

Joshua Chapter 8

Joshua 8:1 "And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:"

God repeated His declaration to Joshua that the battle before them was already won; they simply had to obey Him and carry out the victory (1:9; 6:2; Deut. 1:21; 7:18).

To succeed, Israel would have to live God's way.

The LORD encourages Joshua here.

The first time they had sent 3,000 men.

This time the LORD tells them to take all of the fighting men.

God is with them, and Ai will crumble and fall.

It is no problem to defeat all obstacles before them, if the LORD is with them.

The real enemy they face is sin that might crop up in their own ranks.

Joshua 8:2 "And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof, and the cattle thereof, shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves: lay thee an ambush for the city behind it."

No explanation is offered as to why the spoils of victory at Jericho were accursed but the "spoil" for "Ai" was not.

Whether or not God's commands make sense to His people, they can submit without fear, knowing that He always acts righteously.

Possibly as a reward for collective obedience, the ban is not applied strictly to "Ai" as it had been to "Jericho", but the more customary war regulations are (compare Deut. 24-35; 3:6-7).

Christians are in constant warfare with the devil, or the lust of their own flesh.

God is with us and we are victorious, when we stay faithful to Him.

Even though God sees that we have victory, we still have to fight the war.

We notice in the verse above, that they may keep the spoil of Ai, unlike the spoil of Jericho which was accursed.

They are allowed to keep the cattle as well.

This ambush is to keep them from running away.

Verses 3-12

The variance in numbers of the men assigned to the ambush as well as the difficulty in determining the precise chronology of the details of the campaign caused some doubt as to the trustworthiness of the scriptural record.

Assuming the figures (in verses 3 and 12), refer to the same group, since “Ai’s” casualty figures are a mere “twelve thousand” (verse 25), a force in ambush of “thirty thousand” men seems disproportionate.

The word translated “thousand” may also be understood in the sense of “leaders” or even “contingents”.

Thus, there could be 30 leaders or contingents that made up the five thousand men in ambush.

The logistics of concealing five thousand men also seems difficult.

Verses 3-29

God instructed Joshua to lay a trap for Ai.

This battle plan was much more conventional than the one for Jericho.

It too worked, and God gave the victory.

This time, “Israel” obeyed “according to the “word of the LORD” in every detail.

Joshua 8:3 "So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai: and Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valor, and sent them away by night."

As the LORD had commanded him.

"And Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valor":

Out of all the men of war.

These were a select company, picked men, not the whole army, as some have thought.

For he was ordered to take all the people of war, as he did.

"And sent them away by night":

From the main army, that they might pass the city and get behind it undiscovered, for they were sent for an ambush.

And of these some were to take the city, and be left in it to burn it.

And some to smite the men of Ai, as Abarbanal notes.

"Thirty thousand mighty men":

Joshua's elite force was far superior to that of Ai, with a mere 12,000 total population (8:25).

This time Joshua took no small force presumptuously (compare 7:3-4), but had 30,000 to sack and burn Ai, a decoy group to lure defenders out (verses 5-6), and a third detachment of about 5,000 to prevent Beth-el from helping Ai (verse 12).

This is ten times the number that went against Ai the first time.

It appears that Joshua assaulted Ai with 30,000 men.

It also appears from another Scripture, that 5,000 men were used in ambush.

They moved by night, so as not to be detected.

Notice God has Joshua to figure out the details of the battle plan.

God will help us, but we must put out effort as well.

Joshua 8:4 "And he commanded them, saying, Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, [even] behind the city: go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready:"

At the time he sent them away.

"Behold, ye shall lie in wait against the city, even behind the city":

That is, on the west side of it (Joshua 8:9).

"Go not very far from the city, but be ye all ready":

To enter into it, as soon as the forces are drawn out eastward to meet the army of Israel.

He moved the entire army near to the city.

They were to wait there for further orders.

Joshua 8:5 "And I, and all the people that [are] with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them,"

That is, Joshua with the main body of the army would march up to the city the next morning, in order to draw out the inhabitants of it to fight them.

"And it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first":

As they had done before, when the three thousand were sent against them (Joshua 7:4).

"That we will flee before them":

As the three thousand did, which would animate them to pursue them with the greater eagerness, and to a distance from their city.

It appears that Joshua, has chosen some men to go with him into the edge of the city.

When Ai attacks this small group of soldiers, they will appear to be retreating and bring them to the men who are waiting outside the city.

Joshua 8:6 "(For they will come out after us) till we have drawn them from the city; for they will say, They flee before us, as at the first: therefore we will flee before them."

Of which there could be no doubt, when they should see them run from them.

"Till we have drawn them from the city":

Some distance from it, that they could not return soon enough to save it from the ambush, or prevent their entrance into it, and burning it.

"For they will say, They flee before us, as at the first":

They run away as they did before, and let us pursue them and smite them as we did then.

"Therefore we will flee before them":

To draw them out of the city, and make your way easy to get into it.

This is just a trick to get the fighting men of Ai out of the city, chasing this group led by Joshua.

Joshua 8:7 "Then ye shall rise up from the ambush, and seize upon the city: for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand."

“God will deliver it into your hand”:

God had sovereignly caused Israel’s defeat earlier due to Achan’s disobedience (7:1-5).

Yet, this time, despite Israel’s overwhelming numbers, God was still the sovereign power for this victory (8:7).

After Joshua has led the soldiers out of Ai.

The 5,000 of Israel who had waited in ambush, will go in and take the city.

The LORD is with them, so the trick will work.

Joshua 8:8 "And it shall be, when ye have taken the city, [that] ye shall set the city on fire: according to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do. See, I have commanded you."

Entered it and become masters of it.

"That ye shall set the city on fire":

Not the whole city, only some outlying houses of it, to make a smoke which might be seen both by Israel and the men of Ai, for different purposes.

For the spoil of the city was first to be taken before it was utterly burnt with fire.

"According to the commandment of the LORD shall ye do":

Plunder the city, destroy the inhabitants of it, and then burn it.

"See I have commanded you":

Delivered the command of the LORD unto them, and therefore were left without excuse, and could not plead ignorance.

Besides, he was their general, and he expected his orders to be obeyed, as they ought to have been.

This city is like Jericho.

It is to be destroyed by fire after they have taken it.

There is no other reason given for this, than the fact that God commands it.

Joshua 8:9 "Joshua therefore sent them forth: and they went to lie in ambush, and abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of Ai: but Joshua lodged that night among the people."

The thirty thousand chosen men.

"And they went to lie in ambush":

As they were ordered (Joshua 8:2).

"And abode between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of Ai":

For as Ai was on the east of Beth-el (Joshua 7:2).

Bethel must be on the west of Ai, as Jarchi notes.

"But Joshua lodged that night among the people":

The main body of the army, to direct them in the affair of war, how they should behave the next day, when they came to fight.

And to inspire them with courage and confidence, that they might not be afraid, because of their having been smitten before by this people, so Ben Gersom.

Or rather that he and they might be ready in the morning to march towards Ai, as Jarchi and Kimchi.

It appears there were 30,000 fighting men, and 5,000 of them lay in ambush, waiting for Joshua to draw them out of the city.

Joshua 8:10 "And Joshua rose up early in the morning, and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai."

To see if there were any wanting, and to put them in proper order for their march.

"And went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai":

These elders were either the seventy elders who went with Joshua as council to him; or it may be rather they were inferior officers, who went at the head of their respective corps under them.

This is not the same as the numbering in the book of numbers.

This is a surveying of the troops.

Joshua and the elders led the way into Ai.

Joshua 8:11 "And all the people, [even the people] of war that [were] with him, went up, and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai: now [there was] a valley between them and Ai."

To the city of Ai:

"And came before the city":

As if they intended to besiege it, storm it, or force an entrance into it.

"And pitched on the north side of Ai":

Which was judged fittest for the purpose.

"Now there was a valley between them and Ai":

Which the Rabbins call the valley of Halacha, as Jarchi says.

So that they were upon a hill, at least on rising ground, and might the more easily be seen by the inhabitants of Ai.

Whom they wanted to draw out of their city.

The other troops were stationed on the west side, and these are on the north side.

There was just a valley between them and Ai.

Joshua 8:12 "And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of the city."

This was another ambush, as both Jarchi and Kimchi observe.

And the latter adds, perhaps he set them nearer the city than the former.

And they suppose that Joshua had with him but thirty thousand men in all, five thousand of which he sent to lie in ambush, and the other twenty-five thousand remained with him.

"Between Beth-el and Ai, on the west side of the city":

And though they were on the same side of the city with the first and larger ambush.

Yet, as Abarbanal observes, they might be set nearer the city and to the army.

This seems to be a repetition of the earlier verse.

It appears this 5,000 is part of the whole.

Joshua 8:13 "And when they had set the people, [even] all the host that [was] on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley."

In battle array (as in 1 Kings 20:12); that is, Joshua and the officers of the army.

"Even all the host that was on the north of the city":

Where Joshua and the main army were.

"And their liers in wait on the west of the city":

Both the first and second ambush.

When all, were prepared and got ready by their several officers, to act the part they were to do.

"Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley":

According to Ben Gersom, to see whether the guards or sentinels which were placed there were awake or asleep.

Lest the men of Ai should come suddenly upon them and smite them.

But perhaps it might be to pray and meditate.

It seems that Joshua left a group on the west and on the north, and then took a group to the middle of the valley near Ai to entice the army into the ambush.

Joshua 8:14 "And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw [it], that they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that [there were] liers in ambush against him behind the city."

Not the ambush on the west side, but the host or army on the north side.

Or however, some of his people gave him notice of it.

"That they hasted and rose up early":

Or made haste to rise out of their beds, on the alarm given of Israel's near approach.

"And the men of the city went out against Israel to battle":

Being raised out of their beds and clothed with armor, and put into a military order, they marched out with their king at the head of them, to give Israel battle.

"He and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain":

Which was before the city, the same with the valley mentioned (Joshua 8:11).

The city was built on an eminence, and this plain or valley lay at the bottom of it.

And on an eminence on the other side of the valley the army of Israel was pitched.

Wherefore the king of Ai and all his men of war went out to attack Israel, and this is said to be at an appointed time.

It is difficult to say what is meant by it, when they seem to have hurried out as best as they could, as soon as they perceived the Israelites were near them.

Ben Gersom and Abarbanal think it was the same time of the day they went out at first, which the king might choose as lucky, being before successful.

And to encourage the men, that as they conquered them before, they should now.

Which seems not amiss, though perhaps it rather designs an appointed place, as their rendezvous, and where to attack Israel, and where they had been before victorious.

"But he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city":

That he knew nothing of, and therefore took no precaution against them to prevent their plan.

It appears that the trap worked.

The king of Ai came out into the valley to fight with Joshua and his men.

The ambush took place at this point.

Joshua 8:15 "And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness."

Or smitten, as some of them might be in the pursuit.

"And fled by the way of the wilderness":

Not a barren desert, but, according to Kimchi and Ben Melech, a place for the pasture of cattle.

Though perhaps it is the same with the wilderness of Beth-aven.

Joshua pretended to be beaten, all the while leading the men of Ai away from the city.

Joshua 8:16 "And all the people that [were] in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city."

Because the host of Israel was very numerous, it was judged proper that all the people in Ai should assist in pursuing them.

Not only to kill the more in the pursuit, but to carry off the spoil and prisoners they should take.

Or rather the sense is, that all the people in Ai, which were come out with the king to battle, when they saw Israel flee, "cried", or shouted, as soldiers do when victorious, "in" or "while pursuing" after them.

"And they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city":

At some considerable distance from it; which was the design to be answered by faking a flight.

The shouting of the men of Ai was a victorious shout, which drew the people to follow and see the victory.

Joshua 8:17 "And there was not a man left in Ai or Beth-el, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel."

For as these two places were very near to each other, but a mile apart.

They were in confederacy, and acted together, and could easily be called to the help of each other when required.

Though there is a difficulty how the men of Beth-el could join those of Ai, when the ambush lay between them both (Joshua 8:12).

They either went another way, or the ambush purposely let them pass, for fear of a discovery by a skirmish with them.

And that Bethel as well as Ai might be cleared of its armed inhabitants, and so fall an easy prey to them as well as Ai.

This must be understood only of men of war; for otherwise there were inhabitants left, as old men, and such as were unfit for war, afterwards slain (Joshua 8:24).

"And they left the city open":

They did not stay to shut the gates, nor left porters or any guards about, to take care of, protect, and defend the city.

