

JOSHUA

Lesson 18 - Chapters 13 and 14

As we continue in Joshua 13 today the central feature to keep in mind is that the Lord has ordered Joshua to divide and distribute the Land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel. This dividing comes at a somewhat unexpected time because even with the resounding military victories of Joshua and Israel over the southern and then northern coalition armies of the kings of Canaan, virtually the entire coastline is still in enemy hands. The job of conquering Canaan is unfinished and there is much left to do. So before we re-read a portion of Joshua 13 I think the God-principle that I would like to reiterate as the one that Joshua was learning and that as Believers we need to constantly keep in mind, is that perfect circumstances are never necessary to be obedient or to move forward in God's work. Therefore it is rare that we will fully complete a task to the level it ought to, yet by no means is this ever an excuse to hesitate or procrastinate.

We do what we can, with what we have, when we can. Canaan was not fully taken; but it was sufficiently under control so as to allow allotment of the land to the tribes. There was no reason to wait any longer.

RE-READ JOSHUA 13: 8 – end

This is another of those places in the Bible where it would be much better if the chapter markers were left out. Starting at about chapter 11 and on through chapter 19, it is one continuous story of how and when the Land of Canaan was divided up and given to each Israelite tribe.

Verses 8 – 13 speak of the land on the other side of the Jordan, to the east, in the area that scholars dub the Trans-Jordan. It is the OTHER area that Israel would occupy, and it is OUTSIDE of the Promised Land. The point of these verses is to demonstrate that Joshua wasn't any more a failure than Moses was when it comes to conquering the land fully. The general boundaries of the so called 2 ½ tribes of Israel are called out in these passages, making it abundantly clear that it was Moses who was in charge, and it was he who gave the land to Reuben, Gad, and ½ of the clans who made up the tribe of Manasseh. And that two foreign nations consisting of people called the Geshurites and the Maakites were NOT driven out of the 2 ½ tribes' territorial area and instead were left to live nearby and (in some cases) among Israel. So even Moses, God's own Mediator and a man so highly venerated by his people did not fully succeed. Therefore no one should hold Joshua to a higher standard, nor should Joshua be seen as less than an excellent leader because he did not drive out the

Canaanites from the west side of the Jordan.

The other point of these passages is to show that Moses divided the territory in the Trans-Jordan BEFORE it was completely conquered, so there is no reason that Joshua shouldn't do the same on the opposite side of the River.

Then in verse 14 the Levites are mentioned because they are not counted among either the 2 ½ tribes on the east bank of the Jordan, or the 9 ½ tribes that would occupy the west bank. In fact shortly we are going to encounter a rather lengthy explanation of just WHY the Levites were left out of the count of Israelite tribes. There is a good and practical reason why this review of the make-up of the Israelite nation, and the special status of the Levites, suddenly pops up at this point in Joshua. At some point every generation begins to ponder the current state of affairs and ask questions about why certain things are as they are within their society and culture. Why does one group (tribe, clan, family) seem to have an inherent advantage or disadvantage when compared to the others? Isn't there something we should do about it to make things fairer? Is it time to make a change? Is it time to set aside the traditions of the past for a new future? When left to our own devices we often make changes that never quite pan out as we envisioned, and usually it's near impossible to reverse the effects and go back to how it used to be. The Lord God wanted to make very clear that it was HE who made the decision on the treatment of the Levites, the divvying up of the Land of Canaan; the tribal make-up of Israel and more; and it was not to be tampered with.

Verse 14 says that the Levites would receive no land as their inheritance and this was God's firm position on the subject; but instead of land Levi would receive the offerings made by fire to the Lord God. This has been stated in an around-about way in earlier books of Torah, but it is a little more clear now as to what exactly God's intention was concerning what Levi was to receive. And we have to recollect our understanding of holy property to get the picture of just what this means.

Offerings made to God at the Tabernacle (and later the Temple) were given the general name of *ishsheh*. This referred specifically to burnt offerings but also generally to all sacrificial offerings devoted to the Lord by whatever means. To the Hebrews it meant whatever had been set apart as holy property for God; therefore that could include vow offerings and (especially as pertained to this moment in Israelite history) spoils of Holy War. In other words the Levites were entitled to the same holy property that the other Israelite tribes were **prohibited** under pain of death from taking. Therefore except for the dwelling places of the Canaanite people that were destroyed by Joshua's army and except for the Canaanite people themselves that were killed, generally speaking everything else that was designated as holy property taken as God's portion from the spoils of war went to the Levites for their use.

This system was ordered in Deuteronomy:

CJB Deuteronomy 10:9 *This is why Levi has no share or inheritance with his brothers; ADONAI is his inheritance, as ADONAI your God had said to him.*

We'll talk a little more about this later in our lesson.

Up to now the general area of the Trans-Jordan was described as being given to the 2 ½ tribes of Israel; but with verse 15 we get more exacting boundaries associated with each of those 2 ½ tribes separately. The country between the Arnon River to the south and the Jabbok River north of it was divided between Reuben and Gad; it was bounded on the south by Moab and on the eastern side by Ammon. The southernmost district was given to Reuben and it extended from the Arnon River to the point of connection (the inlet) of the Jordan River into the Dead Sea.

Gad's territory followed along the eastern banks of the Jordan (as it's western boundary) and then eastward from there. It reached as far north as the Sea of Kinnareth (that also went by the name of Gennesaret and then a long time later the Sea of Galilee).

North of Gad's territory lay the region set apart for the tribe of Manasseh, or better the ½ tribe of Manasseh. I know this can get a little confusing but it needn't be; Manasseh was a very large tribe. When Moses was still leading Israel and they were yet to cross-over the Jordan into the Promised Land, and so were still operating in the Trans-Jordan, many of the clans that made up the tribe of Manasseh liked what they saw and didn't want to go any farther; but an approximately equal amount of the other clans of Manasseh wanted to continue on. This was a very serious complication and it easily could have meant inner-tribal civil warfare and blood killings within the tribe of Manasseh unless a compromise could be reached. The solution was that those clans of Manasseh who wished to stay in the Trans-Jordan would be allowed to do so, and those who wanted to move on would also be allowed to do so. Each would keep their tribal affiliation and tribal identity (part of Manasseh didn't become a new and separate tribe). Yet, as was inevitable, eventually there were tremendous power struggles and calls for succession and even some serious battles between east Manasseh and west Manasseh. A good map shows that the two Manasseh territories weren't even contiguous so the table was set for some real and ongoing political problems within the Manasseh tribe. Thus we get this designation of the ½ tribe of Manasseh of which (obviously) there were two.

A good question to ask right about now might be why we get all this stuff about the 2 ½ tribes getting their land in the Trans-Jordan since this seems to be but repeating things we read back in Deuteronomy about the same event that happened several years earlier. I mean it reads as though this distribution of the land to the east of the Jordan was a current event. What is happening is that while Moses designated the land as set apart for the 2 ½ tribes there was a caveat placed on it. The deal was that the 2 ½ tribes had to supply troops to fight alongside the remaining 9 ½ tribes as they went about conquering the Land of Canaan. Further, Joshua would decide when the soldiers of Reuben, Gad, and some of the clans of Manasseh had fulfilled their duty to their brethren. This was that time. The major battles for the southern and northern regions of Canaan had been fought and won and the 2 ½ tribes did as they said they would do. Therefore Joshua, under the direction of Yehoveh, is ready to declare that the eastern lands are officially given to Reuben, Gad, and ½ of Manasseh and they have no further duty to the 9 ½ tribes who have not moved into the Promised Land.

Let's move on to Joshua 14.

READ JOSHUA CHAPTER 14 all

The first words of the first verse show us that the subject is switching from settling the Trans-Jordan to occupying the Land of Canaan. And by definition the main character also switches from Moses (who led the assault on the eastern territory) to Joshua (who led the assault on the western territory, Canaan).

Suddenly after not hearing anything about him for some time, the name of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the current High Priest of Israel reappears. And this reappearance is in the context of the event of distributing the Land of Canaan among the 9 ½ tribes who have yet to receive their own territories. We see that this allotment of land was a joint effort of Israelite leadership with Joshua (the secular leader of Israel), Eleazar (the spiritual leader of Israel), and the 10 tribal princes (one for each of the 10 tribes that would be the recipients of the land). I say “10” princes (tribal leaders) even though we speak of 9 ½ tribes because we have 9 full tribes and about ½ of the clans of the 10th tribe (Manasseh) receiving land in the west. While one can speak of ½ of a tribe, you can’t have ½ of a prince; thus there were 10 princes present for this ceremony.

And the method for land distribution was by means of lots. Don’t think that the presence of the High Priest was needed for lots to be drawn; this could have been done without him. But the nature of dividing the land was divine, so it was appropriate that Eleazar would have a role.

Truth be known, no one really knows what the procedure for using lots amounted to; although there are traditions that suggest how it went and that it was that there were two jars that contained polished stones used as the lots that were randomly selected. The other thing that we should take note of is that there were TWO separate occasions when lots were used to divide the land; the first was when Moses directed it back in Moab, and then there was this one with Joshua leading the way. So why were lots employed two times to deal with the same land transaction? Though it is not stated directly it becomes fairly clear that the first choosing of the lots (with Moses) dealt with the respective juxtaposition (the general locations) of each tribal territory in the land. In other words who would get land by the Jordan River, who by the Mediterranean Sea, who would get the desert country, who would get the lush hills, and so on. What tribe would bump up against another tribe. But what was NOT dealt with was the SIZE of each territory. The exact boundaries would be determined by headcount with the larger tribes getting more territory than the smaller tribes because they needed it. As we’ll find out in upcoming chapters, this didn’t go all that smoothly and some adjustment had to be made over the years in both size of specific tribal territories and even their location.

When things are repeated in the Bible it’s because nuances are being added; more (and often subtle) bits of information are being provided and in some cases history is being retold so that the current (and future) generations can understand the rationale behind certain decisions. That is the case beginning in verse 2 when YET AGAIN we’re told that Moses divided the land among the 2 ½ tribes, that the Levites didn’t get any land inheritance, and then a reminder that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh together represented the single tribe of Joseph. This was explained so that when the current batch of Hebrews looked back to the early tribal lists of

Israel found in Torah and saw “Joseph” but no tribe of Ephraim or Manasseh (and than later saw Ephraim and Manasseh but no tribe of Joseph) they’d understand how this transition occurred and that it was God-ordained all the way.

Let me remind you how it was that Joseph came to be two tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) neither of which went by his name. Back in Genesis 48 we get the story of the Patriarch Jacob, in Egypt, on the verge of death and so calling his favorite son and Vizier of Egypt, Joseph, to his bedside. Joseph brought his two Egyptian born sons (born to Joseph’s Egyptian wife) with him: Ephraim and Manasseh. In a customary Hebrew blessing, done in a very Uncustomary way, Jacob asked Joseph to bring his two young sons forward; and then Jacob made one of the most amazing and awesome prophetic pronouncements that would affect the history of God’s plan of redemption right up until God’s Kingdom is established on earth with Yeshua at it’s head. In what I call the cross-handed blessing, Jacob laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim (the younger of his two grandsons), and his left hand on Manasseh. And he blessed these two children by making them his OWN sons! Jacob literally and officially (NOT symbolically) adopted Ephraim and Manasseh away from Joseph and told Joseph that his future children could remain his. This must have staggered and upset Joseph to no end, for not only had his father Jacob taken his own sons from him BUT he gave the greater blessing to the 2nd born son and the lesser blessing to the firstborn son. By all that was customary, traditional, and right in the eyes of any Hebrew or Middle Easterner Jacob had broken all the rules! But, by those same traditions, once a blessing was given it was irreversible for any reason.

So with his adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh, suddenly Jacob had 14 sons and not 12. For a time there was 14 tribes of Israel and not 12. However before Israel left Egypt the tribal name of Joseph was dropped and replaced with 2 tribes, both coming from his loins: Ephraim and Manasseh. Get the picture: the tribe of Joseph split into two, with one son (Ephraim) representing one line of Joseph, and the other son (Manasseh) representing a second line of Joseph. But removing the tribal name of Joseph still leaves us with 13 tribes of Israel. Later, out in the Wilderness, God would adopt the tribe of Levi away from the nation of Jacob (the nation of Israel) and thus we are back to 12 tribes (plus Levi). But Levi was no longer to be counted “among his brethren”. While Levi’s identity was Hebrew, they would not be counted as a tribe of Israel any longer because they were separated out for duty as God’s personal servants. They would serve Yehoveh as His priests and as those who cared for His sanctuary.

Thus since the Levites were no longer a tribe of Israel, they had no right to inherit any part of the Promised Land. So we find God explaining that instead of giving land as Levi’s inheritance HE is Levi’s inheritance. Further, as we covered one chapter back, the Lord would share some of His holy property with them (a unique privilege that would never be afforded to the 12 tribes).

However the Levites had to live somewhere so they were to be given cities within each of the 12 tribal territories (as well as some pastureland outside of each city for their livestock).

