

The Three Kedesh's of Israel

A **Map of the Three Kedesh's** may be found on the final page.

Introduction

Kedesh of Judah

Kedesh of Issachar

Kedesh of Naphtali (also known as, Kedesh of Galilee)

Kedesh, North of Palestine

Map of the Three Kedesh's

Introduction: Like many authors, I was about to make a quick, only slightly supported comment in 1Chron. 6:72 and move on. I was about to dismiss this city as perhaps being a copyist error and then move on, as I was pretty worn out from examining 1Chron. 6, which is one long chapter in Scripture, and mostly just a list of names and cities. However, upon closer examination, I decided that I needed examine this more closely and place the doctrine back in the book of Joshua, as there are several times when it needs to be referred to.

There are instances where a sharp, knowledgeable critic can point to cities like Kedesh and claim that there are contradictions in Scripture; and, the average believer—in fact, 99% of them, would be unable to refute them. Most of the common solutions offered for the problems of Kedesh would result in there being a contradiction somewhere.

First of all, we can reasonably assume that there is more than one Kedesh. One chief reason is that the city of Kedesh in Naphtali is called Kedesh Naphtali or Kedesh of Galilee (e.g., Joshua 21:32 Judges 4:6). There is no reason to so distinguish the city in Naphtali if there are no other cities named Kedesh.

The Hebrew word is qedesh (קִדְשׁ) [pronounced *KEH-desh*], which means *sanctuary*. It obviously comes from the verb *to set apart, to consecrate, to sanctify*. Strong's #6943 BDB #873. Gesenius, genius that he is, simply points out that there are cities named Kedesh, briefly and without fanfare, noting that *Kedesh of Issachar* is also called *Kishion*¹.

Kedesh of Judah

Kedesh of Judah is mentioned twice in Scripture. It is a city given over to Judah in Joshua 15:23 where it is described, with several other cities, as being a city at the extremity of the tribe of Judah toward the border of Edom. This would place Kedesh in far southwestern Judah, possibly as far as the wilderness of Zin (which is pretty much on the border of Judah and Edom).

The first time that this city is mentioned is back in Num. 20:1. Thirty-eight almost silent years have passed. Most of gen X has been killed off (this is the older generation of Israel who left Egypt; those who were adult slaves in Egypt). They were the rebellious ones of Israel, whose sons were saved by the pleading of Moses. Israel begins to move northward and their first noted stop is in Kedesh, which is in the wilderness of Zin. It was in Kedesh that Miriam died and was buried.

It is possible—in fact, very likely—that this is equivalent to Kadesh-barnea. The difference in spelling simply comes down to vowel points, which were added two millenniums after Joshua 15 was written. The reason that I believe these cities to be equivalent is that Kadesh-barnea is given in the description of the border of Judah (Joshua 15:3), but is never mentioned as one of the cities given over to Judah (Joshua 15:21–62). Given that Kadesh-barnea is one of the more famous of the cities of Judah, I would think that it would have been named separately as a city which was given by lot to Judah. I am not aware of any event recorded in Scripture which would contradict this identification.

Kedesh of Issachar

¹ H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 725.

in Joshua 12:22, we have the king of Kedesh listed as one of those conquered by Israel. In v. 21, it is the kings of Taanach and Megiddo; in v. 22b, it is the king of Jokneam. When listing the defeated kings, these are unlikely to have been listed at random. It is more reasonable to suppose that the author (probably Joshua) recalled these either in order of the battle where they were defeated or geographically (which would amount to almost the same thing). Taanach and Megiddo are in the northern portion of West Manasseh; Jokneam is in southern Asher. It would make more sense to name a city in Issachar (which would be north of Taanach and Megiddo, but south or even with Jokneam) than it would be to name a Kedesh in Naphtali which is far north of all these cities. That would be incongruous with human authorship and memory function. Therefore, although it is not so specifically listed, it is reasonable to suppose that the Kedesh listed in Joshua 12 is in Issachar.

Along the border between Issachar and Manasseh runs the river Kishon, not too far from Taanach and Megiddo. It is along this the River Kishon, or close to this river, where we would find the city of Kedesh, mentioned in Joshua 12:22. What appears to be the case is that Issachar settled Kedesh, but decided to rename it Kishion (after the river); or, that it was known at that time both as Kedesh and Kishion. Therefore, in Joshua 19:20, we have the city Kishion being given over to Issachar. In Joshua 21:28, the tribe of Issachar is to set the city of Kishion aside for occupation by the Levites. However, in the parallel passage, 1Chron. 6:72, where we would expect to find the name *Kishion*, we find *Kedesh* instead. There is no reason to suppose that this was a slip of the copyist's pen, so to speak, because in Joshua 19 and 20, in both the Hebrew and the Greek, we have *Kishion*; in 1Chron. 6:72, in both the Hebrew and the Greek, we have *Kedesh*. My thinking is that, because there was another *Kedesh* in Naphtali, Israel decided to call *Kadesh of Issachar*, *Kishion* instead. However, the name that stuck—that is, for the long-term—was *Kedesh*.

Now, you may wonder, isn't it possible that the manuscript of Joshua was corrupted at this point very early on (prior to the Septuagint translation)? Certainly. However, we have another confirmation that there was a Kedesh in Issachar in the book of Judges. What some folks find confusing is that there is a mention of Kedesh-Naphtali in Judges 4:6 as the residence of Barak. Then Kedesh is mentioned several more times in the chapter—they are not the same city. Barak was living in the foothills of the Mount Naphtali, not far from Lake Huleh. Not too far west of him was Hazor, which was the city from whence Jabin, the king of Canaan, ruled over northern Israel. About forty miles south of there was where Deborah lived, along with the River Kishon, and where all of the action of the Judges 4–5 take place. When Barak gathers his troops, he gathers them to Mount Tabor (Judges 4:6, 12). It is actually unclear in the narrative whether Barak gathers them together in Kedesh Naphtali first and then marches to Mount Tabor; or whether he gathers them together in Kedesh Issachar (which is much closer to Mount Tabor). Because we only mention *Kedesh* once as *Kedesh Naphtali*; and because the mention of *Kedesh* in Judges 4:11 is so clearly *Kedesh Issachar*; I would think that every mention in this chapter of *Kedesh* apart from any other designation, is *Kedesh of Issachar*. Therefore, the men of Naphtali and of Zebulun came south and southeast to Kedesh. Their move to Mount Tabor was then just a relatively short march.

Near the end of the Judges 4, Sisera, the general under Jabin, makes a running escape from the battle at the River Kishon because his troops are being decimated. He runs to the tent of Heber the Kenite, who lived at the oak of Zaananim, which was near Kedesh. If Kedesh (Kishion) is along the River Kishon, then this makes sense. Sisera might have run 3–10 miles before he felt safe. It is much less likely that he would run 40 miles north to the town of Kedesh Naphtali. Furthermore, Jael, Heber's wife, would have a better chance of instantly knowing who Sisera is living in Kedesh Issachar as opposed to living in Kedesh Naphtali.

To sum up, we have several witnesses to this *Kedesh* of Issachar: (1) The Greek and Hebrew text of 1Chron. 6:72; (2) the location of the king of Kedesh on the list of Joshua 12; (3) the use of the name *Kedesh of Naphtali* (or, *Kedesh of Galilee*), which would be done to distinguish it from another *Kedesh* nearby (and *Kedesh of Naphtali* did not really have to be distinguished from *Kedesh of Judah*—they were so far apart that passage context would indicate which *Kedesh* was being spoken of); (4) the geography of Judges 4 makes much more sense if there is a Kedesh near the River Kishon.

Kedesh of Naphtali (also known as, Kedesh of Galilee)

The location of this city is made difficult by its designation, *Kedesh of Galilee*. In Old Testament, Galilee was a region, not a lake. What we call the Sea of Galilee was then called the Sea of Chinnereth, and it was located in lower Galilee. Kedesh Naphtali is located at the foot of the mountains west of Lake Huleh, and is about 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. The city of Hazor is south and slightly east of Kedesh. The two Kedesh's in northern Palestine was a difficulty for even MacMillan's maps; so, several times, *Kedesh Naphtali* is located where we would expect, in north central Naphtali near Lake Huleh.² However, other times it is mistakenly located off the southwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.³ The reason for that mislocation, presumably, is due to the narrative in Judges 4. We do not need an additional *Kedesh* off the shore of the Sea of Galilee for that narrative to make sense; however, we do need a *Kedesh* in Issachar and in Naphtali.

Kedesh Naphtali is first mentioned in Joshua 19:37, along with the other cities which were given to Naphtali by lot. This *Kedesh* is called *Kedesh of Galilee* in Joshua 20:7, where it is designated as one of the cities of refuge. As with all the cities of refuge, it was given to the Levites (Joshua 21:32).

While the evil Pekah ruled over the Northern Kingdom, Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria came down and took several cities in the land of Naphtali, including Kedesh Naphtali (called simply *Kedesh* in this passage, as its location is pretty obvious by context).

Kedesh, North of Palestine

Far north of Kedesh Naphtali, between the city of Carchemish off the Euphrates River even with the northern most portion of the Mediterranean Sea, and the Sea of Galilee, with have a fourth, bonus *Kedesh*, which MacMillan lists on several maps.⁴ This *Kedesh* is nearly a hundred miles north of the northern most portion of Israel along what appears to be the southern end of the Orontes River (which runs north-south in northern Retenu). This *Kedesh* was probably under the control of the Hyksos dynasty of Egypt between 1668–1560 B.C. Apparently, this area that bordered the Mediterranean to the west was known as Retenu. When Thutmose III (1504–1450 B.C.) went back into Canaan to reconquer Egypt's territory, this was the *Kedesh* named on his list of conquered cities (there were about 60 cities total and *Kedesh* was the northernmost of them). *Kedesh* was conquered on his sixth military campaign (of seventeen).

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Map of the Three Kedesh's

Below is a map of the three *Kedesh*'s:

² *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*; 3rd Edition; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai; MacMillan; ©1993 by Carta; p. 54–55 (maps 62 and 63).

³ *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*; 3rd Edition; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai; MacMillan; ©1993 by Carta; p. 54 (map 61).

⁴ *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*; 3rd Edition; Aharoni, Avi-Yonah, Rainey, and Safrai; MacMillan; ©1993 by Carta; p. 29–34.

A Map of the Three Kedesh's



To be quite frank with you, I did not really spend a lot of time properly locating this cities; I simply dropped them approximately where they belong.

This map was taken from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:1759_map_Holy_Land_and_12_Tribes.jpg and the cities were added to it.