

As Joshua beings to divide the land of Canaan to the west of the Jordan river among the nine and a half tribes of Israel, he is approached by Caleb, the only other spy sent into Canaan by Moses 45 years prior that had trusted that the LORD would give them the land. The LORD had promised through Moses a certain portion of land to Caleb and now Caleb was ready to take possession.

In the previous chapter (ch. 13), the LORD points out to Joshua that he is old and there was much land left to be possessed by Israel. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh already had their possession reserved for them east of the Jordan river, territory that had been conquered under the leadership of Moses. This chapter begins to address the division of the land west of the Jordan to the remaining nine and a half tribes.

1 And these *are the countries* which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them.

“And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan” – This chapter begins a section spanning the next several chapters (chapters 14-21) describing how the land would be divided among the tribes of Israel.

“which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them” – Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the heads of the tribes of Israel evidently met together to divide the land in accordance with the way that the LORD had commanded Moses (vs. 2, 5).

2 By lot *was* their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and *for* the half tribe. 3 For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and an half tribe on the other side Jordan: but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them.

“By lot was their inheritance, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes, and for the half tribe” – The LORD had instructed Moses to distribute the land by lot (Num. 26:55). Casting lots was an ancient method of determining the will of God by observing the result of a chance event. Today we often decide things by chance through drawing straws, rolling dice or a coin-toss. The idea was that God expressed His will by controlling the outcome of these chance events. The inheritance was distributed in this manner to avoid disputes over how the land was divided since the decisions were made by the LORD and not by man.

“For Moses had given the inheritance of two tribes and an half tribe on the other side Jordan” – Moses had already given Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan river. The distribution of land to the west of the Jordan was for the remaining nine tribes and the other half-tribe of Manasseh and was done by lot.

“but unto the Levites he gave none inheritance among them” – The tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance of land because “the LORD God of Israel was their inheritance” (Josh. 13:33). The tribe of Levi had access to the things of the LORD that was forbidden to the other tribes. However, they were also given certain cities to dwell in among the other tribes.

4 For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell *in*, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance. 5 As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land.

“For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim” – Instead of there being a tribe of Joseph, his two sons each became a tribe of their own. This is because Jacob, inspired by the LORD, promoted Joseph’s sons to being equal with the other sons of Jacob. **Gen. 48:5** “*And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.*” This change maintained the number of tribes with a land inheritance at 12 after the Levites were omitted from inheriting land.

“therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance” – Even though the Levites had the LORD as their inheritance and did not receive any land, they still needed a place to live. Therefore the LORD had commanded that each of the other tribes provide cities for the Levites to dwell in as well as the area around the cities for their livestock.

“As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land” – The LORD’s command to Moses concerning the Levitical cities is recorded in Num. 35:2-8 and Josh. 21:1-42 describe how each tribe allocated a certain number of cities to each family line in the tribe of Levi. The designation of cities and the division of the land were all done according to how the LORD had commanded Moses for it to be done.

6 Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.

“Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite” – Judah has come to Joshua to receive the inheritance of land given to them. Caleb, who is from the tribe of Judah (Num. 13:6) and probably a major leader of the tribe, steps forward with a specific request.

“said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea” – Caleb is reminding Joshua of the time 45 years before when Moses had sent them along with 10 other men from each tribe into Canaan to spy out the land. Joshua and Caleb had been the only two spies that advocated believing the LORD and entering the land while the others resisted in fear and unbelief (Num, 13-14). The LORD promised that Caleb and his descendants would have a possession in the land (Num. 14:24).

7 Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land; and I brought him word again as *it was* in mine heart. 8 Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God.

Caleb briefly recounts the events in Num. 13-14. He was given the responsibility of spying out the land and he reported back to Moses his opinion of what he saw, as did Joshua. The other spies were fearful and did not trust that the LORD could give them the land and their fear and unbelief spread to the rest of the people. Joshua and Caleb were the only spies that stayed true to the LORD.

9 And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.

This promise came from the LORD and Moses apparently had repeated it to Caleb: **Num. 14:24** *“But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.”* Moses later publicly repeated this promise to Caleb when recounting Israel’s history with the LORD: **Deut. 1:34-36** *“And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto your fathers, Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.”*

10 And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while *the children of Israel* wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I *am* this day fourscore and five years old. 11 As yet I *am* as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.

“And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while *the children of Israel* wandered in the wilderness” – Forty five years had passed since the LORD had made this promise to Caleb and the LORD had preserved his life in order to keep that promise of an inheritance in the land.

“and now, lo, I *am* this day fourscore and five years old” – He was 40 when he served as a spy (v. 7) and so 45 years later he is 85.

“As yet I *am* as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me” – The years had not made Caleb feeble and weak.

“as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in” – Caleb is as strong of a warrior now as he was at 40. He wants Joshua to know that he is capable of handling the request he is about to make because he was still able to go out to battle and come back again.

12 Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and *that* the cities were great and fenced: if so be the LORD *will be* with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said.

“Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the LORD spake in that day” – The LORD had promised Caleb that he could inherit the land that he had traveled through when he was a spy in Canaan. Now Caleb had chosen the area around Hebron (v. 13), including a particular mountain inhabited by powerful enemies.

“for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and *that* the cities were great and fenced” – The Anakims (children of Anak) were the giants that Israel had feared when the twelve spies had returned from their spying mission. In fact, the giants and the great and fenced (walled) cities were the very reasons that ten of the spies had said that they could not take the land (Num. 13:28, 31-33). These same reasons seem to be Caleb’s motivation for choosing this area, indicating his faith in the LORD.

“if so be the LORD *will be* with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said” – Even though Caleb’s strength had not waned over the past 45 years, he recognized it was not his strength that would give him the victory. He understood that it was the LORD alone that could enable him to drive out the giants from their large walled cities. Not only was Caleb’s strength the same as it was 45 years ago, but his trust that the LORD would keep His promise was also just as strong. He had believed that the LORD would defeat the giants back then and he still believed that the LORD would do so 45 years later.

13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. 14 Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel.

“And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance” – Based on the promise of the LORD given through Moses, Joshua granted Caleb’s request and gave him Hebron with his blessing.

“Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day” – Hebron became the perpetual possession of Caleb and his descendants and they were still in possession of it at the time of the writer.

“because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel” – Caleb’s inheritance did not come through his strength or military abilities. Instead, the LORD blessed Caleb because of his faithfulness in following the LORD and granted him his desire for Hebron.

15 And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; *which Arba* was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

Kirjath-arba (“city of Arba”) was the name that the Anakims had given to the city of Hebron, named after one of their heroes. The statement that “the land had rest from war” (also made in Josh. 11:23) is a reminder that the LORD had given the children of Israel victory and was fulfilling His promise to give them an inheritance in Canaan.