

The Allotment for Judah

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Joshua describes the process of allotting space for the tribe of Judah
2. aim – To cause us to be satisfied in wherever the Lord places us, and to be faithful in that place
3. passage – Joshua 15:1-63

b. outline

1. The Boundaries of Judah (Joshua 15:1-12)
2. The Cities of Judah (Joshua 15:20-63)
3. The Success of Caleb (Joshua 15:13-19)

c. opening

1. the **substance** of **chap. 15**
 - a. the chapter recounts the *first allocation* of the land in Canaan *to the tribes of Israel*
 - b. the process had already been described in **14:1-5**: 1) by lot; 2) overseen by Eleazar (representing God), the tribal heads (representing the people), and Joshua (mediating between them); 3) Reuben and Gad will *not* be included; 4) Joseph's allotment will be split between his two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh); and 5) no land will be allocated to the Levites (they will be scattered)
 - c. so ... the entire chapter is dedicated to the allocation of land in Canaan **to Judah**
 1. it has three (3) parts: the *boundaries* of the space allotted to Judah (**vv. 1-12**); the *completion* of the story of Caleb's allocation (**vv. 13-19**; begun in **chap. 14**); a list of the *cities* that the clans of Judah will occupy in their space (vv. 20-63)
 2. **today**: we will address parts 1 and 3 first, and then consider part 2 (**logically**)

I. The Boundaries of Judah (Joshua 15:1-12)

Content

a. the order of this allocation

1. **note #1**: given that the allocation was ordained by God to be done by lot, it is *reasonable to assume* that this first allotment was determined in that fashion, *even though Joshua doesn't record it*
2. **note #2**: it makes sense that the lot would fall to Judah to be allocated *first* (**see also below**)
 - a. according to **Num. 26:22**, Judah was the *largest* of the tribes (76,500 men over 20) – applying a *conservative* multiplier (**x2.5**) to this census number, the *total* population would be ~190,000
 1. Dan (64,400; **Num. 26:43**) and Issachar (64,300; **Num. 26:25**) – *i.e.* 160,000 – are the *nearest*
 - b. thus, the lot fell to the largest tribe to complete **Num. 26:54**: larger tribes = larger space
3. **note #3**: *at this point*, Joshua is simply recording the *allocation* of this land – not its *occupation*
 - a. *i.e.* after Joshua dies, *then* the tribes will go up and occupy their lands
 - b. **ITC**: the first tribe *instructed by God* to go into their space is *Judah* (**Judges 1:2**)

b. the boundaries of this allocation (**see map**)

1. the southern border (**vv. 1b-4**) – a great *arc* sweeping S from the SW corner of the Dead Sea through the Negev and back up to the SE corner of the Mediterranean
 - a. the “arc” allows for the inclusion of: the wilderness of Zin at the S-most point (**v. 1b**), and the city of Kadesh-barnea (**v. 3**) – *i.e.* into the wilderness S as far as is inhabitable
 - b. the space “below” this line is the wilderness that the Israelites spent 40 years wandering in
2. the eastern border (**v. 5a**) – the W edge of the Dead Sea up to where the Jordan enters it
3. the northern border (**vv. 5b-11**) – a meandering line moving from the top of the Dead Sea almost due W to the Mediterranean
 - a. the line actually goes *under* the city of Jerusalem, now occupied by the Jebusites (**v. 8**; **see below**) – the city will be in the tribe of Benjamin when that tribe is allocated land (**18:28**)
4. the western border (**v. 12a**) – the E edge of the Mediterranean, from the border of Egypt N through the territory of the Philistines (Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod) to Jabneel

c. the nature of this allocation

1. the allocation comprises more than 5,000 mi² (Baldwin = 2,027; AL = 52,419)
 - a. the total area allotted is more than 1/3 of the total area in Canaan (nearing 1/2)
 1. and, larger than other tribe (including the divided tribe of Manasseh)

- b. but, only about 2,300 mi² is actually *inhabited* by the people of Judah
 1. some of the territory is uninhabitable (e.g. the Dead Sea plain, the S Negev)
 2. the tribe of Simeon will be allotted space *within* the area of Judah (see map), because the allotment was “*too large for [Judah]*” (19:9)
 3. the inhabitants of Judah will (after the death of Joshua; see Judges 1) conquer *many* of the natives, but they will be limited to the hill country (in the E) and the *Shephelah* (i.e. the lowlands moving W out of the hill country towards the plains; v. 33)
 - a. the Philistine territory in the maritime plain, at the Sea, will only be conquered by David
2. Judah was the most important tribe *politically* (see Jacob’s blessing; Genesis 49:8-12)
 - a. Levi was the most important *spiritually* (i.e. as the priestly tribe)
 - b. but, Judah bore the greatest king of Israel (i.e. David); Judah became the S Kingdom after the division (under Rehoboam); Judah lasted 150 years longer than the N Kingdom (with some *good* kings serving God); (some from) Judah *returned* from the exile of the Babylonians (the N did not); and Judea became the Roman province of record in Palestine
 - c. additionally ... the Messiah ultimately came from the tribe of Judah, born to parents descended from David and in the town of David’s birth (Bethlehem) in Judea

