

Joshua 16 Commentary

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LAND ALLOTMENTS
(Joshua 13-21)
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| JOSHUA A BOOK ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE and REST HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND | | DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND | | CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE |
| ACTION | | ALLOCATION | | APPEAL |
| Josh 1:1-5:15 | Josh 6:1-12:24 | Joshua 13:1-21:45 | | Josh 22:1-24:33 |
| WARLORDS IN CANAAN | | LANDLORDS IN CANAAN | | |
| ENTERING CANAAN | CONQUERING CANAAN | DIVIDING CANAAN | | |
| SECURING THE LAND | | SETTLING THE LAND | | |
| Preparation | Conquest | Possession | | Consecration |
| ca. 1 Month | ca 7 Years | ca. 18 Years | | |

[See also more detailed Chart by Charles R Swindoll](#)

Joshua 16:1 Then the lot for the sons of Joseph went from the Jordan at Jericho to the waters of Jericho on the east into the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to [Bethel](#).

- **the waters:** Jos 8:15 15:61 18:12 2Ki 2:19-21
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE LAND CONTROLLED BY ISRAEL - Carta Bible Atlas, page 62

Joshua 16 can be divided into three parts...

1. **THE ALLOTMENT FOR JOSEPH - Joshua 16:1-4**
2. **THE INHERITANCE FOR EPHRAIM - Joshua 16:5-9**
3. **THE COMPROMISE OF EPHRAIM - Joshua 16:10**

Kenneth Gangel writes "Jacob gave his longest and most favorable blessing to his son Joseph. We cannot understand the allocation of rich, fertile land in central Canaan to Ephraim and Manasseh unless we review and understand that blessing." ([Holman Old Testament Commentary - Joshua](#))

We do well to recall Jacob's blessing on Joseph (and thus on Manasseh and Ephraim), who had been his favorite son

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a spring; Its branches run over a wall. 23 "The archers bitterly attacked him, And shot at him and harassed him; 24 But his bow remained firm, And his arms were agile, From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), 25 From the God of your father who helps you, And by the Almighty who blesses you With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb. 26 "The blessings of your father Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills (**NLT** - May the blessings of your ancestors be greater than the blessings of the eternal mountains); May they be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers. (Gen. 49:22-26)

Allen Ross on Gen. 49:22-26 - This oracle treats Joseph more lavishly than any of the others, for here the main blessing lay (cf. 1Chr 5:1–2). Jacob took up the promise of fruitfulness from the name of Joseph's son Ephraim (which means fruitful) and lavished the promise of victory (Gen. 49:23–24a) and prosperity (v. 25b) on Joseph's two tribes. Victory in battle was experienced by Joshua, Deborah, and Samuel, all of the tribe of Ephraim, and by Gideon and Jephthah, both of Manasseh's tribe. In these verses are several marvelous titles for God—the Mighty One of Jacob ... the Shepherd (cf. Ge 48:15), **the Rock of Israel ... your father's God ... the Almighty** (šadday; cf. 'ēl šadday in Ge 17:1)—the One who ensures **blessings from the heavens above** (i.e., rain for crops) from the **deep ... below** (i.e., streams and wells for water), and from the breast and womb (i.e., abundant offspring). Jacob bestowed on Joseph the **greater** blessings because he was **the prince among his brothers** (cf. Ge 41:41).

Ryrie writes that "The blessing of Joseph is the most eloquent of all. Ge 49:23-24 are a brief biography of Joseph. In later years, Joshua and Deborah were from the tribe of Ephraim, and Gideon and Jephthah, from the tribe of Manasseh."

NIV Study Bible - Ephraim would gain supremacy, especially over the northern tribes (Jos 16:9; Isa 7:1–2; Hos 13:1).

Gangel - Joseph was responsible for the survival of his family during the famine in Egypt and even prior to that was Jacob's favorite son. So rather than a specific and single blessing on Joseph, Jacob ordained that his sons Ephraim and Manasseh should be the heads and founders of tribes along with their eleven uncles. Side by side they occupied what later became Samaria with Ephraim on the south and Manasseh on the north. **Ephraim's** land included Shiloh, where the tabernacle would be located. **Manasseh** included both Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim at the famous and sacred site of Shechem as well as Mount Carmel sticking like a knob out into the Mediterranean Sea. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary - Joshua](#))

Then - [then](#) marks progression in the narrative.

Stephen Grant - The order in which Joshua apportioned the land was in harmony with the historical declaration made by Jacob on his deathbed (Gen 49:22–26). **Judah** was first in priority, followed by the tribes of Joseph. It has already been pointed out that these two allotments comprised the largest of the land portions and were given when the people were gathered at Gilgal (Joshua 14:6), whereas the other tribes received their inheritance at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1). The status of these two tribes within the nation is summarised in 1 Chronicles 5:1–2: "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's)". Although Joseph's two sons, **Ephraim and Manasseh**, are often dealt with as separate tribes, in relation to the lot they are brought together as one entity (IN Joshua 16:1-4), which became the cause of a complaint to Joshua (Joshua 17:14–18). ([What the Bible Teaches - Joshua Judges Ruth](#))

International Children's Bible paraphrase this verse - "This is the land the tribe of Joseph received. It started at the Jordan River near Jericho. It continued to the waters of Jericho, just east of the city. The border went up from Jericho to the mountains of Bethel."

The lot for the sons of Joseph went from the Jordan at Jericho(portion near Jericho) **to the waters of Jericho on the east into the wilderness, going up from Jericho through the hill country to Bethel** ("house of God" - [map of Bethel](#)) - You can [follow this on the map](#) above beginning at Gilgal (Jericho is not on the map but Gilgal was very nearby) and going west through the hill country to the city of Bethel. ([Here is another map that may help](#)). Note that Jericho was in the allotment of Benjamin (Josh 18:12) and similarly Bethel is also assigned to Benjamin (Josh 18:22).

