
JOSHUA 15:1 The lot for the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families was to the border of Edom, even to the wilderness of Zin southward, at the uttermost part of the south.

The lot of the tribe of Judah described, Jos 15:1. Their south border, Jos 15:2-4. Their east border, Jos 15:5-11. Their west border, Jos 15:12. Caleb's conquest, Jos 15:13-15. Promises his daughter to the person who should take Kirjath-sepher, Jos 15:16. Othniel his kinsman renders himself master of it, and gets Achsah to wife, Jos 15:17. Her request to her father to get a well watered land, which is granted, Jos 15:18, Jos 15:19. The cities of the tribe of Judah are enumerated, vv. 20-63.

Verse 1

This then was the lot of the tribe of - Judah - The geography of the sacred writings presents many difficulties, occasioned by the changes which the civil state of the promised land has undergone, especially for the last two thousand years. Many of the ancient towns and villages have had their names so totally changed, that their former appellations are no longer discernible; several lie buried under their own ruins, and others have been so long destroyed that not one vestige of them remains. On these accounts it is very difficult to ascertain the situation of many of the places mentioned in this and the following chapters. But however this may embarrass the commentator, it cannot affect the truth of the narrative. Some of the principal cities in the universe, cities that were the seats of the most powerful empires, are not only reduced to ruins, but so completely blotted out of the map of the world that their situation cannot be ascertained. Where is Babylon? Where are Nineveh, Carthage, Thebes, Tyre, Baalbec, Palmyra, and the so far-famed and greatly celebrated Troy? Of the former and the latter, so renowned by historians and poets, scarcely a vestige, properly speaking, remains; nor can the learned agree on the spot once occupied by the buildings of those celebrated cities! Should this circumstance invalidate the whole history of the ancient world, in which they made so conspicuous a figure? And can the authenticity of our sacred historian be impaired, because several of the places he mentions no longer exist? Surely no: nor can it be called in question but by the heedless and superficial, or the decidedly profane. Although some of the cities of the holy land are destroyed, and it would be difficult to ascertain the geography of several, yet enough remain, either under their ancient names, or with such decisive characteristics, that through their new names their ancient appellatives are readily discernible. It is natural to suppose that the division mentioned here was made after an accurate survey of the land, which might have been made by proper persons accompanying the conquering army of the Israelites. Nine tribes and a half were yet to be accommodated, and the land must be divided into nine parts and a half. This was no doubt done with the utmost judgment and discretion, the advantages and disadvantages of each division being carefully balanced. These were the portions which were divided by lot; and it appears that Judah drew the first lot; and, because of the importance and pre-eminence of this tribe, this lot is first described.

By their families - It is supposed that the family divisions were not determined by lot. These were left to the prudence and judgment of Joshua, Eleazar, and the ten princes, who appointed to each family a district in proportion to its number, etc., the general division being that alone which was determined by the lot.

To the border of Edom - The tribe of Judah occupied the most southerly part of the land of Canaan. Its limits extended from the extremity of the Dead Sea southward, along Idumea, possibly by the desert of Sin, and proceeding from east to west to the Mediterranean Sea, and the most eastern

branch of the river Nile, or to what is called the river of Egypt. Calmet very properly remarks, that Joshua is particular in giving the limits of this tribe, as being the first, the most numerous, most important; that which was to furnish the kings of Judea; that in which pure religion was to be preserved, and that from which the Messiah was to spring.

JOSHUA 15:2 Their south border was from the uttermost part of the Salt Sea, from the bay that looks southward;

Verse 2

From the bay that looketh southward - These were the southern limits of the tribe of Judah, which commenced at the extremity of the lake Asphaltites or Dead Sea, and terminated at Sihor or the river of Egypt, and Mediterranean Sea; though some think it extended to the Nile.

JOSHUA 15:3 and it went out southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, and passed along to Zin, and went up by the south of Kadesh Barnea, and passed along by Hezron, went up to Addar, and turned about to Karka;

Verse 3

Maaleh-acrabbim - The ascent of the Mount of Scorpions, probably so called from the multitude of those animals found in that place.

Kadesh-barnea - This place was called Enmishpat, Gen 14:7. It was on the edge of the wilderness of Paran, and about twenty-four miles from Hebron. Here Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, died; and here Moses and Aaron rebelled against the Lord; hence the place was called Meribah-Kadesh, or the contention of Kadesh.

Karkaa - Supposed to be the Coracea of Ptolemy, in Arabia Petraea. - Calmet.

JOSHUA 15:4 and it passed along to Azmon, went out at the brook of Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your south border.

Verse 4

Toward Azmon - This was the last city they possessed toward Egypt.

The river of Egypt - The most eastern branch of the river Nile. See on Jos 13:3 (note). But there is much reason to doubt whether any branch of the Nile be meant, and whether the promised land extended to that river. On this subject it is impossible to decide either way.

JOSHUA 15:5 The east border was the Salt Sea, even to the end of the Jordan. The border of the north quarter was from the bay of the sea at the end of the Jordan.

Verse 5

The east border was the Salt Sea - The Salt Sea is the same as the Dead Sea, lake Asphaltites, etc. And here it is intimated that the eastern border of the tribe of Judah extended along the Dead Sea, from its lowest extremity to the end of Jordan, i.e., to the place where Jordan falls into this sea.

JOSHUA 15:6 The border went up to Beth Hoglah, and passed along by the north of Beth Arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben.

Verse 6

Beth-hogla - A place between Jericho and the Dead Sea, belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, Jos 18:21, though here serving as a frontier to the tribe of Judah.

Stone of Bohan - This must have been some remarkable place, probably like the stone of Jacob, which afterwards became Bethel; but where it was situated is uncertain.

JOSHUA 15:7 The border went up to Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward, looking toward Gilgal, that is over against the ascent of Adummim, which is on the south side of the river. The border passed along to the waters of En Shemesh, and ended at En Rogel.

Verse 7

The valley of Achor - Debir mentioned in this verse is unknown. The valley of Achor had its name from the punishment of Achan. See the account, Jos 7:24 (note), etc.

En-shemesh - The fountain of the sun; it was eastward of Jerusalem, on the confines of Judah and Benjamin.

JOSHUA 15:8 The border went up by the valley of the son of Hinnom to the side of the Jebusite southward (the same is Jerusalem); and the border went up to the top of the mountain that lies before the valley of Hinnom westward, which is at the farthest part of the valley of Rephaim northward.

Verse 8

The valley of the son of Hinnom - Who Hinnom was is not known, nor why this was called his valley. It was situated on the east of Jerusalem; and is often mentioned in Scripture. The image of the idol Molech appears to have been set up there; and there the idolatrous Israelites caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire in honor of that demon, 2Kgs 23:10. It was also called Tophet, see Jer 7:32. When King Josiah removed the image of this idol from this valley, it appears to have been held in such universal execration, that it became the general receptacle of all the filth and impurities

which were carried out of Jerusalem; and it is supposed that continual fires were there kept up, to consume those impurities and prevent infection. From the Hebrew words גֵּי בֶן הִנּוֹם *gei ben Hinnom*, the valley of the son of Hinnom, and by contraction, גֵּי הִנּוֹם *gei Hinnom*, the valley of Hinnom, came the Γέεννα, Gehenna of the New Testament, called also Γέεννα του πυρός, the Gehenna of fire, which is the emblem of hell, or the place of the damned. See Mat 5:22, Mat 5:29, Mat 5:30; Mat 10:28; Mat 18:9, etc. In the East it is common to add the name of the father to that of the son, e.g., "This land belongs to Goborka the son of Kake Prusada." But this addition is not made till after the father's death. This custom prevailed also in the west. It is common among the aborigines of both Ireland and Wales.

The same is Jerusalem - This city was formerly called Jebus; a part of it was in the tribe of Benjamin; Zion, called its citadel, was in the tribe of Judah.

The valley of the giants - Of the Rephaim. See the notes on Gen 6:4; Gen 14:5; Deu 2:7, Deu 2:11. On this subject, a very intelligent clergyman favors me with his opinion in the following terms: - "The boundary between Judah and Benjamin went up from the valley of Hinnom on the east to the top of the hill southward, leaving Jebusi (or Jerusalem) to the northwest adjoining to Benjamin. This mount (Jebusi) lay between the two tribes, which the Jebusites possessed till the time of David. At the 63d verse here, it is said Judah could not drive out these people; and in Jdg 1:21, the same is said of the Benjamites. Each tribe might have attacked them at various times. There were various mounts or tops to these hills. Mount Zion and Moriah, where the temple stood, was in the tribe of Judah; Psa 78:68, Psa 78:69; Psa 87:2. "In Deu 33:12 it is said of Benjamin, the Lord shall dwell by him, i.e., near him, or beside his borders, between his shoulders; the line might be circular between the two hills or tops so as in part to encompass Mount Zion in the tribe of Judah, on which the temple stood. Benjamin's gate, (mentioned Jer 37:12, Jer 37:13; Jer 38:7), was the gate leading out of the city, into the tribe of Benjamin. So the gate of Ephraim, (2Kgs 14:13), was a gate which led towards the tribe of Ephraim. We give names to roads, etc., in the same way now. "Mount Calvary, (which was on the outside of the gate), seems to have been in the tribe of Benjamin. Query. Whether Calvary or Golgotha was so called from skulls being scattered about there, (as say some), or rather from the figure of the rock being shaped like a man's skull, with one face of it nearly perpendicular? I incline to this latter opinion. I believe the Jews did not suffer human bones, even of malefactors, to lie about." - J. C.

JOSHUA 15:9 The border extended from the top of the mountain to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah, and went out to the cities of Mount Ephron; and the border extended to Baalah (the same is Kiriath Jearim);

Verse 9

Baalah, which is Kirjath-jearim - This place was rendered famous in Scripture, in consequence of its being the residence of the ark, for twenty years after it was sent back by the Philistines; see 1 Samuel 5:1-7:2.

JOSHUA 15:10 and the border turned about from Baalah westward to Mount Seir, and passed along to the side of Mount Jearim on the north (the same is Chesalon), and went down to Beth Shemesh, and passed along by Timnah;

Verse 10

Beth-shemesh - The house or temple of the sun. It is evident that the sun was an object of adoration among the Canaanites; and hence fountains, hills, etc., were dedicated to him. Beth-shemesh is remarkable for the slaughter of its inhabitants, in consequence of their prying curiously, if not impiously, into the ark of the Lord, when sent back by the Philistines. See 1Sam 6:19.

JOSHUA 15:11 and the border went out to the side of Ekron northward; and the border extended to Shikkeron, and passed along to Mount Baalah, and went out at Jabneel; and the goings out of the border were at the sea.

JOSHUA 15:12 The west border was to the shore of the great sea. This is the border of the children of Judah according to their families.

Verse 12

The great sea - The Mediterranean.

JOSHUA 15:13 To Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a portion among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, even Kiriath Arba, named after the father of Anak (the same is Hebron).

Verse 13

And unto Caleb - he gave a part - See the notes on Jos 14:14, etc.

JOSHUA 15:14 Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak: Sheshai, and Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak.

Verse 14

The three sons of Anak - See on Jos 14:15 (note).

JOSHUA 15:15 He went up against the inhabitants of Debir: now the name of Debir before was Kiriath Sepher.

Verse 15

Kirjath-sepher - The city of the book. Why so named is uncertain. It was also called Debir, and Kirjath-sannah. See Jos 15:49.

JOSHUA 15:16 Caleb said, "He who strikes Kiriath Sepher, and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife."

Verse 16

Will I give Achsah my daughter - In ancient times fathers assumed an absolute right over their children, especially in disposing of them in marriage; and it was customary for a king or great man to promise his daughter in marriage to him who should take a city, kill an enemy, etc. So Saul promised his daughter in marriage to him who should kill Goliath, 1Sam 17:25; and Caleb offers his on this occasion to him who should take Kirjath-sepher. Profane writers furnish many similar examples.

JOSHUA 15:17 Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife.

JOSHUA 15:18 When she came, she had him ask her father for a field. She got off of her donkey, and Caleb said, "What do you want?"

Verse 18

As she came - As she was now departing from the house of her father to go to that of her husband.

She moved him - Othniel, to ask of her father a field, one on which she had set her heart, as contiguous to the patrimony already granted.

She lighted off her ass - וַתִּצְנַח vattitsnach, she hastily, suddenly alighted, as if she had forgotten something, or was about to return to her father's house. Which being perceived by her father, he said, What wouldest thou? What is the matter? What dost thou want?

JOSHUA 15:19 She said, "Give me a blessing. Because you have set me in the land of the South, give me also springs of water." He gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

Verse 19

Give me a blessing - Do me an act of kindness. Grant me a particular request.

Thou hast given me a south land - Which was probably dry, or very ill, watered.

Give me also springs of water - Let me have some fields in which there are brooks or wells already digged.

The upper springs, and the nether springs - He gave her even more than she requested; he gave her a district among the mountains and another in the plains well situated and well watered. There are several difficulties in this account, with which I shall not trouble the reader. What is mentioned above appears to be the sense.

JOSHUA 15:20 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families.

JOSHUA 15:21 The farthest cities of the tribe of the children of Judah toward the border of Edom in the South were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur,

JOSHUA 15:22 Kinah, Dimonah, Adadah,

JOSHUA 15:23 Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan,

JOSHUA 15:24 Ziph, Telem, Bealoth,

Verse 24

Ziph - There were two cities of this name in the tribe of Judah, that mentioned here, and another Jos 15:55. One of these two is noted for the refuge of David when persecuted by Saul; and the attempts made by its inhabitants to deliver him into the hands of his persecutor. See 1Sam 23:14-24.

JOSHUA 15:25 Hazor Hadattah, Keriath Hezron (the same is Hazor),

JOSHUA 15:26 Amam, Shema, Moladah,

JOSHUA 15:27 Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet,

JOSHUA 15:28 Hazar Shual, Beersheba, Biziothiah,

Verse 28

Beer-sheba - A city, famous in the book of Genesis as the residence of the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, Gen 22:19; Gen 28:10; Gen 46:1. See the note on Gen 21:31. It lay on the way between Canaan and Egypt, about forty miles from Jerusalem.

JOSHUA 15:29 Baalah, Iim, Ezem,

JOSHUA 15:30 Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah,

Verse 30

Hormah - A place rendered famous by the defeat of the Hebrews by the Canaanites. See Num 14:45, Deu 1:44.

JOSHUA 15:31 Ziklag, Madmannah, Sansannah,

Verse 31

Ziklag - The Philistines seem to have kept possession of this city till the time of David, who received it from Achish, king of Gath, 1Sam 27:6; after which time it remained in the possession of the kings of Judah.

JOSHUA 15:32 Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon. All the cities are twenty-nine, with their villages.

Verse 32

All the cities are twenty and nine, with their villages - But on a careful examination we shall find thirty-eight; but it is supposed that nine of these are excepted; viz., Beersheba, Moladah, Hazarshual, Baalah, Azem, Hormah, Ziklag, Ain, and Rimmon, which were afterwards given to the tribe of Simeon. This may appear satisfactory, but perhaps the truth will be found to be this: Several cities in the promised land are expressed by compound terms; not knowing the places, different translations combine what should be separated, and in many cases separate what should be combined. Through this we have cities formed out of epithets. On this ground we have thirty-eight cities as the sum here, instead of twenty-nine.

JOSHUA 15:33 In the lowland, Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah,

Verse 33

Eshtaol, and Zoreah - Here Samson was buried, it being the burial-place of his fathers; see Jdg 16:31. These places though first given to Judah, afterwards fell to the lot of Dan, Jos 19:41.

