



God Reveals Achan's Sin

Joshua 7



LESSON GOAL

Students will learn to turn from sin because of God's holiness and sin's terrible consequences.

BIBLE TRUTHS

- Israel went to fight Ai but had to run away because God's strength was not with them.
- Israel lost the battle because Achan had sinned.
- In Jericho, Achan saw things that he wanted. He coveted them and took them.
- Because of Achan's sin, he and his family were killed.
- God expects obedience from His children

KEY VERSE

"But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi...took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel" (Joshua 7:1).

APPLICATION

- Check to see if you are coveting anything.
- Beware of areas in which you are tempted to sin.
- Fear the promised consequences of sin.
- Trust that God's goodness is better than the satisfaction that sin promises.

NEXT WEEK

Holy Living in the Promised Land
Read Joshua 23–24.

Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

Teacher Planning Sheet

PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Personal Application

As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to

- _____
- _____
- _____

Three ways students need to apply this passage are

- _____
- _____
- _____

POINT

Choose from various ideas to point students to the coming Bible lesson.

- _____
- _____

PROCLAIM

Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.

Presentation Ideas

- _____
- _____

Praise/Music Ideas

- _____
- _____
- _____

PRACTICE

Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.

- _____
- _____

Materials Needed

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children" (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

By the end of Joshua 6, Israel's conquest of the Promised land was progressing with surprising force. Even before entering the Promised Land, Joshua received God's promise of success. God encouraged the hearts of His people Israel with Rahab's confession of faith and her reports of the Canaanites' fear. When God miraculously stopped the Jordan River, Israel was further encouraged by God's power and was exhorted to fear Him (Josh. 4:24). The deliverance of the Promised Land into the hands of the Israelites became even more certain when the walls of Jericho crumbled. Israel had faithfully followed God's instructions to circle the city and shout when Joshua commanded. God gave them an amazing victory.

Just when the future conquest of Israel seemed certain, however, Joshua 7:1 reveals some terrible news: "The children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan...took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD burned against the children of Israel." Israel had disobeyed God by keeping plunder from the ruins of Jericho. As God deals with Israel's sin, Joshua 7 reveals His hatred for sin and the terrible consequences that follow sin.

Consequences of Sin: Joshua 7:1–9

After the dramatic destruction of Jericho at the end of Joshua 6, Israel was expecting a bright future and a swift conquest of the Promised Land. Chapter 7 shatters the hope and joy of the preceding chapter with the depressing announcement (Josh. 7:1) that Israel had failed to obey God's command to destroy everything in Jericho (except for the silver, gold, and bronze, which they were to set apart for the Lord [Josh. 6:18–19]). Sadly, Israel went into their next battle not having the information that the reader has in Joshua 7:1.

Even though God had given Joshua success at Jericho, Joshua still cautiously sent spies to the city of Ai, located about 15 miles from Jericho (Josh. 7:2). The spies, who did not know that the Lord was angry with Israel, did not see the city of 12,000 men and women as a major obstacle. They recommended that only two or three thousand soldiers be sent (7:3). Joshua took their recommendation, but with devastating results. The soldiers were forced to flee from the men of Ai, who killed 36 of the Israelite soldiers (a staggering defeat compared to the fact that Israel suffered no casualties at Jericho). The blow was devastating for Israel. Once the Canaanites' hearts had melted in fear (Josh. 2:11), but now "the hearts of the people [the Israelites] melted and became like water" (Josh. 7:5). Israel was in shock at the defeat they had just suffered.

Although Israel had been warned that they would "become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it" (Josh. 6:18), Joshua didn't imagine the defeat at Ai to be Israel's fault. When Joshua and the elders came before the ark of the Lord in grief over what happened (Josh. 7:6), Joshua came doubting God (7:7–9). He questioned why God had brought

Israel over the Jordan only to be killed by the Canaanites (7:7). Just as Israel had wished so many times to be back in Egypt, Joshua wished that Israel had stayed in the land east of the Jordan. He quickly forgot the Lord's encouragement in the first six chapters of Joshua. He was afraid of what would happen when word spread that Israel had turned its back before its enemies (7:8). In fear, he expected the Canaanites to be encouraged, encircle Israel, and destroy them. While most of Joshua's speech was blaming and doubting God, the end revealed a right concern. Joshua asked God, "What will You do for Your great name?" (7:9). Despite his fears, Joshua had a righteous concern for the glory of God. Little did he know that Israel had suffered defeat because God was concerned for His glory. The holy God must punish sin.

Revelation of Sin: Joshua 7:10–18

The Lord told Joshua, "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" (Josh. 7:11). Although only one man, Achan, had sinned, all Israel was considered guilty. It is difficult to imagine how God justly punished all Israel for one person's sin, but this is exactly what God had promised would happen in Joshua 6:18. If God had not punished the people, then Achan's sin would have gone uncovered. God's justness resulted in His holiness being glorified. Because of the defeat at Ai, the Israelites would learn how wicked sin is and how essential it was that every Israelite embrace and submit to God's holy law.

The Lord warned that Israel would continue to suffer defeat because they had become "doomed to destruction" (Josh. 7:12), even as Jericho had once been. God would not be with Israel until the one who had brought this curse upon the nation had suffered the same destruction that Jericho had suffered (7:12). God commanded that Israel had to "take away the accursed thing from among you" (7:13). God directed that increasingly smaller groups of Israelites, beginning with the tribes and ending with individual families, be brought before Him, and He would separate the group to which the disobedient man belonged (7:14). Eventually, that man "who is taken with the accursed thing [would] be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD" (7:15). God revealed that it was Achan who had taken the items from Jericho (7:18), and Joshua did just as God had said.

Confession of Sin: Joshua 7:19–21

Joshua exhorted Achan to give glory to God by confessing his sin (7:19). Joshua knew that when Achan admitted his guilt, the holiness and justness of God in punishing Israel would be revealed. In verses 20–21, Achan confessed his sin (though with no visible repentance), and for the first time in the narrative, his exact sin is revealed. When he saw a beautiful robe, silver weighing 200 shekels (more than 80 ounces), and a bar of gold in the plunder from Jericho, he "coveted them and took them" (v. 21). Achan used the same verbs to describe his sin that Moses used when describing Eve's sin in the garden: she also "saw," "desired," and "took" (Gen. 3:6). Achan hid the items by burying them "in the earth in the midst of my tent" (Josh. 7:21).

Punishment of Sin: Joshua 7:22–26

Joshua sent men, who uncovered the items exactly where Achan said they were (Josh. 7:22). Achan was gathered with all his family, all his possessions, and the items he had stolen. Everything belonging to Achan was brought to the Valley of Achor (7:24). Achan was going to be punished with the same righteous and severe

punishment that the Canaanites would endure. Having taken the possessions of Jericho, Achan and his family were punished like those who had lived in Jericho. He had become accursed. He and his family were stoned, and then their bodies and possessions were burned. While a pile of stones marked God's grace at the Jordan, a pile of stones was raised in the valley to remind the Israelites of God's holiness and punishment. Both should have reminded Israel to fear God. His anger had been satisfied with the punishment of Achan (7:26). When Israel returned to fight Ai again (Josh. 8), He gave them the victory.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth" (Psalm 78:1).

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.

What did God tell Joshua to do in order to conquer Jericho?

The Israelites were to march around the city once a day for six days. Everyone was to be quiet. On the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times. After the seventh time around the city, the priests were to blow the trumpets very loud. After the loud blast, everyone was to shout. When they shouted, the wall would fall down flat so the soldiers could attack the city.

Who gave Joshua victory over Jericho?

God.

What happened to Rahab when God gave the Israelites the city of Jericho and they attacked it?

Rahab's house did not fall down even though it was on the wall. God protected Rahab and her relatives who were in the house with her. After the wall fell down, the Israelites attacked. Joshua sent the two spies to bring Rahab and her family safely out of her house.



Saw, Coveted, Took

Achan's confession in Joshua 7:21 provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the anatomy of sin. When Achan saw things he could not have—the robe, gold, and silver—he coveted them and then took them. These three words ("saw," "coveted," and "took") are the same Hebrew words used in Genesis 3:6 to describe Eve's sin when she ate the forbidden fruit. To help prepare the students to think about the reasons and way we sin, review with them how Eve sinned in the garden of Eden. Using flashcards or flannelgraph pieces, show how Eve coveted, saw, and then took the fruit. Neither Eve nor Achan listened to God's commands. If the students in your classroom can read, print those three words onto flashcards. (These words can be used again during the lesson when Achan's sin is discussed.) After each word, ask the students what Eve should have done. This should teach them how to overcome temptation.



Candy

Before the lesson starts, give pieces of candy to each of the students. (Or you could scatter them around the room and instruct each student to find one piece.) When everyone has a piece, explain to the students that although the candy is good, you do not intend for them to eat it. Go around the room, asking each student to put his piece of candy into the garbage can. Discuss ideas from today's lesson such as obedience, greed, and lying. Did any student want to hide the candy or lie about having found it at all? Today we will learn about a man who was punished for stealing and lying in disobedience to God's commands.



Run Away

This game is similar to "Red Light, Green Light." The point is for the students to tag the teacher and for the teacher to tag the students. The teacher stands in the front of the classroom with his back to the students. The students should boldly march toward the teacher. But when the teacher turns around, the students should run away to avoid being tagged. Use this game to teach the students that Israel ran away when they marched to the city of Ai. Explain that God had not given them victory because of Achan's sin.



One and All

Play tag or "Simon Says" with the students, and make a rule that if even one student is tagged or loses, then everyone is out. Mention how quickly the game ends with this rule. Explain that God gave Israel instructions that they were to all obey, but because of one man's sin, all the people were in trouble with God. Discuss with the students what happened to Israel at Jericho when one man sinned.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

"Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done" (Psalm 78:4).

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

After God gave the Israelites victory over Jericho, Joshua's fame began to spread throughout the surrounding nations. It was evident that God was with Joshua, just as He had promised. The Israelites were confident that God was on their side and would help them win their battles.

The next city to be taken over was Ai, located about 15 miles from Jericho. To be cautious, Joshua sent spies to check out the city. The spies returned with good news. The city was small, with only 12,000 people. The spies recommended that Joshua send only two or three thousand soldiers to battle the city of Ai. There was no need to take the whole army. Joshua took their recommendation and sent only the smaller number of soldiers to Ai.

The soldiers headed toward Ai, but when they arrived, they turned around and fled from the people. The men of Ai chased the Israelite soldiers and killed 36 of them. After the Israelite soldiers returned to the camp, Joshua fell on his face before God. He questioned why God had brought them over the Jordan. Joshua had forgotten the Lord's earlier encouragement. He did not think the defeat at Ai could be Israel's fault. All Israel was now afraid to go to war. They were weak in their faith in the Almighty God.

God had the answer for Joshua. All was not as it appeared to be. In Joshua 7:10–11, God says, "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? 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."

God told Joshua that a soldier had stolen things in Jericho. To make it worse, he had put the things he stole in with his own things so they would not be noticed. But even though others had not notice, God saw everything that he had done, just like He sees everything that we do. Joshua needed to know from God what to do with this big mess. He knew of God's righteousness and wanted God's name to be glorified by Israel. God told Joshua how to find and punish the person. And Joshua did as God commanded him.

He gathered all the people and began to separate them as tribes, and then families, until he found the man who had committed the sin. The man's name was Achan. Joshua pleaded with Achan to confess his sin and know that the Almighty God was watching him. Achan confessed to Joshua what he had done. He had seen the lovely things of Jericho—a beautiful robe and lots of silver and gold. He saw them, wanted them, and then took and hid them. Achan had completely disobeyed God's commands. God had said not to take any of the things from the city. Achan told the men where the things were hidden in his tent. The men found them and brought them to Joshua. The punishment was severe because the sin was severe. God told the men to take Achan and all his family out to the Valley of Achor, and there they stoned all of them to death. Then the men of Israel burned everything. How awful to lose your life over being disobedient to God. It was completely fair for God to punish Achan for his disobedience.

God wants His people to live holy lives. His standard is just (fair). He expects those who say they are His children to live in a way that shows others that they belong to God. We cannot hide from God—He is always watching us.

After all of this had taken place and Israel was free from the sin that caused them to lose the war, God told Joshua, "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it." So Joshua did what God commanded and the battle was won. Israel again was triumphant in war. Let's thank God for offering forgiveness for sin.



Lesson Questions

Did any of the Israelites take from Jericho things that were not allowed?

Yes. Achan took things that he was not allowed to take.

What did Achan take?

Achan took a beautiful piece of clothing, some silver, and some gold. The clothing was supposed to have been destroyed, and the silver and the gold were supposed to have been put in the treasury of the house of the Lord.

Since Achan was disobedient and took things he was not allowed, what happened to the Israelites?

God became very angry, and the Israelites were defeated by Ai.

What happened so that God was no longer angry with the Israelites?

Joshua and the Israelites obeyed God and killed Achan because he had done a terrible thing. Achan had taken the things that were just for God. God had told the Israelites not to do that or they would be accursed.

When we are disobedient and sin against God, what should we do so that God will be pleased with us?

We should ask God for forgiveness. God knows that we are not perfect. He knows that we are disobedient sometimes. But when we find out that we have sinned, we must pray to God for forgiveness. And when we ask for forgiveness, we are being obedient. Sin is disobedience against God.

Presentation Ideas



A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



Treasure Map

Make a treasure map. (If time allows, make a map that leads the students to some type of "treasure" in the room.) Ask the students why people need a treasure map. A treasure map points to where treasure is hidden. There are several possible links to today's story.

1. Ask the students why people hide treasure. Tell them that in today's lesson they will learn about somebody who hid treasure.
2. Tell the students that there is buried treasure in today's lesson, but it was not found with a treasure map. Have them listen for how the treasure was found.
3. Ask the students what types of things are found with a treasure map. Tell them which of those is the buried treasure in today's story.



Hearts like Water (Joshua 7:5)

When Achan sinned, God no longer gave Israel the victory in battle. When the people were defeated, they doubted God, and their hearts were no longer bold as they had been. The text describes Israel's spirit by saying that their hearts became like water. Various props could be used to illustrate this. Heart balloons could be partially filled with water. Or the children could eat gelatin in a heart shape during snack time. You could discuss what happens when we are scared and how it can feel as though our hearts are like water.



The Sounds of Feet

As the students are seated, lead them in making a marching sound. Then have the students make the sound of feet quickly running away in fear. Talk about what the different sounds of feet were like. Use this activity to lead the discussion of what happened to Israel when Achan disobeyed God.



Israel's Melting Hearts

Freeze water in the shape of a heart. Take out the frozen heart before the lesson, show it to the class, and review last week's lesson on Jericho. After such a great conquest, the Israelite's hearts must have been strong and full of courage. Tap on the hard ice to symbolize its strength. Read Joshua 2:11 to remind the class that the Canaanites' hearts had once melted in fear. Explain that now the hearts of Israel are going to melt and become like water. Encourage the students to listen to the lesson to find out why Israel now needed to be afraid of their enemies. Display the heart in a dish in the front of the classroom so the students can observe it slowly melting over the course of the lesson. At the end of the lesson, there should be a puddle of water in the container. Read Joshua 7:4–5 to the class to close the lesson, and remind the students that there are serious consequences for sin.



Acting It Out

The teacher could teach this lesson from the point of view of one of the Israelites. This would have been a very memorable experience that would have taught an important lesson about the holiness of God and His expectations of men to obey Him.

Praise and Worship

God Is So Good

Oh, Be Careful

The Wise Man and Foolish Man

Trust and Obey



Achan's Sin

Did you hear the tragic sin of Achan?

(Cup hand at ear.)

Gold and silver and fine clothes he stole.

(Pretend to snatch items and hold them close; look around guiltily.)

Even though the Lord had said, "Don't take them."

(Wag finger; shake head "no.")

Achan did—and hid them in a hole!

(Pretend to dig a hole.)

