

Joshua 15:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

Analysis

And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. Caleb offers his daughter Achsah (עַכְסָה, possibly meaning "anklet" or "adorned") as reward for conquering Debir/Kirjath-sepher. This practice—offering daughters in marriage to warriors who accomplish difficult military feats—appears elsewhere in Scripture (Saul's offer to David, 1 Samuel 17:25; 18:17). While seeming patriarchal to modern sensibilities, it functioned within ancient Near Eastern marriage customs where fathers arranged daughters' marriages, seeking worthy husbands of proven character and ability.

Caleb's challenge reveals strategic wisdom: he incentivizes younger warriors to accomplish dangerous conquests while identifying a son-in-law of courage and faith worthy of his daughter and family legacy. The test wasn't arbitrary but required exactly the qualities Caleb embodied—courage against formidable opposition, persistence in completing difficult tasks, and faith in God's promises. He sought a spiritual heir matching his character.

Theologically, this verse illustrates how faith's rewards often come through challenge. God doesn't give His choicest blessings to passive recipients but to those who actively pursue them through courageous obedience. The pattern foreshadows how Christ, the ultimate Warrior-King, wins His bride (the Church) through victorious conquest over sin, death, and Satan (Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-9).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern marriage customs typically involved bride-price (mohar) paid by the groom's family to the bride's father, compensating for the loss of her labor and securing her status. Caleb's offer reverses this—instead of requiring payment, he rewards the conqueror with both wife and property (v. 19), making Achsah's marriage exceptionally advantageous. This reflects Caleb's wealth and generosity, as well as the strategic value of Debir's conquest. Marriages often sealed political and military alliances, as seen in David's multiple marriages to daughters of various leaders. Achsah's later boldness in requesting additional land (v. 19) suggests she inherited her father's strength of character. The practice of rewarding military achievement with marriage appears in ancient Near Eastern texts including Mesopotamian epics and Egyptian records.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Caleb's search for a son-in-law who shares his faith and courage challenge you to seek spiritual companions (friends, spouse, ministry partners) who strengthen rather than compromise your convictions?
2. What 'cities' or challenges might God be using to test and reveal your character before granting you greater responsibilities or blessings?
3. How does Christ's conquest to win His bride (the Church) elevate your understanding of His sacrificial love and the cost of your redemption?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	כָּל־ב	אֲשֶׁר	יָכֹה	אֶת־	קִרְיַת־	סֶפֶר
said	And Caleb	H834	He that smiteth	H853	H0	Kirjathsepher
H559	H3612		H5221			H7158
וְלָקַח־הָ	וְנָתַתִּי	אֶת־	לִי	עַכְשָׁה	בִּתִּי	לְאִשָּׁה:
and taketh	it to him will I give	H0	H853	Achsah	my daughter	to wife
H3920	H5414			H5915	H1323	H802

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