

Numbers 35:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities.

Analysis

And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits—The ה אלפים ב'אמה (ʾalpayim bā'ammāh, two thousand cubits) on each side creates apparent tension with verse 4's one thousand cubits. Rabbinic interpretation resolves this: verse 4 describes the inner ring (open space from the wall), verse 5 the outer ring (additional fields and vineyards), totaling 2,000 cubits of suburban land.

The fourfold repetition (east, south, west, north) emphasizes completeness and equal allocation regardless of direction. This prevented favoritism based on terrain or proximity to roads. The Levitical inheritance, though landless in the tribal sense, was nonetheless substantial, secure, and evenly distributed—a different kind of inheritance centered on service rather than conquest.

Historical Context

The measurement system was applied uniformly across all 48 Levitical cities distributed throughout Israel's tribal territories. The symmetrical allocation (equal measurements in all directions) was unusual in ancient land grants, which often followed natural boundaries or reflected political power. This divine prescription

ensured fairness regardless of the city's location or the generosity of the surrounding tribe.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's insistence on equal provision in all directions challenge human tendencies toward favoritism and unequal treatment?
2. What 'different kind of inheritance' has God given you that may not look like worldly success but is nonetheless substantial?
3. Where might God be calling you to service-centered living rather than acquisition-centered living?

וּמִדֹּתֶיָם	מִמֶּנֶּח וְיָ	הָעָרִים:	אֶת	פָּאָת	קִדְמָה
And ye shall measure	from without	and the city	H853	side	on the east
H4058	H2351	H5892		H6285	H6924
אֶלְפֵי יָם	בָּאַמָּה הַ	וְאֶת	פָּאָת	נֶגְבַּ	אֶלְפֵי יָם
two thousand	cubits	H853	side	and on the south	two thousand
H505	H520		H6285	H5045	H505
וְאֶת	בָּאַמָּה הַ	אֶלְפֵי יָם	וְ	אֶת	בָּאַמָּה הַ
cubits	H853	side	and on the west	two thousand	cubits
H520		H6285	H3220	H505	H520
וְ	אֶת	בָּאַמָּה הַ	אֶלְפֵי יָם	וְ	אֶת
side	and on the north	two thousand	cubits	and the city	
H6285	H6828	H505	H520	H5892	
וְ	בֵּת וְ	לָהֶם	וְ	יְהִי הַ	זֶה
shall be in the midst		H2088	H1961	H0	
H8432					
וְ	בֵּת וְ	לָהֶם	וְ	יְהִי הַ	זֶה
shall be in the midst		H2088	H1961	H0	
H8432					
וְ	בֵּת וְ	לָהֶם	וְ	יְהִי הַ	זֶה
shall be in the midst		H2088	H1961	H0	
H8432					
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