

**~AI 1 (324)**  
**(A'i) [Heap of Ruins]**

- A royal city of the Canaanites, the second city taken during the Israelite invasion. **Ai** was situated close by Beth-aven, to the east of Bethel, with a valley plain to the North.
- Then Joshua sent men out from Jericho to **Ai**, which is close by Beth-aven, to the east of Bethel, and said to them; Go up and spy on the land. Accordingly the men went up and spied on **Ai**. (**Joshua 7:2**)
- And all the people of war who were with him went up, that they might approach and get in front of the city, and they proceeded to camp to the north of **Ai**, with the valley between them and **Ai**. (**Joshua 8:11**)
- In the meantime he took about five thousand men and set them as an ambush between Bethel and **Ai**, to the west of the city. (**Joshua 8:12**)
- Michmash apparently lay to the South.
- He has come upon **Aiath**, he has passed along through Migron, at Michmash he deposits his articles. (**Isaiah 10:28**)
- Shortly after arrival in Canaan, Abraham had pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and **Ai** on the east. He built an altar there and revisited the place after his sojourn in Egypt.
- Later he moved from there to the mountainous region to the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and **Ai** on the east. Then he built an altar there to Yehowah and began to call on the name of Yehowah. (**Genesis 12:8**)
- And he made his way from encampment to encampment out of the Negeb and to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at first between Bethel and **Ai**. (**Genesis 13:3**)
- In **1473 B.C.E.**, following the victory over Jericho, **Ai** was attacked by a small force of about 3,000 Israelite soldiers, since the spies said of the inhabitants of **Ai**; They are few.

- Then Joshua sent men out from Jericho to **Ai**, which is close by Beth-aven, to the east of Bethel, and said to them; Go up and spy on the land. Accordingly the men went up and spied on **Ai**. (**Joshua 7:2**)
- After that they returned to Joshua and said to him; Let not all the people go up. Let about two thousand men or about three thousand men go up and strike **Ai**. Do not weary all the people with going there, for they are few. (**Joshua 7:3**)
- However, because of Achan's sin Israel suffered defeat.
- So about three thousand men of the people went up there, but they took to flight before the men of **Ai**. (**Joshua 7:4**)
- And the men of **Ai** got to strike down about thirty-six men of them, and they went pursuing them from before the gate as far as Shebarim and continued striking them down on the descent. Consequently the heart of the people began to melt and became as water. (**Joshua 7:5**)
- At this Joshua ripped his mantles and fell upon his face to the earth before the ark of Yehowah until the evening, he and the older men of Israel, and they kept putting dust upon their heads. (**Joshua 7:6**)
- And Joshua went on to say; Alas, Sovereign Lord Yehowah, why did you bring this people all the way across the Jordan, just to give us into the hand of the Amorites for them to destroy us? And if only we had taken it upon ourselves and continued dwelling on the other side of the Jordan! (**Joshua 7:7**)
- Excuse me, O Yehowah, but what can I say after Israel has turned his back before his enemies? (**Joshua 7:8**)
- And the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will certainly surround us and cut our name off from the earth, and what will you do for your great name? (**Joshua 7:9**)
- In turn Yehowah said to Joshua; Get up, you! Why is it that you are falling upon your face? (**Joshua 7:10**)

