

Ophni

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before Chephar-Ammoni so that the number of twelve towns is attained. Therefore, Ophni is not a dittography to Ammoni but a different tradition of the list of twelve towns. Eusebius mentions the biblical tradition that Aphnei is located in the inheritance of Benjamin (*Onom.* 28.7). Jerome relates the toponym Afani to the stem *ʿûp* (to fly) combined with enclitic personal pronoun first person singular: “flying (am) I” (*Nom. hebr.* 24.22).

Ophni is often identified with Jifna (1705.1522) about 5 km northwest of Bethel. This would mean that Ophni lies in Ephraim and not in Benjamin proper. In that case, the northern boundary of Benjamin might have been shifting from time to time. Alternately, the border and town list of Benjamin belonged to different times reflecting changes in the tribal inheritance. However, Heb. *ʿ* is usually rendered by Arab. *ġ*. Only via Greek could Ophni be related to Jifna: Heb. *ʿ* > Gk. *g* > Arab. *ġ/j*. Thus, Jifna might be equated with Gophna, an important site in the Maccabean era (Josephus, *J.W.* 1.45), later one of seven Judean toparchies (*J.W.* 3.55). Moreover, the name Gophna is related to Heb. *gepen* (vine). Thus, there is no need to relate Gophna to Ophni, whose etymology is dubious. Furthermore, Jifna only has remains from the Hellenistic and later periods and is outside the tribal inheritance of Benjamin.

Since biblical Ophni is paired with Geba, it should be looked for in the area around that place, maybe east of Geba, for Chephar-Ammoni might be a place settled by Ammonites from Transjordan.

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Ophni

Ophni (MT *ʿOpni* = rottenness?, if related to Arab. *ʿafan*) is a town in the eastern half of the tribal inheritance of Benjamin between Chephar-Ammoni and Geba (Josh 18:24). Ophni is missing in the LXX, which alternatively mentions either *Καφαφα* (in Codex Vaticanus) or *Αιλαγεν* (in Codex Alexandrinus)