

What is the significance of Lo Debar in the Bible?

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

Lo Debar (or Lo-debar) is a town only mentioned a few times in Scripture. If it is, as many scholars assume, the same town as Debir, mentioned several times in the book of Joshua, we find that it was one of the cities of Canaan that Joshua destroyed (Joshua 10:39). Debir, whose name means “pasture” or “sheepfold,” was located near the Valley of Achor (Joshua 15:7) on the northern boundary of Judah, somewhere between Jerusalem and Jericho. The exact location of the town is impossible to ascertain. If Lo Debar is the same town as Debir, somewhere in its history the name was changed to Lo Debar.

Debar normally means “word” or “thing.” The prefix lo is a negator; thus, the term Lo Debar would mean “no word” or “no thing.” The town’s name is not complimentary. The name may or may not have been an apt description of the town. If it was an apt description, it may have been lacking good pasture, or it may have been an insignificant, “nothing town.” In English we might say that it was “in the middle of nowhere.”

Lo Debar is first mentioned in connection with Mephibosheth, the only surviving son of Jonathan, son of King Saul. David wanted to show kindness to Jonathan’s family, and he was told that Mephibosheth was living in Lo Debar. The story is found in 2 Samuel 9. Mephibosheth leaves “Nothingville” (Lo Debar) and moves into the king’s residence in Jerusalem—from Podunk to palace.

The town of Lo Debar is next mentioned in 2 Samuel 17:27 as the home of Ammiel, one of several men who provided David with provisions as he was fleeing from Absalom.

The final mention of Lo Debar in Scripture is in Amos 6:13. Amos, a prophet from Judah, confronts the sin and pride of the northern kingdom of Israel. He condemns their boasting in their conquest of Lo Debar, which would have been in the territory of Judah. The fact that Israel would conquer a city of Judah was certainly worth addressing in its own right, as Israel and Judah should have been brothers living in peace. But, beyond the mere fact of the treacherous conquest, Amos may also have been making a rhetorical point through a play on words. The men of Israel were boasting that they conquered “Nothing” or “Nothing Town.” Amos may have highlighted this town specifically because of the town’s name, in order to stress the emptiness of their boasting before God. “You are so proud of your conquest,” says the prophet in so many words, “but really you have conquered Nothing!”