God was very angry and He punished

(Make "angry" face.)

Not just Achan, but the nation, too;

(Point to side; then make sweeping motion with arm.)

Everyone in Israel had to suffer.

(Hang head low.)

See what hidden wickedness can do!

(Hold up one finger.)

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



What Looks Good

Talk to the students about coveting and being tempted by what looks good to us. Compare this to what is the right thing to do and what God says.



"Two Memorials of Stone"

Materials: copies of "Two Memorials of Stone" craft page, brown construction paper, scissors, glue

Directions: Give each student a copy of the "Two Memorials of Stone" craft page. Instruct him to make stones out of brown construction paper and glue them to each side of the page.



Achan's Sin Is Revealed

Materials: construction paper, aluminum foil, gold wrapping paper or stickers, fabric

Directions: In the center of a piece of construction paper, students can glue down a piece of fabric to represent the robe Achan stole. On top of the fabric, glue a piece of gold wrapping paper to represent the gold Achan stole. On top of the gold, glue a piece of aluminum foil to represent the silver Achan stole. Make a tent out of construction paper and glue it over the top. Glue a printout of Joshua 7:20–21 to the bottom of the page.



Beware of Coveting

Use this activity to teach the students about coveting. The students can cut out pictures of an eye, a heart, and a hand and glue them next to the words "saw," "desired," and "took." Explain that this is the process that takes place when someone covets something.



3-D Coloring Sheets

After the students have colored the coloring sheet, they may glue gold and silver glitter to the treasure.

Coloring Sheets

Give each student copies of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. Students can color the pages in class or at home.



MEMORY VERSE

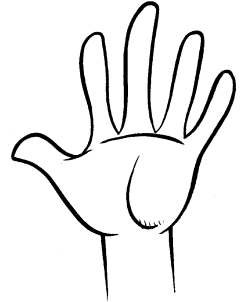
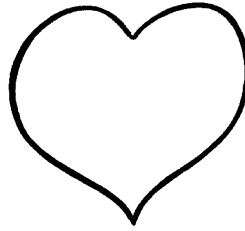
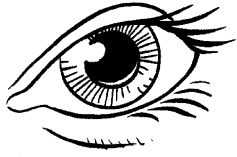
"Eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath" (Romans 2:7–8).

Two Memorials of Stone

Joshua 4:4-9

Joshua 7:25-26

Beware of Coveting

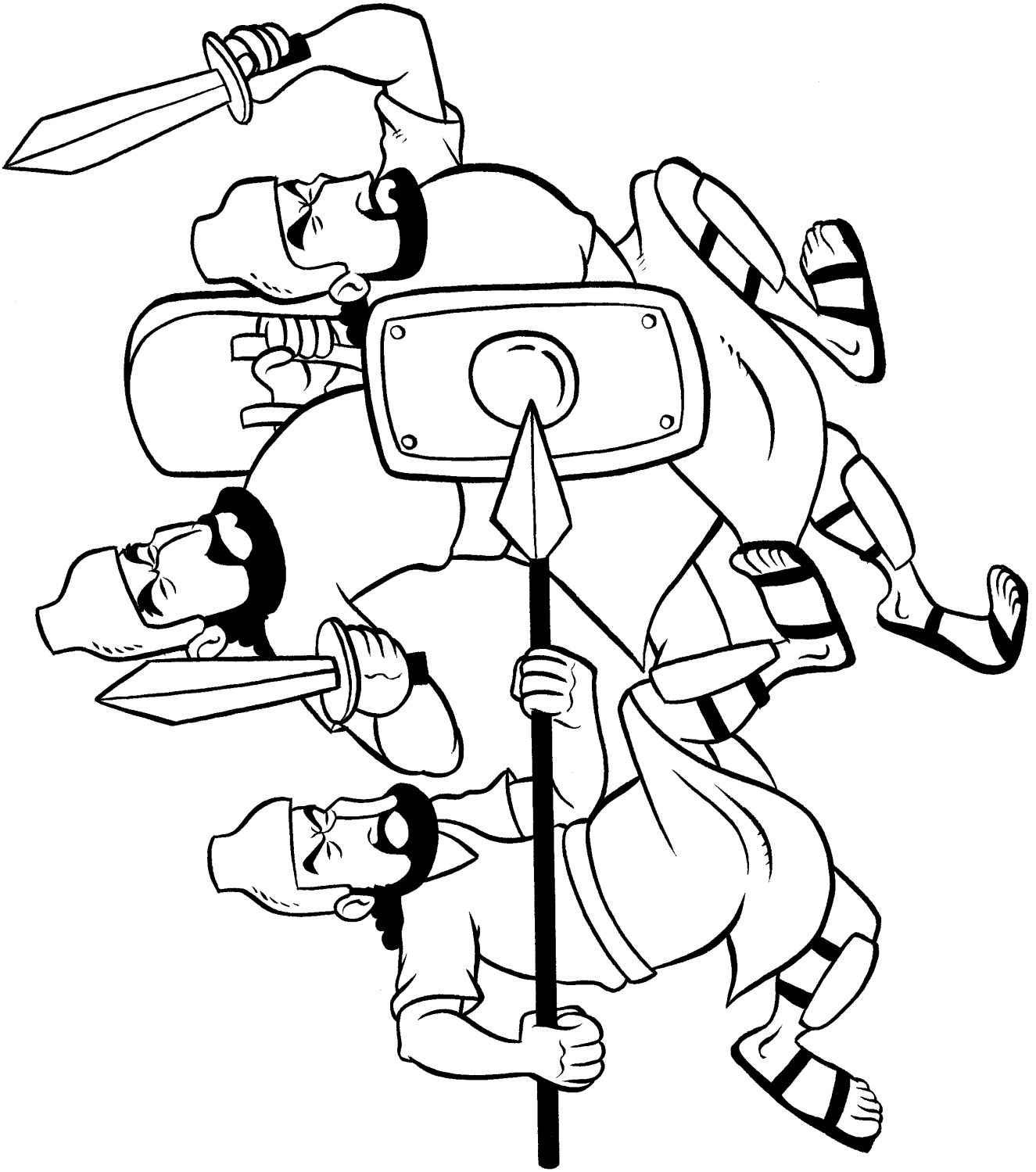


Saw

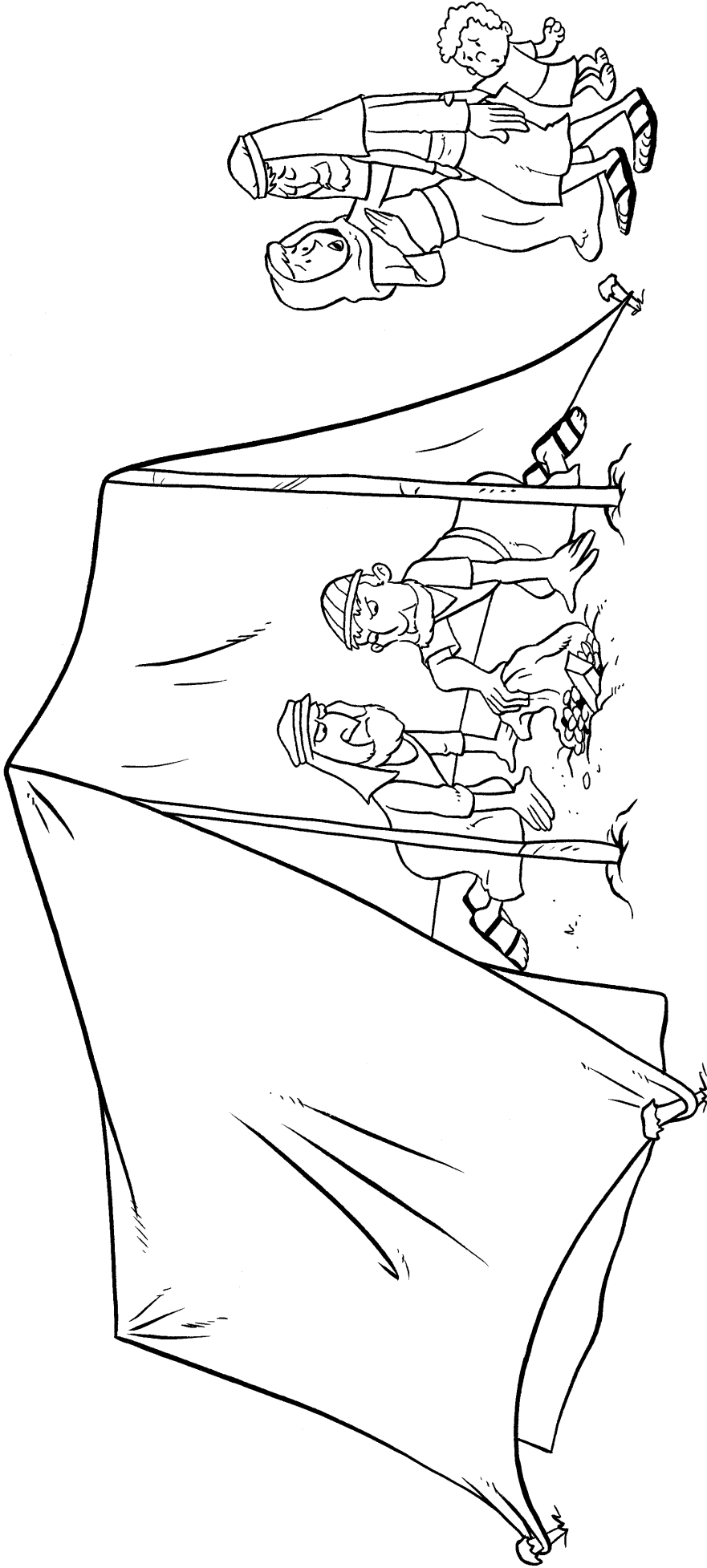
Desired

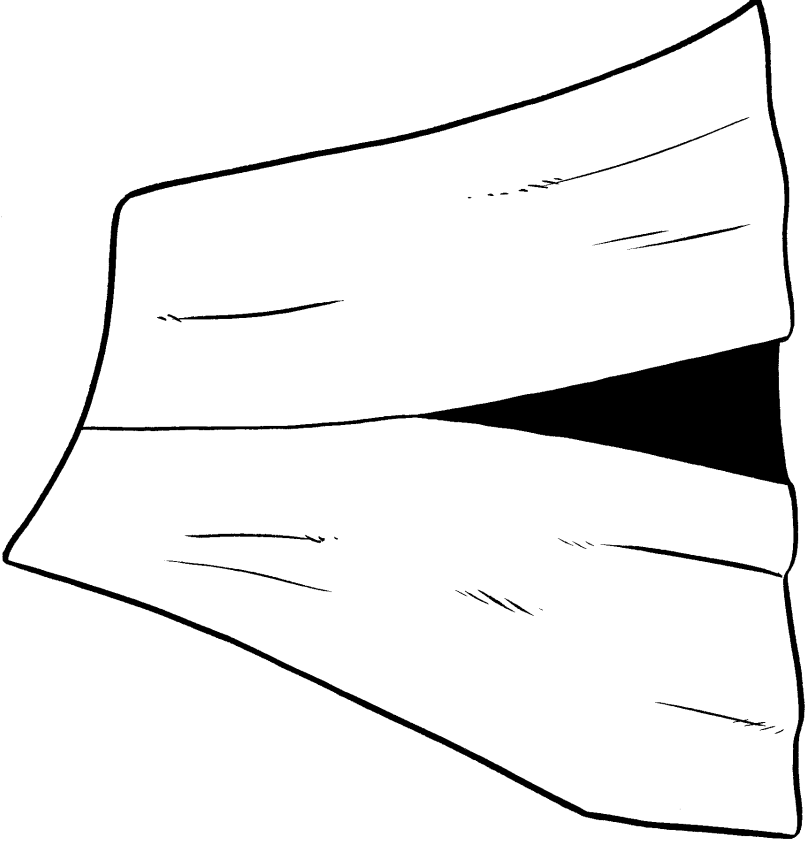
Took

“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).





