

Ibleam

Ibleam (MT *Yible'ām*: “the [divine] uncle brought/consumed/let rain”; LXX *Ιεβλααμ*) is a town in the Manassite highlands south of Jezreel on the main north-south road to Jerusalem guarding the ascent of Gur. Though in the territory of Issachar, Ibleam was given to Manasseh (Josh 17:11) who was not able to repulse the Canaanites but forced them to *corvée* (Judg 1:27–28). King Ahaziah of Judah was shot by Jehu's bowmen near Ibleam and fled to Megiddo where he died (2 Kgs 9:27). According to LXX⁴ King Zechariah of Israel was assassinated at Ibleam (4 Kgdms 15:10) – therefore the beginning and the end of the Jehu-Dynasty is located at Ibleam. The Levitical town of Bileam belonging to the Kohathites (1 Chr 6:55) could be equated with Ibleam. The Greek name forms *Βελβαμ* (Jdt 7:3) and *Βαλαμων* (Jdt 8:3) could be variants of Ibleam since these places lie in the vicinity of Dothan as well. Ibleam was apparently an important town in the Bronze Age since it is mentioned in the topographical list of Thutmose III at the temple of Karnak (Nr. 43). Due to name preservation Ibleam is securely identified with Ḥirbet Bel'ame (1777.2058). This site has strong natural defences, with steep slopes on three sides. Recent excavations have revealed settlement remains of four strata dating to the Middle Bronze Age II and Iron Age I–II. A tunnel built probably in the Iron Age II granted access to the main water source at the foot of the settlement. A chapel of Job was built near 'En Singib at the foot of Ḥirbet Bel'ame preserving the name of the saint. Welī Šeh Mansar was erected on the northern acropolis. Jerome translates Ibleam with “foolish people” (*Nom. Hebr.* 28.12), and refers to the Jehu story (*Sit.* 73.24). He further relates Ibleam to the tribal territory of Manasseh not yet conquered (*Sit.* 109.22). According to later tradition the prophet Hosea stems from Ibleam/Belemoth and was buried there (*Liv. Pro.* 1). The Rehov inscription mentions Ibleam (*bl'm 'lyyth*) as an allowed town near Samaria. According to Estori ha-Farhi Ibleam – distant half an hour from Chofraim – was called *yblh* at his time. This site was called Castellum Beleismum in the Middle Ages.

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