

Ezekiel 48:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now these are the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east and west; a portion for Dan.

Analysis

Now these are the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east and west; a portion for Dan. This verse begins Ezekiel's description of the tribal land allotments in the restored Israel. The precision of boundaries—"from the north end" with specific markers like Hetlōn (הַתְּלִונָה, Hethlon), Hāmāt (הָמָת, Hamath), Haṣar 'Ēnān (חַצֵּר עֵנָן, Hazar-enan), and Dammešeq (דַּמְשֶׁק, Damascus)—demonstrates God's sovereign allocation of inheritance.

The significance of **Dan receiving the first and northernmost portion** is profound. Historically, Dan was associated with idolatry (Judges 18:30-31, 1 Kings 12:28-30) and is omitted from Revelation's 144,000 sealed servants (Revelation 7:4-8). Yet in Ezekiel's restoration vision, Dan receives full inheritance—a powerful picture of redemptive grace. No tribe is beyond restoration when God acts in sovereign mercy. The phrase "**for these are his sides east and west**" indicates Dan's territory stretches the entire width of the land, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, establishing the pattern for all subsequent tribal allotments.

The tribal arrangement in Ezekiel 48 differs dramatically from Joshua's original

distribution (Joshua 13-19). Here, all tribes receive equal portions in parallel horizontal strips running east-west, with the sacred district (containing temple, priestly land, and Levitical cities) at the center (vv. 8-22). This signals new creation order—not based on historical conquest or tribal strength but on divine grace distributing inheritance equally. It anticipates the New Jerusalem where the twelve tribes are memorialized in equal honor (Revelation 21:12) and believers share equally in Christ's inheritance (Ephesians 1:11, Colossians 1:12).

Historical Context

The boundaries described use geographical markers from Israel's ideal northern border. Hethlon is likely modern Heitela near the Phoenician coast; Hamath was a Syrian city-state on the Orontes River (modern Hama); Hazar-enan was on the northeastern border; Damascus, the ancient Syrian capital, marked the eastern limit. These boundaries approximate God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:18) and reflect Solomon's kingdom at its zenith (1 Kings 4:21, 24). The vision, received by Ezekiel around 573 BC during Babylonian exile, offered hope that despite judgment and dispersion, God's covenant promises remain certain. The restoration would exceed even Solomon's glory.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Dan's restoration despite historical apostasy encourage hope for individuals and communities that have wandered from God?
2. What does the equal distribution of land (contrasted with Joshua's varied allotments based on tribal size and conquest) teach about grace versus merit in God's kingdom?

Interlinear Text

אֵל	אֶפְרַיִם	וּבָנָה	מִקְצֵה	הַשָּׁבֵט	יִם	שֵׁם	וְתַ	אֵל	לָהּ
H413	H6828	H7097	H7626	H8034	H428	Now these are the names	of the tribes	end	From the north
עִזִּים	סָצָר	סָמְתָּחָה	לְבוֹא	סְתִּילְלָה	דָּרְגָה	לִתְ	דָּרְגָה	אֶל	לָהּ
H2704	H2574	H2574	H935	H2855	H1870	H3027	to the coast	of Hethlon	as one goeth
וְבַיִוְ	סָמְתָּחָה	אֶל	אֶפְרַיִם	וּבָנָה	דָּמָשָׁק	לִתְ	דָּמָשָׁק	אֶל	לָהּ
H1961	H2574	H413	H6828	H1834	H1366	H3027	From the north	the border	of Damascus
אֶפְרַיִם	אֶתְ	לְ	פָּאַת	מִזְרָחָה	מִזְרָחָה	לְ	מִזְרָחָה	אֶתְ	לְ
H259	H1835	H3220	H6921	H6285	H0	east	and west	portion for Dan	for these are his sides

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