

Joshua 21:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer; and Libnah with her suburbs,

Analysis

Thus they gave to the children of Aaron the priest Hebron with her suburbs, to be a city of refuge for the slayer (חֶבְרוֹן עִיר מִקְלָט הַרְצָחָה, Chevron ir miklat harotzeach)—The Aaronic priesthood received Hebron, one of six arei miklat (cities of refuge) where those guilty of manslaughter could flee from the blood avenger. Hebron held profound patriarchal significance as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's burial place (Genesis 23:19; 49:29-32). That the holiest priestly lineage received this most sacred ancestral site demonstrates divine intentionality.

Libnah with her suburbs (לִבְנָה וְאֶת-מִגְרָשָׁה, Livnah ve'et-migrashehah)—The term migrash refers to open pastureland surrounding the city (Numbers 35:2-5), ensuring Levites had grazing land despite owning no territorial inheritance. This fulfilled God's specific provision: "the Levites shall have no part among you; for the priesthood of the LORD is their inheritance" (Joshua 18:7).

Historical Context

Hebron, located 19 miles south of Jerusalem at 3,040 feet elevation, was ancient Kiriath-arba (Joshua 14:15). Archaeological evidence shows continuous occupation from the Bronze Age. The Cave of Machpelah there remains sacred to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Libnah was a Canaanite royal city conquered in Joshua's southern campaign (Joshua 10:29-32), likely Tell Bornat or Tell es-Safi.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Hebron's dual role as priestly city and city of refuge picture Christ as both our High Priest and refuge from judgment?
2. What does the provision of pastureland (migrash) teach about God's care for those in full-time ministry?
3. Why is it significant that the priests received cities rather than agricultural land like other tribes?

Interlinear Text

מִלְלָתִים
to the children of Aaron the priest Thus they gave to be a city of refuge
H1121 H175 H3548 H5414 H853 H5892 H4733

אֶת לִבְנֵי אַהֲרֹן
for the slayer H853 Hebron H853 with her suburbs and Libnah H853
H7523 H2275 H4054 H3841

מִגְרָשָׁה:
with her suburbs
H4054

Additional Cross-References

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

Joshua 15:54 (Parallel theme): And Humtah, and Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, and Zior; nine cities with their villages:

Joshua 10:29 (Parallel theme): Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, unto Libnah, and fought against Libnah:

Joshua 20:7 (Parallel theme): And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in mount Naphtali, and Shechem in mount Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba, which is Hebron, in the mountain of Judah.

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