

Joshua 15:55

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah,

Analysis

Maon, Carmel, and Ziph, and Juttah—These cities in Judah's southern hill country later figured prominently in Israel's history. Maon (מֵאֵן, "habitation") was where churlish Nabal lived and David sought refuge (1 Samuel 23:24-25, 25:2). Carmel (כַּרְמֶל, "garden-land") was Nabal's home, site of his feast and Abigail's wise intervention (1 Samuel 25). Ziph (צִיף) was where David hid from Saul, though Ziphites betrayed him (1 Samuel 23:14-15, Psalms 54 title).

That cities listed neutrally in Joshua later became settings for moral drama illustrates that geography is morally neutral—the same location can witness both faithfulness (Abigail's wisdom) and treachery (Ziphites' betrayal). Places don't determine character; human choices do. Yet the biblical authors' care in recording these names suggests that physical places matter in God's economy—they become theaters where redemptive history unfolds, invested with meaning through the events that occur there.

Historical Context

This region south of Hebron was semi-arid hill country requiring pastoral economy supplemented by agriculture in valleys. The cities were strategically located to control routes through the wilderness of Judah toward the Dead Sea. This area became a common refuge for outlaws and fugitives due to its rugged terrain and proximity to the uninhabited wilderness, explaining David's repeated use of it when fleeing Saul.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the later history of these cities (David's trials) illustrate that our response to circumstances matters more than the circumstances themselves?
2. What does Abigail's wisdom at Carmel teach about how faithful individuals can transform potentially tragic situations?
3. How might the Ziphites' betrayal at Ziph warn against prioritizing political safety over moral loyalty?

Interlinear Text

מַעַן	לְ	בְרָכָה	לְ	יִזְחָרְיָהּ
Maon		Carmel	and Ziph	and Juttah
H4584		H3760	H2128	H3194

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 15:24 (Parallel theme): Ziph, and Telem, and Bealoth,

1 Samuel 25:2 (Parallel theme): And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

1 Samuel 23:25 (Parallel theme): Saul also and his men went to seek him. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.