

Joshua 17:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah, that lieth before Shechem; and the border went along on the right hand unto the inhabitants of En-tappuah.

Analysis

And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah, that lieth before Shechem—The Hebrew gevul (גָּבוּל, "coast" or "boundary") begins the detailed description of Manasseh's western territory. The boundary ran from the territory of Asher (to the north) southward to Michmethah, an otherwise unknown site near Shechem. Shechem itself was one of Canaan's most ancient and important cities, site of Abraham's first altar (Genesis 12:6), Jacob's land purchase (Genesis 33:18-19), and later the covenant renewal ceremony (Joshua 24).

And the border went along on the right hand unto the inhabitants of En-tappuah—The phrase al-yamin (עַל־יָמִין, "on the right hand") indicates southward direction (since Israelites oriented themselves facing east, right hand pointed south). En-tappuah means "spring of the apple" or "spring of Tappuah," indicating a settlement built around a water source. Precise boundary descriptions demonstrate that covenant promises involved specific, verifiable geography—faith was not divorced from historical and physical reality but grounded in it.

Historical Context

Shechem, modern Tell Balata, has been extensively excavated, revealing continuous occupation from the Bronze Age through the Roman period. The site sits in a strategic mountain pass between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, controlling north-south travel through central Canaan. Archaeological evidence

shows Shechem was a major Canaanite city-state during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, with massive fortifications. Its inclusion in Manasseh's territory fulfilled Jacob's specific bequest to Joseph (Genesis 48:22). The city became Manasseh's most important urban center and served as Israel's first capital before Jerusalem. The detailed boundary descriptions in Joshua 13-21 show sophisticated geographical knowledge and careful record-keeping, similar to Egyptian and Hittite boundary inscriptions.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the specificity of these boundary descriptions demonstrate that God's promises are concrete and verifiable, not vague spiritual abstractions?
2. What spiritual boundaries has God established in your life that require the same careful attention to detail and precision as these geographical borders?
3. How does Shechem's prominence in redemptive history (from Abraham to Joshua 24) illustrate God's long-term faithfulness across generations?

Interlinear Text

עַל אַשְׁר רַבְּמִקְמָתָה תְּחִנְנָה מִאֲשֶׁר תַּחֲנֵן מִגְבּוֹל יְלִיחָה
H1366 H4519 H836 H4366 H834 H5921
And the coast of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethah
H1961 H1366 H4519 H836 H4366 H5921

אֶל בְּמִקְדָּשָׁה שָׁכַם וְכָל רַבְּמִקְמָתָה
H413 H3225 H1366 H413
that lieth before Shechem went along And the coast on the right hand
H6440 H7927 H1980 H1366 H413 H3225

תְּפִירָה יְשִׁבָּה
H0 H5887
unto the inhabitants of Entappuah

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 21:21 (Parallel theme): For they gave them Shechem with her suburbs in mount Ephraim, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Gezer with her suburbs,

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