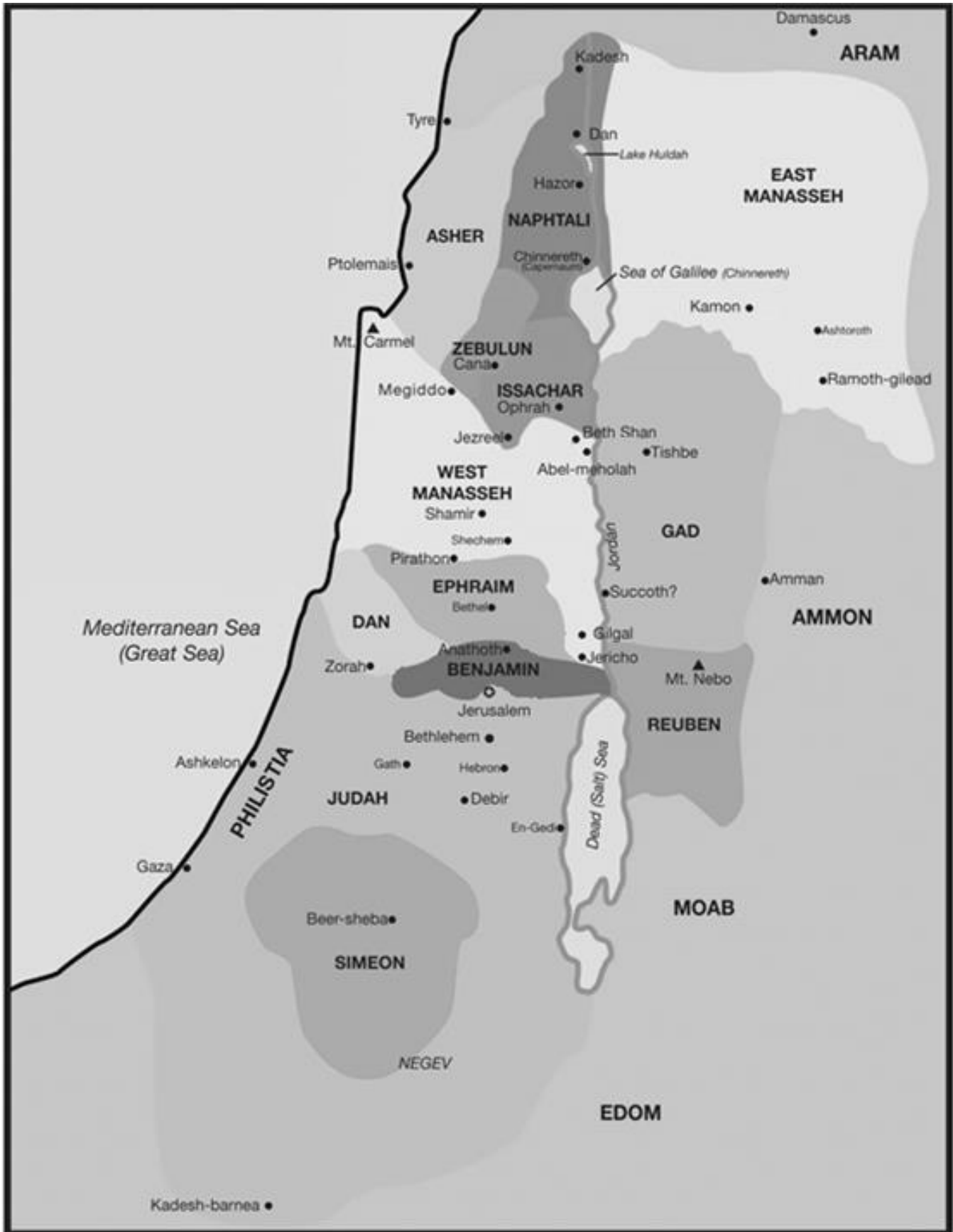


# Holy Land Division between the 12 Tribes





## Dividing the Promised Land by Lot Joshua 14:1-18:10

### Introduction

With the land under Israel's control, Joshua proceeded with the division and distribution to the tribes as the LORD commanded. It was important to occupy the country and settle the nation. Individual tribes could work on subduing their own territory while proceeding with family and national life.

It is the same for us as believers. Most often we must live our daily lives while resisting and routing the enemy in our own territory. When possible we can join in the larger spiritual battles.

In every spiritual battle we can stand with Christ as overcomers of the world, the flesh, and the devil. In doing so, we find meaning in life and avoid emptiness and despair. Does your life seem uninspired and unprofitable? Get into the fray against sin, self, and Satan to find purpose and deep fellowship with Christ and other committed people in His church.

### Outline of Joshua 14:1-18:10

- I. Distribution of the Land - Joshua 14
- II. Distribution to Specific Tribes - Joshua 15-17
- III. Establishing the Nation - Joshua 18:10

#### I. Distribution of the Land - Joshua 14

##### A. By Leaders - Joshua 14:1

Eleazar, the priest, Joshua, and heads of the tribes distributed the land *as an inheritance* to the people. All the details in these chapters may seem irrelevant, however, as William R. Newell says, "Everything the Word of God tells us about the land of Canaan seems alive with spiritual significance to the subject heart and the opened understanding" (Old Testament Studies, William R. Newell).

##### B. By Lot - Joshua 14:2

The tribes received their designated inheritance by lot. This had a two-fold advantage. First, it was fair and unbiased. Secondly, God chose the portion of land given to each tribe. The Apostle Paul wrote, *and when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment* (Acts 13:19).

##### C. As the LORD commanded...Moses - 14:2, 5

In Numbers 34:1-2, God gave Moses instructions for the division of the Promised Land, "*Command the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance - the land of Canaan to its boundaries.'*" The boundaries are given in Numbers 34:3-12.

1. Commandment to divide by lot - Numbers 34:13

*Then Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying: "This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe."*

2. Commandment to use specific leaders - Numbers 34:16-29

*And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "These are the names of the men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. And you shall take one leader of every tribe to divide the land for the inheritance...These are the ones the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance among the children of Israel in the land of Canaan."*

3. People's obedience to the commands - Joshua 14:5

The method of dividing the land was divinely given. It was not humanly conceived or engineered. The LORD revealed it, Moses spoke it, Joshua followed it, and the people performed it. This is the formula for success in God's work.

4. God's pattern for His work and His servants

*Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it* (Psalm 127:1). Moses was told to do everything according to the pattern revealed to him on the mountain (Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 8:5). We, too, *are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10). Are you living your life according to His pattern as revealed in the Bible?

In Jesus' Olivet discourse to His disciples only days before His death, He emphasized the importance of

watching for His return. *"It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work"* (Mark 13:34). Are you doing the work you were created to do and which was created for you? To obey God's Word, the Bible, and humbly serve Him brings true joy and satisfaction as well as eternal reward. *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10).

#### D. Caleb's Request - Joshua 14:6-15

##### 1. Caleb's History - 14:6-7

Caleb is one of the twelve men Moses had sent to *spy out the land of Canaan* (Numbers 13:2). Only he and Joshua had brought back a good report, encouraging the people to go forward and take the land (Numbers 13). Because of the people's rebellion, Caleb had waited forty-five years to claim his portion of the land.

##### 2. Moses' Promise - 14:8-9

Because of his good report (along with Joshua), as opposed to the defeatist report by the other ten spies, Moses had promised Caleb the portion of his choice. Moses had told the Israelites about the LORD's oath, *"Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD"* (Deuteronomy 1:35-36). Those who wholly follow the Lord will not lose their reward.

Note: Deuteronomy 1:38 includes Joshua as one of the faithful who would go into the land and also *"cause Israel to inherit it"*.

##### 3. Caleb's character - 14:11-12

Like many of God's choice servants, Caleb's zeal and courage were not diminished by age. *"I am as strong this day as I was on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in."* Caleb was confident he could still fight the enemy, with the LORD's help. *It may be that the LORD will be with me and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD said.* He really believed God and knew with God's help he could triumph. Do you believe as Caleb did? What is God calling you to do, with His help?

##### 4. Caleb's choice of Hebron - 14:12

Caleb chose the strong city of Hebron within the inheritance of Judah. This is also where Abraham had

pitched his tent in Canaan and built an altar to the LORD after separating from Lot (Genesis 13). When his wife Sarah died, he bought land there from Ephron the Hittite as a burial place. Later Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah were also buried there. Today Hebron is the largest city in the West Bank.

