

# Joshua 15:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And their south border was from the shore of the salt sea,  
from the bay that looketh southward:

## Analysis

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**And their south border was from the shore of the salt sea, from the bay that looketh southward.** The precise demarcation of Judah's southern boundary begins at the Yam ha-Melach (ים מלך, "Salt Sea"), the Dead Sea, Earth's lowest point at 1,410 feet below sea level. The phrase "the bay that looketh southward" (literally "the tongue turning southward," lashon, לשון) refers to the shallow southern basin's distinctive peninsula-like formation.

This geographical specificity demonstrates God's meticulous faithfulness—covenant promises include precise boundaries, not vague territories. The Dead Sea's extreme salinity (33.7%, nearly ten times ocean water) made it uninhabitable, yet it marked Israel's border, teaching that God's gifts include both fertile and barren land. The theological significance: God's sovereignty extends over all creation, including desolate places.

The boundary description (vv. 2-4) traces Judah's southern edge from Dead Sea westward to the Mediterranean, separating Israel from Edom and Egypt. These borders fulfilled patriarchal promises (Genesis 15:18-21) with cartographic precision. For Christians, this meticulous geography illustrates that God's promises are concrete, historical, and trustworthy—not mythological abstractions but tangible realities anchored in specific places and times.

## Historical Context

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The Dead Sea region has been inhabited since ancient times despite its harsh environment. The Cities of the Plain (Sodom, Gomorrah, Genesis 19) likely existed near the southern basin before divine destruction. Ancient geographer Strabo and historian Josephus both describe the sea's extreme salinity and bitumen deposits. The Lisan Peninsula ("tongue") dividing northern and southern basins was more prominent in antiquity.

Archaeological surveys confirm sparse settlement along the Dead Sea's western shore during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, with notable exceptions like Qumran (later famous for Dead Sea Scrolls) and Ein Gedi. The region's economic value came from salt extraction, bitumen harvesting, and balsam cultivation. The southern boundary placement protected Judah's heartland while including the Negev wilderness for pastoral use.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the precision of Judah's borders encourage you to trust God's specific promises in your life rather than seeking vague spiritual platitudes?
2. What does God's inclusion of barren territory (Dead Sea region) in Judah's inheritance teach about His purposes for difficult or 'unproductive' seasons in your life?
3. How can geographical specificity in Scripture strengthen your confidence in the Bible's historical reliability?

## Interlinear Text

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הַתְּלִיחַ מִלְּצָה תְּגִבָּה: גַּבְּ וְלִלְכָם יְהִי  
H1961 H1992 border And their south was from the shore sea of the salt  
H1366 H5045 H7097 H3220 H4417

מִן הַפְּנֵי הַלְּשָׁן תְּגִבָּה: תְּגִבָּה  
H4480 from the bay that looketh And their south  
H3956 H6437 H5045

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 11:15** (Parallel theme): And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod.

**Genesis 14:3** (Parallel theme): All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.

**Ezekiel 47:8** (Parallel theme): Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

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