

# THE CITY OF ASHTAROTH

1. One of the problems which we have with various cities is that they sometimes have different names. The city of *Ashtaroth* is one of those cities, although the names may seem quite different and the connection may not be immediately obvious. The following cities are actually different names for the same city: Ashtaroth, Ashteroth-Karnaim, Be-eshterah, Be-esherah, Beeshterah, Beth Ashtoreth,

Name	Location	Information Given in Passage
<b>Ashtaroth</b>	Joshua 9:10 12:4 13:12 Joshua 13:31 I Chron. 6:71 <sup>1</sup>	Og, king of Bashan, was said to live in Ashtaroth. Og is called one of the remnant of the Rephaim. One of the cities given over to Machir, a clan of Manasseh. I Chron. 6:71: A city, probably in Bashan, given over to the line of Gershom from the family of East Manasseh.
<b>Ashteroth-karnaim</b>	Gen. 14:5	A city inhabited by the Rephaim, located on the King's Highway which was attacked by four kings led by Chedorlaomer during the time that Abram and Lot split up. It is called Ashteroth-karnaim because of its proximity to Karnaim, which was a city 23 miles east of the Sea of Chinnereth (i.e., the Sea of Galilee). <sup>2</sup> Karnaim is possibly mentioned separately in Amos 6:13, which actually tells us little about it, other than it is probably located in the far northeast of Israel (it is translated in some Bibles as <i>two horns</i> or <i>horns</i> ). we also find karnaim in I Maccabees 5:26 (under the name <i>Carnaim</i> ), where it is called large and strong. ZPEB suggests that it is the unnamed city II Maccabees 12:21–28, which is defeated by the Jews.
<b>Beeshterah (or, Be-eshterah)</b>	Joshua 21:27	Joshua 21:27: A city, probably in Bashan, given over to the line of Gershom from the family of East Manasseh.

2. The name *Ashtaroth* is, strictly speaking, a title and not the name of the Canaanite fertility goddess. She was the feminine counterpart to the god Baal. During the time of the judges, and certainly into the time of Samuel, the Israelites worshipped these gods and goddesses as well as the God of Israel and it was because of this idolatry that they were defeated at the hands of the Philistines (I Sam. 12:10). There was at least one city with this name that Israel conquered—the one in view here, a city of Bashan, the home of Og, king of Bashan (Deut. 1:4 Joshua 12:4), conquered by Israel and taken by the half tribe of Manasseh that settled the Trans-Jordanian area.
3. When Israel took this city over, its full name was, perhaps, the *House of Ashtaroth*, which, transliterated, would be *Beth Ashtaroth*. Because of Israel's early enthusiasm for Jehovah God, they bastardized this name to Beeshterah, which is a contraction of the *House of Ashtaroth*.
4. By the time of divided kingdom, much of Israel in the Northern Kingdom had fallen into idolatry, and the original name of the city, Ashtaroth, was restored to it.

<sup>1</sup> The other references are to the goddess of fertility.

<sup>2</sup> Paraphrased from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 539.