

The Grace to Try Again
Defeat and Victory at Ai
Invitation to Promise Series – Part 5
Joshua 7 & 8
November 15-16

Introduction

- Navigating accountability with grace – As a leader I’ve always struggled to teach through **the lens of nuance**. People want the simple, easy answer quickly. But there are **some things in God’s reality** that are nuanced and **demand that we slow down and realize that in one sense one thing is true and in another sense another thing is true. It’s not that they contradict but only that they are complex.**
- **The Rahab example** – Recently in this series we talk about a fascinating character in the Bible named Rahab. She was **a prostitute for some unknown length of time who heard about the mighty God of the Israelites that were coming to destroy her city. She changed allegiances and helped Israel in the battle. She was then accepted into the nation and ended up being the lineage of not just King David, but Jesus Christ Himself. What a beautiful story of redemption and God’s way of knitting us into what He’s doing out of love despite where we’ve come from. Right? Okay, great, I agree. But here’s the question: So is a lesson in the story to be that our girls should pursue prostitution because it’s going to turn out all right in the end? Is a less that it doesn’t matter how we live because God will make it better? No. But why?**
- **Common challenges** – Let’s say that prostitution choices are not common enough to get everyone into this conversation and take it personally. Let’s try a few others....
 - **Virginity & Purity** - How about virginity? **On one hand I taught my girls that purity matters. I taught them that God’s way was the best way and they needed to trust that. I taught them that there was a blessing to faithfulness to God sexually. So, far so good, right? But what if one of them had messed up? What if one of them became pregnant? Does that mean that they are not longer precious in God’s sight? Does that mean that God discards His plan for their life? Or does it mean that with re-alignment, repentance, and connection with the Lord, He can redeem their situation and restore blessing? Okay, so what is the message to share from a pulpit? That purity is blessed or sin is redeemed and ends in blessing. If blessing is the outcome of both, does it matter how you get there?**
 - **Divorce** – Here’s one closer to home for a lot of us in this room: Divorce. **As a pastor I’m going to talk about how God hates divorce. I am going to push for reconciliation, healing, repair, and rebuilding a marriage that may never have existed yet. I hate divorce. It destroys so many people and things in the process. And yet, the truth of the matter is that a lot of us in this room are on our second or third marriage and we are blessed by God. We talk about our exes as terrible and we thank God for our new spouse. We had to deal honestly and painfully with the collapse of our first marriage but now we are**

in a good spot and God is flowing. So, what do I preach? That we need to stay married or that God can make the second one good too? What's the motivation of working on the first one if God will bless the second or third one?

- Are you following me? – I can talk about abortion or a bunch of other personal topics to make us more uncomfortable if you'd like...
- What's the answer? – What do we tell the people in our lives? If God can make it better again, then what's the reason for doing it right the first time? Here's the tough truth: Yes, God is brilliant at redemption. He knows how to make things better than they started even in the midst of chaos and tragedy. And yes, God can reconcile your situation and rebuild you. Yes, God wants to get us back to blessing. But here's the thing and listen carefully...Yes, He can...BUT, at what pain cost? Can and will God redeem? Absolutely, but it comes at a cost.
 - Obedience is the **shortcut to blessing** without the consequences of redemption.
 - God created Eden as a relatively pain-free existence where we could experience His presence. The pathway to continue that was obedience.
 - We inherited general pain from the disobedience of Adam and Eve and those before us (ramifications of their choices).
 - We choose specific pain – beyond all the things that 'happen' to use from a broken world filled with broken people, we are making bad choices and sinning in ways that are costing us daily. Those cannot be pushed off on someone else. We walked into those.
 - **What about sin and grace?** Should we sin? No. Is there grace? Yes. So what's our motivation to remain righteous? **There is grace for God's kids** and we don't lose our eternal life **but what pain will our sin cause for now?**
- What if it's redemption or nothing? What if we are at that place of needing redemption? **The ship on doing it right the first time has sailed. What do we do then?**

We can sit in failure or be motivated by grace.

- Part 5 of a Series about when God invites you to something greater. It's difficult but it's worth it. Israel is at the beginning of their campaign into the Promised Land. God said He would give them the land but they would have to fight for it. It's going to be their greatest challenge yet.
- Last Week – Pastor Judah & Jericho
 - The Angel of the Lord
 - Jesus at Jericho - **God isn't taking sides...He's taking over** – are you on His side?
 - Taking off his sandals – **it's God's way or no way – only God does the impossible. The real power isn't in the sword it's in surrender.**
 - Jericho
 - Worship as warfare – **worship makes way for the king to do it...**
 - Some of us are one weary decision away from forfeiting what God already said was ours...**don't quit.**
 - The walls fell

- Rule: It's not your stuff, it's God's.
- This week – After a mighty victory, **Israel marches on** to its next city to take in the name of God. **Confidence is at an all time high. If Jericho can't stop them, what can?**

