

Joshua 19:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families.

Analysis

The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, even for the children of Naphtali according to their families. This verse marks Naphtali's turn in the sacred lottery that distributed the Promised Land. The phrase "sixth lot" (ha-goral ha-shishi, הַגּוֹרָל הַשְׁשִׁי) emphasizes the ordered, divinely governed process—nothing random or chaotic about God's allocation of inheritance. The repetition "children of Naphtali... children of Naphtali" underscores both their covenant identity and the certainty of their blessing.

Naphtali's name means "my wrestling" or "my strife" (naftali, נַפְתָּלִי), recalling Rachel's struggle with Leah for children and supremacy (Genesis 30:8). Yet this tribe born of conflict receives abundant inheritance in one of Canaan's most fertile regions. The phrase "according to their families" (le-mishpechotam, לְמִשְׁפְּכוֹתָם) demonstrates God's concern for equitable distribution down to clan level—not merely tribal blocks but family allotments ensuring every household had land.

The casting of lots (goral, גּוֹרָל) wasn't gambling but sacred discernment of divine will through the high priest's Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:30). Proverbs 16:33 declares, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD." This method removed human favoritism and demonstrated God's sovereign allocation of each tribe's portion.

Historical Context

Naphtali's territory comprised the eastern Galilee region, including the fertile plain around the Sea of Galilee (Chinnereth) and extending north to the Lebanon mountains. This area was exceptionally productive agriculturally, with abundant water sources, fishing grounds, and trade routes. Archaeological surveys show dense settlement patterns in this region during the Iron Age I period (1200-1000 BCE), confirming its desirability and productivity.

The tribal allotment process described in Joshua 13-21 followed a systematic pattern: larger tribes received first (Judah, Ephraim, Manasseh), then the remaining seven tribes divided what remained. Naphtali's "sixth lot" placed them after Zebulun but before Dan and Asher. The lot-casting ceremony likely occurred at Shiloh (18:1), where the Tabernacle stood and the tribes assembled for this sacred distribution.

Ancient Near Eastern land distribution typically occurred through royal decree or military conquest, with powerful families claiming the best territories. Israel's system, using sacred lots under priestly supervision, ensured fairness and recognized God as the ultimate landowner who granted portions to His covenant people. This theological foundation prevented the concentration of wealth characteristic of surrounding nations.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of lots to distribute land encourage us to trust His sovereignty in allocating gifts, callings, and opportunities within the church?

2. What does the transformation of Naphtali ("my wrestling") into a blessed inheritance teach about God's redemption of our struggles and painful origins?
3. How might the orderly, family-level distribution of land inform our understanding of God's concern for justice and equity in human societies?

Interlinear Text

וְשִׁשָּׁה וְהַזֹּה לִי אַתָּה נַפְתַּלִּי לְבָנֶיךָ
even for the children of Naphtali came out lot The sixth
H1121 H5321 H3318 H1486 H8345

לְבָנֶיךָ נַפְתַּלִּי לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֶם:
even for the children of Naphtali according to their families
H1121 H5321 H4940

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