

Joshua 13:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephoth-maim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.

Analysis

All the inhabitants of the hill country from Lebanon unto Misrephoth-maim, and all the Sidonians, them will I drive out from before the children of Israel: only divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee.

This verse addresses the tension between completed conquest (11:23) and remaining territory. God acknowledges that significant areas remain unconquered—particularly the Lebanese mountain ranges and Phoenician coastal regions. The promise "them will I drive out" (anokhi orishennu, אָנֹכִי אֹרֵשֵׁנָנוּ) places responsibility squarely on divine action, not human military capacity. The emphatic pronoun "I" (anokhi, אָנֹכִי) stresses that Yahweh Himself will complete what Joshua's generation began, provided Israel maintains covenant faithfulness.

The command "only divide thou it by lot" (raq hap'ileha leYisrael benachalah, רָקְ הַפְלֵג לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנָחָלָה) instructs Joshua to allocate even unconquered territory, demonstrating faith in God's promises. This requires remarkable trust—distributing land not yet possessed based solely on divine promise. The lot-casting (goral, גּוֹרָל) removes human favoritism, allowing God to determine each tribe's inheritance (Proverbs 16:33). This method anticipates the apostolic practice of

casting lots before Pentecost (Acts 1:26), after which the Spirit's direct guidance made lots unnecessary.

Reformed theology sees here the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God promises to drive out enemies, yet Israel must actively possess their allotted territory (13:1 notes Joshua's age and much land remaining). God's promises don't eliminate human action; they motivate and empower it. This balance appears throughout Scripture: God works, therefore we work (Philippians 2:12-13). The tragic failure of some tribes to fully possess their inheritance (Judges 1) demonstrates that divine promises, though certain, require human appropriation through faith-filled obedience.

Historical Context

The unconquered territories—Lebanon, Phoenician coast, Philistine pentapolis—would remain thorns in Israel's side throughout the monarchy. The Sidonians (Phoenicians) maintained independent city-states including Tyre and Sidon, becoming both trading partners and sources of religious corruption (1 Kings 16:31; Jezebel was Sidonian). Israel's failure to drive them out, despite God's promise, resulted from covenant unfaithfulness, not divine inability.

The lot-casting practice appears throughout ancient Near Eastern cultures, but Israel's use was distinct—rather than divining fate through impersonal forces, lots discerned God's sovereign will. Urim and Thummim (probably a lot-type mechanism) provided yes/no answers to specific questions. Archaeological discoveries include dice-like objects and inscribed stones that may have served in ancient lot-casting, though exact methods remain uncertain. The key theological point is that God controlled outcomes, ensuring just distribution (Proverbs 18:18).

The detailed boundary descriptions in chapters 13-19 serve practical and theological purposes. Practically, they prevented tribal disputes by establishing clear territorial limits. Theologically, they demonstrate God's attention to detail and orderly administration of His gifts. The preservation of these ancient boundary markers in Scripture, though tedious to modern readers, testified to each tribe

that their specific inheritance was divinely ordained, not arbitrarily assigned. Every tribe mattered to God; every family had designated place in His plan.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's command to distribute unconquered land by faith challenge us to claim God's promises before seeing their fulfillment?
2. What does Israel's later failure to fully possess their inheritance teach about the difference between God's promises and our appropriation of them?
3. In what areas of Christian life do we need to balance trusting God's sovereignty ("I will drive them out") with active obedience (possessing our inheritance)?

Interlinear Text

מִשְׁרָפֶת	תֵּעַד	בְּלֹבֶן	וּלְ	מִן	בְּרִ	וְשָׁבֵ	כָּל	כָּל	וְשָׁבֵ	בְּרִ	תֵּעַד	מִשְׁרָפֶת	
H5704	H0	H3844	H5704	H4480	H2022	H3427	H3605	All the inhabitants	of the hill country	H3427	H3605	כָּל	
אֶזְרִישׁ	מִ	אֶנְכִּי	אֶזְרִישׁ	מִ	אֶנְכִּי	אֶזְרִישׁ	מִ	אֶנְכִּי	אֶזְרִישׁ	מִ	אֶנְכִּי	אֶזְרִישׁ	
unto Misrephothmaim	H4956	H3605	and all the Sidonians	H6722	H595	them will I drive out	H3423	H3423	H3423	H3423	H3423	H3423	
לִשְׁבָּאֵל	בְּפֶל	בְּ	לִשְׁבָּאֵל	בְּ	לִשְׁבָּאֵל	בְּ	לִשְׁבָּאֵל	בְּ	לִשְׁבָּאֵל	בְּ	לִשְׁבָּאֵל	לִשְׁבָּאֵל	
of Israel	H3478	H7535	only divide thou it by lot	H5307	H5307	H5307	only divide thou it by lot	H5307	only divide thou it by lot	H5307	H5307	H5307	of Israel
בְּנַחַל	הַ	בְּנַחַל	הַ	בְּנַחַל	הַ	בְּנַחַל	הַ	בְּנַחַל	הַ	בְּנַחַל	הַ	בְּנַחַל	בְּנַחַל
for an inheritance	H5159	H834	as I have commanded	H6680	H6680	H6680	as I have commanded	H6680	as I have commanded	H6680	H6680	H6680	for an inheritance

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 11:8 (References Israel): And the LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.

Joshua 23:13 (Parallel theme): Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

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