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Joshua 18

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Joshua 18.

Topics.

- The people of Israel set up the Tent of Meeting at Shiloh.
- The inheritance of seven tribes is still to be apportioned.
- Joshua sends three men to write a description of the land.
- Levites have no portion for the priesthood for God is their heritage.
- Joshua apportions the land to the remaining seven tribes.
- The inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin.
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FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: the first five books of Moses anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the Promised Land. Moses is now dead. Joshua crosses the River Jordan (about 1400 B.C.) and after a string of military victories apportioned the land according to the twelve tribes. These battles shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God fights for His people when they are faithful and courageous and put their full trust in Him. (Josh. 1:6-9).

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At the close of the book Joshua says that he and all his house will serve the LORD and invites the people to choose whether they will serve the gods of their fathers or the gods in whose land they dwell or the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. The people choose to serve their God. (Josh. 24:15). Although anonymous the book appears to contain eyewitness testimony, some of which may have been written by Joshua himself.

NOTE: in this study I have not attempted to give detail of land areas, borders and boundaries or the locations of towns and villages etc., since I am not a master of geography or the regions of the Middle East. Added to this it is difficult and enormously time consuming to trace the exact boundaries of some sites and cities, because a number of ancient names mentioned are unknown today

JOSHUA 18:1

The People of Israel Set up the Tent of Meeting at Shiloh.

- **Joshua 18:1:** Then the whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there. The land lay subdued before them.

Shiloh: is a place in Palestine it comes from the Hebrew word (*Shiyloh*) and (*Shalah*) it means to be tranquil, happy, safe, prosperous, secure and successful. Summed up it means rest and peace it is also an epithet (name) of the Messiah. It was situated on a hill in the heart of the country. It was about ten miles due south of Shechem, in the territory of Ephraim not far from Jerusalem, twenty or twenty-five miles north of the city, twelve miles north of Beth-el, and ten miles south of Shechem surrounded by a pleasant valley.

Shiloh and Ephraim: was the tribe that Joshua belonged too so it was proper that the tabernacle should be near the residence of the chief governor. Since it was central to the tribes it brought the leaders of Israel into the district and as soon as the position of Ephraim (Joshua's tribe), was settled the tabernacle was set up there.

Shiloh and the Tabernacle: the word Tabernacle comes from the Hebrew word (*mishkan*) and means a residence it can refer to a shepherd's hut, the lair of animals and figuratively to the grave or a place of rest, but specifically to the Tabernacle and tent of the LORD. It remained seven years in the camp at Gilgal and then no doubt by God's order was removed to Shiloh. The following Scriptures show that it was the LORD who was to choose the place for the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant to reside at.

- You shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, (Deut. 12:5).
- To the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the LORD. (Deut. 12:11).
- At the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. (Deut. 12:14).
- Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. (Jer. 7:12).

These verse show that it is certain the LORD spoke to Joshua concerning the resting place for the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD. Shiloh would also have been selected for the Ark of the Covenant because it was in the heart of the country and therefore most conveniently placed since it was north, south, east, and west, to the other tribes. It is interesting to notice that the Tabernacle and Shiloh mean rest and the House of the LORD and his people are now settling in a land after God had given the people rest from their enemies and that the name of the city of Shiloh is the same as the name which Jacob prophesied of the Messiah in the following verse:

- The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (King James Bible). (Genesis 49:10).

It is supposed by some that the city was called Shiloh (meaning rest and peace) when it was chosen for the resting-place of the ark, which typified the Lord our great Peace-maker, and the way by him to being the path to finding rest in God. The Tabernacle being set up at at Shiloh was very convenient for all the tribes to travel to on feast days and festivals and to offer sacrifices since it was in the centre of the tribes and very safe, being guarded by the two powerful tribes of Judah and Ephraim and being in the lot of Ephraim. Removing the Tabernacle from Gilgal to Shiloh would have been convent for Joshua being of the tribe of Ephraim and establishing himself there and would give him the opportunity to consult with God as often as he desired and needed. It would also have been convent for of all the tribes to more easily travel to it from all places since it was in the heart and centre of them. The Tabernacle with its contents continued at Shiloh during the whole period of the Judges, for more than three hundred years until the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:3) and its capture by the Philistines. The remainder of the land of Canaan was divided into seven parts, for the seven remaining tribes who as yet had not received an inheritance (Josh 18:2-9). Joshua casts the lot at Shiloh (Josh 18:10) and the first comes out for Benjamin, whose borders and cities are described in (Josh 18:11-28).

