



Joshua - Chapter Nineteen

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

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

Summary of Chapter Nineteen

The final six tribes of Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and Dan now receive their land inheritance by lot. After this is completed, Joshua receives his own town in the hill country of Ephraim, thus completing the allocations.

III.b.xi Joshua 19:1-9 - The Territory of Simeon

Following the allocation to Benjamin, the second lot fell to the tribe of Simeon and is recorded here as lying within the boundaries of Judah and therefore only the cities themselves are recorded.

¹ The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of Simeon, according to its families; its inheritance lay within the inheritance of the tribe of Judah. ² It had for its inheritance Beer-sheba, Sheba, Moladah, ³ Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem, ⁴ Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, ⁵ Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah, ⁶ Beth-lebaoth, and Sharuhem – thirteen towns with their villages; ⁷ Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan – four towns with their villages; ⁸ together with all the villages all around these towns as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negeb. This was the inheritance of the tribe of Simeon according to its families.

⁹ The inheritance of the tribe of Simeon formed part of the territory of Judah; because the portion of the tribe of Judah was too large for them, the tribe of Simeon obtained an inheritance within their inheritance.

Joshua 19:1-9



Tribal Land Allocations

That the allocation for Simeon fell in the midst of the inheritance of the people of Judah (v.1) is explained by the fact that the portion of the people of Judah was

too large for them (v.9). A theological rationale for this is offered in the prophetic words of a dying patriarch Jacob, who spoke of Simeon and Levi: <<*Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel*>> (Genesis 49:7). Logically, no boundary description is given for Simeon, only a list of cities. Those cities that can be located stretched west to east along the southern reaches of Judahite territory, suggesting that Simeon may have served a protective function against enemies to the south.

III.b.xii Joshua 19:10-16 - The Territory of Zebulun

The third of the final seven allocations falls to the tribe of Zebulun.

¹⁰ The third lot came up for the tribe of Zebulun, according to its families. The boundary of its inheritance reached as far as Sarid; ¹¹ then its boundary goes up westwards, and on to Maralah, and touches Dabbesheth, then the wadi that is east of Jokneam; ¹² from Sarid it goes in the other direction eastwards towards the sunrise to the boundary of Chisloth-tabor; from there it goes to Daberath, then up to Japhia; ¹³ from there it passes along on the east towards the sunrise to Gath-hepher, to Eth-kazin, and going on to Rimmon it bends towards Neah; ¹⁴ then on the north the boundary makes a turn to Hannathon, and it ends at the valley of Iphtah-el; ¹⁵ and Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem – twelve towns with their villages. ¹⁶ This is the inheritance of the tribe of Zebulun, according to its families – these towns with their villages.

Joshua 19:10-16

Bethlehem is a northerly village not to be confused with the more famous Bethlehem in Judah: <<*Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the clan of Judah. He was a Levite residing there*>> (Judges 17:7), <<*The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah*>> (Ruth 1:2a), <<*But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days*>> (Micah 5:2).

III.b.xiii Joshua 19:17-23 - The Territory of Issachar

The fourth of the final seven lots came out for the tribe of Issachar.

¹⁷ The fourth lot came out for Issachar, for the tribe of Issachar, according to its families. ¹⁸ Its territory included Jezreel, Chesulloth,

Shunem, ¹⁹ Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, ²⁰ Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, ²¹ Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah, Beth-pazzez; ²² the boundary also touches Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth-shemesh, and its boundary ends at the Jordan – sixteen towns with their villages. ²³ This is the inheritance of the tribe of Issachar, according to its families – the towns with their villages.

Joshua 19:17-23

Jezeel is the scene for many notable battles in Scripture and the massacre of Ahab's descendents there in 2 Kings Chapter 10 was probably the reason why the prophet Hosea named his son after the place as part of his prophecy that Israel would be destroyed. This came to pass in 735 BC, when Assyria attacked and conquered Israel (2 Kings 15:29). It is also the place that Hosea prophesies the restoration of God's people: <<*The people of Judah and the people of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint for themselves one head; and they shall take possession of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezeel*>> (Hosea 1:11).

III.b.xiv Joshua 19:24-31 - The Territory of Asher

The fifth of seven lots came out for the tribe of Asher.

²⁴ The fifth lot came out for the tribe of Asher according to its families. ²⁵ Its boundary included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, ²⁶ Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal; on the west it touches Carmel and Shihor-libnath, ²⁷ then it turns eastwards, goes to Beth-dagon, and touches Zebulun and the valley of Iphtah-el northwards to Beth-emek and Neiel; then it continues in the north to Cabul, ²⁸ Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, Kanah, as far as Great Sidon; ²⁹ then the boundary turns to Ramah, reaching to the fortified city of Tyre; then the boundary turns to Hosah, and it ends at the sea; Mahalab, Achzib, ³⁰ Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob – twenty-two towns with their villages. ³¹ This is the inheritance of the tribe of Asher according to its families – these towns with their villages.

Joshua 19:24-31

Carmel is a place frequently mentioned in Scripture. It is perhaps most well known as the place where Elijah triumphed over the priests of Baal recorded in 1 Kings 18:20-40. It was a place of apparent beauty: <<*Your head crowns you like Carmel, and your flowing locks are like purple; a king is held captive in the tresses*>> (Song 7:5), and: <<*The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the*

majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God>> (Isaiah 35:2b); and was referenced by several prophets: <<Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, from there I will search out and take them; and though they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the sea-serpent, and it shall bite them>> (Amos 9:3), and: <<He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither, and the bloom of Lebanon fades>> (Nahum 1:4).



Mount Carmel

III.b.xv Joshua 19:32-39 - The Territory of Naphtali

The sixth of seven lots came out for the tribe of Naphtali.

³² The sixth lot came out for the tribe of Naphtali, for the tribe of Naphtali, according to its families. ³³ And its boundary ran from Heleph, from the oak in Zaananim, and Adami-nekeb, and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum; and it ended at the Jordan; ³⁴ then the boundary turns westwards to Aznoth-tabor, and goes from there to Hukkok, touching Zebulun at the south, and Asher on the west, and Judah on the east at the Jordan. ³⁵ The fortified towns are Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, ³⁶ Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, ³⁷ Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor, ³⁸ Iron, Migdal-el, Horem, Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh – nineteen towns with their villages. ³⁹ This is the inheritance of the tribe of Naphtali according to its families – the towns with their villages.

Joshua 19:32-39

The tribe of Naphtali were another group who failed to fully subdue the land: <<Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became subject to forced labour for them>> (Judges 1:33).

Along with their neighbours Zebulun, they were the recipients of a messianic prophecy: <<He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned’>> (Matthew 4:13-16).

III.b.xvi Joshua 19:40-48 - The Territory of Dan

The final land allocation falls to the tribe of Dan.

⁴⁰ The seventh lot came out for the tribe of Dan, according to its families. ⁴¹ The territory of its inheritance included Zorah, Eshtaol, Irshemesh, ⁴² Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, ⁴³ Elon, Timnah, Ekron, ⁴⁴ Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, ⁴⁵ Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon, ⁴⁶ Me-jarkon, and Rakkon at the border opposite Joppa. ⁴⁷ When the territory of the Danites was lost to them, the Danites went up and fought against Leshem, and after capturing it and putting it to the sword, they took possession of it and settled in it, calling Leshem, Dan, after their ancestor Dan. ⁴⁸ This is the inheritance of the tribe of Dan, according to their families – these towns with their villages.

Joshua 19:40-48

The seventh lot came out for the tribe of Dan. Part of Dan’s territory was later lost to them: <<*The Amorites pressed the Danites back into the hill country; they did not allow them to come down to the plain*>> (Judges 1:34).

The story of how the Danites went up and fought against Leshem is told in Judges Chapter 18, where the citizens of Laish, i.e. Leshem, are described as a people <<*quiet and unsuspecting*>> (Judges 18:7).

The port city of Joppa, modern Jaffa, is just south of Tel Aviv and is part of that city. It was captured by the Jewish Hasmonæans in the 2nd Century BC, and contained a substantial Jewish population prior to the First Jewish Revolt in AD66-73. Excavations under portions of the modern city have revealed evidence of 1st Century AD residences and an early fortress. It was a major trading port: <<*So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from King Cyrus of Persia*>> (Ezra 3:7), the port used by Jonah when he tried to flee from God: <<*But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go*>>

with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord>> (Jonah 1:3), and the location where the Lord used Peter to restore the life of a widow: <<Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord>> (Acts 9:40-42).

III.b.xvii Joshua 19:49-51 - Joshua's Inheritance

After all the land has been allocated to the tribes, Joshua receives the town of Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim, the tribe of his birth.

⁴⁹ When they had finished distributing the several territories of the land as inheritances, the Israelites gave an inheritance among them to Joshua son of Nun. ⁵⁰ By command of the Lord they gave him the town that he asked for, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim; he rebuilt the town, and settled in it.

Joshua 19:49-50

Like Caleb in Joshua 14:6-15, his fellow survivor from the wilderness years, Joshua receives an inheritance among them. On the framing function of these two notices, refer to the comment made on Joshua 14:1-19:51.

By command of the Lord, Joshua is given Timnath-serah or Khirbet Tibnah, and is called Timnath-heres in the notice of Joshua's death in Judges 2:6-10. The site is in southwest Ephraim, away from the more formidable cities of the period. Joshua's reception of an inheritance only after all others have received theirs speaks well of him as a leader. That his city is away from the major power centres may contain a hint that his most active leadership years are drawing to a close.

Joshua received what was promised to him by God, but in remarkable humility, he receives his portion last. This is the kind of humble service and concern for others that makes Joshua such a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ: <<For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many>> (Mark 10:45).

⁵¹ These are the inheritances that the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites distributed by lot at Shiloh before the Lord, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. So they finished dividing the land.

Joshua 19:51

The priest Eleazar and Joshua. The section Joshua 14:1-19:51 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. Everything in this concluding verse indicates that the tribal allocations have been conducted appropriately at the Lord's direction, i.e. by lot.