

# Joshua 18 Commentary

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Paul J Bucknell - Biblical Foundations for Freedom

LAND ALLOTMENTS  
(Joshua 13-21)  
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Click charts to enlarge Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission

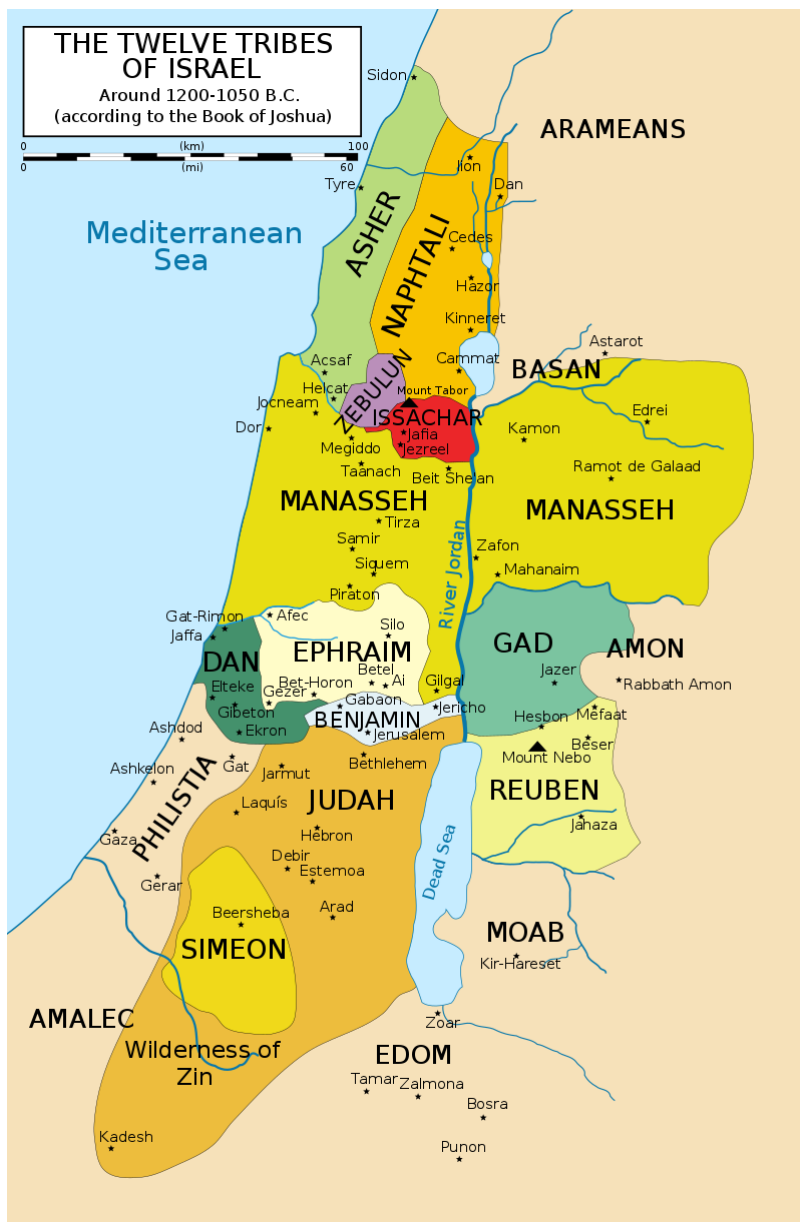
JOSHUA A BOOK ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE and REST HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS		
CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND	DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND	CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE
ACTION	ALLOCATION	APPEAL

Josh 1:1-5:15	Josh 6:1-12:24	Joshua 13:1-21:45	Josh 22:1-24:33
WARLORDS IN CANAAN		LANDLORDS IN CANAAN	
ENTERING CANAAN	CONQUERING CANAAN	DIVIDING CANAAN	
SECURING THE LAND		SETTLING THE LAND	
Preparation	Conquest	Possession	Consecration
ca. 1 Month	ca 7 Years	ca. 18 Years	

[See also more detailed Chart by Charles R Swindoll](#)

**Joshua 18:1** Then the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them.

- **Shiloh:** Shiloh was situated on a hill in the tribe of Ephraim, though near the borders of Benjamin, about fifteen miles north of Jerusalem, and, according to Eusebius, twelve, or according to Jerome, ten miles (south) from Shechem or Nablous. It was but a little north from Bethel or Ai, and near the road from Shechem to Jerusalem. (Jdg 21:19.) In Jerome's time, Shiloh was ruined; and nothing remarkable was extant, but the foundations of the altar of burnt offerings which had been erected when the tabernacle stood there. Jos 19:51 21:2 22:9
- **set up:** Jdg 18:31 1Sa 1:3,24 4:3,4 1Ki 2:27 14:2,4 Ps 78:66 Jer 7:12-14 26:6
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Map to help you visualize the descriptions of boundaries  
 (Click [here](#) for another excellent map of the Tribal Allotments)  
 Here is another excellent map of the Tribal Allotments

## GOD'S TABERNACLE SET UP AT SHILOH "PLACE OF REST"

Outline of Joshua 18 - [Don Anderson](#)

- I. SHILOH, SEVEN AND THE SURVEY - Joshua 18:1-10 (Seven tribes yet to receive their portion)
- II. THE BOUNDARIES FOR BENJAMIN - Joshua 18:11-20
- III. THE CITIES OF BENJAMIN - Joshua 18:21-28

**Gangel** summarizes Joshua 18-19 - The last seven words of Joshua 19:51 sum up these two chapters: "And so they finished dividing the land." Three major things happen in these chapters: (1) the focus changes from Gilgal to Shiloh; (2) seven remaining tribes get their allocation of land; and (3) Joshua receives his city. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary - Joshua](#))

Click [here](#) to read **Irving Jensen's** excellent summary of some of the purposes of this allocation.

**Then** - Marks progression in the narrative, in this case a movement of the religious/political center from Gilgal to Shiloh. Recall that the sons of Joseph had just expressed discontent and even a "touch" of unbelief regarding the obstacle of Canaanite iron chariots (see Josh 17:12-18+).

**The whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there-** Shiloh was about 20 miles NW of the first stop at Gilgal (see map above in territory of Ephraim next to lower Jordan River [-Wikipedia article](#)). **Shiloh** was in the hill country, just off the highway to the north of Bethel and Ai as one travels toward Gerizim and Ebal. To

locate **Shiloh** see "EPHRAIM" and note "**Silo**" just above that name. Most resources say that **Shiloh** means something like peace or rest **Shiloh** was a more central location for the **tent of meeting** (or Tabernacle, only 2x in Joshua - Jos. 18:1; Jos. 19:51, although Ark mentioned in Josh 3:3, 8:33). The tent of meeting would remain at **Shiloh** during all the period of the Judges until the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines in the days of Samuel. When the Ark was returned from the Philistines, it did not return to **Shiloh** but to [Kiriath-jearim](#) (~10 mi W of Jerusalem)(cf 1Sa 6:21)(roughly 1000-1050 BC so it remained in Shiloh over 300 years, one writer giving the number as 369 years - note that the book of Judges lasts about 300 years). From **Shiloh** the other 7 tribal allocations would be undertaken by Eleazar and Joshua (cf Josh 19:51). The **tent of meeting** was just that, the place Israel would meet with God.

**Shiloh** - 30v - Jos. 18:1; Jos. 18:8; Jos. 18:9; Jos. 18:10; Jos. 19:51; Jos. 21:2; Jos. 22:9; Jos. 22:12; Jdg. 18:31; Jdg. 21:12; Jdg. 21:19; Jdg. 21:21; 1Sa 1:3; 1Sa 1:9; 1Sa 1:24; 1Sa 2:14; 1Sa 3:21; 1Sa 4:3; 1Sa 4:4; 1Sa 4:12; 1Sa 14:3; 1 Ki. 2:27; 1 Ki. 14:2; 1 Ki. 14:4; Ps. 78:60; Jer. 7:12; Jer. 7:14; Jer. 26:6; Jer. 26:9; Jer. 41:5

**Constable** on **Shiloh** and the various locations of the **tent of meeting** or tabernacle in the Promised Land - The name of this town was significant because of Jacob's prophecy of Shiloh (Gen. 49:10) and the association of God's name with the Israelites' rest. God's people could find rest where He abode. The tabernacle stood at **Gilgal** (Josh 5:10; .10:15, 43), **Shiloh** (Josh 18:1, 9-10), **Bethel** (Jdg. 20:18-28; 21:1-4), **Shiloh** (1Sa 1:3), **Mizpah** (1Sa 7:9-10), **Gilgal** (1Sa 10:8; 13:8-10; 15:10-15), **Nob** (1Sa 17:54; 21:1-9), and finally at **Gibeon** (1Chr 16:39-40; 21:29; 1Ki3:4; 2Chr 1:3). Solomon's temple in **Jerusalem** then replaced it.

How meaningful that the tent of meeting with God should be in this place, a place of rest.

**Holman Study Bible** - The recurrence of the tabernacle at the end of these allotments (Josh. 19:51) implies that God's will was upheld in this activity. (**ED**: It other words all of the allotments take place between the two mentions of the tent of meeting, suggesting the allotments were carried out in conformity to the will of God.)

**J Vernon McGee** -The children of Israel pitched the Tabernacle at \_J~ iloh, a town in Ephraim. It was not, however to be the permanent place for the Tabernacle because it was not the center of the land. God would choose a permanent site through David, which would one day be Jerusalem. But until the site changed, the children of Israel were to worship the Lord at Shiloh. The Tabernacle remained in Shiloh during the whole period of the Judges.

**Jackman** - Joshua moves his center of operations from Gilgal to Shiloh, situated in the middle of the country. This signifies a shift from being on a war footing, with the main camp at Gilgal, to being at rest. Until that point the tabernacle and the ark have either been adjacent to the camp, or possibly peripatetic as at Jericho. But now there is sufficient rest for a convocation of the whole congregation to gather at Shiloh and to establish the shrine of God's manifest presence there on a more permanent basis. It was still there at the time of Samuel's birth and childhood, indeed until the ark was captured by the Philistines at the time of Eli's death (1 Samuel 1— 4). We must not lose the significance of 18:1. The people of God are established in the land, and the presence of God is located in their midst, at Shiloh, northwest of Jericho, in the territory of Ephraim. ([Joshua: People of God's Purpose](#))

**Wiersbe** makes a good point on the move from Gilgal to **Shiloh** - The Lord must have directed Joshua to make this move or he would not have done it (Dt 12:5-7). Shiloh was centrally located and was more convenient for all the tribes.

Deuteronomy 12:5-7+ But you shall seek the LORD **at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come.** 6 "There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. 7 "There also you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

Placing the Tent of Meeting centrally is a partial fulfillment of the prophetic promise (later fulfilled in Temple in Jerusalem)...

Leviticus 26:11-12+ 'Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. 12 'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.

**Irving Jensen** - Joshua now considered it appropriate and necessary to lead his people to a spot in the middle of the possessed land, and set up the altars of worship there. In doing so he was reminding the people that the key to the blessedness of their inheritance was putting God first and worshiping Him. This principle of life has been wisely stated by someone: "Wherever I have a house, there God shall have an altar." The place chosen for this center of worship was Shiloh, about eleven miles south of Shechem, which was conveniently located in the central area of Canaan. Shiloh means "rest," and it was very appropriate that at the place so named by Joshua Israel should officially enter into a new era of life--in God's rest-land--with the land subdued before them, the larger part of the inheritance allocated, and the ceremony of commencement being a worship service in the Lord's house. ([Joshua- Everyman's Bible Commentary: Rest-Land Won](#))

**Keil and Delitzsch** - The Tabernacle Set Up at Shiloh. - As soon as the tribe of Ephraim had received its inheritance, Joshua commanded the whole congregation to assemble in Shiloh, and there set up the tabernacle, in order that, as the land was conquered, the worship of Jehovah might henceforth be regularly observed in accordance with the law. The selection of **Shiloh** as the site for the sanctuary was hardly occasioned by the fitness of the place for this purpose, on account of its being situated upon a mountain in the centre of the land, for there were many other places that would have been quite as suitable in this respect; the reason is rather to be found in the name of the place, viz., **Shiloh**, i.e., rest, which called to mind the promised **Shiloh** (Ge 49:10), and therefore appeared to be pre-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. In any case, however, Joshua did not follow his own judgment in selecting Shiloh for this purpose, but acted in simple accordance with the instructions of God, as the Lord had expressly reserved to himself the choice of the place where His name should dwell (Dt 12:11). **Shiloh**, according to the Onom., was twelve Roman miles or five hours to the south of Neapolis (**Nablus**), and about eight hours to the north of Jerusalem; at present it is a heap of ruins, bearing the name of Seilun (see Rob. iii. p. 85). The tabernacle continued standing at **Shiloh** during the **time of the judges**, until the ark of the covenant fell into the hands of the Philistines, in the lifetime of Eli, when the holy tent was robbed of its soul, and reduced to the mere shadow of a sanctuary. After this it was removed to Nob (1Sa 21:2); but in consequence of the massacre inflicted by Saul upon the inhabitants of this place (1 Samuel 22:19), it was taken to Gibeon (1Ki 3:4). **From this time forward Shiloh continued to decline, because the Lord had rejected it** (Ps 78:60; Jer 7:12; Jer 26:6). That it was destroyed by the Assyrians, as Knobel affirms, is not stated in the history.

**Utley on tent of meeting** - the home for the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, where YHWH symbolically dwelt between the wings of the cherubim (the place where heaven and earth met). ([Commentary](#))

**Campbell** asks why move it to Shiloh? - Probably because Shiloh, located in the center of the land, was a convenient location where the tabernacle (the Tent of Meeting) could remind the people that the key to prosperity and blessing in the land was worshiping and serving Yahweh. The dissatisfaction of the sons of Joseph with their allotment (Joshua 17:14–18) was an ominous foreshadowing of the future disintegration of the nation because of self-interest. To counteract this tendency the tabernacle was set up in Shiloh to promote a sense of national unity. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#))

**Life Application Study Bible** - The family of Samuel, a great priest and prophet, later would often travel to **Shiloh**, and Samuel would be taken there when a small boy (1 Samuel 1:3, 22). The Tabernacle would remain in Shiloh through the period of the judges (about 300 years). Apparently the city was destroyed by the Philistines when the Ark of the Covenant was captured (1 Samuel 4:10,11). Shiloh never lived up to its reputation as Israel's religious center, for later references in the Bible point to the wickedness and idolatry in the city (Ps 78:56–60; Jer 7:12–15).

