

Joshua 17:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river: these cities of Ephraim are among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also was on the north side of the river, and the outgoings of it were at the sea:

Analysis

And the coast descended unto the river Kanah, southward of the river—The boundary continues southward to the Wadi Kanah, a seasonal stream (Hebrew *nachal*, נַחַל, often translated "river" but actually a wadi that flows only during rainy season). The name Kanah means "reed" or "cane," indicating vegetation growing along the streambed. Natural geographical features—rivers, mountains, valleys—served as tribal boundaries, showing God's providence in using creation itself to establish order among His people.

These cities of Ephraim are among the cities of Manasseh: the coast of Manasseh also was on the north side of the river, and the outgoings of it were at the sea—The territorial complexity continues: certain cities belonging to Ephraim were located within Manasseh's territory. The phrase *betokh arei Menasheh* (בְּתוֹךְ עָרֵי מְנַשֶּׁה, "among the cities of Manasseh") indicates enclaves—Ephraimite cities surrounded by Manassite territory. This arrangement required ongoing cooperation and prevented either tribe from claiming complete autonomy. The boundary's terminus at "the sea" (Mediterranean) gave both tribes access to coastal trade routes.

Historical Context

The Wadi Kanah (modern Nahal Qanah) flows westward from the Samarian highlands to the Mediterranean Sea, marking the border between Manasseh (north) and Ephraim (south) in the coastal plain. The arrangement of Ephraimite cities within Manassite territory may reflect historical settlements from before the tribal allotments, which Joshua's distribution respected rather than erased. This flexibility demonstrated that the allotment process, though divinely directed, accommodated existing realities. The Mediterranean coast provided access to maritime trade, though Israelites never developed significant naval power, leaving sea commerce to Phoenicians. The Philistines, who would become Israel's primary enemies during the judges period, controlled the southern coastal plain, creating ongoing military challenges.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of natural boundaries (rivers, mountains) to separate tribes teach us about respecting the limits and boundaries He establishes in our lives?
2. What does the existence of Ephraimite cities within Manassite territory teach about unity in diversity—distinct identities within shared space?
3. How can we maintain clear identity and inheritance while still cooperating with others whose 'territory' overlaps with ours in family, church, or community?

Interlinear Text

יָרַד ד	וְגַב וּל	לִנְ הַח	קָנָה ה	נָ גְבָה	לִנְ הַח	עָרֵי י
descended	And the coast	of the river	Kanah	southward	of the river	the cities
H3381	H1366	H5158	H7071	H5045	H5158	H5892

הָאָ לָהּ	לְאֶפְרַיִם יִם	בֵּת וְכֹן	עָרֵי י	מְנַשֶּׁה	וְגַב וּל
H428	of Ephraim	are among	the cities	of Manasseh	And the coast
	H669	H8432	H5892	H4519	H1366

מְנַשֶּׁה	מִצָּפֹן וְ	לִנְ הַח	וַיְהִי י	תִצְאֹתָיו
of Manasseh	also was on the north side	of the river	H1961	and the outgoings
H4519	H6828	H5158		H8444

הָיָה:
of it were at the sea
H3220