

Numbers 26:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Of the sons of Issachar after their families: of Tola, the family of the Tolaïtes: of Pua, the family of the Punites:

Analysis

The sons of Issachar after their families—Issachar's census lists four clans: Tolaïtes (from Tola, תולע, 'worm' or 'scarlet'), Punites (from Pua/Puah, פואה, 'splendid'), Jashubites (from Jashub, יָשׁוּב, 'he will return'), and Shimronites (v. 24). Issachar was Jacob's ninth son, born to Leah after the mandrake incident (Genesis 30:18)—his name means 'hired worker' or 'reward.'

Jacob's blessing described Issachar as 'a strong donkey couching between two burdens...and became a servant unto tribute' (Genesis 49:14-15), suggesting agricultural productivity and potential compromise. Yet 1 Chronicles 12:32 praises Issachar's sons as those 'which had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do'—wisdom compensating for military weakness.

Historical Context

Issachar received the fertile Jezreel Valley (Joshua 19:17-23), becoming an agricultural powerhouse. Their territory included Mount Tabor and the Plain of Esdraelon, both strategically significant. Despite Jacob's prediction of servitude, Issachar maintained tribal identity and produced Deborah's general Barak (Judges 4:6) and later King Baasha (1 Kings 15:27).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Issachar's transformation from 'servant unto tribute' (Genesis 49:15) to having 'understanding of the times' (1 Chronicles 12:32) illustrate the possibility of overcoming negative generational patterns?
2. What does Issachar's agricultural calling teach about the dignity of ordinary labor and economic productivity within God's covenant purposes?
3. In what ways might the tribe's wisdom ('understanding of the times') compensate for their apparent military weakness, and how does this apply to the church's spiritual warfare?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי יִ	יִשָּׁשכָר	מִשְׁפֵּחַת	תּוֹלָע	מִשְׁפֵּחַת
Of the sons	of Issachar	after their families	of Tola	after their families
H1121	H3485	H4940	H8439	H4940
הַתּוֹלָעִים	לְפֻהָה	מִשְׁפֵּחַת	הַפּוּנִיִּים	
of the Tolaite	of Pua	after their families	of the Punites	
H8440	H6312	H4940	H6324	

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 7:1 (Parallel theme): Now the sons of Issachar were, Tola, and Puah, Jashub, and Shimron, four.

Genesis 46:13 (Parallel theme): And the sons of Issachar; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimron.