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BIB381: Land of the Bible

April 18, 2023

The Land of Kedesh

Kadesh or Qadesh also known as Cades in Hebrew is derived from the root word “holy”. This location is mentioned many times in the bible. This location has played a major role throughout the history of the region. Since the Bronze Age to the Iron Age, Kedesh was a thriving city that experienced various issues such as political, religious, and economic instability. Kedesh has been known in history to have issues with its neighboring kingdoms for political control over the region. During the Bronze Age, Kedesh was controlled by the city of Mari, which was conquered by the Babylonians. The city eventually fell into the hands of the Hittites, who also had control over the region. Religious conflicts were also a common concern throughout Kedesh’s history.

The city of Kedesh was known for its devotion to the god Baal, which caused conflicts with neighboring kingdoms who had different religious practices and beliefs. During the reign of the Israelite king Solomon, Kedesh was incorporated into the Israelite kingdom, and the city’s religious practices were altered to align with the Israelite religion. During the 8th century BCE, the Assyrian conquest brought great changes to the history of Kedesh. The Assyrians destroyed the city causing it to lose its significance. The city was eventually rebuilt during the Persian Empire and continued to thrive until the Roman conquest.

Kedesh was one of the six cities of refuge mentioned in the Bible and was also known as a place of protection for those who committed unintentional murder. The city was strategically located on a hill. This provided a natural defense against potential attacks. The city walls were solid, and the gates were guarded by soldiers to keep away unwanted visitors. Kedesh is a geographic region located in the northern part of Israel, in the Upper Galilee. The region is situated about 10 kilometers southwest of the biblical city of Hazor and 30 kilometers north of the Sea of Galilee. Kedesh is a hilly region with lush greenery and is surrounded by small villages. Kedesh is said to be dominated by the Galilee mountains, with the highest of the peak being Mount Meron which measures the height of 1,208 meters. This mountain has deep valleys and steep terrain. In addition to the hilly aspect of the landscape it also has many perennial streams. The Amud stream is included and is considered the backbone of agricultural production in the area. Despite this, water scarcity has been a significant challenge in Kedesh, necessitating the construction of numerous cisterns and aqueducts that have helped create a thriving agricultural system.

Agriculture remains a vital sector in Kedesh, with diverse crops like grapes, olives, figs, carob, and almonds grown all year round. The region also experiences Mediterranean climate, mild winters, and hot summers. The soils are fertile and contribute to reliable stream flow which helps with growth of the most vibrant agricultural industries in the region. Kedesh is a diverse topography, with a plethora of flora and fauna unique to the Mediterranean region. The region has evolved over centuries, and the diverse vegetation ranges from deciduous oak and pine trees to the Mediterranean scrubland. The area is also home to various birds' species, such as black start, hoopoe, Bonelli's eagle, among others.

Kedesh is a prominent location in the Bible that played a significant role in the history of the Israelites. Located on the northern border of the tribal territory of Naphtali, Kedesh served as a sanctuary city for the people of Israel in ancient times. Kedesh is first mentioned in the book of Joshua, Kedesh was one of the cities of refuge set up for the Levites to live in. In addition to being a sanctuary city, Kedesh was also a central place to worship God. It was the location of the Tabernacle of God during the time of the Judges and was a place for sacrifices. Kedesh was also important since it was located on the main road that led from the Mediterranean coast to the Aramean kingdom, this made it a vital supply and trade center. During the period of the Judges, Kedesh was one of the few Israelite cities that managed to withstand the Canaanite incursions. It is known the Prophet Isaiah prophesied that Kedesh would be rebuilt and restored glory. He wrote, "The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus the remnant of Aram will be like the glory of the Israelites. This is the declaration of the Lord of Hosts' (Isaiah 17:3). Although the city was destroyed and abandoned, the prophecy came to pass, and Kedesh was rebuilt after the Babylonian exile.

The city is known for its rich history and biblical significance as one of the cities of refuge mentioned in the Old Testament. Though the city has experienced many changes throughout the years, it remains a vital city in Israel with rich culture, tourist attractions, and modern amenities. Today, Kedesh attracts visitors from all over the world who are interested in discovering its ancient ruins, historical sites, and museums. The Kedesh Archaeological Park is one of the main tourist attractions in the city. The park houses the remains of the Canaanite city of Kedesh, which dates to the third millennium BCE. Visitors can also explore the impressive outdoor amphitheater and a Roman temple that has survived through the centuries. Beyond its ancient ruins, Kedesh offers visitors an experience of the region's natural beauty. The nearby

Kedesh River National Park shares breathtaking landscapes, including waterfalls, forests, and streams. Hiking trails are available and picnic areas, visitors can enjoy time in nature, ancient history, and biblical significance.

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