

Joshua 13 – 19

The Apportioned Inheritances (I)

Israel has arrived in the land that the LORD promised them. God had already promised this land to their forefather Abraham. It all belonged to the promises of the covenant, which the LORD had established with Abraham *and* his seed, Israel.

The major battles have been fought in the north and in the south. Now the remainder of the land still needed to be subdued. However, which tribe was to take care of which region? In the following chapters, Joshua divides the land among the different tribes.

1. The division of Canaan

Chapter 12 more or less forms the conclusion of the first part of the book of Joshua. This is apparent from the beginning of chapter 13. Verse 1 says that Joshua is 'old and advanced in years'. He will not be able to provide leadership for a long time anymore. After the entry into and the conquest of Canaan, the division of the land follows. The decisions have already been made by the LORD. Check to see which chapters deal with the division of the land.

As you can see, the account of the division is laid out in detail. It forms a number of chapters that provide some heavy reading for us. There are many names to designate borders and cities. That is why these names are sometimes skipped during Scripture reading.

***Question 1:** What might be an objection against skipping the reading of certain Scripture passages? Think about what Paul writes in 2 Tim 3:14-17. This also applies to these chapters in the book of Joshua. After reading these chapters we realize that the LORD does not neglect any of his promises. In great detail he has worked out the inheritance that he granted to Israel.*

Despite the fact that reading these chapters do not make for easy reading, they definitely do serve a purpose. When you focus on the manner in which the inheritances are apportioned, namely by lot, the purpose becomes clear. Everyone knows from whom they have received their inheritance. The LORD fulfils his promises. We may think of Psalm 16 (esp. vv.5,6), of Naboth and his vineyard (1 Kings 21:3), and of 1 Peter 1 (esp. vv.3-6a).

It is wise to make use of a map while reading these chapters. The names will mean more to us. If we read them without a map, we would not or hardly see the intention of reading the chapters because of the overload of information.

In this outline, our approach to the chapters will be different from the previous outlines. Using several maps, we will try to get an impression of the inheritance that each of the tribes received. We are not able to get more than an impression because we do not know the exact locations of all the places.

In this outline, we want to draw attention to whatever these chapters emphasize; it is important to take this approach when studying Scripture.

2. Dividing the land in faith (13:1-7)

Chapter 13:1-7 is the passage that first deserves our attention. In the first paragraph of section 1 we pointed out that this passage is the beginning of a new section in this book. Joshua is old and advanced in years. If you wish to estimate how old Joshua was at that point in time, you can compare his age to that of Caleb, who was Joshua's contemporary (14:10,11). How old did Joshua eventually get? (See 24:29.)

The LORD talks to Joshua about the fact that he is nearing the end of his life and that shortly he will not be able to provide leadership to Israel anymore. His death would come, even though much of the land still had to be conquered. Only the major battles had been fought. Verses 2-6a reveal how much of the land still had to be possessed.

More must be said. The major battles have been fought. However, quite some time has passed since. Israel was being sluggish! (We will come back to this in section 4.)

Although the land has not yet been conquered, it still must be divided now. Even though Joshua may not be present soon, this conquest will be possible because the LORD (again) gives his promises. His promises are reliable. (See v.6, in which the emphasis lies on the word 'I'.) God renews his promises, which he gave for the first time in Genesis 15:18,19.

Question 2: *What are the consequences of God's promises for Israel (vv.6b,7)? Israel needs to act in faith (= relying/trusting in God) and obedience. Does this clarify the heading above this section?*

3.

In 16:10 we read that the Canaanites who dwelled in Gezer were not driven away. They continued to live in the midst of Ephraim for a long period of time.

Question 3: *Was there maybe no other option than to let the Canaanites live in their midst? Is it possible that they were maybe too strong? Remember the ending of 16:10. The problem here was half-heartedness. Putting the Canaanites to forced labour was a pious excuse for disobedience (half-hearted obedience). A similar attitude is apparent in Saul, who later on, acting on his own initiative, did not utterly destroy the Amalekites as he should have done (1 Sam 15).*

In the land east of the Jordan things already had gone wrong. The two-and-a-half tribes who had received their inheritance there set a wrong example (see 13:13). Did they do that because they were lacking in their faith? No, it was because of their disbelief. Read the previous verse (13:12) to see what Moses had done.

In chapter 17:12 we encounter a similar situation. This verse shows that the conquest of Canaan was not exactly easy (see vv.16-18). The Israelites had to put great effort into it. What else was required? (See 13:6.) It required faith in God's promises. However, among the Israelites there was disobedience. Read what it says in 17:13. (From 17:12 and 13 it becomes clear that they first are not able, and later are unwilling, to conquer.)

Chapter 17:14-16 speaks about the tribes of Joseph, who deemed their portion too small. They receive instructions to add the hill country to their own inheritance. However, in v.16 we read that they shrink from confronting the Canaanites who have chariots of iron. Joshua

then has to provide leadership and encourage them (17:17,18).

The Israelites themselves obstructed the fulfillment of God's promises because of unfaithfulness and unbelief. Israel is premature in thinking that God's will has been executed. However, in faith a believer must completely obey the LORD's commandments.

Question 4: *How could the Israelites become negatively influenced by the Canaanites who were allowed to remain in the land?*

4. Dividing the land at Shiloh (18:1-10)

So far, Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh received their inheritance in Canaan. However, after that the division of the land was discontinued. Joshua calls all the Israelites together at Shiloh. There they set up the Tent of Meeting, which belonged to the LORD.

Question 5: *Why does he assemble them in that place? (See 18:3; also, see vv.6,8, and 10.)*

Joshua reproaches the Israelites for their sluggishness. They have to conquer the land!

Question 6: *Why do you think that they did not continue the conquest? Joshua confronts them with the issue (v.3). They were inactive. Can that be considered sin?*

It is clear that Israel needs leadership. They still receive this from Joshua. He urges them on. A detailed description of the land and of the inheritances of each of the tribes must be drawn up. For that purpose, a number of men must travel throughout the land. The tribes have to cooperate to finish this task (18:5).

Question 7: *How many men were sent out? (See v.4.)*

After these men return, the lot is cast and each of the seven tribes receives their inheritance.

Question 8: *Consequently, from whom does every tribe receive their inheritance?*

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