

## What is the significance of Ramah in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Ramah-in-the-Bible.html>

Ramah is the name of several different cities in the Bible.

Ramah of Asher is a village near the northern border of Asher in the region of Tyre (Joshua 19:29). Ramah of Naphtali is a village allotted to the tribe of Naphtali (Joshua 19:36). Ramah of Asher and Ramah of Naphtali may have been the same community since Asher's and Naphtali's boundaries were connected. Ramah of Benjamin is a town assigned to the tribe Benjamin near where Deborah ruled as judge over Israel (Judges 4:5). And Ramah of Simeon (also called Ramah of the Negev) is a desert village in the Negev allocated to the tribe of Simeon (Joshua 19:8). King David once gave presents to the people there from the spoils of war after successfully defeating the Amalekites (1 Samuel 30:27).

Ramah means "height" or "high" and is often applied to military strongholds. Ramah of Benjamin plays the most prominent role in the biblical narrative. Ramah of Benjamin, situated about five miles north of Jerusalem and west of Geba and Michmash, is associated today with modern er-Ram. This Ramah was the birthplace, hometown, and burial site of the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1, 19-20; 25:1). The book of 1 Samuel places Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim—a vast mountainous territory comprising the tribal lands of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.

Deborah, Israel's only female judge, set up headquarters in a location near Ramah of Benjamin: "She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided" (Judges 4:5). Ramah's nearness to Gibeah, King Saul's hometown (1 Samuel 10:26), made it

the ideal refuge for David when fleeing from Saul to meet up with Samuel (1 Samuel 19:18-19).

Ramah of Benjamin appears again during the divided monarchy and the rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah. King Baasha of Israel built a fortress at Ramah in Benjamin to stop people from entering or leaving Judah. But King Asa, who was ruling in Judah at the time, entered into an alliance with Ben-hadad of Damascus, king of Syria. When Baasha heard that Ben-hadad had attacked and conquered cities in Israel, he stopped fortifying Ramah and left for Tirzah. Asa then dismantled Baasha's fortress in Ramah (1 Kings 15:17-22).

Ramah of Benjamin is mentioned a few times in the prophetic books. Isaiah 10:29 tells how the Assyrians would advance toward Jerusalem by way of Ramah. This same Ramah is one of the cities that sounded a warning in Hosea's judgment cry against Israel (Hosea 5:8). And after Jeremiah had been imprisoned and later thrown into a cistern by King Zedekiah, he was delivered to Ramah and released (Jeremiah 40:1). When the captives returned from exile in Babylon, Ramah of Benjamin is listed among the places where Jews settled (Ezra 2:26; Nehemiah 7:30).

Jacob's wife Rachel's burial site is also associated with this Ramah. Rachel died giving birth to her son Benjamin and was buried near Bethlehem. Jacob marked her grave with a large pillar (Genesis 35:20). Later, Rachel is mentioned in a passage of lament: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more" (Jeremiah 31:15). Speaking of the plight of the Hebrew exiles, the prophet portrays Rachel as weeping over her "children." Ramah, a city in the territory of Rachel's son Benjamin, was, in fact, populated by her

descendants. In the New Testament, Matthew applies Jeremiah's words to the weeping in Bethlehem when Herod massacred the children there after the birth of Christ (Matthew 2:17-18). It is the only time Ramah is mentioned in the New Testament.