

Breaking Faith— Achan



Joshua 7:1-5

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.

² 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."

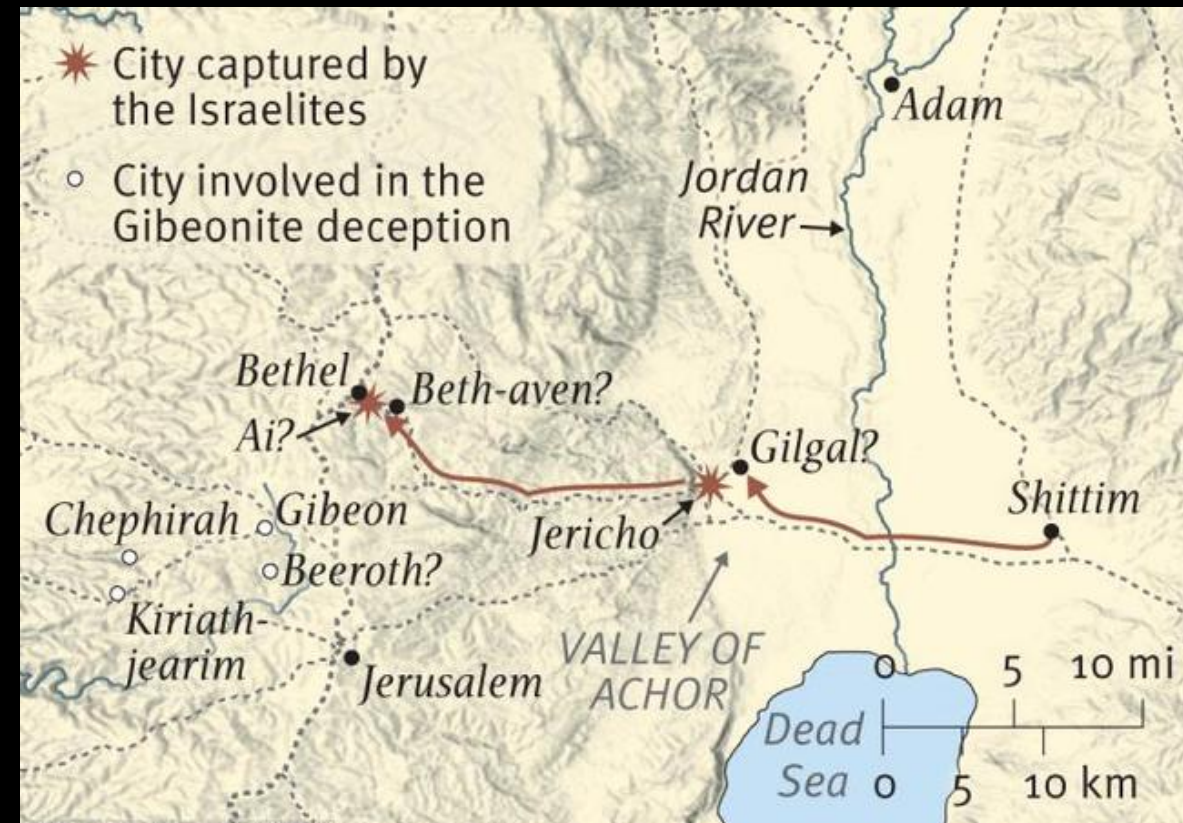
⁴ So about three thousand men went up there from the people. And they fled before the men of Ai, ⁵ and the men of Ai killed about thirty-six of their men and chased them before the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them at the descent. And the hearts of the people melted and became as water.

Ai was a **small Canaanite town** 13 miles West of Jericho.

The Israelites thought Ai was an easy target and only sent part of the army up against it.

But after the rousing success of Israel's first victory in Canaan, the conquest of Jericho, came a **stunning setback**.

The cost is the lives of 36 men and a striking reversal of what had earlier been the state of Canaanite morale. Now it is the Israelites whose hearts have melted and become as water (7:5).



Joshua and the elders go to the sanctuary, tear their clothes (a sign of distress and mourning) and lie on their faces crying out to God.