The inheritance of Seven Tribes is Still to Be Apportioned.

- **Joshua 18:2-3:** There remained among the people of Israel seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned. ³So 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?"

Five tribes had already received their portions of land for their inheritance. The tribe of Reuben and of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had received theirs on the east side of the River Jordan and the tribes of Judah, Ephraim and the remaining half tribe of Manasseh had received theirs in the land of Canaan (Josh 18:15-17). This meant that there still remained seven tribes out of the twelve to be allotted their inheritance in the land of Canaan. Following are three reasons there may have been a delay in resuming the division of the remaining land:

1. Time spent moving the Tabernacle and Ark from Gilgal to the land of Shiloh.
2. Their enjoyment of receiving such a pleasant and fertile region.
3. Their desire to live a normal life of peace and safety.
4. Their reluctance to return to a life of war.

These things seem to have interrupted and delayed the allotment of land for the inheritance to the remaining seven tribes, but Joshua was too much alive to the duty laid on him by the LORD to let such a delay continue, but rather sends out spies to survey the remaining land.

The seven tribes that remained were:

1. Benjamin. (Josh. 18:11-20).
2. Simeon. (Josh. 19:1-9).
3. Zebulun. (Josh. 19:10-16).
4. Issachar. (Josh. 19:17-23).
5. Asher. (Josh. 19:24-31).
6. Naphtali. (Josh. 19:32-39).
7. Dan. (Josh. 19:40-48).

These seven had not yet received their inheritance in the land of Canaan and lots had not yet been cast for them as had been done for Judah, Ephraim and the half of Manasseh.

JOSHUA 18:4-6

Joshua sends Three Men to Write a Description of the Land.

- **Joshua 18:4-6:** 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. ⁵They shall divide it into seven portions. Judah shall continue in his territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall continue in their territory on the north. ⁶And you shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me. And I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God.

Joshua tells the people of Israel to take three men from each of the seven tribes which means twenty-one men went out to describe the remaining land of Canaan. Taking three men from each tribe would guarantee an accurate survey of the country.

When casting the lot is in God's will: the word lot comes from the Hebrew word (*gowral*) and literally means to be rough (as stone). It refers to a stone or pebble that is thrown to determine a decision by the way it is going to land. Following are three ways in which casting the lot is in God's will:

1. When dividing the land of Canaan for the nine and a half tribes the particular locality they would take up in the land was to be decided by lot which would in this instance be totally in the control of God and according to His determination. Then the extent of territory was to be divided into ten parts. One part for each of the nine and a half tribes according to the largeness or smallness of each tribe (i.e., according to the number of names of persons in each tribe) and each inheritance was to bear the name of the ancestor of the tribe. Distributing the land this way was in harmony with the general rule of equity in that too many should be given more and to fewer less. (Numbers 33:53-56) (Joshua 14:1-15).
2. When God is in total control of the lot as He was in Joshua chapter seven. In this chapter God told Joshua to cast lots to discover who had lied and stolen the devoted things amongst the people of Israel (Josh. 7:14). The decision of the lot was totally in control of God, since only He knew who the guilty man (Achan) was and it is very clear that God told Joshua to cast the lot in this manner.
3. When either way the lot falls it is a good choice. In the book of Proverbs, it is written:
 - The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. (Prov. 16:33).

In some circumstances the easy way to decide a thing or stop a quarrel is to flip a coin. Proverbs states; "The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders. (Proverbs 18:18). When my building partner and I decided to go our own way, we had to divide the tools, we were good mates and did not want to upset each another so we prayed that God's will would be done and then grouped the tools together in pairs of equal value. We wrote our names on opposite sides of a block of wood and tossed it in the air and agreed that whoever's name came up would have the first choice then we would alternate choosing from then on, it worked really well and stopped any tension that could have developed. In casting lots God's will was done because we both agreed to accept the outcome whatever way the block fell and both accepted the outcome of it as God's will. In the book of Acts those in the upper room agreed that there were two men who could equally replace Judas so either way the lot fell would have been OK.

If Paul and Peter were deciding to share the Good News of the Gospel on a particular Sunday at the same house meeting they could pray and flip a coin to see which one of them was to lead the meeting in that home and by faith whatever way the lot fell it could be accepted as God's will since no matter whether the coin fell in favour of Peter or Paul the outcome is a good result for those attending the meeting and for God's Kingdom. In all of these examples whatever way the lot fell was not only a good outcome, but also agreed by all involved that whatever it determined would be accepted. No-one with any wisdom would cast a lot if one man was be perfectly suited for the position or the work and another was not nor would they cast a lot if one of the outcomes had the potential to do harm, bring ruin or cause division. In these types of scenarios no one needs to cast a lot to make the right decision since the choice would be obvious to all. Casting lots is only in God's will when it is absolutely clear God is in total control of it or when whatever way the lot falls is a good outcome. When the lot is cast according to these principles its every decision can be accepted as being from the LORD. (Proverbs 16:33)

Levites Have No Portion for the Priesthood, God is their Heritage.

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

In Joshua chapter fourteen it is also written:

- To the tribe of Levi alone Moses gave no inheritance. The offerings by fire to the LORD God of Israel are their inheritance, as he said to him. (Joshua 13:14).

The expression, "The offerings by fire to the LORD God," refers to the sacrifices. All of Israel was to bring a tithe (10%) of their increase to the temple. The Levitical priests would sacrifice these offerings to the LORD on the altar. These sacrifices of fire (i.e., burnt offerings to the LORD) became food for the priesthood. They are called offerings to the LORD because they provided for the priests who were serving the LORD. This is why the priesthood did not receive an inheritance of land their inheritance was the privilege of serving the LORD their God. The other eleven tribes of Israel did receive land in Canaan as their inheritance, but the Levites received no land, but were given forty-eight cities and pasturelands within the other tribes' territories. A full explanation is found in (Deut. 18). It should be highlighted that the Levites were not chosen because they were better than the other tribes, just as ministers of the Gospel are no more valued in the eyes of God than any other faithful believer. Joshua chapter twenty-one gives far more detail concerning the Levites. For further information concerning tithing see the title:

- Tithing (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Prior to crossing the River Jordan Moses allotted the land on its eastern side to the tribe of Gad, Reuben and the half the tribe of Manasseh.

JOSHUA 18:8-10

Joshua Apportions the Land to the Remaining Seven Tribes.

- **Joshua 18:8-10:** 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." ⁹So the men went and passed up and down in the land and wrote in a book a description of it by towns in seven divisions. Then they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh, ¹⁰and Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD. And there Joshua apportioned the land to the people of Israel, to each his portion.

The seven tribes took the advice of Joshua and chose three men out of each tribe and presented them to him. He gave them their commission and instruction to go and describe the land of Canaan whether subdued or not. They prepared for their journey and Joshua told them to go and walk through the land and make an exact survey of it by describing:

- The number of people and their strength of their armies.
- The quality and the quantity of it the land, its soil, farms and fruit.
- The cities, towns, villages, hills and the valleys.
- The names of every country and city.

These twenty-one men were to write all this information down in a book and most likely make maps of the land so that the number of its cities and whether each region was hilly or flat and what parts were clear and covered in forests etc., could easily be seen by the eye and then take all this info back to Joshua.

The inheritance of the Tribe of Benjamin.

- **Joshua 18:11-20:** The lot of the tribe of the people of Benjamin according to its clans came up, and the territory allotted to it fell between the people of Judah and the people of Joseph. ¹²On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan. Then the boundary goes up to the shoulder north of Jericho, then up through the hill country westward, and it ends at the wilderness of Beth-aven. ¹³From there the boundary passes along southward in the direction of Luz, to the shoulder of Luz (that is, Bethel), then the boundary goes down to Ataroth-addar, on the mountain that lies south of Lower Beth-horon. ¹⁴Then the boundary goes in another direction, turning on the western side southward from the mountain that lies to the south, opposite Beth-horon, and it ends at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city belonging to the people of Judah. This forms the western side. ¹⁵And the southern side begins at the outskirts of Kiriath-jearim. And the boundary goes from there to Ephron, to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. ¹⁶Then the boundary goes down to the border of the mountain that overlooks the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is at the north end of the Valley of Rephaim. And it then goes down the Valley of Hinnom, south of the shoulder of the Jebusites, and downward to En-rogel. ¹⁷Then it bends in a northerly direction going on to En-shemesh, and from there goes to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim. Then it goes down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben, ¹⁸and passing on to the north of the shoulder of Beth-arabah it goes down to the Arabah. ¹⁹Then the boundary passes on to the north of the shoulder of Beth-hoglah. And the boundary ends at the northern bay of the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan: this is the southern border. ²⁰The Jordan forms its boundary on the eastern side. This is the inheritance of the people of Benjamin, according to their clans, boundary by boundary all around.

It is by great wisdom and most certainly by the Spirit of God that Benjamin's lot came between the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh). Following are seven reasons that show that there was no wiser method that could have been devised to secure a united Israel than to make Benjamin the link between the two most powerful tribes.

1. In the story of Joseph, Jacob's sons are reconciled through the common affection for Benjamin their father's youngest and best-loved son.
2. The tribe of Benjamin was almost exterminated in the time of the judges those who did survive were united in marriage with women of Ephraim and Manasseh.
3. The city of Jerusalem although assigned by Joshua to Benjamin, was at first a joint possession of Judah and Benjamin (1 Chron. 8:1-32) (Judges 1:8) (Judges 1:21) (Judges 1:8)
4. Benjamin and Judah were the only two sons of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob.
5. The portion assigned to the tribe of Benjamin, lay between the tribe of Judah, who were on the south of them and the tribe of Joseph, (Ephraim) in particular, who lay on the north of them.
6. It is the only place in which the prophecy contained in (Deut. 33:12) could have been accomplished in such a remarkable manner. Jacob on his death bed said of Benjamin in his blessings to the twelve sons:
 - The beloved of the LORD (Benjamin) dwells in safety. The High God surrounds him all day long, and dwells between his shoulders." (Deut. 33:12).
7. Both the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Joseph had a part of Jerusalem the capital of Israel.

Benjamin's was the first lot of the seven that came up; it was but a small lot, and therefore called "little Benjamin" (Psalm 68:27); but the land was very fruitful and pleasant. The land of Benjamin took in Jericho and the

city of Jerusalem. The boundaries of each tribe's inheritance were distinctly drawn and wisely allotted by Joshua the head and captain of God's people and fixed by the leading of the Spirit of God so all future contests in changing the borders was prevented.

JOSHUA 18:21-28

The Cities Allotted to the Tribe of Benjamin.

- **Joshua 18:21-28:** Now the cities of the tribe of the people of Benjamin according to their clans were Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz, ²²Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, ²³Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, ²⁴Chephar-ammoni, Ophni, Geba—twelve cities with their villages: ²⁵Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, ²⁶Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, ²⁷Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, ²⁸Zela, Haeleph, Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath-jearim—fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the people of Benjamin according to its clans.

Jebus, which is Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63), both that tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin had an inheritance in the city of Jerusalem. Benjamin's inheritance of land was one of the smallest, but the quantity of ground and the soil which they possessed was the richest of all the other tribes. Jebus, which is Jerusalem (Josh. 15:63) properly and primarily belonged to Benjamin, but the tribe of Judah also had an interest in it, either because some part of it was allotted to them, or because the Benjamites gave them a share in it, for the assistance which they had received or for the defence and future protection they expected from such a powerful, strong and mighty tribe especially since Jerusalem was a very important place. Jerusalem is always thought of as the capital of Judah. It is almost certain that very few Christian readers of the Bible if asked "Which tribe did the city of Jerusalem belong to," would answer that it was originally a Benjamite city. Now the cities and villages of the tribe of the people of Benjamin were:

- 1 Jericho
- 2 Beth-hoglah
- 3 Emek-keziz
- 4 Beth-arabah
- 5 Zemaraim
- 6 Bethel
- 7 Avvim
- 8 Parah
- 9 Ophrah
- 10 Chephar-ammoni
- 11 Ophni
- 12 Geba
- 13 Gibeon
- 14 Ramah
- 15 Beeroth
- 16 Mizpeh
- 17 Chephirah
- 18 Mozah
- 19 Rekem
- 20 Irpeel
- 21 Taralah
- 22 Zela
- 23 Haeleph
- 24 Jebus (that is, Jerusalem)
- 25 Gibeah
- 26 Kiriath-jearim

Twenty-six cities with their villages was the inheritance of the people of Benjamin

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace