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# 1CHRONICLES 5

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## 1Chronicles 5:1–26

## The Eastern Tribes of Israel

### Outline of Chapter 5:

- vv. 1–10    **The descendants and territory of Reuben**
- vv. 11–17    **The descendants and territory of Gad**
- vv. 18–22    **The eastern tribes war with the Hagrites**
- vv. 23–24    **The descendants and territory of the half-tribe of Manasseh**
- vv. 25–26    **The dispersion of the northeastern tribes**

### Charts

- v. 2    **A Summary of Reuben's Loss of Firstborn Rights and Privileges**
- v. 3    **The Sons of Reuben**

Doctrines Covered		Doctrines Alluded To	

**Introduction:** The line of Reuben is examined in I Chron. 5. We have just finished with the lines of Judah and Simeon, the two tribes who occupy the southernmost portion of the Land of Promise. With the tribe of Reuben, we suddenly go directly across the Dead Sea to the tribe of Reuben and we do continue in a geographical counterclockwise examination of the various tribes. We go to Reuben next as we would have expected to begin with this tribe, based upon the standing of the firstborn. Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, and therefore should have been the son of privilege. However, you will note that his line is examined after the line of Judah and Simeon. Furthermore, Judah is the royal line of the kings of United Kingdom, and later of the Southern Kingdom. It was the behavior of Reuben which resulted in his being supplanted first by the sons of Joseph and then by the tribe of Judah.

One of the interesting aspects of this chapter is that the families of these three tribes are not very carefully examined. Only are the original sons of Reuben mentioned; and the families of these three groups are covered very briefly and without any real depth with regards to their genealogies. However, what we do find in this chapter is a detailed examination of a conflict between these northeastern tribes and their Ishmaelite enemies. We find a tremendous hope in these tribes, as they go to God in a crisis and God answers their prayers. However, in the end, they turn away from God and are carried away into captivity with the rest of the Northern Kingdom.

Another important aspect of this chapter is the exile that these tribes were sent into. We have the well-documented exiles of Samaria (the Northern Kingdom) and of Judah (the Southern Kingdom). However, in this chapter, we hear of the northeastern tribes being the first to be exiled. It is mentioned in vv. 6, 22 and 26, the reason being their unfaithfulness to God (v. 25).

From Reuben, we go north to Gad, and from Gad, we go north to the half tribe of Manasseh which occupied the land east of the Jordan.

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## The Descendants and Territory of Reuben

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

**And sons of Reuben, firstborn of Israel:**

1Chronicles  
5:1a

**The Sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel:**

This half of a verse gives us a title for this particular chapter. If this were a verse by verse translation, this would have been centered and in bold at the top of the chapter (as I would have done in I Chron. 1:28a 2:1a 3:1a 4:1a, 24a). In the next verse and a half, we will examine why Reuben is third on the list in this genealogy rather than being first. I tried separating these verses, but it just wasn't right. V. 1b–2 is a complete thought, parenthetical, and should be in italics or parentheses following the title above. Another similar, but slightly different interpretation, is that the author began with Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, but, when he *penned* those words, he realized that some explanation was necessary; he repeats this phrase in v. 3, to indicate that vv. 1b–2 was parenthetical. We could justify titles from I Chron. 2:1, 4:1a, 4:24a and 5:1a; we could not in the case of the Gadites and Manassites, which are found later in this chapter.

**(for he, the firstborn and in his polluting of beds of his father, given his birthright to sons of Joseph, a son of Israel and not to enroll by genealogy to the birthright. Because Judah became strong in his brothers and to a prince from him and the birthright to Joseph).**

1Chronicles  
5:1b–2

**(Reuben, the firstborn, polluted the bed of his father, and thereby relinquished his birthright to the sons of Joseph [his younger brother]; however, he was not given the privileges and responsibilities normally associated with being the firstborn, because Judah became stronger than his brothers and the royal line came from him and with that, the birthright of Joseph).**

This is such a sloppy and unfortunate separation of verses. V. 1a is the title for this section; v. 1b–2 is parenthetical, explaining why both Judah and Joseph were treated as the firstborn rather than Reuben. It is clear from these first couple chapters that the tribe of Judah is pre-eminent over the tribe of Reuben. Therefore, this must be explained. Now, if we have studied the Old Testament, then we know all about this but recall that in these days, obtaining of copy of Scripture was quite rare (there were times in Israel's history when no one in Israel knew where the Bible was). Therefore, when this was written, some time in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., many would get that Reuben is the firstborn, but why does he not lead Israel? Why did he not receive the double portion? These verses explain why.

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(Although he was the firstborn, his rights as firstborn were given to his nephews, Joseph's sons, because he dishonored his father's bed. However, Joseph couldn't be listed in the genealogy as the firstborn son. Even though Judah was more prominent than his brothers and the prince was to come from him, Joseph received the rights as firstborn.)

JPS (Tanakh)

(He was the first-born; but when he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so he is not reckoned as the first-born in the genealogy; though Judah became more powerful than his brothers and a leader came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.)

NASB

...(for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from his *came* the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.

NIV

...(he was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father's marriage bed, his rights as firstborn were given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel; so he could not be listed in the genealogical record in accordance with his birthright, and though Judah was the

strongest of his brothers and a ruler came from him, the rights of the firstborn belonged to Joseph)—

REB (He had been, in fact, the first son born, but because he committed incest with a wife of his father's the status of the eldest was transferred to the sons of Joseph, Israel's son, who, however, could not be registered as the eldest son. Judah held the leading place among his brothers because he fathered a ruler, and the status of the eldest was his, not Joseph's.)

The Septuagint ...(for he was the firstborn; but because of his going up to his father's couch, his father gave his blessing to his son Joseph the son of Israel; and he was not reckoned as firstborn; for Judah was very mighty even among his brethren, and one was to be a ruler out of him, but the blessing was to Joseph).

Young's Lit. Translation ...—for he is the first-born, and on account of his profaning the couch of his father hath his birthright been given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, and he is not to be reckoned by genealogy for the birthright, for Judah hath been mighty over his brother, and for leader above him, and the birthright is to Joseph.

The first verb is the Piel infinitive construct of *châlal* (חָלַל) [pronounced *khaw-LAHL*], which means *to pollute, to defile, to profane, to sully, to contaminate*. Strong's #2490 BDB #319, BDB #320. What he polluted was the masculine plural construct of *yâtsûwa* (יָטוּא) [pronounced *yaw-TSOO-ahg*], which means *couch, bed*. This word is always found in the plural, as it refers to the several components of a bed. Strong's #3326 BDB #426. The father's bed was polluted by the act of Reuben. As you will recall, Jacob, gave birth to twelve sons and a daughter by two wives (sisters) and their personal maids. Rachel was the younger wife and there is no indication as to the age of her personal maid; however, she may have been 5–10 years younger. After the birth of the twelve sons (apparently), while Jacob was living in the Land of Promise, Reuben, without any explanation of motive, went and slept with Bilhah, Rachel's maid (Rachel had already died while giving birth to Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son). What may be the case is that this was Reuben's way of making a claim on that which belonged to his father (see 2Sam. 16:20–22 1Kings 2:13–25). Jacob definitely had favorites with respect to his sons, and his favorites were the sons of Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin, also his youngest children. This preference was painfully obvious to the others, and this was Reuben's way of laying claim to what he believed to be his. I had originally thought that lust might have been a motivating factor, but there may have been a 20–35 year age difference between Reuben and Bilhah. When Jacob (Israel) found out that this had occurred, it was a great insult to him (Gen. 35:22). Furthermore, when it came to the big decisions and to demonstrating the leadership that the oldest should demonstrate, Reuben did not have it. What he did here was inexcusable (Deut. 27:20). When all the brothers turned on Joseph, Reuben could have provided the correct leadership and protected him as a younger sibling. Reuben apparently was concerned and kept Joseph from being murdered; however, he did not take his role as far as he should have. He tried to covertly protect Joseph, which was not what that particular situation called for. When Jacob, at the end of his life, went to bless his sons, he recalled Reuben's sin, and said that he lost his pre-eminence through that mistake (Gen. 49:3–4). Jacob called Reuben as variable as water. When you pour water into a container, water takes the shape of the container. Water has no backbone or strength of its own. It molds to fit itself into whatever situation it is placed. This is what Reuben did. He should have taken the responsibility of leadership, but he did not. He adjusted his position to the situation and operated under situation ethics. He took the expedient route; he adjusted himself to get by, but he did not take a position of leadership. These are not the qualities of a leader, and so his double-portion was given to Joseph, the second-youngest child of Jacob, and his leadership position to Judah.

