

Joshua 13:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Heshbon, and all her cities that are in the plain; Dibon, and Bamoth-baal, and Beth-baal-meon,

Analysis

Heshbon, and all her cities that are in the plain—Heshbon (חֶשְׁבוֹן) was the former capital of Sihon, king of the Amorites (Numbers 21:26), making it a strategic and symbolic prize. The Hebrew ha-mishor (הַמִּישֹׁר, "the plain") refers to the high plateau east of the Dead Sea, excellent grazing land. This verse lists cities conquered from Sihon, now assigned to Reuben: Dibon, Bamoth-baal, Beth-baal-meon, and others.

The inclusion of cities with "Baal" in their names (Bamoth-baal, Beth-baal-meon) highlights the pagan religious landscape Israel was called to transform. God gave Israel cities built by others (Deuteronomy 6:10-11), demonstrating His sovereignty in transferring wealth and infrastructure from the wicked to His covenant people. Yet the retention of Baal place-names foreshadowed Israel's later syncretism—they occupied the land physically but failed to purge it spiritually, a warning against incomplete obedience.

Historical Context

Heshbon (modern Hesban) was located about 20 miles east of the Jordan River and 15 miles southwest of Amman. Archaeological excavations have confirmed Iron Age occupation. Dibon (modern Dhiban) yielded the famous Moabite Stone. These cities formed a network controlling the King's Highway, the major north-south trade route through Transjordan, making them economically and militarily valuable.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does God giving Israel cities they didn't build teach about His sovereignty in providing for His people?
2. How does the presence of Baal place-names warn against incomplete spiritual transformation in our own lives?
3. In what ways might we occupy territory God has given us physically without possessing it spiritually?

Interlinear Text

וְכָל	עָרֵיהָ	אֲשֶׁר	בְּמִישָׁר	וְדִבּוֹן	וְכָל
Heshbon	and all her cities	that are in the plain	Dibon		
H2809	H3605	H5892	H834	H4334	H1769
בְּעַל	וְבַת	בְּעַל	מְעוֹן:		
and Bamothbaal		and Bethbaalmeon			
H1120	H0	H0	H1010		