



Joshua - Chapter Fifteen

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

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

Summary of Chapter Fifteen

As the western allocations begin, pride of place goes to the important tribe of Judah. In keeping with the general pattern of the subsequent allocations, the tribal boundaries are first described (vv.1-12), followed by listings of cities according to region (vv.20-62).

III.b.iii Joshua 15:1-12 - The Territory of Judah

Judah, the tribe from whom the great kings and the Messiah would come, is the first lot drawn and their land allocation is described here.

¹ The lot for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their families reached southwards to the boundary of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south. ² And their southern boundary ran from the end of the Dead Sea, from the bay that faces southwards; ³ it goes out southwards of the ascent of Akrabbim, passes along to Zin, and goes up south of Kadesh-barnea, along by Hezron, up to Addar, makes a turn to Karka, ⁴ passes along to Azmon, goes out by the Wadi of Egypt, and comes to its end at the sea. This shall be your southern boundary. ⁵ And the eastern boundary is the Dead Sea, to the mouth of the Jordan. And the boundary on the north side runs from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan; ⁶ and the boundary goes up to Beth-hoglah, and passes along north of Beth-arabah; and the boundary goes up to the Stone of Bohan, Reuben's son; ⁷ and the boundary goes up to Debir from the Valley of Achor, and so northwards, turning

towards Gilgal, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the valley; and the boundary passes along to the waters of En-shemesh, and ends at En-rogel; ⁸ then the boundary goes up by the valley of the son of Hinnom at the southern slope of the Jebusites (that is, Jerusalem); and the boundary goes up to the top of the mountain that lies over against the valley of Hinnom, on the west, at the northern end of the valley of Rephaim; ⁹ then the boundary extends from the top of the mountain to the spring of the Waters of Nephtoah, and from there to the towns of Mount Ephron; then the boundary bends around to Baalah (that is, Kiriath-jearim); ¹⁰ and the boundary circles west of Baalah to Mount Seir, passes along to the northern slope of Mount Jearim (that is, Chesalon), and goes down to Beth-shemesh, and passes along by Timnah; ¹¹ the boundary goes out to the slope of the hill north of Ekron, then the boundary bends around to Shikkeron, and passes along to Mount Baalah, and goes out to Jabneel; then the boundary comes to an end at the sea. ¹² And the western boundary was the Mediterranean with its coast. This is the boundary surrounding the people of Judah according to their families.

Joshua 15:1-12

The southern slope of the Jebusites (that is, Jerusalem). This prominent city, which bordered the land allocation of Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 18:28), would not be fully conquered until the time of King David, refer to 2 Samuel 5:6-10 and 1 Chronicles 11:4-9; despite a number of attempts: <<*Then the people of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it. They put it to the sword and set the city on fire*>> (Judges 1:8), with: <<*But the Benjaminites did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived in Jerusalem among the Benjaminites to this day*>> (Judges 1:21).

III.b.iv Joshua 15:13-19 - Caleb Occupies His Portion

Hebron and the surrounding region was within the allocation of Judah, the tribe to which Caleb belonged and the land that had already been allocated to him in the previous chapter. This brief subsection describes how he took the land and how he promised his daughter to the man who conquered the town of Debir. It was his brother Othniel that succeeded in this task.

¹³ According to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, he gave to Caleb son of Jephunneh a portion among the people of Judah, Kiriath-arba, that is, Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak). ¹⁴ And Caleb drove

out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak.¹⁵ From there he went up against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher.¹⁶ And Caleb said, 'Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife.'¹⁷ Othniel son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife.¹⁸ When she came to him, she urged him to ask her father for a field. As she dismounted from her donkey, Caleb said to her, 'What do you want?'¹⁹ She said to him, 'Give me a present; since you have set me in the land of the Negeb, give me springs of water as well.' So Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

Joshua 15:13-19

According to the commandment of the Lord. Caleb was not awarded his portion of land by lot but by the direct instruction that God gave to Joshua.

Caleb said, 'Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife.' Caleb was not only a man of great and bold deeds, i.e. the driving out of the descendants of Anak, but also a man who encouraged others to great and bold deeds. He did this by offering his daughter in marriage to the man who was bold enough to conquer a city to have her.

In Numbers 13:28 the spies reported that the descendants of Anak made the conquest of the land impossible. The tall Anakites are descended from the Nephilim who, in Genesis 6:4, were reported to be mighty warriors.

Othniel son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, became one of the first judges in Israel and his story is told in Judges 3:7-11.

Give me a present; since you have set me in the land of the Negeb, give me springs of water as well. Caleb's daughter imitates her father's boldness in asking for blessing. She did not hesitate to ask her father for some choice springs as water is essential for life and prosperity in the land. The account of Caleb's daughter Achsah is recounted in Judges 1:11-15.

III.b.v Joshua 15:20-63 - The Towns of Judah

This lengthy section lists all the towns and villages within the land allocation boundary. Some of these places will reappear in important accounts of the history of the land, while others remain obscure.

²⁰ This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Judah according to their families. ²¹ The towns belonging to the tribe of the people of

Judah in the extreme south, towards the boundary of Edom, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, ²² Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, ²³ Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, ²⁴ Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, ²⁵ Hazor-hadattah, Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor), ²⁶ Amam, Shema, Moladah, ²⁷ Hazar-gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-pelet, ²⁸ Hazar-shual, Beer-sheba, Biziothiah, ²⁹ Baalah, Iim, Ezem, ³⁰ Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, ³¹ Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, ³² Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: in all, twenty-nine towns, with their villages.

³³ And in the lowlands, Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, ³⁴ Zanoah, En-gannim, Tappuah, Enam, ³⁵ Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, ³⁶ Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, Gederothaim: fourteen towns with their villages.

³⁷ Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal-gad, ³⁸ Dilan, Mizpeh, Jokthe-el, ³⁹ Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon, ⁴⁰ Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish, ⁴¹ Gederoth, Beth-dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen towns with their villages.

⁴² Libnah, Ether, Ashan, ⁴³ Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, ⁴⁴ Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine towns with their villages.

⁴⁵ Ekron, with its dependencies and its villages; ⁴⁶ from Ekron to the sea, all that were near Ashdod, with their villages.

⁴⁷ Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; to the Wadi of Egypt, and the Great Sea with its coast.

⁴⁸ And in the hill country, Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, ⁴⁹ Dannah, Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir), ⁵⁰ Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, ⁵¹ Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven towns with their villages.

⁵² Arab, Dumah, Eshan, ⁵³ Janim, Beth-tappuah, Aphekah, ⁵⁴ Humtah, Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior: nine towns with their villages.

⁵⁵ Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, ⁵⁶ Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, ⁵⁷ Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten towns with their villages.

⁵⁸ Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor, ⁵⁹ Maarath, Beth-anoth, and Eltekon: six towns with their villages.

⁶⁰ Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim) and Rabbah: two towns with their villages.

⁶¹ In the wilderness, Beth-arabah, Middin, Secacah, ⁶² Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En-gedi: six towns with their villages.

⁶³ But the people of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so the Jebusites live with the people of Judah in Jerusalem to this day.

[Joshua 15:20-63](#)



Tribal Land Allocations

Against the backdrop of so much success, the notice that the people of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem and that they live with the people of Judah in Jerusalem to this day is disconcerting in at least two respects. First, it recalls Moses' repeated warnings against allowing Canaanites to survive and live among the Israelites; refer to the comments made on Joshua 6:17 and 6:18. Second, it raises a theological question: how is it that the people of Judah could not drive out their foes? Surely the god of the Jebusites is not stronger than the God of Judah! This is not the first instance of failure to occupy, i.e. Joshua 13:13, and it will not be the last. In Joshua 17:12 the Manassites are unable to occupy certain towns because the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land. In 17:16 the Ephraimites cite Canaanite possession of chariots of iron as preventing them from taking the plains. These statements seem to be in tension with the dominant theological conviction of the Book of Joshua that <<***the hand of the Lord is mighty***>> (Joshua 4:24b), and with the divine promise to the leader Joshua: <<***No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous; for you shall put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them***>> (Joshua 1:5-6). Joshua himself seems to agree with this assessment, insisting that: <<***you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong***>> (Joshua 17:18b). Perhaps statements of what Israel could not do are to be read as early evidence of spiritual slippage, of failure to follow the Lord wholeheartedly, which will become increasingly evident in the Book of Judges.