

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** (רְכֵב בָּרֶזֶל, 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 disbelief. 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.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What 'iron chariots' in your life seem too strong to overcome, and how might fear be masking unbelief?
2. How does focusing on obstacles rather than God's promises limit your spiritual inheritance?

Interlinear Text

יִאָמַר	וְ	בָּנִים	וּ	יְוָשָׁבָה	לֹא	כִּי	צָא	לֹכֶד	רַבָּה
said	And the children	of Joseph		H3808	is not enough		H0	The hill	
H559	H1121	H3130			H4672			H2022	
בְּאַרְצָה	בְּ	פִּישָׁ	בְּ	בְּכָל	בְּרִזְקָן	בְּכָל	בְּכָל	בְּאַרְצָה	
have chariots	of iron	H3605	for us and all the Canaanites		בְּכָל	בְּכָל	בְּכָל	בְּאַרְצָה	
H7393	H1270		H3669		H0	H0	H0	H776	
שָׁאוֹן									
and they who are of the valley		H834	רַבָּתָה	לֹאָשָׁר	בְּבִית	בְּעַמְקָם			
				H0					
וּבְנֹתֶת יְהֹוָה									
and her towns	H834		and they who are of the valley		בְּעַמְקָם	רַבָּתָה	לֹאָשָׁר	וּבְנֹתֶת יְהֹוָה	וּבְנֹתֶת יְהֹוָה
H1323			H6010		H0			H3157	

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 4:12 (Parallel theme): Baana the son of Ahilud; to him pertained Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which is by Zartanah beneath Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, even unto the place that is beyond Jokneam:

Judges 1:19 (Parallel theme): And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove 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.