
Joshua 17

Joshua 17:1–18

The Territories of the tribe of Manasseh

Outline of Chapter 17:

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- Vv. 7–13 **The cities and the territory of Manasseh**
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Introduction: No doubt you are sick of a list of cities and southern and northern borders and Joshua 17 gives us a little narrative and a very limited listing of borders of Manasseh. We will begin with a reminder certain members of the tribe of Manasseh had already come forward to speak to Eleazar the priest (vv. 1–6) to receive their portion of the land already promised them by Moses on the other side of the Jordan (which belongs in here only topically, but not chronologically). Then we will be given the borders of the land assigned to the other half of Manasseh (vv. 7–13). And finally, we will have an official complaint lodged on behalf of the two tribes of Joseph, complaining about the limited amount of land given over to them.

Also, in this chapter, we will look at the woman's place in ancient history, as we find the five daughters of Zelophehad mentioned again here. It is interesting how often we find them in Scripture. This is the fourth time and the same incident. Prior to entering the land, the unmarried daughters of Zelophehad came before Moses and asked if they had any sort of inheritance in the land, being that they were all daughters and they had no brothers (ostensibly to see to their needs and to receive the inheritance in the name of the father). Such a question was even too difficult for Moses, who took it to God. God commanded that they receive an inheritance of land, which, in those days, was almost unheard of. When we reach this verse, we will look briefly at the place of the woman in ancient cultures.

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Personal Inheritance and Zelophehad's Daughters

Literally:

And so was the allotment to a tribe of Manasseh and he [was] a firstborn of Joseph; to Machir, firstborn of Manasseh, a father of the Gilead for he was a man of war and so the Gilead was to him and the Bashan.

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Smother English rendering:

Herein follows the allotment which was given to the tribe of Manasseh, the firstborn of Joseph; and to Machir, who was the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead; for he [Machir] was a man of war and he received Gilead and Bashan.

The reference to Machir as being a man of war actually refers to that portion of the tribe of Manasseh. Throughout the Bible, we have groups of people spoken of in the singular (a peculiarity found in the English language as well). This refers back to Num. 32 where Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh (Machir) took the land on the east side of the Jordan.

I should also remind you that Manasseh was the firstborn of Joseph, and therefore entitled to preferential treatment. However, even Jacob when he blessed the two sons of Joseph, gave Ephraim the preferential blessing, which irked Joseph (Gen. 48:13–14, 17). In fact, this was one of the very few times (the only time, that

I can recall) that we read of Joseph becoming a bit pissed off, which is remarkable, considering what he had gone through with his brothers. The upshot of all this is that Ephraim did receive his portion first, as though he were the firstborn; however, Manasseh would receive two tracts of land, one on each side of the Jordan, thus fulfilling the receiving of the double-portion of the firstborn (Deut. 21:17).

And so he was to sons of Manasseh the remaining ones to their families, and to sons of Abiezer, and to sons of Helek, and to sons of Asriel, and to sons of Shechem, and to sons of Hephher, and to sons of Shemida—these sons of Manasseh a son of Joseph the males to their families.

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And so it [the allotment] was to the sons of Manasseh, those who remained and to their families—to the families of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hephher and Shemida—these sons of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, the male heads of the families.

The phrase *the remaining ones* refer to those sons of Manasseh who settled on the east side of the Jordan. Now, don't become confused here—Manasseh did not have six sons, namely Machir, Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem and Shemida. From Manasseh, certain families became prominent as time went on and these are the prominent families. Manasseh had two sons by his concubine—Asriel and Machir. Machir was the father of Gilead and Gilead's sister, Hammolecheth bore three sons, one of whom was Abiezer (1Chron. 7:14). Gilead is said to be the father of six, of whom were Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Shemida and Hephher (Num. 26:30–32). This second Asriel, who was named after his great uncle, was properly the head of the family of the Asrielites (Num. 26:31). Finally, to fine tune this, Shechem was actually descended from Shemida, meaning that any of the six could be descendants rather than sons of Gilead (1Chron. 7:19). In other words, the six mentioned here are all descendants of Machir, but their families were distinct from Machir. I have a family tree put together on the family of Joseph, but I can't seem to import it into WordPerfect.

Abiezer was the son of Hammolecheth, a sister of Gilead, who was the son of Machir who was the son of Manasseh (1Chron. 7:17–18). Most Bible propose that a shortening of his name gives us lezer (Num. 26:30) or Jeezer. In Num. 26:30, he is called the son of Gilead, rather than Gilead's sister, and the head of the lezerites. Due to this slight discrepancy, we can (1) assume these are two different people; or that (2) Gilead, for whatever reason, essentially raised Abiezer (perhaps his son-in-law passed away early on and his sister and her family became dependent upon him); or, perhaps, (3) this was just the way family lines were expressed in the Old Testament. For whatever reason, the husband of Hammolecheth is not in the picture, so Abiezer (lezer) is called both the son of Gilead and of Hammolecheth, brother and sister. The descendants of Abiezer would receive an inheritance west of the Jordan. They apparently lived nearby the Valley of Jezreel, as they were the first to be called into action when hostile troops camped in that valley (Judges 6:33–35). The famous Gideon, who we will study in Judges 6, was the son of Joash, an Abiezrite (Judges 6:11)¹.

Although ZPEB does not list him as such, there are two Asriel's: the first is the son of Manasseh, whom he sired by his Aramæan concubine (1Chron. 7:14). Nothing is said about him apart from that verse, so I don't see him as the father of the Asrielites. His brother Machir had a son Gilead and one of Gilead's sons was named Asriel, apparently after his great uncle (Num. 26:28–30 but not mentioned in 1Chron. 7). It is unlikely that these are the same men, as 1Chron. 7:14 reads: **The sons of Manasseh: Asriel, whom his Aramæan concubine bore; she bore Machir the father of Gilead.** It is clear enough here so that this would preclude Asriel, son of Manasseh through his concubine, as being the same Asriel who is a son of Gilead, whose father was also the son of Manasseh through his Aramæan concubine. Finally, the younger Asriel is said to be the father of the Asrielites (Num. 26:31).

Interestingly enough, in 1Chron. 7, we only have a mention of Shemida totally out of the blue as fathering Ahlan, Shechem, Likhi and Aniam (1Chron. 7:19). His predecessors are named back in Num. 26:30–31 as a son (or descendant of) Gilead; and he is called the father of the Shemidaites in that passage.

Shechem is called a son of Gilead in Num. 26:30–31, but, as we have seen many times before, that can refer to simply being an ancestor. We see that he is the son of Shemida in 1Chron. 7:19. ZPEB lists them as being

¹ This is not the Abiezer that we find in 2Sam. 23:27 or 1Chron. 11:28 27:12.

different people, but there is nothing in these two passages that would demand such an interpretation. What is more interesting is that we have a town called Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim. We don't know if there is some sort of relationship between the Shechem of this passage and the town (whether one was named after the other).

Helek is mentioned only here and in Num. 26:26:30 as the son of Gilead and the father of the Helekites. There are several Hopher's in the Bible, but there is little said about this one, other than he is a descendant of Gilead; the ancestor of the Hopherites (Num. 26:30–33), and the father of Zelophehad, a man who had five daughters and no sons (Num. 26:33 27:1). Recall that Joshua also defeated a city named Hopher in Joshua 12:17.

And to Zelophehad a son of Hopher a son of Gilead a son of Machir a son of Manasseh [there] were no sons, but daughters and these [are] [the] names of his daughters: Mahlah and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.

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And Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, who was the son of Gilead who was the son of Machir who was the sons of Manasseh, had not sons, but only daughter; their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.

In this verse, after *no sons* we have the compound $k\dot{y} \dot{\imath}m$ (כִּי יִם) [pronounced *kee-eem*] which literally is *because if*; however, together they act as a limitation on the preceding thought, and therefore should be rendered *but, except, unless* and possibly *only*. Strong's #3588 & 518 BDB #474.

Some manuscripts² have a *wâw* conjunction prior to *Milcah*; however, there is no formula to the names of these daughters. In Num. 26:33, it is found exactly as we find it in this verse (no *wâw* prior to *Milcah*, however); in Num. 27:1, it's *Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah*; and in Num. 36:11, it is *Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah*. In other words, there doesn't appear to be any rhyme or reason to any particular order of names (although the way it is found thrice is probably the birth order); and there seems to be nothing to the random insertion of *wâw* conjunctions. My educated guess is that this is being dictated by both Moses and Joshua, which would account for them stumbling over the names and throwing in an extra *and*, here or there, as they pause to think of the names of the daughters. *Approximately 400 years had elapsed between the lifetimes of Manasseh and the daughters of Zelophehad.*³ What is interesting is that, even though we know nothing about these five women, they are mentioned in the Bible four times, which is more than many of the heads of families mentioned in v. 2.

And they came near to faces of Eleazar the priest and to faces of Joshua ben Nun and to faces of the leaders, to say, "Y^ehowah commanded Moses⁴ to give to us an inheritance in a midst of our brothers." And so he gave to them regarding a mouth of Y^ehowah and inheritance in a midst of [the] brothers of their father.

Joshua
17:4

And they came into the presence of Eleazar the priest, Joshua ben Nun and the leaders of Israel, saying, "Jehovah commanded Moses to give us an inheritance in the midst of our brothers." Therefore, he gave as per the command of Jehovah and they received an inheritance in the midst of their relatives.

As we have seen with previous situations, some of what we find in Joshua is topically arranged rather than chronologically arranged. He did not write these things the day after they happened, but several years later. Caleb's driving out of the three sons of Anak (Joshua 15:14) did not occur while Joshua was dividing up the land (Joshua 15:1ff), but topically belonged there. They originally approached Moses in Num. 27:1–7 and Moses granted them a portion of the land. This was reaffirmed here. What had occurred was this: you have a family of

² Three early printed editions and the Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate codices; this information came, of course, Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 250, who keeps careful track of such errata.

³ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 616.

⁴ According to Rotherham, here we have *by the hand of Moses* in three early printed editions of the Massoretic text and in the Septuagint and Vulgate codices.

only females and these females would not be going out to war to take the land—do they still have a right to expect an inheritance? The passage went like this: *Then the daughters of Zelophehad ben Hopher, the sons of Gilead the son of Machir the son of Manasseh of the families of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, approached; the daughters were named Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and they said, “Our father died in the wilderness, although he was not among the company of Korah; but he did die in his own sin, and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be withdrawn from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father’s brothers.” And Moses brought their case before Jehovah. Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, “The daughters of Zelophehad are right in what they say. You will certainly give them an hereditary possession among their father’s brothers, and you will transfer the inheritance of their father to them.”* (Num. 27:1–7). Now, we don’t give much thought to a passage like this because to us, it is a one-time affair; just who the hell is Zelophehad, and what difference does this all make. Therefore, we ought to take this point by point: (1) Throughout most of human history, the woman, because she is weaker physically, has taken the position of a second-class person in all respects. (2) In the Bible, it is clear that the man, in marriage, is the authority, thus, in the eyes of some, giving the woman a *backseat* position again. (3) The Law of Hammurabi, for instance, prescribed death for a woman guilty of *careless or uneconomical housewifery*.⁵ (4) A woman in Babylon was required at least once in her life to sit in the temple of Venus and to have sexual intercourse with a stranger.⁶ (5) Herodotus, the father of history, writes of women who entered into marriage by being placed on what amounted to an auction block and the highest bidder received the woman of his dreams (if she was for sale at that time). He lamented the passage of this ritual. *This very wise custom no longer exists*.⁷ (6) In Babylon, where women enjoyed a fair amount of rights, a man could divorce a woman by returning her dowry to her and telling her that she was no longer his wife. A woman who tried this was drowned.⁸ By giving these examples, I do not mean to imply that women were entirely without rights. It was possible for a woman to leave her husband, although not divorce him, if she could show cruelty on his part and fidelity on her own. (7) Durant writes: *In general the position of woman in Babylonia was lower than in Egypt or Rome, and yet not worse than in classic Greece or medieval Europe*.⁹ However, the point I am making is that women did not the same rights as a man throughout all of human history. (8) What we find in this portion of Biblical law is revolutionary. Here a woman, under some circumstances, is given the exact same legal rights as a man with regards to property. (9) The explanation as to why this was not an absolute right for all women is that they were under the protection and care of their family—particularly their father until they entered into marriage. Therefore, in most cases, a woman was taken care of. This happened to be a situation where these women were, as of yet, unmarried, and they no longer had a father or a family to see to their needs. Although such a question was beyond the scope of Moses’ expertise, God required that they be given an inheritance as if they were sons.

Now, although we have studied this back in Num. 36, we do have the additional information there, spoken by Moses, who was quoting what God had told him: *“This is what Jehovah has commanded concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, ‘Let them marry whom they wish, only they must marry within the family of the tribe of their father.’ Thus no inheritance of the sons of Israel will be transferred from tribe to tribe, for the sons of Israel will each hold to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. And every daughter who comes into possession of an inheritance of any tribe of the sons of Israel, she will be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father, so that the sons of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. Thus no inheritance will be transferred from one tribe to another tribe, for the tribes of the sons of Israel will each hold to his own inheritance.”* Just as Jehovah had commanded Moses, so the daughters of Zelophehad did. Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, married their uncles sons [i.e., their first cousins]. They married from the families of the sons of Manasseh ben Joseph and their inheritance remained with the tribe of the family of their father

⁵ *The Story of Civilization; Volume I Our Oriental Heritage; Will Durant; MJF Books; ©1963; p. 231.*

⁶ *The Story of Civilization; Volume I Our Oriental Heritage; Will Durant; MJF Books; ©1963; p. 245.*

⁷ *The Story of Civilization; Volume I Our Oriental Heritage; Will Durant; MJF Books; ©1963; p. 246.* Durant is herein quoting Herodotus, I, 196. Other writers of history indicate that this practice continued for 400 years after Herodotus, indicating that he obviously hung in the wrong places. See Rawlinson’s *Heroditus*, i, 271,

⁸ *The Story of Civilization; Volume I Our Oriental Heritage; Will Durant; MJF Books; ©1963; p. 247.*

⁹ *The Story of Civilization; Volume I Our Oriental Heritage; Will Durant; MJF Books; ©1963; p. 247.*

(Num. 36:6–12). What appears to be the case is that the last few verses of Num. 36 were added or inserted prior to the final verse by someone during the time of Joshua; my guess is that it was Joshua.

And so fell portions [to] Manasseh, ten, apart from a land of the Gilead and the Bashan, which [is] beyond with respect to the Jordan;

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17:5

There were ten portions which were allotted to the tribe of Manasseh apart from Gilead and Bashan, the land they received on the other side of the Jordan.

The 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, to fall*. This word is used, to mean, among other things, *to cast lots*. Strong's #5307 BDB #656. The subject of the verb is the masculine plural of *che^bvel* (חֵבֶל) [pronounced *KHE^b-vel*], which means *region, country, lot, cord, portion, line, sorrow, rope, bands, tacklings, destruction, coast*. The idea is that this is a *rope or cord*, but it can also refer to *that which has been roped off or allotted to*. Strong's #2256 BDB #286. This gives us some kind of clue as to how the land was divided up. There were so many lots or portions given to each tribe, although how many is not told to us in most of the cases. The NIV Study Bible explains what happened here, however: *Manasseh's territory was second only to Judah's in size. Then ten portions went to the five brothers (minus Hephher) and to the five granddaughters of Hephher.*¹⁰ Other than calling the five relatives, brothers, this seems to be a reasonably explanation. Barnes concurs with this interpretation¹¹.

