

Joshua 15:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem: and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants northward:

Analysis

And the border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom unto the south side of the Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem. The boundary approaches Jerusalem through the Valley of Ben-Hinnom (בְּן הַהִנּוֹם), which became Gehenna (γέεννα) in Greek—the New Testament term for hell. This valley's dark history includes child sacrifice to Molech during Israel's apostasy (2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31-32), making it synonymous with divine judgment. That Judah's border ran through this valley of future defilement underscores how covenant promises don't exempt God's people from facing temptation and potential apostasy.

"The Jebusite; the same is Jerusalem" identifies the city by its pre-Israelite inhabitants. The Jebusites, a Canaanite people, controlled Jerusalem until David's conquest (2 Samuel 5:6-9) approximately 400 years after Joshua. This parenthetical note acknowledges incomplete conquest—Jerusalem remained unconquered during the judges period (Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21). Yet God's purposes weren't thwarted; David's eventual conquest made Jerusalem the political and spiritual capital, and ultimately the city where Christ died and rose.

The border "went up to the top of the mountain that lieth before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the end of the valley of the giants (Rephaim, רְפָאִים)

northward." This precise topographical description locates the boundary at Jerusalem's western heights, marking the division between Judah and Benjamin.

Historical Context

Jerusalem (Hebrew Yerushalayim, יְרוּשָׁלָיִם; Jebusite name probably Urusalim) appears in Egyptian Execration Texts (19th century BCE) and Amarna Letters (14th century BCE), confirming its antiquity and importance. The city's location on a ridge between the Kidron and Hinnom valleys, with water from the Gihon Spring, provided natural defenses making it "impregnable" in Jebusite estimation. The Valley of Hinnom (Ge-Hinnom, corrupted to Gehenna) curves around Jerusalem's western and southern sides. During the monarchical period, apostate kings erected high places here for Molech worship, burning children as offerings—abominations that eventually defiled the valley permanently. King Josiah desecrated the site (2 Kings 23:10), and it became Jerusalem's garbage dump where fires burned continuously, creating the perfect metaphor for eternal judgment that Jesus employed. The Valley of Rephaim ("giants") north of Hinnom was a fertile plain where David later fought Philistines (2 Samuel 5:18-22).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Jerusalem's placement on Judah's boundary—partially conquered but ultimately central—illustrate that God's greatest blessings often require patient, persistent faith to fully possess?
2. What does Hinnom Valley's transformation from inheritance boundary to judgment symbol teach about the consequences of covenant unfaithfulness?
3. How should knowing that even promised inheritance includes potential sites of future failure (Hinnom) keep you humble and dependent on God's grace?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּלֶךְ וְלֹא יָעַל הַגְּבֵן

went up And the border by the valley of the son of Hinnom

H5927

H1366

H1516

בְּנֵי

H1121

הַנְּמֶה

H2011

אֶל

H413

כָּתָף

H3802

וְלֹא יָעַל הַיְבוֹסִי

of the Jebusite unto the south the same is Jerusalem

H2983

H5045

H1931

the same is Jerusalem

H3389

וַיָּעַל הַ

went up

H5927

וְלֹא יָעַל הַגְּבֵן וְלֹא יָשַׁב רְאֵשׁ אֶל שְׁרָאֵל עַל יְהוּדָה

And the border

H413

to the top

of the mountain

H834

H5921

that lieth before

H6440

וְלֹא יָעַל הַגְּבֵן וְלֹא יָשַׁב רְאֵשׁ אֶל שְׁרָאֵל עַל יְהוּדָה בְּקַצְבֵּן הַמִּזְרָחָה בְּקַצְבֵּן הַיְמָן

by the valley

of Hinnom

westward

H834

which is at the end

of the valley

H1516

H2011

H3220

H7097

H6010

וְלֹא יָעַל הַגְּבֵן אֶל שְׁרָאֵל יְהוּדָה בְּקַצְבֵּן הַיְמָן

of the giants

northward

H7497

H6828

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 18:16 (Parallel theme): And the border came down to the end of the mountain that lieth before the valley of the son of Hinnom, and which is in the valley of the giants on the north, and descended to the valley of Hinnom, to the side of Jebusi on the south, and descended to En-rogel,

Joshua 15:63 (References Jerusalem): As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day.

Joshua 18:28 (References Jerusalem): And Zelah, Eleph, and Jebusi, which is Jerusalem, Gibeath, and Kirjath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

Judges 19:10 (References Jerusalem): But the man would not tarry that night, but he rose up and departed, and came over against Jebus, which is Jerusalem; and there were with him two asses saddled, his concubine also was with him.

2 Kings 23:10 (Parallel theme): And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

Judges 1:21 (References Jerusalem): And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.

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