

CHAPTER 16

It is a pity that this and the following chapter should be separated, for both of them give us the lot of the children of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, who, next to Judah, were to have the post of honour, and therefore had the first and best portion in the northern part of Canaan, as Judah now had in the southern part. In this chapter we have,

- I. A general account of the lot of these two tribes together (v. 1-4).
- II. The borders of the lot of Ephraim in particular (v. 5-10). That of Manasseh following in the next chapter.

⌋ JOSHUA 16:1-4

THE LOT OF JOSEPH

Though Joseph was one of the younger sons of Jacob, yet he was his eldest by his most just and best beloved wife Rachel, was himself *his best beloved son*, and had been the greatest ornament and support of his family, kept it from perishing in a time of famine, and had been the *shepherd and stone of Israel*, and therefore his posterity were very much favoured by the lot. Their portion lay in the very heart of the land of Canaan. It extended from Jordan in the east (v. 1) to the sea, the Mediterranean Sea, in the west, so that it took up the whole breadth of Canaan from side to side; and no question the fruitfulness of the soil answered the blessings both of Jacob and Moses, [⌋]Genesis 49:25, 26, and [⌋]Deuteronomy 33:13, etc. The portions allotted to Ephraim and Manasseh are not so particularly described as those of the other tribes; we have only the limits and boundaries of them, not the particular cities in them, as before we had the cities of Judah and afterwards those of the other tribes. For this no reason can be assigned, unless we may suppose that Joshua being himself of the children of Joseph they referred it to him alone to distribute among them the several cities that lay within their lot, and therefore did not bring in the names of their cities to the great council of their princes who sat upon this

affair, by which means it came to pass that they were not inserted with the rest in the books.

~~<6615>~~ JOSHUA 16:5-10

THE LOT OF EPHRAIM

Here,

1. The border of the lot of Ephraim is set down, by which it was divided on the south from Benjamin and Dan, who lay between it and Judah, and on the north from Manasseh; for east and west it reached from Jordan to the great sea. The learned, who aim to be exact in drawing the line according to the directions here, find themselves very much at a loss, the description being short and intricate. The report of those who in these latter ages have travelled those countries will not serve to clear the difficulties, so vastly unlike is it now to what it was then; not only cities have been so destroyed as that no mark nor footstep of them remains, but brooks are dried up, rivers alter their courses, and *even the mountain falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place*, ~~<8148>~~ Job 14:18. Unless I could hope to solve the doubts that arise upon this draught of the border of Ephraim, it is to no purpose to mention them: no doubt it was then perfectly understood, so as that the first intention of recording it was effectually answered, which was to notify the ancient landmarks, which posterity must by no means remove.

2. Some separate cities are spoken of, that lay not within these borders, at least not if the line was drawn direct, but lay within the lot of Manasseh (v. 9), which might better be read, *and there were separate cities for the children of Ephraim among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh*, because it proved that Manasseh could spare them, and Ephraim had need of them, and it might be hoped that no inconvenience would arise from this mixture of these two tribes together, who were both the sons of Joseph, and should *love as brethren*. And by this it appears that though, when the tribes were numbered in the plains of Moab, Manasseh had got the start of Ephraim in number, for Manasseh was then 52,000, and Ephraim but 32,000 (~~<4058>~~ Numbers 26:34, 37), yet by the time they were well settled in Canaan the hands were crossed again, and the blessing of Moses was verified, ~~<6337>~~ Deuteronomy 33:17, *They are the ten thousands of Ephraim*

and they are the thousands of Manasseh. Families and kingdoms are diminished and increased, increased and diminished again, as God pleases.

3. A brand is put upon the Ephraimites, that they did not drive out the Canaanites from Gezer (v. 10), either through carelessness or cowardice, either for want of faith in the promise of God, that he would give them success if they would make a vigorous effort, or for want of zeal for the command of God, which obliged them *utterly to drive out the Canaanites*, and to make no peace with them. And, though they hoped to satisfy the law by putting them under tribute, yet (as Calvin thinks) this made the matter worse, for it shows that they spared them out of covetousness, that they might be profited by their labours, and by dealing with them for their tribute they were in danger of being infected with their idolatry; yet some think that, when they brought them under tribute, they obliged them to renounce their idols, and to observe the seven precepts of the sons of Noah; and I should think so, but that we find in the sequel of the story that the Israelites were so far from restraining idolatry in others that they soon fell into it themselves. Many famous places were within this lot of the tribe of Ephraim, though not mentioned here. In it were Ramah, Samuel's city (called in the New Testament *Arimathea*, of which Joseph was, that took care of our Saviour's burial), and Shiloh, where the tabernacle was first set up. Tirzah also, the royal city of Jeroboam and his successors, and Deborah's palm-tree, under which she judged Israel, were in this tribe. Samaria, built by Omri after the burning of the royal palace of Tirzah, was in this tribe, and was long the royal city of the kingdom of the ten tribes; not far from it were Shechem, and the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, and Sychar, near which was Jacob's well, where Christ talked with the woman of Samaria. We read much of Mount Ephraim in the story of the Judges, and of a city called *Ephraim*, it is probable in this tribe, to which Christ retired, ~~John~~ John 11:54. The whole kingdom of the ten tribes is often, in the prophets, especially in Hosea, called *Ephraim*.