

# Joshua 21 Commentary

Previous

Next

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[Joshua 21:1](#)

[Joshua 21:2](#)

[Joshua 21:3](#)

[Joshua 21:4](#)

[Joshua 21:5](#)

[Joshua 21:6](#)

[Joshua 21:7](#)

[Joshua 21:8](#)

[Joshua 21:9](#)

[Joshua 21:10](#)

[Joshua 21:11](#)

[Joshua 21:12](#)

[Joshua 21:13](#)

[Joshua 21:14](#)

[Joshua 21:15](#)

[Joshua 21:16](#)

[Joshua 21:17](#)

[Joshua 21:18](#)

[Joshua 21:19](#)

[Joshua 21:20](#)

[Joshua 21:21](#)

[Joshua 21:22](#)

[Joshua 21:23](#)

[Joshua 21:24](#)

[Joshua 21:25](#)

[Joshua 21:26](#)

[Joshua 21:27](#)

[Joshua 21:28](#)

[Joshua 21:29](#)

[Joshua 21:30](#)

[Joshua 21:31](#)

[Joshua 21:32](#)

[Joshua 21:33](#)

[Joshua 21:34](#)

[Joshua 21:35](#)

[Joshua 21:36](#)

[Joshua 21:37](#)

[Joshua 21:38](#)

[Joshua 21:39](#)

[Joshua 21:40](#)

[Joshua 21:41](#)

[Joshua 21:42](#)

[Joshua 21:43](#)

[Joshua 21:44](#)

[Joshua 21:45](#)

Click charts to enlarge Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission

<b>JOSHUA</b> <b>A BOOK ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE and REST</b> <b>HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS</b>				
<b>CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND</b>		<b>DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND</b>		<b>CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE</b>
<b>ACTION</b>		<b>ALLOCATION</b>		<b>APPEAL</b>
Josh 1:1-5:15	Josh 6:1-12:24	Joshua 13:1-21:45		Josh 22:1-24:33
<b>WARLORDS IN CANAAN</b>		<b>LANDLORDS IN CANAAN</b>		
<b>ENTERING CANAAN</b>	<b>CONQUERING CANAAN</b>	<b>DIVIDING CANAAN</b>		
<b>SECURING THE LAND</b>		<b>SETTLING THE LAND</b>		
<b>Preparation</b>	<b>Conquest</b>	<b>Possession</b>		<b>Consecration</b>
ca. 1 Month	ca 7 Years	ca. 18 Years		

[See also more detailed Chart by Charles R Swindoll](#)

**Joshua 21:1** Then the heads of households of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of households of the tribes of the sons of Israel.

- **the heads:** Jos 19:51 Ex 6:14,25
- **Eleazar:** Jos 14:1 17:4 Nu 34:17-29
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Source: [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#)

## LEVITES APPROACH THE LEADERS

Here is an outline for Joshua 21 from [Don Anderson](#)...

### I. THE REQUEST AND RESPONSE - Joshua 21:1-8

- A. **THE REQUEST** - Joshua 21:1,2
- B. **THE RESPONSE** - Joshua 21:3-8
  - 1. **KOHATH** - Joshua 21:4,5
  - 2. **GERSHON** - Joshua 21:6
  - 3. **MERARI** - Joshua 21:7,8

### II. THE DESIGNATED CITIES - Joshua 21:9-42

- A. **KOHATH** - Joshua 21:9-26

B. **GERSHON** - Joshua 21: 27-33

C. **MERARI** - Joshua 21:34-40

D. **SUMMARY** - Joshua 21:41,42

### III. THE LORD'S FAITHFULNESS - Joshua 21:43-45

**Then the heads of households of the Levites approached Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of households of the tribes of the sons of Israel** - The Levites come forward to claim the promises of Yahweh. Note from the chart above that the three main branches of the tribe of Levi were Gershon, Kohath and Merari. It is interesting that while Gershon is the firstborn, Kohath is given the first lot in the distribution of the cities.

**Utley - the heads of households of the Levites**" There are going to be forty-eight Levitical cities (cf. vv. 41 and Num. 35:1–8). There are three major households (sons) of the tribe of Levi (cf. Gen. 46:11; Exod. 6:16). The first is the Kohathites, found in vv. 10–19 and 20–26. The second major group is the Gershonites, found in vv. 27–33, the third group is the Merarites, found in vv. 34–40. When discussing "Levites" in the historical literature of early Israel, there is no distinction made between "Levites" and "priests"; both are allowed to serve YHWH and eat from His offerings (cf. Deuteronomy 18). As the years passed, there developed a specialized recognition of the family of Aaron as denoting priests (which was for life and passed on through families). ([Commentary](#))

**Ryrie** - Forty-eight cities and their suburbs were given to the Levites as Moses had commanded (Joshua 21:4-7; Num. 35:1-5). Since the Levites were to teach Israel the Law (Dt. 33:10), it was necessary that these cities be scattered throughout the land (ED: FULFILLING DEATHBED PROPHECY - Ge 49:7b). ([Ryrie Study Bible](#))

While Ryrie's point about the Levites being scattered throughout the land that they might instruct the Israelites on the God's Word, unfortunately this ideal objective was not always realized. **Donald Campbell** in fact points out that "The Levites did not live up to their potential or fulfill their mission. Declared [William Blaikie](#), "If the Levites had all been consecrated men, idolatry and its great brood of corruptions would never have spread over the land of Israel" ([The Book of Joshua](#))." Perhaps too many of the Levites succumbed, as many of us do, to the softening influences of the "good life." When Eddie Arcaro retired as one of the nation's most successful racing jockeys back in 1962, a reporter asked him if he still got up early to walk his mounts around the track while the dew was still on the ground. Arcaro confessed frankly, "It becomes difficult to get up early once a guy starts wearing silk pajamas." ([No Time for Neutrality: A Study of Joshua](#))

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 1-8. The Levites waited till the other tribes were provided for, before they preferred their claim to Joshua. They build their claim upon a very good foundation; not their own merits or services, but the Divine precept. The maintenance of ministers is not a thing left merely to the will of the people, that they may let them starve if they please; they which preach the gospel should live by the gospel, and should live comfortably.

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#### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#)

**The heads of the fathers of the Levites.** The most distinguished persons among the fathers, chiefs, or elders of the three families of Kohath, Gershom, and Merari, which constituted the body of the tribe of Levi. They here make their petition precisely at the time when it could be most conveniently granted, viz. just after the allotments had been made to the other tribes. Whether this was prior or subsequent to the designation of the cities of refuge, mentioned in the foregoing chapter, it is not possible to determine.

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**Utley** - The timing and method of the composition of Joshua is unclear. Many of the accounts go back to Joshua's time. However, some of the events could not have occurred until later. This is especially true of some of the forty-eight Levitical cities. Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, p. 210, lists several cities not under Israelite control until the United Monarchy. ([Commentary](#))

1. Gezer
  2. Ibleam
  3. Taanach, v. 25
  4. Rehob in Asher, v. 31
  5. Jokneam, v. 34
  6. Nahalal, v. 35
  7. Elteke, v. 23
  8. Gibbethon, v. 23
  9. Anathoth
  10. Alemoth (pp. 201–211)
-

## QUESTION - [What is the difference between priests and Levites?](#)

**ANSWER** - The **Levites** were the tribe of Israelites descended from [Levi](#), one of the twelve sons of Jacob (ED: [see chart above](#)). The **priests of Israel** were a group of qualified men from within the [tribe of the Levites](#) who had responsibility over aspects of tabernacle or temple worship. **All priests were to be Levites, according to the Law, but not all Levites were priests.**

**Priests** existed prior to the Levites in a general sense. For example, we first see the role of a priest in Genesis 14:18 during Abraham's time, long before Levi was born. [Melchizedek](#) was the king of the town of Salem, which later became Jerusalem. Melchizedek was also said to be "a priest forever" (Psalm 110:4; cf. Hebrews 6:20; 7:17). Pagan nations also had priests for their religious activities. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, was the priest of Midian (Exodus 3:1;18:1).

When the Jews received the Law of Moses at Sinai, the Lord gave commands regarding a formal priesthood for Israel. The priests would be males from the tribe of Levi and must meet certain physical and age qualifications in order to serve. In addition, they had to remain ceremonially clean to perform their duties before a holy God. The priests served as mediators between the Israelites and God. They were the ones who performed animal sacrifices on behalf of the people. It was only the priests who were permitted to enter the [Holy Place](#) in the tabernacle and, later, the temple. A more detailed description of the Levitical priesthood can be found in our article "[What was the Levitical priesthood?](#)"

**Among these Levitical priests was the high priest.** The first high priest was Aaron, the brother of Moses. His sons and their descendants were to serve as the future high priests of the nation of Israel (Exodus 29). Only the high priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle and temple, and that only once per year on the [Day of Atonement](#). A more detailed description of the work of the high priest can be found in our article "[What was the biblical role of the high priest?](#)"

Ezra, one of the leaders of the Jews who returned from Babylon, was a Levitical priest (Nehemiah 12:1). [Zechariah](#) and Elizabeth, John the Baptist's parents, were both Levites descended from Aaron (see Luke 1:5). Zechariah was a priest, but his son, John, also a Levite, was a prophet, not a priest.

By the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Jewish priesthood held much spiritual and political power. In fact, the Jewish [chief priests](#) were involved in sentencing Jesus to death.

Following the resurrection of Jesus, believers now live under a new covenant in which [all Christians are priests](#): "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). We no longer need an earthly mediator between us and God because Jesus has made the final sacrifice on our behalf and acts as our Mediator (Hebrews 10:19–23; 1 Timothy 2:5).

The Jewish role of high priest is now fulfilled by [Jesus, who serves as our high priest](#). Jesus' sacrifice ended our need for continued sacrifices. The Holy Spirit guides and counsels us.

The Levitical priesthood was part of the old covenant system of sacrifices. It has been fulfilled in Jesus, and we are now under the new covenant. There is no longer a biblical mandate for priests. Every follower of Christ has access to God, regardless of gender, race, or tribe (Hebrews 7:11–28; Ephesians 3:11–12; Colossians 3:11). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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### Related Resources:

- [What can we learn from the tribe of Levi / the Levites? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What was the Levitical priesthood? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 21:2** They spoke to them at Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, "The LORD commanded through Moses to give us cities to live in, with their pasture lands for our cattle."

- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Numbers 35:1-8+ Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying, 2 "Command the sons of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to live in; and you shall give to the Levites pasture lands around the cities. 3 "The cities shall be theirs to live in; and their pasture lands shall be for their cattle and for their herds and for all their beasts. 4 "The pasture lands of the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall extend from the wall of the city outward a thousand

cubits around. 5 You shall also measure outside 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, with the city in the center. This shall become theirs as pasture lands for the cities. 6 **“The cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge (ED: Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan), which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to; and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities.** 7 “All the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be forty-eight cities, together with their pasture lands. 8 “As for the cities which you shall give from the possession of the sons of Israel, you shall take more from the larger and you shall take less from the smaller; each shall give some of his cities to the Levites in proportion to his possession which he inherits.”

Deuteronomy 33:10+ (**GOD'S PURPOSE FOR SCATTERING LEVITES THROUGHOUT THE LAND**) “They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob, And Your law to Israel. They shall put incense before You, And whole burnt offerings on Your altar.

2 Chronicles 17:7-9 He (**GODLY KING JEHOSHAPHAT** ca. 873–ca. 849 BC) took great pride in the ways of the LORD and again removed the high places and the Asherim from Judah. 7 Then in the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel and Micaiah, **to teach in the cities of Judah**; 8 and with them the **Levites**, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah and Tobadonijah, the Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, the **priests**.

2 Chronicles 35:3 He (**GODLY KING JOSIAH** 640 to 609 B.C) also said to **the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the LORD**, “Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built; it will be a burden on your shoulders no longer. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel.

Nehemiah 8:7-9 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, **the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people remained in their place.** 8 They read from the book, from the law of God, **translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.** 9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites **who taught the people** said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law.

## **LEVITES "NAME AND CLAIM" GOD'S PROMISE**

**They spoke to them at Shiloh (Josh 18:1+) in the land of Canaan, saying, "The LORD commanded through Moses to give us cities to live in, with their pasture lands for our cattle** - In making their formal request, the Levites illustrate legitimate *"name it, claim it"* theology, in contrast to what is often taught today (see Related Resources below). While [God Himself was to be their inheritance](#) (Joshua 13:14+, Nu 18:20-24+, Dt 10:9+), God had instructed Israel to give them cities in which to live and they were to have pasture lands to graze their cattle.

See notes on Nu 35:1-8. The Levites were given 48 cities (6 being cities of refuge) with their pasture lands. This distribution provided a spiritual influence over all the people, since it is estimated that no one lived more than 10 miles from a city in which Levites lived.

**Cyril Barber** on the meaning of **cities to live in** - This does not mean that the Israelites to whom these cities had been assigned were dispossessed of their inheritance, but only that some of Israel's religious leaders came and lived among them. This system insured that there was a continuous spiritual influence over all the people. In the plan and purpose of God the tribe of Levi was not only to serve in the central sanctuary but also to be teachers of the Law (Dt 33:8–11; see also 2 Chr 17:7–9; 35:3; Neh 8:7–9) Unhappily, the priesthood deteriorated until a time came when God, speaking through His prophet, Malachi, had to rebuke their faithlessness (see Malachi 2:4–7+)! ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#).)

### **Related Resource:**

- [What is the meaning of the term "Shiloh"? Is it a Messianic prophecy? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Is "name it claim it" teaching biblical? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How was God Himself the inheritance of the Levites? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 21:3 So the sons of Israel gave the Levites from their inheritance these cities with their pasture lands, according to**

## the command of the LORD.

- **the Levites:** Ge 49:7 De 33:8-10 1Ch 6:54-81
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Genesis 49:7 (YAHWEH TURNED THE CURSE INTO A BLESSING FOR THE NATION) “Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I **will disperse them in Jacob**, And **scatter them in Israel** (THE LEVITES WOULD BE EVENLY DISPERSED).

## SONS OF ISRAEL FREELY GIVE TO LEVITES

So the sons of Israel gave the [Levites](#) from their inheritance these cities with their pasture lands, according to the command of the LORD - Note that six of the Levites' cities were designated as [cities of refuge](#) . There is no record of any of the tribes complaining, grumbling or murmuring that they had to give to the Levites, so they appear to do so freely and in complete obedience with the LORD's instructions.

**Utley on pasture lands** - We learn from Nu 35:4 that around the walls of the Levitical cities each Levitical family was given land extending a thousand cubits (for “cubit” see [Cubit](#)). This was apparently to be used for growing crops or to keep a few animals in order to supplement their food supply which was provided by one of the three tithes of the people. ([Commentary](#))

**Hess** - “For Christians, the allotment of Levitical towns from each tribe illustrates the principle of returning to God a portion of what has been given to them. These gifts are then used to support others in need and to encourage the proclamation of the faith (cf. Acts 2:44–47; Rom. 15:26–27; Phil. 4:10–18).” ([Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary](#))

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[Gary D. Baldwin](#) has an excellent discussion to help understand the **Levitical Cities** - Residence and pasture lands provided the priestly tribe of Levi in lieu of a tribal inheritance. Because of their priestly duties, the tribe of Levi did not receive any part of the land of Canaan as an inheritance (Numbers 18:20-24; Numbers 26:62; Deuteronomy 10:9; Deuteronomy 18:1-2; Joshua 18:7 ). **To compensate them for this, they received the tithes of Israelites for their support (Nu 18:21), and 48 cities were allotted to them from the inheritance of the other tribes.** On the average, four cities from each tribe were Levitical cities. The practice of setting cities aside in this manner was a common Ancient Near Eastern practice. **The [Levites](#) were not the sole possessors or occupiers of these cities. They were simply allowed to live in them and have fields to pasture their herds. These cities did not cease to belong to the tribes within which they were located.** Although six of the 48 were asylums for those guilty of manslaughter (Kedesh, Shechem, Hebron in Canaan, Bezer, Ramoth-Gilead, and Golan), Levitical cities and cities of refuge are not synonymous. The privilege of asylum was not extended to all 48 Levitical cities. The aim of having cities of refuge was to control blood revenge by making it possible for public justice to intervene between the slayer and the victim's avenger of blood. The cities of refuge were probably priestly cities containing important shrines. Cities of refuge also served as punitive detention centers. The slayer was not permitted to leave until the death of the high priest. This was possibly interpreted as a vicarious expiation of life by life. **Levitical cities were a series of walled cities, apart from the lands surrounding them. Unwalled suburbs and fields outside the cities remained tribal property. The [Levites](#) could not sell any open plots of land. The legal status of Levitical houses within these cities differed from ordinary property. To prevent the dispossession of [Levites](#) , it was ordained that they might at any time redeem houses in their own cities which they had been forced by need to sell. Moreover, such a house, if not redeemed, reverted to its original Levitical owner during the year of Jubilee. See Jubilee, Year of). Pastureland belonging to Levites could not be sold (Leviticus 25:32-34 ). Theological, political, and economic reasons led to establishing the cities. The cities formed bases of operation so that the [Levites](#) could better infiltrate each of the tribes to instruct them in God's covenant. Such bases would be most needed precisely where one finds them: in those areas least accessible to the central sanctuary.** Obviously, there was also a political dimension. Certainly, the Levitical desire to secure Israel's loyalty to the Lord of the covenant would also imply a commitment to secure loyalty to the Lord's anointed, the king. There was a blending of covenant teaching and political involvement. The economic factor may have been the most significant. The list of cities describes the dispersion of the Levites who were not employed at the large sanctuaries, had no steady income, and who belonged, therefore, in the category of widows and orphans. The cities were established for men needing economic relief.

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GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#)

The children of Israel gave unto the [Levites](#). They cheerfully obeyed the divine command. They gave them cities out of their

several inheritances, without any fear of being impoverished by the appropriation. Nor will men ever find themselves sufferers in their temporal interests, in consequence of a liberal allowance to the ministers of the sanctuary. These cities were assigned by lot, that it might fully appear that God designed the Levites their habitations, as he designed the others their inheritances. The result of this arrangement would naturally be, that the Levites would be dispersed in every part of the land, to instruct the people in the knowledge of the divine law, to edify them by their example, to restrain them from idolatry, and prompt them to a constant adherence to the worship of Jehovah, the only true God. Thus the prophetic sentence of the patriarch, Gen. 49:7, that they should be 'divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel,' though originally carrying with it a punitive import, was through the special mercy of heaven converted to a blessing to themselves and to the nation.

**These cities.** Referring to those which are enumerated in the sequel of this chapter.

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**Today in the Word** - A proverb about courage attributed to Aesop reads, "It is easy to be brave from a safe distance." The Levites were not afforded that luxury. One might think that the priests of Israel, the Levites, would have been set apart and isolated from the other tribes of Israel, but God didn't plan it that way. They weren't a safe distance away from the people they were supposed to lead spiritually, and as God's handpicked representatives, they were to be close to the Almighty as well.

Several times throughout Joshua we've been reminded that the Levites' inheritance was the Lord Himself; serving Him was their reward. But they still needed a place to live. God provided for them in a unique way, bringing provision from every other tribe in Israel. Consulting a map will show that the Levites were spread so evenly across the land that no one was very far from a city of priests.

This wasn't a last-minute decision. God commanded Moses that the land be shared with the priests in this way. The book of Numbers describes the parameters for the Levite cities, and they include generously sized pastures around each one. God didn't overlook His priests; He was determined to show His provision to them in a way that creatively taught the truth of God with unforgettable permanence and profound symbolism.

God's pattern for sustaining the priests had always been for the people to support them according to each one's possessions and income. The distribution of Levite cities was no different. God commanded the larger territories to yield more cities and the smaller to give up less. This fair and wise method provided ample space for the Levites and even distribution of priests throughout the land. It also rooted all of the tribes in the truth that the land was given to them by God and should be shared generously with His servants.

Six of the Levite cities also became the cities of refuge we read about yesterday. It's interesting to note that God chose priests to be a symbol of protection in times of trouble. "City of refuge" may sound like a military term, but it's men of faith, not weapon-bearing warriors, who provide asylum from vengeance.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY** - As salt and light in the world, we can't be satisfied living a safe distance from the world. God has placed you in a position to be a spiritual leader to those around you. Stay close to Him through your personal time with God, and make the most of your place in the world so that the spiritually needy can come to you for help. The Lord will be with you; don't fear those who don't believe. God is greater than the world, and He can give you victory over your own flaws and fears.

