

The Enemy Within



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 1

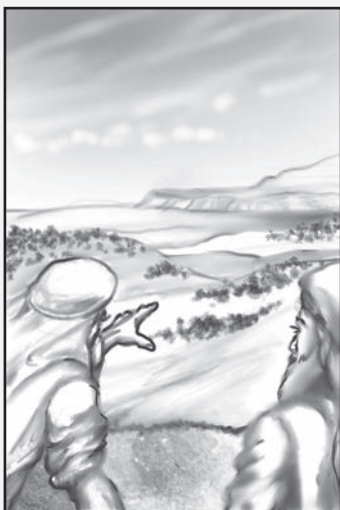
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 7; Joshua 7:16–19; Joshua 7:19–21; Joshua 8:1–29; Joshua 7:6–9.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But I, the LORD, look inside a person’s mind. I see what he thinks and what he feels. I see how everyone lives, and I see the things that they [people] do. I give to each one what he deserves [the reward he should have]’ ” (Jeremiah 17:10, EASY).

IN JOSHUA 7, the Israelites have a terrible experience. This experience teaches the Israelites why they must honor their agreement with God. When the Israelites obey God, they win their wars. When the Israelites disobey God, they lose. The Lord is a mighty Warrior. Israel’s military success depends on God, not on a big army or clever battle plans. When the Lord goes with the Israelites to war, they win.

During the time that the Israelites fought to win the Promised Land, they learned a hard lesson. The lesson they learned was that their worst enemy was within their own camp. The walls and the strong cities were big problems. But the Israelites had a bigger problem than these things. Their problem was that their own people were very stubborn. They didn’t want to do what the Lord asked.

We have the same problem today as we wait for God to give us the things that He promised (1 Peter 1:4; Colossians 3:24). While we wait on the “border” of the Promised Land, God tests our faith. We can pass the test. But only if we give ourselves completely to Jesus.



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BREAKING THE AGREEMENT (Joshua 7)

Read Joshua 7. What were the two big reasons that the people from Ai beat the Israelites in a fight?

Why did the Israelites fail to beat the people from Ai the first time they fought? Let's look at Joshua 7 for the answer.

There are two important reasons that Israel lost: (1) Achan's sin and (2) the Israelites' trust in their own strength. The people forgot to ask God for His advice before they attacked Ai. Also, Israel thought that the army from Ai was weak.

Let's look more closely at Achan's sin. Achan disobeys God. Joshua 7:1, 11–13 shows us that God holds Israel responsible for Achan's sin. So, Israel suffers for Achan's choice. God explains that Achan's sin is very bad. The Bible uses a well-known word for sin, "kḥata," to talk about Achan's sin. Then the Bible talks about five more sins that Achan did. (1) Achan turned away from God in his heart. (2) Achan stole things. (3) Worse, Achan stole things that God commanded Israel to destroy. (4) Achan lied. (5) Then Achan hid the things he stole.

Achan broke the agreement with God. But the whole community of Israel, and not just Achan, was guilty in God's eyes. That's why the Lord told Joshua, " 'The Israelites sinned against me. They have broken the agreement that I commanded them to obey' " (Joshua 7:11, ERV).

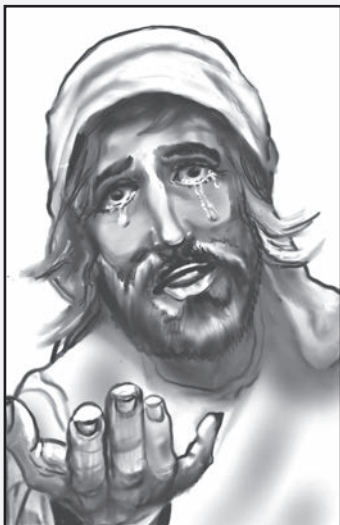
What are ways that communities can suffer from someone else's sins in the community? What examples can you think of? How was the community changed because of the experience?



**Israel suffers
for Achan's choice and
loses the fight.**

THE SIN OF ACHAN (Joshua 7:16–19)

Read Joshua 7:16–19. What does this story tell us about both God and Achan?



