



Deuteronomy - Chapter One

Summary of Chapter One

The forty years of wandering in the wilderness was coming to an end for the Israelites and they were encamped east of the River Jordan. It would soon be time for them to cross into the Promised Land and Moses now embarks on a series of speeches to the people to prepare them for what lay ahead.

Moses provides a summary statement of the key events that had occurred from the time they had departed Mount Horeb to proceed to the Holy Land. He describes the reason for appointing leaders to remove some of the burden from Moses in making judgements between the people. He then gives an account of the twelve spies entering the land, the negative report by ten of them and the consequences for the people's refusal to trust God and enter the land of Canaan anyway. When the Israelites knew they were wrong they then tried to enter the land but were defeated by the Amorites for God had already decreed that all the adults born in Egypt, except for Joshua and Caleb, would perish in the wilderness.

I Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43 - Moses' First Speech: Historical Prologue

Moses' first speech rehearses Israel's past failure at Kadesh near the beginning of the forty year wilderness period as well as its passing through Edom, Moab, and Ammon without fighting, its successes over Heshbon and Bashan, and the distribution of those two lands. Chapter 4 is an exhortation that functions as a transition from the history in Chapters 1-3 to the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments in Chapter 5. The purpose of Chapters 1-3 is not simply to retell history but to use history to persuade Israel to trust God so the land will be conquered. Deuteronomy 1:6-3:29 parallels the historical prologue of ancient covenant treaties. Chapter 4 does not readily parallel such treaties.

I.a Deuteronomy 1:1-8 - Events at Horeb Recalled

This first section provides the chronological and geographical setting of Deuteronomy, identifying the speaker and audience as well as summarising that the book is an exposition of the law. It parallels the preamble sections of ancient covenant treaties. Moses' first speech, or sermon, begins by focusing on the land.

¹ These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan – in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab.

Deuteronomy 1:1

The Hebrew name of Deuteronomy, *Debarim*, literally means 'the words,' and is taken from the opening phrase: **These are the words**. This opening informs the reader that the bulk of Deuteronomy, up to the end of Chapter 30, is the spoken words of Moses.

Moses has been the leader of Israel since early in the Book of Exodus, called by God to that role at the burning bush (Exodus Chapter 3). Deuteronomy is Moses' final speech before his death.

All Israel. Deuteronomy emphasises the unity of the people.

Beyond the Jordan, that is, east of the Jordan River, on the north end of the Dead Sea. Since leaving Egypt and crossing the Red Sea, Israel has been in the wilderness for forty years.

On the plain opposite Suph is also known as the Arabah, and is the low Jordan Valley and area surrounding the Dead Sea.

Suph and **Di-zahab** are places that Israel passed through en route to Moab. Numbers 12:16 mentions **Paran** and **Hazeroth**. **Suph**, **Tophel**, **Laban**, and **Di-zahab** are not mentioned elsewhere in the OT.

² (By the way of Mount Seir it takes eleven days to reach Kadesh-barnea from Horeb.)

Deuteronomy 1:2

Mount Seir is located in the land of Edom, the land settled by Esau, Jacob's older twin: <<*So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir; Esau is Edom*>> (Genesis 36:8).

Kadesh-barnea is a town on the southern border of the Promised Land where Israel camped: <<*And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the Israelites in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word*>>

to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land>>
(Numbers 13:26).

Except for the references to Sinai in Deuteronomy 33:2 and 33:16, Horeb is the name used in Deuteronomy for Mount Sinai, where Israel received the commandments (Exodus 19:1-Numbers 10:12).



The image above is of Mount Horeb.

The map to the left shows the general route of the wilderness marches showing Kadesh-barnea, Mount Seir or Hor, Mount Sinai and the Israelites location where Deuteronomy was written, close to Mount Nebo.

³ In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israelites just as the Lord had commanded him to speak to them. ⁴ This was after he had defeated King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and in Edrei.

Deuteronomy 1:3-4

The juxtaposition of ‘eleven days’ (v.2) with fortieth year highlights the time lost in reaching the border of the Promised Land. The forty year delay was God’s punishment for Israel’s failure to enter the land: *<<And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness for forty years, and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for every day a year, you shall bear your iniquity, forty years, and you shall know my displeasure>>* (Numbers 14:33-34).

