

JOSEPH'S DOUBLE PORTION

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Joseph the son of Jacob had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 41:50-52). Jacob blessed Joseph's sons, and prophesied concerning them, "*Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth,*" but that Ephraim would be the greatest in number (Gen 48:8-20). God had indeed fulfilled this promise by the time the Israelites entered the land of Canaan under Joshua the son of Nun. At that time, in Joshua 17:14, "*the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me hitherto?*" This question was based upon a falsehood, and it betrays a lack of faith on the part of the tribe of Joseph.

Joseph's double inheritance

Concerning the inheritance of the children of Joseph, Joshua 13:29-31 records the inheritance to half the tribe of Manasseh on the east side of the Jordan River. This was granted according to their own request (Num 32; Deut 3:13; 29:7-8; Josh 1:12-16). The lot for Ephraim and the other half of Manasseh was given on the west side of Jordan, recorded in Joshua 16:1-17:11. Thus, the tribe of Joseph received a double inheritance, which was typically the right of the firstborn. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn son, but his birthright was taken from him by God for his sin against his father (Gen 35:22; 49:3-4). The birthright with the double inheritance was transferred to Joseph (1 Chr 5:1-2). Therefore, after the children of Joseph asked Joshua why they were only being given one portion of land to inherit, Joshua reminded them that they *did* have more than one lot.

Why the tribe of Joseph needed more land

Did the children of Joseph not know all this? Of course they did. They were using a false argument that was based upon the fact that they did not currently have enough land to dwell in. They were *given* enough land, but did not *possess* enough land. The question is, *Why* didn't they? The answer is that they did not obey God. The Lord had commanded the tribes of Israel: "When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; *thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them*" (Deut 7:1-2).

Deuteronomy 20:16-17 also said, "But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, *thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: but thou shalt utterly destroy them.*" Yet most of

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the tribes of Israel left remnants of the people of the land that they should have utterly destroyed (Josh 13:13; Judg 1:17-36). The children of Joseph were among the tribes who did not fully obey God. Judges 1:27 says, "Neither did Manasseh drive out the inhabitants of Bethshean 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." Judges 1:29 says, "Neither did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites that dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them." In fact, right before the children of Joseph asked Joshua why they did not have a bigger inheritance, Joshua 17:12 says, "Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land." Joseph's descendants had a shortage of obedience which led to their perceived shortage of land.

The solution to the problem: trust and obey

Joshua told the children of Joseph to solve their problem of not having enough land by obeying God's original commandment and driving out the Canaanites that were among them. "And Joshua answered them, If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood country, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants, if mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee. And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are of Bethshean and her towns, and they who are of the valley of Jezreel. And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh, saying, Thou art a great people, and hast great power: thou shalt not have one lot only: but the mountain shall be thine; for it is a wood, and thou shalt cut it down: and the outgoings of it shall be thine: *for thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong*" (Josh 17:15-18). Their strength and their chariots were no match for God. As David later said to the giant, Goliath, "*The Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's*" (1 Sam 17:47). We have the same Lord fighting for us today in our war against imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-18). And when He is for us, no one can be against us (Rom 8:31-39). "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Cor 15:58).