

67 Mt Carmel

Names (also known as)

Hebrew - Har HaKarmel (lit. God's vineyard)

Also known as Antelope-Nose, Jebel Kurnul, Mar Elyas, Rosh-Kedesh

Etymology

The Hebrew word is said to signify “fruitful, plentiful”. BDB say “garden land”. The word is translated “a fruitful field” in Isa. 32:15.

Location/Description



The Carmel Range is a coastal range in Northern Israel stretching from the Mediterranean Sea towards the Southwest (the city of Haifa - Israel's 3rd largest is located near this range).

The range of mountains is 39 km long (24 miles) and 6 km (4 miles) wide. The Jezreel Valley lies to the immediate northeast.

The mountains are covered with oak, pine, olive and laurel trees.

Mount Carmel itself is 1500 ft high.

It is important not to confuse Mt Carmel with another Carmel much further to the south in the hill country of Judah. The latter was the home of Nabal and Abigail (1 Sam. 25:2) and a place where Saul built a memorial after defeating the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:12). It was also the place where the agricultural king of Judah, Uzziah, established a vineyard (2 Chron. 26:10).

Scriptural references

Old Testament

Josh. 12:22; 19:26; 1 Kings 18:19,20,42; 2 Kings 2:25; 4:25; 1 Chron. 3:1; 11:37; 2 Chron. 26:10; Song 7:5; Isa. 33:9; 35:2; 37:24; Jer.

46:18; 50:19; Amos 1:2; 9:3; Micah 7:14; Nahum 1:4

New Testament

None

Famous characters

Elijah and his servant, and probably Obadiah Ahab and the prophets of Baal



Brief history

The Bible describes Mt Carmel as a symbol of beauty and fertility. To be given the “splendour of Carmel” was to be blessed. For Carmel to wither was a sign of judgement (Nahum 1:4). The mountain belonged to the tribe of Asher. At one time it was covered in wood and used as an example by the prophets (Isa. 33:9; Micah 7:14). Due to the lush vegetation on the sloped hillside, and many caves on the steeper side, Carmel became the haunt of criminals. Carmel was seen as a place offering an escape from Yahweh, as implied by the Book of Amos.

Elisha travelled to Carmel straight after cursing a group of young men because they had mocked him and the ascension of Elijah by jeering, “Go on up, bald man!” thus challenging him to deploy Divine power and follow his master into heaven. After this blasphemy of the spirit, bears came out of the forest and mauled 42 of them. This does not necessarily imply that Elisha had sought asylum there from any potential backlash, although the description in the Book of Amos, of the location being a refuge, is dated by textual scholars to be earlier than the accounts of Elisha in the Book of Kings, and according to Strabo it had continued to be a place of refuge until at least the first century.

During World War I, Mount Carmel played a significant strategic role. The (20th century) “Battle of Megiddo” took place at the head of a pass through the Carmel Ridge, which overlooks the Valley of Jezreel from the south. General Allenby led the British in the battle, which was the turning point in the war against the Ottoman Empire.

In mainstream Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thought, Elijah is indelibly associated with the mountain, and he is regarded as having sometimes resided in a grotto on the mountain.

Indeed, one name for Mount Carmel is **جبل مار إيليا** (Jabal Mar Elyas; Mount Saint Elias). In the Books of Kings, Elijah challenges 450 prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel to determine whose deity was genuinely in control of the Kingdom of Israel; since the narrative is set during the rule of Ahab and his association with the Phoenicians, biblical scholars suspect that the Baal in question was probably Melqart.

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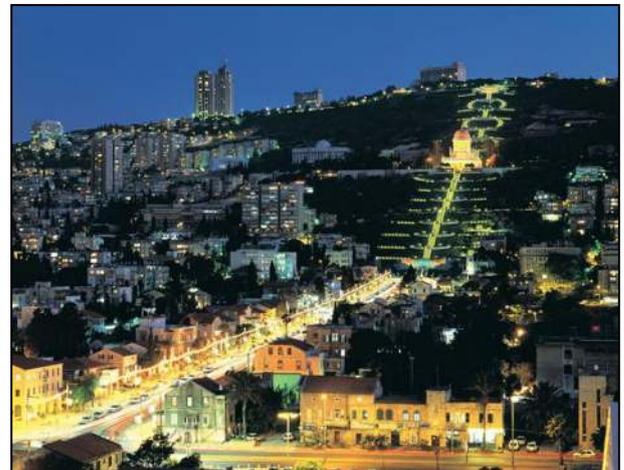
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Above: View of Mt Carmel in 1894



Above: University of Haifa atop Mt Carmel 1996



Above: The city of Haifa today

