

# JOSHUA 14

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## THE DISTRIBUTION OF TERRITORY WEST OF THE JORDAN

After describing the territorial allotments on the east side of the Jordan River previously secured under Moses (Joshua 13), the fourteenth chapter of the book of Joshua shifts focus to the western allotments. These allotments are detailed on through chapter 19.

The chapter opens by describing the process of allotment (verses 1–5). It specifies that these land inheritances were determined by lot according to the Lord’s commandment and under the supervision of the priest Eleazar (verses 1–2), thereby emphasizing the divinely ordered manner of distribution. Casting lots was an important divinatory practice, called cleromancy, that anciently was believed to be a means of determining God’s will, although today casting lots is usually regarded as a random act.<sup>1</sup>

The first allotment was given to Judah, which is described in the remainder of chapter fourteen, running into the next chapter. That Judah takes priority in this process of territorial distribution might best be explained by the real likelihood that the book of Joshua was composed in part to legitimate the Judahite monarchy of the later divided monarchy. In any case, Judah’s territorial allotment was claimed by Caleb, one of the twelve spies sent to scout the land of Canaan.<sup>2</sup> Ironically, however, Caleb himself was not a Judahite nor even an Israelite but a Kenezite (see verse 14). That he was nevertheless counted among Judah is clear indication that the tribes of Israel anciently (as today) were composed of a mix of both biological and adopted members.

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief overview, see William Hamblin and Daniel Peterson, “The Casting of Lots in Ancient Israel,” *Deseret News*, October 2, 2015, <https://deseret.com/2015/10/2/20573546/the-casting-of-lots-in-ancient-israel>.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Numbers 13:6, 30; 14:24, 38; 26:65.

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