
JOSHUA 17:1 This was the lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he was the firstborn of Joseph. As for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan.

The lot of the half tribe of Manasseh, Jos 17:1, Jos 17:2. Case of the daughters of Zelophehad, Jos 17:3-6. The borders of Manasseh described, Jos 17:7-11. The Canaanites dwell among them, but are laid under tribute, Jos 17:12, Jos 17:13. The children of Joseph complain of the scantiness of their lot, Jos 17:14-16. Joshua authorizes them to possess the mountainous wood country of the Perizzites, and gives them encouragement to expel them, though they were strong and had chariots of iron, Jos 17:17, Jos 17:18.

Verse 1

There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh - It was necessary to mark this because Jacob, in his blessing, (Gen 48:19, Gen 48:20), did in a certain sense set Ephraim before Manasseh, though the latter was the first-born; but the place here shows that this preference did not affect the rights of primogeniture.

For Machir - because he was a man of war - It is not likely that Machir himself was now alive; if he were, he must have been nearly 200 years old: It is therefore probable that what is spoken here is spoken of his children, who now possessed the lot that was originally designed for their father, who it appears had signalized himself as a man of skill and valor in some of the former wars, though the circumstances are not marked. His descendants, being of a warlike, intrepid spirit, were well qualified to defend a frontier country, which would be naturally exposed to invasion.

JOSHUA 17:2 So this was for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, for the children of Helek, for the children of Asriel, for the children of Shechem, for the children of Hepher, and for the children of Shemida: these were the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.

Verse 2

The rest of the children of Manasseh - That is, his grandchildren; for it is contended that Manasseh had no other son than Machir; and these were very probably the children of Gilead, the son of Machir.

JOSHUA 17:3 But Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters: and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

Verse 3

Zelophehad - had no sons, but daughters - See this case considered at large in the notes on Num 27:1-7 (note); Num 36:1 (note), etc.

JOSHUA 17:4 They came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers." Therefore according to the commandment of the LORD he gave them an inheritance among the brothers of their father.

JOSHUA 17:5 Ten parts fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which is beyond the Jordan;

Verse 5

There fell ten portions to Manasseh - The Hebrew word חבלִי chabley, which we translate portions, signifies literally cords or cables, and intimates that by means of a cord, cable, or what we call a chain, the land was divided. We have but little account of the arts and sciences of the Hebrews, yet from the sketches which we find in different parts of the Old Testament it appears that their minds were in many respects well cultivated; nor could the division, which is mentioned in this book, have been made without such a measure of geographical knowledge, as we find it difficult to grant them. Suppose even in this case, the land was not measured with a chain, which in some cases would have been impracticable, because the ancient inhabitants still occupied the places which were allotted to certain tribes or families; yet the allusion to this mode of measurement shows that it was well known among them. As there were six sons and five daughters, among whom this division was to be made, there should be eleven portions; but Zelophehad, son of Hephher, having left five daughters in his place, neither he nor Hephher is reckoned. The lot of Manasseh therefore was divided into ten parts; five for the five sons of Gilead, who were Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, and Shemida; and five for the five daughters of Zelophehad, viz., Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. Calmet.

JOSHUA 17:6 because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons. The land of Gilead belonged to the rest of the sons of Manasseh.

JOSHUA 17:7 The border of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, which is before Shechem. The border went along to the right hand, to the inhabitants of En Tappuah.

JOSHUA 17:8 The land of Tappuah belonged to Manasseh; but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim.

JOSHUA 17:9 The border went down to the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook. These cities belonged to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook, and ended at the sea.

Verse 9

Unto the river Kanah - Literally, the river or valley of the reeds, translated by the Vulgate, vallis arundintei. The tribe of Manasseh appears to have been bounded on the north by this torrent or valley, and on the south by the Mediterranean Sea.

JOSHUA 17:10 Southward it was Ephraim's, and northward it was Manasseh's, and the sea was his border. They reached to Asher on the north, and to Issachar on the east.

Verse 10

They met together in Asher on the north - The tribe of Asher extended from the Mediterranean Sea to Mount Carmel, Jos 19:26, and the tribe of Manasseh extended to Dor and her towns, (see the following verse, Jos 17:11 (note)), which were in the vicinity of Carmel; and thus it appears that these two tribes formed a junction at the Mediterranean Sea. This may serve to remove the difficulties in this verse; but still it does appear that in several cases the tribes were intermingled; for Manasseh had several towns, both in Issachar and in Asher, see Jos 17:11. In like manner, Judah had towns in Dan and Simeon; and Simeon had towns in Judah; and what is spoken of the boundaries of the tribes, may be sometimes understood of those towns which certain tribes had within the limits of others. For, in several cases, towns seem to be interchanged, or purchased, by mutual consent, so that in some instances the possessions were intermingled, without any confusion of the tribes or families.

JOSHUA 17:11 Manasseh had three heights in Issachar, in Asher Beth Shean and its towns, and Ibleam and its towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and its towns, and the inhabitants of Endor and its towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns.

Verse 11

Beth-shean - Called afterwards Scythopolis; the city of the Scythians or Cuthites, those who were sent into the different Samaritan cities by the kings of Assyria.

Dor - On the Mediterranean Sea, about eight miles from Caesarea, on the road to Tyre.

En-dor - The well or fountain of Dor, the place where Saul went to consult the witch; 1Sam 28:7, etc.

JOSHUA 17:12 Yet the children of Manasseh couldn't drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

Verse 12

Could not drive out, etc. - They had neither grace nor courage to go against their enemies, and chose rather to share their territories with those whom the justice of God had proscribed, than exert themselves to expel them. But some commentators give a different turn to this expression, and translate the passage thus: But the children of Manasseh could not (resolve) to destroy those cities, but the Canaanites consented to dwell in the land. And as they were willing to pay tribute, and the others chose to tolerate them on those terms, they agreed to dwell together: but this paying of tribute seems not to have taken place till some time after, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, etc.

JOSHUA 17:13 When the children of Israel had grown strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labour, and didn't utterly drive them out.

JOSHUA 17:14 The children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given me just one lot and one part for an inheritance, since I am a great people, because the LORD has blessed me so far?"

JOSHUA 17:15 Joshua said to them, "If you are a great people, go up to the forest, and clear land for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim; since the hill country of Ephraim is too narrow for you."

Verse 15

If thou be a great people - Joshua takes them at their own word; they said, Jos 17:14, that they were a great people; then said he, If thou be a great people or seeing thou art a great people, go to the wood country, and clear away for thyself. Joshua would not reverse the decision of the lot; but as there was much woodland country, he gave them permission to clear away as much of it as they found necessary to extend themselves as far as they pleased.

JOSHUA 17:16 The children of Joseph said, "The hill country is not enough for us. All the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both those who are in Beth Shean and its towns, and those who are in the valley of Jezreel."

Verse 16

The hill is not enough for us - The mountain of Gilboa being that which had fallen to them by lot.

Chariots of iron - We cannot possess the plain country, because that is occupied by the Canaanites; and we cannot conquer them, because they have chariots of iron, that is, very strong chariots, and armed with scythes, as is generally supposed.

JOSHUA 17:17 Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, "You are a great people, and have great power. You shall not have one lot only;

JOSHUA 17:18 but the hill country shall be yours. Although it is a forest, you shall cut it down, and it's farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron, and though they are strong."

Verse 18

The outgoings of it shall be thine - Clear away the wood, occupy the mountain, and you shall soon be able to command all the valleys; and, possessing all the defiles of the country, you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron: your situation will be advantageous, your numbers very respectable, and the hand of God will be upon you for good.

1. From the whole history of the Israelites we find that it was difficult to please them; they had a dissatisfied mind, and hence were rarely contented. From the above account we learn that the children of Joseph were much inclined to quarrel with Joshua, because they had not such a lot as they wished; though they could not be ignorant that their lot, as that of the others, had been determined by the especial providence of God.

2. Joshua treats them with great firmness; he would not attempt to alter the appointment of God, and he saw no reason to reverse or change the grant already made. They were both numerous and strong, and if they put forth their strength under the direction of even the ordinary providence of God, they had every reason to expect success.

3. Slothfulness is natural to man; it requires much training to induce him to labor for his daily bread; if God should miraculously send it he will wonder and eat it, and that is the whole. Strive to enter in at the strait gate is an ungracious word to many; they profess to trust in God's mercy, but labor not to enter into that rest: God will not reverse his purpose to meet their slothfulness; they alone who overcome shall sit with Jesus upon his throne. Reader, take unto thee the whole armor of God, that thou mayest be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all - to Stand. And remember, that he only who endures to the end shall be saved.