“Jesus cried when He scolded people for their sins.”

God doesn't name the sinner right away. As Judge, God wants to show His people that He is fair. He also wants to show His mercy. So, God first explains the reason that Israel lost the fight. Then God tells the people to remove sin from their hearts and become clean (Joshua 7:13). God allows time to pass between this explanation and His punishment of the sin. God gives Achan time to confess his sin. Also, Achan's family can decide at this time if they want to cover up Achan's sin or refuse to go along with it. In the same way, God gave the sons of Korah a choice. They refused to side with their father. So, they avoided being destroyed (compare with Numbers 16:23–33; Numbers 26:11).

At last, God starts His work as Judge. First, God looks at Achan's family group. Then God looks at Achan's family. Then God looks at Achan. God's work is very careful. He is the Witness to the crime. At the same time, He also is the Judge who will punish the guilty.

Achan is very stubborn. Does he really believe that God won't find out who did the sin? We can't hide anything from God's eyes. God sees everything (Psalm 139:1–16; 2 Chronicles 16:9). He knows everything hidden in the human heart (1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:10; Proverbs 5:21).

Notice how Joshua talks to Achan. Joshua names him “my son.” This name shows us the relationship between Joshua and Achan. Joshua is the leader of Israel and is much older than Achan. The words “my son” also show us that Joshua's heart is filled with mercy for Achan. Joshua's kind words and actions are a symbol of Jesus' love for us. Jesus “was never mean and nasty. He didn't say sharp words. Jesus didn't cause anyone pain without good reason. Jesus was not afraid to stand against lies, doubt, and evil. But Jesus cried when He scolded people for their sins.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 353, adapted.

God knows everything you do. He even knows the things you do that no one else knows about. How does this idea change how you live your life? How should this idea change how you live?

LIFE-CHANGING CHOICES (Joshua 7:19–21)

Read Joshua 7:19–21. What does Joshua ask Achan to do? Why is this question so important? What does Achan’s answer show us about his heart?

Joshua asks Achan to do two things: (1) give glory to God and honor Him; and (2) confess his sin.

Sad to say, Achan didn’t do anything to show that he was really sorry. Achan hoped to keep his sin hidden. The law of Moses says that God can’t forgive sins that we aren’t sorry for (compare with Numbers 15:27–31).

Achan’s words in Joshua 7:21 help us remember Adam and Eve’s sin. Eve saw (“ra’ah” in the Hebrew language) that the tree was beautiful (“khamad” in the Hebrew language) and its fruit was good. She finally took (“laqakh” in the Hebrew language) the forbidden fruit. In the same way, Achan confesses that he saw (“ra’ah”) a beautiful coat, 200 silver coins, and a large piece of gold. Achan wanted (“khamad”) and took (“laqakh”) all of them. Achan’s choice shows that he was greedy. He didn’t trust in God to want what was best for him. Achan’s greedy heart showed that he believed God was hiding something good from him. Adam and Eve were guilty of thinking the same thing.

We also can compare Achan to Rahab (compare with Joshua 2:1–13). Rahab led the spies to the roof. She hid them from the soldiers. But Achan stole forbidden things and hid them from Joshua. Rahab was kind to the Israelite spies. She did things that helped them win the war. But Achan caused trouble for Israel with his greedy heart. Then Israel lost their fight against Ai. Rahab made an agreement with the Israelites. But Achan broke the agreement with the Lord. Rahab saved herself and her family. Then they became respected citizens in Israel. But Achan and his family died. They became examples of shame.

Think about how easy it is for us to be selfish and greedy. How can we avoid these sins? (Compare your answer with Luke 12:15.)



Achan confesses that he saw (“ra’ah”) a beautiful coat, 200 silver coins, and a large piece of gold.

THE DOOR OF HOPE (Joshua 8:1–29)

Read Joshua 8:1–29. What does this story tell us about how God can change our worst mistakes into blessings?