Joshua 7:10–12

¹⁰ 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.



The objects Achan took from Jericho and hid in the ground inside his tent included (a) a beautiful **robe** from Babylonia, perhaps acquired by someone in Jericho who traded with a Babylonian, (b) 200 shekels of **silver**, and (c) a 50-shekel (11¼-pound) wedge of gold.



Israel's defeat at Ai taught them three hard but necessary lessons.

1. Be sure your sin will find you out .

Joshua 7:16–21

¹⁶ 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, 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.”

The pathway to
Achan's sin is a
familiar one:

- He *saw*
- He *coveted*
- He *took*.



He *saw*

He *coveted*

He *took*.

Eve took the
same tragic steps
in the Garden of
Eden,
as did *David* with
Bathsheba.



When Achan helped himself to some of the spoils of Jericho, which were consecrated to God and were to be put in the sanctuary, he **disobeyed a direct command from the Lord**.

What Achan took was not insignificant. It was more than a little Babylonian bling. 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold were a considerable sum of wealth.



Achan **hid the things he took**,
but he **could not hide his sin**
from God.

Numbers 32:23

Be sure your sin will find you
out.

Hebrews 4:13

¹³ And no creature is hidden
from his sight, but all are naked
and exposed to the eyes of him to
whom we must give account.



Every believer experiences times when we are *tempted* and *weak* and times when we *stumble* and *sin*.


In his mercy and grace, God forgives believers' sins, but **only if we repent, confess, and forsake our sin.**

1 John 1:8–9

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.



Achan's choice—allowing his own desires to crowd out obedience to God—is being played out in our age, where *personal "happiness"* and *"fulfillment"* have become the *supreme values*.



*FOR EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD
—THE LUST OF THE FLESH,
THE LUST OF THE EYES,
AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE
—COMES NOT FROM THE FATHER
BUT FROM THE WORLD.*

1 JOHN 2:16 NIV

Our fatal attractions are intimately joined to **lies and deception**.

The first reaction most people have when caught in their sin: cover yourself, and then blame the person closest to you.

Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent.

That pattern continues to this day.

There is a universal connection between deception and denial and every kind of sin.

Our sins are like mushrooms: they grow in the dark.



What are you hiding?

What are you ashamed of and unwilling to talk about to anyone?

What's the difference between your private life and imaginations and your public life?

What do you do in private that you would never want to be known in public?

Imagine your life as a movie that shows all your thoughts and actions. What parts of that picture would embarrass you to be published on Youtube.com?

But God is interested in our eternal happiness, not just what gives us pleasure for the moment.



2. You can do what you think is best or inquire of the Lord, but inquiring of the Lord is always the better choice .

It isn't until *after* Israel's defeat at Ai that we read anything in this story about **Joshua's inquiring of the Lord**.

The victory at Jericho came because Joshua followed God's plan for taking the city.

Joshua appears to have attacked Ai on his own initiative with his own plan.



After they were shocked by their defeat and became afraid, Joshua and the leaders of Israel went to the sanctuary and cried out to God, but until then, *they had no idea that God was angry* with them.

Once they sought the Lord, he exposed Achan's sin, set things right, and then gave them victory over Ai.



Stay in the tent!

God still guides those who seek his wisdom in his word and in prayers.

Proverbs 3:5–6

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Psalms 119:105

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

James 1:5

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.



Stay in the tent!

3. Yes, you *are* your brother's keeper .

Joshua 7:1

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 .*



While Achan was the one who sinned and paid his own penalty for disobeying God, *God held the whole community responsible.*

Israel's defeat at Ai was a defeat for the entire nation.

