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## **Joshua 17.**

(2015)

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## Joshua 17.

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### Topics.

- The inheritance allotted to the half tribe of Manasseh east of Jordan.
- The inheritance allotted to the other half of the tribe of Manasseh in Canaan.
- The inheritance Allotted to the Daughters of Zelophehad.
- The territory of the half tribe of Manasseh west of the Jordan River.
- The Canaanites dwell in the midst of Israel.
- The inheritance allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh in the hill country.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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**INTRODUCTION:** the first five books of Moses anticipated the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the Promised Land. Moses is now dead. Joshua crosses the River Jordan (about 1400 B.C.) and after a string of military victories apportioned the land according to the twelve tribes. These battles shine a brilliant spotlight upon the truth that God fights for His people when they are faithful and courageous and put their full trust in Him. (Josh. 1:6-9).

At the close of the book Joshua says that he and all his house will serve the LORD and invites the people to choose whether they will serve the gods of their fathers or the gods in whose land they dwell or the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob. The people choose to serve their God. (Josh. 24:15). Although anonymous the book appears to contain eyewitness testimony, some of which may have been written by Joshua himself.

**NOTE:** in this study I have not attempted to give detail of land areas, borders and boundaries or the locations of towns and villages etc., since I am not a master of geography or the regions of the Middle East. Added to this it is difficult and enormously time consuming to trace the exact boundaries of some sites and cities, because a number of ancient names mentioned are unknown today

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### The inheritance Allotted to the Half Tribe of Manasseh East of Jordan.

Joshua 17:1 -----<sup>1</sup>Then allotment was made to the people 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.

The previous chapter ended with the detail of the inheritance allotted to the tribe of Ephraim so it is now only fitting to describe the portion of land that fell to his brother Manasseh the first born.

Manasseh as the first-born not only receive territory on the east of Jordan won by the valour of the Machirites, but also a portion with the other tribes on the west of Jordan in the land of Canaan. Some feel this is given as a reason why he had a double portion (the special privilege of the first-born) one on the east side of Jordan River and another on the west side in the land of Canaan. (Deut. 21:17).

Though Ephraim was to be more potent and numerous than Manasseh, according to the prophecy of Jacob, yet this should not deprive Manasseh of any privilege to which he might lay claim as the first born.

Both being sons of Joseph drew, but one lot but this one lot was divided into various territories for both Ephraim and Manasseh some inheritances of land being on the east and others being on the west of the Jordan River. Manasseh's firstborn and only son was Machir. Machir was the father of Gilead (Num. 26:29) (Num. 27:1). (There is a province named Gilead). Machir was the only son of Manasseh and so through Machir and by his son Gilead the whole tribe of Manasseh sprung from Machir and because of this he is put forth here for the whole tribe of Manasseh.

**Machir was a man of war:** meaning he had given great proof of his valour, (though the particular history is not mentioned). It is very likely Machir had shown his warlike character and courage when fighting against the common enemy of Israel and his same valiant blood was easily seen in the nature of his offspring.

Gilead and Bashan were also assigned to the Reubenites, and the Gadites which mean they all inherited a part of these two countries. The expression, "To Manasseh, the father of Gilead, were allotted Gilead and Bashan, because he was a man of war (v1) maybe added because these territories were a frontier to the land of Canaan, and as such required valiant men to defend it such as the men of Manasseh had proved themselves to be.

The men of Manasseh would be perfectly suited to protect the frontier to the land of Canaan on the east side of the River Jordan and protect the Reubenites and Gadites while they attended to the care of their flocks and herds.

#### **The inheritance allotted to the other Half of the Tribe of Manasseh in Canaan.**

Joshua 17:2 -----<sup>2</sup>And allotments were made to the rest of the people of Manasseh by their clans, Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher, and Shemida. These were the male descendants of Manasseh the son of Joseph, by their clans.

**The expression,** "For the rest," refers to the remaining inheritance of land for the six male children of Manasseh (Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher, and Shemida) who did not settle with the other half tribe of Manasseh in Gilead and Bashan on the east side of the Jordan River. The fact the Scripture highlights the fact they are men is no doubt to lead the reader to what follows which is an exceptional and remarkable case since up until now only males inherited land.

#### **The inheritance allotted to the Daughters of Zelophehad.**

Joshua 17:3-6 -----<sup>3</sup>Now Zelophehad the son of Hephher, 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 approached Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the leaders and said, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our brothers." So according to the mouth of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brothers 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 people of Manasseh.

Zelophehad a descendant of Manasseh had five daughters: -

1. Mahlah
2. Noah
3. Hoglah
4. Milcah
5. Tirzah

These daughters are now assigned a portion of the land allotted to the half tribe of Manasseh on the western portion of land. The land allotted to the western half tribe of Manasseh was divided into ten portions. The male descendants who had sons

consisted of five families to which five portions of land were given. The sixth family consisted of the five daughters of Zelophehad. After the daughters had approached Eleazar the priest and Joshua and the leaders of Israel they were also assigned five portions of land in Canaan.

