

Who/what was Tirzah in the Bible?

Tirzah in the Bible is 1) the name of a city that Joshua conquered (Joshua 12:24), and 2) the name of a woman from the tribe of Manasseh who was instrumental in clarifying a law governing family inheritances (Numbers 26:33; Joshua 17:3).

In Joshua chapter 12, we learn of the city of Tirzah, an ancient Canaanite city west of the Jordan River, allotted to the half-tribe of Manasseh. Tirzah was conquered by Joshua (Joshua 12:24). Tirzah became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel from the time of Jeroboam I until the reign of Omri. It was Omri who moved the capital to Samaria (1 Kings 16:23).

There aren't many references to the city of Tirzah in the Bible, but we do know a few things about it. Tirzah was where Jeroboam's son died. Also Baasha, Elah, and Zimri ruled Israel from Tirzah (1 Kings 14:17; 15:33; 16:6, 15). The city is compared to a beautiful young woman in Song of Solomon 6:4, "You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling, as lovely as Jerusalem, as majestic as troops with banners."

The other Tirzah, a daughter of Zelophehad, joined her four sisters and came to Moses with a concern over how the Promised Land was to be divided to their family. In Numbers 26:52-56, Moses was given instructions from the Lord on how to divide up the land for inheritance, but these sisters had a unique situation in that they had no male relatives to maintain the inheritance for them (verse 33). With no father and no brothers to inherit a portion of the land, the daughters of Zelophehad would be left destitute. In Numbers 27:1-4 Tirzah and her sisters proposed to Moses that they be allowed to inherit their father's portion of the land. God ruled in favor of the daughters. They could inherit their father's portion of the land as a way to provide for themselves and

preserve the memory of their father (verses 5 -11).

Later, in Numbers 36, we once again hear about the daughters of Zelophehad. This time it is in relation to whom they could marry. A potential problem loomed: if Tirzah and her sisters, who were now landowners, married men outside their tribe, they would join their husbands' tribes and take their father's property with them. As the sisters married men from other tribes, the property allotted to Manasseh, the tribe of Zelophehad, would be diminished (Numbers 36:1-3). God instructed that the daughters of Zelophehad could marry anyone they wanted within their father's tribal clan. The land promised to Zelophehad could not be parceled out to other tribes.

The name Tirzah means "she is my delight." Throughout the Bible, God shows special concern for the widow and the orphan. This was certainly the case with Tirzah and the other daughters of Zelophehad.