**Stephen Grant** - The ark of the covenant remained in this location for over 300 years until it was lost to the Philistines in the days of Eli (1 Sam 4:11). When the ark was removed, Shiloh lost its significance and entered into a period of decline, which culminated in its destruction (Ps 78:60–61; Jer 7:12–14; 26:6). The symbolism ought not to be overlooked. Shiloh, as a place, was nothing in itself. It was the presence of the Lord that gave the place significance. This is true of any dwelling place of the Lord. The temple became an empty shell of a building in spiritual terms when the glory of the Lord departed (Ezek 11:23), and a local assembly in the New Testament context can also become an empty place spiritually when the presence of the Lord is removed (Rev 2:5). ([What the Bible Teaches - Joshua Judges Ruth](#))

**And the land was subdued before them** - **Subdued** (Hebrew = **kabash**) in the Lxx is **krateo** means to be strong and thus to take into one's possession, to take control. The point would seem to be that after 7 years of being conquered by Joshua's army, the Canaanites were "beat down" and not a major threat. In other words, this was a crucial time to lay hold of their possessions, before the Canaanites could regroup.

**Hess** explains the meaning of **subdued** - In Joshua 11:23 and Joshua 14:15, notes indicate that the land has rest from war. Here the note emphasizes the completion of the conquest through the observation that the country was brought under their control. This does not require conquest of every fortification in the land; Joshua 13:1-2 observes that this has not occurred. It means only that the wars had met with success and that map-makers could now be sent out. The allotment was an orderly process. As Joshua and Israel followed God's will in the conquest, so that will would now be obeyed in the allotment process. ([Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

**Davis** writes "With the backbone of Canaanite resistance presently broken, these tribes must follow up this advantage and **nailed down** the land (i.e. permanently occupy it). But here they remain—letting the opportunity **slip away**." ([Joshua: No Falling Words](#))

The land was **subdued** but as described in other passages it was not completely possess because of failure to eradicate the indigenous people groups as God had commanded (see Josh 13:13, Josh 15:63, Josh 17:11-12, Josh 16:10, Josh 19:47 - see chart summarizing cities not conquered by the Israelites)

**Matthew Henry Concise Commentary** - Shiloh was in the lot of Ephraim (see Map above), the tribe to which Joshua belonged, and it was proper that the tabernacle should be near the residence of the chief governor. The name of this city is the same as that by which Jacob prophesied of the Messiah, Genesis 49:10. It is supposed by some that the city was thus called, when it was chosen for the resting-place of the ark, which typified our great Peace-maker, and the way by him to a reconciled God.

#### Related Resource:

- [What is the meaning of the term "Shiloh"? Is it a Messianic prophecy? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Genesis 49:10 "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until **Shiloh** comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

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**Subdued** (Tread...under foot) (03533)(kabash) means to subdue, to bring into bondage, to keep under, to force, to enslave (and so to degrade). The basic meaning is to overcome or subdue someone or something. The first use is a command from the LORD God to Adam to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue (Lxx = [katakuriueuo](#) = exercise dominion over, gain power over, bring into subjection) it." The role of humans is to keep order in nature, to live in harmony with nature, not to abuse and destroy it. Kabash is used of subduing the land and in context to do it by military conquest (Nu 32:22, 29 and Josh 18:1 = of Israel taking control of the Promised Land, 1Chr 22:18), of King David subduing the nations (2Sa 8:11) Kabash refers to enslaving the people of Judah (2Chr 28:10, Neh 5:5). Jeremiah bitterly denounced the people of Jerusalem who had made a covenant to emancipate their bondservants and then enslaved them again (Jer. 34:11, 16). In Esther kabash is used with the sense is of violating or raping the queen (Esther 7:8)

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 18](#)

**The whole congregation—assembled at Shiloh.** The withdrawal of the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh, to take possession of their respective lots, would sensibly diminish the body of the people encamped around the tabernacle at Gilgal, and make it inconvenient as a place of resort to those who were becoming settled at a distance. The expediency, therefore, of removing the tabernacle itself to a more central position was obvious, though the step, it may be presumed, would not be taken without divine direction, for God expressly retained to himself the prerogative of 'choosing the place where he should cause his name to dwell,' Deut. 12:11. Shiloh accordingly was selected for this purpose. The name of this city is the same as that by which Jacob predicted the Messiah, 18:10, and some commentators suppose that it was first called Shiloh on this occasion, when selected for the resting-place of the ark, and the observance of those institutions which pointed to Christ, the great Peacemaker between heaven and earth. It was situated in the tribe of Ephraim, in the very centre of Canaan, about twenty miles north of Jerusalem, twelve north of Bethel, and ten south of Shechem. It was therefore the most convenient location possible for all the tribes, and as Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, he, as chief magistrate of the nation, would always have a ready access to the sanctuary, when the God of Israel was to be consulted. In this place the ark and the tabernacle remained for upwards of three hundred and fifty years, till taken by the Philistines, in the time of Eli, 1 Sam. 4:1–11. It was afterwards removed to Nob, and finally, in the reign of David, to Jerusalem.

**And the land was subdued before them.** Or, Heb. 'for the land was subdued,' intimating to the reader, how it happened that they were enabled to avail themselves of this favorable location. They were freed from the molestation of their enemies. The Canaanites were so far subdued that they offered no resistance or impediment to the occupation of the spot.

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[Stephen Dray](#) general thoughts on **Joshua 18:1-19:51 Moving On** This much neglected and devotionally unpromising passage quickly springs to life when several factors that the author emphasizes are recognized. As we have noted above, chapters 1-12 describe the conquest, 13-19 the settlement and 20-24 provide the framework for living in the land. Thus, these two chapters conclude a major section of the book: and conclusions are normally important! In addition to this there are several other features of interest. Thus, toward the beginning of the section, Caleb's inheritance was recorded (Joshua 14:6-15). Here 'at the other end' is that of Joshua (Joshua 19:49,50). Thus the two faithful spies receive their promised inheritance. Earlier, too, Caleb's active faith as an octogenarian is contrasted to the half-heartedness of those around him. Here, too, Joshua contrasts with the example of the tribes in the previous verses.

At the same time, these two chapters begin to prepare us for what follows. **Shiloh** the central sanctuary during the entire period prior to the monarch makes its first appearance (18:1), the place where 'the whole assembly of the Israelites' would often, thereafter, gather. Shiloh's name, 'rest', also hints that the conquest is nearly at an end. Further, the 'Tent of Meeting' occurs at the beginning and end of this section (and for the first time in Joshua, Joshua 18:1; 19:51) together with 'Eleazar, the priest' (Joshua 19:53). From now on Shiloh, the Tent and Eleazar have an increasingly central role. Indeed all these factors together indicate the people are moving through a transitional stage from conquerors to residents: from one stage of their experience to another. Life does move on.



Joshua, for example, is ready to move into a well-earned semi-retirement (Josh 19:49,50). But if life does move on, the people need to rise to the challenge rather than sink into inertia (18:1-10). Indeed, 'there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance' (18:2). It is easy to imagine reasons for this. They appeared to be at peace and happy. It may be that they were waiting for a fresh outbreak of miracles to arouse them to action. However, they had to recognize that God's past actions, his present blessings and his future promises were not a ground for inactivity but were to provide the framework for their onward pilgrimage amid the 'disappointing side of God's gifts': the hard slog of discipleship. Meanwhile, they were missing the moment .... Thus, faithful old Joshua arouses them to action! The land has been 'given', so how long are they going to hang around before getting off their backsides to do something (3) .

What follows is a masterly example of leadership (4-10)! Joshua helps establish the vision, delegates responsibility and encourages the responsible and united leadership of others. His strategy also encourages unity; the division of the land by a committee representing all parties before the use of the lot 'at Shiloh in the presence of the LORD' (10) is a masterstroke! In this way none are elite but only God's elect: and all are his people! Some of the allotments that follow (18: 11-19:48) were rather double-edged. 'Issachar' (19:17 -23) inherited the plain of Esdraelon: the most fertile area but also the one most easily subject to enemy attack (as any atlas of the Bible will demonstrate). Throughout the list, however, the details emphasize the sheer graciousness and greatness of the gift and the working of the lot stresses divine ordering. Thus, while some (like 'Dan', 19:40-48) were unsatisfied and unwilling to face the challenge of faithful obedience, the others were encouraged to recognize and rejoice in the fact that their 'lot' was what the LORD, in his grace, had appointed for them. And in all this the LORD proved that he was no-one's debtor. Indeed, if this was true for tribes and clans it was also true for individuals (19:49-51). Thus, little 'Timnath-Serah, in the hill country of Ephraim' at which the tribes of Joseph had 'turned up their noses' became, for Joshua, the place where, last of all (49), he entered his promised inheritance, 'built up the town and settled there' (50).

Davis notes this is a fitting conclusion not only to this section but to the events described in Numbers 13,14. He says, 'It is a standing witness to the fact that the majority may be neither faithful nor right ... that Yahweh keeps his promises (Num. 14:24,30), even if he must preserve his two faithful men from Anakim, chariots, and high water to do so . . . There is more in Hebron and Timnath-Serah than one usually hears. '

As for Joshua's leadership it is nearly done. Moving into semi-retirement the baton is passed on (not jealously treasured): it is the LORD's work (51). 'Eleazar' and the 'heads of the tribal clans' are now responsible for seeing the LORD's work to completion.

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#### QUESTION - [What was the tent of meeting?](#)

**ANSWER** - The phrase *tent of meeting* is used in the Old Testament, specifically in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as the name of a place where God would meet with His people, Israel. Usually, the "tent of meeting" was used as another name for the [Tabernacle of Moses](#). However, before the tabernacle was constructed, God met with Moses in a temporary tent of meeting: "Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the 'tent of meeting.' Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. . . . As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses" (Exodus 33:7, 9). The fact that Moses set up the tent of meeting *outside of* the camp underscored that the people had broken fellowship with God at Sinai when they had made [the golden calf](#) (see Exodus 33:3). After the tabernacle was built, Moses no longer needed his temporary tent, and the term *tent of meeting* began to be applied to the tabernacle.

In the Law that God gave Moses, God provided specific instructions to build a place of worship (Exodus 25—27). This "tent of meeting" or tabernacle could be taken up and moved each time they changed locations while wandering in the wilderness. The word *tabernacle* is an English rendition of the Hebrew word *miskan*, or "dwelling place." The tabernacle was a temporary dwelling place for the Ark of the Covenant and the other holy items that the Israelites were instructed to use in the worship of and sacrifice to Yahweh.

Interestingly, the word *tent* or *tabernacle* is also used in the New Testament to draw profound spiritual conclusions about salvation. Both Paul and the writer of Hebrews make a distinction between a heavenly tent and an earthly tent, between what was "built by human hands" and what is "not part of this creation" (2 Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 9:11). Hebrews 9:1–10 describes the earthly tabernacle, or "tent of meeting," as a place into which the priests would go to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. Then, in verse 11, Christ is shown to be a better "high priest" who entered once through the "greater and more perfect tent," referring to His body, to offer a sacrifice that would satisfy the wrath of God completely, for all time. This refers to His blood shed on the cross. The point of the passage is to show how, if the blood of animals could temporarily cleanse worshipers of the guilt of sin, the perfect blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, would cleanse His followers perfectly—that is, eternally—of their sins.

In Hebrews 10:14, the writer says that Jesus has "perfected forever those who are being sanctified." This verse expresses a spiritual paradox. By entering the "tent of meeting," which was His own body, and offering up His own blood, Christ "perfected forever" those

who have faith in Him. And the result of belief in Christ is sanctification, a continual upward spiral of holiness and closeness to God, as the Holy Spirit performs His work within Christ's followers. In this way, we are eternally "perfect" because of the preciousness of Christ's blood applied to our lives, yet at the same time we are "being sanctified" by the Holy Spirit who indwells us and changes us into the image of Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9; Romans 8:29).

Paul also mentions the "tent of meeting" or the tabernacle, comparing it to the earthly human body: "For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee" (2 Corinthians 5:1–5).

When Paul says, "The tent that is our earthly home," he is referring to our earthly body, our temporary dwelling place. Just as the Israelites moved the tent of meeting from place to place waiting for entrance to the Promised Land, believers in Christ are wanderers on the earth—people who are not "at home" in the world and who "seek a city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14). Paul says that those who belong to God will be "further clothed" with immortality upon their deaths and that their earthly tent (their body) will be replaced with a "heavenly dwelling." God does the work of preparing us for that day of glorification by the process of sanctification by the Spirit, and that work happening within us is a "guarantee" that our inheritance and our heavenly dwelling are real. "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13–15). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Tent of Meeting - 140 verses** - Exod. 27:21; Exod. 28:43; Exod. 29:4; Exod. 29:10; Exod. 29:11; Exod. 29:30; Exod. 29:32; Exod. 29:42; Exod. 29:44; Exod. 30:16; Exod. 30:18; Exod. 30:20; Exod. 30:26; Exod. 30:36; Exod. 31:7; Exod. 33:7; Exod. 35:21; Exod. 38:8; Exod. 38:30; Exod. 39:32; Exod. 39:40; Exod. 40:2; Exod. 40:6; Exod. 40:7; Exod. 40:12; Exod. 40:22; Exod. 40:24; Exod. 40:26; Exod. 40:29; Exod. 40:30; Exod. 40:32; Exod. 40:34; Exod. 40:35; Lev. 1:1; Lev. 1:3; Lev. 1:5; Lev. 3:2; Lev. 3:8; Lev. 3:13; Lev. 4:4; Lev. 4:5; Lev. 4:7; Lev. 4:14; Lev. 4:16; Lev. 4:18; Lev. 6:16; Lev. 6:26; Lev. 6:30; Lev. 8:3; Lev. 8:4; Lev. 8:31; Lev. 8:33; Lev. 8:35; Lev. 9:5; Lev. 9:23; Lev. 10:7; Lev. 10:9; Lev. 12:6; Lev. 14:11; Lev. 14:23; Lev. 15:14; Lev. 15:29; Lev. 16:7; Lev. 16:16; Lev. 16:17; Lev. 16:20; Lev. 16:23; Lev. 16:33; Lev. 17:4; Lev. 17:5; Lev. 17:6; Lev. 17:9; Lev. 19:21; Lev. 24:3; Num. 1:1; Num. 2:2; Num. 2:17; Num. 3:7; Num. 3:8; Num. 3:25; Num. 3:38; Num. 4:3; Num. 4:4; Num. 4:15; Num. 4:23; Num. 4:25; Num. 4:28; Num. 4:30; Num. 4:31; Num. 4:33; Num. 4:35; Num. 4:37; Num. 4:39; Num. 4:41; Num. 4:43; Num. 4:47; Num. 6:10; Num. 6:13; Num. 6:18; Num. 7:5; Num. 7:89; Num. 8:9; Num. 8:15; Num. 8:19; Num. 8:22; Num. 8:24; Num. 8:26; Num. 10:3; Num. 11:16; Num. 12:4; Num. 14:10; Num. 16:18; Num. 16:19; Num. 16:42; Num. 16:43; Num. 16:50; Num. 17:4; Num. 18:4; Num. 18:6; Num. 18:21; Num. 18:22; Num. 18:23; Num. 18:31; Num. 19:4; Num. 20:6; Num. 25:6; Num. 27:2; Num. 31:54; Deut. 31:14; Jos. 18:1; Jos. 19:51; 1 Sam. 2:22; 1 Ki. 8:4; 1 Chr. 6:32; 1 Chr. 9:21; 1 Chr. 23:32; 2 Chr. 1:3; 2 Chr. 1:6; 2 Chr. 1:13; 2 Chr. 5:5

#### Related Resources:

- [What was the tabernacle of Moses? | GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)
- American Tract Society [Tabernacle](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Tabernacle](#)
- Baker's Evangelical Dictionary [Tabernacle](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Tabernacle](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Tabernacle](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Tabernacle](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Tabernacle](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Tabernacle](#)
- People's Dictionary of the Bible [Tabernacle](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Tabernacle The](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Tabernacle](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Tabernacle](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Tabernacle](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Tabernacle](#)
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- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Shiloh](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Shiloh](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Shiloh \(1\)](#) [Shiloh \(2\)](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Shiloh](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Shiloh](#) [Shiloh \(2\)](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Shiloh](#)

**Joshua 18:2 There remained among the sons of Israel seven tribes who had not divided their inheritance.**

- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SEVEN ALLOTMENTS TO TRIBES REMAINING

**There remained among the sons of Israel seven tribes who had not divided their inheritance-** ([See table below for summary of the seven](#)) The seven referred to in this verse are Benjamin, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Simeon. Now think about this a moment. How long had these 7 tribes been in essence "homeless?" For seven years of battling the Canaanites. They still had no place to call "home."

The five tribes who have their inheritance are: Reuben, Gad, Ephraim, Manasseh, Judah.

**Jamieson, Fausset and Brown** "Various causes led to a long delay in resuming it. The satisfaction of the people with their change to so pleasant and fertile a district, their preference of a nomad life, a love of ease, and reluctance to renew the war, seem to have made them indifferent to the possession of a settled inheritance. But Joshua was too much alive to the duty laid on him by the Lord to let matters continue in that state" ([Joshua Commentary 18](#)).

**Wiersbe** - Seven tribes still had to have their inheritance marked out for them, and apparently they were slow to respond to the challenge. Unlike Caleb and the daughters of Zelophehad, these tribes didn't have faith and spiritual zeal. These tribes had helped fight battles and defeat the enemy, but now they hesitated to claim their inheritance and enjoy the land God had given them. "The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession" (Pr 12:27NKJV). ([Be Strong -- Joshua: Putting God's Power to Work in Your Life](#))

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 2-10. After a year or more, Joshua blamed their slackness, and told them how to proceed. God, by his grace, has given us a title to a good land, the heavenly Canaan, but we are slack to take possession of it; we enter not into that rest, as we might by faith, and hope, and holy joy. How long shall it be thus with us? How long shall we thus stand in our own light, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities? Joshua stirs the Israelites up to take possession of their lots. He is ready to do his part, if they will do theirs.

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**Remained** (Lxx translates with [kataleipo](#))([03498](#)) [yathar](#) meaning to be left over, to remain. Jacob was left alone after he sent his family across the river (Gen. 32:24[25]); nothing remained after the locusts came (Ex. 10:15); Absalom was thought to have killed all the king's sons with not one remaining (2 Sam. 13:30); Isaiah prophesied to Hezekiah that nothing would be left of his kingdom (2 Kgs. 20:17); God said that when He destroyed Judah, He would leave a remnant (Ezek. 6:8).

**Divide** (flatter) ([02505](#)) [chalaq](#) has two general meanings (1) to make smooth (slippery) or to be smooth (smooth language = flattery) and (2) divide or distribute. It signifies endow (Job 39:17), appoint (2 Ch 23:18), be a partner (Pr 29:24), or provide (Dt 4:19). Intensives imply divide up (Joel 3:2), disperse (Gen 49:7), allot (Mic 2:4), apportion (Job 21:17), assign (Neh 9:22), or distribute (Jos 18:10). People allot (give, claim) as a portion (Isa 34:17; Jer 37:12). Baker says chalaq is "A verb indicating to share, to divide. It indicates receiving or obtaining one's share of something (1 Sam. 30:24; Jer. 37:12). It means to allot something (Deut. 4:19; 29:26[25]), to give a share to someone. Of persons it means to divide up into sections or groups or even to scatter them (Gen. 49:7; 1 Chr. 23:6; 24:3); of objects it means to divide them up (Ezek. 5:1); or distribute them (2 Chr. 23:18). It takes on the nuance of to be a sharer or partner with (Pr. 29:24)."

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 18](#)

**Seven tribes which had not yet received their inheritance.** The reasons of this delay are unknown. The probability is, that the original survey, on which the division thus far made was founded, was so imperfect, that the remaining tribes were unwilling to have it made the basis of their respective allotments. This is to be inferred from the fact that Judah's portion was soon found to be too

large, as Joseph's had already been found too small. The dissatisfaction expressed had led therefore to a temporary suspension of the work, till a new and more exact survey could be made. Add to this, that they appear to have become tired of the war. Their former conquests had enriched them with spoil, they were enjoying the ample provisions which had been treasured up for the use of the former inhabitants, and they became self-indulgent, slothful, and dilatory. They were now living at ease in the midst of their brethren; the regions that yet remained to be divided were remote from the station around which they were clustered, and if they went to take possession of them, they must break up their present connexions, drive their flocks and herds, and convey their wives and children to strange places, and undergo new hardships and trials. Besides this, great numbers of the Canaanites still remained in the unappropriated districts, and these, they knew, could not be expelled but at the expense of great effort, fatigue and peril. Their hearts accordingly sunk within them at the prospect. They knew the work was to be done—they wished it were done—but still they had not spirit to undertake it. 'The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing.' What a striking picture of the too common apathy and sluggishness of the candidate for the heavenly inheritance! How frequently is he diverted from present duties and debarred from present comforts, by giving way to slothful or timorous apprehensions of the difficulties that beset his path. Forty years after this time, the tribe of Dan had to fight for their inheritance, and it was four hundred years before the Jebusites were driven from Jerusalem. Had all the tribes proceeded with united vigor to fulfil the divine command in its utmost extent, they would not so long have been annoyed by their remaining enemies, as 'scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes.' And who does not find that corruptions gather strength by indulgence, and that graces decay for want of exercise? Therefore let us look to ourselves, that we lose not the things that we have wrought.

**Joshua 18:3 So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?"**

NET Joshua 18:3 So Joshua said to the Israelites: "How long do you intend to put off occupying the land the LORD God of your ancestors has given you?"

BGT Joshua 18:3 κα ε πεν ησο ς το ς υ ο ς Ισραηλ ως τ νο ς κλυθ σεσθε κληρονομ σαι τ ν γ ν ν δωκεν κ ριος θε ς μ ν

NLT Joshua 18:3 Then Joshua asked them, "How long are you going to wait before taking possession of the remaining land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given to you?"

ESV Joshua 18:3 So Joshua said to the people of Israel, "How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?"

NIV Joshua 18:3 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 fathers, has given you?"

- **How long** : Jdg 18:9 Pr 2:2-6 10:4 13:4 15:19 Ec 9:10 Zep 3:16 Mt 20:6 Joh 6:27 Php 3:13,14 2Pe 1:10,11
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JOSHUA REBUKES THE ISRAELITES FOR PROCRASTINATING**

**So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?" - KJV** = "How long are you to [slack](#) to go to possess the land?" **God of your fathers** alludes to the patriarchs and to the covenant Yahweh made with them that promised the land. Joshua is saying that it is time to [get your act together](#)! A specific reason for their procrastination is not stated but the implication is that they should have begun to take possession. Remember they have been fighting for 7 years prior to this allocation. The Septuagint translates **put off** with [ekluo](#) which means to become weary or exhausted in strength, give out, even lose heart or get discouraged.

**THOUGHT** - There are times in all of our lives when we need a "Joshua" to give us a little shove! We can all use help from others in organizing our time and our activities. Are you open when you receive a gentle push/rebuke? What area of your Christian life are you growing [slack](#) in or maybe beginning to drift away, compared to those former days when you first fell in love with Jesus (cf Rev 2:4-5+, Heb 2:1+)? Is there some portion of the "land" (some of the "abundant life" in Christ - John 10:10) on which you have failed to "place...the sole of your foot" (Joshua 1:3+), by faith, a faith that obeys **fully** (Nu 14:24+, Josh 14:8-9+)?

**Bush** speaks of Israel's indifference -- **They manifested no interest in, they were taking no steps towards having the requisite survey and division made.** This was the essence of their offence. So, in reproving the impenitent for his neglecting to work out his

own salvation with fear and trembling, and in pressing upon him the faithful discharge of every Christian duty, it is still to be understood that his first, his immediate business is to become reconciled to God, by unfeigned repentance; and thus to secure a title to eternal life. When this is done, his great concern in life is, like that of the Israelites in Canaan, to labor **to enter into possession** of his eternal inheritance.

**THOUGHT** - Ponder Bush's comments. When you are born again, you are in the "land" (life), but there are still many "Canaanites" remaining ([world](#), [flesh](#) and [devil](#)) that must daily be defeated in order for you to enter into the abundant life (Jn 10:10>

**Matthew Henry** suggests why they 7 tribes were delaying - The countries that remained to be divided lay at a distance, and some parts of them in the hands of the Canaanites. If they go to take possession of them, the cities must be rebuilt or repaired, they must drive their flocks and herds a great way, and carry their wives and children to strange places, and this will not be done without care and pains, and breaking through some hardships" ([Joshua Commentary 18](#)).

**William Blaikie** - Joshua is old, but his impatience with laziness and irregularity still gives sharpness to his remonstrance, "How long are ye slack to possess the land?" The ring of authority is still in his voice; it still commands obedience. More than that, the organising faculty is still active—the faculty that decides how a thing is to be done. ([Joshua 18, 19 The Distribution Completed](#))

**Cyril Barber** - Once the "Tent of Meeting" (i.e., the Tabernacle) had been set up at Shiloh, we would have expected the other tribes to rush headlong into the vacant land and seize an inheritance for themselves. Instead we find that they were content to be squatters. Joshua had to indict them for being slackers (Josh 18:3). As a result of their lethargy they were impugning the character of the One who had promised to give them the land. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#).)

Yahweh's promises are intended not as sedatives but as stimulants.

God does not want us to swallow his promises but to seize them.

-- Dale Ralph Davis

**Dale Ralph Davis** - Verse 3 reflects the tension of much **believing experience**, ancient Israelite and contemporary Christian. **Yahweh has promised the land and yet it must be possessed.** It is Yahweh's gift and yet that does not cancel human responsibility. Yahweh's promises are intended not as sedatives but as stimulants. God does not want us to swallow his promises but to seize them. Such is the apostle's 'theo-logic' in 2Pe 1:3ff. Peter exclaims that 'His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness' and that 'He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises' (NASB). Then he concludes: 'Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge', and so on (NASB; emphasis added). God's gifts are not meant to tame but to arouse God's people. ([Joshua: No Falling Words](#))(Bolding added)

[Believer's Study Bible](#) - It appears Joshua expected the tribes to take the initiative in asking for their portion of the Promised Land. **A similar situation could be said to exist regarding the blessings God has promised all believers**(Mt 7:7; Jas 1:5; Jas 4:2; Eph 1:3; 2Pe 1:3).

**Campbell** adds that "when the Israelites were thus assembled for erecting the tabernacle and celebrating the new worship center Joshua sensed that a feeling of war-weariness had overtaken them. They were exhausted in the struggle for the conquest of Canaan, so they stopped in the middle of the task of allocating the tribes." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#))

**Stephen Dray** - The land has been 'given', so how long are they going to hang around before getting off their backsides to do something

**THOUGHT** The description **the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you** is clearly an allusion to the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant. In that covenant Yahweh promised them the land. However as with all of God's promises, they had to believe in order to receive (THE OLD HYMN "[TRUST AND OBEY](#)"). Their hesitation would therefore seem to border on distrust (unbelief) in Yahweh and the integrity of His covenant promise. Contrast this with the man Caleb who was of a different spirit (Nu 14:24+) and followed the LORD fully, not partially and hesitatingly. Joshua's allusion to the Abrahamic Covenant also recalls God's promise in chapter 1 that "**Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.**" (Joshua 1:3+) But even in that promise what is the implicit action they had to take to possess their possession? **Clearly their foot had to tread on the land that was promised.**

**God's faithful promise called for exercise of man's faith and obedience.**

- Has your foot tread on the promises God has already given to you in Christ?
- Or are you procrastinating, fearful, disobedient, unfaithful, etc?

- Our "**Joshua**" (Lxx = [Iesous](#)) **Jesus** ([Iesous](#)) would command us to step out and "tread" by faith the **precious and magnificent promises** (2 Pe 1:4+) for it is by believing and obeying those promises we become partakers of the divine nature (aka we grow in Christ-likeness, God's goal for each of His children.).

**Utley** adds that "YHWH had clearly stated His intentions to **Abraham** (cf. Ge 15:7, 16; 13:15, 17; 17:8) and reaffirmed them to **Isaac** (cf. Ge 26:4) and **Jacob** (cf. Ge 28:13–14). Moses had clearly stated YHWH's intentions toward Israel (cf. Ex 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Dt. 1:7–8; 4:38, 40; 5:31; 7:13; 8:1; 9:6; 11:9, 17; 26:1, 9; 32:52; 34:4; Josh 1:2, 3, 6, 11, 13, 15; 2:9, 24; 18:3; 21:43; 23:13; 24:13). Many of these promises are linked to covenant obedience." ([Commentary](#))

**Campbell** comments that "Apparently the tribes were to initiate matters relating to territorial allocations. Joshua probably viewed every passing day as a day lost in the program of completely occupying the land, a day in which the enemy could return or become more firmly entrenched." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#))

**Rod Mattoon** - What do you do when you get stuck behind a slow driver? Do you pass when it's dangerous, tailgate, lay on the horn, flash the lights, or relax and enjoy the scenery? At Shiloh, seven tribes were driving real slow. They had not possessed the land. Joshua is honking the horn and getting impatient with their laziness. The seven tribes were slow to respond to the challenge. They were weak in faith and spiritual zeal and hesitated to claim their land. They were content without an inheritance; tired of war and hardship. These folks wanted ease and were content to wander. What a picture of carnal believers today who are weak in faith and lack spiritual zeal. They are content to wander spiritually and are unconcerned about the blessings and riches of God for their lives. Like these tribes we have a tendency to delay the completion of the difficult, the boring, or the disagreeable. Our procrastination is a lack of discipline and reveals poor stewardship of time. Are you floating in your Christian life? Get busy for God. Don't waste the precious time He has given you to serve Him. A few years ago, Snoopy, the beagle in the Charlie Brown cartoons, had his left leg broken. Hundreds wrote letters to Snoopy or sent sympathy cards. Perched on top of his dog house one day and staring at his huge cast, Snoopy began to philosophize about his plight. "My body blames my foot for not being able to go places. My foot says it was my head's fault, and my head blames my eyes. My eyes say my feet are clumsy, and my right foot says not to blame him for what my left foot did." Snoopy looks out at his audience and confesses, "I don't say anything because I don't want to get involved." This attitude does not belong among God's people. We are to be concerned and involved in serving Jesus Christ. ([Treasures From Joshua](#))

**Stephen Grant** has some interesting points of possible application - Some believers wish to emulate the two and a half tribes that settled on the wrong side of the Jordan. They desire to go in for the things of the world whilst continuing to maintain some loose connection with the Lord's people. Others come up against an obstacle or an enemy, which they cannot overcome, and come to accept failure and live with it. Some believers feel that compromise is the best way forward and exploit what should be absent from their lives in order to enhance their quality of life. The tribes who took possession of their inheritance thus far in the narrative have provided illustrations of these problems. The remaining seven tribes point to a tendency among some Christians to be content with a shallow, superficial life of spiritual neutrality. They do not wish to go into the world and live a sinful life, yet display no desire to go in for the things of the Lord. Such inertia is displeasing to the Lord and carries great risk to a believer's spiritual well-being. It is the equivalent to standing still in no-man's-land. ([What the Bible Teaches - Joshua Judges Ruth](#))

**Don Anderson** - I am reminded of a cartoon given to me from the Wall Street Journal which is a picture of an Israelite standing with his staff on a mountain looking heavenward saying, "Gee, we were sort of hoping that the Promised Land would be somewhere outside of the Middle East." It is so easy in our lives to sit down and wait after we have won the victory, rather than move on and possess the territory that has been acquired.

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**Put off** ([07503](#)) **raphah** means to sink, to become slack, to relax, to cease (Jdg. 8:3; 2 Sa 24:16; Neh. 6:9; Ps. 37:8), to desist or leave alone (Ex. 4:26; Dt. 9:14; Jdg. 11:37; Job 7:19), to become discouraged, to become disheartened, to become weak, to become feeble, to let drop or let go (Job 27:6; = figuratively; Pr. 4:13 = figuratively; Song 3:4 = literally), to discourage, to leave alone, to let go, to forsake or abandon someone (Deut. 4:31; 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5; 10:6; Ps. 138:8), to be lazy (Ex. 5:8, 17; Josh. 18:3; Prov. 18:9).

**Strong's** - 1) to sink, relax, sink down, let drop, be disheartened 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to sink down 1a2) to sink, drop 1a3) to sink, relax, abate 1a4) to relax, withdraw 1b) (Niphal) idle (participle) 1c) (Piel) to let drop 1d) (Hiphil) 1d1) to let drop, abandon, relax, refrain, forsake 1d2) to let go 1d3) to refrain, let alone 1d4) to be quiet 1e) (Hithpael) to show oneself slack

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**How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, &c** This is surely the language of rebuke, and implies that there had been a criminal remissness, among the tribes, in regard to this matter, the probable source of which is explained in the remarks on the preceding verse. It is true, indeed, that they could not well be enjoined to enter immediately, to rush, as it were, upon their inheritances, for the particular assignments were first to be made to each, but the point of the censure is directed to their **indifference** in this respect.

**Joshua 18:4 "Provide for yourselves three men from each tribe that I may send them, and that they may arise and walk through the land and write a description of it according to their inheritance; then they shall return to me.**

Literally Hebrew = "I will send them so they may arise and walk about in the land and describe it in writing according to their inheritance and come to me."

NET Joshua 18:4 Pick three men from each tribe. I will send them out to walk through the land and make a map of it for me.

BGT Joshua 18:4 δ τε ξ μ ν τρε ς νδρας κ φυλ ς κα ναστ ντες διελθ τωσαν τ ν γ ν κα διαγραφ τωσαν α τ ν ναντ ον μου καθ δε σει διελε ν α τ ν κα λθοσαν πρ ς α τ ν

NLT Joshua 18:4 Select three men from each tribe, and I will send them out to explore the land and map it out. They will then return to me with a written report of their proposed divisions of their new homeland.

ESV Joshua 18:4 Provide three men from each tribe, and I will send them out that they may set out and go up and down the land. They shall write a description of it with a view to their inheritances, and then come to me.

NIV Joshua 18:4 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.

- **three:** Jos 18:3 3:12 4:2 Nu 1:4 13:2
- **description of it:** Jos 18:6,9
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **JOSHUA COMMANDS "SURVEYING CREWS"**

**Provide for yourselves three men from each tribe that I may send them, and that they may arise and walk through the land and write a description of it according to their inheritance; then they shall return to me** - Joshua is for action, but not before careful plans are made. Joshua issues a command to appoint 21 men, 3 each from the tribes that have yet to receive their inheritance.

**Mattoon** - Jewish historians record that these men were experts in geometry. Their parents mastered the science of land surveying in Egypt.

**Bush** suggests that "Joshua's instructions, therefore, required the commissioners to have a special eye to the intrinsic value of the different parts of the country, as being more or less fertile and eligible."

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 18](#)

**Give out from among you.** Heb. לכם הבו hâbu lâkem, give ye for yourselves; i. e. appoint, select, ordain.

**Three men of each tribe.** Of each of the seven tribes that yet remained to be provided for, making twenty-one in all.

**Go through the land.** Accompanied, perhaps, by a military guard, to prevent the surveyors from being cut off by straggling parties of the Canaanites. Others suppose the Canaanites were supernaturally intimidated and restrained from attacking them.

**Describe it.** See on v. 9.

**According to the inheritance of them.** Heb. לפי נהלתם lepi nahalâthâm, according to the mouth of their inheritance; i. e., probably, to the value of their inheritance, or the country which they were to inherit not of their particular inheritances, for these were afterwards to be assigned them by lot, but of the country in general which was to constitute their inheritance. This is frequently the sense of the Heb. term פי pi, mouth, as may be seen by consulting Ex. 12:4; 16:18; Gen. 43:7; Prov. 12:8. The words of Josephus,

in his account of this affair, give, as we conceive, very nearly the precise import of the original. 'He also gave them a charge to estimate the measure of that part of the land that was most fruitful, and what was not so good.' Again, 'Joshua thought the land for the tribes should be divided by estimation of its goodness, rather than the largeness of its measure; it often happening that one acre of some sorts of land was equivalent to a thousand other acres.' Ant. B. V., ch. 1. § 21. Joshua's instructions, therefore, required the commissioners to have a special eye to the intrinsic value of the different parts of the country, as being more or less fertile and eligible.

**Joshua 18:5 "They shall divide it into seven portions; Judah shall stay in its territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall stay in their territory on the north."**

- **Judah shall:** Jos 15:1-12 19:1-9
- **the house:** Jos 16:1-17:18
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**They shall divide it into seven portions; Judah shall stay in its territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall stay in their territory on the north** - The message is that it was "hands off" the property of Judah and that of the sons of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim).

**Bush** comments that these 21 men "were carefully to divide the remaining territory which was not occupied by these tribes into seven equal parts."

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 18](#)

**And they shall divide it.** Or, Heb. התחלקו hithhalleku, divide ye it.

**Judah shall abide in their coast** In their district, in their region. Heb. 'shall stand upon his border.' The meaning undoubtedly is, that in this survey they were not to take into consideration the tribe of Judah, which was in the south, nor the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, which were on the north of where they now were, but were carefully to divide the remaining territory which was not occupied by these tribes into seven equal parts. The tribes of Judah and Joseph had been already provided for; let them stand by themselves. The terms north and south are here used relatively to Shiloh, rather than to the actual position of these two tribes.

**Joshua 18:6 "You shall describe the land in seven divisions, and bring [the description] here to me. I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God."**

- **may cast:** Jos 18:8,10 14:2 Nu 26:54,55 33:54 34:13 Ps 105:11 Pr 16:33 18:18 Ac 13:19
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **SURVEY FOLLOWED BY CASTING LOTS**

**You shall describe the land in seven divisions, and bring [the description] here to me. I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God** - It is Joshua, not Eleazar the high priest, who cast the lots, but as Pr 16:33 says "every decision is from the LORD." Notice Joshua's words **before the LORD our God** which emphasize His sovereign role in the casting of lots. And note that "before the LORD" is found three times, for added emphasis.

**Hess** explains that "Everything is recorded in a book. Joshua writes the covenant in the Book of the Law of God (24:26; see also 8:32, 34). Just as the law guides the people in their life, the map book will guide the people in their possession of God's blessing of the land. ([Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

Don't miss the phrase **before the LORD** (Septuagint translates it "*enanti kuriou tou theou hemon*" where the preposition "*enanti*" means literally "in the presence of" or "in front of") signifying that this was in His presence (repeated **3 times in this section** - Josh 18:6, 8, 10). He would witness this allotment. This was in a sense an act of worship before the LORD. And then on the conclusion of the casting of lots and distribution of land, we encounter the phrase **in Shiloh before the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting** (Joshua 19:51).

**Dale Ralph Davis** - Though this seems perfunctory enough to us, it was nevertheless necessary. There could be no end of



complaint, quarrelling, or discontent unless the tribes were assured that their lot was determined by the hand of God, that their territory was theirs by Yahweh's decision. The heart of the matter differs little for the Christian, though it may seldom involve real estate. Only as I am convinced that 'my times are in thy hand' (Ps. 31:15—see v. 13 for what those times can be like!) and that Yahweh really does hold my lot (cf. Ps. 16:5), can I be kept from bitterness and discontent. There is, by a strange chemistry, something oddly consoling when I realise in a fresh way that my present lot is what my Lord has intended for me. ([Joshua: No Falling Words](#))

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 18](#)

**Before the Lord our God.** Before the ark or tabernacle, over which the symbol of the divine presence rested. See on Joshua 3:11. The transaction was a solemn one, and he would have it so performed as that the tribes should look upon their possessions, as established to them by divine authority. The pious heart ever delights to look upon God as 'determining the bounds of our habitations'

**Joshua 18:7 "For the Levites have no portion among you, because the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance. Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh also have received their inheritance eastward beyond the Jordan, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them."**

- **the Levites:** Jos 13:14,33 Nu 18:20,23 De 10:9, 18:1-2
- **and Gad:** Jos 13:8-31 Nu 32:29-41 De 3:12-17 4:47,48
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 13:14; 33 Only to the tribe of Levi he did not give an inheritance; the offerings by fire to the LORD, the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as He spoke to him. 13:33 But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; the LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as He had promised to them.

Numbers 18:20 Then the LORD said to Aaron, "You shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel.

Numbers 18:23 "Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the sons of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

Deuteronomy 10:9 Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God spoke to him.)

Deuteronomy 18:1-2 "The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the LORD'S offerings by fire and His portion. 2" They shall have no inheritance among their countrymen; the LORD is their inheritance, as He promised them.

### REMINDER THAT LEVITES NOT IN THE "LOTTERY"

**For the Levites have no portion among you, because the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance-** The inheritance of the Levites is reiterated and ultimately it is the best because it is Yahweh Himself!

While [God Himself was to be their inheritance](#) (Joshua 13:14+, Nu 18:20-24+, Dt 10:9+), God had instructed Israel to give them cities in which to live and they were to have pasture lands to graze their cattle - see comments on Joshua 21:1-45.

As an aside, the LORD was also to be the **inheritance** of His people

The portion of Jacob is not like these; For the Maker of all is He, And Israel is the tribe of His **inheritance** (PORTION, POSSESSION); The LORD of hosts is His name. (Jeremiah 10:16)

**Utley** - The Levites as a tribe took the place of the firstborn (cf. Exodus 13) in serving YHWH (cf. 13:14; Nu. 18:1–32 and note at Josh. 13:33). ([Commentary](#))

**Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh also have received their inheritance eastward beyond the Jordan, which**

**Moses the servant of the LORD gave them** - The inheritance east of the Jordan is repeated again (Jos 13:8-31 Nu 32:29-41 De 3:12-17 Dt 4:47,48)

#### Related Resource:

- [How was God Himself the inheritance of the Levites? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is our inheritance in Christ? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- **BELIEVER'S HAVE AN ALLOTMENT** - [What does it mean to say that God is my portion? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 18:8 Then the men arose and went, and Joshua commanded those who went to describe the land, saying, "Go and walk through the land and describe it, and return to me; then I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh."**

NET Joshua 18:8 When the men started out, Joshua told those going to map out the land, "Go, walk through the land, map it out, and return to me. Then I will draw lots for you before the LORD here in Shiloh."

BGT Joshua 18:8 κα ναστ ντες ο νδρες πορε θησαν κα νετε λατο ησο ς το ς νδρ σιν το ς πορευομ νοις χωροβατσαι τ ν γ ν λ γων πορε εσθε κα χωροβατσατε τ ν γ ν κα παραγεν θητε πρ ς με κα δε ξο σω μ ν κλ ρον ναντι κυρ ου ν Σηλω

NLT Joshua 18:8 As the men started on their way to map out the land, Joshua commanded them, "Go and explore the land and write a description of it. Then return to me, and I will assign the land to the tribes by casting sacred lots here in the presence of the LORD at Shiloh."