One of the words we need to examine is the preposition *lâmed* plus masculine noun *bad* (בַּד) [pronounced *bahd*] and it means *separation, by itself, alone*. Most translators ignore the *lâmed* preposition, as it is difficult to translate into something which makes sense in the English (see Num. 11:14 Deut. 1:9 8:3 2Sam. 10:8). However, most of the time, we find *bad* with the *lâmed* preposition. When followed by the preposition *mîn*, it means *apart from* or *besides*, which is what we have here. Strong's #905 BDB #94.

Prior to the noun *Jordan*, we have the *min* preposition and the masculine singular noun *êber* (עֵבֶר) [pronounced *ĠAY^b-ver*], which means *region across, beyond, side*. With a *mêm*, it means *on the opposite side, on the other side*. Strong's #5676 BDB #719. Israel is still gathered together as a whole. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh are still with Joshua awaiting the finalizing of the division of the land. Their wives and children are settled in the land, but they won't depart for the land until Joshua 22:1–9.

because daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance in a midst of his sons and a land of the Gilead was to sons of Manasseh, the remaining ones.

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because the daughters of Manasseh also received an inheritance as well as the sons. The land of Gilead was the inheritance of the remaining sons of Manasseh.

The individual words are easy enough in this verse, but the meaning is a little difficult, so let me give you what some other translations have (in some cases, I included v. 5 for context):

The Emphasized Bible

...because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance in the midst of his sons,—and the land of Gilead became the possession of the sons of Manasseh that remained.

NASB

Thus there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan, because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons. And the land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.

¹⁰ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 311.

¹¹ This interpretation was certainly not original with the NIV Study Bible; this apparently has been a longstanding interpretation, as it is given by Keil and Delitzsch and well as by Barnes.

NIV Manasseh's share consisted of ten tracts of land besides Gilead and Bashan east of the Jordan, because the daughters of the tribe of Manasseh received an inheritance among the sons. The land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the descendants of Manasseh.

Young's Lit. Translation ...for the daughters of Manasseh have inherited an inheritance in the midst of the sons, and the land of Gilead hath been to the sons of Manasseh who are left.

As you see, the problem was primarily that these verses should not have been cut up as they were. Here the Bible interprets itself. The *ten lots* are explained in this verse as those which fell upon the five descendants of Manasseh (apart from Hopher) and the five granddaughters. What they received, as per this verse, is even more impressive than first thought. They were not all given one portion of land, but five, equal to the land given to the male descendants.

Also you will note that Joshua makes note of the fact that Manasseh has land on both sides of the Jordan—the inheritance specified here and the land of Gilead on the other side. Perhaps one of the reasons the author mentions this is that this chapter will end with a delegation from the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim complaining about not receiving enough of an inheritance.

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The Ages of the Five Sisters

Now we have a problem to deal with. Insofar as I am aware, I don't know of anyone who has dealt with this problem before. Certainly none of my sources did and I have been lucky enough to have access to some of the very best and thorough commentaries available.¹ How old are these five sisters? Are they actually present at this meeting or are their descendants simply represented here? What would make the most sense is that we are dealing with large groups of people—whole families in the sense of hundreds or thousands of descendants represented by each person. We also have to deal with the killing off of those who are over 20 during the time in the desert. We had better take this point by point:

1. Near the beginning of the exodus, there were 32,200 men in the tribe of Manasseh. These are the men who are twenty years and older. As you know, I would like to reduce this figure by 10 or even by a 100, but until I have some reasonable proof concerning this, we have to go with the 32,200. This is after Israel spent roughly 400 years in Egypt, most of that in slavery to the Egyptians.
2. The second census, after the death of gen X, recorded 52,700 males who were 20 years and older and from the tribe of Manasseh.
3. Approximately 70 Israelites originally migrated to Egypt, say around 1800 A.D. or so.
4. Joseph, a high ranking official in Egypt, had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to him in Egypt prior to the coming of his family. Joseph brought these sons before his father Israel to be blessed in Gen. 48.
5. Joseph lived long enough after the death of his father to see the third generation of Ephraim's sons (his great great grandchildren) and the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, was born on Joseph's knees. These would be his great grandchildren (Gen. 50:22–23).
6. We must turn to 1Chron. 7 or to Num. 27 to continue the family line. A problem at this point is that we do not know exactly who is really a son of whom—the word *bēn* (בֶּן) [pronounced *bane*] (we tend to pronounce it *behn*) and it means *son, descendant*. In the plural, it can mean *sons* or *descendants*. Strong's #1121 BDB #119. In Num. 27:1–3, we read: Then the daughters of Zelophehad, a son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir the sons of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, came near; and these are the names of his daughters: **Mahlah, Noah and Hoglah and Milcah and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before the leaders and all the congregation, at the doorway of the tent of meeting, saying, "Our father died in the wilderness...he died in his own sin and he had no sons."** This tells us that the daughters are contemporaries of Moses, under the age of 20 when Israel first stood on the brink of the land, and now they are under 40.

7. The implication is that these women have not married and do not have any children at this time. This would place them perhaps a year away from entering the land again.
8. At the end of the book of Numbers, these women are mentioned again with the footnote that they all married their first cousins (a case could be made for 2nd or 3rd cousins). Since it is unlikely that in the space of a year they all married, this was probably added by Joshua some time later.
9. We have already examined the time that it took Joshua to capture the land. In Joshua 14, this took about 7 years. Even if it took longer, we are still looking at five women who, at the soonest, had married seven or eight years previous and therefore have a child, if that, at this time.
10. The point that I am making is that these women do not each make up 1/10th of the tribe of Manasseh (or, 1/20th, considering that a portion of the tribe of Manasseh has their inheritance on the other side of the Jordan River).
11. What this would indicate is that the people herein mentioned in this passage each received a portion or a lot, including these five women who are probably married and have at best a very small family.
12. So, herein, is our problem. Even though a portion of the tribe of Manasseh will live on the other side of the Jordan, that still leaves, say, 25,000 or so, to live west of the Jordan. Ten lots would mean that 2500 people, on average, would inherit a particular lot. This five women, at largest, might have a family of a dozen, given that they married, had one or two children or more, and house some of their husbands relatives as well.
13. This gives us two possibilities: either this would indicate that we are not dealing with the land of Manasseh as being cut up into ten lots which are approximately equal in size, but that these lots varied greatly in size, according to the group of people to whom they were assigned. Since the instructions given to Moses originally said that the land would be apportioned according to size, this would be in keeping with those instructions.
14. If these women did not receive an inheritance or if they did not marry, then they would possess no land in the Land of Promise.
15. The other possibility is that with respect to this incident, there were ten lots given out in this context; however, there were perhaps hundreds of lots apportioned to other families in the tribe of Manasseh. This does not appear to jive with the verse: [Thus there fell ten portions to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan, because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons](#) (Joshua 17:5–6a).
16. What would make the most sense is if the census were 1/10th or even 1/100th of what it is given as in the book of Numbers

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The Cities and the Territory of Manasseh

And so was a border of Manasseh: from Asher the Michmethath which [is] as far as faces of Shechem and the boundary goes out toward the right to those inhabiting En-tappuah.

Joshua
17:7

The border of Manasseh was as follows: it went from Asher to Michmethath to Shechem and then toward the south to En-tappuah.

The way that this boundary is cut is surprising. I was expecting the northerly route from Mount Carmel to Mount Tabor to the Jordan River; however, this description begins in the upper northwest corner, right below the inheritance of the tribe of Asher. Now, Asher has not received her inheritance yet, however, this portion of God's Word was not written until after the fact—that is, Joshua did not write this until he had distributed the land to all of the tribes, which included Asher.¹² This takes us to Mount Carmel, and then the boundary cuts through the land of Manasseh in a diagonal directly toward the most southeastern portion of Manasseh (which is the northern

¹² Barnes is of the opinion that this is not the tribe of Asher but that it refers to a particular geographical area; however, I think that is a rather convoluted explanation. However, in case you're interested, it can be found in *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 393. Keil and Delitzsch agree with Barnes, and go into great detail as well. That may be found in Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 131. Unfortunately, they are both wrong here; although we are not talking differences in major Christian doctrine.

portion of Ephraim), giving the names of three cities which are found between Ephraim and Manasseh. The cities mentioned here were all covered in the previous chapter and Shechem was covered in Gen. 12:6. Keil and Delitzsch suggest that Shechem was founded by the Hivite named Shechem, but loan reference to Gen. 33:18 is not enough to confirm this.

In mid-verse, describing the boundary, we have the feminine noun *yâmîyn* (יָמִינַיִם) [pronounced *yaw-MEEN*], which means *the right hand, the right side*. Strong's #3225 BDB #411. There is one problem in the translation. Prior to *En-tappuah*, some translations have *toward Jashub by En-tappuah*. Without spending an inordinate amount of time on this, that is a problem with a letter or two and *inhabitants of* or *those inhabiting* is how this should be rendered (it is in the masculine plural).

To Manasseh was a land of Tappuah and Tappuah [was] to a boundary of Manasseh for sons of Ephraim.

Joshua
17:8

The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh and Tappuah was a boundary for Manasseh and Ephraim.

We have two different prepositions here, which I should point out to the one who does not read Hebrew. *Lâmed* (*to, for*) is found twice—at the beginning of the verse and prior to the word *sons*; and *ʿel* (עַל) [pronounced *el*], which denotes direction and means *in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding*, and is found prior to *a boundary*. Strong's #413 BDB #39.

The Tappuah found here is not the same as the one found in Joshua 15:52. This is a bordering city for Ephraim and Manasseh. I believe that this is also the Tappuah that we find in Joshua 12:17 when the various kings and cities are named as having been conquered.

And the boundary went down [to] a brook of Kanah southward to the brook. The cities the these [are] for Ephraim in a midst of cities of Manasseh and a boundary of Manasseh from northward to the brook and so their goings out were the sea.

Joshua
17:9

Then the boundary continues down to the Brook of Kanah and southward along the brook. These cities in this general area are to be inhabited by Ephraim, although found in the midst of the cities of Manasseh. The boundary of Manasseh is the brook at the north and terminates at the sea.

I found the literal translation to be a bit unwieldy, so let's see what others have done (in the NASB, I began with v. 8):

The Emphasized Bible

...and the boundary goeth down to the ravine of Kanah southward of the ravine, these cities belong to Ephraim, in the midst of the cities of Manasseh,—but the boundary of Manasseh was on the north side of the ravine, and the extensions thereof were to the sea;

NASB

The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh, but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh *belonged* to the sons of Ephraim. And the border went down to the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook (these cities *belonged* to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh), and the border of Manasseh *was* on the north side of the brook and it ended [lit., and goings out of it were] at the sea.

NIV

Then the boundary continued south to the Kanah Ravine. There were towns belonging to Ephraim lying among the towns of Manasseh, but the boundary of Manasseh was the northern side of the ravine and ended at the sea.

Young's Lit. Translation

And the border hath come down *to* the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook; these cities of Ephraim *are* in the midst of the cities of Manasseh, and the border of Manasseh *is* on the north of the brook, and its outgoings are at the sea.

Recall that Ephraim was given some of the cities of Manasseh (Joshua 16:9), and I assume that the cities listed in the previous two verses are the cities referred to. It is difficult to tell, as Joshua 16:9 makes it sound as though

there are other cities other than those mentioned which would be populated by Ephraim. The opinion of Barnes: *The text is possibly corrupt. The intention seems to be to state that the cities lying south of the river, though within the limits of Manasseh, were in fact made over to Ephraim, and were amongst the “separate cities”* [named in Joshua 19:6]. *On the contrary, the north bank of the river, both land and towns, belonged to Manasseh exclusively.*¹³ It is a tough call here. On the one hand, it seems as though we are about to be given a list of cities within the borders of Ephraim, yet belonging to Manasseh, but no list is given. There really seems to be only one city so named and that Tappuah in the previous verse. However, we have no evidence which indicates that cities had been removed from this verse. You may wonder about the Septuagint, but we have no additional cities mentioned therein either. The translation of the Septuagint would, of course, have been based upon older manuscripts than what we possess today, but even those manuscripts were copied almost a full millennium after the originals, and this after a great deal of political unrest. There are passages which have been undoubtedly added to the Bible—even the New Testament (e.g., the end of the book of Mark). Therefore, it follows that there were very likely some passages removed from the Bible. It is obvious that we will never know until eternity future what would be found in those missing passages.

Keil and Delitzsch have an explanation which does not require there to be additional cities: *The only possible meaning of these words is the following: From Tappuah, the boundary went down to the Cane-brook and crossed it, so that the south side of the brook really belonged to the territory of Manasseh; nevertheless the towns of this south side were allotted to Ephraim, whilst only the territory to the north of the brook fell to the lot of the Manassites. This is expressed more plainly in v. 10a: “To the south (of the brook the land came) to Ephraim, and to the north to Manasseh.” In v. 10b the northern and eastern boundaries are only briefly indicated: “And they (the Manassites) touched Asher towards the north, and Issachar towards the east.” The reason why this boundary was not described more minutely, was probably because it had not yet been fixed*¹⁴.

Obviously, there are fewer cities mentioned with regards to Ephraim and Manasseh than for Judah and there are more cities in Ephraim and Manasseh than are mentioned in these two chapters. Whether these cities are later founded by Israel or whether Joshua decided, after the chapter of Judah, not to include such detail in the remainder of these records, I couldn't say yet. Samaria, one of the most famous cities of Manasseh and mentioned 100 times in the Old Testament was not built until after the time of Solomon. Shiloh is one of the most important cities of Ephraim, however it will not be mentioned until the beginning of the next chapter. It may have begun at that point as just a camping area to begin with. There is found an Aphek on several maps within Ephraim (this is not the same as the Aphek given over to Judah or to Asher, of course). This Aphek seems to be based primarily upon extra-Biblical sources. We covered a complete doctrine of Aphek (all the different Aphek's) back in Joshua 12. What I am not finding is a city in either of these areas which is well-known and in use prior to the time of the dispersion of land to the various tribes.

The second to the last word is the feminine plural of *thôtzâ`âh* (תִּצְאוּ) [pronounced *toh-tzaw-AW*], a word found only in the plural collective (and also is spelled slightly differently in the New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance and in Gesenius), 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. Strong's #8444 BDB #426.

Southward to Ephraim and northward to Manasseh; and so the sea was his boundary and in Asher they reached from the north and in Issachar from the east. Joshua 17:10

The southern side [of the brook of Kanah] belonged to Ephraim and the northern side to Manasseh; furthermore, the sea was also a boundary of Manasseh on up to Asher in the north and to Issachar in the east.

Time-wise, Asher and Issachar have not received their land yet. However, since Joshua is writing this after the fact and, since, apparently, these are not the legal documents assigning the land but a record of the assigning of the land, Joshua takes a few liberties and simply names Asher as the northwest border and Issachar as the

¹³ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 394.

¹⁴ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 131.

northeast border of Manasseh. Barnes suggests: *the northern border is only indicated in general terms, perhaps because the Israelites were not yet completely masters of this part of the country, and so had not precisely determined it*¹⁵.

And so he was to Manasseh in Issachar and in Asher: Beth-shean and her villages; and Ibleam and her villages; and inhabitants of Dor and her villages; and inhabitants of En-dor and her villages; and inhabitants of Taanach and her villages; and inhabitants of Megiddo and her villages; a third the Naphath.

Joshua
17:11

And the border for Manasseh was Issachar and Asher: the cities of Manasseh are Beth-shean and its villages; Ibleam and its villages; the inhabitants of Dor and its villages; the inhabitants of En-dor and its villages; the inhabitants of Taanach and its villages; the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; the three hills.

This verse seems to abruptly jump into the cities assigned to Manasseh. It first, it seems as though these are villages given to Manasseh which are actually in Issachar or Asher. It would depend upon how the boundary lines were drawn. If Manasseh is given a border which ran simply from the east to the west, then Beth-shan would be in Issachar and Dor, Megiddo and Taanach would all be in Asher. One possibility is that Manasseh received a certain set of boundaries by lot which did not include these cities, and they were given over to Issachar and to Asher. Because Joshua was under orders to adjust the property distribution based upon the population, he took in a little more land and a few more cities than the throwing of the lots allowed for. Since he is writing this after the fact, he is indicating that these cities would have fallen to Asher and Issachar, had he not adjusted the territory somewhat. Therefore, these cities will be found in the boundary of Manasseh on most maps that you see. Barnes suggests that possibly these were added to the territory of Manasseh to compensate Manasseh for giving some of her cities over to Ephraim. Recall Num. 26:52–56: *Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, "Among these the land will be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To the larger, you will increase their inheritance, and to the smaller, you will diminish their inheritance; each will be given their inheritance according to those who were numbered of them. But the land shall be divided by lot. They shall receive their inheritance according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. According to the section by lot, their inheritance will be divided between the larger and the smaller tribes."* Because of this verse, we should expect to see something in the book of Joshua which indicates that there were adjustments made to the land which was distributed to the various tribes. That is possibly what we have here. The problem with this interpretation is that it would leave us with an entire chapter about the territory and cities of Manasseh, but without mentioning any cities which actually belong to Manasseh.

The other view, which would make more sense, is that these cities belonged to West Manasseh, which borders Issachar and Asher. Kaufman indicates that this verse should be rendered *...along [or, beside] the border of Issachar and Asher*.¹⁶ Therefore, these would towns would be near the northern border of Manasseh belonging to Manasseh, which does, more or less, agree with my maps.

The cities mentioned herein do not appear to be in any sort of order. We begin with Beth-shean (or, *Beth-shan*) in west Manasseh and then make a westwardly sweep and then sweep back again toward the east. There are only a few perennial streams which feed into the Jordan from its west bank and one of them is Jalud, which is why this area was densely populated. The principal city along the Jalud is Rehob, surprisingly not mentioned in the Bible; however, five miles north of Rehob was the city of Beth-shean. Beth-shean is also about five miles west of the Jordan. This is one of the more strategic sites in Palestine, although you wouldn't think that would be true for a city found 350 feet below sea level. *The Valley of Jezreel is a minor rift valley leading into the broader Plain of Esdraelon and the Mediterranean coast. The huge pyramid of Tell el-Husn, site of ancient Beth-shean, is located at a step in the narrow Jezreel trough, in a nodal position of great military importance. It commanded thus the routs south along the Jordan, north to Syria by way of the Sea of Galilee and west to the coast of the*

¹⁵ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 394.

¹⁶ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, p. 339, which quotes Y. Kaufman, *The Biblical Account of the Conquest of Palestine*, 1955.

*Mediterranean. It is situated at circa 350 feet below sea level, but Tell el-Husn commands a wide prospect on a promontory between Jalud Valley to the north, and a converging valley to the southeast, high above the Jordan.*¹⁷ The Canaanites controlled this area for a long period of time, a control which culminated in the hanging of the bodies of King Saul and his sons on the wall of the city Beth-shean after they had been defeated at Gilboa (1Sam. 31:10–12). Although we are not given any details, David apparently subdued this city and Solomon included it in the cities under the control of Israel in 1Kings 4:12. Its last mention in the Bible is 1Kings 14:25, where we hear of the King of Egypt, Shishak, attacking Jerusalem. Although Beth-shean is not mentioned by name, it figured into Shishak's attack. After the exile, Beth-shean was renamed Scythopolis, *perhaps because it was principally tenanted by a rude and heathen population, styled in contempt Scythians. It was a border city of Galilee, and the chief town of the Decapolis.*¹⁸ At some later date (1Sam. 31:10, to be precise), we will examine this city in greater detail, as well as cover the archeological finds in this area.¹⁹

Ibleam was located almost in center in Manasseh, according to my map. According to Joshua 17:11–12 and Judges 1:27, was under the control of Canaanites. Apparently the Via Maris is some sort of a road which goes through Manasseh, although I cannot find it in any of my encyclopedias or maps or dictionaries; not even Durant mentions it. However, ZPEB points out that Ibleam guards *one of the four or five passes on the Via Maris from the Sharon Plain*. Ahaziah, the king of Judah, was killed by Jehu as he fled by chariot through the ascent of Gur, which is near Ibleam (2Kings 9:27). Ibleam is somewhat of a *hidden city*; that is, there are three places in Scripture where Ibleam is mentioned where we may not recognize it. In 1Chron. 6:70, *Bileam* is actually *Ibleam*. It is very likely that we find this town mentioned again in 2Kings 15:10. Apparently the phrase *before the people* should read *in Ibleam*, giving us: **Then Shallum ben Jabesh conspired against him [Zechariah ben Jeroboam] and struck him down in Ibleam and killed him, and reigned in his place.**²⁰ Finally, we should also find this city named in Joshua 21:25 as a city which was given over to the Levites; however, we find the copyist's error of Gath-rimmon instead.

Dor was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, somewhat south of Mount Carmel and eight miles north of Caesarea. The Phœnicians settled there early on for the purple dyes that they could get from the shells found along the coast. Dor was also under the control of the Canaanites. On any map, Dor is clearly in Manasseh; however, Dor is spoken of with regards to Ephraim in 1Chron. 7:29, although it is said to be occupied by the sons of Joseph.

En-dor was much further inland, being located between Jezreel and the Sea of Kinnereth. En-dor is found in the northern portion of Manasseh. In the future we will see King Saul going to En-dor to seek the witch of En-dor.

Apparently the Via Maris is an important coastal road which heads inland on the Plain of Sharon and along this route in the southwestern edge of the plain of Jezreel we have the three cities Taanach, Megiddo and Jokneam, each of which guards a pass along the Via Maris. It is important to note that **Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land** (Judges 1:27). At the end of this chapter we will see the sons of Joseph complaining that they were given the short end of the stick as the area they received was smaller than it should of have been. They did not take what God gave them. They were to go in and conquer these cities and they did not. If you are not faithful in the little things, then how can you expect God to entrust you with the greater things. If they were unable to fully take possession of the area which God gave them, then obviously God does not need to give them more area. You may be less than thrilled about your possessions and the life that God has given you or the limited

¹⁷ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 543.

¹⁸ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 394. The *Decapolis* is an area wherein were ten cities, including Gadara, Pella, Damascus and Philadelphia. ZPEB suggests that the union of these cities was more political than geographical.

¹⁹ Most of this information came from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill C. Tenney, ed.; Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976, Vol. 1; p. 543.