Lesson

- Hit a Snag
 - Achan steals from the Lord
 - *Joshua 7:1 – “But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel.”*
 - But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, - **God was extremely specific about the instructions of what to do when Jericho's walls fell.** He stated: burn everything, kill everyone (except Rahab and her family), take the bronze, iron, silver and gold and put it into the treasury of the Lord for it's His alone. But someone or *someones* didn't follow the rules and it's critical to know that at this point in the story. Everything went great at Jericho and they were in full confidence in the power of God. But something underneath wasn't right.
 - *Jos 6:16–19 - “Shout, for the LORD has given you the city. ¹⁷ And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. ¹⁸ But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. ¹² But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD.”*
 - for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, - some guy, named Achan, a Judahite, did something wrong. He will become famous for all the wrong reasons. They know exactly his lineage because God is going to out him.
 - took some of the devoted things. – Devoted things are things promised to God. He took God's stuff. That's a no-no.
 - And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel. – And God was ticked off about it. Many time when the Bible says the anger of God burned against it means that God is doing something actively to cause damage due to judgment, but at this point it simply means that God is angry about something and will reveal it in a minute. But Israel needs to learn a lesson first.
- Stunning Loss
 - Israel is routed by Ai

- Joshua 7:2-5 – *“Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, “Go up and spy out the land.” And the men went up and spied out Ai. ³ And they returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few.” ⁴ So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, ⁵ and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.”*
 - Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel,¹ - Israel is following the logical route through the Promised Land and the next stop on that journey is the small city of Ai.
 - and said to them, “Go up and spy out the land.” And the men went up and spied out Ai. – I always think that it’s fascinating to watch the combination of God’s help and mankind’s efforts blended for victory. Why should Israel have to spy out the land of Jericho and Ai if God was going to fight for them? We must remember that God said He was going to give them the land but they would have to fight for it. There was a significant piece of the puzzle that they would need to do themselves for victory to happen. They didn’t know where those lines were. God wanted to make sure that they knew the lay of the land so that when He brought in another plan of capture, they would be familiar and He wouldn’t have to overexplain Himself. So they sent some spies to find out how many people, what the city was like and what the surrounding region was like.,
 - And they returned to Joshua and said to him, “Do not have all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not make the whole people toil up there, for they are few.” So about three thousand men went up there from the people. – Warfare is not only dangerous its exhausting. Israel was marching with a massive army and that would require a ton of logistics. The spies knew that there was never a reason to have more soldiers than necessary. So, when they assessed the situation they realized that Israel would only need about 2-3k guys to attack in order to win. In other words, **it should be an EASY WIN.**
 - And they fled before the men of Ai, and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. – and this is the shock! **ISRAEL**

¹ “The city to be explored by Joshua’s men is Ai which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel. Much has been written about the archaeological aspects of this site. The usual identification of Ai with et-Tell has led to the conclusion that, during the time Israel entered Palestine, Ai was not an inhabited city at all. Various solutions of this problem have been offered by those who wish to maintain the basic veracity of the biblical account of Ai’s capture by Joshua and his forces.¹³ In general, what was said about Jericho in the commentary on 6:1 should also be kept in mind here. The limitations of archaeological research together with its valuable contributions to the science of biblical interpretation should be kept equally in mind. Biblical Ai is said to be near Beth-aven, lit. “house of vanity” or “house of nothingness. “ The name is used for Bethel in Hos. 4:15; 10:5; Amos 5:5 (see also 1 Sam. 13:5). No firm identification has been proposed. Ai was also east of Bethel. This is probably present-day Beit’in, which has been excavated. Houses from the Middle Bronze period have been discovered there.” NICOT Marten Woudstra

LOST! In the midst of the battle 36 Israelite men lost their lives. What the heck? Were the spies wrong? Was the strategy bad?

- And the hearts of the people melted and became as water. – Notice how quickly the people went from overconfident from Jericho, to stunningly fearful with this loss. Why? What caused the deep-seated fear and dread? It was because they were ALL CLEAR that it was GOD OR NOTHING. They knew that the if they had any chance at taking this land it would have to be miraculous. They may have had a large army that could take this city normally, but what about the next nation they try to conquer? If God is no longer with them, the whole plan is doomed to fail. The ramifications of the absence of God's blessing and promise were so significant everyone began to panic.
- Shock and Awe
 - Joshua is floored by the failure
 - *Joshua 7:6-9 – "Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. ⁷ And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! ⁸ O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! 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. And what will you do for your great name?"*
 - Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. – Joshua and his leaders knew instantly that something deep was wrong. It was not a mere battle loss. They knew about battle, they had been in a lot of them. But this was different. This was an indicator that God had turned from them and that was devastating. Why would He do that? Wasn't this His idea?
 - And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan! O Lord, what can I say, when Israel has turned their backs before their enemies! – Joshua is devastated and in a bit of a panic. He knows that something has changed with God. God pulled back. But why? And God is the one that told them to go into the land. God was the one who told them not to stay on the other side of the Jordan where they could have lived for a long time. God was the one who said that He would pave the way for Israel and that Joshua was blessed like Moses and "no man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life." But here we are with a loss right at the beginning of the military campaign. So, what gives? Did God break His promise?

- Jos 1:1-9 – “After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, ² “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. ⁵ No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on 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 then you will have good success. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

- 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. And what will you do for your great name? – Joshua knew that **a loss would become public and the other nations that were surrounding the area would want Israel gone and attack.** The only thing they had going for them was the psychological warfare of people fearing Yahweh’s presence and the supernatural ability to win battles they shouldn’t normally win. But what if everyone finds out that it’s hit and miss? What if everyone realizes there’s a weakness? They will jump on it. And ultimate, as if God didn’t know this, Joshua reminds God that it will make God look bad. **Everyone knows that Israel and Yahweh are connected. Any losses reflect back on God negatively.** It says that He’s not mighty enough to win. If Israel is ultimately wiped out (worst case scenario), then what will that say about Yahweh? That He was unable to protect His people and do what He said He could do. I don’t know whether Joshua was truly concerned about God’s name or he was using it as leverage, but **a lot of the patriarchs and faith fathers had a concern about God’s glory and His reputation, which I think we need to have more of a concern for today.**

- It’s Not a Mystery

- God explains the reason for the failure

- Joshua 7:10-15 – “The LORD said to Joshua, “Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? ¹¹ Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. ¹² Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. ¹³ Get up! Consecrate the people and say, ‘Consecrate yourselves for

tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." ¹⁴ In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. ¹⁵ And he who is taken with the devoted things 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 an outrageous thing in Israel.' "

- The LORD said to Joshua, "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? – I LOVE this line! God says, 'get up, what do you think you are doing on your face? Really? Do you think that you need to beg me for more power? Do you think I lost a battle? Do you think that I can't do what I say I can do? Do you really think the problem is ME? This is absurd. Get off your face and stand up and listen to me. There's a very practical reason this happened the way that it happened. The Bible records many times that God has to re-rack His people: Job; Elijah; David; Peter; etc. I love it because it shows that these are regular people and God is so far ahead of all of us. When you get corrected it shows that God is in control of all of it and knows exactly what needs to happen."
 - God's rebuke of Elijah - 1 Ki 19:9–11, 13-15, 18 – "There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." ¹¹ And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD."...And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." ¹⁵ And the LORD said to him,...¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."
- Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. – The problem is YOU! God says. Israel sinned. I was very clear in my instructions, you were very clear in giving the instructions, Joshua, but somehow someone didn't take it seriously. I told everyone that if they want My blessing, they need to hold up their side of the contract/covenant. They didn't. One of your guys has taken my stuff, lied about it, and then hid it in his tent. So, don't be dramatic and don't blame me. Just handle it.
- Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction. – When you violated my contract/covenant, I'm not going to back you up. I was clear about that. So, yes, one of your team violated Me and now you lost the battle. You should be thankful

that it was a small loss when you learned this lesson, it could have been catastrophic. You're welcome. I told you that when you violate me, I become your problem and I'm worse than anything you will face.

- I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things from among you. Get up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says the LORD, God of Israel, "There are devoted things in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the devoted things from among you." – I'm not going one step further in defense of you as long as you are sinning and playing me for a fool (God says). You need to handle your stuff. Get up. Clean things up, and get ready because tomorrow I'm going to out this guy and I need you to handle it the way it needs to be handled.
 - When God has to pause the plan for sin – There are times in our lives when God wants to move forward at a healthy pace to take territory and bring blessing, but our sin forces Him to stop and deal with it. The stoppage is not on Him, it's on us. He has to hold us back until the issue is handled because the further we go the greater the cost when it's finally rooted out. It's one thing to correct a bad leader in a church of 100 and quite another with a national leader.
 - In the morning therefore you shall be brought near by your tribes. And the tribe that the LORD takes by lot shall come near by clans. And the clan that the LORD takes shall come near by households. And the household that the LORD takes shall come near man by man. And he who is taken with the devoted things 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 an outrageous thing in Israel.' – God explains the process of rooting out the evil. He's going to pick them systematically and whittle it down to the guy: Tribe – Clan – Household – Man. And when God outs this guy he is to be killed and burned off the face of the earth, including his immediate family. He will be made an example of so no one else thinks that they can mess around like this. God has eyes everywhere and nothing escapes His view.
 - When God does dramatic judgment – Why does God do these massive extreme moves of judgment in the Bible (especially the Old Testament)? (Sodom & Gomorrah; David's census plague; Korah's rebellion; etc.) Doesn't it seem over the top and unnecessary? Why be so dramatic? Here's my perspective: You can do it once dramatically to make an example so that others don't do it, or you can do it subtly and continue to have people try to do themselves and you end up with greater loss. God isn't messing around and it's critical that He makes His will and ways known clearly. Is it extreme? Yes, that's the point. It's leadership move to make a point about authority.
- Revelation
 - Achan's Sin is Revealed

- Joshua 7:16-23 – *“So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. ¹⁷ And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. ¹⁸ And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. ¹⁹ Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.” ²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua, “Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: ²¹ when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar [Babylon], and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.” ²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. ²³ And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD.”*
- So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel near tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was taken. And he brought near the clans of Judah, and the clan of the Zerahites was taken. And he brought near the clan of the Zerahites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. And he brought near his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken. – Joshua doesn't waste time (it says that he got up early a lot in the Bible). He gets right to the situation. He organizes the nation so that everyone can see that God is doing the whittling down and it's not a witch hunt by Joshua. I would assume two things: 1.) He explained the situation to everyone that there was sin in the camp and that's why they lost the Ai battle – which would have ticked everyone off especially the families of the 36 men lost; 2.) The selection process was done by LOT. That is a process of making determinations by random selection (like flipping a coin or drawing straws). It allows God to steer it and not man. They even used that method in selecting the replacement apostle (Mathias for Judas).
- The tribe of Judah – it's impossible for a Christian to read this story and not pick up on the tribe of Judah reference because the most famous member of the tribe beyond King David, is Jesus Christ. He is the lion of the tribe of Judah. There's not a tie in with Achan and Jesus it's just that it smeared the name of the tribe that Jesus was from a bit (historical embarrassment).
- Why didn't Achan come forward when the selection process began? – I have to assume that he still thought he could hide and get away with it. There were probably many times that tribes were selected out but it was over 2 million people so maybe he had a shot to keep silent and escape. What he forgot to factor was God.

- Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the LORD God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.” – you can see Joshua’s age and wisdom here by the phrase, ‘my son.’ Joshua is likely 70-80 years old and has seen a lot of death and pain. He is now the leader of all of Israel and a big deal. This man **Achan is brought before him (which is terrifying). Everyone is watching.** Joshua said, **‘this is about God right now, son.** It’s not a time to pretend you can hide stuff. This is not a simple matter; this is life and death. I need you to tell me exactly what happened.’
- And Achan answered Joshua, “Truly I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.” – Achan crushes under the weight of it all and confesses everything. He admits that when they were plundering Jericho he came across some items (either in the house of someone as he ran by or in the big pile in the middle of the city that everyone was dumping stuff as they found it). He said I really wanted them and I took them. He even admitted where he had stashed them. **Perhaps he thought that if he came clean he would get mercy.**
 - Why did Achan do it? – **Why do any of us sin? At the heart of it we think that we can. We also think that there’s a chance that we won’t get caught.** I think that Achan saw an opportunity and didn’t have the pre-designed character to withstand the temptation. **That should be a lesson for us all. All of us have a limit to what we cannot handle a temptation.** Sure, God will give us a way out (1 Cor 10:13), but if we don’t have the practiced character we will fall. We must be disciplined in all areas of life so that when the big temptations come we have a shot at denying it.
 - So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the LORD. – Joshua wanted the evidence that would confirm his guilt. It’s actually really wise to have that in front of everyone **so that no one can say that it was a personal vendetta and Achan was set up and forced to confess.**
- Judgment Day
 - Achan is wiped off the face of the earth
 - *Joshua 7:24-26 – “And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ And Joshua said, “Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today.”*

And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones.²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.”

- And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor.² – Joshua is a very hands on leader. He’s involved in a lot of stuff (marches in battle still at his age). He leads the charge of Achan’s judgment here, as messy as it is. They gather up Achan, his family, his stuff, and the stolen items and went to the Valley of Achor.
- And Joshua said, “Why did you bring trouble on us? The LORD brings trouble on you today.” And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones.³ - Joshua proclaims judgment over Achan and they stoned him to death and burned all of his stuff. The way its written seems to indicate that his **immediate family was stoned to death as well** (stoned THEM with stones). Then they burned everything that he had. The point was to wipe out his family line in judgment for what he had done.
 - **Why kill the innocents?** – perhaps the toughest aspect of this story is that the immediate family was held responsible for his sin. I hate that. I have grown up in a reality (especially post cross and Pentecost) where we are held accountable for our own actions. This is still a time of history when God dealt with groups collectively even in judgment, even though He laid down the law with Moses in Deuteronomy 24:16 that kids shouldn’t be held accountable for their parents sins. Either we have a special case here (the whole household were in on the hiding of the theft), or **Joshua knew that this was specific to wiping out any traces of sin in the camp during this sensitive time.**
 - Dt 24:16 – *“Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children, nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers. Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.”*
 - Amaziah followed that law – 2 Ch 25:3-4 - *“And as soon as the royal power was firmly his, he killed his servants who had struck down the king his father. ⁴But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the Law, in the Book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, “Fathers shall not die because of their children, nor children die because of their fathers, but each one shall die for his own sin.”*

² “The place where the execution takes place is called proleptically the valley of Achor. The symbolism of this name is explained in Joshua’s words in v. 25. It will be a valley devoted to the memory of the one who “troubled” Israel (see also the name Achar in 1 Chr. 2:7).” NICOT

³ “Although v. 15 had spoken only of burning, v. 25 also speaks of stoning. Moreover, v. 25 uses alternately the third person singular and the third person plural for the object of the punishment. It may well be that the stoning was done to enable “all Israel” to participate in the act. The use of both singular and plural probably indicates that Achan was put to death separately, to make an example of him. The fact that his family also shared in that fate may be due to their common knowledge of the crime. After all, the goods were hidden in the parental tent. The element of corporate guilt is here also. Deut. 24:16 is held in balance by Deut. 5:9. The former should not be seen as representing a more individualistic, less “sacral” view than the latter. Properly understood the Bible does not teach individualism anywhere. Care should also be taken not to view the corporate element as only a remnant of a primitive mode of thought that is inconsistent with modern thinking.” NICOT

- Jeremiah hinted at further change - Je 31:27–30 - *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.”*²⁸ *And it shall come to pass that as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring harm, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD.*²⁹ *In those days they shall no longer say: “ ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’”*³⁰ *But everyone shall die for his own iniquity. Each man who eats sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.”*
- And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor. – This was no small incident. They made a monument about it. People would look at the memorial stone altar and ask what happened. **They would all tell the story as a warning to others to never take God’s stuff.**
 - **Joshua had to deal with Achan’s sin directly** – Before Israel moved on, this issue had to be dealt with once and for all.
 - **Dealing harshly with sin – Why is God so vicious about sin? We as humans are so used to sin** we can’t imagine not having brokenness and wickedness. It’s the water we swim in so it seems exaggerated the way that God deals with sin sometimes. **In our world we forgive each other because everyone sins and everyone hurts each other. We just think that it’s the way that it is. And if we are honest, sometimes God’s reactions seems more brutal than the initial sin.** If the actual sin was doing mean stuff, God would be worse at times, right? No. Because **we are looking at sin wrong. Sin is rebellion against God. The result of violating God’s ways is hurt. But the sin isn’t the hurt, it’s the decision to violate God. It’s the rebellion that’s so serious.** Take for example the famous story of the guy who accidentally touched the ark of the covenant and was killed for it (Uzzah, in 2 Sam 6 – or the guys who looked into it and were killed by God, in 1 Sam 6). There was no actual damage from their ‘sin’. The ark was fine. But it was the decisions and rebellion against God that was so serious. **The outcome or ramifications of the sin are beside the point.** Murder isn’t wrong because of how much it hurt the other person, per se, but because God said it’s wrong and we don’t get to violate God’s law. **That’s why modern folks struggle so much with reasoning out WHY they should be able to violate a biblical truth or law. They argue that no one is hurt in the process, but that’s beside the point.** The sin is the choice to do it, not the outcome (in a very real sense). **God is not from our perspective that just sees sin as no big deal. Sin isn’t a way of life for Him. Sin is dangerous and evil and spreads like wildfire. Unlike us, He knows and is purity. He is righteousness. God doesn’t just let sin go. No sin is let go. All sin is held accountable.** There is no infraction or rebellion against, God, no matter how slight, that is ignored or overlooked. **ANY hint of wickedness is a death sentence. It’s a rebellion against an Almighty and perfect God.**

according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you.”⁹ So Joshua sent them out. And they went to the place of ambush and lay between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai, but Joshua spent that night among the people.¹⁰ Joshua arose 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 fighting men who were with him went up and drew near before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai.¹² He took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city.¹³ So they stationed the forces, the main encampment that was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley.¹⁴ And as soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city, hurried and went out early to the appointed place toward the Arabah to meet Israel in battle. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city.¹⁵ And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness.¹⁶ So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city.¹⁷ Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel.¹⁸ Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city.¹⁹ And the men in the ambush rose quickly out of their place, and as soon as he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it. And they hurried to set the city on fire.²⁰ So when the men of Ai looked back, behold, the smoke of the city went up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that, for the people who fled to the wilderness turned back against the pursuers.²¹ And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city, and that the smoke of the city went up, then they turned back and struck down the men of Ai.²² And the others came out from the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side. And Israel struck them down, until there was left none that survived or escaped.²³ But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him near to Joshua.²⁴ When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them to the very last had fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel returned to Ai and struck it down with the edge of the sword.²⁵ And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000, all the people of Ai.²⁶ But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction.²⁷ Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their plunder, according to the word of the LORD that he commanded Joshua.²⁸ So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day.²⁹ And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. And at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body

down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day.”

