
Joshua 16

Joshua 16:1–10

Ephraim's Allotment

Introduction: Joseph, the second youngest of Jacob's children, was envied by his brothers and, as a result, he ended up in Egypt as a slave. He rose to great power in Egypt and had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Because of the degeneracy of his brothers, Joseph rather than Reuben, received the double-portion of blessing. Ephraim and Manasseh were treated generally as two tribes. Joshua 16 records the land area given over to Ephraim. Interestingly enough, the cities given over to them will not be enumerated herein. I need to also remind you that half of the tribe of Manasseh had already received an inheritance on the other side of the Jordan.

Only one lot was drawn for Ephraim and the remaining half tribe of Manasseh, and that was further divided between the two tribes (see Joshua 17:14). He suggests that it was pretty much understood that they would occupy adjacent territories. Keil and Delitzsch: *The descendants of Joseph drew one lot, that the inheritance of the half tribe of Manasseh might not be separated from that of the tribe of Ephraim. But the territory was immediately divided between the two separate tribes of the children of Joseph, Ephraim receiving the southern portion of the land that had fallen to it by lot, and half Manasseh the northern. Accordingly we find the southern boundary of the whole territory described first of all in ch. 16:1–4, both the boundary which separated it from the tribe of Benjamin (ch. 18:11ff), and that which divided it from Dan (ch. 19:40ff); then the territory of Ephraim is given, with a minute description of the northern boundary*¹.

In vv. 1–4, the southern boundary of both tribes is described, albeit briefly compared to Judah. In Joshua 16:5–10, the boundaries for Ephraim in particular will be given and, in Joshua 17:1–13, the boundaries for the sons of Manasseh will be given. Interestingly enough, they will complain to Joshua concerning their inheritance and Joshua will answer their complaints in 17:14–18. I imagine after hearing about the huge amount of land given over to Judah, with the option to increase this inheritance to the south; and knowing that Reuben, Gad and the other half tribe of Manasseh had received a substantial portion of land on the other side of the Jordan—a land which could also expand considerably to the east; their landlocked portion must have seemed small by comparison. However, *there territory allotted to these two powerful tribes comprises the central and, in every way, the choicest part of Canaan west of the Jordan. The hills of this district, making up what is called (xx. 7) "Mount Ephraim," are less high and far less barren than those of Judah; the water supply is much larger; and the very rich and fertile plains of Sharon and Esdrælon are left between the rocky fastnesses of Benjamin on the south and the high lands of Galilee belonging to Issachar on the north*².

Outline of Chapter 16:

- Vv. 1–4 **The southern border of the children of Joseph**
- Vv. 5–10 **The border of Ephraim**

The Southern Border of the Children of Joseph

Literally:

And so the allotment went up to sons of Joseph from Jordan-Jericho to waters of Jericho eastward [to] the wilderness going up from Jericho into the hill country [to] Joshua 16:1

Smoother English rendering:

And the allotment of sons of Joseph went from Jordan-Jericho area to the waters of Jericho on the east, namely the wilderness which goes up from Jericho into the hill country to Bethel.

¹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 127.

² *Barnes' Notes*, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 392.

The verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of the very common verb *yâtsâ'* (יָצַא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*], which means *to go out, to come out, to come forth*. Strong's #3318 BDB #422. What actually *went forth* or *came forth* was the lot from the urn from which it was drawn. The lot or the allotment is in the singular, as the tribe of Joseph drew but one lot and that was split between the two tribes (reference Joshua 17:14). Keil and Delitzsch give the rendering: *And there came out the lot of the children of Joseph from Jordan by Jericho...* They paraphrase this as: *There came out the lot to the children of Joseph, namely, the inheritance, which goes out from, or whose boundary commences at, the Jordan by Jericho... The water of Jericho is the present fountain of es Sultan, half an hour to the north-west of Riba, the only large fountain in the neighbourhood of Jericho, whose waters spread over the plain, and form a small brook, which no doubt flows in the rainy season through the Wady Kelt into the Jordan.*³ Keil and Delitzsch also point out that *wilderness* is in apposition to the word *allotment*, meaning that this was their allotment (or the beginning thereof). To indicate this, they insert the word *namely* prior to *the wilderness*, which I have done as well in the smoother, English translation. This is the desert wilderness of Beth-aven, also mentioned in Joshua 18:12, which was east of Bethel. Keil and Delitzsch: *Towards the east this desert terminates with the Jebel Kuruntul (Quarantana) on the north-west of Jericho, where it descends precipitously into the valley of the Jordan...where it rises out of the Jordan valley*⁴.

I am a tad confused as to whether this should be *from Jericho in the hill country to Bethel* or *from Jericho into the hill country of Bethel*. So I'll list what other translators have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...going up from Jericho, through the hill country to Bethel;
NASB	...going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel.
Owen's Translation	...going up from Jericho into the hill country to Bethel,...
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...going up from Jericho in the hill-country of Beth-El,...

So, as you can see, I am not alone in being unable to make this decision. The *bêyth* preposition precedes *the hill country* and can mean *in* or *into*. In the Septuagint, the city named is *Bethel-luz*. The wilderness spoken of here is the *wilderness of Beth-haven* (also alluded to in Joshua 8:15 and 18:12). The southern border of the two tribes of Joseph moved from Jericho northwest to Bethel, then southwest to Gezer. From there, and this is not clear in this portion of the Bible, it went almost due north to Brook Kanah, then moving westward along the brook to the coast of the Mediterranean.

And going from Bethel-Luz, he passes along unto a territory of the Archite—Ataroth.	Joshua 16:2	Then, from Bethel-luz, the allotment passes along the territory belonging to the Archites, that is, Ataroth.
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We touched on Bethel in Gen. 12, 28 or 35. Some of the translations make it appear as though Bethel is different from Luz, but they are the same name for the same city (Gen. 28:19 Joshua 18:13). Bethel is located 12 miles north of Jerusalem. The cities of Jericho and Bethel will serve as bordering towns between Benjamin and Ephraim. Keil and Delitzsch suggest here that Bethel is distinguished from Luz because we are not referring to the city of Bethel but to the southern range of mountains which belonged to Bethel. In any case, there is no preposition between them.

This is the first we hear of the Archites. We can probably assume that these are some of the indigenous Canaanites in the land, but we don't read anywhere else of a concerted effort to rid the land of the Archites. You will recall that Israel attacked Ai and stashed some of her troops between Bethel and Ai, but what exactly happened with regards to Bethel is not quite clear. One might even guess that they were a part of the Gibeonites who made a treaty with the Israelites, although that is never specifically stated either. Barnes suggests that Archite is based upon the name Erech, which is found in Gen. 10:10, a city which we covered in more depth at that time. The name *Erech* and *Archite* do have the same basic consonants, which would tend to confirm Barnes opinion (one which I did not find expressed by anyone else). At best, this tells us that these people originated from the fertile crescent,

³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 127.

⁴ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 127.

which is pretty much true of 90% of the people which we study. We will hear mention in the future of an advisor to King David, and then to Absalom, named Hushai the Archite. Although your translation probably has this allotment running from the territory of the Archites to Ataroth, there is no *to* to be found. In other words, Ataroth probably is the territory or the city of the Archites. Unfortunately, this does not help us a great deal. It is reasonable to suppose that these are the Canaanites spoken of at the end of the next chapter when the children of Joseph begin to complain about their allotment. Also, there is a different Ataroth built (or, re-built) in the Transjordanian area by the Gadites (Num. 32:3, 34). ZPEB identifies the Ataroth found in v. 8 of this chapter as different from this Ataroth, but that seems unlikely. G. A. Smith locates this city 3.5 miles south of Bethel. It is probably equivalent to Ataroth-addar mentioned in v. 5 and 18:13, which would distinguish it from the Ataroth which was constructed on the other side of the Jordan. We find the name again in 1Chron. 2:54, but probably as a proper name. ZPEB gives greater discussion to the modern location of Ataroth and mentions and dismisses one theory that it is equivalent to one of the Mizpah's⁵.

And he goes westward unto a territory of the Japhletite as far as [the] territory Beth-horon lower and as far as Gezer and its ends are at [the] sea.

Joshua
16:3

And the border continues westward to the territory belong to the Japhletites to Lower Beth-horon and to Gezer, ending at the sea.

The Japhletites are mentioned only here, so we know less about them than we do the Archites. *Beth-horon* means *house of caves* and this is the name of actually two towns, ten and twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem. They are called Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon and correspond to the modern cities Beit-'Ur el-Faqa and Beit 'Ur el-Tahta and are at 1800 ft. and 1000 ft., respectively. There is archeological evidence of occupation of these area in the Late Bronze Age and even *today one can see evidences of the Roman road connecting the two towns which were both located on the important trunk route between Gibeon to the east and the Valley of Aijalon and the coastal plain to the west.* Both Ataroth-addar and Lower Beth-horon were border towns for Benjamin and Ephraim (Joshua 18:13). The sons of Sheerah, a daughter of Beriah, the son of Ephraim rebuilt both cities—or, more properly, her descendants did (1Chron. 7:24). Sometime later, Solomon rebuilt Lower beth-horon (1Kings 9:17 2Chron. 8:5).

There is a road that runs from Beth-horon through the hill country and through Gezer which extends all of the way to the coast. Gezer, probably the Geder of Joshua 12:13, shows archeological evidences of occupation during The Chalcolithic, Early Bronze I, II and II, and Middle Bronze II and Late Bronze, Iron, Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. Surprisingly enough, we cannot find evidence of occupation during the time of Solomon. This was the city which sent men to Lachish when Joshua was marching through southern Palestine decimating everything in his path. We will talk more about this city in the future, as it has a rich and varied history.⁶ On the map, there doesn't appear to be a straight shot from Gezer to the sea, but the boundary moves northward and then west.

And so inherited, sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim,

Joshua
16:4

And so the sons of Joseph, both Manasseh and Ephraim, inherited...

Although there was one allotment, still Joseph's sons were treated as though they were two independent tribes when it came to their inheritance. They will complain of being treated more like one tribe than two, however. **Then the sons of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me only one lot and one portion for an inheritance, since I am a numerous people whom Jehovah has thus far blessed?"** (Joshua 17:14).

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⁵ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill C. Tenney, ed.; Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976, Vol. 1; p. 400–401.

⁶ Taken from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 708.

The Border of Ephraim

the territory of sons of Ephraim was⁷ to their families and the boundary of their inheritance was eastward Ataroth-addar as far as Beth-horon Upper;

Joshua
16:5

The territory of the sons of Ephraim was to their families and the boundary of their inheritance was toward the east toward Ataroth-addar and as far as Upper Beth-horon.

All that has been described so far is a very general boundary along the southern portion of the tribe of Joseph. Now we will get specifics on just the boundary for Ephraim. The NIV Study Bible sums it up rather handily: *Ephraim's northern border began down by the Jordan and ran west near Shiloh, but south of Shechem, then followed the Wadi Kanah down to the Mediterranean Sea.*⁸ Ataroth-addar means *crown of fame* or *crown of greatness*.

Since the southern border of Joseph has already been covered in the previous verses, we will have a less thorough description in this verse. I do not follow why the boundary in v. 3 is at Lower Beth-horon and that here it is at Upper Beth-horon. It is not as though they are very far from one another. Furthermore, we should be describing the exact same southern boundary line here. Keil and Delitzsch state that there is no significant difference as these cities are next door to one another. Lower Beth-horon and Beth-horon are both used when describing the boundary of the land of Benjamin (Joshua 18:13–14).

And went the boundary [to] the sea, the Michmethath from northward and turns around the boundary eastward [to] Taanath-shiloh and he passes along him from eastward [to] Janoah.

Joshua
16:6

And the boundary went to the sea, to Michmethath on the north and the boundary turns around eastward to Taanath-shiloh and it passes along Taanath-siloh from the east to Janoah.

We find Michmethath only here and in Joshua 17:7 used to define the boundaries of Manasseh. According to the maps in the Macmillan Bible Atlas, we have a sudden movement from the sea over three-quarters of the length of the northern border of Manasseh along the Kanah Brook, perhaps. The exact location of this city can only be guessed at.

Taanath-shiloh is found only here and possibly means *approaching Shiloh* or *approach to Shiloh*. It is thought to be seven miles southeast of Shechem (or, Nablus today) as there is *evidence of an ancient hill fort* in modern Ta'nah⁹.

Janoah is only mentioned in this verse and the next as a city on the eastern border of Ephraim. It is also guessed to be about seven miles southeast of Shechem. Keil and Delitzsch identify it with the *present ruins of Janûn, a miserable village, with extensive ruins of great antiquity*.¹⁰ There is another city with the same name found in northern Naphtali (or north of Naphtali) found in 2Kings 15:29; it is a city taken by Tiglath-Pileser, a king of Assyria. It is Barnes conjecture that the way which we launch into this set of borders seems to be clumsy and sudden, indicating that perhaps we are dealing with very a corrupt text at this point (vv. 5–8), which would imply that some of the places herein named are not altogether accurate with regards to the original Hebrew (which accounts for several of them being found here only). Given that throughout the book of Joshua, there are quite a number of cities found only there, and given that Joshua is not an inherently talented writer, I would think that the accuracy here would be as good as anywhere else. That we might have some verb fall out—again, suggested by Barnes—is not

⁷ Rotherham footnotes this as literally *turned out to be*, but this is simply the Qal imperfect of *to be*.

⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 311.

⁹ This information, as almost always, is courtesy of *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 572.

¹⁰ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 129, who cite Robinson here..

inconceivable. You will of course note that there are only a handful of cities named in this chapter, making us think that it is possible that there are cities not mentioned which have dropped out of the text, as we cover relatively large portions of land without mentioning a city. However, we do not find on the maps any additional major cities along the borders of Ephraim which are not mentioned herein. What it boils down to is that compared to Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh received a lot less with regards to the number of cities. However, their land was far superior in terms of climate and fertility.

And he goes down from Janoah to Ataroth [to] Naarah and he touches in Jericho and he goes out [to] the Jordan.

Joshua
16:7

And the border goes down from Janoah to Ataroth to Naarah, and then it goes through Jericho and ends at the Jordan.

The first verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *yârad* (יָרַד) [pronounced *yaw-RAHD*], which means *to descend, to go down*. It is often used of going from a higher elevation to a lower elevation. Strong's #3381 BDB #432.

The Bible has little to say about Naarah, other than to give it as either a border city of Ephraim or a city which was more inside of Ephraim, as it is given as strictly a possession of Ephraim in 1Chron. 7:28 (called *Naaran* in that passage). ZPEB gives us a couple of different modern sites which might correspond to Naarah, a couple miles northwest of Jericho. Josephus mentions a city Neara which apparently shared a water source (the waters for Jericho) with Jericho (*Antiquities*, XVII. xiii. 1). Eusebius mentions a city called Noorath, which may also be the same city.

The second verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *pâga* (פָּגַע) [pronounced *paw-GAHG*], and it means *meet, encounter, reach*. Strong's #6293 BDB #803. The final verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *yâtsâ* (יָצָא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*], which means *to go out, to come out*. Strong's #3318 BDB #422.

From Tappuah goes the boundary westward [to] a brook of Kanah and their end is the sea; this [is] an inheritance of a tribe of [the] sons of Ephraim for their families;

Joshua
16:8

From Tappuah goes the boundary westward [to] a brook of Kanah and their end is the sea; this [is] an inheritance of a tribe of [the] sons of Ephraim for their families;

We have started in the northeast corner of Ephraim and have first gone east and south and now in this verse we are picking up in the same place and going westward. There are two Tappuah's; this is the city which Joshua defeated in Joshua 12:17 and it will be named again as a city on the northern border of Ephraim in Joshua 17:8. The other Tappuah is Beth-tappuah, already mentioned as a city of Judah in Joshua 15:52.

The Brook of Kanah is the border which runs between Ephraim and Manasseh, going from east to west (Joshua 16:8 17:9). This is the modern-day Wadi Qana which runs westward into the Mediterranean Sea, just north of Joppa¹¹.

And the towns the set apart ones for sons of Ephraim in a midst an inheritance of sons of Manasseh, all of the towns and their villages.

Joshua
16:9

And also the towns which have been set aside for the sons of Ephraim which are in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh; all those towns and villages.

The cities or towns are modified by the feminine plural adjective which is found only here. Strong's #3995 BDB #95. However, the actual reading is likely the Hophal participle or Niphal participle of *bâdal* (בָּדַל) [pronounced *baw-DAHL*] means *separate, divide, sever, differentiate, distinguished, make a distinction*. The key

¹¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 778.

is separation—when you differentiate between two things, you are separating them from one another. Strong's #914 BDB #95. The difference between the adjective and the Hophal is but one vowel point.

