

26 Kir-Haraseth

Names (also known as)

Modern names – Al Karak, Karak, Kerak

Biblical – 2 Kings 3:25; Isa. 16:7 “Kir-haraseth”; Isa. 16:11 “Kir-harash”; Jer. 48:31, 36 “Kir-heres”; 2 Kings 16:9; Isa. 22:6; Amos 1:5; 9:7 “Kir”.

Kharkha (Aramaic)

Etymology

Strong’s H7025 *qīyr chāreśeth* – “Fortress of earthenware”; BDB – “Wall of potsherds”.

Location/Description



Karak lies 140 kilometres (87 miles) to the south of Amman on the ancient King’s Highway. It is situated on a hilltop about 1,000 metres (3,300 ft) above sea level and is surrounded on three sides by a valley. Karak has a view of the Dead Sea. A city has been built up around the castle and it has buildings from the 19th century Ottoman period. The town is built on a triangular plateau, with the castle at its narrow southern tip.

Karak’s metropolitan population was estimated to be 68,800 in 2013, making up 31.5% of the total population of the Karak Governorate. Most of the population of the city are Muslims (75%) and there is also a significant Christian population (25%). In general, the percentage of Christians in Karak is among the highest in Jordan.

Scriptural references

Old Testament

2 Kings 3:25; 16:9; Isa. 16:7,11; 22:6; Jer. 48:31,36; Amos 1:5; 9:7

Famous visitors

Jehoshaphat king of Judah	} Formed a tripartite alliance to attack Moab – 2 Kings 3
Jehoram king of Israel	
The king of Edom	
Elisha (in all probability)	



Brief history

Biblically it is called Qer Harreseth or Kir of Moab, and was subject to the Assyrian empire. In the Books of Kings (16:9) and Book of Amos (1:5, 9:7), it is mentioned as the place where the Syrians went before they settled in the regions north of Israel, and to which Tiglath-Pileser III sent the prisoners after the conquest of Damascus. In 1958 the remains of an inscription was found in wadi al Karak that has been dated to the late 9th century BC.

In Jehoram’s invasion of Moab, Kir of Moab (obviously the capital) alone withstood his attack; and on the city wall the king of Moab sacrificed his son (2 Kings 3:25), an act that divided the 3 invading nations and brought the campaign to an end.

The area eventually fell under the power of the Nabateans. The Roman Empire – with support from the Arab Ghassanid tribe conquered it from them in 105 AD. Under the Byzantine Empire it was the seat of a bishopric, housing the much venerated Church of Nazareth, and remained predominantly Christian under Arab rule.

Al Karak fell within the Crusader lands east of the River Jordan and the Dead Sea. In 1132 King Fulk of Jerusalem, made Pagan the Butler Lord of Montreal and Oultrejordain.

Pagan made his headquarters at al-Karak where he built a castle on a hill called by the crusaders Petra Deserti - The Stone of the Desert. His castle, much modified, dominates the town to this day.



The castle was only in Crusader hands for 46 years. It had been threatened by Saladin's armies several times but finally, surrendered in 1188, after a siege that lasted more than a year. Saladin's younger brother, Al-Adil was governor of the district until becoming ruler of Egypt and Syria in 1199.



In 1844 Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt sent an expedition west of the Dead Sea. His troops occupied the castle at Karak but they were starved out with much loss of life.

Mohammed Al-Majali who had control of Al Karak in 1868, was involved in the events that led to the destruction of the Moabite Stone.

In 1893 the Sublime Porte Abdul Hamid II established the sub-province of Ma'an, with a resident governor (Mutasarif) in Karak, under the Wāli of Syria based in Damascus.

Following the San Remo conference, 1920, Great Britain was given a mandate to govern the area. On 25 May 1946, the United Nations

approved the end of the British Mandate and recognized Transjordan as an independent sovereign kingdom.

Sources:

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Al_Karak&redirect=no.

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)