

The Doctrine of the Girgashites

The Girgashites are found in Gen. 10:16 15:21 Deut. 7:1 Joshua 3:10 24:11 I Chron. 1:14 Neh. 9:6

1. At this point in time, we do not know anything about the Girgashites apart from the Biblical record. Only the following items have been guessed at:
 - a. The city of Karkisha, which is found in the cuneiform Hittite texts, is suggested as their locality due to the similarities in name. *The New Bible Dictionary* by J. Douglas says this is unlikely.
 - b. One scholar suggest that their name means *client of Gesh*; Gesh being the sumerian god of light introduced to Palestine around 2000 BC.
 - c. A better guess might be that the name bn grgš and grgš (which could be taken to mean Girgashite and Sons of Girgashite), a tribal name which appears in the Ugaritic texts¹ from the 13th century BC.
 - d. Some have guessed that they survived into the first century as the Gergesenes (RV—Gadarenes) of Matt. 8:28; however, Josephus in *Antiquities* I, vi., 2, does not draw this conclusion.
2. In the listing of nations, the Girgashites (along with the Jebusites, the Hivites and the Amorites) are descendants of Canaan, who was a descendant of Ham. Therefore, they are a very old people, their named ancestor having lived within a century of the flood. Gen. 10:6 I Chron. 1:13–14
3. There are several places where the Girgashites are not listed. The basic six nations, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Hivites, the Amorites and the Perizzites are named, but not the Girgashites (Ex. 3:8 13:5² Judges 3:5).
4. God promised Abraham that he would be given the land occupied by the Girgashites and nine other nations in Gen. 15:18–21.
5. Moses promises this to the sons of Israel, naming the Girgashites and six other nations, possibly quoting Gen. 15:18–21 (Deut. 7:1).
6. Joshua demonstrates his faith by telling the sons of Israel that they would displace the Girgashites and six other tribes (Joshua 3:10).
7. Joshua does not record any fighting against the Girgashite, but says to the Israelites: "And you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand." Joshua 24:11
8. Finally, the Levites paraphrase from God's Word, looking back upon what God had done on behalf of Israel, mentioning the promising of the land of the Canaanites, Girgashites, et al to Israel (a total of five tribes are mentioned; the Hivites being left out) (Neh. 9:5–8).
9. So, interestingly enough, the Israelites were promised, through Abram, the land of the Girgashites, a promise which was confirmed by Moses and Joshua; and a promise which was fulfilled according to Joshua 24:11; however, there is no record in God's Word anywhere of the Israelites actually coming into contact with the Girgashites.

¹ See the Ugaritic Manual, Gordan, €1955, p.252, #439.

² The Perizzites are left out here.