

# The Allotment for Joseph

## Introduction

### a. objectives

1. subject – Joshua describes the process of allotting space for the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh
2. aim – To cause us to pursue a legacy of true faith in Christ before our children in the face of adversity
3. passage – Joshua 16:1-17:18

### b. outline

1. The Allotment for Ephraim (Joshua 16:1-10)
2. The Allotment for Manasseh (Joshua 17:1-13)
3. The Inheritance of Joseph (Joshua 17:14-18)

### c. opening

1. the **substance** of **chaps. 16-17**
  - a. these chapters recount the *next allocation* of the land in Canaan to the tribes of Israel
    1. the process had already begun in **chap. 15**: the tribe of Judah (**i.e.** the largest tribe in **Num. 26**) is given the *first* and *largest* territory in Canaan, although much of it is uninhabitable, and some of it will need to be shared with Simeon
  - b. these chapters are dedicated to the allocation of land in Canaan **to the descendants of Joseph**
    1. to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, *his sons*, blessed by Jacob as Joseph's heritage
      - a. **note**: although there is a chapter break between the two allocations, it is really considered *a single one* (note the opening phrase: *“for the people of Joseph”, v. 1*)
        1. therefore, the two chapters *together* comprise a single pericope of the narrative ...
      - b. **remember**: the blessing of Jacob of Joseph's sons in **Genesis 48** did two (2) things:
        1. it gave to Joseph a *double-blessing* for his faithfulness in Egypt
        2. it elevated Ephraim (the younger) over Manasseh (the older)
      - c. **IOW**: the lot falls to *“the people of Joseph”* next (after Judah; **16:1**), but the *allotment* is made to Ephraim *first* (in the W) because he was elevated over his brother by Jacob
      - d. (**again**) we do not *officially* know why Moses included part of Manasseh for a Transjordan allotment, although (**IMO**) it scatters the descendants of Joseph *all over* the land where the Israelites live, *as a part of the blessing above* (**see below**)
- c. these chapters employ *this* structure: the space allotted to Joseph (**16:1-4**); the space allotted to Ephraim specifically (**16:5-10**); the space allotted to Manasseh in Canaan (**17:1-13**); an embedded story of another *special* allotment (**17:3-6**); a “complaint” lodged by the two tribes (**17:14-18**)

## I. The Allotment for Ephraim (Joshua 16:1-10)

### Content

#### a. the allotment for Joseph in Canaan (vv. 1-4)

1. **note (again)**: as in the case of Judah (**15:1**), although Joshua does *not* record it (**initially**), this allotment is made *by lot* (**see the implication of 17:14**)
  - a. the lot falls to the *next son* of Jacob to receive an inheritance in Canaan (**ITC: Joseph**), and the lot *also* specifies *where the allotment is to be made* within the territory
2. the lot (and the description given) sets the allotment for the descendants of Joseph to occupy most of the central territory of Canaan from the Jordan W to the Great Sea (**see map**)
  - a. allotments for Benjamin, Dan, and Issachar would “intrude” upon these allocations later (**i.e.** as Simeon did in Judah; **19:9**) – but the two tribes would still get the greatest share of space in C Canaan (to the N of Judah)
  - b. **i.e.** the land of Joseph's descendants would comprise the greatest part of the “*hill country*” (which would be perceived as a “problem”; **17:15**; **see below**)
3. **IOW**: the allotment for Joseph *as a whole* is drawn out first, *then* the specific allocations for his sons are designed *within that space* – the blessing given to Joseph is for his two sons to be given *unique allocations* within Canaan, but “within” his position as a *direct son* of Jacob
  - a. this explains Joshua statement in **17:17**: “*you shall not have one allotment only*” = the two sons will *each* receive a space (an allotment), and be separate from each other, *rather than being mixed together* – each son of Joseph will *technically* receive an allotment (other tribes did not!)

## b. the allotment for Ephraim in Canaan (vv. 5-10)

1. **remember:** the “rule” was that larger tribes were to receive larger space; smaller tribes, smaller
  - a. **ITC:** Ephraim numbered 32,500 in the census (**Num. 26:37**); Manasseh 52,700 (**Num. 26:34**)
    1. **i.e.** Ephraim was significantly smaller than Manasseh, so his space was much smaller
    - b. but ... Ephraim was allotted space *first* because he was blessed by Jacob *over his older brother*
      1. **i.e.** Jacob had *purposely* given the “first-born” blessing to Ephraim (**Genesis 48:19f**)
  2. the allotment to Ephraim was in the “prime” hill country from Jericho N, and then down into the valley towards the W – about the bottom ⅓ of the space allotted to Joseph in Canaan (**see map**)
  3. **see below** for an explanation of **16:10** ...

## II. The Allotment for Manasseh (Joshua 17:1-13)

### Content

#### a. the allotment for Manasseh in Canaan (vv. 1-2; 7-13)

1. **note:** the reference in **17:1; 5-6** to Gilead and Bashan, is a reference to the allotment *already made* to E Manasseh in the Transjordan
  - a. Gilead is the area to the E of the Jordan where the people of Machir took the land while the Israelites were encamped across from Jericho (**Num. 32:39f**)
  - b. Bashan is the area N of the Sea of Galilee in the Transjordan, where Joshua defeated king Og after the Israelites arrive (**Num. 21:33ff**) – both were allotted *by Moses* to the ½ tribe of Manasseh
  - c. so, **17:2** is a *summary* of the allotment of Canaan for the *rest* of Manasseh (**i.e.** W Manasseh) that is *then* described starting in **17:7**
2. the allotment to W Manasseh was *also* in the “prime” hill country from Jericho N, and then down into the valley towards the W *all the way to the Sea* – the entire “middle” of Canaan (**see map**)
3. (**now**) an explanation for the similar statements of **16:10** and **17:13**
  - a. **remember:** the Conquest under Joshua was *not complete* = many Canaanites still remained in the land (**e.g.** the Jebusites in Jerusalem; the Canaanites in Gezer [**16:10**], etc.)
  - b. during the days of Joshua, the people “coexisted” with the natives that remained; the process *now underway* was to allot the land, although the people will not take up *direct residence* (**i.e.** “fan out” and occupy everywhere) until after Joshua’s death
  - c. but ... the Israelites did have *some measure* of success against the natives during the initial Conquest – apparently, they were able to conscript some of them to “forced labor”
  - d. however ... this was a **compromise that would haunt them** – instead of doing *what Yahweh had commanded* (**i.e.** destroy them under his edict of judgment), the Israelites *probably* felt that subscribing some of them to serve Israel would be a “better” choice

#### b. the allotment for the daughters of Zelophehad (vv. 3-6)

1. **note:** the story included here is *similar* to Caleb in **14:8-15** – a *special allotment* promised earlier *by Moses* (**i.e.** a *sub-allotment* in Manasseh like Caleb in Judah)
2. the original story is in **Num. 27:1-11** – the five (5) daughters of Zelophehad (**i.e.** the *eventual* descendant of Manasseh through Machir, Gilead, and Hephher) approach Moses for an inheritance
  - a. **note:** given there is 400 years between Manasseh and Zelophehad, the names of Manasseh’s descendants are *truncated* – **e.g.** Machir → Gilead → ... → Hephher → Zelophehad
  - b. **i.e.** Zelophehad had died in the wilderness (not in Korah’s rebellion) and had left no son; thus, the daughters come to ask for some land, being left without a male heir through which to survive
  - c. Moses brings their case before the Lord – Yahweh does two (2) things with their request:
    1. he transfers the inheritance of Zelophehad to his *brothers*, and included the women in it
    2. he modifies the law to include inheritances for daughters of a man who dies without sons
2. so ... the women are granted an allotment in the territory of Manasseh, making the total area “*ten portions*” (**17:5 cf. 17:2**; Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Shemida, and the 5 “daughters” of Hephher)

## III. The Inheritance of Joseph (Joshua 17:14-18)

### Content

#### a. the complaint of the people of Joseph

1. why have you given us only “*one lot and one portion*” – **implied:** doesn’t the blessing given to Joseph mean that we should get *unique lots and separate portions* (**i.e.** a lot-cast for *both of us*)?
  - a. the people of the two tribes feel that their allotted space is *too small* or is *too cramped*

- b. Joshua responds (17:16): you need to *branch out* from the *interior* hill country into the “forest”
  - 1. **IOW:** if you are a numerous people (and you are; v. 17!), then you have the power to take the *entirety* of the space allotted to you, even into areas not *automatically* agreeable
  - 2. but the Canaanites that live in the *valley* (i.e. of Jezreel; to the W of the hill country towards the Sea) are powerful – they have “*chariots of iron*” and we won’t be able to live amongst *them*
    - a. or ... the hill country is not enough for us, even if we clear the forests to the N – that will force us down into the valley where the *powerful* Canaanites live (i.e. the Philistines)
    - b. the people of the two tribes express a kind of “spiritual slippage” = failure to follow the direction (and confidence) of the Lord as seen in *Joshua*, which will become increasingly obvious in the theocracy during the days of the Judges (i.e. a lack of *faith in the power of God*)
    - c. Joshua responds (17:17-18): you *shall* drive out the Canaanites and occupy *all of the land*
- b. the legacy of the people of Joseph
  - 1. combining the story of Zelophehad’s daughters with this “complaint” by the people of Joseph ...
  - 2. **reality: what set Joseph apart from his brothers was his faithfulness – in spite of being cast away by them, the Lord raised him up and used his faithfulness to save his family and the entire nation of Israel that would come from them (Genesis 45:4-8a cf. 50:20)**

“So Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come near to me, please.’ And they came near. And he said, ‘I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God ... As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”

    - a. **IOW:** Joseph left a **legacy** – one that would be *rewarded* as an entire nation entering into the Promise of God made to his great-grandfather – **his faithfulness is visible here**
      - 1. true ... it wasn’t perfect (i.e. his descendants didn’t trust God fully) and it took 400 years to come to fruition ... but, it came to pass nonetheless *because God honored that faithfulness*
  - 3. **did you know:** we currently have **69** children (out of 195) on our roster? – something seen by other pastors and churches as *startling* and *unbelievable* (i.e. which explains the *noise!!*)
    - a. **so ... what legacy are we leaving these children?** as a church, as parents and grandparents, as families (both nuclear and spiritual), when these children observe us, **what do they see?**
    - b. do they see the promises of God being “allotted” in our lives (i.e. do they see us *faithfully* led by the Spirit through the Word and prayer in *every area of life*)?
      - 1. **e.g.** do our children see in us **consistency** between what we say *and what we do*?
      - 2. or, do they see us “complaining” about what we (don’t) have and afraid of every little thing that God has *already promised* to protect us from?
    - c. **our children will learn more about faith from watching our response to this world and our commitment to the things the Lord has given us than from anywhere else**