

# CHAPTER 15

Though the land was not completely conquered, yet being (as was said in the close of the foregoing chapter) as rest from war for the present, and their armies all drawn out of the field to a general rendezvous at Gilgal, there they began to divide the land, though the work was afterwards perfected at Shiloh, <sup><680></sup>Joshua 18:1, etc. In this chapter we have the lot of the tribe of Judah, which in this, as in other things, had the precedence.

- I.** The borders or bounds of the inheritance of Judah (v. 1-12).
- II.** The particular assignment of Hebron and the country thereabout to Caleb and his family (v. 13-19).
- III.** The names of the several cities that fell within Judah's lot (v. 20-63).

## <sup><657></sup>JOSHUA 15:1-12

### THE LOT OF JUDAH

Judah and Joseph were the two sons of Jacob on whom Reuben's forfeited birth-right devolved. Judah had the dominion entailed on him, and Joseph the double portion, and therefore these two tribes were first seated, Judah in the southern part of the land of Canaan and Joseph in the northern part, and on them the other seven did attend, and had their respective lots as appurtenances to these two; the lots of Benjamin, Simeon, and Dan, were appendant to Judah, and those of Issachar and Zebulun, Naphtali and Asher, to Joseph. These two were first set up to be provided for, it should seem, before there was such an exact survey of the land as we find afterwards, <sup><680></sup>Joshua 18:9. It is probable that the most considerable parts of the northern and southern countries, and those that lay nearest to Gilgal, and which the people were best acquainted with, were first put into two portions, and the lot was cast upon them between these two principal tribes, of the one of which Joshua was, and of the other Caleb, who was the first commissioner in this writ of partition; and, by the decision of that lot, the southern country, of which we have an account in this chapter, fell to Judah, and the northern, of which we have an account in the two

following chapters, to Joseph. And when this was done there was a more equal dividend (either in quantity or quality) of the remainder among the seven tribes. And this, probably, was intended in that general rule which was given concerning this partition (<sup><0354></sup>Numbers 33:54), *to the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less, and every man's inheritance shall be where his lot falleth*; that is, “You shall appoint two greater portions which shall be determined by lot to those more numerous tribes of Judah and Joseph, and then the rest shall be less portions to be allotted to the less numerous tribes.” The former was done in Gilgal, the latter in Shiloh.

In these verses, we have the borders of the lot of Judah, which, as the rest, is said to be *by their families*, that is, with an eye to the number of their families. And it intimates that Joshua and Eleazar, and the rest of the commissioners, when they had by lot given each tribe its portion, did afterwards (it is probable by lot likewise) subdivide those larger portions, and assign to each family its inheritance, and then to each household, which would be better done by this supreme authority, and be apt to give less disgust than if it had been left to the inferior magistrates of each tribe to make that distribution. The borders of this tribe are here largely fixed, yet not unalterably, for a good deal of that which lies within these bounds was afterwards assigned to the lots of Simeon and Daniel

**1.** The eastern border was all, and only, the Salt Sea, v. 5. Every sea is salt, but this was of an extraordinary and more than natural saltness, the effects of that fire and brimstone with which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed in Abraham's time, whose ruins lie buried in the bottom of this dead water, which never either was moved itself or had any living thing in it.

**2.** The southern border was that of the land of Canaan in general, as will appear by comparing v. 1-4 with <sup><0618></sup>Numbers 34:3-5. So that this powerful and warlike tribe of Judah guarded the frontiers of the whole land, on that side which lay towards their old sworn enemies (though their two fathers were twin-brethren), the Edomites. Our Lord therefore, who *sprang out of Judah*, and whose *the kingdom is, shall judge the mount of Esau*, <sup><3021></sup>Obadiah 1:21.

**3.** The northern border divided it from the lot of Benjamin. In this, mention is made of *the stone of Bohan* a Reubenite (v. 6), who probably was a great commander of those forces of Reuben that came over Jordan, and

died in the camp at Gilgal, and was buried not far off under this stone. The valley of Achor likewise lies upon this border (v. 7), to remind the men of Judah of the trouble which Achan, one of their tribe, gave to the congregation of Israel, that they might not be too much lifted up with their services. This northern line touched closely upon Jerusalem (v. 8), so closely as to include in the lot of this tribe Mount Zion and Mount Moriah, though the greater part of the city lay in the lot of Benjamin.

