

Joshua 16

Written by K B Napier
Thursday, 22 February 2018 11:25

This chapter continues to list the places allocated to the tribes, this time to the 'House of Joseph'. Rather than give details of every place in this study, the reader should look at a map giving the various allocations to all tribes. Other descriptions will be found in a separate article.

Verses 1-4

1.

And the lot of the children of Joseph fell from Jordan by Jericho, unto the water of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goeth up from Jericho throughout mount Bethel,

2.

And goeth out from Bethel to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth,

3.

And goeth down westward to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of Bethhoron the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea.

4.

So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

The 'children of Joseph' or tribes descended from him, were: Ephraim, Manasseh (referred to as the 'half-tribes'), whose names are usually given instead of the 'tribe of Joseph' itself, sometimes called the 'House of Joseph'/Beit Yosef, whose ensign was that of a little boy. The land given to them mainly ran east of the Jordan and northwards (see previous maps). There was also land to the West of the Jordan, and both portions were the most valuable in all Israel; the two half-tribes became dominant at one time.

Verses 5-8

1.

And the border of the children of Ephraim according to their families was thus: even the border

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of their inheritance on the east side was Atarothaddar, unto Bethhoron the upper;

2.

And the border went out toward the sea to Michmethah on the north side; and the border went about eastward unto Taanathshiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah;

3.

And it went down from Janohah to Ataroth, and to Naarath, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan.

4.

The border went out from Tappuah westward unto the river Kanah; and the goings out thereof were at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families.

Land given to the half-tribe of Ephraim is less than that given to Manasseh (see next chapter), but link to the familial land of Benjamin and Manasseh. It ran just above Jericho, but included Gilgal. Benjamin had Jerusalem and Jericho. The land stretched from the Jordan to the Mediterranean (though some maps do not show the true borders).

Verses 9&10

1.

And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.

2.

And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

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Reference is here made of the “separate cities” of Ephraim that were “among” those of the half-tribe of Manasseh. Notably, the long list of cities and villages found in previous chapters are not found here – only an outline of the boundaries. Matthew Henry suggests this might be because Joshua, being from the House of Joseph, knew which cities were included.

It appears that Ephraim had charge of some cities within the borders of Manasseh. Sadly, many families split up over time... history would tell. At that time the number of the tribe of Manasseh was about 52,000; in Ephraim, 32,000.

Very unfortunately, as elsewhere, the tribe of Ephraim did not completely drive out pagan tribes of Canaanites dwelling in Gezer, but took tribute from them. This tribute should not be seen in the same light as the ‘tribute tax’ (Jizya) demanded by Muslims; so long as those paying tribute maintained their tribute they were treated with respect. In Islam however, those who pay tax for being allowed to live find a diminishing accommodation, often leading to outright persecution, oppression, or death, with the tax-payer viewed as inferior.

Note: At times the whole Jewish nation was described as ‘Ephraim’, e.g. as in Hosea.

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