

Judges 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

Analysis

And Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron: (now the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba:) and they slew Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmai.

Hebron held profound historical significance for Israel—Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah there for Sarah's burial (Genesis 23), making it the patriarchs' burial site. The name Kirjath-arba (qiryat arba, קִרְיַת אַרְבָּע) means "city of four" or "city of Arba," named after Arba the Anakim (Joshua 14:15, 15:13). The Anakim were renowned as giants, descendants of Anak, causing the fearful spies to report "we were in our own sight as grasshoppers" (Numbers 13:33). Caleb specifically requested Hebron as his inheritance (Joshua 14:12-13), demonstrating faith that what terrified the previous generation could be conquered through trust in God's promises.

Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai were Anakim, likely the leading clan heads or rulers of Hebron. Their names appear in the spies' report forty years earlier (Numbers 13:22), indicating either extraordinary longevity or that these were dynastic names passed to successors. The Hebrew text emphasizes "they slew" (vayakku, וַיָּקֻ) these three specifically, suggesting their military-political leadership made them primary targets. Defeating these giant warriors demonstrated God's power overcoming humanly impossible obstacles—a recurring biblical theme from David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17) to Paul's "I can do all things through Christ" (Philippians 4:13).

Reformed theology sees the Anakim as types of overwhelming sin and Satan's power—appearing invincible from human perspective but conquered through faith in God's promises. The Israelite spies' fear forty years earlier reflected unbelief, while Caleb and Joshua's confidence reflected faith (Numbers 14:6-9). This generation's victory under Judah vindicates faith and warns against unbelief. Christians face spiritual 'giants'—entrenched sins, satanic opposition, worldly powers—that appear insurmountable. Victory comes not through human strength but through Christ who has already defeated every enemy (Colossians 2:15, 1 John 4:4).

Historical Context

Hebron was one of Canaan's most ancient cities, located in the Judean highlands approximately 19 miles south of Jerusalem at 3,050 feet elevation. Archaeological excavations at Tel Hebron (Tel Rumeida) have uncovered remains from the Early Bronze Age (3rd millennium BCE) through the biblical period. The Middle Bronze Age (2000-1550 BCE, Abraham's era) shows substantial fortifications and settlement. The city's elevation, reliable water sources, and strategic location made it a major political and economic center.

The Anakim's identity has generated scholarly debate. Biblical texts describe them as exceptionally tall people (Deuteronomy 2:10-11, 9:2), possibly related to the Rephaim. Some scholars connect them to Egyptian Execration Texts mentioning 'Anaq' as a Canaanite region. Whether the Anakim were genuinely unusual in stature or whether 'giant' language is hyperbolic, they clearly represented formidable military opposition. Their reputation created psychological warfare—mere mention of Anakim terrified Israel's spies and explains Caleb's faith requirement to conquer them.

Hebron's association with the patriarchs made its conquest particularly significant. The cave of Machpelah housed Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah (Genesis 49:29-32, 50:13). Controlling Hebron meant controlling access to this sacred site, providing powerful religious-cultural symbolism. Later, David ruled from Hebron for seven years before capturing Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:5), showing

the city's continued political importance. The parallel account in Joshua 15:13-14 credits Caleb specifically with defeating the three Anakim sons, while Judges 1:10 credits Judah corporately—both perspectives are true, with Caleb as Judah's representative warrior.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What 'giants' in your life appear insurmountable from human perspective but are already defeated through Christ's victory?
2. How does Caleb's faithfulness across forty years, from spy to conqueror, encourage perseverance in pursuing God's promises despite obstacles?
3. What is the relationship between remembering God's past faithfulness (Abraham's connection to Hebron) and courage to face present challenges?

Interlinear Text

וְיַעֲשֵׂה	אֶל	יְהוָה	הָיָה	לְגָדִילָה	בְּפִישָׁה	וְסִבְרָה
H1980	And Judah	H413	against the Canaanites	H3669	that dwelt	in Hebron
H3063					H3427	H2275
וְיַעֲשֵׂה	אֶל	יְהוָה	הָיָה	לְגָדִילָה	בְּפִישָׁה	וְסִבְרָה
now the name	in Hebron	before		was Kirjatharba	and they slew	and
H8034	H2275	H6440	H0	H7153	H5221	H853
וְיַעֲשֵׂה	אֶל	יְהוָה	הָיָה	לְגָדִילָה	בְּפִישָׁה	וְסִבְרָה
Sheshai	and Ahiman			and Talmi		
H8344	H289	H853		H8526		

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 14:15 (Parallel theme): And the name of Hebron before was Kirjath-arba; which Arba was a great man among the Anakims. And the land had rest from war.

Numbers 13:22 (Parallel theme): And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org