

Notes on Joshua 14

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B. Inheritance of Caleb – Joshua 14

Verses 1-5

1. Explain why 9½ tribes inherited west of Jordan, even though Levi did not inherit territory (i.e., why did that not leave just 11 tribes to inherit?).

Arrangements for dividing the land to the 9 ½ tribes

The previous chapter recorded the area given to the 2 ½ tribes who inherited east of Jordan. Now begins the account of the remaining 9 ½ tribes that inherited west of Jordan. This inheritance was supervised by Joshua and the high priest Eleazar along with the heads of the various tribes.

The territory would be divided into 10 areas, then the areas would be assigned to the various tribes by lot, as God had instructed through Moses (Num. 26:55). The Levites would not receive a territory, as discussed in the previous chapter. They received cities scattered throughout the territories of the other tribes, so they could lead in spiritual service (Num. 35:2-8).

One might expect that would leave only eleven tribes to inherit territory. However, Joseph received the birthright, including a double portion of territory. This was accomplished, according to the instructions of Jacob, by giving territory to each of Joseph's two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. The effect was to make a total of 12 tribes to inherit, because Joseph's descendants counted as two tribes. See on Gen. 48:1-22 (esp. v5); 1 Chron. 5:1.

Verses 6-9

2. Who was Caleb? Why was a special inheritance given to him?

Caleb requests his inheritance.

Caleb was the son of Jephunneh of the tribe of Judah. He came to Joshua, along with other people of the tribe of Judah, to request that he be given the inheritance Moses had promised him. See Num. 13,14.

When Israel had first approached Canaan at Kadesh Barnea, Moses had sent 12 spies into the land. Ten of them had brought back bad reports saying the people could not take the land. This had discouraged the people, leading them to refuse to go into the land. As a result, God had said the older generation would not be allowed to enter at all, but would wander in the wilderness forty years till they died.

The other two spies, however, had maintained their faith in God and had urged the people to enter. Those two were Joshua and Caleb. God had said they would be the only two of the older generation to enter the land. Obviously Joshua entered as Moses' successor and leader of the nation. Caleb also had entered, as God had promised, and now he was requesting to be given the inheritance promised him. See Num. 14:23,24; Deut. 1:36.

Verses 10-15

3. What inheritance did he receive? Who had formerly lived there?

Caleb's descendants given Hebron

Caleb had been 40 years old as a faithful spy at Kadesh Barnea (v7). Forty-five years had passed since then, making Caleb 85 years old. Yet he was still strong and active. He believed he could lead his people to capture the territory of his inheritance from the people of the land. So he requested to be given a territory among the same region where he had traveled when he spied out the land.

The territory they had spied had been inhabited by the Anakim, the giants, as discussed in 11:21. These were the giants whose appearance had so discouraged the Israelites. One of the cit-

ies the Anakim had inhabited was Hebron, and that was the territory Joshua said Caleb could have. It had formerly been named Kirjath Arba, after Arba who was the greatest leader of the Anakim.

We are not told here, but chap. 15 records the actual taking of the city of Hebron by Caleb and his descendants (15:13ff). The chronology is somewhat confusing, however. Joshua 11:21 had said that Joshua had driven the Anakim out of Hebron when they had defeated the armies that attacked them. It is unclear whether that was a summary statement which included the later victory by Caleb. Or perhaps the event recorded here in chap. 14 had actually occurred earlier, and Caleb had been the leader who actually won the victory in chap. 11. Or perhaps the best explanation is that the Anakim had been defeated and driven from Hebron earlier as recorded in chap. 11 but had returned afterward as Israel fought elsewhere. So now Caleb's family had to fight to defeat them again, but this time it did not require the whole army to win the victory.

The land is again said to have peace from war. The occasional battles to capture or recapture various areas are apparently not viewed as an exception. The point is that the major warfare required to take the land was now over. There was no doubt in anyone's mind who now controlled the territory. It belonged to Israel and any future battles were simply to remove other people living in their territory. The war itself was over.

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