

Joshua 21:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the rest of the children of Kohath had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and out of the tribe of Dan, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh, ten cities.

Analysis

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The "**rest of the children of Kohath**" (velivney Kehat hanotarim, וְלִבְנֵי קְהַת הָנוֹתָרִים) refers to non-Aaronic Kohathites who served the Tabernacle but couldn't offer sacrifices. They received "**ten cities**" from Ephraim, Dan, and western Manasseh—strategically positioned in central Israel. While Aaron's line got thirteen cities near the worship center, these Kohathites received ten in the heartland, distributing Levitical teaching throughout the nation.

The phrase "**by lot**" (bagoral, בְּגָזָל) appears again, emphasizing God's sovereign distribution. The Kohathites didn't choose locations based on preference, economics, or family connections—God assigned cities through the sacred lot. This models Christian service: God places His workers where He wills, not where they prefer (Acts 13:2, 16:6-10). Faithfulness means serving wherever God assigns, not seeking prestigious or comfortable positions.

The allocation from "**Ephraim, Dan, and the half tribe of Manasseh**" positioned Kohathites in Israel's most populous region, ensuring maximum impact. Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph's sons (Genesis 48), blessed with numerical strength and fertile territory. Dan received coastal plains initially (though later

migrating north). This distribution ensured the largest Israelite populations had access to Levitical teaching.

Historical Context

The non-Aaronic Kohathites' ten cities included Shechem (verse 21), a city of refuge and covenant renewal site (Joshua 24). Their central location made them accessible to northern and southern tribes alike. During the divided kingdom (931 BC), many of these cities fell within the northern kingdom (Israel), where Kohathites faced pressure to participate in Jeroboam's illegitimate worship at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:25-33). Some faithful Levites fled south to Judah (2 Chronicles 11:13-16), demonstrating that geography doesn't override conviction—God's people must maintain doctrinal purity regardless of where they're positioned.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the non-Aaronic Kohathites' service without priestly privileges challenge our desire for recognition and status in ministry?
2. What does accepting God's sovereign assignment (by lot) rather than choosing preferred locations teach about Christian vocation and calling?
3. How can you faithfully serve in the 'city' (role, location, circumstances) God has assigned you, even if it's not what you would have chosen?

Interlinear Text

מִתְהָלָלִים	מִמְשָׁפֵחָה	בְּגֹתֶר יִם	לִבְנֵת	וְלִבְנֵי
of the children	of the families	And the rest	out of the tribe	and out of the tribe
H1121	H6955	H3498	H4940	H4294

מִתְהָלָל	וּמִתְחָצֵץ	מִתְהָלָל	וּמִתְחָצֵץ	מִתְהָלָל
of Ephraim	and out of the tribe	of Dan	and out of the half	and out of the tribe
H669	H4294	H1835	H2677	H4294

עָשָׂר:	עָרִים	בְּנֹתָ לְ	מִנְשָׁה	ה
of Manasseh	had by lot	cities	ten	
H4519	H1486	H5892	H6235	

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