

Joshua 15:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the border went up to Beth-hogla, and passed along by the north of Beth-arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben:

Analysis

And the border went up to Beth-hogla, and passed along by the north of Beth-arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. The northern boundary's progression includes significant landmarks. Beth-Hoglah (בֵּית הַחֲגֹלָה, "House of the Partridge") was a settlement near the Jordan, probably named for local bird populations. Beth-Arabah (בֵּית הָעֲרָבָה, "House of the Desert") reflects its location in the arid Jordan Valley wilderness (Arabah, עֲרָבָה).

Most intriguing is "the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben" (even Bohan ben-Re'uven, אֶבֶן בֹּהָן בֶּן־רְעֻוֵן). This permanent marker, likely a large standing stone, commemorated Bohan of Reuben's tribe. Ancient Near Eastern practice used boundary stones (kudurru in Akkadian) to mark territorial limits, often with inscriptions invoking divine curses on violators. This stone's preservation as a landmark for generations testifies to Israel's respect for established borders.

Theologically, named boundary markers demonstrate God's attention to detail and human history. Individual names—Bohan son of Reuben—receive permanent memorial in Scripture's geographic descriptions. God remembers persons, not just peoples. This foreshadows how believers' names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27)—individual identity mattering eternally to God.

Historical Context

Beth-hoglah is identified with modern Deir Hajla, east of Jericho near the Jordan River. Archaeological remains confirm ancient settlement. Beth-arabah's location remains debated, though likely in the northern Dead Sea region. The practice of erecting memorial stones was common in ancient Israel—Jacob set up stones at Bethel (Genesis 28:18) and Gilead (Genesis 31:45), Joshua erected stones at the Jordan crossing (Joshua 4:20), and Samuel set up Ebenezer (1 Samuel 7:12). These markers served legal, commemorative, and religious functions. Bohan's identity beyond being Reuben's descendant is unknown, but his memorial stone functioned for centuries as a recognized boundary marker, demonstrating the stability and continuity of tribal boundaries despite political upheavals.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What memorial 'stones'—significant markers of God's faithfulness—can you identify in your spiritual journey that serve as reference points for future direction?
2. How does God's preservation of Bohan's name in Scripture encourage you about His attention to individual identity and legacy?
3. What boundaries in your life (relational, moral, vocational) need clearer markers to prevent confusion or transgression?

Interlinear Text

וַעֲלֶה הַ	הַגֹּב וְלִ	בֵּית הַ	חֲגִלָּה הַ	וַעֲבַר רַ	מִצָּפֹן וְ	
went up	And the border	H0	to Bethhogla	and passed	along by the north	
H5927	H1366		H1031	H5674	H6828	
לְבֵית הַ	הַעֲרָבָה הַ	וַעֲלֶה הַ	הַגֹּב וְלִ	אֶל בֶּן	בֶּן הֵן	בֶּן הֵן
H0	of Betharabah	went up	And the border	to the stone	of Bohan	the son
	H1026	H5927	H1366	H68	H932	H1121
רְאוּבֵן:						
of Reuben						
H7205						

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 18:17 (Parallel theme): And was drawn from the north, and went forth to En-shemesh, and went forth toward Geliloth, which is over against the going up of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben,