We have literally *and not to register [or enroll by genealogy]*. We have the negative, the lamed prefixed preposition and the Hithpael infinitive construct of *yâchas* (יָחַס) [pronounced *yaw-KHAHS*], which means *to cause one's name to be recorded in genealogical tables*. The infinitive with lamed means *shall or must*; and the negative means *not*. Strong's #3187 BDB #405.

What has to be dealt with is that Joseph would seem to have been the logical choice for the birthright of Jacob, but that was not God's plan. At the end of v. 1, it says that *he is not listed in the genealogy according to his birthright*; and it is unclear as to who *he* is. However, we are now speaking about Joseph. It is Joseph, not Reuben, who is dealt with next, something which is lost when these verses are separated. The explanation of the

chronicler is simply that the tribe of Judah simply prevailed over his brothers. The verb is the Qal perfect of gâ<sup>b</sup>var (גָּבַר) [pronounced *gaw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR*], which means *to be strong, to be mighty, to exhibit greater strength than, to be stronger than, to prevail over*. Strong's #1396 BDB #149.

What came from Judah was the masculine singular of nâgîyd (נָגִיד) [pronounced *naw-GEED*], which means *prince, leader, ruler, noble*. This word comes from the original concept of a leader and ruler and then is applied to the virtues which become a prince. Strong's #5057 BDB #617. We find this same word used of David used in I Chron. 11:2 17:7.

It should be clear by any translation that what happened was the birthright went from Reuben, who defiled his father's marriage bed, to Joseph, who, because of the leadership that he demonstrated in Egypt, was the natural choice (and, certainly because he was his father's favorite; in fact, his father's message to his sons—Gen. 49, ends with the longest praise going to Joseph, and conferring to him the blessings of his father in Gen. 49:22–26). What Joseph received, in essence, was the double blessing. Two tribes came from him—Ephraim and Manasseh. However, the royal birthright did not remain with Joseph, despite the fact that, during the lifetime of Jacob, Joseph was a principal ruler in Egypt; the royal birthright went to Judah, and v. 2 explains that. *Gilead is Mine and Manasseh is Mine and Ephraim is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter* (Psalm 60:7). *But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah; from you, One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity* (Micah 5:2). Judah became a leader to the other tribes in several ways: (1) Judah was the largest tribe by population before and after the removal of gen X; (2) Judah continued to remove the Canaanite from its territory, whereas most of the other tribes did not make any progress after receiving their land inheritance; (3) from Judah came David and his dynasty; and, (4) from Judah would come the Eternal King.

<b>Reuben, due to his inability to lead and his defilement of his father's bed, lost the two most important aspects of being the firstborn:</b>		Gen. 35:22 48:5, 21–22 49:3–4, 10 Deut. 27:20 I Chron. 5:1–2 Micah 5:2
<b>The Double-Portion...</b>	<b>The Leadership Position...</b>	
...went to Joseph, whose sons were Ephraim and Manasseh, forming two tribes of Israel.	...went to Judah, whose line showed leadership qualities.	

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Now the NIV Study Bible has a slightly different take on the structure of these couple of verses (which does not change the exegesis, just the presentation). They explain that the chronicler began to write about the family of Reuben, and suddenly stopped to explain why Reuben did not carry with him all the rights and privileges of being firstborn. Then he resumed right where he left off. Although we could see the first line of v. 1 as a title of this section, and could make a similar reasonable argument for I Chron. 2:1a 3:1a 4:1a, 24a, once we get to the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh in this chapter, there is no way that the first few words could be interpreted as a title. However, by going with *sons of Reuben*, in the author's mind, he is thinking the northeastern tribes and taking them as a whole, for when we get to the tribe of Levi, one can easily make the argument that I Chron. 6:1a is the title of that chapter.<sup>1</sup> The different takes on the structure of these verses does not affect the interpretation of same.

**Sons of Reuben, firstborn of Israel: Hanoch** 1Chronicles **The sons of Reuben (the firstborn of Israel) and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi.** 5:3 **were Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi.**

As with the previous couple chapters, it is easier to see the progression of these lines with an outline.

<sup>1</sup> By the way, in the Hebrew Bible, there is no chapter break between chapters 5 and 6; one goes directly from the northeastern tribes to the descendants of Levi—now, that is way goofy, but another topic.

## The Sons of Reuben

1. Hanoch (Gen. 46:9 **I Chron. 5:3**)
2. Pallu (Gen. 46:9 **I Chron. 5:3**)
  - a. Eliab → Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram (Num. 26:8–9)
3. Hezron (Gen. 46:9 **I Chron. 5:3**)
4. Carmi (Gen. 46:9 **I Chron. 5:3**)
5. Descendants of Reuben whose clan is not given:
  - a. Joel → Shemaiah → Gog → Shimei → Micah → Reaiah → Baal → Beerah (**I Chron. 5:4–6**)
  - b. Jeiel, a chief; and Zechariah (who would have lived during the time of the deportation (**I Chron. 5:7–8a**))
  - c. Joel → Shema → Azaz → Bela (**I Chron. 5:7–8a**)

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Reuben's sons are mentioned in Gen. 46:9; the fact that they form the four major families of Reuben is given in Ex. 6:14 Num. 26:5–6. Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron and Carmi all went with Reuben into Egypt and none of them, at that time, had had any sons. Only Pallu is found in an additional passage—Num. 26:8, where he is said to be the father (ancestor) of Eliab, who was the ancestor of Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram.

Surprisingly enough, Eliab is not mentioned in I Chron. 5; nor are his sons, Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram, which is not all that surprising. Nemuel is mentioned, in fact, only in Num. 26:8–9. You may recall when most of gen X was alive and in the desert with Moses, that Korah, a Levite, led a rebellion against Moses, along with 250 leaders from the congregation. Directly under Korah were Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, a son of Peleth (who some say might be Pallu, but I doubt it). Korah believed in complete and total equality (except for himself, of course) and saw the good in all men. **“You have gone far enough,”** he said to Moses and Aaron; **“for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of Jehovah?”** (Num. 16:3b). Moses called to have a private chat with Dathan and Abiram (it is unclear as to his intentions). They would not speak with Moses, claiming that he brought them out to this waste of a land; they weren't going to listen to him lord it over them (Num. 16:12–13). God caused an earthquake which swallowed Korah and his immediate followers (which would have been Dathan and Abiram), and a fire which engulfed the remainder (Num. 16:23–35 Deut. 11:6). Another 14,700 sympathizers were taken out by the plague before Aaron was able to make intercession for them (Num. 16:41–50). The psalmist who penned Psalm 106 recalls their sin (Psalm 106:16–18) and Jude, 1500 years later also recalls their sin against God's leadership, associating Cain, Balaam and Korah together (Jude 11). What is important to understand is that Dathan and Abiram, although they were followers, had enough by way of leadership qualities to influence 15,000 Israelites to follow Korah. So, the most well-known of the natural leaders in Reuben's line rebelled against God's leadership in Moses. Here is yet another reason why Reuben was not the ruling tribe of Israel.

**Sons of Joel: Shemaiah, his son; Gog, his son; Shimei, his son; Micah, his son; Reaiah, his son; Baal, his son; Beerah, his son, who was deported Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria—he [was] a leader to the Reubenite;**

<sup>1</sup>Chronicles  
5:4–6

**The descendants of Joel: Shemaiah, whose son was Gog, whose son of Shimei, whose son was Micah, whose son was Reaiah, whose son was Baal, whose son was Beerah, who Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, carried away into exile. Beerah was a leader of the Reubenite tribe;**

The descendants of Reuben here are not clearly related to any of Reuben's four sons. They are only found in this passage. There may be several generations which fall between each set of *sons*. This almost takes us to 721 B.C., at which time Assyria took all of Samaria (the Northern Kingdom of Israel) into captivity. Apparently, Tiglath-Pileser III took the northeastern tribes into captivity a decade prior (see the last verse of this chapter). I haven't a clue as to why Tiglath-Pileser's name is so spelled in this and other passages. In the Septuagint

translation, it is *Thaglyphallasar*. In Scripture, what we know about Tiglath-Pileser is that he attacked Israel (i.e., Samaria, the Northern Kingdom) and carried them away into captivity (2Kings 15:29 | Chron. 5:26) and required Judah to pay him tribute (2Kings 16:7–10 | 2Chron. 28:19–20).

Beerah was called a *nâsîy'* (נָסִי) [pronounced *naw-SEE*], which means *one lifted up, leaders, chiefs, princes*. Strong's #5387 BDB #672.

It is obvious that this line cannot stretch back very far. If it were a continuous father and son line, then it would take us back in time from Tiglath-Pileser to perhaps the time of Rehoboam. In this line, as in so many before it, there are likely many large and small gaps.

<p><b>and his brothers to their families in recording their generations: the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah and Bela son of Azaz,<sup>2</sup> son of Shema, son of Joel.</b></p>	<p><sup>1</sup>Chronicles 5:7–8a</p>	<p><b>along with his relatives by their families when recording their genealogy: the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah and Bela, son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel.</b></p>
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Along with Beerah, we have *âch* (אָח) [pronounced *awhk*], which simply means *brother, kinsman or close relative*. Here, it refers to a fellow member of the tribe of Reuben. Strong's #251 BDB #26.

We have the *bêyth* preposition and the Hithpael infinitive construct of *yâchas* (יָחַס) [pronounced *yaw-KHAHS*], which means *to cause one's name to be recorded in genealogical tables*. Strong's #3187 BDB #405. *Bêyth* acts as a temporal preposition here. This is followed by the feminine plural of *tôwl<sup>e</sup>dôwth* (תּוֹלְדוֹת) [pronounced *tohl<sup>e</sup>-DOHTH*], which means *generations*. This word is used a great deal in genealogies (e.g., Gen. 5:1 | 6:9 | Ex. 6:16). Strong's #8435 BDB #410. The men mentioned here are unknown apart from this passage. We could only speculate whether the Joel of this passage is equivalent to the Joel of the previous passage.

<p><b>He [Reuben] was dwelling in Aroer and as far as Nebo and Baal-meon and to the east he dwelt as far as an entry desert-ward to from the River Euphrates because their cattle had multiplied in a land of Gilead.</b></p>	<p><sup>1</sup>Chronicles 5:8b–9</p>	<p><b>Reuben had lived in Aroer and as far as Nebo and Baal-meon. To the east, he occupied land which went to the entrance of the desert to the River Euphrates because of the increase of their cattle.</b></p>
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As often found in this first few chapters of Chronicles, the person who separated it into verses did not seem to have a clue. In the middle of v. 8, we begin to describe where the tribe of Reuben lived. This begins with a 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular pronoun. We are not speaking of Joel, as we have no clue even the time period of Joel within 300 years. Furthermore, we are fairly certain that Joel did not live everywhere given in vv. 8b–10; tha'd be stupid. However, in not separating v. 8 into two verses, and by separating vv. 8 and 9, it appears as though *he* refers back to Joel, the nearest masculine singular noun. The person referred to here is Reuben, who was dead 400 years prior to coming into the Land of Promise (or, actually, prior to standing on the outskirts of the land, east of the Jordan). However, the singular noun, *Reuben* is used as a metonym for his descendants. What we have is a description of where Reuben lived over the past half millennium. The southern border between Reuben and Moab was the Arnon River, which forked near Aroer, which would have been the southeastern most corner of the territory of Reuben.

Early on, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh lay claim to the area east of the Jordan. They were cattle ranchers and the land, at that time, was ideal for that. Prior to crossing the Jordan, Israel moved north along the eastern side of the Dead Sea, and was forced to war with some of the peoples on the east side of the Jordan. The tribes of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh liked the land that they saw and claimed it for their own. After some discussion of their responsibilities, Moses granted them that land (Num. 32). Once they had finished helping the rest of Israel secure the Land of Promise, then they were free to return to this land east of the Jordan and occupy it. **And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned and departed from the**

<sup>2</sup> *Azan* or *Azzan* in some codices.

sons of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they had possessed, according to the command of Jehovah through Moses (Joshua 22:9). This would have been around 1400 B.C.

In the book of the Judges, the tribe of Reuben is only mentioned in the Song of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5:15–16) and the tribe of Gad is not mentioned at all. When Israel first takes the Land of Promise, it appears as though only Judah and Simeon actually make some strides in taking the land which God had given them (Judges 1); the other tribes appear to be failures in that regard (Judges 1:27–36). However, who is not mentioned is Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. It would be most reasonable for them to have taken the land mentioned in this verse early on during the period of the judges (this would also square us with the next verse where King Saul is mentioned, whose reign officially ended the 300 year period of the judges). This would have been the time period during which Israel, as a whole, would have been at its most gung ho (at least, at the very beginning). However, the order of these verses makes such a determination impossible. We have Tiglath Pileser hauling the Reubenites away in v. 6; we have their ancestors in v. 8; we have the expansion of their land in v. 9; and King Saul is mentioned in v. 10. So the order of the verses would not support this theory. It would be just as reasonable to place this expansion during the period of time between Saul (circa 1040 B.C.) and the time of the dispersion of the northeastern peoples (circa 733 B.C.). Apparently Aroer, Nebo and Baal-meon were recaptured from Ahab by Mesha, the king of Moab in the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.,<sup>3</sup> which would therefore likely place their original capture by Reuben during the early period of the judges (although we could certainly argue for an exchange of that real estate after that time period; however that would be less likely).

Mount Nebo marks the northern extremity of Reuben. There was a city Nebo, either on Mount Nebo or near its base, and which originally belonged to the Moabites. As Israel came up on the east side of the Dead Sea, developing as a military force, often against their own will, Reuben, Gad and a portion of Manasseh requested that their inheritance be on the east side of the Jordan, and one of the cities which Reuben requested was Nebo (Num. 32:3). This city was rebuilt by the Reubenites (Num. 32:38 33:47). Mesha, the king of Moab, took the city back and recorded this victory on the famous Moabite Stone (again, in the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). Isaiah prophesies against Moab, and Nebo is a part of that prophecy (Isa. 15:1–9). Jeremiah also prophesies against Moab, mentioning Nebo as well (Jer. 48; see vv. 1 and 22). Eusebius places Nebo eight miles south of Heshbon,<sup>4</sup> which would put it southeast of Mount Nebo.

The tribe of Reuben built Baal-meon early on (Num. 32:38) and it is described as one of the most glorious cities on the *flank* of Moab (Ezek. 25:9). Keil and Delitzsch suggest that Baal-meon is equivalent to the ruin of *Myun*. This is rather confusing, as Baal-meon is on the northern border of what was originally allotted to Reuben. This would mean that Reuben got pushed very far north at some time or another. Ammon is mentioned in that passage as being given as a possession; Ammon is due east of Reuben. ZPEB suggests that the ownership of Baal-meon passed back and forth between Reuben and Moab several times. Again, its placement in the north of Reuben makes that rather confusing (although one of my maps of Israel and Judah during the divided kingdom shows just that—Moab extending all the way from the southernmost portion of the Dead Sea to the northernmost portion). We spent some time with Baal-meon in Joshua 13:17.

The land of Gilead was just north of the area originally given to Reuben and apparently, Reuben eventually moved into that area. However, the cattle belonging to the people of Reuben became so extensive that they grazed them all the way along the Syrian desert line to the Euphrates (they would have had to have gone northeast along the mountains and the edge of the desert). This would have been a pretty far trip, traveling through what was once Amorite country all the way to the land occupied by the Babylonian Empire.

