



Deuteronomy - Chapter Two

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

Summary of Chapter Two

Moses continues his sermon on the journey in the wilderness. God instructed them to go through the land he had given to Jacob's twin brother Esau. Since that people were from the same family as the Israelites, God told them they were to purchase what they needed from the people in the land and they were not to fight against them - they would not win for God would be against them. He then gave them a similar command as they came to the land of Moab, for they were descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham.

The story recounts that those who were adults when they left Egypt had died during the wandering years, indeed God had sought them out to ensure they would die. He then gave them a similar command not to attack the people of Ammon for they too were descended from Lot but he would give them King Sihon and the Amorite peoples. Moses offered peace terms to King Sihon but he refused and came out against Israel and was defeated. Thus Israel destroyed all the land of the Amorites, their properties, killed all of the people but they took the livestock as spoil.

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

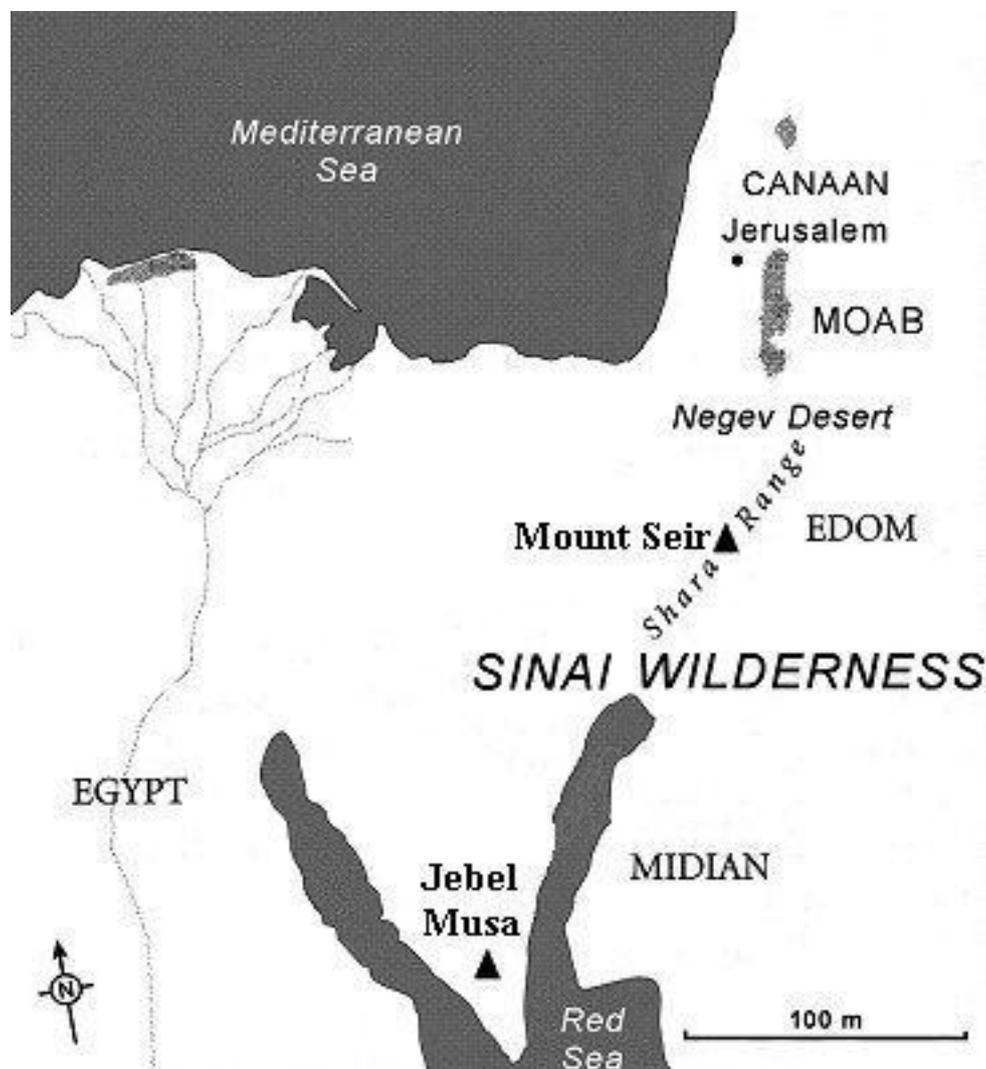
Moses continues to recount past history, jumping to near the end of the forty year wilderness period and recalling Israel's peaceful passage through three nations distantly related to it; refer to Numbers 20:14-21:20. This passage reminds Israel of God's care in bringing them so far and counters their fear of the inhabitants of the land so that they now may enter the land.

