

Numbers 26:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites: of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites: of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites:

Analysis

The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites: of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites: of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites—Benjamin (בְּנֵי־בָּנָן, 'son of the right hand') had five primary clans, reflecting Jacob's prophetic description of Benjamin as a 'ravenous wolf' (Genesis 49:27)—fierce, numerous, and strategically positioned. Bela (עַלְעָלָה, 'swallowing/destruction') headed the clan, a name suggesting military ferocity.

Ashbel (אַשְׁבֵל, 'man of Baal' or 'fire of Bel') and Ahiram (אַחִירָם, 'brother of the exalted') show the clan's ancient roots in pre-monotheistic naming conventions, yet God's covenant preserved them. Benjamin, though smallest tribe (besides decimated Levi), punched above their weight—producing King Saul, the Benjamite 'wolf,' and later Saul of Tarsus who 'ravaged the church' before conversion (Acts 8:3). The census preserves their distinct clans before they nearly perished in the civil war of Judges 19-21.

Historical Context

Benjamin's territory, though small (roughly 26 x 12 miles), was strategically vital—containing Jerusalem's northern section, Jericho, Gibeon, and the Benjamin plateau controlling access to the highlands. Their position between Joseph and Judah made them kingmakers in future conflicts. This census occurred just before

their greatest military challenge—the Conquest—where their ferocity would prove invaluable.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Benjamin's preservation despite their 'ravenous wolf' character demonstrate God's grace toward aggressive, difficult personalities in His covenant people?
2. What does the inclusion of potentially pagan-derived names (Ashbel/'man of Baal') teach about God's patience with His people's incomplete sanctification?
3. How might Benjamin's pattern—small tribe, fierce reputation, producing both King Saul and Apostle Paul—illustrate Romans 11:29 about irrevocable gifts and callings?

Interlinear Text

מִשְׁפָּטִים לְבָנֵי בְּנִימָן מִשְׁפָּטִים לְבָנֵי בָּלֵא
The sons of Benjamin after their families of Bela after their families
H1121 H1144 H4940 H1106 H4940

לְאַחִיכָּם מִשְׁפָּטִים לְאַשְׁבֵל לְבָלָע
of the Belaites of Ashbel after their families of the Ashbelites of Ahiram
H1108 H788 H4940 H789 H297

מִשְׁפָּטִים בָּנִים אַחִיכָּמִים
after their families of the Ahiramites
H4940 H298

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 8:1 (Parallel theme): Now Benjamin begat Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third,

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