

50b Valley of Hinnom

Names (also known as)

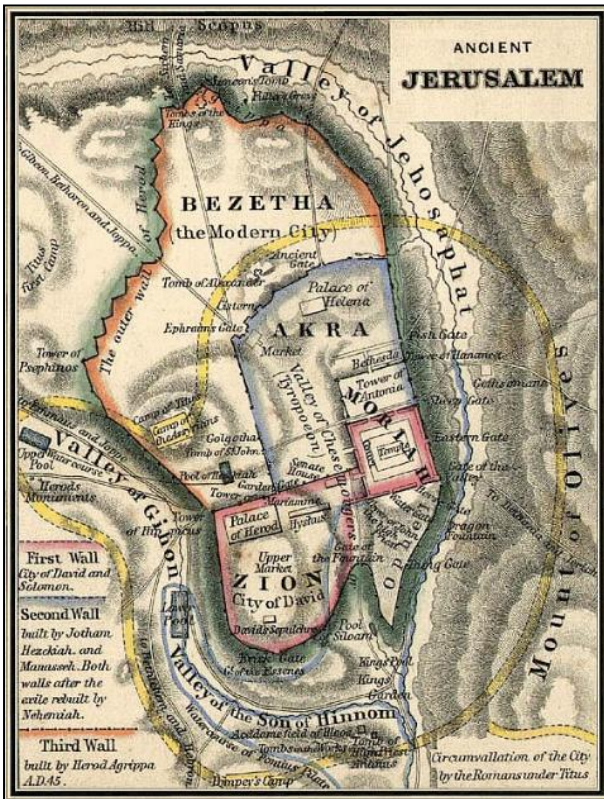
Valley of the son of Hinnom, Valley of Gihon, Tophet, Field of Blood, Gehenna, Wadi Jehennam, Wadi er Rubeb, Wadi er-Rababi.

Etymology

The English "Gehenna" represents the Greek Ge'enna (γέεννα) found in the NT, a phonetic transcription of Aramaic Gēhannā equivalent to the Hebrew Ge Hinnom, literally "Valley of Hinnom".

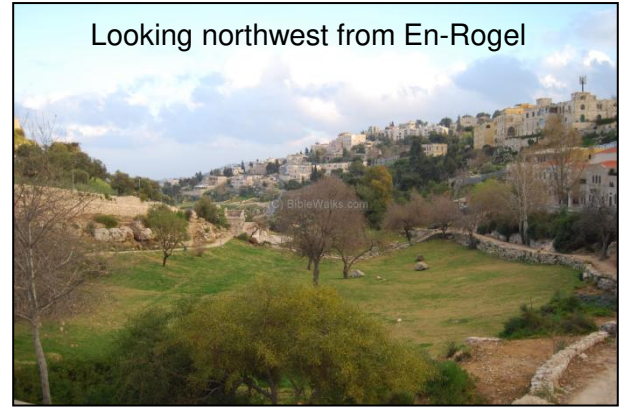
This was known in the OT as Gai Ben-Hinnom, literally the "Valley of the son of Hinnom", and in the Talmud as הגנום Gehinnam or גהנום Gehinnom.

Location/Description



The Valley of Hinnom is at the base of Mount Zion one of the two principal valleys surrounding the Old City (the other being the Kidron or Valley of Jehoshaphat).

According to Joshua, the valley began in En-Rogel. If the modern Bir Ayyub is En-Rogel then the Wadi er-Rababi which begins there is Hinnom.



Scriptural references

Old Testament

“Hinnom” - Josh. 15:8; 18:16; 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Neh. 11:30; Jer. 7:31,32; 19:2,6; 32:35.

The name Hinnom occurs 13 times in the OT. 13 is the number of rebellion, and it was here that the kings of Judah rebelled against Yahweh by passing their children through the fire.

“Topheth” - Isa. 30:33; Jer. 7:31,32; 19:6,11, 12,13,14.

Topheth, the name of a particular part in the valley of Hinnom, is from the Hebrew *toph* “a drum,” because the cries of children here sacrificed by the priests of Molech were drowned by the noise of such an instrument; or from *taph* or *toph*, meaning “to burn,” and hence a place of burning.

New Testament

Gehenna (translated as “hell”) - Matt. 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6.

Famous characters

Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Judas



Brief Biblical history

The site was initially where apostate Israelites and followers of various Baal's and other Canaanite gods, including Moloch (or Molech), sacrificed their children by fire (2 Chron. 28:3, 33:6). Thereafter it was deemed to be cursed (Jer. 7:31; 19:2-6) and was used as a place to deposit and burn rubbish from the city of Jerusalem by those who returned from captivity in Babylon where they were freed from idolatry. It came in time to represent eternal destruction. Judas committed suicide in this area (Acts 1:18-19; Matt. 27:3-10) and was buried there.

The oldest historical reference to the valley is found in Josh. 15:8 and 18:16 which describe tribal boundaries.

The next chronological reference to the valley is at the time of king Ahaz of Judah who sacrificed his sons there according to 2 Chron. 28:3. Since his legitimate son Hezekiah, by the daughter of the high priest, succeeded him as king, this may mean children by unrecorded pagan wives or concubines. However, it is recorded of Ahaz's grandson Manasseh in 2 Chron. 33:6 that he caused his children to “pass through the fire.” The word “pass” is *abar* – to pass over or through. A reasonable conclusion from this language is that the children were offered to Molech but not burnt to death in the process. This may well have been the fate of Hezekiah as well.



Isaiah does not mention Gehenna by name, but the “burning place” of Isa. 30:33 in which the latter day Assyrian army (Gog) is to be destroyed, may be read “Topheth”, and the final verse of Isaiah (66:24) which concerns those that rebel against God during the Kingdom Age is based on this place of destruction. This passage in Isaiah refers to unrighteous visitors to the Temple in the

Kingdom who do not return home but whose dead bodies are cast on to the dump to the west of the Temple – a dump based on the NT Gehenna.

It is to be noted that all the carcasses and bones of Gog's multitude will be buried after Armageddon (Ezek. 39:11-16), while the carcasses of the dead in Isa. 66:23-4 are left in the open to be consumed by maggots (worms) and by a continually smouldering fire.

In the reign of Josiah a call came from Jeremiah to destroy the shrines in Topheth and to end the practice (Jer. 7:31-32; 32:35). It is recorded that king Josiah destroyed the shrine of Molech on Topheth, to prevent anyone sacrificing children there (2 Kings 23:10). Despite Josiah's ending of the practice, Jeremiah also included a prophecy that Jerusalem itself would be made like Gehenna and Topheth (Jer. 19:2-6, 11-14).

A final purely geographical reference is found in Neh. 11:30 to the exiles returning from Babylon camping from Beersheba to Hinnom.

Passing through the fire to Molech

Molech had the head of a bull with two horns and the body of a man. The idol's stomach was hollow and was the furnace for the fire used during the sacrifice. When hot enough, the infant was placed into the arms of the idol. Some were roasted to death and others like Hezekiah were probably caused to “pass through the fire” receiving grievous burns in the process as was the practice of Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:6).



The words concerning Christ (based on the life of Hezekiah) in Isa. 52:14 – “As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” may be inferential proof that not all children were burnt to death. The word “marred” is *moshchâth* and refers primarily to disfigurement of the face. This may account for the fact that Hezekiah did not marry until after his sickness (unto death) and extension of life. This theme appears to be carried on in Isa. 53:2 – “he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

Sources:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gehenna>
<http://helpmewithbiblestudy.org>

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)