

Joshua 15:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the east border was the salt sea, even unto the end of Jordan. And their border in the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the uttermost part of Jordan:

Analysis

And the east border was the salt sea, even unto the end of Jordan. And their border in the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the uttermost part of Jordan. The eastern boundary uses the Dead Sea as a natural barrier, extending northward to where the Jordan River empties into it. The Hebrew emphasizes totality: "unto the end (qetseh, קֵצֶה) of Jordan"—the river's terminus, not some arbitrary point. This geographical precision continues the pattern of meticulous boundary definition.

The northern boundary begins where the eastern ended—"the bay of the sea at the uttermost part of Jordan" refers to the Jordan's delta where it meets the Dead Sea's northern basin. The Hebrew *pe'ah* (פֶּאֶה, "quarter") indicates a specific directional sector. This careful description ensured later generations could identify borders accurately, preventing territorial disputes that plagued other nations.

Theologically, the Jordan River carries immense significance throughout Scripture: Israel crossed it to enter Canaan (Joshua 3-4), Elijah and Elisha crossed it (2 Kings 2:8-14), and Jesus was baptized in it (Matthew 3:13-17). Using the Jordan as a boundary marker connects Judah's inheritance to redemptive history's pivotal moments. The river that represented transition from wilderness to promise now defines the promised land's edge.

Historical Context

The Jordan River, approximately 156 miles long, descends from Mount Hermon through the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, dropping from 2,814 feet above sea level to 1,410 feet below—a total descent of over 4,200 feet. This dramatic elevation change creates a unique ecosystem. The river's width varies from 90-100 feet, with depths of 3-10 feet, though spring flooding (Joshua 3:15) could double these dimensions. The Dead Sea, fed by the Jordan, loses water only through evaporation, concentrating minerals to toxic levels. Ancient sources including Josephus describe the sea's remarkable buoyancy and the bitumen deposits exploited for Egyptian mummification and waterproofing. The Jordan Rift Valley, part of the Great Rift system extending to Africa, creates a formidable natural boundary defending Judah's eastern flank.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the Jordan's role as both entrance point to Canaan (Joshua 3-4) and boundary marker illustrate transitions in your spiritual journey—places of breakthrough becoming reference points?
2. What natural 'boundaries' has God established in your life that you need to respect rather than resent or transgress?
3. How can the precision of Judah's borders inform your understanding of God's specificity in directing your life's path and calling?

Interlinear Text

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| וּגְבּ וּלְ | קִדְמָה | הַיָּם | הַמֶּלַח | עַד | מִקְצֵה הַ |
| And their border | And the east | of the sea | was the salt | H5704 | at the uttermost part |
| H1366 | H6924 | H3220 | H4417 | | H7097 |
| הַיָּרְדֵּן: | וּגְבּ וּלְ | לְפָאֵת | צָפֹן וְנֹהַ | מִלְשֵׁן וְ | הַיָּם |
| of Jordan | And their border | quarter | in the north | was from the bay | of the sea |
| H3383 | H1366 | H6285 | H6828 | H3956 | H3220 |
| מִקְצֵה הַ | הַיָּרְדֵּן: | | | | |
| at the uttermost part | of Jordan | | | | |
| H7097 | H3383 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 34:12 (Parallel theme): And the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about.