### **The Territory of the Half Tribe of Manasseh West of the Jordan River.**

Joshua 17:7-11 -----<sup>7</sup>The territory of Manasseh reached from Asher to Michmethath, which is east of Shechem. Then the boundary goes along southward 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 people of Ephraim. <sup>9</sup>Then the boundary went down to the brook Kanah. These cities, to the south of the brook, among the cities of Manasseh, belong to Ephraim. Then the boundary of Manasseh goes on the north side of the brook and ends at the sea, <sup>10</sup>the land to the south being Ephraim's and that to the north being Manasseh's, with the sea forming its boundary. On the north Asher is reached, and on the east Issachar. <sup>11</sup>Also in Issachar and in Asher Manasseh had Beth-shean and its villages, and Ibleam and its villages, and the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, and the inhabitants of En-dor and its villages, and the inhabitants of Taanach and its villages, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; the third is Naphath.

The thing to notice here is that even though each tribe had their own inheritance of land their borders ran alongside each other. They were not to separate themselves from each other, but intermix in good fellowship one with another and do good to each other as is becoming of the children of God. Though they were different tribes all are counted as one nation and as one people before God and as such called to love each other.

### **The Canaanites Dwell in the Midst of Israel.**

Joshua 17:12-13 -----<sup>12</sup>Yet the people of Manasseh could not take possession of those cities, but the Canaanites persisted in dwelling in that land. <sup>13</sup>Now when the people of Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

By using the Canaanites as servants to labour for them rather than utterly driving them out of the land they were acting in disobedience to God. The following verses show that Israel would only succeed if they obeyed God. Prior to crossing the River Jordan and entering the land of Canaan Joshua commanded the people saying: -

- Be careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:7-8).

All the people of Israel answered Joshua saying: -

- Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, we will obey you, may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses! <sup>18</sup>Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words and your commands shall be put to death. (Josh. 1:16-18).

God had promised Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan as an inheritance to his offspring forever. Israel was to occupy the land and cleanse it from all that was an abomination before God and all that was corrupt wicked and evil and cleanse it from all traces of idols and pagan gods and their temples and all traces of occultism and their places of worship. Following are the two reasons for this: -

- 1 All of these things are an abomination before God and have no place in His Kingdom.
- 2 So there would be no opportunity for the people (especially the woman) involved in these practices to entice the people of Israel into adopting their ways of religion and their evil practises.

This is why Israel was to drive out all the inhabitants of the land. Sadly they didn't drive out all the inhabitants and eventually they not only married pagan women who turned their hearts from the LORD their God, but also entered into gross wickedness and sacrificed to pagan gods and their idols.

### **The inheritance allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh in the Hill Country.**

Joshua 17:14-18 ----- <sup>14</sup>Then the people of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me but one lot and one portion as an inheritance, although I am a numerous people, since all along the LORD has blessed me?" <sup>15</sup>And Joshua said to them, "If you are a numerous people, go up by yourselves to the forest, and there clear ground for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim, since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you." <sup>16</sup>The people of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us. Yet all the Canaanites who dwell 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 a numerous people and have great power. You shall not have one allotment 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."

This is the land allotted to Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh in the land of Canaan. Verse seventeen show that the people of Joseph refer to Manasseh and Ephraim both are present at this interview. Some feel that Manasseh and Ephraim are exhibiting an arrogant and jealous spirit by complaining before Joshua that the boundaries of their allotment are too narrow and much smaller than they expected for the following four reasons: -

1. At the census (Num. 26) the two tribes together were hardly more numerous than the single tribe of Judah and now that half of the tribe of Manasseh is on the eastern side of the Jordan River they would be even smaller. Though this may not be so since they say they are a numerous people, because the LORD has blessed them meaning He has greatly multiplied them.
2. A glance at the map shows that their complaint was in itself unreasonable.
3. The map shows that their territory measured about 55 miles by 70 miles which was at least as large in proportion to their numbers as that of any other tribe.
4. The land allotted to them comprehended of some of the most fertile soil of the whole Promised Land.

But it is also just as likely they approached Joshua for the following three reasons: -

1. They were in some confusion over why being two tribes they are only allotted one portion of land which had to be divided between the two tribes
2. They felt that the area of the land allotted to them was only suited for one tribe.
3. They feared going against the people in the land on their own because the inhabitants of the land were strong and had chariots of iron.

Whichever of these it was Joshua's answer was full of wisdom he uses their own words to answer their question saying, "You say you are a numerous people and have great power so go in and possess the land yourselves."

Then he speaks with absolute confidence that they will have triumphant victory even though the inhabitants of the land were strong and had chariots of iron and tells them that the hill country will not only be theirs, but that they will also clear it for farming and livestock. Joshua is confident God will bless the tribes and give them the hill country as he has given Israel the land so far if they go in faith and trust in God to give them the victory.

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End.