

Joshua 15:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

From thence it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt; and the goings out of that coast were at the sea: this shall be your south coast.

Analysis

From thence it passed toward Azmon, and went out unto the river of Egypt; and the goings out of that coast were at the sea: this shall be your south coast. The southern boundary concludes at the Mediterranean, having traced from the Dead Sea through the Negev. Azmon (אַזְמוֹן) was likely a fortress settlement in the southwestern Negev. The "river of Egypt" (nachal Mitsrayim, נַחַל מִצְרָיִם) refers to Wadi el-Arish, a seasonal watercourse in northern Sinai—not the Nile.

The phrase "this shall be your south coast" (zeh yihyeh lakhem gevul negev, זה יהיה לך גבול נגב) employs emphatic Hebrew: "THIS shall be to you..." The definitive language brooks no ambiguity. God's territorial assignments are authoritative and final. The boundary's conclusion "at the sea" (ha-yam, הַיָּם)—the Mediterranean—establishes the western terminus, completing the southern border's description.

This verse demonstrates covenant precision: God's promises include specific geography, not nebulous spirituality. The detailed borders prevented tribal disputes and established clear jurisdictions. For Christians, this specificity illustrates how God's spiritual promises—eternal life, adoption, inheritance in Christ—are equally definite and reliable, anchored in the historical work of Christ at a specific time and place.

Historical Context

The River of Egypt (Wadi el-Arish) formed the traditional southwestern boundary between Canaan and Egypt, mentioned in the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 15:18) and Solomon's kingdom extent (1 Kings 8:65). This seasonal watercourse, dry most of the year, flows only during winter rains. The boundary's placement here, rather than at the Nile, reflects geopolitical realities—Egypt's sphere of influence extended into Sinai, but Israel's covenant land stopped at Wadi el-Arish. Archaeological surveys identify numerous fortresses along this border from various periods, confirming its role as a major political boundary. The Mediterranean coast in this region features sandy beaches and shifting dunes, less suitable for harbors than Lebanon's rocky coast to the north, explaining Israel's limited naval development.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the definitiveness of 'this shall be your south coast' encourage you to accept God's assignments in your life rather than coveting others' inheritances?
2. What does the boundary's precision teach about the importance of respecting God-ordained limits and boundaries in relationships, ministry, and responsibilities?
3. How can Judah's defined territory illustrate the Christian's spiritual inheritance—specific, guaranteed, but requiring appropriation through faith?

Interlinear Text

מִצְרַיִם	בְּנֵי	אֶזְמוֹן	עַצְמָתָה	וַיֵּצֵא	רִבְעֵב	רַ
From thence it passed	toward Azmon	and went out	unto the river	of Egypt		
H5674	H6111	H3318	H5158	H4714		
וְיַיְהֵי הַ	זָהָר	בְּנֵי	אֶזְמוֹן	וְיַיְהֵי	וְיַיְהֵי	וְיַיְהֵי
H1961	H8444	H1366	H3220	H2088	H1961	H0
coast	this shall be your south					
H1366	H5045					

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 34:5 (References Egypt): And the border shall fetch a compass from Azmon unto the river of Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea.

Joshua 13:3 (References Egypt): From Sihor, which is before Egypt, even unto the borders of Ekron northward, which is counted to the Canaanite: five lords of the Philistines; the Gazathites, and the Ashdothites, the Eshkalonites, the Gittites, and the Ekrionites; also the Avites: