

Exegetical Notes, Joshua 18:1-19:51

“How Long Will You Wait”

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Joshua 18:1-19:51

Verses 18:1-10

The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there. The country was brought under their control,² but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance.

³ So Joshua said to the Israelites: “How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you? ⁴ Appoint three men from each tribe. I will send them out to make a survey of the land and to write a description of it, according to the inheritance of each. Then they will return to me. ⁵ You are to divide the land into seven parts. Judah is to remain in its territory on the south and the tribes of Joseph in their territory on the north. ⁶ After you have written descriptions of the seven parts of the land, bring them here to me and I will cast lots for you in the presence of the LORD our God. ⁷ The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the LORD is their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh have already received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. Moses the servant of the LORD gave it to them.”

⁸ As the men started on their way to map out the land, Joshua instructed them, “Go and make a survey of the land and write a description of it. Then return to me, and I will cast lots for you here at Shiloh in the presence of the LORD.” ⁹ So the men left and went through the land. They wrote its description on a scroll, town by town, in seven parts, and returned to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh.

¹⁰ Joshua then cast lots for them in Shiloh in the presence of the LORD, and there he distributed the land to the Israelites according to their tribal divisions.

- The tribes of Israel were gathered at Shiloh. The tent of meeting had been set up. The Promised Land was under their control. And there things sat. Seven tribes had not yet received their portion of land. But there seemed to be no concern about moving forward.

- Joshua's question in verse three is basically, "How long will you sit here and do nothing?" Israel seems content to leave things as they are.
- Joshua appointed a survey team of 21 persons, three from each of the seven tribes which had not yet been inherited. The team's job was to map out the land not yet assigned. Once the descriptions had been written, they were to be brought to Joshua. Lots would be cast to determine. Its means that they threw dice or some other means to determine which tribe got which portion. They believed that God would speak to them through this method of dividing the land.
- Since the Levites receive the offering made by the people of Israel to God as their support, they were not given a portion of the land. The priest's living came from the offerings of God's people.
- Gad, Reuben and ½ of Manasseh had received land outside of the Promised Land. They were not given another portion within the Promised Land.

Verses 11-28

The first lot came up for the tribe of Benjamin according to its clans. Their allotted territory lay between the tribes of Judah and Joseph:

¹² On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan, passed the northern slope of Jericho and headed west into the hill country, coming out at the wilderness of Beth Aven. ¹³ From there it crossed to the south slope of Luz (that is, Bethel) and went down to Ataroth Addar on the hill south of Lower Beth Horon.

¹⁴ From the hill facing Beth Horon on the south the boundary turned south along the western side and came out at Kiriath Baal (that is, Kiriath Jearim), a town of the people of Judah. This was the western side.

¹⁵ The southern side began at the outskirts of Kiriath Jearim on the west, and the boundary came out at the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. ¹⁶ The boundary went down to the foot of the hill facing the Valley of Ben Hinnom, north of the Valley of Rephaim. It continued down the Hinnom Valley along the southern slope of the Jebusite city and so to En Rogel. ¹⁷ It then curved north, went to En Shemesh, continued to Geliloth, which faces the Pass of Adummim, and ran down to the Stone of Bohan son of Reuben. ¹⁸ It continued to the northern slope of Beth Arabah and on down into the Arabah. ¹⁹ It then went to the northern slope of Beth Hoglah and came out at the northern bay of the Dead Sea, at the mouth of the Jordan in the south. This was the southern boundary.

²⁰ The Jordan formed the boundary on the eastern side.

These were the boundaries that marked out the inheritance of the clans of Benjamin on all sides.

²¹ The tribe of Benjamin, according to its clans, had the following towns: Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, ²² Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, ²³ Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, ²⁴ Kephah Ammoni, Ophni and Geba—twelve towns and their villages.

²⁵ Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, ²⁶ Mizpah, Kephirah, Mozah, ²⁷ Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, ²⁸ Zelah, Haeleph, the Jebusite city (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath—fourteen towns and their villages.

This was the inheritance of Benjamin for its clans.

- The first portion was given to Benjamin. This passage contains its boundaries.

Verses 19:1-9

The second lot came out for the tribe of Simeon according to its clans. Their inheritance lay within the territory of Judah.¹ ² It included:

Beersheba (or Sheba), Moladah, ³ Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem, ⁴ Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, ⁵ Ziklag, Beth Markaboth, Hazar Susah, ⁶ Beth Lebaoth and Sharuhem—thirteen towns and their villages;

⁷ Ain, Rimmon, Ether and Ashan—four towns and their villages—⁸ and all the villages around these towns as far as Baalath Beer (Ramah in the Negev).

This was the inheritance of the tribe of the Simeonites, according to its clans.

⁹ The inheritance of the Simeonites was taken from the share of Judah, because Judah's portion was more than they needed. So the Simeonites received their inheritance within the territory of Judah.

- The second portion went to the tribe of Simeon. This portion was part of the territory assigned to Judah, but was reassigned to Simeon.
- It is believed that Simeon's portion was small because of Jacob's curse of this tribe and the tribe of Levi found in Genesis 49:5-6. (See Genesis 34)

Verses 10-16

The third lot came up for Zebulun according to its clans:

The boundary of their inheritance went as far as Sarid. ¹¹ Going west it ran to Maralah, touched Dabbesheth, and extended to the ravine near Jokneam. ¹² It

turned east from Sarid toward the sunrise to the territory of Kisloth Tabor and went on to Daberath and up to Japhia. ¹³ Then it continued eastward to Gath

Hepher and Eth Kazin; it came out at Rimmon and turned toward Neah. ¹⁴ There

the boundary went around on the north to Hannathon and ended at the Valley of Iphtah El. ¹⁵ Included were Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah and Bethlehem. There were twelve towns and their villages.

¹⁶ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of Zebulun, according to its clans.

- The third portion of land went to the tribe of Zebulun.

Verses 17-23

The fourth lot came out for Issachar according to its clans. ¹⁸ Their territory included:

Jezreel, Kesulloth, Shunem, ¹⁹ Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, ²⁰ Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, ²¹ Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah and Beth Pazzez. ²² The boundary touched Tabor, Shahazumah and Beth Shemesh, and ended at the Jordan. There were sixteen towns and their villages.

²³ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Issachar, according to its clans.

- The fourth portion of land went to the tribe of Issachar.

Verses 24-31

The fifth lot came out for the tribe of Asher according to its clans. ²⁵ Their territory included:

Helkath, Hali, Beten, Akshaph, ²⁶ Allammelek, Amad and Mishal. On the west the boundary touched Carmel and Shihor Libnath. ²⁷ It then turned east toward Beth Dagon, touched Zebulun and the Valley of Iphtah El, and went north to Beth Emek and Neiel, passing Kabul on the left. ²⁸ It went to Abdon, Rehob, Hammon and Kanah, as far as Greater Sidon. ²⁹ The boundary then turned back toward Ramah and went to the fortified city of Tyre, turned toward Hosah and came out at the Mediterranean Sea in the region of Akzib, ³⁰ Ummah, Aphek and Rehob. There were twenty-two towns and their villages.

³¹ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Asher, according to its clans.

- The fifth portion of land went to the tribe Asher.

Verses 32-39

The sixth lot came out for Naphtali according to its clans:

³³ Their boundary went from Heleph and the large tree in Zaananim, passing Adami Nekeb and Jabneel to Lakkum and ending at the Jordan. ³⁴ The boundary

ran west through Aznoth Tabor and came out at Hukkok. It touched Zebulun on the south, Asher on the west and the Jordan on the east. ³⁵ The fortified towns were Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Kinnereth, ³⁶ Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, ³⁷ Kedesh, Edrei, En Hazor, ³⁸ Iron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath and Beth Shemesh. There were nineteen towns and their villages.

³⁹ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Naphtali, according to its clans.

- The sixth portion of land went to the tribe of Naphtali.

Verses 40-48

The seventh lot came out for the tribe of Dan according to its clans. ⁴¹ The territory of their inheritance included:

Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir Shemesh, ⁴² Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, ⁴³ Elon, Timnah, Ekron, ⁴⁴ Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, ⁴⁵ Jehud, Bene Berak, Gath Rimmon, ⁴⁶ Me Jarkon and Rakkon, with the area facing Joppa.

⁴⁷ (When the territory of the Danites was lost to them, they went up and attacked Leshem, took it, put it to the sword and occupied it. They settled in Leshem and named it Dan after their ancestor.)

⁴⁸ These towns and their villages were the inheritance of the tribe of Dan, according to its clans.

- The last portion of land was given to the tribe of Dan.

Verses 49-51

⁴⁹ When they had finished dividing the land into its allotted portions, the Israelites gave Joshua son of Nun an inheritance among them, ⁵⁰ as the LORD had commanded. They gave him the town he asked for—Timnath Serah in the hill country of Ephraim. And he built up the town and settled there.

⁵¹ These are the territories that Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel assigned by lot at Shiloh in the presence of the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And so they finished dividing the land.

- For his faithful service to YHWH and Israel, Joshua received a special inheritance, the city of Timnath Serah in the territory of Ephraim.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *How Long Will You Wait*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Interim Senior/Lead Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)