JOSHUA 15:34 Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah, Enam,

JOSHUA 15:35 Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah,

Verse 35

Jarmuth - See the note on Jos 10:3.

Adullam - See the note on Jos 12:15.

Socoh - It was near this place that David fought with and slew Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, 1Sam 17:1.

JOSHUA 15:36 Shaaraim, Adithaim and Gederah (or Gederothaim); fourteen cities with their villages.

Verse 36

Gederah - See the note on Jos 12:13.

Fourteen cities - Well reckoned, we shall find fifteen cities here; but probably Gederah and Gederothaim (Jos 15:36) are the same. See the note on Jos 15:32.

JOSHUA 15:37 Zenan, Hadashah, Migdal Gad,

JOSHUA 15:38 Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel,

JOSHUA 15:39 Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon,

Verse 39

Lachish - and Eglon - See on Jos 10:3 (note).

JOSHUA 15:40 Cabbon, Lahmam, Chitlish,

JOSHUA 15:41 Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and Makkedah; sixteen cities with their villages.

Verse 41

Beth-dagon - The house or temple of Dagon. This is a well known idol of the Philistines, and probably the place mentioned here was in some part of their territories; but the situation at present is unknown.

JOSHUA 15:42 Libnah, Ether, Ashan,

Verse 42

Libnah - See the note on Jos 10:29.

Ether - From Jos 19:7 we learn that this city was afterwards given to the tribe of Simeon.

JOSHUA 15:43 Iphtah, Ashnah, Nezib,

JOSHUA 15:44 Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah; nine cities with their villages.

Verse 44

Keilah - This town was near Hebron, and is said to have been the burying-place of the prophet Habakkuk. David obliged the Philistines to raise the siege of it; (see 1Sam 23:1-13); but finding that its inhabitants had purposed to deliver him into the hands of Saul, who was coming in pursuit of him, he made his escape. See this remarkable case explained in the note on Deu 32:15 (note).

Mareshah - Called also Maresheth and Marasthi; it was the birth-place of the prophet Micah. Near this place was the famous battle between Asa, king of Judah, and Zera, king of Cush or Ethiopia, who was at the head of one thousand thousand men, and three hundred chariots. Asa defeated this immense host and took much spoil, 2Chr 14:9-15.

JOSHUA 15:45 Ekron, with its towns and its villages;

JOSHUA 15:46 from Ekron even to the sea, all that were by the side of Ashdod, with their villages.

Verse 46

Ekron - One of the five Philistine lordships; see the note on Jos 13:3.

JOSHUA 15:47 Ashdod, its towns and its villages; Gaza, its towns and its villages; to the brook of Egypt, and the great sea with its coastline.

Verse 47

Ashdod - Called also Azotus, Act 8:40.

Unto the river of Egypt - The Pelusiac branch of the Nile, or Sihor. But see on Jos 15:4 (note).

The great sea - The Mediterranean.

JOSHUA 15:48 In the hill country, Shamir, Jattir, Socoh,

Verse 48

Socoh - See a town of this name, Jos 15:35 (note).

JOSHUA 15:49 Dannah, Kiriath Sannah (which is Debir),

Verse 49

Kirjath-sannah - See the note on Jos 15:15.

JOSHUA 15:50 Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim,

JOSHUA 15:51 Goshen, Holon, and Giloh; eleven cities with their villages.

Verse 51

Goshen - See the note on Jos 10:41.

Giloh - The country of the traitor Ahithophel, 2Sam 15:12.

JOSHUA 15:52 Arab, Dumah, Eshan,

JOSHUA 15:53 Janim, Beth Tappuah, Apekah,

Verse 53

Beth-tappuah - The house of the apple or citron tree. Probably a place where these grew in great abundance and perfection.

Apekah - See the note on Jos 12:18.

JOSHUA 15:54 Humtah, Kiriath Arba (the same is Hebron), and Zior; nine cities with their villages.

Verse 54

Kirjath-arba - See the note on Jos 14:15.

