

# Joshua 15:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the west border was to the great sea, and the coast thereof. This is the coast of the children of Judah round about according to their families.

## Analysis

**And the west border was to the great sea, and the coast thereof. This is the coast of the children of Judah round about according to their families.** The western boundary uses the Mediterranean as a natural, permanent barrier. The phrase "the great sea" (ha-yam ha-gadol, הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל) reflects ancient Israelite perspective—for inland, non-seafaring people, the Mediterranean was indeed "great," vast and mysterious. The addition "and the coast thereof" (u-gevul, וְגִבּוּל) includes not just the sea but the coastal region, though Philistine control of key ports limited Judah's coastal access.

The concluding statement "This is the coast (gevul, גִּבּוּל, boundary/territory) of the children of Judah round about according to their families" provides a solemn summary. The phrase "round about" (saviv, סָבִיב) emphasizes completeness—all sides accounted for. The specification "according to their families" (le-mishpechotam, לְמִשְׁפְּחוֹתָם) indicates this inheritance was subdivided among Judah's clans, not held collectively. Each extended family received specific portions within the tribal boundary.

This verse's finality carries theological weight: God's covenant faithfulness is complete, measurable, and distributed according to His wisdom. The meticulous boundary description (vv. 1-12) transforms abstract promise into concrete possession. For Christians, this models how spiritual inheritance in Christ—though

positional and guaranteed—requires faith-filled appropriation and is experienced within the "family" of God's people.

## Historical Context

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The Mediterranean coastline in Judah's territory featured few natural harbors, limiting maritime development. The Philistines controlled the best ports—Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza—making Israel largely landlocked and dependent on Phoenician allies for sea trade (1 Kings 5:9; 2 Chronicles 2:16). Archaeological evidence shows Judah's settlements concentrated in the hill country and Shephelah, with minimal presence in the coastal plain. The tribal allotment system, distributing land by families (mishpachot, מִשְׁפָּחָה), created a decentralized land tenure preventing feudal concentration of property. Each family's portion was inalienable (Leviticus 25:23-28; Numbers 36:7-9), ensuring economic stability and preventing permanent poverty. This system, though challenged by monarchy's centralizing tendencies, preserved family identity and economic independence throughout Israel's history.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the completeness of Judah's boundary ('round about') encourage you to trust that God's provision for your life is comprehensive, lacking nothing essential?
2. What does the family-based land distribution teach about balancing corporate identity (the tribe) with individual responsibility (each family's portion)?
3. How can the transition from promise (Genesis 15) to detailed fulfillment (Joshua 15) strengthen your faith that God's spiritual promises will likewise be completely fulfilled?

## Interlinear Text

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גֹּב וַל	הַיָּמָה	הַיָּמָה	הַגָּד וַל	גֹּב וַל	זֶה
and the coast	And the west	And the west	was to the great	and the coast	H2088
H1366	H3220	H3220	H1419	H1366	
גֹּב וַל	בְּנֵי	יְהוּדָה	סָבִיב	לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם:	
and the coast	of the children	of Judah	round about	according to their families	
H1366	H1121	H3063	H5439	H4940	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Ezekiel 47:20** (Parallel theme): The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side.

**Joshua 15:47** (Parallel theme): Ashdod with her towns and her villages, Gaza with her towns and her villages, unto the river of Egypt, and the great sea, and the border thereof: