

# **THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL**

**JOSHUA 13:1 – 19:51**

Introduction to chapter thirteen

The focus to this point has been on YHWH's gift of the Promised Land to Israel, made effective by the obedience of the Israelite leader, Joshua. Now the authors include all the information available to them concerning the tribal boundaries. They were probably doing this to assist King Josiah in his determination to restore Israel to its former glory. They portray the boundaries as having divine authority, and as having been set in place by Joshua in accordance with the instructions given to him by YHWH. They begin by listing the areas of Canaan that had never been under Israelite settlement: most of the Mediterranean coastal area, south and north, and Lebanon.

Areas of Canaan still to come under Israelite control (13:1-7)

**<sup>1</sup>Now Joshua was old and advanced in years; and YHWH said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land still remains to be possessed. <sup>2</sup>This is the land that still remains: all the regions of the Philistines, and all those of the Geshurites <sup>3</sup>(from the Shihor, which is east of Egypt, northward to the boundary of Ekron, it is reckoned as Canaanite; there are five rulers of the Philistines, those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron), and those of the Avvim, <sup>4</sup>in the south, all the land of the Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians, to Aphek, to the boundary of the Amorites, <sup>5</sup>and the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the east, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo-hamath, <sup>6</sup>all the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon to Misrephoth-maim, even all the Sidonians. I will myself drive them out from before the Israelites; only allot the land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you.**

**<sup>7</sup>Now therefore divide this land for an inheritance to the nine tribes and the half-tribe of Manasseh."**

To be modelled on what Moses did in Transjordan (13:8-33)

Joshua is to model himself on what Moses did in Transjordan (see Deuteronomy 3:12-20 and map page 51; also map page 49 for some of the main towns). Hence, before recording the tribal allotment in Canaan, the authors set down all the information that they could find on the towns that, at various stages, were settled by the Transjordan tribes. No strict tribal boundaries are given, which probably indicates the very flexible situation east of the Jordan, and the fact that significant Israelite occupation there only began in the tenth century and ended in the eighth century with Assyrian occupation and deportation.

**<sup>8</sup>With the other half-tribe of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses gave them, beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of YHWH gave them: <sup>9</sup>from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, and the town that is in the middle of the valley, and all the tableland from Medeba as far as Dibon; <sup>10</sup>and all the cities of King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the boundary of the Ammonites; <sup>11</sup>and Gilead, and the region of the Geshurites and Maacathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan to Salecah.**

<sup>12</sup>all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (he alone was left of the survivors of the Rephaim); these Moses had defeated and driven out. <sup>13</sup>Yet the Israelites did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites; but Geshur and Maacath live within Israel to this day.

<sup>14</sup>To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance; the offerings by fire to YHWH God of Israel are their inheritance, as he said to them.

The Deuteronomists have a special interest in the tribe of Levi who were most effected by the centralising of cult in Jerusalem under Josiah.

#### 1. Reuben's Allotment (13:15-23)

<sup>15</sup>Moses gave an inheritance to the tribe of the Reubenites according to their clans. <sup>16</sup>Their territory was from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, and the town that is in the middle of the valley, and all the tableland by Medeba; <sup>17</sup>with Heshbon, and all its towns that are in the tableland; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon, <sup>18</sup>and Jahaz, and Kedemoth, and Mephaath, <sup>19</sup>and Kiriathaim, and Sibmah, and Zereth-shahar on the hill of the valley, <sup>20</sup>and Beth-peor, and the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth-jeshimoth, <sup>21</sup>that is, all the towns of the tableland, and all the kingdom of King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses defeated with the leaders of Midian, Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, as princes of Sihon, who lived in the land. <sup>22</sup>Along with the rest of those they put to death, the Israelites also put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination. <sup>23</sup>And the border of the Reubenites was the Jordan and its banks. This was the inheritance of the Reubenites, according to their families with their towns and villages.

#### 2. Gad's Allotment (13:24-28)

<sup>24</sup>Moses gave an inheritance also to the tribe of the Gadites, according to their families. <sup>25</sup>Their territory was Jazer, and all the towns of Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites, to Aroer, which is east of Rabbah, <sup>26</sup>and from Heshbon to Ramath-mizpeh and Betonim, and from Mahanaim to the territory of Debir, <sup>27</sup>and in the valley Beth-haram, Beth-nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of King Sihon of Heshbon, the Jordan and its banks, as far as the lower end of the Sea of Chinnereth, eastward beyond the Jordan. <sup>28</sup>This is the inheritance of the Gadites according to their clans, with their towns and villages.

#### 3. Manasseh's Transjordan Allotment (33:29-31)

<sup>29</sup>Moses gave an inheritance to the half-tribe of Manasseh; it was allotted to the half-tribe of the Manassites according to their families. <sup>30</sup>Their territory extended from Mahanaim, through all Bashan, the whole kingdom of King Og of Bashan, and all the settlements of Jair, which are in Bashan, sixty towns, <sup>31</sup>and half of Gilead, and Ashtaroth, and Edrei, the towns of the kingdom of Og in Bashan; these were allotted to the people of Machir son of Manasseh according to their clans—for half the Machirites.

Summary conclusion (13:32-33)

**<sup>32</sup>These are the inheritances that Moses distributed in the plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan east of Jericho. <sup>33</sup>But to the tribe of Levi Moses gave no inheritance; YHWH God of Israel is their inheritance, as he said to them.**

Tribal Allotment in Canaan: Introduction (14:1-15)

A sacred task (14:1-5)

**<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>Their inheritance was by lot, as YHWH had commanded Moses for the nine and one-half tribes. <sup>3</sup>For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan; but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>The Israelites did as YHWH commanded Moses; they allotted the land.**

The role of the high priest, Aaron's son, Eleazar, the use of the sacred lots (the Urim and Thummim, see Deuteronomy 33:8) to by-pass human decision-making thus leaving the decision entirely to God, and the mention again of Moses (see Numbers 32:28), all highlight the sacredness of this allotment. The number twelve is kept in spite of the exclusion of the Levites. The authors remind us that Joseph has been divided into two tribes.

Hebron, Caleb and a special case (14:6-15)

**<sup>6</sup>Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal; and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what YHWH said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. <sup>7</sup>I was forty years old when Moses the servant of YHWH sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him an honest report. <sup>8</sup>But my companions who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholeheartedly followed YHWH my God. <sup>9</sup>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 forever, because you have wholeheartedly followed YHWH my God.' <sup>10</sup>And now, as you see, YHWH has kept me alive, as he said, these forty-five years since the time that YHWH spoke this word to Moses, while Israel was journeying through the wilderness; and here I am today, eighty-five years old.**

Both the Deuteronomic School (Deuteronomy 2:14), and the Priestly School (Numbers 14:34) speak of the forty years of wandering in the wilderness as God's punishment for the lack of trust shown by the people in the scene recalled here in Joshua, and both speak of the exception made for Caleb (Deuteronomy 1:36 and Numbers 14:24).

**<sup>11</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>So now give me this hill country of which YHWH spoke on that day; for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; it may be that YHWH will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as YHWH said.” <sup>13</sup>Then Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. <sup>14</sup>So Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholeheartedly followed YHWH, the God of Israel. <sup>15</sup>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.**

The final sentence is an awkward way of indicating the end of the long insertion of chapters twelve, thirteen and fourteen. It links back with 11:23. On the Anakim see Joshua 11:21-22.

#### 4. Judah’s Allotment (15:1-12)

We should not be surprised that Judah is listed first and that it is given by far the most extensive treatment. It is, after all, from Judah that King Josiah began his determined effort to restore Israel to its intended extension. For the same reason the area assigned here to Judah takes in areas originally assigned to Simeon in the southwest, Dan to the northwest, and Benjamin to the north. Roughly speaking, Judah as described here takes in the whole of the area south of a line running from the top of the Dead Sea in the east to the Philistine territory bordering the Mediterranean in the west, and running just south of Jerusalem.

**<sup>1</sup>The lot for the tribe of the people of Judah according to their families reached southward to the boundary of Edom, to the wilderness of Zin at the farthest south. <sup>2</sup>And their south boundary ran from the end of the Dead Sea, from the bay that faces southward; <sup>3</sup>it goes out southward 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, <sup>4</sup>passes along to Azmon, goes out by the Wadi of Egypt, and comes to its end at the sea. This shall be your south boundary.**

**<sup>5</sup>And the east 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; <sup>6</sup>and the boundary goes up to Beth-hoglah, and passes along north of Beth-arabah; and the boundary goes up to the Stone of Bo-han, Reuben’s son; <sup>7</sup>and the boundary goes up to Debir from the Valley of Achor, and so northward, turning toward 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; <sup>8</sup>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;**

<sup>9</sup>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); <sup>10</sup>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; <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>And the west boundary was the Mediterranean with its coast. This is the boundary surrounding the people of Judah according to their families.

Once again Caleb and Hebron (15:13-19)

The earlier section on Caleb (14:6-15) seems to be a later insertion supplementing this.

<sup>13</sup>According to the commandment of YHWH 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). <sup>14</sup>And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak. <sup>15</sup>From there he went up against the inhabitants of Debir; now the name of Debir formerly was Kiriath-sepher. <sup>16</sup>And Caleb said, "Whoever attacks Kiriath-sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife." <sup>17</sup>Othniel son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. <sup>18</sup>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 wish?" <sup>19</sup>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.

Towns in Judah's allotment (15:20-63)

<sup>20</sup>This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Judah according to their families.

<sup>21</sup>The towns belonging to the tribe of the people of Judah in the extreme South, toward the boundary of Edom, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, <sup>22</sup>Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, <sup>23</sup>Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, <sup>24</sup>Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, <sup>25</sup>Hazor-hadattah, Kerioth-hezron (that is, Hazor), <sup>26</sup>Amam, Shema, Moladah, <sup>27</sup>Hazar-gaddah, Heshmon, Beth-pelet, <sup>28</sup>Hazar-shual, Beer-sheba, Biziothiah, <sup>29</sup>Baalalah, Iim, Ezem, <sup>30</sup>Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, <sup>31</sup>Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah, <sup>32</sup>Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: in all, twenty-nine towns, with their villages.

<sup>33</sup>And in the Lowland, Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, <sup>34</sup>Zanoah, En-gannim, Tapuah, Enam, <sup>35</sup>Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, <sup>36</sup>Shaaraim, Adithaim, Gederah, Gederothaim: fourteen towns with their villages. <sup>37</sup>Zenan, Haddashah, Migdal-gad, <sup>38</sup>Dilan, Mizpeh, Jokthe-el, <sup>39</sup>Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon,

<sup>40</sup>Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish, <sup>41</sup>Gederoth, Beth-dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen towns with their villages. <sup>42</sup>Libnah, Ether, Ashan, <sup>43</sup>Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, <sup>44</sup>Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine towns with their villages. <sup>45</sup>Ekron, with its dependencies and its villages; <sup>44</sup>from Ekron to the sea, all that were near Ashdod, with their villages. <sup>47</sup>Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; to the Wadi of Egypt, and the Great Sea with its coast.

<sup>48</sup>And in the hill country, Shamir, Jattir, Socoh, <sup>49</sup>Dannah, Kiriath-sannah (that is, Debir), <sup>50</sup>Anab, Esstemoh, Anim, <sup>51</sup>Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven towns with their villages. <sup>52</sup>Arab, Dumah, Eshan, <sup>53</sup>Janim, Beth-tappuah, Aphekah, <sup>54</sup>Humtah, Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), and Zior: nine towns with their villages. <sup>55</sup>Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, <sup>56</sup>Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, <sup>57</sup>Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten towns with their villages. <sup>58</sup>Halhul, Beth-zur, Gedor, <sup>59</sup>Maarath, Beth-anoth, and Eltekon: six towns with their villages.

The following have dropped accidentally from the Hebrew and are supplied from the Septuagint: 'Tekoa, Ephrathah – that is, Bethlehem – Peor, Etam, Kolon, Tatam, Ehoresh, Kerem, Gallim, Beth-Ter, Manoho: eleven towns with their villages']

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

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

<sup>63</sup>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.





5. Allotment for the Joseph Tribe (16:1-10)

This section begins with a vague description of Ephraim's southern border with Benjamin and Dan, running from the Jordan north of Jericho, and passing through Bethel to the Mediterranean.

**<sup>1</sup>The allotment of the Josephites went from the Jordan by Jericho, east of the waters of Jericho, into the wilderness, going up from Jericho into the hill country to Bethel; <sup>2</sup>then going from Bethel to Luz, it passes along to Ataroth, the territory of the Archites [as far as Upper Beth-horon]; <sup>3</sup>then it goes down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of Lower Beth-horon, then to Gezer, and it ends at the sea.**

**<sup>4</sup>The Josephites—Manasseh and Ephraim—received their inheritance.**

**<sup>5</sup>The territory of the Ephraimites by their families was as follows: the boundary of their inheritance on the east was Ataroth-addar, <sup>6</sup>and the boundary goes from there to the sea; on the north is Michmethath; then on the east the boundary makes a turn toward Taanath-shiloh, and passes along beyond it on the east to Janoah, <sup>7</sup>then it goes down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, and touches Jericho, ending at the Jordan. <sup>8</sup>From Tappuah the boundary goes westward to the Wadi Kanah, and ends at the sea.**

Ephraim occupied the southern central hill country between Bethel and Shechem (see map page 256). North of that the hill country was heavily wooded and sparsely populated. This was assigned to Manasseh, but, as we learn in the following verses, members of the Ephraim tribe lived in towns inside the Manasseh tribal area. Ephraim's northern border with Manasseh seems to have been somewhat fluid. Remember that Ephraim and Manasseh constitute the Joseph tribe.

**Such is the inheritance of the tribe of the Ephraimites by their families, <sup>9</sup>together with the towns that were set apart for the Ephraimites within the inheritance of the Manassites, all those towns with their villages.**

**<sup>10</sup>They did not, however, drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer: so the Canaanites have lived within Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labour.**

Manasseh's Allotment in Canaan (17:1-13)

**<sup>1</sup>Then allotment was made to the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. To Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a warrior.**

This is the area east of the Jordan already mentioned in 13:29-31.

**<sup>2</sup>And allotments were made to the rest of the tribe of Manasseh, by their families, Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, and Shemida; these were the male descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, by their families.**



**<sup>3</sup>Now Zelophehad son of Hopher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh had no sons, but only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. <sup>4</sup>They came before the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun and the leaders, and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our male kin." So according to the commandment of YHWH he gave them an inheritance among the kinsmen of their father. <sup>3</sup>Now Zelophehad son of Hopher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh had no sons, but only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. <sup>5</sup>They came before the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun and the leaders, and said, "YHWH commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our male kin." So according to the commandment of YHWH he gave them an inheritance among the kinsmen of their father. Thus there fell to Manasseh ten portions, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is on the other side of the Jordan, <sup>6</sup>because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance along with his sons. The land of Gilead was allotted to the rest of the Manassites.**

The Priestly School deal with the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 27:1-11; see also 26:28-33). Hoglah and Noah are named in the Samaria Ostraca (records on pottery) as localities in Samaria. It is likely that the same is true of the other three names. The prevailing system was that only the sons inherited land. If a daughter were to inherit land, it would go to the family of her husband and so be lost to her kin. The passage in Numbers introduces a law to allow the daughters to inherit, but only by way of exception. Later on in Numbers 36 a rider is added that the daughter is obliged to marry within her kinship group to ensure that the property is not lost to another tribe. It will go to her children, or, if she has none, the older custom will come into play and it will revert to the closest male member of her kin. The overall effect of this law is to allow a woman to inherit when there is no male heir, but to keep the land in the kinship group. If she has children they will inherit in preference to other male relatives.

**<sup>7</sup>The territory of Manasseh reached from Asher to Michmethath, which is east of Shechem; then the boundary goes along southward to the inhabitants of En-tappuah. <sup>8</sup>The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but the town of Tappuah on the boundary of Manasseh belonged to the Ephraimites. <sup>9</sup>Then the boundary went down to the Wadi Kanah. The towns here, to the south of the wadi, among the towns of Manasseh, belong to Ephraim. Then the boundary of Manasseh goes along the north side of the wadi and ends at the sea. <sup>10</sup>The land to the south is Ephraim's and that to the north is Manasseh's, with the sea forming its boundary; on the north Asher is reached, and on the east Issachar.**

Note the comments on the previous page concerning the relationship between Ephraim and Manasseh. Here, too, we hear of Ephraimite towns in the area notionally belonging to Manasseh. The following verses highlight another factor that made life difficult in the Manasseh area. Their northern border was the east-west valley of Esdraelon.

## Canaanite Towns in the plain

The valley was controlled by strong non-Israelite city-states, and so made a distinct break between the Israelite tribes to the south of the valley and the tribes in Galilee to the north. The Israelites were basically restricted to the hill country.

**<sup>11</sup>Within Issachar and Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its villages, Ibleam and its villages, the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, the inhabitants of En-dor and its villages, the inhabitants of Taanach and its villages, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages (the third is Naphath).**

**<sup>12</sup>Yet the Manassites could not take possession of those towns; but the Canaanites continued to live in that land. <sup>13</sup>But when the Israelites grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labour, but did not utterly drive them out.**



Joshua permits the Joseph tribe to have a second allotment (17:14-18)

This is another version of why the Joseph tribe was able to take over the whole of the central hill country. The main Manasseh tribal area is in Transjordan, but some of the Manasseh tribe stayed in Canaan with Ephraim.

**<sup>14</sup>The tribe of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, since we are a numerous people, whom all along YHWH has blessed?" <sup>15</sup>And Joshua said to them, "If you are a numerous people, go up to the forest, and clear ground there for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you." <sup>16</sup>The tribe of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us; yet all the Canaanites who live in the plain have chariots of iron, both those in Beth-shean and its villages and those in the Valley of Jezreel." <sup>17</sup>Then Joshua said to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, "You are indeed a numerous people, and have great power; you shall not have one lot only, <sup>18</sup>but the hill country shall be yours, for though it is a forest, you shall clear it and possess it to its farthest borders; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong."**

## Introduction to chapters eighteen and nineteen

These chapters centre on Shiloh, which housed the ark after the destruction of Shechem by Abimelech in the middle of the twelfth century. This would place the assembly there after Joshua's death. Constructing the text some five hundred years later, the Deuteronomists continue the link with Joshua and with allotment by use of the Urim and Thummin. The difference between this allotment and the earlier one of the Judah and Joseph tribes is that in their case the land being allotted was already occupied by Israel. Much of the land in Galilee with which this allotment is concerned was yet to be settled. The text reveals the interest of the Deuteronomists who have gathered whatever material they can find to prepare for Josiah's reconquering of northern Israel.

## A Survey (18:1-10)

**<sup>1</sup>Then the whole congregation of the Israelites assembled at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there. The land lay subdued before them.**

**<sup>2</sup>There remained among the Israelites seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned. <sup>3</sup>So Joshua said to the Israelites, "How long will you be slack about going in and taking possession of the land that YHWH, the God of your ancestors, has given you? <sup>4</sup>Provide three men from each tribe, and I will send them out that they may begin to go throughout the land, writing a description of it with a view to their inheritances. Then come back to me. <sup>5</sup>They shall divide it into seven portions, Judah continuing in its territory on the south, and the house of Joseph in their territory on the north. <sup>6</sup>You shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before YHWH our God.**

For the allotments to the Judah and Joseph tribes see Joshua 15-17.

**<sup>7</sup>The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of YHWH is their heritage;**

The special interest in the Levites is typical of the Deuteronomic School (see Joshua 3:3; 8:33; 13:14, 33; 14:3-4).

**and Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of YHWH gave them."**

For the allotments to the Transjordan tribes see Joshua 13:8-35

**<sup>8</sup>So the men started on their way; and Joshua charged those who went to write the description of the land, saying, "Go throughout the land and write a description of it, and come back to me; and I will cast lots for you here before YHWH in Shiloh." <sup>9</sup>So the men went and traversed the land and set down in a book a description of it by towns in seven divisions; then they came back to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh, <sup>10</sup>and Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before YHWH; and there Joshua apportioned the land to the Israelites, to each a portion.**

## 6. Benjamin's Allotment (18:11-28)

This is the area of the battles described earlier in chapters two to nine. It is not clear why Benjamin is included here rather than in the earlier allotment. Perhaps it was weakened by the fighting and records showed that it could consolidate only at a later date. The text here represents the situation at the end of the tenth century, after Israel had broken away from Judah, but Jerusalem was still strong enough to administer Benjamin and southern Ephraim. Benjamin is wedged in between the two largest tribes: Joseph to the north and Judah to the south. The northern boundary skirts Bethel (18:13; in Ephraim) and the southern boundary skirts Jerusalem (18:16). On the west Benjamin is restricted to the hill country.

**<sup>11</sup>The lot of the tribe of Benjamin according to its families came up, and the territory allotted to it fell between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Joseph.**

**<sup>12</sup>On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan; then the boundary goes up to the slope of Jericho on the north, then up through the hill country westward; and it ends at the wilderness of Beth-aven. <sup>13</sup>From there the boundary passes along southward in the direction of Luz, to the slope of Luz (that is, Bethel), then the boundary goes down to Ataroth-addar, on the mountain that lies south of Lower Beth-horon.**

**<sup>14</sup>Then the boundary goes in another direction, turning on the western side southward from the mountain that lies to the south, opposite Beth-horon, and it ends at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a town belonging to the tribe of Judah. This forms the western side.**

**<sup>15</sup>The southern side begins at the outskirts of Kiriath-jearim; and the boundary goes from there to Ephron, to the spring of the Waters of Nephtoa;**

**<sup>16</sup>then the boundary goes down to the border of the mountain that overlooks the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is at the north end of the valley of Rephaim; and it then goes down the valley of Hinnom, south of the slope of the Jebusites, and downward to En-rogel; <sup>17</sup>then it bends in a northerly direction going on to En-shemesh, and from there goes to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim; then it goes down to the Stone of Bohan, Reuben's son; <sup>18</sup>and passing on to the north of the slope of Beth-arabah it goes down to the Arabah; <sup>19</sup>then the boundary passes on to the north of the slope of Beth-hoglah; and the boundary ends at the northern bay of the Dead Sea, at the south end of the Jordan: this is the southern border.**

**<sup>20</sup>The Jordan forms its boundary on the eastern side. This is the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin, according to its families, boundary by boundary all around.**

**<sup>21</sup>Now the towns of the tribe of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz, <sup>22</sup>Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, <sup>23</sup>Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, <sup>24</sup>Chephar-ammoni, Ophni, and Geba – twelve towns with their villages. <sup>25</sup>Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, <sup>26</sup>Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, <sup>27</sup>Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, <sup>28</sup>Zela, Haeleph, Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath-jearim – fourteen towns with their villages. This is the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin according to its families.**

## 7. Simeon's Allotment (19:1-9)

The story in Genesis 34 points to the presence of the Simeon tribe in the area of Shechem. Genesis 49:5-7 suggests that it was banished. This present text points to it seeking refuge at the edge of the desert. Archeology has demonstrated the sudden emergence of unwalled settlements in the area around Beer-sheba in the twelfth century. They were virtually wiped out in the tenth century, possibly by the Philistines, or perhaps by the Amalekite raiders from the desert. At the beginning of the tenth century at the time of King David the tribe of Judah absorbed this area, so that the Simeon tribe effectively disappeared.

<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>It had for its inheritance Beer-sheba, Sheba, Moladah, <sup>3</sup>Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem, <sup>4</sup>Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, <sup>5</sup>Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah, <sup>6</sup>Beth-lebaath, and Sharuhem—thirteen towns with their villages; <sup>7</sup>Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan—four towns with their villages; <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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.

## 8. Zebulun's Allotment (19:10-16)

The Zebulun tribe occupied the poorer southern flank of the Galilee mountains. It was blocked to the south by the plain of Esdraelon (Jezreel) which was controlled by powerful Canaanite city-states (see the map page 266).

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

9. Issachar's Allotment (19:17-23)

Issachar's allotment is basically the eastern section of the Esdraelon Plain. It was well nigh impossible here for the ordinary farmer, however zealous he was for the religion of Israel, to buck the system, especially being so close to the fortress city of Beth-shean (see the map page 266).

**<sup>17</sup>The fourth lot came out for Issachar, for the tribe of Issachar, according to its families. <sup>18</sup>Its territory included Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem, <sup>19</sup>Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, <sup>20</sup>Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, <sup>21</sup>Remeth, Engannim, En-haddah, Beth-pazzez; <sup>22</sup>the boundary also touches Tabor, Shazumah, and Beth-shemesh, and its boundary ends at the Jordan—sixteen towns with their villages. <sup>23</sup>This is the inheritance of the tribe of Issachar, according to its families—the towns with their villages.**

10. Asher's Allotment (19:24-31)

Asher occupied the western slopes of Lower Galilee and looked out upon the lush plain of Acco. This gave them access to the prosperous sea trade with Tyre. How much of it they ever actually 'possessed' is another question.

**<sup>24</sup>The fifth lot came out for the tribe of Asher according to its families. <sup>25</sup>Its boundary included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, <sup>26</sup>Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal; on the west it touches Carmel and Shihor-libnath, <sup>27</sup>then it turns eastward, goes to Beth-dagon, and touches Zebulun and the valley of Iphtah-el northward to Beth-emek and Neiel; then it continues in the north to Cabul, <sup>28</sup>Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, Kanah, as far as Sidon the Great; <sup>29</sup>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, <sup>30</sup>Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob—twenty-two towns with their villages. <sup>31</sup>This is the inheritance of the tribe of Asher according to its families—these towns with their villages.**

11. Naphtali's Allotment (19:32-39)

This is the heartland of Galilee. The major trade routes from the southern coastal plain of Canaan and from the port of Acco to the west passed through Naphtali on the journey to Damascus and beyond to the north or northwest (see Deuteronomy 33:23).

**<sup>32</sup>The sixth lot came out for the tribe of Naphtali, for the tribe of Naphtali, according to its families. <sup>33</sup>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; <sup>34</sup>then the boundary turns westward 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. <sup>35</sup>The fortified towns are Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, <sup>36</sup>Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, <sup>37</sup>Kedesh, Edrei, En-hazor, <sup>38</sup>Iron, Migdal-el, Horem, Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh—nineteen towns with their villages. <sup>39</sup>This is the inheritance of the tribe of Naphtali according to its families—the towns with their villages.**

## 12. Dan's Allotment (19:40-48)

Verses forty to forty-six describe the territory west of Benjamin. It spans the two major western access routes to Jerusalem and its environs. It is suggested that the Danites were originally one of the 'Sea Peoples', the Dananu, who settled this area, joined the Israel movement, but were displaced by another wave of Sea Peoples. At which stage, as described in verses forty-seven to forty-nine, they migrated north to the foot of the Hermon range.

<sup>40</sup>The seventh lot came out for the tribe of Dan, according to its families. <sup>41</sup>The territory of its inheritance included Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, <sup>42</sup>Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, <sup>43</sup>Elon, Timnah, Ekron, <sup>44</sup>Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, <sup>45</sup>Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon, <sup>46</sup>Me-jarkon, and Rakkon at the border opposite Joppa.

<sup>47</sup>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. <sup>48</sup>This is the inheritance of the tribe of Dan, according to their families—these towns with their villages.

## Joshua's Allotment (19:49-50)

<sup>49</sup>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. <sup>50</sup>By command of YHWH 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.

## Conclusion (19:51)

<sup>51</sup>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 YHWH, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. So they finished dividing the land.



The Twelve Tribes of Israel