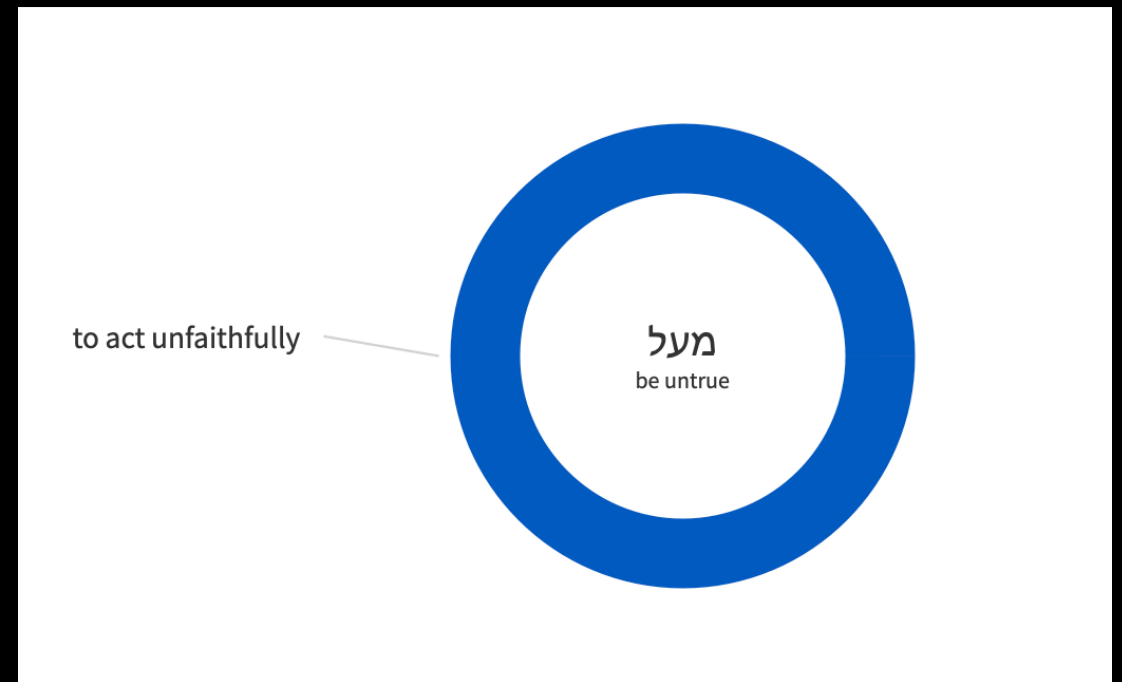
The story begins with this indictment: "*the people of Israel broke faith* And the anger of the LORD burned *against the people of Israel.*"

God expected the community and its leaders to promote a culture of faithfulness to God in everything God commanded them.



The Hebrew word translated here as “breaking faith,” *maal*, is one of the Hebrew words for sin that has the idea of a *conscious act of treachery* that *breaks a covenant relationship*.

It was sometimes used of the marital unfaithfulness of an *adulterous spouse*.



What happens to you happens to everyone.

For fifteen months journalist *Sebastian Junger* followed a *single platoon* of U.S. soldiers stationed in a dangerous part of *Afghanistan*.

Living and working in the midst of a warzone made Junger realize how much the soldiers had to rely on each other.

What you do or don't do as a soldier affects everyone else in your platoon.



“Margins were so small and errors potentially so catastrophic that every soldier had a kind of *de facto* authority to reprimand others—in some cases even officers. And because combat can hinge on [small] details, there was nothing in a soldier’s daily routine that fell outside the group’s purview. Whether you tied your shoes or cleaned your weapon or drank enough water or secured your night vision gear were all matters of public concern and so were open to public scrutiny.



“Once I watched a private accost another private whose bootlaces were trailing on the ground. Not that he cared what it looked like, but if something happened out there—and out there, everything happened suddenly—the guy with the loose laces couldn’t be counted on to keep his feet at a crucial moment. It was the *other* man’s life he was risking, not just his own There was no such thing as *personal* safety out there; *what happened to you happened to everyone.*”



Keeping faith with God is both an *individual* and a *community responsibility*.

Hebrews 13:17

¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.



Galatians 6:1–2

¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Conclusion

Achan's sin was putting **his own desires** ahead of God's commands.

Joshua's sin was **launching out on his own** without seeking God's will.

And Israel's sin was not **promoting a culture of faithfulness** that encouraged their brother to do the right thing.

All of these are sins to which we are liable and against which we should guard.

So, what secret sins have a hold on you?
It's time to *wake up*, *own up*, and *step up*.