



## Joshua - Chapter Seventeen

### III Joshua 13:1-21:45 - Dividing the Land (continues)

#### III.b Joshua 14:1-19:51 - Western territories (continues)

##### Summary of Chapter Seventeen

The account continues and describes the land allocation to the remaining Josephites - the second half tribe of Manasseh. The account includes the allocation given to the daughters of Zelophehad who died without leaving sons to inherit from him.

The chapter concludes with a dispute over the land allocation given to Ephraim, who believed they were too numerous for the portion of land given.

#### III.b.vii Joshua 17:1-13 - The Other Half-Tribe of Manasseh

The allocation here goes to the half tribe of Manasseh that was settled west of the River Jordan. Part of the allocation is given to the daughters of Zelophehad, who had no sons to claim his inheritance.

<sup>1</sup> Then allotment was made to 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 warrior.

<sup>2</sup> And allotments were made to the rest of the tribe of Manasseh, by their families, Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hopher, and Shemida; these were the male descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, by their families.

### Joshua 17:1-2

Then allotment was made to the tribe of Manasseh. The allocation goes to the half tribe of Manasseh as the other clans had received their allocation in Transjordan; refer to Joshua 13:29-33.

<sup>3</sup> Now Zelophehad son of Hopher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh had no sons, but only daughters; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. <sup>4</sup> They came before the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun and the leaders, and said, ‘The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our male kin.’ So according to the commandment of the Lord he gave them an inheritance among the kinsmen of their father. <sup>5</sup> Thus there fell to Manasseh ten portions, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is on the other side of the Jordan, <sup>6</sup> because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance along with his sons. The land of Gilead was allotted to the rest of the Manassites.

### Joshua 17:3-6

The daughters of Zelophehad receive their inheritance, as the Lord commanded Moses; refer to Numbers 27:1-11 and the qualification introduced in summary of Numbers Chapter 36.

This is noted in the text because it was unusual for women to receive an inheritance. It was more important that the land remain in the ancestral families than it was to follow this custom. Therefore the daughters of Zelophehad could inherit their father’s land.

<sup>7</sup> The territory of Manasseh reached from Asher to Michmethath, which is east of Shechem; then the boundary goes along southwards to the inhabitants of En-tappuah. <sup>8</sup> The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but the town of Tappuah on the boundary of Manasseh belonged to the Ephraimites. <sup>9</sup> Then the boundary went down to the Wadi Kanah. The towns here, to the south of the wadi, among the towns of Manasseh, belong to Ephraim. Then the boundary of Manasseh goes along the north side of the wadi and ends at the sea. <sup>10</sup> The land to the south is Ephraim’s and that to the north is Manasseh’s, with the sea forming its boundary; on the north Asher is reached, and on the east Issachar. <sup>11</sup> Within Issachar and Asher, Manasseh had Beth-shean and its villages, Ibleam and its villages, the inhabitants of Dor and its

villages, the inhabitants of En-dor and its villages, the inhabitants of Taanach and its villages, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages (the third is Naphath). <sup>12</sup> Yet the Manassites could not take possession of those towns; but the Canaanites continued to live in that land. <sup>13</sup> But when the Israelites grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labour, but did not utterly drive them out.

Joshua 17:7-13



**Tribal Land Allocations**

Yet the Manassites could not take possession of those towns; but the Canaanites continued to live in that land. The familiar story of the Israelites failure to possess all the land as commanded by God continues. This follows the pattern of Judah (15:63) and Ephraim (16:10).

That the Canaanites continued to live in that land is unsurprising. Why should they leave if the Israelites were unable to defeat them? What was lacking was complete determination from the people of Israel. They were satisfied to put the Canaanites to forced labour.

### III.b.viii Joshua 17:14-18 - The Tribe of Joseph Protests

The tribe of Ephraim were dissatisfied with the size of their land allocation and wanted a further allocation. However, Joshua instructs them that, if they want more land, there is land they can claim for themselves from the Perizzites and the Rephaim. Even though Ephraim claim the people are too strong for them Joshua, himself and Ephraimite, holds firm.

<sup>14</sup> The tribe of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, ‘Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, since we are a numerous people, whom all along the Lord has blessed?’ <sup>15</sup> And Joshua said to them, ‘If you are a numerous people, go up to the forest, and clear ground there for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you.’

#### Joshua 17:14-15

The tribe of Joseph is probably just Ephraim here and does not include the half tribe of Manasseh that had been allocated land to the north of them.

Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, since we are a numerous people? They believe that a special case should be made as they were a large tribe although the census data in Numbers Chapter 26 shows there were tribes larger than they were at that time. However, when combined with Manasseh, the tribe of Joseph was indeed the largest and is perhaps what they were saying here. In reality, Ephraim and the two half tribes of Manasseh received three allocations between them and they should have been satisfied with that.

If you are a numerous people. Joshua’s reply is both wise and wonderful. He tells them, “If you are a great people, then go and get the land for yourself; fully occupy what the Lord has given you.” These tribes had not completely taken the mountain country in their midst, because it would be hard and dangerous work.

With the influx of the Israelites into Canaan, many settlements appear in areas never before settled: the highlands and the deserts. To support this human settlement in those areas not so easily cultivable, the Israelites borrowed or

developed fresh agricultural techniques. One principal development of settlers in the mountains was agricultural terracing. In addition, plastered cisterns and rock-lined silos are abundant at these sites; they are rare in earlier periods.

<sup>16</sup> The tribe of Joseph said, 'The hill country is not enough for us; yet all the Canaanites who live in the plain have chariots of iron, both those in Beth-shean and its villages and those in the Valley of Jezreel.'

<sup>17</sup> Then Joshua said to the house of Joseph, to Ephraim and Manasseh, 'You are indeed a numerous people, and have great power; you shall not have one lot only, <sup>18</sup> but the hill country shall be yours, for though it is a forest, you shall clear it and possess it to its farthest borders; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong.'

### Joshua 17:16-18

In contrast to the lighter chariots of Joshua 11:4, the chariots of iron of the plains-dwelling Canaanites were of heavier construction, perhaps armoured with iron fittings and sporting iron-shod, six-spoked wheels. It was because of this that they: <<*could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain, because they had chariots of iron*>> (Judges 1:19). Daunting as such military machinery must have been, Joshua insisted that it was no impediment to the eye of faith: you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and are a militarily strong people; refer also to the comment made on Joshua 15:63.

How different is their attitude than Caleb's attitude in Joshua 14:11-12! They want 'easy land' given to them, instead of taking God's promises and going out and taking what God has given them. The principle applies just as strongly for the church today; if they desire more of something, the first thing to do is to be as faithful as they can where they are.

Perhaps they appealed to Joshua as a fellow Ephraimite, because he was a descendent of Joseph himself: <<*from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun*>> (Numbers 13:8), and: <<*These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses changed the name of Hoshea son of Nun to Joshua*>> (Numbers 13:16).