While Joseph was one of Jacob's 12 sons, he did not have a tribe named after him because, as the oldest son of Jacob's wife Rachel, he received a double portion of the inheritance divided between his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, whom Jacob considered as his own (Genesis 48:5). It is not surprising that the largest territory and the greatest influence in the northern half of Israel belonged to their tribes.

Madvig points out that "The sons of Joseph became the dominant tribes in the northern kingdom during the divided monarchy, so much so that the name Ephraim became one of the names for that kingdom (cf. Isa 7:2). The southern border of Joseph, which is described here, is actually the northern borders of Benjamin (Josh 18:11–14) and Dan (Josh 19:40–48). ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

Believer's Study Bible has an interesting note on Joshua 16:1-4 - Jacob had adopted Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh as his own and had bestowed the greater blessing on Ephraim, though Manasseh was Joseph's firstborn (Ge 48:5-20). Thus the land was divided among 12 tribes, even though Levi received none. Manasseh and their inheritance was divided into two parts, half west of the Jordan and half on the east in Transjordan with Reuben and Gad (cf. 1:12-18; Num. 32:20-22).

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary - This and the following chapter should not be separated. They give the lots of Ephraim and Manasseh, the children of Joseph, who, next to Judah, were to have the post of honour, and therefore had the first and best portion in the northern part of Canaan, as Judah in the southern part. God's people now, as of old, suffer his enemies to remain. Blessed Lord, when will all our enemies be subdued? 1 Corinthians 15:26. Do thou drive them all out; thou alone canst do it. These settled boundaries may remind us, that our situation and provision in this life, as well as our future inheritance, are appointed by the only wise and righteous God, and we should be content with our portion, since he knows what is best for us, and all we have is more than we deserve.

Bethel - Holman Bible Dictionary Bethel was important in the Old Testament for both geographic and religious reasons. Because of its abundant springs, the area was fertile and attractive to settlements as early as 3200 B.C., and first supported a city around the time of Abraham. Today the village of Beitin rests on much of the ruins of Bethel. Located at the intersection of the main north-south road through the hill country and the main road from Jericho to the coastal plain, Bethel saw much domestic and international travel. Bethel became a prominent border town between tribes and the two kingdoms later. Religiously, Bethel served as a sanctuary during the times of the patriarchs, judges, and the divided kingdom, hence was second only to Jerusalem as a religious center.

Entering Canaan, Abraham built an altar at Bethel, calling "upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 12:8), and returned here after his time in Egypt (Genesis 13:3). His grandson, Jacob, spent the night here on his way to Syria to find a wife. In a dream the Lord confirmed the Abrahamic covenant, and Jacob responded by renaming this locale which was previously called Luz, "Bethel" ("house of God"; Genesis 28:10-22). Probably the name "Bethel" is referred to but out of chronological sequence in the earlier Abraham passages. When he returned with his large family, Jacob came to Bethel again to hear the Lord's confirmation of the covenant and his name was changed to "Israel." Here again Jacob set up a stone monument (Genesis 35:1-16; Hosea 12:4-5). Extensive fortification of Bethel came after this patriarchal period.

At the time of the conquest, Bethel and Ai were taken together (Joshua 7:2; Joshua 8:3-17; Joshua 12:9 ,Joshua 12:9,12:16), but the definitive defeat of Bethel is recounted later in Judges 1:22-26 . It was a Benjamite border town initially (Joshua 16:1-2; Joshua 18:13 ,Joshua 18:13,18:22). Later it was a part of the Northern Kingdom (1 Chronicles 7:28), only briefly annexed to Judah by Abijah (2 Chronicles 13:19).

The ark of the covenant was kept in Bethel during a period of the judges (Judges 20:27), so the tribes converged there upon Benjamin to avenge the moral atrocity at Gibeah (Judges 20:18-28), offering sacrifices and seeking the Lord's direction (Judges 21:1-4). Bethel also was a place where both Deborah (Judges 4:5) and Samuel (1 Samuel 7:16) judged the civil and religious affairs of the Israelites in the area. Bethel was evidently vulnerable at the time of the judges, since archaeology shows it to have been destroyed several times in this period.

David considered the city significant enough to send it gifts during his flight as a fugitive from Saul, hoping to establish a friendship of diplomatic value in the future (1 Samuel 30:27). When he eventually named Jerusalem his capital, Bethel grew and prospered.

Whereas Bethel had been a place of orthodox worship from Abraham to the judges, Jeroboam I made it a religious center of his innovative, apostate religion of the Northern Kingdom. He erected a golden calf both here and in Dan with non-Levitic priests and an illegitimate feast to compete with the celebrations and religion of Jerusalem, ten and a half miles to the south in Judah (1 Kings 12:29-

33). Bethel was the prominent site over Dan. There an anonymous prophet from Judah found and rebuked Jeroboam I and brought destruction to the king's altar (1 Kings 13:1-10). Another anonymous prophet from Bethel entrapped the first prophet into disobedience. Because of his disobedience, the Lord caused a lion to kill the first prophet (1 Kings 13:11-25).

Other true prophets seem to have been attached to Bethel even during the time of northern apostasy, since Elijah encountered a group of them there as he traveled (2 Kings 2:2-3). Amos was sent to Bethel to rebuke the kingdom of Jeroboam II in the eighth century (Amos 7:10-13) since it was the center of northern idolatry and a royal residence. He met the resistance of Amaziah, the priest, who vainly ordered him to leave the city. In addition to Amos' prophetic charges against those who sacrificed there (Amos 4:4), he predicted the destruction of Bethel and its false altars (Amos 3:14 , Amos 5:5-6), as did Hosea (Hosea 10:14-15). Hosea seems to have played with the name of Bethel ("city of God"), by referring to it as "Beth-aven" ("city of a false [god]," Hosea 5:8-9; Hosea 10:5).

The religious significance of Bethel is confirmed also by Assyria's appointment of a priest to this city to teach the new residents of the north who displaced the Israelites (2 Kings 17:28). Later, Josiah desecrated another false altar of Bethel during his reforms (2 Kings 23:4-19) and perhaps annexed the city to his Southern Kingdom.

Bethel was destroyed in the sixth century during the Exile; however, some returned there when released by the Persians (Ezra 2:28; Nehemiah 7:32; Nehemiah 11:31).

Since it was a late first century Roman garrison town, it was probably a city of importance at the time of Christ. 2. Another city variously spelled Bethul (Joshua 19:4), Bethuel (1 Chronicles 4:30), and Bethel (1 Samuel 30:27). This may be modern khirbet el Qaryatein north of Arad.

Joshua 16:2 It went from Bethel to Luz, and continued to the border of the Archites at Ataroth.

- **Bethel:** Jos 18:13 Ge 28:19 Jdg 1:22-26
- **Archites:** 2Sa 16:16 1Ch 27:33
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Map to help visualize descriptions of boundaries
[CLICK TO ENLARGE](#)

It went from [Bethel](#) to Luz - Note several versions have "**Bethel (that is Luz)**" (NLT, NIV). See several dictionary explanations below. In Genesis 28:19 we read "He called the name of that place **Bethel**; however, previously the name of the city had been **Luz**", Luz being the

name given by the Canaanites. (cf. Joshua 18:13; Gen 35:6; Jdg. 1:23).

Grant notes that "The border ran in a south-westerly direction from the Jordan, by Jericho, toward Ataroth, through the borders of Archi, whence came Hushai, one of David's advisors (2Sa 15:32)."

Holman on relationship of Bethel and Luz - Joshua 16:2 seems to distinguish the two places, Bethel perhaps being the worship place and Luz the city. Bethel would then be Burj Beitin and Luz, Beitin.

Smith's Bible Dictionary comments on **Bethel** and **Luz**. (almond tree). It seems impossible to discover with precision whether Luz and Bethel represent one and the same town - the former the Canaanite, the latter the Hebrew, name - or whether they were distinct places, though in close proximity. The most probable conclusion is that, the two places were, during the times preceding the conquest, distinct, Luz being the city and Bethel the pillar and altar of Jacob that, after the destruction of Luz by the tribe of Ephraim, the town of Bethel arose.

ISBE on **Luz** - This was the ancient name of **Bethel** (Genesis 28:19; Judges 1:23; compare Genesis 35:6; Genesis 48:3; Joshua 16:2; Joshua 18:13). It has been thought that Joshua 16:2 contradicts this, and that the two places were distinct. Referring to Genesis 28:19 , we find that the name Bethel was given to "the place," ha -māḳōm , i.e. "the sanctuary," probably "the place" (Genesis 28:11 , Hebrew) associated with the sacrifice of Abraham (Genesis 12:8), which lay to the East of Bethel. The name of the city as distinguished from "the place" was Luz. As the fame of the sanctuary grew, we may suppose, its name overshadowed, and finally superseded, that of the neighboring town. The memory of the ancient nomenclature persisting among the people sufficiently explains the allusions in the passages cited.

And continued to the border of the Archites at Ataroth - The location of these sites is not known with certainty.

Utley - the Archites" One of David's counselors was from this family group (cf. 2 Sa 15:32; 16:16), but this is all moderns know of this non-Israelite clan. The same is true for the Japhletites in Joshua 16:3.

Archi - Holman Bible Dictionary ARCHITE An unknown group of people who gave their name to a border point of the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin (Joshua 16:2). They may have been a clan of Benjamin, or more likely remnants of the ancient "Canaanite" inhabitants. Their only representative in the Bible was David's Counselor Hushai.

Ataroth - Holman Bible Dictionary Place name meaning, "crowns." Village on border of Benjamin and Ephraim (Joshua 16:2 ,Joshua 16:2,16:7) It may be modern Khirbet el-Oga in the Jordan Valley. ALSO REFERRED TO A. Town desired and built up by tribe of Gad (Numbers 32:3 ,Numbers 32:3,32:34). Mesha, king of Moab, about 830 B.C. claims he captured Ataroth but admits it belonged to Gad "from of old" and had been built by an Israelite king. It is located at modern Khirbet Attarus, eight miles northwest of Dibon and eight miles east of the Dead Sea.

Joshua 16:3 It went down westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of lower Beth-horon even to Gezer, and it ended at the sea.

- **Bethhoron:** Jos 18:13 1Ki 9:15-17 1Ch 7:24,28 2Ch 8:5
- **the sea:** Nu 34:6
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Map to help visualize descriptions of boundaries
 CLICK TO ENLARGE

FROM THE JORDAN IN THE EAST THEN WEST TOWARD MEDITERRANEAN

It went down (descended) westward to the territory of the Japhletites, as far as the territory of lower Beth-horon (see map above) even to Gezer (see map above - Gezer is further west from Beth-horon), and it ended at the sea (the Mediterranean Sea) - The border went toward the west through the territory of the Japhletites not much of which is known otherwise. This description says **ended at the sea** (the Mediterranean Sea) but the map above does not show this terminus, but has it ending at the border with Dan.

Grant - Two further landmarks are provided to identify the route that the southern boundary took: Beth-horon and Gezer. Both places have featured in the narrative prior to his point. Beth-horon was the place to which the Amorite kings fled when Joshua defeated them at Gibeon (10:10–11). The king of Gezer came to assist Lachish in their battle with Joshua and was defeated. His city is thought to have been approximately 15 miles (24 kilometres) from the sea. From Gezer the boundary went to the sea, with Keil & Delitzsch assuming that it went “toward the northwest ... to the north of Japho, which was assigned to the Danites, according to Joshua 19:46”.

Japhleti - Holman Bible Dictionary Place name according to KJV but name of tribal group—Japhletites—according to modern translations (Joshua 16:3). The clan’s territory lay on border between Ephraim and Benjamin, though the clan apparently belonged to Asher.

Beth-Horon - Holman Bible Dictionary Place name of uncertain meaning. Suggestions include, “house of caves,” “house of anger,” “house of the hollow,” “house of (the god) Hauron.” Twin cities, one higher than the other, and so called Upper and Lower Beth Horon. An important road here dominates the path to the Shephelah, the plain between the Judean hills and the Mediterranean coast. Joshua used the road to chase the coalition of southern kings led by the king of Jerusalem (Joshua 10:10). Here God cast hail stones on the enemies. The border between the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin was at Beth-horon (Joshua 16:3, Joshua 16:3, 16:5; Joshua 18:13–14). The city belonged to Ephraim but was set aside for the Levites (Joshua 21:22). The Philistines sent one unit of their army the way of Beth-horon to attack Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 13:18). Solomon rebuilt the lower city as a stone city and as a defense outpost (1 Kings 9:17). The chronicler preserved an even earlier tradition of a descendant of Ephraim, a woman named Sherah, building the two cities (1 Chronicles 7:22–24). When King Amaziah of Judah (796–767 B.C.) followed a prophet’s advice and sent home mercenary soldiers he had hired from Israel, those soldiers fought the cities of Judah, including Beth-horon (2 Chronicles 25:13). Upper Beth Horon is modern beit Ur el-Foqa, five miles northwest of Gibeon and ten miles northwest of Jerusalem. It is 1750 feet above sea level. Lower Beth Horon is two miles to the east and only 1050 feet above sea level. It is modern beit Ur et-Tahta.

Gezer - Holman Bible Dictionary Place name meaning, "isolated area." Major Canaanite city nineteen miles northwest of Jerusalem at tell Gezer on the edge of the foothills of Judah near the Shephelah, seven miles southeast of Ramleh. It provides a military post for the highway junction of the Via Maris and the road leading to the valley of Ajalon to Jerusalem, Jericho, and over the Jordan. A site of 30 acres, it was one of the largest and most important cities in Palestine from 1800 B.C. onwards, though occupation reaches back to 3500 B.C. Archaeologists have found important inscriptions here such as the Gezer calendar, one of, if not the, earliest (before 900 B.C.) examples of Hebrew writing known. Even earlier is an inscribed piece of broken pottery in the "Proto-Sinaitic" script. The largest stone structure in Palestine, a fifty-foot wide wall from about 1600 B.C. was found here. A high place or sanctuary with ten stone stele or masseboth demonstrates Canaanite worship practices about 1600 B.C. Some of these tower over nine feet high. Egyptian sources mention Gezer about 1410 B.C., as do the Amarna letters of 100 years later. Three different kings of Gezer wrote the Egyptian pharaoh. Merneptah's stele from about 1200 B.C. claims the pharaoh captured Gezer. Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria pictured the capture of Gezer about 734 B.C. in his palace at Nimrud. Joshua defeated the king of Gezer when he tried to aid the king of Lachish (Joshua 10:33). Gezer formed the boundary for Ephraim's tribal allotment (Joshua 16:3), but Israel did not control the city (Joshua 16:10; Judges 1:29). Still, it was assigned as a city for the Levites (Joshua 21:21). David finally wrested control of it from the Philistines (2 Samuel 5:25; 1 Chronicles 20:4). A few years later, Egypt's pharaoh captured the city from the Canaanites and gave it to Solomon as a wedding gift for Solomon's marriage with the pharaoh's daughter. Solomon rebuilt its walls (1 Kings 9:15-17). Between the Testaments, Gezer became known as Gazara. The Seleucid general Bacchides fortified it (1 Maccabees 9:52). In 142 B.C. the Jewish leader Simon Maccabeus captured Gazara and built himself a home there. Then John Hyrcanus, his son, assumed command of the Jewish army and established his headquarters there (1 Maccabees 13:43-53). Gezer thus is a peripheral city in the Bible whose magnificent history had begun to recede a century before Joshua entered Palestine. Still, it marked an important military outpost for Philistines, Egyptians, Israelites, and Assyrians trying to control the important trade and military routes.

Joshua 16:4 The sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance.

- Jos 17:14
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Map to help visualize descriptions of boundaries of Ephraim
 CLICK TO ENLARGE

**SUMMATION OF INHERITANCE
 OF SONS OF JOSEPH**

Suggestion - Although I have made some attempt (using dictionary descriptions and some commentary notes) to sort out these specific boundary names in Joshua 16:5-9, I would advise not getting too bogged down with the names because many of the locations simply are still not known. Don't miss the forest for the trees! Verses 5-9 show God's attention to details regarding His promised blessing. The tribe of Ephraim understood the boundaries of their blessing for they knew these locations even if we do not today. Ephraim understood what God had blessed them with and did not have to guess. God is a God of order, not confusion.

The sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, received their inheritance - This verse ends the description of the one lot given as Joseph's inheritance. In the following sections the borders and cities of Ephraim and Manasseh are described separately. Did you notice the order of Joseph's sons in this verse - first Manasseh (he was literally the firstborn) and then Ephraim (cf same order in Ge 46:20, 48:1). But then Jacob soon to pass on makes the following declaration "Now your (ADDRESSING JOSEPH) two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, **are mine** (JACOB IN ESSENCE "ADOPTS" THEM); **Ephraim and Manasseh** (NOTE JACOB MENTIONS EPHRAIM BEFORE MANASSEH) shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. (Ge 48:5). And then when Jacob bestows a prophecy and a blessing on Joseph's two sons he does something unexpected:

Joseph took them both, **Ephraim** with his right hand toward Israel's left, and **Manasseh** with his left hand toward Israel's right (THIS WOULD BE THE HAND FOR BLESSING THE FIRSTBORN), and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of **Ephraim**, who was the younger, and his left hand on **Manasseh's** head, crossing his hands, although **Manasseh** was the firstborn. 15 He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day. 16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." 17 When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head." 19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. **However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.**" 20 He blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'" **Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.** (Ge 48:13-20)

So now Joshua follows the same order as Jacob and first blesses Ephraim and then Manasseh, in accord with Jacob's prophetic blessing.

Grant - Some commentators suggest that the description of the one border separating the territory of Benjamin (SEE MAP ABOVE FOR **BENJAMIN JUST TO SOUTH OF EPHRAIM**) and Judah from that of Manasseh and Ephraim and the other more northerly tribes, was an indication that there was a north-south divide (**ED: HE IS ALLUDING TO THE "POLITICAL DIVISION" THAT WOULD OCCUR IN SOLOMON'S REIGN**), even at the earliest period of the occupation of Canaan. This is reinforced by the absence of a description of Joseph's northern boundary, underlining the separation of Judah and Benjamin from the other ten tribes (**ED: WHEN SOLOMON'S KINGDOM WAS DIVIDED, IN 1 Kings 11:11, 31, TEN TRIBES WENT NORTH AND ONLY TWO STAYED SOUTH - JUDAH AND BENJAMIN, WHICH WAS THE HOME OF JERUSALEM AND SOLOMON'S TEMPLE**). The tribe of Dan did receive land which lay between Joseph and Judah (Joshua 19:40-46), yet, as shall be commented upon later, they migrated under pressure from the Amorites (Jdg 1:34) and settled on the northern borders of Naphtali and eastern Manasseh, at the northern extremity of Canaan (**ED: [SEE DAN'S FINAL TERRITORY IN THE FAR NORTH IN THIS MAP](#)**).

Gotquestions.org has a helpful note on the tribe of Dan which explains why the map above shows Ephraim's western border ending at Dan's territory.

As the Israelites came into the land of Canaan, by lot certain areas of territory were assigned to each tribe. **The tribe of Dan was given a tract of land that was smaller than the other land grants but was fertile and also had a boundary along the Mediterranean Sea where there was fishing and commerce available to them.** (**ED: THIS WOULD CORRESPOND TO THE TERRITORY IN **DARK GREEN** ON THE MAP ABOVE**) However, the tribe of Dan never fully conquered this area as a result of a lack of faith in God. This was true of the other tribes as well, as the early chapters of the book of Judges clearly teach, and led to a time during the period of Judges where it was said, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." Jdg 18:1-31+ tells the story of the people of Dan falling into idolatry. They also **did not like** the territory that was theirs (**ED: DON'T MISS THIS NOTE - THEY WERE NOT CONTENT WITH WHAT GOD HAD GIVEN THEM - EVER BEEN THERE, DONE THAT? JUST ASKING!**), so they sent out spies to find a better area. In the north, some representatives of Dan learned of an area where a peaceful group of people lived. The tribe of Dan took things into their own hands and wiped out the people of that land so they could then move the entire tribe up to a region close to the sources of the Jordan River, just south of present-day Lebanon. There they established their main city and called it Dan. (**ED: [SEE THIS MAP FOR THEIR SMALL PARCEL OF LAND IN FAR NORTH NEXT TO MOUNT](#)**

HERMON).

Donald Campbell - Located immediately north of the territory to be assigned to Dan and Benjamin, the allotment of Ephraim stretched from the Jordan to the Mediterranean and included the sites of some of Joshua's battles as well as Shiloh where the tabernacle would remain for about 300 years. To encourage unity some of Ephraim's towns were located in the territory of Manasseh (v. 9). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#))

F B Meyer - Joshua 16:4 And the children of Joseph took their inheritance.

What a wonderful wealth of blessing these children of Joseph came into! There were the precious things of heaven, the dew, and the deep that couched beneath; the precious fruits of the sun and of the growth of the moons; the metals of the ancient mountains and the everlasting hills; the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof, and, above all, the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush (Deuteronomy 33:13–16). Surely they were blessed with all manner of blessings — more than they had asked or thought! The rich gifts of God's grace! An inheritance which could not have been won by their prowess or arms, but was the free gift of God's love — to be taken and enjoyed!

These things happened to them as types; the spiritual counterparts of all are ours in Christ. He is precious — nay, priceless: his promises are exceeding great and precious. The blood by which we were redeemed is precious, has meanings not yet explored; the very trial of our faith is precious as the gold taken from the everlasting hills. How much preciousness there is for us who believe! (1 Peter 2:7, R.V.). But we are poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, because we have not taken our inheritance.

We need to do more than ask for it. He that asketh should not rest satisfied till he receiveth. We must take by a faith which claims, appropriates, employs. Open your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, that He may cause you to receive and enjoy all his precious gifts. In Christ all things are yours: go in and possess; take your inheritance; believe that you do receive; thank Him, and go on your way rejoicing.

Joshua 16:5 Now this was the territory of the sons of Ephraim according to their families: the border of their inheritance eastward was Ataroth-addar, as far as upper Beth-horon.

- **Ataroth-addar:** Jos 16:2 18:13
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Map to help visualize descriptions of boundaries of Ephraim
[Zondervan Atlas of the Bible: C. Rasmussen](#) (recommended resource)
CLICK TO ENLARGE

THE INHERITANCE FOR EPHRAIM

The [Zondervan Atlas of the Bible by Carl Rasmussen](#) gives one of the best maps for helping to visualize these locations, albeit admittedly the exact location of many of the sites is not absolutely established. That said, the map locations correlate with the Scripture descriptions so that they would seem to be very close approximations.

Rasmussen has a very helpful comment on Ephraim's borders - The second distribution was made to the tribe of Ephraim, the first son of Joseph. **Only incomplete portions of its boundary description are given** Its southern boundary matched the northern one of **Benjamin** (Josh 16:1–5; Josh 18:12–13), while on the west it theoretically was blocked from the sea by the tribe of **Dan** (Josh 19:40–48). Its northwestern boundary along the Kanah Ravine was well defined (Josh 16:8; 17:7–10), while on the northeast and east fewer border points are provided. **For most of its history, Ephraim was confined to the rugged mountainous area. Deep V-shaped valleys provided it with security and inaccessible areas** (see pp. 46). Since no city list for the tribe of Ephraim is provided, relatively little is known about its population centers. In addition, some Ephraimites settled in the territory of Manasseh located to the north (Josh 16:9). ([Zondervan Atlas of the Bible](#))

Madvig adds that "Although a disproportionate amount of space is devoted to Ephraim and Manasseh, the description of their territories is fragmentary and difficult to follow." ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

Ephraim receives specific boundary limits for her land allotment in Joshua 16:5-9, beginning with the southern border of Ephraim.

David Thompson points out that "Just as Jacob had predicted, **Ephraim** was awarded his blessings prior to Manasseh, even though Manasseh was older (Ge 48:14, 17, 20). Everything God does is done in precise conformity to His Word."

Now this was the territory of the sons of Ephraim according to their families: the border of their inheritance eastward was Ataroth-addar (see [map above](#)), **as far as upper Beth-horon** (see [map above](#)) - The southern boundary of Ephraim's inheritance is described briefly, since it has already been detailed from the perspective of Joseph's lot in Joshua 16:1-4. Locate **Beth-Horon** on the map above - this description is of the southern border of **Ephraim** which on the map is somewhat rectangular shaped.

Note that the word "allotment" is replaced by "**inheritance**" which more directly speaks of a sovereign arrangement the Lord has chosen to give to Ephraim. Joshua would have personal interest in this inheritance since this was his tribe of origin.

Joshua 16:6 Then the border went westward at Michmethath on the north, and the border turned about eastward to Taanath-shiloh and continued beyond it to the east of Janoah.

- **Michmethah:** Jos 17:7
- **Taanathshiloh:** Placed by Eusebius ten miles of Neapolis or Shechem. Jos 18:1
- **Janoah:** Eusebius calls it [Iano,] in Acrabatene, twelve miles east from Neapolis.
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then - In verse 5, the description of Ephraim's border described the southern boundary, but now the description swings west but we do not know for sure where some of these boundaries were.

NET Note - "It then extended on to the sea." Note that the NAS translation lacks the "on to the sea" which is found in ESV, NIV, NLT.

The border went westward at Michmethath on the north The location of **Michmethah** is uncertain but in Joshua 17:7 it is located near Shechem (see [possible location on map above](#)).

And the border turned about eastward to Taanath-shiloh (see [map above](#)) **and continued beyond it to the east of Janoah** (see [map above](#)).- This is the description of the northern border Ephraim's portion and it is described in two parts, the first part in this passage, and then the second part in Joshua 16:7.

Utley - Taanath-shiloh" (see [map above](#)) This is not the site of the tabernacle in Samuel's day, but another city (so say Eusebius and Jerome).

[Michmethah - Smith's Bible Dictionary](#) A place which formed one of the landmarks, of the boundary of the territories, of Ephraim and Manasseh, on the western side of Jordan. Joshua 17:7. The position of the place must be somewhere, on the east of , and not far distant from, Shechem. Fausset's Dictionary adds "A landmark between Ephraim and Manasseh W. of Jordan, on the E. of and facing Shechem (Joshua 17:7); but Joshua 16:6 says Ephraim's border went out toward the sea to Michmethah on the N. side; Grove supposes a gap between Joshua 16:5 and Joshua 16:6."

[Taanath-shiloh - Smith's Bible Dictionary](#) (approach to Shiloh). A place named once only - Joshua 16:6 - as one of the landmarks of the boundary of Ephraim. Perhaps, Taanath was the ancient Canaanite name of the place, and Shiloh was the Hebrew name.

[Janoah - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "he rests." 1. Town in tribal territory of Ephraim (Joshua 16:6-7). It is probably modern khirbet Janun about seven miles south of Nablus. KJV transliterates the Hebrew ah meaning "towards" and so spells Janohah here. 2. City in northern Israel that Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria (744-727 B.C.), captured from Pekah, king of Israel (752-732 B.C.), about 733 B.C. Its location is uncertain, suggestions including khirbet Janun; Janua, six miles south of Megiddo, and Janoah, nine miles east of Acco. Recently, interpreters have sought to establish a military pattern in the report and locate Janoah at khirbet Niha just south of Kefar Giladi on the road south from Abel-beth-Maacah.

Joshua 16:7 It went down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah, then reached Jericho and came out at the Jordan.

