

Judges 1:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher:

Analysis

And from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher.

Following Hebron's conquest, Judah advanced approximately 12 miles southwest to Debir, a significant Canaanite city. The name Kirjath-sepher (qiryat sefer, קִרְיַת סְפֵר) means "city of the book" or "city of writing," suggesting it may have been a scribal or administrative center. Some scholars propose it housed a library or archive, though archaeological evidence for this remains inconclusive. The name change to Debir (devir, דְבִיר) connects to the Hebrew dabir (דְבִיר, "inner sanctuary, holy of holies"), used for the most sacred space in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:5, 16)—though no explicit connection explains the naming.

The parallel account in Joshua 15:15-19 provides identical details, confirming the historical reliability of both narratives. The repetition emphasizes the significance of this conquest as part of Caleb's inheritance. Caleb's clan possessed this territory, demonstrating how individual faith and obedience secured specific portions of God's promises. This illustrates the covenantal principle that while God's corporate promises to Israel were unconditional, individual participation in blessing required personal faith and obedience (Deuteronomy 28).

Theologically, conquering a "city of writing" carries symbolic weight. God's word written on tablets (Exodus 31:18) and in scrolls (Deuteronomy 31:24-26) formed the foundation of Israel's covenant identity. Securing Kirjath-sepher represents

claiming intellectual and cultural territory for God's truth. Similarly, Christians are called to "cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Spiritual warfare includes intellectual combat, refuting false worldviews and establishing biblical truth in every domain.

Historical Context

Debir is typically identified with Tel Beit Mirsim (excavated by W.F. Albright) or Khirbet Rabud, both located in the Judean highlands southwest of Hebron. Archaeological excavations show Late Bronze Age occupation with evidence of destruction in the 13th-12th century BCE, consistent with the conquest period. The site features typical Late Bronze Age Canaanite pottery, architecture, and fortifications. However, the identification remains debated, as neither site yields definitive evidence of scribal activity that would explain the name 'city of the book.'

Ancient Near Eastern cities sometimes specialized in particular industries or functions. Administrative centers housed archives of cuneiform tablets recording legal, economic, and diplomatic transactions. The Amarna letters, for example, show extensive written correspondence between Canaanite city-states and Egypt. If Kirjath-sepher housed such archives, its conquest would have yielded valuable intelligence about Canaanite political alliances, resources, and strategies—though Scripture doesn't mention this.

The conquest of Debir connects to broader patterns of Judahite expansion. Control of Hebron and Debir secured the central Judean highlands, creating a territorial core for Caleb's clan. These conquests also fulfilled God's promise that Caleb would possess the land he spied (Numbers 14:24, Deuteronomy 1:36). Caleb's faith at age 85 (Joshua 14:10-11) demonstrates that advancing age doesn't disqualify from vigorous service to God—a counter-cultural message in modern youth-obsessed society.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does conquering a 'city of writing' illustrate the importance of establishing biblical truth in intellectual and cultural domains?
2. What false 'writings' or worldviews in your cultural context require refutation through careful biblical thinking?
3. In what ways does Caleb's persistent pursuit of his full inheritance challenge spiritual complacency that settles for partial obedience?

Interlinear Text

לְבִרְכָּה	וְיָשַׁבְתִּי	בְּדָבִיר	וְיִשְׁמַם	לְבִרְכָּה
H1980	H8033	H413	against the inhabitants	of Debir
			H3427	H1688
			and the name	of Debir
			H8034	H1688

בְּרִית	לְפָנֵי	סִפְרָה
before	H0	was Kirjathsepher
H6440		H7158

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 15:15 (Parallel theme): And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjath-sepher.