As in Deuteronomy 1:1, Moses spoke, here stressing his faithfulness in speaking according to all that the Lord had given him in commandment to them. Deuteronomy rarely distinguishes between God’s words and Moses’ words.

This was after he had defeated King Sihon. The Israelites had requested to pass through the land of the Amorites but were refused, indeed the Amorites went out to attack these Hebrew wanderers but were soundly defeated for opposing the people of God (Numbers 21:21-32). A similar story then followed with King Og of Bashan (Numbers 21:33-35). Heshbon and Bashan were east of the Jordan, north of where Deuteronomy is set.

⁵ Beyond the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law as follows:

Deuteronomy 1:5

The repeated mention of beyond the Jordan (v.1) underscores that Israel is not yet in the Promised Land. Moab was beyond the Jordan from the perspective of Canaan, i.e. on the eastern side. Unlike their fighting against Sihon and Og (v.4), Israel had not fought against Moab en route to the Promised Land.

This law refers to the entire law given to Israel on Mount Sinai as detailed in Exodus 19:1-Numbers 10:12. Moses' task is not simply to repeat that law but to expound it, in effect, to preach it so that Israel will newly accept the law before crossing the Jordan to conquer the land. At Mount Sinai, Israel verbally agreed to the covenant law's obligations: *<<Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, 'All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do'>>* (Exodus 24:3), but did not behave accordingly. Hence in Deuteronomy Moses exhorts Israel to a covenant renewal with God. This is especially relevant as this was a new generation; it was their parents and grandparents that had made the covenant.

⁶ The Lord our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain.'

Deuteronomy 1:6

Deuteronomy typically names God as the Lord our (or your) God. The Lord is *Yahweh*, the personal and covenantal name for God revealed to Moses: *<<God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you."' God also said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you": This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations'>>* (Exodus 3:14-15); refer also to the comment made on Genesis 2:4.

⁷ Resume your journey, and go into the hill country of the Amorites as well as into the neighbouring regions – the Arabah, the hill country, the Shephelah, the Negeb, and the sea coast – the land of the

Canaanites and the Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.

Deuteronomy 1:7

Resume your journey. Israel left Mount Sinai in Numbers 10:11 and the account of their journey to this point is recorded thereafter.

The Amorites is a general term for the occupants of the land. The descriptions of the land reflect its geography, roughly east to west.

The Arabah was described as ‘the plain opposite Suph’ in v.1 and was commented on there.

The hill country is the ridge of higher mountains overlooking the Jordan Valley from the west.

The Shephelah is the lowland to the west, with low, undulating hills.

The Negeb is the arid land across the south, which becomes desert.

The sea coast refers to the flat Mediterranean Sea coastline.

In general terms, the land is occupied by Canaanites, a term virtually synonymous at this time with the Amorites, mentioned earlier in the verse.

The Lebanon lies to the north.

The river Euphrates lies even farther north and east. This is similar to the description of the land in the promise given by God to Abraham several hundred years earlier: <<*On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites’*>> (Genesis 15:18-21).

⁸ See, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land that I swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them.’

Deuteronomy 1:8

See has a sense of urgency, for it is a time of decision: from the plains of Moab the people of Israel can now survey the land before them.

Take possession of the land is a common command in Deuteronomy.

The land that I swore to your ancestors. The promise of land was made first to Abraham (Genesis 12:7 and 15:18-21), reiterated to Isaac (Genesis 26:4), and then to Jacob (Genesis 28:13 and 35:12). The promises to the three patriarchs included land for their descendants after them. Moses is emphasising that the current generation of Israel is included in the promises and God intends to keep his promise of the land. Thus the patriarchal reference functions rhetorically to persuade Israel to go in and possess the land.

I.b Deuteronomy 1:9-18 - Appointment of Tribal Leaders

Before rehearsing the departure from Horeb as v.6 anticipated, Moses recalls the appointment of tribal heads to help Moses judge and lead the people (Exodus 18:18-26 and Numbers 11:14-30). Rather than digressing from the theme of the land, this section reminds Israel that God has already been faithful to another part of the Abrahamic promises, namely, offspring.

⁹ At that time I said to you, ‘I am unable by myself to bear you. ¹⁰ The Lord your God has multiplied you, so that today you are as numerous as the stars of heaven. ¹¹ May the Lord, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times more and bless you, as he has promised you!