ESV Joshua 18:8 So the men arose and went, and Joshua charged those who went to write the description of the land, saying, "Go up and down in the land and write a description and return to me. And I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh."

NIV Joshua 18:8 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."

- **Go and walk:** Ge 13:17
- that I may here: Jos 18:6,10 7:16-18 13:7 14:1,2 15:1 1Sa 14:41 Ac 1:24-26 Ro 14:19
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Proverbs 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

### **SURVEY THE LAND BEFORE CASTING LOTS**

**Then the men arose and went, and Joshua commanded those who went to describe the land, saying, "Go and walk through the land and describe it, and return to me; then I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh** - Walking on the land recalls Joshua 1:3 "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses." Joshua is a good general/administrator for he repeats the instructions in capsule form and reissues the commands. This is done so that the men will have no question about what their job is.

**Utley** - Joshua wants these remaining tribes to act on YHWH's promises and possess their inheritance! The very act of these tribal representatives walking on the land was a symbol of possession (cf. Gen. 13:17; Num. 13:17–24). ([Commentary](#))

**Bush** comments that "This is the earliest instance of land-surveying on record. The art was perhaps learned from the Egyptians; for their fields being annually overflowed by the Nile, and the land-marks swept away, they would be compelled frequently to resurvey them, in order to adjust their limits.

**William Blaikie** - Judah and Joseph are not to be disturbed in the settlements that have already been given to them; but the men are to divide the rest of the country into seven parts, and thereafter it is to be determined by lot to which tribe each part shall belong. It would appear that special note was to be taken of the cities, for when the surveyors returned and gave in their report they "described the land by cities into seven parts in a book." Each city had a certain portion of land connected with it, and the land always went with the city. The art of writing was sufficiently practised to enable them to compose what has been called the

“Domesday Book” of Canaan, and the record being in writing was a great safeguard against the disputes that might have arisen had so large a report consisted of mere oral statement. When the seven portions had been balloted for, there was no excuse for any of the tribes clinging any longer to that nomad life, for which, while in the wilderness, they seem to have acquired a real love.

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 18](#)

**Described it in a book.** Laid it down on a map or chart, accompanied, perhaps, with a verbal description of the leading features of the country.

**Described it by cities.** Setting down the most remarkable cities, with their towns and villages, their distances from each other, and the territories adjacent.

**And came again to Joshua.** According to Josephus, at the end of seven months.

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**F B Meyer - Joshua 18:8 Joshua charged them that went to describe the land.**

In every age of the Church's story, God has sent forth men to walk through and describe the land of our spiritual inheritance. They have become dissatisfied with the low attainments of their brethren, and with great desire have followed the Divine suggestions which pointed to a wider knowledge and enjoyment of the possibilities of Christian living. In the first ages, this was the work of men like Chrysostom and Augustine; in later ones, of the Reformers; in later ones still, of men whose names are still fresh in the memory of the Church.

But there is a sense in which all the experiences of life, all our walkings through the land of promise, all our discoveries of springs and valleys and far-stretching champaigns of territory, are not intended for ourselves alone, but for others. We are led by a certain path, that we may know how to direct a poor wanderer on his way. We are comforted, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble. Our Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, that we may communicate those blessings to our fellows. We are shown the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, that we may be able to unfold their joy and helpfulness to others. We are saved that we may become workers together with God.

The books which come to us from holy men who have traversed the land are of priceless value, like this Domesday book which Joshua prepared. But we who cannot write books should yet describe the land. “Come and hear, all ye that fear God; and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.” There is a Divine warrant for experience meetings of the right sort, where the form is subordinate to the fresh and living Spirit.

**Joshua 18:9 So the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities in seven divisions in a book; and they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh.**

- **into seven:** Ac 13:19
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SURVEY RESULTS WRITTEN OUT FOR JOSHUA

**So the men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities in seven divisions in a book; and they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh** - Note that the surveyors exhibit complete obedience to Joshua's orders. The Israelites were not illiterate!

**Henry Morris** - The scientific art of surveying is ancient. The Egyptians practiced it ([SEE NOTE](#)), but long before that, the sons of Noah and their descendants used it to divide the lands for their nations after the flood (Genesis 10:32).

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 18](#)

**Described it in a book.** Laid it down on a map or chart, accompanied, perhaps, with a verbal description of the leading features of the country. This is the earliest instance of land-surveying on record. The art was perhaps learned from the Egyptians; for their fields being annually overflowed by the Nile, and the land-marks swept away, they would be compelled frequently to resurvey them, in order to adjust their limits.

**Described it by cities.** Setting down the most remarkable cities, with their towns and villages, their distances from each other, and

the territories adjacent.

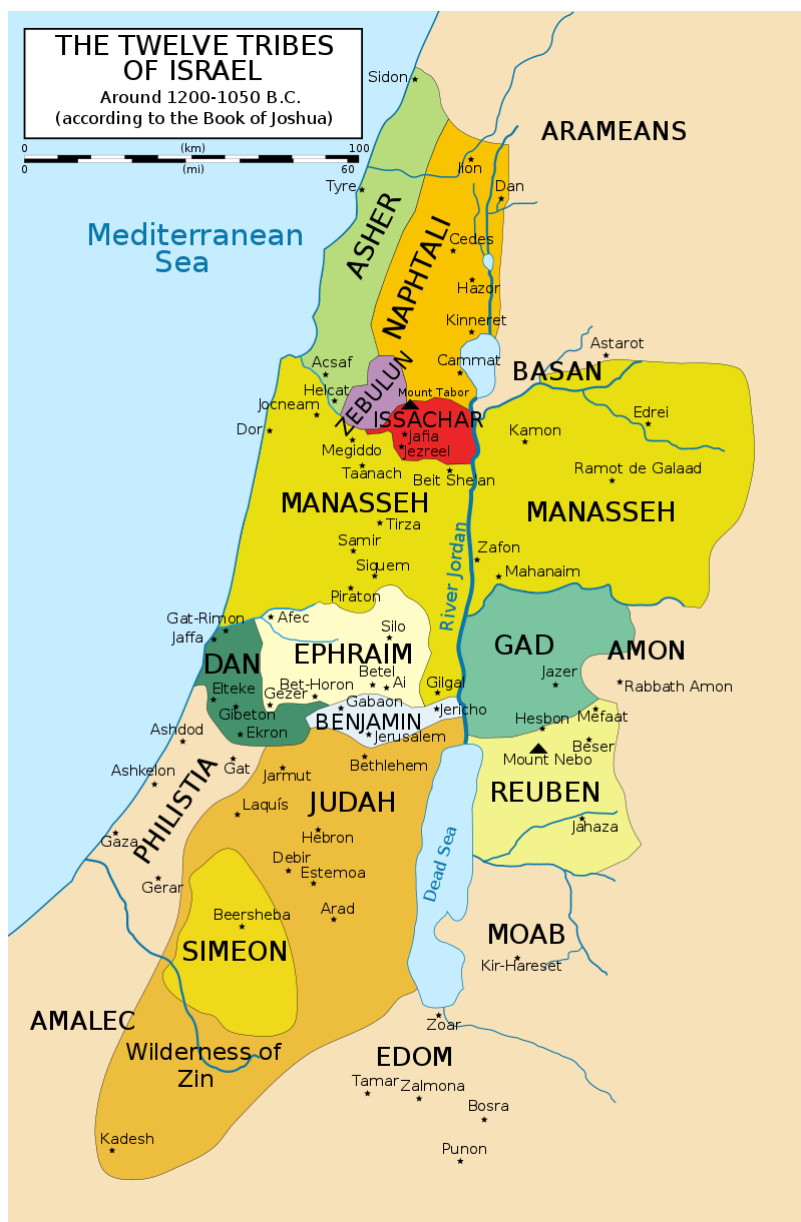
**And came again to Joshua.** According to Josephus, at the end of seven months.

**Joshua 18:10 And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the sons of Israel according to their divisions.**

- **cast lots:** Jos 18:6,8 Pr 18:18 Eze 47:22 48:29 Mt 27:35 Ac 13:19
- **before the Lord:** Ps 16:5,6 47:4 61:5 Joh 17:2 Ac 26:18 Col 1:12
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DIVISION OF LAND BY CASTING LOTS**

**And Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the land to the sons of Israel according to their divisions** - While Eleazar the priest was present (Josh 14:1+) (and may have worn breastplate with the [Urim and Thummim](#)) some think that he may have used the [Urim and Thummim](#) in deciding the allotments. However here the text clearly states **Joshua casts lots for them**. Was the [Urim and Thummim](#) used? We simply cannot say. We can say with absolute certainty that God was sovereign (see Pr 16:33) and in control of how the lot fell! Here the tribes learn for the first time which property would be their land.



Map to help you visualize the descriptions of boundaries

[\(Click here for another excellent map of the Tribal Allotments\)](#)

[Here is another excellent map of the Tribal Allotments](#)

SUMMARY OF LAND ALLOTMENTS			
Joshua 18-19			
Tribe (Number of male warriors)	Location	Significance of Location	Description Resources
Josh 18:11–28 <b>BENJAMIN</b> 45,600	-between Judah and Ephraim	-location of holy Jerusalem -encouraged close association with Judah	-mountains and ravines -rough terrain -not productive
Josh 19:1–9 <b>SIMEON</b> 22,200	-part of Judah on the south	-enemy exposed	mostly flat and desert

Josh 19:10–16 <b>ZEBULUN</b> 60,500	-included plain of Megiddo -had access to the coast	-next to its wilderness encampment neighbor, Issachar	-fertile plain -road to sea -very productive
Josh 19:17–23 <b>ISSACHAR</b> 64,300	-east of Zebulun -south of Sea of Galilee	-valley of Jezreel a noted battlefield of Palestine	-beautiful location -in traffic of plain -very productive
Josh 19:24–31 <b>ASHER</b> 53,400	-south of enemy Sidonians -coastal land from Carmel to Sidon	-Asher's strength protected Israel from northern coastal enemies	-fertile coastal plains -famous for olives
Josh 19:32–39 <b>NAPHTALI</b> 45,400	-east of Asher -west of Sea of Galilee and Merom	-important lands in N.T. history	-north-south ridge through the land -fertile, productive valleys
Josh 19:40–48 <b>DAN</b> 64,400	-west of Benjamin -access to Great Sea	-original location too small -exposed to Philistines on SW	-productive section in Philistines' hands
-- Irving Jensen <a href="#">Joshua- Everyman's Bible Commentary: Rest-Land Won</a>			

**Joshua 18:11** Now the lot of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin came up according to their families, and the territory of their lot lay between the sons of Judah and the sons of Joseph.

- **lay between the sons of Judah and the sons of Joseph.:** Jos 15:1-8 16:1-10 De 10:1-22 13:12
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 33:12+ Of Benjamin he said, "May the beloved of the LORD dwell in security by Him, Who shields him all the day, And he dwells between His shoulders.

Deuteronomy 33:12NLT Moses said this about the tribe of Benjamin: "The people of Benjamin are loved by the LORD and live in safety beside him. He surrounds them continuously and preserves them from every harm."

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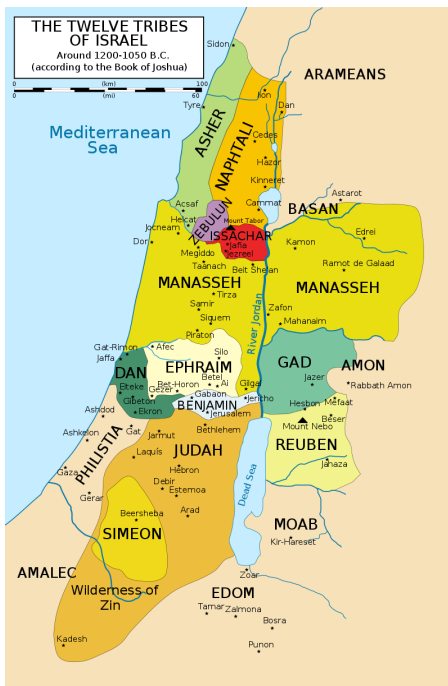
#### OUTLINE of BOOK TO THIS POINT:

- THE INVASION OF THE LAND - chaps. 1-5
- THE SUBJECTION OF THE LAND - chaps. 6-12
- THE DIVISION OF THE LAND - chaps. 13-22

#### OUTLINE OF JOSHUA 18

- SHILOH, SEVEN AND THE SURVEY - Joshua 18:1-10
  - THE BOUNDARIES FOR BENJAMIN - Joshua 18:11-20
  - THE CITIES OF BENJAMIN - Joshua 18:21-28
-





Map to help you visualize the descriptions of boundaries

[\(Click here for another excellent map of the Tribal Allotments\)](#)

[Here is another excellent map of the Tribal Allotments](#)

## THE NEXT LOT TO BENJAMIN

Benjamin, although not the largest tribe of the 7 remaining to receive their lot, was described in considerably more detail than that of the other tribes.

**Now the lot (goral) of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin came up according to their families, and the territory of their lot lay between the sons of Judah and the sons of Joseph** - Map above shows most of Benjamin's northern border is Ephraim with a tongue of West Manasseh. The southern border is encompassed by the land of Judah. Note that Benjamin had some degree of security (cf Deut 33:12+) because it was totally surrounded by other tribes which were strong. None of its borders abutted on enemy lands.

**Gangel** - Throughout these chapters Deuteronomy 7:22 is played out: "The Lord your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you." What we see, of course, with a number of the tribes (especially Dan) is an unwillingness to be patient with the details of the process. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary - Joshua](#))

**Francis Schaeffer** - The fall of the lot located Benjamin right next to Judah: "And the lots of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families; and the coast of their lot came forth between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph" (Josh. 18:11). As a matter of fact, their land came together at the city of Jerusalem. Moses had made this prophecy concerning Benjamin: "The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders" (Deut. 33:12). Benjamin was going to have a special closeness to the Lord. When the northern tribes later turned away from God, the tribes that stood fast were Judah and Benjamin; so Moses' prophecy was fulfilled. ([The Complete Works](#))

**Rod Mattoon** writes that Benjamin's allotment "would be 25 miles from East to West, and 15 miles from North to South at the longest point. The land of Benjamin acted as a buffer between the leading rival leading tribes of Judah and Ephraim. The land was steep and mountainous and one of the richest inheritances of the land. The land of Benjamin included important cities such as ...

- \* Jericho—Blind men were healed by Jesus here.
- \* Bethel—Samuel judged here and this was the location of the school of the prophets.
- \* Gibeon—Joab was killed here. The Tabernacle was here at one time.
- \* Ramah—David fled from Saul to this place.
- \* Mizpah—The home of Jephthah.

\* Jerusalem—The capital of Israel and the hot spot of today.

The tribe of Benjamin was counted as the least of the tribes (1 Samuel 9:21). Yet, it was strong enough to defy the combined tribes (Judges 20:12). Jacob said it would have wolf-like characteristics (Genesis 49). Benjamin was known for the skill of its stone slingers. Seven hundred of them were left handed slingers. In Benjamin, Jonathan battled the Philistines. Famous Benjamites included Saul, the first king; Mordecai (Esther 2:5); Paul (Romans 11:1). The lesson of the tribe of Benjamin is this, God delights in taking little things and making them great. Benjamin proves that bigger is not necessarily better. ([Treasures From Joshua](#))

**Stephen Grant** - With Judah on their southern boundary, and Joseph (Ephraim) to the north, their inheritance lay between the two most powerful tribes within the land. They should have been able to rely on the protection of these two tribes in times of crisis. However, a brief look at the subsequent history of the nation (Jdg 20:12–14; 2 Sam 2:15–16; 1 Chr 8:40) demonstrates that Benjamin was a warlike tribe displaying the character of which Jacob had spoken: "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil" (Gen 49:27). As a tribe they did not enjoy a peaceful existence. In subsequent years they formed a close alliance with Judah and even shared in the possession of Mount Zion. ([What the Bible Teaches: Joshua](#))

**Gangel** - Although Benjamin was a favorite son of Jacob, his allotment is one of the smaller ones in the entire promised land, indicating something of the size of the tribe. More important are the cities that fall within Benjamin's boundaries—Jericho, Bethel, Gibeon, Mizpah, Ai, and Jerusalem. Settled along the Jordan River with its western boundary reaching Kiriath Jearim and its northern boundary just north of Bethel, Benjamin was squarely positioned for a major role in Israelite history in the centuries ahead. We're reminded of Jacob's final prophecy in Genesis 49:27: "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder." We see the hand of God in the drawing of the lot for Benjamin. This tract of land between the Judahites and Josephites served to fulfill Deuteronomy 33:12 by placing the ultimate temple site in Benjamin and served to unite Israel by making Benjamin the link between the two most powerful tribal groups. We remember that it was Judah who offered himself as hostage in place of Benjamin (Gen. 43-44). ([Holman Old Testament Commentary - Joshua](#))

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**Lot** ([01486](#)) (**goral**) refers to any kind of small object (e.g., stick, pebble, shard) used for making decisions by a "random" outcome (see Pr 16:33 on what controls "random") or for determining the will of God. **Lot** is often translated in the Septuagint with [kleros](#) which can also mean inheritance.

**Vine on Lot - Gôrâl** (גֹּרָל, Strong's #[1486](#)), "lot." This word is attested 77 times and in all periods of the language (if a traditional view of the formation of the canon is accepted). Gôrâl represents the "lot" which was cast to discover the will of God in a given situation: "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat" (Lev. 16:8—the first occurrence). Exactly what casting the "lot" involved is not known. Since the land of Palestine was allocated among the tribes by the casting of the "lot," these allotments came to be known as their lots: "This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families; even to the border of Edom ..." (Josh. 15:1). In an extended use the word gôrâl represents the idea "fate" or "destiny": "And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us" (Isa. 17:14). Since God is viewed as controlling all things absolutely, the result of the casting of the "lot" is divinely controlled: "**The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD**" (Pr 16:33). Thus, providence (divine control of history) is frequently (**ED: I WOULD SAY ALWAYS**) figured as one's "lot."

#### Related Resources:

- Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament [Lots](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Lots](#)

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 18](#)

**And the lot—came up.** That is, came forth from the urn or vessel in which the lots were deposited. And so by an easy metaphor it is said immediately after, that 'the coast came forth,' because the lot on which it depended came forth. In like manner it is said, Lev 16:9, 'The goat upon which the Lord's lot felt, (Heb. upon which the Lord's lot came up.)'

**Between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph.** See Deut. 33:12. The prediction of Moses in regard to the lot of Benjamin was remarkably fulfilled, as may be seen in Deut. 33:12

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 11-28. The boundaries of each portion were distinctly drawn, and the inheritance of each tribe settled. All contests and selfish claims were prevented by the wise appointment of God, who allotted the hill and the valley, the corn and pasture, the brooks and rivers, the towns and cities. Is the lot of any servant of Christ cast in affliction and

sorrow? It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good. Are we in prosperity and peace? It is from above. Be humbled when you compare the gift with your own unworthiness. Forget not Him that gave the good, and always be ready to resign it at his command.

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#### QUESTION - [Who was Benjamin in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Benjamin was a son of Jacob and head of one of the [twelve tribes of Israel](#). Benjamin was the twelfth-born and youngest son in Jacob's family. He was born to Jacob's wife Rachel, making Benjamin the full brother of [Joseph](#). His story is found in Genesis chapters 35–49. It is here that we learn of his birth (Genesis 35); his relationship to his father and brothers (Genesis 37, 42–45); his relationship with Joseph (Genesis 43–45); his children (Genesis 46); and the blessing he received from his father (Genesis 46:21).

[Jacob](#) had two wives, Rachel and Leah. He loved Rachel with such fervor that he worked for her dad for seven years to earn the right to marry her (Genesis 29:18), seven years that "seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her" (Genesis 29:20). This love helps us to understand Jacob's affection for Benjamin, born to his beloved Rachel. Rachel had great difficulty in giving birth to Benjamin, although she did not know she would have another son. Her midwife told her that she was having another son. Rachel died in childbirth, as soon after she died in childbirth, but, as she was dying, she named her son Ben-Oni, which means "Son of My Trouble." Jacob renamed him Benjamin, "Son of My Right Hand" (Genesis 35:18).

Benjamin was not part of the conspiracy concocted by his ten older brothers to kill their brother Joseph. Later, when the brothers had to travel to Egypt to seek food during a famine, Jacob's love for his youngest son compelled him to keep Benjamin home "because he was afraid that harm might come to him" (Genesis 42:4). The other brothers traveled to Egypt and met with the governor of Egypt (Joseph, whom his brothers did not recognize). Joseph tested his brothers by accusing them of spying and demanding that they prove their honesty by bringing Benjamin back with them: "You will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here" (Genesis 42:15). Joseph shut them all in prison for three days and then released all but Simeon. The others returned home with the grain they had purchased—and the money that Joseph had secretly returned to them (verse 25).

Back in Canaan, Jacob laments his predicament: "You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!" (Genesis 42:36). For a while, Jacob refused to allow Benjamin to make the trip back to Egypt (verse 38). He later relented when they ran out of grain and Judah promised to personally guarantee Benjamin's safe return (Genesis 43:8–9).

Upon arriving in Egypt, the brothers presented themselves to Joseph, who was still unrecognized by them. Joseph, as he greeted the brothers this second time, "looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son, [and] he asked, 'Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?' And he said, 'God be gracious to you, my son.' Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep" (Genesis 43:29–30).

Joseph showed favor to Benjamin by preparing five times more food and drink for him than for his brothers when they gathered for dinner (Genesis 43:34). When it came time for the children of Israel to return to their father, Joseph used Benjamin as the means of further testing them. Joseph placed a silver cup in Benjamin's bag along with the money for the grain (Genesis 44:1–2). Joseph let his brothers set out on their journey and then sent a steward after them to feign outrage over the fact that they possessed stolen property. The brothers proclaimed their innocence, but, sure enough, the silver cup was found in Benjamin's possession; the brothers tore their garments in grief (verses 3–13). As punishment for their "crime," Joseph demanded that Benjamin remain in Egypt. But Judah—the same brother who had suggested years earlier that Joseph be sold into slavery—pleads with Joseph, saying, "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father" (Genesis 44:33–34). So, the brothers passed the test; they demonstrated a true change of heart from the time when they had mistreated Joseph.

Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers: "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that . . . God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God" (Genesis 45:4–8). Joseph then instructed his brothers to bring their father and all they possessed to Egypt, and "he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping" (verse 14).

Years later in Egypt, as Jacob prepared to die, he blessed Benjamin, saying, "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he devours the prey, in the evening he divides the plunder" (Genesis 49:27). The [tribe of Benjamin](#) became famous for their skill in battle and warlike nature. We learn more about Benjamin and the tribe of Benjamin throughout the books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges. Descendants of Benjamin include [Ehud](#), one of the judges; [Saul](#), Israel's first king; [Queen Esther](#); and the [apostle Paul](#). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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## QUESTION - [What can we learn from the tribe of Benjamin?](#)

**ANSWER** In Genesis 49 the patriarch Jacob, sensing his impending death, gathers his sons to his bedside to bless them. Each son became the progenitor of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Benjamin, as the youngest, receives his father's blessing last: "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil" (Genesis 49:27). The warlike nature of the small tribe of Benjamin became well known, as exhibited in their swordsmen (Judges 20:15–16; 1 Chronicles 8:40, 12:2; 2 Chronicles 14:8, 17:17) and in their ungodly defense of their extreme wickedness in Gibeah (Judges 19–20).

Benjamin's blessing has three parts. Compared to a wolf, his blessing has two time frames, morning and evening; it has two actions, devouring and dividing; and two outcomes, prey and spoil. This sets up a type of "before and after" experience for Benjamin and his offspring.

Scripture shows that at least four great people came from Benjamin's tribe, even though it was the smallest of the twelve tribes (1 Samuel 9:21). First, Ehud, a great warrior who delivered Israel from Moab (Judges 3:12–30). Next, Saul becomes the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:15–27). In later Jewish history, many Jews lived in Persia, God used Mordecai and Esther, from the tribe of Benjamin, to deliver the Jews from death (Esther 2:5–7). Finally, in the New Testament the apostle Paul affirms he, too, came from Benjamin. "I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Romans 11:1). Paul repeats this affirmation in Philippians 3:4–5.

Yet Benjamin's tribe had its dark side. Their warlike nature came out not only in defense of their country but also in depravity within their country. In Judges 19–21 Benjamin takes up an offence against the other eleven tribes of Israel, and civil war ensues. This period had the reputation of everyone doing what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). What led to the civil war was the horrific abuse and death of an unnamed Levite's concubine (Judges 19:10–28). The eleven tribes turned against the tribe of Benjamin and nearly annihilated them because of their refusal to give up the perpetrators (Judges 20:1–21:25). Eventually, the tribes restored Benjamin's tribe, greatly diminished due to the war, and the country reunited.

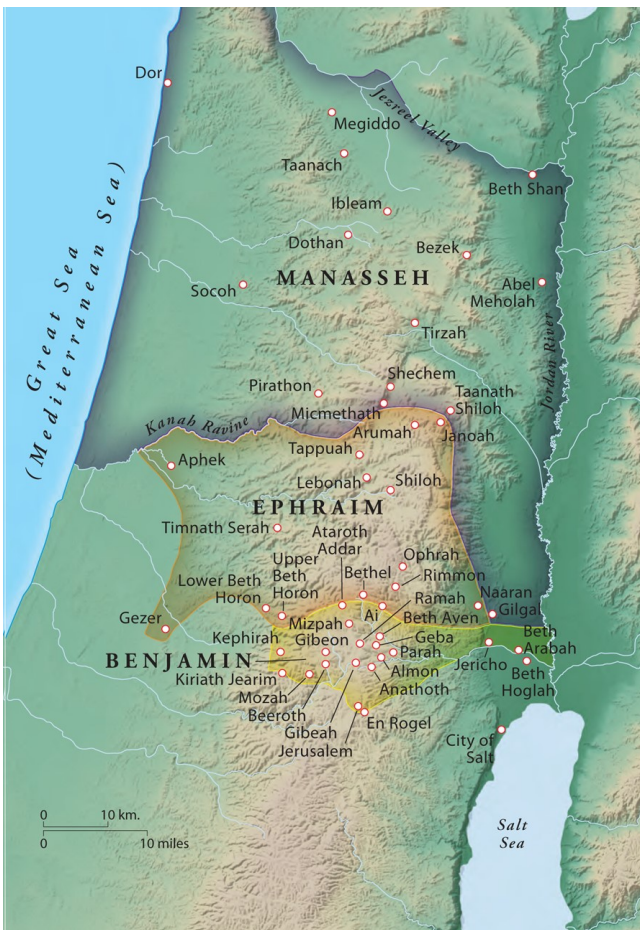
In Jewish culture the day begins at evening. Here begins the "after" for Benjamin. Benjamin's prophecy ends in the evening, the beginning of a new day, in which he will "divide the spoil." This has two aspects. First, through the apostle Paul, who testifies, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15). In the apostle Paul Benjamin's tribe had a citizen who served God mightily, as he says of himself, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

But Benjamin's "dividing of the spoil" has another fulfillment yet future. In Revelation 7:8, during the tribulation period, 12,000 men from Benjamin, along with 12,000 from each of the other tribes of Israel, will reach the world's population with the gospel. The result will be a multitude of the saved "that no man could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands" (Revelation 7:9). The second dividing of the spoil for Benjamin comes in the millennial kingdom when they will have a place in the land of Israel, along with a gate that has their name on it in the city of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 48:32). They, along with the other tribes of Israel, will find the ultimate dividing of the spoils in the New Jerusalem as each gate has a name of one of the tribes, Benjamin included (Revelation 21:12–13). What a glorious finish! What grace is this!

Benjamin has great truths to teach. First, God doesn't see as men see, for God looks on the heart. God saw a warrior inside of Benjamin. Outwardly, others saw him as the youngest son and his tribe as the smallest tribe. But God saw more, a man who would both devour and divide. The second lesson for us lies in the two Sauls who came from the tribe of Benjamin. King Saul, the epitome of the sin nature and its war against God, and Saul/Paul whose nature was changed by God from a murderous Pharisee to the apostle of grace. Paul is the example of what God does for those who come to Christ in faith. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 18:12** Their border on the north side was from the Jordan, then the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and went up through the hill country westward, and it ended at the wilderness of Beth-aven.

- **Jericho:** Jos 2:1 3:16 6:1 16:1
- **the wilderness:** Jos 7:2 Ho 4:15 5:8 10:5
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Map to help visualize descriptions of boundaries of Manasseh  
 Zondervan Atlas of the Bible: C. Rasmussen (recommended resource - do not reproduce)  
 CLICK TO ENLARGE

## NORTHERN BORDER OF BENJAMIN

Their border on the north side was from the Jordan, then the border went up to the side of [Jericho](#) on the north, and went up through the hill country westward, and it ended at the wilderness of Beth-aven - This border is the southern border of Ephraim (Josh 16:1–5).

