

Joshua 15:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the coast of Edom southward were Kabzeel, and Eder, and Jagur,

Analysis

And the uttermost cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the coast of Edom southward—the phrase *ha'arim miqtseh* (הָעָרִים מִקְצֵה, "the uttermost cities") describes the southernmost settlements along Judah's border with Edom. These frontier towns protected against Edomite incursions and controlled trade routes through the Negev. **Kabzeel** means "God gathers"; it was the hometown of Benaiah, one of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:20). **Eder** ("flock") and **Jagur** ("he will sojourn") likely served as pastoral centers for shepherding communities in the arid Negev.

This catalog of 29 cities (v. 32) in Judah's southern district demonstrates meticulous territorial organization. Each settlement name carries meaning—often describing geographical features, economic activities, or theological significance. The preservation of these names in Scripture honors communities that might seem insignificant but played vital roles in Israel's national life. God's attention to detail shows that no faithful community, however small or remote, escapes divine notice.

Historical Context

The Negev region receives only 8-12 inches of annual rainfall, making permanent settlement challenging. These cities clustered near wadis (seasonal streams) and employed sophisticated water management—cisterns, terracing, and runoff collection. Archaeological excavations at sites like Tell Arad and Beer-sheba reveal

Late Bronze/Iron Age I occupation, confirming the biblical city lists. Kabzeel (possibly modern Khirbet Hora) lay near the Edomite border, approximately 20 miles southeast of Beer-sheba. The Edomites, descendants of Esau, maintained complex relationships with Israel—sometimes hostile (Numbers 20:14-21), sometimes allied (Deuteronomy 23:7-8).

These frontier settlements served military, economic, and administrative functions. They protected trade caravans traveling the Incense Route from Arabia to Gaza, collected taxes, and provided way stations. The mention of specific cities demonstrates historical accuracy—these weren't legendary place names but actual settlements that could be verified and visited.

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 small, remote communities in Judah's inheritance encourage faithful service in seemingly insignificant places?
2. What does the strategic placement of cities along Edom's border teach about being spiritually vigilant at the vulnerable frontiers of your life?
3. How can studying the meanings of biblical place names deepen appreciation for Scripture's historical and theological richness?

Interlinear Text

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|-------------|----------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| אֶל | יְהוּדָה | בְּנֵי | לְמַטֵּה | מִקְצֵה | הָעָרִים | וְהֵי וְ |
| H413 | of Judah | of the children | of the tribe | And the uttermost | cities | H1961 |
| | H3063 | H1121 | H4294 | H7097 | H5892 | |
| וַיִּגּוּר: | וְעֵדֶר | קַבְצֵאֵל | בֵּן גִּבְעָה | אֶדֹם | גִּבּ וְ | |
| and Jagur | and Eder | were Kabzeel | southward | of Edom | toward the coast | |
| H3017 | H5740 | H6909 | H5045 | H123 | H1366 | |

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 35:21 (Parallel theme): And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.