
JOSHUA 18:1 The whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh, and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The land was subdued before them.

The tabernacle is set up at Shiloh, Jos 18:1. Seven of the tribes having not yet received their inheritance, Jos 18:2. Joshua orders three men from each tribe to be chosen, and sent to examine the land and divide it into seven parts, which should be distributed among them by lot, Jos 18:3-7. The men go and do as commanded, and return to Joshua, Jos 18:8, Jos 18:9. Joshua casts lots for them, Jos 18:10. The lot of Benjamin, how situated, Jos 18:11. Its northern boundaries, Jos 18:12-14. Its southern boundaries, Jos 18:15-19. Its eastern boundary, Jos 18:20. Its cities, Jos 18:21-28.

Verse 1

Israel assembled together at Shiloh - This appears to have been a considerable town about fifteen miles from Jerusalem, in the tribe of Ephraim, and nearly in the center of the whole land. To this place both the camp of Israel, and the ark of the Lord, were removed from Gilgal, after a residence there of seven years. Here the tabernacle remained one hundred and thirty years, as is generally supposed, being the most conveniently situated for access to the different tribes, and for safety, the Israelites having possession of the land on all sides; for it is here added, the land was subdued before them - the Canaanites were so completely subdued, that there was no longer any general resistance to the Israelitish arms.

JOSHUA 18:2 Seven tribes remained among the children of Israel, which had not yet divided their inheritance.

JOSHUA 18:3 Joshua said to the children of Israel, "How long will you neglect to go in to possess the land, which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?"

Verse 3

How long are ye slack to go to possess the land - We find an unaccountable backwardness in this people to enter on the inheritance which God had given them! They had so long been supported by miracle, without any exertions of their own, that they found it difficult to shake themselves from their inactivity. When it was necessary that all the people should go out to battle, they went with a measure of confidence, expecting miraculous help from God, and confiding in their numbers, but when each tribe found it necessary to fight for itself, in order to its establishment and the extension of its borders, it was discouraged, and chose rather a life of inglorious ease than the possession of an inheritance which would cost it much labor to conquer.

JOSHUA 18:4 Appoint for yourselves three men from each tribe. I will send them, and they shall arise, walk through the land, and describe it according to their inheritance; and they shall come to me.

Verse 4

Three men for each tribe - Probably meaning only three from each of the seven tribes who had not yet received their inheritance. It is likely that these twenty-one men were accompanied by a military guard, for without this they might have been easily cut off by straggling parties of the Canaanites.

They shall - describe it - It is likely they were persons well acquainted with geography and mensuration, without which it would have been impossible for them to have divided the land in the way necessary on this occasion.

JOSHUA 18:5 They shall divide it into seven portions. Judah shall live in his borders on the south, and the house of Joseph shall live in their borders on the north.

Verse 5

Judah shall abide - on the south, and the house of Joseph - on the north - Joshua does not mean that the tribe of Judah occupied the south, and the tribe of Ephraim and Manasseh the north of the promised land; this was not the fact: but being now at Shiloh, a considerable way in the territory of Ephraim, and not far from that of Judah, he speaks of them in relation to the place in which he then was. Calmet considers him as thus addressing the deputies: "Go and examine the whole of the country which remains yet to be possessed; do not take into consideration the tribe of Judah, which is on the south, nor the tribe of Ephraim, which is on the north of where we now are, but carefully divide the remaining land which is not occupied by these tribes into seven equal parts." This makes a very good sense, and frees the place from embarrassment.

JOSHUA 18:6 You shall survey the land into seven parts, and bring the description here to me; and I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God.

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

Verse 7

The priesthood of the Lord is their inheritance - We have already seen that the priests and Levites had the sacrifices, oblations tithes, first-fruits, redemption-money of the firstborn, etc., for their inheritance; they had no landed possessions in Israel; the Lord was their portion.

JOSHUA 18:8 The men arose and went. Joshua commanded those who went to survey the land, saying, "Go walk through the land, survey it, and come again to me. I will cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh."

JOSHUA 18:9 The men went and passed through the land, and surveyed it by cities into seven portions in a book. They came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh.

Verse 9

And described it in a book - This as far as I can recollect, is the first act of surveying on record. These men and their work differed widely from those who had searched the land in the time of Moses; they went only to discover the nature of the country, and the state of its inhabitants; but these went to take an actual geographical survey of it, in order to divide it among the tribes which had not yet received their portions. We may suppose that the country was exactly described in a book, that is, a map, pointing out the face of the country, accompanied with descriptions of each part.

JOSHUA 18:10 Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD. There Joshua divided the land to the children of Israel according to their divisions.

JOSHUA 18:11 The lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according to their families. The border of their lot went out between the children of Judah and the children of Joseph.

Verse 11

And the lot - of Benjamin came up - On the manner of casting the lot, see on Jos 14:2 (note), and Num 26:55 (note). There were probably two urns, one of which contained the names of the seven tribes, and the other that of the seven portions. They therefore took out one name out of the first urn, and one portion out of the second, and thus the portion was adjudged to that tribe.

JOSHUA 18:12 Their border on the north quarter was from the Jordan. The border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and went up through the hill country westward. It ended at the wilderness of Beth Aven.

Verse 12

The wilderness of Beth-aven - This was the same as Beth-el; but this name was not given to it till Jeroboam had fixed one of his golden calves there. Its first name signifies the house of God; its second, the house of iniquity.

JOSHUA 18:13 The border passed along from there to Luz, to the side of Luz (the same is Bethel), southward. The border went down to Ataroth Addar, by the mountain that lies on the south of Beth Horon the lower.

JOSHUA 18:14 The border extended, and turned around on the west quarter southward, from the mountain that lies before Beth Horon southward; and ended at Kiriath Baal (the same is Kiriath Jearim), a city of the children of Judah. This was the west quarter.

JOSHUA 18:15 The south quarter was from the farthest part of Kiriath Jearim. The border went out westward, and went out to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah.

JOSHUA 18:16 The border went down to the farthest part of the mountain that lies before the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is in the valley of Rephaim northward. It went down to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of the Jebusite southward, and went down to En Rogel.

Verse 16

To the side of Jebusi - The mountain of Zion, that was near Jerusalem; for Jebusi, or Jebus, was the ancient name of this city.

JOSHUA 18:17 It extended northward, went out at En Shemesh, and went out to Geliloth, which is over against the ascent of Adummim. It went down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben.

Verse 17

En-shemesh - The fountain of the sun; a proof of the idolatrous nature of the ancient inhabitants of this land.

Geliloth - As the word signifies borders or limits, it is probably not the proper name of a place: And went forth towards the Borders which are over against the ascent to Adummim.

JOSHUA 18:18 It passed along to the side over against the Arabah northward, and went down to the Arabah.

JOSHUA 18:19 The border passed along 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.

Verse 19

The north bay of the Salt Sea - As the word לשון *leshon* signifies the tongue, it may here refer to the point of the Dead or Salt Sea. Of these tongues or points it had two, one on the north, and the other on the south.

JOSHUA 18:20 The Jordan was its border on the east quarter. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, by the borders around it, according to their families.

JOSHUA 18:21 Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin according to their families were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz,

Verse 21

Now the cities - Some of these cities have been mentioned before, and described; of others we know nothing but the name.

JOSHUA 18:22 Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel,

JOSHUA 18:23 Avvim, Parah, Ophrah,

JOSHUA 18:24 Chephar Ammoni, Ophni, and Geba; twelve cities with their villages.

Verse 24

And Gaba - Supposed to be the same as Gibeah of Saul, a place famous for having given birth to the first king of Israel; and infamous for the shocking act towards the Levite's wife, mentioned Jdg 19:16-30, which was the cause of a war in which the tribe of Benjamin was nearly exterminated. Judges 20:29-48.

JOSHUA 18:25 Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth,

Verse 25

Gibeon - See before, Jos 10:1-14 (note). This place is famous for the confederacy of the five kings against Israel, and their miraculous defeat. Ramah, a place about six or eight miles north of Jerusalem. Beeroth, i.e., wells; one of the four cities which belonged to the Gibeonites, who made peace with the Israelites by stratagem. See Jos 9:3-15.

JOSHUA 18:26 Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah,

Verse 26

And Mizpeh - This place is celebrated in the sacred writings. Here the people were accustomed to assemble often in the presence of the Lord, as in the deliberation concerning the punishment to be inflicted on the men of Gibeah, for the abuse of the Levite's wife. Jdg 20:1-3. Samuel assembled the people here to exhort them to renounce their idolatry, 1Sam 7:5, 1Sam 7:6. In this same place Saul was chosen to be king, 1Sam 10:17. It was deemed a sacred place among the Israelites; for we find, from 1 Maccabees 3:46, that the Jews assembled here to seek God, when their enemies were in possession of the temple.

JOSHUA 18:27 Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah,

JOSHUA 18:28 Zelah, Eleph, the Jebusite (the same is Jerusalem), Gibeath, and Kiriath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

Verse 28

And Zelah - This was the burying-place of Saul, Jonathan, and the family of Kish. See 2Sam 21:14.

Jebusi, which is Jerusalem - We often meet with this name, and it is evident that it was the ancient name of Jerusalem, which was also called Salem; and was probably the place in which Melchizedek reigned in the days of Abraham; though some think a different place is meant; for that there was another place of the same name, is evident from Joh 3:23. This place, called Salim by the evangelist, is said to be near to Enon, and there John baptized, because there was much water in the place. This, however, must not be confounded with the Salem mentioned above; for that this was a name of Jerusalem, is evident from Psa 76:1, Psa 76:2 : In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion. This must refer to Jerusalem, where the temple was situated. Whether Jebus or Jebusi had its name from the Jebusites, or the Jebusites from it, cannot be ascertained.