

Joshua

November 15, 2009

Joshua 16-21

I. Major Conquest is Done

Last week, we reviewed chapters 12-15, which included the beginnings of the distribution of the land, including a review of the Trans-Jordan tribes' allocation. This week, we will complete the review of all the tribes' territories west of the Jordan River and of associated matters, such as the cities of refuge.

II. Portion to Joseph: Josh 16-17

These two chapters deal with the portion of the land that went to the two tribes that were descended from Joseph: Ephraim and Manasseh. The first four verses of Joshua 16 give a brief review of their southern boundaries. (The Arkites were descended from Canaan, Gen. 10:17; David's adviser, who helped him when Absalom took over the country, was Hushai the Arkite, 2 Sam. 17:7.) Some find the emphasis of the boundary between Joseph and Judah as a precursor for the division later into two nations. Even before that division, Judah was sometimes considered as a separate entity from the northern tribes.

The rest of Chapter 16 deals with Ephraim in a little more detail, but not nearly as much detail as for Judah. Ephraim was the younger son of Joseph, but the tribe descended from him would become the most important tribe in the north.

In 16:9, it is not clear why the Ephraimites are given cities within Manasseh. Later, we will see that Manasseh get cities from Issachar and Asher. Some suggest that the order of inheritance had something to do with it. Ephraim had precedent over Manasseh, and Joseph had precedent over Issachar and Asher. We really do not know why this is given this way. Perhaps, after the casting of lots, these tribes were allowed some horse trading. In general, when another tribe is given cities in a brother tribe, the boundaries of the brother tribe are not affected, such as the city allocation to the Levites and of the city allocations to Simeon with Judah's territory.

Obviously, concerning 16:10, this statement parallels the final verse in Chapter 15 concerning Judah and Jerusalem. However, it does appear that the Ephraimites took these people, but chose to let them be forced laborers rather than devote them to the LORD. Gezer had been defeated by Joshua in 10:30. So, the reason for Ephraim's failure is a little difficult to fathom.

The first 6 verses reviews and builds on information from Numbers. The first two verses review that Manasseh had been given two portions of land east of the Jordan River: Bashan and parts of Gilead. One of Manasseh's six "sons" did not have any sons but did have six daughters. So, ten shares are given west of the river, five for the five "sons" who had sons, and five for the five daughters, for a total of ten shares. Note: The genealogy from Manasseh is somewhat difficult to follow as Makir is the only son listed in Gen. 50:23; however, "son" can be used for any male descendent, and Num. 26:29-33 suggests that Manasseh was really the great-grandfather of these six "sons."

17:14-18 has an interesting vignette showing the greed of Ephraim and Manasseh. This exchange might have happened later, such as the two earlier stories concerning Caleb. At the beginning of Chapter 16, we see the two tribes from Joseph being treated as one; the basis for their argument is that they should have been considered as two tribes, not as one, and therefore had two casting of the lots. They appear to think that two casting would have given them more land. Yet, by square mile, they have done much better than most tribe, and the land that they were given was some of the most fertile of all the land. While their complaint might have some validity from a formal legal viewpoint, clearly they are not trusting in God since He is really the one who is controlling the lots, whether they get two casting or just one. Yet, the two tribes have justified in their own minds that they have been discriminated against. They forget that God divided the land; perhaps they simply do not trust God. How easy it is for us to justify any desire that we might have?

Remember that Joshua is a member of the tribe of Ephraim. In verse 15, Joshua's point is that if they are so numerous, they should be able to take more land within what has already been allocated. Indeed, assuming the accuracy of earlier censuses, the two tribes might have received more than their "fair" share of the land.

III. Other Portions: Josh 18-19

Shiloh was the first place that was designated by the LORD for worship; however, it was not until the ark was moved to Jerusalem that other places became outlawed for worship. Three tribes have already been given their inheritance west of the Jordan River. This might have occurred at Gilgal (14:6) or might have been in Shiloh as part of this narrative (14:2). If time has passed since the allocations to Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh had received their allocations, we are not told why. All the tribes were gathered together for the allocation to the 2 ½ tribes. Perhaps, they had to stop casting lots until they had surveyed the land already given. Shiloh is much more centrally located than Gilgal. It is also with the territory of the complaining tribe of Ephraim, although Gilgal is within Manasseh's territory.

2 ½ tribes received land in Trans-Jordan, and the same number west of the river for a total of five tribes, plus the Levities will be scattered throughout the land. This leaves seven tribes to receive allocations west of the river. The land distributions are allocated:

<u>TRIBE</u>	<u>PASSAGE</u>
Benjamin	18:11-28
Simeon	19:1-9
Zebulun	19:10-16
Issachar	19:17-23
Asher	19:24-31
Naphtali	19:32-39
Dan	19:40-48

Notice that Benjamin and Judah have much more detail concerning their specific land inheritance than their brother tribes.

