

### The Boundaries for the Tribal Area of Judah

#### Joshua 15

Joshua 15 - *"So this was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families: The border of Edom at the Wilderness of Zin southward was the extreme southern boundary. <sup>2</sup> And their southern border began at the shore of the Salt Sea, from the bay that faces southward. <sup>3</sup> Then it went out to the southern side of the Ascent of Akrabbim, passed along to Zin, ascended on the south side of Kadesh Barnea, passed along to Hezron, went up to Adar, and went around to Karkaa. <sup>4</sup> From there it passed toward Azmon and went out to the Brook of Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your southern border. <sup>5</sup> The east border was the Salt Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan. And the border on the northern quarter began at the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup> The border went up to Beth Hoglah and passed north of Beth Arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. <sup>7</sup> Then the border went up toward Debir from the Valley of Achor, and it turned northward toward Gilgal, which is before the Ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the valley. The border continued toward the waters of En Shemesh and ended at En Rogel. <sup>8</sup> And the border went up by the Valley of the Son of Hinnom to the southern slope of the Jebusite city (which is Jerusalem). The border went up to the top of the mountain that lies before the Valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the Valley of Rephaim northward. <sup>9</sup> Then the border went around from the top of the hill to the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and extended to the cities of Mount Ephron. And the border went around to Baalah (which is Kirjath Jearim). <sup>10</sup> Then the border turned westward from Baalah to Mount Seir, passed along to the side of Mount Jearim on the north (which is Chesalon), went down to Beth Shemesh, and passed on to Timnah. <sup>11</sup> And the border went out to the side of Ekron northward. Then the border went around to Shicron, passed along to Mount Baalah, and extended to Jabneel; and the border ended at the sea. <sup>12</sup> The west border was the coastline of the Great Sea. This is the boundary of the children of Judah all around according to their families.*

<sup>13</sup> Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a share among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, namely, Kirjath Arba, which is Hebron (Arba was the father of Anak). <sup>14</sup> Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak. <sup>15</sup> Then he went up from there to the inhabitants of Debir (formerly the name of Debir was Kirjath Sepher).

<sup>16</sup> And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife." <sup>17</sup> So Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife. <sup>18</sup> Now it was so, when she came to him, that she persuaded him to ask her father for a field. So she dismounted from her donkey, and Caleb said to her, "What do you wish?" <sup>19</sup> She answered, "Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs. <sup>20</sup> This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families: <sup>21</sup> The cities at the limits of the tribe of the children of Judah, toward the border of Edom in the South, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, <sup>22</sup> Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah, <sup>23</sup> Kedesh, Hazor,

*Ithnan,<sup>24</sup> Ziph, Telem, Bealoth,<sup>25</sup> Hazor, Hadattah, Kerioth, Hezron (which is Hazor),<sup>26</sup> Amam, Shema, Moladah,<sup>27</sup> Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet,<sup>28</sup> Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Bizjothjah,<sup>29</sup> Baalah, Ijim, Ezem,<sup>30</sup> Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah,<sup>31</sup> Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah,<sup>32</sup> Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities are twenty-nine, with their villages.<sup>33</sup> In the lowland: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,<sup>34</sup> Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam,<sup>35</sup> Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah,<sup>36</sup> Sharaim, Adithaim, Gederah, and Gederothaim: fourteen cities with their villages;<sup>37</sup> Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad,<sup>38</sup> Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel,<sup>39</sup> Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon,<sup>40</sup> Cabbon, Lahmas,<sup>[b]</sup> Kithlish,<sup>41</sup> Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah: sixteen cities with their villages;<sup>42</sup> Libnah, Ether, Ashan,<sup>43</sup> Jiphtah, Ashnah, Nezib,<sup>44</sup> Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine cities with their villages;<sup>45</sup> Ekron, with its towns and villages;<sup>46</sup> from Ekron to the sea, all that lay near Ashdod, with their villages;<sup>47</sup> Ashdod with its towns and villages, Gaza with its towns and villages—as far as the Brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with its coastline.*

*<sup>48</sup> And in the mountain country: Shamir, Jattir, Sochoh,<sup>49</sup> Dannah, Kirjath Sannah (which is Debir),<sup>50</sup> Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim,<sup>51</sup> Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities with their villages;<sup>52</sup> Arab, Dumah, Eshean,<sup>53</sup> Janum, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah,<sup>54</sup> Humtah, Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron), and Zior: nine cities with their villages;<sup>55</sup> Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah,<sup>56</sup> Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah,<sup>57</sup> Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities with their villages;<sup>58</sup> Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor,<sup>59</sup> Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon: six cities with their villages;<sup>60</sup> Kirjath Baal (which is Kirjath Jearim) and Rabbah: two cities with their villages.<sup>61</sup> In the wilderness: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah,<sup>62</sup> Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi: six cities with their villages.<sup>63</sup> As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.”*

## Background Notes

Joshua 15 is certainly not the most exciting chapter in the Bible, is it? Wouldn't you rather read about the conquering of Jericho in Joshua 6 rather than Joshua 15? War stories are always more exciting than land surveys! Joshua 15 reads like a “real estate contract,” because that's what it is. But Joshua 15 was not boring reading to Judah because it was the land that God was giving to them! Keep that in mind when you ask, “Why did God put a chapter like this in the Bible?” In addition, there are spiritual lessons in this chapter for us.

