

Ezekiel 48:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Ephraim.

Analysis

And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Ephraim. Ephraim, Joseph's younger son who received the firstborn blessing (Genesis 48:14-20), occupies the fifth position moving southward. Historically, Ephraim became the dominant tribe of the northern kingdom, with "Ephraim" often standing as synecdoche for all ten northern tribes. The prophets frequently rebuked Ephraim for idolatry (Hosea 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols").

Despite Ephraim's historical prominence and subsequent apostasy, the vision assigns them standard inheritance—neither elevated above others due to past greatness nor diminished due to past sin. **This equality demonstrates the leveling power of grace: all tribes stand on the same ground before God, receiving identical portions regardless of historical performance.** The pride that led to Ephraim's downfall (Isaiah 7:2-9, Hosea 5:5) finds no place in the restored order.

The placement of Ephraim south of Manasseh reverses their birth order, recalling Jacob's crossed-hands blessing where the younger received preeminence (Genesis 48:14). Yet in Ezekiel's vision, neither has preeminence—both receive equal portions. This fulfills the prophetic promise that jealousy between Ephraim and Judah would cease (Isaiah 11:13), and the two sticks (Ephraim and Judah) would become one (Ezekiel 37:15-19).

Historical Context

Ephraim's territory in the central hill country included Shiloh (early tabernacle site) and later Samaria (northern capital). After Solomon's death, Jeroboam (an Ephraimite) led ten tribes in rebellion, and Ephraim dominated the northern kingdom until Assyrian conquest (722 BC). Ephraimite pride and rivalry with Judah characterized much of the divided kingdom period.

Hosea, prophet to the northern kingdom, portrayed God's anguished love for Ephraim: "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?" (Hosea 11:8). Despite deserved judgment, God's compassion toward Ephraim persisted. Ezekiel's allocation of equal inheritance to Ephraim embodies this divine mercy—restoration not based on merit but on covenant love (hesed).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Ephraim's equal inheritance despite prideful history challenge our merit-based thinking about God's blessings?
2. What modern "Ephraim-like" pride in denominational or theological superiority must be abandoned for true unity in Christ's body?

Interlinear Text

לְעַל גָּבְּרָא מִנְשָׁה פָּאַת עַד פָּאַת

H5921 And by the border of Manasseh side side

H1366

H4519

H6285

H5704

side

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מִתְּמִימָה אֶתְּנָתָר אֶתְּנָתָר

unto the west portion for Ephraim a

H3220

H669

H259

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