So we get this mysterious and quite profound lesson from what God ordained for His servants, His priests, the tribe of Levi:

1. They were to receive little to no earthly, physical inheritance. Instead their's was to be a SPIRITUAL inheritance as not only a GIFT from God, but the inheritance WAS God.
2. Whatever God's servants did have on this earth was to be given to them out of the other tribes' portions. God's priests and sanctuary workers are to be provided for by those who are God's people and His worshippers.
3. The priests and servants of God (the Levites) were to have as little equity, as little hold, on this world as is possible for a physical being. Of course they needed clothing, homes, food, medical care and all the other basics of life that any human needs for survival. It was not meant for them to be poverty stricken; but it was also not meant for them to be landowners or businessmen or among the more well to do of the community.

What does this say to us in the 21st century when it is made abundantly clear in the New Testament that as disciples of Yeshua, as Believers in the God of Israel, that we are His new priesthood? Here are 3 principles that we as God's spiritual priests are to follow in our lifestyles as a result of our position that Jesus has won for us with His blood. This is the mindset about our position before God, and in our relationship with this world, that we are to adopt.

We are to see our inheritance as God Himself, and thus not strive to build up treasures that moth and rust doth corrupt at the cost of our relationship with the Lord. God's ministers are to be provided for by those to whom they minister. Naturally the level of provision varies; if there is a very small flock that requires little of the minister's time, then it is that minister's duty to have a trade or craft to offset at least some of his costs of living. Thus we see the priests and Levites that do NOT work full time at the Temple having jobs, trades, and so forth to support themselves and their families. But at the same time, God's ministers are not to seek to be provided for at a level better than the flock at large. They are not to achieve economic advantage by being a servant of God. At some point the reasonable need for receiving a decent living and thus being paid for carrying the Gospel to others can turn into selling the Gospel for profit. A passion and a duty can become no more than a profession. I don't need to give you examples of this, I'm sure we can all think of them.

The first tribe on the west side of the Jordan to receive their inheritance was Judah. Verse 8 begins the story of just how it was that it happened this way. The camp of Israel was still located in Gilgal; and some of the clan leaders of the tribe of Judah approached Joshua; specifically it was the clan of Kalev (Caleb) who sought to receive their land inheritance NOW. So in rather typical Middle Eastern fashion Kalev reminds Joshua of what happened many years earlier, out in the wilderness, when Moses put together a scouting party of 12 to reconnoiter the Land of Canaan. Kalev and the man he is now beseeching to give him land, Joshua, were among those 12. And of course the story was that Israel was near the area of Kadesh-Barnea in the southernmost desert region of Canaan when Moses (at God's direction) decided it was time to make their move on the Land of Canaan. But the scouting party returned with bad news: the enemy was too well fortified and there were fierce warriors called the Anakim, giants, who were sure to annihilate Israel. Therefore Israel should NOT attack Canaan. Kalev and Joshua, however, disagreed not with the assessment but with the conclusion. They agreed that the challenge was great and dangerous but that if God be with

them, victory was theirs. The majority won out and Israel was turned back into the desert to wander for 38 more years.

Notice in verse 6 something that is pretty easy to just read over: it says that Kalev was the son of Jephunneh (Y'funeh) the Kennizite. This is actually rather startling when we understand what this means. Kalev's biological father was Y'funeh of the tribe of Judah. But Y'funeh died and apparently Kalev's mother remarried a fellow named Kenaz (hence the word Kenaz-ites). So Kenaz became Kalev's stepfather. Kenaz was descended from Edom, a non-Israelite tribe. So here we have Kalev who is closely tied to the Edomites, but yet a member of the tribe of Judah, asking for his land inheritance. The point is (as I have mentioned time after time) there is no such thing as genealogical purity among the Israelites, and there wasn't even genealogical purity among the earliest Hebrews going back to Abraham. And that is exactly as God intended. The Lord told Abraham that any foreigner who wanted to join the Hebrews should be welcomed, with the understanding that to join meant to worship only the God of Abraham. Later we find in the early development of the nation of Israel (founded by Jacob) that most of the people that he took with him (as Israelites) to Egypt were actually foreigners that he had captured from Shechem. So Kalev is but another example of how race and genealogies matter little to nothing to the Lord, but instead it's trust in Him and faithfulness to Him that have always been the issues. It is that faith and trust that makes one part of God's people or not.

Kalev reminds Joshua that Moses promised to give him the land of his choice; particularly land that Kalev had personally scouted out. Well apparently the mission Kalev had was to reconnoiter the area of Hebron, and so that is the general area he is asking to receive as his clan's land inheritance.

We get an interesting and helpful piece of information in verse 10; it says that a) Kalev was 40 years old when he went with the group of 12 scouts into Canaan, and that this event occurred 45 years earlier making Kalev 85 years old. Since Israel was out of Egypt for about 2 years when they arrived at Kadesh-Barnea and organized the scouting party, that means that at the time of this meeting between Kalev and Joshua, about 7 years had passed since Israel had crossed over the Jordan River. So all these battles we have been reading about have taken place during a 7-year time span.

We also find out that the Anakim, that race of giants, controlled the area of Hebron. So what we see happening here is that Kalev remains as bold and confident of victory at the Lord's hand, as he was 45 years earlier and a much younger man. We don't read of anyone challenging Kalev's request for this particular place because the rest of Israel wanted nothing to do with fighting the Anakim.

Now, in reality, Kalev asked for a whole lot more than what he wound up with. He wanted all the land that he set his foot upon in Canaan; but he got Hebron and the contiguous land. But Kalev also received a great honor: he was the FIRST to receive a land inheritance inside the Promised Land. And of course this was a reward for his steadfastness in standing with Moses and the Lord, facing down his brethren, and taking a most unpopular position (that Israel should ignore the strength of the enemy and proceed in faith to attack Canaan). Also notice that it was the tribe of Judah (Kalev's tribe) who got the first piece of land in the Promised

Land.

Let me explain something: we'll see the words in Joshua that the land was distributed according to the clans AND the tribes. Any tribal society would understand this perfectly. Just as different tribes were more and less populous and more and less powerful than others, so were the clans within the tribes that formed the tribes. Some clans (like Kalev's) had great pull and sway within their tribe, so they had much sway over the politics and daily decisions that occurred within their tribe. A tribe was only a collection of clans; warfare within a tribe was between clans. Kalev getting first choice of land within the tribe of Judah meant his was undoubtedly the most powerful clan within Judah.

Yet as choice as was the land that Kalev asked for, it was an unconquered land. Understand that the division of land at this point was to serve several purposes among which was that the tribe who received a certain territory had to finish conquering it, and then they had the task of maintaining control and dominance over it indefinitely.

This chapter ends with the words, "and the land had rest from war". This indicates a pause in the action. But we should notice that at this point only the smallest distribution of land had taken place; only one clan from one tribe (Judah) had by now received any allocation of property within the Land of Canaan. Even though the earlier verses spoke about Ephraim and Manasseh in the context of them not giving any of their territory to the Levites except for some cities, this did NOT indicate a land distribution as of yet.

What we're going to find out in the upcoming chapters is that in between Judah being given their land inheritance, and the other tribes getting theirs, a lull occurred. This time of little recorded activity, and a pause in the distribution of the land, came for a rather interesting reason: Joshua couldn't find any takers for the land he offered. The tribes fully understood that at the same time they would be settling portions of their tribal land inheritance (the good stuff), they had the responsibility to drive out or kill the Canaanites who held onto certain areas within their land (the not so good stuff). By now Israel were nomads; this generation (the 2nd generation) of the Exodus had never lived in anything but tents. They had never lived in a city, nor planted crops and tended vineyards. They were herders that used up the pastureland and moved on. They knew and were comfortable with the way of the Bedouin. Taking the land meant settling down and restricting themselves to a relatively small area. It meant respecting boundaries and borders. It meant defending their land, battling with neighbors. Nomads moved their flocks and herds away from trouble, not into it. Nomads were a non-confrontational people in general, who didn't want the responsibility of villages and cities and caring for the land and crops. The LAST thing that interested them was war and territorial battles. So in a few chapters we're going to find Joshua reading the riot act to the Israelite tribes who were blowing off occupying their gift of land from their God.

It was during this lull in the land distribution that Israel moved their encampment from Gilgal (where they had been living since the day they crossed-over the Jordan) to Shiloh. Shiloh would become the new Israelite headquarters and it would by default be where the Tabernacle is erected and all sanctuary services performed. Shiloh would be the new center of worship and government for Israel for many decades. If you go to Shiloh today, you can find the actual

area where the Wilderness Tabernacle stood (I and several of you in this room have been there). You can even find the holes in the rocks where the posts were set to bear the weight of the massive curtains that surrounded the Tabernacle courtyard.

Next week we'll take up chapter 15 and watch as the land distribution effort continues.