

Joshua 8:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them,

Analysis

Joshua outlines his part of the plan: 'I, and all the people that are with me, will approach unto the city: and it shall come to pass, when they come out against us, as at the first, that we will flee before them.' This requires humility and courage—deliberately provoking attack, then feigning retreat. The phrase 'as at the first' references the earlier defeat, using it now as tactical deception. What was shameful failure becomes strategic advantage. God redeems even our defeats for His purposes (Romans 8:28). The planned retreat 'we will flee before them' demands disciplined courage—false retreat easily becomes real rout if troops panic. They must trust Joshua's plan enough to simulate defeat convincingly while maintaining formation. This teaches that spiritual warfare sometimes requires apparent retreat or weakness to accomplish God's greater purpose. Paul's 'weakness' became the platform for God's strength (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Historical Context

Feigned retreat was a sophisticated tactic requiring disciplined troops. The Israelites had to convince Ai's defenders that they were genuinely fleeing, repeating their earlier defeat. This psychological warfare exploited Ai's overconfidence after their previous victory. Ancient commanders knew that pursuing enemy troops who broke formation presented both opportunity (inflicting maximum casualties) and risk (pursuers becoming disorganized). Joshua's plan depended on Ai's forces taking the bait—leaving their fortifications to pursue what

appeared to be defeated foes. The reference 'as at the first' shows Joshua turning Israel's shame into tactical advantage. Their earlier defeat, caused by Achan's sin, became the setup for ambush strategy. This demonstrates how God can redeem failures, using painful lessons for future victory. The plan required Israel to relive their humiliation publicly—but now under God's blessing, not judgment.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. When has God redeemed your past failures or defeats for future victory?
2. What does the planned 'flight' teach about strategic patience versus immediate confrontation?
3. How can apparent weakness or retreat sometimes advance God's purposes more than direct confrontation?

Interlinear Text

וְאֲנִי	וְכָל	הָעָם	אֲשֶׁר	אֶת־
H589	H3605		H834	H854
And I and all the people				
H5971				

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 7:5 (Parallel theme): And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.