

Joshua 19:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrising unto the border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia,

Analysis

And turned from Sarid eastward toward the sunrising unto the border of Chisloth-tabor, and then goeth out to Daberath, and goeth up to Japhia.

The boundary description pivots at **Sarid**, turning **eastward toward the sunrising** (mizrachah mizrach ha-shemesh, מזרח מזרח השמש). This beautiful Hebrew phrase literally means "toward the rising of the sun," emphasizing cardinal orientation through natural observation. Ancient Israelites marked directions by the sun's movement, grounding abstract geography in daily experience of God's creation.

Chisloth-tabor (כִּסְלוֹת תָּבוֹר) literally means "the flanks of Tabor," referring to settlements on the slopes of Mount Tabor. This prominent mountain (1,929 feet elevation) dominated the landscape and served as a crucial geographical landmark. Mount Tabor appears prominently in Deborah and Barak's victory over Sisera (Judges 4:6-14), where Zebulun fought valiantly (Judges 5:18). The inclusion of Tabor in Zebulun's boundary thus connects their inheritance to future military triumphs accomplished through faith.

Daberath (דָּבֶרֶת) was later assigned as a Levitical city (Joshua 21:28; 1 Chronicles 6:72), demonstrating how tribal inheritances included provisions for priestly families. **Japhia** (יָפִיעַ) possibly means "he will shine" or "conspicuous," perhaps describing its elevated location. These sites trace Zebulun's eastern boundary,

marking where their territory bordered Naphtali and Issachar. Each landmark witnessed God's faithfulness in giving Israel the land He had promised to Abraham 600 years earlier.

Historical Context

Mount Tabor, mentioned indirectly through Chisloth-tabor, became one of ancient Israel's most significant landmarks. Its distinctive dome shape, rising prominently from the Jezreel Valley, made it visible for miles and a natural gathering point. Early Christian tradition identified Tabor as the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8), though this is debated since the text doesn't specify which mountain Jesus climbed.

Daberath's identification as a Levitical city demonstrates the integration of priestly families throughout tribal territories. The Levites received no contiguous tribal inheritance but rather cities scattered among the other tribes (Joshua 21:1-42). This dispersion served theological purposes—having priests dwelling among each tribe ensured that teaching of the Law and maintenance of proper worship permeated all Israel geographically. Zebulun, though not the most prominent tribe, contributed to supporting the Levitical priesthood through providing cities and pasture lands.

The Jezreel Valley and Mount Tabor region witnessed many decisive moments in Israel's history. Beyond Deborah's victory, this area saw Gideon's triumph over the Midianites (Judges 6-7), Saul's final battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 31), and Josiah's death fighting Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:29). The land Zebulun inherited thus became a stage for pivotal events in redemptive history, demonstrating that God's purposes unfold in specific locations, not merely abstract spiritual realms.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the Hebrew phrase 'toward the sunrising' illustrate how Scripture grounds spiritual truth in observable natural phenomena?
2. What does the inclusion of Mount Tabor in Zebulun's inheritance teach about how God's assignments often include future opportunities for faith and courage we don't yet foresee?
3. How does the Levitical city system—scattering priests among all tribes—inform how the church should distribute spiritual leadership and teaching throughout all communities?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּשְׁבַּ	עַל	פֶּשֶׁ	מִשְׁ	עַל
And turned	from Sarid	eastward	toward the sunrising	H8121
H7725	H8301	H6924	H4217	H5921
עַל	פֶּשֶׁ	מִשְׁ	עַל	פֶּשֶׁבֶת
גַּבְעָל	רַ	כִּסְלָת	תְּבַר	אֶל
unto the border	H0	of Chislothabor	and then goeth out	H413
H1366		H3696	H3318	H1705
וַיַּעַל	הַ	יְפִיעָן		תְּבַרְתָּ
and goeth up		to Japhia		to Daberath
H5927		H3309		

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