

1 Chronicles 6:59

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs:

Analysis

And Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs—this verse lists Levitical cities assigned to Aaron's descendants in Judah's and Simeon's territories. The Hebrew **מִגְרָשֵׁיהָ** (migrasheiha, 'suburbs') technically means 'pasture lands' or 'open spaces'—grazing fields extending 2,000 cubits around each city (Numbers 35:4-5), providing agricultural support for non-farming priestly families.

Ashan (אֶשְׁן 'smoke') appears in Joshua 15:42 as a Judahite city given to Simeon (Joshua 19:7), then designated for Levites. **Beth-shemesh** (בֵּית־שֶׁמֶשׁ 'house of the sun') was a strategic border city with Philistia, famous as the terminus of the ark's return journey after Philistine captivity (1 Samuel 6). The priestly presence in border cities served dual purposes: worship leadership and covenant witness to neighboring nations.

The Levitical city system (48 cities total) geographically distributed spiritual leadership throughout Israel, preventing priestly isolation in Jerusalem and ensuring Torah teaching reached all tribes. This decentralized model anticipates the New Testament pattern of elders/pastors in every city (Titus 1:5), making spiritual oversight accessible rather than centralized.

Historical Context

The Levitical city system originated in Joshua's conquest (c. 1400 BC, Joshua 21) but required continual renegotiation as tribal boundaries shifted. By the

Chronicler's time (450-400 BC), most northern Levitical cities were lost to Assyrian conquest; this genealogical record preserved the ideal distribution and encouraged restoration where possible. Beth-shemesh's excavation shows Israelite occupation from Late Bronze Age through Iron Age II, confirming its long-standing importance.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the Levitical city system—distributing spiritual leaders throughout the land rather than centralizing them—challenge or affirm your church's approach to ministry?
2. What significance does priestly presence in border cities like Beth-shemesh have for Christian witness in culturally contested spaces?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶת	אֲשָׁן	וְאֶת	מִגְרָשֶׁיהָ:	וְאֶת	בֵּית	יִשְׁמֶשֶׁת	וְאֶת
H853	And Ashan	H853	with her suburbs	H853	H0	and Bethshemesh	H853
	H6228		H4054			H1053	

מִגְרָשֶׁיהָ:
with her suburbs
H4054

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 21:16 (Parallel theme): And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.

Joshua 15:42 (Parallel theme): Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan,

