

Joshua 19:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalath-beer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families.

Analysis

And all the villages that were round about these cities to Baalath-beer, Ramath of the south. This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families.

The phrase **all the villages that were round about these cities** (kol-hachatserim asher sevivot, כָּל-הַחֲצֵרִים אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבוֹת, *kol-hachatserim asher sevivot*) emphasizes the comprehensive nature of Simeon's allotment—not merely the named cities but the surrounding agricultural settlements and pastoral encampments. Chatser (חֲצֵר) denotes unwalled villages, crucial for understanding ancient settlement patterns where fortified cities served as refuges while most people lived in vulnerable agricultural communities.

Baalath-beer (בְּעֵלַת בְּאֵר, "mistress of the well" or "Baal of the well") combines the Canaanite deity Baal with be'er (בְּאֵר, "well"), creating theological tension. The name may preserve pre-Israelite Canaanite worship at this spring, or it could use "Baalath" in its generic sense of "mistress" or "owner" without pagan connotation. Wells were so valuable in arid regions that they acquired quasi-sacred status, sometimes retaining Canaanite names that Israel should have purged but didn't (Judges 2:11-13).

Ramath of the south (רָמַת נֶגֶב, "height of the Negev") marks the southern extremity of Simeon's territory. Ramah means "height" or "high place," often designating

hilltop settlements for defensive advantage. That this Ramah required the qualifier "of the south" distinguishes it from other Ramahs throughout Israel (1 Samuel 1:19; Matthew 2:18), indicating how common the name was. The verse concludes with formal recognition: **This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Simeon according to their families** (nachalat matteh bene-Shimon lemishpechotam, נַחֲלַת מַטֵּה בְנֵי־שִׁמְעוֹן לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָם), establishing legal title despite their subordinate position within Judah.

Historical Context

Baalath-beer appears nowhere else in Scripture, making identification uncertain. The Baal element in the name reflects Canaanite religious influence that Israel incompletely eradicated. Baal was the Canaanite storm god, associated with fertility and agricultural abundance—worship of whom Israel repeatedly adopted, provoking divine judgment (Judges 2:11-13; 1 Kings 16:31-32). That a Simeonite city retained this name suggests either incomplete conquest or later syncretism.

The phrase "according to their families" (lemishpechotam) indicates land distribution followed clan structure, with each mishpachah receiving proportional allotments. This system prevented concentration of land ownership and maintained economic equity, though it also meant smaller tribes like Simeon had fewer clans and thus less territory. The clan-based system appears throughout Joshua 13-21, showing meticulous attention to equitable distribution.

Simeon's southern location made them vulnerable to desert raiders—Amalekites, Edomites, and later Arab tribes. This military exposure without adequate population or resources contributed to their weakness. First Chronicles 4:39-43 records Simeonites seeking new territory by attacking Edomites and Amalekites, showing their expansionist attempts outside Judah's borders. These efforts suggest Simeon's dissatisfaction with their constrained inheritance and desire for independent identity—attempts that ultimately failed, as the tribe disappeared from later biblical records.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does the preservation of the name Baalath-beer (containing Baal) in Israelite territory warn about incomplete obedience in removing spiritual compromises from our lives?
2. How does Simeon's inheritance "according to their families" demonstrate God's care for equitable distribution even within the constraints of prophetic judgment?
3. In what ways might we be settling for 'southern heights' (Ramath of the south —marginal positions) when God calls us to complete faithfulness that would grant fuller blessings?

Interlinear Text

וְכָל	הַחֲצִירִים	אֲשֶׁר	סְבִיבוֹת	הָעָרִים	הָאֵלֶּה
H3605	And all the villages	H834	that were round about	these cities	H428
	H2691		H5439	H5892	
עַד	בְּעֵלֹת	בְּאֵר	רָאֵם	נֶגֶב	זֶאת
H5704	H0	to Baalathbeer	Ramath	of the south	H2063
		H1192	H7414	H5045	
	נַחֲלָת	מִטָּה	בְּנֵי	שִׁמְעֹן	
	This is the inheritance	of the tribe	of the children	of Simeon	
	H5159	H4294	H1121	H8095	
	לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם:				
	according to their families				
	H4940				

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 4:33 (Parallel theme): And all their villages that were round about the same cities, unto Baal. These were their habitations, and their genealogy.