

## **Background Issues:**

This account is set against the failure of Israel to seize Ai because of their pride and failure to follow God. This is important because not only was their image among the nations was at stake here, this was the first time they had lost and could so this was a critical moment for them whether they would turn back to God or to their own power for a solution.

## **Key Points:**

### **8:1-17** – The second attempt to Seize Ai

- Where last time only a few people were sent to Ai, a prideful and overly confident gesture, here the entire army heads to deal with the city.
- Why was it important for the Israelites to seize Ai? What might have happened if the people of the land had rallied together and grown confident Israel could be defeated?
- Israel rallied and agreed to follow God's orders and so was promised the victory but the entire army went anyway. What does this say about the amount of effort needed on our part even with God on our side?
- This is a brilliant strategic battle. The people of Ai were overconfident now and certain Israel would run away again. So the Israelites did just that and pretended to flee, while leaving a second army in hiding to take Ai and cut off their enemy's escape.
- The Israelites used their past failure as a crucial part of their plan for victory. It was their failure at Ai before that made the people of that city confident the Israelites would win and let this trap work.
- How does God use our past failures and work them into future plans for our lives? What do we lose if we ignore our failures instead of allowing God to use them to further God's plan?

### **8:18-29** – Ai Destroyed

- The ambush worked perfectly. The people of Ai were overconfident from Israel's earlier defeat and convinced that they fled the field. The ambush was triggered and Ai was cut down completely.
- This is a very violent passage. The people did not fail to kill everyone there, 12000 people.
- This was a victory, but a very violent one. Does God still use violence like this to further God's goals? Why or why not? Why was this event needed to keep Israel and the worship of God alive?

### **8:30-35** – Israel Worships God.

- The people then worship God and read through the Law of Moses (the first 5 books of the Bible today). How is this more startling in contrast with what just happened? Why was it appropriate for them to worship God after wiping out an entire city of people?
- This passage several times mentions foreigners among them, while they had just killed many foreigners at Ai. These people were sitting through the law and learning how to follow God.
- People saw God's power demonstrated through God's people. How did Israel's victory over Ai bring people over to the worship of God in that day? What makes people see God in us today?