



LESSON 02: ACHAN BREAKIN' HEART

Collective Guilt and Punishment; Corporate Lament Psalms

I. Achan and Corporate Sin/Punishment

A. "Devoted things"

→ [Deuteronomy 13:16-17a](#)

¹⁶You are to gather all the plunder of the town into the middle of the public square and completely burn the town and all its plunder as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God. That town is to remain a ruin forever, never to be rebuilt, ¹⁷and none of the condemned things are to be found in your hands.

→ [Joshua 8:1-2; 26-27](#)

¹Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land. ²You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city."

²⁶For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai. ²⁷But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as the Lord had instructed Joshua.

- Sometimes plunder allowed; other times not.

B. Jericho; Defeat at Ai

→ [Joshua 6:17-19](#)

¹⁷The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. ¹⁸But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. ¹⁹All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury."

→ Joshua 7:1

But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel.

- Achan: Important genealogy; insider; tribe of Judah
- Achan took the devoted things; the Lord's anger burned against Israel.

→ Joshua 7:10-26

¹⁰The Lord said to Joshua, "Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? ¹¹Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. ¹²That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

¹³"Go, consecrate the people. Tell them, 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow; for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are devoted things among you, Israel. You cannot stand against your enemies until you remove them.

¹⁴"In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the Lord chooses shall come forward clan by clan; the clan the Lord chooses shall come forward family by family; and the family the Lord chooses shall come forward man by man. ¹⁵Whoever is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him. He has violated the covenant of the Lord and has done an outrageous thing in Israel!"

¹⁶Early the next morning Joshua had Israel come forward by tribes, and Judah was chosen. ¹⁷The clans of Judah came forward, and the Zerahites were chosen. He had the clan of the Zerahites come forward by families, and Zimri was chosen. ¹⁸Joshua had his family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen.

¹⁹Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and honor him. Tell me what you have done; do not hide it from me."

²⁰Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath."

²²So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord.

²⁴Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵Joshua said, "Why have you brought this trouble on us? The Lord will bring trouble on you today."

Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. ²⁶Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. Therefore that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since.

II. Corporate Lament Psalms

A. Individual Lament Example

→ Psalm 13

- ¹ How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- ² How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?
- ³ Look on me and answer, Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
- ⁴ and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.
- ⁵ But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
- ⁶ I will sing the Lord's praise,
for he has been good to me.

B. Corporate Lament

→ Psalm 60

- ¹ You have rejected us, God, and burst upon us;
you have been angry—now restore us!
- ² You have shaken the land and torn it open;
mend its fractures, for it is quaking.
- ³ You have shown your people desperate times;
you have given us wine that makes us stagger.
- ⁴ But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner
to be unfurled against the bow.
- ⁵ Save us and help us with your right hand,
that those you love may be delivered.
- ¹⁰ Is it not you, God, you who have now rejected us
and no longer go out with our armies?
- ¹¹ Give us aid against the enemy,
for human help is worthless.
- ¹² With God we will gain the victory,
and he will trample down our enemies.

→ Psalm 90:7-12

- ⁷ We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your indignation.
- ⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
- ⁹ All our days pass away under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan.

*¹⁰ Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.
¹¹ If only we knew the power of your anger!
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is your due.
¹² Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

III. Inaction = Complicity (Sins of Omission)

→ Obadiah 10-11

*¹⁰ Because of the violence against your brother Jacob,
you will be covered with shame;
you will be destroyed forever.
¹¹ On the day you stood aloof
while strangers carried off his wealth
and foreigners entered his gates
and cast lots for Jerusalem,
you were like one of them.*

IV. Conclusion

"On some occasions, lament is appropriate, but other occasions call upon us to identify the human causes of suffering and work to eradicate them. Like Joshua, we do at times lament the wrongs and brokenness around us without acknowledging human responsibility for them." – Carolyn Pressler.¹

¹ Carolyn Pressler, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 60.