

Joshua 16:1-10; Joshua 17:1-18

The boundary of the inheritance of the Ephraimites and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh is described in these two chapters, as well as the allotment for Zelophehad's daughters. Neither tribe was able to completely drive out the Canaanites, but instead allowed them to remain "under tribute."

Joshua 16:1-2 - "And the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto the water of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho throughout mount Bethel, And goeth out from Bethel to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth,"

The tribe of Judah went first in the casting of lots (in chapter 15), since Reuben had lost his firstborn privileges:

- **1 Chronicles 5:1-2** - "Though he was the firstborn, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, because Reuben defiled his father's bed. So he is not reckoned according to birthright. And though Judah prevailed over his brothers and a ruler came from him, the birthright belonged to Joseph."

- **Genesis 49:8** - "Judah, your brothers shall praise you. Your hand shall be on the necks of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you."

Now it was the turn of the tribe of Joseph - which really meant the tribes of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh

- **Genesis 48:5** - "And now your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here shall be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine."

First the borders of the whole lot in general are given, **Joshua 16:1**; and then the borders of the tribe of Ephraim in particular, **Joshua 16:4**.

Again, What Are These Descriptions Telling Us?

These landmarks are rich in history - both from the earlier patriarchs but also the later prophets and other biblical figures.

"The water of Jericho" refers to the waters Elisha healed (**2 Kings 2:19**) and near where John the Baptist baptized.

Bethel reminds us of Jacob's dream of the ladder connecting heaven and earth:

- **Genesis 28:12** - "Behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it""

There, God has a promise for Jacob:

“I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” (**Genesis 28:13-15**).

Jacob responds:

“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (**Genesis 28:16-17**).

Just the mention of this place brings back the memory of that promise.

Later, with Israel divided, the northern kingdom set up two golden calves for worship at Bethel. So the prophet Amos saddled it with a curse: "But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought" (**Amos 5:5**). Neither Bethel nor Beersheba are mentioned in the New Testament.

This shows that the literal places and boundaries of the Promised Land amount to nothing if Israel falls into disbelief and rebellion.

Canaanites 'Serve Under Tribute'

Joshua 16:10 - "And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute."

In fact, Gezer remained a Canaanite city until the times of King Solomon, when it was taken by Pharaoh king of Egypt, and given as a present to his daughter, the wife of Solomon (**1 Kings 9:15**).

What does it mean to serve "under tribute?"

I think it means they were getting something out of the arrangement. Are we allowing a Canaanite stronghold within us because we get something out of it, even though it's keeping us from fully occupying our spiritual inheritance?

This adds another reason for not dispossessing the Canaanites, besides sloth or weakness - *greed*.

But more specifically, the meaning for us is different. What we get out of it is self-pity.

The presence of the remaining Canaanites in Gezer puts us in the position of being victims. We have all sorts of reasons that we couldn't overcome this Canaanite stronghold. They are too strong. Giants were among them. The walls were too thick, or too high to climb. It's hopeless. This allows us to feel victimized by circumstances, even by the casting of the lots (That other tribe had an easier garrison to fight. Not fair!).

The 'Tribute' is Self-Pity

So we work out an arrangement that allows the Canaanites to remain while we get something - we get to feel sorry for ourselves, even though we're disobeying God's command.

But God's people can never legitimately feel sorry for themselves! We're not victims, even while being persecuted or martyred.

Americans are the least oppressed of any Christians in the world. In fact, we are fat and lazy, unthankful for the freedoms we have, and reluctant to take advantage of them.

There's an evangelist who travels from state to state holding meetings with crowds of thousands defying state pandemic mandates. He says the church is "muzzled" when wearing masks, and the pandemic regulation are *designed* to deprive Christians of their right to worship. (These kind of actions are also coming from those most vocal about upholding law and order).

There ARE conspiracies to deprive believers of their rights, but they are happening in Muslim countries, Communist dictatorships and places like India, where your chance of getting beaten by a gang with sticks is about 50/50.

Of course we should be vigilant to protect our right to freedom of religion. But to say we are "persecuted" sounds more like whining to believers in Nigeria, for instance, who expect their church could be burned down at any minute. Or in China, where house churches are being systematically shut down and pastors jailed.

These are the beaten-down people who can best hear the words of Isaiah:

- Isaiah 60:2-3 - "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

We need to hear it, too - not regarding our outward circumstances, but because of our inner Canaanite strongholds, which are siphoning away our zeal.

Our arrangements for self-pity are preventing God from using us to overcome that remaining strong fortress of opposition. It's keeping us from our inheritance.

More on the Half-Tribe of Manasseh

Joshua 17:1 - "There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh; for he was the firstborn of Joseph; to wit, for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead: because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan."

- **Genesis 50:23** - "The children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up (or borne) upon Joseph's knees."

Machir the firstborn of Manasseh was a mighty warrior, but by this time had died. But because his descendants Jair and Nobah had conquered the northern area of Trans-Jordan, the family was given that area as the inheritance of the half-tribe" of Manasseh.

(See **Deuteronomy 3:1**, **Numbers 32:41** and **Numbers 32:42**)

Reuben and Gad were also settled there with their flocks.

Looking at the Trans-Jordan region, with the warlike children of Machir and the flocks and herd of Reuben and Gad, we can see again a spiritual division of labor. Machirites guarding the part of Israel facing out to a hostile pagan world, while Reuben and Gad focus on shepherding work. Sort of like pastoral ministry compared to the work of a prophet or apologetics ministry. Each of us has a ministry and an office in the body of Christ.

Joshua 17:3-6 - Zelophehad's Daughters

Zelophehad was also part of the children of Machir, but he had no male heirs.

The boldness of his daughters in placing their claim before Moses and the elders is related in **Numbers 36**.

Here they have to do it again, at the point where inheritances are being divided and meted out, to remind Joshua.

Like the previous story of Caleb's daughter Achsah, It is related here to emphasize for us zeal for claiming their inheritance in the Promised Land.

The problem then was that traditionally if the daughter who inherits has a son, the son's pedigree follows his father's tribe and his inheritance remains in his father's tribe. But a wife takes her husband's tribe upon marriage. Her birth tribe has no more bearing on inheritance.

Remarkably, their names are listed again - Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. They are meant to be remembered! The fact that they brought this up before Israel even crossed over the Jordan displayed their faith and assurance that God would accomplish the conquest of Canaan.

- **Numbers 36:11-12** - "For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their father's brothers' sons: And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father."

Another Failure to Finish

Joshua 17:12-13 - "Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute; but did not utterly drive them out."

Again, by gaining something in tribute, they thought that they could avoid pushing the Canaanites out completely.

With the Canaanites still there, there wasn't enough room. So they appealed to Joshua grant them more territory.

He agrees, but he uses highly ironic language - If you're such a large tribe and a "Great People" that you need more space, then go drive out these Perizzites and take that land.

Besides greed, now it comes out that fear plays a big role in their inability to fight. They object:

Joshua 17:16 - "...all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron..."

This recalls the complaint of the spies that there were giants in the land, a complaint that Joshua and Caleb had to counter.

Joshua restates his offer, with a calm but firm promise:

Joshua 17:17-18 - "Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only: But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong."

Basically, we can have as much spiritual inheritance as we want and can take. But we need to remember that God has said He ALREADY has "delivered it into your hands."

In practical terms, our inheritance is peace and joy. Peace and joy come when we see God's victory over every obstacle.

What is the giant, the remaining Canaanite, the obstacle in your life keeping you from peace and joy? Whatever it is, it's sitting on an area of your inheritance that belongs to you. All we need to do is rouse ourselves from self-pity for a minute and hear God's

promise.

Neither the giants, the iron chariots or our own fears will hinder us, if we have faith.