

Deuteronomy 34:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

Analysis

The Mystery of Moses' Burial

This verse presents one of Scripture's most intriguing mysteries: the burial of Moses by God Himself. The Hebrew phrase vayyiqbor oto (וַיַּקְבֹּר אֹתוֹ) literally means "and He buried him," with the subject being the LORD mentioned in verse 5. This divine interment in an unknown location "in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor" has profound theological significance.

The deliberate concealment of Moses' sepulchre prevented any possibility of idolatry or veneration of his remains—a constant temptation in the ancient Near East where tomb-worship was common. The phrase "no man knoweth" (lo-yada ish) emphasizes the complete hiddenness of the burial site. Even today, despite numerous attempts to locate it, Moses' grave remains undiscovered.

This unique burial foreshadows the New Testament account in Jude 9, where Michael the archangel contends with Satan over Moses' body. It establishes that even the greatest prophet belongs wholly to God in death, and human glory must fade before divine sovereignty. The location "over against Beth-peor"—where Israel had sinned with Baal (Numbers 25)—may symbolize God's grace covering Israel's transgression.

Historical Context

Historical Context of Moses' Death

Moses died at age 120 on Mount Nebo after leading Israel for forty years through the wilderness. God prevented him from entering the Promised Land due to his striking the rock at Meribah (Numbers 20:12), yet granted him a panoramic view of Canaan before his death. The burial in Moab, east of the Jordan, placed his grave outside the land he had yearned to enter.

Beth-peor was a significant location—the site of Israel's apostasy with the Moabite women and Baal worship (Numbers 25:1-9), resulting in a plague that killed 24,000. By burying Moses near this place of national sin, God may have been demonstrating His redemptive power to transform places of judgment into sites of honor. The deliberate obscurity of the grave also prevented the development of a pilgrimage cult, keeping Israel's worship focused on God alone rather than revering their greatest prophet's remains.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why might God have chosen to bury Moses Himself rather than allowing the Israelites to perform this honor?
2. What does the hidden location of Moses' tomb teach us about the dangers of venerating human leaders in our faith?
3. How does Moses' exclusion from Canaan yet honored burial demonstrate both God's justice and mercy?
4. What significance might the location near Beth-peor (site of Israel's sin) have for understanding God's redemptive purposes?

5. How does this passage prepare us to understand the dispute over Moses' body mentioned in Jude 9?

Interlinear Text

רַבָּתָה	וַיַּקְבֵּר	אֹתָהּ	בְּגִיאָה	בְּאֶרֶץ	מִזְמָאָה	בְּמִזְמָאָה	בְּיַהְוָה
And he buried	H853	him in a valley	H1516	in the land	H776	of Moab	over against
H6912			H1047		H4124		H0
בְּיַהְוָה	וְרַבָּתָה	אֹתָהּ	בְּגִיאָה	בְּאֶרֶץ	מִזְמָאָה	בְּמִזְמָאָה	בְּיַהְוָה
Bethpeor	H3808	knoweth	H3045	but no man	H376	of his sepulchre	unto this day
H1047			H2088		H6900		H3117
בְּיַהְוָה:							

Additional Cross-References

Jude 1:9 (Parallel theme): Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Deuteronomy 3:29 (Parallel theme): So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor.