

Dr. David Howard, Joshua - Ruth, Session 17, Joshua 13-19 – Land Distribution Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 17, Joshua 13-19 – Land Distribution, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. David Howard's lecture discusses the land distribution detailed in Joshua chapters 13-19. He explains the complexities of the text, focusing on the allocation of land to the Israelite tribes, the unique situation of the Levites, and individual stories within the broader narrative. The lecture highlights the challenges of interpreting the numerous lists of cities and boundaries, emphasizing the significance of Judah and Joseph's tribes. Finally, it notes the incomplete conquest of Canaan, foreshadowing the events of the Book of Judges. The overall theme is God's fulfillment of promises to his people, both collectively and individually.

2. 15 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 17 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Joshua-Ruth).



**Howard_Josh_Ruth
_Session17.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 17, Joshua 13-19 – Land Distribution

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Howard_Josh_Ruth_EN_Session17_Josh13_19.pdf":

Briefing Document: Joshua 13-19 - Land Distribution

Introduction:

This document summarizes Dr. David Howard's lecture on Joshua 13-19, which focuses on the distribution of land to the Israelite tribes after their conquest of Canaan. This section of Joshua is characterized by detailed lists of borders, cities, and tribal allotments, making it a challenging but important part of understanding the fulfillment of God's promises. The narrative shifts from the dramatic military campaigns of the first 12 chapters to a more administrative focus, showing the meticulous division of the land.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Transition from Conquest to Inheritance:

- Chapters 13-21 mark a shift from military conquest to the distribution of the conquered land. Dr. Howard notes, "This is where they're now finally, the battles are done, Joshua and the leaders are distributing the land to the tribes, and everybody gets their piece of the land, and that's what we're going to be focusing on next."
- The section is less narrative-driven and more detailed, making it difficult to read. As Dr. Howard states, "this part of the book is much more difficult to read, to work through...it starts with this almost mind-numbing, impenetrable listing of peoples, or cities and borders, and all that."
- Commentaries often give less attention to these chapters due to their complexity and less engaging storyline.

1. The Incomplete Conquest:

- Despite previous summaries suggesting total victory (e.g., Joshua 10:40-42, 11:16-23), Joshua 13:1 reveals that "there remains yet very much land left to possess."

- This highlights that the initial accounts of conquest were more general statements, and there were still areas to be taken. This is crucial to understand because it points to a more nuanced reality.
- This idea of the incomplete conquest sets the stage for future issues and conflicts explored in the book of Judges.

1. Land Distribution and Tribal Significance:

- The tribes who settled east of the Jordan (Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh) had received their inheritance from Moses. They were required to help the western tribes with their conquest. These tribes are discussed in chapter 13, and the western tribes are detailed in chapters 14-19.
- Judah receives the most detailed treatment (chapter 15), with a large list of cities, emphasizing their unique and prominent place in Israelite history. Dr. Howard points out that this is "confirmed even by this extensive treatment devoted to it, that the author includes many more cities at much more length than we see for the other cities" and that "Judah, from the beginning, received one of the greatest blessings from his father Jacob in Genesis 49."
- Ephraim and Manasseh (the sons of Joseph) are also given a special focus (chapters 16-17) because of the blessings they received from Jacob. Dr. Howard notes, "his descendants become the most significant tribes in the northern part of the land."

1. The Special Case of the Levites:

- The Levites were not given land inheritance. Instead, God Himself was their inheritance. "To the tribe of Levi, the text tells us, Moses gave no inheritance, no land inheritance. Namely, why? It's because the Lord God of Israel is their inheritance, just as he said to them."
- Their role was to serve as priests and helpers in the Tabernacle (later the Temple).
- This points to a more spiritual inheritance, "the privilege of being priests to God is sufficient for them." Although they didn't receive land, they did have 48 cities throughout the territory in order to have places to live.
- This emphasizes that their relationship with God and their special commission was of greater value than material possessions, a theme that challenges modern materialistic values.

1. **Detailed Lists and Boundaries:**

- The text includes detailed boundary lists and city lists, describing the specific allotments given to each tribe.
- Dr. Howard compares reading the boundary lists to using an Etch-a-Sketch, with the line moving as the boundary is described. He states, "it reminds me that the author is trying to bring alive the boundaries, to make them real to the reader."
- There are boundary lists and city lists and these are sometimes combined, showing a lot of detail, and the author is trying to give the reader the feeling of that detail.
- Many of the cities listed in the text are unknown and occur nowhere else in the Bible.

1. **God's Care for Individuals:**

- While there is a focus on tribal distribution, the text includes narratives of individuals like Caleb (chapter 14) and the daughters of Zelophehad (chapter 17) that show God's concern for individual situations.
- Dr. Howard says this "shows that God's interest is not only on the big picture, just the tribes in general, but also individuals."
- The daughters of Zelophehad story highlights God's justice and willingness to adapt laws to ensure inheritance is passed on correctly.

1. **Tension and Unfulfilled Expectations:**

- In contrast to the daughters of Zelophehad, the descendants of Joseph come off as complaining about their territory in 17:14-16, leading to Joshua's humorous response to take more land. This contrast illustrates the range of reactions and attitudes during this time.
- Dr. Howard paraphrases Joshua's response as "you're big boys and girls. Go take it."
- Their begrudging response highlights the contrast with the story of Zelophehad's daughters.

1. **Importance of Shiloh:**

- Shiloh became a central place for the setting up of the tent of meeting and for the distribution of land to the last seven tribes (18:1-10). This indicates its growing importance in the religious and political life of the Israelites.
- The text describes the process of sending out surveyors to map the land, indicating the organized and intentional nature of the distribution.

1. **Joshua's Inheritance:**

- The final section of chapter 19 (verses 49-51) focuses on Joshua receiving his own inheritance, emphasizing that even the leader is taken care of by God.
- Joshua is referred to as “Joshua, the son of Nun” to emphasize his authority.

1. **The Incomplete Pacification:**

- Although the land is pacified in general, there are indications that not all the inhabitants were removed. Dr. Howard states, “So the land is pacified, sort of.”
- Judah could not remove the Jebusites from Jerusalem (15:63), a fact that appears to date the text to before David's conquest of the city.
- This incomplete removal of the inhabitants sets up future problems for Israel. The book of Judges highlights the continued struggles of Israel due to these failures to drive out all the inhabitants.

1. **Summary and Conclusion:**

- While Joshua emphasizes the theme of rest and fulfillment of promises, the existence of the remaining inhabitants and the Israelites' failure to completely drive out all of the people foreshadows future conflicts.
- The land is finally divided after the conquest, but the author gives us a glimpse into the future issues when he points out that some groups were not driven out.
- The land distribution is a fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham.
- The emphasis on individuals as well as tribes reveals a God who cares for all.
- Dr. Howard concludes, “the overwhelming picture of Joshua is the picture of rest, and I think that's a valid and accurate picture.” But he also notes “there are these little ticking time bombs that are going to come off when we move into the book of Judges.”

Conclusion:

The book of Joshua is not just about warfare. Chapters 13-19 are an essential part of the narrative, showing the meticulous way the land was distributed and the significance of God's promises being fulfilled, even with the lingering issues of an incomplete victory. These chapters highlight the complex and sometimes difficult to understand historical context of this part of the Bible. Dr. Howard's commentary makes it easier to see the forest for the trees, and is an important reminder of God's care for both the whole people and each individual, as well as a reminder that God's plan can sometimes be incomplete in human time.

4. Study Guide: Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 17, Joshua 13-19 – Land Distribution

Joshua 13-19: Land Distribution Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. Why is the section of Joshua 13-19 considered more difficult to read than the earlier chapters?
2. What does God tell Joshua about the land at the beginning of chapter 13, and how does this contrast with previous statements about conquest?
3. What special role did the tribe of Levi play in Israel, and how did this affect their inheritance?
4. How does the author describe the boundary lists in chapter 15 for the tribe of Judah, and what effect is he trying to achieve with this description?
5. How does the inheritance of Joseph get divided, and what is the historical significance of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh?
6. What is the story of Zelophehad's daughters, and what does it illustrate about God's character?
7. What complaint do the people of Joseph voice to Joshua in chapter 17, and how does Joshua respond?
8. What purpose did the surveyors serve in chapter 18, and how did the land distribution process conclude at Shiloh?
9. How is Joshua's inheritance described, and what is notable about his designation as "son of Nun" at the end of the land distribution narrative?
10. What key detail regarding the Jebusites demonstrates that the conquest wasn't fully completed and might suggest the timeframe when the book was written?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The section is more difficult to read because it shifts from a narrative of battles to detailed lists of peoples, cities, and borders, which can be less engaging and seemingly impenetrable to readers. Commentators, and the author as well, often find it challenging to write about them.

2. God tells Joshua that there is still much land left to possess, contrasting with previous summaries that suggested a complete and instantaneous conquest, which emphasizes that the earlier statements were generalizations and not literal descriptions of the extent of the conquest.
3. The tribe of Levi was set apart for religious service, acting as priests and assisting in the Tabernacle; they did not receive a land inheritance like other tribes because God and the privilege of serving him were their inheritance.
4. The boundary lists for Judah are described using a variety of Hebrew verbs that depict the boundary line moving as if it were being traced or sketched in real-time, aiming to make the boundaries vivid and real for the reader by engaging their imagination.
5. Joseph's inheritance was split between his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh; these tribes became the most significant in the northern part of the land and formed a key part of the northern kingdom after the kingdom was divided.
6. Zelophehad's daughters appealed to Moses to inherit land in the absence of sons, which was granted and later fulfilled by Joshua. This highlights God's character as one who keeps his promises and cares for individuals as well as larger groups.
7. The people of Joseph complained that they were only given one allotment and the hill country was not sufficient. Joshua responded by telling them they should take the land they desire themselves due to their strength and numbers.
8. Surveyors were sent to create a map of the land that was to be divided and the land was distributed through lots cast at Shiloh, finalizing the division of the land among the remaining tribes after the map was created.
9. Joshua received the city of Timnath-Serah, which he requested in the hill country of Ephraim, and his designation as "son of Nun" serves as a formal marker of his authority in the division of the land which emphasizes his leadership role.
10. The Jebusites continued to inhabit Jerusalem among the people of Judah which means the task of conquest wasn't complete. This detail also suggests that the book of Joshua was written before David conquered Jerusalem, which he would later make his capital.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Respond to each question with a well-organized essay.

1. Analyze the significance of the land distribution in Joshua 13-19, and discuss how this section contributes to the overall narrative of the book and its theological themes.
2. Compare and contrast the roles of the tribes of Judah, Levi, and the descendants of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) within the context of the land distribution, and discuss how their respective inheritances reflect their unique positions in Israel.
3. Examine the relationship between the collective narrative of the tribes and individual stories within the land distribution chapters, using specific examples to illustrate how God's concern is shown for both groups and individuals.
4. Discuss the concept of "rest" and the idea of God's promise keeping as it appears in Joshua 13-19, paying attention to the details of the distribution and the ongoing challenges that the Israelites faced after the conquest.
5. Evaluate the tension between the perceived completion of the conquest in Joshua 1-12 and the lingering conflicts revealed in chapters 13-19. What does this tension reveal about the nature of Israel's obedience to God?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Allotment:** A specific portion of land assigned to a tribe or individual as their inheritance.
- **Boundary List:** A detailed description of the borders or limits of a territory.
- **City List:** A catalogue of cities assigned to each tribe within their territory.
- **Ephraim & Manasseh:** The sons of Joseph, whose inheritances were split into two tribes, who later held prominent positions in the northern part of the land.
- **Gilgal:** The initial camp of the Israelites after crossing the Jordan River; the place they were based until they moved to Shiloh.
- **Inheritance:** Land or property passed down to descendants; in this context, land given to the tribes of Israel by God.
- **Jebusites:** The inhabitants of Jerusalem that were not driven out when the tribes entered the promised land.
- **Judah:** A tribe of Israel that received a large and detailed land inheritance in the southern part of the land, considered one of the most prominent tribes.
- **Levi:** A tribe set apart for priestly service, and as such they did not receive a land inheritance but were granted cities throughout Israel.
- **Shiloh:** A location where the tent of meeting was set up during the land distribution and where lots were cast for each remaining tribe.
- **Tabernacle:** The portable sanctuary where God was worshipped in ancient Israel.
- **Zelophehad:** A man whose daughters were granted land because he had no sons, which demonstrates God's concern for individuals and unique situations.

