

Joshua 19:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid:

Analysis

And the third lot came up for the children of Zebulun according to their families: and the border of their inheritance was unto Sarid.

Zebulun's selection as **the third lot** (ha-goral ha-shelishi, הגורל השלישי) demonstrates God's sovereignty in the seemingly random process of lot-casting. The Hebrew goral (גורל, "lot") refers to the sacred method of determining God's will through casting stones or other objects (Proverbs 16:33). Though human hands cast the lots, divine providence determined the outcome—Zebulun received precisely the territory God appointed for them.

The phrase **according to their families** (le-mishpechotam, למשפחותם) emphasizes the covenantal structure of inheritance. Land distribution wasn't individualistic but familial and tribal, ensuring that future generations would possess their ancestral portion. This system prevented land concentration among the wealthy and maintained tribal identity across centuries. The starting boundary marker **Sarid** (possibly modern Tell Shadud) anchored Zebulun's territory geographically.

Prophetically, Zebulun's inheritance carries immense significance. Jacob's blessing proclaimed that Zebulun would "dwell at the haven of the sea" (Genesis 49:13), and Isaiah prophesied that "the land of Zebulun" would see great light (Isaiah 9:1-2). Matthew 4:15-16 identifies this light as Jesus Christ, whose Galilean ministry occurred largely within Zebulun's borders. The seemingly mundane land

distribution thus participates in redemptive history, preparing the geographical stage for Messiah's appearance centuries later.

Historical Context

Zebulun's territory in lower Galilee occupied strategic land between the Mediterranean coastal plain and the Sea of Galilee. Though Jacob's blessing mentions the sea, Zebulun's actual inheritance didn't reach the Mediterranean coast—it bordered Asher to the west, who controlled the coastline. This suggests Jacob's prophecy referred either to commercial involvement with maritime trade or to the Sea of Galilee to the east.

Archaeological surveys of this region reveal fertile valleys, important trade routes (including the Via Maris), and numerous settlements from the Late Bronze Age through the New Testament period. Cities like Nazareth, Cana, and Nain—all featured in Jesus' ministry—lay within or near Zebulun's boundaries. The region's mixed population (Jews and Gentiles) led Isaiah to call it "Galilee of the Gentiles" (Isaiah 9:1), making it a despised region in later Jewish thought yet the very place where God's light would shine brightest.

Zebulun receives less biblical attention than Judah or Ephraim, yet the tribe faithfully participated in Israel's defining moments—they fought valiantly under Deborah (Judges 5:18), supported David's kingship (1 Chronicles 12:33), and provided the geographical context for Christianity's birth. This demonstrates that God's purposes encompass all His people, not just the prominent tribes, and that seemingly obscure assignments serve crucial roles in redemptive history.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the lot-casting for land distribution demonstrate that God's sovereign purposes work through seemingly random or ordinary processes?
2. What does Zebulun's relatively obscure role in Old Testament history, yet central role in Jesus' ministry, teach about God's long-term planning across generations?
3. How should understanding the prophetic significance of Zebulun's land (Isaiah 9:1-2, Matthew 4:15-16) shape our view of God's attention to geographical and historical details in Scripture?

Interlinear Text

זְבוּלֹן	לְבָנָיו	הַשְּׁלִישִׁי	הַגּוֹכֹל	לֵי עָלָה
of Zebulun	for the children	And the third	lot	came up
H2074	H1121	H7992	H1486	H5927
עַד	נַחֲלָתָם	גֹּבֶל וְ	וְהָיָה	לְמִשְׁפַּחָתָם
H5704	of their inheritance	and the border		according to their families
H5159		H1366	H1961	H4940
שָׂרִיד:				
				was unto Sarid
				H8301

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