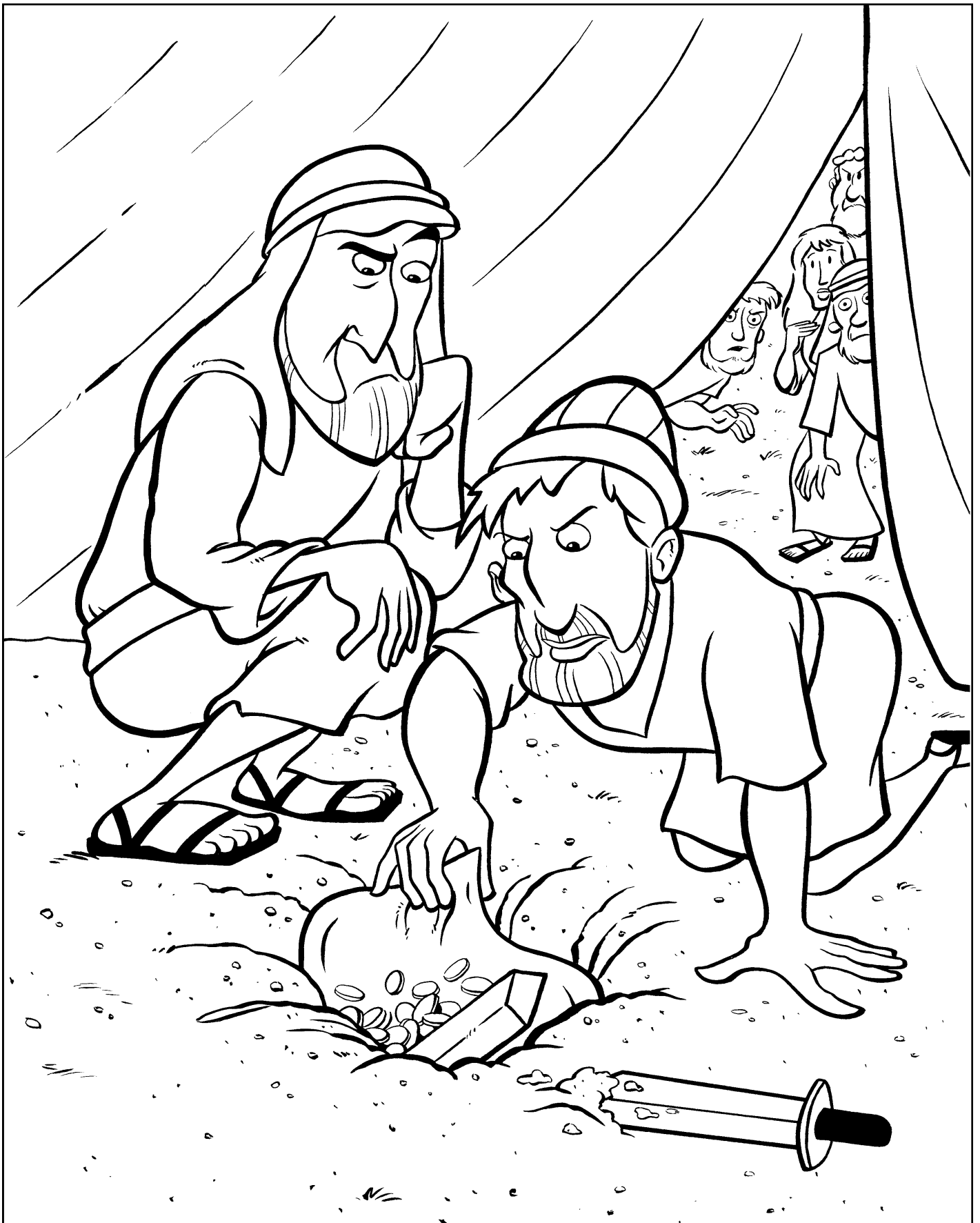




Front flap of Achan's tent



**“So about three thousand men went up there from the people,
but they fled before the men of Ai” (Joshua 7:4).**



“So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it” (Joshua 7:22).

