

## Lesson 9

# Putting Down Roots

## *Joshua 13-19*

### Introduction

In just over seven years, the tribes, led by the strategic leadership of Joshua and with divine intervention, successfully conquered Canaan, breaking the backbone of Canaanite resistance. The latter part of the Book of Joshua focuses on the occupation of the land, covering topics such as land distribution, disputes among the tribes, and Joshua's final discourses.

The distribution of the land, discussed in Joshua 13:1–33, was a significant task as Joshua, now nearly a hundred years old, had to fulfill his commission. The revelation to distribute the conquered land is highlighted, and the chapter details the allotment east and west of the Jordan River. The section concludes by addressing the establishment of cities of refuge and the designation of Levitical cities.

### 13.1-7: Possessing the Land

Through direct communication, God presented Joshua with a summary of the lands still to be conquered by Israel, despite the previous chapter's assertion that Joshua had taken the entire land, bringing rest from war. The victories secured the land in principle, but pockets of Canaanite resistance persisted. These areas, outlined in Joshua 13.1, included the territory of the Philistines and allied Geshurites along the southwest coast, the Phoenician coast up to Aphek, the land of the Gebalite and all of Lebanon, and the mountain regions occupied by the Sidonians.

Although God promised to drive out the remaining inhabitants, the principle remained that God provides, but Israel must act. While not fully possessed, the land was to be divided among the tribes as an "inheritance," even if effective control was not yet established. This act of assigning territory demonstrated faith, 13.6b–7.

### 13.8-33 – East of the Jordan

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh received their inheritance east of the Jordan River, and the boundaries established by Moses are detailed. The description of the Transjordan territory follows the earlier presentation. It includes notes on the Geshurites and Maacathites not being dispossessed and the absence of an inheritance for the Levites in Transjordan, as their offerings to the Lord served as their inheritance.

Next, Joshua verbally mapped out the areas assigned to the two-and-a-half tribes, aligning them with the conquest order. Reuben's territory extends from the Arnon River to Heshbon, Gad claims the land between Heshbon and Ramoth-Gilead (the Jordan valley east of the river), and Manasseh occupies Bashan, formerly ruled by King Og. Joshua emphasized the authority behind these tribal assignments and reiterated that Levi did not receive a land inheritance due to their spiritual inheritance 13.32–33.

## West of the Jordan

### Joshua 14.1-17.18

The decision-making process of who received this land involved Joshua, Eleazar, the high priest, and tribal leaders, 14.1. Nine and a half tribes received territories west of the Jordan, and twelve tribal areas were assigned, including the two-and-a-half territories east of the Jordan. The descendants of Joseph were given two portions as Joseph's two sons had become full-fledged tribes. The Levites did not receive a tribal allotment but were granted cities scattered throughout the tribes, aligning with Moses' stipulations, 14.3-5.

### ***14.6-15.63: The Tribe of Judah***

The allotment to Judah emphasized Caleb's significant role in the settlement of the tribal area. Caleb's faith and courage serve as a model for the expectations God had for all of Israel. Caleb requested an inheritance at Gilgal, reminding Joshua of the commitments made in the wilderness. At eighty-five years old, still strong, Caleb requests the hill country inhabited by the giants, the Anakim. He believes in the Lord's promise to drive out the remaining Anakim. Caleb receives Hebron and its surroundings as his inheritance, bringing a temporary rest from war, 14.6-15.

The borders of Judah are carefully traced in 15.1-12, with tribal territories designated by lot. The details of family assignments are spared, and the lists serve legal and possibly liturgical purposes, celebrating God's faithfulness. Caleb's settlement model is highlighted in 15.13–19 as he successfully drives out the giants from Hebron and conquers Kiriath-Sepher (Debir). Othniel, Caleb's relative, wins Achsah's hand in marriage by capturing Kiriath-Sepher. Achsah requests nearby springs as a wedding present, showing insight and determination. Caleb grants her "the upper and lower springs." The section concludes with a list of 114 cities in Judah, 15.21-62, categorized into the Negev, lowlands, hill country, and desert regions. A notable mention is that the tribe of Judah failed to drive out the Jebusites from Jerusalem until the time of David, 15.63.