- Israel has sinned, and they have also overstepped my covenant that I laid as a command upon them, and they have also taken some of the thing devoted to destruction and have also stolen and also kept it secret and have also put it among their own articles. (**Joshua 7:11**)
- And the sons of Israel will not be able to rise up against their enemies. The back is what they will turn before their enemies, because they have become a thing devoted to destruction. I shall not prove to be with you again unless you annihilate the thing devoted to destruction out of your midst. (**Joshua 7:12**)
- Get up! Sanctify the people, and you must say; Sanctify yourselves tomorrow, for this is what Yehowah the God of Israel has said; A thing devoted to destruction is in your midst, O Israel. You will not be able to rise up against your enemies until you people have removed the thing devoted to destruction from your midst. (**Joshua 7:13**)
- And you must present yourselves in the morning, tribe by tribe, and it must occur that the tribe that Yehowah will pick will come near, family by family, and the family that Yehowah will pick will come near, household by household, and the household that Yehowah will pick will come near, able-bodied man by able-bodied man. (**Joshua 7:14**)
- And it must occur that the one picked with the thing devoted to destruction will be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has overstepped the covenant of Yehowah and because he has committed a disgraceful folly in Israel. (**Joshua 7:15**)
- After correction of this matter, Joshua employed a stratagem against Ai, setting an ambush at the rear of the city on its West side. The main force was deployed before the city to the North, where a valley or low desert plain lay, and from here Joshua prepared for a frontal attack on Ai.
- Having lured the king of Ai and a body of men out of Ai, Joshua's force feigned retreat until their pursuers were far from their fortress. Then the ambush was signaled into action, and the city was captured and set on fire.
- Then Yehowah said to Joshua; Do not be afraid or be terrified.

Take with you all the people of war and get up, go up to **Ai**. See, I have given into your hand the king of **Ai** and his people and his city and his land. (**Joshua 8:1**)

- And you must do to **Ai** and to its king just as you did to Jericho and its king. Only you people may plunder its spoil and its domestic animals for yourselves. Set an ambush of yours against the city at its rear. (**Joshua 8:2**)
- Accordingly Joshua and all the people of war rose to go up to **Ai**, and Joshua proceeded to choose thirty thousand men, valiant mighty ones, and to send them off by night. (**Joshua 8:3**)
- And he went on to command them, saying; See, you are lying in ambush against the city to the rear of the city. Do not go very far away from the city, and you must all of you hold yourselves in readiness. (**Joshua 8:4**)
- As for me and all the people who are with me, we shall go close to the city. And it must occur that, in case they should come out to meet us just as at the first, we must then flee before them. (**Joshua 8:5**)
- And they must come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say; They are fleeing before us just as at the first. And we must flee before them. (**Joshua 8:6**)
- Then you, you will rise up from the ambush, and you must take possession of the city, and Yehowah your God will certainly give it into your hands. (**Joshua 8:7**)
- And it must occur that as soon as you have seized the city, you should set the city on fire. According to Yehowah's word you should do. See, I have commanded you. (**Joshua 8:8**)
- After that Joshua sent them out and they marched to the place of ambush and took up quarters between Bethel and **Ai** to the west of **Ai**, while Joshua kept lodging on that night in the midst of the people. (**Joshua 8:9**)
- Then Joshua rose up early in the morning and reviewed the people and went up, he and the older men of Israel, before the people to **Ai**. (**Joshua 8:10**)

- And all the people of war who were with him went up, that they might approach and get in front of the city, and they proceeded to camp to the north of **Ai**, with the valley between them and **Ai**. (**Joshua 8:11**)
- In the meantime he took about five thousand men and set them as an ambush between Bethel and **Ai**, to the west of the city. (**Joshua 8:12**)
- So the people set the main camp that was to the north of the city and the extreme rear of it that was to the west of the city, and Joshua proceeded to go during that night into the middle of the low plain. (**Joshua 8:13**)
- And it came about that, as soon as the king of **Ai** saw it, then the men of the city got in a hurry and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people, at the appointed time, before the desert plain. As for him, he did not know that there was an ambush against him to the rear of the city. (**Joshua 8:14**)
- When Joshua and all Israel suffered a blow before them, then they took to flight by the way of the wilderness. (**Joshua 8:15**)
- At that all the people who were in the city were called out to chase after them, and they went chasing after Joshua and got to be drawn away from the city. (**Joshua 8:16**)
- And there was not a man remaining in **Ai** and Bethel that did not go out after Israel, so that they left the city wide open and went chasing after Israel. (**Joshua 8:17**)
- Yehowah now said to Joshua; Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward **Ai**, for into your hand I shall give it. Accordingly Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. (**Joshua 8:18**)
- And the ambush rose up quickly from its place, and they began to run at the instant that he stretched out his hand, and they proceeded to enter the city and capture it. Then they hurried and set the city on fire. (**Joshua 8:19**)
- And the men of **Ai** began to turn back and look, and there the smoke of the city ascended to the heavens, and there proved to be no ability in them to flee this way or that. And the people that

