

## The First Sermon of Moses, Continued

### Deuteronomy 2

**Deuteronomy 2:1-23** - *“Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness of the Way of the Red Sea, as the Lord spoke to me, and we skirted Mount Seir for many days.*

<sup>2</sup> *“And the Lord spoke to me, saying: <sup>3</sup> ‘You have skirted this mountain long enough; turn northward. <sup>4</sup> And command the people, saying, “You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. <sup>5</sup> Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. <sup>6</sup> You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink. <sup>7</sup> “For the Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.”*

<sup>8</sup> *“And when we passed beyond our brethren, the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir, away from the road of the plain, away from Elath and Ezion Geber, we turned and passed by way of the Wilderness of Moab. <sup>9</sup> Then the Lord said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.”’ <sup>10</sup> (The Emim had dwelt there in times past, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. <sup>11</sup> They were also regarded as giants, like the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim. <sup>12</sup> The Horites formerly dwelt in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the Lord gave them.)*

<sup>13</sup> *“Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.’ So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered. <sup>14</sup> And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the Lord had sworn to them. <sup>15</sup> For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed.*

<sup>16</sup> *“So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, <sup>17</sup> that the Lord spoke to me, saying: <sup>18</sup> ‘This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab. <sup>19</sup> And when you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession.”’ <sup>20</sup> (That was also regarded as a land of giants; giants formerly dwelt there. But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, <sup>21</sup> a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. But the Lord destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, <sup>22</sup> just as He had done for the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them. They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day. <sup>23</sup> And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza—the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.)”*

## **Background Notes**

In Deuteronomy 1 Moses began his first sermon by reviewing Israel's time at Mt. Sinai, where the Law was given. He also reviewed Israel's time at Kadesh Barnea, where they sent out the spies. Because of the people of Israel's unbelief, they wandered in the wilderness for 38 years, until all the adult generation had died - except for Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies.

Moses' first sermon continued in chapter 2. He reviewed Israel's journey from Kadesh Barnea to the plains of Moab, and the conquest of Transjordan (the east side of the Jordan River). *"And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the Lord had sworn to them"* (v14). The total time they spent between leaving Egypt and entering Canaan was 40 years, and 38 of those years wandering in the wilderness.

Most translations have verses 10-12 and verses 20-23 in parentheses. It appears that another inspired writer added this information at a later time. Is the fact that these verses were added later a problem for the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture? No! The doctrine of inspiration does not require every book of Scripture to be written entirely by one author. After all, David didn't write all the psalms - other inspired authors wrote some of the psalms. And most likely another inspired writer wrote of Moses' death at the end of the book of Deuteronomy.

## **Doctrinal Points**

### **1. Moses reviewed Israel's journey to Transjordan.**

"Transjordan" ("across Jordan") means the eastern side of the Jordan River. In verses 1-23 Moses reviewed the journey of the children of Israel from Kadesh Barnea (where they had sent out the spies 38 years before) to the Plains of Moab, on the eastern banks of the Jordan. From there they would cross the Jordan and enter the Land of Promise. God could have chosen to bring them directly north from Kadesh Barnea to enter the Land (as they should have done 38 years earlier). However, God now chose to bring them into the Land from the east. Why? One reason is that this allowed them to experience the miracle of the Jordan River being held back, so they could cross over - at flood season - with no problem. Experiencing this miracle was important for the new generation that had not seen the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea.

In addition, God brought His people into the Land from the east so Israel could defeat the Amorites in Transjordan. But notice - before they fought the Amorites, God directed them to bypass and not fight the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites, who also lived on the east side of the Jordan. They were not to fight these nations because the Edomites were descendants of Esau, and the Moabites and Ammonites were descendants of Lot. God had given these distant

relatives of Israel their land to the east and the southeast of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. God's people Israel were **not** to take what God had **not** given them - not then, and not today.

When the children of Israel left Kadesh, they went southeast and circled Mt. Seir (which belonged to Edom) for many days. Then they moved on towards Moab, but they did not fight the Edomites, nor did they cut through their territory by way of the Arabah Road. No, they went around Edom and travelled toward Moab on the east side of Edom. They paid with their own money for any food or water they got from the Edomites.

The same "hands-off" policy applied to the Moabites and the Ammonites. Israel went around Moab to the east, and then to the plains of Moab without harassing the Ammonites. By the way, don't confuse the "Ammonites" and the "Amorites"! As descendants of Abraham's nephew, Lot, the Ammonites were distant relatives of the children of Israel, and God Himself gave them their land (v19). The Amorites, on the other hand, were not given land by God on either side of the Jordan River, and Israel was allowed to fight them on both sides of the Jordan.

## 2. Moses reviewed Israel's conquest of Transjordan.

**Deuteronomy 2:24-37** - *"Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess it, and engage him in battle. <sup>25</sup> This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.' <sup>26</sup> "And I sent messengers from the Wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, <sup>27</sup> 'Let me pass through your land; I will keep strictly to the road, and I will turn neither to the right nor to the left. <sup>28</sup> You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on foot, <sup>29</sup> just as the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir and the Moabites who dwell in Ar did for me, until I cross the Jordan to the land which the Lord our God is giving us.'*

<sup>30</sup> *"But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as it is this day. <sup>31</sup> "And the Lord said to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to possess it, that you may inherit his land.'<sup>32</sup> Then Sihon and all his people came out against us to fight at Jahaz. <sup>33</sup> And the Lord our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people. <sup>34</sup> We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining. <sup>35</sup> We took only the livestock as plunder for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we took. <sup>36</sup> From Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, and from the city that is in the ravine, as far as Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us; the Lord our God delivered all to us. <sup>37</sup> Only you did not go near the land of the people of Ammon—anywhere along the River Jabbok, or to the cities of the mountains, or wherever the Lord our God had forbidden us."*

From these verses, it's clear that Israel did a lot of fighting before they crossed the Jordan for the conquest of central Canaan. By the time they entered the Land they were battle-hardened troops. Israel first offered a peace treaty to the Amorite king, Sihon, but Sihon refused, and God delivered these Amorites into Israel's hands.

The fact that Israel left no survivor (v34) is a difficult concept to handle, but it must be viewed from the **divine perspective**. When a nation or "people group" did not bring glory to God, He often removed them, rather than permit them to go on sinning. Genesis 15:16 indicated that God had given the Amorites hundreds of years to repent - but they refused. God told Abraham: "*In the fourth generation the descendants of Abraham shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete*" (Genesis 15:16). So the Amorites had plenty of time to repent. And God certainly had a witness in the land - Melchizedek is one example. God was present in the land, but the pagans did not respond to His grace. As a theocracy (a nation that took direct orders from God), Israel was used as God's rod of judgment in dealing with the pagan Amorites.

Another aspect of the **divine perspective** is that God did not want His people Israel to be polluted by the idolatry and the immorality of these pagan peoples. Remember, God was going to allow the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh to settle in the territory on the east side of the Jordan.

## Practical Application

**Remember - the *right* way is sometimes the *long* way.**

God took His people the long way around - bypassing the nations of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, and entering the Promised Land by crossing the Jordan River from the east. I'm sure many of the people complained - especially if they could have looked at the early maps and seen how many extra miles they had to travel - on foot! We probably would have complained, too - even if we got to drive those extra miles in an air-conditioned car!

But for Israel, the **right** way was the **long** way - and this may be true in our lives as well. The right way - God's way - may involve more time, more money, more work, more sacrifice, more grief, and more disappointment. But remember - **the right way is sometimes the long way!** So don't be discouraged. Even if the road is hard and long, God is at work in our lives!