

Joshua 15:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it:
and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

Analysis

And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. Othniel (אֹתְנִיֵּל, "God is my strength" or "Lion of God") meets Caleb's challenge, conquering Debir and winning Achsah. Described as "son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb," Othniel was either Caleb's younger brother (making him Achsah's uncle) or more likely Caleb's nephew (Kenaz being Caleb's brother, making Othniel Caleb's nephew and Achsah's cousin). Ancient Israelite marriage customs permitted cousin marriage, common for preserving family property and tribal identity.

Othniel's later prominence validates Caleb's judgment: he becomes Israel's first judge after Joshua's death, delivering Israel from Mesopotamian oppression (Judges 3:9-11). The Spirit of Yahweh empowered him for leadership, and Israel enjoyed forty years of peace under his judgeship. This demonstrates how character proven in one arena (military conquest) transfers to another (civil leadership). Othniel's faith matched Caleb's—both wholly followed Yahweh (Numbers 32:12; Joshua 14:8-9, 14).

Theologically, this verse rewards spiritual excellence across generations. Caleb's faithfulness produced a family culture of courage and faith that continued in Othniel and Achsah. Legacy matters—faithful parents shape children and extended family who carry covenant faithfulness forward. God's purposes advance through generations of believers who inspire and challenge each other to courageous obedience.

Historical Context

Othniel's judgeship (Judges 3:7-11) occurred during the early post-conquest period when Israel repeatedly fell into Canaanite idolatry and suffered foreign oppression as divine discipline. The cycle—apostasy, oppression, repentance, deliverance through a judge, and peace—characterized the judges era (c. 1375-1050 BCE). Othniel set the pattern as the first judge, delivering Israel from Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia (Aram-naharaim). His leadership provided a forty-year peace, demonstrating the blessings of covenant faithfulness. The Kenizzites, Kenaz's clan, were originally non-Israelite (Genesis 15:19) but fully incorporated into Judah, illustrating Israel's capacity to assimilate foreigners who embraced Yahweh. Caleb himself was a Kenizzite (Joshua 14:6, 14), showing that faith, not mere ethnicity, determined covenant participation—a theme anticipating gospel inclusion of Gentiles.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What character qualities proven in your current challenges might God be developing to prepare you for future leadership or greater responsibilities?
2. How can you create a family or community culture where courage and faith are valued, challenged, and rewarded across generations?
3. How does Othniel's story as a non-ethnic Israelite who became a judge encourage you about God's inclusive grace toward all who trust Him?

Interlinear Text

וְלָקַח הִוא	וְעֹתְנִיֵּאל לִ	בֶּן	קִנָּז ז	אָחִי י	כָּל ב	וְהָיָה
took	And Othniel	the son	of Kenaz	the brother	of Caleb	it and he gave
H3920	H6274	H1121	H7073	H251	H3612	H5414
וְהָיָה	לְאִשָּׁהּ:	בִּתּוֹ	עַכְסָה הִוא	אֶת ל ו		
	to wife	his daughter	him Achsah			
	H802	H1323	H5915	H853	H0	

Additional Cross-References

Judges 3:9 (Parallel theme): And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

Judges 1:13 (Parallel theme): And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

Joshua 14:6 (Parallel theme): Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea.

Judges 3:11 (Parallel theme): And the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died.