### ***Joshua 16-17 – The Descendants of Joseph***

The descendants of Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were considered separate tribes in Israel. Here, we have an overview of the lot that fell to these tribes, 16.1-4, and a discussion follows, providing the details for each tribe individually.

The inheritance of Ephraim, 16.5-10, is outlined with an essential note that Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites in Gezer but chose to make them forced laborers instead.

The inheritance of Manasseh, 17.1-13 is detailed, with part of the tribe already allotted east of the Jordan and the rest receiving ten portions west of the Jordan. Five portions were given to the daughters of Zelophehad, who had successfully appealed to Moses for their inheritance. The borders of Manasseh are described, and additional cities are assigned. However, Manasseh couldn't take control of all these cities, resorting to putting the Canaanites into forced labor when Israel became strong.

These tribes complained to Joshua about the size of their portion, 17.14-18. Joshua challenged them to expand into the forested area northwest of their allotment. They expressed dissatisfaction, citing the Canaanites' iron chariots in the valley of Jezreel. Without showing favoritism, Joshua urges them to assert themselves, take the hill country, and drive out the Canaanites, assuring them that their numerous populations can secure the needed land despite the iron chariots, 17.14-18.

## Joshua 18.1-10 – The Final Allotment

Shiloh became the site for the final allotment, where the tent of meeting was established after the primary Canaanite resistance had been overcome. By divine revelation, God designated Shiloh as the location for His earthly palace, chosen for its central position among the tribes, 18.1. The relocation of the Tabernacle to Ephraim aimed to counteract tribal self-interest threatening national unity, as indicated by the complaint of the tribes of Joseph.

Next, we receive details concerning the organization of the Shiloh distribution. Seven tribes had not yet obtained their inheritance, and Joshua scolded them for not taking possession of their areas. Three men from each tribe formed a survey team to describe prospective areas and divide the remaining territory into seven portions. In emphasizing national unity, Joshua cast lots "before Yahweh our God" to determine the allotments. The survey team's work, likely contributing to the content in Joshua 13–19, described the land "by cities in seven divisions in a book," and lots were cast in Shiloh, 18.2–10.

The distribution of the land occurred in the following order: Benjamin, 18.11-28); Simeon, 19.1-9; Zebulun, 19.10-16; Issachar, 19.17-23; Asher, 19.24-31; Naphtali, 19.32-39, and Dan, 19.40-48. Detailed geographical issues in this unit are beyond the scope of this survey. However, specific observations about these allotments are noteworthy:

1. Benjamin's lot is carefully described, including border stations and a city list of twenty-six entries.
2. Simeon's lot was taken from within the tribal area of Judah due to Judah's portion being "too large for them."
3. A portion of Dan migrated north, capturing Leshem near the headwaters of the Jordan and renaming it Dan. This event is detailed in Judges 18, likely occurring after Joshua's time, but the note is included here to complete the account of Dan's allotment.

The section concludes with Joshua's inheritance, 19.49-51. In compliance with the Lord's command, the sons of Israel gave Joshua an inheritance, and he received the city of Timnath-Serah in the hill country of Ephraim. Joshua rebuilt and settled the town. With the allocation of Timnath-Serah, the western tribal allotment concluded, and Eleazar, Joshua, and tribal leaders fulfilled their responsibilities. The final phase of the allotment occurred at Shiloh "before Yahweh" at the door of the tent of meeting, 19.51.

## Conclusion

In just over seven years, the tribes of Israel, led by Joshua's guidance and aided by divine intervention, successfully conquered the land of Canaan. This conquest, marked by the leadership of Joshua, broke the backbone of Canaanite resistance. The latter portion of the Book of Joshua is dedicated to the

intricate task of occupying the land, delving into topics such as land distribution, tribal disputes, and Joshua's final discourses.

