

Numbers 10:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.

Analysis

Over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. Manasseh, Joseph's firstborn, marched with Ephraim's division under Gamaliel (גָּמְלִיאֵל, "God is my reward"). Though Manasseh was Jacob's firstborn grandson through Joseph, he received the lesser blessing when Jacob crossed his hands, placing his right hand on Ephraim (Genesis 48:14). Yet Manasseh wasn't rejected—merely positioned differently in God's purposes. His name means "causing to forget," reflecting Joseph's testimony: "God has made me forget all my toil" (Genesis 41:51).

Gamaliel led 32,200 warriors (Numbers 1:35), making Manasseh the smallest of Joseph's tribes at this census (though they would grow substantially by the second census to 52,700, Numbers 26:34). The tribe's later division—half settling east of Jordan, half in Canaan proper—made Manasseh unique in straddling the Jordan River, connecting the Transjordan tribes to western Israel.

Historical Context

Gamaliel served as Manasseh's census representative (Numbers 1:10) and brought offerings at the dedication (Numbers 7:54-59). Manasseh's eventual territorial holdings became the largest of any tribe, stretching from the Jordan Valley to the Mediterranean coast in western Manasseh, and controlling Gilead and Bashan in eastern Manasseh. Notable Manassites include Gideon (Judges 6:15), Jephthah (Judges 11:1), and Jair (Judges 10:3). The tribe's divided settlement (Numbers

32:33-42, Joshua 17:1-13) created both opportunities (extensive land) and challenges (difficult unity). Manasseh's history illustrates that God's "lesser" blessing is still abundant blessing—being second to Ephraim didn't diminish Manasseh's significance in redemptive history.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Gamaliel's name ("God is my reward") challenge you to find your satisfaction in God Himself rather than in positional prominence?
2. What does Manasseh's acceptance of "second" position (after Ephraim) teach about contentment with God's sovereign assignments rather than demanding the place we think we deserve?
3. In what ways might you, like Manasseh's name suggests, need God to help you "forget" past pain so it doesn't define your future service?

Interlinear Text

גָּמְלִיאֵל מִנְשָׁה הַמִּטְהָר אֶצְבָּע וְעַל

H5921 And over the host H6635 of the tribe H4294 of the children H1121 of Manasseh H4519 was Gamaliel H1583

פְּדַהְצּוּר: הַמִּטְהָר
of the children of Pedahzur

H1121 H6301