

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA 17

This chapter gives an account of the lot that fell to the half tribe of Manasseh, to the male children of Manasseh, and to the daughters of Zelophehad, (^{<670>}Joshua 17:1-6); and describes the coast of that lot, (^{<670>}Joshua 17:7-13); and relates the request of the sons of Joseph, to have their lot enlarged, which was granted, (^{<674>}Joshua 17:14-18).

Ver. 1. *There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh*, etc.] As well as for the tribe of Ephraim:

for he [was] the firstborn of Joseph; and therefore ought to have his part and share in the lot of the children of Joseph, though Ephraim was preferred before him in the blessing of Jacob. Some think this is given as a reason why he had a double portion, one on the other side Jordan, and another in the land of Canaan:

[to wit], for Machir, the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead; who was the only son of Manasseh, and so through him, and by his son Gilead, the whole tribe sprung from that patriarch: and

because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan; which were given to his posterity by Moses, and lay on the other side Jordan, (see ^{<683>}Deuteronomy 3:13,15). This Machir very likely had shown his warlike disposition and courage in Egypt, and had fought under the kings there against the common enemy of that country; for it is highly probable he was dead before the children of Israel came out from thence, but the same warlike spirit continued in his posterity; they had their part assigned them on the other side Jordan, to defend that country, while the tribes of Reuben and Gad attended to the care of their flocks and herds.

Ver. 2. *There was also [a lot] for the rest of the children of Manasseh by their families*, etc.] For such that had no part in Gilead and Bashan on the other side Jordan, even for the other half tribe, whose families are particularly mentioned, as follows:

for the children of Abiezer; who is called Jeezer in (⁻⁰⁰⁵⁰Numbers 26:30); and was a son of Gilead, the son of Machir, as the rest that follow were:

and for the children of Helek, and for the children of Asriel, and for the children of Shechem, and for the children of Hopher, and for the children of Shemida; hence the families of the Jeezerites, Helekites, Asrielites, Shechemites, Hopherites, and Shemidaites, mentioned in (⁻⁰⁰⁵⁰Numbers 26:30-32); and for which families was the lot here spoken of:

these [were] the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph by their families; which is observed for the sake of, and to lead unto what follows, otherwise in common none but males inherited; but the following is an excepted and remarkable case.

Ver. 3. *But Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but daughters*, etc.] The descent of this man is particularly given, to show the truth and reality of it, upon which his daughters made their request, and that granted and now claimed:

and these [are] the names of his daughters, Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah; by the same names, and in the same order they are called in (⁻⁰⁰⁵³Numbers 26:33 27:1); the order is a little different in (⁻⁰⁰⁵¹Numbers 36:11).

Ver. 4. *And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes*, etc.] The ten princes, who, with Eleazar and Joshua, were appointed to divide the land, (⁻⁰⁰⁴⁷Numbers 34:17-29); and were now met together for that purpose, (⁻⁰⁰⁴⁰Joshua 14:1);

saying, the Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren; those of the same tribe with them; for upon their application to Moses he inquired of the Lord, who ordered him to grant their request, (⁻⁰⁰⁷⁰Numbers 27:1-7);

therefore according to the commandment of the Lord he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their fathers; that is, to the half tribe of Manasseh.

Ver. 5. *And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which [were] on the other side Jordan*, etc.] The lot which fell to the half tribe of Manasseh was divided into ten parts: according to

the Jewish writers, the six families before mentioned had six parts, and the daughters of Zelophehad had four parts; one on the account of Zelophehad their father, two on the account of their grandfather Hephher, who they say was the firstborn, and one on account of their uncle, their father's brother, who died in the wilderness without children; so Jarchi and Kimchi relate from the Talmud^{f387}; but the true case seems to be this, there were six portions for the six families, but there being no sons in Hephher's family, his part was divided into five, and given to the five daughters of Zelophehad:

beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which [were] on the other side Jordan: which were given to the other half tribe, as before observed, (⁴⁶³⁹Joshua 13:29-31).

Ver. 6. *Because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance among his sons,* etc.] Which occasioned such a number of portions; the daughters of Zelophehad are meant, who descended from Manasseh:

and the rest of Manasseh, some had the land of Gilead; that is, those besides the six families before expressed, namely, the two families of the Machirites and Gileadites, (⁴⁶⁵⁹Numbers 26:29).

Ver. 7. *And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher,* etc.] Not from the border of the tribe of Asher, as Kimchi, in which he is followed by Vatablus; for that was at too great a distance; but a city of the tribe of Manasseh; and in Jerom's^{f388} time a village of this name was shown fifteen miles from Neapolis or Shechem, as you go from thence to Scythopolis, near the public road:

to Michmethah, that [lieth] before Shechem; the same place mentioned in the description of the border of Ephraim, (see Gill on "⁴⁶⁴⁶Joshua 16:6"):

and the border went along on the right hand, unto the inhabitants of Entappuah; that is, leaving this place, and its inhabitants to the right, which was a place in the land of that name, next mentioned; and seems to be so called from a fountain in it, or near it, as well as from a multitude of apples growing there, and with which perhaps the country abounded, of which in (⁴⁶⁷⁸Joshua 17:8).

Ver. 8. *[Now] Manasseh had the land of Tappuah,* etc.] The whole territory that went by that name, from a city of note in it, next mentioned; all the fields and villages in it belonged to the tribe of Manasseh:

but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh [belonged] to the children of Ephraim; and was one of those separate cities they had among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh; though it seems they had only the city, not the territory adjacent to it, and which was named from it.

Ver. 9. *And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river*, etc.] The same mentioned in the account of the coast of Ephraim, (^{<4668>}Joshua 16:8); which was north of that river, as Manasseh was to the south of it:

these cities of Ephraim [are] among the cities of Manasseh; that is, the cities before mentioned, Asher, Michmethah, Entappuah, and Tappuah; though they were in the tribe of Manasseh, yet they were inhabited by the Ephraimites:

the coast of Manasseh also [was] on the north side of the river; of the river Kanah, as well as on the south of it; it had cities there, though possessed by the tribe of Ephraim:

and the outgoings of it were at the sea; the Mediterranean sea.

Ver. 10. *Southward [it was] Ephraim's, and northward [it was] Manasseh's*, etc.] As Ephraim lay to the south of Manasseh, Manasseh lay to the north of Ephraim:

and the sea is his border; the Mediterranean sea was their boundary on the west:

and they met together in Asher on the north; that is, on the northwest towards the Mediterranean sea, as, at Mount Carmel:

and in Issachar on the east; towards Jordan.

Ver. 11. *And Manasseh had in Issachar, and in Asher, Bethshean, and her towns*, etc.] As Ephraim had cities in Manasseh, so had Manasseh cities in these two tribes, which in some parts bordered on it, before described, even the cities following, and the first that is named is Bethshean: this lay in the tribe of Issachar, and was the uttermost border of Manasseh that way; it was, as Josephus ^{f389} says, called Scythopolis; but not from the Scythians, as Pliny ^{f390} suggests, but from Succoth, a place where Jacob resided, and which was not far from it, (^{<0337>}Genesis 33:17 ^{<1042>}1 Kings 4:12 7:46); it lay before the great plain of Jezreel, and was at the entrance into it,

“After this went they over Jordan into the great plain before Bethsan.” (1 Maccabees 5:52)

and was six hundred furlongs, or seventy five miles, from Jerusalem, according to: “From thence they departed to Scythopolis, which lieth six hundred furlongs from Jerusalem,” (2 Maccabees 12:29)

and was one of the cities of Decapolis, from whence our Lord had hearers, (^{<4025>}Matthew 4:25). It was such a pleasant place, that it is said in the Talmud ^{f391}, that if the garden of Eden was in the land of Israel, Bethshean was the gate of it; on which the gloss says, that its fruits were the sweetest in the land of Israel:

and Ibleam and her towns; it seems to be the same with Bileam, by a transposition of the two first letters, (^{<1350>}1 Chronicles 6:70); and was a place not far from Megiddo, after mentioned, as appears from (^{<1307>}2 Kings 9:27);

and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns; this had been a royal city, (see Gill on “^{<6102>}Joshua 11:2”) and (see Gill on “^{<6123>}Joshua 12:23”);

and the inhabitants of Endor and her towns; this place became famous for a witch there in the times of Saul, (^{<0207>}1 Samuel 28:7); in the times of Jerom ^{f392} it was a large village near Mount Tabor, four miles to the south, which he calls Aeor, or in Jezreel; and elsewhere ^{f393} he speaks of Endor, as near the town of Nain, where our Lord raised the widow’s son the dead, and is about: Scythopolis:

and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns; this had been a royal city, (see Gill on “^{<6022>}Joshua 12:22”);

and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: this was another royal city mentioned with the former; (see Gill on “^{<6021>}Joshua 12:21”); there

[even] three countries; the three last cities, with their towns, that are mentioned, Endor, Taanach, and Megiddo; all which perhaps belonged to Dor, and may be the Naphothdor spoken of (^{<6102>}Joshua 11:2 12:23); where the same word is used as here; so Jarchi interprets it.

Ver. 12. *Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out [the inhabitants] of these cities*, etc.] Mentioned in (^{<6071>}Joshua 17:11); they had not strength at first to do it, or either were negligent and slothful, and suffered them to dwell among them, and did not take the advantage they

might have done; and afterwards it was too late, they became too strong and numerous for them, at least for a time:

but the Canaanites would dwell in the land; whether they would or not.

Ver. 13. *Yet it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxed strong*, etc.] Increased in numbers, and became superior to the Canaanites, not only those of the tribe of Manasseh, but of the other tribes also:

that they put the Canaanites to tribute; they did not take away their lives, as they were commanded to do, but made them tributaries to them, which seems to arise from a covetous disposition, and done for the sake of gain:

but did not utterly drive them out; which they were ordered to do, and could now have done; for if they were able to make them pay tribute to them, they had power sufficient to drive them out, or destroy them, and therefore broke the commandment of God, (^{<B70>}Deuteronomy 7:1,2 20:16,17).

Ver. 14. *And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua*, etc.] Which some understand of the children of Manasseh only; and, indeed, the complaint and arguments used, as well as some circumstances in the account, best agree with them; yet certain it is, that the children of Ephraim accompanied the children of Manasseh, and were present at this interview, as appears from (^{<B77>}Joshua 17:17); and if they did not join with them in the request and complaint expressly, they countenanced and encouraged the same by their presence:

saying, why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit: this seems to suit better with one than both; for there was a lot for the tribe of Manasseh also, as well as for Ephraim, (^{<B70>}Joshua 17:1); by which it should seem that there were two, and if both made this expostulation, it was not fact; but it may be, that the inheritance which came to them by lot was not as yet divided, and so they called it one lot and one portion, and then it might with propriety be said by them both; and their sense be, that the lot or portion assigned them was only sufficient for one of them, and not for both:

seeing I [am] a great people; as especially both tribes put together were;

forasmuch as the Lord hath blessed me hitherto? this best agrees with the tribe of Manasseh, which, since their coming out of Egypt, was increased

twenty thousand five hundred, whereas the tribe of Ephraim was decreased; compare (⁴⁰¹³³Numbers 1:33,35) with (⁴⁰¹³⁴Numbers 26:34,37). Now it might have been expected by them, that as Joshua was of the tribe of Ephraim, that he would have favoured their cause on that account, and that they should have obtained the grant of an addition by that means; but Joshua was impartial in his administration, and showed no favour and affection on that score, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 15. *And Joshua answered them,* etc.] By retorting their own argument upon them:

if thou [be] a great people; which he does not deny, as they were for numbers and power:

[then] get thee up to the wood [country]; which was near them, and within their borders, and lay on hills and mountains, perhaps the mountains of Gilboa, and therefore are bid to go up:

and cut down for thyself there; cut down the trees of the wood, clear the ground of them, and so make it habitable, and by that means enlarge the places of their habitation:

in the land of the Perizzites, and of the giants; or Rephaim; the former of these were one of the seven nations of the Canaanites, who from their name seem to have dwelt not in the cities, and walled towns, but in villages, and scattered houses, in desert places, and among the woods, where also the giants had retired and dwelt after Joshua had driven them out of the cities; and by driving these out of their present habitations, they would gain more room to dwell in, and would find their lot sufficient for them:

if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee; either meaning all Ephraim, and even the whole lot of the sons of Joseph, or rattler the mount particularly so called; for the words may be rendered, “for Mount Ephraim hastens for thee”^{f394}; was clear or open for thee; ready to be delivered to thee, and thou mayest possess it at once.

Ver. 16. *And the children of Joseph said, the hill is not enough for us,* etc.] Meaning either Mount Ephraim, and all included in it; or it may be rather the wood country on the hills and mountains they were bid to go up to; signifying, that if they could gain that out of the hands of the Perizzites and giants, and clear it of the wood, and make it habitable, even that would

not be sufficient for them; or that hill and mountain cannot be “found by us”^{f395} or obtained and possessed by us; we are not able to get it into our hands; there being a valley between us and that:

and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron; not chariots made of iron, but chariots with iron scythes fastened to the sides, or axle trees of them, which when driven with great force and fury, would cut down the infantry in battle, as grass is cut down with scythes, (see ^{<07012>}Judges 4:2,3);

[both they] who [are] of Bethshean and her towns, and [they] who [are] of the valley of Jezreel; both which belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, or were on the borders of it, though as yet they had not got possession, (see ^{<06711>}Joshua 17:11); and this circumstance seems to favour the notion, that tribe of Manasseh were at least chiefly concerned in this address.

Ver. 17. *And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, [even] to Ephraim and to Manasseh*, etc.] From whence it is clear that some of both were present; and they being brethren, and their interests united, and their cities intermixed, it would be to their mutual advantage to have an enlargement; which the tribe of Manasseh wanted more especially, more of their cities that fell to their lot being in the hands of the Canaanites, than of any other:

saying, thou [art] a great people, and hast great power; were very numerous, and so able to contend with the Canaanites, and make themselves more room:

thou shalt not have one lot [only]; or only have what they were possessed of, but should have more; and, as they wanted more, they were able enough to get more; and if they exerted their power, relying on the providence of God, through his blessing on their endeavours, they would certainly have an increase of their portion.

Ver. 18. *But the mountains shall be thine*, etc.] Or “for”^{f396} it shall be thine; thou shalt get the possession of it, though attended with difficulties that seem insuperable:

for, or “if, though”^{f397}

it [is] a wood; the habitation of the Perizzites, and giants, and so dangerous to go un to it, and full of trees, and so seems unprofitable and useless:

and thou shalt cut it down; both the inhabitants of it, and the trees of it, and clear it of both, and make it both safe and commodious to dwell in, which would be a fine enlargement for them:

and the outgoings of it shall be thine; all it produces when cultivated, and all the parts adjacent to it:

for thou shall drive out the Canaanites; this Joshua assures them of, to encourage them to attempt it:

though they have iron chariots, [and] though they [be] strong; be not afraid of their chariots, though terrible, nor of their giants and mighty men, God will be on your side, and you have nothing to fear from them, (see ~~610~~ Joshua 11:4,6); whether the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh took this advice of Joshua is not said.