- **Ataroth:** 1Ch 7:28
- **Jericho:** Jos 3:16 6:1,26 Nu 33:48
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

It went down from Janoah (see [map above](#)) **to Ataroth Tappuah** ([not on the map above](#)) **and to Naarah** (see [map above](#) on eastern side of Ephraim's border), **then reached Jericho** (see [map above](#)) **and came out at the Jordan** - This continues (Josh 16:6 begins the description) the description of the northern border. **NLT** = "From Janoah it turned southward to Ataroth and Naarah, touched Jericho, and ended at the Jordan River. " **ICB** = "Then it went down from Janoah to Ataroth and to Naarah. It continued until it touched Jericho and stopped at the Jordan River." **Janoah** is apparently at the NE border of Ephraim and thus is very near or even in the Jordan valley.

Keil and Delitzsch - From Janoah the boundary went down "to Ataroth and Naarath," Ataroth, a different place from the Ataroth or Atroth-addar mentioned in vv. 3 and 5 (**KITTO'S NOTE** = **Ataroth**, on the borders of Ephraim Joshua 16:2; Joshua 16:7, which some identify with, and others distinguish from, the Ataroth-Addar of the same tribe mentioned in Joshua 16:5; Joshua 18:13), is apparently to be sought for on the eastern slope of the mountains by the side of the Ghor, judging from the expression "went down;" but it has not yet been discovered. Naarath, probably the same as Naaran, in eastern Ephraim (1 Chron. 7:28), is described in the Onom. (s. v. Naaratha) as viculus Judaeorum Naorath, five Roman miles (i.e., two hours) from Jericho, probably on the north-east. The boundary line then touched Jericho, i.e., the district of Jericho, namely on the north side of the district, as Jericho was allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (Josh. 18:21). At this point it also coincided with the southern boundary of the tribe of Joseph (v. 1) and the northern boundary of Benjamin (Josh. 18:12).

Naarah - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia A town in the territory of Ephraim Joshua 16:7 . It appears as "Naaran" in 1 Chronicles 7:28 (Codex Vaticanus Νααρνάν , *Naarnán* ; Codex Alexandrinus Νααρών , *Naarón*). Eusebius, *Onomasticon* (s.v. "Noorath") places it 5 Roman miles from Jericho. The name has not been recovered, and no identification is certain. The position would agree with that of *el - 'Aujeh* , about 5 miles Northeast of Jericho.

Joshua 16:8 From Tappuah the border continued westward to the brook of Kanah, and it ended at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families,

- **Tappuah**: Jos 12:17 17:8
- **brook of Kanah**: Jos 17:9 19:28
- **the sea**: Jos 16:3-6 Nu 34:6
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

From Tappuah (see [map above](#)) **the border continued westward to the brook of Kanah** (see [map above](#) where it is designated "Kanan Ravine" - [Wikipedia](#)), **and it ended at the sea. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim according to their families**

Tappuah - Jewish Encyclopedia City in Ephraim, marking the western boundary of the tribe (Joshua 16:8).

Kanah - Easton's Bible Dictionary A stream forming the boundary between Ephraim and Manasseh, from the Mediterranean eastward to **Tappuah** (see [map above](#)) (Joshua 16:8). It has been identified with the sedgy streams that constitute the Wady Talaik, which enters the sea between Joppa and Caesarea.

Joshua 16:9 together with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages.

- Jos 17:9
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

Joshua 17:9 (**MANASSEH'S BORDER**) The border went down to the brook of Kanah, southward of the brook (**these cities belonged to Ephraim among the cities of Manasseh**), and the border of Manasseh was on the north side of the brook and it ended at the sea.

CITIES IN MANASSEH PART OF EPHRAIM'S INHERITANCE

Together with the cities which were set apart for the sons of Ephraim in the midst of the inheritance of the sons of Manasseh, all the cities with their villages - NLT - "In addition, some towns with their surrounding villages in the territory allocated to the half-tribe of Manasseh were set aside for the tribe of Ephraim." This text teaches that some of the cities given to Ephraim were located in the area of the inheritance given to Manasseh. This might be designed to maintain tribal unity between these two groups, but that is conjecture. **Grant** says that "There is no explanation provided for Ephraim gaining cities that lay beyond their borders, although it is worth pointing out that Manasseh was also granted cities that were not within its boundaries (Joshua 17:11)."

Keil - The tribe of Ephraim also received some scattered towns in the territory of the tribe of Manasseh, in fact all those towns to which Tappuah belonged, according to Josh. 17:8, with the dependent villages.

In summary, from the [map above](#) note that Ephraim was bounded on the WEST by the tribe of **Dan** (at least at the beginning, until Dan opted to move north as discussed above), on the SOUTH by **Benjamin** and a portion of **Dan**, on the EAST by the **Jordan**, and in the NORTH by the half tribe of Manasseh. The inheritance itself was 38 miles east and west and 20 miles north and south. This is the inheritance of Ephraim.

Joshua 16:10 But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers.

- **did not drive** Jos 15:63 Jdg 1:29 1Ki 9:16,21
- **the Canaanites:** Nu 33:52-55 De 7:1-2
- [Joshua 16 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Joshua 15:63+ Now as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the sons of Judah **could not drive them out**; so the Jebusites live with the sons of Judah at Jerusalem until this day.

Judges 1:28-30, 33, 35 + It came about **when Israel became strong**, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely. 29 Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who were living in Gezer; so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. 30 Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites lived among them and became subject to forced labor. (1:33) Naphtali **did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh**, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, but lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; and the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and Beth-anath **became forced labor** for them...(1:35) yet the Amorites persisted in living in Mount Heres, in Aijalon and in Shaalbim; but when the power of the house of Joseph grew strong, **they became forced labor**.

1 Kings 9:16, 21 For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife. (1Ki 9:21) **their descendants who were left after them in the land whom the sons of Israel were unable to destroy utterly**, from them Solomon levied forced laborers, even to this day.

EPHRAIMITES' CANAANITE CONSCRIPTION COMPROMISE

[Conscription](#) means compulsory enlistment for state service, typically into the armed forces.

But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers - The Ephraimites failed to drive out the inhabitants of Gezer as [shown on the map at the top of this page](#). This "sowing" of compromise with the wicked and abominably sinful Canaanites leads to a "reaping" (Gal 6:7-8+) with much grief and many struggles recorded in the sad book of Judges. (See THOUGHT on "COULD NOT" and "WOULD NOT")

Compromise with evil never pays.

In the end, disobedience to God will cost you

Disobedience to God's clear commands **ALWAYS** has consequences (almost always negative ones) beloved! This is a clear breach of the covenant stipulations clearly stated by Yahweh...

Deuteronomy 7:1-5+ "When the LORD your **God brings you into the land** where you are entering to possess it, and **clears away many nations before you**, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, 2 and when the LORD your **God delivers them before you** and you defeat them, then **you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.** 3 "Furthermore, **you shall not intermarry with them**; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. 4 "For **they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods**; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. 5 "But thus you shall do to them: **you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.**

Madvig comments on the cost of compromise writing "The commands of God allowed them to subject the people from cities outside Palestine to forced labor, but the population of the cities inside the Promised Land—men, women, and children—were to be put to death without pity and without exception (Dt 20:10–18). As a result of this failure, the Israelites were corrupted by intermarrying with these

pagans and engaging in their perverse and idolatrous worship (Jdg 2:1–3; 3:5–6; 10:6). We cannot be sure of the exact time reference of the phrase “to this day,” but it seems that Gezer was not subjected to Israel until the time of Solomon (1 Kings 9:15–17). ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3](#))

Utley - This verse is meant to express the disobedience of these large tribes (cf. Nu 33:55; Jdgs. 1:27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34). This was the common experience of all the tribes (cf. Joshua 17:13). R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, makes a good point about this verse. “If scholars had differentiated a little more closely in the past between **occupation** and **subjugation**(see below) ,the picture of conquest as represented in Joshua would have emerged in far clearer focus than it did, and as a result there would have been no need to regard the initial narratives of Judges as historical at the expense of their counterparts in Joshua” (**ED: WHILE I AGREE WITH THE STATEMENT, THE FACT IS THAT GOD DID NOT SAY OCCUPY OR SUBJUGATE BUT UTTERLY DESTROY - THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO ASSURE THE PAGANS WOULD NOT DEFILE THE HOLINESS OF ISRAEL!**).

- **Occupation** - the action, state, or period of occupying or being occupied by military force.
- **Subjugation** - the action of bringing someone or something under domination or control.

Campbell adds this insightful comment - But the men of Ephraim, like those of Judah, did not completely drive out the Canaanites from their region. Motivated by a materialistic attitude, they chose to put the Canaanites in Gezer under tribute to gain additional wealth. That proved to be a fatal mistake for in later centuries, in the time of the Judges, the arrangement was reversed as the Canaanites rose up and enslaved the Israelites. In addition to the historical lesson there is a spiritual principle here. It is all too easy for a believer to tolerate and excuse **some pet sin** only to wake up some day to the grim realization that it has risen up to possess and drive him to spiritual defeat. It pays to deal with sin decisively and harshly. (**ED: AND THE BIBLE DOES NOT JUST SUGGEST DOING SO BUT COMMANDS IT!!! - cf COMMAND IN Col 3:5NLT+.**) ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#))

Guzik - Perhaps the people of Ephraim were guilty of this compromise because they wanted forced laborers among them. Even this convenience does not justify their disobedience to God’s command.. If they had the power to make the people of Gezer forced laborers, they certainly had the power to defeat them completely, especially because Gezer was a city that Joshua had already conquered (Joshua 10:33 and Joshua 12:12).. This sort of compromise seems innocent, but it became the way that much idolatry and immoral worship came into the people of Israel. This is one reason why we see so many struggles in the days of the Judges. The Israelites did not fully conquer for two reasons. First, they wanted peace at any cost. Second, they wanted wealth. For the sake of ease and money, they disobeyed God and fell short of what He had for them—as we do today also.

Cities Not Conquered by the Israelites

| TRIBES | JOSHUA | JUDGES | PEOPLE | CITIES |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|------------|---|
| Israelites in General | Josh 13:13 | | | |
| Judah | Josh 15:63 | | Jebusites | Jerusalem |
| Benjamin | | Jdg 1:21 | Jebusites | Jerusalem |
| W. Manasseh | Josh 17:11-12 | Jdg 1:27-28 | Canaanites | Beth Shan, Taanach, Dor, Ibleam, Megiddo, Endor,* Napthoth* |
| Ephraim | Josh 16:10 | Jdg 1:29 | Canaanites | Gezer |
| Zebulun | | Jdg 1:30 | Canaanites | Kitron, Nahalol |
| Asher | | Jdg 1:31-32 | Canaanites | Acco, Sidon, Ahlab, Aczib, Helbah, Aphek, Rehob |
| Naphtali | | Jdg 1:33 | Canaanites | Beth Shemesh, Beth Anath |
| Dan | Josh 19:47 | Jdg 1:34-35 | Amorites | Leshem |

Note - This is a list of the so-called “Conquest Lacunae,” consisting primarily of cities the Israelites did not conquer (see Kallai, Historical Geography, 102–11). It differs from the list of “Remaining Lands,” which are listed together in Josh 13:2–6 and consist of territories the Israelites did not conquer (in addition to Kallai, see Na’aman, Borders and

Districts, 39–73). (Source: David Howard - [Joshua: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture Volume 5 The New American Commentary](#))