



4. Judah's Inheritance ([14:6–15:63](#))

Judah, as the most important tribe in Israel's history and the recipient of a special blessing from Jacob many years earlier ([Gen 49:8–12](#)), received the most land west of the Jordan, and the attention devoted to its lands is the most detailed and extensive of all the tribes. For more detailed introductions to Judah's tribal inheritance, see the introductions to chap. [15](#) and to [15:21–62](#).

(1) Caleb's Inheritance: Part One ([14:6–15](#))

⁶Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. ⁷I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, ⁸but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. ⁹So on that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.’

¹⁰“Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! ¹¹I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. ¹²Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.”

¹³Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. ¹⁴So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. ¹⁵(Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.)

Then the land had rest from war.

Before the narrative in chap. [14](#) details Judah's inheritance, Caleb, a prominent figure in an earlier story, is given his inheritance. Caleb was from the tribe of Judah ([Num 13:6](#)), and he had been one of the twelve spies sent into Canaan from the wilderness. He and Joshua alone had given a favorable report ([Num 14:6–9](#)), resulting in their being the only ones from their generation allowed to enter Canaan ([14:30](#)). We are told three times of his taking his inheritance, although with different emphases each time ([Josh 14:6–15](#); [15:13–19](#); [Judg 1:12–15](#)). The fact that three episodes tell of his inheritance highlights his prominent status in Israel.

¹ David M. Howard, *New American Commentary – Volume 5: Joshua*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 325-330, 356-360.

Caleb reviewed his actions and obedience for Joshua before asking him for land in the hill country of Judah; he would drive out the remaining Anakites from that land (vv. [6–12](#)). Joshua granted his wish, giving him Hebron, a prominent city that previously had been captured ([10:3](#), [36–37](#); [12:10](#)), but which may have been taken again by the Anakites who were not destroyed by the Israelites (cf. [11:22](#)).

The story of Caleb's inheritance is one of five stories in chaps. [14–21](#) in which characters ask for and receive their inheritance: Caleb ([14:6–15](#)); Acsah ([15:18–19](#)); the daughters of Zelophehad ([17:3–6](#)); Joseph ([17:14–18](#)); and the Levites ([21:1–3](#)). These have been identified and labeled as “land grant narratives” by Nelson, and they follow a similar pattern in most cases. First, there is a confrontation that establishes the setting and the characters. Then the would-be grantees present their case and make a request for land. Following this, the land is granted, and, finally, a summary of the resolution is given.

[14:6](#) We hear nothing after this of the men of Judah who came to Joshua, but Caleb, a Judahite ([Num 13:6](#)), was with them, and this is his story. Joshua was at Gilgal, which presumably is the Gilgal near Jericho (see the commentary on [9:6](#) on another possible Gilgal). The next geographical indicator about where Joshua was comes in [18:1](#), where the entire nation assembled at Shiloh, another significant religious site for Israel.

Though Caleb is called a “Kenizzite” ([14:6](#), [14](#); cf. [Num 32:12](#)), he was also from the tribe of Judah ([Num 13:6](#); [1 Chr 2:9](#); [4:15](#)). Since we know that a non-Israelite group called Kenizzites lived in Canaan like the Kenites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, et cetera ([Gen 15:19](#)), scholars have puzzled over Caleb's exact lineage. The simplest solution is to remember that the term “Kenizzite” means “son of Kenaz.” Caleb's brother Othniel is called “son of Kenaz” in [Josh 15:17](#), so Caleb may have been a “Kenizzite” by virtue of being associated with a relative or ancestor named Kenaz. Thus the Kenizzites of Caleb's line were one of the family groups within the tribe of Judah and were not related at all to the non-Israelite Kenizzites of [Gen 15:19](#). This is made more plausible by the fact that Caleb himself had a descendant named Kenaz ([1 Chr 4:15](#)).

Caleb's words to Joshua recall their experience together forty years earlier as the two spies who gave a favorable report to Moses. His words in this verse emphasize Joshua's role and can be paraphrased as “You (of all people), you know the word that the LORD spoke to Moses, the man of God, concerning me and concerning you, at Kadesh Barnea.” The reference here is to God's promises to Joshua and Caleb to bring them into the land of Canaan and give them inheritances there ([Num 14:24](#), [30](#)).

