in Josephus." - Kennicott's Observat.

JOSHUA 7:18 He brought near 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 selected.

JOSHUA 7:19 Joshua said to Achan, "My son, please give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done! Don't hide it from me!"

Verse 19

My son, give - glory to the Lord God - The person being now detected, Joshua wishes him to acknowledge the omniscience of God, and confess his crime. And doubtless this was designed, not only for the edification of the people, and a vindication of the righteous judgment of God, but in reference to his own salvation; for as his life was now become forfeited to the law, there was the utmost necessity of humiliation before God that his soul might be saved. Give glory to God signifies the same as, Make a thorough confession as in the presence of God, and disguise no part of the truth. In this way and in these very words the Jews adjured the man who had been born blind that he would truly tell who had healed him; for they pretended to believe that Christ was such a sinner that God would not work a miracle by him. Joh 9:24.

JOSHUA 7:20 Achan answered Joshua, and said, "I have truly sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I have done.

Verse 20

I have sinned against the Lord God - This seems a very honest and hearty confession, and there is hope that this poor culprit escaped perdition.

JOSHUA 7:21 When I saw among the plunder a beautiful Babylonian robe, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, then I coveted them and took them. Behold, they are hidden in the ground in the middle of my tent, with the silver under it."

Verse 21

A goodly Babylonish garment - אֲדֶרֶת שִׁנְעָר addereth shinar, a splendid or costly robe of Shinar; but as Babylon or Babel was built in the plain of Shinar, the word has in general been translated Babylon in this place. It is very probable that this was the robe of the king of Jericho, for the same word is used, Jon 3:6, to express the royal robe, of the king of Nineveh which he laid aside in order to humble himself before God. Bochart and Calmet have shown at large that Babylonish robes were very splendid, and in high reputation. "They are," says Calmet, "generally allowed to have been of various colors, though some suppose they were woven thus; others, that they were embroidered with the needle; and others, that they were painted. Silius Italicus appears to think they were woven thus: -

Vestis spirantes referens subtemine vultus,

Quos radio caelat Babylon.

Punic. lib. xiv., ver. 667.

Martial seems to say they were embroidered with the needle: -

Non ego praetulerim Babylonia Picta superbe

Textra, Semiramia quae variantur Acu.

Lib. viii., E. 28, ver. 17.

Pliny (lib. viii., c. 48) and Apuleius (Florid. lib. i.) speak of them as if painted: "Colores diversos picturae intexere Babylon maxime celebravit, et nomen imposuit." Thus far Calmet: but it may be observed that the clothes woven of divers colors at Babylon, which were so greatly celebrated, and hence called Babylonish garments, appear rather to have had the pictures woven or embroidered in them than painted on them, as Calmet supposes, though it is most likely the figures referred to were the work of the needle after the cloth came from the loom. Aquila translates the original, אֲדֶרֶת שִׁנְעָר addereth shinar, by στολην βαβυλωνικην, a Babylonish robe; Symmachus, ενδυμα συναρ, a robe of Synar; the Septuagint, ψιλην ποικιλην, a fine garment of different colors; and the Vulgate, pallium coccineum, a scarlet cloak. There is no doubt it was both beautiful and costly, and on these grounds it was coveted by Achan.

Two hundred shekels of silver - At three shillings per shekel, amount to about 30l. sterling.

A wedge of gold - A tongue of gold, לֶשׁוֹן זָהָב leshon zahab what we commonly call an ingot of gold, a corruption of the word lingot, signifying a little tongue, of fifty shekels weight. These fifty shekels,

in weight 29 oz. 15 15/31 gr., at 2l. 5s. 2 1/2 42/93d. per shekel, would be worth about 113l. 0s. 10 3/4d. This verse gives us a notable instance of the progress of sin. It

1. enters by the eye;
2. sinks into the heart;
3. actuates the hand; and,
4. leads to secrecy and dissimulation.

I saw, etc, I coveted, etc. I took and hid them in the earth. Thus says St. James: "When lust (evil desire) is conceived it bringeth forth sin; and when sin is finished it bringeth forth death," Jos 1:15.

JOSHUA 7:22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent. Behold, it was hidden in his tent, with the silver under it.

JOSHUA 7:23 They took them from the middle of the tent, and brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel. They laid them down before the LORD.

JOSHUA 7:24 Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his cattle, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor.

Verse 24

Joshua - took Achan - and all that he had - He and his cattle and substance were brought to the valley to be consumed; his sons and his daughters, probably, to witness the judgments of God inflicted on their disobedient parent. See Jos 7:25.

JOSHUA 7:25 Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? the LORD will trouble you this day." All Israel stoned him with stones, and they burned them with fire and stoned them with stones.

Verse 25

Why hast thou troubled us? - Here is a reference to the meaning of Achan's or Achar's name, מַחַח עַכְרָתָנוּ meh Achar-tanu; and as עַכְרַח achar is used here, and not עַכְנִי achan, and the valley is called the valley of Achor, and not the valley of Achan, hence some have supposed that Achar was his proper name, as it is read 1Chr 2:7, and in some MSS., and ancient versions. See the note on Jos 7:17.

And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones - With great deference to the judgment of others, I ask, Can it be fairly proved from the text that the sons and daughters of Achan were stoned to death and burnt as well as their father? The text certainly leaves it doubtful, but seems rather to intimate that Achan alone was stoned, and that his substance was burnt with fire. The reading of the present Hebrew text is, They stoned Him with stones, and burnt Them with fire, after they had stoned Them with stones. The singular number being used in the first clause of the verse, and the plural in the last, leaves the matter doubtful. The Vulgate is very clear: Lapidavitque Eum omnis Israel; et cuncta quae illius erant, igne consumpta

sunt, "All Israel stoned him; and all that he had was consumed with fire." The Septuagint add this and the first clause of the next verse together: Και ελιθοβολησαν αυτον λιθοις πας Ισραηλ, και επεστησαν αυτω σωρον λιθων μεγαν: And all Israel stoned Him with stones, and raised over Him a great heap of stones. The Syriac says simply, They stoned Him with stones, and burned what pertained to Him with fire. The Targum is the same as the Hebrew. The Anglo-Saxon seems to refer the whole to Achan and his Goods: And Him they stoned there, and burnt his goods. The Arabic version alone says, They stoned Him and his Children, and his goods. Instead of burnt Them, **Ⲕⲛⲕ** otham, two of De Rossi's MSS. read **ⲓⲛⲕ** otho, Him; which reading, if genuine, would make the different members of the verse agree better. It is possible that Achan, his oxen, asses, sheep, tent, and all his household goods, were destroyed, but his sons and daughters left uninjured. But it may be asked, Why are they brought out into the valley with the rest? Why, that they might see and fear, and be for ever deterred by their father's punishment from imitating his example. I have gone thus far into this important transaction, in which the justice and mercy of God are so much concerned, that I might be able to assign to each its due. That Achan's life was forfeited to justice by his transgression, no one doubts: he sinned against a known and positive law. His children could not suffer with him, because of the law, Deu 24:16, unless they had been accomplices in his guilt: of this there is no evidence; and the text in question, which speaks of Achan's punishment, is extremely dubious, as far as it relates to this point. One circumstance that strengthens the supposition that the children were not included, is the command of the Lord, Jos 7:15 : "He that is taken with the accursed thing, shall be burnt with fire; he, and all that he hath." Now, all that he hath may certainly refer to his goods, and not to his children; and his punishment, and the destruction of his property would answer every purpose of public justice, both as a punishment and preventive of the crime; and both mercy and justice require that the innocent shall not suffer with the guilty, unless in very extraordinary cases, where God may permit the righteous or the innocent to be involved in those public calamities by which the ungodly are swept away from the face of the earth: but in the case before us, no necessity of this kind urged it, and therefore I conclude that Achan alone suffered, and that his repentance and confession were genuine and sincere; and that, while Justice required his life, Mercy was extended to the salvation of his soul.

JOSHUA 7:26 They raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. The LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Therefore the name of that place was called "The valley of Achor" to this day.

Verse 26

They raised over him a great heap of stones - The burial-places, both of heroes and eminent culprits, were anciently thus distinguished; and transactions of this kind gave rise to those great piles of stones called cairns, that are so frequently to be met with, especially in northern countries. From the whole of this account we may see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the great danger of not withstanding its first approaches. By covetousness many lives and many souls have been destroyed, and yet the living lay it not to heart! Who fears the love of money, provided he can get riches? Through the intensity of this desire, every part of the surface of the earth, and as far as possible its bowels, are ransacked in order to get wealth; and God alone can tell, who sees all things, to how many private crimes, frauds, and dissimulations, this gives birth; by which the wrath of God is brought down upon the community at large! Who is an enemy to his country? The sinner against his God. An open foe may be resisted and repelled, because he is known; but the covetous man, who, as

far as his personal safety will admit, is outraging all the requisitions of justice, is an unseen pestilence, sowing the seeds of desolation and ruin in society. Achan's covetousness, which led him to break the law of God, had nearly proved the destruction of the Israelitish camp, nor would the Lord turn away from his displeasure till the evil was detected, and the criminal punished. Reader, is the face of God turned against thee, because of some private transgression? Are not thy circumstances and family suffering in consequence of something in thy private life? O search and try thy ways, return to God, and humble thyself before him lest thy iniquity instantly find thee out.