

Joshua

Lesson 14

Too many details often become hard to follow. We call it complicated. It is incredibly complex when the details are unfamiliar. If you add the problem that some of the details have been lost to time and the forces of nature, the task of sorting the details becomes much harder. Such is the case with the details of the division of the Promised Land to the tribes as presented in chapters 14 through 19. Be that as it may, we need to look at the division of the land and do our best to set the scene for the living areas of the twelve tribes of the Nation of Israel.

f) The Tribal Cities of Judah

(1) In the South

(a) Twenty-nine Cities

The writer begins by naming the twenty-nine cities in the southeast portion of Judah's territory toward the land of Edom, in the Negev. Verse 20. *"This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families.²¹ Now the cities at the extremity of the tribe of the sons of Judah toward the border of Edom in the south were Kabzeel and Eder and Jagur,²² and Kinah and Dimonah and Adadah,²³ and Kedesb and Hazor and Ithnan,²⁴ Ziph and Telem and Bealoth,²⁵ and Hazor-badattah and Keriath-bezron (~~that is, Hazor~~),²⁶ Amam and Shema and Moladah,²⁷ and Hazar-gaddah and Heshmon and Beth-pelet,²⁸ and Hazar-shual and Beersheba and Bizjathiah,²⁹ Baalah and Iim and Ezem,³⁰ and Eltolad and Chesil and Hormah,³¹ and Ziklag and Madmannah and Sansannah,³² and Lebaoth and Shilhim and Ain and Rimmon; in all, twenty-nine cities with their villages."* (15:20-32)

When the book of Joshua was written, all of these cities were well known. However, over time, most of them have been lost by nature's forces. Each of these cities supported unnamed villages surrounding each city.

(2) In the Lowlands

(a) Fourteen Villages

The lowlands, called the Shephelah in some versions of the Bible, are in the northeastern part of Judah's territory. The lowlands are the low-lying flat district that weaves between the central highlands of the holy land and the Mediterranean. Verse 33. *"In the lowland: Eshtaol and Zorah and Ashnah,³⁴ and Zanoah and En-gannim, Tappuah and Enam,³⁵ Jarmuth and Adullam, Socob and Azekah,³⁶ and Shaaraim and Adithaim and Gederah and Gederothaim; fourteen cities with their villages."* (15:33-35)

Verse 36 mentions fourteen cities, yet the count of the cities is fifteen. The Greek Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew text, does not contain the city of *Gederothaim*. More than likely, the addition of the city of *Gederothaim* in this passage was accidentally added to a Hebrew manuscript after the Greek Septuagint translation was made from an older Hebrew copy.

(b) Sixteen Cities with Villages

The second set of sixteen cities with their villages lay in the actual plain on the western side of Judah's territory from north to south next to the Philistine coast. Verse 37. *"Zenah and Hadashah and Migdal-gad,³⁸ and Dilean and Mizpeh and Joktheel,³⁹ Lachish and Bozkath and Eglon,⁴⁰ and Cabbon and Labmas and Chitlish,⁴¹ and Gederoth, Beth-dagon and Naamah and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages."* (15:37-41)

(c) Nine Cities with Villages

The nine cities with their villages lay in the southern part of the hill region of Judah's territory on the west. Verse 42. "*Libnah and Ether and Asban,⁴³ and Iphtah and Asbnah and Neziib,⁴⁴ and Keilah and Achzib and Maresbah; nine cities with their villages.*" (15:42-44)

(d) Three Towns with Villages

The three cities with villages lay on the Philistine coastline, in the land of Judah's territory yet to be conquered. Verse 45. "*Ekrone, with its towns and its villages;⁴⁶ from Ekron even to the sea, all that were by the side of Ashdod, with their villages.⁴⁷ Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; as far as the brook of Egypt and the Great Sea, even its coastline.*" (15:45-47)

(e) Eleven Cities with Villages

The eleven cities with villages lay in the mountain of the hill country. Verse 48. "*In the hill country: Shamir and Jattir and Socob,⁴⁹ and Dannah and Kiriath-sannab (~~that is, Debir~~),⁵⁰ and Anab and Eshtemoah and Anim,⁵¹ and Gosben and Holon and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages.*" (15:48 – 51)

(f) Nine Cities with Villages

The nine cities with their villages lay north of the eleven just mentioned in the country around Hebron. Verse 52. "*Arab and Dumah and Esban,⁵³ and Janum and Beth-tappuah and Aphekab,⁵⁴ and Humtah and Kiriath-arba (~~that is, Hebron~~), and Zior; nine cities with their villages.*" (15:52-54)

(g) Ten Cities with Villages

The ten cities with their villages lay southeast of Hebron. Verse 55. "*Maon, Carmel and Ziph and Juttah,⁵⁶ and Jezreel and Jokdeam and Zanoah,⁵⁷ Kain, Gibeah and Timnah; ten cities with their villages.*" (15:55-57)

(h) Six Cities with Villages

The six cities with their villages lay north of Hebron. Verse 58. "*Halbul, Beth-zur and Gedor,⁵⁹ and Maarath and Beth-anoth and Eltekon; six cities with their villages.*" (15:58-59)

(i) Two Cities with Villages

The two cities and villages lay west of Jerusalem. Verse 60. "*Kiriath-baal (~~that is, Kiriath-jearim~~), and Rabbah; two cities with their villages.*" (15:60)

(j) Six Cities with Villages

The six cities with their villages lay in the wilderness between the mountain and the Dead Sea. "*In the wilderness: Beth-arabah, Middin and Secacah,⁶² and Nibsban and the City of Salt and Engedi; six cities with their villages.*" (15:61-62)

(3) In Jerusalem

Finally, the writer speaks of the Jebusites fortress near Jerusalem. Verse 63. "*Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah could not drive them out; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem until this day.*" (15:63)

The Jebusite citadel north of Jerusalem would not be taken by the Nation of Israel for more than three hundred years. King David will finally conquer it in his seventh year of reign.

Chapter 16

2. The Tribal Area Assigned to Ephraim (16:1-10)

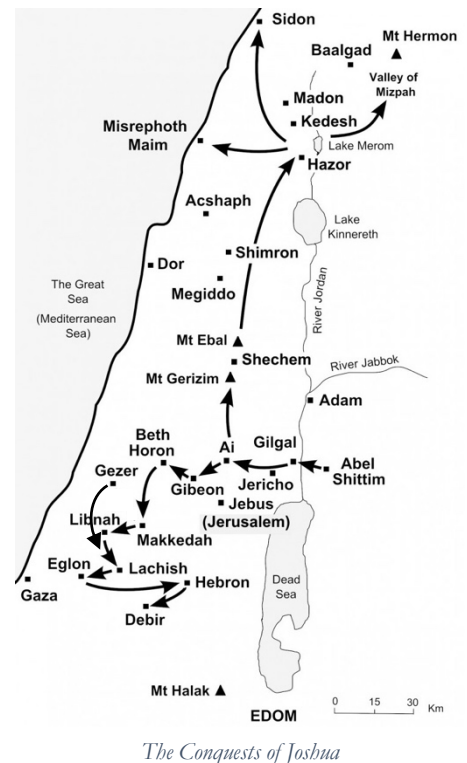
With the opening of the short chapter 16, the writer describes the tribal area assigned to Ephraim. Verse 1. *“Then the lot for the sons of Joseph went from the Jordan at Jericho to the waters of Jericho on the east into the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel. ² It went from Bethel to Luz, and continued to the border of the Archites at Ataroth. ³ It went down westward to the territory of the Japhleites, as far as the territory of lower Beth-horon even to Gezer, and it ended at the sea. The sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance. ⁵ Now this was the territory of the sons of Ephraim according to their families: the border of their inheritance eastward was Ataroth-addar, as far as upper Beth-horon. ⁶ Then the border went westward at Michmethath on the north, and the border turned about eastward to Taanath-shiloh and continued beyond it to the east of Janoah. ⁷ It went down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, then reached Jericho and came out at the Jordan.*

⁸ From Tappuah the border continued westward to the brook of Kanah, and it ended at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families, ⁹ together with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. ¹⁰ But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers.” (16:1-10)

Interestingly, the second lot fell to Ephraim. Just as with Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, it was promised the area of Hebron by Moses. So, too, Ephraim was promised the area of Shechem by Jacob. Therefore, the land of Ephraim had to contain Shechem.

The southern border started at the Jordan River, where the camp crossed and ran west through Jericho and on to Bethel. Interestingly, the passage says *“Bethel to Luz”* because the two are one and the same. Luz was the name of the area until Jacob met the LORD there and changed the name to Bethel (*Beth = house, el = God*), the house of God. However, later, in Judges, a man from the old Luz will move a few miles and establish a new Luz. We will talk about that in the book of Judges.

Gezer is part of Ephraim; however, Joshua did not attack the city of Gezer. If you will remember, the king of Gezer and his army arrived at Lachish to help fight Joshua there. The king and his men were killed in Lachish. Joshua never entered Gezer to destroy the Canaanites in that city. Therefore, the Canaanites remained, but the nation of Israel made them forced laborers when needed.



Chapter 17

3. The Tribal Area Assigned to Manasseh (17:1-18)

a) The Sons of Manasseh (17:1-2)

Moving into chapter 17, the writer describes the tribal area assigned to Manasseh.

The writer gives the names of the sons of Manasseh and their family divisions. Chapter 17, verse 1. *“Now this was the lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. To Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a man of war. ² So the lot was made for the rest of the sons of Manasseh according to their families: for the sons of Abiezer and for the sons of Helek and for the sons of Asriel and for the sons of Shechem and for the sons of Hephher and for the sons of Shemida; these were the male descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.”* (17:1-2)

Translation! The sons of Manasseh were Machir, Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher, and Shemida – six in all. These were the divisions of the tribe of Manasseh. All of these sons lived in Egypt, and none were alive these four centuries later at the land division. The descendants of each division would be divided by the families for the distribution of the land.

Manasseh’s oldest son was Machir. Machir was the father of Gilead. Gilead was not alive at this time in the story either. His descendants were. Nevertheless, when his descendants asked Moses for the land on the east side of the Jordan River, Moses granted them the Amorite land of King Og. The Nation of Israel named the land Gilead after Machir’s son. It also took Bashan, which belonged to King Og. We do not know the former name of Bashan before the Gileadites took it and gave it the Hebrew name.

b) The Problem of Manasseh (17:3-6)

When giving the land to the Machir – Gilead descendants of the tribe of Manasseh, a problem occurred that had been addressed five years before when Moses was still alive. Verse 3. *“However, Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. ⁴ They came near before Eleazar the priest and before Joshua the son of Nun and before the leaders, saying, “The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers.” So according to the command of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among their father’s brothers. ⁵ Thus there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan, ⁶ because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons. And the land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.”* (17:3-6)

This story is told in the book of Numbers. Here are the highlights of that story.

Then the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, ... stood before Moses and before Eleazar, the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the tent of meeting, saying, ³ “Our father died in the wilderness, ... ⁴ Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father’s brothers.” ⁵ So Moses brought their case before the LORD. ⁶ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁷ “The daughters of Zelophehad are right in their statements. You shall surely give them a hereditary possession among their father’s brothers, and you shall transfer the inheritance of their father to them. (Numbers 27:1-7)

c) The Borders of Manasseh (17:7-13)

The writer describes the borders of Manasseh. Verse 7. *“The border of Manasseh ran from Asher to Michmethath, which was east of Shechem; then the border went southward to the inhabitants of En-tappuah.”*⁸ *The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the sons of Ephraim.*⁹ *The border went down to the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook (these cities belonged to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh), and the border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook and it ended at the sea.*¹⁰ *The south side belonged to Ephraim and the north side to Manasseh, and the sea was their border; and they reached to Asher on the north and to Issachar on the east.*¹¹ *In Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its towns and Ibleam and its towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns, the third is Napheth.*¹² *But the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land.*¹³ *It came about when the sons of Israel became strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely.”* (17:7-13)

From the passage, it is clear that the writer wrote this after the divisions of the land were completed because of the mention of the tribal areas of Issachar and Asher yet to be given by lot.

When the text says, *“In Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its towns and Ibleam and its towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of En-dor and its towns,”* the writer means the towns were on the border with Issachar and Asher; however, the towns belonged to the tribe of Manasseh. Then the writer adds the towns of Taanach, Megiddo, and Napheth. Together with the towns on the border of Issachar and Asher, all were heavily inhabited with Canaanites that could not be destroyed. The only thing Manasseh could do was to force them to labor in the nation’s projects.

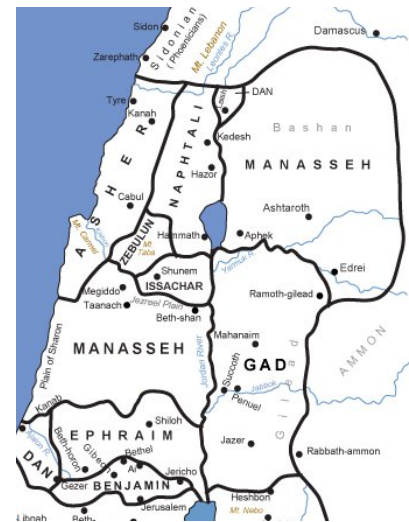
d) The Difficulty of Manasseh

(1) The Statement to Joshua (17:14)

The tribe of Manasseh was unhappy with the division of the Land on the west side of the Jordan River. It was the difficulty of Manasseh that is addressed here. It starts with the statement to Joshua by the tribe. Verse 14. *“Then the sons of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, “Why have you given me only one lot and one portion for an inheritance, since I am a numerous people whom the LORD has thus far blessed?”* (17:14)

The difficulty we have not noticed so far, but it is indicated in verses 8-9. *“This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families,⁹ together with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.”*

During the division of the land, Ephraim’s portion laid in the *“in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh.”* The tribal area of Ephraim and Manasseh was one section of land on the west side of the Jordan River. The reason for the difficulty is actually unfounded. In the last census of Israel, the combined total of Ephraim and Manasseh was no more than 59,000. Dan had 64,400 and Issachar had 64,300. Judah, who had just been given its land, totaled 76,500. Therefore, the area allotted to Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh, which will become the tribal area of Ephraim alone (as seen in the map), was large enough for the combined tribes.



Manasseh's Borders after Manasseh complains about sharing Ephraim's Land

(2) The Reply of Joshua (17:15)

With that as the statement to Joshua from Manasseh, we hear the reply of Joshua. Verse 15. *“Joshua said to them, “If you are a numerous people, go up to the forest and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you.” (17:15)*

The original description of the land of Manasseh excluded and moved around the area of the Perizzites where the Rephaim lived. Rephaim in Hebrew means a *terrible one*. Some have tried to associate the Rephaim with giants, but there is no true connection that confirms that they were giants.

(3) The Complaint to Joshua (17:16)

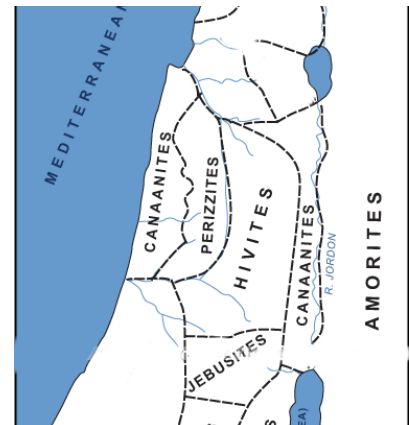
We hear the complaint to Joshua from the sons of Joseph, who would have included both tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Verse 16. *“The sons of Joseph said, “The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the valley land have chariots of iron, both those who are in Beth-shean and its towns and those who are in the valley of Jezreel.” (17:16)*

The Canaanites in this valley have already been mentioned in the list of cities that were still Canaanite controlled. The valley is Jezreel. The towns were mentioned in 17:7-13 as Beth-shean, Ibleam, Dor, En-dor, Taanach, Megiddo, and Napheth. If you are in the city of Jezreel, the valley is called the *valley of Jezreel*. If you are in Megiddo, the valley is called the *valley of Megiddo*. It is the valley of Armageddon. What has happened in this story is what we have mentioned before. The writer told us the division of the land as it would finally be, then he circled back around and gave more details as to how the land was decided upon and what the sons of Joseph had to do to obtain all the land they wanted.

(4) The Decision of Joshua (17:17-18)

After the complaint to Joshua, we come to the decision of Joshua. Verse 17. *“Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, saying, “You are a numerous people and have great power; you shall not have one lot only,¹⁸ but the hill country shall be yours. For though it is a forest, you shall clear it, and to its farthest borders it shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have chariots of iron and though they are strong.” (17:17-18)*

Joshua did not change his mind. The land still controlled by the Canaanites, including the Perizzites. That land was not yet taken by the Nation of Israel, yet it was allotted to Manasseh. However, Manasseh would have to fight to obtain them. Manasseh did not destroy them as instructed by the LORD through Moses. Instead, the Canaanites were forced into labor projects for the nation. Manasseh was disobedient to the LORD’s command.



Location of the Perizzites Territory