

# Joshua 14:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land.

## Analysis

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**As the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did, and they divided the land**—This succinct verse establishes the theological foundation for the land distribution detailed in chapters 13-21. The phrase **as the LORD commanded Moses** (כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת-מֹשֶׁה) grounds the allocation in divine mandate, not human preference or military conquest rights. The specific commands referenced appear in Numbers 26:52-56, 33:50-54, and 34:1-29, where God detailed tribal boundaries and distribution methods.

**So the children of Israel did** (כִּי עָשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, ken asu benei Yisra'el)—The simple obedience formula emphasizes covenant faithfulness. The verb **divided** (קָלַל, chalaq) means to apportion or allot, the same root appearing in nachalah (נָכְלָה, inheritance). The land wasn't conquered territory to exploit but sacred inheritance to steward according to divine instruction. This principle undergirds all biblical land theology: the earth belongs to the LORD (Psalm 24:1), and human possession is delegated stewardship under divine authority. The meticulous obedience to Mosaic commands demonstrates continuity between Moses and Joshua, and between wilderness revelation and Canaan fulfillment. God's word given decades earlier remained authoritative for the new generation in new circumstances.

## Historical Context

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The land distribution process described in Joshua 13-21 required complex administrative work: surveying territories, defining boundaries, allocating to tribes based on size (Numbers 26:54), and resolving disputes. The division occurred at Gilgal (14:6) and later Shiloh (18:1), where the tabernacle provided central authority for this sacred task. The use of lots (18:6, 10) combined human wisdom with divine sovereignty—God directed the lots to assign each tribe its inheritance. Archaeological evidence shows Israelite settlement patterns emerging across the highlands during the Iron Age I period (1200-1000 BC), consistent with tribal land allocation. The system maintained tribal identity while creating national unity—each tribe had defined territory yet belonged to the larger covenant community. The meticulous record-keeping (boundary lists, city lists) served legal purposes, establishing property rights that lasted centuries. The land grant was conditional on obedience (Deuteronomy 28), foreshadowing later exile when Israel violated covenant. The careful obedience to Moses's commands honored both the lawgiver who died before entering Canaan and the God who faithfully fulfilled promises made to Abraham four centuries earlier.

## Related Passages

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How does grounding land distribution in divine command rather than military conquest rights challenge modern notions of property ownership?
2. What does Israel's obedience to commands given by the previous generation teach about respecting foundational instructions even when circumstances change?
3. How does the concept of land as divine inheritance rather than earned possession shape your understanding of God's gifts in your life?

## Interlinear Text

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בָּנִים עֲשֵׂה מֹשֶׁה אָתָּה יְהוָה כְּאֶשְׁר רְצָאת הָיָה כְּאֶשְׁר  
commanded As the LORD Moses did so the children  
H834 H6680 H3068 H853 H4872 H3651 H6213 H1121

לִשְׁבָא לְיִתְחָלָק אֶת הָאָרֶץ  
of Israel and they divided the land  
H3478 H2505 H853 H776

## Additional Cross-References

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**Joshua 21:2** (References Lord): And they spake unto them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, The LORD commanded by the hand of Moses to give us cities to dwell in, with the suburbs thereof for our cattle.

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