

Joshua 16:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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—this verse completes the boundary description by detailing the western border. **Tappuah** ("apple" or "height," תַּפּוּחַ) was located in the hill country, while **the river Kanah** (נַחַל קָנָה, "brook of reeds") formed a natural boundary descending to the Mediterranean.

The phrase **the goings out thereof were at the sea** indicates the boundary's western terminus at the Mediterranean coast, giving Ephraim access to maritime trade routes. However, Phoenician cities (Tyre, Sidon) and Philistine cities dominated the coast, limiting Israelite naval development. The concluding statement, **This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Ephraim by their families**, summarizes the completed description with theological emphasis on inheritance (nachalah, נַחֲלָה)—not earned possession but covenant gift.

The repetition of **by their families** underscores the clan-based distribution system ensuring every extended family received land. This prevented wealth concentration and maintained economic stability across generations. The boundary description's precision and the summary formula mark this as official legal documentation of covenant fulfillment.

Historical Context

The river Kanah (modern Wadi Qanah) flows westward from the hill country to the Mediterranean, forming a natural boundary between Ephraim and Manasseh. Archaeological surveys show this region experienced significant settlement in Iron Age I, consistent with Israelite expansion. The Mediterranean coast offered economic opportunities but also military challenges, as Sea Peoples (including Philistines) settled coastal regions around 1200 BCE, contemporary with Israel's conquest. The Phoenicians controlled northern coastal cities, creating a buffer between Israel and maritime powers. This geopolitical reality meant Israel's economy centered on agriculture and land-based trade rather than naval commerce. The formula "this is the inheritance" appears throughout Joshua 13-21, marking official completion of each tribal allotment. These formulaic statements transformed conquest accounts into legal documents establishing property rights and fulfilling covenant promises made to the patriarchs centuries earlier.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does viewing your calling and gifts as "inheritance by families" rather than individual achievement shape your sense of responsibility to past generations and future descendants?
2. What does Ephraim's access to the sea but limited naval development teach about faithfully developing the gifts God has given rather than coveting abilities He hasn't granted?
3. How can you practice contentment with the specific boundaries of your inheritance while maximizing the potential of what God has entrusted to you?

Interlinear Text

מִתַּפּ יוֹחַ	יֵלֶךְ	הַגֹּב וְלֵ	הֵי מָה	נָחַל	קָנָה
from Tappuah	H1980	The border	thereof were at the sea	unto the river	Kanah
H8599		H1366	H3220	H5158	H7071
וְהֵי וְ	תֵצֵאת יוֹ	הֵי מָה	זֶאת	נַחֲלָת	
H1961	and the goings out	thereof were at the sea	H2063	This is the inheritance	
	H8444	H3220		H5159	
מִטֵּה	בְּנֵי	אֶפְרַיִם	לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם:		
of the tribe	of the children	of Ephraim	by their families		
H4294	H1121	H669	H4940		

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org