

Day 9 – Feb. 9

Finally, the tribes are at rest. They have cleared the Promised Land as well as they ever would, and no other enemy was powerful enough to come against them. And so God fulfilled His promise to them given over 600 years previous in the time of Abraham. The tribes end their warfare and divide up the land by tribe. And how did they do this? “By divine lots” the bible says. Yes, they flipped a coin, or in this case drew a stone.

The Chief Priest of the day kept two stones in a bag on his ceremonial breastplate, one black and one white, called the Urim and the Thummim. When a decision had to be reached, the community prayed and then the High Priest drew out a stone at random and the decision was determined. And while this seems dangerously arbitrary to us, the people of Israel had an unswerving trust in God, and in the fact that God was sovereign in the world. Anything that happened was by God’s will because only God was sovereign and nothing could happen outside of God’s will. So if a white stone led them in a certain direction, it must have been by God’s will. It is this faith in God’s supreme sovereignty that we say played out again and again in the Old Testament where everything was attributed to God’s will.

So the land is divided up and then given to tribes by the drawing of the Urim and Thummim. All but 4 of the tribes, that is. The Levites do not get any land, but instead get cities and pastureland in every other tribe because they are the priestly tribe and will work at the temple. And the other three tribes, well 2 ½ technically, already have their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh have already staked their claim, and then have come with their fellow Israelites to clear the Promised Land as Moses commanded. And now, they can go home to their families and new land.