
Joshua 18

Joshua 18:1–28

Israel Relocates to Shiloh/Benjamin's Inheritance

Outline of Chapter 18:

- Vv. 1–10 **The land remaining is mapped out**
- Vv. 11–20 **The borders of the land of Benjamin**
- Vv. 21–28 **The cities belonging to Benjamin**

Introduction: There are a couple of seemingly inexplicable things which take place in Joshua 18: suddenly, the entire congregation moves to Shiloh and they set up their tents there. However, they do not resume casting lots for the land but Joshua sends out representatives from each remaining tribe to carefully map out the remaining land to divide it up themselves. Then they resume with the distribution of the land. There are a lot of questions that, if you read this and thought about it, that you could not answer. Why did they pack up and suddenly move to Shiloh? They already had a rough idea of the land in the northern section; why did Joshua send them up there to both map it out and divide it up? What is further confusing is why does Joshua makes it sound as though the Israelites did not do what was necessary to go in and secure their possession? It was as though the rest of the tribes were happy to continue camping out at Gilgal. Joshua seems to berate them for this in v. 3. I had several different thoughts at first. My first thought was that there would have been representatives from every tribe standing before Joshua as the lots were cast; however, it appears as though a few lots were cast, some land was distributed; but that the majority of the tribes didn't come forward to have a lot cast on their behalf. Another possibility which occurred to me was that the land in the far north had not been charted and mapped as had the land in central and southern Israel. They didn't fully realize what they had, how far it went, or how much land they really possessed in the north; so they had to pause and map the land out. That thought was partially true. I thought perhaps that Joshua's berating in v. 3 is partially congenial and partially because they have not sent men forward to Joshua to inquire about their next move. My point is, on a dry read, if you think about it, you are going to have a lot of questions. If you don't believe me, then stop reading this, go to your Bible (any translation), and begin reading. Read the chapter once or thrice and then determine on your own why they moved, why did Joshua require them to map out the remaining area; but, most peculiar of all, why does Joshua seem to chide the remaining tribes? You, of course, don't have to do this. I'll explain it all in the next paragraph and as we go through the chapter, it will all hang together.

The end of the previous chapter helps to explain the *why* of what is going on in this one. Joshua has been dividing up the land as God had instructed him to. Manasseh, who had a huge portion of land on both sides of the Jordan, and Ephraim, who also received a large chunk of land which was exceptionally fertile, came and complained. Joshua does not want to deal with seven more tribes coming to him with complaints that their land is too small. Therefore, all of Israel will move to a more centralized area from whence he will send representatives out to divide the land up to where they are satisfied that it is equally divided. Then he could continue distributing the land and they tribes cannot complain because they have themselves divided up the land.

The Land Remaining Is Mapped Out

Literally:

And so were gathered all a congregation of [the] sons of Israel [at] Shiloh; and so they caused to set up there a tent of meeting; and the land was subdued before their faces.

Joshua
18:1

Smoother English rendering:

Then the congregation of Israel was relocated to Shiloh. They also set up the tent of meeting there and the land stood subdued before them.

The first verb is the Niphal imperfect of qâhal (קָהַל) [pronounced *kaw-HAHL*], which means *to assemble, to be gathered*; it is only found in the Niphal and the Hiphil. Properly, according to Barnes, it means *to gather together the parties for trial; or rather call the individual into court for trial, to call together, to convoke, as a people*. Strong's #6950 BDB #874.

The second verb is the Hiphil imperfect of shâkan (שָׁכַן) [pronounced *shaw-KAHN*], which means *to tabernacle, to pitch a tent*. Strong's #7931 BDB #1014. The first order of business when they moved was to set up the tent of meeting—the tabernacle, the central place of worship. The Hiphil means they were caused to set this up.

They re-gather at Shiloh, which means *rest*. Although we examined the city of Shiloh in Psalm 78:61, it may be good for us to take a quick peek at it again. Shiloh is in the midst of Ephraim, which is in the direct center of Israel proper, perhaps two or three miles east of the main road that ran between Bethel and Shechem. Shiloh occupied a rather commanding position on top of a hill about nine miles north of Bethel.¹ It appears as though Shiloh had not be occupied by Canaanites previously, meaning that it was uncontaminated by heathen worship, making it a pure site for the setting up of the ark and the tent of meeting. Shiloh, being up in the hill country, was in a good strategic position and easier to defend than Gilgal, which was really nothing more than a temporary campground for Israel. Where the tabernacle, the holy tent, was set up, was of great importance to Israel; therefore, a site which was more centrally located and more easily defended made perfect sense to Joshua, a military and religious man. During this time, doorposts and a door were added (I Sam. 1:9), although it is not clear as to when or by whom and it began to be referred to as a temple (I Sam. 3:3). The tabernacle will remain here throughout the entire period of the Judges until it is captured by the Philistines in I Sam. 4 (Judges 18:31 I Sam. 1:3, 24). Although we are not told of the incredible destruction which must have taken place in Shiloh, we know from I Sam. 4:10 that 30,000 foot soldiers were killed and Psalm 78:60 reads: *So that He abandoned the dwelling place at Shiloh, the tent which He had pitched among men*.

Now, what is interesting is that we do not have an appeal made by Joshua to God nor do we have any mention of God directly communicating with Joshua. Moses had promised his people, *“When you cross the Jordan and you live in the land which Jehovah your God will give you to inherit and He gives you rest from all your enemies around so that you live in security, then it will come to pass that the place in which Jehovah your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you will bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to Jehovah.”* (Deut. 12:11). Whether this is the point at which Israel will have security or not is debatable. What we do have is someone who is clearly in charge of Israel. Moses made it clear that his leadership position was to be transferred to Joshua. *“Joshua ben Nun, who stands before you—he will enter there. Encourage him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it.”* (Deut. 1:38). *Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you will go with this people into the land which Jehovah has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you will give it to them as an inheritance* (Deut. 31:7; see also Deut. 3:28 31:23). Joshua was the one in charge of making the decisions. He had an excellent working knowledge of the Scriptures as they then existed and I see no reason to doubt that he made the choice to move the tabernacle and all Israel to a more centralized and more defensible location. That God did not speak to Joshua out of the tent of gathering and tell him where to erect the tabernacle in the first place does not mean that this was not God's will. I had too many negatives in the previous sentence, so let me clarify. Joshua, as the spiritual and military leader of Israel, when he made the choice to move the tabernacle, was acting in accordance with God's will. A believer with doctrine does not need a thunderbolt to hit him in the left shoulder to tell him which way to turn. In retrospect, we find out: *“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people, Israel.”* (Jer. 7:12). It is clearly stated that relocating the ark in Shiloh was God's will and implies that Shiloh was decimated (see also Jer. 26:6 with regards to this). Although it is not specifically recorded in the Bible, the Assyrians destroyed what was left of Shiloh.

Keil and Delitzsch seem to be of the opinion that God came to Joshua and told him where to move the tabernacle to. I don't buy that for the extremely important reason that we do not find that occurrence recorded in Scripture. Joshua was very familiar with what Moses did and every time God spoke to Moses, Moses took note and told us of what was said. God seemed to have some contact with Joshua, but less than with Moses. However, what

¹ This was according to Barnes; the NIV Study Bible says ten miles northeast of Bethel.

could be more important to record than a conversation with God? I personally do not see how this could have slipped Joshua's mind to have had such a conversation with God and yet not mention it. Keil and Delitzsch also suggest that part of the reason for moving the Tabernacle to Shiloh was the name *Shiloh*, which means *rest*. *Shiloh [was]...therefore...re-eminently suitable to be the resting-place of the sanctuary of the Lord, where His name was to dwell in Israel, until He should come who was to give true rest to His people as the Prince of Peace.*² That the Tabernacle, which speaks of Jesus Christ, should be tied to a location which speaks of rest, was not a coincidence, was certainly God's plan.

Israel first, when they crossed the Jordan, had camped at Gilgal. Although some expositors suggest that they camped at two different Gilgal's, in our exegesis of the book of Joshua, we found no evidence which pushed us in that direction. However, Gilgal was the first place the Israelites could set up their tents west of the river Jordan. Now that they had taken the land, it was time to locate the place of worship in central Israel. My guess is that, after assigning the southern portion of land and Manasseh's territory, all of Israel, was moved, along with the tent of meeting, to a more centralized place. Joshua knew that the remainder of the land had not been properly charted, so that was the next consideration. Had he been able to see a map as we can examine today, he may have not assigned as much area as he did to Judah and to Manasseh. Since the sons of Israel would be required to come to a specific location three times of year to worship Jehovah God, Joshua determined that a more centralized location for the ark and all of the furniture and the tent of meeting would be in order. The passive voice of *qâhal* above indicates to me that Joshua gave the orders for the congregation to move out. The third reason for Joshua to relocate the ark at Shiloh is that he was from the tribe of Ephraim so that he would spend his last years in the midst of his own tribe and their allotment.

Below Shiloh, the land to Judah has already been assigned; directly above Manasseh we have a fairly good-sized chunk of real estate given over to the half-tribe of Manasseh. However, above Manasseh is an area which was partially conquered (all of Israel was partially conquered, with the exception of the east portion, which seems to have been fully taken). However, it appears as though the Israelites do not have this area completely mapped out. There have been two expeditions by spies into Israel and it appears as though they either did not go that far north or that the information from that area was too sketchy to map what was there. This is the land which will be given over to Asher, Naphtali, Zebulun and Issachar.

The final verb is the Niphal perfect of *kâbash* (כָּבַשׁ) [pronounced *kaw-BAHSH*], which means *to subdue, to bring into bondage, to dominate, to force*. It is found in most of the stems. The Niphal is the passive, so the land has been caused to be subdued. Strong's #3533 BDB #461. My father used to speak of putting the "kabosh" on someone; I had no idea that he was speaking a little Yiddish.

And so there remained in sons of Israel who had not been apportioned their inheritance seven tribes.

Joshua
18:2

Now there were still seven tribes in the sons of Israel who had not been given their inheritance yet.

Connecting the subject and the verb in this verse is rather difficult. The verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Niphal imperfect of *yâthar* (יָתַר) [pronounced *yaw-THAHR*], which means *to remain over, to remain*. Strong's #3498 BDB #451. The following noun (*sons*) is masculine plural, but it is preceded by the *bêyth* preposition, meaning that it is not the subject. We don't have a masculine plural noun until we get to the end of the verse where we have the word *tribes*. In between we have the negative and the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *châlaq* (חָלַק) [pronounced *chaw-LAHK*], means *to divide, to apportion, to allot, to share*. Strong's #2505 BDB #323. This verb probably goes with *sons of Israel*, as it is preceded also by the relative pronoun. It might be instructive to see how various Bibles translated this verse:

The Emphasized Bible

But there remained among the sons of Israel, to whom had not been apportioned their inheritance,—seven tribes.

KJV

And there remained among the children of Israel seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance.

² Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 135.

NASB	And there remained among the sons of Israel seven tribes who had not divided their inheritance.
NIV	...but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance.
Young's Lit. Translation	And there are left among the sons of Israel who have not shared their inheritance seven tribes.

So you will notice that even among the best of the translators, there is disagreement as to which noun goes with which verb; however, the meaning is clear. This is a far superior place to be than if it were the other way around. The tribes of Dan and Benjamin will be sandwiched between Ephraim and Judah; Simeon will be placed in the midst of Judah; the Levites will be spread out throughout the entire land; and the remaining four tribes will be given the land north of Manasseh.

And so said Joshua unto sons of Israel, “How long you [all] continue being remiss to go in and to take possession of the land which Y^ehowah has given you, God of your fathers?”	Joshua 18:3	Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, “How long will you continue being remiss in taking possession of the land which Jehovah, the God of your fathers, has given you?”
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Joshua calls together the heads of the tribes. They were caused to relocate to Shiloh and to set up their tents again, so all of this took considerable time. However, Joshua had the tent of meeting set up and he was ready to distribute the land. Time was of the essence because Joshua did not want their enemies to return to the land and to take it back.

Let's deal with some of the nuances of the Hebrew: Joshua begins with the preposition *ʿad* and the adverb *ʾân* (אָן) [pronounced *awn*], which means *where*; with regards to time it means *to what point*; with *ʿad*, it means *how long*. Strong's #575 BDB #33. This is followed by the 2nd person masculine plural personal pronoun and then the Hithpael participle of *râphâh* (רָפַח) [pronounced *raw-FAW*], a verb which means *to sink, to relax, to loosen and let drop, to let down, to cast down, to let fall* in the Qal. In the Niphal, it means *to be idle*. In the Hiphil it means *to lose interest in a person or a project and therefore abandon that person or project, to forsake* (it means *leave me alone* in the Hiphil imperative). Gesenius gives the Hithpael meanings as *to show oneself remiss, to be lazy, to lose one's courage*. BDB suggests it means *to shew oneself to be slack* (big help, here). Obviously, the difference of the stems makes a difference in the meaning of the verb. Strong's #7503 BDB #951.

What Joshua does here is a little tongue in cheek. He has moved the tribes to Shiloh, he has not resumed the distribution of the land. He calls for the heads of the tribes to come and visit with him. In my first marriage, I have noticed a peculiarity. When my wife had done something wrong or bad, as soon as I walked in the door, she would be all over me bitching and complaining about something I had done recently or about my lack of ability to provide. In other words, when she was in the wrong, she went on the offensive immediately. I never had a chance to find out what she had done because when I walked through that front door, I was immediately in the wrong. Soon thereafter, when I found out what she had done that was wrong, I was already the person in the wrong so what could I say? The first thing these men are ready to do is to divide up the land. They may have come to Joshua with that in mind. In fact, they were probably ready to finish dividing up the land in Gilgal at the end of the previous chapter when Joshua suddenly gave the order to pull up their tent stakes and move to Shiloh. As soon as they come before Joshua, he begins berating them for not doing this, it catches them off guard. While off guard, he tells them what they are going to do. Joshua is not going to say, *“Because your brothers came to me and bitched and complained about the land which they received, we are going to do things differently this time.”* He just tells them what they are going to do without giving them a full explanation as to why he has chosen to do it this way.

Barnes suggests what Joshua said was not tongue in cheek, but a result of the Israelites dragging their feet. *This...probably arose from the indisposition of the people to abandon the nomad life in which they had been born and bred, and to settle in fixed abodes, and perhaps also from a dislike of the exterminating warfare incidental to a complete dispossessing of the Canaanites.*³ What Barnes says here does make a great deal of sense. A

³ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 395.

possible scenario is that the Israelites picked up camp and moved as per Joshua's orders but then did not send representatives to Joshua to continue the casting for lots. Joshua here speaks to Israel as a whole, knowing that he needs to finish the work which God has given him. Joshua had several extremely important tasks to complete. He had to finish the book of Deuteronomy; he had to write Scripture which reflected his own time and history, he had to conquer all of Israel—i.e., make enough in-roads so that the tribes could proceed individually; and then he had to distribute the land. It was a tall order for one man.

McGee agrees with Barnes here. *Seven of the tribes were standing around with their hands in their pockets. They said to Joshua, "What about this land? What are you going to give us?" Joshua told them, "You have been given a certain area. Go and possess your land. How long are you going to wait?"* And then McGee uses this as a springboard for what is true—God has given us a great many temporal and spiritual blessings which often go unclaimed by us, due to our hard-heartedness, obstinance towards His plan and time spent out of fellowship.

So that there is no confusion between the book of Joshua and the next book, let me point out that in Joshua, the Israelites subdued the land enough to occupy the land. They did not rid every city of Canaanites and Amorites. In the book of Judges, what was supposed to take place was the individual tribes were to continue to take the cities which remained in the hands of enemy forces.

“Provide for yourselves three men for the tribe and I will send them and they will set out and they will go up and down in the land and they will document it according to their inheritance and they will come to me.

Joshua
18:4

“Each tribe will provide three men, and I will send them out and they will traverse the land and carefully map it out according to their inheritance, and then they will return to me.

This verse is packed with verbs, but they are mostly translated correctly and they are simple verbs. In the middle of the verse we do have the Hithpael imperfect of *hālak*^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK^e*], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. In the Hithpael, it means *to go for oneself, to walk up and down*. The latter is the choice of Rotherham, Owen and Young, so that is good enough for me. Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229.

The verb following that is the Qal imperfect of *kātha*^{bv} (כָּתַב) [pronounced *kaw-THAH^{BV}*], which means *to write, to write down, to chronicle, to record, to document*. Rotherham suggests *to map out*. The NKJV uses the very modern rendering *to survey*. Strong's #3789 BDB #507. I am not aware of any maps made by the Hebrew from this time period which are still in existence, but the very material that they would be made on, and the nature of a map would preclude their preservation. This is followed by the lamed preposition and the masculine singular construct of *peh* (פִּה) [pronounced *peh*], which means *mouth*. However, with a preposition, it generally becomes a particle. With lamed, it means *at the rate of, according to*. Strong's #6310 BDB #804.

In the previous chapter, Joshua had just dealt with a delegation complaining about their inheritance. He is thinking that he may face this with each and every tribe. Therefore, he will have the tribes who are about to receive the remaining land map out the land which remains and then to divide it up themselves. Since they are doing the dividing, they cannot come to Joshua afterwards and claim that he screwed them in the deal. If you are concerned about the Israelites being primitive and unable to properly map out the area during that time period, the Egyptians surveyed their land at annual intervals, primarily because of the regular flooding of the Nile.⁴ It was likely that the Israelites learned how to survey from the Egyptians, although the generation which would have learned how to do it properly would have died off in the desert. Therefore, this was not a proper survey, but it was accurate enough for their purposes of dividing up the land. The Hebrew words used here also do not reflect a formal surveying of the land. What was probably required by Joshua was *the preparation of lists of the towns in the different parts of the land, with an account of their size and character; also with "notices of the quality and condition of the soil; what lands were fertile, and what they produced; where the country was mountainous, and where it was level; which lands were well waters, and which were dry; and any other things that would indicate the*

⁴ See Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 135 for historical citations from Herodotus, Strabo and Diodorus Siculus.

character of the soil, and facilitate a comparison between the different parts of the land” (Rosenmüller).⁵ At first read, I thought that may be a bit too much; however, the resulting land, although divided up more evenly than what had been done previous, still had some inequities in size—both Asher and Naphtali are considerably larger in size; however Naphtali is a lot more mountainous than the other tribal areas. The territory of Asher was fertile and well-watered, but in a precarious area subject to outside invasion. Asher never had control of her coastal cities.

“And they will divide her to seven portions. Judah will stand by his territory [or, border] from southward and a house of Joseph will stand by their territory from northward. Joshua 18:5

Then they will divide the land into seven portions. Judah will remain in its territory in the south and the house of Joseph will remain in its territory in the north.

We have one verb twice in this verse; the Qal imperfect of *ʿamad* (אָמַד) [pronounced *gaw-MAHD*], which means *to take a stand, to stand, to remain, to endure*. Owen renders this *will continue* and Rotherham and Young both render it *stay*. Strong's #5975 BDB #763. These verbs are both followed by the preposition *ʿal* (עַל) [pronounced *ahl*] and it means, primarily, *upon, against, above*. When *ʿal* is used in connection with something geographical, particularly *water*; it has the connotation of *contiguity* or *proximity*; so here, it means *by*. Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752. Obviously, Judah, Manasseh, Gad and Reuben will not be involved here. What Judah is to stand by is her *g^{eb}vûl* (גְּבוּל) [pronounced *g^{eb}-VOOL*], which means *border, boundary, territory*. Strong's #1366 BDB #147.

Joshua does not want the tribes who are not going to receive the land become involved in the dividing of the land. Just those who are to receive the land will map and divide it. Joshua, as the leader of this new nation, will cast the lots which will decide who will own what. Judah received its land in Joshua 15 and Joseph in Joshua 16–17. The territory of Ephraim and Manasseh is referred to as being in the north—but that is relative to the territory of Judah.

“And you [all] will document the land—seven divisions—and you will bring in unto me here and I will cast for you [all] a lot here before faces of Y^ehowah our God; Joshua 18:6

“And you will map out the land into seven divisions and then you will bring these maps to me here and I will cast lots on your behalf in the presence of Jehovah God.

You will recall at the end of the previous chapter, Manasseh and Ephraim came and complained of their portion of land. Joshua is not going to divide up the remaining land—he will have representatives of the tribe divide the land up so that they believe it is *equal*. Then Joshua can cast lots and no one can complain that they received a lot which was too small.

“because no portion to the Levite in your midst for [the] priesthood of Y^ehowah [is] their inheritance; and Gad and Reuben and a half of a tribe of the Manasseh have received their inheritance from beyond the Jordan eastward which Moses, servant of Y^ehowah, gave to them.” Joshua 18:7

“because the Levites will not receive a contiguous portion of land as they will be in your midst, for their inheritance is the priesthood of Jehovah. Furthermore, the tribes of Gad, Reuben and half of Manasseh have already received their inheritance on the other side of the Jordan, which Moses, the servant of Jehovah, gave them.”

There are twelve tribes in all and the tribe of Joseph received a double portion. Since Gad, Reuben and half of the tribe of Manasseh has received their distribution of land on the other side of the Jordan; and since Ephraim, the remaining tribe of Manasseh and Judah had already been given their portion; and since the Levites would not be given a contiguous chunk of land; that left seven tribes who would have the remaining land divided up between them. The Levites would be the ones who preserved the spiritual aspect of Israel, and they would be spread

⁵ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 136.

throughout Israel, much like the way Israel is spread out throughout the world today. Then Jehovah aid to Aaron, “You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you own any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel.” (Num. 18:20; see also Num. 18:7 Joshua 13:33).

And so arose the men and went and so Joshua charged those going to document the land, to say, “Go and walk up and down in the land and document and return again to me and here I will cast for you a lot before faces of Y^ehowah in Shiloh.”

Joshua
18:8

Then the men arose and went. Joshua charged those who went to map out the land, saying, “Go and walk up and down throughout the remaining land and map it out; then return to me and I will cast lots on your behalf in the presence of Jehovah in Shiloh.”

