

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 (בֶּן-הִנּוֹם), 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, רֶפְאִים)

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, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם; 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

וַעֲלֶה הַ	הַגֹּב וְ	גִּי	בֶן	הַנֹּחַם	אֶל	כְּתֵר
went up	And the border	by the valley	of the son	of Hinnom	H413	side
H5927	H1366	H1516	H1121	H2011		H3802
הַיְבוּסִי	מִן גֹּב	הָ יֵא	יְרוּשָׁלַם	וַעֲלֶה הַ		
of the Jebusite	unto the south	H1931	the same is Jerusalem	went up		
H2983	H5045		H3389	H5927		
וְהַגֹּב וְ	אֶל	רֹאשׁ	הַהָר	עַל	אֲשֶׁר	כָּנִי י
And the border	H413	to the top	of the mountain	H834	H5921	that lieth before
H1366		H7218	H2022			H6440
גִּי	הַנֹּחַם	לְמַחֲ	אֲשֶׁר	בְּקֶצֶה הַ	עֵמֶק	
by the valley	of Hinnom	westward	H834	which is at the end	of the valley	
H1516	H2011	H3220		H7097	H6010	
רַפָּאִים	צָפוֹנָה:					
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.