

JOSHUA 15

THE TERRITORY OF JUDAH

Continuing the description of the allotment of Judah's territory in the previous chapter (Joshua 14:6–15), the fifteenth chapter of the book of Joshua provides further descriptions of Judah's inheritance (verses 1–12, 20–62) and a brief narrative detailing how Caleb and the Judahites secured their territorial claim from lingering threats (verses 13–19).

The territorial boundaries described in verses 1–12 appear to be more idealistic than concretely historical, reflecting what the author of Joshua probably thought deservedly belonged to Judah. It begins in the south (verses 2–4) and works its way counterclockwise in its description, going east (verse 5), north (verses 6–11), and finally west (verse 12).

Although Caleb was afforded Judah's territorial claim in the previous chapter, in verses 13–19 he and other Judahite heroes nevertheless had to deal with lingering Canaanite threats. Caleb's brother Othniel (verse 17) later served as the first of Israel's judges (see Judges 3:7–11).

The concluding comment of this chapter that “the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day” (verse 63) is clear indication that some time has passed between the events described in the text and its composition. If taken at face value, it may mean that the book (or an early version of it) was composed sometime after the events described in it but before David's capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites (see 2 Samuel 5:6–10; 1 Chronicles 11:1–9). It could also be merely the same kind of formulaic postscript that occurs elsewhere without necessarily implying much about the actual social situation of the author's time (see, for example, Joshua 16:10).

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