II. The Cities of Judah (Joshua 15:20-63)

Content

a. the listing of these cities

1. skipping down to vv. 20-63 – the *logical* next passage: a listing of the *cities* within the territory
2. the list is comprised of the *major* cities *allocated* to Judah in the territory above
 - a. 116 total cities listed, not including the various *villages* around each of these
 - b. **note:** many of the places are unknown to modern scholars, and the names overlap with names of cities in other territories (i.e. what was true of ancient Canaan *changed* over time)
3. of the list of cities, four (4) deserve special notice by us:
 - a. Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza (vv. 45-47) are coastal, occupied by the Philistines; **note** the lack of a *count* of these cities (i.e. they are listed individually, implying that they are “separate”)
 - b. Jerusalem is included in the list (v. 63), but it is *technically not* in Judah (Benjamin); it is recorded that the Jebusites “ *dwell with the people of Judah*” when the book is written
 1. i.e. after the allocation of the land, the city “straddled” the border with Judah and (for all practical purposes) the people belonged to Judah
 2. because of this, the city becomes a *centrally located* capital, established by David

b. the importance of these cities

1. Joshua lists cities *throughout the land* allocated to Judah – it is *message* to the people that the *entirety* of this land belongs to them **because God had given it to them as a part of his covenant promise**
 - a. true ... they wouldn’t be able to “dislodge” all of the natives (yet!) and occupy it all ...
 - b. but ... it is allotted to them *by Yahweh*; he would make Judah a “great nation” here (see below)

III. The Success of Caleb (Joshua 15:13-19)

Content

a. the details of Caleb’s success

1. **note:** the story of Caleb is *continued* here from the original account in 14:8ff
 - a. because the allotment of land to Caleb came from *within* the boundaries of Judah (v. 13)
 1. the territory listed is at the N end of the Negev (v. 19), near Hebron (see map)
 - b. because Caleb occupies his territory *even before Joshua’s death* (re: Judah in Judges 1)
 1. i.e. Joshua *writes* about Caleb’s success; the other tribes “move in” after his death
2. it is a **success story** – Caleb trusted in the Lord (14:12), and this narrative *confirms* that faith
 - a. Caleb is able to drive out the people descended from the three sons of Anak (v. 14) – Sheshai, Ahiman, Talmai (i.e. the *tribes* of Anak through *his* three sons)
 1. although Joshua does not *explicitly say so*, it is *clearly implied* that God *himself* gave Caleb the power to overcome these enemies (i.e. he endowed an 85-year-old man with might)

- b. Caleb then turns to take Kiriath-sepher (the city of Sepher, now called Debir; **v. 15**)
 - 1. Joshua had originally dealt with Debir during the S campaign (**10:38ff**), but there was still natives in the area to be expelled (perhaps the villages *around* the city were still occupied)
 - 2. but, Caleb *himself* does not take up this fight – he offers his daughter (Achsah) as a reward for anyone doing so – Othniel (Caleb’s nephew; Kenaz’s son) captures it for himself (**v. 17**)
 - a. Othniel becomes the first judge in Israel during the theocracy after Joshua (**Judges 3:7-11**)
 - 1. the “*Spirit of the Lord was upon him*” = he throws off an oppressing king from the N
 - 2. Caleb grants to his daughter several springs of water in the Negev as a *blessing* – **i.e.** as a *wedding gift* to her and Othniel, Caleb cedes to her what will be necessary in the wilderness
 - 3. **IOW:** the faithfulness of Caleb “prepares” what would be necessary *in the future* for Judah

b. the importance of Caleb’s success (and Judah’s allotment)

- 1. both are a reminder that *all of us* are allotted our “station” in life by God’s design (**Acts 17:26**)

“And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place ...”

 - a. our “station” in life (**i.e.** where we live, how old we live to be, how “prosperous” we become, our physical strength [or weakness], etc.) is all determined by God *according to his purposes*
 - b. **i.e.** the sovereign God *ultimately* determines who we are and where we come from (**contra** the *synergistic* idea that “we” get to decide everything: no one gets to decide **where they are born**)
- 2. both are a reminder to us to “be useful” to the kingdom of God *no matter what our circumstances*
 - a. **principle: the station of life that you are experiencing is a part of God’s larger plan – it can be something that you “kick against” (Acts 26:14) or something you embrace; to “flower where you are planted”; to be useful to the advancement of his kingdom here and now**
 - b. **IOW:** it’s easy to think that the “grass is greener” somewhere else in our “wanderlust” culture (it isn’t!), and waste our life always looking for something “better” or “different” or “newer”
 - c. **IOW:** it seems that so many Christians use the “excuse” of needing to “accomplish” *just one thing more* before serving the Lord (**e.g.** raise my kids, get a better job, make more money, retire, etc.)
 - 1. **question: in whatever situation the Lord has you now, what are you doing to help advance his kingdom? are you waiting for “just the right moment” (or circumstance), or are you content to be a minister for Christ in this moment?**
 - a. **e.g. Jenny Capps** – still an **encouragement to others** even over 100 years old