

Joshua 15:53

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Aphekah,

Analysis

And Janum, and Beth-tappuah, and Aphekah. This verse appears within the detailed enumeration of Judah's inheritance, specifically in the section listing cities in the hill country (har, הַר). The three cities mentioned—Janum, Beth-tappuah, and Aphekah—represent the meticulous faithfulness of God in fulfilling His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob regarding the land.

The Hebrew name Beth-tappuah (בֵּית תַּפְּוּחַ) means "house of the apple" or "house of the fruit," indicating an area of agricultural abundance and fertility. This name points to God's provision not just of land, but of productive, life-sustaining territory. The mention of specific cities, even obscure ones, demonstrates that God's promises are concrete and particular, not vague or generalized.

Theologically, this verse illustrates several crucial truths:

1. God's faithfulness extends to every detail—not merely grand promises but specific locations and provisions
2. covenant promises have tangible, earthly fulfillment
3. the land distribution was divinely ordained, not randomly allocated;
4. even seemingly insignificant places matter in God's redemptive plan.

The careful recording of these cities serves as a permanent witness to God's trustworthiness and the historical reality of Israel's possession of Canaan as the promised inheritance.

Historical Context

This verse occurs within Joshua 15:21-63, the comprehensive catalog of cities allocated to the tribe of Judah during the territorial division following the conquest of Canaan (circa 1400-1350 BCE). Judah, as the preeminent tribe from which kings and ultimately the Messiah would come, received the largest and most detailed inheritance. The hill country region mentioned here refers to the central highlands of Judea, west of the Dead Sea.

Archaeological evidence suggests Beth-tappuah can be identified with modern Taffuh, located about 5 miles west of Hebron. Excavations in the region confirm occupation during the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age, consistent with the biblical timeline. The hill country was strategically valuable for defense, with its rugged terrain providing natural fortifications, and agriculturally productive with terraced farming.

The listing of these cities served multiple purposes: establishing legal boundaries for tribal territories, preventing future disputes over land ownership, providing a historical record of fulfillment of divine promises, and organizing administrative and military districts. For later generations of Israelites reading Joshua, these lists confirmed their ancestral rights to the land and reminded them of God's covenant faithfulness across centuries.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's attention to seemingly insignificant details in this passage encourage us to trust Him with the small matters of our lives?
2. What does the permanent recording of these city names teach us about God's view of history and His promises?
3. In what ways does the physical inheritance of land in Joshua point forward to our spiritual inheritance in Christ?
4. How should understanding the historical reality of these places shape our reading of Scripture as actual history rather than allegory?
5. What parallels exist between Israel receiving their promised inheritance and believers receiving their promised spiritual blessings in Christ?

Interlinear Text

יָנֹם	וְבֵית	תַּפּ וְיָם	אֶפְקָה:
And Janum	H0	and Bethtappuah	and Aphekah
H3241		H1054	H664

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