Joshua gives the representatives from the remaining seven tribes specific marching orders to go out and map out the remaining land. This reminds us of when God told Abraham to walk through the land which He was going to give him. “Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.” (Gen. 13:17).

And so went the men and so they passed through in the land and so they documented her for the towns to seven allotments upon a book. And so they came unto Joshua unto the camp Shiloh.

Joshua
18:9

Then the men left and walked through the land and they mapped it out with the towns into seven portions on a scroll. Then they returned to Joshua at his camp in Shiloh.

In this verse we have the masculine plural noun *chêleq* (חֵלֶק) [pronounced *KHAY-lek*], which means *portion, tract, territory, share, allotment*. Strong’s #2506 (and #2511?) BDB #324. Where they record this information is in the masculine singular noun *çêpher* (סֵפֶר) [pronounced *SAY-fur*] and it means *book, document, writing, scroll*. Strong’s #5612 BDB #706. Although we would presume that the form of this *book* would be a scroll, we are not told that specifically by this particular Hebrew word.

I want you to notice something about authorship here. From vv. 1–8, we know all of the details. Suddenly, in v. 9, these men are gone for, say, three weeks or a month, and it is covered in one verse. This is because vv. 1–8 is what Joshua did and thought—therefore we get more detail. In v. 9, Joshua does not go on this expedition with these 21 men, therefore we have only the fact that they left and then returned with all the territory mapped out.

And so cast for them Joshua a lot in Shiloh before faces of Y^ehowah and so apportioned there Joshua the land to sons of Israel as their allotments.

Joshua
18:10

So Joshua cast on their behalf in Shiloh a lot in the presence of Jehovah and there apportioned the land to the sons of Israel according to their allotments.

The second verb is the Piel imperfect of *châlaq* (חָלַק) [pronounced *chaw-LAHK*], means *to divide, to apportion, to allot, to share*. Strong’s #2505 BDB #323. It is the verbal cognate of the noun in the previous verse. The final word in this verse is the masculine plural of *chêleg* again.

The very last phrase in this verse is *as their allotments* or *according to their allotments*. Five early printed editions has *in their allotments*. The difference is between a kaph (כ), which is the general accepted reading, and a bêyth (ב). This mistake has occurred several times throughout Scripture (in fact, when I began exegeting, I did not even know there was a difference). We will go with the kaph.

You will recall that God had already chosen twelve men, one each from each tribe (two from the tribe of Joseph and none from the Levites) who would represent their tribes in the distribution of the land in Num. 34:16–29. Seven of these, Samuel ben Amminhud, from the tribe of Simeon; Elidad ben Chislon, from the tribe of Benjamin; Bukki ben Jogli, probably the Israelite with the coolest name ever, from the tribe of Dan; Elizaphan ben Parnach of the tribe of Zebulun; Paltiel ben Azzan of the tribe of Issachar; Ahihud ben Shelomi of the tribe of Asher;

Pedahel ben Ammihud, the tribe of Naphtali. Joshua and Eleazar the priest would be in charge of actually distributing the land, as per Num 34:17 and Joshua 19:51.

Return to Outline

The Borders of the Land of Benjamin

<p>And so the came up a lot of a tribe of sons of Benjamin to their families and so went out a territory of their allotment between sons of Judah and between sons of Joseph.</p>	<p>Joshua 18:11</p>	<p>The first lot which came up was the tribe of Benjamin so that the territory between the tribes of Judah and Joseph was their allotment.</p>
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One of the words found in this verse is the masculine singular of *gôrâl* (גֹרֵל) [pronounced *goh-RAWL*], which means *lot, allotment, portion, recompense, retribution*. Strong's #1486 BDB #174. The difference between this word and *chêleg* is emphasis. *Gôrâl* seems to emphasize their rightful recompense and *chêleg* emphasizes the division of the land.

In this verse we also have the preposition *bayin* (בַּיִן) [pronounced *bah-YIN*] or *bêyn* (בֵּינָם) [pronounced *bane*]. When found once, this word is translated *in the midst of*; however, here, it is found twice, and that corresponds most closely to our word *between*. Strong's #996 BDB #107. The remainder of this chapter will deal with the boundary of the land of Benjamin and their inheritance within these boundaries.

Barnes has an interesting note that we should bear in mind as we study the next couple chapters: *There are many indications found in this and the next chapter that the text is in great disorder, and many of the places are still unknown.*⁶

The following verses can be further subdivided:

The northern boundary	vv. 12–13
The western boundary	v. 14
The southern boundary	vv. 15–19
The eastern boundary	v. 20

<p>And so was to them the boundary to [the] north from the Jordan and goes up the boundary unto a shoulder of Jericho from north and he goes up in the hill country westward and his ends were from a wilderness Beth-aven;</p>	<p>Joshua 18:12</p>	<p>The northern border began at the Jordan and then went along side Jericho through the hill country and ended in the wilderness of Beth-aven.</p>
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This chapter explains a lot. Had Joshua not included the beginning of this chapter and the end of the last, we would have been totally confused as to why and what was going on here. The representatives of the tribes mapped out the land, indicated to Joshua that there needed to be some additional allotments between Judah and Ephraim, as well as the fact that Judah needed to give up some of her own land as a lot as well. Actually, it is not completely clear if this area between Judah and Ephraim had always been set aside for another tribe or whether that was deemed necessary after the mapping of the remaining territory. The Israelites had not carefully plotted out their possession to the far north, and, now that they had, they realized that there was not much more land to distribute amongst one another. Therefore, because of this expedition, there were three additional lots carved out of the territory which had already been apportioned. Therefore, even though Joshua has recorded what was given to the other tribes previously, that was in the first allotment and in this chapter, it became clear to him that it needed to be adjusted in order to fulfill God's commandment to adjust the allotments according to the population of the tribe. Now, this raises an interesting philosophical question: *if God had the Israelites cast lots for their land,*

⁶ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 396.

why didn't they receive exactly the correct portion in the first place? Have you even gone to Las Vegas and, several times in the midst of your gambling, prayed to God, now, God, if you want to make me rich and prior to this, You lacked opportunity, I am not providing you the opportunity to come through. I am doing my part, now, if it is Your will, You can do Yours. If you have prayed anything like that, then God saw that this chapter and the previous portion of Joshua was recorded for you. I am not certain whether I have a problem with controlled gambling. If you find it fun to take \$100 and gamble it in away Vegas, or wherever else that is done, I am not certain I see any problem here. Personally, I would rather take my \$100 to the back yard and burn it in front of my neighbors to see their reaction, but that's me. It is a form of entertainment or recreation, like sailing, like going to a movie, like jogging, like taking photographs. I quite frankly do not see the fun in it, but as long as you don't sprinkle your gambling with stupid prayers to God, then it's probably legit. Now, this does not mean that if your intention is to go to Vegas and win a lot of money and you will gamble until that happens, that it is okay. If you in any way think that God is going to bless you for going to Vegas and give you a great deal of money, then there is a problem. It is a game of chance, and, although God knows the outcome of everything in eternity past, we are not to run out lives by the roll of a die. That is, you don't get to use some occurrence of chance in order to make your decisions. I forgot the names of those black balls that you shake and up comes some answer like *yes, no, quite probably*, etc. God does not allow you to go to things of chance like that for guidance or direction. Similarly, you don't get to go to Vegas with the idea that God now has the opportunity to bless you—an opportunity that perhaps He lacked in the past. So, even though God did, prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture, allow for the throwing of lots, the Israelites were instructed to use their own intelligence to make the final determination to adjust how the land would be divided up in the end.

Now, for the actual boundaries of Benjamin: they were sandwiched between Judah and Ephraim and the river Jordan. Apparently, where the Israelites had camped at Gilgal, they named a portion of the Jordan *the shoulder of the Jordan*, so that this boundary was familiar to them. This was the area where they first entered into the Land of Promise and began to conquer it. They knew the hill country being referred to here because this is where Israel went to battle at the beginning of the book of Joshua. We looked at Beth-aven back in Joshua 7:2. The wilderness area mentioned here was probably the same area that Israel fled into when pretending to retreat from the men of Ai in Joshua 8:15.

The boundaries in this verse and the next correspond with the southern boundary of Ephraim up to Lower Beth-horon found in Joshua 16:1–3.

And the boundary passes from there to a direction of Luz unto a shoulder of Luz southward (she [is] Bethel). And goes down the boundary to Ataroth-addar upon a mountain which [is] southward to Beth-horon Lower.

Joshua
18:13

Next the boundary passes from there to Luz from where is then turns southwest near Ataroth-addar to the mountain south of Lower Beth-horon.

This *shoulder* of Luz is actually the high point in the territory of Benjamin. From here we will move southwest through Ataroth-addar down to Lower Beth-horon.

We covered Bethel in Gen. 35 (which is the same as Luz) and Ataroth-addar in Joshua 16:12 and Beth-horon in Joshua 16:3. This may concern you that these have all been covered in conjunction with another tribe but, first of all, these are not said to belong to the tribe of Benjamin but they merely make up its border.

And a boundary marked out and it turns with reference to a side of [the] sea southward from the mountain which overlooks Beth-horon southward and its ending is toward Kiriath-ba'al (she [is] Kiriath-jearim), a city [of] sons of Judah—this [is] a side of [the] west.

Joshua
18:14

And the boundary was then marked and it then, on the west border, turned south from the mountain overlooking Beth-horon to the south. The border ends near Kiriath-ba'al (also known as Kiriath-jearim), a city of Judah. This is the western border.

The first verb is Qal perfect of the very rare *tâ`ar* (תָּאַר) [pronounced *taw-AHR*], which apparently means *incline* (BDB); *to be marked out, to describe* (Gesenius, Young); *goes in another direction* (Owen), *extended* (NASB). This is a word found rarely in Scripture (Qal: Joshua 15:9, 11 18:14, 17; Piel: Isa. 44:13; Pual: Joshua 19:13). Strong's #8388 BDB #1061. *Boundary* is the subject. This is followed by the Niphal perfect verb *çâ`va`v* (בָּצַו) [pronounced *saw^b-VAH^BV*], which means *to turn oneself, to go around, to surround, to encompass*; in the Niphal, it means *to turn oneself*; when followed by a lamed preposition, it can mean *to be transferred* [to someone or something]. Strong's #5437 BDB #685. This is followed by two nouns. The first is the feminine construct of *pê`âh* (פְּאַה) [pronounced *pay-AWH*] and it means *corners, sides*; and specifically is related to the boundaries of a something (Ex. 26:18, 20 38:9 Lev. 19:9). Strong's #6285 & 6311 BDB #802. This is followed by the masculine noun which is translated both *sea* and *west*. Strong's #3220 BDB #410.

Prior to Beth-horon, we have the preposition *al* (עַל) [pronounced *ahl*], which means, *upon, against, above*. When *al* is used in connection with something geographical, particularly *water*; it has the connotation of *contiguity* or *proximity*; so here, it means *by*. Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752. This is followed by the masculine plural construct of *pânîym* (פָּנִים) [pronounced *paw-NEEM*], which means *face*. With *al*, it means *facing, in front of, before* (as in *preference to*), *in addition to, overlooking*. Strong's #6440 BDB #815.

This boundary is the far western boundary, going from the north to the south. At the top northwestern corner, we are at a mountain which faces Beth-horon, which is in Ephraim (recall there is an Upper and a Lower Beth-horon). *The meaning is, that at lower Beth-horon the northern boundary-line of Benjamin curved round and ran southward,—Beth-horon being its extreme westerly point.*⁷ From there, the boundary goes straight down to Kiriath-jearim, which is in Judah.

And a side of [the] south from [the] end of Kiriath-jearim and goes the boundary westward and he goes toward a spring of waters of Nephtoah.

Joshua
18:15

From this southwest corner on the outskirts of Kiriath-jearim, the boundary goes toward the spring—the Waters of Nephtoah.

The borders described in vv. 15–19 are quite similar to the northern border of Judah, already described in Joshua 15:5–9, the primary difference being that Judah's borders are given east to west and Benjamin's are given as west to east.

There are some significant differences in the renderings of this verse:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And the border southward is from the uttermost part of Kiriath-jearim—and the boundary goeth out westward, yea it goeth out unto the fountain of the waters of Nephtoah;
NJB	This was the south side: from the tip of Kiriath-Jearim, the frontier went to Gasin and came out near the spring of the Waters of Nephtoah,...
NRSV	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 Nephtoah;
The Septuagint	and the south side on the part of Cariath-Baal; and the borders go across to Gasin, to the fountain of the water of Naphtho.
REB	The southern side starts from the edge of Kiriath-jearim and ends at the spring of the waters of Nephtoah.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And the south quarter <i>is</i> from the end of Kirjath-Jearim, and the border hath gone out westward, and gone out unto the fountain of the waters of Nephtoah;

Gasin is found in the Greek; *westward* in the Hebrew. Where the NRSV came up with Ephron, I don't know. They footnote that it is *westward* in the Hebrew. Ephron is the Hittite that Abraham purchased a plot of land from as a burial place. The more economical reading of the Greek in terms of general directions is probably the more correct.

⁷ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 396.

In this verse, prior to Kiriath-jearim, we have the noun qâtseh (הַקֵּץ) [pronounced *kaw-TSEH*], which means *end, extremity*, and the mîn preposition. Together, they mean *at the end of, after*. Strong's #7097 BDB #892. The border next goes due east to the Waters of Nephtoah, which is on the border between Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:9). Nephtoah is perhaps three miles northwest of Jerusalem and all we know about it is its approximate location.

And goes down the boundary toward an extremity the mountain which overlooks a valley of sons of Hinnom which [is] in a valley of Rephaim northward; and he goes down a valley of Hinnom toward a shoulder of the Jebusite southward and it goes down to En-rogel.

Joshua
18:16

The boundary then goes toward the mountain which overlooks the valley of Hinnom near the valley of the Rephaim and then goes through the valley of Hinnom in a semi-circle back up to the area of the Jebusites and then down to En-rogel.

We have two words that we should mention here: the first, we have had several times—the masculine singular of *g^{eb}vûl* (גְבוּל) [pronounced *g^{eb}-VOOL*], which means *border, boundary, territory*. Strong's #1366 BDB #147. The second is the masculine singular construct of qâtseh (הַקֵּץ) [pronounced *kaw-TSEH*], which means *end, extremity*. Strong's #7097 BDB #892. Owen renders them *boundary* and *border* respectively, which may cause some of you confusion.

At the Waters of Nephtoah, the boundary moves in a semi-circle that would hold water. This apparently follows along the Valley of Hinnom, which is near the Valley of the Rephaim. According to the Macmillan Bible Atlas, En-rogel is slightly south of Jerusalem. We covered En-rogel in Joshua 15:7. If you are paying much attention, you will have noticed that the boundaries described in Joshua 15:6–9 are very similar, which is simply because the northern border of Judah is the southern border of Benjamin. You may wonder why it is done that way and perhaps you are thinking, *why don't they just write, "The southern border of Benjamin is Judah, from Kiriath-jearim to the mouth of the Jordan"?* However, if you examine your deed of trust or the country documents of the land your house sits on, the mapping out of it is quite precise and not once do they reference your neighbor Charlie Brown's lot as being your southern border.

And he bends from northward and he goes [to] En-shemesh and he goes toward Geliloth which [is] opposite an ascent of Adummim. And he goes down a Stone of Bohan, a son of Reuben.

Joshua
18:17

The border then bends, moving toward En-shemesh and then toward Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim. Then the border moved down to the Stone of Bohan, who was a Reubenite.

Compared to the description of the border in vv. 13–14, we are now taking relatively small steps. Since Benjamin was sandwiched between Ephraim and Judah, it was important that the border not be a cause of dispute between Benjamin and Judah. We have covered all of these cities and landmarks in previous chapters of Joshua. The Stone of Bohan, mentioned only here and in Joshua 15:6, is apparently some marker stone of stone of note having to do with Bohan. We know nothing of the background here, however, other than this is near Jericho, indicating that it was a marker which may have had to do with the battle at Jericho or with the crossing of the Jordan.

And he passes toward a shoulder in front of the Arabah northward and he goes down the Arabah.

Joshua
18:18

the border continued toward the side of the Arabah on the north and then went down through the Arabah.

This is a tad bit more difficult and we may consult some other translations to do this verse.

The Emphasized Bible

...and passeth along unto the side over against the Arabah, northward,—and goeth down toward the Arabah;

NASB	And it continued to the side in front of the Arabah northward, and went down to the Arabah.
NIV	It continued to the northern slope of Beth Arabah and on down into the Arabah.
NRSV	...and passing on to the north of the slop of Beth-arabah it goes down to the Arabah;
The Septuagint	...and it will pass over behind Bætharaba northward, and it will go down to the borders behind the sea northward.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and passed over unto the side over-against Arabah northward, and gone down to Arabah;

The first verb is the Qal perfect of עָבַר (ʿāḇar) [pronounced *aw^b-VAHR*], which means *to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over*. Strong's #5674 BDB #716. What it passes over is the feminine singular of כַּתֵּף (kāthêph) [pronounced *kaw-THAFE*], which means *side, shoulder, shoulder-blade*. The connection is that the shoulder is at the side of us. Strong's #3802 BDB #509. Then we have the preposition מִלְּפָנֶיךָ (mîl) [pronounced *mool*] which means *in front of*. Strong's #4136 BDB #557. Rotherham gives the meaning for Arabah as *waste-plain*. In the Greek Septuagint, we have the name Beth-arabah; and in the Hebrew we have *slope facing the Arabah*. As was mentioned early on, it appears as though much of this chapter has problems.

It would not make sense for the *Arabah* mentioned here to refer to the *Arabah* of Judah, which is the southern portion of Judah. It is more likely that this is the city *Beth-arabah* back in Joshua 15:6, 61 and 18:22. The Septuagint would support this. This was covered in reasonable careful detail in the first of those verses.

And passes on the boundary toward a shoulder of Beth-hoglah northward and [the] ends were the boundary toward a bay of a sea of salt northward toward the end of the Jordan southward; this [was] a border of [the] south.

Joshua
18:19

And the border continued along the northern side of Beth-hoglah; then the border ended at the north bay of the Salt Sea, at the southern portion of the Jordan. This was the southern border.

The border of Benjamin, at least on the MacMillan map, takes a turn downward around Beth-arabah; and then near Beth-hoglah, it takes a turn toward the Jordan. However, I am not certain that I would have gotten this from this particular verse. I'll include just a couple of other translations to help out:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...and the boundary passeth along into the side of Beth-hoglah northward, and so to the extensions of the boundary are unto the bay of the Salt Sea, northward, unto the end of the Jordan, southward,—This is the south boundary.
NASB	And the border continued to the side of Beth-hoglah northward; and the border ended at the north bay of the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This was the south border.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and the border hath passed over unto the side of Beth-Hoglah northward, and the outgoings of the border have been unto the north bay of the salt sea, unto the south extremity of the Jordan; this <i>is</i> the south border;

These previous two verse correspond with Joshua 15:5–6, which details the borders of Judah.

And the Jordan forms his boundary to a side of [the] east; this [is] an inheritance of sons of Benjamin, to her boundaries round about to their families.

Joshua
18:20

Finally, the Jordan River is its east border; this is the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin and the borders surrounding their families.

This is a summation of the previous verses. The first verb found here is the Qal imperfect of a verb that we would have though would have occurred many times throughout the book of Joshua— גָּבַל (gāḇal) [pronounced *ga^b-VAHL*], which means *borders, bounds, forms a boundary*. Strong's #1379 BDB #148.

We have a preposition here: סָבִיב (סָבִיב) [pronounced *saw^b-VEE^bV*], which means *circuit, round about, encircle*. Strong's #5439 BDB #686. So far, these borders of Benjamin take the most twists and turns.

Return to Outline

The Cities Belonging to Benjamin

And the cities were to a tribe of sons of Benjamin to their families: Jericho, and Beth-hoglah, and Emek-keziz;

Joshua
18:21

Now the cities which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin and the Benjamite families were are follows: Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz;

The towns which are the inheritance of Benjamin are given in two groups, the first (vv. 21–24) being in the east and the second (vv. 25–28) being a list of its western cities.

We have a great deal of material already in this book about the city of Jericho in chapter 1 and 6. We covered Beth-hoglah in Joshua 15:6. It is not said to belong to Judah, but only to be a boundary of Judah in that verse. It is not one of the cities given over to Judah either. The implication is that there were plans when the land was originally split up for their to be another tribe in this area. Emek-kezez means *low ground, valley* and is mentioned only here. It might be taken to mean *Valley of Keziz*. Keil and Delitzsch point out that its name has been preserved in the Wady el Kaziz, which is on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. No clue as to the exact location of the city other than the name of that wadi.

And Beth-arabah, and Zemaraim, and Bethel, and the Avvim, and the Parah, and Ophrah;

Joshua
18:22–23

Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, Avvim, Parah, Ophrah,

What about Beth-arabah belonging to Judah and to Daniel? *Zemaraim* means *two wooded hills*, according to Barnes. The city of Zemaraim is mentioned only here. By the surrounding cities, we know its general location, but not its exact location (ZPEB suggests that it is near modern Ramallah and el-Bireh, which are both a few miles north of Jerusalem; Barnes suggests that it is Es-Sumrah). Since Ephraim is directly north of Benjamin, the mountain of Zemaraim is probably nearby, directly north of the city (II Chron. 13:4, 19).

