

Joshua 15:51

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages:

Analysis

And Goshen, and Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages:

Goshen (גּוֹשֶׁן, goshen) shares its name with the Egyptian region where Israel lived before the Exodus, though this is clearly a different location in Judah's hill country. The name's etymology is uncertain, possibly meaning "drawing near" or deriving from unknown pre-Israelite roots. That a Judean region bears the same name as their Egyptian homeland may be coincidental, or it might reflect nostalgic naming by former slaves now free in their inheritance—transforming a name of bondage into a memorial of deliverance.

Holon (חוֹלָן, cholon) possibly means "sandy" or derives from chalal (חַלָּל, "to pierce, profane"), though the etymology remains uncertain. The city was designated a Levitical city and city of refuge (21:15), providing asylum for accidental manslayers. The establishment of refuge cities demonstrated God's justice—distinguishing intentional murder from accidental killing, protecting the innocent while punishing the guilty (Numbers 35:9-28; Deuteronomy 19:1-13). This gracious provision foreshadowed Christ our refuge, where sinners flee from justice to find mercy.

Giloh (גִּלּוֹה, giloh) possibly means "uncovering" or "exile," from galah (גָּלַח, "to uncover, reveal, go into exile"). This city gained tragic fame as the hometown of Ahithophel, David's trusted counselor who betrayed him during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15:12; 23:34). Ahithophel's treachery, originating from Giloh,

foreshadowed Judas's betrayal of Jesus—both intimate advisors who turned against God's anointed. The enumeration "eleven cities" maintains the administrative precision characteristic of these territorial lists.

Historical Context

The designation of Holon as both a Levitical city and city of refuge reflects these institutions' frequent overlap. Cities of refuge required stable populations and Levitical oversight to administer the laws of asylum properly. The six cities of refuge (three west of Jordan, three east) were strategically distributed so that fleeing manslayers could reach safety quickly. Holon's position in Judah's southern hill country made it accessible to those fleeing from the Negev or Philistine regions. Giloh's identification remains uncertain, though some propose Khirbet Jala near Hebron. Ahithophel's wisdom was proverbial—"as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God" (2 Samuel 16:23)—making his betrayal particularly devastating. His suicide after Absalom rejected his counsel demonstrates pride's destructive power.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Goshen's name transformation (from bondage in Egypt to inheritance in Canaan) encourage you about God's redemption of painful memories?
2. What does the city of refuge (Holon) teach about God's justice that both punishes guilt and provides mercy for the unintentional offender?
3. How should Ahithophel's betrayal from Giloh warn us about the danger of intimate spiritual relationships turning to apostasy through pride or bitterness?

Interlinear Text

וּמְצָרִיקָן: עַשְׂרֵה אֶחָת עָרִים יְגָל הַיּוֹתֶר וְיַחַל אֶת גָּשֶׁן
And Goshen and Holon and Giloh cities eleven with their villages
H1657 H2473 H1542 H5892 H259 H6240 H2691

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 11:16 (Parallel theme): So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;

Joshua 10:41 (Parallel theme): And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.

2 Samuel 15:12 (Parallel theme): And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

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