

# Leadership and the Implementation of Plans

## Joshua 8:9-13

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, April 16th 2023

### I. Introduction - Archaeology and the Bible: clarifying needless confusion in some commentaries

Before we dive into this section I want to once again address the controversy of the location of Ai, and do so in a little bit more detail because without it, it would be super easy to get confused on what's happening in any given verse. And I've given a map and an elevation diagram to help you kind of picture the rest of the sermon in your minds. I have over 200 commentaries on this book, and wow - there is a lot of confusion in the commentaries themselves. Let me give a list of some of the things that commentators differ on or have said that they can't figure out:

1. Where is Ai? There are four different views.
2. Where is Bethel?
3. Where is Beth Aven?
4. How many soldiers were in the entire army? Believe it or not, there are even conservatives who question the numbers given in the book of Numbers and in this book. They have a hard time believing that there could be that many soldiers, and some of them reduce the number to about a tenth of what the Bible states were there.
5. How many ambush groups were there? Was there one or two?
6. And if there was only one (which is wrong) then they have to try to reconcile how many soldiers were used for the ambush. You've got to do some pretty creative exegesis if there was only one ambush.
7. For example, if there was just *one* ambush group, how do you reconcile the 30,000 in verse 3 with the 5000 in verse 12? Some people claim that the 30,000 was a copyist's mistake and that we don't know what the original was. I'm sorry; that's a cop out, not exegesis. Others say that the Hebrew word "Elf" for "thousand" might mean officers over a thousand, and so its just the 30 officers who went there and formed a swat team, or (as some hypothesize) those 30 oversaw the 5000. Well, that's not the meaning of Elf, and it still doesn't reconcile. Others have no idea on how to reconcile the two numbers. I just take it as 30,000 like it says.

8. If there *were* two ambush groups (which is what I believe), why were there 5000 in one and 30,000 in the other? Did they have different tasks? I believe they did. And more importantly, where did they hang out? There is a very good reason for the high numbers.
9. Was there one or two valleys, and what is the location of the valley or valleys?
10. What days did the two ambush groups move to their locations and how did they do so without being noticed? *If you have the wrong location for Ai, these are disconcerting questions that have perplexed many minds.*
11. Where did Joshua go in the last sentence of verse 13? And why did he go there? Was that a different valley than the one mentioned with the ambush?
12. How could the 30,000 who were in hiding see Joshua's javelin signal to attack without Ai or Bethel being able to see the 30,000? How is that even possible? Well, we will see how it really is possible. But these are the kinds of questions that Christians need to be able to answer, but which most commentaries provide almost zero answer to. And there are more questions.
13. Why was Ai in league with Bethel and not in league with the much closer city of Beth Aven?
14. What was the location of the plain that is mentioned in verse 14? On some theories, there is no plain.
15. How could there be egress for each ambush group and (more importantly) for the main army given any given commentary's theory of the location of Ai? Was there really viable egress? And if not, how does the commentary try to reconcile it? Or did they even bother?
16. Is there a difference between the location of this Ai and the mentions of Ai in Genesis? Some people say yes (it was a different city with the same name). I say no - they are one and the same city.
17. What about all the references to locations in this chapter like "behind the city" in verse 4, "not very far from the city" in the same verse, and east, west, north, etc. Many theories simply cannot reconcile all of those terms.
18. Is there evidence of burning and burial at the suggested location? And if not, how do they reconcile it?

19. And how on earth can all these things be reconciled with archaeology, the topography of the area, elevation maps, the dating for the destruction of various cities, etc.?

As David Howard points out, if Et-Tel is the site of Ai (as most archaeologists claim that it is), then the biblical record is hopelessly mistaken.<sup>1</sup> Of course, liberal archaeologists have had no problem saying that the Bible is mistaken - and of course they assume that they cannot be mistaken. What is sad is that many evangelical commentaries have gone along with establishment archaeology in order to be academically respectable and it has forced them to mess up or (more frequently) just to ignore many facts in this chapter.

Thankfully, evangelicals began to be fed up with the mess and started looking for alternative sites. Albright and other establishment archaeologists told them that they were on a wild goose chase and tried to talk them out of it. But sadly, even though these evangelical archaeologists had good motivations, they still hadn't learned Christ's lesson that the Scripture are the "key of knowledge" (as Jesus described them in Luke 11:52) - it's the key that opens the door to knowledge in every area of life including archaeological knowledge. But because they didn't *start* with Scripture, they still came up shorthanded with two more digs and wasted lots of money and years of time.

Well, finally a group of Christians decided to let the Bible *alone* dictate where *everything* was located, and to start digging only *after* they had isolated eleven clues from the Bible. When they went to where the *Bible* pointed, they discovered a perfect match. Ai is without question the modern location of Kirbet el-Maqatir.

Anyway, things were such a mess that when I started studying the book of Joshua I didn't want to accept even *their* conclusions without double checking every phrase in the Bible that related to Ai. So I inductively came up with 21 facts that the inspired Bible lays out. Those are listed on the back of your outline. Don't bother reading it now because you will miss some important things that I am about to talk about. But when I compared each of those 21 facts to their location of modern Khirbet el-Maqatir, 100% of them matched perfectly. Suddenly 19 conundrums that have puzzled commentators for years are 100% resolved and reveal a beautiful war strategy. And I want to look at that war strategy. But I've introduced this sermon with this little exercise to show how important it is to be Biblically presuppositional in all things. You won't regret it. But let's go now to the war strategy.

## II. Plans need to be implemented ("Therefore" - v. 9)

In verses 1-8 we saw the process of *making* plans based on the revealed will of God and clearly *communicating* those plans. Verse 9 begins with a "Therefore" followed by actions. It indicates a transition from making plans to implementing plans.

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<sup>1</sup> David M. Howard Jr., Joshua, vol. 5, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 179.

I debated whether to even include this point since the whole sermon is about implementing our plans, but I have seen too many cases of people coming up with terrific looking plans, only to let those plans gather dust on the shelf. They were missing some elements that hindered implementation. So I am stating the obvious, but it needs to be stated. There's an old saying that good intentions don't move mountains, bulldozers do." Or another way of wording it is that plans are useless unless we are willing to carry them out.

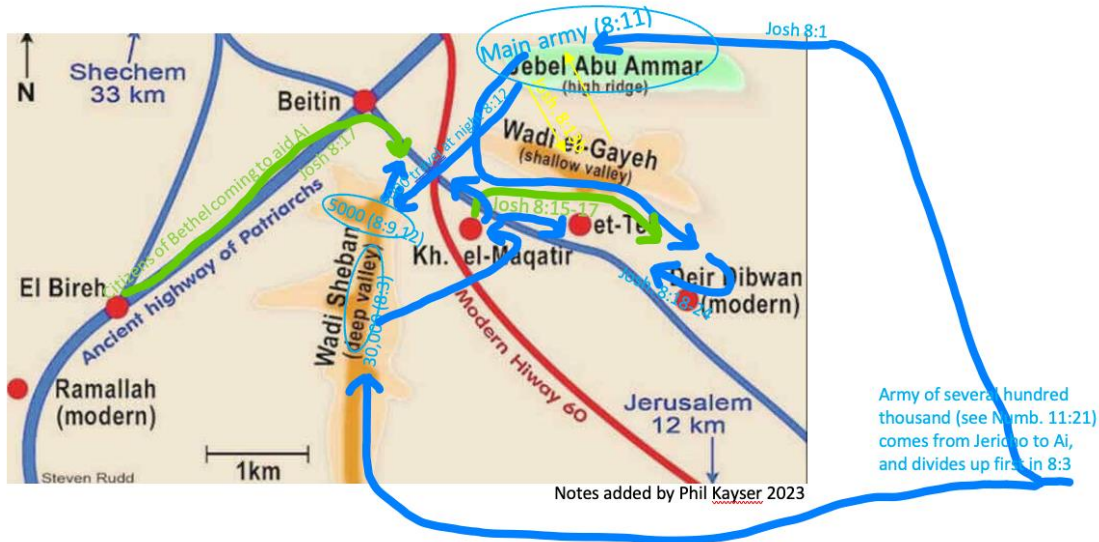
This is one of the reasons I encourage the men I mentor to not only make plans for the year and for each week, but to start each day with a five minute PEP meeting with God that keeps us honest on this point. PEP stands for prayer, evaluation, planning. I think you can afford five minutes at the beginning of the work day. And during the evaluation portion of that five minutes I ask myself the following questions: Did I do what I planned yesterday? Did I do it on time? If not, what were the obstacles? How can I avoid those obstacles in the future? And then I review the plan for this day that had been made at the beginning of the week. But I do the five minute PEP to keep my planning honest. Planning without good implementation is not good enough. It is true in civil government like Joshua led, and it is true in everyday life.

### III. Don't do everything yourself (v. 9a)

But the next phrase indicates that Joshua didn't do everything by himself, and neither should we. Division of labor is at the heart of Biblical civics, Biblical capitalism, a healthy body life in the church, and even our family life. Let's look first at how this applied to the military. Verse 9 says,

Joshua therefore sent them out; and they went to lie in ambush, and stayed between Bethel and Ai, on the West side of Ai.

And these were not the only ones to be sent out. In verse 3 (which refers to the previous night) it says, "Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor and sent them away by night." There has been a lot of confusion in the commentaries on how to reconcile who was sent where in this chapter, so if you take a look at the first image in your outline, I want to walk you through that map.



Verse 1 says that Joshua brought all the men of war with him from the Valley of Achor. The Valley of Achor would be off the map to the right (or to the east) This represented several hundred thousand men, which was a pretty massive army. But if they followed the route that I have laid out, they would have had no problem marching toward their staging point. But let's begin with the *first* split off from the army in verses 3-4.

If you look at the map, you will see that the army of several hundred thousand divided into two parts. The bottom line represents the night movement of the 30,000-man-ambush-group that is mentioned in verses 3-4. They traveled under cover of darkness straight west, entering the Wadi Sheban at a southerly point just under the map, and then marched north through that deep valley into a place just southwest of Ai. Ai's gate faced north-east, so where they were encamped was literally *behind* the city (just as the text indicates) in a spot that would be perfect for rushing past the east side of the city and into the gate once everyone left the city. But in the meantime, they hid. That valley was a perfect hiding place for those soldiers.



If you look at the elevation map on the image right underneath the map, you will see that those 30,000 soldiers couldn't be seen by anyone on the walls of Ai, which is modern day Khirbet el-Maqatir. And if I had given you a similar drawing for Bethel (which would take you to the left of that image), you would notice that they could not be seen by anyone at the city of Bethel, which is modern day El Bireh.

Back to the right hand side of the map where the blue line divides. When daylight came, the bulk of the army traveled north and then west and camped on the north side of the ridge

located at modern day Jebel Abu Ammar. Verse 11 shows the time that they arrived there. That ridge would have nicely hidden their presence until they crested it.

That night there would be another group splitting off from the main army. Verse 12 says it was composed of 5,000 men. Joshua sent *this* ambush group to silently travel southwest into the same valley that the previous 30,000 soldiers were already in, but they are entering the valley from the *northern* entrance. Again, that is a perfect hiding spot for those men, and they are going to be the first defense against any soldiers from Bethel in the green arrow who try to run up the highway to help Ai. So they are covering the backside of the 30,000 when they enter the city. They will stop the Bethel soldiers on the west side of the city to let the 30,000 do their business. But in the meantime, they are in hiding.

The diagonal yellow letters near the top that are referencing Joshua 8:13b show Joshua going down from the ridge into the shallow valley area known as Wadi el-Gayeh. Some people think Joshua went there to visually go over his plan. I guess that is possible, but in the darkness that is unlikely. I think he was getting away from his army to a quiet place to pray. In any case, he rejoins his men the next morning on the high ridge where he will be able to see all the action in the whole area and be able to *be* seen and to signal directions to his three contingents of soldiers as needed.

So back to the main army at the top of the map. That morning the main army that is camped on the north side of the Jebel Abu Ammar ridge comes over the ridge in verse 13 and is spotted by the king of Ai in verse 14. This sudden appearance keeps the whole attention of the cities of Bethel and Ai on this huge army of several hundred thousand men that is moving down the ridge, through the shallow valley, and onto the plane in front of Ai. That would be very concerning to these two cities, and that concern would keep them focused on the main army rather than behind the city where the ambush parties were. There is no gate on the back side of the city. The gate faces the Israelite army. So the tactics are great.

The men of Ai (represented by the second green arrow) come out of the city to engage the main army, and the army retreats just like they did in chapter 7 in a downhill run toward the quarries near modern Deir Dibwan. That fake retreat (that looks just like the first retreat in chapter 7) encourages all the men of Ai to leave the city and pursue them, leaving the city exposed to the ambush group. Likewise, all the men of Bethel (the first green arrow) who have been watching, race up the ancient highway - perhaps hoping to join in the pursuit. But they are stopped by the 5000 men who had been hiding in the north part of the deep valley and who have run up to the highway. They block any access of the Bethel soldiers to Ai.

But just before that, as soon as Joshua sees the perfect time to do a reversal, he signals with his javelin toward Ai, and the 30,000 men stationed in the deep valley labeled Wadi Sheban dash out of their hiding place and into the city, setting it on fire. As soon as their work in the city is done, they either branch to the left and join the 5000-man ambush that is holding back Bethel's soldiers to the west of Ai, or they go to the right and pursue the Ai men who had been pursuing the main army. This means that once the main army does a u-turn (at Joshua's signal), the soldiers of Ai are caught between two units and are decimated. Just

from the map you can see that it is a brilliant war strategy. So enough on the big picture. Hopefully you have that clearly in your mind.

But in terms of *application*, just as there was division of labor in the army, with the movements of the various forces each having their own assignment, implementing our plans often requires division of labor. And each person is important in God's overall strategy. Back then those under the age of twenty who stayed behind to protect the women, children, and baggage were just as important as those who endangered their lives here. Here's how Paul worded it in 1 Corinthians 12.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

He is saying that every member of the church is important to God's purposes. Not all have the giftings to be leaders. Not all have the gifting to do administration. Not all are as good at EQ and making people feel welcome. Not all are as good at hospitality. But when every part functions in the area of their strengths, the body as a whole has success. And Pat Lencioni has some remarkable resources for church and family in focusing on what he calls your working genius areas and your strong areas and not putting all your focus in the areas of your frustration. And I would really encourage you to at least examine that website. It's [workinggenius.com](http://workinggenius.com).<sup>2</sup>

But let's just think of the division of labor. People don't realize how many members work week after week behind the scenes, and without them our church would not function very well. Do you know who sets up the communion elements every Sunday, and who washes the cups, puts things away? Don't take that labor for granted. Even children and young people are involved. Do you know who opens and closes the church? Likewise, there is an enormous amount of work that each member of the music team does - and especially Kathy. She does a huge amount of work to make sure the written music and the played and sung music goes well and to try to ensure that each member of the music team succeeds. There is a lot of behind the scenes work that is done on organizing church activities, cleaning up after lunch, and a host of other duties. God made the body of Christ to work together and we need each other's gifts. Don't think that you can do everything yourself or that someone else can. Implementing plans requires division of labor.

The same is true in the family. When you are implementing your plans for the upkeep of your house or your garden or yard, each child can have their area that they focus on. And just as Joshua kept his eyes peeled on everything that was happening so that he could give

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.workinggenius.com>

his directions, mom can keep the implementation of the plan moving forward, making corrections as needed.

And dads, you need to express appreciation for the invisible division of labor that your wife engages in. Certain time-consuming jobs routinely fall to women but often don't count as "housework," such as planning the social calendar (that takes time), or buying birthday gifts, changing diapers, bathing the kids, cooking, cleaning, laundry, making sure doctor's appointments aren't missed, supervising thank-you note writing, teaching the kids good manners, etc. There is invisible emotional work of comforting a child, or disciplining a naughty child with a few words. That kind of work matters. If your wife were to die, you would suddenly wonder how on earth everything got done. Appreciate it without her having to die.

So how do you become more efficient in this division of labor? There is a lot that could be said, but I am only going to give you the bird's eye perspective. Experts say that there are at least five steps that you need to take:

1. First, inventory what resources you have and who is doing what. Inventory is essential. Joshua definitely engaged in it.
2. Second, observe who is actually pulling their weight and who needs a bit of leadership nudging. Joshua was up on the ridge observing.
3. Third, communicate with each member of the family about what's going well and what could work better.
4. Fourth, constantly express gratitude for each person's part.
5. And fifth, encourage more and more ownership of a task as the kids mature, including even some of the planning. You eventually include them in planning because *they* are going to have to do that when they set up their *own* families. We will see later in this book that Joshua was a master at all five of these things. Today I am just introducing them, so don't worry if you didn't get them written down.

#### IV. A leader spends time among the people (v. 9b)

But the next principle that I see is that a leader spends time among the people who are doing the work. You can't do the five things I just mentioned without spending time with those you are responsible for. Even though I've given you an overview of that whole day, let's go back to the second part of verse 9. It says, "but Joshua lodged that night among the people."

Obviously it wasn't the only time he was among the people. A leader can't lead effectively from afar. He must know his people. Jesus, whom Joshua typifies, spent time with the people. Pastors who only teach and don't spend time getting to know the people are not imitating Christ's shepherding.



Dads, this means spending time with your family, getting to know the weak points, the strong points, the gifts, the insecurities, problems, and aspirations of your family members. It means teaching and inspiring. Spending time with those you lead is a simple point, but it's a needed one.

## V. Be prompt and exercise initiative (v. 10a)

The next point that I see is promptness and initiative on the part of Joshua. Verse 10 says, "Then Joshua rose up early in the morning..." Obviously there were *strategic* reasons for doing so, so I don't want to make too much of this point. Strategically they didn't want the *city's* men to command the field, so they needed to get there first - or they wouldn't be able to fake flight in the right direction. But it's just a fact that Joshua was a man who got going early. In chapter 3:1 it says, "Then Joshua rose early in the morning." Chapter 6:12 says, "And Joshua rose early in the morning." And you see similar language 6 times in these first eight chapters. He didn't allow the day to get ahead of him. Implementing a plan means seizing the hour and making the most of it. And it would be worthwhile for all of you to learn time management. Time management is an essential in implementing your plan.

## VI. Galvanize the people (v. 10b)

The next principle of implementing a plan is seen in the next phrase in verse 10: "and mustered the people..." The Hebrew word for "mustered" (*pecode* - פקד), refers to more than simply mustering. Mustering is *itself* an important part of implementing a plan, but the Hebrew word gives nuances of the *kind* of mustering that Joshua did. The Hebrew word *pecode* has nuances of urging or inspiring, instruction, entrusting people with something, etc. There is a little bit of the idea of galvanizing, inspiring, charging with a vision.

Those of you who watched the Mel Gibson movie, *The Patriot*, may remember Benjamin Martin rallying the troops. It was more than mustering. It was inspiring and galvanizing people back into action. But this point and the next point really belong together. Benjamin Martin didn't galvanize *just* by telling people what to do. He joined them, as did the other leaders.

Now, I will admit that galvanizing is not one of my Pat Lencioni genius points or strong points. If you know his system, you know that he describes six things that are needed to get any team project done, and he uses the acronym WIDGET to list those six. You need a person with Wonder, who is curious about lots of stuff and asks lots of penetrating questions and loves to research. And you need a person who says, "That gives me an idea," and this ideation person comes up with brilliant ideas of how to move the project forward. But since not every idea is a good idea, you need a Discerner who can discern what will work and what will not. You need a galvanizer who can motivate and pull together the people and resources. You need an enabler or person with the gift of helps. And you need a person with tenacity that can take the project through to completion. That's kind of a simplistic explanation, but I think you get the idea.

And he points out that everyone usually has two working genius areas that energize you when you do them, two areas of strength that you can do but that don't necessarily energize you, and two areas of weakness or frustration. Well, galvanizing is one of my two areas of frustration. That's why our leadership team needs more than me. But even though it is not my strong point, from what I have read, people who are strong in this department have at least five things that characterize them.

