

Joshua 15:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Cabbon, and Lahmam, and Kithlish,

Analysis

And Cabbon, and Lahmam, and Kithlish,

These three cities remain archaeologically unidentified, their precise locations lost to history despite biblical preservation of their names. **Cabbon** (כַּבּוֹן, kabbon) may derive from a root meaning "hilly" or relate to kabash (שָׁבַע, "to subdue"), possibly indicating a conquered stronghold. The uncertainty surrounding its identification reminds us that much of ancient history remains unknown despite archaeological advances.

Lahmam (לַחֲמַם, lachmam) possibly relates to lechem (לֶחֶם, "bread"), suggesting agricultural productivity or bread-making significance. If this etymology is correct, the name would indicate the Shephelah's role as Judah's breadbasket, with fertile valleys producing grain for the hill country. Such utilitarian names reflect ancient priorities: food production, military security, and water access determined settlement viability.

Kithlish (כִּיתְלִישׁ, kitlish) is of completely uncertain meaning, appearing only in this verse. The preservation of these otherwise unknown cities demonstrates Scripture's commitment to comprehensive documentation of tribal inheritances. Every city, however small or obscure, mattered in God's distribution of the Promised Land. This detail orientation reflects divine care for specificity and justice in land allocation—no tribe was shortchanged, every family received its designated portion.

Historical Context

That these cities remain unidentified doesn't diminish their historical existence. Archaeological surveys have located hundreds of ancient tells (settlement mounds) in the Shephelah that await excavation or identification. Ancient city names changed over time, complicating identification. Some sites may have been destroyed without significant remains, occupied only briefly, or covered by modern settlements. The precision of these lists—specifying district organization, city counts, and geographic regions—reflects authentic administrative records rather than later fabrication. Ancient Near Eastern parallels include Egyptian and Mesopotamian administrative texts cataloging cities and territories with similar specificity.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's preservation of even obscure, unidentified city names demonstrate His care for detail and completeness in fulfilling promises?
2. What does the inclusion of forgotten places teach about God's valuation of the seemingly insignificant in His redemptive plan?
3. How should we respond when historical evidence is incomplete or lost—with skepticism toward Scripture or humility about the limits of archaeological knowledge?

Interlinear Text

וְכַבּוֹן	וְלַחְמָם	וְכִתְלִישׁ:
And Cabbon	and Lahmam	and Kithlish
H3522	H3903	H3798