God turns Israel's loss at the Valley of Achor into success. The word "Achor" comes from the Hebrew word for "trouble." Now the Valley of Achor becomes a place of hope (compare with Hosea 2:15). The citizens of Ai are filled with pride because they beat Israel in the first fight. They are sure they can beat Israel again. The citizens of Ai attack the Israelites, who pretend to run away as if they are losing the fight. This move causes the people to leave the city of Ai and chase the Israelites. What the people of Ai don't know is that 30,000 Israelites are standing not too far behind the city (Joshua 8:4). These 30,000 Israelites will set the city of Ai on fire. Joshua 8:7 says that the Lord is responsible for Israel's win. God gave Joshua the battle plan. But the Israelites didn't win because of the excellent military plan. They won because the Lord helped them fight. Then He gave them the city as a gift.

When the men of Ai leave the city, they start to chase after the Israelites. Then God gives Joshua orders. God shows us that He is in charge of the battle. Now we will see that the Israelite army will win.

Joshua's weapon is a curved sword, and not a spear. In Joshua's time, people didn't often use curved swords when they fought. But the curved sword was a symbol of leadership and control. So, the curved sword shows God's control over the fight. When Joshua held out the curved sword until Israel won, he showed that he was Israel's leader. Joshua showed the same leadership over Israel that Moses showed when Israel crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16) and fought against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:11–13).

God doesn't do any special miracle in the fight against Ai. But the Israelites know that God helps them win. The Israelites win because Joshua has faith in God and obeys Him. This important rule is a lesson for us today. Whenever we are in trouble or need help, we must trust in God to give us success.



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A WITNESS TO GOD'S POWER (Joshua 7:6–9)

As we already saw (read lesson 5), God gave the Canaanites a chance to know about Him and stop doing evil. But they refused God's invitation. Finally, the time came for God to punish them for their sins.

Read Joshua 7:6–9, which tells us what Joshua said and did when the people of Ai first beat the Israelites. Carefully read Joshua 7:9. What important rule do we see in Joshua's words?

At first, Joshua seems as if he is complaining, the same as the Israelites after they left Egypt. "They said, 'It would have been better if the LORD had just killed us in the land of Egypt. At least there we had plenty to eat. We had all the food we needed. But now you have brought us out here into this desert to make us all die from hunger'" (Exodus 16:3, ERV).

Now listen to Joshua: " 'Lord GOD, you brought our people across the Jordan River. Why did you bring us this far and then allow the Amorites to destroy us? We should have been satisfied and stayed on the other side of the Jordan River'" (Joshua 7:7, ERV).

But soon after, Joshua explains why he is upset. He is not complaining. He is worried about God's honor and name. Joshua doesn't want people to laugh at God because Israel lost the fight. " 'The Canaanites and all the other people in this country will hear about what happened. Then they will attack us and kill all of us! Then what will you do to protect your great [mighty and wonderful] name?' " (Joshua 7:9, ERV).

This verse shows us an important idea that was part of God's plan for Israel. God wanted the countries around Israel to see the wonderful things He did for His people who obeyed Him. These countries also could learn about God from the success He gave Israel in war. But what if things went bad for Israel, as they did here? Then the Canaanites and other people groups would think Israel's God was weak (read Numbers 14:16; Deuteronomy 9:28). Then the Canaanites would try to attack Israel.

Read Deuteronomy 4:5–9. How do these verses help us to understand God's plan for our church as His witnesses?



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Fall of Jericho,” pages 493–498, in *Patriarch and Prophets*.

“The sin that destroyed Achan started with a greedy heart. This sin is a problem for many people. But few people understand its danger. . . .

“Achan knew he was guilty and said so. But he confessed his guilt when it was too late to do him any good. Achan saw Israel’s armies come back from Ai. They were sad because they lost the fight. But Achan didn’t come out and confess his sin. Achan saw Joshua and the leaders of Israel bow to the earth with sorrow. Their suffering was too much and deep for words. If Achan confessed his sin at that time, then the leaders would have proof that Achan was sorry for his sin. But Achan stayed silent. Achan listened to the announcement that someone did a terrible crime. Achan even heard what the crime was. But he didn’t confess his sin. Then the Lord came to judge what happened. Achan’s heart filled with terror when he saw that his family group was selected. Then his family line and then his own family members were selected as guilty. Achan said nothing until God announced his guilt. When Achan could no longer hide his sin, he confessed the truth. Many people are the same as Achan. They confess their crimes only when they can’t hide them anymore. Achan confessed that he was wrong, but not because he was sorry for his sin. Achan continued to hide his sin because he hoped he wouldn’t get caught and punished. But Achan’s words showed that his punishment was fair. Achan wasn’t really sorry for his sin. His heart hadn’t changed. He didn’t hate evil.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 496–498, adapted.



“Achan saw Joshua and the leaders of Israel bow to the earth with sorrow. Their suffering was too much and deep for words.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read the 10th commandment. How do we obey this commandment when we see ads all around us for things we don’t really need? How is a real need different from something we want? Why is the answer important for us to know?
- ② Read Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:4–19. Why does Daniel say “we” did all these bad things, even when Daniel didn’t do any of them? Why does Daniel include himself? What does the answer teach us about prayer?

GIVING GOD BACK HIS THINGS—PART 1

Frank Mukube ran out of money after he moved to a new town in Namibia. Frank rented a house and bought furniture with a loan: a bed, couch, stove, radio, television, rug, and pots for his kitchen.

Frank got a new job as a teacher. He made a budget for his expenses each month and followed it carefully. At first, Frank had no trouble giving tithe and offerings and paying his loan. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. But then new expenses came up. Soon Frank didn't have enough money for everything. So, he stopped giving tithe and offerings. Frank felt terrible. So, he prayed. "Lord, what shall I do?" Frank needed two years to pay the loan back. But in Malachi 3:8, 9, the Lord says to His people, "'A man should not rob God. But you are robbing me.' But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' I say, 'You do not give to me the tithes and the offerings that you should give.' Yes, all of you are robbing me. The whole nation [people group] of Israel is guilty. So you will receive the punishment of a curse'" (EASY).

Two years passed. Frank felt terrible until the day he paid back the loan. But Frank didn't feel the joy he expected to feel when he paid back the loan. He felt worse. So, he decided to take everything he bought back to the store. The first person who learned about Frank's plan was his boss at the school where Frank taught. Frank asked for permission to leave school for a few hours. He said, "I need to take my stuff back to the store."

His boss asked, "Didn't you pay for all of it already?"

Frank said, "Yes. But I want to take everything back. . . . These things are separating me from God because I didn't give God the money that belonged to Him."

Frank's boss laughed in his face. "You can't take those things back! Are you crazy?" But his boss let Frank go.

Frank went to his rented house. He announced his decision to his brother, who moved in with him a little while ago. His brother thought Frank was crazy, too.

Frank said, "It's not good to sleep in a house with things that are cursed. I used God's money to pay for these things."

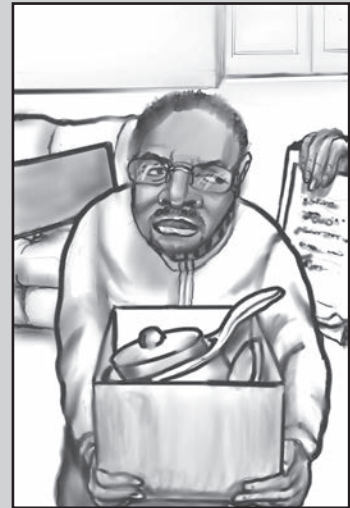
Then Frank went to the store and talked with the manager. The manager looked up Frank's bill on the computer. The manager saw that Frank didn't owe any money. The manager asked, "You want to give these things back? Are you crazy?"

Frank told the man he was fine.

The manager said, "We can't give you any money for these things." Frank didn't care. So, the manager printed out a piece of paper for Frank to sign. The paper said that Frank was giving back everything for free.

Read the rest of the story next week.

INSIDE *Story*



The paper said that Frank was giving back everything for free.



Frank Mukube