

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA 21

This chapter contains the address of the Levites to the court, to have the cities and suburbs given them according to the command of God by Moses, (^{<0210>}Joshua 21:1,2); the grant of them by lot out of the several tribes, (^{<0213>}Joshua 21:3-8); the particular cities out of the tribes of Judah and Simeon are mentioned by name, (^{<0219>}Joshua 21:9-16); then those out of the tribe of Benjamin, (^{<0217>}Joshua 21:17-19); next those out of the tribe of Ephraim, (^{<0221>}Joshua 21:20-22); afterwards those out of the tribe of Dan, (^{<0223>}Joshua 21:23-26); then those out of the half tribe of Manasseh, (^{<0227>}Joshua 21:27); and out of the tribe of Issachar, (^{<0228>}Joshua 21:28,29); and out of the tribe of Asher, (^{<0231>}Joshua 21:30,31); and of Naphtali, (^{<0232>}Joshua 21:32,33); and of Zebulun, (^{<0234>}Joshua 21:34,35); and of Reuben, (^{<0236>}Joshua 21:36,37); and of Gad, (^{<0238>}Joshua 21:38-40); which in all made forty eight, (^{<0241>}Joshua 21:41,42); and the chapter is concluded with observing, that God gave Israel all the land of Canaan, and rest in it, according to his promise, very faithfully and punctually, (^{<0243>}Joshua 21:43-45).

Ver. 1. *Then came near the heads of the fathers of the Levites*, etc.] When the land was divided to the several tribes, and everyone knew the cities that belonged to them, and what they could and should part with to the Levites, and when the six cities of refuge were fixed; the Levites came to put in their claim for cities of habitation, they having no share in the division of the land; and yet it was necessary they should have habitations; the persons that undertook to put in a claim for them were the principal men among them; the fathers of them were Kohath, Gershon, and Merari; the heads of those were the chief men that were then living: these came

unto Eleazar the priest, and unto Joshua the son of Nun; the high priest and chief magistrate:

and unto the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel; the princes appointed to divide the land with the two great personages before mentioned, (^{<0347>}Numbers 34:17-29).

Ver. 2. *And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, etc.]* Where the tabernacle was fixed, at or near which the above persons met to cast lots for the division of the land to the seven tribes that had not received their inheritance:

saying, the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle; this command is extant in (^{OLD}Numbers 35:2-8).

Ver. 3. *And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, etc.]* Knowing full well there was such a command, made no objection to their motion, but freely gave them cities out of the portion of inheritance allotted to them; this they did

at the commandment of the Lord, and in obedience to it, even gave these cities and suburbs; after mentioned: this was done by the tribes themselves; as there were a certain number fixed by the commandment of God, they agreed among themselves how many and what cities should be given out of each tribe; and then lots were cast for them by Joshua, what and which cities should be appropriated to their several divisions, as the Kohathites that sprang from Aaron, and the rest of them that did not, and the Gershonites and Merarites, as follows.

Ver. 4. *And the lot came out for the family of the Kohathites, etc.]* The first lot that was drawn out of the pot or urn was for the descendants of Kohath, a son of Levi:

and the children of Aaron the priest, [which were] of the Levites; who descended from Amram, the eldest son of Kohath, and these were not only Levites, but priests: these

had by lot out of the tribe of Judah, and out of the tribe of Simeon, and out of the tribe of Benjamin, thirteen cities; which are after mentioned by name; and as these were priests, whose business was to serve in the temple, and at the altar, the cities assigned them by the lot, were, by the wise disposal of divine Providence, ordered them out of those tribes which lay nearest to Jerusalem; the place God had chosen to put his name in, where the temple would be built, and the altars erected for sacrifices and incense.

Ver. 5. *And the rest of the children of Kohath, etc.]* Which did not descend from him in the line of Amram and Aaron, but of Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, who were not priests, but Levites:

[had] by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh, ten cities; these other sort of Kohathites had their cities in tribes next to the other three where the Kohathites that were priests had theirs.

Ver. 6. *And the children of Gershon [had] by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar,* etc.] These were Levites who descended from Gershon, the eldest son of Levi, and had their cities by lot assigned them in tribes at a greater distance, not only out of Issachar, but

out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh in Bashan; which was the other half of the tribe beyond Jordan:

thirteen cities; as many as were given out of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin.

Ver. 7. *The children of Merari by their families,* etc.] The descendants of Merari, the third son of Levi:

[had] out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad; which were both on the other side Jordan:

and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities; in all forty eight, as the Lord commanded, (^{Q187D}Numbers 35:7).

Ver. 8. *And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs,* etc.] Reaching two thousand cubits from the cities all around: these cities did not lie all together, and so could not be described by their coasts; but in the several tribes, and intermixed with their cities; which fulfilled Jacob's prophecy, that they should be divided and scattered in Israel, (^{Q140E}Genesis 49:7); as well as it was so ordered for the benefit of the several tribes, that they might have the assistance of the priests and Levites, to instruct them in the knowledge of the laws and commandments of God, and all divine things:

as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses; (^{Q187D}Numbers 35:2).

Ver. 9. *And they gave out of the tribe of the children of Judah,* etc.] Here follows a particular account of the several cities which were given out of each tribe, and first out of this:

and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon; which is joined with that of Judah, because the cities of it lay within it, (^{<630>}Joshua 19:1);

these cities which are [here] mentioned by name; (^{<621>}Joshua 21:13-16).

Ver. 10. *Which the children of Aaron, [being] of the families of the Kohathites, etc.*] Who descending from Kohath, in the line of Aaron, were priests:

[who were] of the children of Levi, had; they were Levites, as descending from Levi, but were priests also, as being of the stock of Aaron, and the cities hereafter mentioned in the said tribe fell to their portion:

for theirs was the first lot; for being of the line of Aaron, and priests, they had the honour and privilege to have the first lot drawn for them, and out of the tribe for which the first lot was also drawn, the tribe of Judah; here they had their cities allotted them, for a reason before given.

Ver. 11. *And they gave them the city of Arba, the father of Anak, etc.*] Which from him was called Kirjatharba, (^{<645>}Joshua 14:15); and Anak, according to Kimchi, is not the name of a man, but a general name, comprehending the Anakims, a race of giants, among whom Arba was the chief and principal man, a prince and ruler over them, as Ben Melech:

which [city is] Hebron in the hill [country] of Judah; as in (^{<645>}Joshua 14:15); (see ^{<619>}Luke 1:39,65);

with the suburbs thereof round about it; as far as two thousand cubits, which were to put their cattle in, and provision for them.

Ver. 12. *But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, etc.*] Which lay beyond the two thousand cubits:

gave they to Caleb the son of Jephunneh, for his possession; as Moses had promised, and Joshua had confirmed to him; and now the children of Israel gave them to him, and put him in the possession of, (^{<646>}Joshua 14:6,13 15:13); and the same is to be observed of all the other cities given to the Levites, that they and their suburbs, extending to such a distance only, were given to them; but the fields and villages, which belonged to them, continued the inheritance of the tribes in which they were.

Ver. 13. *Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest, etc.]* The families of the Kohathites, that part of them which descended from him, and were priests:

Hebron with her suburbs, [to be] a city of refuge for the slayer; that had slain a person unawares, and without design; see on (⁽⁶¹¹⁾Joshua 20:3,7);

and Libnah with her suburbs; a royal city, of which (see ⁽⁶¹²⁾Joshua 10:29,30).

Ver. 14. *And Jattir with her suburbs, etc.]* (See Gill on “⁽⁶⁵⁸⁾Joshua 15:48”);

and Eshtemoa with her suburbs; (see Gill on “⁽⁶⁵⁵⁾Joshua 15:50”).

Ver. 15. *And Holon with her suburbs, etc.]* (See Gill on “⁽⁶⁵⁵⁾Joshua 15:51”);

and Debir with her suburbs; (see Gill on “⁽⁶⁵⁴⁾Joshua 15:49”).

Ver. 16. *And Ain with her suburbs, etc.]* (See Gill on “⁽⁶⁵²⁾Joshua 15:32”);

and Juttah with her suburbs; (see Gill on “⁽⁶⁵⁵⁾Joshua 15:55”);

[and] Bethshemesh with her suburbs; which is not mentioned among the cities of Judah, (⁽⁶⁵²⁾Joshua 15:21-63); only as in the borders of it, (⁽⁶¹¹⁾Joshua 21:10); and perhaps is the same Bethshemesh to which the ark was directed by the Philistines from Ashdod, (⁽⁹¹⁹⁾1 Samuel 6:9,12); in it formerly was a temple dedicated to the sun, from whence it had its name:

nine cities out of those two tribes; and they seem all but one, which is Ain, to be of the tribe of Judah, and that originally belonged to it; and as that tribe had the largest number of cities in its lot, the more were given out of it to the Levites, according to a rule prescribed, (⁽⁶⁵⁸⁾Numbers 35:8).

Ver. 17. *And out of the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with her suburbs, etc.]* See Gill “⁽⁶⁸²⁾Joshua 18:25”; from which came the Gibeonites.

Geba with her suburbs.] Of which (see Gill on “⁽⁶⁸²⁾Joshua 18:24”).

Ver. 18. *Anathoth with her suburbs, etc.]* This is not mentioned among the cities of Benjamin, (⁽⁶⁸¹⁾Joshua 18:11-28); it was the native place of the Prophet Jeremiah, (see Gill on “⁽²⁰⁰⁾Jeremiah 1:1”); it lay about two or three miles north of Jerusalem; three, says, Jerom^{f507}. Rauwolff^{f508} speaks of it as a small village, when he travelled into those parts, and as lying on a

height or eminence, and which was within twenty furlongs of Jerusalem, as Josephus writes ^{f509}:

and Almon with her suburbs; this also is not mentioned among the cities of Benjamin, (^{<6881>}Joshua 18:11-28); it is called Alemeth, (^{<1366>}1 Chronicles 6:60). Jarchi and Kimchi say it is the same with Bahurim, (^{<1016>}2 Samuel 3:16); where the Targum renders it by Almeth, and both words signify the same thing, “youth”:

four cities; which were a large number for so small a tribe as little Benjamin to give.

Ver. 19. *All the cities of the children of Aaron, the priests*, etc.] Those of the Kohathites that came from him:

[were] thirteen cities with their suburbs; and just so many are mentioned by name in (^{<6211>}Joshua 21:11-18).

Ver. 20. *And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites*, etc.] Who were not priests:

which remained of the children of Kohath; these are the children of Moses, as Jarchi says, and those that descended from Kohath in the lines of Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel,

even they had the cities of their lot out of the tribe of Ephraim; and were as follow.

Ver. 21. *For they gave them Shechem, with her suburbs, in Mount Ephraim*, etc.] Of which (see ^{<6107>}Joshua 20:7);

[to be] a city of refuge for the slayer; which being on a mountain, was the more conspicuous, and the fitter for this purpose, as was Hebron in the hill country of Judea, (^{<6211>}Joshua 21:11,13); this is the second; city of refuge mentioned:

and Gezer with her suburbs: a place from whence the Canaanites were not expelled; (see Gill on “^{<6160>}Joshua 16:10”).

Ver. 22. *And Kibzaim with her suburbs*, etc.] Which seems to, be the same with Jokneam, (^{<1368>}1 Chronicles 6:68); of it we read nowhere else;

and Bethhoron with her suburbs; upper Bethhoron, for there were two, an upper and a nether: (see ^{<6163>}Joshua 16:3,5);

four cities; as mentioned by name.

Ver. 23. *And out of the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with her suburbs*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{<694>}Joshua 19:44”);

Gibbethon with her suburbs, (see Gill on “^{<694>}Joshua 19:44”).

Ver. 24. *Aijalon with her suburbs*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{<692>}Joshua 19:42”);

Gathrimmon with her suburbs, four cities; (see Gill on “^{<695>}Joshua 19:45”).

Ver. 25. *And out of the half tribe of Manasseh, Taanach with her suburbs*, etc.] Of which (see ^{<670>}Joshua 17:10);

and Gathrimmon with her suburbs, there was a city of this name in Dan, as in (^{<624>}Joshua 21:24); nor was it unusual for cities to be called by the same name in different tribes:

two cities; these are called Aner and Bilean in (^{<367>}1 Chronicles 6:70); in process of time cities changed their names; two cities were a proper proportion for this half tribe; two more were given out of the other half tribe on the other side Jordan, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 26. *All the cities [were] ten, with their suburbs*, etc.] Four out of Ephraim, four out of Dan, and two out of the half tribe of Manasseh: which were

for the families of the children of Kohath that remained: who were of the other branch of the Kohathites, and who did not descend from Aaron, and were only Levites, and not priests; (see Gill on “^{<621>}Joshua 21:20”).

Ver. 27. *And unto the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites*, etc.] The descendants of the second son of Levi:

out of the [other] half tribe of Manasseh; that which was settled beyond Jordan:

[they gave] Golan in Bashan, with her suburbs, [to be] a city of refuge for the slayer; (see ^{<618>}Joshua 20:8); this is the third city of refuge mentioned:

and Beeshterah with her suburbs; called Ashtaroth, (^{<367>}1 Chronicles 6:71); which had been the royal city of Og, king of Bashan, where he had his palace, (^{<604>}Deuteronomy 1:4). Here seems to have been formerly a temple dedicated to the goddess Astarte; for Beeshterah is a compound of

“Beth” and “Ashterah”, or Astarte; that is, the house or temple of Astarte, but now become a city of the Levites:

two cities; two more having been before given out of the other half tribe.

Ver. 28. *And out of the tribe of Issachar, Kishon with her suburbs*, etc.] From whence the river Kishon probably had its name, or the city from that; it is the same with Kishion, (^{<6920>}Joshua 19:20); and called Kedesh, (^{<1352>}1 Chronicles 6:72).

Dabareh with her suburbs; the same with Daberath on the border of Zebulun, (see Gill on “^{<6912>}Joshua 19:12”).

Ver. 29. *Jarmuth with her suburbs*, etc.] Called Ramoth, (^{<1353>}1 Chronicles 6:73); very probably the same with Remeth, (^{<6921>}Joshua 19:21);

Engannim with her suburbs; called Anem, (^{<1353>}1 Chronicles 6:73);

four cities; so many are mentioned by name.

Ver. 30. *And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs*, etc.] The same with Misheal, (^{<6925>}Joshua 19:26); called Mashal, (^{<1354>}1 Chronicles 6:74);

Abdon with her suburbs; not mentioned among the cities of Asher, unless the same with Hebron, (^{<6928>}Joshua 19:28).

Ver. 31. *Helkath with her suburbs*, etc.] (See Gill on “^{<6925>}Joshua 19:25”); the same with Hukok in (^{<1355>}1 Chronicles 6:75);

and Rehob with her suburbs, four cities; (see Gill on “^{<6928>}Joshua 19:28”).

Ver. 32. *And out of the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs*, etc.] Of which (see ^{<6317>}Joshua 20:7);

[*to be*] *a city of refuge for the slayer*; this is the fourth city of refuge mentioned:

and Hammothdor with her suburbs; the same with Hammon, (^{<1356>}1 Chronicles 6:76); and with Hammath, (^{<6935>}Joshua 19:35); and is thought by some to be Tiberias, so called from the hot baths in or near it:

and Kartan with her suburbs; called Kirjathaim, (^{<1356>}1 Chronicles 6:76); but cannot be the Kirjathaim in (^{<6327>}Numbers 32:37); for that belonged to the tribe of Reuben, and was on the other side Jordan:

three cities; this being a lesser tribe than some others gave fewer cities, according to the rule in (^{<04818>}Numbers 35:8).

Ver. 33. *All the cities of the Gershonites, according to their families,* etc.] Which were divided among them, according to the number of their families:

[were] thirteen cities with their suburbs; two out of the half tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan, four out of Issachar, four out of Asher, and three out of Naphtali.

Ver. 34. *And unto the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites,* etc.] The descendants of the youngest son of Levi, who were all that remained of the Levites unprovided of cities:

out of the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with her suburbs; which lay near Carmel, and was a royal city; (see Gill on "^{<16122>}Joshua 12:22");

and Kartah with her suburbs; perhaps the same with Kattath, (^{<16915>}Joshua 19:15).

Ver. 35. *Dimnah with her suburbs,* etc.] Nowhere mentioned, unless the same with Rimmon, (^{<1367>}1 Chronicles 6:77);

Nahalal with her suburbs; (see ^{<16915>}Joshua 19:15);

four cities; only two are mentioned, (^{<1367>}1 Chronicles 6:77); and they by different names; the one is Rimmon, before observed, and the other Tabor; perhaps the same with Chislothtabor, (^{<16912>}Joshua 19:12).

Ver. 36. *And out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with her suburbs,* etc.] Which was a city of refuge, and the fifth of them in this account, though not observed as such here, but is in the Greek version; (see ^{<16118>}Joshua 20:8);

and Jahazah with her suburbs; called Jahaz, (see Gill on "^{<02123>}Numbers 21:23").

Ver. 37. *Kedemoth with her suburbs,* etc.] Near to which was a wilderness of that name; (see ^{<16126>}Deuteronomy 2:26);

and Mephaath with her suburbs; of which (see Gill on "^{<06318>}Joshua 13:18"); where the two preceding cities are mentioned along with it:

four cities, (^{<02135>}Joshua 21:35,36), are not in some ancient copies of the Hebrew Bible, as is noted by the Masorites; but are in some others, as Kimchi owns, and stand in the Targum, in the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, and in a manuscript referred to by Hottinger ^{f510}; and the same words are to be found in (^{<0368>}1 Chronicles 6:78,79), and are absolutely necessary to be retained, since without them there would be but eight cities for the Merarites, whereas they are expressly said to be twelve, (^{<0240>}Joshua 21:40).

Ver. 38. *And out of the tribe of Gad*, etc.] Which also, as that of Reuben, lay on the other side Jordan:

Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs; of which (see ^{<0618>}Joshua 20:8);

[*to be*] *a city of refuge for the slayer*; and is the sixth and last city of refuge in this account:

and Mahanaim with her suburbs; here it was the angels met Jacob, which gave rise to the name of the place, (^{<0301>}Genesis 32:1,2); afterwards a city was built here, and was on the borders of the tribe of Gad, and belonged to it, (^{<0136>}Joshua 13:26); mention is made of it in other places, (^{<0108>}2 Samuel 2:8) (^{<0108>}1 Kings 2:8).

Ver. 39. *Heshbon with her suburbs*, etc.] Which was formerly the royal city of Sihon king of the Amorites, and was first given to and rebuilt by the Reubenites, but was upon the border of the tribe of Gad; and appears from hence to have been one of their cities, (^{<0226>}Numbers 21:26 32:37) (^{<0137>}Joshua 13:17,21,26);

Jazer with her suburbs; sometimes called Jaazer, another city in the same country, and near Heshbon; (see ^{<0232>}Numbers 21:32);

four cities in all: which were Ramothgilead, Mahanaim, Heshbon, and Jazer.

Ver. 40. *So all the cities for the children of Merari by their families*, etc.] Which were distributed by lot to them, according to the number of their families, and were sufficient for them:

which were remaining of the families of the Levites; the last division of them, besides those of the Kohathites, Levites, and the Gershonites:

were [by] their lot twelve cities; four out of the tribe of Zebulun, four out of the tribe of Reuben, and four out of the tribe of Gad, whose names are before given,

Ver. 41. *All the cities of the Levites, within the possession of the children of Israel*, etc.] As comprised in one sum total:

[were] forty and eight cities with their suburbs; which is just the number that Moses from the mouth of God ordered to be given unto them, before they entered into the land, and before they were in possession of one city in it, (⁰⁸³⁷Numbers 35:7); which, as it is a proof of the omniscience, prescience, and predetermination of God; so of the sure and true prediction of Moses, who could not be otherwise certain than from the Lord of the Israelites being able to give so many cities to them, out of each of their tribes: and it is to be observed, that this tribe of Levi, though it had no share in the division of the land, yet had more cities by lot given to it than any other, excepting the tribe of Judah; though indeed, in the account of some of the tribes, all the cities in them are not mentioned; and besides, they had only the cities they had with their suburbs round about them, but not the lands belonging to them, nor the villages; however this shows that a large and liberal maintenance of the ministers of the Lord, that serve in his sanctuary should be allowed and made for them, as in the legal, so under the Gospel dispensation

Ver. 42. *These cities were everyone with their suburbs round about them*, etc.] Which reached to the space of two thousand cubits on every side; and such a space was assigned to everyone of the above cities for their cattle, to keep them in and lay up provision for them:

thus [were] all their cities; six of them cities of refuge, and forty two for the priests and Levites to dwell in, and for the commodious use of their herds and flocks.

Ver. 43. *And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers*, etc.] It was all given them by lot, whether subdued or not subdued, and the far greater part was actually put into their hands, and they had as much as they could for the present occupy and cultivate; and such as were in the hands of the Canaanites, were subject to pay tribute to them; and it was owing to their own slothfulness and sluggishness that they did not possess more hereafter; though it was the will of God that their enemies should be driven out by little and little, until the Israelites were so

increased as to occupy the whole, lest any part of the land should lie waste and become barren, and lest the wild beasts of the field should multiply upon them:

and they possessed it, and dwelt therein; each according to their lot in the several places assigned them, as many cities as they could at present people, and as much land as they could now manage.

Ver. 44. *And the Lord gave them rest round about*, etc.] Not only from their travels, with which they had been fatigued forty years in the wilderness, but from wars with the Canaanites they had been engaged in for some years past:

according to all that he sware unto their fathers; not only to give them the land, but peace, rest, and safety in it:

and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; for whenever any rose up to oppose them, they were immediately cut off: this is to be understood while Joshua was living; for afterwards, sinning against God, they were again and again delivered up into the hands of their enemies:

the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hands; that is, that made war with them.

Ver. 45. *There failed not ought of any good thing*, etc.] Not only every good thing in general, but every part and particular of that good thing; that, with all that was included in it, or were appendages to it, or circumstances of it:

which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel; as of their deliverance out of Egypt, and passage through the Red sea and wilderness, with all conveniences for them therein; so of their passage through Jordan, success of their arms, the conquest of their enemies, possession of their land, a land flowing with milk and honey:

all came to pass; exactly, precisely, and punctually, even everything relative to their temporal and spiritual good: so all that God promises to his spiritual Israel, with respect to their present comfort or everlasting happiness, all is exactly fulfilled, all his promises in Christ are yea and amen.