

Joshua 19:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.

Analysis

Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon: for the part of the children of Judah was too much for them: therefore the children of Simeon had their inheritance within the inheritance of them.

This verse provides explicit theological explanation for Simeon's unusual arrangement. The phrase **the part of the children of Judah was too much for them** (rav chelqo-Yehudah mehem, מְתַתְּנֵת יְהוּדָה רַב) is striking—Judah's allotment exceeded their capacity to settle. Rather than waste land through under-population, God's wisdom redistributed the surplus to Simeon. This demonstrates divine economy: no blessing is wasted, and one tribe's abundance provides for another's need.

Yet this explanation carries ironic judgment against Simeon. They didn't receive independent territory because they lacked the population and strength to merit full tribal status. Jacob's prophecy that he would "divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7) found precise fulfillment—Simeon was scattered not by exile but by absorption into Judah. The Hebrew construction emphasizes that Simeon's inheritance was from (n, me) Judah's portion, not merely beside it—they were derivative, dependent, subordinate.

The repetition **within the inheritance of them** (b'toch nachalatam, בְּתוֹךְ נַחֲלָתָם at verse's end underscores Simeon's enclosed status. They had cities and villages (vv. 2-8) but no autonomous borders, no independent tribal territory. This foreshadows their historical disappearance—by David's time, Simeon had been absorbed into Judah, with some families migrating to northern Israel (2 Chronicles 15:9; 34:6). The tribe that joined Levi in violent destruction at Shechem (Genesis 34:25-31) found their tribal identity destroyed in turn, demonstrating the sobering principle that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Historical Context

Judah received the largest tribal allotment, stretching from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean and from Benjamin's border southward to the Negev. This vast territory (detailed in Joshua 15) reflected both Judah's large population and their covenant preeminence as bearers of the messianic line (Genesis 49:10). However, the southern Negev remained sparsely populated due to aridity, making Simeon's placement there logical from settlement perspective though devastating for tribal autonomy.

Population estimates suggest Judah numbered around 76,500 males at the second census (Numbers 26:22), while Simeon had drastically declined from 59,300 (Numbers 1:23) to 22,200 (Numbers 26:14)—a catastrophic 62% decrease. This demographic collapse, possibly related to divine judgment for participation in Baal-Peor immorality (Numbers 25:14 identifies Zimri as Simeonite), left Simeon the smallest tribe. Their numerical weakness made independent settlement impossible.

By the monarchy period, Simeon had effectively disappeared as distinct tribe. The tribal genealogy in 1 Chronicles 4:24-43 records Simeonite families but no autonomous territory. Second Chronicles 15:9 mentions Simeonites among northern refugees fleeing to Judah, indicating dispersion. Simeon receives no blessing in Moses' final testament (Deuteronomy 33), a conspicuous omission suggesting the tribe's diminishment was recognized and accepted. Archaeological surveys show the Negev remained underdeveloped during Iron Age I-II, consistent

with Simeon's failure to thrive there. The tribe's absorption into Judah was complete and irreversible, fulfilling Jacob's centuries-old prophecy with precision.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Judah's 'too much' becoming Simeon's inheritance illustrate the biblical principle that God's blessings to the faithful overflow to benefit others, even those under judgment?
2. What does Simeon's gradual disappearance teach about how generational consequences of sin (violence at Shechem) can result in loss of identity and legacy?
3. In what ways might we be living 'within the inheritance' of others—dependent, derivative, lacking independent spiritual vitality—and what would it take to develop robust personal faith?

Interlinear Text

מִן־כֵּל

Out of the portion for them therefore the children of Judah the inheritance

H2256

בָּנִי

H1121

יְהוָה

H3063

נְמֻלְּתָם:

H5159

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H8095

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H3588

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H1961

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H2506

בָּנִי

for them therefore the children of Judah was too much the inheritance

H1121

יְהוָה

H3063

כִּי

H7227

מִן־

H1992

נְמֻלְּתָם:

H5159

בָּנִי

for them therefore the children of Simeon within the inheritance

H1121

שָׁמַע וְיִ

H8095

בְּתִן וְיִ

H8432

נְמֻלְּתָם:

H5159

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