

Joshua 19:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem,

Analysis

And their border was toward Jezreel, and Chesulloth, and Shunem. This verse begins detailing Issachar's territorial boundaries, starting with three significant cities. Yizrē'ēl (יִזְרְעֵל) means "God sows" or "God will sow," a name rich with agricultural and prophetic significance. The valley bearing this name was ancient Palestine's breadbasket, but also became synonymous with divine judgment—Hosea named his son Jezreel to prophesy blood-guilt judgment (Hosea 1:4-5), and Revelation's Armageddon (Greek for Har Megiddo) references this valley as the final battle site (Revelation 16:16).

Chesulloth (כֶּשְׁלּוֹלֹת) means "loins" or "confidence," likely referring to a geographically secure position. Shunem (שֻׁנֵּם) became famous as the home of the wealthy woman who hosted Elisha, whose son the prophet raised from death (2 Kings 4:8-37). This same city witnessed the Philistines' encampment before Saul's final battle (1 Samuel 28:4). These cities weren't merely dots on a map but stages for redemptive history—places where God's sovereignty intersected with human drama, demonstrating that sacred geography matters in biblical narrative.

Historical Context

The Jezreel Valley stretches approximately 25 miles east-west and varies from 3-12 miles north-south, forming a triangular plain between Galilee and Samaria. This valley's strategic importance cannot be overstated—controlling it meant controlling the Via Maris, the ancient coastal highway connecting Egypt with

Assyria and Babylon. Archaeological excavations at Tell Jezreel have revealed fortifications from the Israelite monarchy period, confirming the site's military significance. Shunem has been identified with modern Sulam, about 3 miles north of Jezreel. The valley's volcanic soil made it exceptionally fertile for wheat and barley cultivation, fulfilling its name as 'God's sowing place.' However, this fertility attracted constant foreign interest, making Issachar's inheritance both blessing and burden.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How do the contrasting associations of Jezreel (fertility and judgment, sowing and reaping) inform your understanding of God's dual nature as provider and judge?
2. What does the Shunammite woman's hospitality to Elisha teach about stewarding God-given resources and territory for kingdom purposes?
3. How might living in strategically important but vulnerable places parallel the church's calling to engage culture while facing spiritual warfare?

Interlinear Text

וְיָהּ י	גְבוּלָם	יִזְרְעֵל אֵלֶּה	וְחֶסְלוֹת	שֻׁנָּם:
H1961	And their border	was toward Jezreel	and Chesulloth	and Shunem
	H1366	H3157	H3694	H7766

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 28:4 (Parallel theme): And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

2 Kings 4:8 (Parallel theme): And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

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