

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 (שׁוּתֵלַח, 'crash of breakage' or 'shoot/sprout') headed the clan that produced Joshua (1 Chronicles 7:25-27), Israel's next leader after Moses.

Becher (בְּכֹר, 'young camel' or 'firstborn') and Tahan (תַּחַן, '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

אֵלֶּה	בְּנֵי	אֶפְרַיִם	מִשְׁפֵּחַת	לְשׁוֹת לַח
H428	These are the sons	of Ephraim	after their families	of Shuthelah
	H1121	H669	H4940	H7803
מִשְׁפֵּחַת	הַשְּׁתַּלְחִי	לְבֶּכֶר	מִשְׁפֵּחַת	
after their families	of the Shuthalhites	of Becher	after their families	
H4940	H8364	H1071	H4940	
הַבַּחְרִי	לְתַחַן	מִשְׁפֵּחַת	הַתַּחְנִי:	
of the Bachrites	of Tahan	after their families	of the Tahanites	
H1076	H8465	H4940	H8470	