



Deuteronomy - Chapter Three

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

Summary of Chapter Three

Moses continues the account with a military defeat of another Amorite king, King Og of Bashan. The land contained sixty fortified towns but Israel overcame them all, killing the king and all the people in the process. This land in the Transjordan would become the possession of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and for the half tribe of Manasseh. This demonstration of God's power was a reminder to Joshua of what God would also do for them when they went in to take possession of Canaan.

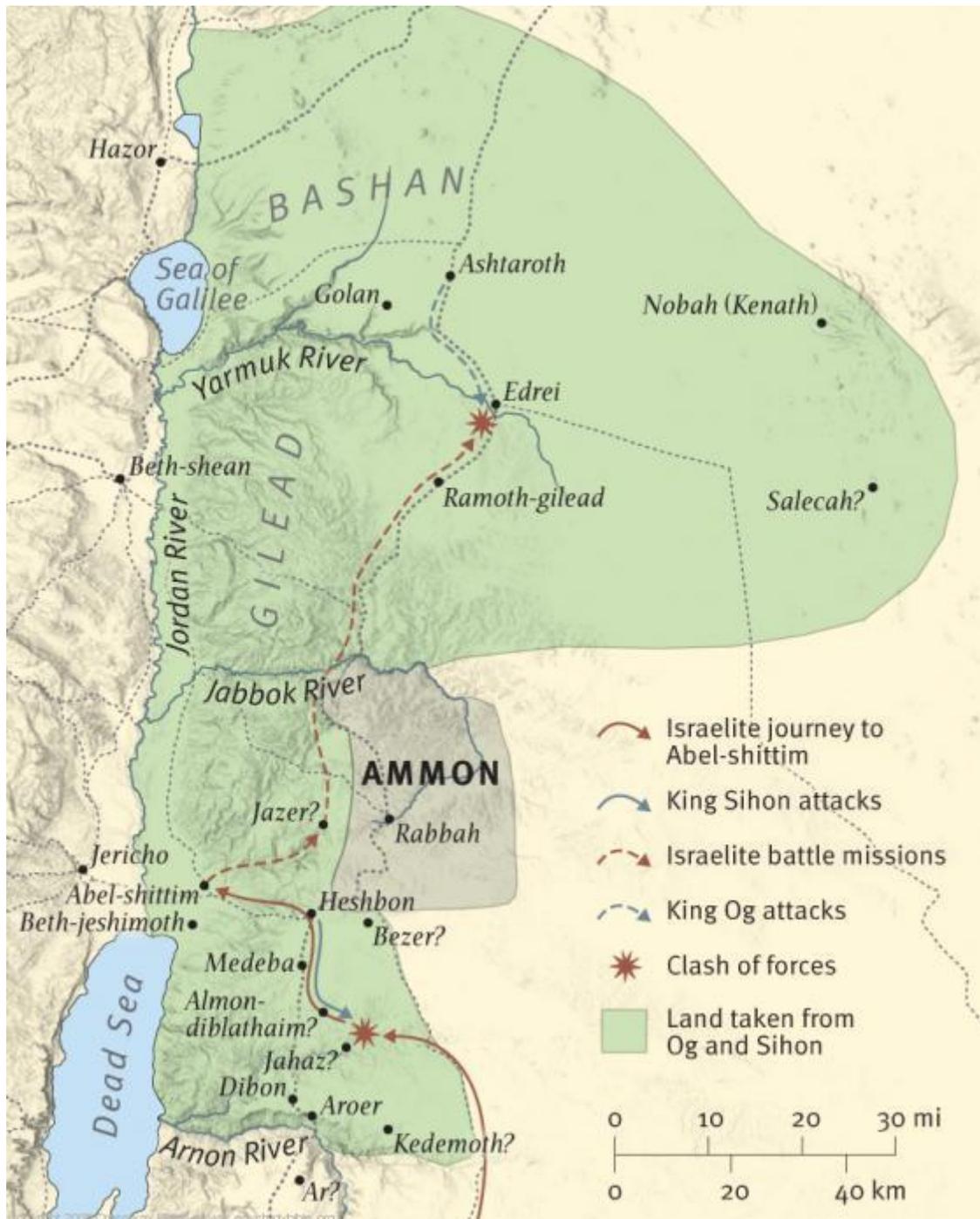
Moses came before God following this battle and requested that he be allowed to cross the Jordan so that he could continue to witness the power and might of God. The Lord rebuked him for this request but directed him to go to the top of Pisgah to view the land that the Israelites would possess. It would be Joshua that would have the privilege of taking the people across the river.

I.f Deuteronomy 3:1-22 - Defeat of King Og

Moses provides a detailed account of the defeat of the second Amorite king and God's purpose for this battle.

I.f.i Deuteronomy 3:1-11 - Israel Defeats Bashan

This section recounts Israel's second Transjordanian victory; refer to Numbers 21:31-35. Like Sihon, Og was also an Amorite. Deuteronomy 2:26-3:22 reviews how the Israelites defeated King Sihon when he refused them passage through his land and attacked them at Jahaz. Soon afterward, the Israelites spied out Jazer and captured it. As they headed north from Jazer, the Israelites were attacked by King Og's forces at Edrei, but they defeated him and took control of his land as well.



¹ When we headed up the road to Bashan, King Og of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, for battle at Edrei. ² The Lord said to me, ‘Do not fear him, for I have handed him over to you, along with his people and his land. Do to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon.’

[Deuteronomy 3:1-2](#)

[Bashan](#) is the area northeast of the Sea of Galilee. [Edrei](#) was a town on the southern border of Bashan.

Do not fear him, for I have handed him over to you. As Israel continued closer to the Promised Land, moving westward towards the Jordan River, they passed through the land of Og, king of Bashan. God's message to his people not to fear enemies is a frequent theme in the OT, including: <<*The Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not fear them, for I have handed them over to you; not one of them shall stand before you'*>> (Joshua 10:8), <<*Isaiah said to them, 'Say to your master, "Thus says the Lord: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me"'*>> (2 Kings 19:6), and: <<*Then the Lord said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field, and say to him, Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smouldering stumps of firebrands, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah*>> (Isaiah 7:3-4).

³ So the Lord our God also handed over to us King Og of Bashan and all his people. We struck him down until not a single survivor was left.

Deuteronomy 3:3

So the Lord our God also handed over to us King Og of Bashan. Moses reminded the people that it was God and not they who had won the victory.

We struck him down until not a single survivor was left. It was quite common in warfare for some men to be taken as slaves and the women either likewise or as wives. However, God had decreed that all should be destroyed and that is what the Israelite soldiers did: <<*So they killed him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left; and they took possession of his land*>> (Numbers 21:35). Some Christians are uncomfortable with human carnage on this scale in the name of God, but if it is his will then it needs no justification.

⁴ At that time we captured all his towns; there was no citadel that we did not take from them – sixty towns, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

Deuteronomy 3:4

At that time we captured all his towns; sixty towns. This brought Israel even more territory to occupy on the east side of the Jordan River, and it showed them that they could, through the power of God, overcome the mighty enemies they would confront on the west side of the Jordan River.

⁵ All these were fortress towns with high walls, double gates, and bars, besides a great many villages. ⁶ And we utterly destroyed them, as we had done to King Sihon of Heshbon, in each city utterly destroying

men, women, and children. ⁷ But all the livestock and the plunder of the towns we kept as spoil for ourselves.

Deuteronomy 3:5-7

All these were fortress towns with high walls. In recounting these victories, Moses seeks to persuade Israel to cross the Jordan not fearing the enemy but trusting in God's power to overcome anyone and anything. This was clearly demonstrated at Jericho in Joshua Chapter 6.

Utterly destroying men, women, and children or devoted to destruction. The total destruction of Og's towns and people reflects God's instructions for battle within the Promised Land. Refer also to the comments on Deuteronomy 2:34-35.

⁸ So at that time we took from the two kings of the Amorites the land beyond the Jordan, from the Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon ⁹ (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, while the Amorites call it Senir), ¹⁰ all the towns of the tableland, the whole of Gilead, and all of Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edrei, towns of Og's kingdom in Bashan.

Deuteronomy 3:8-10

Mount Hermon stands at 9,232 feet or 2,814m above sea level and is a snow-capped mountain at Israel's northern border with Lebanon and Syria. It is part of what is now known as the Golan Heights. The alternative names Sirion and Senir are also found in ancient Ugaritic, Hittite, and Assyrian documents. Salecah lay on the south eastern edge of Bashan.



Mount Hermon

Regional map showing the location of Mount Hermon in the Golan Heights.

<<It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life for evermore>> (Psalm 133:3).

¹¹ (Now only King Og of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. In fact his bed, an iron bed, can still be seen in Rabbah of the Ammonites. By the common cubit it is nine cubits long and four cubits wide.)

Deuteronomy 3:11

Now only King Og of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Apparently, Og was the last of the Rephaim in his area on the east side of the Jordan River. The repeated references to the Rephaim in these first three chapters show that Israel, when trusting in God, was well able to defeat this race of fearsome warriors. It also shows that their fear of these men back in Numbers Chapter 13, where they first refused to go into the Promised Land, was unfounded. Their excuses are shown to be weaker in light of the next generation's victories.

Og's iron bed was over 13 feet or 4m long and 6 feet or 1.8m wide. This may refer to his coffin or sarcophagus. The reference reminds Israel that the giant Rephaim have been killed and that Israel's fear of them is unfounded.

Rabbah was the capital city of Ammon, a city that represented opposition to Israel in the Promised Land: <<*In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem*>> (2 Samuel 11:1), and: <<*Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of the Ammonites, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead in order to enlarge their territory. So I will kindle a fire against the wall of Rabbah, fire that shall devour its strongholds, with shouting on the day of battle, with a storm on the day of the whirlwind*>> (Amos 1:13-14). It is modern-day Amman in Jordan.

The common cubit, which is different from a royal cubit, was approximately 18 inches or 46cm.

I.f.ii Deuteronomy 3:12-17 - Distribution of the Transjordanian Land

This subsection recapitulates the distribution of the lands of Sihon and Og to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh; refer to Numbers 32:1-42 and 34:13-15. The repeat of this in Deuteronomy underscores that the possession of the Promised Land has begun, which should make Israel more confident to cross the Jordan and conquer the remaining land.

¹² As for the land that we took possession of at that time, I gave to the Reubenites and Gadites the territory north of Aroer that is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as well as half the hill country of Gilead with its towns, ¹³ and I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh the rest of Gilead

and all of Bashan, Og's kingdom. (The whole region of Argob: all that portion of Bashan used to be called a land of Rephaim; ¹⁴ Jair the Manassite acquired the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and he named them – that is, Bashan – after himself, Havvoth-jair, as it is to this day.)

Deuteronomy 3:12-14

As for the land that we took possession of at that time. These two and a half tribes decided that this land on the east side of the Jordan River was good enough for them, and the Lord allowed it, if they would fulfil their obligations mentioned in the following verses.

The Reubenites and Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were given land in the Transjordan: *<<Moses gave to them – to the Gadites and to the Reubenites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph – the kingdom of King Sihon of the Amorites and the kingdom of King Og of Bashan, the land and its towns, with the territories of the surrounding towns>>* (Numbers 32:33), although it was conditional on them crossing over into Canaan to fight for the land with their brothers: *<<So Moses said to them, 'If you do this – if you take up arms to go before the Lord for the war, and all those of you who bear arms cross the Jordan before the Lord, until he has driven out his enemies from before him and the land is subdued before the Lord – then after that you may return and be free of obligation to the Lord and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord>>* (Numbers 32:20-22)

Jair the Manassite acquired the whole region of Argob. Numbers 32:39-41 implies the various clans of the half tribe of Manasseh took towns and villages that were in Gilead, and not Bashan as stated here. This is supported by one of his descendants of the same name who became a judge over Israel: *<<After him came Jair the Gileadite, who judged Israel for twenty-two years. He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; and they had thirty towns, which are in the land of Gilead, and are called Havvoth-jair to this day>>* (Judges 10:3-4).

The Geshurites and the Maacathites were separate kingdoms bordering Bashan to the west. They were not conquered by Joshua: *<<Yet the Israelites did not drive out the Geshurites or the Maacathites; but Geshur and Maacath live within Israel to this day>>* (Joshua 13:13), and remained independent in David's time: *<<Sons were born to David at Hebron: his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel; his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; the third, Absalom son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur>>* (2 Samuel 3:3), and: *<<When the Ammonites saw that they had become odious to David, the Ammonites sent and hired the Arameans of Beth-rehob and the Arameans*

of Zobah, twenty thousand foot-soldiers, as well as the king of Maacah, one thousand men, and the men of Tob, twelve thousand men>> (2 Samuel 10:6).

¹⁵ To Machir I gave Gilead. ¹⁶ And to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory from Gilead as far as the Wadi Arnon, with the middle of the wadi as a boundary, and up to the Jabbok, the wadi being the boundary of the Ammonites; ¹⁷ the Arabah also, with the Jordan and its banks, from Chinnereth down to the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, with the lower slopes of Pisgah on the east.

Deuteronomy 3:15-17

Machir was the son of Manasseh: <<*Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children of Machir son of Manasseh were also born on Joseph's knees>> (Genesis 50:23). Here it refers to his descendants, a clan of the tribe of Manasseh; refer also to Joshua 17:1.*

Chinnereth is another name for the Sea of Galilee. It appears only in Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua.

Pisgah is the peak of Mount Nebo, overlooking Jericho and the north end of the Dead Sea, the place where Moses dies; refer to Deuteronomy 34:1-4. Once again it is only referenced in Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua.

I.f.iii Deuteronomy 3:18-22 - Command to all Israelites to Fight

Two and a half tribes already possess their land, but they are commanded here to join the remaining tribes to conquer the land west of the Jordan and only then return to inhabit their Transjordanian land. The wives and children of these tribes are to stay in Transjordan and await the completed conquest.

¹⁸ At that time, I charged you as follows: 'Although the Lord your God has given you this land to occupy, all your troops shall cross over armed as the vanguard of your Israelite kin.

Deuteronomy 3:18

Your troops shall cross over armed as the vanguard of your Israelite kin. As previously indicated, the Transjordan tribes not only agreed to go into Canaan to fight but they would actually take the lead and go before the other tribes: <<*but we will take up arms as a vanguard before the Israelites, until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our little ones will stay in the fortified towns because of the inhabitants of the land>> (Numbers 32:17).*

¹⁹ Only your wives, your children, and your livestock – I know that you have much livestock – shall stay behind in the towns that I have given to you.

Deuteronomy 3:19

Only your wives shall stay behind. The two and a half tribes would make provision for their families in their new towns before embarking on the war in the land of Canaan: <<*Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan. But all the warriors among you shall cross over armed before your kindred and shall help them*>> (Joshua 1:14). There would, no doubt, have been men under twenty years of age and thus too young to be in the army, but who would have been able to protect the women and children from any attacks on their towns.

²⁰ When the Lord gives rest to your kindred, as to you, and they too have occupied the land that the Lord your God is giving them beyond the Jordan, then each of you may return to the property that I have given to you.'

Deuteronomy 3:20

Although rest here conveys simply peace after warfare, it is a theologically rich term, suggesting the well-being of God's people in God's place under his rule. Thus the notion hints back to the seventh day of creation: <<*For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it*>> (Exodus 20:11), and forward to a permanent rest; refer to Psalm 95:7-11 and Hebrews 3:7-4:11.

²¹ And I charged Joshua as well at that time, saying: 'Your own eyes have seen everything that the Lord your God has done to these two kings; so the Lord will do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. ²² Do not fear them, for it is the Lord your God who fights for you.'

Deuteronomy 3:21-22

And I charged Joshua as well at that time. Joshua had a huge task before him, to bring a whole nation into a land where they would not be welcome, and where they would have to fight to possess what God had rightfully given to them.

The conquests of Sihon and Og gave the Israelites a model of the future conquest under Joshua. Unlike its experience thirty eight years previously at Kadesh, Israel is not to fear their enemies. If God fights for them, victory is assured: <<*Be strong*

and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.’ Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel: ‘Be strong and bold, for you are the one who will go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their ancestors to give them; and you will put them in possession of it. It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed’>> (Deuteronomy 31:6-8). Remembering God’s past faithfulness is key to present and future victory.

I.f.g Deuteronomy 3:23-29 - Moses Views Canaan from Pisgah

As already mentioned in Deuteronomy 1:37-38, it is reiterated that the Lord had denied Moses entry into the land and that Joshua would succeed him. In light of the significant cloud that Moses’ death would cast over Israel’s enthusiasm for entry into the land, the emphasis here lies more on encouraging Joshua so that he is well-equipped to continue on from Moses’ leadership.

²³ At that time, too, I entreated the Lord, saying: ²⁴ ‘O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your might; what god in heaven or on earth can perform deeds and mighty acts like yours!

Deuteronomy 3:23-24

O Lord God is a standard form for beginning a prayer: <<*I prayed to the Lord and said, ‘Lord God, do not destroy the people who are your very own possession, whom you redeemed in your greatness, whom you brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand’>> (Deuteronomy 9:26).*

You have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your might. Moses had, of course, seen much of what God could do for his people and indeed had seen his glory, speaking with him face to face: <<*Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the tent*>> (Exodus 33:11). However, the way these battles had been so decisive was something new and Moses wanted to see more of what God could do in this context. In human terms, this is fully understandable.

²⁵ Let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon.’

Deuteronomy 3:25

Let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan. God had already told Moses that he would not get to enter the Promised Land, but he pleaded with God this one last time. Moses knew God was rich in mercy and forgiveness. He knew

there was no harm in asking God to relent from his previous judgement that Moses would not see the Promised Land. It can be appreciated what a painful thing this was for Moses. He lived the first forty years of his life confident in his own ability to deliver Israel. He spent the next forty years of his life having that confidence demolished as he tended his father-in-law's sheep. He spent the last forty years of his life being used by God to do what he was called to do. Now, he was not allowed to see the end result. No wonder Moses pleaded with the Lord. Yet he would still encourage the others to continue: <<*For I am going to die in this land without crossing over the Jordan, but you are going to cross over to take possession of that good land*>> (Deuteronomy 4:22).

²⁶ But the Lord was angry with me on your account and would not heed me. The Lord said to me, 'Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again!' ²⁷ Go up to the top of Pisgah and look around you to the west, to the north, to the south, and to the east. Look well, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. ²⁸ But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, because it is he who shall cross over at the head of this people and who shall secure their possession of the land that you will see.'

Deuteronomy 3:26-28

The Lord was angry with me on your account. Moses had struck the rock at Meribah which was the reason he lost his right to lead the people into the Promised Land. However, he did so only after disputing with the other Israelites and this, he states was the reason why he misunderstood the Lord's command and struck the rock instead of commanding it to bring forth water: <<*They angered the Lord at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account*>> (Psalm 106:32).

Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again! God did not want to hear Moses' appeal on this matter. Because of his sin at Meribah, recorded in Numbers Chapter 20, where he misrepresented God as being angry with Israel when he was not, Moses could not enter the Promised Land. This may seem an excessively harsh punishment for Moses. It seemed that after only one slip-up, he then had to die short of the Promised Land. However, Moses was being judged by a stricter standard because of his leadership position with the nation, and because he had a uniquely close relationship with God.

It is right for teachers and leaders to be judged by a stricter standard: <<Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness>> (James 3:1); although it is unrighteous to hold teachers and leaders to a perfect standard. It is true the people's conduct was worse than Moses' but that is irrelevant. Worst

of all, Moses defaced a beautiful picture of Jesus' redemptive work through the rock which provided water in the wilderness. The NT makes it clear this water-providing, life-giving rock was a picture of Jesus: *<<and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ>>* (1 Corinthians 10:4). Jesus, being struck once, provided life for all who would drink of him: *<<On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink>>* (John 7:37-38a). It was unnecessary, and unrighteous, that Jesus would be struck again, much less again twice, because the Son of God needed only to suffer once: *<<And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, 'he sat down at the right hand of God'>>* (Hebrews 10:10-12). People can now come to Jesus with words of faith: *<<But what does it say? 'The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved>>* (Romans 10:8-10), as Moses should have only used words of faith to bring life-giving water to the nation of Israel. Moses unintentionally 'ruined' this picture of the work of Jesus that God intended.

Go up to the top of Pisgah. This was the place where Moses would be able to see the Promised Land from a distance, and then die, and where the Book of Deuteronomy will end.



An engraving of Moses viewing the Promised Land from the top of Mount Pisgah.

But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him. Joshua is commissioned by Moses in Deuteronomy 31:7-8 and by the Lord in Deuteronomy 31:23. Refer also to Joshua 1:1-9.

It would have been easy for Moses to have an unrighteous attitude here, “well, if I’m not going into the Promised Land, I’m sure not going to make any real effort to train my replacement.” However, that was not the heart of Moses, he would do everything he could to love the people, to guide them, to prepare them to go in, and to make Joshua a successful leader. A person of God would not do it any other way. Moses had the heart of a true shepherd: <<*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*>> (John 10:11). He knew that his ministry was not centred on himself and his own satisfaction, but on God and his people.

²⁹ So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

Deuteronomy 3:29

Beth-peor was the location of another act of rebellion in Israel’s wilderness years, when Israel worshipped the Baal of Peor; refer to Numbers 25:1-5. Beth-peor means ‘house or temple of Peor,’ perhaps referring to the altars Balaam had built there: <<*So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the wasteland. Balaam said to Balak, ‘Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me’*>> (Numbers 23:28-29).