JOSHUA 15:55 Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Jutah,

Verse 55

Maon - In a desert to which this town gave name, David took refuge for a considerable time from the persecution of Saul; and in this place Nabal the Carmelite had great possessions. See 1Sam 23:24, 1Sam 23:25; 1Sam 25:2.

Carmel - Not the celebrated mount of that name, but a village, the residence of Nabal. See 1Sam 25:2. It was near Maon, mentioned above, and was about ten miles eastward of Hebron. It is the place where Saul erected a trophy to himself after the defeat of the Amalekites; see 1Sam 15:12.

Ziph - See on Jos 15:24 (note).

JOSHUA 15:56 Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah,

JOSHUA 15:57 Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah; ten cities with their villages.

Verse 57

Timnah - A frontier town of the Philistines; it was in this place that Samson got his wife, see Judges 14:1-15:20.

JOSHUA 15:58 Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor,

Verse 58

Gedor - See the note on Jos 12:13. In this place the Alexandrian MS. of the Septuagint and the Codex Vaticanus add the eleven following towns: Theca, and Ephratha, (that is, Bethlehem), and Phagor, and Etan, and Kulon, and Tatam, and Thebes, and Karam, and Galam, and Thether, and Manocho; eleven cities and their villages. St. Jerome, on Mic 5:1, mentions them, so that we find they were in the copies he used. Dr. Kennicott contends that they should be restored to the text, and accounts thus for their omission: "The same word וּחְצֵרֵיהֶן vechatsreyhen, and their villages, occurring immediately before this passage and at the end of it, the transcriber's eye passed from one to the other by mistake. A similar accident has caused the omission of two whole verses, the 35th and 36th of Joshua 21." See the note on Jos 21:35, Jos 21:36.

JOSHUA 15:59 Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon; six cities with their villages.

JOSHUA 15:60 Kiriath Baal (the same is Kiriath Jearim), and Rabbah; two cities with their villages.

Verse 60

Kirjath-baal - The same as Baalah. See on Jos 15:9 (note).

JOSHUA 15:61 In the wilderness, Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah,

JOSHUA 15:62 Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi; six cities with their villages.

Verse 62

The city of Salt - Or of Melach. This city was somewhere in the vicinity of the lake Asphaltites, the waters of which are the saltiest perhaps in the world. The whole country abounds with salt: see the note on Gen 19:25. Some suppose that it is the same as Zoar, the place to which Lot escaped after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

En-gedi - The well of the kid: it was situated between Jericho and the lake of Sodom or Dead Sea.

JOSHUA 15:63 As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah couldn't drive them out; but the Jebusites live with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

Verse 63

The Jebusites dwell - at Jerusalem unto this day - The whole history of Jerusalem, previously to the time of David, is encumbered with many difficulties. Sometimes it is attributed to Judah, sometimes to Benjamin, and it is probable that, being on the frontiers of both those tribes, each possessed a part of it. If the Jebusites were ever driven out before the time of David, it is certain they recovered it again, or at least a part of it - what is called the citadel or strong hold of Zion, (see 2Sam 5:7), which he took from them; after which the city fell wholly into the hands of the Israelites. This verse is an additional proof that the book of Joshua was not written after the times of the Jewish kings, as some have endeavored to prove; for when this verse was written, the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Judah, which they did not after the days of David; therefore the book was written before there were any kings in Judea.

It is very likely, not only that many cities have by the lapse of time changed their names or been totally destroyed, (see the note on Jos 15:1), but that the names of those in the preceding catalogue have been changed also, several of them repeated that should have been mentioned but once, and not a few confounded with the terms by which they are described. But we must not suppose that every repetition of the name is through the carelessness of copyists; for there are often two places which bear the same name, which is frequently the case in England. But besides this, villages are mentioned as being apparently in the tribe of Judah, which afterwards appear to have been in an other tribe. The reason appears to be this: many towns are mentioned which were frontier towns, and when the limits of a tribe are pointed out, such places must necessarily be mentioned, though allotted to a different tribe. This consideration will serve to remove several difficulties which occur in the reading of this and the following chapters.