**[Beth-Aven - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)** Place name meaning, “house of deception” or “of idolatry.” 1. A city near Ai east of Bethel (Joshua 7:2 ). It formed a border of Benjamin (Joshua 18:12 ) and was west of Michmash (1 Samuel 13:5 ). Saul defeated the Philistines here after God used his son Jonathan to start the victory (1 Samuel 14:23 ). The exact location is not known. Suggestions include Burqa, south of Bethel; tell Maryam; and Ai.

**Rasmussen** - The strategic importance of Benjamin cannot be overemphasized. One of the main approach roads from the coastal plain into the hill country ran through its western portion. On the east, several roads led down into the Rift Valley and joined at the oasis of Jericho and from there proceeded eastward across the fords of the Jordan into Transjordan. Thus, throughout history, Benjamin was one of the busiest tribal areas, for invading international powers often entered the hills via the roads from the east or the west, and the northern and southern Israelite tribes occasionally met in battle in the territory of the Benjamites as they sought to expand their influence. ([Zondervan Atlas of the Bible](#))

**Joshua 18:13** From there the border continued to Luz, to the side of Luz (that is, Bethel) southward; and the border went down to Ataroth-addar, near the hill which lies on the south of lower Beth-horon.

- **Luz:** Jos 16:2 Ge 28:19 Jdg 1:22-26
- **Beth-horon:** Jos 10:11 Josh 16:3 Josh 21:22
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

From there the border continued to Luz, to the side of Luz (that is, [Bethel](#)) southward; and the border went down to Ataroth-addar, near the hill which lies on the south of lower [Beth-Horon](#) - These locations are also described in notes Joshua



16:1-3. **Beth Horon** belonged to Ephraim (Josh 16:3) and was also a Levitical city (Josh 21:22)

[Luz - Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia](#) The ancient name of Bethel () [BETHEL]. The spot to which the name of Bethel was given appears, however, to have been at a little distance in the environs of Luz, and they are accordingly distinguished in , although the name of Bethel was eventually extended to that town. **Fausset** adds that "Luz was originally the city, Bethel the pillar and altar of Jacob; in Genesis 12:8 it is called Bethel by anticipation (Genesis 28:19), after Ephraim's conquest the town Bethel arose. The nearness of the two accounts for their being identified in all cases where there was no special reason for distinguishing them. After one of the townsmen of ancient Luz had betrayed it to Israel he went into "the land of the Hittites," and built a city of the same name (Judges 1:23-26). Answering to Khirbet Lozeh, close to Beitin.

[Ataroth-Addar - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "crowns of glory." A border town in Ephraim (Joshua 16:5 ), bordering Benjamin (Joshua 18:13 ), probably modern Khirbet Attara at the foot of tell en-Nasbeh or possibly identical with tell en-Nasbeh and thus with biblical Mispah.

**Joshua 18:14** The border extended from there and turned round on the west side southward, from the hill which lies before Beth-horon southward; and it ended at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city of the sons of Judah. This was the west side.

- **Kirjath-baal:** Jos 15:9,60 1Sa 7:1,2 2Sa 6:2 1Ch 13:5,6
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WESTERN BORDER OF BENJAMIN

The border extended from there and turned round on the west side southward, from the hill which lies before Beth-horon southward; and it ended at Kiriath-baal (that is, [Kiriath-Jearim](#)), a city of the sons of Judah. This was the west side. -See notes on Josh 15:60.

[Beth-Horon - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name of uncertain meaning. Suggestions include, "house of caves," "house of anger," "house of the hollow," "house of (the god) Hauron." Twin cities, one higher than the other, and so called Upper and Lower Beth Horon. An important road here dominates the path to the Shephelah, the plain between the Judean hills and the Mediterranean coast. Joshua used the road to chase the coalition of southern kings led by the king of Jerusalem (Joshua 10:10 ). Here God cast hail stones on the enemies. The border between the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin was at Beth-horon (Joshua 16:3 ,Joshua 16:3,16:5; Joshua 18:13-14 ). The city belonged to Ephraim but was set aside for the Levites (Joshua 21:22 ). The Philistines sent one unit of their army the way of Beth-horon to attack Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 13:18 ). Solomon rebuilt the lower city as a stone city and as a defense outpost (1 Kings 9:17 ). The chronicler preserved an even earlier tradition of a descendant of Ephraim, a woman named Sherah, building the two cities (1 Chronicles 7:22-24 ). When King Amaziah of Judah (796-767 B.C.) followed a prophet's advice and sent home mercenary soldiers he had hired from Israel, those soldiers fought the cities of Judah, including Beth-horon (2 Chronicles 25:13 ). Upper Beth Horon is modern beit Ur el-Foqa, five miles northwest of Gibeon and ten miles northwest of Jerusalem. It is 1750 feet above sea level. Lower Beth Horon is two miles to the east and only 1050 feet above sea level. It is modern beit Ur et-Tahta.

[Kiriath-Baal - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "city of Baal." Another name for Kiriath-Jearim in Joshua 15:60; Joshua 18:14 .

**Joshua 18:15** Then the south side was from the edge of Kiriath-jearim, and the border went westward and went to the fountain of the waters of Nephtoah.

- **Nephtoah:** Jos 15:9
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SOUTHERN BORDER OF BENJAMIN

Then the south side was from the edge of Kiriath-jearim, and the border went westward and went to the fountain of the



**waters of Nephtoah** - This is the NORTHERN boundary of Judah described in notes on Joshua 15:5-9.

**Kiriath-Jearim - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "city of forests." Kiriath-Jearim was located at modern Abu Gosh nine miles north of Jerusalem. It was on the border where Dan, Benjamin, and Judah joined before Dan began their migration northward (Joshua 15:9 ,Joshua 15:9,15:60; Joshua 18:14-15 ). Dan's army camped there in their search for new territory (Judges 18:12 ). After the Philistines returned the ark of the covenant, it was kept at Kiriath-Jearim for a time (1 Samuel 6:21-7:2 ). David attempted to move the ark to Jerusalem from there, but because he did so improperly, God struck down Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:1-8 ). Among Kiriath-Jearim's sons was Uriah, a faithful prophet and contemporary of Jeremiah. He was executed for prophesying against the king (Jeremiah 26:20-24 ). The Romans built a fort over the ancient ruins to guard the main route from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean Sea. A garrison from the Tenth Legion was stationed there. Kiriath-Jearim is identified with Deir al-Azhar near the modern village of Qaryet el-Inab or Abu Gosh.

**Nephtoah - Easton's Bible Dictionary** Opened, a fountain and a stream issuing from it on the border between Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:8,9; 18:15 ). (Smith - It lay northwest of Jerusalem).

**Joshua 18:16 The border went down to the edge of the hill which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is in the valley of Rephaim northward; and it went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the slope of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En-rogel.**

- **in the valley of Ben-hinnom** Jos 15:8 2Ki 23:10 2Ch 28:3 33:6 Isa 30:33 Jer 7:31,32 19:2,6,11 Jer 32:35
- **the valley of Rephaim** the valley of the giants: Jos 15:8 18:16 1Ch 14:9
- **Jebusite:** Mount zion, south of Jerusalem; for Jebusi or Jebus was the ancient name of that city. Jos 18:28 15:63 Jdg 1:8,21 19:10
- **Enrogel:** Jos 15:7 2Sa 17:17 1Ki 1:9
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The border went down to the edge of the hill which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is in the valley of Rephaim northward; and it went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the slope of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En-rogel** - See notes on Joshua 15:8 for **Valley of Ben Hinnom**. See notes on Joshua 15:7 for **En-rogel**.

**Rasmussen** - Of particular interest—as evidenced by the minute details—are the notations of its southern boundary in the Jerusalem area (Josh 18:16–17), where it is explicitly noted that Jerusalem was located in Benjamin, not in Judah, despite the fact that later a Judahite (David) would capture the city and make it his personal possession.

**Ben-Hinnom - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "son of Hinnom." A valley south of Jerusalem serving as northern border of tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:8 ) and southern boundary of tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:16 ). Pagan child sacrifices occurred here, some kings of Judah included (Ahaz, 2 Chronicles 28:3; Manasseh, 2 Chronicles 33:6 ). Jeremiah announced God's judgment on the valley because of such practices (Jeremiah 19:1-15 ). The valley would be renamed, "valley of slaughter" (Jeremiah 19:6 ). The sin of the valley gave God reason to bring the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem (Jeremiah 32:35 ). King Josiah defiled and did away with the altars there (2 Kings 23:10 ). The valley served as the northern boundary of the Judean villages where the returning exiles settled (Nehemiah 11:30 ).

**Rephaim, Valley of - Easton's Bible Dictionary** (Joshua 15:8; 18:16 , RSV). When David became king over all Israel, the Philistines, judging that he would now become their uncompromising enemy, made a sudden attack upon Hebron, compelling David to retire from it. He sought refuge in "the hold" at Adullam (2 Samuel 5:17-22 ), and the Philistines took up their position in the valley of Rephaim, on the west and south-west of Jerusalem. Thus all communication between Bethlehem and Jerusalem was intercepted. While David and his army were encamped here, there occurred that incident narrated in 2 Samuel 23:15-17 . Having obtained divine direction, David led his army against the Philistines, and gained a complete victory over them. The scene of this victory was afterwards called Baalperazim (q.v.). A second time, however, the Philistines rallied their forces in this valley (2 Samuel 5:22 ). Again warned by a divine oracle, David led his army to Gibeon, and attacked the Philistines from the south, inflicting on them another severe defeat, and chasing them with great slaughter to Gezer (q.v.). There David kept in check these enemies of Israel. This valley is now called el-Bukei'a

**En-Rogel - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "spring of the fuller" or "spring of the foot." A border town between the tribal territory of Judah (Joshua 15:7 ) and that of Benjamin (Joshua 18:16 ). Jonathan and Ahimaaz, the priests' sons, stayed at En-rogel as messengers to relay to David what the priests might learn from Absalom when he took over Jerusalem from his father (2 Samuel 17:17 ). Adonijah staged a party there to proclaim himself as David's successor as king of Judah (1 Kings 1:9 ). En-rogel lay near Jerusalem where the Kidron and Hinnom valleys met at modern Bir Ayyub.

**Joshua 18:17 It extended northward and went to En-shemesh and went to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, and it went down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben.**

- **Geliloth:** Geliloth is probably the same as Gilgal; though as the word may signify border or limits, some think that it is probably not the proper name of a place: "And went forth towards the borders which are over against the ascent to Adummim." Others render Geliloth circuits or roundings, or the hills about Jordan, {tumuli Jordanis.} Vulgate: {pertransit usque ad tumulos.}
- **the stone:** Jos 15:6
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**It extended northward and went to En-shemesh and went to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim, and it went down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben** - "From En-rogel the boundary proceeded in a northerly direction and came to En-shemesh and on to Geliloth (which is across from the slopes of Adummim). Then it went down to the Stone of Bohan. (Bohan was Reuben's son.)" (Jos 18:17NLT)

For **En Shemesh** see notes on Joshua 15:7. For **Stone of Bohan** see notes on Joshua 15:6.

[En-Shemesh - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "spring of the sun." Town on border between tribal territories of Judah (Joshua 15:7 ) and Benjamin (Joshua 18:17 ). It is located at ain el-Hod, "the spring of the apostles," about two miles east of Jerusalem on the eastern edge of Bethany.

[Geliloth - Fausset's Bible Dictionary](#) Joshua 18:17. One of the southern bounds of Benjamin, "over against the going up (ascent) of Adummim." Gilgal occupied the same position "before the going up of Adummim" (Joshua 15:7) on the northern boundary of Judah, which is the southern bound of Benjamin; therefore Grove would substitute "**Gilgal**" for "**Geliloth**." Its derivation is gaalal "to roll"; like the Scotch "links," meaning both the windings of the stream (Geliloth is near the Jordan) and the coasts; whereas Ciccar is the circle of vegetation or dwellings round the bends of the water. Conder connects Geliloth with the "tells" or mounds of Palestine, which he thinks to be the accumulated refuse of sun-dried bricks, which served as a platform on which others were baked, as at the present day in India and Egypt. They are found in the Jordan valley, and in the plain of Esdraelon. They always occur near water, and in alluvial clay plains, as in the clay lands between Succoth and Zarthan, where Solomon east his temple brasswork.

[Adummim - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "red ones." A rocky pass on the road descending from Jerusalem to Jericho located at modern Talcat ed-damm. It formed the border of Judah and Benjamin in the tribal allotments Joshua made (Joshua 15:7; Joshua 18:17 ). Today the Inn of the Good Samaritan is there because late traditions locate the Good Samaritan narrative there (Luke 10:30-37 ).

[Bohan - McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia](#) a Reubenite, (See BEN- BOHAN), in whose honor a stone was erected which afterward served as a boundary mark on the frontier of Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:6; Joshua 18:17). It does not appear from the text whether this stone was a sepulchral monument, or set up to commemorate some great exploit performed by this Bohan in the conquest of Canaan (comp. 1 Samuel 7:12).

[Bohan The Stone of - Smith's Bible Dictionary](#) A stone erected in honor of Bohan, on the boundary between Judah and Benjamin, in the valley of Achor, along the eastern side of the present Wady Dahr, running into the Dead Sea.

**Joshua 18:18 It continued to the side in front of the Arabah northward and went down to the Arabah.**

- **Arabah:** Jos 15:6,61
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**It continued to the side in front of the Arabah northward and went down to the Arabah.** NLT- "From there it passed along the north side of the slope overlooking the Jordan Valley. The border then went down into the valley," **Arabah** refers to the Jordan Valley and means "dry, infertile area" and common Hebrew noun meaning desert with hot climate and sparse rainfall.

**Joshua 18:19 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.**

- **bay**: Jos 15:2 Isa 11:15
- **the salt**: Jos 3:16 12:3 Ge 14:3 19:25 Nu 34:3 De 3:17
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SOUTHERN BORDER OF BENJAMIN

The border continued to the side of Beth-hoglah northward; and the border ended at the north bay of the Salt(Dead) Sea, at the south end of the Jordan - NET = " It then crossed to the slope of Beth Hoglah to the north and ended at the northern tip of the Salt Sea at the mouth of the Jordan River. This was the southern border. (Jos 18:19NET)" **NLT** = "ran past the north slope of Beth-hoglah, and ended at the north bay of the Dead Sea, which is the southern end of the Jordan River. This was the southern boundary." For **Beth-hoglah** see notes on Joshua 15:6.

**Salt Sea = Dead Sea** - Gen. 14:3; Num. 34:3; Num. 34:12; Deut. 3:17; Jos. 3:16; Jos. 12:3; Jos. 15:2; Jos. 15:5; Jos. 18:19 See [People's Bible Dictionary](#)

**This was the south border - TSK note - This was the south border.** The borders of this tribe on the north were the same as those of Ephraim on the south, and his southern boundaries the same as the northern borders of Judah; but drawn from west to east, instead of from east to west (Joshua 15:1-12; ch. 16.) As the inheritance of Benjamin did not extend to the Mediterranean sea, and no other sea or lake is known to have been in those parts, perhaps this depression, "compassed the corner of the sea southward," (Josh 18:14,) should be rendered, "made a circuit on the side next the sea towards the south;" for it seems to connect the northern border, in the preceding verses, with the southern which follows.

**Beth-Hoglah - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "house of the partridge." Border city between tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:6; Joshua 18:19 ,Joshua 18:19,18:21 ). It is probably modern Ain Hajlah four miles southeast of Jericho.

**Joshua 18:20 Moreover, the Jordan was its border on the east side. This was the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin, according to their families and according to its borders all around.**

- Jos 18:11
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## EASTERN BORDER OF BENJAMIN

**Moreover, the Jordan was its border on the east side. This was the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin, according to their families and according to its borders all around.**

**Joshua 18:21 Now the cities of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho and Beth-hoglah and Emek-keziz,**

- **Jericho**: Jos 18:12 2:1 6:1 Lu 10:30 19:1
- **Bethhoglah**: Jos 18:19 15:6
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CITIES OF BENJAMIN

While the territory of Benjamin was small, the list of cities was the third longest after Judah and Levi.

**Now the cities of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho and Beth-Hoglah and Emek-keziz** - The cities consist of 12 on the eastern side (Joshua 18:21-24) and 14 on the western side (Joshua 18:25-28). For **Beth-hoglah** see notes on Joshua 15:6.

**Rasmussen** - Benjamin's city list (Josh 18:21–28) consists of two sections of twelve and fourteen cities respectively. It seems that the list is divided into eastern and western groupings of cities—approximately along the line of the watershed in the mountains.

**William Blaikie** - The cities of Benjamin included several of the most famous. Among them was Jericho, the rebuilding of which as a fortified place had been forbidden, but which was still in some degree inhabited; Bethel, which was already very famous in the history, but which, after the separation of the kingdoms, was taken possession of by Jeroboam, and made the shrine of his calves; Gibeon, the capital of the Gibeonites, and afterwards a shrine frequented by Solomon (1 Kings 3:5); Ramah, afterwards the dwelling-place of Samuel (1 Sam. 7:17); Mizpeh, one of the three places where he judged Israel (1 Sam. 7:16); Gibeath, or Gibeah, where Saul had his palace (1 Sam. 10:26); and last, not least, Jerusalem.

**Howard** notes that "ten of the cities here never occur elsewhere in the Bible: Emek, Keziz, Avvim, Parah, Kephrah Ammoni, Ophni, Mozah, Irpeel, Taralah, Zelah, and Haeleph" ([Joshua: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition](#))

**Beth-Hoglah - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "house of the partridge." Border city between tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:6; Joshua 18:19, Joshua 18:19, 18:21 ). It is probably modern Ain Hajlah four miles southeast of Jericho.

**Emek-Keziz - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "the cut off valley" or "the valley of gravel." It is listed as one of the cities assigned the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:21 ). Its location is not known.

**Related Resource:**

- [What is the significance of Jericho in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 18:22 and Beth-arabah and Zemaraim and Bethel,**

- **Betharabah:** Jos 18:18 15:6
- **Zemaraim:** Ge 10:18 2Ch 13:4
- **Bethel:** 1Ki 12:29-32
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

and [Beth-arabah](#) and [Zemaraim](#) and [Bethel](#), For [Beth-arabah](#) see notes on Joshua 15:6. For [Bethel](#) see notes on Joshua 7:2 (cf Jdg 1:22-23+).

**Related Resource:**

- [What is the significance of Bethel in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 18:23 and Avvim and Parah and Ophrah,**

- **Ophrah:** Situated, according to Eusebius, five miles east of Bethel. 1Sa 13:17
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

and [Avvim](#) and [Parah](#) and [Ophrah](#)

**Madvig** - "Parah" is modern Khirbet 'Ain Farah, northeast of Anathoth. "Ophrah" is modern et-Taiyibeh, about four miles northeast of Bethel. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

**Joshua 18:24 and Chephar-ammoni and Ophni and Geba; twelve cities with their villages.**

- **Ophni:** Probably the same as Gophna ([Ayin] being often pronounced as G); which, according to Josephus, was about fifteen miles from Jerusalem, towards Shechem, says Eusebius, (Onom. in [pharaux botrous].)
- **Gaba:** Gaba or Geba, according to Josephus, was not far from Rama, forty stadia from Jerusalem, and, according to Eusebius, five miles from Gophna, towards Shechem. Jos 21:17 Ezr 2:26 Ne 7:30
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

and [Chephar-ammoni](#) and [Ophni](#) and [Geba](#); twelve cities with their villages -

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## Joshua 18:25 Gibeon and Ramah and Beerth,

- **Gibeon:** Jos 9:17 10:2 1Ki 3:4,5 9:2 Isa 28:21
- **Ramah:** Situated, according to Eusebius, six miles from Jerusalem towards Bethel; though Jerome places it near Gaba, seven miles from Jerusalem. 1Sa 1:1, Ramathaim-zophim, Jos 7:17 15:34 Jer 31:15 Mt 27:57, Arimathea
- **Beerth:** Eusebius says Beerth was seven miles from Jerusalem, towards Nicopolis or Emmaus. Jerome, however, reads Neapolis or Shechem; but Reland prefers the former.
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Gibeon and Ramah and Beerth,** - For “Gibeon” and Beerth see notes on Joshua 9:17.

**Madvig** - “Ramah” is modern er-Ram, about five miles north of Jerusalem. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

**Beerth - Holman Bible Dictionary** A city of the Gibeonites to which Joshua and his army came to defend the Gibeonites after making a covenant with them (Joshua 9:17 ). The city was allotted the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:25 ). Ishbosheth's army captains came from Beerth (2 Samuel 4:2 ), whose citizens had fled to Gittaim when Israel, possibly under Saul, conquered Beerth (2 Samuel 4:3 ). Compare 2 Samuel 21:1-9 for Saul's dealing with the Gibeonites. Joab's armorbearer, one of David's 30 heroes, came from Beerth ( 2 Samuel 23:37 ). Citizens of Beerth returned with Zerubbabel from Exile in Babylon about 537 B.C. (Ezra 2:25 ). The city had to be close to Gibeon, but its exact location is debated. Among suggestions are: el-Bireh, tell en-Nasbeh, Nebi Samwil, Khirbet el-Burj, Biddu, Khirbet Raddana, ras et-Tahune.

## Joshua 18:26 and Mizpeh and Chephirah and Mozah,

- **Mizpeh:** Situated not far from Rama, forty stadia from Jerusalem. Jdg 10:17
- **Chephirah:** Jos 9:17 Ezr 2:25
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**and Mizpeh and Chephirah and Mozah,** For **Chephirah** see notes on Joshua 9:17.

**Mizpah, Mizpeh - Holman Bible Dictionary** The town of Mizpeh located in the territory of Benjamin (Joshua 18:26 ) seems to be the most important of the Mizpeh's in the Old Testament. In spite of the numerous references to this important Old Testament site, its location is still debated. Two major sites have been suggested as possible locations: Nebi Samwil, located about five miles north of Jerusalem, and tell en-Nasbeh, located about eight miles north of Jerusalem. While a major excavation has never been done at Nebi Samwil, the stories of Samuel seem to fit this location. On the other hand, tell en-Nasbeh has been excavated, and the archaeological data fits well the history of Mizpeh of Benjamin. The important role of Mizpah played in Old Testament history is reflected in the many events associated with the site. Mizpah was a rallying point for Israel as they gathered against the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20:1 ). Samuel gathered Israel to Mizpah for prayer in the light of the Philistine threat (1 Samuel 7:5-11 ). Mizpah was a major site at which legal decisions were made (1 Samuel 7:15-17 ). One of the most interesting chapters in the history of Mizpah took place after the Fall of Jerusalem. With Jerusalem in shambles following the Babylonian attack in 587 B.C., Mizpah became the administrative center of this Babylonian province. At Mizpah Gedaliah, who had been appointed governor of the province, sought to encourage those who had remained behind (Jeremiah 40:1 ). See Watchtower; Samuel; Jephthah; Gedaliah .

**Chephirah - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, “queen of the lions.” It is located at khirbet Kefire about four miles west of Gibeon. One of the four cities of the Gibeonites which Joshua delivered from the coalition led by the king of Jerusalem (Joshua 9:17 ). Joshua assigned it to the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:26 ). Some of its exiled inhabitants returned to the post-exilic village with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:25 ).

**Mozah - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, “unleavened.” City in Benjamin (Joshua 18:26 ), later a center for pottery production as attested by numerous vessels recovered at Jericho and tell-en-Nasbeh bearing the inscription Mozah on their handles. The site is likely that of modern Qaluniya, four miles northwest of Jerusalem on the Tel Aviv road. (Madvig adds “Mozah” is modern Qalunyah, about four miles northwest of Jerusalem near the waters of Nephtoah.”)

## Joshua 18:27 and Rekem and Irpeel and Taralah,

- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

and Rekem and Irpeel and Taralah,

[Rekem - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) meaning, “maker of multicolored cloth. Unidentified site in Benjamin (Joshua 18:27 ).”

[Irpeel - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, “God heals.” Town in tribal territory of Benjamin (Joshua 18:27 ). Location is not known.

[Taralah - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, “strength.” Unidentified site in Benjamin, likely northwest of Jerusalem (Joshua 18:27 ).

**Joshua 18:28 and Zelah, Haeleph and the Jebusite (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah, Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin according to their families.**

- **Zelah:** 2Sa 21:14
- **Jebusite:** Jos 18:16 15:8,63 2Sa 5:8
- **Gibeath:** Jdg 19:12-15 20:4,5 1Sa 10:26 13:15,16 Isa 10:29 Ho 10:9, Gibeah
- **according:** Nu 26:54 33:54
- [Joshua 18 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

2 Samuel 21:14 They buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in **Zela**, in the grave of Kish his father; thus they did all that the king commanded, and after that God was moved by prayer for the land.

**Gangel** - We leave this chapter noting that the blessing of Moses upon Benjamin was considerably stronger than the blessing of Jacob. In Deuteronomy 33:12 we read, "About Benjamin he said: 'Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders.'" We are not sure what to make of this metaphor except that Jerusalem, a Benjaminite city, would become the most holy city of Israel. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary - Joshua](#))

**and Zelah, Haeleph and the Jebusite (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah, Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the sons of Benjamin according to their families** - Saul and Jonathan were buried at **Zelah** (see passage above)

**Madvig** - “Gibeah” is modern Tell el-Ful. It must not be confused with Gibeah in Judah (15:57). ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

[Zelah - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, “rib, side, slope.” Town allotted to Benjamin (Joshua 18:28 ), in which the bones of Saul and Jonathan were buried (2 Samuel 21:14 ). The site is probably khirbet Salah between Jerusalem and Gibeon or else another site in the hills north and west of Jerusalem

[Haeleph - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, “the ox.” KJV reads the initial “h” as the Hebrew definite article and thus has “Eleph.” Some interpreters combine the preceding town name in Joshua 18:28 to read, “Zelah Haeleph” as one town, following early Greek manuscript evidence. Town in tribal territory of Benjamin ( Joshua 18:28 ). The location is not known.

[Gibeah - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, “a hill,” closely related to names of Geba and Gibeon. Gibeah or Gibeath was the name of four different places in the Old Testament. ....The most significant Gibeah was the city in the tribal territory of Benjamin (Joshua 18:28 ). A bloody civil war between Benjamin and the other Israelite tribes broke out when the men of Gibeah raped a traveling Levite's concubine (Judges 19:1-21:25 ). Saul had close family connections to the city (1 Chronicles 8:29-33 also connects them with the nearby and similar-sounding Gibeon; see 1 Samuel 10:5, 1 Samuel 10:26; 1 Samuel 15:34; 1 Samuel 23:19 ). If the “hill of God” (1 Samuel 10:5 KJV, NAS, REB) or “Gibeath-elohim” (NRSV) should be translated “Gibeah of God” (NIV) and equated with Gibeah of Saul, then the Philistines controlled the city prior to Saul gaining control. Apparently the Philistines built a fortress there which Saul took over, or Saul constructed his own royal complex, since archaeologists have uncovered a fortress from this period. After Saul's death, the city declined. Hosea and Isaiah referred to it during the eighth century B.C. ( Isaiah 10:29; Hosea 5:8; Hosea 9:9; Hosea 10:9 ). Isaiah shows it was on the natural path of march for an enemy army such as the Assyrians attacking Jerusalem from the north. Archaeologists have shown the city flourished once more after the destruction of Jerusalem and again in the Maccabean age. Gibeah is located at tell el-Ful on a high ridge three and a half miles north of Jerusalem. See Benjamin; Geba; Saul .

[Kiriath - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, “city” in tribal territory of Benjamin (Joshua 18:28 NAS, NIV; KJV has



Kirjath, an alternate spelling). The same as Kiriath-Jearim (see Joshua 18:28 NRSV, REB, TEV).

**Related Resource:**

- [What is the significance of the city of Jerusalem? | GotQuestions.org](#)
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**Norman Geisler** - [When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties](#)

JOSHUA 18:28—Was Jerusalem in the territory of Benjamin or in Judah?

**PROBLEM:** Joshua 15:8 lists Jerusalem in Judah, but Joshua 18:28 says it is in Benjamin.

**SOLUTION:** Both are true. Some scholars also point to a Jewish tradition that held the altars and sanctuary were in Benjamin, while the courts of the temple were in Judah. Be that as it may, the city was actually within the limits of Benjamin's territory, but it was also on the border of Judah's land. So it may properly be described as being part of both.