**4.** The west border went near to the great sea at first (v. 12), but afterwards the lot of the tribe of Dan took off a good part of Judah's lot on that side; for the lot was only to determine between Judah and Joseph, which should have the north and which the south, and not immovably to fix the border of either. Judah's inheritance had its boundaries determined. Though it was a powerful warlike tribe, and had a great interest in the other tribes, yet they must not therefore be left to their own choice, to enlarge their possessions at pleasure, but must live so as that their neighbours might live by them. Those that are placed high yet must not think to be *placed alone in the midst of the earth*.

## ◀6151▶ JOSHUA 15:13-19

### CALEB'S INHERITANCE

The historian seems pleased with every occasion to make mention of Caleb and to do him honour, because he had honoured God in following him fully. Observe,

**I.** The grant Joshua made him of the mountain of Hebron for his inheritance is here repeated (v. 13), and it is said to be given him.

**1.** *According to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua.* Though Caleb, in his petition, had made out a very good title to it by promise, yet, because God had ordered Joshua to divide the land by lot, he would not in this one single instance, no, not to gratify his old friend Caleb, do otherwise, without orders from God, whose oracle, it is probable, he consulted upon this occasion. In every doubtful case it is very desirable to know the mind of God, and to see the way of our duty plain.

2. It is said to be a part *among the children of Judah*; though it was assigned him before the lot of that tribe came up, yet it proved, God so directing the lot, to be in the heart of that tribe, which was graciously ordered in kindness to him, that he might not be as one separated from his brethren and surrounded by those of other tribes.

## II. Caleb having obtained this grant, we are told,

1. How he signaled his own valour in the conquest of Hebron (v. 14): *He drove thence the three sons of Anak*, he and those that he engaged to assist him in this service. This is mentioned here to show that the confidence he had expressed of success in this affair, through the presence of God with him (<sup><6442></sup>Joshua 14:12), did not deceive him, but the event answered his expectation. It is not said that he *slew these giants*, but he *drove them thence*, which intimates that they retired upon his approach and fled before him; the strength and stature of their bodies could not keep up the courage of their minds, but with the countenances of lions they had the hearts of trembling hares. Thus does God often *cut off the spirit of princes* (<sup><9762></sup>Psalms 76:12), *take away the heart of the chief of the people* (<sup><8124></sup>Job 12:24), and so shame the confidence of the proud; and thus if we resist the devil, that roaring lion, though he fall not, yet he will flee.

2. How he encouraged the valour of those about him in the conquest of Debir, v. 15, etc. It seems, though Joshua had once made himself master of Debir (<sup><6109></sup>Joshua 10:39), yet the Canaanites had regained the possession in the absence of the army, so that the work had to be done a second time; and when Caleb had completed the reduction of Hebron, which was for himself and his own family, to show his zeal for the public good, as much as for his own private interest, he pushes on his conquest to Debir, and will not lay down his arms till he sees that city also effectually reduced, which lay but ten miles southward from Hebron, though he had not any particular concern in it, but the reducing of it would be to the general advantage of his tribe. Let us learn hence not to seek and mind our own things only, but to concern and engage ourselves for the welfare of the community we are members of; we are not born for ourselves, nor must we *live to ourselves*.

(1.) Notice is taken of the name of this city. It had been called *Kirjath-sepher*, *the city of a book*, and *Kirjath-sannah* (v. 49), which some translate *the city of learning* (so the Septuagint *Polis grammaton*), whence some conjecture that it had been a university among the Canaanites, like

Athens in Greece, in which their youth were educated; or perhaps the books of their chronicles or records, or the antiquities of the nation, were laid up there; and, it may be, this was it that made Caleb so desirous to see Israel master of this city, that they might get acquainted with the ancient learning of the Canaanites.

(2.) The proffer that Caleb made of his daughter, and a good portion with her, to any one that would undertake to reduce that city, and to command the forces that should be employed in that service, v. 16. Thus Saul promised a daughter to him that would kill Goliath (~~1~~<sup>1</sup> Samuel 17:25), neither of them intending to force his daughter to marry such as she could not love, but both of them presuming upon their daughters' obedience, and submission to their fathers' will, though it might be contrary to their own humour or inclination. Caleb's family was not long honourable and wealthy, but religious; he that himself *followed the Lord fully* no doubt taught his children to do so, and therefore it could not but be a desirable match to any young gentleman. Caleb, in making the proposal, aims,

[1.] To do service to his country by the reducing of that important place; and,

[2.] To marry a daughter well, to a man of learning, that would have a particular affection for *the city of books*, and a man of war, that would be likely to serve his country, and do worthily in his generation. Could he but marry his child to a man of such a character, he would think her well bestowed, whether the share in the lot of his tribe were more or less.

(3.) The place was bravely taken by Othniel, a nephew of Caleb, whom probably Caleb had thoughts of when he made the proffer, v. 17. This Othniel, who thus signalized himself when he was young, had long after, in his advanced years, the honour to be both a deliverer and a judge in Israel, the first single person that presided in their affairs after Joshua's death. It is good for those who are setting out in the world to begin betimes with that which is great and good, that, excelling in service when they are young, they may excel in honour when they grow old.

(4.) Hereupon (all parties being agreed) Othniel married his cousin-german Achsah, Caleb's daughter. It is probable that he had a kindness for her before, which put him upon this bold undertaking to obtain her. Love to his country, an ambition of honour, and a desire to find favour with the princes of his people, might not have engaged him in this great action, but his

affection for Achsah did. This made it intolerable to him to think that any one should do more to win her favour than he would, and so inspired him with this generous fire. Thus is love strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave.

(5.) Because the historian is now upon the dividing of the land, he gives us an account of Achsah's portion, which was in land, as more valuable because enjoyed by virtue of the divine promise, though we may suppose the conquerors of Canaan, who had had the spoil of so many rich cities, were full of money too.

[1.] Some land she obtained by Caleb's free grant, which was allowed while she married within her own tribe and family, as Zelophehad's daughters did. He *gave her a south land*, v. 19. Land indeed, but *a south land*, dry, and apt to be parched.

[2.] She obtained more upon her request; she would have had her husband to ask for a field, probably some particular field, or champaign ground, which belonged to Caleb's lot, and joined to that south land which he had settled upon his daughter at marriage. She thought her husband had the best interest in her father, who, no doubt, was extremely pleased with his late glorious achievement, but he thought it was more proper for her to ask, and she would be more likely to prevail; accordingly she did, submitting to her husband's judgment, though contrary to her own; and she managed the undertaking with great address. *First*, She took the opportunity when her father brought her home to the house of her husband, when the satisfaction of having disposed of his daughter so well would make him think nothing too much to do for her. *Secondly*, She *lighted off her ass*, in token of respect and reverence to her father, whom she would honour still, as much as before her marriage. She *cried* or *sighed* from off her ass, so the Septuagint and the vulgar Latin read it; she expressed some grief and concern, that she might give her father occasion to ask her what she wanted. *Thirdly*, She calls it *a blessing*, because it would add much to the comfort of her settlement; and she was sure that, since she married not only with her father's consent, but in obedience to his command, he would not deny her his blessing. *Fourthly*, She asks only for the *water*, without which the ground she had would be of little use either for tillage or pasture, but she means the field in which the springs of water were. The modesty and reasonableness of her quest gave it a great advantage. Earth without water would be like a tree without sap, or the

body of an animal without blood; therefore, when God *gathered the waters into one place*, he wisely and graciously left some in every place, that the earth might be enriched for the service of man. See ~~<B440>~~ Psalm 104:10, etc. Well, Achsah gained her point; her father gave her what she asked, and perhaps more, for *he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs*, two fields so called from the springs that were in them, as we commonly distinguish between the higher field and the lower field. Those who understand it but of one field, watered both with the rain of heaven and the springs that issued out of the bowels of the earth, give countenance to the allusion we commonly make to this, when we pray for spiritual and heavenly blessings which relate to our souls as blessings of the upper springs, and those which relate to the body and the life that now is as blessings of the nether springs.