I don't quite follow the meaning here, so I am going to give a couple of translations by others:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...together with the cities which were separated for the sons of Ephraim, in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh,—all the cities, with their villages. But they did not dispossess the Canaanites who were dwelling in Gazer,—so the Canaanites have dwelt in the midst of Ephraim unto this day, and have become tributary servants.
NASB	... <i>Together</i> with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages. But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers.
NIV	It also included all the towns and their villages that were set aside for the Ephraimites within the inheritance of the Manassites. They did not dislodge the Canaanites living in Gezer; to this day the Canaanites live among the people of Ephraim but are required to do forced labor.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And the separate cities of the sons of Ephraim <i>are</i> in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities and their villages; and they have not dispossessed the Canaanite who is dwelling in Gezer, and the Canaanite dwelleth in the midst of Ephraim unto this day, and is to tribute—a servant.

It sounds as though, for some reason, there are cities within the boundaries of Manasseh which belong to the sons of Ephraim as well. We do not find an additional set of towns mentioned in Joshua which fit this description, but off in Joshua 17:8–10 and 1Chron. 7:29, we find some additional cities. This requires a brief explanation. The next logical book to begin after the book of Joshua is 1Chronicles, the first eight and one-half chapters. These chapters cover primarily the genealogy of man and then of the twelve tribes, with additional mentions of various cities which seem to be founded by certain men of note. The only thing which is even slightly out of place is that we have the genealogy of David in chapter 2 and the genealogy of Saul in chapter 8; other than that, we are dealing with text which, if it were not have been written during the time of Joshua, then it was no doubt taken from records which were compiled during the time of Joshua. In this verse, what appears to be likely is that Joshua, recognizing that they had received very few cities with respect to the size of their tribe, has allowed that, once they settle in, that they might also occupy some cities which belong to their kindred tribe, Manasseh.

When I run into a passage for which I cannot fully present an explanation (exactly why was Ephraim given these cities and at what time did this occur), I feel better when I discover that other much greater theologians than myself have also struggled with the problem. *The reason why the Ephraimites received scattered towns and villages in the tribe-territory of Manasseh, is supposed by Calvin, Masius, and others, to have been, that after the boundaries had been arranged, on comparing the territory allotted to each with the relative numbers of the two tribes, it was found that Ephraim had received too small a possession. This is quite possible; at the same time there may have been other reasons wick we cannot discover now, as precisely the same thing occurs in the case of Manasseh (ch. 17:11)*¹².

And they did not drive out the Canaanite, the ones dwelling in Gezer and so Canaanite dwell in a midst of Ephraim unto the day the this and so he is for a slave of laboring.

Joshua
16:10

However, they did not drive out the indigenous Canaanites, the ones who lived in Gezer, so the result is that the Canaanites live in the middle of Ephraim even to this day and he is used as slave labor.

The Canaanite is described by the lamed preposition (*to, for*), then the masculine singular construct of maç (o n) [pronounced *mahs*], which means *laborer, task-worker, labor-group, serfdom*. Strong's #4522 BDB #586. This

¹² Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 129.

is followed by the Qal active participle of $\text{ʿā}^{\text{b}}\text{vad}$ (אָבַד) [pronounced *gaw^b-VAHD*], which means *to work, to serve, to labor*. Strong's #5647 BDB #712. We are given more information in the next chapter: [But the sons of Manasseh could not take possession of these cities, because the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. And it came to pass when the sons of Israel became strong, they placed the Canaanites into forced labor, but they did drive them out completely](#) (Joshua 17:12–13). This tells us that it was right and proper for them not to receive a larger portion of land because they were unable to conquer fully the land given them through Joshua.

Gezer is mentioned again in Judges 1:29: [Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them](#). This city of Gezer was later conquered by the king of Egypt who then gave it to Solomon as a part of a dowry (1Kings 9:16). This is a city which Ephraim should have taken herself hundreds of years previous.

The NIV Study Bible suggests that this verse may have been added later; however, if Joshua lived another ten years or so after the conquering of the Land of Promise (or even an additional five years), it is possible to think that the addition was made by him. However, our problem here is that the book of Judges is filled with failures of the Israelites and there is every indication that the land was never completely conquered. *Since Gezer does not appear to have come under Israelite control until the days of Solomon (1Ki 9:15–16), this may be a note added after that event.*¹³ The soonest that Gezer was conquered was perhaps under David, when he chased the Philistines and struck them down from Geba to Gezer (2Sam. 5:25). However, because of the information we find in 1Kings 9:15–16, it is more likely that David did not conquer Gezer, but took the battle that far and then stopped.

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¹³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 311.