

# Joshua 21:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

## Analysis

**And the children of Israel gave by lot unto the Levites these cities with their suburbs, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.**

This summary verse emphasizes Israel's complete obedience. The phrase "**gave by lot**" (vayitnu...bagoral, וַיִּתְּנוּ...בַּגּוֹרָל) combines human agency (giving) with divine sovereignty (lot-casting). Israel actively obeyed, but God determined specific allocations. This models the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility—we act obediently while trusting God's sovereign ordering of outcomes.

The comprehensive statement "**these cities with their suburbs**" (et-hearim haeleh veet-migresheyhen, וְאֶת־הָעִירִים הָאֵלֶּה וְאֶת־מִגְרֵשֶׁיהֶן) repeats the thorough provision from verse 3. Israel didn't give cities grudgingly or incompletely—they provided both urban living space and surrounding pastureland, exactly as commanded. This demonstrates that partial obedience is disobedience; God's people must follow His instructions completely, in the manner prescribed.

The concluding phrase "**as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses**" (kaasher tsivah Yahweh beyad-Moshe, כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה) roots obedience in divine command. Israel obeyed not because it was convenient or beneficial, but because Yahweh commanded. The phrase beyad-Moshe ("by the hand of Moses") recognizes Moses as God's authorized mediator—commands given through him

carried divine authority requiring compliance. This prefigures Christ as ultimate Mediator whose commands demand obedience (Hebrews 3:3-6, John 14:15).

## Historical Context

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This verse summarizes the entire Levitical city allocation process detailed in verses 9-42. The system worked successfully during the united monarchy and into the divided kingdom period. When northern tribes apostatized under Jeroboam (1 Kings 12), faithful Levites fled south, abandoning their cities (2 Chronicles 11:13-16). During Hezekiah's reforms (2 Chronicles 31) and Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 23), Levitical cities served as centers for covenant renewal. The system's breakdown paralleled Israel's spiritual decline—when people stopped supporting Levites through tithes, the teaching infrastructure collapsed (Nehemiah 13:10-11).

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does combining human action (giving) with divine sovereignty (lot-casting) inform your understanding of prayer, decision-making, and obedience?
2. What does Israel's complete provision (cities plus pastures, exactly as commanded) challenge about your tendency toward partial or selective obedience?
3. How should recognizing God's commands (mediated through Scripture) as divinely authoritative shape your response to biblical teaching you find difficult or costly?

## Interlinear Text

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וַתֵּן ו	בְּנֵי	יִשְׂרָאֵל	לְלֵוִיִּם	אֶת	הָעָרִים
<b>gave</b>	<b>And the children</b>	<b>of Israel</b>	<b>unto the Levites</b>	H853	<b>these cities</b>
H5414	H1121	H3478	H3881		H5892
הָאֵלֶּה	וְאֵת	מִגְרָשֶׁיהֶן	בְּאֶשׁ ר	צִוָּה	יְהוָה
H428	H853	<b>with their suburbs</b>	H834	<b>commanded</b>	<b>as the LORD</b>
		H4054		H6680	H3068
בְּיַד	מֹשֶׁה	בַּגּוֹרֵל:			
<b>by the hand</b>	<b>of Moses</b>	<b>by lot</b>			
H3027	H4872	H1486			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Joshua 21:3** (References Lord): And the children of Israel gave unto the Levites out of their inheritance, at the commandment of the LORD, these cities and their suburbs.