

August 15

Scriptures: Read Joshua 16 & 17

Key Verse: "... If you are a great people, then go up to the forest country and clear a place for yourself there..." (Joshua 17:15)

Overview

The royal tribe of Judah was the first to receive its inheritance. Next was the house of Joseph (the tribes of his sons Ephraim and the half of Manasseh that were to settle west of the Jordan—cf. 1 Chron.5:2). They were granted the double portion formed one of the largest tribes. Their territory of land was first drawn as one allotment, being the large area in the north, west of the Jordan, between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. This land was then divided between the two, with half of Manasseh to the north of Ephraim (see map on page 139).

The tribe of Ephraim's inheritance is described before Manasseh's, for though Ephraim was the younger, Jacob granted him the birthright over Manasseh (Gen.48:17-18). The tribe of Ephraim received the beautiful, fertile, and desirable central hill country, but much of it was occupied by Canaanites. It was their responsibility to drive them out, as God had intended for His people to do. However, it appears they took the easy route, the way of compromise, by merely subjecting them and making them pay a tribute (16:10). Perhaps they were tired of war and did not have the perseverance and zeal for God as they should have to continue on in the conquest, as did Caleb. It was not until much later, in the time of King Solomon, that the Canaanite stronghold of Gezer finally came under Israelite control (1 Kings 9:16). This failure on Ephraim's part to drive them out led to a sad history, for the Canaanites brought them nothing but problems and pain. When anyone goes against God's will, pain and suffering is inevitable.

The territory of Manasseh was north of Ephraim. It was also large, beautiful, and fertile, and included the northern part of the hills of Samaria. When the inheritance for Manasseh was being settled, the five daughters of Zelophehad once again bravely came before the high priest and the leader. This time they reminded Joshua of Moses' ruling which he heard from the Lord concerning giving the right of inheritance to the daughters if a man had no son (Num.27:1-8; 36:5-12). Joshua did according to Moses' ruling by giving the daughters their allotment.

Like Ephraim, Manasseh's territory was also inhabited by Canaanites, and they also made the same mistake of not driving them out but only making them subjects. They must have lacked faith in God and holy boldness, for it appears they had attempted to conquer the Canaanites but could not (17:12-13), even though God had told them it was theirs and they merely had to take it. How sad it is when God's gifts and work are stopped by lack of faith.

In the beginning of the settlement by both these tribes, they came together before Joshua with the complaint of a lack of available land. Their fellow tribesman, Joshua, an Ephraimite, was stern and yet displayed great wisdom. He encouraged the tribes to work hard, clear more land in the forest country, conquer more land, and drive out the allotment was not too small, rather their mind-set and faith was too narrow. Had they not be expected, because if they were capable and great enough, as Joshua encouraged them that they were, they should be able to handle the task

assigned to them. Let us not be narrow-minded but increase our faith, for with God all things are possible!

Prayer

Holy Father, as sons and daughters we have received the rich inheritance You purchased for us at so great a cost. Father, open our hearts and renew our minds that we might receive all You have for us and go forth to take the land—the hearts and minds of those not yet set free.