

SIN IN THE CAMP

By Keith Greer

The "period of conquest" begins when Joshua and the children of Israel enter the land of promise. After the taking of the city of Jericho, they come to the little city of Ai. Joshua, being a good soldier, sends out spies to survey the city before the battle.

"And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few." {Joshua 7:3} Seems like this would be an easy victory for the people of God!

Yet, in the battle, they are soundly defeated! Joshua falls before the ark of the Lord and wants to know why they have been brought to defeat. "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff." {Joshua 7:11}

What sin had they committed? Let us go back to the battle in Jericho for a moment, "And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble." {Joshua 6:18}

Someone must have disobeyed God's commandment. But who? Joshua is told to bring the children of Israel before the congregation, one family at a time, to find who has taken the "**accursed thing**". So, all the families are brought up by their tribes, one by one, beginning with Judah.

"Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me." {Joshua 7:19}

Achan answers Joshua, "And Achan answered Joshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it." {Joshua 7:20,21} Achan had taken some of the spoils, the ones God had given instructions for them to leave alone, and hidden them in the earth, in the midst of his tent. Messengers are sent to check his tent, where they find garments and silver. They take their findings to Joshua.

" Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones." {Joshua 7:24,25}

Today, many have convinced themselves their lives concern no one but them. Each one is free to determine to choose the path they we will walk in this life. Yet, is it true that such decisions only affect the person making the choices? What about the people who love that person? What about the other

people directly involved in their lives, parents, spouses, and children? What about a member of the church who destroys their life with sin— does it only hurt them?

What lessons can we learn from this story of old? Achan's sin cost Israel **36 lives**. It also brought death to his sons and daughters. One sin! Now tell me "**one sin does not make a difference**"? Some say, "my sins hurt no one but myself". Tell that to Achan's sons and daughters and the loved ones of the 36 men! Some have even charged that God's punishment was harsh! No, it was not God's actions but Achan's. Can anything good come from sin??? Even one!! ***