

Deuteronomy 4:43

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Namely, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.

Analysis

Namely, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.

Moses names the three cities with geographical precision: Betser (בֶּצֶר, 'fortress/gold ore') for Reuben in the southern wilderness plateau; Ramot (רָמוֹת, 'heights') in Gilead for Gad in the central region; Golan (גֹּלָן, possibly 'exile' or 'encircled') in Bashan for half-Manasseh in the north. Strategic distribution ensured accessibility—no one was more than a day's journey from refuge.

Each city served a specific tribal territory, demonstrating the integration of civil law with tribal organization. The eastern tribes, though settling outside Canaan proper, received full legal protection. Geographic distance from the tabernacle did not diminish covenantal status or legal rights. God's justice extends to the margins, not merely the center.

The names themselves carry significance. Bezer suggests strength and protection; Ramot indicates elevated status; Golan may imply a place of exile or refuge. Together they speak of sanctuary for the vulnerable. These specific names, recorded in Scripture, demonstrate that biblical law addresses real places, real people, real situations—not abstract principles floating above actual human need. Divine revelation touches ground.

Historical Context

Moses names the three trans-Jordan cities of refuge: Bezer for Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead for Gad, and Golan in Bashan for Manasseh. These tribes had requested to settle east of the Jordan (Numbers 32), and Moses ensured they had legal protections equal to those who would settle in Canaan proper.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the strategic distribution of cities of refuge demonstrate God's concern for accessibility and equal protection under law?
2. What does it mean that those on the geographical margins of Israel received the same legal protections as those at the center?

Interlinear Text

אֶת	בְּצֶר	בַּמִּדְבָּר	בְּאֶרֶץ	הַמִּישֹׁר	לְרֵאֲוִיבֵנִי
H853	Namely Bezer	in the wilderness	country	in the plain	of the Reubenites
	H1221	H4057	H776	H4334	H7206

וְאֶת	רָאֵם ת	בְּגִלְעָד	לְגַדִּי	וְאֶת	גּוֹלָן	בְּבָשָׁן
H853	and Ramoth	in Gilead	of the Gadites	H853	and Golan	in Bashan
	H7216	H1568	H1425		H1474	H1316

לְמַנַּשֵּׁי:

of the Manassites
H4520

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 20:8 (Parallel theme): And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh.

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