1. First, they *inspire* engagement rather than *guilting* people into engagement. One of the trainers in Pat Lencioni's organization said, "These people [Galvanizers] rally, motivate, and provoke people to take action around an idea or an initiative." We dads need to learn to inspire more than we guilt. It's a part of emotional leadership.
2. Second, they set clarity about the team's vision and goals and take them from theoretical to concrete - "Here's what we are going to do." The Hebrew indicates that Joshua was doing that - telling the troops, "Here's what we are going to be doing." And that idea of instruction or giving clarity of what needs to be done that is embedded in the Hebrew word *pecode*, should characterize us dads more and more - even if galvanizing is an area of weakness and frustration. We don't abandon galvanizing simply because it's not our strong suit.
3. Third, they make it safe for people to fail when they are *truly* trying. If people are given plenty of opportunity to try and succeed, they may sometimes fail, but if they know it is safe to fail, they will be more motivated to try.
4. Fourth, galvanizers seem to be able to have fun with the people that they lead and to be real. Well, I don't see that right on the surface in *this* chapter. But there can be a camaraderie in even the toughest of battles that make men's hearts knit together as a band of brothers. You will certainly see this later in the book, and you see it a lot in the life of David. David was a galvanizer par excellence.
5. And fifth, though galvanizers can be tough, they also highly value kindness. Now, with the brutality that you see in *this* chapter, you may question whether Joshua had this feature, but he was kind with the *right* people. OK?

Anyway, I am no expert on galvanizing, but if this is the right meaning of the Hebrew word for "muster," it is at least something we can somewhat try to grow in. But at a minimum, we dads need to learn how to muster the troops.

## VII. Leaders encourage other leaders to lead (v. 10c)

The next principle that I see here is that leaders encourage other leaders to lead. This is similar to division of labor, but it is also somewhat different. It is being secure enough in your own leadership that you don't have to prove you can do it all. It's letting other leaders succeed at what they do, and letting them do better at what they do than you can do. It's letting them shine. David was brilliant at this, but later in the book we will see that so was

Joshua. It's just hinted at here. Verse 10 ends by saying, "and went up, *he and the elders of Israel, before the people* to Ai." He recognized the leaders and acknowledged the leaders in front of others. He is not the only one who was front and center. Leaders encourage other leaders to lead.

## VIII. Good organization is essential for implementing the plan (vv. 11-13)

But in verses 11-13 and throughout this book, you can see that Joshua was a brilliant organizer. Good organization is essential for implementing the plan. It takes some administrative skills, but it takes discernment, an ability to take in the big picture, and vision as well.

And don't assume that somebody is not organized simply because they are somewhat messy. Organization can look different to different people. Some people are *so* organized that everyone knows it. They have a place for everything and everything is in its place. Their atmosphere looks super tidy and neat. But sometimes those people don't get anything else done, right? It's great if you can do that *and* be an effective leader.

But some people have their organization in their heads. Their environment might look like a mess, but they have the information well-organized in their heads and they know exactly where to pull that needed paper from the messy pile of papers. This chapter gives the appearance of having a mix of both types of organization.

But the point is that *some* type of organization is needed to implement *any* plan. Organization enables a person to be more productive. It reduces stress and and it helps to minimize risks. And though the rest of this book talks a lot about *other* facets of organization - especially when we get to the division of the land, I only see three exemplifications of organization here.

### A. The organization of the main army (v. 11a, 13a)

First, there was the organization of the main army in the first part of verse 11 and the first part of verse 13. Verse 11 says,

And all the people of war who were with him went up and drew near; and they came before the city and camped on the north side of Ai.

Verse 13 repeats that thought:

And when they had set the people, all the army that was on the north of the city...

It takes a lot to organize an army, and it is guaranteed that Joshua didn't do it all by himself. There were other officers, and there was a chain of command that kept order in the camp and kept order in the battlefield.

And in this particular case, Joshua wanted the enemy (Ai) to see the whole Israelite army so that their focus would not be behind them (where the ambushers were), but would be on

the battlefield. He lets the enemy see what he wants the enemy to see and he hides what he doesn't want them to see. This all takes organization.

### B. The organization of space (v. 11b-13 plus previous material)

But next comes organization of space. I already gave the overview of how Joshua had the entire space organized to produce a perfect trap. And next time we will look at all the aspects of that trap. There is a lot we can learn from that. But first he has to *implement* his preparations *for* that trap. He took advantage of spacial resources to the max. The valleys, ridges, plain, direction the city faced, the location of Bethel in relationship to Ai, the naturally occurring gap that kept Beth Aven out of the conflict (even though they were closer) and kept them in the northern confederation and not with the southern confederation, and the downward slope away from Ai to the quarries all factored into Joshua's plan. There are differences of view on how far north the army camped, but it is my view (based on the fact that the king of Ai didn't notice the army till the next day in verse 14), that they camped just north of the ridge (out of sight) and came over the ridge the next day into sight.

Verse 11 ends with another thought related to space - "Now a valley lay between them and Ai." That's introduced because the night before the battle Joshua goes into that shallow valley of Wadi el-Gayeh by himself. It's another reason why I don't think the army showed itself quite yet or there would have been all kinds of scouts out in that valley. But another reason for mentioning this valley is that it shows that initially there was some space between the two opposing forces. It enabled some time to elapse.

But verse 13 mentions the city really being sandwiched between the two ambush groups on the southwest and the main army on the northeast. It was only when Joshua was satisfied that things were in place that he went into the valley to pray.

So Joshua organized space and the physical resources all around him. And my question to you is this: "How well do you do at analyzing space - whether it is for security purposes, managing children, growing vegetables, or whatever?" Physical space can aid or hinder the implementation of our plans. And some of us probably need to study administration and organizational techniques and tools a bit more. The Scripture calls for us to do our best at organizing. Some will be better at it than others, but at least we need to do our *own* best.

### C. The organization of backup resources (v. 12, 13b with vv. 3-4)

But the third thing that Joshua organized was the back up resources - the 5000 soldiers in verse 12 who would keep the soldiers of Bethel from being able to easily stream to the defense of Ai, and the 30,000 who would burn the city and then would trap Ai's soldier's once they were done with setting the city on fire.

It's pretty obvious from the second image in your outlines that Joshua couldn't see the 30,000-man-ambush mentioned in verses 3-4 and mentioned again in the second part of 13b. He calls them the rear-guard. They were a backup for any contingency that might happen. But you might wonder how they could see his signal. And though the text says

nothing about a scout, it seems that someone had to be peeking his head over the crest of the hill to see when Joshua would give them the signal.

Based on topography, this was a perfect setup. Both Ai and Bethel can see Joshua and the main army, but they can't see the ambush. But where Joshua is positioned, he can easily communicate with *both* ambush groups - at least if there was one or two scouts. OK, so that was *his* organization.

But let's apply this point to ourselves. Do we make adequate use of the people and space resources that we have in our homes? Rather than wishing for more, do we make adequate use of the people and space resources that we already have? How organized are we? If someone were to ask you about the strengths and weaknesses of space and people resources, would you be able to easily outline them? Obviously all of us can get better at these things, but they are worth thinking about. Some people don't think these things are spiritual enough to worry about ("we need to be focused on the Gospel"), but the Bible addresses all of life - and so does the Gospel. 2 Peter 1:3 says that He has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" through His grace and Scripture knowledge. Not just all things that pertain to godliness, but all things that pertain to *life* and godliness. 1 Corinthians 6:3 says, "Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?" And there are many other Scriptures that show that Christ's kingdom is interested in all of life. Only Gnostics ignore the physical and focus exclusively on the invisible. And that is why Scripture teaches so much about leadership, planning, math, organization, and other things.

### **IX. Once everything was in place for action (vv. 11-13b), Joshua took time to be with God (v. 13c)**

But this section ends by saying that despite the critical importance of our planning, organization, and attempts to begin to implement our plans, we must seek God's face if that implementation is to succeed. Oh, Oh. Here it comes again. Gary and I never get tired of reminding you to pray. And that's what I believe Joshua did when he went down into the valley. And I believe the people up on the ridge were praying their hearts out too. Verse 13 says,

And when they had set the people, all the army that was on the north of the city, and its rear guard on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley.

There were no soldiers in *that* valley. He had it to himself. It was the perfect spot to recommit his ways to God acknowledging that without God he could do nothing, but no doubt also worshipfully thanking God that they could do all things if God were to bless them.

So hopefully verses 1-8 have inspired you to plan, and to communicate those plans, and hopefully these verses have inspired you to be better at implementing a plan every single day.

But I hope as well that our wrestling with the text and with archaeology has inspired you to value starting with the Scripture. We must be presuppositional in every area of life. The Bible is the key of knowledge. It provides keys to planning, leadership, archaeology, math, science, and every other endeavor. May we be known as people of the book, people of prayer, people of planning, and people of action. Amen.

## X. For further information

The following are 21 clues on the true location of Ai derived inductively from the text by Phil Kayser. (Note, only one of four theories fits all 21 clues.)

1. Ai must be in the hill country (Gen. 12:8; “descent” in Josh 7:5; “go up” in 8:1,10,11)
2. Ai must have been in existence when Joshua conquered the land (Josh 7-8)
3. Ai must be smaller than Gibeon, i.e., must be 7 acres or less. (Josh 10:2; with 7:2,3 and Deut. 9:1; also see the archaeology). (By way of comparison, et-Tell is 27.5 acres when it was in existence before being destroyed prior to Joshua.)
4. Ai must be “east of Bethel” (Joshua 7:2)
5. Ai must be a fortified city with walls and a gate (Joshua 7:5)
6. Ai must have its gate facing north-east (Joshua 7:5). (In contrast, the gate at et-Tell faced south.)
7. There must be a valley deep enough to hide 30,000 soldiers traveling from the south (Joshua 8:3,13b), and be a valley that lies “behind the city” (8:4), and that is not far from the city (Joshua 8:4). This valley must be able to conceal the soldiers from both Bethel and Ai since those were two southern confederation cities in league with each other (Joshua 8:17), and the ambush would be useless if they were seen by the citizens of either city.
8. That same deep valley must be easily accessible to the second group of 5000 who would be coming from the main encampment in the north on the next night. They must be able to enter and exit the valley from a more northerly spot without having to navigate past the first group of 30,000 (Joshua 8:12). (See map)
9. There must be a high ridge north of the city within sight that is big enough for the main army of Israel (several hundred thousand) to camp (Joshua 8:13a).
10. There must be a shallow valley between the main army of Israel and Ai (Joshua 8:11b), that lies just north of Ai but south of where the main army was, to which

Joshua could go the night before (Joshua 8:13b).

11. Viable egress #1 . The topography has to allow for the main army to divide in Joshua 8:3, but be navigable for 30,000 to travel under cover of darkness into the deep valley (Joshua 8:3,13b).
12. Viable egress #2. The topography has to allow for the main army to come from Jericho, to leave the main highway and travel to a high hill overlooking the city (Joshua 8:11) – a hill high enough for Joshua’s signal (8:18-19) to be seen by the men in hiding or at least by a scout for those men (Joshua 8:18-19).
13. Viable egress #3. The topography has to allow the main army camped north of Ai to come down to attack. (By comparison, the slopes at et-Tell are way too steep to accommodate an army’s descent.)
14. Viable egress #4. There must be a plain in front of the city big enough to engage in battle (Joshua 8:14).
15. Viable egress #5. The ground leading east from that plain must slope downwards. We know this because the real retreat of Joshua 7 & the false retreat of Joshua 8 happened on the same ground – ground that sloped downwards (“descent”) toward the quarries of Shebarim (see Joshua 7:5; 8:6).
16. The land for engagement of armies must be large enough and flat enough (no cliffs, etc.) to be realistic and to constitute a plain (Josh 8:14).
17. There must be a mountain east of Bethel with Ai being located even further east (Gen. 12:8).
18. Ai must be close to Beth Aven (Joshua 7:2). See map for modern Beitin being Beth Aven.
19. Beth Aven must be closer to Ai than Bethel (Joshua 7:2).
20. Bethel is in league with Ai whereas the closer city of Beth Aven was not (Joshua 7:2; 8:17). See map. Beth Aven is treated later in Joshua as being part of the northern confederacy, whereas Bethel (see map for El Bireh being Bethel) was part of the southern confederacy. Historically the Wadi Gayeh has been a significant border line. (It later became the border line between northern Israel and Judah.)
21. There must be evidence of a conflagration at the time of Joshua (8:28) and for having been buried (Joshua 8:29)