From this story we learn,

1. That it is no breach of the tenth commandment moderately to desire those comforts and conveniences of this life which we see attainable in a fair and regular way.
2. That husbands and wives should mutually advise, and jointly agree, about that which is for the common good of their family; and much more should they concur in asking of their heavenly Father the best blessings, those of the upper springs.
3. That parents must never think that lost which is bestowed upon their children for their real advantage, but must be free in giving them portions as well as maintenance, especially when they are dutiful. Caleb had sons (~~<C045>~~ 1 Chronicles 4:15), and yet gave thus liberally to his daughter. Those parents forget themselves and their relation who grudge their children what is convenient for them when they can conveniently part with it.

## ~~<G530>~~ JOSHUA 15:20-63

### THE LOT OF JUDAH

We have here a list of the several cities that fell within the lot of the tribe of Judah, which are mentioned by name, that they might know their own, and both keep it and keep to it, and might neither through cowardice nor sloth lose the possession of what was their own.

**I.** The cities are here named, and numbered in several classes, which they then could account for the reason of better than we can now. Here are,

**1.** Some that are said to be the uttermost cities *towards the coast of Edom*, v. 21-32. Here are thirty-eight named, and yet said to be *twenty-nine* (v. 32), because nine of these were afterwards transferred to the lot of Simeon, and are reckoned as belonging to that, as appears by comparing <sup><38B></sup>Joshua 19:2, etc.; therefore those only are counted (though the rest are named) which remained to Judah.

**2.** Others that are said to be *in the valley* (v. 33) are counted to be fourteen, yet fifteen are named; but it is probable that Gederah and Gederathaim were either two names or two parts of one and the same city.

**3.** Then sixteen are named without any head of distinction, v. 37-41, and nine more, v. 42-44.

**4.** Then the three Philistine-cities, Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza, v. 45-47.

**5.** Cities *in the mountains*, eleven in all (v. 48-51), nine more (v. 52-54), ten more (v. 55-57), six more (v. 58, 59), then two (v. 60), and six in the wilderness, a part of the country not so thick of inhabitants as some others were.

**II.** Now here,

**1.** We do not find Bethlehem, which was afterwards the city of David, and was ennobled by the birth of our Lord Jesus in it. But that city, which at the best was but *little among the thousands of Judah* (<sup><38B></sup>Micah 5:2), except that it was thus dignified, was now so little as not to be accounted one of the cities, but perhaps was one of the villages not named. Christ came to give honour to the places he was related to, not to receive honour from them.

**2.** Jerusalem is said to continue in the hands of the Jebusites (v. 63), *for the children of Judah could not drive them out*, through their sluggishness, stupidity, and unbelief. Had they attempted it with vigour and resolution, we have reason to think God would not have been wanting to them to give them success; but they could not do it, because they would not. Jerusalem was afterwards to be the holy city, the royal city, the city of the great King, the brightest ornament of all the land of Israel. God has designed it should be so. It may therefore be justly looked upon as a punishment of their



neglect to conquer other cities which God had given them that they were so long kept out of this.

**3.** Among the cities of Judah (in all 114) we meet with Libnah, which in Joram's days revolted, and probably set up for a free independent state (~~<1182>~~2 Kings 8:22), and Lachish, where king Amaziah was slain (~~<1149>~~1 Kings 14:19); it led the dance in idolatry (~~<3001>~~Micah 1:13); it was the *beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion*. Giloh, Ahithophel's town, is here mentioned, and Tekoa, of which the prophet Amos was, and near which Jehoshaphat obtained that glorious victory, ~~<4011>~~2 Chronicles 20:20, etc., and Maresha, where Asa was a conqueror. Many of the cities of this tribe occur in the history of David's troubles. Adullam, Ziph, Keilah, Maon, Engedi, Ziklag, here reckoned in this tribe, were places near which David had most of his haunts; for, though sometimes Saul drove him out from the inheritance of the Lord, yet he kept as close to it as he could. The wilderness of Judah he frequented much, and in it John Baptist preached, and there the kingdom of heaven commenced, ~~<4101>~~Matthew 3:1. The riches of this country no doubt answered Jacob's blessing of this tribe, that he should *wash his garments in wine*, ~~<0491>~~Genesis 49:11. And, in general, *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise*, not envy.