

Joshua 21:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes.

Analysis

Ain with her suburbs, and Juttah with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs; nine cities out of those two tribes (עַיִן וַיְתָה וּבֵית־שְׁמֶשׁ)—Ayin veYuttah uVeit-Shemesh ("house of the sun") carried pagan connotations, likely a former Canaanite solar worship site, yet became a Levitical city. This site later witnessed the judgment upon those who looked into the ark of the covenant (1 Samuel 6:19-20), demonstrating that proximity to holiness without reverence brings destruction. The phrase **nine cities out of those two tribes** (תשע עָרִים מֵאֲתָה) refers to Judah and Simeon, whose territories overlapped (Joshua 19:1).

The precise enumeration—exactly nine cities from Judah/Simeon—reveals God's mathematical precision in fulfilling the Levitical allocation prescribed in Numbers 35. No city was forgotten; no promise left incomplete.

Historical Context

Beth-shemesh (Tell er-Rumeileh) guarded the strategic Sorek Valley, a major route from the Philistine coastal plain into the Judean highlands. Excavations uncovered a substantial Israelite settlement with cultic installations. Its border location made it vulnerable to Philistine incursions (1 Samuel 6; 2 Kings 14:11-13). Ain may be the same as Ashan (1 Chronicles 6:59). Juttah (Yatta) lies 5 miles south of Hebron

and may have been the city where John the Baptist's parents lived (Luke 1:39-40, "city of Judah" in the hill country).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Beth-shemesh's tragic ark incident warn against casual familiarity with sacred things?
2. What does God's precise allocation of exactly nine cities teach about His faithfulness to detailed promises?
3. How should Christians today balance accessibility to God through Christ with reverence for His holiness?

Interlinear Text

תְּשִׁעְנָה עָרִים מִגְּרָשׁ בְּיַתְּאֵת שְׁמַשׁ וְיַתְּאֵת שְׁמַשׁ and Bethshemesh with her suburbs cities nine

מֵאַת	שְׁנִים	יִם	הַשְׁבָּטִים	בְּאֵלָה:
H853	out of those two	tribes		H428

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 6:59 (Parallel theme): And Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs:

Joshua 15:10 (Parallel theme): And the border compassed from Baalah westward unto mount Seir, and passed along unto the side of mount Jearim, which is Chesalon, on the north side, and went down to Beth-shemesh, and passed on to Timnah:

Joshua 15:55 (Parallel theme): Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah,

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