

Joshua 19:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Hazar-shual, and Balah, and Azem,

Analysis

And Hazar-shual, and Balah, and Azem. This verse continues the enumeration of cities within Simeon's inheritance, which was taken from Judah's portion (Joshua 19:1). The three cities—Hazar-shual, Balah, and Azem—represent the fulfillment of Jacob's prophetic word concerning Simeon: "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7). Rather than receiving a contiguous territory, Simeon received cities within Judah's borders.

The name Hazar-shual (חֲצִיר שׁוּעָל) means "village of the jackal" or "enclosure of the fox," likely describing the area's wildlife or geographical features. This naming pattern reflects ancient Israel's close observation of their environment and God's sovereignty over even the animal kingdom. The specific mention of these cities, though small and seemingly obscure, demonstrates God's comprehensive care for all twelve tribes.

Theologically, this passage illustrates divine justice tempered with mercy. Though Simeon's inheritance was diminished due to ancestral sin (the violence at Shechem, Genesis 34), the tribe still received a legitimate portion within the promised land. This reveals that while God's discipline is real, His covenant faithfulness transcends human failure. The absorption of Simeon into Judah also foreshadows the unity of God's people and ultimately points to Christ, the Lion of Judah, who gathers all believers into His kingdom regardless of tribal distinctions.

Historical Context

This verse appears in Joshua 19:1-9, which describes Simeon's territorial allotment. Historical records indicate that Simeon's inheritance lay in the southern Negev region, an area of semi-arid land suitable for pastoralism and seasonal agriculture. Hazar-shual has been identified with modern Tell el-Wawiyat or Khirbet Sa'weh, located in the northern Negev near Beersheba.

Simeon's unique situation—receiving cities within Judah rather than independent territory—had lasting historical consequences. By the time of the divided monarchy, Simeon had been largely assimilated into Judah, with no separate identity maintained. This fulfills both Genesis 49:7 and demonstrates how divine prophecy operates in historical reality over generations.

Archaeological surveys of the northern Negev reveal settlement patterns from the Late Bronze Age through the Iron Age, confirming habitation in this region during the period of the conquest and settlement. The cities mentioned would have served as administrative centers for Simeonite families within the larger framework of Judah's territory. For ancient readers, these lists provided legal documentation of land rights and served as testimony to God's faithfulness in distributing the promised inheritance to all tribes.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Simeon's reduced inheritance due to ancestral sin inform our understanding of generational consequences while maintaining hope in God's mercy?
2. What does the inclusion of Simeon within Judah's borders teach us about God's ability to work through discipline to accomplish His purposes?

3. How might Simeon's experience of dispersion yet preservation parallel the church's calling to be scattered as salt and light?
4. In what ways does the eventual absorption of Simeon into Judah prefigure the unity of all believers in Christ, the greater Son of Judah?
5. What encouragement can we draw from God's faithfulness to preserve and provide for Simeon despite their forefather's violence and presumption?

Interlinear Text

וְחָצַר	שׁוּעַ ל	וּבַלָּה	וְעֶזֶם:
H0	And Hazarshual	and Balah	and Azem
	H2705	H1088	H6107

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