

Joshua 15:48

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Socoh,

Analysis

And in the mountains, Shamir, and Jattir, and Socoh,

This verse transitions from the Shephelah (lowlands) to the hill country (הַרְרָה, hahar), Judah's mountainous heartland where the tribe's identity centered. The phrase "in the mountains" marks a new district section in this comprehensive territorial catalog. The hill country's rugged terrain provided natural defense, making it easier to hold than contested lowlands.

Shamir (שָׁמִיר, shamir) means "thorn" or "adamant stone," possibly describing the rocky, harsh terrain characteristic of Judean highlands, or referring to a fortified, prickly defensive position. A different Shamir in Ephraim was the burial place of judge Tola (Judges 10:1-2), demonstrating the name's reuse across tribal territories. The symbolic significance of "thorn" reminds us that even God's good gifts come with challenges requiring perseverance and faith.

Jattir (יָתִיר, yattir) means "abundance" or "pre-eminence," possibly indicating this city's size or productivity despite mountainous location. David later shared Philistine spoils with Jattir's elders (1 Samuel 30:27), showing his political wisdom in cultivating support among Judah's cities. Jattir was designated a Levitical city (21:14), placing priests throughout Judah's territory to maintain covenant teaching and worship.

Socoh (שׁוֹכָה, sokoh) means "branches" or "hedge," possibly describing vegetation or defensive features. Like Ashnah, multiple cities bore this name—this Socoh in the hill country differs from another Socoh in the Shephelah (v. 35). The famous

David-Goliath confrontation occurred near the lowland Socoh (1 Samuel 17:1), not this highland city.

Historical Context

Judah's hill country formed the tribe's demographic and political center, with elevations ranging from 2,000-3,300 feet. The limestone terrain supported terrace agriculture (grain, grapes, olives) requiring intensive labor to maintain. Archaeological surveys show dense Iron Age settlement in this region, confirming biblical descriptions of numerous cities. Jattir (Khirbet Attir) was excavated, revealing substantial Iron Age remains consistent with its identification as a Levitical city. The distribution of Levitical cities throughout tribal territories ensured religious education and maintained covenant consciousness—priests weren't isolated in Jerusalem but dispersed among the people. Socoh appears in administrative ostraca from Judean fortresses, confirming its continued importance in later periods.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the contrast between thorny Shamir and abundant Jattir remind us that God's inheritance includes both challenges and blessings?
2. What does the distribution of Levitical cities like Jattir throughout Judah teach about the church's need for gospel ministers dispersed in every community?
3. How can the hill country's natural defensibility encourage you about spiritual strongholds God has given that enemy attacks cannot easily penetrate?

Interlinear Text

וּבֶהָר	שָׁמִיר	וַיֵּת יֵר	וְשׁוֹכָה:
And in the mountains	Shamir	and Jattir	and Socoh
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