"And pursued after Israel":

With great eagerness and vehemence, not having the least apprehension of their city being in any danger.

This explains that every man went with the pursuit of Joshua and the army of Israel, not even realizing they were leaving their city open for attack.

Joshua 8:18 "And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that [is] in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that [he had] in his hand toward the city."

"The spear":

Joshua's hoisted spear represented the go-ahead indicator to occupy Ai.

Possibly the raising was even a signal of confidence in God: "for I will give it into thine hand".

Earlier, Moses' uplifted rod and arms probably signified trusting contact with God for victory over Amalek (Exodus 17:8-13).

This spear seemed to be the signal to those lying in ambush in the north and the west to go and take Ai.

This is similar to Moses stretching out the staff God had given him, and bringing judgement from God.

Joshua 8:19 "And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire."

As soon as the sentinels set in proper places observed the signal, and gave them notice of it.

Which was the stretching out of the spear, as appears by what follows.

"And they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand":

And the spear in his hand; from whence it is plain, that though the LORD is said to bid Joshua do this now, he had orders from him for it before and the ambush must have been made acquainted with it before they were sent away.

And this was only a renewal of the order from the LORD, and which pointed out the proper time, the very crisis, when it should be stretched out.

"And they entered into the city":

Without any difficulty, the gates being open.

"And took it":

Took possession of it, and the strong holds in it.

"And hasted and set the city on fire":

That is, they made haste to set some houses on fire as the signal to the army of Israel to return.

They not only take the city, but set fire to it as well.

Joshua 8:20 "And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way: and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers."

On some account or another, perhaps observing that the army of Israel made a full stop and was gazing at the city.

"They saw, and, behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven":

From whence they concluded an enemy was there, and had set fire to it.

"And they had no power to flee this way or that way":

For if they turned back to their city there was an enemy, how powerful they knew not, possessed of it, and whom they might expect would meet them.

And if they pushed forward, there was the whole army of Israel against them, which now turned and faced them, showing no fear of them.

"And the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers":

The people of Israel, that fled by the way of the wilderness (Joshua 8:15), turned about, and fell upon the men of Ai that pursued them.

When the men of Ai saw the fire, they knew they had been tricked.

There is now nowhere to run, because Joshua and his men are on one side and the men who set fire to Ai are on the other.

Joshua 8:21 "And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai."

"And all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city":

Which they knew by the smoke, as follows.

"And that the smoke of the city ascended":

In large columns, which sufficiently indicated that the whole city was taken and fired by the ambush.

"They turned again, and slew the men of Ai":

Great numbers of them.

Joshua had not been afraid at all.

They had lured the men out of the city.

Now they turn on the men of Ai and kill them.

Joshua 8:22 "And the other issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side: and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape."

That is, the ambush, or at least a part of them.

"So they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side":

Or, as we commonly say, they were between two fires, the ambush on one side, the army of Israel on the other.

"And they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape":

Not one was saved alive, excepting their king (as in Joshua 8:23).

No quarter was given them, nor any suffered to make their escape.

By this time the men who had been in the city, have turned on the troops of Ai from the other side of where Joshua attacked them.

They kill every one of them.

Joshua 8:23 "And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua."

They spared him, and reserved him for a more shameful death.

"And brought him to Joshua":

Their general; delivering him into his hands as his prisoner, to do with him as seemed good in his sight.

Joshua 8:24 "And it came to pass, when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them, and when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword, until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned unto Ai, and smote it with the edge of the sword."

That came out against them.

"In the field, in the wilderness wherein they chased them":

Both in the suitable farming lands that were sown with corn, and now covered with it.

The wheat especially, not being gathered in, as not yet ripe, and in the pasture ground, designed by the wilderness (see Joshua 8:15).

"And when they were all fallen on the edge of the sword":

And were slain by it.

"Until they were consumed":

And not one left.

"That all the Israelites returned unto Ai":

Both the ambush that came out of it, and the army that came against it.

"And smote it with the edge of the sword":

That is, the inhabitants that were left in it unfit for war, as old men, infirm persons, women and children, as follows.

When they had made sure they killed all of them in the field, they returned to Ai and sought out any that might have lived through the fire, and killed them.

Joshua 8:25 "And [so] it was, [that] all that fell that day, both of men and women, [were] twelve thousand, [even] all the men of Ai."

Partly in the city, and partly in the field, both by the ambush and the army: both of men and women.

"Were twelve thousand, even all the men of Ai":

So that the city was not a very large one, and the numbers of inhabitants were comparatively but few (as in Joshua 7:3).

The city perhaps, had more people than 12,000.

That was the number of adult men and women that were killed.

It appears from this, that there were no men left alive, except for the king who had been taken to Joshua.

Joshua 8:26 "For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai."

But continued it, and that stretched out.

"Until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai":

Just as the hand of Moses was held up, and kept held up until Amalek was destroyed by Joshua (Exodus 17:12).

Joshua kept his spear pointed out to cause the people to continue to fight, until all of the inhabitants were killed.

Joshua 8:27 "Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua."

Even all their substance, as besides their cattle, also their gold, silver, household goods, merchandise, etc.

"According unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua":

(Joshua 8:2).

The animals are to be saved, as gains from war.

God allows them to spoil Ai.

God had said it was alright to take spoil here.

Joshua 8:28 "And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it a heap for ever, [even] a desolation unto this day."

The whole city, fire being only set before to a few houses, to make a smoke as a signal.

He did with it as he had done with Jericho, for so he was ordered (Joshua 8:2).

"And made it a heap for ever":

That is, for a long time, for it appears to have been rebuilt, and to have been inhabited by the Jews, after their return from their Babylonish captivity (Neh. 11:31).

"Even a desolation unto this day":

To the time of the writing of this book; and by what has been just observed, it appears that Ezra could not be the writer of it, since this city was inhabited in his time.

The city of Ai was not only destroyed, but cursed for generations to come.

This burning by Joshua was in addition to the burning the soldiers had done.

This speaks of total destruction.

Joshua 8:29 "And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, [that remaineth] unto this day."

“The king of Ai”:

The complete execution of Ai’s populace included hanging even the king.

This wise move prevented later efforts to muster a Canaanite army.

Further, as a wicked king, he was worthy of punishment according to biblical standards (Deut. 21:22; Joshua 10:26-27).

This carried out the vengeance of God on His enemies.

These details are in harmony with the scriptural injunctions in (Deut. 21:22-23), and the action taken against Achan (7:26; see also 10:26-27).

With this, the shameful campaign for “Ai” ended.

Joshua hanged the king of Ai as an example to all that looked on, and those other nations who heard about it.

It is written, cursed is everyone who hangeth on a tree.

The carcase was taken to the gate of the city, and buried under a pile of rocks as a memorial of this evil man.

Verses 30-35

This ceremony took place in obedience to (Deut. 27:1-26), at the conclusion of Joshua’s central campaign (compare 6:1 – 8:35).

Thanks is offered to God for giving victory.

The altar, in obedience to the instruction of (Exodus 20:24-26), was built of uncut stones, thus keeping worship simple and untainted by man’s showmanship.

Joshua gave God's Word a detailed and central place.

This special commemoration service in this perfectly suited location was specified by "Moses" (Deut. Chapter 27).

Joshua 8:30 "Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel in mount Ebal,"

The erection of the "altar" on "mount Ebal", as the initial phase of the conquest ends, may be a conscious repetition of Abraham's earlier practices as he entered Canaan (compare Gen. 12:7-8).

In any case, it was in clear obedience to the Mosaic command (compare Exodus 20:24-25; Deut. 27:2-6).

The building of the altar, the offering of sacrifices, the inscribing of the law, and the reading of what Moses had ordered all point to a ceremony of covenant renewal at this time.

Having come into the Land of Promise, the people were entering a new phase of existence that called for worship and obedience to their God and King.

In a distinctive way, they were to consider themselves on active duty in His service.

"Mount Ebal" is about 3,109 feet above sea level, forming the north side of the Shechem pass opposite Mount Gerizim in the Samaritan hills (Deut. 11:29).

Moses gave instructions to the Israelites concerning a religious ceremony they should observe after they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

The people were to whitewash stones with lime, set them on Mount Ebal, and build an altar to the LORD (Deut. 27:4-5).

Later on, Joshua and the leaders did all these things as Moses had commanded (verses 30-35).

When Joshua read the blessings of the law, the people on Mount Gerizim responded with an "Amen"; when he read the curses of the law, the people on Mount Ebal responded with an "Amen".

Thus, Mount Ebal became known as the Mount of Cursing.

The tops of the two mountains are about two miles distant from each other.

Jebel Eslamiyeh is the modern name of Mount Ebal.

This is a place to worship God, and thank Him for the victories.

There would be no opposition to this type of thing, because of the example Joshua had made of Ai's king.

The surrounding people would be terrified.

Joshua 8:31 "As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lift up [any] iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings."

"An altar of whole stones, on which no man hath lift up any iron":

See Exodus 20:25; Deut. 27:5-6.

"And they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings":

By way of thanksgiving for the good land they were introduced into, and this was what they were ordered to do by Moses (Deut. 27:6).

This is a verification that this was written after the book of Deuteronomy.

These sacrifices were made, to continue the blessings of God upon these people.

Joshua 8:32 "And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel."

Not upon the stones of which the altar was made, though some have so thought.

But upon other stones erected in the form of a pillar, and plastered over (Deut. 27:4).

Which copy of the law was not the whole book of Deuteronomy, as some, at least only an abstract of the laws in it.

But rather the Decalogue, as Abarbanal; or the blessings and curses later read, as Ben Gersom.

"Which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel":

They being witness of it, that he did what was enjoined.

These stones were plastered, as they had received instructions to do (in Deut. chapter 27).

Deuteronomy 27:2-4 "And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster:"

"And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee."

"Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, [that] ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster."

Joshua has done exactly as God had commanded, and has written the law on these stones.

Joshua 8:33 "And all Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel."

Some on Ebal, and some on Gerizim.

"Before the priests The Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD":

In full view of them.

"As well the stranger, as he that was born among them":

That is, as well the proselytes as the native Israelites, both appeared and were in the same situation.

"Half of them over against Mount Gerizim":

That is, half of the tribes, and these were Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.

"And half of them over against Mount Ebal":

Which were the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali (see notes on Deut. 27:12-13).

"As Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel":

As in (Deut. 27:12).

The presence of God, symbolized by the ark, was in the middle of the people.

The people were gathered and blessed of God.

Joshua 8:34 "And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law."

Not the whole Pentateuch, nor the whole book of Deuteronomy, but either some parts of it, the Decalogue, or whatsoever he had written on the stones, and as follows.

"The blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law":

Deut. 27:14; see note on Deut. 27:11.

This law was read to all the people, because it was the law of the people.

They would be without excuse.

They all knew the law, from the least to the greatest.

Joshua 8:35 "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."

Since it was possible for the women and children to sin, they must hear the law as well.

Even the stranger that lived among them was subject to the law.

A person could not keep the law, unless he knew what the law was.

It was very important that it be read aloud to the people.

Joshua Chapter 8 Questions

1. What does the LORD tell Joshua, in verse 1, to encourage him?
2. What is the real enemy they face?
3. What will be different about their destruction of Ai from the destruction of Jericho?
4. Christians are in constant battle against the _____.
5. How can we win the battle?
6. How many men did Joshua send out by night?
7. What were these men that went out by night, to do?
8. Where will Joshua go?
9. Why will Joshua appear to be running from them?
10. After the men of Ai come out to chase Joshua, what will those lying in ambush do?
11. Where were the two places the men were waiting in ambush?

12. When they take the city, what are they to do to it?
13. What is the numbering, in verse 10, speaking of?
14. Where did Joshua go to entice the men of Ai to chase him?
15. What does verse 15 say that Joshua pretended?
16. Why were the men of Ai shouting?
17. What did Joshua stretch out, that caused the men in ambush to move on the city?
18. What is this spear similar to?
19. What did the men of Ai realize, when they saw the city burning?
20. Who slew the men of Ai?
21. Who was the only one kept alive?
22. They took the king to _____.
23. How many men and women fell that day?
24. How many men were left alive?
25. What did God tell the Israelites they could take at Ai?
26. The city of Ai was not only destroyed, but _____ for generations to come?
27. What happened to the king of Ai?
28. What was written on the stones that were erected for an altar?
29. Who did Joshua read the law aloud to?