The land distribution, as detailed in Joshua 13:1–33, was a monumental undertaking. Joshua fulfilled his commission to allocate the conquered land at nearly a hundred years old. The revelation mandating the distribution and the subsequent detailing of allotments east and west of the Jordan River demonstrate the meticulous planning involved.

The possession of the land faced challenges, with areas still to be conquered despite the assertion that the entire land had been taken. The principle emerged that while God promises, Israel must actively take possession. Pockets of Canaanite resistance lingered, identified in areas like the territory of the Philistines and allied Geshurites. The author emphasizes the faith required in land allocation, assigning territories as an act of faith.

The tribes east of the Jordan, namely Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, received their inheritance with defined boundaries set by Moses. The Levites in Transjordan were granted offerings as their inheritance. The description of the tribal territories concludes with a note on the authority behind these assignments and the acknowledgment that Levi did not receive a land portion due to its spiritual inheritance.

The distribution west of the Jordan involved the tribes receiving their respective allotments. Caleb's significant role in the settlement of Judah's tribal area is highlighted, emphasizing his faith and courage as a model for the people. The meticulous tracing of Judah's borders and the listing of cities showcase the careful organization of the tribal inheritance. Caleb's settlement model, involving the conquest of giants and the strategic marriage of his daughter, adds additional insight.

Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh's descendants receive their respective inheritances, emphasizing Ephraim's failure to drive out the Canaanites in Gezer. Manasseh's inheritance is detailed, including the unique case of the daughters of Zelophehad receiving portions. The Joseph tribes express dissatisfaction with their allotment size, prompting Joshua to challenge them to assert themselves against potential challenges.

The conclusion of the tribal allotments centers around Shiloh, where the tent of meeting is established, signifying the end of major Canaanite resistance. Shiloh becomes the central location for the Tabernacle, chosen to counter tribal self-interest and maintain national unity. The organizational aspect of the Shiloh distribution involves a survey team to describe prospective areas, emphasizing national unity through the casting of lots "before Yahweh."

The distribution of the remaining territories follows a defined order, with specific observations regarding Benjamin's detailed allotment, Simeon's portion taken from within Judah's tribal area, and Dan's migration north detailed in Judges 18. The section concludes with the personal inheritance of Joshua at Timnath-Serah in Ephraim, marking the end of the western tribal allotment.

## Thought Questions for Discussion

1. How did the strategic leadership of Joshua contribute to the success of the tribes in conquering Canaan in just over seven years?

2. What role did divine intervention play in the conquest of Canaan, and how is it reflected in the narrative of the Book of Joshua?
3. Explore the challenges faced by the tribes in distributing the conquered land, considering factors such as geographical issues, tribal disputes, and the need for strategic planning.
4. Discuss the significance of Shiloh as the site for the final allotment and the establishment of the tent for the meeting. How did this choice impact the unity among the tribes?
5. In the land distribution, what principles and patterns can be observed in the allocation to different tribes? How were these decisions made, and what criteria were considered?
6. Analyze Caleb's role in the settlement of Judah's tribal area, emphasizing his faith and courage. In what ways did Caleb's actions serve as a model for the expectations God had for all of Israel?
7. Explore the challenges and successes faced by the descendants of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) in receiving their respective inheritances. How did their actions reflect on their ability to assert themselves in the allocated territories?
8. Consider the significance of Joshua's inheritance at Timnath-Serah. How does this reflect on the fulfillment of God's promises and the role of leadership in the distribution of land?
9. Reflect on God's principle, but Israel must actively take possession. How is this principle evident in the narrative, and what implications does it have for the people of Israel?
10. Discuss the themes of faith, obedience, and unity throughout the Book of Joshua. How do these themes contribute to the overall narrative of the conquest and occupation of the Promised Land?