

Joshua Chapter 16

Verses 1-4: Although “Joseph was one of the 12 sons of Jacob, he did not have a tribe named after him. This is because, as the oldest son of Rachel, he received a double portion of the inheritance. This double portion went to his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (see note on 14:4-5).

Joshua 16:1 "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 Beth-el."

This being the next lot that was drawn to that of Judah. The government being Judah's, and the birthright Joseph's (1 Chron. 5:2). And by his children are here meant the tribe of Ephraim, and the tribe of Manasseh. Or the line and border according to the lot went forth.

"From Jordan by Jericho unto the water of Jericho on the east": By which it appears, that this was the southern border of the lot. For the tribe of Benjamin, in which Jericho was, lay between Judah and Ephraim. And the border began at Jordan, where it flowed near Jericho, and proceeded to a water which belonged to that city. And is generally thought to be the waters Elisha healed (2 Kings 2:19).

"To the wilderness that goeth up throughout Mount Bethel": This was the wilderness of Beth-aven (Joshua 18:12). Jarchi interprets it of the border that went up through Mount Beth-el. Which is true, and so might the wilderness also, for which the Targum is express. Mention is made of a mountain on the east of Beth-el (Gen. 12:8).

We find that Joseph's sons received two allotments. Together, Ephraim and Manasseh's land spread between Jordan at Jericho to the other side of mount Beth-el. "Fell" means that they received their portion by lot.

Joshua 16:2 "And goeth out from Beth-el to Luz, and passeth along unto the borders of Archi to Ataroth,"

For though these two places in time became one, yet they were originally distinct. Beth-el, at which Jacob stopped, and who gave it its name, was a field adjacent to the city of Luz (Gen. 38:11). And therefore, with propriety may be, as they here are, distinguished.

"And passeth along unto the borders Archi to Ataroth": Or to Archi-ataroth; these two words being the name of one and the same place. And to be joined as they are, in the Greek version, and others; and is the same with Ataroth-addar (Joshua 16:5).

Ataroth was its proper name, but it had these additional epithets to distinguish it from another Ataroth (see Joshua 16:7). Jerom makes mention of Atharoth by Ramma, in the tribe of Joseph. And of another in the tribe of Ephraim, now a village at the north of Sebaste, or Samaria, four miles from it, called Atharus. The former is here meant.

We see that the land extended beyond Beth-el to Luz. It extended even to the borders of the Archites (Archi).

Joshua 16:3 "And goeth down westward to the coast of Japhleti, unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether, and to Gezer: and the goings out thereof are at the sea."

This place is now unknown, though no doubt well known to the sons of Joseph, when this lot fell to them, and its border was described.

"Unto the coast of Beth-horon the nether: so called to distinguish it from Beth-horon the upper (Joshua 16:5). This was about twelve miles from Jerusalem (see Joshua 10:10). And to Gezer: which was about a day's journey from Beth-horon, as appears from the passages in the Apocrypha". Jerom says in his time it was a village called Gazara, four miles from Nico-polis, or Emmaus. It is the same with Gadara, as it is sometimes called by Josephus. Who says, the tribe of Ephraim took in the land from the river Jordan to Gadara. This was a royal city (see Joshua 10:33).

"And the outgoings thereof are at the sea": The sea mentioned here is the Mediterranean Sea.

Joshua 16:4 "So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance."

As it fell to them by the lot. By Manasseh is meant the half tribe of Manasseh. One half of that tribe having been settled by Moses on the other side Jordan. And next follows an account of the borders of the inheritance of Ephraim in particular. As that of the half tribe of Manasseh is given in (Joshua 17:1).

Manasseh's land is just north of Ephraim's land. It appears, they took possession of their land.

Verses 5-9: "Border of ... Ephraim": The description is of the land north of Judah's territory, from the Jordan west to the Mediterranean Sea. There was the inclusion of some cities in the territory of Manasseh, since Ephraim's land was small compared to its population.

Joshua 16:5 "And the border of the children of Ephraim according to their families was [thus]: even the border of their inheritance on the east side was Ataroth-addar, unto Beth-horon the upper;"

The "inheritance" of Joseph's son "Ephraim" is mentioned before that of his firstborn, Manasseh, because he was the son who had received the chief blessing (compare 48:13-20). Ephraim's territory lay south of Manasseh's whose inheritance lay on both sides of the Jordan (compare 13:8-33; 17; with Num. 32:33-42; Deut. 3:13-15).

It is very difficult to separate Ephraim's northern border from Manasseh's southern border. It is really an imaginary line. Their eastern border was at the Jordan River, and their western border reached to the Mediterranean Sea.

Joshua 16:6 "And the border went out toward the sea to Michmethah on the north side; and the border went about eastward unto Taanath-shiloh, and passed by it on the east to Janohah;"

The Mediterranean Sea.

"To Michmethah on the north side": Of the border, the same on which Beth-horon was. From whence the border proceeded on to this place, of which we have no other account but in (Joshua 17:7). By which it appears to have been near Shechem, and in sight of it.

"And the border went about eastward unto Taanath-shiloh": This seems to be the same Jerom that calls Thenath in the tribe of Joseph. And who observes there was in his day a village of this name ten miles from Neapolis (or Shechem) to the east, as you go down to Jordan.

"And passed by it on the east to Janohah": Which the above writer wrongly calls Janon, and says, that in his time a village of this name was shown in the country of Acrabatena, twelve miles to the east from Neapolis or Shechem. The border passed by Taanath on the east of it, and went on to this place.

Joshua 16:7 "And it went down from Janohah to Ataroth, and to Naarath, and came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan."

This is different from Ataroth before mentioned (Joshua 16:2). There were several places of this name, as before observed. This seems to be that which Jerom places four miles from Sebaste or Samaria (see note on Joshua 16:2).

"And to Naarath": Jerom says, that Naarath was in his time called Naorath, a village of the Jews, five miles from Jericho. And is the village Josephus calls Neara, where there was water. Half of which Archelaus turned, and led to the field planted with palm trees, near Jericho. And, according to the Jewish writers: there was a place called Noaran near to Jericho, which seems to be this.

"And came to Jericho, and went out at Jordan": Where it ended this way, which was eastward.

Jericho was the southeastern border of the land of Ephraim. The names of these cities were changed, when the Israelites took the cities and this makes it difficult to locate each area. We would recognize the northern area better by realizing that one of the most northern cities of Ephraim will be Shechem.

Joshua 16:8 "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."

Which was different from the Tappuah in the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:34). This was in the tribe of Ephraim on the border of Manasseh (Joshua 17:8).

"Unto the river Kanah": Supposed by some to be the brook Cherith, by which Elijah hid himself (1 Kings 17:3). Though objected to by others; it seems to have had its name from the reeds which grew in it, or on the banks of it.

"And the goings out thereof were at the sea": If the river Kanah was the brook Cherith, this must be the dead or salt sea. But that is never called "the sea", rather the Mediterranean Sea is meant. And consequently, Kanah could not be Cherith, which was at too great a distance from this sea.

"This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families": That is, this is the description of the border of it. For the cities within are not mentioned, and the descriptions in general are very obscure.

This is speaking of the border that joins Manasseh. The river "Kanah" was named Kana, because it was a wintertime river that flowed through the cane and the reeds. It was not always there.

Joshua 16:9 "And the separate cities for the children of Ephraim [were] among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages."

The tribe of Ephraim, being much larger than the half tribe of Manasseh. Besides the lot that fell to it, described before by its boundaries, had several particular and distinct cities given to it. Which;

"Were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh": Some that were upon the borders of Ephraim, and within the territory of Manasseh. And it may be where it jetted out in a nook or corner (see Joshua 17:8).

"All the cities with their villages": Not the separate cities only, but the little towns adjacent to them.

There were cities in the inheritance of Manasseh that were actually divided from the land of Manasseh, and belonged to Ephraim as an inheritance. These two tribes were very closely connected, not just because that Ephraim and Manasseh were brothers, but because their land was joined.

Joshua 16:10 "And they drove not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute."

Ephraim did not drive the Canaanites from their area. This is the first mention of the fatal policy of neglecting to exterminate the idolaters (see note on 15:63; compare Deut. 20:16).

It appears that, Ephraim did not kill all of the Canaanites. They kept some of them alive under their jurisdiction. The Canaanites that were left paid tribute to Ephraim. This shows that the Israelites did not complete God's will in getting rid of the Canaanites. We can see in this, the same problem that Christians live in today. We live in lands where the believers are mixed in with the rest of society. It is difficult to live a completely holy life under these circumstances.

Joshua Chapter 16 Questions

1. Joseph's sons received _____ allotments.
2. Together their land reached from where to where?
3. What does the word "fell" tell us about this inheritance?
4. Archi is the same as the _____.
5. What is the sea in verse 3?
6. Where is Manasseh's land in relation to Ephraim's?
7. _____ was on the southeastern border of Ephraim's land.
8. Why is it so hard to locate each detail of the area?
9. Why was the river named "Kanaah"?
10. What was strange about some of the cities Ephraim inherited?
11. The Canaanites that were left paid _____ to Ephraim.
12. What similar problem do Christians have that Ephraim and Manasseh had?
13. Which brother was the firstborn of Joseph?