Joshua 11 mentioned that Israel conquered Hebron and drove out the Anakim, or the giants. How does that harmonize with Joshua 14 and 15, which says that Caleb took Hebron and drove out the giants? Most likely Joshua 14 and 15 give us the details of the Joshua 11 account. It was through Caleb that Joshua and the Israelites took Hebron and drove out the giants.

In verses 21-32, 38 cities are listed, but verse 32 says the total is 29! How is this to be explained? Most likely the answer is in Joshua 19, where we find that the tribe of Simeon had its tribal area within the tribal area of Judah, and thus they possessed 9 of these cities. So the Bible is accurate! When you come upon any apparent discrepancies -- no problem! They're all easily resolved.

The mounds (or tells) that cover the remains of many of the cities listed in Joshua 15 have been located. The city of Salt (v62) may be what later became Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were later buried.

## Doctrinal / Teaching Points

### 1. God sovereignly distributes our portion in the Land.

When you read commentaries on Joshua 15, you won't find a wealth of material -- a few paragraphs at most. However, I did read one commentary that just about blew me away for its wealth of material on Joshua 15! It was The Numerical Bible, by F.W. Grant. There were 36 pages of fine print on Joshua 15!

How can anyone possibly write 36 pages of material on the land boundaries and the cities of the tribe of Judah? Well, remember -- the physical land of Canaan represents the spiritual land that God has given us. It's the land of spiritual realities, where our spiritual blessings are and where spiritual warfare takes place. So in 36 pages of fine print, F.W. Grant traced the boundaries, tracked down the meaning of the names and places, and drew spiritual lessons about our spiritual blessing and spiritual battles. But that much detail is way beyond the scope of this Talk! Aren't you glad?

Our first doctrinal point is more general than the details of that book: God sovereignly distributes our portion in the land. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 says, "*There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.*" And verse 11: "*But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*"

Here's the point: God is sovereign, and He sovereignly distributes our portion in the land. In the land of spiritual realities, God determines what spiritual gift (or gifts) we have. He determines what ministries and activities of Christian service are best for us, and where we belong. All of this is pictured in Joshua 15.

God knew what portion of the land was best for Judah. It was determined, humanly speaking, by the drawing of lots -- but God controlled the lots! Our spiritual gifts, ministry and areas of Christian service are often determined by our circumstances, humanly speaking -- but God controls our circumstances! God is sovereign, and He sovereignly distributes our portion in the land.

Let me ask you: are you content with your portion in the land? Are you content with the spiritual gifts that God has given you (or not given you)? What about the ministries that you're involved in, the Christian service areas that you're involved in? Are you content, or are you disgruntled and bitter towards God because He hasn't given you the particular gifts that you would like to have? Remember, God sovereignly distributes our portion in the Land.

## 2. God graciously grants our requests in the Land.

Verse 16: *“And Caleb said, “He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give Achsah my daughter as wife.”*

So Othniel, who later became the first Judge in Israel, responded to Caleb’s challenge and conquered Debir. He was rewarded with Caleb’s daughter Achsah as wife. Not a bad deal!

Achsah asked Othniel to ask Caleb for a certain field in the land and the request was granted. Then she herself asked her father for certain springs of water to irrigate her field to make it more productive, and her request was granted. Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower spring (v19).

Achsah’s request was not a selfish request. She needed water to make the land that had been given to her more productive. I think there’s a spiritual lesson here, or at least an illustration. As Caleb’s daughter asked her father for water to make her land more productive, so we should ask our heavenly Father for whatever we need to make our lives more fruitful. Achsah’s request was granted, and ours will be as well.

This is not true of every prayer request we make, but God loves to answer prayer requests having to do with our fruitfulness in the land He has given us! In John 15:16 our Lord said, *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”* Have you claimed this promise?

Years ago when I was working as a research engineer, I asked the Lord to give me more time to study His Word so I could be more fruitful and productive in teaching His Word. Well, God answered that request -- He called me out of secular employment! What a blessing it is, to be involved in preaching and teaching and studying God’s Word full time! God graciously grants our requests in the Land.

### Practical Application

#### Is our problem lack of strength -- or lack of faith?

Verse 63 says, *“As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.”* In fact, Judah didn’t fully drive out the Jebusites for many years, until the time of David. Why? Was it lack of strength, or lack of faith?

It was lack of faith! The Lord had promised **total** victory if they would depend on His strength. In Joshua 13:6, after the conquest, and a listing of the enemies that were still left in the land, the Lord promised, *“All the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the Brook Misrephoth, and all the Sidonians— I will drive them out from before the children of Israel...”* So Judah’s problem was not lack of strength, but lack of faith.

What about us? Is the enemy controlling some areas of the Land in your life? Are you living with doubts or discouragements or defeats? You don't have to! We can't blame it on a lack of strength, because Isaiah 40:31 says, *"those who wait on the Lord will gain new strength..."*

So here's a good question for all of us, isn't it? Is our problem lack of strength -- or lack of faith?