Deuteronomy 1:9-11

I am unable by myself to bear you. Moses experienced this crisis in Numbers Chapter 11 when the people complained again about the food God provided. To help Moses bear the burden, God directed him to appoint seventy elders to assist him in bearing up under the pressure of leading the nation. As described in Numbers Chapter 11, these elders had a precious function: To take their place there with Moses, to have the same Spirit as Moses, and to bear the burden of the people with Moses (Numbers 11:16-17).

You are as numerous as the stars of heaven. This was first promised to Abraham with regard to his offspring: <<*He brought him outside and said, ‘Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be’*>> (Genesis 15:5). Having just exhorted Israel regarding the promise of land in Genesis 15:18-21, a promise yet to be fulfilled, Moses refers to a promise already fulfilled in order to stir up Israel’s faith that God will keep the land promise.

As he has promised you signifies the transference of God’s promises from one generation to the next, providing they remain faithful to him, a theme that Moses will return to in Deuteronomy.

Introduction to Deuteronomy 1:12-18

The need for leaders to help Moses is tangible evidence that the promise to Abraham of offspring has been fulfilled. In the Exodus parallel (Exodus 18:13-26), Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, encouraged Moses to appoint tribal leaders to share in judging between disputants.

¹² But how can I bear the heavy burden of your disputes all by myself?

¹³ Choose for each of your tribes individuals who are wise, discerning, and reputable to be your leaders.' ¹⁴ You answered me, 'The plan you have proposed is a good one.' ¹⁵ So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and reputable individuals, and installed them as leaders over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officials, throughout your tribes.

Deuteronomy 1:12-15

But how can I bear the heavy burden of your disputes all by myself? This is a virtual repeat of v.9 and is commented on there.

The process to appoint leaders involved the people nominating the judges and Moses confirming them; Exodus 18:25 simply summarises that Moses chose them: I took the leaders of your tribes, and installed them as leaders over you. However, the people had agreed with Moses' plan at the time: The plan you have proposed is a good one.

¹⁶ I charged your judges at that time: 'Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. ¹⁷ You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgement is God's. Any case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.' ¹⁸ So I charged you at that time with all the things that you should do.

Deuteronomy 1:16-18

Whether citizen or resident alien. Aliens were non-Israelites who resided in the land and accepted Israelite rule and law but did not own land and were hence vulnerable to oppression. Deuteronomy consistently upholds the equal rights of aliens and Israelites.

You must not be partial in judging. Impartiality is a prerequisite for good judgement as well as a characteristic of God himself: *<<For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not*

partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing>> (Deuteronomy 10:17-18).

So I charged you at that time with all the things that you should do. Although there would be a great difference between the wilderness years and the time that lay ahead as the people settled in the land of Canaan, the instruction to lead, judge between, and guide the people would remain the same.

I.c Deuteronomy 1:19-45 - Israel's failure at Kadesh recalled

This section rehearses Israel's failure to enter the land at Kadesh some 38 years previously, already alluded to in vv.3-4 and confirmed in Numbers Chapters 13-14. Its purpose is to warn the current generation not to repeat the sins of their parents. Israel is theologically at the same point as they were at Kadesh, namely, on the border of the Promised Land. The question is whether or not they will repeat the same mistake and fail to trust in God's promises.

I.c.i Deuteronomy 1:19-33 - Israel's Refusal to Enter the Land

This first sub-section deals with their parent's reluctance just to trust in God and enter the Promised Land. Instead, they proposed sending in twelve leaders to spy out the land and report on what they saw. On their return ten of the spies gave a bad report, saying they could not possibly defeat the peoples that dwelt there.

¹⁹ Then, just as the Lord our God had ordered us, we set out from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness that you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, until we reached Kadesh-barnea.

Deuteronomy 1:19

We set out from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness. Moses summarises the initial stage of the journey, which was hard and during which their parents had frequently complained, but he does not provide them with the details here.

²⁰ I said to you, 'You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the Lord our God is giving us. ²¹ See, the Lord your God has given the land to you; go up, take possession, as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you; do not fear or be dismayed.'

Deuteronomy 1:20-21

I said to you. Strictly speaking, the addressees at Kadesh were the parents of the current generation, who were either children at that time or were born afterward

in the wilderness. However, the repetition of **you** throughout Deuteronomy treats the current generation as having been present through their parents and thus incorporates the current generation in their parents' sin. This pessimistically suggests that the current generation is no different from their predecessors.

See, the Lord your God has given the land to you; go up, take possession. After seeing God's faithfulness in enabling them to cross the land of the Amorites, Moses was ready to lead the nation into Canaan.

Do not fear is a common command in the Scriptures; God alone is to be feared: <<*So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being*>> (Deuteronomy 10:12-13), and: <<*The Lord your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear, his commandments you shall keep, his voice you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast*>> (Deuteronomy 13:4). Jesus taught this same message: <<*Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*>> (Luke 12:32), with the caveat: <<*Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell*>> (Matthew 10:28).

²² All of you came to me and said, 'Let us send men ahead of us to explore the land for us and bring back a report to us regarding the route by which we should go up and the cities we will come to.'²³ The plan seemed good to me, and I selected twelve of you, one from each tribe.²⁴ They set out and went up into the hill country, and when they reached the Valley of Eshcol they spied it out²⁵ and gathered some of the land's produce, which they brought down to us. They brought back a report to us, and said, 'It is a good land that the Lord our God is giving us.'

Deuteronomy 1:22-25

All of you came to me and said, 'Let us send men ahead of us'. As Moses remembered this suggestion, he must have looked back with regret. There really was no compelling reason to send forth spies into the Promised Land. God had told them that the land was good. Unless they did not believe him, there was no reason to confirm it on their own. God had told them they would take the land and defeat the nations living there. Unless they did not believe him, there was no reason to take a look at the enemies and see if God was somehow up to the challenge.

The plan seemed good to me. Again, Moses must have had regret as he remembered this. The people suggested it and Moses agreed to it. Yet when ten of the twelve spies came back with a report filled with fear and unbelief, the nation believed them and refused to believe God's promised and enter in. From reading only Numbers 13:2 it might seem that this plan to send spies into Canaan originated with God, not the people. However, a careful look shows that Numbers 13:2 dealt mainly with the number of spies to send, i.e. twelve men, and how they should be chosen, one from each tribe. So although the plan did not originate with God (Deuteronomy Chapter 1 indicates that it started with the people, and was approved by Moses), the Lord essentially said: "If you are going to send spies, send twelve, and have them represent the whole nation by sending one from each tribe." Perhaps in this God made certain that not all the spies brought a report of unbelief.

The Valley of Eshcol is close to Hebron and still renowned for its fruit.

It is a good land that the Lord our God is giving us. Moses does not repeat all the details of what the spies said, particularly their 'bad report' (Numbers 13:32), or describe Caleb's positive minority report: <<***Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it***>> (Numbers 13:30b).

²⁶ But you were unwilling to go up. You rebelled against the command of the Lord your God; ²⁷ you grumbled in your tents and said, 'It is because the Lord hates us that he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to hand us over to the Amorites to destroy us.' ²⁸ Where are we heading? Our kindred have made our hearts fail by reporting, "The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large and fortified up to heaven! We actually saw there the offspring of the Anakim!"

Deuteronomy 1:26-28

But, yet or nevertheless. In this context, this is a haunting word. It was the exact word in the mouth of the ten fearful spies when they began to give an evil testimony to Israel: <<***Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there***>> (Numbers 13:28). The positive report of the spies in v.25 is sharply juxtaposed with the people's rebellion in v.26. Deuteronomy highlights Israel's culpability, reinforcing the warning for the current generation not to follow in their parents' footsteps.

Essentially, the ten spies and all Israel said, "We went into the land of Canaan and found it to be a wonderful land, just as the Lord said it would be. God's Word was true on that point. But (essentially saying, 'despite all that'), we

don't believe God when he says he will enable to overcome the enemies of the land and to possess it."

But! Despite the fact Christians have seen that God's Word is true, many will not trust him for great things in the future. This is a terrible testimony.

You grumbled in your tents is a reference to Numbers 14:1-4. This was not the only time Israel murmured in complaint during the forty year wilderness period, although the word used here, Hebrew *ragan*, is rare but is used in another account: <<*They grumbled in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the Lord*>> (Psalm 106:25).

It is because the Lord hates us. In their sin, Israel attributed to God the opposite motive for his action: <<otherwise the land from which you have brought us might say, "Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to let them die in the wilderness">> (Deuteronomy 9:28), and the attitude of the people in Numbers 14:1-4). The words attributed to the spies in Numbers 13:28-29 are repeated by the people in Deuteronomy.

They were not persuaded of the love of God, and they found it hard to trust a God they did not believe loved them. Christians today also need to be persuaded of the love of God. Many believers are hindered in their walk with God because they are not genuinely persuaded of the love of God for them. They should ask, "What would it take me finally convince me that God really loves me?" They do not wait for God to give them everything they want before they love him. That is the selfish demand of a short-sighted child, like the child who thinks their mother does not love him because he cannot have all the things he wants. God has already given the ultimate demonstration of his love: <<*But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us*>> (Romans 5:8) The death of Jesus for guilty sinners is the ultimate demonstration of God's love; he can do nothing greater than what he has already done in Jesus. Now Christians can simply receive his love and remember: <<*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us*>> (1 John 4:18-19).

Anakim were reputed to be giants: <<*The Emim – a large and numerous people, as tall as the Anakim – had formerly inhabited it. Like the Anakim, they are usually reckoned as Rephaim, though the Moabites call them Emim*>> (Deuteronomy 2:10-11). Israel's fear expressed here is addressed by Moses in Chapters 2-3.

²⁹ I said to you, 'Have no dread or fear of them. ³⁰ The Lord your God, who goes before you, is the one who will fight for you, just as he did

for you in Egypt before your very eyes, ³¹ and in the wilderness, where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you travelled until you reached this place.

Deuteronomy 1:29-31

Have no dread or fear of them. This exhortation is grounded in past experience of the plagues and the exodus from Egypt (refer to Exodus Chapters 7-14), and the wilderness provision (v.33).

Before your very eyes, where you saw. Even though this is the next generation, Moses sees the nation as a unity and addresses his audience as though they were there with the previous generation; some, of course, were there as children.

Carried you, just as one carries a child. The image is tender and loving, repudiating the false claim of <<*It is because the Lord hates us*>> (v.27).

³² But in spite of this, you have no trust in the Lord your God, ³³ who goes before you on the way to seek out a place for you to camp, in fire by night, and in the cloud by day, to show you the route you should take.'

Deuteronomy 1:32-33

You have no trust in the Lord. People often think that it is really some sin that hinders them from going on with the Lord. It is true that the Lord wants to deal with the sin and get it out of the way, but the way that happens is by deepening the relationship of love and trust in the Lord: <<*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths*>> (Proverbs 3:5-6). Unbelief and lack of trust is the real enemy. Unbelief parallels rebellion (v.26).

In fire by night, and in the cloud by day is a reminder of how God had led them throughout their wilderness wanderings: <<*The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night*>> (Exodus 13:21).

I.c.ii Deuteronomy 1:35-45 - The Penalty for Israel's Rebellion

God was angry with the people's lack of faith so he determined that all the adults born in Egypt would not enter the Promised Land but would die during a forty year period of wandering in the wilderness. This included Moses, for only Joshua and Caleb would be spared this fate.

Realising their error and against God's command, the people tried to reverse God's decision and went in to take the land by force but were heavily defeated by their enemies. Thus they had no option but to return into the wilderness.

³⁴ When the Lord heard your words, he was wrathful and swore: ³⁵ 'Not one of these – not one of this evil generation – shall see the good land that I swore to give to your ancestors, ³⁶ except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and to his descendants I will give the land on which he set foot, because of his complete fidelity to the Lord.'

Deuteronomy 1:34-36

The Lord was wrathful and swore. In response to Israel's unbelief and lack of trust in God's love, God swore an oath that the adult generation which came out of Egypt would not inherit the Promised Land, but would die in the desolate wilderness instead: <<*Therefore in my anger I swore, 'They shall not enter my rest'*>> (Psalm 95:11).

God's anger at Israel's sin resulted in the forty year wilderness period, preventing the first generation from entering the land. God's mention of good land makes it clear that he agrees with part of the spies' report (v.25) and rejects the people's ill-founded fear and unbelief.

Caleb was one of the twelve spies who gave the minority report and advocated entry into the land. It was because of his complete fidelity to the Lord that he would be allowed to enter into the Promised Land: <<*But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me wholeheartedly, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it*>> (Numbers 14:24).