5. FAQs on Howard, Joshua-Ruth, Session 17, Joshua 13-19 – Land Distribution, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions about the Land Distribution in Joshua 13-19

1. **Why are the land distribution chapters (Joshua 13-19) considered more difficult to read than the earlier sections of Joshua?** These chapters are challenging due to their detailed and seemingly repetitive lists of cities, boundaries, and peoples. Unlike the narrative-driven conquest stories, these sections consist largely of geographical information, which can be difficult for modern readers to follow and appreciate without a deep understanding of the historical and geographical context. Commentaries on Joshua often devote less time and detail to these chapters.
2. **What is significant about God telling Joshua, "there remains yet very much land left to possess" in Joshua 13:1?** This statement highlights that the conquest of Canaan was not a complete and instantaneous event as sometimes portrayed in earlier summarizing statements. While those earlier passages give the impression that the conquest was complete, God's message to Joshua indicates that there were still significant areas and peoples yet to be subdued. This modifies those statements and shows the reality of the gradual process of settlement.
3. **What is unique about the tribe of Levi's inheritance, and why?** Unlike the other tribes, the Levites were not given land as an inheritance. Instead, God Himself was designated as their inheritance, along with the offerings made to Him. The Levites were given the special role of serving in the Tabernacle/Temple as priests and assistants. This distinction was due to their faithful service during the golden calf incident, making them a tribe dedicated to religious service and relationship with God rather than material possessions. They did receive 48 cities scattered throughout the land, but not large tracts of land like the other tribes.
4. **Why does the book of Joshua dedicate so much space to the tribe of Judah's land allotment (Joshua 15)?** The extensive detail given to Judah's allotment emphasizes the tribe's privileged and foundational role in Israel's history. Judah received a significant blessing from Jacob in Genesis 49 and later became the tribe through which God continued His promises to David, including the Davidic kingship. The detailed list of over 100 cities, many of which are not mentioned elsewhere, demonstrates the tribe's importance in God's plan.

5. **How are boundary lists and city lists used to describe the land allotments in Joshua 13-19?** The authors of Joshua use boundary lists, with active verbs that describe how a boundary line moved from one place to another, to bring the text alive and help readers understand how the borders were drawn. City lists provide a detailed record of the locations that made up each tribe's territory. These lists show the meticulousness of the land division process and offer insights into the unique geography of each tribe's area.
6. **What is the significance of the story of the daughters of Zelophehad in Joshua 17?** This story highlights God's justice and concern for individuals, not just for the large tribes. Zelophehad's daughters, who had no male heirs, successfully petitioned for their father's inheritance. Their case, first addressed in Numbers 27, demonstrates that God's law is flexible and righteous. It also shows that the author is concerned not only with the big picture of the land distribution, but also with the needs of individual people.
7. **How does the story of the tribe of Joseph in Joshua 17 contrast with that of Zelophehad's daughters?** The story of Zelophehad's daughters showcases a humble request that was granted, while the story of the tribe of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) is a less positive one. They come to Joshua, complaining they haven't been given enough land and demanding more, suggesting a dissatisfaction with their initial allotment. In response, Joshua tells them that because they are so numerous and powerful, they should go out and expand their land by fighting the Canaanites. This highlights a responsibility to claim their inheritance that the other story does not.
8. **What is the final summary of the land distribution process, and what does it imply about the overall theme of the book of Joshua?** The final summary highlights that the land was distributed through a religiously sanctioned process led by Eliezer the priest and Joshua, son of Nun, and under the authority of God at Shiloh, thus completing the promise to Abraham. However, some tribes failed to drive out the Canaanites completely, and the fact that the Jebusites were still in Jerusalem is a notable example. While the book emphasizes rest and the fulfillment of promises, it also hints at the challenges and failures that will soon emerge in the book of Judges. So, although the land was "pacified", the task was not totally completed as God had instructed.