



Joshua - Chapter Fourteen

III Joshua 13:1-21:45 - Dividing the Land (continues)

Summary of Chapter Fourteen

The method by which Joshua and Eleazar will allocate the land to the various tribes is to be by lot, overseen by the tribal elders. The faithful Caleb and his family are allocated the hill country around Hebron.

III.b Joshua 14:1-19:51 - Western territories

This section describes the tribal allocations west of the Jordan, and it exhibits literary symmetry. It begins and ends almost identically, making reference to Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the Israelite tribes, who distributed by lot the territories west of the Jordan (14:1-5 and 19:51).

Inside this outer frame are references to the inheritance of the two faithful former spies, Caleb (14:6-15) and Joshua (19:49-51). These in turn frame the major central section describing the actual allocations to the nine and a half tribes who received no inheritance east of the Jordan.

A crucial assembly of the whole congregation of the people of Israel at Shiloh before the tent of meeting bisects and anchors this section (18:1-10), with the allotments for the major tribes of Judah and Joseph, that is, Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh, preceding (15:1-17:18), and the allotments for the other seven tribes following (18:11-19:48). Thus, Chapters 14-19 provide detailed historical information in a carefully structured literary form, and in so doing underscore a fundamental theological truth: those like Caleb or Joshua who wholly follow the Lord will be able to enjoy their inheritance.

III.b.i Joshua 14:1-5 - The Distribution of Territory West of the Jordan

This summary statement confirms that the land allocation west of Jordan will be made by drawing lots. It would be Joshua and the high priest Eleazar that would draw the lots, observed by the tribal leaders.

¹ These are the inheritances that the Israelites received in the land of Canaan, which the priest Eleazar, and Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites distributed to them.

Joshua 14:1

The priest Eleazar was Aaron's son and successor: <<*The Israelites journeyed from Beeroth-bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried; his son Eleazar succeeded him as priest*>> (Deuteronomy 10:6), and had been assigned his present task by Moses: <<*These are the names of the men who shall apportion the land to you for inheritance: the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun*>> (Numbers 34:17).

Ten heads of the nine and a half tribes were explicitly named already in Numbers 34:18-29.

² Their inheritance was by lot, as the Lord had commanded Moses for the nine and a half tribes.

Joshua 14:2

That the inheritance was by lot guarantees divine oversight and protects Israel's leaders from any suspicion of favouritism. The Lord's progressively more detailed instructions to Moses regarding the lot-casting procedure are recorded in Numbers 26:52-56, 33:50-54, and 34:1-15.

The Israelites believed that God would influence the way the lots were drawn and this is seen at various times in their history: <<*But the land shall be apportioned by lot; according to the names of their ancestral tribes they shall inherit*>> (Numbers 26:55), and: <<*You shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the Lord our God*>> (Joshua 18:6). Israelites believed that God controlled the outcome: <<*The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord's alone*>> (Proverbs 16:33), as did the early church: <<*And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles*>> (Acts 1:26).

It would not have been a case of divine will when the Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus' garments for that was simply gambling. However, it was by divine inspiration and will: <<*When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his*>>

clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.' This was to fulfil what the scripture says, 'They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.' And that is what the soldiers did>> (John 19:23-25a).

³ For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and a half tribes beyond the Jordan; but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. ⁴ For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim; and no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only towns to live in, with their pasture lands for their flocks and herds. ⁵ The Israelites did as the Lord commanded Moses; they allotted the land.

Joshua 14:3-5

The inheritance to the two and a half tribes beyond the Jordan was dealt with in the previous chapter.

For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim. Although it is usual to refer to the twelve tribes of Israel, each descended from the twelve sons of Jacob or Israel, there were actually thirteen as Jacob 'adopted' Joseph's two elder sons Ephraim and Manasseh in Genesis Chapter 48. However, since the Levites were to receive no land allocation, there would still be only twelve tribal lands and therefore they are still described as being twelve tribes.

Interestingly, when the twelve tribes are listed in Revelation Chapter 7 the tribe of Joseph is listed instead of Ephraim yet the descendants of Manasseh are included as are the Levites. In that listing it is the descendants of Dan who are omitted.

Although the Levites would receive no portion of land as discussed in Chapter 13, they would be given towns to live in and pasture lands for their flocks and herds. The designation of Levitical cities is given in Joshua Chapter 21.

III.b.ii Joshua 14:6-15 - Hebron Allotted to Caleb

This section recounts Caleb's inheritance of Hebron, which Moses swore to give him many years before: <<*But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me wholeheartedly, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it*>> (Numbers 14:24).

It is one of four narrative passages, sometimes referred to as 'land-grant narratives,' that are distinctive in Joshua Chapters 14-19 in that they focus on

individuals. The other three are the allocation of Debir to Caleb's daughter Achsah and her husband Othniel (15:13-19), Othniel reappears in Judges 3:7-11; the bestowal of an inheritance on the daughters of Zelophehad (Joshua 17:3-6); and the granting of Timnath-serah to Joshua (19:49-50).

⁶ Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal; and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, 'You know what the Lord said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. ⁷ I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him an honest report. ⁸ But my companions who went up with me made the heart of the people fail; yet I wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God. ⁹ And Moses swore on that day, saying, "Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children for ever, because you have wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God." ¹⁰ And now, as you see, the Lord has kept me alive, as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, while Israel was journeying through the wilderness; and here I am today, eighty-five years old. ¹¹ I am still as strong today as I was on the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war, and for going and coming. ¹² So now give me this hill country of which the Lord spoke on that day; for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; it may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as the Lord said.'

Joshua 14:6-12

I wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God. Emphasised through repetition in v.9 and v.14, this commendation of Caleb sets a standard by which Israel is to be measured in the narratives that follow. Caleb is not boasting but is reminding Joshua of the promise Moses made in Deuteronomy 1:35-36. Caleb was one of the only two spies to come back with a good report, a report of faith, believing that God had given Israel the land and would enable them to conquer it; refer to Numbers 13:26-14:9. The other ten spies believed that Israel would be destroyed in the attempt to take Canaan, and Israel believed the ten doubting spies.

The other faithful spy was none other than Joshua. The ten faithless spies measured the giants against their own strength, but Joshua and Caleb measured the spies against God's strength. This was the cause of Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness; God would not allow that generation of unbelief to enter in, so he waited for them to die in the desert; refer to Numbers 14:26-38. The only ones of age at the time of the rejection who

actually entered the Promised Land were be Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies. So, it is fitting as Judah is the first tribe to receive its allotment on the west side of the Jordan, that Caleb be the first among the people of Judah to receive his inheritance.

Despite his advanced age of eighty-five years, Caleb maintains that his strength is undiminished and that he will be able to drive out the formidable Anakim, provided that the Lord will be with him. Joshua was credited with cutting off the Anakim from Hebron already in Joshua 11:21. Either the Anakim have reasserted themselves in Hebron, supported by Joshua 11:22 which mentions some survivors, or, more likely, as commander-in-chief Joshua supports and receives general credit for the eventual expulsion of the Anakim by Caleb.

¹³ Then Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. ¹⁴ So Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholeheartedly followed the Lord, the God of Israel. ¹⁵ Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba; this Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. And the land had rest from war.

Joshua 14:13-15

Then Joshua blessed him. It is interesting that it is the leader of the people and not the high priest that offers the blessing. Clearly, God was with both men yet it would have meant more to Caleb to receive this blessing from a man he clearly admired and trusted.

Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb. The promise was honoured because he wholeheartedly followed the Lord.

That both the summary of Joshua's defeat of the Anakim in Joshua 11:21-23 and the present account of Caleb's taking of Hebron conclude with the statement, the land had rest from war, a statement that appears nowhere else in the Book of Joshua, suggests that both sections relate to the same events.