³⁷ Even with me the Lord was angry on your account, saying, 'You also shall not enter there. ³⁸ Joshua son of Nun, your assistant, shall enter there; encourage him, for he is the one who will secure Israel's possession of it.'

Deuteronomy 1:37-38

Even with me. Moses' failure, which prevented his entry into the land, was not related to the spies' incident but occurred when he struck the rock in self-exalting anger at Meribah; refer to the comment made on Numbers 20:2-13.

On your account. Moses says that his own sin was provoked by the actions and complaints of the people of Israel. Refer also to Deuteronomy 3:26, 4:21 and 32:51.

Joshua the son of Nun is first mentioned in Exodus 17:9-14. He was Moses' assistant (Exodus 24:13), and one of the twelve spies (Numbers 13:8). With Caleb, he advocated entry into the land: *<<And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the Israelites, 'The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only, do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they are no more than bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them'>>* (Numbers 14:6-9). Joshua, who had led the Israelite army to victory in their first battle against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16), succeeded Moses as leader of Israel: *<<So the Lord said to Moses, 'Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon him; have him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and commission him in their sight'>>* (Numbers 27:18), and: *<<The Lord your God himself will cross over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua also will cross over before you, as the Lord promised>>* (Deuteronomy 31:3). He would be the man to lead the Israelites in their victorious campaigns to take possession of the Promised Land as recorded in the Book of Joshua. He would only succeed in this because God went with him: *<<I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go>>* (Joshua 1:9).

Moses was the great law giver, and represented relationship with God through the Law. This could give a person a wilderness kind of relationship with God, but could never bring them into the Promised Land kind of relationship with God. Only Joshua could do that - and the Hebrew name Joshua exactly corresponds to the name Jesus. Only Jesus can bring his people into a Promised Land relationship with God. In fact, the apostle John writes: *<<The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ>>* (John 1:17).

³⁹ And as for your little ones, who you thought would become booty, your children, who today do not yet know right from wrong, they shall enter there; to them I will give it, and they shall take possession of it.

⁴⁰ But as for you, journey back into the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea.'

Deuteronomy 1:39-40

As for your little ones who today do not yet know right from wrong. The expression suggests very young children before they are old enough to distinguish

between right and wrong. The need for discernment between good and evil is enforced in Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

⁴¹ You answered me, ‘We have sinned against the Lord! We are ready to go up and fight, just as the Lord our God commanded us.’ So all of you strapped on your battle gear, and thought it easy to go up into the hill country. ⁴² The Lord said to me, ‘Say to them, “Do not go up and do not fight, for I am not in the midst of you; otherwise you will be defeated by your enemies.”’ ⁴³ Although I told you, you would not listen. You rebelled against the command of the Lord and presumptuously went up into the hill country. ⁴⁴ The Amorites who lived in that hill country then came out against you and chased you as bees do. They beat you down in Seir as far as Hormah. ⁴⁵ When you returned and wept before the Lord, the Lord would neither heed your voice nor pay you any attention.

Deuteronomy 1:41-45

We have sinned against the Lord! We are ready to go up and fight. After hearing the consequences of their rejection of God, Israel had a change of heart. Yet they went forth in the flesh and not in faith, because God did not lead them.

I am not in the midst of you. If God does not fight for Israel, defeat is assured.

You would not listen. Israel stubbornly continues to refuse to heed God’s Word: *<<Know, then, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to occupy because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people. Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness; you have been rebellious against the Lord from the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place>>* (Deuteronomy 9:6-7).

You rebelled against the command of the Lord. They did this in the midst of their supposed repentance. Their sorrow was not over grieving the heart of God but over forty more years in the wilderness. God therefore saw through their shallow repentance.

Chased you as bees do describes the way the Israelites had to flee from the Amalekites in Exodus 23:28. It showed how their futile invasion attempt ended in disaster. After their total defeat, then they wept and wept, but again this was over the consequences of getting caught, not over grieving the heart of God, and not over their sin of not believing the great love of God. Instead of fighting for Israel, God now fights against them.

I.d Deuteronomy 1:46-2:25 - The Desert Years

Refer to Chapter Two.

Verse 46 will be commented on in Chapter Two.