

Joshua 19:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages:

Analysis

Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and Ashan; four cities and their villages:

This second list adds four more cities, creating interpretive questions about the relationship to the "thirteen cities" of verse 6. The total would be seventeen, suggesting either distinct categories (fortified cities vs. settlements) or textual variants combining different source traditions. Ain (אֵין, "spring" or "fountain") and Remmon (רִמּוֹן, "pomegranate") appear jointly as En-rimmon in Nehemiah 11:29, indicating either merger of two settlements or a compound name meaning "spring of the pomegranate." Springs were vital in the Negev's arid climate, explaining why settlements clustered around water sources.

The name Remmon shares its form with Rimmon, a Syrian deity (2 Kings 5:18), though here it likely references the fruit tree rather than pagan worship. Pomegranates were highly valued in ancient Israel, appearing on priestly garments (Exodus 28:33-34), temple decorations (1 Kings 7:18), and as symbols of fertility and blessing. That a city bore this name suggests either abundant pomegranate cultivation or symbolic hope for fruitfulness in an otherwise harsh environment.

Ether (אֶתֶר, "abundance") and Ashan (אֶשָׁן, "smoke") appear also in Judah's inheritance (Joshua 15:42), confirming the overlap between tribal territories. Ashan was later designated a Levitical city (Joshua 21:16; 1 Chronicles 6:59), showing how Simeon's cities were further redistributed to priestly service. The

progression is striking: Simeon received cities within Judah's borders, then lost even some of these to Levitical use, illustrating their progressive diminishment.

Historical Context

Ain/En-rimmon's identification with Khirbet Umm er-Ramamin (9 miles north of Beer-sheba) is plausible based on the name preservation. Post-exilic Jews resettled there (Nehemiah 11:29), showing the site's continuity across centuries. Springs in the Negev were crucial for survival—annual rainfall averages only 8-12 inches, making permanent water sources the difference between habitation and abandonment.

Pomegranates (Hebrew rimmon) were one of the seven species characterizing the Promised Land's abundance (Deuteronomy 8:8). Archaeological excavations throughout Israel have uncovered pomegranate imagery in pottery, seals, and architecture, confirming the fruit's cultural importance. The pomegranate's many seeds symbolized fertility and God's abundant provision—appropriate imagery for a city in challenging agricultural conditions.

Ashan's designation as a Levitical city (Joshua 21:16) demonstrates how Simeon's inheritance was progressively absorbed by others. The Levites received forty-eight cities throughout Israel (Numbers 35:1-8), with several taken from Simeon's minimal allotment. This further weakened Simeon's territorial identity, fulfilling Jacob's prophecy of scattering. By the monarchy period, former Simeonite territory was functionally Judahite, with Simeon existing only as genealogical memory rather than autonomous tribe.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the city name Remmon ("pomegranate"—symbol of abundance) contrast with Simeon's actual scarcity, and what does this teach about the difference between named blessings and experienced reality?
2. What does Simeon's loss of cities even to the Levites reveal about how failure to steward God's gifts leads to their transfer to more faithful servants?
3. In what areas of your spiritual life might you be dwelling near the "spring" (Ain) of God's provision without drawing deeply enough to experience the fruitfulness the pomegranate symbolizes?

Interlinear Text

עֵין	רֶמּוֹן	וְעֵתֶר	וְעָשָׁן	עָרִים	אַרְבַּע	וּמִצְרֵיהֶן:
Ain	Remmon	and Ether	and Ashan	cities	four	and their villages
H5871	H7417	H6281	H6228	H5892	H702	H2691

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 15:42 (Parallel theme): Libnah, and Ether, and Ashan,