

## IGNORANCE OR REBELLION

**“In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the Lord spoken by Joshua son of Nun.” (1 Kings 16:34)**

What was wrong with this man? Didn't he know about the curse Joshua pronounced on anyone who would dare to do what he did? Standing in the smoking ruins of Jericho, Joshua had pronounced this solemn oath: **“Cursed before the Lord is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: ‘At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates.’ ” (Josh 6:26)**

Please note that Hiel did this in “Ahab's time”. Ahab was a terrible king who did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him (1 Kings 16:30). He not only considered it a trivial thing to commit the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, but added to his own evil by marrying the wicked Jezebel, the daughter of the pagan Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. Ahab and Jezebel refused to worship the true God, and set up an altar to Baal in Samaria. They also set up an Asherah pole, and did many other things to provoke the Lord unto anger.

Note also that Hiel was from Bethel. Bethel means the “house of God”. It had once been a holy place where godly men like Abraham and Jacob built altars and worshiped Jehovah (Gen. 12:8; 28:10 - 22). Unfortunately, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, had transformed this holy place into a center of idolatry. To discourage people in the northern kingdom from worshiping in Jerusalem, Jeroboam made two golden calves. He placed one in Dan, and the other in Bethel and had the audacity to lie to the God's people and say: **“Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt” (1 Ki. 12:28).**

Jericho was in a beautiful location. It was known as the “city of palms”. Even though Jericho had been destroyed in the days of Joshua, people had continued to live there for 500 years. It was counted as a city of Benjamin (Josh. 18:21), and was taken by the Moabites after Joshua's death (Judges 3:13). David's disgraced commanders stayed at Jericho until their beards had grown out again (2 Sam. 10:5). The curse of Joshua did not forbid people to live in Jericho, but it did forbid the laying of “foundations” and the setting up of “gates”. God specifically forbade that the city of Jericho would ever be fortified again.

Did Hiel know this? He should have for it was written in the Word of God. Precisely as Joshua predicted, when Hiel laid the foundations of Jericho his firstborn son, Abiram, died. Then when he set up the gates, his youngest son, Segub, also died. Touche! God will be found true even if every man is a liar (Rom. 3:4).

There is also the possibility that Hiel knew the consequences of his actions and deliberately did it anyhow. While this may seem unthinkable to godly people, we must remember that paganism is ungodly. The very essence of sin is selfishness. Pagan people have consistently sacrificed their children for selfish purposes. The Scriptures make many references to pagan practice of burning children alive on pagan altars. See Deut. 18:10; 2 Ki. 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; 2 Chron. 33:6, etc. Remember! Sin is selfish and Satan has no mercy or compassion.

It really didn't matter to these boys, however, why their father did what he did. They were going to be dead one way or the other. It does, however, remind us that a father's life can affect his children. The Law promised that God would punish children for the sins of their fathers down to the third and fourth generation (Ex. 20:5). When the father is ignorant of the Bible, his children will often pay the price. When the father deliberately disobeys God, his children also pay the price. Thankfully, Jesus paid the price and all the promises of God are “yes” in Him (2 Cor.1:20).