

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 16

- Vv. 1- 4 *The territory of the children of Joseph.* Joseph was one of the twelve sons of Jacob, but no tribe bore his name. Instead, two tribes were formed from the descendants of the two sons of Joseph—Ephraim and Manasseh. The land given to these two sons was outlined in general at the beginning of this chapter. The land lay between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea and was in the very heart of the territory.
- Vv. 5- 8 *The boundaries of Ephraim.* Ephraim was the younger son of Joseph's children, but he was given the first choice of the land allotted to the sons of Joseph. His territory lay south of the territory given to Manasseh and his border was shared with Dan and Benjamin on the south.
- Vv. 9-10 *The later history of Ephraim.* The children of Ephraim settled in some cities which were outside the boundaries of their territory. These cities were in Manasseh, their brethren to the north. On the other hand, the children of Ephraim did not drive all the Canaanites from their cities. The city of Gezer, in particular, was occupied by the Canaanites who were made subject to task work.

## LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *All things work together for good.* The entire story of Joseph is an exposition of the central theme of the eighth chapter of the book of Romans. The Apostle Paul wrote, "And we know that all things work together

## JOSHUA

for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). The descendants of Joseph must have reveled in the history of their ancestor. They must have known of his suffering in prison. They must have thanked God many times for his deliverance and his exaltation to the rank of second man in the great kingdom of Egypt. As God fulfilled His promise to Joseph, so He fulfilled His promise to His children. They were given a bountiful inheritance in the Promised Land.

2. *Joseph was a fruitful bough.* When Jacob blessed his twelve sons, he said of Joseph, "Joseph is a fruitful bough" (Genesis 49:22). Jacob went on to describe him as being like a fruitful tree which was planted by a well where the roots could run deep and find water. He depicted Joseph as a tree whose branches ran over the wall. Such was certainly the case of Ephraim as we read that he not only fathered the children who inherited the Promised Land but that his children inherited some of the finest land of Canaan. In addition, Ephraim had separate cities which were among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh (verse 9). All God's children should strive to be like the descendants of Joseph through Ephraim and Manasseh. With the blessing of God upon them, they would indeed be as "fruitful boughs."
3. *There is bad in the best of us.* The children of Joseph failed to drive out the Canaanites (verse 10). These Canaanites dwelt in Gezer. The Ephraimites did make them to become servile and placed them under tribute. Nonetheless, their instructions were to drive out these people. Since they failed to do this, we read that they were like thorns in their sides and pricks in their eyes (Judges 2:3).

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

*The Territory of the Children of Joseph 16:1-4*

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,

2 And goeth out from Beth-el 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 Beth-horon 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.

*1. Who were the "children of Joseph"? 16:1*

Joseph had two children—Manasseh, the first-born; and Ephraim, his younger brother. In Joshua's day, the members of the two tribes are described as the "children of Joseph." These two sons were born to Joseph while he was in Egypt. Joseph married Asenath, who was the daughter of the high priest of On (Genesis 41:45). On is called Heliopolis by the Greeks, and it was the "city of the sun." Since the god who was symbolized by the sun to the Egyptians would be the chief god, it is believed that this was one of the chief religious cities of Egypt in Joseph's day. When his sons were born, Joseph called his first-born Manasseh, a word that signifies "forgetting." His reason for this was that God had made him forget all his toil and all his father's house. He wanted to forget his father's house because his brothers had sold him as a slave. Ephraim was named "fruitful." Joseph named his boy this because he said God had made him to be fruitful in the land of his affliction.

2. *What was the southern border of the inheritance of Ephraim and Manasseh?* 16:2

The border on the south went from the Jordan River near Jericho up into the hill country around Beth-el and moved on west to the old site of Luz. From there, it dropped down into Joppa and out to the seacoast. This was also the northern border of the tribe of Benjamin and Dan. These tribes then were the southern neighbors of Ephraim. Dan was on the west and Benjamin on the east along the lower border of the "children of Joseph." Beth-el was one of the most prominent points on the south border of Ephraim. This town was twelve miles from Jerusalem and on the right of the road between Jerusalem and Shechem. Ruins at this point bear the name Beitin. Luz was the old name of Beth-el, and the southern border of Ephraim ran along past the old town to Ataroth-adar. The border then went down to the territory possessed by the Japhletites, an ancient tribe who dwelt on the hills in the west part of Ephraim's territory. Beth-horon lay on the boundary between Benjamin and Ephraim and was settled by the Kohathites. The upper village is some four miles from Gibeon, and marks the descent down into the Philistine plains. The border of the territory assigned to the children of Joseph finally reached to Gezer, a town that figured prominently in later Israelite history, and the site of which has recently been excavated by a number of capable archaeologists, including Professor Reuben Bullard of the Bible College of The Cincinnati Bible Seminary. Finally, the southern border reached to the Mediterranean Sea.

3. *Who were the Archites?* 16:2b

The Archites are a family of people otherwise unknown except for this reference here. They evidently lived on the south border of Ephraim between Beth-el and Ataroth. Hushai, the beloved counselor of David, was an

Archite (II Samuel 15:32; 16:16; 17:5, 14). Any village which belonged to them is not known, their settlement having been lost in the passage of time.

4. *Where is Gezer?* 16:3

Gezer stands right on the edge of the northern promontory of Japhleti and overlooks all of the plain of Sharon and on out to the Mediterranean Sea. It is about one half of the distance between Joppa and Jerusalem and was a very important outpost in the defenses of the land of Canaan. The site was excavated in modern times by Dr. MacAlester, and later by a team under the auspices of Hebrew Union College. Gates built in the time of Solomon have been discovered, and a worship area dating back into the third millenium before Christ is also in evidence.

5. *What was the western border of the "children of Joseph"?* 16:3b

The western border of the territory of the "children of Joseph" was the Mediterranean Sea. The scripture says, "the goings out thereof are at the sea" (16:3b). No western border is given in so many words, but it goes without saying that the Mediterranean Sea was the western border of both Ephraim and Manasseh. The southern border was given since this divided the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh from the territory of all the other tribes to the south. In giving the border of the children of Ephraim, the author makes it clear that the territory was divided between the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The northern border of the tribe of Manasseh is given in the next chapter.

6. *Why did Manasseh and Ephraim receive their inheritance together?* 16:4

Since both Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph, they were given a single portion of land. This portion was then divided between them. In addition, Manasseh also

was divided with part of his descendants living east of the Jordan while others lived west of the Jordan. In receiving this double portion of land, Joseph indeed became "a fruitful bough by a fountain; his branches ran over the wall" (Genesis 49:22).

*The Boundaries of Ephraim 16:5-8*

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;

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;

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

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.

*7. What border of Ephraim was given first? 16:5*

A brief description of the southern boundary was repeated in verse five. A more minute description of this boundary was given in verses one through three. Upper Beth-horon was mentioned in verse five instead of Lower Beth-horon, but the two places stood quite close together. No difficulty is created by this difference. Since the border on the south was shared by two other tribes, Dan and Benjamin, it is given more careful attention. Manasseh and Ephraim were both sons of Joseph and had much in common. The border between them is not as carefully defined or given as much attention.

8. *Where was the border between Manasseh and Ephraim?*  
16:6

The border of the children of Ephraim was defined by a line drawn from the area near Shechem, first to the west and then to the east. Shechem and its territory were central in the land. The people of Israel had gathered on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim for the readings of the blessings and the curses when they first entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Ephraim's border was first described by pointing out the boundary which ran west from this central spot in the mountains to the Mediterranean Seacoast on the west. The boundary line was next described as it stretched from this central location to the Jordan River.

9. *What points were on the northeastern boundary of Ephraim?* 16:6-8

The northern boundary of Ephraim was given in two sections. A central point was selected and then the border as it extended to the east was described in detail. It stretched from Michmethah to Taanath-shiloh and then went along to the east of Janohah. Michmethah was near Shechem, and Taanath-shiloh was in the direction one would take in going to the Jordan River. It is thought to be the present Tana, a heap of ruins southeast of Nablus. Janohah is to be found in the ruins of Janun. The Ataroth is a different place from Ataroth-addar mentioned in verses two and five. This spot must have been on the eastern slope of the mountains which stretched down to the Jordan Valley. Naarath was found some six miles northeast of Jericho. Ephraim's boundary then went down to the territory of Jericho, but probably did not reach to the city itself since Jericho was given to the tribe of Benjamin. At this point, Ephraim's northern border coincided with her southern border and stretched out to the Jordan River along the boundary of the tribe of Benjamin.

10. *Did Jericho belong to Ephraim?* 16:7

The border of Ephraim is described as coming "to Jericho" (verse 7). From other scriptures (Joshua 18:21), it is evident that Jericho belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. The border finally reached the Jordan River on the east. A prominent feature of the west border was a small stream which flowed across the Philistine plain to the Mediterranean Sea. This River Kanah figured prominently in establishing the border between Ephraim and Manasseh. It was customary for those laying out borderlines to use prominent physical features of the land, such as this river, to determine boundaries. The river itself was not important for commerce, but it did afford a water supply, especially in the rainy season. Its primary importance, however, was in establishing this border for Ephraim and Manasseh.

11. *What was the east border of the children of Ephraim?*  
16:7

The east border of the children of Ephraim was the Jordan River. The western border was the Mediterranean Sea. The land thus stretched all the way from the river to the sea and was some of the finest land of Canaan. Many future events in Israel's history occurred in the highlands which belonged to Ephraim. The capital of the northern kingdom was established in this territory. Several centuries later, the prophets worked in this area with great zeal since the false worship established by Jeroboam permeated the land. Ephraim was of great importance in the later history of Israel, and her land became filled with historical sites.

12. *What points were in the western half of Ephraim's northern border?* 16:8

The narrator returned to the point from which he departed in giving the eastern half of the northern border and described the western half of the northern border of Ephraim. This border went west from the central point



to Tappuah. This point was west of Shechem and has not yet been discovered. Ephraim's northern border then ran to the brook Kanah and followed it out to the Mediterranean Sea.

13. *In what way was the inheritance "by their families"?*  
16:8

When Moses took the census of the children of Israel as they lay encamped in the steppes of Moab, he found that there were 32,500 men in Ephraim who were twenty years of age and over. At that time, he also listed the following men as heads of families: Shuthelah, Becher, and Tahan. He also listed one of the sons of Shuthelah who was named Eran. These men made up the families of the Shuthalhites, Bachrites, Tahanites, and Eranites (Numbers 26:35, 36). The tribe of Ephraim with these many thousands of people was subdivided into these family groups. Each one would be given enough land to meet the needs of its members. Ample provision was made for each tribe to have the territory which it needed.

*The Later History of Ephraim* 16:9, 10

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.

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.

14. *What were "the separate cities"?* 16:9

The children of Ephraim evidently conquered, occupied, and possessed cities which were outside their borders. They did not settle cities in many of the other tribes, but it is specified that they did have such cities in the land which was given to the children of Manasseh. Since both

Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph, they had a common heritage. This would make it easy for them to dwell together in harmony. The fact that they did occupy these cities must have led to a rather indefinite boundary line being maintained between these two tribes. Various reasons have been put forth as answers to the question about Ephraim settling scattered towns and villages in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh. Most commentators believe that after the boundaries had been fixed there was an evident disproportion in the amount of land given to the very numerous children of Ephraim. Since they were so numerous it was felt that they had received too small a possession and that therefore they settled cities in Manasseh in order to accommodate their many people. This is quite possibly the major reason for this extension of Ephraim's territory, but there may have been other reasons which were not recorded in the historical narrative.

15. *What Canaanites remained in the land of Ephraim?*  
16:10

The Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer were not driven out by the Ephraimites. They continued to dwell among the Israelites, although they were reduced to a state of servitude. God had directed His people to annihilate the Canaanites, but many of the tribes failed to comply completely with God's demand. As a result, these Canaanites lived among them and seduced many of them to commit idolatry and other abominable practices. These foreign peoples living among them were like "pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides" (Numbers 33:55). Gezer was such an impregnable fortress that it was evidently very difficult for the Ephraimites to drive out the Canaanites who occupied the site. Fortifications which have been found there in recent years under the expeditions led by MacAlester, and in later times under Dr. Nelson Glueck, have uncovered ruins of massive walls which ran the

entire length of the last mountain height on the northern end of Shephelah. This site would be almost impossible to take from the north. It would likewise be inaccessible from the lowlands of the Philistine plain on the west. Since valleys surrounded on the south and east, it was similarly hard to attack from any of these points. The Ephraimites could have taken the city with God's help, but they were dilatory in their duties. When the book of Joshua was written, the Canaanites were still there. The author says that they were there "unto this day."

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 16

1. What two tribes are called "children of Joseph"?
2. What river was on the east border of these tribes?
3. What sea was on their west border?
4. Near what town did the southern border of the children of Joseph begin on the east?
5. Was Beth-el along the southern border of the children of Joseph?
6. Along what river did the northern border of Ephraim run out to the sea?
7. Did Jericho belong to Ephraim?
8. In what tribe's territory did Ephraim inhabit separate cities?
9. From what town did Ephraim fail to drive out the Canaanites?
10. Were these Canaanites made to serve under tribute?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 17

- Vv. 1-13 *Inheritance of Manasseh west.* One half of the tribe of Manasseh received land east of the Jordan; but the other half was to have territory which was north of Ephraim, lying between