

Judges 1:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

Analysis

Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.

Manasseh's failure to drive out Canaanites from five major cities—Beth-shean, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, and Megiddo—represents strategic defeat with lasting consequences. These cities controlled the Jezreel Valley, the major east-west corridor through northern Israel connecting the coastal plain to the Jordan Valley. The phrase 'but the Canaanites would dwell' (vayo'el haKena'ani lashev, **לִזְאָל הַקְנָעָנִי לִשְׁבַּת**) uses ya'al, 'to consent, be willing, persist'), indicating Canaanite determination to retain territory despite Israelite pressure. This wasn't God refusing to give the land but Israel refusing to complete conquest.

Beth-shean controlled the eastern approach to Jezreel Valley and fords across the Jordan. Taanach and Megiddo guarded the western approach from the coastal plain into the highlands. Dor was a Mediterranean port. Ibleam controlled a pass into central highlands. Canaanite retention of these strategic sites fragmented Israelite territory, separating northern tribes from southern. This geographical-

political fragmentation contributed to tribal disunity evident throughout Judges and eventually the kingdom's north-south division (1 Kings 12).

Theologically, Manasseh's failure illustrates the danger of tolerating strategic strongholds in Christian life. These cities weren't isolated villages but key positions controlling access and communication. Similarly, certain sins function as 'strategic strongholds' controlling access to other life areas—pride gates humility, lust gates purity, greed gates generosity. Tolerating such 'gatekeeping' sins allows enemy influence to fragment Christian discipleship, preventing integrated, comprehensive obedience.

Historical Context

The five cities Manasseh failed to conquer were major Late Bronze Age Canaanite strongholds. Megiddo, excavated extensively, reveals massive fortifications, palaces, and temples. The site controlled the Megiddo Pass (Wadi Ara), the main route from the coast into Jezreel Valley—strategically crucial for trade and military movements. Egyptian Pharaohs fought at Megiddo (Thutmose III's victory, 15th century BCE). Later, King Josiah died fighting Pharaoh Necho II there (2 Kings 23:29-30). The name's significance continues into Revelation—Armageddon (Har Megiddo, 'mountain of Megiddo') as final battle site (Revelation 16:16).

Beth-shean (Tel Beth-shean/Scythopolis) was heavily fortified with Egyptian presence during Late Bronze Age. Archaeological excavations uncovered Egyptian temples and administrative buildings. After Saul's death fighting Philistines, his body was displayed on Beth-shean's walls (1 Samuel 31:10-12), showing continued Canaanite-Philistine control even in early monarchy. David eventually subdued these areas, though full Israelite control remained tenuous.

These cities' Canaanite retention reflects both military challenges and incomplete obedience. Jezreel Valley's flat terrain favored Canaanite chariot warfare, explaining Israel's difficulty (v. 19 notes chariots prevented valley conquest). However, God had promised victory despite chariots (Joshua 17:18), and later Deborah-Barak defeated Sisera's chariots in this same region (Judges 4-5). Faith versus unbelief, not merely military technology, determined success.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 – Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 – God is love

Study Questions

1. What 'strategic strongholds' (gatekeeping sins) in your life control access to other areas and require priority warfare?
2. How does Manasseh's tolerance of Canaanite 'gatekeepers' in key cities illustrate how partial obedience fragments spiritual unity?
3. What geographical/social/relational spaces has God called you to possess but you've allowed worldly powers to retain control?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	וְשָׁאָה	בֵּית	אַתָּה	מִנְשָׁה	הַזָּר	וְשָׁאָה
H3808	drive out	Neither did Manasseh	H853	H0	the inhabitants of Bethshean	H1052
	H3423	H4519				
וְאַתָּה	בְּנֹתֶת יִבְנֶה	וְאַתָּה	בְּנֹתֶת יִבְנֶה	וְאַתָּה	בְּנֹתֶת יִבְנֶה	וְלֹשֶׁן בֵּת
H853	and her towns	H853	nor Taanach	H853	and her towns	H853
	H1323		H8590		H1323	
וְאַתָּה דָּוֶר	בְּנֹתֶת יִבְנֶה	וְאַתָּה	בְּנֹתֶת יִבְנֶה	וְאַתָּה יַבְלָעֵם	וְאַתָּה יַבְלָעֵם	בְּנֹתֶת יִבְנֶה
of Dor	H853	and her towns	H853	dwell	H853	and her towns
H1756		H1323		H3427	H2991	H1323
וְאַתָּה לְשֶׁן בֵּת	בְּנֹתֶת יִבְנֶה	וְאַתָּה מִגְדָּוֹן	בְּנֹתֶת יִבְנֶה	וְאַתָּה וְאֶל	וְאַתָּה וְאֶל	פְּכַנְעָן
H853	dwell	of Megiddo	H853	and her towns	H2974	but the Canaanites
	H3427	H4023		H1323		H3669
וְאַתָּה לְשֶׁן בֵּת	בְּאַרְץ	וְאַתָּה לְשֶׁן בֵּת	בְּאַרְץ	וְאַתָּה לְשֶׁן בֵּת	בְּאַרְץ	וְאַתָּה לְשֶׁן בֵּת
dwell	in that land	H2063				
H3427		H776				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 48:10 (Parallel theme): Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

1 Samuel 15:9 (Parallel theme): But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

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