²⁰ This was primarily taken from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill C. Tenney, ed.; Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976, Vol. 3; p. 238–239.

responsibilities that God has given you. If you cannot handle what He has given you already, don't think that God is going to give you more. Israel will not take control of this area until the time of King David (see 1Kings 4:12, which indicates that David conquered this general area earlier). The site of Taanach, called Tell Ta'annak, was first excavated in 1901–1904 by Professor Sellin of Vienna, who discovered twelve cuneiform tablets of circa 1450 B.C., and revealed the strong later Bronze Age defensive system, later modified in the Iron Age as a chariot garrison.²¹ We hear of these cities in history in the Egyptian chronicle of Thutmose II, King of Egypt from the 13th century B.C. It is unclear as to who controlled what; however, Egypt had some form of communication going with these cities and they were inhabited by Canaanites as well. We will read more about this area in Judges 4–5. We will cover the **Doctrine of Megiddo** in Judges 5:19.

Many Bibles end with the word *the Naphath* in this verse. In fact, why don't I just list the various ways this is rendered:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns—the three heights
NAB	...and Megiddo and its towns and natives [the third is Naphath-dor].
NIV	...Manasseh also had Beth Shan, Ibleam and the people of Dor, En-dor, Taanach and Megiddo, together with their surrounding settlements (the third in the list is Naphoth).
NJB	...the Three of the Slopes.
NRSV	...and its villages (the third is Naphath). [the Hebrew meaning is uncertain]
REB	...(the third is the district of Dor).
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...three counties.

The explanations go as follows: (1) The New American Bible and the NIV both give the other name of Dor, the third city on the list, as also being called *Naphath-dor* or *Naphoth*. We do not have separate confirmation of this elsewhere and it appears that many of the cities called by more than one name were so mentioned several times in Scripture, most conspicuous in this regard is Bethel-luz. (2) The other main explanation is that the final three cities were taken as a whole—that is, they were all located together in the same area, and therefore they and their general areas were called the *three counties*, *the three hills* or *the three of the slopes*. (3) What seems to be the least likely is that there is a third city with the name *Naphath*—that just does not make any sense. So, you are finally wondering about the Hebrew, right? In the Hebrew, it reads nâpheth (נַפְתָּ) [pronounced *naw-FETH*], and this word is found nowhere else in Scripture. Strong's #5316 BDB #632. However, there is another Hebrew word, nâphâh (נַפְחָ) [pronounced *naw-FAW*], found in several forms in several passages (e.g., Joshua 11:2 12:23 1Kings 4:11). Since this word is found twice already in the book of Joshua, it is not a stretch to think that it might be found again. You can see how very similar the letters tâv (ת) and hê (ה) are; given that the vowel points were added almost two thousand years later and given the fact that Joshua could be one of the more corrupt books (particularly in this second section of the book), it is likely that what we have in our Bibles is a mistake a copyist made due to working with a poor original. Strong's #5299 BDB #632. And, in case you are wondering, this last phrase is not found in the Septuagint.

And sons of Manasseh did not have the ability to take a possession of the cities the those and so the Canaanite were willing to dwell in the land the that.

Joshua
17:12

However, the sons of Manasseh did not have the ability to take possession of those cities so that the Canaanites were willing to continue to dwell in that land.

The first verb is the Qal perfect of yâkôl (יָכַל) [pronounced *yaw-COAL*], which means *to be able, to have the ability, to have the power to*. Strong's #3201 BDB #407. The next verb is the Hiphil infinitive construct of yârash (יָרַשׁ) [pronounced *yaw-RAHSH*] means *to possess, to take possession of, to occupy [all] geographical area—by driving out the previous occupants, to inherit, to dispossess*. Strong's #3423 BDB #439.

The next verb is the Hiphil imperfect of yâ'al (יֵאָל) [pronounced *yaw-AHL*] and BDB gives its meanings variously as *to show willingness, to be pleased, to determine, to undertake, to willingly chose, to be willing to*.

²¹ This information was quoted or paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill C. Tenney, ed.; Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976, Vol. 5; pp. 571–572.

Strong's #2974 BDB #383. Despite the fact that the Israelites had conquered cities all around them, the Canaanites remained in the land. This is further confirmed in Judges 1:27–29: **But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages; so the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. And it came to pass when Israel became strong, that they placed the Canaanites into forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely. Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer, so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them.**

And so it was when sons of Israel grew strong and so they placed the Canaanites to forced labor and to dispossess out did not dispossess him.

Joshua
17:13

And so it came to pass when the sons of Israel became stronger, they placed the Canaanites under forced labor, but they were unable to eradicate them.

The verb *to drive out* is found twice at the end of this verse to indicate emphasis. Owen renders this *and did not utterly drive them out*; Young as *and have not utterly dispossessed him*; the NASB reads *but they did not drive them out [or, dispossess] completely*. The gist of this verse is that the Israelites did not attempt to expel the Canaanites from the land, as they were supposed to, but what they did do was they, once they were strong enough, enslaved the Canaanites. It is possible that when they had developed the strength to drive out the Canaanites that they decided to instead enslave them. To some of them, that would have made better financial sense (in God's realm, it did not). You will notice that this is how we ended Joshua 15 and 16, with a note that Judah and Ephraim were unable to drive out those who occupied the land. What we don't have here is a clear reference as to when this actually occurred. Joshua certainly may have added that the Israelites were unable to dispossess the Canaanites, but it was not during his lifetime that the Canaanites were made slaves. That would indicate that this note was added by someone else. The NIV Study Bible suggests that this was added during the time of David or Solomon. Personally, since Joshua wrote Scripture and appended the book of Deuteronomy, I am comfortable with his additions to the books of Moses (of which there are several). However, in general, I am very uncomfortable with verses being added to other books of the Bible when it is unclear who added the verse and when.

Return to Outline

The Sons of Joseph Bring their Objections Before Joshua

And so spoke sons of Joseph [unto] Joshua to say, "Why did you give to me an inheritance [of] one lot and one portion? And I [am] a numerous people until which until here blessed us Y^ehowah."

Joshua
17:14

Then the sons of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why did you give us a single lot and a single portion as an inheritance? We are a numerous group who have been blessed by Jehovah up until this time."

We have four particles strung together here. We have *ʿad* (אָד) [pronounced *ḡad*] which means *as far as, until*. Strong's #5704 BDB #723. This is combined with the relative pronoun *ʾăsher* (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *ash-ER*], which means *that, which, when or who*. Strong's #834 BDB #81. Together, they mean *until that, until the time, until that time, until then*. Then we have *ʿad* again with the adverb *kôh* (כֹּה) [pronounced *koh*], which means *thus, here, hence*. Strong's #3541 BDB #462. Together, with regards to space, they mean *as far as here*; and with regards to time, they mean *hitherto*. This is the only place where these are all four strung together like this and BDB suggests *till now and till then*. This is variously translated *since hitherto* (Owen), *hitherto* (Young), *because hitherto* (Rotherham), *since...thus far* (NASB), *forasmuch...hitherto* (KJV); and *inasmuch as...until now* (NKJV). We might render this loosely as *up until this time*.

The point of this delegation is that God has blessed them with a large population (and, in that time, that was considered a great blessing); therefore, their inheritance should correspond with their population. Furthermore, Jacob so blessed Joseph: **"And I will give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."** (Gen. 48:22). In this situation, the lot and the cities given to them is

a result of divine guidance and divine providence.²² Furthermore, they have received a double portion. Manasseh has a large area on the other side of the Jordan. And their combined portions are roughly equivalent to Judah. In fact, Manasseh alone has a portion, with its two sections put together, just about equivalent to Judah, when you consider that Simeon lives in the midst of Judah. What they received was proportional to their population, and what was assigned to them was some of the most fertile land in all of Israel.

What I think that we have here is not a delegation from Manasseh and Ephraim, but actually one probably initiated by Ephraim. Even though Joshua refers to them as *sons of Joseph* (which the Ephraimites are), and indicates that there were delegates from both tribes (v. 17), the real problem is with Ephraim. Joshua, who is an Ephraimite, will say that the solution is in driving out the Canaanites (and then Joshua will mention Beth-shean, a city of Ephraim) and (v. 16); and, (2) it will be in clearing away some of the forest in the hill country, which will be the hill country of Ephraim (v. 18). Since there are delegates there from Manasseh as well, Joshua also mentions clearing out the Canaanites from the Valley of Jezreel, which is in the midst of west Manasseh.

And so said to them Joshua, “If a people numerous you [are], go up for yourself [to] the forest and shape by cutting for yourself there in a land of the Perizzites and the Rephaim since [the] hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you.”

Joshua
17:15

So Joshua said to them, “If you are such a numerous people, then you should go up into the forest and level an area there for yourselves in the land of the Perizzites and giants, since the hill country alone is not enough for you.”

In this verse, we have the Piel perfect of *bârâ* (בָּרָא) [pronounced *baw-RAWH*], which is the verb used for *creation* in Gen. 1:1. It also means *to shape, to carve, to fashion by cutting*. Strong’s #1249–1250 (&1254) BDB #135. The NIV Study Bible made an apt observation here: *this region of Canaan was still heavily forested. It seems that the Israelites viewed their assigned territories primarily in terms of the number of cities that had their land cleared for farming and pasturage, not in terms of the size of the region in which these cities were located. The region assigned to the Joseph tribes was at the time not as heavily populated as others*²³.

This is one of the few times that we speak of one of the Canaanitish people separately. Apparently the Perizzites occupied the country given to Ephraim. The Rephaim here are the *giants*, or men of great stature. My guess is that they were a head taller than the Israelites, if not more. My thinking is that Rephaim is a more general term, not referring to a particular people, but to simply men who were bigger and taller than the Israelites. Apparently Goliath the Philistine, was even taller than that.

The last verb is the Qal perfect of *ʾûts* (אָוֹץ) [pronounced *oots*], and its meanings are given variously as *to press, to urge, to press anyone on, to be pressed, to confine, to make haste*. In most of the 10 times that this word is found in Scripture, it means *to hasten, to cause to hasten, to hurry, to hurry along, to hasten*. The only time we cannot give this the general meaning is here in Joshua 17:15. Various translators give this the renderings *hath been narrow* (Young); *is too narrow* (NASB, Owen); *is too small* (NIV); *are too confined* (NKJV); and *you are their near neighbors in the hill country of Ephraim* (REB), which Bible footnotes here that the actual Hebrew is obscure here. This would account for the odd translation here. Strong’s #213 BDB #21. Although the name *Mount Ephraim* is found in the KJV, perhaps this should be better rendered the *hill country of Ephraim*.

Barnes: *Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, but far from supporting the demands of his kinsmen he reproves them, and calls upon them to make good their great word by corresponding deeds of valour. He bids them clear the country of its woods and thus make room for settling their people. The “wood country” probably means the range which runs along the northern border of Manasseh, and which connects the mountains of Gilboa with Carmel*²⁴.

²² We still have divine guidance and providence today, but it does not come about by the casting of lots.

²³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 312.

²⁴ *Barnes’ Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 394–395.

McGee speaks about this area: *If you travel to this area today, you will find that the hills are as bare as they are in Southern California. What happened to all of the trees? The enemies that have come into this country down through the centuries have completely denuded the hills. There is a great campaign in Israel right now to plant trees in that region... Trees will grow here because the land was once covered with them. By the way, in Christ's day the Mount of Olives was also covered with trees. If there had been just a little clump of trees as there is today, His enemies would not have had any trouble finding Christ and His followers in the garden. Judas was needed to lead them through the jungle of trees and point out exactly where our Lord was*²⁵.

And so spoke sons of Joseph, “Not found for us the hill country and chariots of iron with all the Canaanite the dwellers in the plain to [him] who [is] in Beth-shean and its villages and to [him] who [is] in a plain of Jezreel.”

Joshua
17:16

Then the sons of Joseph said, “The hill country is not enough for us; furthermore, every Canaanite in the valley has an iron chariot, both in Beth-shean and its outlying areas and in the Valley of Jezreel.”

Although the general meaning of this verse is not difficult, its correct translation is. Therefore, let's see what others have done with it:

The Amplified Bible

The Josephites said, The hill country is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites who dwell in the valley have iron chariots, both those in Beth-shean and its villages, and in the Valley of Jezreel.

The Emphasized Bible

And the sons of Joseph said, The hill country is not enough for us,—and there are chariots of iron among all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley, belonging both to them in Beth-shean and her towns, and to them in the valley of Jezreel.

NASB

And the sons of Joseph said, “The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the valley land have chariots of iron, both those who are in Beth-shean and its towns, and those who are in the valley of Jezreel.”

Young's Lit. Translation

And the sons of Joseph say, 'The hill is not found to us, and a chariot of iron is with every Canaanite who is dwelling in the land of the valley—to him who is in Beth-Shean and its towns, and to him who is in the valley of Jezreel.'

The sons of Joseph begin with the negative and the Niphal perfect of *mâtsâ`* (מָצָא) [pronounced *maw-TSAW*] and it means *to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover*. In the Niphal, Gesenius gives the meanings as *to acquire, to be found, to be present, to exist*. Obviously, the meanings given by many translators aren't quite on target. Strong's #4672 BDB #592.

In the English, a word for word rendering of *with all the Canaanite* seems rather stilted; *with every Canaanite* is probably the best almost literal equivalent. This is followed by the definite article and the Qal active participle of the verb *to dwell*; as you see above, this is rendered *who dwell, that dwell, who live* and *who is dwelling*. I've rendered this *the dwellers*.

Then we have the lamed prefixed preposition and the relative pronoun *`ăsher* (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *ash-ER*], which means *that, which, when* or *who*. In Gesenius and BDB, the best I can come up with for this combination is *to him who* or *for him who*. However, we find this rendered as *both* (Owen), *both those who* (NASB), *belonging both to them* (Rotherham). What occurs here is that this phrase is repeated and this is where the translators come up with *both*. Strong's #834 BDB #81.

The sons of Joseph have essentially admitted that they are not up to conquering the people who dwell in their land. What they want is a lot of land where there are no Canaanites, or, at least no Canaanites with iron chariots. I am certain that this is all you ever ask of God—just give me a place that is spacious and where I don't have any problems—that's all I want. News flash—you're living in the devil's world. No matter how many times you ask, you will continue to live in the devil's world and that means you may not get all that you ask for, and what you do get might have Canaanites with iron chariots living in it. I must admit that this is how I felt when I rented my first

²⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 82.

home. I rented a small house in the poorer section of town, for myself and my new bride and I went over there to do some dinking around. Turns out that there was a small motorcycle gang, probably descended from the Canaanites, who lived in this house. They had a ramp set up on the front door and the back door so that they could drive their iron chariots in and out through the front door or the back door. I must admit that, even though I had a lease for this property and I knew that they did not still did not make me feel any more comfortable. I let them know that I was moving in with my new wife and then returned to my car, hoping that they would not pursue me on their chariots of iron. Surprisingly enough, they did not and God gave me possession of the house.

We will later see that the tribe of Judah could not drive out the Canaanites in its area. **Now Jehovah was with Judah and they took possession of the hill country; but they could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had iron chariots** (Judges 1:19). We will find another problem which Israel has with Jabin, the king of Canaan, who had 900 chariots and he would oppress Israel for twenty years (Judges 4:3). NIV Study Bible: *Only in the plains were chariots effective. Not the entire chariot was made out of iron.*²⁶ I believe that we have touched on this in the past where the place that the rider placed his feet was often just rope. The axle and perhaps the frame was iron. Barnes: *The possession by the Canaanites of chariots strengthened and tipped with iron, such as were used by the Egyptians (Ex. xiv. 7), is named here by the children of Joseph as a reason why they could not possess themselves of the plains*²⁷.

Barnes: *The Valley of Jezreel is the broad low valley which sweeps from Zerin between the mountains of Gilboa and the range of little Hermon eastward down to the Jordan. It was mostly likely in this valley that the host of the Midianites was encamped, when attacked by Gideon (Judges vii. 1, 8). The great plain of Jezreel, called the plain of Esdraelon (Esdrelom, Judith I. 8), extends from Carmel on the west to the hills of Gilboa, little Hermon, and Tabor on the east, a distance of full sixteen miles; and its breadth between the rocky mass of southern Palestine and the bolder mountains of Galilee on the north, is about twelve miles. Its position as well as its open area make it the natureal battle-field of Palestine*²⁸.

And so spoke Joshua unto a house of Joseph, to Ephraim and to Manasseh, to say, “A people numerous you [are] and power great to you. [There] is not to you a lot of one;

Joshua
17:17

Then Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph, both to Ephraim and Manasseh: “You are a numerous people and you have great power; you certainly have more than one lot,

Joshua tells representatives of the two tribes that he recognizes that they are a numerous and powerful tribe. I don't know how much of this is said to manipulate them. He will say that they are given this land which must be conquered because they are a great and powerful people. In this verse, the last verb is the Qal imperfect of the verb *to be* preceded by the negative particle and followed by the phrase *to you* (singular). He says, **“There is not to you a lot of one [or, one lot].”** Just because only one lot was thrown, this does not mean that the territory they received was equivalent to but one lot of territory. Plus, the key to their increasing their territory is to (1) drive out the Canaanites and (2) clear the forested area. Had they done these things, their possession would have been huge and what they possessed would have been the most fertile of all the allotments. What we are witnessing are shades of things to come. At this point in time, they have a charismatic, spiritual and doctrinally-oriented leader in the person of Joshua. There will be no man to replace him as the leader of Israel. Israel will go into a new phase where each tribe will have judges over them, and none of these judges will possess the doctrine that Moses and Joshua possessed. Here, even though Ephraim and Manasseh are out of line (although, they certainly believe that they are right), the fact that Joshua is accurate in his assessment of the situation and that he has the power and the authority and the respect to make his assessment and judgment of the situation stick. However, once Joshua dies, Israel will drift further and further from God and her leadership will reflect that. This is what we will find in the book of the Judges.

²⁶ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 312.

²⁷ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 395.

²⁸ *Barnes' Notes, Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 395.

“For a hill country is to you, because a forest he [is] and you will clear it and it is to you to its end; because you will dispossess the Canaanite because a chariot of iron to him because strong he [is].”

Joshua
17:18

“for the hill country is yours; and though it is a forest, you will clear it unto its farthest borders, because you will dispossess the Canaanites though he has chariots of iron and though he is strong.”

Let's see how others rendered this verse:

The Emphasized Bible

...for the hill country shall be thine in that a forest it is, therefore canst thou cut it down and thine shall be the extensions thereof,—for thou shalt dispossess the Canaanites, though chariots of iron they have and though strong they are.

NASB

“...but the hill country shall be yours. For though it is a forest, you shall clear it, and to its farthest borders it shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have chariots of iron *and* though they are strong.”

NIV

“...but the forested hill country as well. Clear it, and its farthest limits will be yours; though the Canaanites have iron chaitots and though they are strong, you can drive them out.”

Young's Lit. Translation

‘...because the mountain is thine; because it *is* a forest—thou hast prepared it, and its outgoings have been thine; because thou dost dispossess the Canaanite, though it hath chariots of iron—though it *is* strong.’

Vv. 17 and 18 should not have been separated. V. 18 continues with the same thought and explains Joshua's thinking. The NIV begins v. 18 with *but*, as does the NASB, the KJV and several other Bibles. However, the first word of v. 18 is the conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which has several meanings, depending upon the context. Gesenius calls this one of the oldest words found in the Hebrew, which means that it will have a variety of meanings. ❶ It is used as a relative conjunction, particularly after the verbs *seeing, hearing, speaking, knowing, believing remembering, forgetting* and in such cases means *that*. ❷ *Kîy* is used for consecution and effect and rendered *to that, that*; and sometimes it has an intensifying force and is rendered *so that, so even, even*. ❸ The connective can be used of time and be rendered *at that time, which, what time, when*. ❹ *Kîy* can be used of time, but in such a way that it passes over to a demonstrative power where it begins an apodosis (*then, so*). It can be used as a relative causal particle: *because, since, while, on account that*. When we find it several times in a sentence, it can mean *because...and* or *for...and*. It can also have a continuous disjunctive use here and be rendered *for...or...or* (when the second two *kîy*'s are preceded by conjunctions). ❺ After a negative, it can mean *but* (the former must not be done because the latter is to be done). Although I cannot find specific justification for this, here, at the beginning of each sentence, this should be rendered *because* or *for* and secondly as *thought* or *and though*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. Reading vv. 17 and 18 together, we have: **Then Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph, both to Ephraim and Manasseh: “You are a numerous people and you have great power; you certainly have more than one lot, for the hill country is yours; and though it is a forest, you will clear it unto its farthest borders, because you will dispossess the Canaanites though he has chariots of iron and though he is strong.”**

This chapter seems to have somewhat of an abrupt end, as though something else should be said or some conclusion should be drawn or that we should have the sentence, *and the sons of Joseph walked away in a huff*. However, Joshua is not what you would call a major story writer. He is not near as literate as Moses and what he said was, insofar as he was concerned, the end of the conversation. In terms of what is important, his word was the last word. Let us append this with what Moses told the people: **“When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them, for Jehovah your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.”** (Deut. 20:1).

So that we don't end so abruptly, I'd like to include a few paragraphs from J. Vernon McGee, who does not give us much commentary from this portion of God's Word: *Joshua says, “If you don't like what you have, go up and possess the mountains. But remember there are giants in the land. You'll have to work; you'll have to fight. Its going to cost you something. It is a time we stopped complaining and possessed more land.*

A great preacher from New York City once took a vacation in northern New York state, He went to church on Sunday in a small country town, and to his surprise the young pastor was preaching almost verbatim one of his published sermons. When the young man came out of the pulpit, and was greeting people at the door, the visiting pastor shook hands with him and asked, "Young man, I enjoyed your sermon this morning. How long did it take you to prepare it?" "Oh, it took me only about three hours," came his reply. "That is strange," said the famous preacher, "It took me about eight hours to prepare it."

It takes work to lay hold of spiritual possessions and blessings. Many years ago a student of mine entered the active ministry. He served in a church about three years and then came to see me. He was in distress because he said he was all preached out. I asked him how much time he spent studying and how long it took him to prepare a sermon. He told me that he did not spend much time studying and it took him about an hour to prepare a sermon. That was his problem. I spend anywhere from eight to twenty hours preparing a sermon. In order to lay hold of spiritual blessings, you are going to have to work hard. But remember that there is an enemy. There are giants in the land. Satan will trip you up if he can.

Another classmate of mine once complained to a professor about a book he was required to read. He claimed it was as dry as dust. "Well," said the professor, "why don't you dampen it with a little sweat from your brow?" This is a great argument for hard work. Joshua says to his tribe, "Don't come to me and complain. There is plenty of land for you. Go and get it."²⁹

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1. I consider my set of *Barnes' Notes* and Keil and Delitzsch's *Old Testament Commentary*, along with J. Vernon McGee's *Thru the Bible* series to be absolutely necessary to my study. Furthermore, I was lucky enough to be under the ministry of Bob Thieme Jr. for several decades, which gave me a good overall working knowledge of Scripture.

²⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; pp. 83–84.