<sup>3</sup> Martin J. Selman, *1Chronicles An Introduction & Commentary*; The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D. J. Wiseman editor, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., ©1994, p. 106. What we have in the Moabite Stone, line 26, is that Mesha built Aroer and the road by the Arnon. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 327.

<sup>4</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 4, p. 395.

And in days of Saul, they made war with the Hagrites and so they fell in their hand. And so they dwelt in their tents beyond all faces of [the] east to the Gilead.

1Chronicles  
5:10

In the days of Saul, the Reubenites fought against the Hagrites and were victorious. They then lived in their tents throughout the area east of Gilead.

Let's first examine a couple of different literal translations for this verse:

NASB

And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagrites, who fell by their hand, so that they occupied [lit., dwelt in] their tents throughout all the land east of Gilead [lit., all the face of the east].

The Septuagint

And in the days of Saul, they made war upon the sojourners *in the land*; and they fell into their hands, all of them dwelling in their tents eastward of Galaad.

Young's Lit. Translation

And in the days of Saul they have made war with the Hagarites, who fall by their hand, and they dwell in their tents over all the face of the east of Gilead.

The first thing that you might note about these translations is that in the two literal Massoretic text-based translations, we are speaking of *Hagrites* and in the Greek, we are speaking of sojourners. These words, in the Hebrew, are not even close. There are a half dozen words for *dwelt*, *sojourn*, *dwellers*, *sojourners*, etc., in the Hebrew, and none of them are even close to the word for *Hagrites*. The second main difference is that the Reubenites, in the Greek, went to war and defeated *all of them dwelling in their tents eastward of Galaad*. In the MT, the Reubenites actually occupy those tents following the war. Given the increase of the cattle of the Reubenites in the previous verse and their occupying land all the way to the Euphrates, either translation works for us, as long as we realize that Reuben occupied a great deal of territory to the east of the Gilead (which was not exactly the land which was first given them).

A minor consideration: the preposition preceding *all faces of [the] east* is *ʿal* (אָל) [pronounced *ahl*], which means *upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside*. When *ʿal* is used in connection with something geographical, particularly *water*; it has the connotation of *contiguity* or *proximity*; so here, it means *by* or *beside*. Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752. No matter how we render it, it will sound convoluted in the English; however, the gist is that Reuben, during the time of Saul, occupied a great deal of the land which was east of the Gilead.

We don't know much about the Hagrites. ZPEB supposes that they are an Arab or Aramæan tribe who lived in the region east of Gilead. Israel faced them at least twice in war, soundly defeating them (I Chron. 5:10, 19–22) Just as all Arabs do not hate all Jews and vice versa, David placed Jaziz the Hagrite in charge of his flocks (I Chron. 27:30–31). In fact, David left essentially foreigners in charge of his possessions. The Hagrites as a whole, however, appear to have been quite at odds with Israel, and are mentioned among almost a dozen other groups of those at enmity with Israel in Psalm 83:6–9. The passage we are in and Psalm 83 clearly places this group in trans-Jordanian area. We do not know whether there is a relationship between Hagar, Sarah's maid who bore Ishmael, and the Hagrites; the similarity of names makes this a reasonable proposition. They are mentioned with other Arab troops in an inscription made by Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.).<sup>5</sup> Barnes suggests that they were both wealthy and one of the most widespread of the Syrian tribes, being found both near the Euphrates with the Assyrians as well as in *Hauran, in the neighbourhood of Palestine, in contact with the Moabites and the Israelites*.<sup>6</sup> Given the fact that the tribes of the desert were nomadic, it would not be unusual to find them appearing in areas which are far apart.

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<sup>5</sup> The bulk of this information came from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 326.



## The Descendants and Territory of Gad

**And sons of Gad to dwell against them in a land of the Bashan as far as Salecah.**

1Chronicles  
5:11

**And the sons of Gad were adjacent to them, now in the land of Bashan, occupying territory as far east as Salecah.**

We next move to the land of Gad. We are moving geographically, more or less. We began with Judah, as it became the pre-imminent tribe, then took in Simeon, which was a part of Judah, moved across the Dead Sea to Reuben (who moved north and east from there) and now we are north of Reuben's original territory, which is the land of Gad. Now, Bashan is actually further north than the land which Gad originally occupied (Gad's original possession is delineated in Deut. 3:12 Joshua 13:24–28). Gad now occupied a portion of the land which was originally given over to Manasseh. Bear in mind that almost 500 years have passed since Joshua distributed the land (actually, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh staked their claims even earlier than this), so we should expect some fluidity in their occupation. Both the tribes of Reuben and Gad have moved further north. In the past 500 years, we have noticed some fluidity in the boundaries of the United States, starting from zero, to a baker's dozen colonies to 48 contiguous states, to 50 noncontiguous states. Our boundaries have not been stable for even 50 years, let alone 500; so we should not be concerned about this.

Interestingly enough, we dispense with any sort of real introduction here, and the original sons of Gad are not named. The chronicler simply names Gad, the area of Gad (v. 11), and then its military chiefs (v. 12). Unlike the previous tribes, the chronicler chooses not to name the original sons of Gad from Gen. 46 or Num. 26).

Salecah [pronounced *SAHL*<sup>e</sup>-*caw*] is also associated originally with the tribe of Manasseh (Joshua 13:29–31) and now with Gad, just as land previously associated with Gad is now associated with Reuben. This city is often known as the easternmost landmark of the land of Bashan (Deut. 3:10 Joshua 12:5 13:11), an area known for its fertile soil.

**Joel, the chief and Sharpham the second and Janai and Shaphat in the Bashan.**

1Chronicles  
5:12

**Joel was governor and Sharpham was lieutenant governor, along with staff Janai and Shaphat in the Bashan.**

Unlike the previous three tribes, the tribe of Gad's lineage is not begun at the beginning. However, we will begin with them at the beginning. When Gad moved to Egypt with the rest of the family, he pretty much had the largest base of children to work with. He had Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi and Areli. Only Benjamin, the youngest, had more children. These children are mentioned in Gen. 46:16 and in Num. 26:15–16 (in this latter passage, we are speaking of their families). In this passage, we simply begin with some Gadites without any clear connection between them and their particular ancestors. These were leaders of Gad probably the last in existence prior to the northern kingdom being dispersed. When Chronicles was written, the kingdom of Israel was but a shadow of what it once was. Moab and Ammon occupied the territory which once belonged to Reuben and Gad. Larger nations had deported first the northeastern tribes of Israel (Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh),<sup>7</sup> then the northern tribes of Israel, and finally those in Judah were removed. When a limited number of Jews came back to the land under the decree of Cyrus the Great, they did not occupy all of Israel as before. They were a relatively small group of men who moved back into the northern portion of Judah. The southern portion of Judah was now Idumea, which was controlled by various groups from 400 B.C. to the time of our Lord. In other words, at this point, we do not know the time period of which we are speaking. We would reasonably guess somewhere between the time of Saul to the time prior to the northern kingdom dispersion. V. 17 will clear this up for us.

<sup>7</sup> We will cover this in v. 26 of this chapter.

**And their brothers to houses of their fathers: Michael and Meshullam and Sheba and Jorai and Jacan and Zia and Eber<sup>8</sup>—seven—these sons of Abihail, son of Huri, son of Jaroah, son of Gilead, son of Michael, son of Jerhishai, son of Sahdo, son of Buz.**

1Chronicles  
5:13–14

**Their relatives were Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia and Eber—seven who were sons of Abihail, the son of Huri, who was the son of Jaroah, who was the son of Gilead, who was the son of Michael, who was the son of Jerhishai, who was the son of Sahdo, who was the son of Buz,**

In v. 13, we have seven men mentioned—probably families in Gad—all from one father, Abihail (v. 14). It is obvious that no clear genealogical records were kept. We have these seven, who can be traced back several generations, and the leaders of Gad, who apparently come from these seven families? Best we might do in these verses is guess that these are simply the seven families of Gad known to the writer of Chronicles.

**Ahi, son of Abdiel, son of Guni—a chief in a house of their fathers.**

1Chronicles  
5:15 **brother of the son of Abdiel, who was the son of Guni, the head of the house of their fathers.**

At the beginning of this verse, we are uncertain as to whether it should begin with *a son of* or not (it does not in the MT). However, in the Greek, *Ahi* is not taken as a proper noun, but as *the brother of*. It is rendered: *...the son of Jeddai, the son of Buz, the brother of the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni—chief of the house of their families.* In any case, these people are only known in this passage.

**And so they dwelt in the Gilead in Bashan and her towns and in all pasture lands of Sharon against their goings-out.**

1Chronicles  
5:16

**They lived in Gilead in the Bashan and in her towns and in the pasture lands of Sirion to its borders.**

*Sharon*, here, is not the famous plain of Sharon found throughout Scripture—that Sharon is a 50 mile long plain off the coast in northern Palestine. This particular *Sharon* is found only here and is thought to possibly be a corruption of *Sirion*, which refers to some pasture lands of Hermon. It is mentioned on line 13 of the Moabite Stone (however, it is unclear whether it is under the name *Sharon* or *Sirion*).<sup>9</sup> Others suggest that this is the plateau (or, *mīshor*) of the Gilead, which lies between Heshbon and the Arnon Valley (Deut. 3:10).<sup>10</sup> The final word in this verse is the feminine plural noun *thôtzâ`âh* (תִּרְצָאֵהָ) [pronounced *toh-tzaw-AW*], a word found only in the plural collective and it means *a going out* or refers to *the place where one goes out*. It can refer to the *exit* or the *termination* of a thing. The REB renders this *as far as it stretched*. Strong's #8444 BDB #426.

**Their all recorded [by genealogies] in days of Jotham, king of Judah and in days of Jeroboam, king of Israel.**

1Chronicles  
5:17

**These men had all been recorded in the genealogical records during the times of Jotham, the king of Judah, and Jeroboam, the king of Israel.**

It is rather difficult to translate the beginning of this verse. It begins with the masculine singular noun *kôl* (כֹּל) [pronounced *kohl*], which means *the whole, all of, the entirety of, all, every*. Strong's #3605 BDB #481. With this is the masculine plural suffix. Literally, this is *their all*; however, we can go with *all of them*. This is followed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, Hithpael perfect of *yâchas* (יָחַס) [pronounced *yaw-KHAHS*], again, which means *to cause one's name to be recorded in genealogical tables*. Strong's #3187 BDB #405. This combination is variously rendered as *All of these were enrolled in the genealogies* (NASB); *all of them reckoned themselves by genealogy* (Young); or, *All of them were genealogically registered* (Rotherham). Although most interpret this as a simple

<sup>8</sup> Possibly *Ebed*, as found in two early printed editions and in the Septuagint.

<sup>9</sup> Martin J. Selman, *1Chronicles An Introduction & Commentary*; The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D. J. Wiseman editor, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL., ©1994, p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 377.

reference to the families of Gad herein named; it is possible that the compiler of Chronicles was giving his basic sources at this time. *All of these* need not refer back only to the Gadites (which would actually make the interpretation of this more difficult); but it can refer back to all of the peoples and families mentioned.

It is at this point that we are given some sort of time frame in which these lines are valid for. This would place us at the latter half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. 10–50 years later, northern Israel would be dispersed (at the time of the writing of this chapter, they had already been dispersed). Jotham ruled in Judah between c. 740–732 B.C. and Jeroboam ruled in Israel c. 782–753 B.C. (this is Jeroboam II). During this rule of Jeroboam, Israel was prosperous and flourishing. However, 30 years later, the northern kingdom was dispersed in 721 B.C. and this (the book of Chronicles) was written about 300 years later. I would guess that there was some sort of central area where the official genealogical records were kept; perhaps in or near the Temple. What is being said is that the chronicler, probably Ezra, has two sets of records that he is working with which came from different places (the Northern and Southern Kingdoms) from slightly different time periods. How or where these were preserved is not information to which we are privy. In any case, Ezra has obtained two small libraries from the two time periods and two different locals of the two kings mentioned, either from their personal library or from the library of the Levites while under their rulership. It is obvious from the language of I Chron. 5:12, 18–22 that some of these were military records. Finally, we should not be concerned that records concerning the northeastern tribes were found either in Judah or in Israel—we do not have any indication of any strong, independent, central leadership in the northeast. Although probably allied, for the most part, with Israel, we should not be surprised that there were records concerning them from either place. During their exile, it is possible that some of these records were purposely brought to the south for safekeeping. Again, we do not know the means of preservation or the chain of custody—we simply know that Ezra was able to gain access to these records and was able to determine the time period that they came from.

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## The Eastern Tribes War with the Hagrites

**Sons of Reuben and Gadites and half of a tribe of Manasseh from sons of valiant men carriers of a shield and sword and drawers of a bow and learned of battle—44,760 goes out of the army.**

1Chronicles  
5:18

**From the sons of Reuben, Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh came valiant soldiers, those who bore the shield and sword, who were well-instructed in war; there were 44,760 men in their army alone.**

Although the gist of this verse is easy enough to grasp, let's get a couple of other translations in here:

NASB

The sons of Reuben and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, *consisting of* valiant men, men who bore shield and sword and shot with bow, and *were* skillful in battle, *were* 44,760, who went to war.

*Young's Lit. Translation*

Sons of Reuben, and the Gadite, and the half of the tribe of Manasseh, of sons of valour, men bearing shield and sword, and treading bow, and taught in battle, *are* forty and four thousand and seven hundred and sixty, going out to the host.

Prior to *sons of valiant men* we have the *mîn* preposition, which means *away from, off, out from, out of from*; it can also be used in its *comparative* sense, and mean *above, beyond, more than*. Quite frankly, I don't really like any of these, although there is no way around it; this is the preposition found here. The thought here may be *out from [these]*. Strong's #4480 BDB #577.

We will look at two different verbs from this verse. Prior to *shield and sword*, we have the masculine plural, Qal active participial construct of *nâsâ'* (נָשָׂא) [pronounced *naw-SAW*], which means *to lift up, to bear, to carry*. Strong's #5375 (and Strong's #4984) BDB #669. Prior to the word *battle*, we have the masculine plural, Qal passive participial construct of *lâmad* (לָמַד) [pronounced *law-MAHD*], which means, *to learn, to train*. Strong's #3925 BDB #540. The time frame here is rather difficult to ascertain. It is not clear whether this was

from the records of the time of Jotham and Jeroboam or whether these are the military figures of the army of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh during their conflict with the Hagriles mentioned in the next verse (which, by context, seems the more likely). Even placing that conflict in time is difficult. When Israel first entered into the land, there were twice as many Gadites and Reubenites available for war than the two and a half tribes together. This would indicate that some time had passed between Israel taking the land and the numbers above.

**And so they made a war with the Hagriles and Jetur and Naphish and Nodab.** <sup>1</sup>Chronicles 5:19 **They engaged in war with the Hagriles, and the descendants of Jetur, Naphish and Nodab.**

We know nothing of this war in the Bible apart from this passage. In fact, there seems to be very little information about the northeastern tribes in general. The genealogies of the northeastern tribes are more sparse here than any of the other tribes that we have studied (there will be some northern tribes whose genealogy is equally sparse). We don't know which side began the skirmish, but the gist of this passage seems to indicate that the result was that Reuben (and the other tribes) would expand their borders as a result. What is emphasized is the spiritual battle. We don't know when this occurred, whether before or after the time of Saul, but we know that God supported their faithfulness to Him. The sparse amount of information here may indicate that this information would be known to the reader, meaning that it had all occurred relatively recently (within the previous 200–300 years). In other words, not too much before the time that the northeastern tribes were removed. This would place the timing during the reigns Jotham and Jeroboam. That such a war should not distinguish itself in time or be recorded elsewhere in Scripture should not concern us. During all of my life, I don't recall many times when there was not some sort of a conflict occurring in the middle east.

