

13.06 Ai Defeated (Joshua 8:1–29)

(The teacher might combine this story with “13.07 Ebal and Gerizim.”)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.
- (optional) A spear or javelin (plastic toy is okay)

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: (Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *ambush*: hiding and then attacking an enemy by surprise
- *javelin*: a light, long spear
- *spoil*: things taken from an enemy in war

Scripture: (ESV)

Joshua 8:1 And the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. 2 And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves. Lay an ambush against the city, behind it.”

3 So Joshua and all the fighting men arose to go up to Ai. And Joshua chose 30,000 mighty men of valor and sent them out by night. 4 And he commanded them, “Behold, you shall lie in ambush against the city, behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you remain ready. 5 And I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out against us just as before, we shall flee before them. 6 And they will come out after us, until we have drawn them away from the city. For they will say, ‘They are fleeing from us, just as before.’ So we will flee before them. 7 Then you shall rise up from the ambush and seize the city, for the Lord your God will give it into your hand. 8 And as soon as you have taken the city, you shall set the city on fire. You shall do according to the word of the Lord. See, I have commanded you.” 9 So Joshua sent them out. And they went to the place of ambush and lay between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai, but Joshua spent that night among the people.

10 Joshua arose early in the morning and mustered the people and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. 11 And all the fighting men who were with him went up and drew near before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai. 12 He took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. 13 So they stationed the forces, the main encampment that was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley. 14 And as soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city, hurried and went out early to the appointed place toward the Arabah to meet Israel in battle. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. 15 And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness. 16 So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city. 17 Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel.

18 Then the Lord said to Joshua, “Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand.” And Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. 19 And the men in the ambush rose quickly out of their place, and as soon as he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it. And they hurried to set the city on fire. 20 So when the men of Ai looked back, behold, the smoke of the city went up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that, for the people who fled to

the wilderness turned back against the pursuers. 21 And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city, and that the smoke of the city went up, then they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. 22 And the others came out from the city against them, so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side, and some on that side. And Israel struck them down, until there was left none that survived or escaped. 23 But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him near to Joshua.

24 When Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the open wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them to the very last had fallen by the edge of the sword, all Israel returned to Ai and struck it down with the edge of the sword. 25 And all who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000, all the people of Ai. 26 But 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. 27 Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as their plunder, according to the word of the Lord that he commanded Joshua. 28 So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins, as it is to this day. 29 And he hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening. And at sunset Joshua commanded, and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the gate of the city and raised over it a great heap of stones, which stands there to this day.

Introduction/Review:

What man had disobeyed God's command at Jericho? [Achan.] What was the command that Achan had disobeyed? [Not to take anything from Jericho.] What happened to Israel as a result of Achan's disobedience? [Defeat at Ai and 36 killed.] How was the problem taken care of? [Achan was stoned and everything of his was burned.]

Story:

God's conquering Ai

Now that the sin-in-the-camp situation had been corrected, God encouraged Joshua: "Do not be afraid, and do not worry. I have given you Ai."

"*Have given*"? God knew He would do it; so he used the past perfect tense in order to show the deed was as good as done. Then He gave details: "Just as I gave the king and people of Jericho, I will give the king and people of Ai to you. Only this time, you will be able to take the spoil. This is how you will do battle: you will set up an ambush behind Ai."

Here God is telling exactly how to take this city—just as He did for conquering Jericho. This is great! What did He say? ["You may take spoil; set up an ambush behind Ai."]

Joshua obeyed and followed God's plan. Ten times as many soldiers as had gone against Ai the first time (3000 then) were preparing for a second battle (30,000 now). He sent 5,000 of these at night, when the people of Ai couldn't see, to the west side of Ai. These were the men of the ambush. Before they left camp, Joshua informed them of God's plans: "The rest of us will go toward the city and then run away as we did last time. The people will come out of the city just as they did before. When they have left the city, I'll signal you by raising my javelin. That will mean you will come out of your hiding place and get into the city and burn it."

Israel's ambushing Ai

Early the next morning, Joshua himself took 25,000 men to a hill north of Ai with a valley between him and Ai. Just as God had said, the king of Ai saw Joshua and his men in the morning and went out to fight Israel, not knowing about the ambush waiting west of the city. When Joshua and company pretended to be beaten, running away as they had in the first battle, all—I mean *all*—the men of Ai chased Israel. Not one soldier was left in the city. In fact, even the city gates were left open.

At that point the Lord told Joshua, "Stretch out your javelin toward Ai, and I will give it into your hand."

When the men waiting to ambush saw Joshua raise his javelin, they came out of hiding, entered the city, took it over, and set it on fire.

Soldiers of Ai who were pursuing Israel happened to look back and discovered with horror that Ai was burning! Seeing the smoke of their city, they were disheartened and lost all power to run. Where could they run anyway? For the Israelites whom they had been chasing had turned around and were now pursuing them. In addition, the Israelites who had set fire to the city were pouring out of Ai toward them? Ai's soldiers were trapped.

Obviously, God, through Israel, soundly defeated and destroyed Ai that day. In fact, all the inhabitants left in the city also died at the hand of Israel—a total of 12,000 people. Not one person survived or escaped—none, that is, except the king of Ai. But this king did not last long, for after coming before Joshua, he died by hanging that same day. At sunset Joshua commanded that his body be taken down and thrown in the gate of Ai. A pile of stones marked his grave and became a memorial of the conquest of Ai.

Israel's spoiling Ai

Since God had said only the inhabitants of this city were to be devoted to destruction, Israel could take the spoil. This they did, taking all the cattle, gold, silver, and clothing they could find. “So Joshua burned Ai and made it forever a heap of ruins.”

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
“Joshua conquered by yielding, as if he had himself been conquered; so our Lord Jesus, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, seemed as if death had triumphed over him, and as if he and all his interests had been routed and ruined; but in his resurrection he rallied again and gave the powers of darkness a total defeat; he broke the serpent's head, by suffering him to bruise his heel. A glorious stratagem!” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-complete/joshua/8.html>).

Activities:

- Play dough: soldiers; a javelin; stones
- Snack: Meatballs, fruit, or other foods eaten with toothpicks (little plastic swords would be better). This site has some good food ideas: <https://wearychef.com/31-fantastic-foods-you-can-eat-with-a-toothpick/>.
- Play-act the Ai men, men in ambush, and Joshua with his javelin, or use plastic soldiers to reenact this battle.
- Discuss the fact that Joshua held his javelin high until all Ai's inhabitants had been devoted to destruction. Was there another time when hands were held up during a battle? Remind students if they do not remember that Moses held up his hands while Joshua and Israel fought against the Amalekites shortly after Israel had left Egypt.
- Sing “Holding up Hands,” found at “Lesson 12.12 Holding up Hands” or on the “Songs” page at teachingthebibletokids.org, where an audio and visual are also available.
- Israel stacked a pile of stones in the gate of Ai. Tell about three other times so far in the book of Joshua when piles of stones were raised: (1) the twelve stones placed by Joshua in the Jordan; (2) the twelve stones taken from the Jordan and heaped up at Gilgal; (3) the heap of stones over the ashes of Achan and his household in the Valley of Achor.
- Review questions: (Game: If small plastic sword toothpicks are available, students who answer questions correctly may place one sword per correct answer in a small transparent container. Or print, back with paper towel, and cut out the clipart figures holding javelins found below. A correct answer allows a student to place a figure on the flannel board.)
 1. What did God say would be the outcome of the battle with Ai? [“I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land.”]

2. What did God say about taking spoil in Ai? [The people could take it for themselves.]
3. Why did Joshua send 5000 soldiers to the west side of Ai during the night? [So that they could lie in ambush without the people of Ai knowing they were there.]
4. What did Joshua and his 25,000 soldiers do to trick the soldiers of Ai? [Pretended to run away as they had in the first battle with Ai.]
5. What happened when Joshua raised his javelin in signal to his 5000 men west of Ai? [Those soldiers entered the city and set it on fire.]
6. What did the men who were with Joshua do when they saw the smoke rise from Ai? [Turned back and struck down the men of Ai.]
7. How many people of Ai were devoted to destruction? [All of them; 12,000.]
8. How long did Joshua stretch out his javelin? [Until all Ai's inhabitants were destroyed.]
9. What happened to the king of Ai? [He was brought to Joshua; he was hanged to death; his body was thrown down at the gate of Ai; a pile of stones was placed over his body.]

Memory Verse[s]: (ESV)

- Joshua 1:6, 7: Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

Handwork:

- Print the page found below of the four compass points and positions of Joshua and of his men in ambush. Students will draw the city of Ai on a hill in the middle of the page. Additional drawings on this page might include fire in the city, soldiers coming out of the city toward Joshua, men of ambush entering the city, and/or Joshua and his soldiers trapping the soldier of Ai.

ambush

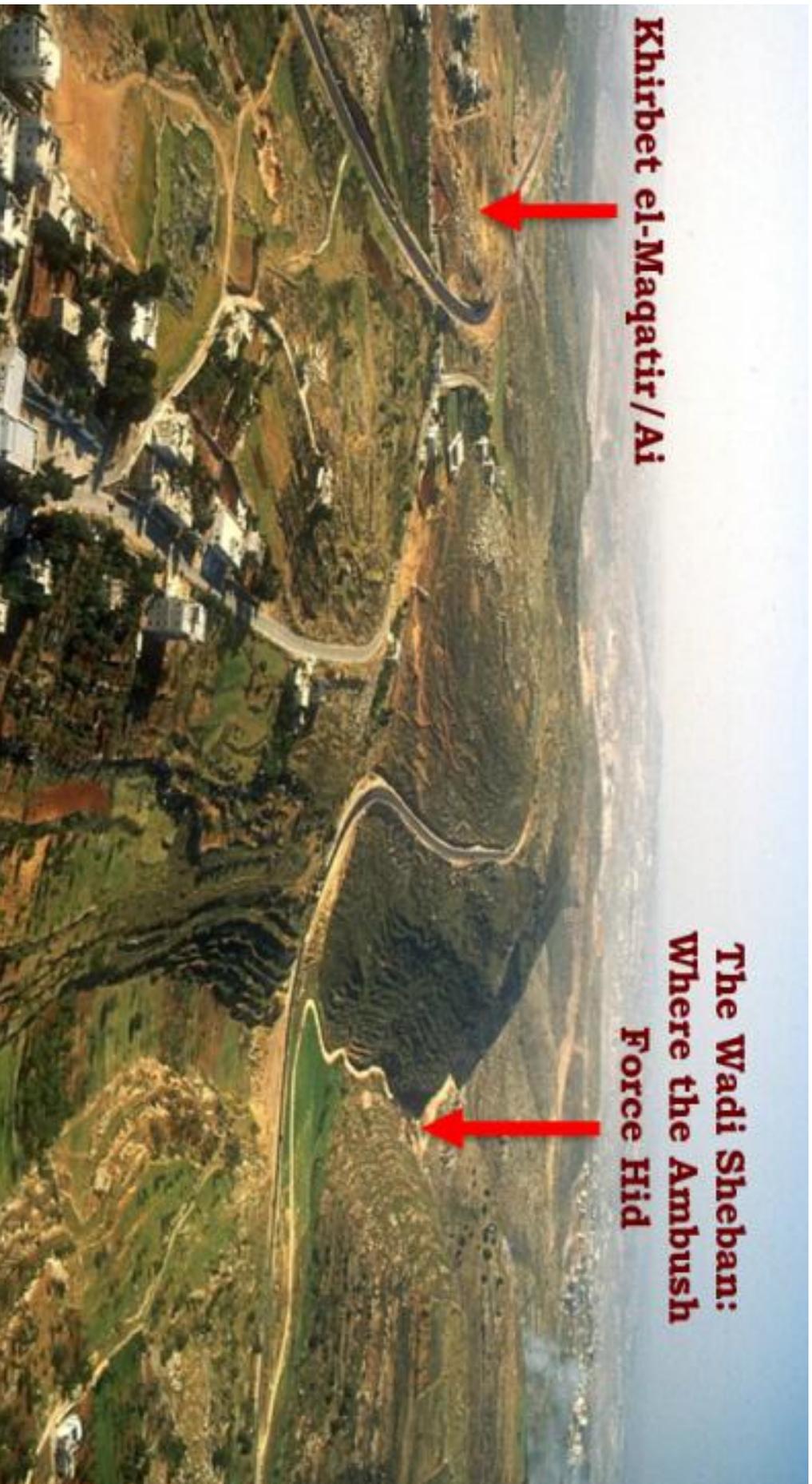
spoil

javelin

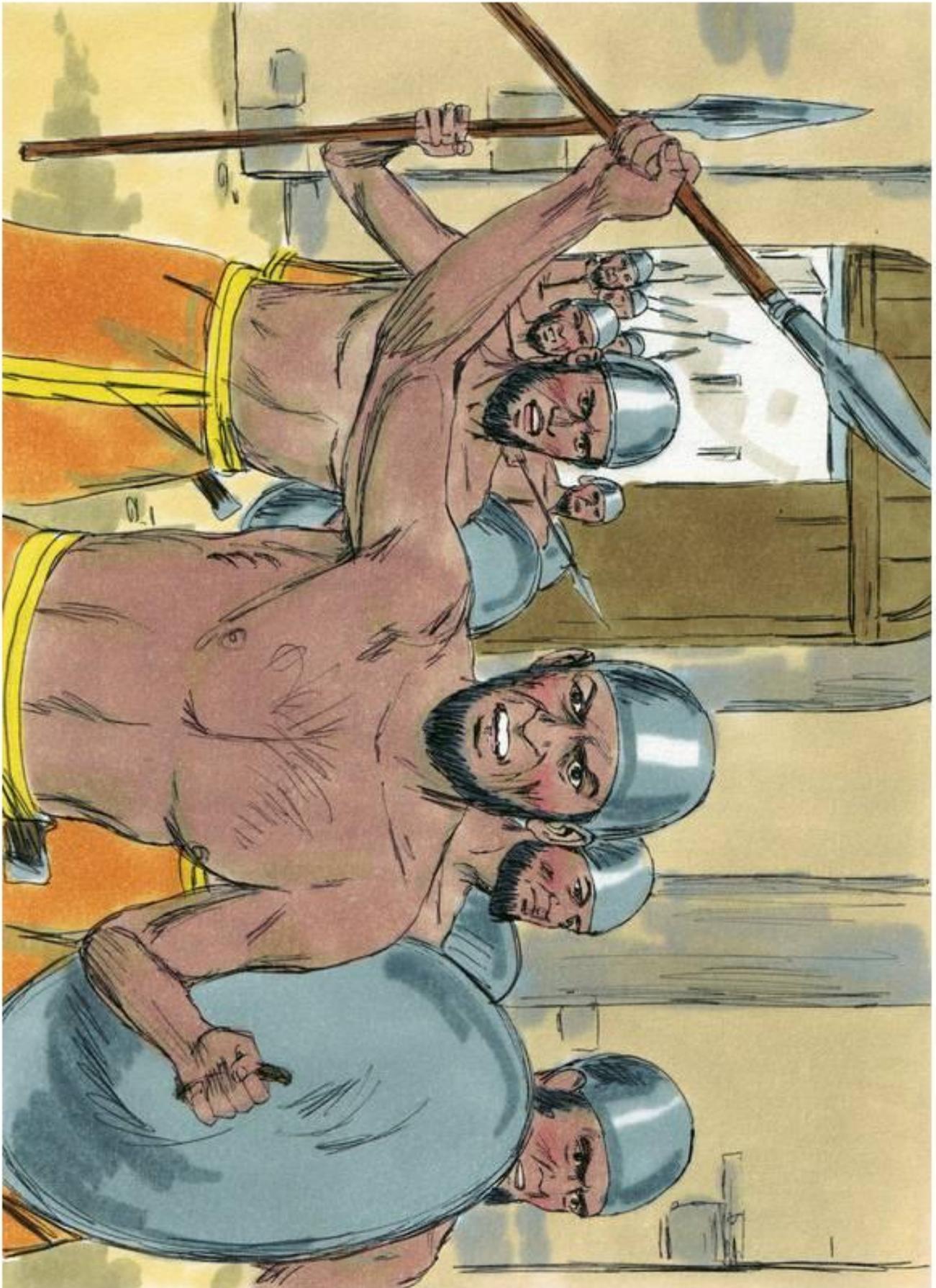
Khirbet el-Maqatir / Ai



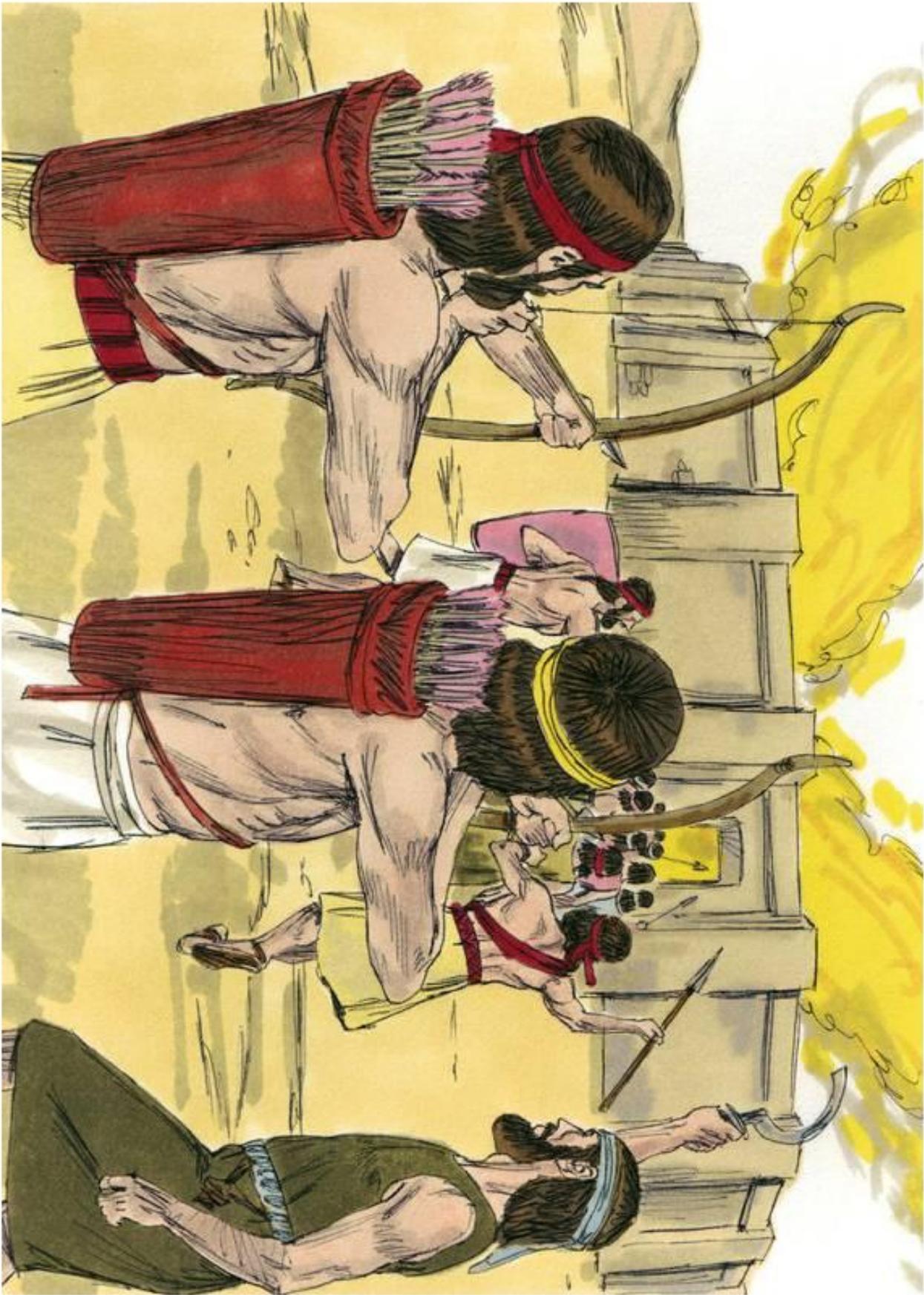
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Where the Ambush
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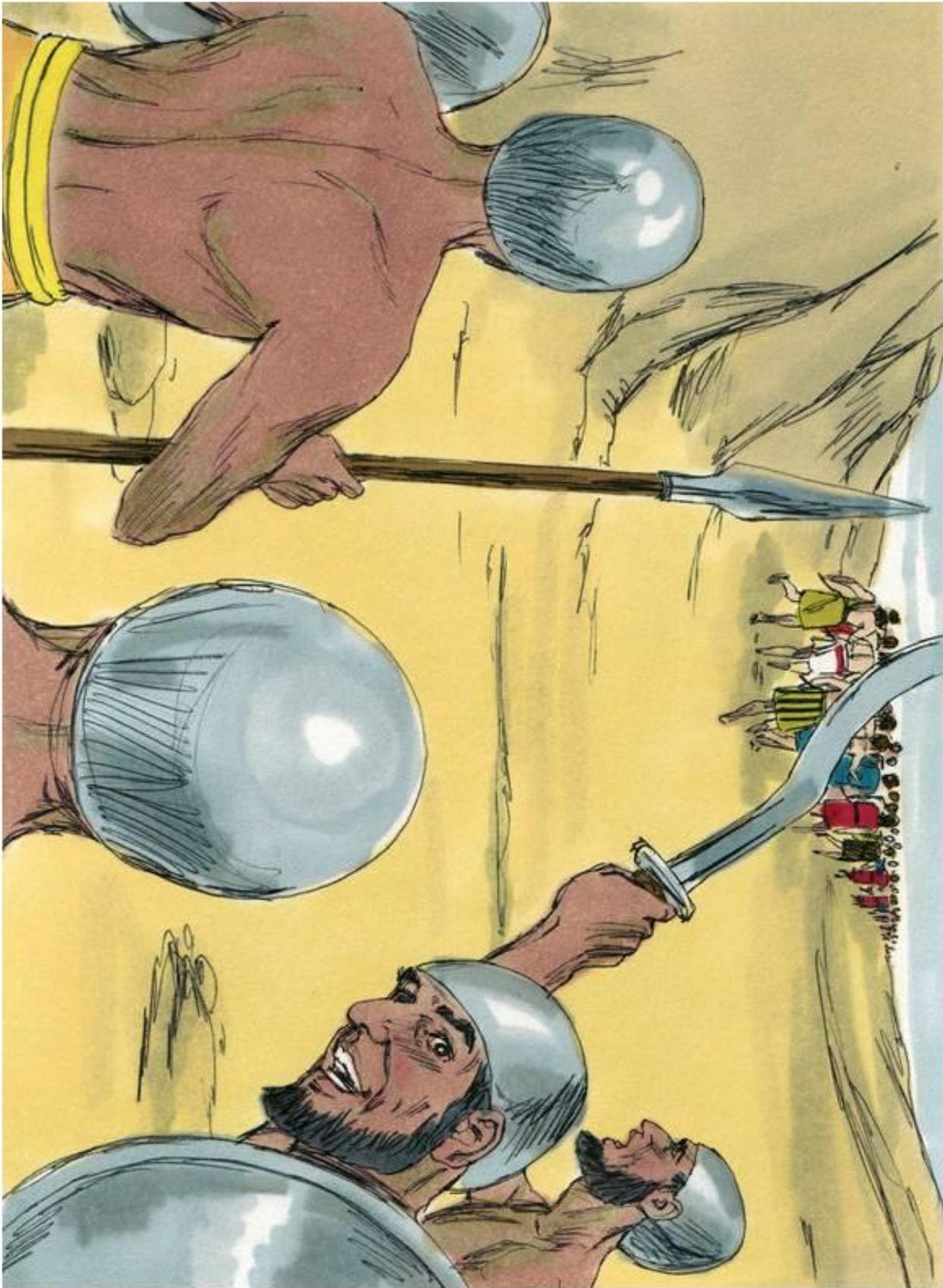


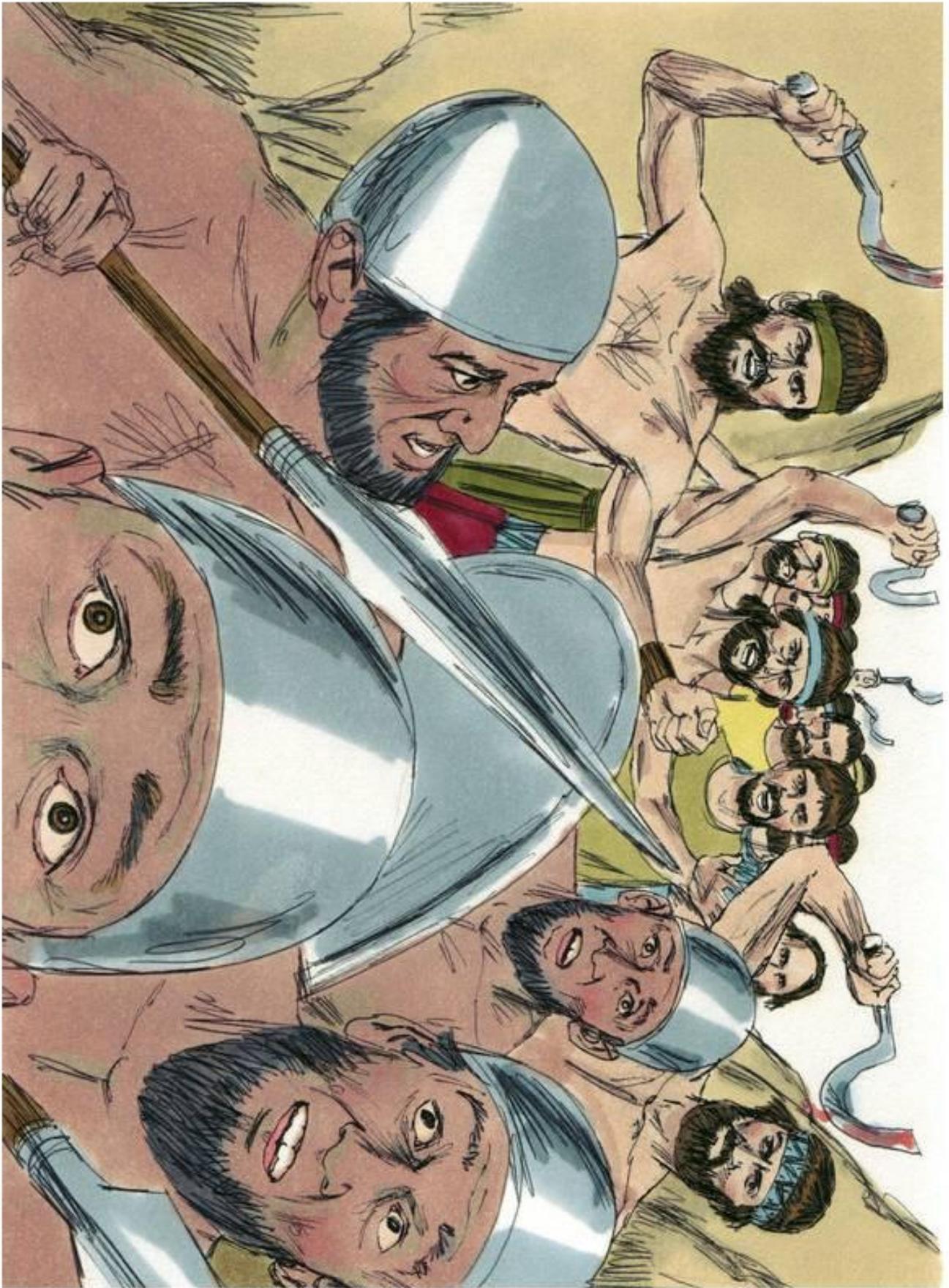
Joshua came from this side.

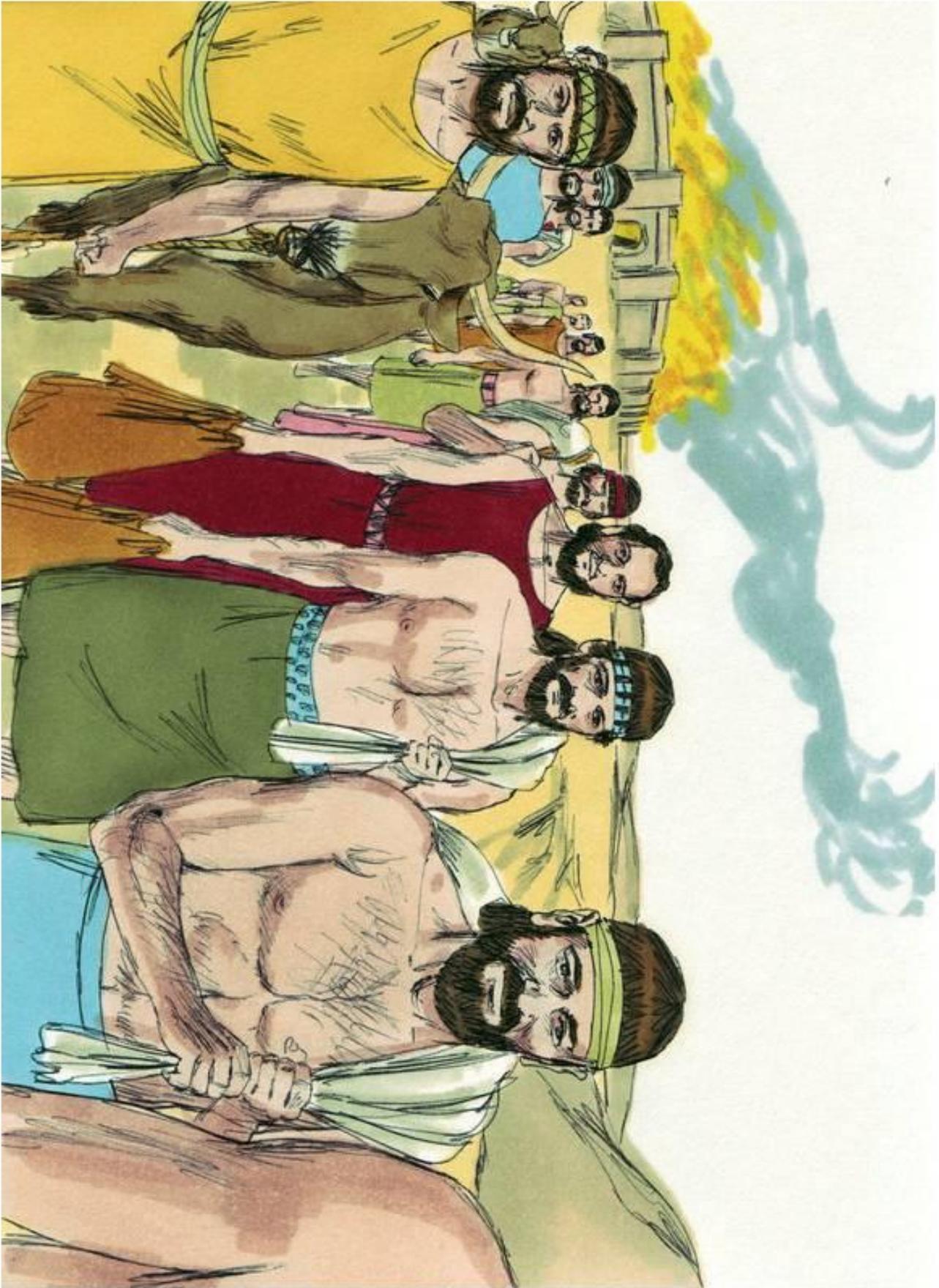


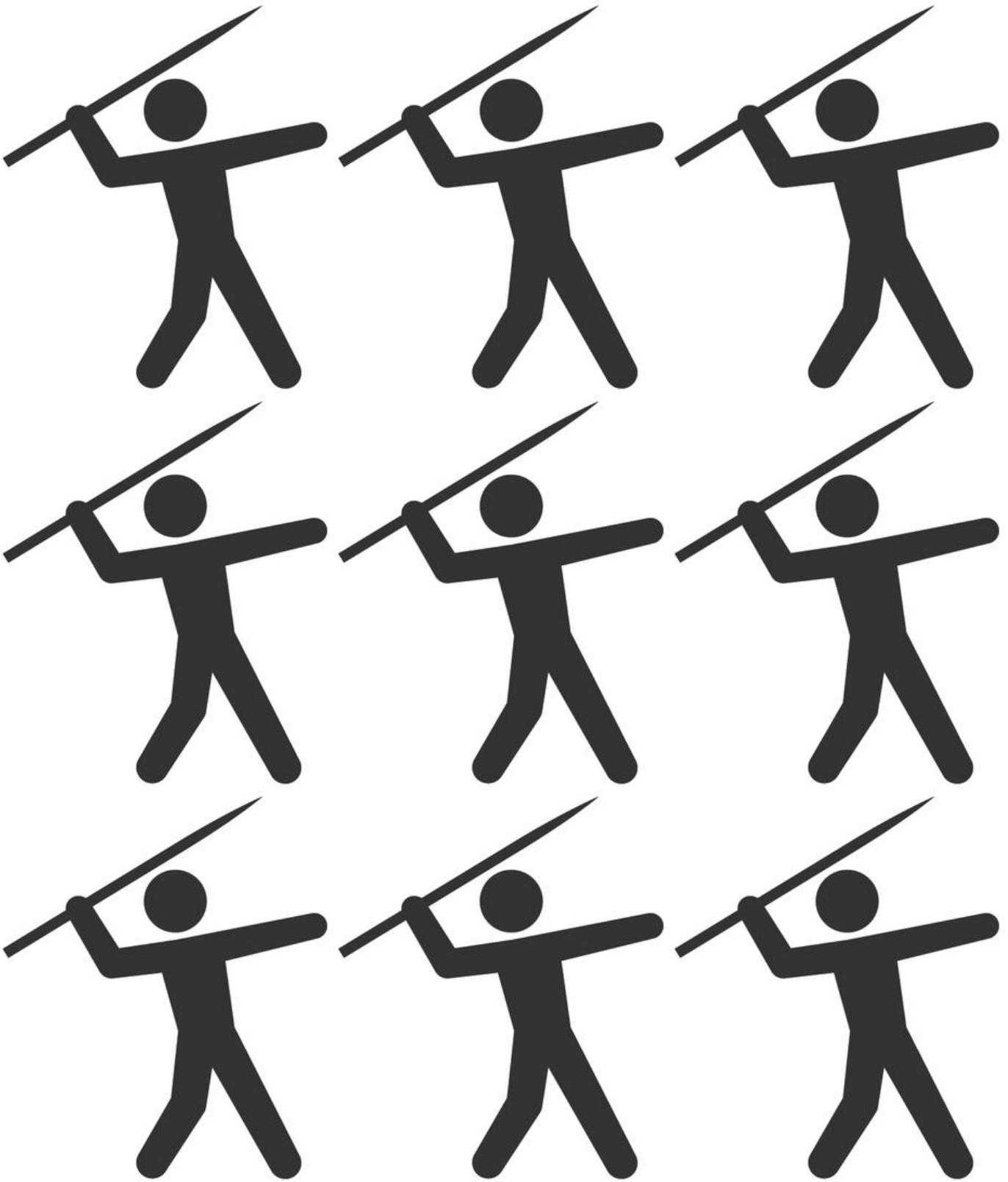












North

**Joshua and
25,000 men**

West

East

**5,000 men
in ambush**

South

Joshua 1:6, 7: Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.