

Joshua 15:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Keilah, and Achzib, and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages:

Analysis

And Keilah, and Achzib, and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages:

Keilah (קַיִלָּה, qe'ilah) achieved fame as the city David rescued from Philistine attack (1 Samuel 23:1-13). Despite David's deliverance, Keilah's citizens would have betrayed him to Saul—a sobering example of how fear and self-interest can overcome gratitude and justice. The name possibly means "fortress" or "citadel," appropriate for this border town subject to frequent Philistine raids. Keilah later appears as a Levitical city and in Nehemiah's rebuilding efforts (Nehemiah 3:17-18), showing its continued importance into the post-exilic period.

Achzib (אֲכַזִּב, akzib) means "deception" or "disappointment," from a root meaning "to lie" or "to fail." This ominous name may describe a wadi that flowed seasonally but dried up in summer—a "deceptive stream" promising water but failing travelers. Micah 1:14 plays on this meaning: "the houses of Achzib shall be a lie (akzab, אֲקַזָּב) to the kings of Israel." The prophet warns that trusting this city will bring disappointment. The name serves as sobering reminder that not all inheritances prove reliable—some blessings carry inherent limitations or dangers requiring divine wisdom to navigate.

Mareshah (מַרְשָׁה, mareshah) means "summit" or "possession," from yarash (יָרַשׁ, "to possess, inherit"). This fitting name appears in contexts of conquest and possession. Later history records Mareshah as the birthplace of the prophet Eliezer (2 Chronicles 20:37), site of Asa's great victory over the Ethiopians (2

Chronicles 14:9-10), and a fortified city under Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11:8). The enumeration "nine cities" again demonstrates administrative precision in tribal allotments.

Historical Context

Keilah (Khirbet Qila) occupied a strategic position controlling access to the hill country from the Shephelah. The Philistines' repeated attacks (1 Samuel 23:1) reflect its economic and military importance—threshing floors full of grain made it attractive plunder. Mareshah (Tell Sandahanna) was extensively excavated, revealing massive fortifications and occupation from Bronze Age through Hellenistic period. The Edomites later occupied it, and the Maccabees captured it (1 Maccabees 5:65-68; 2 Maccabees 12:35). The city's position on major trade routes gave it commercial significance. Achzib's location remains debated, though several sites with seasonal wadis have been proposed. These cities formed Judah's southwestern defensive line against Philistine expansion.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does Keilah's ingratitude toward David (planning to betray him despite his deliverance) warn against taking God's blessings for granted?
2. What 'deceptive streams' (Achzib) in your life promise satisfaction but ultimately disappoint—and how do you distinguish true from false sources of security?
3. How does Mareshah ("possession") remind you that spiritual inheritance requires active appropriation, not merely passive reception?

Interlinear Text

וּמְצָרִיקָן: תְּשַׁע עָרִים וּמִרְאָשׁ הָאָכִז יְבָ וְקַעַל הַ
And Keilah and Achzib and Mareshah cities nine with their villages

H7084

H392

H4762

H5892

H8672

H2691

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org