##### 5. Joshua's blessing - 14:13

Joshua gave Hebron to Caleb, his old friend, along with his blessing. Three times in this chapter (verses 8, 9, and 14) as well as in Numbers 14:24; 32:12 and Deuteronomy 1:36 we are told Caleb wholly followed the LORD. Can anything better be said of someone? Do you want this said of you? What would you have to change to make it true?

## II. Distribution to Specific Tribes - Joshua 15-17

### A. Judah - Joshua 15

When the tribes marched through the wilderness, Judah and her armies set out first (Numbers 10:14). As the lead tribe, they now received the first portion. Their boundaries were given and all of their cities enumerated.

### B. Ephraim - Joshua 16

Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh received large portions in the central region of Canaan. This represented the double portion for Joseph, whose sons were Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim's part lay north and south of Shechem which centuries later became Samaria.

### C. Half-tribe of Manasseh - Joshua 17

Manasseh inherited large portions on both sides of the Jordan, receiving the greatest land mass of all the tribes. For the third time the daughters of Zelophehad asserted their claim in order to receive the inheritance promised them by Moses and by God, for their father had no sons (Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-12).

Zelophehad had five daughters and no sons (Numbers 26:33). Had he been childless, the inheritance rights issue might not have been raised as his property would have gone to a brother, uncle, or male cousin within the tribe. But he had daughters and they raised the inheritance question. If these five women had not spoken for their father's inheritance, it would no doubt have been lost to relatives by default.

Women's rights were previously not an issue and therefore were undefined. But these women spoke up and the LORD determined their request to be just and right, *"If a man dies and has no son, then you shall*

*cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter*" (Numbers 27:8). Zelophehad's daughters, Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah were women of faith. They boldly made their request for what was rightly theirs and the LORD honored it.

Today, as Christians, we have spiritual possessions God has promised. By faith we can ask for them and expect to receive. Will you boldly stand up and claim all the spiritual blessings God has promised in His Word? Ephesians 1:1-14 proclaims the believer's spiritual blessings in Christ. This is a good place to begin. Will you take time now to read that passage and familiarize yourself with what is rightly yours as a believer? It is important to know the blessings God has promised in order to claim them.

### III. Establishing the Nation - Joshua 18

#### A. Setting Up the Tabernacle - Joshua 18:1

The camp now moved from Gilgal to Shiloh, the first of the national Hebrew sanctuaries. From the banks of the Jordan, where they had camped for over seven years and had begun dividing the territory, the Israelites moved inland and a little north to a central position almost half-way between Jerusalem and Shechem in the territory of Ephraim. Here they *set up the tabernacle of meeting* to worship God.

#### B. Seven Portions for Seven Tribes - Joshua 18:2-10

##### 1. A committee of thirty-six men

Joshua chided the people for sluggishness, *How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you?* He instructed each tribe to select three men to go and survey the land. While there, they were to divide the land into seven parcels.

##### 2. Seven parts to be distributed by lot

Joshua would cast lots *before the LORD our God* to determine the inheritance of each of the remaining seven tribes. God would determine the outcome.

#### 3. Levites Excluded - 18:7

Again, Joshua mentioned the Levites, *But the Levites have no part among you for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance.* The Levites were to be as unencumbered as possible in order to fulfill their duties as priests. In a similar vein, the apostle Paul told Timothy, *No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier* (2 Timothy 2:4). Are you so entangled with worldly concerns that you do not take time to please God? What do you really want your priority to be? What will you do about it?

#### 4. Shiloh the place for casting lots - 18:8-10

When the survey committee returned and reported, Joshua cast lots *before the LORD* at the tabernacle in Shiloh, the nation's new center. And *Joshua divided the land to the children of Israel according to their divisions.*

### Applications

1. Jesus, as our Joshua, leads us into the place of blessing. He gives us victory over the enemy and causes us to enjoy our blessings in the heavenly places if we wholly follow Him. Are you following the captain of your salvation into the place of blessing and allowing Him to lead the way? What decisions do you need to entrust to Him now?
2. In 1 Timothy 6:12, the apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to, *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called.* How willing are you to fight the good fight of faith? How do you need to change your priorities in order to faithfully fight?
3. Are you willing to live a disciplined life and *endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ* (2 Timothy 2:3)? Do you consider it more important to live a life of comfort and pleasure or a life of faith?