**Allotments for Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh**

A couple in Tennessee my brother knows recently moved into their new home they started construction on 3 years ago. They had numerous delays, partly due to availability of subcontractors and partly due to their insistence on using exotic materials such as Italian tile that were difficult to find. They were the opposite of Conrad Hilton who would force his hotels open. He would set a firm opening date and tell the contractor the hotel would absolutely open on that date. His hotels did open on time, often with carpet being installed as guests were checking in. We see God forcing the opening of Canaan to the Israelites beginning in Joshua chapter 15 and continuing for several chapters. While the land was not fully conquered, God wanted the tribes to move in.

Chapter 15 begins with a description of the land allotment for Judah. Their land was the southernmost parcel in Canaan, extending to the Desert of Zin. Its eastern border touched almost the entire western shore of the Dead Sea while its western border adjoined the Mediterranean Sea although the land on that coast was the stronghold of the Philistines. Well known cities in Judah included Hebron, Bethlehem and Beersheba. It was the largest single land mass of all the tribes.

In chapter 14 Caleb asked Joshua to grant him Hebron, saying that with God’s help he would drive out the Anakites. In verse 14, we see that Caleb made good on his vow, driving out 3 Anakite kings. He marched on the city of Debir and promised his daughter as a wife to the man who would capture Debir, also known as Kiriath Sepher. Othniel, who was the son of Caleb’s brother Kenaz took the town so Caleb gave him his daughter Acsah whom Caleb had given land in the Negev which was part of the land he was granted by Joshua. Knowing her family would need water, she was bold enough to ask her father for springs of water which he granted. Othniel was the first judge appointed by God to lead Israel after the death of Joshua serving for 40 years (see Judges 3:9-11). The remainder of chapter is devoted to listing the clans of Judah and the land given to each.

Chapters 16 and 17 describe the land given to the tribe of Ephraim and half tribe of Manasseh. Ephraim’s section was in the central part of Canaan and Manasseh’s land extended northward and bordered much of the Jordan River. The story of the daughters of Zelophedad is repeated (see Num. chapters 27 and 36). Since their father died with no sons, his daughters inherited the land that would been left to a son.

The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh considered the land given to them as inadequate since they were large tribes. They complained to Joshua who told them that if they wanted more land, the could clear forested land held by the Perizzites and Rephaites. They objected, saying that those people in that region had iron chariots. Joshua held firm, telling them that they would not receive more land but told them that they could drive out the people occupying land that would enlarge their territory.

Note that the three tribes who first received their allotment were Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh. Normally, the first born (Reuben) would receive the birthright but Rueben dishonored Jacob and so lost his rights as eldest son (see Gen. 49:3-4). Rueben also took land east of the Jordan River and so inherited no land in Canaan. Jacob’s second son was Simeon who with Levi, murdered innocent people at Shechem and was cursed by Jacob (see Gen 49:7). The prophecy of scattering them in Jacob and dispersing them in Israel was realized as Simeon’s land was part of Judah’s land and the tribe of Levi (3rd son) was spread among the other tribes and priests, receiving no inheritance. The 4th son was Judah whose tribe received the largest single portion. The tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim received the inheritance due to Joseph who was Jacob’s favorite son and he counted Joseph’s sons as his own thus giving Joseph a double blessing. Their combined land both east and west of the Jordan comprise the largest land of any of the tribes. Jacob gave Ephraim the birthright due to the eldest son although Manasseh was older. Ephraim became the more prolific tribe and after the split of the tribes, the 10 northern tribes were sometimes collectively referred to as Ephraim.