1:46 After you had stayed at Kadesh as many days as you did, ¹ we journeyed back into the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea, as the Lord had told me, and skirted Mount Seir for many days.

Deuteronomy 1:46-2:1

The Red Sea. This probably includes the Gulf of Aqaba, the north eastern arm of the Red Sea that divided the Sinai Peninsula from the land of Midian.

Mount Seir is south of the Dead Sea, in the land of Edom: <<**By the way of Mount Seir it takes eleven days to reach Kadesh-barnea from Horeb**>> (Deuteronomy 1:2). Edom is sometimes called Seir, a name also given to the Shara range of mountains.



² Then the Lord said to me: ³ ‘You have been skirting this hill country long enough. Head north, ⁴ and charge the people as follows: You are about to pass through the territory of your kindred, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, so be very careful

⁵ not to engage in battle with them, for I will not give you even so much as a foot's length of their land, since I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession.

Deuteronomy 2:2-5

The Lord said to me. This expression occurs seven times in Chapters 1-3, giving Moses a prophetic role, i.e. as God's authorised spokesman.

You have been skirting this hill country long enough. This is a similar statement to the one God made about the people camping at Mount Horeb (Deuteronomy 1:6). This formally announces the end of the forty year wilderness wandering.

Your kindred. The nation of Edom was descended from Jacob's twin brother Esau: <<Esau said to Jacob, 'Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!' (Therefore he was called Edom)>> (Genesis 25:30), and: <<These are the descendants of Esau (that is, Edom)>> (Genesis 36:1). Deuteronomy does not call the nation Edom, the Hebrew word for 'red,' instead referring either to Seir or Esau, perhaps to stress the blood relationship. The Israelites need to be very careful not to provoke the people of Edom against them: <<But Edom said to him, 'You shall not pass through, or we will come out with the sword against you.' The Israelites said to him, 'We will stay on the highway; and if we drink of your water, we and our livestock, then we will pay for it. It is only a small matter; just let us pass through on foot.' But he said, 'You shall not pass through.' And Edom came out against them with a large force, heavily armed. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through their territory; so Israel turned away from them>> (Numbers 20:18-21).

Perhaps the most famous Edomite in the NT was Herod the Great. He was hated by the Jews because he was an Edomite, or more correctly an Idumean in his day, but he wanted to be received and respected as a Jew. He was known as a great builder throughout the eastern Mediterranean area, including bringing the Jerusalem temple back to some of its former glory. He was also a ruthless man who killed many of his own close family and murdered innocent young children in an attempt to kill the young Jesus: <<When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men>> (Matthew 2:16).

Be very careful not to engage in battle with them, for I will not give you even so much as a foot's length of their land. Israel was not just some conquering army, out to get whatever land it could take. It probably was strong enough to simply take the land of Edom, but Israel only received what God had promised to them.

As a possession. This rare expression also occurs in v.9 and v.19 with respect to Moab and Ammon, and in v.12 with respect to Israel's future possession. God had given land to Edom, Moab, and Ammon and forbids Israel to attempt taking that land, presumably because of the blood relationships through Esau and Lot. The point is God's ability to give and protect land, thus encouraging Israel to trust him.

⁶ You shall purchase food from them for money, so that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them for money, so that you may drink. ⁷ Surely the Lord your God has blessed you in all your undertakings; he knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.'

Deuteronomy 2:6-7

You shall purchase food from them for money, you shall also buy water. God commanded Israel to treat the Edomites with respect, even though they could have dominated them as a stronger nation. It is how a person treats the vulnerable that often marks out their character. God commanded Israel to treat the weaker nation of Edom well to reveal their true character and, more importantly, his.

Surely the Lord your God has blessed you. Israel is not to be indebted to anyone other than God. This is a frequent theme in Deuteronomy. Israel lacked nothing, for God provided food and water when they ran short; refer to Exodus Chapters 16-17 and Numbers Chapter 11. He had provided for them for forty years: <<*For forty years you sustained them in the wilderness so that they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell*>> (Nehemiah 9:21), and: <<*Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you for forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite*>> (Amos 2:10).

^{8a} So we passed by our kin, the descendants of Esau who live in Seir, leaving behind the route of the Arabah, and leaving behind Elath and Ezion-geber.

Deuteronomy 2:8a

Elath and Ezion-geber were seaports on the Red Sea at the Gulf of Aqaba: <<*King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom*>> (1 Kings 9:26).

The route of the Arabah ran from these towns northward to the Dead Sea. Israel is now heading in a north easterly direction: <<*Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through their territory; so Israel turned away from them*>> (Numbers 20:21).

^{8b} When we had headed out along the route of the wilderness of Moab,
⁹ the Lord said to me: ‘Do not harass Moab or engage them in battle, for I will not give you any of its land as a possession, since I have given Ar as a possession to the descendants of Lot.’

Deuteronomy 2:8b-9

When we had headed out along the route of the wilderness of Moab. The Moabites were also distant relatives to Israel; they descended from Lot, who was the nephew of Abraham: <<*Thus both the daughters of Lot became pregnant by their father. The firstborn bore a son, and named him Moab; he is the ancestor of the Moabites to this day*>> (Genesis 19:36-37). And as with Edom, God did not want Israel to harass Moab or engage them in battle - their land was not the land God intended to give to Israel.

One of the more famous Moabites in the Bible was Ruth: <<*But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth*>> (Ruth 1:3-4a). She was a Moabite woman who married Boaz, an Israelite man, and became grandmother to King David and one of the ancestors of the Messiah: <<*The women of the neighbourhood gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi.’ They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David*>> (Ruth 4:17).

¹⁰ (The Emim – a large and numerous people, as tall as the Anakim – had formerly inhabited it. ¹¹ Like the Anakim, they are usually reckoned as Rephaim, though the Moabites call them Emim. ¹² Moreover, the Horim had formerly inhabited Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them, destroying them and settling in their place, as Israel has done in the land that the Lord gave them as a possession.) ^{13a} ‘Now then, proceed to cross over the Wadi Zered.’

Deuteronomy 2:10-13a

The Emim – a large and numerous people, as tall as the Anakim – had formerly inhabited it. This section, like vv.20-23, is very important in Moses’ argument. The people whom God dispossessed in order to give Moab its land included the Anakim (v.21), the very people Israel feared: <<*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 1:28). The point is that Israel has no reason to fear them. God is more powerful: <<*The Lord goes forth like a soldier, like a warrior he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes*>> (Isaiah 42:13).

Rephaim, like the Anakim, were so tall that the people of Israel thought of them as giants, which is the meaning of the Hebrew word *rephaim* that also means 'fearsome ones' (Numbers 13:32-33). Both Emim and Rephaim are mentioned in: <<*In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and subdued the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim, and the Horites in the hill country of Seir as far as El-paran on the edge of the wilderness*>> (Genesis 14:5-6).

Esau's possession is a model to encourage Israel. The land of their possession may refer only to the Transjordanian land Israel possessed already (Deuteronomy 2:24-3:17).

The Horim had formerly inhabited Seir. The Horim are also known as the Horites and are recorded as inhabiting the land of Seir in Genesis 14:6 above. Their genealogy is listed in Genesis 36:20-30.

^{13b} So we crossed over the Wadi Zered. ¹⁴ And the length of time we had travelled from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the Wadi Zered was thirty-eight years, until the entire generation of warriors had perished from the camp, as the Lord had sworn concerning them. ¹⁵ Indeed, the Lord's own hand was against them, to root them out from the camp, until all had perished.

Deuteronomy 2:13b-15

The wadi Zered was the border between Edom and Moab. A wadi is a brook or river that usually flows only after rain and then becomes dry again.

Thirty-eight years. In these brief verses, Moses covered thirty eight years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. This was a period when they just took up time, waiting for the generation of unbelief to die so that the generation of faith could take the Promised Land. God's decree after the spies incident, that the adult generation of Israel then living would die in the wilderness: <<*none of the people who have seen my glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their ancestors; none of those who despised me shall see it*>> (Numbers 14:22-23), has been fulfilled.