[14:7–9](#) These verses review the events of [Numbers 13](#) and [14](#). While Caleb's (and Joshua's) report was positive, the other spies' report had the effect of making the Israelites' hearts melt because of the fearsome nature of the land's inhabitants (vv. [7–8](#)). Ironically, this was precisely the reaction of Canaan's inhabitants earlier, when they had heard of Israel's exploits ([Josh 2:9](#), [11](#), [24](#); [5:1](#)).

Caleb emphasized his own faithfulness in contrast to his fellow spies' faithlessness, stating that he had “fully” followed the Lord. Caleb's passion is revealed by the manner in which he spoke. We have already noted his special emphasis on Joshua in v. [6](#). Here, in v. [8](#), he displayed a similar passion when he stated, “As for me, I have fully followed the LORD.” He was confident of his faithfulness to the Lord and now, forty-five years later (see v. [10](#)), he wanted to claim that which had been promised to him.

Moses' promise to Caleb (v. [9](#)) is recorded in [Num 14:24](#) and especially [Deut 1:36](#), where the wording is similar to that here. We learn here that Moses had actually sworn (*šb'*) to Caleb, a fact not recorded in the earlier passages. (See also the commentary on [19:49–50](#).) Caleb was not being self-serving by claiming that he had fully followed the Lord; he was simply stating a fact that Moses also had recognized (see the words at the end of v. [9](#), which are found in the Lord's mouth almost verbatim in [Num 14:24](#) and in Moses' mouth in [Deut 1:36](#)).

[14:10–12](#) In vv. [10–11](#), Caleb's focus shifts from the past to the present, specifically, on his own condition and readiness to claim his inheritance. Despite the fact that he was now eighty-five years old (adding the forty years of v. [7](#) to the forty-five years of v. [10](#)), he still claimed physical vigor and a readiness and willingness to do battle. His words were insistent and animated, revealing the vigor and eagerness of a man far younger. For example, he used the expression “and now” (*wě‘attâ*) three times (vv. [10](#)[2x],[12](#)), which shows him carefully, but insistently, building a logical case for himself; it can be translated as “now then,” as the NIV does at the beginning of v. [10](#). The reference to God's promise is to [Num 14:24](#).

The time periods referred to in vv. [7](#) and [10](#) give us an insight into the period of time covered by most of the Book of Joshua. Israel was sentenced to forty years of wandering in the wilderness after the spies came back with their report ([Num 14:33–34](#)). Verse [10](#) shows that forty-five years had elapsed since the time of this sentence, so the conquest to date had occupied some five years (or perhaps seven, if the two years Israel had already been in the wilderness—[Num 10:11](#)—are counted in the forty years). Joshua's farewell addresses may have come many years later, however (see the commentary on [23:1](#)).

On the basis of the promises of God and Moses to him, and his own physical vigor (and, presumably, because at his advanced age he would not have had many more years left to him), Caleb presented his request to be given his inheritance (v. [12](#)). His passion is revealed again in his words at the outset of v. [12](#) (lit.): “Now then [*wě‘attâ*], give to me this hill country.” He again appealed to Joshua as one who was present forty-five years earlier, who would know of the fearsome nature of the land's inhabitants and their cities. But he hoped for the Lord's help, since God had promised that Caleb would indeed inherit the land ([Num 14:24](#)). Caleb's faith is also revealed in his confession that it was Yahweh himself who had kept him alive these forty-five years, so that he could inherit his land (v. [10](#)).

The Israelites' destruction of the Anakites is recounted in [11:21–22](#). However, some were able to survive outside of Israelite territory, in the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. The reference to them here (and in [15:14](#)) would seem to indicate that Anakites had returned to at least some of their former places.

[14:13](#) Verses [13–15](#) show the “resolution” (v. [13](#)) and the “results” (vv. [14–15](#)) of the entire episode. No words of Joshua's are recorded in response to Caleb's extended and impassioned speech (vv. [6–12](#)). This fact may signal that Caleb's words were singularly effective and that no verbal response was necessary, only action. Joshua blessed Caleb and gave him the city of Hebron as his inheritance.

This verse records only the second instance in the book of a blessing (*brk*). The concept of a blessing is a rich one in biblical thought. God's blessing upon his people bestowed abundant and effective life upon them (e.g., [Gen 27:27–29](#); [49:1–28](#)). It involved bestowing material abundance upon them, such as children (e.g., [Gen 1:28](#); [28:3](#)), land ([Gen 26:3](#); [28:4](#)), or wealth ([Gen 28:12–14](#)), as well as upon others ([Gen 12:3](#); [22:18](#)). When people blessed God, they were worshiping him, ascribing worth to him and his great name (e.g., [Ps 103:1–2](#); [104:1](#)). When people blessed each other, it conveyed a desire for God's best to befall them (e.g., [Gen 47:10](#); [Judg 5:24](#); [Neh 11:2](#); [Prov 30:11](#)). Blessing someone was more than wishful thinking, however, since blessing in the name of the Lord tapped into the power and resources of God himself.

In the Book of Joshua blessings are bestowed by both God and men. God's blessings through the reading of the blessings in the law were given to the people at Mount Ebal ([Josh 8:33–34](#)). Joshua blessed Caleb ([14:13](#)) and the Transjordan tribes ([22:6–7](#)), and Caleb's daughter Achsah asked her father for a blessing of a land grant ([15:19](#)). And the Israelites blessed God (i.e., they praised him: see NIV) when the misunderstanding about the Transjordan tribes' building of an altar was resolved ([22:33](#)).

[14:14–15](#) The episode resulted in the city of Hebron becoming Caleb's inheritance ever since (lit., “until this day”). Caleb's whole-hearted devotion to God had never been in question, even in the wilderness (this is affirmed in [Num 14:24](#); [Deut 1:36](#); [Josh 14:14](#)). As a result, he received as a reward the land that he requested. His faithfulness to God over a period of forty-five years of waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled was certainly remarkable and worthy of emulating today.

The episode ends with an explanation of the city's name and a concluding comment about rest for the land, just as the account of the southern and northern campaigns had ended ([11:23](#)).

The former name of the city of Hebron had been Kiriath Arba. It was where Sarah had died many years earlier ([Gen 23:2](#)). Its former name meant “city of Arba” (i.e., “Arbatown”). Arba was the most prominent man of the Anakites, although he is not known except for references here and in [15:13](#) and [21:11](#), where he is said to have been the founding ancestor of the Anakite people. This passage explaining why this place received a new name is sometimes labeled by scholars as an etiology (see following excursus).

6. The Other Tribes' Inheritance ([18:1–19:48](#))

After the most important tribes have been dealt with in previous chapters, the land distribution is rapidly concluded now in two chapters that detail the remaining seven allotments. The allotment descriptions for each tribe are much shorter and much more uniform than those of Judah and the two Joseph tribes. The unity of the two chapters is indicated by the regularly patterned allotments for all the remaining tribes, by the accounting for every tribe—including those mentioned previously, and Levi, to be mentioned later—and even by the opening and closing verses ([18:1](#); [19:51](#)), which both mention Shiloh and the tent of meeting. The literary unity reflects the historical unity that was to be the standard for the entire nation (see [1:12–18](#); cf. chap. [22](#)).

Until now, Israel's central encampment in the land appears to have been at Gilgal, but now the entire congregation moved to Shiloh ([18:1](#)), and the tent of meeting was set up there. At this assembly at Shiloh Joshua charged Israel with the task of mapping out and possessing the land for the remaining seven tribes ([18:2–10](#)). After the surveying was done, lots were cast, and the land was apportioned out accordingly. The seven tribes were Benjamin, Simeon, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan. The lists for each of these are similar and straightforward, for the most part, listing boundaries and/or cities belonging to each tribe. Simeon inherited land within Judah's allotment ([19:1](#), [9](#)), and Dan would later lose its territory and migrate northward ([19:47](#); cf. [Judg 1:34–35](#); [18:27–31](#)). The other tribes are not forgotten, however. Joshua carefully mentioned each one: the two and one-half Transjordan tribes, Judah, the two Joseph tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh), and Levi (vv. [5–7](#)). The detail and inclusiveness here shows the importance of (1) the land in God's plans for Israel and (2) the unity of the nation.

The format of the distribution lists changes in these two chapters from the previous chapters. It is uniform and regular for all seven tribes dealt with, as we have noted. The lot (*gôrāl*) was involved in each one, but the territories were surveyed before the lots were cast. Previously, the distribution for the two and one-half Transjordan tribes involved no lot, since the account in chap. [13](#) is essentially a review of what had already happened under Moses. In the distributions to the important tribes of Judah and Joseph (chaps. [15–17](#)), the lot is mentioned, but no surveying was done and the *gôrāl* was more of a static nature (“allotment”) rather than the active nature seen in chaps. [18–19](#), where the lot appears actually to have been cast.

God's presence throughout these two chapters, but especially in [18:1–10](#), is indicated in at least three ways: (1) the presence of the tent of meeting ([18:1](#); [19:51](#)); (2) the presence of the Lord ([18:6](#), [8](#), [10](#); [19:51](#)); and (3) the actual casting of the lots, since God controlled even the lot ([18:6](#), [10–11](#); [19:1](#), [10](#), [17](#), [24](#), [32](#), [40](#), [51](#)).

(1) Introduction ([18:1–10](#))

¹The whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there. The country was brought under their control, ²but there were still seven Israelite tribes who had not yet received their inheritance.

³So Joshua said to the Israelites: “How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? ⁴Appoint three men from each tribe. I will send them out to make a survey of the land and to write a description of it, according to the inheritance of each. Then they will return to me. ⁵You are to divide the land into seven parts. Judah is to remain in its territory on the south and the house of Joseph in its territory on the north. ⁶After you have written descriptions of the seven parts of the land, bring them here to me and I will cast lots for you in the presence of the LORD our God. ⁷The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the LORD is their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh have already received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. Moses the servant of the LORD gave it to them.”

⁸As the men started on their way to map out the land, Joshua instructed them, “Go and make a survey of the land and write a description of it. Then return to me, and I will cast lots for you here at Shiloh in the presence of the LORD.” ⁹So the men left and went through the land. They wrote its description on a scroll, town by town, in seven parts, and returned to Joshua in the camp at Shiloh. ¹⁰Joshua then cast lots for them in Shiloh in the presence of the LORD, and there he distributed the land to the Israelites according to their tribal divisions.

This section represents an important turning point in the land distribution lists and is arguably the focal point of all of chaps. [13–21](#) (see the introduction to these chapters). A new location—Shiloh—is the setting, and the tent of meeting is mentioned for the first time in the book. God's presence is emphasized as the passage opens and closes, through the references to the tent of meeting in v. [1](#) and “the presence of the LORD” in v. [10](#).

Koorevaar sees the emphasis on God's presence here as the fulfillment of the Lord's last promise in the list of blessings in [Leviticus 26](#): “I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people” ([Lev 26:11–12](#)). [Joshua 18:1–10](#) also is the fulfillment of God's promises in [Deuteronomy 12](#) about placing his name in the place he would choose.

[18:1–2](#) Up to this point, Israel's central encampment in the land appears to have been at Gilgal, near Jericho, where the nation had observed several religious ceremonies ([4:19–20](#); [5:2–12](#)). This was where Caleb had approached Joshua to ask for his inheritance ([14:6](#)). Now the entire congregation moved to Shiloh ([18:1](#)), about fifteen miles northwest of Jericho, and the tent of meeting was set up there. Shiloh was in the territory of Ephraim (see [16:6](#)), and it would remain an important Israelite religious center for several hundred years, until the taking of Jerusalem in David's day (see [19:51](#); [21:2](#); [Judg 18:31](#); [21:12](#); [1 Sam 1:9](#)). The ark was kept there ([1 Sam 3:3](#)), and it was brought into battle against the Philistines, who captured it in Samuel's day ([1 Samuel 4](#)). Soon after that event, Shiloh was destroyed ([Ps 78:60](#); [Jer 7:14](#)).

The only other reference to the tent of meeting (i.e., the tabernacle) in Joshua is at the end of the two-chapter section, in [19:51](#). The tabernacle was a large portable tent that served as God's "home" when the Israelites were in the wilderness. In it were the ark of the covenant and other holy items. It was made of fine boards covered with layers of rich fabrics ([Exodus 26](#)). There was also a different tent called the "tent of meeting," which Moses used to pitch outside of the camp, where he and the people could also meet God ([Exod 33:7](#)). It was a temporary tent during the Israelites' days in the wilderness, and it is not referred to later in the Old Testament.

These two verses introduce the situation that needed to be remedied, and they set the stage geographically and spiritually in the process by mentioning Shiloh and the tent of meeting. The situation was that though the land was essentially subdued, seven tribes still had not received their allotted territories.

[18:3–7](#) Joshua's question in v. [3](#) sounds on the face of it like an accusation, and it very well may have been. However, no specific command to take the land had been given as yet, and Joshua's words may have been merely rhetorical, as a preface to his detailed instructions in vv. [4–7](#). The already-accomplished aspect of God's gift of the land that is first introduced in [1:3](#) is again emphasized here (see the commentary on [1:3](#) and the excursus there on "The Giving of the Land in Joshua"). Joshua reminded the people that it was the God of their fathers who had given them the land. "Your fathers" refers to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the expression "the God of your fathers" was an important one: God used it with Moses at the burning bush ([Exod 3:13, 15–16](#)), and Moses used it several times in Deuteronomy as he exhorted the people ([1:11, 21; 4:1; 6:3; 21:1; 27:3](#)). This is its first use in Joshua, and it is a subtle reminder of the promises God had made to the patriarchs about the land (e.g., [Gen 12:7; 15:18–21](#) [Abraham]; [26:3–4](#) [Isaac]; [28:4, 13; 35:12](#) [Jacob]).

In order to accomplish the equitable dividing, taking, and settlement of the remaining lands, Joshua instructed that three men from each of the seven remaining tribes be appointed as surveyors who would travel throughout the land and record its description (v. [4](#)). The seriousness of the task is emphasized by the repeated references to writing in this passage. Three times the text specifies that the men were to write down what they found (vv. [4, 6, 8](#)). Then, in v. [9](#), the execution of the command to do this is mentioned: they carefully wrote down on a scroll the land's contours by its cities and by its seven divisions. These things show the importance of the task as well as the fact that later generations were to know of it because it was to be written down.

In vv. [5–7](#), the unity of the nation and the equitable distribution of the land are the primary focus. All fourteen land distribution units are accounted for here: the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and Manasseh (v. [5](#)), the seven remaining tribes (v. [6](#)), the Levites (v. [7a](#)), and the three tribal units east of the Jordan (v. [7b](#)). Before the nation hurried ahead to complete its remaining land distributions, Joshua made sure that they remembered the previous distributions.

Three items bear mentioning here. First, Joshua's leadership is visible because he was actively involved in parceling out the lands. The twenty-one surveyors were to bring their findings to him, and he would cast lots before the Lord (v. [6](#)). Second, the Lord's presence was with the people, and he oversaw the lots (v. [6](#)). Third, the Levites' special inheritance is again singled out for attention and augmented. Previously, their inheritance had been identified as "the offerings made by fire to the LORD" ([13:14](#)) and "the LORD, the God of Israel" ([13:33](#)). Now, a third way of looking at their inheritance is introduced: it was "the priestly service of the LORD" (v. [7](#)).

[18:8–10](#) Verse [8](#) is somewhat repetitive of information already recorded in vv. [4](#) and [6](#). The repetition of Joshua's words shows the importance and solemnity of the occasion. Verse [9](#) records the execution of the commands Joshua gave in vv. [4–6](#). Then v. [10](#) states that Joshua did what he said he would do. There is little new here that is not already anticipated in vv. [4–6](#), but the report of the execution of the commands is consistent with the same pattern throughout the book. Joshua and the people took extreme care to do things as they should.

The description of the land that was written down on the scroll (v. [9](#)) was presumably that which is now found in the following portions of the Book of Joshua: [18:11–19:48](#).

This key passage ends, then, with the assurance that each tribe did indeed receive its allotted territory. The previous allotments were a matter of record, the Levites' inheritance was the Lord's service, and the remaining tribes did receive their lands equitably and in order. The unity of the nation was still holding firm. The rest of chaps. [18–19](#) are devoted to detailing the allotments, but by [18:10](#) the allotments were complete, an accomplished fact.