Bethel was covered back in Gen. 35 and touched on in Joshua 8. The Avvim are covered in Deut. 2:23 and these were the people of Ai. *Ai* means *ruin* and *Avvim* means *ruins*. Parah means *heifer, cow* and is found only here. It is approximately *five miles north of Jerusalem and today is represented by Khirbet el-Farah. There 'Ain farah gushes forth to begin Wadi Farah.*⁸

The city of Ophrah is mentioned with respect to the war between King Saul and the Philistines in I Sam. 13:17. The Philistines had obviously moved fairly far inland for this particular set of attacks. According to ZPEB, several scholars associate Ophrah with the city of Ephron (or, Ephraim) in II Chron. 13:19, where it is therein mentioned in conjunction of the civil war during the reign of Jeroboam and Abijah, the king of Judah. Jerome associates Ophrah with the city of Ephraim (see II Sam. 13:23 John 11:54). On the other hand, it is distinguished from the Ophrah in Manasseh in Judges 6:11, 24 8:27; furthermore, Barnes claims that this is not the Ophrah found in I Sam. 13:17. In other words, we know very little about this particular Ophrah in Benjamin—in fact, all we can piece together is theory and guesswork. We will examine the other Ophrah when we get to Judges 6:11.

And Chephar-ammoni, and Ophni, and Geba—cities, twelve and their villages.

Joshua
18:24

Chephar-ammoni, Ophni and Geba, twelve cities and their villages.

⁸ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 599.

Chephar-ammoni means *the Ammonite village*, which implies that it was inhabited by or captured from an outpost of Ammonites.⁹ This city is mentioned only here. Ophni is mentioned only here. Josephus, in War III. iii. 5 mentions a city called Gophna, and ZPEB suggests that these cities are one and the same. Gophna is the modern-day Jiffa, which is three miles northwest of Bethel. We will cover the city of Geba in I Sam. 13:16.

There were two other eastern cities not mentioned here which belonged to Benjamin. Anathoth was the home of Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 1:1 11:21); it was given over to the Levites (Joshua 21:18); and it was occupied after the exile and return of the Israelites (Ezra 2:23 Neh. 11:32). Two of David's great warriors, Abiezer (II Sam. 23:27) and Jehu (I Chron. 12:3) were both from the city of Anathoth. Solomon banished David's son, Abiathar, to this city after his unsuccessful bid to the throne following David's death. It is possible that the name *Anathoth* is the plural form of *Anath*, who was a Canaanite goddess, indicating that this city could have been given over chiefly to pagan worship prior to the occupation of the Benjamites. The name is preserved today in the modern town of *Anata*, which is three miles north of Jerusalem. *However, some identify Ras el-Harrubeh, near the village of Anata, as the site of ancient Anathoth. Excavations at Ras el-Harrubeh reveal that there were settlements there in early Israelite times.*¹⁰

Almon, called Allemeth in I Chron. 6:60, was also another eastern town of Benjamin which had been given over to the Levites (Joshua 21:18). It is to be found in the ruins of Almîṭ (according to Robinson) or in el-Mid (according to Tobler).

Gibeon, and the Ramah, and Beeroth, and the Mizpeh, and the Chephirah, and the Mozah; Joshua **Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah,** 18:25–26

Gibeon is north of Jerusalem, in the hill country, associated with Ramah, Beeroth, Mizpeh, etc. Gibeon is located dead center between Jericho and the Mediterranean Sea on an east-west line. We originally examined Gibeon in Joshua 9, where the Gibeonites were the ones who, along with several other cities, used deception to gain a treaty with the Israelites. This treaty included the inhabitants of Chephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath-jearim (Joshua 9:17). The inhabitants of Gibeon were Hivites (and, as ZPEB suggests, perhaps Horites or Hurrians). Later, in II Sam. 21, we will read how King Saul killed off many Gibeonites, which caused God to place Israel under discipline by famine. When David spoke to God, he found out the reason and, then, after speaking directly to the Gibeonites, handed over seven descendants of Saul, whom the Gibeonites then executed. We will cover archeological information when we get to II Sam. 21. After the first dispersion, 743 men returned to Kiriath-jearim (or, Kiriath-arim), Chephirah and Beeroth; 621 to Ramah and Geba (Ezra 2:25–26 Neh. 7:29–30). The other equally famous *Gibeah* is in Benjamin and is also called *Gibeah of Saul* and we will cover it in greater detail in Joshua 18:25 and Judges 19:12.

Ramah (or, Rama) means *height* or *lofty*, and, being such a common geographical term, is the name of several cities (or areas) throughout Israel (including a Ramah in Naphtali, Asher, Benjamin, and in the Negev). Ramah is a little closer to the Jordan River than it is to the Mediterranean Sea. ZPEB gives a more thorough discussion of its placement by ancient historians. Judges 4:5 make sit clear that it was next to Bethel, inasmuch as that famous *prophetess, Deborah, exercised her authority as a judge between Bethel and Ramah*. Ramah was also close to Gibeon (Gibeah), as we have a short travelogue placing them together in Judges 19:12–15. There appears to be an important north-south and east-west route which either passed through or near Ramah. The east-west road is the road which goes from Jerusalem through Gibeon and the descent of Beth-horon on to Gezer. In I Kings 15:17 and II Chron. 16:1, Baasha, a king of Israel in opposition to Asa, king of Judah, fortified Ramah in order to restrict the access of Asa to the outside world via this east-west road. Finally, Ramah is where the judge of Israel, Samuel, had a house and the end of the circuit when he would travel and judge in the surrounding cities (I Sam. 1:19 25:1).

Beeroth is one of the cities which joined with Gibeon in order to deceitfully make an alliance with Joshua. This city was given over to Benjamin (Joshua 18:25 II Sam. 4:2). It was repopulated after the exile (Ezra 2:25

⁹ According to Rotherham, it is written *Chephar-ammoni* but read *Chephar-ammonah*.

¹⁰ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 156.

Neh. 7:29). One of David's men from his 30-man crack military team, Nahari (also an armor bearer to Joab), came from Beeroth (II Sam. 23:37 I Chron. 11:39). There are several who have guessed at its modern location, but that is unknown to us today. It is certainly near Bethel and not too far from Jerusalem (if it is the modern el-Bîreh, then it would be eight miles north of Jerusalem). ZPEB goes into more detail concerning where this city was located.¹¹ Chephirah was covered in Joshua 9:17.

The Mizpeh mentioned here was the most famous Mizpeh of the half dozen Mizpeh's found in Scripture. As you will recall, *Mizpeh* (or, *Mizpah*) means *watchtower*, so that such a name would be common and you might expect one at any high place near any major intersection or road of travel. ZPEB suggests that the modern location of Mizpeh of Benjamin is to be found in Nebi Samwil, which means *the prophet, Samuel*. The highest point of Nebi Samwil, *which stands like a watch-tower upon the highest point in the whole region*, is a mosque, which was once a Latin church beneath which is believed, by Christians, Jews and Mahometans alike, is the tomb of Samuel, the prophet. This would place Mizpeh midway between Jericho and the Mediterranean Sea, just east of Gibeon.¹² This would make sense, as Mizpeh and Gibeon are mentioned together in Scripture (Joshua 18:25–26 Neh. 3:7). *Nebi Samwil is a high mountain peak which overlooks the Valley of Aijalon, which is the best route between the Mediterranean coast and the Jordan valley. Joshua used this route for his conquest of Palestine.* The other suggested location is en-Nasbeh, which ZPEB rejects because it had the heaviest walls of any city in Palestine, meaning that it was probably the most vulnerable to attack. That is not the sort of city you would name *watchtower*. Samuel was one of the few great judges over Israel and he had a circuit court which would move from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpah, and then he would finally return to Ramah, which was his home and where he had built an altar to Jehovah (I Sam. 7:15–17). This is also where he gathered the people of Israel to elect a king. During a time of revival (I grit my teeth to use that word), many in Israel gathered in Mizpah to confess their sins, to fast and offer libations before God. The Philistines heard of this gathering and decided to attack Israel. Due to Israel's repentance, God routed the Philistines with a terrific thunderstorm, allowing the Israelites to organize and successfully attack the Philistines (I Sam. 7:1–14). If you recall Joshua's move into this valley with Israel and the striking of the enemy with the thunderstorm, these are parallel occurrences. The Babylonian governor, Gedaliah, will rule from Mizpah of Benjamin (II Kings 25:23 Jer. 40:6). In the far future, we will be studying a terrific story of murder and intrigue in Jer. 40–41 which takes place in Mizpeh.¹³

Mozah is thought to be a place which was famous for its pottery, as its name is found stamped on vessel handles which have been found in Jericho and Tell en-Nasbeh. This is its only mention in Scripture.

And Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah, and Zela, Haeleph (or, Zela ha-elaph), and the Jebusite (she [is] Jerusalem); Gibeath, Kiriath-jearim; cities fourteen and their villages—this [is the] inheritance of sons of Benjamin to their families.

Joshua
18:27–28

Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, Zela, Haeleph, and the Jebusite (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeath, and Kiriath-jearim—fourteen cities in all along with their villages. This is the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin and to their families.

First, note how different these proper names are in the Greek and Hebrew:

NASB

...and Rekem and Irpeel and Taralah, and Zelah, Haeleph and the Jebusite (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeath, Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin according to their families.

The Septuagint

...and Phira, and Caphan, and Nacan, and Senecan, and Thareela, and Jebus (this is Jerusalem); and Gabaoth, Jarim, thirteen cities, and their villages; this the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin according to their families.

¹¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 507.

¹² Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 138.

¹³ Quote is from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 4, pp. 255–257; see same for further discussion.

There are two people named Rekem in Scripture and this one city, which is mentioned only here. *Rekem* means *friendship*. Irpeel Taralah are mentioned only in this passage.

Zela is actually tsêla' (צֵלָא) [pronounced TZAY-lahg], which is transliterated *Zelah*. *Zela* means the *rib* or *side* of a man. We find this word in Gen. 2:21–22 and II Sam. 16:13. Strong's #6762 BDB #854. It is possible that *Zela* should have ha-eleph appended to it, making those *two cities* one in reality. There is no conjunction between them. However, we only have the name *Zela* later in Scripture when David buries Saul and Jonathan in this city (II Sam. 21:14). By referencing back to this passage, the NKJV implies that *Zelah* might be equivalent to *Zelzah*, which city is found only in I Sam. 10:2. They are both proximate to Ramah (compare Joshua 18:25 and I Sam. 7:17 and our discussion in I Sam. 9 as to just where did Saul meet up with Samuel).

Ha-eleph means *the ox* and we find this city only here. If we list *Zela-Haeleph* as one city, then we are down to thirteen cities. In the Greek, this reads *thirteen* cities. The reason for suggesting this is that there is no connective between *Zela* and *Haeleph*. Some translations (the KJV and ASV) use the name *Eleph*, as *ha* is simply the definite article.

In the Hebrew, we have the proper noun *Jebusite*, which is actually y^{eb}vûçîy (יְבוּסִי) [pronounced y^evoo-SEE], which means *Jebusite*. It almost has a French sound, does it not? Strong's #2983 BDB #101. In the Greek (and Latin and Syriac codices), this is Ἰηβοῦς (correctly transliterated *Iêbous* and transliterated into our English as *Jebus*). The tribe of Benjamin did not have any luck in removing the *Jebusites* from this city. [But the sons of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who lived in Jerusalem; so the Jebusites have lived with the sons of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day](#) (Judges 1:21). Because the *Jebusites* continued to live here, this city came to be known, for awhile, as *Jebus* (Judges 19:10); however, when David conquered the city, he restored the name *Jerusalem*. We covered *Jerusalem* in more detail in Joshua 10:1.

In the Hebrew, we have simply *Kiriath* here. In the Greek, we have only *Jarim*. *Kiriath-jearim* was covered in Joshua 9:7 15:9, 16. Keil and Delitzsch warn us not to confuse this with the *Kiriath-jearim* of those verses, but there appear to be two or three Judæan cities which were either given over to Benjamin or shared with Benjamin as border towns, this being one of them. In Joshua 15:8, *Jerusalem* appears to belong to Judah (also see Joshua 15:63) and in Joshua 18:28, it clearly belongs to Benjamin. The simplest explanation is that Judah was a border town, belonging both to Judah and to Benjamin. Jewish tradition has the altars and sanctuary as being in Benjamin and the courts and the temple as being in Judah (once these were both moved to *Jerusalem*). Properly speaking, *Jerusalem* belonged to Benjamin, but was on the border between Judah and Benjamin, indicating that there would be a lot of Judæans living there. Look at Laredo or Chula-vista, for instance.

In the Hebrew, we have *Gibeath* in this verse; in the Greek, it is *Gibeah*. *Gibeah* means *hill*, and is therefore a popular name for a city. This is the *Gibeah* of Benjamin or the *Gibeah* of Saul, so called in Judges 19:14 20:4, 10 II Sam. 23:29 Isa. 10:29—not an exhaustive list). This designation indicates (1) that it is a happening place in the Bible and (2) there must be several cities with that name; otherwise, it would not be called *Gibeah* of anything, as there would be just one *Gibeah*. It appears as though this has been unquestionably identified as the modern-day Tell el Fûl, which is only three miles north of *Jerusalem*, by a German named Cross in 1843 and confirmed by W. F. Albright during his excavations in that area in 1922–1923 and 1933. An archeologist name P. Lapp did further confirmatory excavations in 1964. Although no running water has been found on this tell, there were a number of cisterns, silos and pits apparently excavated out of solid rock, which made it possible for *Gibeah* to sustain a relatively large population. There was also unearthed a tower fortress which dates back to the time of Saul. Archeological evidence indicates that this site was continuously occupied from before the time of Saul until the time of Jeremiah. Apparently it continued to be occupied until 500 B.C., despite the fact that *Jerusalem* was destroyed in 587 B.C. Several hundred years passed and *Gibeah* was again occupied during the time of the Maccabean's with its greatest population being circa 100 B.C. Titus destroyed both *Gibeah* and *Jerusalem* in 70 A.D. and it was never re-occupied.

We will be in the city of *Gibeah* in Judges 19–20 when we have war between the adjacent Israel tribes, Benjamin and Ephraim, over a gang rape which took place in *Gibeah*. It will give us pause to see how quickly a people can go from being honorable to degenerate. Obviously, this city is often called *Gibeah* of Saul as this is where King

Saul was born. Gibeah will be mentioned several times in the wars between Saul and the Philistines (e.g., I Sam. 13:2 14:2, 16).¹⁴

Jacob, although not a spiritual giant by any means throughout most of his life, was very much in love with Rachel, as we have seen in our study of Genesis. He had ten children by his first wife and two mistresses (the handmaidens of his two wives); and he had two children, his youngest, by Rachel—Joseph, a man of greatness and a man of grace; and his younger brother Benjamin. We know very little about Benjamin apart from what Jacob predicted in Gen. 49:27 (“[Benjamin is a ravenous wolf. In the morning he devours the prey and in the evening he divides the spoil.](#)”). Knowing how his tribe will behave in the book of Judges is a cause for sadness.

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¹⁴ I am indebted, as usual, to *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 713–714.