- were fleeing to the wilderness turned upon the pursuers. (Joshua 8:20)
- And Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, and so they turned around and went striking the men of **Ai** down. (Joshua 8:21)
  - And these others came out of the city to meet them, so that they got to be in between Israel, these on this side and those on that, and they went striking them down until there did not remain of them either a survivor or an escapee. (Joshua 8:22)
  - And the king of **Ai** they caught alive and proceeded to bring him near to Joshua. (Joshua 8:23)
  - And it came about that while Israel was finishing the killing of all the inhabitants of **Ai** in the field, in the wilderness in which they had pursued them, they kept falling, all of them, by the edge of the sword until they came to their end. After that all Israel returned to **Ai** and struck it with the edge of the sword. (Joshua 8:24)
  - And all those who fell on that day, from man to woman, amounted to twelve thousand, all the people of **Ai**. (Joshua 8:25)
  - And Joshua did not draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had devoted all the inhabitants of **Ai** to destruction. (Joshua 8:26)
  - Only the domestic animals and the spoil of that city Israel plundered for themselves, according to Yehowah's word that he had **laid** in command upon Joshua. (Joshua 8:27)
  - **Ai's** king was executed, and the city was reduced to an indefinitely lasting mound **Hebrew, tel**, as a desolation down to this day.
  - Then Joshua burned **Ai** and reduced it to an indefinitely lasting mound, as a desolation down to this day. (Joshua 8:28)
  - By Isaiah's time, in the **Eighth Century B.C.E**, the city, or perhaps an adjoining site, was inhabited and it was prophesied that it would be the first to be taken by the king of Assyria in his march on Jerusalem.

- He has come upon **Aiath**, he has passed along through Migron, at Michmash he deposits his articles. (**Isaiah 10:28**)
- Following the Babylonian exile, Benjamites from **Ai** returned with Zerubbabel's caravan.
- The men of Bethel and **Ai**, two hundred and twenty-three. (**Ezra 2:28**)
- The men of Bethel and **Ai**, a hundred and twenty-three. (**Nehemiah 7:32**)
- And the sons of Benjamin were from Geba, Michmash and **Aija** and Bethel and its dependent towns. (**Nehemiah 11:31**)
- **Ai** has been generally identified with the site **Khirbet et-Tell, Horvat et-Tel**, which preserves the meaning of the ancient name, **et-Tell** means, **The Mound, The Heap of Ruins**. It is 2.3 kilometers (1.4 miles) East-Southeast of Bethel or modern Beitin.
- However, excavations made there in **1933-1935 C.E.** and in **1964-1972 C.E.** indicate that it was a large city, devastated about **2000 B.C.E.** and thereafter uninhabited until about **1050 B.C.E.**, according to archaeological methods of dating. Because of this, various attempts have been made by archaeologists to alter the sense of the Scriptural references to **Ai**. However, archaeologist **J. Simons** finds the identification with **Khirbet et-Tell** unacceptable on the basis of the city's size
- After that they returned to Joshua and said to him, Let not all the people go up. Let about two thousand men or about three thousand men go up and strike **Ai**. Do not weary all the people with going there, for they are few. (**Joshua 7:3**)
- The fact that there is no broad valley to the North of Khirbet et-Tell
- And all the people of war who were with him went up, that they might approach and get in front of the city, and they proceeded to camp to the north of **Ai**, with the valley between them and **Ai**. (**Joshua 8:11**)

- **And on other grounds. [American Journal of Archaeology, July-September 1947, p. 311] If the archaeological dating is correct, then the site must be located elsewhere. The name itself would not necessarily identify the place, since as Sir Frederic Kenyon states; The transference of a name from a ruined or abandoned site to another near by is a common phenomenon in Palestine. (The Bible and Archaeology, 1940, p. 190)**