

Joshua 21:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Gershon had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities.

Analysis

And the children of Gershon had by lot out of the families of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the half tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities.

The "**children of Gershon**" (velivney Gershon, וְלִבְנֵי גֵּרְשֹׁן) were descended from Levi's firstborn son (Exodus 6:16-17). Despite primogeniture, Gershon's line didn't receive priestly privileges—those went to Kohath's descendant Aaron. This demonstrates that natural birth order doesn't determine spiritual calling; God's sovereign choice does (Romans 9:10-13). The Gershonites received "**thirteen cities**" in Israel's northern territories: Issachar (eastern Jezreel Valley), Asher (coastal Galilee), Naphtali (upper Galilee), and eastern Manasseh (Bashan/Golan).

The phrase "**in Bashan**" (baBashan, בָּבָשָׁן) specifies the fertile, cattle-rich plateau east of the Sea of Galilee. Bashan's prosperity (Deuteronomy 32:14, Ezekiel 39:18) provided excellent pastureland for Levitical livestock. The migrash (pasture lands) surrounding these cities supported the Gershonites economically, balancing spiritual calling with practical provision.

The allocation "**by lot**" (bagoral, בְּגָזָל) for the third time emphasizes God's sovereign distribution. The northern positioning of Gershonite cities created a Levitical presence in Israel's remotest territories, ensuring even distant tribes had

access to Torah instruction. This fulfills God's intent that knowledge of His law pervade all Israel, not just the southern tribes near Jerusalem.

Historical Context

The Gershonites' northern cities included refuge cities like Kedesh in Naphtali (verse 32) and Golan in Bashan (verse 27). Their frontier positioning made them vulnerable during Assyrian invasions (732-722 BC), when northern territories fell first. Many Gershonites likely died or were exiled during this period. Yet their faithful presence in Israel's borders during peacetime demonstrates that God positions His servants even in dangerous places for kingdom purposes. Geography doesn't exempt believers from service—God calls some to spiritually difficult or physically dangerous locations.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Gershon's birthright not guaranteeing priestly privileges challenge assumptions about deserving spiritual status based on family heritage or seniority?
2. What does the Gershonites' positioning in remote northern territories teach about taking the gospel to hard-to-reach or less prestigious locations?
3. How can you faithfully maintain spiritual vitality and doctrinal purity when serving in 'frontier' contexts far from established centers of faith?

Interlinear Text

וְلֹבֶב בָּרִא	מִמְשָׁפֵחָה וּתְגִרְשָׁן	מִטְהָרָה	מִטְהָרָה
And the children of Gershon	out of the families and out of the tribe	and out of the tribe	of Issachar
H1121	H1648	H4940	H4294
H3485			
מִטְהָרָה	אֶשְׁר	מִטְהָרָה	נְפָתֵל
and out of the tribe	of Asher	and out of the tribe	of Naphtali
H4294	H836	H4294	H5321
H2677			
מִטְהָרָה	מִנְשָׁה	בְּבָשָׁן	שָׁלֵשׁ
and out of the tribe	of Manasseh	in Bashan	cities
H4294	H4519	H1316	thirteen
H7969			
עִשְׂרָה:			
H6240			

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