

Joshua 15:1-63

According to these verses, Judah received a very large inheritance, stretching southward to the Negev and toward the boundary of Edom. To the west, the border reached the land of Philistia and extended along the coast of the Mediterranean as far as the Wadi of Egypt. It reached northward along the Mediterranean coast slightly north of Jerusalem — or "Jebus" as it was called at the time — and to the east as far as the Dead Sea.

The specificity of these boundaries laid out in Joshua relates to our specific place in the Body of Christ, the different gifts we express and the offices and ministries through which we are used by God.

- **Romans 12:4-6** - "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;"

- **1 Corinthians 12:4-7** - "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."

These boundaries even show up in the geographical boundaries that defined Paul's area of ministry. For instance, Paul planned to go to Asia, but the Holy Spirit turned him toward Greece.

The same applies to us. Each city listed here signifies a particular spiritual battle, and a spiritual victory that God has accomplished in us and through us in our lives. It happens as we "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" (**Philippians 2:12**).

"work out" = *katergázomai* - work fully, i.e. accomplish; by implication, to finish, fashion: —cause, to perform

We participate in the finishing, the accomplishing or the winning of our spiritual inheritance at each of these battles in our life. Remember, the Promised Land was given to Israel by God, but they had to claim it and then acquire it little by little, through many battles and victories. God gave the victory, but they had to show up.

These chapters in Joshua represent different chapters in our own lives as we work out, or *live out*, our salvation.

Some of these places have interesting and suggestive names.

Joshua 15:3 - "And it went out to the south side to Maalehacrabim, and passed along to Zin, and ascended up on the south side unto Kadeshbarnea, and passed along to Hezron, and went up to Adar, and fetched a compass to Karkaa:"

"*Maaleh-Acrabbim*" = Scorpion Pass, or "ascent of scorpions"

To claim and receive inheritance in the "ascent of Scorpions" Israel had to figuratively tread them down. Scorpions are deadly enemies of man, but throughout the scriptures believers are told not to fear them.

- **Deuteronomy 8:15** - "He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint."

- **Luke 10:19** - "Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you."

Joshua 15:7 - "And the border went up toward Debir from the valley of Achor, and so northward, looking toward Gilgal, that is before the going up to Adummim, which is on the south side of the river: and the border passed toward the waters of Enshemesh, and the goings out thereof were at Enrogel:"

Debir = "sanctuary" and also used to describe the Holy of Holies, the "oracle" of the Temple (**1 Kings 6:5**)

(Debir was also the king of Eglon, one of the five kings hanged by Joshua in **Joshua 13:26** - a false "sanctuary").

"the valley of Achor" = *Achor* means trouble, a cause of sorrow. The place where Achan and his family were stoned (**Joshua 7:26**)

To go "up toward Debir from the valley of Achor" means to leave the grief and sorrow of sin and enter the Holy of Holies in the presence of God.

The Old Man

Adummim - "ascent of the red ones" on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho, so called because of the blood which was frequently shed by thieves there. Traditionally the scene of the Good Samaritan's act of kindness (**Luke 10:25–37**). From *adam* - the first man but also red, of the earth. Our old man had to die for us to inherit the Promised Land, or in New Testament terms, inherit the kingdom. My "Adummim" had to be conquered, transformed and incorporated into the new Israel through the cross.

- **Romans 6:6** - "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Cleansing

En-rogel: "the fountain of the launderers or fullers" near Jerusalem

- **Malachi 3:2** - "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap."

In Jerusalem, the laundering process took place in a fullers' field outside the city because of the smell (**2 Kings 18:17**) and because it required open space to dry and sun the cloth. For many centuries, the process for making soap was a closely guarded secret among select guild of Jewish families. With the cloth soaking in soap and water, the fullers beat or stamped it to remove the impurities (the Hebrew word for fuller comes from a root meaning "to tread").

At His transfiguration Jesus' garment is said to have been white "so as no fuller on earth could white them" (**Mark 9:3**). This garment becomes our own garment, His righteousness.

Each of the places mentioned could have spiritual meaning, either from some incident that happened there, or from breaking down the meaning of the place name. We'll just look at a few of them.

Joshua 15:8 - "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:"

"the valley of the son of Hinnom" - *Gehenna*, a place infamous for the sacrifices of children to Moloch (**2 Kings 23, Jeremiah 7:31–32, 32:35**). Thereafter, it was deemed to be cursed (**Jeremiah 7:31, 19:2–6**). It became the name of a place of eternal punishment for the wicked.

- **Matthew 5:22** - "whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell (*Gehenna*) fire."

- **Matthew 10:28** - "...rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul [Greek: psyche] and body in *Gehenna*."

The Giants

"The valley of the giants" - or the *Rephaim*. It lies on the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Rephaim means "cast down, fallen" and is another name the fallen angels, the *Nephilim*, and their offspring.

- **Jude 1:6** - "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

- **2 Peter 2:4** - "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (Tartarus), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

- **1 Enoch 7:2 -3** - "And when the angels, the sons of heaven, beheld them, they became enamored of them, saying to each other, Come, let us select for ourselves wives from the progeny of men, and let us beget children."

- **Genesis 6:4** - "There were giants (*Nephiim*) in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."

- **Numbers 13:32-33** - "And there we saw the *Nephilim*, the sons of Anak, who come of the *Nephilim*; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight"

How does defeat of the Rephaim figure in our spiritual inheritance?

They were remembered long after the last ones died (Goliath and his family?)

- **Ezekiel 32:27** - "They lie with the warriors, the Nephilim of old, who descended to Sheol with their weapons of war. They placed their swords beneath their heads and their shields upon their bones, for the terror of the warriors was upon the land of the living."

But God defeated them:

- **Isaiah 26:12-14** - "LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased (*Rephaim*), they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish."

"Other lords" have had dominion over humanity - and each of us personally. The spirit of these Rephaim - glory-seeking giants, mighty men of old spawned by rebellious angels - has been at work in humanity ever since the chief fallen angel, Satan or Lucifer, whispered in Eve's ear in the form of the serpent. They attempted to disrupt the bloodline of Messiah in Noah's day. Our self-seeking flows from Adam and Eve's first enticement to rise above God, above the cloud, and that is the spirit of not only Satan but the Rephaim.

These remnants of the giants in Canaan are pictures of the "other lords" that have ruled over each of us before God shattered their dominion and entered our lives. We were once slaves to sin, working on behalf of the spirit of the Rephaim.

But now the defeated giants are "bread for us" (**Numbers 14:9**)- acknowledging their defeat by God provides us with sustenance - and God has "made all their memory to perish." ... like the Amalekites.

"They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased (*Rephaim*), they shall not rise"

Joshua 15:13-19 - Caleb and Othniel

Joshua 15:15-16 - "And he went up thence to the inhabitants of Debir: and the name of Debir before was Kirjathsepher. And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife."

Debir = "sanctuary" and also used to describe the Holy of Holies, the "oracle" of the Temple where God spoke to Israel (**1 Kings 6:5**)

Kirjathsepher also called *Kirjathsannah* - city of branches, or of the book or scroll, learning in general (could refer to scrolls, genealogical tables, prophecies, scripture or reading)

Victory over the City of the Book or the Scroll means it is transformed into *Debir*, the inner sanctuary, the place of the oracle of God; i.e. mere learning from a book is infused with life and becomes the experiential knowledge of the presence of God within us. This is what was accomplished by Jesus, who by personifying the Law, fulfilled it.

So that now, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God (the *Debir* in Hebrew)." (**1 Peter 4:11**)

Embedded within this short tale is also a reflection of Christ and His Bride.

Caleb's daughter **Achsah** = from *`ekec* - "ankle chain," an ornament for women, bangles (Also in a bad sense, fetters for prisoners)

Othniel - The etymology of his name is uncertain, but may mean "God/He is my strength" or "God has helped me"

Later, Othniel becomes one of the Judges.

According to the biblical account in **Judges 3:8-11**, some time after the death of Joshua the Israelites once again turned to sin and fell under the subjection of Chushan-rishathaim, the king of Aram-Naharaim in Mesopotamia, because of their transgressions against God. He oppressed them for eight years; when they "cried" unto God, Othniel was raised up to be their deliverer. He is the only Judge mentioned connected with the Tribe of Judah. Under Othniel, peace lasted for forty years.

Tradition saw Othniel as a great scholar - perhaps from his victory over the City of Books, or "learning."

Rashi - Our Rabbis said: These are the [3,000] laws which were forgotten during the mourning period for Moses, which Othniel the son of Kenaz reestablished through his great scholarship.

Achseh was given to Othniel as his wife. But she wanted one more thing - a blessing

from her father - the land was dry, and it required water.

The Bride spiritually requires springs of living water, and her Father is delighted to supply it, here signified by the “the upper and lower springs,” similar to the early and latter rain in the prophets (**Joel 2:23. James 5:7**)

God himself is described as "the LORD, the fountain of living waters" (**Jeremiah 17:13**).

- **John 7:38** - "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Later when Israel rebels against God and goes after idolatry, these same adornments of the Bride - ankle bracelets - become objects of pride and haughtiness for the daughters of Zion.

- **Isaiah 3:16-22** (NET) - "The LORD says, 'The women of Zion are proud. They walk with their heads high and flirt with their eyes. They skip along and the jewelry on their ankles (*ḥekec*) jingles. So the sovereign master will afflict the foreheads of Zion's women with skin diseases, the LORD will make the front of their heads bald. At that time the sovereign master will remove their beautiful ankle jewelry, neck ornaments, crescent shaped ornaments, earrings, bracelets, veils, headdresses, ankle ornaments, sashes, sachets, amulets, rings, nose rings, festive dresses, robes, shawls, purses, garments, vests, head coverings, and gowns.'"

The Talmud on Othniel and Achsah

The Rabbis describe Achsah as being a beauty, finding an allusion to this in her name: “Whoever sees her is angry [koes] with his wife,” who is not as ravishing as she is (Babylonian Talmud, Temurah 16a). Achsah’s beauty explains the willingness of the men to go forth to war against the Anakites (giants) of Kiriath-sepher, since Caleb had promised his daughter Achsah to the man who would conquer the city. The midrash (Gen. Rabbah 60:3) criticizes Caleb’s pledge, for if a slave had taken the city Caleb would have been forced to give him his daughter. Nonetheless, God “arranged a proper match for her,” because Caleb’s brother, Othniel the Kenizzite, captured the city.

