

Joshua 17:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Beth-shean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel.

Analysis

The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron—The Josephite tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) complained of insufficient territory, yet their real obstacle was fear. The phrase **chariots of iron** (רֶכֶב בַּרְזֶל, rekev barzel) represented ancient military superiority—reinforced war chariots that intimidated Israel. Beth-shean and the Jezreel valley were strategic Canaanite strongholds.

This complaint reveals a crisis of faith. God had promised the land, yet they focused on enemy strength rather than divine power. Their excuse—'not enough'—masked unbelief. This parallels believers who see obstacles as insurmountable rather than opportunities for God's strength to be displayed (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Historical Context

Beth-shean guarded the eastern entrance to the Jezreel valley, a crucial military corridor. Archaeological evidence confirms Canaanite iron-working technology gave them military advantage circa 1200 BC. The Josephites' complaint came during the conquest's consolidation phase when faith wavered.

Judges 1:19 (Parallel theme): And the LORD was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.

Judges 4:3 (Parallel theme): And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Joshua 17:18 (Parallel theme): But the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.

Judges 6:33 (Parallel theme): Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.