

Joshua 21:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the cities were ten with their suburbs for the families of the children of Kohath that remained.

Analysis

All the cities were ten with their suburbs for the families of the children of Kohath that remained.

This summary verse totals the allocation for non-priestly Kohathites (descendants of Kohath who weren't Aaron's line). The phrase "that remained" (הנותרים) distinguishes them from Aaron's descendants who received thirteen cities (verses 4, 19). The Hebrew root yatar (יתר) means to be left over or remain—these were the Kohathites who remained after the priestly line was separated out for special service.

The careful differentiation between priestly and non-priestly Kohathites illustrates biblical principles of order and distinction within unity. All Kohathites were Levites, sharing tribal identity and covenant responsibilities. Yet within that unity, God established functional distinctions—priests offering sacrifices, other Kohathites performing supporting roles. Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) reflects this same principle: one body, many members with different functions, all necessary.

The total of ten cities for these Kohathite families demonstrates proportional provision. Their allocation came from Ephraim, Dan, and half-Manasseh (verses 5, 20-25)—Joseph's descendants, fulfilling Jacob's blessing that Joseph would be fruitful (Genesis 49:22-26). The Levites' inheritance came not from

undifferentiated land distribution but from specific tribal allocations, creating economic interdependence that fostered national unity.

Historical Context

The Kohathites held special responsibility for transporting the tabernacle's most holy objects during wilderness wanderings (Numbers 4:4-15). Even within Kohath's family, Aaron's sons handled the most sacred items while other Kohathites carried them once properly covered. This careful ordering prevented presumptuous approach to holy things—a lesson Israel learned tragically when Uzzah touched the ark (2 Samuel 6:6-7).

The ten-city allocation provided sustainable economic base for Kohathite families while maintaining their dependence on tribal tithes and offerings. Unlike landholding tribes who could achieve self-sufficiency through agriculture, Levites remained economically dependent on Israel's covenant faithfulness—when Israel obeyed and brought tithes, Levites prospered; when Israel apostatized, Levites suffered (Nehemiah 13:10-13; Malachi 3:8-10). This arrangement made Levites living witnesses to covenant blessing and cursing.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the distinction between priestly and non-priestly Kohathites inform your understanding of different callings within the body of Christ?
2. What does the Levites' economic dependence on Israel's faithfulness teach about the interdependence of spiritual leaders and congregations?

3. In what ways might God be calling you to specialized service within the broader community of believers?

Interlinear Text

כָּל יְמֵן שָׁר עָרֶב | וּמִגְּרוּשִׁים | לְמַשְׁפֵּחַ וָתָּבִן בָּנִים
H3605 All the cities H5892 H6235 H4054 H4940 H1121
of Kohath that remained H6955 H3498

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