But Achsah herself was not pleased with the match that had been made for her and the Talmud reports that she complains about this to her father. She is concerned that Othniel is only a Torah scholar and that he will not be capable of providing for her livelihood. The Rabbis understand her complaint “For you have given me away as Negeb-land; so give me springs of water” (**Joshua 17:19**)—as referring to her husband Othniel, who possesses only water (i.e., Torah), but is desolate and dry of property and livelihood. (In this narrative the Rabbis compare Achsah to an ass, who immediately cries out if there is no food in his crib).

The picture of Achsah that emerges from this midrash is that of a practical woman who is concerned for her family’s sustenance. Like the Daughters of Zelophehad, Achsah succeeds in gaining some of her family’s land and water resources, which were

normally not available to women in ancient Israel's patrilineal system.

The remaining verses of this chapter describe the borders of the southern part of Judah.

These attempts to gain more of the inheritance - which on the surface might look like greed or dissatisfaction, are really portraying spiritual zeal when we see it as a type.

The Jebusites

Joshua 15:63 - "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."

As we saw earlier, the territory of Jerusalem was divided between Judah and Benjamin. In fact the dividing line went through what would later be the Temple courts. The Jebusites in Benjamin's territory remained there until David's time.

David's taking of upper Jerusalem from the Jebusites is described in **2 Samuel 5**.

The failure to dispossess the Jebusites is a reflection of our own lack of zeal. Through sloth are we allowing Canaanites to keep us from our spiritual inheritance in Christ?

Remember that the warning about letting Canaanites remain was that we would be seduced into following their ways - living our lives according to the world's value system of self-seeking. In years past, we talked about the Jebusites representing false hopes, in competition to the one hope of the resurrection.

An Alternate Explanation

Because the continued presence of the Jebusites up until the time of David was so troubling, some rabbis came up with a way around the problem.

Rashi - "The children of Judah could not drive them out" - They really could, but they were not permitted, because of the oath which Abraham had sworn to Abimelech (**Genesis 21:27**). Now these Jebusites were not of the Jebusite nation, but the Tower of David, which was in Jerusalem, was called *Jebus*, and the inhabitants of that section were of the Philistines. And when the children of Judah conquered Jerusalem, they did not drive out the inhabitants of that section.

This would account for David's allowing Araunah (or Ornan), a Jebusite king, to remain living nearby. (See **2 Samuel 24** and **1 Chronicles 21**).

Mt. Moriah

This pointed mention of Jerusalem and the Jebusites causes us to reflect on Abraham and Isaac going to Mt. Moriah, which tradition says would become the Temple Mount. - the "Akedah," the command to sacrifice Isaac, which tested Abraham's obedience. We

read about it during the High Holy Days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

This is the punctuation to this chapter's long list of boundaries and place names.

Abraham's "only son" Isaac is willingly tied to the altar, but the angel stops Abraham's hand.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a ram after caught in the thicket . . ."

Some rabbis said Abraham saw the *achareit yomim*, "the last days." He saw Christ's future sacrifice.

- **Hebrews 11:17-19** - ""By faith, being tested, Abraham offered up Isaac . . . reckoning that God was able to raise him from the dead; from where indeed he obtained him in a parable."

This is the parable, or midrash:

R. Judah says: When the sword touched Isaac's throat his soul flew clean out of him. And when He let His voice be heard from between the cherubim, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad." The lad's soul was returned to his body. Then his father unbound him and Isaac rose, knowing that in this way the dead would come back to life in the future; whereupon he began to recite, "Blessed are You, LORD, who resurrects the dead." (Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer)

By virtue of Isaac who offered himself as a sacrifice on top of the altar, the Holy One blessed be He, will resurrect the dead in the future, as it is said, "To hear the groaning of him who is bound; to open up release for the offspring appointed to death." (Psalm 102:21) "Him who is bound" is interpreted as Isaac bound on top of the altar. "To open up release for the offspring appointed to death" [is interpreted] as the dead whose graves the Holy One, blessed be He, will open up so that He may set them on their feet in the Age to Come. (Mekilta Simeon)

Other midrash say that Isaac's soul actually exchanged places with the soul of the ram.

Mishnah (Avot 5:6) says that this particular ram was created for this purpose since the first days of creation. In other words, Isaac's ram was prepared for sacrifice since the foundation of the world. In the same way, Peter described Jesus as "a lamb without blemish or defect, chosen before the creation of the world" (**1 Peter 1:19-20**).

This is what Jesus meant here:

Jesus said: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (**John 8:5-6**)

This reading clearly marks out a contrast between the Resurrection and the Jebusites, typifying false hope and trust in something other than God.

If there is a Jebusite garrison within us that keeps us from fully realizing the meaning of this incident in our lives, we need to pray it be revealed and repent. We need all the inheritance we can get!