

# Joshua 14:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance.

## Analysis

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Joseph's double portion: 'For the children of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim: therefore they gave no part unto the Levites in the land, save cities to dwell in, with their suburbs for their cattle and for their substance.' Joseph's blessing through his two sons receiving tribal status (Genesis 48:5) meant he effectively got double portion—firstborn's inheritance despite Reuben's biological priority. This fulfilled Jacob's elevation of Ephraim and Manasseh to tribal status (Genesis 48:5). With Levi not receiving territory, the twelve territorial tribes became: Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Benjamin, Ephraim, Manasseh. The provision for Levitical cities with pasturelands shows practical care—while not owning territory, Levites needed living space and capacity to keep some livestock for family support. This balance between 'God as inheritance' and practical provision models kingdom living: spiritual priority without despising physical needs.

## Historical Context

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Jacob's adoption of Joseph's sons (Genesis 48) created the legal mechanism for Joseph's double portion—compensation for his suffering and faithfulness during brothers' betrayal and Egyptian exile. This elevation also meant firstborn's privilege (double portion, Deuteronomy 21:17) went to Joseph rather than Reuben,



who forfeited it through sin (Genesis 49:3-4). The twelve-tribe structure remained constant despite variations in lists: sometimes Joseph counted as one (with Ephraim/Manasseh as sub-units), sometimes as two (with Levi excluded), sometimes Levi included with Joseph as one. The forty-eight Levitical cities (chapter 21) with surrounding pasturelands provided practical support. Archaeological evidence shows some of these cities were fortified, serving dual religious and defensive purposes. The Levitical cities' distribution throughout Israel ensured religious instruction was geographically accessible, preventing centralization that might breed corruption. This dispersed clergy model influenced later Protestant emphases on distributed ministerial presence.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does Joseph's double portion (reward for faithfulness through suffering) encourage perseverance during unjust treatment?
2. What does balancing spiritual priority (God as inheritance) with practical provision (cities and pasturelands) teach about holistic kingdom living?
3. How should ministry structures balance spiritual calling with practical needs of those serving?



## Interlinear Text

כִּי	הֵיוּ	בְנֵי	יוֹסֵף	שְׁנֵי	מִטּוֹת	מְנַשֶּׁשֶׁה
H3588	H1961	For the children	of Joseph	were two	tribes	Manasseh
		H1121	H3130	H8147	H4294	H4519
וְאֶפְרַיִם	וְלֹא	נָתַנוּ	חֵלֶק	לְלוֹאֵי	בְּאֶרֶץ	
and Ephraim	H3808	therefore they gave	no part	unto the Levites	in the land	
H669		H5414	H2506	H3881	H776	
כִּי	אִם	עָרִים	לֶשְׂכֵת	וּמִגְרִישֵׁיהֶם	לְמִקְנֵיהֶם	
H3588	H518	save cities	to dwell	in with their suburbs	for their cattle	
		H5892	H3427	H4054	H4735	
וּלְקִנְיָנָם:						
and for their substance						
H7075						

## Additional Cross-References

**Genesis 48:5** (Parallel theme): And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.