**Joshua 21:4 Then the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. And the sons of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, received thirteen cities by lot from the tribe of Judah and from the tribe of the Simeonites and from the tribe of Benjamin.**

- **the sons of Aaron the priest** Jos 21:8-19 24:33 1Ch 6:54-60
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Map to help visualize cities of refuge - **UNDERLINED**  
Zondervan Atlas of the Bible: C. Rasmussen (recommended resource - do not reproduce)  
CLICK TO ENLARGE

## **AARONIC KOHATHITES RECEIVE 13 CITIES FROM JUDAH, SIMEON & BENJAMIN**

**Then the lot (goral) came out for the families of the Kohathites** - The Kohathites had special responsibilities related to the Tabernacle. Some were responsible for moving the vessels of the Tabernacle (Nu 4:1-20, including the Ark of the Covenant), some were designated by David to bring the ark to Jerusalem (Nu 15:4-5), and some (1Chr 6:33) were assigned to a ministry of praise. This would be significant in the future when the Temple was built in Jerusalem as Aaronic Kohathites were in this area by



It is worth noting that in Numbers 16:1-50+ [Korah](#), a Kohathite (the grandson of Kohath), along with part of the tribe of Reuben ([Dathan](#), [Abiram](#) and On), rebelled against Moses and Aaron and were destroyed (while the [sons of Korah](#), perhaps too young to understand their father's uprising or maybe too cognizant of God's authority to join in the revolt, were spared - Nu 26:9-11).

In Numbers we see the "numbers" of [Kohathites](#) -- "In the numbering of every male (in the Kohathite lineage - all 4 sons of Kohath) from a month old and upward, there were 8,600, performing the duties of the sanctuary." (Nu 3:28+)

**Background Note on Kohathites and relation to the sons of Aaron** - In Exodus 28:1-43+ the Lord told Moses to make holy garments for Aaron (a descendant of Kohath) and his sons and anoint them as priests to Him. **Only those Kohathites of the line of Aaron would be priests** So while all the priests were Levites, specifically Levites from the line of Aaron and Kohath, not all Levites from the line of Kohath were priests. It follows that **the rest of the sons of Kohath** (same phrase Josh 21:5) and all the sons of **Gershon** and **Merari** (the other two sons of Levi) were Levites who served the priests (Nu 3:6; 8: 19+). If you find this somewhat confusing (as I do), take a moment to read it again and look at the [Family Tree from Abraham](#) (suggestion open this in a new window - on your mouse hold pointer over this link and right click - select "Open in a New Window"). In Numbers 3:27+ we see the 4 sons of Kohath which are also shown on the Family Tree - "Of **Kohath** was the family of the **Amramites** and the family of the **Izharites** and the family of the **Hebronites** and the family of the **Uzzielites**; these were the families of the Kohathites." Only the descendants of Kohath who came through Amram (father of Aaron) and Aaron were qualified to be priests.

**Utley on "the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites"** The "lot" is not understood exactly. Some believe that it refers to [the Urim and Thummim](#) in the breastplate of the High Priest, while others believe it refers to black or white stones which were cast like dice or drawn from a pouch. ([Commentary](#))

**And the sons of Aaron the priest, who were of the Levites, received thirteen cities by lot from the tribe of Judah and from the tribe of the Simeonites and from the tribe of Benjamin** - The phrase **the sons of Aaron** refers to the family from the tribe of Levi from which the High Priests and other Priests would come (cf Ex 28:1 - see [chart above](#)). So within the group of Kohathites, this group of Kohathites is separated from non-Aaronic Kohathites. In Joshua 21:5 the lot is given to Kohathites who were not descended from **Aaron** ([see family tree](#) - suggestion open this in a new window - on your mouse hold pointer over this link and right click - select "Open in a New Window"), which is why they are referred to as **the rest of the sons of Kohath**.

The Kohathites who descended from Aaron received thirteen towns in Judah, Simeon and Benjamin (Joshua 21:4). The specific Aaronic Kohathite cities are - Hebron, Libnah, Jattir, Eshtemoa, Holon, Debir, Ain, Juttah, Beth-shemesh, Gibeon, Geba, Anathoth, Almon.

Identify these cities by the [green triangles on the map](#). Notice that **4 of these cities are very close to Jerusalem** (Gibeon, Geba, Almon, Anathoth). This is significant because the Aaronic Kohathites were the priests who ministered in the future Temple in Jerusalem because they handled the vessels of the Tabernacle. **Paul Enns** explains the significance of the distribution to the Aaronic Kohathites commenting that the "Kohathites who descended through Aaron received thirteen towns in Judah, Simeon. and Benjamin. (Joah 21:4). The providence of God is clearly seen since the Aaronic Kohathites would be ministering in the Temple that would ultimately be established in Jerusalem. The Kohathites that were not descendents of Aaron received ten towns in Ephraim, Dan, and the western half of the tribe of Manasseh (Joshua 21:5)" ([Joshua. Bible Study Commentary](#));

Notice also [on the map](#) the fact that there are no Levitical cities actually within the territory allocated to Simeon and yet here they are recorded in the text as contributing land, a fact I cannot completely understand.

**TSK Note** - Judah and Benjamin furnished more habitation to the Levites, in proportion, than any of the other tribes, because they possessed a more extensive inheritance, agreeably to what Moses had commanded (Nu 35:8.) It is worthy of remark, that the principal part of this tribe, whose business was to minister at the sanctuary, which sanctuary was afterwards established at Jerusalem, had their appointment nearest to that city; so that they were always within reach of the sacred work which God had appointed them.

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Korah in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What was the significance of the rebellion of Korah? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Who were the sons of Korah in the Old Testament? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Lot** ([01486](#)) (**goral**) refers to any kind of small object (e.g., stick, pebble, shard) used for making decisions by a "random" outcome (see Pr 16:33 on what controls "random") or for determining the will of God. **Lot** is often translated in the Septuagint



with [kleros](#) which can also mean inheritance.

**Baker** - A masculine noun indicating a portion or lot. A lot was cast, probably a stone or stones, to decide questions or appoint persons for various reasons; for apportioning land (Num. 26:55; 33:54; Josh. 18:6, 11); for assignments of various kinds, such as goats on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:8–10); priests, singers, musicians, etc. to their duties (1 Chr. 24:5, 31; 25:8; 26:13); for living in Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1), etc. (Judg. 20:9; Neh. 10:34[35]); for allotting slaves (Joel 3:3[4:3]). Lots were cast to distribute garments (Ps. 22:18[19]). The word also is used to refer to things allotted such as land (Josh. 15:1; 17:1; 21:40[38]) or even the boundary itself of an allotment (Josh. 18:11). It refers figuratively to one's destiny or fortune (Prov. 1:14) but notes an allotted share or portion in the age to come (Dan. 12:13). Finally, it can designate a portion or allotment for someone in the sense of recompense or retribution (Isa. 17:14; Jer. 13:25). ([Old Testament Word Study](#))

**Vine on Lot - Gôrâl** (גֹרָל, Strong's #1486), "lot." This word is attested 77 times and in all periods of the language (if a traditional view of the formation of the canon is accepted). Gôrâl represents the "lot" which was cast to discover the will of God in a given situation: "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat" (Lev. 16:8—the first occurrence). Exactly what casting the "lot" involved is not known. Since the land of Palestine was allocated among the tribes by the casting of the "lot," these allotments came to be known as their lots: "This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families; even to the border of Edom ..." (Josh. 15:1). In an extended use the word gôrâl represents the idea "fate" or "destiny": "And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us" (Isa. 17:14). Since God is viewed as controlling all things absolutely, the result of the casting of the "lot" is divinely controlled: "**The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD**" (Pr 16:33). Thus, providence (divine control of history) is frequently (**ED: I WOULD SAY ALWAYS**) figured as one's "lot."

**Goral** - 77x in 67v all translated "lot" - Lev. 16:8; Lev. 16:9; Lev. 16:10; Num. 26:55; Num. 26:56; Num. 33:54; Num. 34:13; Num. 36:2; Num. 36:3; Jos. 14:2; Jos. 15:1; Jos. 16:1; Jos. 17:1; Jos. 17:14; Jos. 17:17; Jos. 18:6; Jos. 18:8; Jos. 18:10; Jos. 18:11; Jos. 19:1; Jos. 19:10; Jos. 19:17; Jos. 19:24; Jos. 19:32; Jos. 19:40; Jos. 19:51; Jos. 21:4; Jos. 21:5; Jos. 21:6; Jos. 21:8; Jos. 21:10; Jos. 21:20; Jos. 21:40; Jdg. 1:3; Jdg. 20:9; 1 Chr. 6:54; 1 Chr. 6:61; 1 Chr. 6:63; 1 Chr. 6:65; 1 Chr. 24:5; 1 Chr. 24:7; 1 Chr. 24:31; 1 Chr. 25:8; 1 Chr. 25:9; 1 Chr. 26:13; 1 Chr. 26:14; Neh. 10:34; Neh. 11:1; Est. 3:7; Est. 9:24; Ps. 16:5; Ps. 22:18; Ps. 125:3; Prov. 1:14; Prov. 16:33; Prov. 18:18; Isa. 17:14; Isa. 34:17; Isa. 57:6; Jer. 13:25; Ezek. 24:6; Dan. 12:13; Joel 3:3; Obad. 1:11; Jon. 1:7; Mic. 2:5; Nah. 3:10

**Albert Bean on Lots** - Objects of unknown shape and material used to determine the divine will. Often in the Ancient Near East people, especially priests, made difficult and significant decisions by casting lots on the ground or drawing them from a receptacle. Several times Scripture mentions the practice. We do not know exactly what the lots looked like. Nor do we know how they were interpreted. We do know that people of the Old and New Testaments believed God (or gods in the case of non-Israelites or non-Christians) influenced the fall or outcome of the lots (Proverbs 16:33). Thus, casting lots was a way of determining God's will.

One of the best examples of this use of lots is in Acts. Matthias was chosen to be Judas' successor by lot (Acts 1:26). The apostles' prayer immediately before shows the belief that God would express His will through this method. In the Old Testament Saul was chosen as Israel's first king through the use of lots (1 Samuel 10:20-24).

In a similar fashion God communicated knowledge unknown to human beings through lots. Saul called for the casting of lots to determine who sinned during his day-long battle with the Philistines. Specifically, he called for the use of the Urim and Thummim (1 Samuel 14:41-42; See Joshua 7:10-15).

Lots helped God's people make a fair decision in complicated situations. God commanded that the Promised Land be divided by lot (Numbers 26:52-56). Later, lots established the Temple priests' order of service (1 Chronicles 24:5-19). This practice continued into Jesus' day. Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, was burning incense in the holy place when the angel spoke to him. Zechariah was there because the lot fell to him (Luke 1:9). The awful picture of soldiers casting lots for Jesus' garments was this kind of "fair play" use of lots (Matthew 27:35). Proverbs teaches that the use of lots is one way to put an end to a dispute when decisions are difficult (Proverbs 18:18).

Lots are memorialized in the Jewish Feast of Purim. Purim, the Akkadian word for lots, celebrates the frustration of Haman's plan to destroy the Jews in Persia. Haman had used lots to find the best day for the destruction (Esther 3:7).

Finally, the word lot came to refer to one's portion or circumstance of life. The righteous could confess that God was their lot (Psalm 16:5). The lot of those who violated the people of God was terror and annihilation (Isaiah 17:14). See [Oracles: Urim and Thummim](#) ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**Related Resources:**

- Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament [Lots](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Lots](#)
- J. Lindlom, "Lot-casting in the OT." VT:12:164–66
- [Old Testament Lot-Casting: Divination Or Providence](#) Mark A. Snoeberger DBSJ 16 (2011): 3–18

## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#)

**And the lot came out.** It would seem that a certain number of cities were previously designated and set apart en masse, as the habitations of the Levites, and that the particular appropriation of them to the several families and their branches was then determined by lot.

**The children of Aaron the priest.** All the Kohathites were children of Aaron, in being lineally descended from him, but they were not all priests; whereas the phrase 'children of Aaron' here is but another name for the priests, his successors in office; and these had their allotment of cities in the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin; the rest, who were merely Levites and not priests, had their lot, as appears from v. 5, in the tribes of Ephraim, Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. The providence of God in this assignment is very remarkable, as in consequence of it the priestly part of Aaron's posterity, who were the stated ministers of the sanctuary, the seat of which was afterwards to be fixed at Jerusalem, had their location nearest to that city, so that they were always conveniently situated with reference to the work to which they were appointed.

**Thirteen cities.** This was a large proportion for the present number of priests, which was small, but in view of the prospective increase of this body, and their future wants, it was no more than was requisite. As to the nature of the tenure by which the Levites held these appropriated cities, the probability is that they had no other property in them than merely the right to certain places of habitation, which they might let or sell, but always with the right of perpetual redemption; and with the understanding that they were to return to them in the year of jubilee. But on this head see Notes on Lev. 25:32, 33.

**[Kohathites - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)** The descendants of Kohath, the son of Levi (Exodus 6:16; see Kohath). Since Kohath was the grandfather of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam (Exodus 6:20; Numbers 26:59; see Amram), the Kohathites were considered the most important of the three major Levitical families (that is, Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites). The Kohathites were further divided into four branches according to the four sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel (Exodus 6:18; Numbers 3:19; 1Chronicles 6:1-3, 1Chronicles 6:16, 1Chronicles 6:18, 1Chronicles 6:33, 1Chronicles 6:38; 1Chronicles 23:6, 1Chronicles 23:12-13, 1Chronicles 23:18-20; 1Chronicles 26:23).

The Kohathites were active throughout Israel's history. The Kohathites, along with the Gershonites and Merarites, were placed around the tabernacle and were charged with caring for and moving it. The Kohathites were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle and were responsible to care for and move the ark, table, lampstand, altars, vessels of the sanctuary, and the screen (Numbers 3:29-31). The Kohathites could not touch these objects and could move them only after they had been properly prepared by Aaron and his sons. The result of attempting to move these objects without their first being fit with poles for carrying was death (Numbers 4:15, Numbers 4:15, 4:17-20; Numbers 7:9; compare 1 Samuel 5-6; 2 Samuel 6:6-11).

After the conquest, Kohathites descended from Aaron received thirteen cities from the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin (Joshua 21:4, Joshua 21:4, 21:9-19; 1Chronicles 6:54-60). The remaining Kohathites received ten cities from the tribes of Dan, Ephraim, and Manasseh (Joshua 21:5, Joshua 21:5, 21:20-26; 1Chronicles 6:61, 1Chronicles 6:66-70). One of the latter ten was Shechem, a city of refuge. See Levitical Cities; Cities of Refuge.

David appointed 120 Kohathites under the leadership of Uriel to bring the ark to Jerusalem (1Chronicles 15:5). When Jehoshaphat sought deliverance from the Moabites and Ammonites, the Kohathites led the people in prayer and praise (2Chronicles 20:19). Mahath and Joel of the Kohathites helped in the purification of Israel's worship during the time of Hezekiah (2Chronicles 29:12). During Josiah's religious reforms, two Kohathite priests (Zechariah and Meshullam) helped supervise the work (2Chronicles 34:12).

When the Israelites returned from the Exile, some of the Kohathites were placed in charge of preparing the show bread every sabbath (1Chronicles 9:32).

**Kohath\*** - 47x in 42v - Gen. 46:11; Exod. 6:16; Exod. 6:18; Num. 3:17; Num. 3:19; Num. 3:27; Num. 3:29; Num. 3:30; Num. 4:2; Num. 4:4; Num. 4:15; Num. 4:18; Num. 4:34; Num. 4:37; Num. 7:9; Num. 10:21; Num. 16:1; Num. 26:57; Num. 26:58; Jos. 21:4; Jos. 21:5; Jos. 21:10; Jos. 21:20; Jos. 21:26; 1Chr. 6:1; 1Chr. 6:2; 1Chr. 6:16; 1Chr. 6:18; 1Chr. 6:22; 1Chr. 6:33; 1Chr. 6:38; 1Chr. 6:54; 1Chr. 6:61; 1Chr. 6:66; 1Chr. 6:70; 1Chr. 9:32; 1Chr. 15:5; 1Chr. 23:6; 1Chr. 23:12; 2Chr. 20:19; 2Chr. 29:12; 2Chr. 34:12

**[Kohath - Fausset's Bible Dictionary](#)** ("assembly".) Levi's second son; came down to Egypt with Levi and Jacob (Genesis 46:11). Died 133 years old (Exodus 6:16; Exodus 6:18). From him sprang Moses and Aaron (1Chronicles 6:2); but (See AMRAM their father

is separated from the Amram, Kohath's son, by many omitted links in the genealogy, for at the Exodus Kohath's posterity numbered 2,750 between 30 and 50 years old (Numbers 4:35-36), and the males young and old 8,600, divided into the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites, and Uzzielites (Numbers 3:25-27, etc.).

Their charge on the march was on the S. side of the tabernacle, to bear (Numbers 4:15) the ark, the table, the candlestick, the altars, and vessels of the sanctuary, and the hangings, but not to take off the coverings put on by the sons of Aaron or touch them, on pain of death; Uzzah's fatal error (2 Samuel 6:6-7). They held high office as judges and rulers in things sacred and secular, and keepers of the dedicated treasures, and singers in the sanctuary (1 Chronicles 26:23-32; 2 Chronicles 20:19). Samuel was Kohathite, and therefore so was Heman the singer, Samuel's descendant. Their inheritance was in Manasseh, Ephraim, and Dan (1 Chronicles 6:61-70; Joshua 21:5; Joshua 21:20-26).

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#### QUESTION - [Who were the Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites?](#)

**ANSWER** - The **Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites** were three clans of the **Levite tribe** in Israel (Numbers 26:57). Each clan was comprised of descendants of the man from whom the clan received its name. Kohath was the father of the Kohathites, Gershon the father of the Gershonites, and Merari the father of the Merarites. Kohath, Gershon, and Merari were the three sons of Levi and grandsons of Jacob (Genesis 46:11). Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were Kohathites (1 Chronicles 6:2-3).

The Levites filled the **priestly roles** in Israel and bore the responsibility of caring for the tabernacle. The Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites had specific roles within the Levite culture. The Kohathites, for example, had charge of caring for the objects associated with the sanctuary: "This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tent of meeting: the most holy things" (Numbers 4:4-14). The Ark of the Covenant, the Table of Showbread, and other holy items were the responsibility of the Kohathites (Numbers 10:21; 1 Chronicles 9:32). The Gershonites took care of the decorations in the sanctuary—curtains, ropes, and coverings (Numbers 4:24-26). The Merarites had the task of maintaining and carrying from place to place the pillars, bases, frames, pegs, and cords that created the structure of the tent of meeting. Since the Israelites were often on the move, the tent of meeting often had to be taken up and moved. Each clan had its responsibility to the sanctuary of God.

The sanctuary objects that the Kohathites transported were to be carried on their shoulders with poles made for that purpose (Numbers 7:9; cf. Exodus 25:26-28). The Gershonites and Merarites, however, were given ox carts to help with the transport of their items; the Gershonites received two carts and four oxen, and the Merarites received four carts and eight oxen (Numbers 7:6-8).

As Levites, the Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites did not receive a specific territory in the Promised Land. Rather, they were given cities and pasturelands from among the territories of the other tribes by the command of the Lord (Joshua 21:2). The Kohathites received thirteen cities from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon and ten cities from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Dan. The Gershonites received thirteen cities from Isaachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh. The Merarites got twelve cities from Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. The distribution of the cities was decided by the drawing of lots (Joshua 21:1-8), and six of the Levites' cities were designated as **cities of refuge**. [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### Related Resources:

- [How was God Himself the inheritance of the Levites? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the difference between priests and Levites? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What was the Levitical priesthood? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Joshua 21:5** The rest of the sons of Kohath received ten cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Ephraim and from the tribe of Dan and from the half-tribe of Manasseh.

- Jos 21:20-26 Ge 46:11 Ex 6:16-25 Nu 3:27 1Ch 6:18,19,61,66-70
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **KOHATHITES RECEIVE 10 CITIES FROM EPHRAIM, DAN, WEST MANASSEH**

The rest of the sons of **Kohath** received ten cities by lot (**goral**) from the families of the tribe of Ephraim and from the tribe of Dan and from the half-tribe of Manasseh - See [green triangles on the map](#).

Note the repetition of **lot** (7x/6v - Josh 21:4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 40). Recall that Yahweh controlled the lot as stated in Pr 16:33 "The **lot** is

cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD." He was dispersing the Levites throughout the land exactly as He desired.

Notice the phrase **the rest** refers to those Kohathites not descended from Aaron.

There are five and a half tribes involved in these twenty-three cities given to the Kohathites.

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#)

**Out of the tribe of Dan, &c.**, ten cities. A less number than was given out of the tribes above-mentioned, because their inheritance was less. The law by which the appropriation was to be regulated is contained Num. 35:8, 'And the cities which ye shall give shall be the possession of Israel; from them that have many (cities), ye shall give many; but from them that have few, ye shall give few; every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites, according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.' It may be remarked, that there is no evidence that the priests were bound to live in these and in no other cities. When the tabernacle was at Nob, both the priests and Levites dwelt there, 1 Sam. 21:1-7; and when the worship of God was established at Jerusalem, multitudes both of priests and Levites resided there, though it was no Levitical city; as did the courses of the priests afterwards at Jericho. This was a circumstance which Moses had foreseen, and for which he had provided, Deut. 18:6, &c. So, on the other hand, persons belonging to the other tribes were not precluded from living in the Levitical cities; as for instance Gibeah of Benjamin, which is here made a Levitical city, v. 17, was always peopled by the Benjamites, as appears from Jdg. 19.

**Joshua 21:6 The sons of Gershon received thirteen cities by lot from the families of the tribe of Issachar and from the tribe of Asher and from the tribe of Naphtali and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan.**

- Jos 21:27-33 Ex 6:16,17 Nu 3:21,22 1Ch 6:62,71-76
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### GERSHONITES RECEIVE 13 CITIES FROM ISSACHAR, ASHER, NAPHTALI, EAST MANASSEH

The sons of Gershon received thirteen cities by lot ([goral](#)) from the families of the tribe of Issachar and from the tribe of Asher and from the tribe of Naphtali and from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan (EAST OF JORDAN) See [orange triangles on the map](#)

[Gershon - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Personal name meaning, "expelled" or "bell." Eldest son of Levi (Genesis 46:11). He was the progenitor of the Gershonites, who had specifically assigned responsibilities regarding the transporting of the tabernacle during the years of Israel's nomadic existence in the wilderness. Compare Exodus 6:16-17; Numbers 3:17-25; Numbers 4:22-41; Numbers 7:7; Numbers 10:17; Numbers 26:57; Joshua 21:6, Joshua 21:6,21:27. First Chronicles often spells the name Gershom

[Gershon - Fausset's Bible Dictionary](#) Oldest of Levi's three sons, born apparently before Jacob's going down to Egypt (Genesis 46:11). Kohath and his descendants Moses and Aaron's priestly line eclipsed Gershon's line. Gershon's sons were Libni and Shimei (1 Chronicles 6:17; 1 Chronicles 6:20-21; 1 Chronicles 6:39-43). Some of his descendants took part in the service of the sanctuary (1 Chronicles 23:7-11). Asaph, the famous sacred singer and seer, was one of them. Compare also under Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:12). At the Sinai census the males of the sons of Gershon were 7500 (Numbers 3:21-22). The serving men were 2,630 (Numbers 4:38-41). They had charge of the tabernacle, tent, covering, hangings, curtain of the door, and cords (Numbers 3:25-26; Numbers 4:25-26). They had two covered wagons and four oxen for the service (Numbers 7:3; Numbers 7:7-8).

The Merarites had twice as many wagons and oxen. The reason for this unequal division is not expressed; but on turning to Numbers 2 the reason undesignedly appears (an unstudied propriety attesting the truth of the narrative); the Gershonites had the lighter parts to bear, the "curtains," "tabernacle," i.e. the mishkan or great woven cloth consisting of ten breadths, the "tent" of goats' hair cloth, and the "covering" of rams' skins, and badgers (tachash) skins, the hangings and their cords. (See BADGERS.) But the Merarites had the heavier and more solid framework to bear, the boards, bars, pillars, sockets, pins, their cords and instruments. Their station was "behind the tabernacle westward" (Numbers 3:23); on march they were in the rear of the first three tribes. Thirteen of the Levitical cities were allotted to them; all in the northern tribes, two of them cities of refuge (Joshua 21:27-33; 1 Chronicles 6:62; 1 Chronicles 6:71-76).

**Joshua 21:7 The sons of Merari according to their families received twelve cities from the tribe of Reuben and from the tribe of Gad and from the tribe of Zebulun.**

- Jos 21:34-40 Ex 6:19 Nu 3:20 1Ch 6:63,77-81
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MERARITES RECEIVE 12 CITIES FROM REUBEN, GAD, ZEBULUN,

**The sons of Merari according to their families received twelve cities from the tribe of Reuben and from the tribe of Gad and from the tribe of Zebulun** - See [blue triangles on the map](#)

In sum, the descendants of **Kohath** got twenty-three towns, the descendants of **Gershon** thirteen towns, and the descendants of **Merari** got twelve towns, giving us a total of 48. The beautiful thing is that everybody participated in ~ this project of the Levite cities. Nobody said, "I ain't givin' them any of my towns!" The average allotment was 4 town per tribe. The only exception to that was that there were 9 towns from Judah and Simeon and only 3 towns from Naphtali.

**Merari - Smith's Bible Dictionary** (bitter, unhappy). Third son of Levi, and head of the third great division, of the Levites, the Merarites. Genesis 46:8; Genesis 46:11. At the time of the Exodus, and the numbering in the wilderness, the Merarites consisted of two families, the Mahlites and the Mushites, Mahli and Mushi being either the two sons, or the son and grandson of Merari. 1 Chronicles 6:19; 1 Chronicles 6:47. Their chief, at that time, was Zuriel. Their charge was the cords of the Tabernacle and the court, and all the tools connected with setting them up. In the division of the land by Joshua, the Merarites had twelve cities assigned to them, out of Reuben, Gad and Zebulun. Joshua 21:7; Joshua 21:34-40; 1 Chronicles 6:63; 1 Chronicles 77-81. In the days of Hezekiah, the Merarites were still flourishing. 2 Chronicles 29:12; 2 Chronicles 29:15.

**Fausset Bible Dictionary Merari** ("sorrowful"), because of the anguish attending his birth (Genesis 46:8; Genesis 46:11). (See LEVITES.) Third of Levi's sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Born before Jacob's going down to Egypt; of the 70 who accompanied him. The Mahlites and Mushites were the two families of Merarites at the Exodus and in the wilderness (1 Chronicles 6:19; 1 Chronicles 6:47; Numbers 3:20; Numbers 3:33-37; Numbers 4:29-33; Numbers 4:42-45; Numbers 7:8; Numbers 10:17-21). They followed after Judah's standard, and before Reuben's in the march, to set up the tabernacle against the Kohathites' arrival. Their charge was the tabernacle boards, pillars, etc., four wagons and eight oxen being assigned them. Joshua assigned them 12, cities out of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun (Joshua 21:7; Joshua 21:34-40). They shared with the Gershonites and Kohathites the offices of singers, doorkeepers, etc., under David (1 Chronicles 15:1-6; 1 Chronicles 23:5-6; 1 Chronicles 23:21-23; 1 Chronicles 26:10; 1 Chronicles 26:19); in Nehemiah's time also (Nehemiah 11:15-16). Lord A. Hervey (Smith's Dictionary) supposes Jeduthun the patronymic title of the house, Ethan the head in David's time, and that Jeduthun was brother of an ancestor of Ethan before Hashabiah (1 Chronicles 6:45; 1 Chronicles 25:3; 1 Chronicles 25:19) and son of Hilkiah or Amaziah. Thus, the "sons of Ethan" are distinct from "sons of Jeduthun," and the difficulty is explained how in David's time there could be sons of "sons of Jeduthun" above 30 years of age for they filled offices (1 Chronicles 26:10; 1 Chronicles 16:38), at the same time that Jeduthun is said to be "chief of the singers."

Merari\* - 40x in 38v - Gen. 46:11; Exod. 6:16; Exod. 6:19; Num. 3:17; Num. 3:20; Num. 3:33; Num. 3:35; Num. 3:36; Num. 4:29; Num. 4:33; Num. 4:42; Num. 4:45; Num. 7:8; Num. 10:17; Num. 26:57; Jos. 21:7; Jos. 21:34; Jos. 21:40; 1 Chr. 6:1; 1 Chr. 6:16; 1 Chr. 6:19; 1 Chr. 6:29; 1 Chr. 6:44; 1 Chr. 6:47; 1 Chr. 6:63; 1 Chr. 6:77; 1 Chr. 9:14; 1 Chr. 15:6; 1 Chr. 15:17; 1 Chr. 23:6; 1 Chr. 23:21; 1 Chr. 24:26; 1 Chr. 24:27; 1 Chr. 26:10; 1 Chr. 26:19; 2 Chr. 29:12; 2 Chr. 34:12; Ezr. 8:19

**Joshua 21:8 Now the sons of Israel gave by lot to the Levites these cities with their pasture lands, as the LORD had commanded through Moses.**

- **by lot:** Jos 21:3 18:6 Nu 33:54 35:3 Pr 16:33 18:18
- as the Lord: Nu 32:2
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passage:

Joshua 21:3 So **the sons of Israel gave the Levites from their inheritance** these cities with their pasture lands, according to the command of the LORD.

## REITERATION OF ISRAEL'S

## OBEDIENT GIVING TO LEVITES

Now the sons of Israel gave by lot ([goral](#)) to the [Levites](#) these cities with their pasture lands, as the LORD had commanded through Moses - In Joshua 21:3 these cities were apparently freely given from each tribes inheritance.

Joshua 21:9 They gave these cities which are here mentioned by name from the tribe of the sons of Judah and from the tribe of the sons of Simeon;

- **these cities:** Jos 21:13-18 1Ch 6:65
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### CITIES FROM JUDAH & SIMEON

They gave these cities which are here mentioned by name from the tribe of the sons of Judah and from the tribe of the sons of Simeon - NET = "They assigned from the tribes of Judah and Simeon the cities listed below." This is a preview of the lists of cities in Joshua 21:13-18.

**Matthew Henry** - By mixing the Levites with the other tribes, they were made to see that the eyes of all Israel were upon them, and therefore it was their concern to walk so that their ministry might not be blamed. Every tribe had its share of Levites' cities. Thus did God graciously provide for keeping up religion among them, and that they might have the word in all parts of the land. Yet, blessed be God, we have the Gospel more diffused amongst us.

Joshua 21:10 and they were for the sons of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites, of the sons of Levi, for the lot was theirs first.

- Jos 21:4 Ex 6:18,20-26 Nu 3:2-4,19,27 4:2
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### AARONIC KOHATHITES GET FIRST LOT

and they were for the sons of Aaron, one of the families of the [Kohathites](#), of the sons of Levi, for the lot ([goral](#)) was theirs first - NET = "They were assigned to the Kohathite clans of the Levites who were descendants of Aaron, for the first lot belonged to them."

The phrase **the sons of Aaron** refers to the family from the tribe of Levi from which the High Priests and other Priests would come (cf Ex 28:1 - see [chart above](#)). Gershon was actually Levi's firstborn son and theoretically should have received the first lot. The reason this honor is given to the Kohathites is not stated, but surely has something to do with the fact that they handled the utensils of the Tabernacle including the Ark of the Covenant.

Joshua 21:11 Thus they gave them Kiriath-arba, Arba being the father of Anak (that is, Hebron), in the hill country of Judah, with its surrounding pasture lands.

- **they:** 1Ch 6:55
- **the city of Arba: or, Kirjath-arba,** Jos 15:13,14,54 Ge 23:2 35:27 Jdg 1:10
- **is Hebron:** 2Sa 2:1-3 5:1-5 15:7
- **in the hill:** Jos 20:7-9 Lu 1:39
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



## SPECIFIC CITIES TO KOHATHITES

Thus they gave them Kiriath-arba, Arba being the father of Anak (that is, Hebron), in the hill country of Judah, with its surrounding pasture lands. See [green triangles on the map](#). (in territory of Judah) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

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**Hebron - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name and personal name meaning “association” or “league.” A major city in the hill country of Judah about nineteen miles south of Jerusalem and fifteen miles west of the Dead Sea. The region is over 3,000 feet above sea level. The surrounding area has an abundant water supply, and its rich soil is excellent for agriculture. According to archaeological research the site has been occupied almost continuously since about 3300 B.C.

After his separation from Lot, Abraham moved to Hebron. At that time the area was known as Mamre and was associated with the Amorites (Genesis 13:18; Genesis 14:13; Genesis 23:19 ). Abraham apparently remained at Mamre until after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. When Sarah died, the place was called Kirjath-arba; and the population was predominantly Hittite (Genesis 23:2; Joshua 14:15; Joshua 15:54; Judges 1:10 ). From them Abraham purchased a field with a burial plot inside a nearby cave. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah were buried there (Genesis 23:19; Genesis 25:9; Genesis 35:29; Genesis 49:31; Genesis 50:13 ).

Four centuries later, when Moses sent the twelve spies into Canaan, the tribe of Anak lived in Hebron. According to Numbers 13:22 Hebron was “built” seven years prior to Zoan, the Egyptian city of Tanis. Archaeological evidence suggests that the reference was to Tanis' establishment as the Hyksos capital around 1725 B.C. and not its beginning. Indeed both cities already were inhabited long before 2000 B.C. Therefore, the date may indicate that it was rebuilt by the Hyksos at that time, or it may specify when Hebron became a Canaanite city. After the Israelite conquest of Canaan, Hebron was given to Caleb ( Joshua 14:9-13 ). It also became a city of refuge (Joshua 20:7 ). Later, Samson put the gates of Gaza on a hill outside of Hebron (Judges 16:3 ).

After the death of Saul, David settled in the city (2 Samuel 2:3 ) and made it his capital during the seven years he ruled only Judah (1 Kings 2:11 ). His son, Absalom, launched an abortive revolt against David from Hebron (2 Samuel 15:10 ). Between 922,915 B.C. Rehoboam fortified the city as a part of Judah's defense network (2 Chronicles 11:5-10 ). According to inscriptions found on pottery fragments, royal pottery was made in the city between 800,700 B.C.

When the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C., the Edomites captured Hebron. It was not recaptured until Judas Maccabeus sacked the city in 164 B.C. Although Herod the Great erected pretentious structures there, no mention of the city is made in the New Testament. The city was raided by both Jewish revolutionaries and Roman legions in A.D. 68 during the Jewish Revolt.

Hebron is still an important city today. Except for during the Crusades, the Muslims have ruled the city since A.D. 635. It is venerated by the Arabs because of the tombs of the patriarchs.

Two individuals in the Old Testament also were named Hebron. The first was a Levite (Exodus 6:18; Numbers 3:19; 1Chronicles 6:2,1 Chronicles 6:18; 1 Chronicles 23:12 ). The second is listed in the Calebite genealogy (1 Chronicles 2:42-43 ).

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### **Adrian Rogers - The Significant Names of the Cities of Refuge...Hebron: Christ Is a Harmonious Place**

The name of the next city is Hebron. Do you know what the name Hebron means? Fellowship—fellowship. Not only is He Christ our Savior, and not only is He Christ our strength; but friend, He's Christ our satisfaction. The Bible says, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:7). You see, Christ is a harmonious place. Say, “Harmonious place,” because there is harmony; there is peace. We are as one with Him. He has made peace through the blood of His Christ—through the blood of His cross—and through Him we do have that oneness that we want—that harmony. He has put that harmony in our souls, and we are at one with our Lord because He is a holy place, He is a helpful place, He is a harmonious place. He is Christ our Savior. He is Christ our strength. He is Christ our satisfaction. (Excerpt from When Great Men Die Like Fools)

**Joshua 21:12 But the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession.**

- Jos 14:13-15 1Ch 6:55-57
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



## Related Passages:

1 Chronicles 6:54-57 Now these are their settlements according to their camps within their borders. To the sons of Aaron of the families of the Kohathites (for theirs was the first lot), to them they gave Hebron in the land of Judah and its pasture lands around it; 56 but the fields of the city and its villages, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

## CALEB RETAINS THE FIELDS AROUND HEBRON

**But the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession-** There is no record of this servant of the LORD (Nu 14:24) grumbling or disputing the gift of the pasture land around Hebron to the Kohathites.

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#)

**The fields of the city—gave they to Caleb.** As it would not necessarily involve the exclusion of himself or his family from a residence in the city, he probably gave it to the priests in order to set an example to his brethren of cheerfully contributing to the maintenance of religion. See on Josh 14:6–15.

25. Tanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon. In the parallel passage, 1 Chr 6:70, Aner and Bileam are mentioned instead of the above. A careful examination of the two catalogues will discover several other discrepancies of the same kind, which are probably owing to the fact, either that some of the cities were called by different names, or that their names in process of time were changed. Others conjecture that some of the cities here enumerated being at this time in possession of the Canaanites, and not easily to be taken out of their hands, others were given them in their stead.

**Joshua 21:13 So to the sons of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Libnah with its pasture lands,**

- **they gave:** 1Ch 6:56
- **Hebron:** Jos 15:54
- **the city of refuge** Jos 20:7 Nu 35:6
- **Libnah:** Jos 10:29 15:42 1Ch 6:57 Isa 37:8
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HEBRON - CITY OF REFUGE TO AARONIC KOHATHITES

**So to the sons of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge**([miqlat](#); Lxx = phugadeuterion - place of refuge) **for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Libnah with its pasture lands** See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Judah's territory) for Hebron and Libnah (but note location of latter is not known with certainty) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Libnah - Holman Bible Dictionary** ([Wikipedia Article](#)) (See also Fausset Bible Dictionary [Libnah](#)) Place name meaning "white" or "storax tree." 1. Wilderness station east of the Jordan (Numbers 33:20 ). Its location is not known; Umm Leben 66 miles south of Haradah has been suggested. See Joshua 10:29-30 ). Joshua allotted it to the tribe of Judah (Joshua 15:42 ) and separated it as a city for the Levites (Joshua 21:13 ). It illustrated western border rebellion against King Joram of Judah (853-841 B.C.) just as Edom represented rebellion in the east (2 Kings 8:22 ). It lay on the invasion route to Jerusalem followed by Sennacherib about 701 B.C. (2 Kings 19:8 ). The mother of Kings Jehoahaz (609 B.C.) and Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.) came from Libnah (2 Kings 23:31; 2 Kings 24:18 ). Debate rages concerning Libnah's location: tell es-Safi at the head of the Elah Valley appears too far north; tell Bornat just west of Lachish; tell el-Judeideh, usually identified as Moresbeth-gath. Tell Bornat is the most popular candidate but far from certain.

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**Refuge** ([04733](#)) [miqlat](#) is a masculine noun that refers to a refuge, a place of safety and security. An asylum where a person guilty of manslaughter could flee for protection from the blood avenger (the goel) REFUGE is from a Latin word meaning to escape and depicts a place which provides shelter or protection from trouble, danger or distress. This noun is always used in connection with the cities appointed to provide asylum for those guilty of involuntary manslaughter. Such a provision prevented excesses in the [law of retribution](#). Initially, those not guilty of intentional or premeditated killing could seek asylum at the altar (Ex 21:12–14), but those

who killed with premeditation should be dragged from the altar and executed (cf. 1Ki 2:28–31). Once Israel was in the Promised Land distance would potentially render successful flight more difficult and place innocent men at risk of being killed by the blood avenger. God in His perfect wisdom instructed Israel to establish cities of refuge throughout the promised land (Nu 35:9–34).

**Miqlat** - 20v all translated "refuge" - Num. 35:6; Num. 35:11; Num. 35:12; Num. 35:13; Num. 35:14; Num. 35:15; Num. 35:25; Num. 35:26; Num. 35:27; Num. 35:28; Num. 35:32; Jos. 20:2; Jos. 20:3; Jos. 21:13; Jos. 21:21; Jos. 21:27; Jos. 21:32; Jos. 21:38; 1 Chr. 6:57; 1 Chr. 6:67

**Manslayer** (killer)(07523) **ratsach** means to murder or slay, all 47 uses (in 40v and 18 refer to "manslayer") speaking of one human being killing another and never of a person killing an animal. Ratsach is never employed in contexts of war, capital punishment, or self-defense. The taking of a human life is the primary concept behind this word. The first use is in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." (Ex 20:13) **Ratsach** refers to premeditated murder (Deut. 5:17; 1 Kgs. 21:19; Jer. 7:9), accidental killing (Nu. 35:11; Josh. 20:3), an act of revenge (Nu 35:27) and death from animal attack (Pr. 22:13). "Provocatively, Hosea refers to the lewdness of the priests that led people astray as being equal to murder (Hos. 6:9)." ([Old Testament Word Study](#))

**Ratsach** - 40x - killed(1), kills the manslayer(1), manslayer(18), murder(7), murdered(2), murderer(12), murderer shall be put(1), murderers(1), murders(1), put to death(1), slew(1). mExod. 20:13; Num. 35:6; Num. 35:11; Num. 35:12; Num. 35:16; Num. 35:17; Num. 35:18; Num. 35:19; Num. 35:21; Num. 35:25; Num. 35:26; Num. 35:27; Num. 35:28; Num. 35:30; Num. 35:31; Deut. 4:42; Deut. 5:17; Deut. 19:3; Deut. 19:4; Deut. 19:6; Deut. 22:26; Jos. 20:3; Jos. 20:5; Jos. 20:6; Jos. 21:13; Jos. 21:21; Jos. 21:27; Jos. 21:32; Jos. 21:38; Jdg. 20:4; 1 Ki. 21:19; 2 Ki. 6:32; Job 24:14; Ps. 62:3; Ps. 94:6; Prov. 22:13; Isa. 1:21; Jer. 7:9; Hos. 4:2; Hos. 6:9

#### Joshua 21:14 and Jattir with its pasture lands and Eshtemoa with its pasture lands,

- **Jattir**: Jattir or Jether, according to Eusebius, was situated in the district of Daroma, or the southern part of Judah, 20 miles (south) from Eleutheropolis, towards the city of Malatha. Jos 15:48 1Sa 30:27,28
- **Eshtemoa**: Eusebius says Eshtemoa, or Esthema, was a great city in the south of Judah, and in the district of Eleutheropolis, north of that city. Jos 15:50, Eshtemoh
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### TWO CITIES TO KOHATHITES FROM JUDAH

and Jattir with its pasture lands and Eshtemoa with its pasture lands, See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Judah's territory) ([Suggestion - open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Jattir - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "the remainder." (or "height") Town in the hills of the tribal territory of Judah (Joshua 15:48 ). David gave some of war booty from victory over Amalekites to Jattir (1 Samuel 30:27 ). Joshua reserved it for the Levites (Joshua 20:14 ). It was located near modern khirbet Attir about thirteen miles south southwest of Hebron and fourteen miles northeast of Beersheba. (4v Jos. 15:48; Jos. 21:14; 1 Sam. 30:27; 1 Chr. 6:57)

**Eshtemoa - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place and personal name meaning, "being heard." (or "obedience") The name may indicate an ancient tradition of going to Eshtemoa to obtain an oracle or word of God from a prophet or priest. 1. City in tribal allotment of Judah (Judges 15:50 , with variant Hebrew spelling; see Joshua 21:14 ). While living in exile in Ziklag, David sent some of the plunder from his victories to Eshtemoa (1 Samuel 30:28 ). (6v - Jos. 15:50; Jos. 21:14; 1 Sam. 30:28; 1 Chr. 4:17; 1 Chr. 4:19; 1 Chr. 6:57)

#### Joshua 21:15 and Holon with its pasture lands and Debir with its pasture lands,

- **Holon**: Jos 15:51 1Ch 6:58, Hilan
- **Debir**: Jos 12:13 15:49
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### TWO CITIES TO KOHATHITES FROM JUDAH

and Holon with its pasture lands and Debir with its pasture lands, See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Judah's territory) (Suggestion - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

[Holon - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) "sandy spot." 1. Town in the hill country of Judah allotted to tribe of Judah and given as city for Levites (Joshua 15:51; Joshua 21:15 ). It may be modern khirbet Illin near Beth-zur. The parallel passage (1 Chronicles 6:58 ) has Hilez or Hilin in different manuscripts.

[Debir - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Personal and place name meaning, "back, behind." As a common noun, the Hebrew term refers to the back room of the Temple, the holy of holies. Important city in hill country of tribe of Judah whose exact location is debated by archaeologists and geographers. Joshua annihilated its residents (Joshua 10:38; compare Joshua 11:21; Joshua 12:13 ). Joshua 15:15 describes Caleb's challenge to Othniel to capture Debir, formerly called Kiriath Sepher. Compare Judges 1:11 . Joshua 15:49 gives yet another name, Kiriath Sannah, to Debir. It became a levitical city for the priests ( Joshua 21:15 ). Different scholars locate Debir at tell beit Mirsim, thirteen miles southwest of Hebron; khirbet Tarrameh, five miles southwest of Hebron; and khirbet Rabud, seven and a half miles west of Hebron. It may have been the most important town south of Hebron.

**Joshua 21:16 and Ain with its pasture lands and Juttah with its pasture lands and Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands; nine cities from these two tribes.**

- **Ain:** Jos 15:42 1Ch 6:59, Ashan
- **Juttah:** Eusebius says Juttah was a great town 18 miles south from Eleutheropolis. Jos 15:55
- **Beth shemesh:** Jos 15:10 1Sa 6:9, 12 1Ch 6:59
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THREE CITIES TO KOHATHITES FROM JUDAH

and Ain with its pasture lands and Juttah with its pasture lands and Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Judah's territory) (Suggestion - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Nine cities from these two tribes** - From Judah and Simeon to the Kohathites.

[Ain - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place meaning, "eye" or "water spring." Often used as first part of a place name indicating the presence of a water source. English often used "En" as first part of such names. See Numbers 34:11 ). Location is uncertain. 2. City of southern Judah (Joshua 15:32 ) belonging to Simeon (Joshua 19:7 ) but assigned as homestead for the Levites, who had no land allotted (Joshua 21:16 ), if this is not read Ashan as in some manuscripts of Joshua and in 1 Chronicles 6:59 .

[Juttah - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "spread out." Town in hill country of tribal territory of Judah (Joshua 15:55 ) given to the Levites (Joshua 21:16 ). It may be located at modern Yatta, six miles southwest of Hebron

[Beth-Shemesh - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) ([Wikipedia](#)) Place name meaning, "house of the sun." Beth-shemesh is a name applied to four different cities in the Old Testament. The name probably derives from a place where the Semitic god Shemesh (Shamash) was worshiped. **Beth-shemesh of Dan is located on the south tribal border with Judah** (Joshua 15:10; Joshua 19:41 ) overlooking the Sorek Valley about 24 miles west of Jerusalem. The ancient name was preserved in the Arab village of Ain Shems, and the "tell" is identified with tell er-Rumeilah. Beth-shemesh guarded the lush farmlands of the Sorek Valley at the point at which the Shephelah (foothills) borders the Judean hill country. It was also situated in the strategic "buffer zone" between the Philistines and the Israelites during the judges period.

[Beth-Shemesh - Hasting's Bible Dictionary](#) **A town in Judah** ( Joshua 15:10 etc., called Ir-Shemesh in Joshua 19:41 ) allotted to the children of Aaron ( Joshua 21:15 ). Hither the ark was brought when sent back by the Philistines, and the inhabitants were smitten because of their profane curiosity ( 1 Samuel 6:1-21 ). Here Amaziah was defeated and captured by Jehoash, king of Israel ( 2 Kings 14:11; 2 Kings 14:13 ). It was one of the cities taken by the Philistines in the time of Ahaz ( 2 Chronicles 28:18 ). It is identified with the modern 'Ain Shems , on the S. slope of Wāḏy es-SurĀḏr , 15 miles W. of Jerusalem.

[Beth-Shemesh - Jewish Encyclopedia](#) According to Joshua 19:41, it was one of the cities of Dan, and **according to Joshua 15:10, it was on the boundary-line of Judea**. In Joshua 21:16 it is named as a Levitic city. The Ark of the Covenant of Yhwh remained here for a time after it had been released by the Philistines (1 Samuel 6:9 et seq.). At the time of Solomon, Beth-shemesh was the seat of one of the royal officers (1 Kings 4:9). Later on Amaziah, king of Judea, incurred a serious defeat there. Under Ahaz, Beth-shemesh was conquered by the Philistines (2 Chronicles 28:18).

## Joshua 21:17 From the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its pasture lands, Geba with its pasture lands,

- **Gibeon:** Jos 9:3 18:25 1Ch 6:60
- **Geba:** Jos 18:24
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### TWO CITIES TO KOHATHITES FROM BENJAMIN

From the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with its pasture lands, Geba with its pasture lands, See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Benjamin's territory - Gibeon is in the far western edge of their territory) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

[Gibeon - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "hill place." This "great city" (Joshua 10:2) played a significant role in Old Testament history—especially during the conquest of Canaan. Archaeology has demonstrated that the city was a thriving industrial area which made it a primary community in Canaan....Forty-five Old Testament references are made to Gibeon. Its first major appearance in Israel's history involved the conquest of Canaan. The people of Gibeon concocted a deceptive strategy to protect themselves from the Israelites (Joshua 9:1). Pretending to be foreigners also, the Gibeonites made a treaty with Joshua. When Joshua later discovered the truth, he forced the Gibeonites to become water carriers and woodcutters for the Israelites. Honoring this covenant, Joshua led Israel against the armies of five kings who had attacked Gibeon. During these victories the Lord caused the sun and moon to stand still (Joshua 10:1; compare Isaiah 28:21).

[Geba - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "hill," and variant Hebrew spelling of Gibeah, with which it is sometimes confused though the two represent different towns in the territory of Benjamin. Geba was given Benjamin (Joshua 18:24) but set aside for the Levites (Joshua 21:17). This is evidently the base camp for Saul and Jonathan in their fight with the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:16-14:18), though the Hebrew texts and modern translations confuse Geba and Gibeah here. King Asa of Judah (910-869 B.C.) strengthened the city (1 Kings 15:22). In the days of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.) Geba apparently represented the northern border of Judah as opposed to the southern border in Beersheba (2 Kings 23:8). Isaiah described the ominous march of the Assyrian army coming through Geba on its way to Jerusalem (Isaiah 10:29). For Zechariah (Zechariah 14:10), Geba represented the northern border of a Judah to be flattened out into a plain dominated by God ruling on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. At some period Geba's inhabitants were forced to move to Manahath (1 Chronicles 8:6), perhaps when the tribe of Benjamin first settled there or during the Exile. Exiles returned to Geba under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:26). Some citizens of Geba lived in Michmash and other cities in Nehemiah's day, unless the Hebrew text is read differently (REB) to mean they lived in Geba as well as the other towns (Nehemiah 11:31). Levite singers lived there (Nehemiah 12:29).

## Joshua 21:18 Anathoth with its pasture lands and Almon with its pasture lands; four cities.

- **Anathoth:** Anathoth was situated about three miles northward from Jerusalem according to Eusebius and Jerome (in Jer ch. 1:20;) or twenty furlongs, according to Josephus. Ant. I. viii. c. 10. 1Ki 2:26 Isa 10:30 Jer 1:1
- **Almon:** 1Ch 6:60, Alemeth
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### TWO MORE CITIES TO KOHATHITES FROM BENJAMIN

**Anathoth with its pasture lands and Almon with its pasture lands; four cities.** See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Benjamin's territory) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

[Anathoth - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) A city assigned to the tribe of Benjamin, located about three miles northeast of Jerusalem (Joshua 21:18). King Solomon sent Abiathar the priest there after removing him as high priest (1 Kings 2:26-27). It was also the home of Jeremiah the prophet, who may have been a priest in the rejected line of Abiathar (Jeremiah 1:1). Though Jeremiah was opposed and threatened by the citizens of Anathoth (Jeremiah 11:21-23) he purchased a field there from his cousin Hanameel in obedience to the word of the Lord to symbolize ultimate hope after Exile (Jeremiah 32:6-15). Anathoth was overrun by the Babylonians, but resettled following the Exile (Nehemiah 7:27; Nehemiah 11:32).

[Almon - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "darkness" or "hidden," or "small road sign." City given to Levites from tribe of Benjamin, called Alemeth in 1 Chronicles 6:60 . The site is probably modern Khirbet Almit.

**Joshua 21:19 All the cities of the sons of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their pasture lands.**

- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### 13 CITIES TO KOHATHITES FROM JUDAH AND SIMEON

**All the cities of the sons of Aaron, the priests, were thirteen cities with their pasture lands** - The phrase **the sons of Aaron** refers to the family from the tribe of Levi from which the High Priests and other Priests would come (cf Ex 28:1 - see [chart above](#)).

**Joshua 21:20 Then the cities from the tribe of Ephraim were allotted to the families of the sons of Kohath, the Levites, even to the rest of the sons of Kohath.**

- Jos 21:5 1Ch 6:66
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### CITIES FROM EPHRAIM TO THE KOHATHITES

**Then the cities from the tribe of Ephraim were allotted**([goral](#)) **to the families of the sons of Kohath, the Levites, even to the rest of the sons of Kohath.**

**Joshua 21:21 They gave them Shechem, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim, and Gezer with its pasture lands,**

- **Shechem:** Jos 20:7 Ge 33:19 Jdg 9:1 1Ki 12:1
- **Gezer:** Jos 16:10 1Ki 9:15-17 1Ch 6:67
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**They gave them Shechem, the city of refuge** ([miqlat](#); Lxx = phugadeuterion - place of refuge) **for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim, and Gezer with its pasture lands** See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Ephraim's territory - **Shechem** at northern most point and **Gezer** is southwest corner) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

[Shechem - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Personal and place name meaning, "shoulder, back." 1. District and city in the hill country of Ephraim in north central Palestine. The first capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, the city was built mainly on the slope, or shoulder, of Mount Ebal. Situated where main highways and ancient trade routes converged, Shechem was an important city long before the Israelites occupied Canaan.

The city makes its earliest appearance in biblical history in connection with Abram's arrival in the land (Genesis 12:6-7 ). When Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, he settled down at Shechem and purchased land from the sons of Hamor (Genesis 33:18-19 ). In Genesis 33-34 , Shechem was the name of the city and also of the prince of the city. While Jacob was at Shechem, the unfortunate incident of Dinah occurred. Simeon and Levi, her full brothers, destroyed the city (Genesis 34:1 ). Later, the brothers of Joseph were herding Jacob's flock at Shechem when Joseph was sent to check on their welfare. Joseph was buried in the plot of ground that his father Jacob had purchased here (Joshua 24:32 ).

As the Israelites conquered Canaan, they turned unexpectedly to Shechem. Joshua built an altar on Mount Ebal and led the people in its building, renewing their commitment to the law of Moses (Joshua 8:30-35; compare Deuteronomy 27:12-13 ). Shechem lay in the tribal territory of Ephraim near their border with Manasseh (Joshua 17:7 ). It was a city of refuge (Joshua 20:7 ) and a Levitical

city (Joshua 21:21 ). See Joshua 24:1-17 ). Gideon's son Abimelech fought the leaders of Shechem (Judges 8:31-9:49 ).

Rehoboam, successor to King Solomon, went to Shechem to be crowned king over all Israel (1 Kings 12:1 ). Later, when the nation divided into two kingdoms, Shechem became the first capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 12:25 ). Samaria eventually became the permanent political capital of the Northern Kingdom, but Shechem retained its religious importance. It apparently was a sanctuary for worship of God in Hosea's time about 750 B.C. (1 Kings 6:9 ).

The name Shechem occurs in historical records and other sources outside Palestine. It is mentioned as a city captured by Senusert III of Egypt (before 1800 B.C.) and appears in the Egyptian cursing texts of about the same time. "The mountain of Shechem" is referred to in a satirical letter of the Nineteenth Dynasty of Egypt. Shechem also figures in the Amarna Letters; its ruler, Lab'ayu, and his sons were accused of acting against Egypt, though the ruler protested that he was absolutely loyal to the pharaoh.

At Shechem (sometimes identified with Sychar), Jesus visited with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well (John 4:1 ). The Samaritans had built their temple on Mount Gerizim, where they practiced their form of religion.

[Gezer - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "isolated area." Major Canaanite city nineteen miles northwest of Jerusalem at tell Gezer on the edge of the foothills of Judah near the Shephelah, seven miles southeast of Ramleh. It provides a military post for the highway junction of the Via Maris and the road leading to the valley of Ajalon to Jerusalem, Jericho, and over the Jordan. A site of 30 acres, it was one of the largest and most important cities in Palestine from 1800 B.C. onwards, though occupation reaches back to 3500 B.C. Archaeologists have found important inscriptions here such as the Gezer calendar, one of, if not the, earliest (before 900 B.C.) examples of Hebrew writing known. Even earlier is an inscribed piece of broken pottery in the "Proto-Sinaitic" script. The largest stone structure in Palestine, a fifty-foot wide wall from about 1600 B.C. was found here. A high place or sanctuary with ten stone stele or masseboth demonstrates Canaanite worship practices about 1600 B.C. Some of these tower over nine feet high. Egyptian sources mention Gezer about 1410 B.C., as do the Amarna letters of 100 years later. Three different kings of Gezer wrote the Egyptian pharaoh. Merneptah's stele from about 1200 B.C. claims the pharaoh captured Gezer. Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria pictured the capture of Gezer about 734 B.C. in his palace at Nimrud.

Joshua defeated the king of Gezer when he tried to aid the king of Lachish (Joshua 10:33 ). Gezer formed the boundary for Ephraim's tribal allotment (Joshua 16:3 ), but Israel did not control the city (Joshua 16:10; Judges 1:29 ). Still, it was assigned as a city for the Levites (Joshua 21:21 ). David finally wrested control of it from the Philistines (2 Samuel 5:25; 1 Chronicles 20:4 ). A few years later, Egypt's pharaoh captured the city from the Canaanites and gave it to Solomon as a wedding gift for Solomon's marriage with the pharaoh's daughter. Solomon rebuilt its walls (1 Kings 9:15-17 ). Between the Testaments, Gezer became known as Gazara. The Seleucid general Bacchides fortified it (1 Maccabees 9:52 ). In 142 B.C. the Jewish leader Simon Maccabeus captured Gazara and built himself a home there. Then John Hyrcanus, his son, assumed command of the Jewish army and established his headquarters there (1 Maccabees 13:43-53 ).

Gezer thus is a peripheral city in the Bible whose magnificent history had begun to recede a century before Joshua entered Palestine. Still, it marked an important military outpost for Philistines, Egyptians, Israelites, and Assyrians trying to control the important trade and military routes.

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### **Adrian Rogers - The Significant Names of the Cities of Refuge**

Now, not only do I want you to think about the saving nature of these cities, but think with me about the significant names of these cities. Look with me ... Let's begin and look at the names of these cities, because remember the Bible says, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower" (Proverbs 18:10).

**Shechem: Christ Is a Helpful Place** - Now, what's the name of the next city? Shechem. Do you know what the name Shechem means? It means "shoulder" or "strength." Now, not only is Christ a holy place; Christ is a helpful place, because the Bible says of our Savior, "And the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6). Remember there in the parable of the lost sheep when the good shepherd went out and found that sheep? What did he do? He laid it upon his shoulders and brought it back home safely. And friend, that's the way I'm going to Heaven—upon the shoulders of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was a sheep with six legs (four of his own and two of the Savior), going on back to the sheepfold, because He is the One who carries our burdens. So, you've said, "Holy place." Now, I want you to say, "Helpful place"—"helpful place." Christ is a helpful place. Do you need strength? The glory of the Lord ... "The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). And, when you come to Him for refuge, He will give you strength because not only is He Christ our Savior, the holy place; He is Christ our strength, the helpful place. (Excerpt from When Great Men Die Like Fools)

**Joshua 21:22 and Kibzaim with its pasture lands and Beth-horon with its pasture lands; four cities.**



- **Bethhoron:** Jos 16:3,5 18:13,14 1Ch 6:68
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

and Kibzaim with its pasture lands and Beth-horon with its pasture lands; four cities. See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Ephraim's territory - but Kibzaim is not on this map but [see here](#)) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Kibzaim - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "double gathering" or "double heap." One of the Levitical cities in the tribal territory of Ephraim also designated as a city of refuge (Joshua 21:22 ). In a parallel list of cities in Chronicles, the name Jokmeam appears (1 Chronicles 6:68 ). This is not to be confused with Jokmeam (or Jokneam) of 1 Kings 4:12 . The reason for the appearance of Jokneam in 1Chronicles is unexplained.

**Beth-Horon - Holman Bible Dictionary** Twin cities, one higher than the other, and so called Upper and Lower Beth Horon. An important road here dominates the path to the Shephelah, the plain between the Judean hills and the Mediterranean coast. Joshua used the road to chase the coalition of southern kings led by the king of Jerusalem (Joshua 10:10 ). Here God cast hail stones on the enemies. The border between the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin was at Beth-horon (Joshua 16:3 ,Joshua 16:3,16:5; Joshua 18:13-14 ). The city belonged to Ephraim but was set aside for the Levites (Joshua 21:22 ). The Philistines sent one unit of their army the way of Beth-horon to attack Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 13:18 ). Solomon rebuilt the lower city as a stone city and as a defense outpost (1 Kings 9:17 ). The chronicler preserved an even earlier tradition of a descendant of Ephraim, a woman named Sherah, building the two cities (1 Chronicles 7:22-24 ). When King Amaziah of Judah (796-767 B.C.) followed a prophet's advice and sent home mercenary soldiers he had hired from Israel, those soldiers fought the cities of Judah, including Beth-horon (2 Chronicles 25:13 ). Upper Beth Horon is modern beit Ur el-Foqa, five miles northwest of Gibeon and ten miles northwest of Jerusalem. It is 1750 feet above sea level. Lower Beth Horon is two miles to the east and only 1050 feet above sea level. It is modern beit Ur et-Tahta.

#### Joshua 21:23 From the tribe of Dan, Elteke with its pasture lands, Gibbethon with its pasture lands,

- **Eltekeh:** Jos 19:44,45
- **Gibbethon:** Probably the Gabatha mentioned by Eusebius and Jerome, as situated in the south of Judah, 12 miles from Eleutheropolis, where the prophet Habakkuk's sepulchre was shown.
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

From the [tribe of Dan](#), Elteke with its pasture lands, Gibbethon with its pasture lands, See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Dan's western territory) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)). Note the proximity of the [Danites](#) to [the Philistines](#) which explains why [Dan](#) had a difficult time possessing their land and some even moved north (Joshua 19:42).

**Elteke - Holman Bible Dictionary** or ELTEKEH (ehl teh keh) Place name meaning, "place of meeting," "place of hearing," or "plea for rain." A city in Dan (Joshua 19:44 ) assigned to the Levites (Joshua 21:23 ). Egyptian pharaohs claim to have conquered an Altaku, which may be the same. Sennacherib of Assyria met an Egyptian army there about 701 B.C. It has been variously located at khirbet el-Muqenna on the eastern edge of the coastal plain, at tell esh-Shalaf, and at tell el-Melat, northwest of Gezer.

**Gibbethon - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "arched," "hill," or "mound." City in the tribal territory of Dan (Joshua 19:44 ) but assigned to the Levites (Joshua 21:23 ). During the monarchy the Philistines controlled Gibbethon. Nadab of Israel (909-908 B.C.) besieged it. During the siege Baasha murdered Nadab and assumed the kingship (1 Kings 15:25-28 ). The Israelite army was encamped against Philistine Gibbethon when Zimri assumed rule by assassinating Elah, the son of Baasha (1 Kings 16:15-17 ). Gibbethon has been variously identified as tell el-Melat north of Ekron, and with Agir, two and a half miles west of tell el-Melat.

#### Joshua 21:24 Aijalon with its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; four cities.

- **Aijalon:** Jos 10:12 19:42, Aijalon, 1Ch 6:69
- **Gathrimmon:** Gathrimmon is said by Jerome to be a great town 10 miles from Diospolis, or Lydda, towards Eleutheropolis.
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Aijalon with its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; four cities.** See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Dan's territory - Beth-Rimmon far north, Aijalon toward the eastern side) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to](#)



[enlarge](#)).

**Aijalon - Holman Bible Dictionary** Also spelled Ajalon. Place name meaning, "place of the deer." 1. Town and nearby valley where moon stood still at Joshua's command (Joshua 10:12 ). Near the Philistine border, south of Beth-horon, Aijalon belonged to Dan, according to tribal allotments (Joshua 19:42 ); but Dan did not conquer the territory and moved to the north (Judges 18:1 ). It was one city in Dan given the Levites (Joshua 21:24 ). Amorites gained temporary control, but the Joseph tribes subjected them to pay tribute (Judges 1:34-35 ). Saul and Jonathan won a battle between Michmash and Aijalon (1 Samuel 14:31 ). In post-exilic times, the Chronicler knew Aijalon as a city of the tribe of Benjamin which defeated Gath (1 Chronicles 8:13 ). Rehoboam, Solomon's son, had fortified Aijalon (2 Chronicles 11:10 ). King Ahaz (735-715 B.C.) asked for Assyrian help because the Philistines had taken Aijalon and other cities. Thus it was an important military location on Judah's western border. Aijalon is located at modern Yalo about fourteen miles from Jerusalem.

**Gath-Rimmon - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "winepress on the pomegranate tree." 1. Town in tribal territory of Dan (Joshua 19:45 ) and set aside for Levites (Joshua 21:24 ). It is usually located at tell Jerisheh on the Yarkon River in modern Tel Aviv, but some scholars locate it two miles to the northeast at tell Abu Zeitun. 1 Chronicles 6:69 lists Gath-rimmon in the tribe of Ephraim, but this is usually understood as a copyist's omission of a sentence at the beginning of 1 Chronicles 6:69 . Gath-rimmon also appears in the Hebrew text of Joshua 21:25 though not in the earliest Greek translation or in the parallel in 1 Chronicles 6:70 . Most scholars recognize that a copyist repeated Gath-rimmon from 1 Chronicles 6:24 , the original reading probably being Ibleam.

**Joshua 21:25 From the half-tribe of Manasseh, they allotted Taanach with its pasture lands and Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; two cities.**

- **Aner and Bileam** are mentioned in Chronicles, instead of **Tanach** and **Gath-rimmon**. (1 Ch 6:70.) Either the cities had at this time different names, or afterwards their names were changed; or the Levites, being by some means dispossessed of the cities first assigned them, received others from their brethren. A careful examination of the marginal references will discover other variations of this kind, which may be accounted for in the same manner.
- **Tanach**: Jos 17:11 Jdg 5:19
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**From the half-tribe of Manasseh, they allotted Taanach with its pasture lands and Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; two cities.** See [green triangles on the map](#) (in Manneseh's western territory - Taanach toward north, Gath Rimmon toward the south but see NET NOTE below) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**NET NOTE** - The name "**Gath Rimmon**" is problematic here, for it appears in the preceding list of Danite cities. The LXX reads "Iebatha"; 1 Chr 6:55 HT (1Chr 6:70 ET) reads "Bileam." Most modern translations retain the name "Gath Rimmon," however.

**Taanach - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name of uncertain meaning. One of the sites along the northern slope of the Mount Carmel range protecting the accesses from the Plain of Esdraelon to the region of Samaria. Irbid, Megiddo, and Taanach each protect strategic passes through the Carmel range. **Taanach** thus sat along one fork of the major north-south road of antiquity that went through Palestine, usually called the Via Maris. It also sat on an east-west road that led from the Jordan Valley to the Mediterranean Sea near modern Haifa. In the Bible, **Taanach** is only mentioned seven times, usually in lists such as tribal allotments (Joshua 17:11; 1 Chronicles 7:29 ), administrative districts (1 Kings 4:12 ), Levitical towns (Joshua 21:25 ), or conquered cities (Joshua 12:21; Judges 1:27 ). The most famous biblical reference to Taanach is that of the battle fought at "Taanach by the waters of Megiddo" where the Hebrew forces under Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanites under Sisera (Judges 5:19 ). **Taanach** was a town of about 13 acres, about the same size as the better known **Megiddo**. Its history runs through the Bronze Ages and into the Iron Age, from about 2700 B.C. to about 918 B.C. when it was destroyed by the Egyptian Pharaoh Shishak. A large fortress was built on the site during the early Islamic period, and that fortress may well have continued in use during the Crusades. While Megiddo was apparently a major Canaanite administrative center, Taanach seems to have been less heavily populated and perhaps the home for the farmers of the surrounding area and their tenants. Excavations have shown a number of cultic objects and installations at Taanach, suggesting that it was a religious center as well.

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**GEORGE BUSH** [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#)

**Tanach with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon.** In the parallel passage, 1 Chron. 6:70, Aner and Bileam are mentioned instead of the above. A careful examination of the two catalogues will discover several other discrepancies of the same kind, which are probably owing to the fact, either that some of the cities were called by different names, or that their names in process of time were changed. Others conjecture that some of the cities here enumerated being at this time in possession of the Canaanites, and not

easily to be taken out of their hands, others were given them in their stead.

**Joshua 21:26 All the cities with their pasture lands for the families of the rest of the sons of Kohath were ten.**

- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**All the cities with their pasture lands for the families of the rest of the sons of [Kohath](#) were ten.**

**Joshua 21:27 To the sons of Gershon, one of the families of the Levites, from the half-tribe of Manasseh, they gave Golan in Bashan, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Be-eshterah with its pasture lands; two cities.**

- **And to:** Jos 21:6
- **Golan:** Jos 20:8 De 1:4 4:43 1Ch 6:71
- **Be-eshterah:** It is very probable that Beesh-terah is a contraction of {baith ashtaroth,} "the house of Ashtaroth," and the same as [Ashtaroth](#), which is the reading in 1 Chr 6:71.
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**To the sons of Gershon ([note](#)), one of the families of the [Levites](#), from the half-tribe of Manasseh, they gave Golan in Bashan ([map of modern "Golan heights"](#)), the city of refuge ([miqlat](#)) for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Be-eshterah with its pasture lands; two cities** - See [orange triangles on the map](#) (in the eastern half of Manasseh's territory - east of the Jordan River - Note on the map the name is [Ashtaroth](#) instead of [Beeshterah](#) as recorded in the parallel passage in 1 Chr 6:71) (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Utley** on "**Gershon**" They numbered 7,500 at Sinai (cf. Num. 3:34). When the tabernacle was moved, they were in charge of the covering, the curtains, and the boards (cf. Nu 3:25–26). ([Commentary](#))

[Golan - Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "circle" or "enclosure." It was a city of refuge for people who unintentionally killed someone and was located in Bashan for the part of the tribe of Manasseh living east of the Jordan River (Deuteronomy 4:43 ). It was also a city for the Levites (Joshua 21:27 ). It was located at modern Sahem el-Jolan on the eastern bank of the River el-Allan. See Cities of Refuge; Levitical Cities

[Beeshterah -Holman Bible Dictionary](#) Place name meaning, "in Ashtaroth" or representing a contraction of "Beth Ashtaroth," which means, "house of Ashtaroth." Place east of the Jordan from territory of tribe of Manasseh set aside for the Levites (Joshua 21:27 ). 1 Chronicles 6:71 spells name "Ashtaroth." See [Ashtaroth](#)

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#### **Adrian Rogers - The Significant Names of the Cities of Refuge... Golan: Christ Is a Happy Place**

And then, the next place is Golan, and the word Golan means "separated"—"separated." And, when we come to the Lord Jesus, not only do we leave the things of this world, but we come into Him and are separated from the world and separated unto the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians chapter 6, verse 17 says, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17). But, the word here for separation is an interesting word; it means "separation that brings joy." So, Jesus is a happy place. Say, "Happy place." Hey, don't feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian, I have experienced this past week the joy of the Lord that is absolutely ... it's inexplicable. You say, "Well, I've been saved, Pastor, but I don't have that joy. Why don't I have that joy?" Well, maybe you're not separated; maybe you haven't been to Golan. You see, you show me a person who's let go of this world with both hands and taken hold of Jesus with both hands, and I'll show you a person who has "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). And so, the Lord Jesus Christ—He is Christ our Savior; He is Christ our strength; He is Christ our satisfaction; He is Christ our security; He is Christ our sovereign; He is Christ our sanctification. He is a holy place, a helpful place, a harmonious place, a hiding place, the highest place, and the happy place, and His name is Jesus. Jesus is our city of refuge (Excerpt from *When Great Men Die Like Fools*)

**Joshua 21:28 From the tribe of Issachar, they gave Kishion with its pasture lands, Daberath with its pasture lands,**

- **Dabareh:** Jos 19:12 1Ch 6:72,73

- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**From the tribe of Issachar, they gave Kishion with its pasture lands, Daberath with its pasture lands-** See [orange triangles on the map](#) in northern section section of Issachar. (Suggestion - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Kishion - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "hard ground." A town in Issachar allotted to the Gershonite Levites (Joshua 21:28 ). A parallel list calls the town Kedesh (1 Chronicles 6:72 ). It has been suggested that "Kedesh in Issachar" may have arisen from a misreading of "Kishon" for "Kedesh." The site is uncertain, perhaps modern tell Abu Qudeis, about two miles southeast of Megiddo.

**Daberath - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "pasture." Border city of Zebulun near Mount Tabor (Joshua 19:12 ). In Joshua 21:28 it is a city given the Levites from the territory of Issachar. It is modern Daburiyeh at the northwest foot of Mount Tabor.

#### Joshua 21:29 Jarmuth with its pasture lands, En-gannim with its pasture lands; four cities.

- **Jarmuth:** This seems to be the same city with **Remeth**, Jos 10:19, 21, and **Ramoth**, 1 Ch 6:73, mentioned with Engannim. Jos 10:3,23 12:11
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Jarmuth with its pasture lands, En-gannim with its pasture lands; four cities** - See [orange triangles on the map](#) in Issachar. (Suggestion - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Jarmuth - Fausset's Bible Dictionary** A city of Issachar, assigned to the Gershonite Levites. (Joshua 21:29). REMETH in Joshua 19:20; RAMOTH in 1 Chronicles 6:73. Both are modifications of the same root as Jarmuth.

**En-Gannim - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "the spring of gardens." 1. A town in the tribal territory of Judah located in the Shephalah (Joshua 15:34 ). It has been located at modern Beit Jemal, about two miles south of Beth-shemesh or at umm Giina one mile southwest of Beth-shemesh. 2. Town in tribal territory of Issachar designated as city for Levites (Joshua 19:21; Joshua 21:29 ). Anem (1 Chronicles 6:73 ) is apparently an alternate spelling. The same place may be meant in 2 Kings 9:27 by Beth Haggan (NIV, REB, NRSV) or the "garden house" (KJV, NAS). It is located at modern Jenin west of Beth-shean and about 65 miles north of Jerusalem.

#### Joshua 21:30 From the tribe of Asher, they gave Mishal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands,

- **Mishal:** Jos 19:25-28, Misheal, 1Ch 6:74,75, Mashal
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**From the tribe of Asher, they gave Mishal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands-** See [orange triangles on the map](#) in Asher. (Suggestion - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Mishal - Easton's Bible Dictionary** A city of the tribe of Asher (Joshua 21:30; 1 Chronicles 6:74 ). It is probably the modern Misalli, on the shore near Carmel.

**Abdon - Holman Bible Dictionary** Geographical and personal name meaning "service" or "servile." 1. A city from the tribe of Asher given the Levites (Joshua 21:30; 1 Chronicles 6:74 ). Its modern name is Khirbet Abdeh. It lies about three miles from the Mediterranean coast between Tyre and Acco.

#### Joshua 21:31 Helkath with its pasture lands and Rehob with its pasture lands; four cities.

- **Rehob:** See the note on Nu 13:21. Jdg 1:31 18:21 1Ch 6:75
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Helkath with its pasture lands and Rehob with its pasture lands; four cities** - See [orange triangles on the map](#) in Asher. (Suggestion - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Helkath - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, “flat place.” Border town in the tribal allotment of Asher (Joshua 19:25 ) given to the Levites (Joshua 21:31 ). It is called Hukok in the parallel passage (1 Chronicles 6:75 ). It is either modern tell Qassis on the west bank of the Kishon River or tell tel-Harbaj just south of Acco.

**Rehob - Holman Bible Dictionary** “broad or open place.” Town in the territory of Asher (Joshua 19:28 ,Joshua 19:28,19:30 ). Asher was not able to drive out the Canaanite inhabitants (Judges 1:31 ). Elsewhere, Rehob in Asher is assigned to the Levites (Joshua 21:31; 1 Chronicles 6:75 ). The site is perhaps tell el-Gharbi about seven miles east-southeast of Acco.

**Joshua 21:32 From the tribe of Naphtali, they gave Kedesh in Galilee, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Hammoth-dor with its pasture lands and Kartan with its pasture lands; three cities.**

- **Kedesh:** Jos 19:37 20:7 1Ch 6:76
- Hammothdor: Supposed by many to be the same as Tiberias; so called from the hot-baths, as the word {Chammoth} may denote, in its vicinity. Jos 19:35, Hammath
- Kartan: Supposed to be the same as Kirjathaim. 1Ch 6:76
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**From the tribe of Naphtali, they gave Kedesh in Galilee, the city of refuge(miqlat) for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Hammoth-dor with its pasture lands and Kartan with its pasture lands; three cities** See [orange triangles on the map in Naphtali](#) .- Kedesh is far north, Kartan is on western shore of Sea of Kinnereth (Galilee). Hammoth-Dor not shown. **Suggestion - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)**.

**Kedesh - Holman Bible Dictionary** A Canaanite town in eastern Galilee defeated by Joshua (Joshua 12:22 ). The town was allotted to Naphtali (Joshua 19:32 ,Joshua 19:32,19:37 ) and was called Kedesh in Naphtali (Judges 4:6 ). It was also called Kedesh in Galilee and given to the Gershonite Levites as one of their cities (Joshua 20:7; Joshua 21:32 ). See Judges 4:6 ) and the place where Deborah and Barak gathered their forces for battle (Judges 4:1-10 ). Heber the Kenite pitched his tent in the vicinity where Sisera met his death at the hands of Jael, Heber's wife (Judges 4:21; Judges 5:24-27 ). Kedesh in Naphtali was captured by Tiglath-pileser III during the reign of Pekah of Israel. The inhabitants were exiled to Assyria (2 Kings 15:29 ). Usually identified with modern khirbet Qedish, about two miles south of Tiberias.

**Hammoth-Dor - ISB Encyclopedia** חמת דאר , ḥammōth dō'r ; Εμαθδῶρ , Emathdōr , as also several corrupt forms): A fenced, Levitical city of Naphtali (Joshua 19:35; Joshua 21:32); also named **Hammen** (1 Chronicles 6:61 Hebrew). Probably the hammatu of the Karnak lists, and the hamatam of WAI , II , 53; certainly the Emmaus of Josephus, Ant , XVIII , ii , 3; BJ , IV , i , 3; Hamata of 'Erūbhīn Psalm 74:5; Meghillāh 2b , and the modern el -Hammām , 1 1/2 miles South of Tiberias. The name signifies "hot springs," and these, 4 in number, still exist. They have a temperature of 144 degree F., are salt and bitter in taste and sulfurous in smell. Considered invaluable for rheumatism, they are crowded in June and July. This health-giving reputation is of ancient date. It is mentioned in Josephus, BJ , IV , i , 3; and a coin of Tiberias of the reign of Trajan depicts Hygeia sitting on a rock beside the springs, feeding the serpent of Aesculapius. Being used for pleasure also, they were permitted to the Jew on the Sabbath, whereas had they been used only medicinally, they would have been forbidden (Babylonian Talmud, Shab 109a; compare Matthew 12:10 ).

**Kartan - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, “city.” A Levitical city in the tribal territory of Naphtali (Joshua 21:32 ). Also called Kiriathaim (1 Chronicles 6:76 ). It was located near the Sea of Galilee. Usually identified with modern khirbet el-Qureiyeh.

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### Adrian Rogers The Significant Names of the Cities of Refuge

Now, not only do I want you to think about the saving nature of these cities, but think with me about the significant names of these cities. Look with me ... Let's begin and look at the names of these cities, because remember the Bible says, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower” (Proverbs 18:10).

#### Kedesh: Christ Is the Holy Place

First of all, in verse 7, there's the word Kedesh (Joshua 20:7), and you know what that word means? It means “holiness”—“holiness,” and it speaks of Christ our dear, sinless, holy Savior. And so, when you think of Kedesh, think of a holy place. Say it: “holy place.” Say it again: “holy place.” Jesus is a holy place. You see, the Bible says of our dear Savior, He is holy and undefiled (Hebrews 7:26). He's clean and pure, and that's the reason He can save. You know, you can't get dirty clothes clean if you wash them in dirty water. There's no other sinner that can be our Savior. We need a holy person, and that's the person the Bible says in Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 1: “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for

uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). And again, the Bible says in Hebrews 12, verse 14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Now folks, if you are not holy, you're going to Hell. And, your only hope of holiness is for God to make you holy through the Lord Jesus Christ, so this very first place that we're talking about speaks of Christ our Savior, a holy place—Christ our Savior. (**Excerpt** from When Great Men Die Like Fools)

**Joshua 21:33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to their families were thirteen cities with their pasture lands.**

- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GERSHONITES 13 CITIES

**All the cities of the Gershonites** ([note](#)) **according to their families were thirteen cities with their pasture lands**

**Joshua 21:34 To the families of the sons of Merari, the rest of the Levites, they gave from the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its pasture lands and Kartah with its pasture lands.**

- **To:** Jos 21:7 1Ch 6:77
- **Jokneam:** Jos 12:22 19:11,15
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**To the families of the sons of Merari** ([note](#)), **the rest of the Levites**, they gave from the tribe of Zebulun, **Jokneam with its pasture lands and Kartah with its pasture lands** - The rest of the **Levites** = the remaining **Levites**. See [blue triangles on the map](#) in **Zebulun**.- **Kartah** not shown. (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Utley** on "**Merari**" They numbered 6, 200 at Sinai (cf. Num. 3:34). When the tabernacle was moved they were in charge of the boards, the bars, the pillars, the sockets and the pins (cf. Num. 3:27). ([Commentary](#))

**Jokneam - ISB Encyclopedia** **jok'né - am** ( יֹכְנֵאִם , yōkne'ām ): A royal city of the Canaanites taken by Joshua and described as "in Carmel" ( Joshua 12:22 ), in the territory of Zebulun, and allotted to the Merarite Levites ( Joshua 21:34 ). The border of Zebulun "reached to the brook that is before Jokneam" ( Joshua 19:11 ). In 1 Kings 4:12 the name appears in the King James Version where, with the Revised Version (British and American), we should read "Jokmeam." Eusebius, Onomasticon places it 6 Roman miles from Lejjo ( Lejjūn ) on the way to Ptolemais (Acre). This points to Tell Kaimun , a striking mound on the eastern slope of Mt. Carmel. To the East of it runs the "torrent bed" of the Kishon. It stands about 300 ft. above the valley to the North of it, and the sides are steep. It is crowned by the ruins of an 18th-century fortress. A little lower down are the remains of a small chapel. There are fine springs at the foot (PEFM , II, 69 f). In Judith 7:3 it appears as "Cyamon" (Κυαμων , Kuamōn ). It is the "Mons Cain" of the Middle Ages. "In the Samaritan Book of Judges it is noticed as the scene of a conflict between the Hebrews and the Giants; and Joshua is said to have been shut up here in magic walls of brass, till on sending a dove to the Hebrew king of Gilead, he was rescued" (Conder, HDB , under the word).

**Kartah - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "city." Levitical city in the territory of Zebulun ( Joshua 21:34 ). Location unknown. See Levitical Cities .

**Joshua 21:35 Dimnah with its pasture lands, Nahalal with its pasture lands; four cities.**

- **Dimnah:** This and the following verse are wholly omitted by the Masora, and many Hebrew Bibles which are esteemed very highly; though, without them, neither the twelve cities of the Merarites in particular (ver. 40,) nor the forty-eight Levitical cities in general (ver. 41), nor the six cities of refuge, can be made up. But these two verses, are thus absolutely necessary for the truth and consistency of this chapter, are happily preserved in no less than 149 MSS. collated by Dr. Kennicott, and upwards of 40 collated by De Rossi. Jos 21:35

- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Dimnah with its pasture lands, Nahalal with its pasture lands; four cities.** These are not shown in the [blue triangles on the map](#) in **Zebulun**. (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Dimnah - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, “manure.” Town in tribal territory of Zebulun given to Levites (Joshua 21:35 ). 1 Chronicles 6:77 appears to refer to the same city as Rimmon. Compare Joshua 19:13 . A scribe copying the text could easily confuse the two names. See [Rimmon](#) .

**Nahalal - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, “pasture” with alternate forms: Nahallal (Joshua 19:15 ); Nahalol (Judges 1:30 ). Town Zebulun's territory allotted to the Levites (Joshua 19:15; Joshua 21:35 ). **The Israelites were unable to drive out the Canaanite inhabitants of the city** (Judges 1:30 ). The site is uncertain. Tell-en-Nahl north of the Kishon River at the southern end of the plain of Acco is possible as are modern Nahalal about six miles west of Nazareth and tell el-Beida.

**Joshua 21:36 From the tribe of Reuben, they gave Bezer with its pasture lands and Jahaz with its pasture lands,**

- **Bezer:** Jos 20:8 De 4:43 1Ch 6:78,79
- Jahazah: Jos 13:18 Nu 21:23 1Ch 6:78, Jahzah
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**From the tribe of Reuben, they gave Bezer with its pasture lands and Jahaz with its pasture lands,** See [blue triangles on the map](#) in **Reuben** (just east of Salt Sea) - see Bezer and Jahaz (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Bezer - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, “inaccessible.” 1. **A city of refuge** in tribal territory of Reuben (Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 20:8 ), set aside as a city for the Levites (Joshua 21:36 ). It may be Umm el-Amad, eight miles northeast of Medeba. Mesha, king of Moab about 830 B.C., claimed to have rebuilt Bezer as a Moabite city.

**Jahaz - Holman Bible Dictionary** Moabite place name perhaps meaning, “landsite.” As they journeyed from the wilderness to the Promised Land, Israel defeated King Sihon there (Numbers 21:23-24; Deuteronomy 2:32-33; Judges 11:20-21 ). Isaiah's oracle against Moab described the isolated city of Jahaz as hearing the mourning of Heshbon and Elealeh (Isaiah 15:4 ). Jeremiah issued a similar warning (Jeremiah 48:34; compare Jeremiah 48:21 ). The name also appears with the Hebrew locative ah ending, thus being spelled Jahaza or Jahazah. Jahzah is also a variant spelling. It became part of the tribal territory of Reuben ( Joshua 13:18 ) and a city of the Levites (Joshua 21:36; compare 1 Chronicles 6:78 ). On the Moabite stone, King Mesha of Moab claims an Israelite king (perhaps Jehu) built Jahaz and used it as a base in his unsuccessful fight against Mesha, Chemosh, the Moabite god driving the Israelites out. Mesha then annexed the city to Dibon. It has been variously located at Libb, six miles north of Dibon; Aleiyan; khirbet el-Medeiyneh; and khirbet Iskander, four miles north of Dibon, being the most popular suggestions.

**Adrian Rogers - The Significant Names of the Cities of Refuge... Bezer: Christ Is a Hiding Place**

And then, look at the next one. The name of the next city is Bezer. Do you know what the name Bezer means? It means “stronghold”; it means “fortification,” and that speaks of Christ our safety. You remember—“the righteous run in, and they're safe” (Proverbs 18:10). Jesus is a hiding place. Say it: “hiding place.” Jesus is a hiding place. He is a holy place. He is a helpful place. He is a harmonious place. He is a hiding place 'till the storm passes over.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.  
—AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY

Again, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10). And, I want to tell you, friend, there is the hound of Hell, the justice that is baying at our heels, and we need to find a place to hide. And, I'm hiding in the Lord Jesus, and I trust that you are. And so, that speaks not only of Christ our satisfaction; that speaks of Christ our security. As long as an individual was in Bezer, he was absolutely secure from the judgment that was on his heels. (Excerpt from When Great Men Die Like Fools)

**Joshua 21:37 Kedemoth with its pasture lands and Mephaath with its pasture lands; four cities.**



- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Kedemoth with its pasture lands and Mephaath with its pasture lands; four cities** See [blue triangles on the map](#) in Reuben.- Kedemoth and Mephaath shown.. (**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Kedemoth - ISB Encyclopedia** ked'ē - moth , kē - dē'moth ( כֶּדְמוֹת , kedhēmōth , "eastern parts"): From the wilderness to which this town gave its name, Moses sent messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites in Heshbon ( Deuteronomy 2:26 ). It was given by Moses to the tribe of Reuben (Joshua 13:18 ), **and assigned to the Merarite Levites** (Joshua 21:37; 1 Chronicles 6:79 ). It must probably be sought on the upper course of the Arnon. Buhl (GAP , 268) suggests that it may be identified with Umm er - Reṣāṣ . See [JAHAZ](#) .

**Mephaath - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "height." Town in Reuben's tribal allotment (Joshua 13:18 ), assigned to the Levites (Joshua 21:37; 1 Chronicles 6:79 ). In Jeremiah's time the town was in Moabite hands (Jeremiah 48:21 ). The site is perhaps that of modern Jawah about six miles south of Amman.

**Joshua 21:38 From the tribe of Gad, they gave Ramoth in Gilead, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Mahanaim with its pasture lands,**

- **Ramoth:** Jos 20:8 1Ki 22:3 1Ch 6:80
- **Mahanaim:** Ge 32:2 2Sa 17:24 19:32
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**From the tribe of Gad, they gave Ramoth in Gilead, the city of refuge([miqlat](#)) for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Mahanaim with its pasture lands** See [blue triangles on the map](#) in Gad.-(**Suggestion** - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

Note that **Ramoth-Gilead** ([see on another map](#)) is actually shown [on this map](#) in Manasseh's territory which must be an error because it is repeatedly stated to be in territory of **Gad** (Dt 4:43, Josh 20:8, 1Chr 6:80).

**Ramoth-Gilead - Holman Bible Dictionary** meaning, "heights of Gilead." One of the cities of refuge Moses appointed for unintentional killers (Deuteronomy 4:43; compare Joshua 20:8 ) and Levitical cities (Joshua 21:38 ). It probably was located in northeastern Gilead, east of the Jordan. Solomon made Ramoth-gilead a district capital (1 Kings 4:13 ). After the division of the kingdom about 922 B.C., the city fell to Syria (1 Kings 22:3 ) and remained there for almost seventy years. Ahab attempted to retake the city but was mortally wounded in the battle (1 Kings 22:29-40 ). Joram did recapture the city (2 Kings 9:14; compare 2 Kings 8:28 ). In Ramoth-gilead Elisha anointed Jehu as king over Israel (2 Kings 9:1-6 ). In 722 B.C. the region was taken by Assyria.

**Mahanaim - Watson's Theological Dictionary** a city of the Levites, of the family of Merari, in the tribe of Gad, upon the brook Jabbok, Joshua 21:38; Joshua 13:26 . The name Mahanaim signifies "two hosts," or "two fields." The patriarch gave it this name because in this place he had a vision of angels coming to meet him, Genesis 32:2 . Mahanaim was the seat of the kingdom of Ishbosheth, after the death of Saul, 2 Samuel 2:9; 2 Samuel 2:12 . It was also to this place that David retired during the usurpation of Absalom, 2 Samuel 17:24; and this rebellious son was subdued, and suffered death, not far from this city.

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#### **Adrian Rogers - The Significant Names of the Cities of Refuge... Ramoth: Christ Is the Highest Place**

And, the name of the next city was Ramoth—Ramoth. And, the name Ramoth means “exalted,” and that speaks of Christ our sovereign. “High and lifted up” (Isaiah 6:1) is our Lord, and Jesus is the highest place. Say, “Highest place”—“highest place.” You see, the Bible teaches that when we get saved, when we come to Jesus, we’re seated with Him in heavenly places. And again, Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, said in Acts chapter 2, verse 33: “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted” (Acts 2:33). Our Lord is exalted. Philippians 2, verse 9: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9). Jesus is the holy place. Jesus is a helpful place. Jesus is a harmonious place. Jesus is a hiding place. Jesus is the highest place. You’ll never find anything better than Jesus; you’ll never need anything more than the Lord Jesus. He is the highest of the high. Hallelujah! What a Savior! (Excerpt from When Great Men Die Like Fools)

**Joshua 21:39 Heshbon with its pasture lands, Jazer with its pasture lands; four cities in all.**

- **Heshbon:** Jos 13:17,21 Nu 21:26-30 32:37 1Ch 6:81



- **Jazer:** Nu 32:1,3,35, Jaazer, Isa 16:8,9 Jer 48:32
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Heshbon with its pasture lands, Jazer with its pasture lands; four cities in all.** See [blue triangles on the map](#) in Gad.- (Suggestion - [open this map in a new window and click to enlarge](#)).

**Heshbon - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "reckoning." City in Moab ruled by Sihon and captured by Moses (Numbers 21:21-30 ). Ancient Heshbon, to be identified with present-day tell Hesban, was one of several ancient cities situated on the rolling and fertile plateau east of the Dead Sea and north of the Arnon River (present-day Wadi Mojib). Two of the other cities nearby, often mentioned by the biblical writers in connection with Heshbon, were Elealeh and Medeba. The agriculturally-productive region in which these cities were located was much disputed territory during Old Testament times. Generally it was regarded as part of Moab, as is assumed in Isaiah 15-16 and Jeremiah 48:1 . Yet the Israelite tribes of Reuben and Gad ranged with their sheep in this region (Numbers 32:3 ,Numbers 32:3,32:37 ). The Israelites laid claim to it on the grounds that Moses had taken all of the territory as far south as the Arnon from Sihon, an Amorite king who ruled from Heshbon (Numbers 21:21-31 ). Certain of the stronger Israelite kings (David, Omri, and Ahab) were able to control all of that area. Apparently, the Ammonites claimed the region as well, as implied by the exchange of messages between Jephthah and the Ammonite king related in Judges 11:12-28 .

Heshbon was assigned to the tribe of Gad and designated as a Levitical city according to Joshua 13:27-28; Joshua 21:38-39 . Song of Song of Solomon 7:4 , describing a maiden's beauty, proclaims "thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon." Herod the Great fortified the site, and it became a flourishing city (called Esbus) during late Roman times. Esbus continued as an active city during the Byzantine period (fourth through the sixth centuries A.D.), at which time its population embraced Christianity. A bishop from Esbus participated in the council of Chalcedon.

Excavations at tell Hesban, conducted between 1968,1978, produced occupational remains ranging from the beginning of the Iron Age (about 1200 B.C.) through medieval times. No evidence of pre-Iron Age occupation was discovered at the site. That is the period when King Sihon was supposed to have ruled from the city. See Gad; Moab; Reuben; Sihon .

**Jazer - Holman Bible Dictionary** Place name meaning, "May He help." Amorite city state Israel conquered while marching across the land east of the Jordan towards the Promised Land (Numbers 21:32 ). The tribe of Gad rebuilt and settled Jazer (Numbers 32:35; compare Joshua 13:25 ). Joshua assigned it to the Levites (Joshua 21:39 ). Isaiah pronounced judgment on Jazer while preaching against Moab (Isaiah 16:8-9 ). Jeremiah echoed him (Jeremiah 48:32 ). David found outstanding leaders there (1 Chronicles 26:32 ). It was also an important city in the period between the Testaments (1Maccabees 1 Chronicles 5:8 ). Interpreters debate Jazer's exact location. German archaeologists appear to favor tell el-Areme, while Israelis point to khirbet es-Sar about eight miles west of Amman. Others point to khirbet Jazzir about two miles south of es-Salt.

**Joshua 21:40 All these were the cities of the sons of Merari according to their families, the rest of the families of the Levites; and their lot was twelve cities.**

- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## 12 CITIES TO MERARITES

**All these were the cities of the sons of Merari**([note](#)) **according to their families, the rest of the families of the**[Levites](#)**; and their lot** ([goral](#)) **was twelve cities - The rest of the families of the**[Levites](#) **refers to "the remaining Levites" (NET), "the remainder of the clans" (ESV).** See [blue triangles on the map](#) for their 12 cities.

**Joshua 21:41 All the cities of the Levites in the midst of the possession of the sons of Israel were forty-eight cities with their pasture lands.**

- **in the midst** : Ge 49:7 Nu 35:1-8 De 33:10
- **forty-eight cities:** At the last census, the tribe of Levi amounted only to 23,000 (Nu 36:62); and it is thought by some that forty-eight cities was too great a proportion for this tribe. But it should be considered, that cities in ancient times were little more than villages.
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SUMMARY OF THE GIFTS TO THE LEVITES

**All the cities of the Levites in the midst of the possession of the sons of Israel were forty-eight cities with their pasture lands** - Note that 10/48 Levitical cities were located east of the Jordan River - Two in half-tribe of Manasseh (Josh 21:27), four in Reuben (Josh 21:36–37) and four in Gad (Josh 21:38–39). Ultimately this dispersion of Levi throughout the nation was a fulfillment of Jacob's prophetic curse in Genesis 49:7 "Cursed be their (Simeon and Levi - Ge 49:5) anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel."

**Donald Campbell** explains that Jacob uttered the curse on Simeon and Levi because of "their senseless murder of the Shechemites (Gen. 34). In the case of Levi's descendants God overruled to preserve their tribal identity and make them a blessing to all Israel. He did this because the Levites stood with Moses at a time of acute crisis (Ex. 32:26) and because Phinehas (a Levite and Eleazar's son) vindicated God's righteous name in the plains of Moab (Num. 25:7-13)....But at the time of the assignment many of the Levites' towns were under Canaanite control and had to be conquered. Apparently the Levites did not always succeed and the other tribes did not offer to help. This would appear to be the simplest explanation for the lack of complete correlation between the list of Levitical cities here and the list in 1 Chronicles 6:54–81. (See the chart below on Levite towns)" ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#))

**Henry Morris - forty-eight cities.** The Levites had no single province assigned to them, as the other tribes did, for they were to be spiritual teachers and counselors to all the people. They were accordingly given forty-eight strategically located cities, including the six cities of refuge (Numbers 35:1-8), and a goodly portion of their support was to come from the tithes and offerings of the other tribes (Numbers 18:21).

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### GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#)

**All the cities—were forty and eight cities, with their suburbs.** This was in exact accordance with the direction given by Moses several years before, as we learn from Num 35:7. This order of Moses is a direct demonstration that it was given under divine inspiration, as otherwise, how could he possibly have known that so many cities could be assigned to the Levites, without un duly encroaching on the limits of the other tribes?

Source: [The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#)

**Joshua 21:42 These cities each had its surrounding pasture lands; thus it was with all these cities.**

- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**These cities each had its surrounding pasture lands; thus it was with all these cities- NET** = "Each of these cities had grazing areas around it; they were alike in this regard."

**Campbell** - The potential for good in the dispersion of Levites among the other tribes was almost unlimited. Moses, in his final blessing of the tribes, said of Levi, "He teaches Your precepts to Jacob and Your Law to Israel" (Deut. 33:10). The solemn responsibility and high privilege of the Levites was to instruct Israel in the Law of the Lord, to maintain the knowledge of His Word among the people. Especially in the north and east the Levites ought to have been barriers against the idolatry of Tyre and Sidon, as well as against the heathen practices of the desert tribes. Someone has estimated that no one in Israel lived more than 10 miles from 1 of the 48 Levite towns. Thus every Israelite had nearby a man well-versed in the Law of Moses who could give advice and counsel on the many problems of religious, family, and political life. And it was essential that Israel obey the Word of God in all areas of life because without this their prosperity would cease and their privileges would be forfeited. But the final word is a sad one. The Levites did not live up to their potential; they did not fulfill their mission. If they had, idolatry and its corrupting influence might never have spread over the land of Israel. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#))

**Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary** - Verses 43-45. God promised to give to the seed of Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession, and now they possessed it, and dwelt therein. The after-prevalence of the Canaanites was the effect of Israel's slothfulness, and the punishment of their sinful inclination to the idolatries and abominations of the heathen whom they harboured and indulged. There failed not aught of any good thing, which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. In due season all his promises will be accomplished; then will his people acknowledge that the Lord has exceeded their largest expectations, and made them more than conquerors, and brought them to their desired rest.

**Joshua 21:43 So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it.**

- Ge 12:7 13:15 15:13-21 Ge 26:3,4 Ge 28:4,13,14 Ex 3:8 Ex 23:27-31 Ps 44:3 Ps 106:42-45
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Psalms 44:2-3 You with Your own hand drove out the nations; Then You planted them; You afflicted the peoples, Then You spread them abroad. For by their own sword they did not possess the land, And their own arm did not save them, But Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your presence, For You favored them.

