**Joshua**

Chapter 17

**This was the allotment for the tribe of Manasseh as Joseph’s firstborn, that is, for Makir, Manasseh’s firstborn. Makir was the ancestor of the Gileadites, who had received Gilead and Bashan because the Makirites were great soldiers. 2 So this allotment was for the rest of the people of Manasseh—the clans of Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher and Shemida. These are the other male descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph by their clans. 3 Now Zelophehad son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons but only daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 4 They went to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders and said, “The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers.” So Joshua gave them an inheritance along with the brothers of their father, according to the Lord’s command. 5 Manasseh’s share consisted of ten tracts of land besides Gilead and Bashan east of the Jordan, 6 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. 7 The territory of Manasseh extended from Asher to Micmethath east of Shechem. The boundary ran southward from there to include the people living at En Tappuah. 8 (Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah itself, on the boundary of Manasseh, belonged to the Ephraimites.) 9 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. 10 On the south the land belonged to Ephraim, on the north to Manasseh. The territory of Manasseh reached the sea and bordered Asher on the north and Issachar on the east. 11 Within Issachar and Asher, Manasseh also had Beth Shan, Ibleam and the people of Dor, Endor, Taanach and Megiddo, together with their surrounding settlements (the third in the list is Naphoth). 12 Yet the Manassites were not able to occupy these towns, for the Canaanites were determined to live in that region. 13 However, when the Israelites grew stronger, they subjected the Canaanites to forced labor but did not drive them out completely. 14 The people of Joseph said to Joshua, “Why have you given us only one allotment and one portion for an inheritance? We are a numerous people and the Lord has blessed us abundantly.” 15 “If you are so numerous,” Joshua answered, “and if the hill country of Ephraim is too small for you, go up into the forest and clear land for yourselves there in the land of the Perizzites and Rephaites.” 16 The people of Joseph replied, “The hill country is not enough for us, and all the Canaanites who live in the plain have iron chariots, both those in Beth Shan and its settlements and those in the Valley of Jezreel.” 17 But Joshua said to the house of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—“You are numerous and very powerful. You will have not only one allotment 18 but the forested hill country as well. Clear it, and its farthest limits will be yours; though the Canaanites have iron chariots and though they are strong, you can drive them out.”**

**17:1** *Manasseh as Joseph’s firstborn.* A reminder to the proud Ephraimites that Manasseh had been the firstborn, though Jacob gave priority to Ephraim when he adopted Joseph’s two sons (Ge 48:14, 19). (CSB)

Even though Ephraim preceded him, Manasseh received a total allotment second only to Judah’s. (TLSB)

*man of war*. As a condition for receiving land east of the Jordan, the clan of Machir had agreed to leave their families behind and assist in the conquest of the land (1:12–15; Nu 32:1–27). (TLSB)

**17:3** *Zelophehad … had … only daughters.* Before Moses died, he promised the daughters an allotment along with their relatives (see Nu 26:33; 27:1–7). (CSB)

**17:5** *ten tracts of land.* Manasseh’s territory was second only to Judah’s in size. Then ten portions went to the five brothers (minus Hepher) and to the five daughters of Hepher. For the law protecting the inheritance rights of a daughter without brothers see Nu 27:8–11. (CSB)

**17:11** *Beth Shan … Megiddo.* These powerfully fortified cities, and others along Manasseh’s common border with Issachar and Asher, were not conquered until later. When King Saul died in battle, the victorious Philistines fastened his body to the wall of Beth Shan (see 1Sa 31:10), which suggests that that city was in league with the Philistines. (CSB)

**17:13** *when the Israelites grew stronger.* Possibly referring to the days of David and Solomon (see note on 16:10). (CSB)

**17:14** *one lot and one portion*. Combined tribes claim the promise of Israel/Jacob of the double portion of the firstborn son (Gn 48:21–22). (TLSB)

*people of Joseph … numerous.* The reference is to both Ephraim and Manasseh (see v. 17). The allotment to the Joseph tribes is here handled as one (see 16:1, 4)—though the two subdivisions are then described separately (16:5–17:11). (CSB)

According to the second census (Nu 26), Ephraim and Manasseh together have a population greater than any single tribe, fulfilling the prophecy of Gn 48:19–20. (TLSB)

**17:15** *hill country of Ephraim.* The territory of the Joseph tribes—under the name of the legal firstborn (see note on v. 1). (CSB)

*clear land for yourselves.* 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. (CSB)

Evidence is plentiful that this land, and much of the eastern Mediterranean, was heavily forested. Population pressures were the main cause of later deforestation. (TLSB)

*Perizzites and Rephaites.* Here listed as neighboring peoples, though elsewhere the Perizzites are said to have lived on the west bank in Canaan (3:10; 12:8) and the Rephaites in the Transjordan kingdom of Og (12:4; 13:12). See notes on Ge 13:7; Dt 2:11. (CSB)

**17:16** *in the plain.* Only in the plains were chariots effective.(CSB)

*iron chariots.* Chariots with certain parts made of iron (see note on 2Sa 8:7), perhaps the axles—the use of iron was a new development (see note on 11:6). (CSB)

Joshua burned some of these chariots (11:9), so wood was predominant in the chariot’s construction, but iron parts could have been used in the axle, wheel rims, or as armor. (TLSB)

**17:17–18** *you shall drive out*. In addition to promising a healthy population, God also promises to fight for His people to give them full possession of the land. (TLSB)

**Ch 17** The tribes of Joseph move to lay claim to the promises of God by inheriting their land. But they forget His promises about acquiring His blessings. God’s promises do not come up short. He promises to address our true needs in Christ. • Dear God, help me to see how all of Your promises fit together and how well You have already acted to secure my portion in Your Son, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Grant me all diligence in my calling of service to You. Amen. (TLSB)