

Joshua 19:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Ziklag, and Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susah,

Analysis

And Ziklag, and Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susah,

Tsiqlag (צִיִּקְלָג, "Ziklag") became one of the most significant cities in Simeon's inheritance, though its early history remains obscure. The name is non-Semitic, possibly Philistine in origin, suggesting foreign settlement before Israelite conquest. Ziklag's true importance emerged when the Philistine king Achish of Gath gave it to David as a refuge during his exile from Saul (1 Samuel 27:6). From Ziklag, David raided Israel's enemies while feigning loyalty to Philistia—a complex period of political maneuvering that providentially protected him for kingship.

The text notes that "Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day" (1 Samuel 27:6), indicating the city's permanent transfer from Simeon to royal Davidic control. This mirrors Simeon's broader absorption into Judah—they lost Ziklag specifically to David, just as they lost tribal independence generally. The city's destruction by Amalekites (1 Samuel 30:1-2) and David's dramatic recovery of the captives prefigured his coming kingship, with Ziklag serving as the launching point for his reign.

Beth-marcaboth (בֵּית הַמָּרְכָבוֹת, "house of chariots") and Hazar-susah (חֲצֵר סוּסָה, "village of horses" or "enclosure of the mare") both reference equestrian facilities—chariot stations and horse corrals. These military installations in the Negev likely served Solomon's extensive chariot forces (1 Kings 4:26; 10:26), though initially assigned to pastoral Simeon. The irony is striking: a diminished tribe received cities named for military might (chariots and horses) they probably never developed, later utilized by Judah's monarchy.

Historical Context

Ziklag's location remains uncertain, with Tel Halif, Tel Sera, and Tel esh-Sharia among proposed sites. Archaeological surveys in the Negev show scattered Iron Age I settlements that could correspond to these Simeonite towns. The region's aridity limited population density, explaining why these cities remained underdeveloped during Simeon's tenure but were valuable for David's guerrilla operations against desert raiders.

David's sixteen-month residence in Ziklag (1 Samuel 27:7) occurred around 1012-1011 BCE, during the final years of Saul's reign. The Philistine grant of the city reveals the political complexity of the period—the Philistines used David to buffer their southern border against Amalekites while he used them for protection against Saul. This arrangement ended when the Philistines gathered to fight Israel at Gilboa (1 Samuel 29).

Beth-marcaboth and Hazar-susah reflect ancient Near Eastern military infrastructure. Chariots were the ancient world's armored cavalry, requiring specialized facilities for maintenance and horse breeding. Egypt and Canaan used chariots extensively; Israel's adoption of chariot warfare peaked under Solomon. Archaeological remains of horse stables at Megiddo (once attributed to Solomon, now dated later) illustrate the scale of chariot operations. These Negev installations probably served as southern outposts for monitoring trade routes and securing borders.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How did God use David's exile in Ziklag—a time of apparent defeat and political compromise—to prepare him for kingship, and what does this teach about God's providence in difficult seasons?
2. What does the transition of Ziklag from Simeon to David to the kings of Judah reveal about how God redistributes resources according to His purposes rather than human claims?
3. How might the cities named for military power (chariots and horses) but held by diminished Simeon warn against trusting in earthly strength rather than God's provision?

Interlinear Text

סוֹסָה:	וְחָצֵר	הַמִּרְכָּב וְ	בֵּית	זִקְלָג
and Hazarsusah	H0	and Bethmarcaboth	H0	And Ziklag
H2701		H1024		H6860

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org