

Deuteronomy 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

(Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir;)

Analysis

(Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir;)

This parenthetical note provides geographical and linguistic detail about Mount Hermon, demonstrating Moses' comprehensive knowledge of the region Israel would inherit. The Hebrew word Siryon (שִׂירֵון) means "breastplate" or "coat of mail," possibly referencing the mountain's snow-covered appearance resembling shining armor. The Amorite name Senir (שְׁנֵיר) appears in Deuteronomy 3:9 and is referenced in Song of Solomon 4:8 and 1 Chronicles 5:23.

Mount Hermon, standing at 9,232 feet, marks the northern boundary of Israel's conquest east of the Jordan (Deuteronomy 3:8). Its multiple names reflect the diverse peoples inhabiting the region—Sidonians (Phoenicians) to the northwest, Amorites to the south and east. This linguistic detail serves several purposes: it establishes precise geographical boundaries, demonstrates the historical reliability of Moses' account, and reminds Israel that God was giving them land inhabited by powerful nations with distinct cultures and languages.

The inclusion of various names also emphasizes the comprehensive nature of Israel's victory over Og king of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:1-11). The territory from Mount Hermon southward represented significant conquest—these weren't obscure lands but regions known by multiple names across different peoples, indicating their importance and Israel's thoroughgoing victory through God's power.

Historical Context

Mount Hermon forms the southern end of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range, approximately 28 miles long. Its snow-capped peak (snow remains year-round) feeds the Jordan River and numerous springs, making it crucial for the region's water supply. The mountain's prominence made it a significant landmark in ancient geography and a site for Canaanite worship of Baal (judges by archaeological evidence).

The conquest of this region occurred around 1406 BC during Israel's defeat of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og (Numbers 21:21-35; Deuteronomy 2:24-3:11). Og king of Bashan ruled the territory including Mount Hermon, and his defeat gave Israel control of the Transjordan highlands. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh received this territory as their inheritance (Deuteronomy 3:12-17).

The multiple names for Hermon appear in ancient Near Eastern texts, confirming the historical accuracy of Moses' account. The Sidonians (Phoenicians) called it Sirion, mentioned in Ugaritic texts. The Amorite name Senir appears in Assyrian records. This demonstrates that the biblical text preserves authentic ancient geographical knowledge, not later legendary material. Mount Hermon later became the traditional site for Jesus' transfiguration, though the exact location is uncertain (Matthew 17:1-9).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's attention to geographical and historical detail demonstrate His concern for real-world, concrete reality?
2. What does Israel's conquest of territories with multiple names and diverse peoples teach about God's sovereignty over nations?

3. How should believers view the intersection of biblical faith and historical, geographical, and archaeological evidence?
4. What spiritual significance does Mount Hermon's role as a boundary marker hold for understanding God's promises?
5. How does this verse's inclusion of seemingly minor details encourage confidence in Scripture's reliability?

Interlinear Text

לֹא יָקֹרְאָו וְאַמְרֵי צִדְקָנִים
 the Sidonians call Which Hermon Sirion and the Amorites call H0
 H6722 H7121 H2768 H8303 H567 H7121

שְׁנִיר:

it Shenir

H8149

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 29:6 (Parallel theme): He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

1 Chronicles 5:23 (Parallel theme): And the children of the half tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baal-hermon and Senir, and unto mount Hermon.

Psalms 133:3 (Parallel theme): As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

Ezekiel 27:5 (Parallel theme): They have made all thy ship boards of fir trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee.

Song of Solomon 4:8: Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

