

Joshua 15:59

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages:

Analysis

And Maarath, and Beth-anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages—

These cities complete another cluster in Judah's hill country. Beth-anoth (בֵּית עֲנוֹת, "house of Anath") bears the name of a Canaanite goddess, similar to earlier examples of Baal place-names. The retention of pagan divine names in Israelite geography presented both opportunity and danger: opportunity to transform pagan sites into places serving the true God, danger of syncretism if residents tolerated or adopted pagan practices.

The enumeration "**six cities with their villages**" maintains the precise accounting characteristic of these chapters. Some commentators note that these detailed lists, seemingly dry to modern readers, would have been precious to original recipients—their family's specific inheritance documented in sacred scripture. Imagine the pride and security of knowing your hometown was listed in God's Word as legitimate, covenant-blessed inheritance.

Historical Context

These cities were in the central-southern hill country, an area of moderate rainfall and terraced agriculture. The region required significant labor investment to create and maintain agricultural terraces on hillsides, making it less attractive to conquerors who preferred easier lowland agriculture. This characteristic actually helped preserve Israelite culture, as the hill country remained more purely Israelite while lowland areas saw more cultural mixing.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the transformation of pagan-named sites into Israelite cities illustrate redemptive re-purposing of what was formerly dedicated to evil?
2. What might it mean for believers today to know their 'place' is documented in God's Word (our names written in heaven)?
3. How can Christians redeem cultural elements formerly associated with paganism without compromising doctrinal purity?

Interlinear Text

And Maarath	H4638	וְבֵית	H0	עַבְוֹת	H1042	וְבֵית	H515	וְאַלְתָּקָן		שָׁשׁ עָרִים	H5892	שָׁשׁ	H8337	וְמַעַרְתָּה
-------------	-------	--------	----	---------	-------	--------	------	--------------	--	--------------	-------	-------	-------	--------------

with their villages
H2691