Joshua 13:1+ Now Joshua was old and advanced in years when the LORD said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed.

**Comment** - It would be left to later leaders to complete the overthrow of the Canaanites, a feat that would not be accomplished until hundreds of years later under David, and then only temporarily

### YAHWEH'S FAITHFULNESS TO ISRAEL SUMMARIZED

**So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it** - Now the writer summarizes God's promise to Abraham until the settlement described in this chapter. Yahweh had fulfilled His promises to the patriarchs, to give Israel the land ([Abrahamic Covenant](#)). **The LORD gave** speaks of His amazing grace. **All the land which He had sworn** speaks of His eternal faithfulness. **They possessed it** speaks of the faith of Israel under Joshua's leadership to possess their promised possessions. **Lived in it** speaks of the life of those who exercise faith and obedience. God always keeps His promises!

This reminds me of the NT passage

For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. (2Cor 1:20KJV+)

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through Him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. (2Cor 1:20NIV+)

**Guzik** - All the tribes had their land. They must go into every corner of what God has given, and take full possession, but God had provided everything necessary for them to do so. ([Joshua 21 Commentary](#))

**Donald Campbell** - Some theologians have insisted that the statement in Joshua 21:43 means that the land promise of the Abrahamic Covenant was fulfilled then. But this cannot be true because later the Bible gives additional predictions about Israel possessing the land after the time of Joshua (e.g., Amos 9:14-15+). Joshua 21:43, therefore, refers to the extent of the land as outlined in Numbers 34 and not to the ultimate extent as it will be in the **messianic kingdom** (Ge 15:18-21+). Also though Israel possessed the land at this time it was later dispossessed, whereas the Abrahamic Covenant promised Israel that she would possess the land **forever** (Ge 17:8). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#))

**M H Woudstra** - This passage constitutes one of the key sections of the entire book, for one may learn from it the revelational purpose that the Holy Spirit had in inspiring the human author to compose this book. This purpose is to let the full light of revelation fall upon the faithfulness of the covenant God who keeps His word once given to the forefathers. As such, this passage summarizes the first part of the book and points out its basic message. ([The Book of Joshua The New International Commentary](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - This doxology forms a fitting conclusion to the second main division of the book (Joshua 13-21), reminding Israel of the faithfulness of their God. This passage has been called "the theological heart of the Book of Joshua." In a sense, Joshua 21:43 summarizes Joshua 13-21, Joshua 21:44 summarizes Joshua 1-12, and Joshua 21:45 states the main theme of the entire book. In every situation God had demonstrated Himself faithful and sufficient. In spite of the power of the Egyptians, the size, number, and technology of the Canaanites, and the stubbornness and foolishness of His people, God was fulfilling His promises. He continues to do so for the Christian as well, for whom there will be a final, complete, and eternal victory and rest (cf. Phil. 4:13+; 2 Th 1:6-10+).

**Ryrie** adds that "God had kept His promise to give Israel the land of Canaan as recorded in Gen. 17:8. It is true that the Israelites had not yet fully conquered it, but God had told them they would do so gradually (Deut. 7:22+). The promise of Gen. 15:18-20+

involving a larger territory will be fulfilled in the Millennium. ([Ryrie Study Bible](#))

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## GEORGE BUSH [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#)

**And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land, &c.** The foregoing history is here wound up by a suitable acknowledgment of the faithfulness of God, in the performance of all his promises. The Canaanites, it is true, were yet in possession of some parts of the country, but they were so far subdued, that they gave them no serious molestation, and they were enabled to sit down in their possessions in the enjoyment of comparative rest and quiet. They had as much of the land in actual possession as they could occupy; and as they increased God enabled them, according to his promise, Ex. 23:30 ("I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land."), to carry forward the work of extermination, and obtain further room for their settlement. All the assurances given to Joshua, Joshua 1:5, of a successful tide of victories during his life, were accomplished, and as to the subsequent annoyance and occasional prevalence of their enemies, it was owing solely to the supineness and infidelity of Israel. So long as they were obedient, they, were uniformly triumphant and prosperous. See notes on Joshua 1:5.

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### Joshua 21:43-45 TODAY IN THE WORD

A quote from one of the characters in Harper Lee's masterpiece novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, speaks to a different kind of courage: "It was times like these when I thought my father, who hated guns and had never been to any wars, was the bravest man who ever lived." Joshua's courage led Israel through divinely victorious battles into the promise of God's peace from war; but the true test of Israel's courage wasn't in how they fought, but how they lived after the battle.

The last portion of Joshua 21 is an amazing statement, given all that Israel was up against. They were a people prone to disobedience. Physically, they were dwarfed by the Canaanites. But nothing stood in the way of God's promise to Israel during the reign of Joshua; neither physical enemies nor spiritual failures could prevent God from showing His love.

Think for a moment about how improbable it was for Israel to enter Canaan. Consider everything that happened in between God's covenant with Abraham and today's reading. Israel had started as a nation of one, and that one wasn't even born until after Abraham and Sarah were well beyond childbearing years. But that one became a multitude—through sacrifices and substitutions; stolen birthrights and switched brides; a coat of many colors and the plotting of many brothers; imprisonment and empowerment; captivity and deliverance; plagues and a Passover; grumbling and wandering; and finally, strength and courage—the nation of Israel had their land, and they had their rest.

Everything we've learned of Israel to this point in their history shows that they were a nation prone to wander, contentious and disobedient. There was nothing in their character as a people that set them apart as decidedly godly or sanctified—nothing, that is, except for a constant thread of faith. There was always someone in Israel who showed faith in God.

When we read that not one of the Lord's promises failed, we know who deserves the glory. God is faithful above anything Israel deserved. He held on to Israel by a lifeline of faith, and no matter what happened after Israel claimed their land, they had ample evidence that God reigns supreme.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Joshua and Israel had missteps of their own along the way, but God kept His promises to them. We can take heart in that invaluable lesson about God's longsuffering love. Don't get discouraged by your failures and your weaknesses—we all have them. Instead, take courage that God has given you faith and forgiveness. The Lord is mightier than the world around you and the sin inside you. Serve Him with confidence and praise Him today!

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### H Witherby - Rest

JOSHUA 21:43–45

"If Joshua had given them rest, then would he [David] not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."—HEB. 4:8, 9.

ALL Jehovah's promises were fulfilled, and the land was distributed amongst Israel, according to His word.

"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He swore to give unto their fathers.

"And they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

"And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He swore unto their fathers.

"And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.

“There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.”

Jehovah had been unwearied in bringing Israel into the possession of the land promised to the fathers. He had now fulfilled His own sure word. He had come down into Egypt, the land of Israel's bonds; He had been afflicted there in their afflictions; He had ransomed them from captivity, and, having given them the spirit of pilgrims, had guided them as a flock through the wilderness, where He fed them daily, went before them, and was their rearward; He had healed their wilderness backslidings, and forgiven their unbelief in His grace; He had brought them through the river into the promised land, fought for them, given them victory over all their enemies, and had made the promised inheritance their possession. All that Jehovah had given them to anticipate was fulfilled. Israel was at rest—rest in the midst of fulfilled promises, in the midst of possessed blessings.

In one sense Israel entered Canaan at rest—at rest from the judgment of Egypt, from the pursuit of the destroyer, and from the wilderness. All their hopes concerning deliverance from the place of bondage and Pharaoh, and of reaching the land of promise, were then fully realized. Thus they began their fight in Canaan as God's men of war, and in the power of His liberty; and, having waged Jehovah's wars for seven years, as it is generally understood—a perfect period—“the land rested.” (Joshua 11:23.) Conquest produced rest from warfare; but as this was obtained by conquest, it could only be sustained by incessant watchfulness, being lost to them should they fail to exterminate the enemy. The rest was not absolute.

But the rest mentioned in verse 44 of the chapter before us is complete, at least so far as Israel was concerned.

Every character of rest which Israel enjoyed resulted from divine faithfulness. That here described, being a fulfilment of promise, is one which, when entered, leads the devout heart to exclaim, Behold, what hath God wrought! It anticipates a day when, every foe of God's people being subdued, all the blessings which are promised them in Christ shall be realized.

What follows in the book of Joshua, morally considered, is hardly a development of the history of Israel. With rest we have reached the desired end. The remainder of the book is a warning to such as, having a promise given them of entering into rest, seem to come short of it (chap. 22), and an exhortation to those which have in spirit entered into rest, to abide in the power of it (chap. 23 and 24).

The Christian, as the result of Christ's victory, enjoys through faith present rest over sin, the world, and Satan, even while warring with these foes. It is his portion, by faith, to know full deliverance from the judgment of the world through the precious blood of Christ, his passover; to know that Christ, being risen from among the dead, has broken the power of death and Satan; from both of which He has delivered His redeemed people. The Christian knows, too, that Christ is in the heavenly places, and that he is seated in Him there; that he is God's freed man, and in the power of this liberty and rest, and, in his Lord's might, he fights against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. The Christian enjoys the peace of his Shiloh, worships the Father in spirit and in truth in the true tabernacle, where the glory-cloud ever abides. But while all these blessings are his to enjoy and to dwell in, yet there is a rest which he is anticipating, a rest which he has not at present entered, even the rest of God.

The Christian is a man of expectation; he is saved in hope—in hope of coming glory. Did he not enjoy complete peace with God, and rest for his conscience through the finished work of the Lord Jesus, he could not hope for the glory. His salvation is absolute, but the longings of the new nature render him a man of expectation. “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Rom. 8:24, 25.)

Hope and possession are woven together in his soul. He is not yet transformed into the image of Christ, though he is now a child of God; what he shall be is not yet manifested, but he is blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. He is not yet morally like the Lord, but by beholding His glory he is, day by day, changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18.) He is compassed about with infirmity, and with the whole groaning and travailing creation, groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:21–23); yet he has the Spirit of God within him, the earnest of the promised possession. (Eph. 1:13, 14.) Hope and security are both his,” As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:49); “we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:20, 21), yet even now “all things” are ours. (1 Cor. 3:21.) In the sympathies of Christ, the Christian anticipates the day of his Redeemer's glory, and longs to behold that glory, as the Lord prayed the Father (John 17:24); in the “patience of” Christ he awaits the day when the Lord's foes shall be made His footstool. (Rev. 1:9.)

It is further the Christian's privilege to look forward, desiring the honour of Jesus, to the time when Israel's twelve tribes shall own their now rejected Messiah, when north and south shall give up the people who are now nationally dead, when their land shall once more flow with milk and honey, and shine with God's favour, and when Israel shall sing to Jehovah “and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him;” when the Kingdom of God shall be established, and the name of Jesus be confessed by every tongue, and every knee bow to Him and own Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. In a word, the Christian is expecting all that shall accrue to Christ's glory, which His precious death has purchased, and for which He Himself waits, for “He shall see of the travail of His soul,

and shall be satisfied.” (Isa. 53:11.)

In order to enjoy rest in our present spiritual blessings ceaseless vigilance is necessary, for the foe is still active. But fightings without and fears within will cease before long; idols and their names will shortly come no more in remembrance. The strivings of sin and the buffetings of Satan have an end for God’s people; it shall be said of all the saints, even of the weakest, “The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.” The day will dawn, ushered in by the Morning Star shining in the sky; and then this world and the lusts thereof shall pass away; and it shall be proved that the word of the Lord endureth for ever. Then, resting in God’s rest, heart shall respond to heart with joyful praise, “There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken ... all is come to pass.”

**Joshua 21:44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand.**

KJV Joshua 21:44 And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

NET Joshua 21:44 The LORD made them secure, in fulfillment of all he had solemnly promised their ancestors. None of their enemies could resist them.

BGT Joshua 21:44 κα̅ κα̅τ̅ πα̅υσεν̅ α̅το̅ς̅ κ̅ρι̅ος̅ κυ̅κλ̅ θεν̅ καθ̅ τι̅ μο̅σεν̅ το̅ς̅ πα̅τρ̅ σιν̅ α̅τ̅ν̅ ο̅κ̅ ν̅ στη̅ ο̅ θε̅ς̅ κα̅τε̅ν̅ π̅ιο̅ν̅ α̅τ̅ν̅ π̅ι̅ π̅ι̅των̅ τ̅ν̅ χ̅θρ̅ν̅ α̅τ̅ν̅ π̅ι̅τας̅ το̅ς̅ χ̅θρ̅ο̅ς̅ α̅τ̅ν̅ πα̅ρ̅ ὄ̅ω̅κε̅ν̅ κ̅ρι̅ος̅ ε̅ς̅ τ̅ς̅ χ̅ε̅ρας̅ α̅τ̅ν̅

NLT Joshua 21:44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had solemnly promised their ancestors. None of their enemies could stand against them, for the LORD helped them conquer all their enemies.

ESV Joshua 21:44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands.

NIV Joshua 21:44 The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them.

YLT Joshua 21:44 and Jehovah giveth rest to them round about, according to all that which He hath sworn to their fathers, and there hath not stood a man in their presence of all their enemies, the whole of their enemies hath Jehovah given into their hand;

LXE Joshua 21:44 And the Lord gave them rest round about, as he sware to their fathers: not one of all their enemies maintained his ground against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hands.

CSB Joshua 21:44 The LORD gave them rest on every side according to all He had sworn to their fathers. None of their enemies were able to stand against them, for the LORD handed over all their enemies to them.

NKJ Joshua 21:44 The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand.

NRS Joshua 21:44 And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their ancestors; not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands.

- Jos 1:15 Joshua 11:23 Joshua 22:4,9 De 7:22-24 Dt 31:3-5 Heb 4:9
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 11:23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. **Thus the land had rest from war.**

Joshua 22:4; 9 **“And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them** therefore turn now and go to your tents, to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan.....(22:9) The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned home and departed from the sons of Israel at Shiloh which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession which they had possessed, according to the command of the LORD



through Moses.

**And the LORD gave them rest on every side- NET** = The LORD made them secure" Of course there were still Canaanites in the land Israel possessed, but their power had been subdued by Israel's conquest led by Joshua. Sadly this rest would be short lived, for Israel disobeyed God resulting in the tragic descriptions in the book of Judges which is summarized by the statement "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.." (Jdg 21:25)

**Guzik** has an interesting note - This is the point where Israel stopped commemorating Passover as if equipped to travel as described in Exodus 12:11). Now they will eat the Passover reclining at rest (as described in John 13:23), because the LORD had given them rest in the land. ([Joshua 21 Commentary](#))

**Bush** - The Canaanites, it is true, were yet in possession of some parts of the country, but they were so far subdued, that they gave them no serious molestation, and they were enabled to sit down in their possessions in the enjoyment of comparative rest and quiet. They had as much of the land in actual possession as they could occupy; and as they increased God enabled them, according to his promise, Ex. 23:30 ("I will drive them out before you little by little, until you become fruitful and take possession of the land."), to carry forward the work of extermination, and obtain further room for their settlement. All the assurances given to Joshua, Joshua 1:5 ("No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.), of a successful tide of victories during his life, were accomplished, and as to the subsequent annoyance and occasional prevalence of their enemies, it was owing solely to the supineness and infidelity of Israel. So long as they were obedient, they, were uniformly triumphant and prosperous. See notes on Joshua 1:5. ([Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 21](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [Rest in the Bible](#)
- Dr Walter Kaiser's excellent summary - The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest - Bibliotheca Sacra: Volume 130

**According to all that He had sworn to their fathers- NET** = "in fulfillment of all he had solemnly promised their ancestors."

**And no one of all their enemies stood before them - NET** = None of their enemies could resist them.

**The LORD gave all their enemies into their hand** - Yahweh fulfilled the promises He had made to Israel in Deuteronomy...

Deuteronomy 7:22-24 "The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, for the wild beasts would grow too numerous for you. 23"But the LORD your God will deliver them before you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. 24"He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you will make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them.

Deuteronomy 31:3-5 "It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken. 4"The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. 5"The LORD will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you.

[Keil and Delitzsch](#) - "Notwithstanding the fact that many a tract of country still remained in the hands of the Canaanites, the promise that the land of Canaan should be given to the house of Israel for a possession had been fulfilled; for God had not promised the immediate and total destruction of the Canaanites, but only their gradual extermination (Ex. xxiii. 29, 30; Deut. vii. 22). And even though the Israelites never came into undisputed possession of the whole of the promised land, to the full extent of the boundaries laid down in Num. xxxiv. 1-2, never conquering Tyre and Sidon for example, the promises of God were no more broken on that account than they were through the circumstance, that after the death of Joshua and the elders his contemporaries, Israel was sometimes hard pressed by the Canaanites; since the complete fulfillment of this promise was inseparably connected with the fidelity of Israel to the Lord."

**J Vernon McGee** - The children of Israel now possessed the land of Canaan, but that was only a small segment of the land God had promised them. If they are to get any more land, they will have to go and possess it. The rule still stands that every place their feet stand upon will be theirs. That which the Israelites possess now, however, is free from the enemy and they can enter into rest. The rest for us today is the rest of redemption. It is the rest that we desperately need. We live in an age of tension. There are many pressures, and if there is one thing that the average Christian needs, it is to enter into the rest God has provided. As we shall see as we move into the Book of Judges, Israel failed to completely rid her possession of her enemies. Why? Because of her unbelief. Even Joshua could not give them the rest they needed since they failed to believe God and appropriate His power. The writer of the



Hebrews warns us about repeating Israel's failure: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:9–11). How do you and I enter into that rest? By faith, that is the only way. At the time of Christ, when Israel rejected Him as King and He rejected their cities, He gave a personal invitation which stands yet today, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). That rest is the rest of redemption. Now here in Joshua 21 the people have entered into the rest—at least temporarily—which God had provided for them. My, how wonderful it must have been after the long, weary journey through the wilderness and the warfare to take their possessions, to settle down on their own parcel of ground. What a thrill it must have been to cultivate it and eat the fruits of it ([Joshua 21](#))

### Joshua 21:45 Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass.

KJV Joshua 21:45 There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

NET Joshua 21:45 Not one of the LORD's faithful promises to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; every one was realized.

BGT Joshua 21:45 ο δι πρεσεν π π ντων τ ν ημ των τ ν καλ ν ν λ ησεν κ ριος το ς υ ο ς Ισραηλ π ντα παρεγ νετο

NLT Joshua 21:45 Not a single one of all the good promises the LORD had given to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; everything he had spoken came true.

ESV Joshua 21:45 Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

NIV Joshua 21:45 Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

YLT Joshua 21:45 there hath not fallen a thing of all the good thing which Jehovah spake unto the house of Israel -- the whole hath come.

LXE Joshua 21:45 There failed not one of the good things which the Lord spoke to the children of Israel; all came to pass.

CSB Joshua 21:45 None of the good promises the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed. Everything was fulfilled.

NKJ Joshua 21:45 Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

NRS Joshua 21:45 Not one of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

- Jos 23:14-15 Nu 23:19 1Ki 8:56 1Co 1:9 1Th 5:24 Titus 1:2 Heb 6:18
- [Joshua 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Joshua 23:14-15 "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that **not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.** 15 "It shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

1 Kings 8:56 "**Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.**

1 Corinthians 1:9 **God is faithful**, through Whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 **Faithful** is He who calls you, and **He also will bring it to pass**.

Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which **God, who cannot lie**, promised long ages ago,

## **NOT ONE GOOD PROMISE FAILED**

**Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass**- As noted in the previous comments, Israel would fail in the time of the Judges, but that was because of their unfaithfulness to God, not because of the failure of His **good promises**. This recalls Paul's words "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." (2Ti 2:13+).

**THOUGHT - Good promises** is an interesting description, for in one sense all God's promises are good, because that is His nature. There are some promises that don't come across as "good," such as 2 Ti 3:12, but they are still good!

**Utley** - "**not one of the good promises...**" - This is our great hope: when God speaks, we can depend upon His word (cf. 23:14; 1 Kgs. 8:56; and note Isa. 55:11). Yet covenant disobedience can negate the blessings of the promises of God! There is an inseparable bond between a faithful God and a faithful people. Covenant has privileges and responsibilities. ([Commentary](#))

**Cyril Barber** comments that the writer "sees how God had dispossessed nations greater and mightier than Israel in order to give to His people the land that He had sworn to Abraham. He had been faithful in all He had done. None of His promises had failed. His gifts to His chosen people were threefold: (1) a possession, (2) rest, and (3) peace. All that remained was for Israel to respond to Him in gratitude and devotion. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#)):

**Matthew Henry** - 'The inviolable truth of God's promise, and the performance of it to the utmost, is what all the saints have been ready to bear their testimony to; and if in any thing it has seemed to come short, they have been as ready to own that they themselves must bear all the blame.'

**Scott** - 'In due season all the promises of God will be accomplished to His true people; and their **believing hope**, and **patient waiting** and **self-denying obedience**, will terminate in joyful songs of triumph, and thankful celebrations of his faithfulness, love, and power. Then it will be universally acknowledged that there hath not failed nothing of any good thing which the Lord had spoken: nay, that He has exceeded their largest expectations (cf Eph 3:20), and made them more than conquerors (cf Ro 8:37), and brought them to their delightful rest and inheritance (cf Ps 37:11). May none of us at that season be found among his enemies, "who shall be destroyed forever. (Ps 92:7KJV)" '

**Alan Redpath** - "In the light of the Cross, is it not true that the enemy has no right to dwell in the land? Is it not true that Satan's claim to your life was taken from him at Calvary? Is it not true that sin has no right to a foothold in the life of the child of God? Is it not true that Satan has no power in the presence of Omnipotence? Is it not true that by virtue of His blood and His resurrection, Jesus Christ is pledged to destroy the enemy utterly? Is it not true that in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit there is strength for every temptation, grace for every trial, power to overcome every difficulty?"

[Life Application Study Bible](#) - God proved faithful in fulfilling every promise he had given to Israel. Fulfillment of some promises took several years, but "not a single one of all the good promises the Lord had given to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled." God's promises will be fulfilled according to his timetable, not ours, but we know that his word is sure. The more we learn of those promises God has fulfilled and continues to fulfill, the easier it is to hope for those yet to come. Sometimes we become impatient, wanting God to act in a certain way now. Instead, we should faithfully do what we know he wants us to do and trust him for the future.

**J D Douglas** - "Fathers" (v43) generally means the patriarchs (Woudstra). These verses wind up the history of the dividing of the land that was begun in 13:1, 7. All the promises made, from Abraham down to Joshua, had been or were being fulfilled (cf. Josh 21:43 with Josh 1:6 and Josh 21:44 with Josh 1:5). The recorded experience of the Israelites (Josh 21:45) is a ground of hope and confidence to the people of God in every age, that all other promises made throughout the Scripture will, in due time, be accomplished. In point of fact, not all the inhabitants of Canaan had been destroyed. And as seen most clearly in the cases of Dan and Asher, not all assigned territories were by any means fully occupied. It appears, then, that the theological significance of Josh 21:43 is to show that God was indeed faithful to his promise (Butler). But Israel's failure to take certain areas reflected on their lack of faith or resolve (e.g., Josh 17:15-18; 18:2, 3). ([New Commentary on the Whole Bible: Old Testament](#))

[Don Anderson](#) - There are four things that stand out to underscore the **Lord's faithfulness** in these last verses:

1. He gave Israel all the land.
2. He gave them rest.
3. He handed all their enemies over to them.
4. Every good promise was fulfilled--none failed .

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### Spurgeon from Power in Prayer - God's Promise

Another mighty piece of ordinance in the battle of prayer is God's promise. When Jacob was on the other side of the brook Jabbok and his brother Esau was coming with armed men, he pleaded with God not to allow Esau to destroy the mother and the children. As a master reason he pleaded, "And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good" (Gen. 32:12). Oh, the force of that plea! He was holding God to His word: "Thou saidst." The attribute is a splendid horn of the altar to lay hold upon; but the promise, which has in it the attribute and something more, is a yet mightier holdfast. "Thou saidst."

Remember how David put it. After Nathan had spoken the promise, David said at the close of his prayer, "Do as thou hast said" (2 Sam. 7:25). "Do as thou hast said." That is a legitimate argument with every honest man. "God is not a man, that he should lie...hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Num. 23:19). "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). Will He not be true? Will He not keep His word? Will not every word that comes out of His lips stand fast and be fulfilled?

Solomon, at the opening of the temple, used this same mighty plea. He pleads with God to remember the word that He had spoken to his father David and to bless that place.

When a man gives a promissory note, his honor is engaged. He signs it with his signature, and he must discharge it when the due time comes, or else he loses credit. It will never be said that God dishonors His bills. The credit of the Most High never was impeached and never will be. He is punctual to the moment; He is never before His time, but He is never behind it. You can search this Book through and compare it with the experience of God's people, and the two match from the first to the last. Many an aged patriarch has said with Joshua in his old age, "**There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken...all came to pass**" (Josh. 21:45).

My friend, if you have a divine promise, you need not plead it with an "if" in it; you may plead with a certainty. If, for the mercy that you are now asking, you have God's solemnly pledged word, there will scarcely be any room for caution about submission to His will. You know His will. That will is in the promise. Plead it. Do not give Him rest until He fulfills it. He meant to fulfill it, or else He would not have given it.

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### H A Ironside - from [The Continual Burnt Offering - Feb 4](#)

Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass. Joshua  
21:45

What a testimony to the faithfulness of God! He fulfilled His word to the letter, whether in grace or in government, as He brought His people through the wilderness and into the promised inheritance. As they looked back they could say, "All that God promised He has accomplished." So shall it be with those who now know Him as revealed in Christ Jesus. When we have ended our pilgrimage and we survey the way we have come from the vantage point of our eternal home in the Father's house, we shall praise and adore Him. He saved us and guided us to an assured habitation, and His Word has been our confidence through all the journey.

God, the Lord, shall never fail thee,  
He thy cause will undertake;  
All the way His hand shall hold thee,  
Faithful love can ne'er forsake.

Rest then on His own sure promise,  
For His word He cannot break;  
To green pastures, by still waters,  
He will lead for His name's sake.

Everlasting joy awaits thee,  
When the earthly journey's o'er;

Waiting for thee in the glory  
There are pleasures evermore.  
—F. Buckley

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### **Vance Havner - "There Failed Not Ought"**

There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass. Joshua 21:45.

In recounting the goodness of God to Israel, Joshua tells us that the Lord gave them the Promised Land just as He had said He would. Joshua repeats it in an address to the people (23:14). Solomon said it in like fashion years later (1Ki 8:56).

If you will survey the path already trod you will say so too. "There hath failed not ought of any good thing God has spoken... all came to pass." If it hasn't, it will. He which hath begun a good work in us will finish it. He will perfect that which concerneth us.

It ought to fill our hearts with thanksgiving, our eyes with tears and our lips with praise, for "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance."

"There failed not ought..." But how we have failed Him!

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### **Vance Havner - ALL CAME TO PASS**

There failed not ought.... Joshua 21:45.

We worry and doubt and fear, grow impatient and rebellious. Then we look back across the years and discern that all the while God was weaving a pattern where all things worked together for good. I remember now a time long ago when I could have said with Jacob, "All these things are against me." In one of my darkest hours, I had to turn my course and abandon old plans for new, to find that behind the dim unknown God stood within the shadow keeping watch above His own. "All came to pass," says the verse in Joshua. And so say I!

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### **Joshua 21:45 THERE FAILED NOT ... ANY GOOD THING**

#### **A Good Thing Sighted—John 1:46**

Nathaniel's verdict was, 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?' It seemed impossible that any tender plant could grow amid its encircling thorns and weeds. Most prominent figures, as they step on to the stage of public life, have to contend with the inevitable skeletons in the cupboards of their earlier days. Yet there emerged from the shadows of privacy, One on whom the eye of God had rested with pleasure, who had woken morning by morning amidst a poisoned air, yet no contagion touched His soul, no sin disturbed His prayer. He was in truth the Good Thing out of Nazareth that never failed!

#### **A Good Thing Sought—Ps. 34:10**

The 'good thing' on offer in the Psalm is synonymous with seeking the Lord. We have (a) the Deliverance He brings, vv. 4–7, and (b) the Delight He brings, vv. 8–10. The psalmist writes to encourage others to put their trust in the God he himself has found to be so bountiful in His offers. In a world where he has known disappointment and failure, he contrasts the experience of those who seek the Lord and who thus have His personal attention. None who has tasted of His delicacies can doubt their superior quality. Merchants present their wares with the familiar logo 'you've tried the rest, now try the best'. Thus it is with the good things of God.

#### **A Good Thing Supplied—Josh. 21:45**

Whereas David had looked forward, Joshua looks backward. This great leader has lived to see the passing of a whole generation of men who had one day shared his dreams of the land that flowed with milk and honey. He has watched as hearts failed and help failed but he is conscious that there is a God who has never failed, not even in part, for 'there failed not ought of any good thing'. We resented the explanation as children that 'circumstances alter things', when promised plans did not materialize. God's children never know an alteration of His purposes. There are no circumstances that ever bring change.

I nothing lack if I am His And He is mine for ever.  
HENRY BAKER]

John Bennett - Day by Day: Bible Promises -

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## He Keeps His Promises

Topics: GOD'S PROMISES, MAN'S PROMISES

Bible Verses: Numbers 23:19; Joshua 21:45

In 1783, the United States and England signed the Treaty of Paris formally ending the American Revolutionary War. But soon cracks began to develop in the treaty. Britain refused to surrender western forts promised to the United States in the treaty. There were also allegations that Britain was arming North American Indians to fight against Americans on the western frontier. In 1795, the Jay Treaty with Britain and the Treaty of Greenville with the North American Indians temporarily resolved the conflict on the Northwestern frontier.

Another problem between the two countries was trade embargos enacted by Britain, which resulted in the seizure of hundreds of American merchant ships.

The Monroe-Pinkney Treaty of 1806 sought to remedy this. The treaty was drafted but never ratified by the United States Congress.

Tensions continued to rise which led to the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States. In a mere twenty-nine years from the end of the American Revolution, four separate agreements were broken.

God is faithful in what He promises, they never fail, He never breaks them. (Peter Kennedy - [Preaching Illustrations Vol.1](#))

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### Amazing Guide

Read: Joshua 1:1-9

Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken. — Joshua 21:45

When actors and actresses make a movie, it's the director who sees the "big picture" and the overall direction. Actress Marion Cotillard admits she didn't understand everything the director was doing in one of her recent films. She said, "I found it very interesting to allow myself to be lost, because I knew that I had this amazing guide. . . . You abandon yourself for a story and a director that will make it all work."

I think Joshua could have said something similar about the director of his life. In today's Scripture passage, the newly commissioned leader of Israel is standing at the threshold of the Promised Land. More than 2 million Israelites are looking to him to lead them. How would he do it? God didn't give him a detailed script, but He gave him the assurance that He would go with him.

God said, "I will be with you. I will not leave you" (Josh. 1:5). He commanded Joshua to study and practice everything written in His Word (vv.7-8), and He promised to be with Joshua wherever he went. Joshua responded with complete devotion and surrender to his amazing Guide, and "not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken" (Joshua 21:45).

We too can abandon ourselves to our Director and rest in His faithfulness. — Poh Fang Chia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

He leadeth me! O blessed thought!  
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!  
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,  
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.  
— Gilmore

Faith never knows where it is being led; it knows and loves the One who is leading.

— Oswald Chambers

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### Robert Morgan - My All in All

- Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed. -- Joshua 21:45 (NIV)
- The LORD is faithful to all his promises.. -- Psalm 145:13 (NIV)

The faithfulness of God is that aspect of His character that results in His complete adherence to fulfilling His Word and keeping His promises. He is unalterably reliable to do exactly as He has said. Because He is trustworthy, we can trust and not worry.

- God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes His mind. Does He speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?. --

Numbers 23:19

- You know with all your heart and all your soul that none of the good promises the Lord your God made to you has failed. Everything was fulfilled for you; not one promise has failed.. -- Joshua 23:14
- Not one of all the good promises He made through His servant Moses has failed.. -- 1 Kings 8:56
- Lord, You have treated Your servant well, just as You promised.... May Your faithful love comfort me, as You promised Your servant.... Sustain me as You promised.... Defend my cause, and redeem me; give me life, as You promised.. -- Psalm 119:65, 76, 116, 154

**Splendid to be so near the gates of heaven!**

**I am lost in amazement!**

**There has not failed one word of all His good promises!**

—Frances Ridley Havergal on her deathbed

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## **CERTAIN FULFILMENT of PROMISES - Joshua 21:45**

GOD'S PROMISES WILL BE FULFILLED, for:

I. This verse affirms the fulfilment of some: Promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob of a numerous seed, and of the land of Canaan for possessions. Promises to them in Egypt, to Moses, and then to Joshua. Land flowing with milk and honey. All the land. Enemies conquered. Lands allotted. Zebulon dwelt by the sea. Judah had praise. Issachar had an agricultural district. Asher dipped his foot in oil. Naphtali had the sea and coast.

II. There were peculiar difficulties in the way. Abraham and Sarah, old and childless. Isaac offered. Rebeckah barren. Jacob threatened by Esau. Greivous famine. Anger of the neighbours excited. Bondage in Egypt. Murder of all males. Red sea. Want of water and bread. War with

Amalek. Sin in the camp. Difficulties in conquest. Anakims giants. Walled town. Chariots of iron. Vast numbe[r].

III. God has fulfilled many others to his Israel: The Gift of Jesus. No destruction by flood. To Gideon, David, the apostles. He promised to hear prayer, to comfort, to bless, instruct, strengthen, support, provide for thee, and he has done it.

BELIEVE, THEN, HIS PROMISE:

1. That Jesus shall be satisfied.
2. That thou shalt be heard.
3. That thou shalt persevere.
4. That thou shalt inherit glory.

(from handwritten notes by Spurgeon in the book "Lost Sermons of Spurgeon, Volume 1")

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**Spurgeon** - Dt 10:12 - "It is a land the LORD your God cares for." The eyes of the Lord our God are always on us, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year. Some of us say, "I have had deep troubles this year." "I have lost a friend," says one. "I have been impoverished this year," says another. "I have been slandered," cries another. "I have been exceedingly vexed and grieved," says another. "I have been persecuted," says another. But take the year altogether—the troubles and the joys, the hills and the valleys, and what have we to say about it? Do not pick out one day in the year and say it was a bad day. Let the year revolve in all its grandeur, and then say, "He has done everything well" (Mk 7:37). And why have all things been well? It is because the eyes of the Lord have been on us all the year. If those eyes had been shut for a single moment, night or day, where would we have been? We would not have been at all, but swept away, like airy dreams, into annihilation. God has been watching over us, so that when a trouble came, he said, "Trouble, go away!" **I think a child of God will say with Joshua, when he reviews it all, "None of the good promises the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed. Everything was fulfilled"** (Jos 21:45).

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## **Henry Blackaby - Not One of God's Promises**

Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass. . . .

"Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed. It shall come about that just as all the good words which the LORD your God spoke to you have come upon you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God has given



you."Joshua 21:45; 23:14–15 (NASB)

God keeps his promises. That sounds like a warm and fuzzy thought, but let's examine what Joshua had to say about it. Joshua had walked with God his entire life—from the time he was a child slave in Egypt through his days as a Hebrew spy, through his forty-year stint in the desert, and as he led his army to victory all across the Promised Land. Joshua had seen it all. He saw how many times the Hebrews pleased God and how many times they failed him. He saw their faith and their disbelief, their obedience and their disobedience. He was there for the good days and the bad days. Joshua also observed God's ways over his long lifetime. He saw that God kept, to the letter, every single promise he made. He concluded that God had been faithful, without exception, to his people.

Joshua also saw that God would indeed judge his people for their sin, just as he said he would. Half of Joshua's life had been spent in the back country leading a nation that was paying the penalty for its disbelief. As he looked back over his life, Joshua could say with confidence that God was completely trustworthy to do as he said he would. According to Joshua, this could be troubling or it could be comforting. It all depends on whether you've been faithful.

Are you aware of how many promises God has made to you? It's important that you never take his faithfulness to you for granted. It's equally important that you don't take your faithfulness to him for granted. Strive to be faithful to God, and you will enjoy fully God's incredible faithfulness to you. (The Experience)

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### Joshua 21:45 Amazing Guide

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Today's Scripture & Insight: Joshua 1:1-9

When actors and actresses make a movie, it's the director who sees the "big picture" and the overall direction. Actress Marion Cotillard admits she didn't understand everything the director was doing in one of her recent films. She said, "I found it very interesting to allow myself to be lost, because I knew that I had this amazing guide. . . . You abandon yourself for a story and a director that will make it all work."

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**Matthew Henry** -"you know that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord spoke concerning you" (and he spoke a great many); see Joshua 21:45. God had promised them victory, rest, plenty, his tabernacle among them, etc., and not one thing had failed of all he had promised. "Now," said he, "has God been thus true to you? Be not you false to him." It is the apostle's argument for perseverance (Heb. 10:23), He is faithful that has promised.

Israel's experience of God's fidelity is here upon record, and is an acquittance under their hands to the honour of God, the vindication of his promise which had been so often distrusted, and the encouragement of all believers to the end of the world: There failed not any good thing, no, nor aught of any good thing (so full is it expressed), which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel, but in due time all came to pass, v. 45. Such an acknowledgment as this, here subscribed by Joshua in the name of all Israel, we afterwards find made by Solomon, and all Israel did in effect say Amen to it, 1 Ki. 8:56. The inviolable truth of God's promise, and the performance of it to the utmost, are what all the saints have been ready to bear their testimony to; and, if in any thing the performance has seemed to come short, they have been as ready to own that they themselves must bear all the blame.

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### F B Meyer - Joshua 21:45 There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken.

Such will be the summary of our lives, as we review them from the land of the sunset. We shall see plenty of our own failures, shortcomings, and sins, and sadly acknowledge them. We shall see that our unbelief and disobedience have deprived us of the enjoyment of much that God intended for us. We shall see that whatever was lacking was in no wise due to Him, but to ourselves. The land of our inheritance had been all given us in Jesus; but we suffered the lack of much, because of our failure to enter in.

There may be long delays in the fulfillment of promise. — But delays are not denials; and it is better to let the fruit ripen before you pluck it. Wait till God drops it into your hand; it will be ever so much sweeter.

There may be enemies and obstacles. — But they will give back, before the will of God, as the gates of night roll back before the touch of the dawn. Do not scheme, or fret, or be impatient; God is doing all to make thy life full of favour and blessing. Wait on Him, and keep his way; He will exalt thee to inherit the earth. Thou art as safe as if the gate of pearl were behind thee; thy joy cannot rust or be stolen; every wind is a south wind; every shore thy native land; every circumstance a rough packing-case containing the gifts of thy Fathers love.

There may be ignorance and weakness. — But God can deal with this also. Take to Him thine imperfect apprehension, thy faltering faith, He can make right what is wrong, and adjust thee to receive all He waits to give. Heaven will be full of wonder at the way in which God has kept his word, and done all that He had promised, and more.

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**Streams in the Desert** - "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God." (Heb. 4:9.)

The rest includes victory, "And the Lord gave them rest round about;... the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand." (Joshua 21:44.)

"He will beautify the meek with victory." (Psalm 149:4.) (Rotherham, margin.)

AN eminent Christian worker tells of his mother who was a very anxious and troubled Christian. He would talk with her by the hour trying to convince her of the sinfulness of fretting, but to no avail. She was like the old lady who once said she had suffered so much, especially from the troubles that never came.

But one morning the mother came down to breakfast wreathed in smiles. He asked her what had happened, and she told him that in the night she had a dream.

She was walking along a highway with a great crowd of people who seemed so tired and burdened. They were nearly all carrying little black bundles, and she noticed that there were numerous repulsive looking beings which she thought were demons dropping these black bundles for the people to pick up and carry.

Like the rest, she too had her needless load, and was weighed down with the devil's bundles. Looking up, after a while, she saw a Man with a bright and loving face, passing hither and thither through the crowd, and comforting the people.

At last He came near her, and she saw that it was her Saviour. She looked up and told Him how tired she was, and He smiled sadly and said:

"My dear child, I did not give you these loads; you have no need of them. They are the devil's burdens and they are wearing out your life. Just drop them; refuse to touch them with one of your fingers and you will find the path easy and you will be as if borne on eagle's wings."

He touched her hand, and lo, peace and joy thrilled her frame and, flinging down her burden, she was about to throw herself at His feet in joyful thanksgiving, when suddenly she awoke and found that all her cares were gone. From that day to the close of her life she was the most cheerful and happy member of the household.

And the night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day,  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.

—Longfellow