

The Allocation of the Transjordan

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Joshua describes the area allotted to Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh in the Transjordan
2. aim – To cause us to recognize and use the various God has given to sanctify us in Christ
3. passage – Joshua 13:8-33

b. outline

1. The Allocation of the Transjordan Land (Joshua 13:8-13)
2. The Allocation to the Transjordan Tribes (Joshua 13:15-32)
3. The Allocation to the Transjordan Levites (Joshua 13:14, 33)

c. opening

1. the **content** of **13:8-33**
 - a. Joshua *summarizes* the allocation of the land E of the Jordan (**i.e.** the Transjordan)
 1. in the chaps. to follow, he will summarize the allocation of the land in Canaan-proper, the territory to the W of the Jordan *where the military campaigns under Joshua occurred*
 - a. to Israel: these verses are *extremely important*, for they establish where each tribe is going to settle – **i.e.** to **Joshua's audience**, these words are written as a great reminder to them of where God had settled them *according to the promise he gave to Abraham*
 2. **so**: our approach will be to point out where these places are, and then focus on the *overarching point* – **what can we learn from this allocation that applies to our reality?**
 - b. (**as before**) **chaps. 13-19** represent the **crowning achievement** of the life of Joshua
 1. contra: the idea that Joshua is renown *primarily* for his *military capability*
 2. **the best is saved for last**: at the end of his life, Joshua is given the great honor by Yahweh to divvy up the land amongst the people, to carve out *under God's direction* where each tribe would settle – to do what Moses was never honored to do because of his sin ...
2. the **structure** of **13:8-33**
 - a. first, a general summary of the allocation of the Transjordan (**vv. 8-13**)
 - b. then, the specific allocation to the 2½ tribes in the Transjordan (**vv. 15-32**)
 - c. finally, a *non-allocation* in the Transjordan (of some significance; **vv. 14, 33**)

I. The Allocation of the Transjordan Land (Joshua 13:8-13)

Content

a. the tribes included in this allocation (v. 8)

1. **note**: although the ESV renders **v. 8a** as “with the other half of the tribe of Manasseh,” the original Hebrew actually just reads “with it” – meaning: “it” as a reference back to **v. 7 (the ESV clarifies)**
 - a. Yahweh tells Joshua (**in vv. 1-7**) that 1) he is old, 2) there is still much of the land (and its occupants) to be conquered (**i.e.** the Conquest continues), and 3) he is to allot the land to Israel
 - b. **ITC**: divide “this land” up (**i.e.** W of the Jordan) as an inheritance to the 9½ tribes – the ½ tribe being *the primary half* of the tribe of Manasseh *on this side of the Jordan*
 - c. **IOW**: the “it” of **v. 8** is *the remaining half* of the tribe of Manasseh – **i.e.** those settling to the E
2. the tribes included in this allocation (then) are: **Reuben, Gad, and ½ of Manasseh**
 - a. **recall**: this E allocation is a *deference* agreed to by Moses – the *original* promise to Abraham was the territory of Canaan W of the Jordan
 1. in Numbers 32, the leaders of Reuben and Gad come to Moses and ask him for permission to simply *remain* in the land they are currently encamped (**i.e.** having come up from the S through Edom and Moab, they were camped in Gilead, on the E side of the Jordan)
 2. Moses *acquiesces* to their request – they confirm that they are willing to fight alongside Israel on the W of the Jordan (which they do; **see Joshua 4:12**), and Moses promises these tribes an inheritance in this land (and *specifically* instructs Joshua to give it to them)
 3. so, the allocation outlined here *is the fulfillment of the promise made by Moses* – **i.e.** which “Moses gave them ... as Moses the servant of the Lord gave them”
 4. **the implication**: Yahweh had *authorized* this inheritance *through* Moses (**note**: there is no reference to Moses consulting the Lord about this in **Num. 32**, but it was *clearly* acceptable)