- And the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves. Lay an ambush against the city, behind it.” – *All of that with Achan was pretty traumatic and so God gets them dialed back into the original plan. God said, ‘now that it’s done with, we can move on.’ It’s handled. We don’t need to bring it up again.* Get your confidence back. I’m locked in and you will win as normal. Go attack the city of Ai, they won’t be able to withstand you. I’m going to do a strategy with you that I need you to follow.
 - *The invitation to try again* – Israel collectively and corporately sinned and messed up. So, what now? *God was not interested in them laying around in their shame, but wanted them to deal with it and get back after it.* Why would God let them try again? They blew it. As serious as sin is, *God is very clear about the condition of His people.* We are broken and very untrustworthy. *He is not shocked that we fail. He knows what He’s working with. God has a plan for AFTER we fail, and it’s clean up and continue on.* How is this possible?
 - *The implications of Grace* – *Because of God’s loving character, He is a God of another chance.* He knows that He is perfect and we are not. *He extends multiple opportunities to do it over.* God could have led only with His justice and demanded perfection immediately, but He is beautifully balanced and impacted by His nature of love that allows failure to be redeemed.
 - *Let’s try again - Grace is an opportunity* for a renewed covenant/relationship with God and to begin doing things His way.
- So Joshua and all the fighting men arose to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out by night. And he commanded them, “Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you remain ready. And I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out against us just as before, we shall flee before them. And they will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city. For they will say, ‘They are fleeing from us, just as before.’ So we will flee before them. Then you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will give it into your hand. And as soon as you have taken the city, you shall set the city on fire. You shall do according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you.” – Originally they were going to bring about 2-3k soldiers. This time they take 30k with them to make sure. God gives them a strategy to lure out the Ai soldiers and come in behind them and cut them off and burn the city.

- So Joshua sent them out. And they went to the place of ambush and lay between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai, but Joshua spent that night among the people. Joshua arose early in the morning and mustered the people and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. – Joshua again remains with his people as a way to bolster their confidence. They got up early and attacked.
- And all the fighting men who were with him went up and drew near before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai. He took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. So they stationed the forces, the main encampment that was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley. – They got ready for the strategic attack. They got everyone in place.
- And as soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city, hurried and went out early to the appointed place toward the Arabah to meet Israel in battle. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. – it looked like a normal line up for battle as before so the Ai forces came out in force to stand against them. They had no clue there was another set of Israelite forces laying in wait.
- And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness. So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city. Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel.⁴ They left the city open and pursued Israel. – The first group lures them out by pretending that they are getting beaten back AGAIN. The whole city of Ai was depleted of soldiers due to their overconfidence. They left the city wide open.
- Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. – I don’t know how to read the javelin part. Was it like Moses raising the staff during the Amalekite war (Aaron and Hur keeping his arms up), or was this simply the signal for the 2nd group to attack in ambush? It’s not clear. Later it seems that Joshua had to keep it raised for some reason so perhaps it was a miracle indication.
- And the men in the ambush rose quickly out of their place, and as soon as he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it. And they hurried to set the city on fire. So when the men of Ai looked back, behold, the smoke of the city went up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that, for the people who fled to the

⁴ “Hitherto the city of Bethel, although mentioned previously (v. 9), had not been regarded as participating in these events. Here it suddenly is introduced as supplying people for the pursuit and thereby leaving itself as exposed as neighboring Ai. This reference to Bethel is mysterious and cannot be fully explained. The king of Bethel is mentioned among those slain by Joshua (12:16), but there is no reference to Bethel’s capture anywhere in the book of Joshua. Since the ambush mentioned in v. 12 was stationed between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai, the men of Bethel had to pass close by the ambush in order to come to Ai’s assistance.” NICOT

wilderness turned back against the pursuers. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city, and that the smoke of the city went up, then they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. And the others came out from the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side. And Israel struck them down, until there was left none that survived or escaped. – Ai soldiers were caught in the middle and destroyed. The plan worked perfectly. Some of the soldiers took off running but they were pursued. The rest of the city was beaten and burned.

- But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him near to Joshua. – the king of Ai was captured and brought alive to Joshua. This was a common occurrence in ancient warfare. Sometimes they would keep the king as a prisoner of war. Sometimes they would make an example out of him. Sometimes they would just kill him.
- When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them to the very last had fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel returned to Ai and struck it down with the edge of the sword. And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000, all the people of Ai. – Israel finished the job by killing men and women in the city (no kids mentioned) about 12,000 of them. It was a total wipe out of Ai. This would normally allow some of Israel to backfill that town as one of their new areas of living, but we find that they don't.
- But Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of Ai to destruction. – this is the indication that it was a bit of a Moses lifting up his staff move. Joshua seems to have kept his javelin up until the job was done almost as an indicator of God's move on their behalf.
- Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their plunder, according to the word of the LORD that he commanded Joshua. – all the stuff, this time (as opposed to Jericho) was able to be plundered and taken so that Israel would have resources moving forward. They are now trying to become a self-sustaining nation.
- So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day. – Ai was wiped out and it doesn't look like Israel inhabited it at all. It seems to have been flattened and burned.
- And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. And at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day. – They made a show of the death of the king of Ai in a psychological warfare kind of way. They hung him publicly and then threw his body at the entrance to the city gate and made another memorial rock pile of victory over it. It was a memorial of God's victory over their enemies.

- Suring Up
 - Joshua leads a covenant experience
 - *Joshua 8:30-35 – “At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal,³¹ just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings.³² And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.³³ And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel.³⁴ And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law.³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.”*
 - At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal,⁵ just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the people of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, “an altar of uncut stones, upon which no man has wielded an iron tool.” And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD and sacrificed peace offerings. – Mt Ebal and Mt. Gerizim are two mountains near each other. Moses had instructed that when they finally got into the Promised Land, they were to do some covenant interaction with God on Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim (mntns in Canaan).
 - All of this was prescribed by Moses – None of this was an idea of Joshua’s and made spur of the moment. These decisions were made long before by Moses. As Moses was seeing the transference of leadership to Joshua and they were drawing near to the Promised Land he had a lot to say. He retold their history of the last 40+ years He gave lots of instructions on what to do when they went into Canaan (It’s chronicled in the book of Deuteronomy).
 - Dt 27:1–14; 28:1-2, 15, - *“Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, “Keep the whole commandment that I command you today.² And on the day you cross over the Jordan to the land that the LORD your God is*

⁵ “Mount Ebal, where the ceremony was held, is identified by most interpreters with Jebel Eslāmîyeh, north of Shechem (modern Nablus). Deut. 11:30, which specifies the site of the proclamation of blessings and curses, places it and Mount Gerizim “over against Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh” (ASV). If the location near Shechem is correct, then the conquest of Ai had made it possible for Joshua to move the entire Israelite camp, including women and children (v. 35), to that vicinity, which was considerably to the north, without encountering opposition. Perhaps those are right who assume that Ai’s fate had inspired fear in the Canaanites. Perhaps also the events described in Gen. 34, even though initially resulting in hostility between Jacob’s family and the local inhabitants, may have left some traces of a friendly relationship. The problem is a difficult one. It may well be that considerations of composition led the author of Joshua to place the story here. Such arrangement of historical material would not be out of accord with the principles of biblical historiography, but no strong objections can be raised against a chronological understanding of this episode.” NICOT

giving you, you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster.³ And you shall write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you.⁴ And when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, concerning which I command you today, on Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster.⁵ And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. You shall wield no iron tool on them;⁶ you shall build an altar to the LORD your God of uncut stones. And you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God,⁷ and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God.⁸ And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly."⁹ Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, "Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the LORD your God.¹⁰ You shall therefore obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today."¹¹ That day Moses charged the people, saying,¹² "When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.¹³ And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.¹⁴ And the Levites shall declare to all the men of Israel in a loud voice: [series of curses for: false gods and fake images of God; dishonoring parents, stealing neighbors land, taking advantage of the blind, injustice, incest, bestiality, murder, bribery, not following the law.]... 28:1 "And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. [blessings such as: blessed in all the land, childbirth, harvest, flocks, plentiful food, enemies defeated, the work of your hands, kept a holy people to the Lord, rain in season, wealth, success.]...¹⁵ "But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. [reverse of the blessings with more detail – clear hints of coming judgment and exile for disobedience in the future]...^{30:15} "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it.¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them,¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess.¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live,²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

- And there, in the presence of the people of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.⁶ – Moses had commanded that the stones would be covered with plaster so they could write on them and they would be permanent markers of the law. It's basically the ten commandments and perhaps some of the other laws.
- Dt 27:1–8 – "Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, "Keep the whole commandment that I command you today. ²And on the day you cross over the Jordan to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster. ³And you shall write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you. ⁴And when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, concerning which I command you today, on Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster. ⁵And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. You shall wield no iron tool on them; ⁶you shall build an altar to the LORD your God of uncut stones. And you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God, ⁷and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God. ⁸And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly."
- And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal,⁷ just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel. – 6 tribes were supposed to assemble "on" Mt. Gerizim and 6 tribes were to assemble 'on' Mt. Ebal, the ark of the covenant (God's presence indicator) was in between.
- Moses' command - Dt 11:26–30 - "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, ²⁸ and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known. ²⁹ And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. ³⁰Are they not beyond the Jordan, west of the road, toward the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oak of Moreh?"

⁶ "The stones on which a copy of the law was written were probably not the stones of the altar. Deut. 27:1–8 prescribes that large whitewashed stones should be inscribed. This was an Egyptian technique rather than Palestinian or Mesopotamian. Just who wrote the copy of the law which Joshua inscribed upon the stones is not quite clear. Perhaps it was Moses or Joshua himself. What is evident is that the writing of this copy on the stones was done in the sight of the assembled Israelites. The narrative does not specify the extent of the "law" which was written. It could be the Ten Commandments, or the blessings and curses of Deut. 28." NICOT

⁷ "The two mountains where the people arrange themselves are Ebal (see v. 30) and Gerizim. Investigations have indicated that the acoustical qualities of that site are excellent for such a ceremony.²⁷ Verse 33 again emphasizes that all is done according to Moses' commandment. Moreover, that verse speaks only of the blessing. In actual fact, as is clear from v. 34, both blessing and curse were read. This shows that the blessing was of paramount importance, although it would be erroneous to relegate the curses to a second-rank position. Both belong to the pattern of covenant-making and covenant renewal. A covenant cannot be conceived of without an oath confirming the relationship. In turn, the oath is a form of conditional self-cursing. Blessing and cursing are the two poles around which the history of the covenant revolves (see Deut. 11:26; 30:1). The blessing means life, the curse death (Deut. 30:19). God may also turn a curse into a blessing (Deut. 23:5). The words of blessing and cursing are not to be conceived of as mere words. Within the biblical context they are true vehicles of power, not in a magical sense but because they were uttered on behalf of him whose Word is powerful (Ps. 33:9). To bless is to "put" the "name" of the Lord upon the people (Num. 6:27). To curse is to invoke that name by way of self-malediction or in order to curse others." NICOT

- And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them. – Joshua’s leadership (which included the priests) read aloud all the instructions of Moses about the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. Everyone heard it (it’s a massive crowd that couldn’t possibly hear, so perhaps they had methods of sharing the information as it was given), but in the end no one could say that they didn’t know the instructions of God in the new land.
 - Dt 31:9–13 – *“Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. ¹⁰ And Moses commanded them, “At the end of every seven years, at the set time in the year of release, at the Feast of Booths, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹² Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law, ¹³ and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.””*
- **Reminder of why the Canaan campaign is right**
 - God will clear out the other people groups before Israel even though Israel will be the boots on the ground fighting - Dt 7:1 - *“When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you,...”*
 - How can we get mightier nations out? - Dt 7:17–21 – *“If you say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I. How can I dispossess them?’ ¹⁸ you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ¹⁹ the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So will the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. ²⁰ Moreover, the LORD your God will send hornets among them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you are destroyed. ²¹ You shall not be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.”*
 - Dt 9:1–3 - *“Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven, ² a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’ ³ Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.”*
 - Rules on how fast to get them out - Dt 7:22 – *“The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little. You may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you.”*
 - All Canaanite groups must be totally wiped out for purity reasons - Dt 7:1–4 – *“...and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. ³ You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their*

sons or taking their daughters for your sons,⁴ for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.”

- Dt 7:16 – “And you shall consume all the peoples that the LORD your God will give over to you. Your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.”
- All foreign gods and worship must be eradicated - Dt 7:5–11 – “But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire. ⁶ “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.”
- Dt 7:1–11 – “The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. ²⁶ And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction.”
- Dt 12:1–4 - “These are the statutes and rules that you shall be careful to do in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. ² You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³ You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. ⁴ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way.”
- Dt 12:29–31 - “When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.’ ³¹ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.”
- Same judgment for the Jews - Dt 17:2–7 – “If there is found among you, within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, in transgressing his covenant, ³ and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden, ⁴ and it is told you and you hear of it, then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abomination has been done in Israel, ⁵ then you shall bring out to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones. ⁶ On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. ⁷ The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.”
- God chose you but not because you are a big deal - Dt 7:6b–7 – “The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,…”
- You aren’t the one who is victorious – Dt 8:7–10 - “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.”

- God blesses Israel due to keeping a promise to forefathers - Dt 7:8-11 – *“...but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰ and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. ¹¹ You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.”*
- It’s a good land and worth the effort – Dt 8:7-10 - *“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.”*
 - Dt 11:8-12 - *“You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess, ⁹ and that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their offspring, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. ¹¹ But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, ¹² a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.”*
- Rules of Warfare – toward those who are OUTSIDE Canaan (Canaanite groups are to be wiped out).
 - Soldiers are to be voluntary - Since God is fighting ultimately, any man who is just starting his life is can go home, or even if a man is terrified to fight (hurts morale) - Dt 20:1-9
 - Before you fight a city offer terms of peace to it. If they agree they become your servants, if not fight. Kill the men, take the women and children and all the spoils as your own. (Dt 20:15-17 – *“Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. ¹⁶ But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, ¹⁷ but you shall devote them to complete destruction,...”). Oh, and when you siege, don’t cut down the food bearing trees, those aren’t yours. You can use the other ones.*
 - Rules on marrying captive women – Dt 21:10-14
- **Key Point: It’s not Israel’s righteousness that gets them the land but God’s judging and moving the Canaanites out for their wickedness** – Dt 9:4-8 - *“Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. ⁵ Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ⁶ “Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your*

righteousness, for you are a stubborn people. ⁷ Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD. ⁸ Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you." [then a reminder of the Golden Calf incident]

Conclusion

- The Motivation of God's Grace – What did we learn from this story? God is a God of second chances to be sure. But what about us? Did it provide us a clear directive when handling sin and failure? It did. It showed us that God has a very clear plan to deal with this. The first is OBEDIENCE gets us to blessing and SIN gets us to pain and loss. WHEN we sin, there is a manner in which to handle it. We are to own up to it and let God deal with us in His own manner. We do not hide it, we do not excuse it, we own it. He determines how to clean it, we do it, and we get on with it. God is not interested in us wallowing in the shame of what He has already forgiven and moved on from.