

Numbers 26:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

These are the sons of Ephraim after their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthalhites: of Becher, the family of the Bachrites: of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites.

Analysis

These are the sons of Ephraim after their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthalhites: of Becher, the family of the Bachrites: of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites—Ephraim (אֶפְרַיִם, 'double fruitfulness') had three primary clans versus Manasseh's six subdivisions, suggesting more consolidated tribal structure. Shuthelah (שׁוּתְלָה, 'crash of breakage' or 'shoot/sprout') headed the clan that produced Joshua (1 Chronicles 7:25-27), Israel's next leader after Moses.

Becher (בָּכֶר, 'young camel' or 'firstborn') and Tahan (תָּהָן, 'camp/encampment') suggest mobility and military organization—appropriate for the tribe that would dominate central hill country. Ephraim's streamlined clan structure may have contributed to their cohesion and political influence, eventually making 'Ephraim' synonymous with the northern kingdom (Isaiah 7:2). Sometimes fewer divisions mean greater unity and impact.

Historical Context

Ephraim received the central highlands including Shiloh (where the Tabernacle rested 369 years) and later Samaria. Their territory controlled north-south travel through Canaan's mountain spine. Joshua, Samuel, and Jeroboam I all came from Ephraim, making them the northern kingdom's dominant tribe. Their reduced census numbers (from 40,500 to 32,500) didn't diminish their influence.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Ephraim's decline in numbers yet increase in influence challenge our modern metrics of success and 'growth'?
2. What does Shuthelah's clan producing Joshua teach about God's long-term preparation of leaders through family lines?
3. How might Ephraim's eventual pride and downfall (Hosea's constant critique) warn against confusing divine calling with inherent superiority?

Interlinear Text

לְשׁוֹתָה לְחַמְּשָׁפֶת
These are the sons of Ephraim after their families of Shuthelah
H428 H1121 H669 H4940 H7803

מִשְׁפָּת מִשְׁפָּת לְבָכֶר
after their families of the Shuthalhites of Becher after their families
H4940 H8364 H1071 H4940

בְּתִמְנָתִים מִשְׁפָּת לְמִתְמָן
of the Bachrites of Tahan after their families of the Tahanites
H1076 H8465 H4940 H8470