

Joshua 12:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one;

Analysis

The king of Debir, one; the king of Geder, one—Debir (Devir, דְּבִיר, possibly 'sanctuary/oracle') was formerly called Kiriath-sepher ('city of the book,' Joshua 15:15), suggesting it was a Canaanite religious or scribal center. Caleb later offered his daughter Achsah to whoever captured it; Othniel succeeded (Joshua 15:16-17; Judges 1:11-13). This demonstrates that even 'defeated' cities sometimes required re-conquest—the list records strategic victories, not necessarily permanent occupation.

Geder (Geder, גֶּדֶר, 'wall/enclosure') remains archaeologically unidentified, possibly a textual variant of Gerar or another Shephelah fortress. Its inclusion emphasizes completeness—even obscure kings fell before Israel. The pattern teaches that God's victory encompasses both famous strongholds (Jerusalem) and forgotten fortresses (Geder). No enemy is too insignificant for God's attention or too obscure for His judgment.

Historical Context

Debir (Tel Rabud or Khirbet Rabud) was strategically located in the southern highlands. Its alternative name 'city of the book' may indicate a scribal school or religious center, making its conquest symbolically significant—truth replacing false teaching. The need for Othniel's later re-conquest illustrates the gap between initial defeat and permanent possession common in ancient Near Eastern warfare.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Debir's name 'city of the book' suggest that spiritual warfare often involves confronting false teaching and ideological strongholds, not just behavioral sin?
2. What does the inclusion of obscure Geder alongside famous Jerusalem teach about God's comprehensive concern for all aspects of His purposes?
3. How should the pattern of re-conquest (Debir defeated, then requiring Othniel's victory) inform your expectations about spiritual progress?

Interlinear Text

מֶלֶךְ	דְּבִיר	אֶחָד	מֶלֶךְ	גְּדֵר	אֶחָד
The king	of Debir	one	The king	of Geder	one
H4428	H1688	H259	H4428	H1445	H259

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 10:38 (Parallel theme): And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and fought against it: