

Joshua 17:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim;

Analysis

Now Manasseh had the land of Tappuah: but Tappuah on the border of Manasseh belonged to the children of Ephraim—This verse illustrates the complexity of tribal boundaries, with territorial overlaps creating potential for either cooperation or conflict. The region of Tappuah (Tappuach, תַּפּוּחַ, meaning "apple" or "quince") belonged to Manasseh, but the city of Tappuah itself was assigned to Ephraim. Such arrangements were common in the allotments, with cities sometimes belonging to one tribe while surrounded by another's territory.

The situation reflects the intermingled settlement pattern and the complex geography of Canaan's hill country. The Hebrew construction emphasizes the distinction: the land (eretz, אֶרֶץ) versus the city (ir, עִיר). This required the tribes to live as neighbors, sharing resources and maintaining peaceful relations. The arrangement anticipates potential conflict—indeed, Ephraim's complaint in verses 14-18 shows the tensions that could arise. God's wisdom in creating interdependence prevented tribal isolation while requiring brothers to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1).

Historical Context

Tappuah has been identified with modern Sheikh Abu Zarad, about 8 miles south of Shechem. The region was fertile and agriculturally productive, explaining both its desirability and the detailed attention to its allocation. The intermingling of tribal territories, while potentially creating friction, also promoted national unity

by preventing complete tribal independence. Similar boundary complexities appear throughout Joshua 13-21, with Levitical cities scattered among all tribes and some cities functioning as shared resources. Ancient Near Eastern parallels show that such territorial arrangements were not unusual; Hittite, Assyrian, and Egyptian records document complex boundary agreements and shared access to resources.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the sharing of territory between Manasseh and Ephraim model the balance between individual inheritance and communal interdependence among God's people?
2. What can we learn from this arrangement about God's wisdom in creating situations that require His people to cooperate despite potential conflicts of interest?
3. In what areas of church or family life might God be calling you to share resources or territory with others, requiring humility and mutual submission?

Interlinear Text

מְנַשֶּׁה הַ	הַיְתָה הַ	אֶרֶץ	וְתַפּוּאָה	וְתַפּוּאָה	אֶל
Now Manasseh	H1961	had the land	but Tappuah	but Tappuah	H413
H4519		H776	H8599	H8599	
גֹּבַל וְ	מְנַשֶּׁה הַ	לְבָנֵי י	אֶפְרַיִם:		
on the border	Now Manasseh	belonged to the children	of Ephraim		
H1366	H4519	H1121	H669		

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 16:8 (Parallel theme): 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.