Jetur is a tribe which descended from Ishmael (Gen. 25:15 | Chron. 1:31) and they are likely the progenitors of the Ituræans, who we hear of in New Testament times. In the Old Testament, Jetur is only mentioned these three times. We only hear of Ituræa one time in the New Testament, and that is in Luke 3:1, as one of the areas of Palestine ruled over by Philip, the brother of Herod the Great. Barnes places them in the region southwest of the Damascene plain, between Gaulonitis (Jaulan) and Ledjah (wherever those places are).<sup>11</sup> Barnes: *This tribe was noted for its thievish habits, and was regarded as savage and warlike.*<sup>12</sup> We will cover them in more detail when we get to the New Testament.

Naphish is another son of Ishmael, not nearly as well-known to us today as then (see Gen. 25:15 | Chron. 1:31 Ezra 2:50 Neh. 8:52). Nodab is found only in this passage; we could assume that they are an Arabian tribe of the Trans-Jordan area.

**And so they received help against them and so were given into their hands the Hagriles and all who [were] with them, for unto God they cried in the battle and He was entreated to them for they trusted in Him.** <sup>1</sup>Chronicles 5:20

**The tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh received help against these Ishmaelites, and the Hagriles, as well as their allies, were delivered into the hands of the eastern tribes of Israel, because they called out to God during the battle and He heard them because they trusted in Him.**

After these northeastern tribes cried out to God, we have the Niphal infinitive absolute of ʿâthar (עָתַר) [pronounced *aw-THAHR* or *gaw-THAHR*], and it means *to pray, to supplicate, to appeal, to petition, to entreaty*. This verb is always directed toward God. The Niphal is the passive voice, meaning that they received an answer from their supplication to God. Young and the NASB render this: *and He was entreated to them*; Rotherham: *and He suffered Himself to be entreated by them*; God's Word renders this: *and he answered their prayers*. Strong's #6279 BDB #801.

<sup>11</sup> Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 326.

<sup>12</sup> Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 326.

One of the great themes of the books of Chronicles (which was originally one book) is the idea of Godly retribution. These other nations were not authorized by God to show aggressive behavior toward Israel; God was not avenging the behavior of the northeastern tribes for anything that they had done. For whatever reason, they were in a military dispute with these other Arabian groups and they called out to God for assistance. God not only assisted them, but brought down the nations who opposed them, giving their land into the hands of the Reubenites, Gadites and Ephraimites. They opposed the nation of Israel and there was hell to pay. Israel called out to God and God answered them. Two simple, powerful lessons.

One of the great themes of the Bible is man trusting God and God responding to that trust. Of Hezekiah, the Bible says, “He trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel, so that after him there was no one like him among all of the kings of Judah, nor of those who were before him. For he clung to Jehovah; he did not depart from following Him, but he kept His commandments, which Jehovah had commanded Moses (2Kings 18:5–6). And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Jehovah, have not forsaken those who seek You (Psalm 9:10). Some boast in chariots and in horses; but we will boast in the name of Jehovah, our God. They have bowed down and have fallen, but we have risen up and have stood upright (Psalm 20:7–8). “One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for Jehovah your God is He Who fights for you, just as He has promised.” (Joshua 23:10; see also 2Chron. 14:11–13).

In this passage, we obviously just have the bare bones description of war between the eastern tribes and these Ishmaelites. V. 17 apparently sets the time for these conflicts (the naming of two kings who are as far apart in time as Jotham and Jeroboam indicates that this conflict went on for a long time). On the one hand, there seems to be this glimmer of hope here for these eastern tribes; however, not far off in time for them would be the dispersion of the northern kingdom. You may wonder how is it possible for this great victory to take place, and then for God to remove Israel from the Northern Kingdom—what we have is a people under great pressure who finally turned to God. Once God had given them what they wanted, they apparently forgot Him.

**And so they carried their livestock: their camels, 50,000; and sheep, 250,000; and asses, 2000; and a soul of men, 100,000.**

1Chronicles  
5:21

**The northeastern tribes of Israel captures their livestock—they took 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep and 2000 asses; they also captured 100,000 men [presumably to be slaves].**

This verse pretty much speaks for itself. However, the implication is that the tribes in the northeast were pretty much at the top of their game. They went to war to secure greater land for their expanding livestock and they were not simply victorious, but made quite a haul in the battle. Their key was the previous verse where they called out to God in battle and God delivered them.

**For slain many fell for from the God the war and so they dwelt in their stead [or, instead of them] until the exile.**

1Chronicles  
5:22

**For many fell fatally wounded for the war was from God; therefore, the Reubenites lived in the land of their enemies until the captivity.**

Let's first see how others have rendered this, because there are some troubling prepositions in this verse:

NASB

For many fell slain, because the war was of God. And they settled in their place until the exile.

NIV

...and many others fell slain, because the battle was God's. And they occupied the land until the exile.

Young's Lit. Translation

...for many have fallen pierced, for of God is the battle; and they dwell in their stead till the removal.

We begin with the explanatory conjunction and the masculine plural noun *châlâl* (חָלַל) [pronounced *chaw-LAWL*], which means *slain, fatally wounded, wounded, pierced*. Strong's #2491 BDB #319. This is followed by the masculine plural of the adjective *ra<sup>b</sup>v* (רַב) [pronounced *rah<sup>b</sup>v*], which means *many, much, great*. Strong's #7227 BDB #912. The main verb is the Qal perfect of *nâphal* (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to lie*,

*to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply.* Strong's #5307 BDB #656. This gives us: **For fatally wounded many fell...** It appears as though the adjective *many* is used as the subject of the sentence and that *slain* describes how they fell. Then we are told that *the war was from God*. That means that they engaged in battle with the full support of God. This does not mean that they did not suffer any casualties or that it was not difficult; it simply means that God was in full support of their battles and they were rewarded for that.

Then we are told that *they dwelt* and this is followed by the preposition tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced *TAH-khahth*], which means *underneath, below, under beneath, instead of*. Strong's #8478 BDB #1065. This is affixed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix—so literally, we have: **...and so they dwelt instead of them [or, better, and so they dwelt in their stead]...**

The final word of this verse is feminine singular noun gôwlâh (גֹּוֹלָהּ) [pronounced *goh-LAW*], which means *exiles, exile*. This word is used both to describe the event as well as to describe those who were taken away (or, more often, those who returned). The KJV generally renders this *captives, captive* or *captivity*; however, neither Gesenius nor BDB offered that as the proper rendering of this verb. However, Zodhiates tells us that this means *emigration, evacuation, exile, banishment; exiles, captives*. He goes on to say, *This word...refers to anyone who has been deported as a slave or to the captivity itself...[it] is used with reference to the Babylonian exile of Judah, which was the result of the rebellion against God.*<sup>13</sup> In this case, of course, it refers to the deportation of the northeastern tribes, circa 733 B.C. Assyrian annexed their territory in 734 B.C.; Tiglath Pileser conquered northern and northeastern Israel, and carried away those in the north captive (2Kings 15:29). Strong's #1473 BDB #163.

This gist of the verse is simple: the *many* who fell dead refer to the Hagrites and the descendants of Jetur, Naphish and Nodab—God approved and sanctioned this war, and therefore the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh were emerge victorious and occupy the land of their enemies. This would indicate that the area which Reuben, Gad and Manasseh occupied in the 8<sup>th</sup> century was quite a bit different from the land originally given them by God. They originally occupied a strip of land, about 30–50 miles wide, extending from the middle of the Dead Sea in the south up to Damascus in Aram in the north. Apparently, by some of the cities described in this chapter, Reuben was pushed up until they and the other tribes were north of the Dead Sea, but this war seems to have given them a great deal of land which extended their northern territory toward the north and the east—all of the way to the River Euphrates. This would not have simply included Damascus but pretty much the area which belonged to Hammath; in other words, for awhile, Israel occupied a significant portion of modern-day northwestern Syria to the point that the northern portion was at roughly the same latitude as Cyprus.

In these previous four verses, we pass over five centuries of history, going from very early conquests of the northeastern tribes all the way to their captivity, which preceded the capture of Samaria by a decade.

One of the philosophical questions often posed is *How can God both support war and simultaneously be good?* In this particular verse, the Trans-Jordanian war is said to be *of God* and there appears not only to be a great slaughter, but also a tremendous transfer of property and possessions. This is a very reasonable question generally posed by those of the 60's *love* generation. We are not going to be able to somehow *love* everybody into a state of peace. For thousands of years, since the first war, men have recognized the horrors of war. Those who have lived through war on their own country's soil can testify to its madness and absolute inhumanity. However, war is a part of human history and will continue to be until Christ returns. Both history and the Bible teach us that. Now, on occasion, an individual nation might survive a century or more without war, but there is no time at which, in the world, where some war is not going on. There is no time when acts of aggression between nations or between different ethnic groups within the same geographical area are not going on. In many instances, God is on one side or the other. Sometimes, one army represents all that is evil and God destroys that army (e.g., the German army of World War II—many of those in the army were believers, but they represented a nation steeped in anti-Semitism). As in the actions of the men of World War II, they did not have a great many

<sup>13</sup> *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 2308.

options. It was their bravery and dedication to the principals of peace which purchased for us, with their blood, decades of peace for the United States.<sup>14</sup>

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## The Descendants and Territory of the Half-tribe of Manasseh

**And sons of half a tribe of Manasseh in the land from Bashan as far as Baal-hermon and Senir and a mount of Hermon—they multiplied [their population].** 1Chronicles 5:23

**And the descendants of the half tribe of Manasseh occupied the land of Bashan as far north as Baal-hermon, Senir and Mount Hermon. Their population increased dramatically [in Lebanon as well].<sup>15</sup>**

Bashan is the fertile tract of land which is east of the Sea of Galilee. Although Senir and Baal-hermon are mentioned several times in Scripture, we do not know exactly where they are, although ZPEB suggests that they might be two mountains in the same range as Mount Hermon. Barnes explains: “*Baal-Hermon,*” “*Senir*” (*Deut. iii. 9*), and “*Mount Hermon,*” are here not so much three names of the one great snow-clad eminence in which the Anti-Lebanon terminates towards the north, as three parts of the mountain—perhaps the “three summits” in which it terminates.<sup>16</sup> This gives us a rough northern boundary.

The last verb in this verse is the Qal perfect of *râ<sup>b</sup>vâh* (רַבַּהּ) [pronounced *raw<sup>b</sup>-VAWH*], which means *to become much, to become many, to multiply, to increase in population and in whatever else*. Strong’s #7235 BDB #915. The Greek Septuagint adds *Lebanon*. I don’t know if this is reasonable, as Lebanon is north and northwest of Israel.

**And these heads of a house of their fathers: and Epher and Ishi and Eliel and Azriel and Jeremiah and Jodaviah and Jahdiel— men of strengths of valor; men of renown, heads to a house of their fathers.** 1Chronicles 5:24

**And these were the heads of the clans of their fathers: Epher, Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Jodaviah and Jahdiel, soldiers of great integrity, famous men, who were heads of the families of their fathers.**

In the Massoretic text, prior to Epher, we have the *wâw* conjunction. It is not found in the Septuagint or in the Vulgate.

In the second description of these men, they are called *men of* and this is followed by the masculine plural construct of *gibbôr* (גִּבּוֹרִים) [pronounced *gib-BOAR*], which means *strong men, mighty men, soldiers*. Strong’s #1368 BDB #150. This is followed by the masculine singular construct of *chayil* (חַיִל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil*] and it means *efficiency, army, strength, valour, power, might*. Strong’s #2428 BDB #298. As you can see, a word-for-word rendering is difficult; the NASB and the KJV render this as *mighty men of valor*; Young as *men mighty in valour*; Rotherham as *men who were heroes of valour*.

Quite obviously, we do not know these men of Manasseh. We can place them in time as after the rule of Solomon and prior to the dispersion; however, it does tell us that God remembers these men, even if we do not; and the implication is that there is more to their lives that we might know someday.

<sup>14</sup> I bring up this discussion here, as does *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, pp. 202–203. They give a similar, but different approach to this question. Gleason Archer also covers this in *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 219–220. When in the book of the Joshua, (Joshua 10:43), we covered their arguments and point of view.

<sup>15</sup> As per the Septuagint.

<sup>16</sup> *Barnes’ Notes, Volume 2*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 327.

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## The Dispersion of the Northeastern Tribes

**And so they acted unfaithfully against a God of their fathers and so they [sexually] sought after gods [or, sexually pursued the gods] of [the] peoples of the land whom annihilated God [subject] from their faces.**

<sup>1</sup>Chronicles  
5:25

**However, the eastern tribes were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and they sexually pursued the heathen gods of the people whom their God had destroyed right before their eyes.**

They of this verse does not necessarily refer to the men named above, but to the half-tribe of Manasseh and probably to Gad and Reuben as well. What they did was the Qal imperfect of mā'al (מָאֵל) [pronounced *maw-AL*], which means *to act treacherously, to act unfaithfully, to commit an infraction*. The root of this word means *covering*, so *to act covertly* would be a reasonable sense of this verb. In other words, they are transgressing against God, although they begin by doing this quietly; they try to hide their infraction. Strong's #4603 BDB #591. How they acted unfaithfully is described by the next verb, which is the Qal imperfect of zānāh (זָנָה) [pronounced *zaw-NAW*], which means *to commit adultery, to fornicate, to [sexually] pursue*. Strong's #2181 BDB #275. The use of this verb suggests the phallic cults, but does not demand it. The God of their fathers delivered them and now they are pursuing the gods of the peoples whom they have defeated. The people they defeated depended upon their heathen gods, which are non-existent. Therefore, as irrational as it might seem, the Israelites chose to pursue their gods instead of the God Who delivered them.

The last verb is the Hiphil perfect of shāmad (שָׁמַד) [pronounced *shaw-MAHD*] means *to be exterminated, to be destroyed* in the Niphal; *to lay waste, to annihilate, to exterminate* in the Hiphil. This word is found only in the Niphal or the Hiphil, so a causal relationship may or may not exist. In this case, there was a causal relationship, as God worked through the tribe of Manasseh. Strong's #8045 BDB #1029. God is the subject of this verb and *their* refers to the tribe of Manasseh. Before *their* faces God destroyed the Hagrites and the descendants of Jetur, Naphish and Nodab.

Recall that I have mentioned the themes of immediate retribution? With God's protection came responsibility to represent Him on this earth. These northeastern tribes did not do that. Instead of being God's people, they pursued other gods. They pursued the gods who failed the population they defeated. They rejected their God who gave them victory over the Hagrites and other Arabian peoples, and pursued their gods who let them down. For that reason, the God gave them over to the gods of their enemies and gave them into the hand of their enemies. **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...for when they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks; in fact, they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened, professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to a status of immorality, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever, Amen** (Rom. 1:18, 21–25). If you are a believer, then God affords you protection, but you also have responsibilities. If you choose to turn away from Him, then He will do likewise to you.

**And so stirred up a God of Israel a spirit of Pul, king of Assyria and a spirit of Tilgath-pilneser, king of Assyria, and so He carried them away to the Reubenite and to the Gadite and to the half of a tribe of Manasseh. And so he brought them to Halah and Habor and Hara and a river of Gozan as far as the day the this.**

<sup>1</sup>Chronicles  
5:26

**So God stirred up the spirit of Pul, the king of Assyria—even the spirit of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria—so that he carried away captive the sons of Reuben, Gath and Manasseh, taking them to Halah, Habor and to the mountains and river of Gozan, where they remain even to this day.**



The first verb is the Hiphil imperfect of עָוַר (עוּר) [pronounced *gōor*], and it means *to rouse oneself, to awake*. The Hiphil means *to cause one to be awake, to cause one to be stirred up*. Strong's #5782 BDB #734. The subject of the verb is *the God of Israel*. Who God stirred up is Pul, whom ZPEB identifies as Tiglath-Pileser. Here, it sounds as though they are two different people. Ashurbanipal came to my mind as the identity, simply based upon the similarity of the name. However, Ashurbanipal was the king of Assyria from 669–626 B.C., which is 50 years after Tiglath-Pileser removed Israel from Israel. The New Bible Dictionary and several other sources also maintain that Pul and Tiglath-Pileser (or, in this passage, Tilgath-Pilneser), pointing out that his native name, Pul, is found as Pulu in the Babylonian Chronicle.

Will Durant compares the relationship between the nations Sumeria, Babylonia and Assyria to Crete, Greece and Rome. *The first created a civilization, the second developed it to its height, the third inherited it, added little to it, protected it, and transmitted it as a dying gift to the encompassing and victorious barbarians. For barbarism is always around civilization, amid it and beneath it, ready to engulf it by arms, or mass migration, or unchecked fertility. Barbarism is like the jungle; it never admits its defeat; it waits patiently for centuries to recover the territory it has lost.*<sup>17</sup> Three hundred miles north of Babylon, roughly during this time period, another civilization had appeared. They developed a fierce and rugged military, forced to defend themselves against the vicious mountain tribes surrounding them. Along the waters or tributaries of the Tigris, this civilization grew principally in four cities: Ashur, Arbela, Kalakh and Nineveh. The god Ashur gave its name to the city, and eventually to the civilization known as the Assyrians. *The population was a mixture of Semites from the civilized south (Babylonian and Akkadia) with non-Semitic tribes from the west (probably of Hittite or Mitannian affinity) and Kurdish mountaineers from the Caucasus. They took their common language and their arts from Sumerian, but modified them later into an almost indistinguishable similarity to the language and arts of Babylonia. Their circumstances, however, forbade them to indulge in the effeminate ease of Babylon; from beginning to end they were a race of warriors, mighty in muscle and courage, abounding in proud hair and beard, standing straight, stern and stolid on their monuments, and bestriding with tremendous feet the east-Mediterranean world. Their history is one of kings and slaves, wars and conquests, bloody victories and sudden defeat.*

Apparently, this civilization, under Shalmaneser I, brought the several city-states under one rule, making Kalakh his capital, while Babylon, as Durant further explains, *was still in the darkness of the Kassite era*. The first great Assyrian to arise was Tiglath Pileser I, who would go out and conquer, burning cities, taking booty, demanded tribute. *In every direction he led his armies, conquering the Hittites, the Armenians, and forty other nations, capturing Babylon, and frightening Egypt into sending him anxious gifts. (He was particularly mollified by a crocodile.)* The riches that he gained in these conquests allowed him to build temple dedicated to the various Assyrian gods and goddesses. *Then Babylon revolted, defeated his armies, pillaged his temples, and carried his gods into Babylonian captivity. Tiglath-Pileser died of shame. His reign was a symbol and summary for all Assyrian history; death and taxes, first for Assyria's neighbors, then for herself.* The next ruler of note, Ashurnasirpal II, regained some of the booty which had been taken away, and conquered some less important city-states, and then spent a lot of time in his harem. Shalmaneser III continued his conquests where Ashurnasirpal II had left off, moving as far as Damascus. Then, after a short reign of a queen mother, Tiglath-Pileser III (who was apparently no relation to the first Tiglath-Pileser, but simply took his name) built up the Assyrian war machine again, re-conquering Armenia, Syria, Babylonia and making *vassal cities of Damascus, Samaria and Babylon*.<sup>18</sup> It is this Tiglath-Pileser III who is mentioned in this passage (he reigned 745–727 B.C.). I am not able to completely explain his relationship to Israel. In this passage, he is said to have taken the northeastern tribes off to Halah, Habor, Hara and the Gozan River, which Zodhiates places as 733 B.C.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *The Story of Civilization; Volume I Our Oriental Heritage; Will Durant; MJF Books; ©1963; p. 165.*

<sup>18</sup> This was all quoted or paraphrased from *The Story of Civilization; Volume I Our Oriental Heritage; Will Durant; MJF Books; ©1963; pp. 265–267.*

<sup>19</sup> *The Complete Word Study Old Testament; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 1061.* Martin Selman also concurs, noting that exile of the northeastern tribes of Israel is probably associated with the Assyrian campaign against the Philistines (734 B.C.) rather than with their campaign against Damascus (733–732 B.C.). See Martin J. Selman, *1Chronicles An Introduction & Commentary; The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, D. J. Wiseman editor, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Il., ©1994, p. 105.*

Menahem began to rule over the Northern Kingdom (also called Samaria) around 752 B.C. and he is said to have paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser during his reign (2Kings 15:17–20). In about 732 B.C., he is said to have come into the land of Naphtali (as well as other key areas in northern Palestine) and carried them away captive into Assyria (2Kings 16:29).

Halah is mentioned here and in 2Kings 17:6 18:11. Around 722–721 B.C., it was the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser, after a three year siege, who carried Israel away into captivity, removing her to Halah, Habor (on the Gozan River?) and to other cities of the Medes (some of this information is in 2Kings 17). We do not know exactly where Halah is, apart from being in the region of Gozan. Habor, according to ZPEB, is a tributary which runs off of the Gozan River, along which were many Assyrian settlements. Today it is known by the name Khabur and was densely populated at one time by Assyrians, *as the many mounds of buried cities give evidence*.<sup>20</sup> However, Barnes points out: “*Habor*” here seems to be a city or a district, and not a river...there is some reason to believe that districts among the Assyrians were occasionally named from streams.<sup>21</sup> *Hara* may be *Haran*, which is what Barnes suggests, citing Gen. 11:31 2Kings 19:12 Ezek. 27:23; being a softening of the original *Kharan*.<sup>22</sup> And, on the other hand, *Hara* may be an error. It is not found in the two parallel passages, although we have the *mountains of the Medes* mentioned in one of those passages. Some have suggested that this should be *mountains* and that *of the Medes* was dropped out of the original text. In fact, it is the contention of Keil and Delitzsch that *Hara* is the Aramaic form of the word for *mountains*, a term which would have only been used by the exiles who were deported there. This does make a great deal of sense. However, I should point out that *Hara* is also not to be found in the Septuagint.

Gozan appears to be a City, region, and apparently river in the upper valley of the Khabur River.<sup>23</sup> It might be identified with the modern-day Tell Halaf, which is by the Khabur River where it crosses the border between Syria and Turkey, 200 miles east of the northeastern tip of the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>24</sup>

What happened to these northeastern tribes was not unexpected. God had warned Israel again and again. **But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—You are grown fat, thick and sleep—then he forsook God Who made him and scorned the Rock of his salvation. They made Him jealous with strange [gods] and with abominations, they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons who were not God; to [gods] whom they have not previously known, new [gods] who arrived on the scene only recently—gods whom your fathers did not dread. You neglected the Rock Who begot you and you forgot the God Who gave you birth. And Jehovah saw this and He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and daughters. Then He said “I will hide My face from them. I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, sons in whom there is no faithfulness. They have made Me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not [My] people. I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in My anger, and burns to the lowest part of Sheol and consumes the earth with its yield, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap misfortunes upon them; I will use My arrow on them. They will be wasted by famine and consumed by plague and bitter destruction; and the teeth of beasts I will send upon them, with the venom of crawling things of the dust. Outside the sword will bereave and inside, terror. Both the young man and virgin, the nursling with the man of gray hair.” I would have said, “I will cut them to pieces, I will remove the memory of them from men.” (Deut. 32:15–26). “Jehovah will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you do not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old nor show favor to the young. Moreover, it will eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed; they will also leave to you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. And it will besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your**

<sup>20</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 327.

<sup>22</sup> *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 327.

<sup>23</sup> It sounds as though, in our passage, the Habor is a city and that Gozan is an area.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted and paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 799.

land and it will besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which Jehovah your God has given you.” (Deut. 28:49–52).

In this one chapter, we have covered over a thousand years of the history of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh.

In the next chapter, we will examine the descendants of Levi. I mention that now because, in the Hebrew Bible, chapter 5 doesn't end here but continues. In fact, for another 15 verses it continues and 1Chron. 6, in the Hebrew, actually begins with our 1Chron. 6:16, which, insofar as chapter divisions go, probably one of the very worst. The Greek Septuagint properly separates the chapters. 1Chron. 5 deals with the tribes of the northeast and 1Chron. 6 deals with the Levites.

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