

Numbers 10:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan.

Analysis

Over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan. Naphtali completed Dan's rear guard division under Ahira (אַחִיכָע, "my brother is evil" or "my brother is a friend"—the meaning is debated). Naphtali, born to Jacob through Rachel's maid servant Bilhah, received an elegant blessing: "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words" (Genesis 49:21). The name Naphtali means "my wrestling," reflecting Rachel's declaration "with great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed" (Genesis 30:8).

Naphtali's 53,400 warriors (Numbers 1:43) made them the third-largest tribe, contributing significant strength to the rear guard. The tribe's blessing of freedom ("hind let loose") and eloquence ("goodly words") anticipated their future in Galilee's beautiful hill country. The march's conclusion with Naphtali symbolized Israel's wrestling—born from struggle, concluding in grace, protected in their journey by tribes who had wrestled with God and prevailed.

Historical Context

Ahira served as Naphtali's census representative (Numbers 1:15) and brought offerings at the dedication last of all (Numbers 7:78-83), since Dan's camp marched last. Naphtali's territory in upper Galilee (Joshua 19:32-39) included some of Israel's most beautiful landscape—mountains, valleys, and the Sea of Galilee's western shore. The region's fertility and strategic location made it valuable, though Naphtali faced constant pressure from northern enemies. Barak,

who defeated Sisera, came from Naphtali (Judges 4:6), as did the prophetess Deborah's ally. Isaiah prophesied that Galilee—including Naphtali's territory—would see great light (Isaiah 9:1-2), fulfilled when Jesus ministered primarily in Galilee (Matthew 4:13-16).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does Naphtali's name ("my wrestling") teach about how spiritual struggle can produce blessing, not just difficulty?
2. How does Naphtali's blessing of eloquence ("goodly words") challenge you to use your speech to proclaim God's grace rather than complain about struggles?
3. In what ways might your rear guard position—protecting others while they advance—be more valuable to God's kingdom than prominent leadership?

Interlinear Text

אַחִיכָּע נַפְתָּלִי
And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali

H5921

And over the host

H6635

מִתְּהִלָּה
of the tribe

H4294

בְּנֵי
of the children

H1121

וְאַחִיכָּע

H5321

נַפְתָּלִי
was Ahira

H299

בְּנֵי עֵינָן
of the children of Enan

H1121

H5881

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 1:15 (Parallel theme): Of Naphtali; Ahira the son of Enan.

