

Judges 1:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

Analysis

Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

Ephraim's failure regarding Gezer parallels Manasseh's failures (v. 27). Gezer was a major Canaanite city-state controlling the Aijalon Valley, a strategic route from the coastal plain to the central highlands. Joshua had defeated Gezer's king (Joshua 10:33, 12:12) and allotted it to Ephraim (Joshua 16:3, 10), yet Canaanites retained control. The phrase 'dwelt in Gezer among them' (vayeshev haKena'ani beqerev Efrayim, וַיֵּשֶׁב הַכְּנַעֲנִי בְּקֶרֶב אֶפְרַיִם) indicates Canaanites maintained distinct identity within Ephraimite territory—coexistence without assimilation, creating internal pluralism contrary to God's design.

Gezer's unconquered status persisted until Solomon's era when Pharaoh conquered it and gave it as dowry to his daughter (Solomon's wife, 1 Kings 9:16). This demonstrates how incomplete obedience by one generation creates problems requiring resolution by later generations. What Joshua's and Judges' generations failed to do required Egyptian intervention and political marriage—God accomplished His purposes despite human failure, though through more complicated means than simple obedience would have required.

Theologically, Ephraim's tolerance of 'Canaanites among them' represents the danger of internal pluralism—allowing worldly values, thought patterns, and practices to coexist with Christian commitment. Paul's exhortation 'be not

conformed to this world' (Romans 12:2) and 'be ye separate' (2 Corinthians 6:17) addresses this tendency. True discipleship requires not merely adding Christian practices to existing worldly patterns but comprehensive transformation—renewing the mind (Romans 12:2), putting off the old man and putting on the new (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Historical Context

Gezer (Tel Gezer) was one of Canaan's most important cities. Extensive excavations reveal occupation from Chalcolithic period (4000 BCE) through Byzantine era. Late Bronze Age Gezer featured massive fortifications, a high place with ten standing stones (possibly connected to covenant ceremonies or Canaanite worship), and evidence of Egyptian influence. The Amarna letters mention Gezer's king communicating with Pharaoh, showing its significance in regional politics.

Gezer's strategic location at the northern end of the Aijalon Valley made it critical for controlling access between the Shephelah (lowlands) and the central highlands. The Via Maris (coastal highway) passed nearby, making Gezer important for trade and military movements. Its position also explains why Ephraim couldn't conquer it—Gezer's king could summon allied Canaanite or even Egyptian support, and the valley terrain favored chariot warfare.

The Gezer Calendar, a 10th-century BCE inscription found at the site, provides rare evidence of ancient Hebrew writing and agricultural calendar. Though post-judges period, it demonstrates Gezer's cultural significance. Solomon's fortification of Gezer (1 Kings 9:15-17) alongside Hazor and Megiddo made it part of Israel's strategic defense system. However, archaeological evidence suggests Israelite-Canaanite coexistence continued even after nominal Israelite control, confirming the biblical picture of incomplete conquest and integration.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What worldly values or practices have you allowed to 'dwell among' your Christian commitments rather than eliminating them completely?
2. How does incomplete spiritual conquest requiring later divine intervention illustrate how disobedience complicates God's purposes?
3. What areas of internal pluralism (mixing worldly and godly standards) exist in your church, family, or personal life?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶפְרַיִם	לֹא	יִשְׁרָאֵל	אֶת	הַכְּנַעֲנִי	וַיֵּשֶׁב	בְּגֵזֶר:
Neither did Ephraim	H3808	drive out	H853	but the Canaanites	dwelt	in Gezer
H669		H3423		H3669	H3427	H1507
וַיֵּשֶׁב	הַכְּנַעֲנִי	בְּקִרְבּוֹ	בְּגֵזֶר:			
dwelt	but the Canaanites	among	in Gezer			
H3427	H3669	H7130	H1507			

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 16:10 (Parallel theme): And they drave not out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer: but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute.

1 Kings 9:16 (Parallel theme): For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife.