

What is the significance of Anathoth in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Anathoth-in-the-Bible.html>

The word Anathoth appears in the Bible in various contexts. It is the personal name of two biblical figures and the name of a city in the tribal territory of Benjamin. The name Anathoth may have been derived from that of the Canaanite goddess Anath or possibly assigned later by the Israelites after one of Benjamin's descendants (see 1 Chronicles 7:8). In Hebrew, Anathoth means "answers to prayer."

Anathoth was one of four towns set aside by sacred lots as a city of refuge for the Levitical priests descended from Aaron through the tribe of Benjamin: "And from the territory of Benjamin they were given Gibeon, Geba, Alemeth, and Anathoth, each with its pasturelands" (1 Chronicles 6:60, NLT; see also Joshua 21:17-18).

While the exact location of Anathoth is unconfirmed, it was most likely situated at Râs el-Kharrûbeh near the modern-day city of Anata, about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. At an elevation of more than 2,200 feet, the area may have been fortified in ancient times. From this vantage point, Anathoth would have offered a bleak yet expansive view of the eastern slopes of Benjamin's mountainous wilderness, including the north end of the Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley.

One of David's mighty men, Abiezer, was from Anathoth (2 Samuel 23:27), as was Jehu, one of the first expert warriors to join David's army at Ziklag (1 Chronicles 12:3).

Abiathar was a high priest during David's reign. He owned land in Anathoth and was among the men who fled the capital city with David (2 Samuel 15:24). Abiathar and Zadok

carried the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem at David's command (2 Samuel 15:24-29). Later, Abiathar was banished back to Anathoth by King Solomon because he had supported Adonijah, Solomon's rival who had conspired for the throne (1 Kings 2:26-27).

The city of Anathoth is perhaps most familiar to Bible readers as the hometown of the prophet Jeremiah, who owned a field there (Jeremiah 1:1; 29:27; 32:7-9). Jeremiah began his ministry in Anathoth but was fiercely opposed by the townspeople. They wanted to kill Jeremiah because he had prophesied severe punishment on them for breaking God's covenant: "This is what the Lord says about the men of Anathoth who wanted me dead. They had said, 'We will kill you if you do not stop prophesying in the Lord's name.' So this is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies says about them: 'I will punish them! Their young men will die in battle, and their boys and girls will starve to death. Not one of these plotters from Anathoth will survive, for I will bring disaster upon them when their time of punishment comes'" (Jeremiah 11:21-23, NLT).

Isaiah also mentioned Anathoth (Isaiah 10:30) as one of the cities Assyria marched through (Isaiah 10:27-34), although the city was not destroyed. After the Babylonian captivity, more than one hundred people from Anathoth were among the first Jewish exiles to return with Zerubbabel to their towns (see Ezra 2:23; Nehemiah 7:27), and the Benjaminites resettled Anathoth (Nehemiah 11:32).

Two people in the Bible bear the name Anathoth. One is listed among the sons of Becher, who was a descendant of Benjamin (1 Chronicles 7:8). The other is Anathoth, the witness. He was one of the Israelite leaders who signed the covenant pledge made by the returning exiles to obey God's law (see Nehemiah 10:1-19).