Concerning Dan, its inheritance is in the south between Judah and Ephraim. They were unable to conquer their territory, and a contingent of them moved to the far north to take land from a tribe related to the residents of Sidonians. Leshem, also called Laish, was renamed Dan. It became the farthest north of Israel's main city (See Judges 18). From

Beersheba to Dan became a description of the entire land, where Beersheba was in the far south. The most famous Danite was Samson. Perhaps because the tribe appears to have left its inheritance (or those who remained were killed off), the tribe is not included in the listing of 144,000 Jews in Rev. 7.

The final three verses give Joshua's inheritance (within Ephraim's inheritance), and summarizes the entire process.

IV. Cities of Refuge: Josh 20

The word for "kills" as used in verse 3 is basically the same word used in the Ten Commandments for murder. This passage assumes that the one killed has been killed illegally (i.e. not authorized by God), but also unintentionally. There is no difference as far as the word goes whether the person is killed intentionally or unintentionally. The concept that there was an alternative existed to avenging blood was unique to Israel in ancient cultures.

It might work like this, if America adopted the principle. Assume that Seneca Falls is a city of refuge. If you are driving a car at night near Spencerport, and someone jumps in front of your car such that you run over and kill him, you could go to a city of refuge (that is Seneca Falls) to seek asylum. However, if the person's brother was there with a shotgun when you ran over him, he could shoot you and be consistent with the law; it is not clear if your brother could then kill the one who killed you. If you make it to Seneca Falls, the avenging brother cannot kill you, unless you leave the city; so, you have to stay in it. You would have a trial to confirm that your actions that resulted in death were unintentional. After that, you would continue to have to live at Seneca Falls until your church got a new pastor or the country got a new President (or some such change). If this change did not occur for 20 years, you would have to stay in Seneca Falls for 20 years, as the avenger of blood could legally murder you otherwise.

While 20:6 implies that the trial is in the city of refuge, Number 35:24-25 has the trial occurring in the slayer's city:

Num 35:24-25

**24 the assembly must judge between him and the avenger of blood according to these regulations.
25 The assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the avenger of blood and send him back to the city of refuge to which he fled. He must stay there until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil.**

NIV

Perhaps it worked this way:

- Someone is killed
- The slayer flees to a city of refuge
- The officials of the city of refuge question the slayer to assure that he has a case for unintentional murder.
- The slayer's city calls an assembly and brings the slayer back home.
- The slayer stands trial in his town
- If the slaying was found unintentional, the slayer is sent back to the city of refuge under guard.
- If the slaying was found intentional, the slayer is turned over to the avenger of blood.

Three cities of refuge are given on each side of the Jordan. With these six cities as cities of refuge, apparently no place in the country was more than a day's journey from one of them.

V. Allocation to the Levites: Josh. 21

The Levites are given 48 cities where they can live and graze their sheep. This is a sizable number of cities compared to the list of cities indicated for many of the other tribes. Of course, these other lists are likely no complete, plus the Levites do not have room for growth. We do not see battles to take most of these cities. Some of them were not taken for some time such as the Philistine cities of Elteke and Gibbethon.

Earlier it was the heads of the tribes that approached Eleazar and Joshua, but now it is the head of the Levites. God had promised cities to the Levites in Num. 35:1-8. The cities still belonged to the tribal area in which they laid. It is not clear if the Levites coexisted with the owning tribe in these cities, or if they had sole possession. Many feel that the Levites could not “own” the towns or their own plots of land in them, but it would seem that they could own them in the same way that the Simeonites could own their land and cities. Obviously neither had their own tribal area, only cities within the areas of other tribes. One difference is that the Levites had some rather big cities; for example, was Hebron shared with Judahites? At a minimum, as a city of refuge, it would have had Judahites livings in it. Some of these cities might have been inhabited solely by Levites, and some might have been shared with others.

The number of cities is allocated this way:

Aaronic Kohathites:	13
Other Kohathites:	10
Gershomites:	13
Merarites:	12
Total	48

The Priests will live in basically the territory that would be Judea in the NT or the nation of Judah after the breakup of the combined nation in the OT.

VI. Meaning to Us

Why is the allocation of the land so important to the original recipients of the book of Joshua...indeed, one might argue that it is the most important point of the book to them?

Why is this allocation important to us?

Hints:

Give us background on the Israelites

Shows that God’s promises are kept

Shows how the Israelites struggled in following God (to help us with our struggles)