

Judges 1:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

Analysis

And they gave Hebron unto Caleb, as Moses said: and he expelled thence the three sons of Anak.

This verse confirms fulfillment of Moses' promise to Caleb (Numbers 14:24, Deuteronomy 1:36) and Joshua's grant (Joshua 14:6-15). The phrase "as Moses said" (ka'asher dibber Mosheh, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה) emphasizes covenant faithfulness—God keeps promises across generations and through leadership transitions. Forty-five years separated Moses' promise from its fulfillment (Joshua 14:10), demonstrating both God's patience and the endurance of faith required to inherit promises (Hebrews 6:12, 10:36).

Caleb "expelled" (vayoresh, וַיֹּרֶשׁ from yarash, יָרַשׁ, "to dispossess, drive out, inherit") the three sons of Anak—Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai (verse 10, Joshua 15:14). The parallel accounts in Judges 1:10 ("Judah" expelled them) and 1:20 ("Caleb" expelled them) reflect Caleb's leadership within Judah. Corporate and individual agency aren't contradictory but complementary perspectives on the same events. Caleb, at age 85 (Joshua 14:10), demonstrated that advancing years don't disqualify vigorous service when sustained by faith and divine strength.

Theologically, Caleb exemplifies persevering faith. At 40, he believed God would give Canaan despite giants; at 85, he claimed his inheritance by defeating those same giants. He "wholly followed the LORD" (Numbers 14:24), the Hebrew male acharei Yahweh (אַחֲרַי יְהוָה, "filled up after the LORD") suggesting complete,

unreserved obedience. This contrasts with partial obedience characterizing most judges-era Israelites. Caleb prefigures New Testament teaching that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26)—genuine faith produces enduring obedience. His example encourages believers that regardless of age or circumstance, God provides strength for whatever He calls us to do (Isaiah 40:29-31, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Historical Context

Hebron's conquest held both strategic and symbolic significance. Strategically, Hebron controlled the central Judean highlands at 3,050 feet elevation, dominating north-south and east-west routes. Symbolically, it housed the patriarchs' tombs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah—Genesis 23, 25:9, 49:31, 50:13), making it sacred ground connecting conquest generation to covenant promises made 600+ years earlier to Abraham. Later, David ruled from Hebron seven years before capturing Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5:5), showing its continued political importance.

Caleb's Kenizzite heritage (Numbers 32:12, Joshua 14:6, 14) shows Gentile integration into Israel through faith. The Kenizzites possibly connected to Edomites (Genesis 36:11, 15, 42), suggesting Caleb's ancestors joined Israel during Egyptian bondage or wilderness wanderings. His full inclusion and tribal prominence demonstrate covenant inclusion transcended ethnicity—anticipating Gentile inclusion in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-19). Caleb proves Paul's later point: not all descended from Abraham are Abraham's true children; children of promise (those with Abraham's faith) are reckoned as Abraham's seed (Romans 9:6-8, Galatians 3:7-9).

The sons of Anak's defeat reversed the unbelieving spies' fear-filled report forty years earlier. Those giants who appeared as insurmountable obstacles fell before faith-filled obedience. Archaeological excavations at Hebron show Late Bronze Age destruction layers potentially corresponding to this conquest, though connecting specific destructions to biblical events remains speculative. The site's continuous occupation from prehistoric times through modern day testifies to its strategic value.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What promises from God remain unfulfilled in your life, and how does Caleb's forty-five-year wait encourage patient, persevering faith?
2. How does Caleb's vigor at age 85 challenge modern assumptions about aging and usefulness in God's service?
3. What does Caleb's 'wholly following the LORD' look like practically in terms of daily decisions and life priorities?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּתֵּן ו	לְכָלֵב	אֶת	חֶבְרֹן	כְּאִשׁ ר	דָּבָר ר	מֹשֶׁה ה
And they gave	unto Caleb	H853	Hebron	H834	said	as Moses
H5414	H3612		H2275		H1696	H4872
וַיִּדְרֹשׁ	מֹשֶׁה	אֶת	שְׁלֹשׁ ה	בְּנֵי י	הָעֲנָקִים:	
and he expelled	H8033	H853	thence the three	sons	of Anak	
H3423			H7969	H1121	H6061	

Additional Cross-References

Judges 1:10 (Parallel theme): 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 Talmi.

Deuteronomy 1:36 (Parallel theme): Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed the LORD.

Numbers 14:24 (Parallel theme): But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

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