- b. **question:** why does ½ of Manasseh *suddenly* appear in **Num. 32:33** as a part of this allocation?
 - 1. **maybe:** this *foreshadows* the fact that some of Manasseh (Machir, Jair, Nobah) dispossess the Amorites from Gilead (**Num. 32:39-42 cf. vv. 30f**), thus Moses *has already decided* that these Manassites would occupy the land *in perpetuity* after the Conquest of the W
 - a. however, it is *strange* that it is never mentioned before and, the narrative *seems to imply (IMO)* that the above attack in Gilead happens *after* Reuben and Gad make their request
 - 2. **sanctified speculation:** based on the **double-blessing** given to Joseph (*i.e.* the blessing of the two sons of Joseph [Ephraim and Manasseh] as his inheritance due to his great faithfulness in Egypt; **Genesis 48**), Moses decides that it is important for *some* of Joseph's descendants to occupy this "extended" territory of Canaan as well
 - a. **IOW:** a ¼ of the people of Joseph in the Transjordan helps to maintain that blessing – Joseph's progeny would occupy territory *all over* where Israel winds up, *because their very existence was based on his faithfulness to God in Egypt (i.e. God using him to save Jacob)*
- b. the area included in this allocation (vv. 9-12)**
 - 1. **note:** no map this week – I will provide one next week as we talk about the **much more complicated** allocation of Canaan W of the Jordan (it will show these E territories too)
 - 2. Joshua defines the allocation of *the entire Transjordan* very similarly to Moses in **Num. 32:33ff**:
 - a. from Aroer in the S (**v. 9**; *i.e.* the Arnon river as a S border) to Mount Hermon in the N (**v. 11**)
 - b. including all of the territory formerly of Sihon (in the S; **v. 10**) to Og (in Bashan, N; **v. 12**)
 - c. including the lush area of Gilead, the original encampment of the Israelites (**v. 11**)
 - d. *i.e.* territories that *Moses* had conquered *prior* to the Israelites crossing into Canaan (**v. 12**)
 - 3. **IOW:** Joshua recounts the area of the whole Transjordan by naming its *physical N-S boundaries* (a river and mountain), and who had originally occupied the space
- c. the reality of this allocation (v. 13)**
 - 1. (**as before**) even though Moses *did* drive out two (2) significant Amorite presences in the Transjordan, this area would have the same reality that Canaan did when the Israelites "move in":
 - a. there would *still be* "natives" in the territory that would need to be conquered – **the Conquest will continue on the E side of the Jordan just as it will on the W side**
 - b. *i.e.* the Geshurites and the Maacathites were still there in the days of this allocation
 - 2. **remember:** this is a) a warning for the E tribes to be careful (*i.e.* not intertwining with them), and b) a reminder that it would be *Yahweh* who would continue the Conquest (*i.e.* to trust in *his* power)
 - 3. **Joshua will now allocate this territory – he will allocate the Transjordan first, because this area is unique and needs a special allotment to satisfy (i.e. outside the original promise)**

II. The Allocation to the Transjordan Tribes (Joshua 13:15-32)

Content

a. the allocation to Reuben (vv. 15-23)

- 1. the territory outlined in these verses extends N from the Arnon River (flowing into the Dead Sea about the midpoint) to just above the top of the Dead Sea, from the Dead Sea E into the wilderness
 - a. a rectangular area encompassing the *former* territory of Sihon (**v. 21**)
 - b. **note:** Joshua recalls that Balaam was killed in this area (**v. 22 cf. Num. 22-24**)
- 2. **question:** is it *coincidental* that the first area *in all of Israel* allocated is to the first-born son of Jacob?
 - a. there are no coincidences, so it is *unlikely* that there is any *special* significance this
 - b. **remember:** Reuben had *forfeited* his blessing as the "first born" in the incident with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine (**Genesis 35:22 cf. 49:4**) – **IOW:** Reuben had requested this, so he is *logically* the first

b. the allocation to Gad (vv. 24-28)

- 1. the territory outlined in these verses extends N from the top of Reuben (above the Dead Sea) to the Jabbok River (flowing into the Jordan about the midpoint), from the Jordan out to Ammon
 - a. also a rectangular area (but less wide) encompassing the central area of the Transjordan
 - b. but, also including two "fingers" of land: one NW up the Jordan to the Sea of Galilee; one NE to Ramoth-Gilead, on both sides of E Manasseh above them (*i.e.* adding a V-shape to the top)

c. the allocation to Manasseh (vv. 29-32)

- 1. the territory outlined in these verses extends N from the top of Gad (above the Jabbok) all the way up to Mount Hermon (under Lebanon to the N)
 - a. a vast area in the *former* territory of Og of Bashan (**v. 30**), and the upper half of Gilead (**v. 31**)
 - b. (**as above**) territory conquered by Jair (**v. 30**) and Machir (**v. 31b**) in the days of Moses
- 2. the total area of E Manasseh is more than *double* what is allocated to Reuben and Gad

III. The Allocation to the Transjordan Levites (Joshua 13:14, 33)

Content

a. the non-allocation to the Levites

1. **note:** Joshua points out *twice* in this pericope (**vv. 14, 33**) that the Levites receive “no inheritance”
 - a. although not *explicitly* said so, the implication is: no inheritance *in the Transjordan*
 - b. **i.e.** while making the allotment for Reuben, Gad and E Manasseh, Joshua made no provision for the Levites *in the Transjordan* – they were not included in this *initial* allotment
2. **question:** why mention the Levites *at all* – up until now (both **here** and in **Numbers 32**) the Levites have *never been a part of the discussion* – why bring them up in this retelling of the E allocation?
 - a. or, was there an *assumption* that the Levites were *supposed* to be a part of this allocation?
 - b. **answer:** even though the Levites were not allocated specific land *anywhere* (**i.e.** on *either side* of the Jordan) they *would* be “sprinkled in” amongst the Transjordan tribes, *just like on the W*
 - c. **remember:** God had *purposely not* given the Levites any allocated land – instead, they would occupy areas throughout all of Israel (around cities in Israel, and in 48 *specific* cities of their own; **14:4 cf. Num. 18:21-24; 35:1-8**)
 1. the Levites would have *no land* (per se) to farm or raise herds; their income would come from the *perpetual tithes* of the Israelites to the tabernacle (**Num. 18:21ff**)
 2. the Levites would *serve the priests* at the tabernacle, acting as its *guards* and its *attendants*; they would carry the tent wherever it would go, and help the priests in their duties (**Num. 1:50ff**)
 3. the Levites would serve as *teachers* and *accountability* amongst the people to the law of God; sprinkled amongst them, they would serve to teach God’s law to the people (**Deut. 27:14ff**)
 - d. **IOW:** Joshua does not allocate land for the Levites in the Transjordan, but **many Levites would move there**, sprinkling themselves amongst Reuben, Gad, and E Manasseh

b. the analogy of the Levites

1. **(again)** we cannot apply this passage *directly*, but we can do so by analogy:
 1. **analogy: the Spirit has conquered the “enemy” of our sinful, rebellious hearts (in our justification), and now we must “take the land” (in our sanctification) – we must “occupy”**
2. but ... what has God *given us* to help us to “take this land?” – **analogy: he has sprinkled “Levites” into our lives to help us both overcome the remaining enemies and to worship the Lord**
 - a. the original Levites were set aside by God to help all the other Israelites to remain faithful to the God who had called them out of Egypt and into this Promised Land
 1. they would help the people worship (at the tabernacle), teach the people the law (**i.e.** the very nature of God himself), and hold them accountable in allegiance to Yahweh
 2. thus, the “Levites” given to the believer include: the Spirit himself, the Scriptures, the church and its leadership, worship gatherings, preaching and teaching, other believers, *koinonia* fellowship (for iron to sharpen iron), ministry service, and even discipline (when needed!)
3. **the Levites were the honored provision of God, sprinkled throughout the nation, to keep the people faithful – Christ has sent his Spirit and his Word into the church to do the same for us**