

Joshua 17:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan;

Analysis

And there fell ten portions to Manasseh, beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan—The Hebrew chavalim (חֲבָלִים, "portions" or "measured cords") refers to surveyed allotments. Simple arithmetic explains the ten portions: six for the male clans listed in verse 2 (Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher's remaining sons, and Shemida), plus four more because Hepher's inheritance passed to his five daughters (the fifth portion being Hepher's own), resulting in ten total divisions.

Actually, the better calculation: six sons of Gilead received portions, but Hepher died, so his portion was divided among his five daughters, making $(6-1)+5=10$ portions total. This careful accounting demonstrates divine precision in fulfilling promises—every family received its inheritance exactly as God ordained. The phrase **beside the land of Gilead and Bashan, which were on the other side Jordan** reminds readers that Manasseh's Transjordanian territory (already distributed to Machir's descendants) was additional to this western allotment, making Manasseh the largest tribe territorially.

Historical Context

The western territory of Manasseh included exceptionally fertile regions: the Jezreel Valley (Israel's breadbasket), the Sharon Plain (famous for roses and fertility, Song of Solomon 2:1), and the Samarian highlands. This agricultural wealth made Manasseh economically powerful but also attracted Canaanite

resistance and later foreign invasions. The division into ten portions required careful surveying, likely using measuring cords (hence chavalim), similar to Egyptian and Mesopotamian land survey practices. Surviving ancient Near Eastern boundary stones and cadastral surveys show sophisticated mathematical knowledge in dividing territory equitably. Manasseh's size meant it played major roles in Israel's history, though unfortunately often as the site of idolatry (the golden calf at Dan was in Manasseh's territory).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the precise mathematical division of inheritance reflect God's character as a God of order who fulfills promises exactly?
2. What does Manasseh's double portion (east and west of Jordan) teach about how God sometimes gives beyond what we expect?
3. How should the inclusion of Zelophehad's daughters in this count encourage us that God's accounting includes those whom society might overlook?

Interlinear Text

מִן־צָדֶקָה	לְבָנָה	עַשְׂרֵה	הַמִּנְשָׁה	הַמִּבְנָה	מִבְנָה	מִבְנָה
And there fell	portions	to Manasseh	ten	H905	beside the land	
H5307	H2256	H4519	H6235		H776	

לְגָלְעָד	וּבָשָׁן	רַא	אֲשֶׁר	בְּרִית	מִעֵד	לִירַדְןָה
of Gilead	and Bashan		H834	which were on the other side	H5676	Jordan
H1568	H1316					H3383