

RE READ *the big story*

JOSHUA 6-7

PREVIOUS BEDTIME STORY: FALL OF JERICHO
CHARACTERS: YAHWEH, JOSHUA, ACHAN, THE KING OF AI

RE VIEW *the context*

Joshua and the Israelites had witnessed the impossible once more. Jericho had crumbled before their very eyes - without even a single pebble thrown! But their excitement became their folly. They rushed into battle, attempting to sack the city of Ai, but never consulted the Lord. Had Joshua prayed, he would have discovered sin in the camp. Achan had stolen cursed treasure from Jericho's rubble. And because of his sin, Israel was defeated at Ai. It was a mistake Joshua would not make again.

RE ENTER *through the 2nd story*

A REIMAGINING OF JOSHUA 8:1-23

'BAHA!' The king of Ai shouted from the city walls. **'Look at those pesky Israelites! They attempt our city a second time! Well - we shall meet them on the fields of battle and not only defeat them, we will wipe them and their God from this earth!'** The king turned to his general. **'Gather every person from the city. Everyone. Open the gates! We will kill the Israelites where they stand!'** The gates of Ai opened and the army stormed out, shouting and hollering a cry of victory. The king followed on horseback and motioned to the people of the city. **'Everyone come,'** he called, **'and watch Yahweh be destroyed under the sun!'**

Joshua looked on at a distance, crouched and silent, his javelin tight in hand. God's plan was in motion. Only a small portion of Joshua's army met the king outside the city. The rest of Joshua's army lay around the hillside on the ground and unseen. An ambush was in order.

'Wait,' Joshua whispered to his men. **'Wait until they are far clear of the gates!'**

The king of Ai rode further onto the grassy plain until his troops surrounded the small band of Israelite soldiers. **'You fools!'** The king's mocking voice echoed through the valley. **'The mighty and powerful god Baal fights for us! You are no match for his vengeance! Today - both you and your God will die!'** The king drew out his sword, **'Attack!'** he shouted. The soldiers of Ai rushed to the Israelites and the Israelites fled as fast as their feet could run, drawing their foe farther and farther from the city.

Joshua looked on. **'Wait,'** he said. **'Almost... A little farther... just a little bit farther. NOW!'** Joshua jumped to his feet and hoisted his javelin into the air. **'NOW!'** he yelled. **'Armies of Yahweh! Attack!'** Joshua's army leapt to their feet and ran toward the gates of Ai. The king of Ai heard Joshua's call and stopped dead in his path. He turned in shock. **'No!'** he said. **'The gates! My city!'** But it was too late. Joshua and his army stormed the city of Ai through the front door and set the city ablaze. Thick black smoke billowed over its walls. In moments, the city had been destroyed and the battle was over.

Joshua emerged from the fiery gates with his javelin still high above his head. His face charred and spotty with soot. His walk was brisk and confident. **'Yahweh lives,'** he said. **'The battle belongs to our Lord.'**

RETHINK *in sacred sharing*

Spend some time in sacred reflection, conversation, and listening. Use the following questions as a guide.

- Q: Name a time when your actions affected someone else for the worse.
- Q: KIDS: Why did the Israelites lose the battle of Ai on their first try? And can you explain Joshua's strategy for capturing the city of Ai on their second try?
- Q: Sin is not really a topic that gets a lot of attention anymore. How would you describe sin?
- Q: What are natural consequences of sin?
- Q: What did God mean when He told Joshua: 'The people of Israel can no longer look their enemies in the eye!'
- Q: What is salvation? Can you name a time when you experienced redemption from sin?
- Q: How has Jesus saved you from sin?

RECREATE *in sacred play*

Spend some time in sacred play recreating the second attack on the city of Ai. Below are a list of props, characters, ideas to use your space, and a general flow-of-the-story.

COSTUMES/PROPS: Joshua's javelin/spear, swords, the city walls of Ai and its workable gate.

CHARACTERS: Characters can be divided.

KIDS: Joshua and the army of Israel (2 halves!)

ADULTS: The king of Ai and his soldiers.

SPACE: Set up the space to resemble the ancient city of Ai (use pillows and couches) and the grassy plains (a big open space between). The city must have a working gate (cushion, box, or blanket) and the walls of the city must be strong!

FLOW: Divide the army of Israel into two halves. One half of Joshua's army will wait on the grassy plain for the king of Ai. When the king of Ai chooses, he/she will open the gates and attack Joshua's army. The other half of Joshua's army must sneak behind, through the city gate, and shout 'VICTORY!' before being caught by the king! But if the king touches either army - he/she wins! Swap roles! Play again!

REMAKE *in a sacred meal*

In just a few short weeks, the Israelites had both won over Jericho and had been defeated at Ai. They tasted both the sweetness of victory, and the bitterness of loss. Taste is often defined in similarly polarizing terms: sweet or sour, salty or un-salty, bland or spicy.

CHALLENGE: Alongside your Sunday meal, spread out an array of opposite foods: sweet and sour, salty and un-salty, bland and spicy! No matter your preference, taste and savour each flavour and note life's victories and defeats!

RESPOND *in sacred prayer*

Joshua rushed the attack on Ai and lost because he failed to recognize the sin in his own camp. As Israel's leader, Joshua did not take time to confess any sins that he or his tribe had. In this case, confession was not only good for the soul - but it was necessary. Where do you need to make things right before God? What do you need to confess?

Find a spot to be alone in your home. Somewhere quiet, but not overly comfortable. Pray and ask the Spirit to illuminate areas of your life that you need to confess. Then, if you feel led, have a moment of confession as a tribe.