The Lord's own hand was against them suggests pestilence, as seen in: <<*the hand of the Lord will strike with a deadly pestilence your livestock in the field: the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks*>> (Exodus 9:3), and: <<*The hand of the Lord was heavy upon the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and struck them with tumours, both in Ashdod and in its territory*>> (1 Samuel 5:6).

To root them out from the camp, until all had perished. It was decreed that all should perish for their opposition to God and the purpose he had for his people: <<*Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them that he would make them fall in the wilderness*>> (Psalm 106:26), and: <<*Now I desire to remind you, though you are fully informed, that the Lord, who once for all saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those who did not believe*>> (Jude 5).

¹⁶ Just as soon as all the warriors had died from among the people, ¹⁷ the Lord spoke to me, saying, ¹⁸ ‘Today you are going to cross the boundary of Moab at Ar. ¹⁹ When you approach the frontier of the Ammonites, do not harass them or engage them in battle, for I will not give the land of the Ammonites to you as a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot.’

Deuteronomy 2:16-19

I will not give the land of the Ammonites to you as a possession. As with the Edomites and the Moabites, the land of the Ammonites was also not for the people of Israel to inhabit or destroy. To ensure this did not happen he issued the command do not harass them or engage them in battle: <<*See now, the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy*>> (2 Chronicles 20:10)

²⁰ (It also is usually reckoned as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly inhabited it, though the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, ²¹ a strong and numerous people, as tall as the Anakim. But the Lord destroyed them from before the Ammonites so that they could dispossess them and settle in their place. ²² He did the same for the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, by destroying the Horim before them so that they could dispossess them and settle in their place even to this day. ²³ As for the Avvim, who had lived in settlements in the vicinity of Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and settled in their place.)

Deuteronomy 2:20-23

The Zamzummim are probably the same as the Zuzim of Ham in Genesis 14:5.

The Avvim are recorded as an unconquered people living in the south of Canaan: <<*there are five rulers of the Philistines, those of Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron), and those of the Avvim in the south*>> (Joshua 13:3), which

later became the territory allocated to the tribe of Benjamin; refer to Joshua 18:11-28. They were an ungodly race: <<*But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the shrines of the high places that the people of Samaria had made, every nation in the cities in which they lived; the people of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the people of Cuth made Nergal, the people of Hamath made Ashima; the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak; the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim*>> (2 Kings 17:29-31)

The Caphtorim. It is possible that Caphtor was Crete, the original home of the Philistines: <<*Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphtorim, from which the Philistines come*>> (Genesis 10:14), and: <<*For the Lord is destroying the Philistines, the remnant of the coastland of Caphtor*>> (Jeremiah 47:4).

²⁴ ‘Proceed on your journey and cross the Wadi Arnon. See, I have handed over to you King Sihon the Amorite of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to take possession by engaging him in battle.’²⁵ This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under heaven; when they hear report of you, they will tremble and be in anguish because of you.’

Deuteronomy 2:24-25

The wadi Arnon flowed into the Dead Sea and marked the border between Moab to the south and Amorite territory and Ammon to the north.

Begin to take possession. All that is occurring to the east of the River Jordan is preparation for the Israelites to enter and possess the land of Canaan. Even though Heshbon lies in Transjordan, in a sense its conquest marks the beginning of possessing the Promised Land; refer to Joshua 12:1-6.

Begin to take possession by engaging him in battle. According to Genesis 15:16, the land would be given to Israel when the iniquity of the Amorites was complete, and now that time had come. Thus the defeat of various nations represents God’s punishment for their iniquity: <<*For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord; it is because of such abhorrent practices that the Lord your God is driving them out before you*>> (Deuteronomy 18:12).

In holy war, enemies tremble before the Lord: <<*The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia*>> (Exodus 15:14), and: <<*so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, and so that you may fear the Lord your God for ever.*>> When all the kings of the Amorites beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the Israelites until they had crossed over, their hearts failed, and

there was no longer any spirit in them, because of the Israelites>> (Joshua 4:24-5:1).

I have handed over to you King Sihon the Amorite. Moses recounts Israel's first conquest; refer to Numbers 21:21-30 for full details.

I.e Deuteronomy 2:26-37 - Defeat of King Sihon

Moses recounts the first battle on their final leg towards the land of Canaan as the Amorite king refuses to allow the Israelites to pass through his land peacefully but instead engages them in battle. This leads to the complete destruction of his land and the annihilation of his people.

²⁶ So I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to King Sihon of Heshbon with the following terms of peace: ²⁷ 'If you let me pass through your land, I will travel only along the road; I will turn aside neither to the right nor to the left. ²⁸ You shall sell me food for money, so that I may eat, and supply me water for money, so that I may drink. Only allow me to pass through on foot — ²⁹ just as the descendants of Esau who live in Seir have done for me and likewise the Moabites who live in Ar — until I cross the Jordan into the land that the Lord our God is giving us.'

Deuteronomy 2:26-29

Heshbon was a fertile land: <<*Your eyes are pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim*>> (Song 7:4b), north of Moab and Ammon on the east of the Jordan River. The offer of terms of peace does not seem to match the instruction to fight in v.24. Perhaps Israel was reluctant to obey and fight. The tribe of Benjamin was later saved from extinction by a similar effort to gain peace: <<*Then the whole congregation sent word to the Benjaminites who were at the rock of Rimmon, and proclaimed peace to them*>> (Judges 21:13)

³⁰ But King Sihon of Heshbon was not willing to let us pass through, for the Lord your God had hardened his spirit and made his heart defiant in order to hand him over to you, as he has now done.

Deuteronomy 2:30

God had hardened his spirit and made his heart defiant just as with Pharaoh during the series of plagues: <<*But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he would not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses*>> (Exodus 9:12), and on several other occasions.

It was right for God to do this because the creator has the right to do whatever he pleases with his creatures. However, it was also right because of the way God did it. God did not persuade a reluctant Sihon to act out against Israel; God simply let Sihon's heart take the evil way it wanted to take. God did not change Sihon's heart from good to bad, but hardened it in its malice towards Israel. Jesus warned his disciples not to have hardened hearts so as not to perceive the ways of the world around them: *<<And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?' They said to him, 'Twelve.' 'And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?' And they said to him, 'Seven.' Then he said to them, 'Do you not yet understand?>> (Mark 8:17-21).*

In order to hand him over to you. This explains why God hardened the heart of Sihon. God led Sihon into the destructive course that his heart desired so that the land of the Amorites became the possession and inheritance of Israel.

As he has now done. Expressions like this occur regularly in Deuteronomy to give Israel confidence in God's power and faithfulness.

³¹ The Lord said to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin now to take possession of his land.' ³² So when Sihon came out against us, he and all his people for battle at Jahaz, ³³ the Lord our God gave him over to us; and we struck him down, along with his offspring and all his people.

Deuteronomy 2:31-33

Jahaz is mentioned in Joshua 13:18 and 21:36-37, along with Kedemoth (v.26).

³⁴ At that time we captured all his towns, and in each town we utterly destroyed men, women, and children. We left not a single survivor.

³⁵ Only the livestock we kept as spoil for ourselves, as well as the plunder of the towns that we had captured.

Deuteronomy 2:34-35

We utterly destroyed or devoted to destruction. The total destruction of Sihon's towns and people reflects God's instructions for battle within the Promised Land. This emphasis is absent in the parallel account in Numbers Chapter 21. Since God is the victor, the spoils of battle belong to him and not to Israel, hence their destruction as an act of devotion to God. It also is a precursor of final judgement.

³⁶ From Aroer on the edge of the Wadi Arnon (including the town that is in the wadi itself) as far as Gilead, there was no citadel too high for us. The Lord our God gave everything to us. ³⁷ You did not encroach, however, on the land of the Ammonites, avoiding the whole upper region of the Wadi Jabbok as well as the towns of the hill country, just as the Lord our God had charged.

Deuteronomy 2:36-37

Aroer was on the northern bank of the Arnon.

Gilead is the name given generally to the Transjordanian territory.

There was no citadel too high for us. Thirty eight years before, Israel refused to go into the Promised Land because they felt they were over-matched militarily. Here, when they began to enter the land by faith, God showed them how it could have been thirty eight years before, if they had only believed and trusted him.

The Jabbok River in part marked the border of Ammon and Gilead. It was the place where Jacob and his family crossed as they returned to Canaan: <<***The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok***>> (Genesis 32:22), and where Jacob wrestled with God, thus being given the new name of Israel: <<***Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed'***>> (Genesis 32:28).