

• *Joseph's two son's tribes*

The allocation of land to Judah has been dealt with. Land east of the Jordan has been given to the Reubenites, Gadites and to half of the tribe of Manasseh. ^{¶1} Another eight and a half tribes must be allocated their land. Joshua 16:1– 17:18 deals with the two tribes descending from the two sons of Joseph. ^{¶2} This is first mentioned generally, ^{¶3} and then Ephraim's area is considered in fuller detail. ^{¶4} After Ephraim, the tribal land of Joseph's second son, Manasseh, will be covered. ^{¶5} This leaves seven remaining tribes. ^{¶6}

¶1 13:8–33
 ¶2 16:1–4
 ¶3 16:1–4
 ¶4 16:5– 10
 ¶5 17:1–18
 ¶6 as 18:1–2
 will note

• *More details on Ephraim*

First the southern border of the two tribes is first traced. It runs from the river Jordan quite near Jericho and then runs westwards to the Mediterranean, ^{¶1} past two pagan population-groups, the Arkites and the Japhletites. Nothing is known of them.

¶1 16:1–3

Joshua 16:4 announces that the territory of the two tribes is being described. Then Joshua 16:5–8 describes the border of Ephraim. Ephraim is the southernmost of the two tribes so the border of 16:5–8 is the same border as that in 16:1–3. The boundary is traced from Ataroth Addar westward to the sea. ^{¶1} The sea is the western border. In the north it runs from the sea eastwards to a town called Micmethath and, further eastward, to Taanath Shiloh. Then it turns right towards the south and continues southwards until it meets the southern border already mentioned, not far from Jericho. ^{¶2} Joshua 16:5–7 has gone right round the border. Joshua 16:8 goes back to fill in a detail concerning the northern border.

¶1 16:5–6a

¶2 16:6b–7

Judah's towns were mentioned in detail, ^{¶1} but in the case of Ephraim Joshua 16:9 simply mentions the fact that there were Canaanite towns that were now allocated to Ephraim. And Joshua 16:10 mentions that Gezer was undefeated (just as Jerusalem was mentioned in 15:63 in connection with Judah).

¶1 15:21–62

1. Eminence as a result of spirituality

1. **Eminence came as the result of spirituality.** There seems to be significance in the fact that Judah is dealt with first, and then the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. Judah comes first as the royal tribe, the one which was promised dominion. The repentance and spirituality in the later years of Jacob's son, Judah, led to his eminence. He was not without blemish – far from it – but his later spirituality pleased God.¹

• *Judah*

• *Joseph represented by Ephraim and Manasseh*

The tribes connected with Joseph come next because after Judah they are the next most important. Joseph's years of faithfulness towards God leads to his eminence also. Two tribes represented Joseph who became the heir of Jacob – replacing Reuben. The tribes descending from Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh were given the central areas.

• *The Eastern tribes-Second best*

Conversely, those who grasped at easy but premature inheritance did not get the best. Two and a half tribes had asked for land on the other side of the Jordan and had been given what they asked. Yet it was not the best part of the land; they had asked for a second best. In later years when Assyrians invaded Israel, those who lived east of Jordan lost their independence earliest. ^{¶1} Their grasping the land east of Jordan did them little good.

¶1 1
 Chronicles 5:26

• *Reuben demoted*

Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh were given the central part of the land. The other seven tribes would take what was left. Reuben – who was

the oldest son of Jacob – did not have an eminent position because his outrageous sin led to his demotion.

2. Some inheritance lost

- Sin
- Indolence
- Unbelief
- Financial gain preferred

Clearly marked out land for each tribe

- Precise details
- Prevents envy
- Lay hold of God's will in our lives

2. **Some of the inheritance was lost through sin, indolence and unbelief.** The people of Judah apparently attempted to gain Jerusalem but failed, ¹ but it seems that the people of Ephraim did not even attempt to displace the pagans of Gezer. ² The gaining of inheritance requires zeal and faith. The Ephraimites compelled the people of Gezer to pay tribute, but they disobeyed the command to exterminate paganism. They gained a little wealth but lost much in relation to God. Ephraim was strong enough to force the people of Gezer into a covenant; the destruction could have been achieved. But Ephraim preferred financial gain. They did not conquer the paganism of Gezer; love of money conquered them.

3. **God wished the different sections of Israel to be quite clear concerning what land was for them.** The mass of geographical detail in these chapters is hard to follow and one needs a good Bible atlas to follow the information properly. Yet there is something important in all of this detail. It obviously was vitally important that the twelve tribes knew exactly where their borders were located. The precise route could be worked out as the different tribes actually occupied the lands that were being allocated to them. But the general route of the border is defined in the Book of Joshua. Each tribe was to know exactly where their calling for God was to be exercised and how they related to other nearby Israelites. The clearly defined borders prevented dispute. God Himself had marked out their areas for them.

God has marked out our calling and our inheritance for us. There are territories belonging to others into which we should not intrude. Our inheritance from Jesus is varied, but if we are conscious that God has marked out for us our specific 'territory' in which we are to serve Him, it should prevent us from envy of the callings and ministries of others.

We have a spiritual area, in which we are to serve God. The more clearly it is marked out for us by God, the more we shall conquer that realm for God without envy or dissatisfaction. God marks out for us our 'territory' in Jesus. We must seek to know God's will for our lives. Then we 'lay hold of that for which God has laid hold of us' (see Philippians 3:12).

Note

1. See 'The Story of Judah' in M.A. Eaton, *Genesis 24–50* (forthcoming), ch.22.

1 15:63

2 16:10



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