

Joshua 15:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou?

Analysis

And it came to pass, as she came unto him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wouldest thou? This verse reveals Achsah's wisdom and initiative. The phrase "she moved him" (tasitehu, תָּסִיתָהוּ, from sut, סוּת, "to incite" or "persuade") indicates Achsah encouraged Othniel to request additional land from Caleb. Some translations suggest she persuaded Othniel to let her ask, which the narrative bears out. Ancient Near Eastern custom generally had men negotiate property matters, making Achsah's direct approach noteworthy.

"She lighted off her ass" (vatitsnach me-al ha-chamor, וַתִּטְסַח מֵעַל הַחֲמֹר) describes a deliberate dismount, possibly signaling respect, formality, or preparation for serious conversation. The action caught Caleb's attention, prompting his question, "What wouldest thou?" (mah-lach, מַה-לָּךְ, literally "What to you?" or "What is it you desire?"). Caleb's question shows openness to his daughter's request and respect for her voice.

This interaction models healthy family dynamics where women's wisdom contributes to household decisions. Achsah, like her father, demonstrates boldness—not satisfied with minimal blessing but seeking maximum provision within appropriate bounds. Her initiative prefigures other bold biblical women (Abigail, Esther, the Canaanite woman of Matthew 15:22-28) who, through respectful persistence, obtained blessing for themselves and others.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern women, while living in patriarchal societies, exercised more agency than often assumed. Property law, inheritance customs, and marriage contracts (like those found in Nuzi tablets and Egyptian papyri) show women could own property, initiate legal actions, and engage in business. Achsah's request fits this context—she wasn't overstepping cultural bounds but working within established customs that allowed women to make legitimate property claims. Riding donkeys was common for both genders in ancient Israel; horses were primarily military animals. Dismounting before addressing a superior showed respect (compare 1 Samuel 25:23 where Abigail dismounts before David). Achsah's action signaled this wasn't casual conversation but formal petition. The Negev land she and Othniel received (v. 19) was good for grazing but needed water sources for full productivity, explaining her specific request for springs.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Achsah's bold but respectful initiative encourage you to make legitimate requests to God and human authorities rather than passively accepting minimal provision?
2. What additional blessings might God be willing to grant if you ask with appropriate faith and persistence (James 4:2, Matthew 7:7-8)?
3. How can you balance contentment with what you have while still seeking God's best provision for your life and ministry?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי יוֹ	בָּבוֹאָהָ	וַתִּסֵּיתָ הוּ	מֵאֵת לְשֶׁא וּלְ	
H1961	And it came to pass as she came	unto him that she moved	him to ask	H853
	H935	H5496	H7592	
אֶבְיָהָ	שָׂדֶה	וַתִּצֶנֶחַ	מֵעַל	הָאֵמָר וַיֹּאמֶר
of her father	a field	and she lighted off	H5921 her ass	said H0
H1	H7704	H6795	H2543	H559
כָּלִי בִ	מָה	לָהּ:		
and Caleb	H4100	H0		
H3612				

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 24:64 (Light): And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

1 Samuel 25:23 (Light): And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,