

The Historical Context of Joshua 19: 40-48

Gershon Galil – Haifa

The town-list in Joshua 19: 40-48 has already been discussed¹. This list is clearly divided into five groups/sub-districts as follows: 1: v. 41; 2: v. 42; 3: v. 43; 4: v. 44; 5: v. 45. In this paper I will try to clarify whether existed a political or administrative unit that serve as a background for drawing up this list.

The description of the allotment of Dan in Joshua 19: 40-48 is evidently idealistic. The geographic text in vv. 41-46 presents an unfulfilled plan. The families of Dan did not succeed in realizing their right to their assigned land, nor were they able to settle there: "The sons of Dan lost their land, therefore they went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and captured it. They put its people to the sword, occupied it and settled in it; and they renamed the place Dan after their ancestor Dan" (Joshua 19: 47). Their failure to settle in the south is also reflected in the traditions in the Book of Judges. The eastern border of their promised land (the area of Ajalon and Shaalabbin) was already occupied by "the Amorites" who drove the Danite families back into the hill-country and forbade them to enter the Valley of Ajalon (Judges 1: 34-35). The Danites settled in only two of the sixteen promised cities: Zorah and Eshtaol (Judges 13: 25; 16: 31; 18). One should not suppose that first they managed to settle in those cities and afterwards were pushed out by the Amorites because it is explicitly written in Judges that in those days "The tribe of Dan was looking for territory to occupy, because they had not so far come into possession of the territory allotted to them among the tribes of Israel". It seems, therefore, that the description in Joshua 19: 41b-46 does not reflect Dan's nuclear allotment.

The search for a historical background matching the reality reflected in this list yields only a period prior to the Schism. In the reign of Rehoboam and Jeroboam this territory was divided among the kingdoms of Israel, Judah, and probably the kingdom of Ekron (I Kings 15: 27; II Chronicles 21: 16-17). The northwestern border of the kingdom of Judah passed south of Beth-horon, west of Ajalon, Zorah, and Beth-shemesh, and east of Shaalabbin and Timnah, whereas the southern border of the kingdom of Israel ran south of Shaalabbin and Gezer, and near Gibbethon. The fate of Baalath, which was fortified by Solomon, and Eltekeh, the city of the Levites, is uncertain, as is the fate of the fifth Danite sub-district. Therefore it cannot be determined whether the Israelites or the Philistines took over these areas.

Until the reign of Uzziah this reality does not show major changes. The Israelite army camped near Gibbethon during the Zimri revolt (I Kings 16: 15) and the Philistines' attack on Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat (II Chronicles 21: 16-17), did not change the territorial status in

¹ Z. Kallai, *Historical Geography of the Bible: The Tribal Territories of Israel*, Jerusalem-Leiden 1986, 361-374 with earlier bibliography; N. Na'aman, *Borders and Districts in Biblical Historiography*, Jerusalem 1986, 75-117.

the area due to Joash-Amaziah's war which was waged in Beth-shemesh 'of the Judah' (II Kings 14: 11).

One can learn of the territorial changes that occurred in the area in the time of Uzziah through the depiction of his conquests in Philistia (II Chronicles 26: 6-7), and from the description of the Philistines' conquests during the reign of his grandson, Ahaz (II Chronicles 28: 18)². These passages raise a different picture from that reflected in the town-list of Dan. The expansion of the Judean territory was at the expense of the Philistine kingdoms. Uzziah conquered Gath (Philistine), Jabneh, and Ashdod from the Philistines. Ekron, Ashkelon, and Gaza are not mentioned, though one can assume that Uzziah's authority was accepted much as in the case of the Me'unim and the Arabs who resided in Gur-baal. In light of the Philistines' conquests at the time of Ahaz, it is safe to assume that Uzziah expropriated the territory of Timnah (Tel Batash) from the kingdom of Ekron, whereas the territory of Gimzo (which apparently includes the city of Gezer) was transferred from the kingdom of Israel to Judah. Uzziah's conquests in Philistia should be dated to the second half of the reign of Jeroboam, son of Joash (770-750 B.C), whereas the expansion of Judah at the expense of Israel (in the area of Gimzo-Shaalabbin-Gezer) should be dated to the time of Jotam and Ahaz, during the last years of the kingdom of Israel (750-735 B.C)³.

Accordingly, we can assert that under Uzziah-Jotam and the beginning of the reign of Ahaz, the territory of Shaalabbin, which appears as one sub-district in the town-list of Dan, was divided into two sub-territories: the area of Ajalon in the east and that of Gimzo in the west. The Beth-shemesh district mentioned during the reign of Ahaz was identical to the first sub-district in the town-list of Dan, and the Timnah district closely approximated the third sub-district of Dan (the status of the city of Ekron is uncertain). We possess no data of this period regarding the western sub-districts of Dan.

As a result of Rezzin and Pekah's campaign (ca. 735/4 B.C) and due to the fall of the Israelite kingdom in 720 B.C, several distinct changes occurred in this area. The whole territory of the cities of Dan passed to the Philistines. During the Syro-Ephraimite war, the Philistines conquered from the kingdom of Judah the four sub-districts of Dan: Beth-shemesh, Ajalon, Gimzo, and Timnah (II Chronicles 28:18), and the coastal districts of Dan were also in the hands of the Philistines (see below). If we accept the argument that the list of the Judean cities in Joshua 15 reflects the time of Hezekiah⁴, it is safe to assume that the first sub-district of Dan was conquered by Hezekiah from the Philistines and annexed to the kingdom of Judah (Joshua 15:33-36). However, contrary to the town-list of Dan, Beth-shemesh is not mentioned in the second district of the Judean cities. The third sub-district of Dan is known in Joshua 15:45 as: "Ekron with her towns and her villages", and the territory: "from Ekron even unto the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages" (Joshua 15: 46) closely accords with the area of the fourth sub-district of Dan, assuming the northern boundary of Ashdod met the Sorek River (this suggestion is preferable to the assumption which relates this

² For the boundaries of Judah in the time of Uzziah, Jotam, and Ahaz see J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, Philadelphia 1981, 258 ff., 273 ff.; M. Noth, *The History of Israel*, London 1960, 238, note 4; S. Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times*, London 1975, 240, note 1.

³ For the chronological problems of this period see E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Grand Rapids 1965, 77 ff.; K. T. Andersen, 'Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda', *Studia Theologica*, 23 (1969), 19 ff.; G. Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, Leiden 1996, 57 ff.

⁴ See Z. Kallai, *The Tribes of Israel*, Jerusalem 1967, 315 ff. (Hebrew).

definition to the area of Jabneh). It appears that in 701 B.C these two areas, the third sub-district of Dan (Timnah) and the fourth sub-district of Dan (Eltekeh), were controlled by Ekron. The king of Ashkelon apparently dominated the western part of the fifth sub-district of Dan⁵. The fate of the valley of Lod and Ono and the second sub-district of Dan, during that time, is uncertain. Whether the Israelite settlement began in the area of Lod and Ono during that time or merely during the days of Josiah is unclear. It is further unclear whether Hezekiah reoccupied the territories of Shaalabbin and Gimzo, which were conquered by the Philistines from Ahaz, his father⁶. Nevertheless, the evidence submitted above is sufficient in proving the discrepancy between the historical-geographic reality on the eve of Sennacherib's campaign and the full extent and internal division of the Dan area. This discrepancy may be observed in two areas: the territories of the Danite cities were divided between Israel and Philistia at that time; and Japho is mentioned in the Annals of Sennacherib with the cities located in the fifth sub-district of Dan, contrary to the description in Joshua 19: 40-48, which depicts their separation. On the eve of Sennacherib's campaign, the cities of Dan, dominated by Judah, and the cities of the Shephelah, conquered by the Assyrian army, were passed to the hands of the Philistines⁷. It is however unclear how these territories were distributed among the Philistine kingdoms. We may assume that the western domain of the fifth sub-district of Dan was left to Ashkelon, and the remaining territory was given to Padi, king of Ekron.

During the reign of Manasseh (first half of the 7th century B.C), apparently several districts in the land of Gezer, including the city of Gezer, were annexed to Samaria, a nearby Assyrian province, as determined by the inscriptions found in Gezer⁸.

Judah re-occupied the territories of the land of Dan during the reign of Josiah, but the extent of its area and its internal division are uncertain⁹. If the lists of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 and 11 indeed reflect reality of the end of the First Temple period, we may then assert that the town-list of Dan is not a reflection of this period, for there is a discrepancy between the names mentioned in Joshua 19: 40-48 and names presented in these lists. Among the 16 cities mentioned in the town-list of Dan only Zorah is mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah; nonetheless, many of the cities located in the Dan area are mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah, but not in the town-list of Dan, e.g., Lod, Ono, Gittaim, Hadid, and Zeboim. Zorah, which is mentioned in Nehemiah 11 along with several Judean cities, should be differentiated from the cities indicated above, which are considered to be the cities of Benjamin.

In the fifth century B.C, the Ono valley was presumably located near the border of Jehud (Nehemiah 6:2), and Ekron, Timnah, Gibbethon, Eltekeh, and Baalath were within the

⁵ Beth-dagon, Japho, and Bene-berak, are mentioned as "the cities of Zidqa", king of Ashkelon, in the Annals of Sennacherib, see R. Borger, *Babylonisch-assyrische Lesestücke*, Rome 1979 (=An. Or. 54), 74.

⁶ For the boundaries of Judah in the time of Hezekiah see D. Ussishkin, 'The Destruction of Lachish by Sennacherib and the Dating of the Royal Judean Storage Jars', *Tel Aviv 4* (1977), 56 ff.; N. Na'aman, 'Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah and the Date of the *Imk* Stamps', *VT*, 29 (1979), 61-86 esp. 70 ff.; G. L. Klem and A. Mazar, 'Three Seasons of Excavations at Tel Batash - Biblical Timnah', *BASOR*, 248 (1982), 1-36, esp. 29-30.

⁷ See Borger (above, note 5), 75-76.

⁸ For these inscriptions see R. A. S. Macalister, *The Excavations of Gezer*, I, London 1912, 22 ff.; K. Galling, 'Assyrische und persische Präefekten in Geser', *PJB*, 31 (1935), 76 ff; B. Becking, 'The Two Neo-Assyrian Documents from Gezer in their Historical Context', *JEOL*, 27 (1981/82), 76-89.

⁹ See G. Galil, 'Geba-Ephraim and the Northern Boundary of Judah in the Days of Josiah', *RB*, 100 (1993), 364-367.

confines of Ashdod. The cities of the Shephelah, among which is Zorah (Nehemiah 11: 29-30), were apparently included within the province of Keilah, whereas the cities of Benjamin, which are mentioned in Nehemiah 11, were apparently included in the province of Mizpah¹⁰. Hence it seems that the list of the cities of Dan (Joshua 19: 40-48) does not reflect a historical-geographic reality of the 9th - 6th century B.C. Clearly, one should not date this list to the period prior to the days of David and Solomon. The land of Dan was divided during the 12th - 11th century B.C between the Israelite tribes, the Philistines, and the Canaanites. The Philistines occupied the third, fourth, and perhaps fifth sub-districts of Dan. The Israelites settled in the first sub-district (mainly the tribe of Dan), whereas the second sub-district of Dan remained in the hands of the Canaanites: Gezer remained a Canaanite city until the time of Solomon and the Amorites dwell in Ajalon and Shaalabbin (Judges 1: 34-35).

Comparison of the "land of Dan" in Joshua 19: 40-48 with the territorial systems of the united monarchy shows discrepancy as well as agreement. Scholars have previously proven that the boundary system of the Israelite tribes, as well as of the Levite town-lists, should be dated to the era of the united monarchy¹¹. One may argue that in the description of Ephraim's southern boundary, Gezer's territorial definition is uncertain and whether Gezer was included within the boundary of Ephraim is a controversial issue. The same applies to the northern boundary of Judah. Apparently, Beth-shemesh and Timnah were not part of the Judean territory. However, the data for Ekron are sufficient, for the border undoubtedly lay north of Ekron. Consequently, Ekron again resembles a kind of Archimedic point. The inclusion of Ekron in the Judean territory indicates a discrepancy between the system of the tribal boundaries and the town-list of Dan, despite the editor's effort to portray Dan's allotment in the same manner as the boundaries of the northern tribes, namely, a description containing cities and boundaries¹². Another contradiction can be found in the description of the northeastern margins of the territory. Contrary to the description of Ephraim's northern boundary, which ran from the Qanah River to the sea (Joshua 16: 8), the boundary of Dan turned south down the Ayalon River and did not reach the sea. From these discrepancies, one may define Gezer (in the description of Ephraim's southern boundary) as a wide area. It is safe to assume that the boundary was outlined south of the territory of Dan; hence, the northern boundary of Judah is actually the southern boundary of Ephraim.

Moreover, the "land of Dan" closely accords with Solomon's second district¹³. Not only were the five cities mentioned in the description of Solomon's second district administrative centers, these five territories clearly correlate with the five sub-districts of Dan. The administrative territory of Beth-shemesh apparently coincided with the first sub-district of Dan; the territory of Shaalabbin is the second sub-district of Dan, and the sub-district dominated by Elon apparently connects with the third sub-district of Dan. These three cities are mentioned in I Kings 4, as well as in Joshua 19.

¹⁰ There are very few data for the land of Dan during the Hellenistic period, yet they suffice to assert that the town-list of Dan does not reflect this period. See Z. Kallai, *The Northern Boundaries of Judah*, Jerusalem 1960, 95 ff. (Hebrew).

¹¹ See *idem*, *ibid.*, 51.

¹² See F. M. Cross Jr. and G. E. Wright, 'The Boundary and Province Lists of the Kingdom of Judah', *JBL*, 75 (1956), 202.

¹³ See Kallai (above, note 4), 305 ff.

The location of Makaz and Beth-hanan remains uncertain; however, these cities were presumably the administrative centers of the coastal sub-districts of Dan. Moreover, the territories of Makaz and Beth-hanan may be assumed to have coincided with the fourth and fifth sub-districts of Dan, much like the territorial similarity between the first three sub-districts of Dan and the three sub-districts of Solomon's second district: Shaalabbin, Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon. We therefore conclude that the list of the Danite cities in Joshua 19: 41-45 is actually the list of cities in Solomon's second district. The fact that Makaz and Beth-hanan are not mentioned in the list of the cities of Dan can be explained on account of a certain chronological gap between this list and the list of Solomon's districts. According to this suggestion, the town-list of Dan reflects a reality prior to the list of Solomon's districts, although both lists should be dated in the first half of Solomon's reign. Makaz and Beth-hanan were presumably new administrative centers built by Solomon in the land of Dan.

The fact that Gezer is not mentioned in the town-list of Dan is surprising; furthermore, Gezer is also missing from the list of centers of Solomon's second district. This deficiency supports the assumption regarding the correlation between the two lists and supports dating the list of the cities of Dan and the system of Solomon's districts to the first half of Solomon's reign.