

עץ חיים

ETZ HAYIM

TORAH AND COMMENTARY

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
THE UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM



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Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary
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*The Rabbinical Assembly
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1 These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan.— Through the wilderness, in the Arabah near Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab, ²it is eleven days from

אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּמִדְבָּר בְּעֶרְבָה מִזֶּה מִן הַיַּרְדֵּן בֵּין-פָּאֲרָן וּבֵין-תּוֹפֵל וּלְבָן וְחֶזְרֹת וְדִי זָהָב: ²אֶחָד עָשָׂר יוֹם מִחֶזֶב

A UNIQUE BOOK (1:1–5)

The first five verses give the time and place of the delivery of Moses' farewell address.

1. These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel Apart from some connecting passages and the narratives about Moses' last days, the speaker in Deuteronomy is Moses, not an anonymous narrator as in the previous books of the Torah. Even the narratives and laws appear as parts of addresses in which Moses reviews the past 40 years and prepares the Israelites for the future.

on the other side of the Jordan In Transjordan, east of the river Jordan. Although Moses

never crossed over to the western side of the Jordan, this is written from the point of view of one already in the Land.

the wilderness The text locates this wilderness in the long narrow depression, or rift, that continues the Jordan Valley south of the Dead Sea down to the Gulf of Elat. This rift is known as the 'Arabah to this day.

2. It was an 11-day journey from Horeb (Mount Sinai) to Kadesh-barnea, the gateway to the Promised Land (see vv. 19–20). If the Israelites had trusted in God, this verse tells us, they could have entered the land immediately, without wandering in the wilderness for 38 years.

CHAPTER 1

Some of Deuteronomy's passages, ranging from the Decalogue to setting aside cities of refuge, duplicate contents found elsewhere in the Torah. But 70 of the approximately 100 laws in Deuteronomy are not found in the earlier books. These laws deal mostly with arrangements for living in the Land and with the new emphasis on a central sanctuary to be designated by God. Moses is telling the Israelites things they will need to know when they settle the Land, things they had no need to know before.

One way of viewing this book is to see it as divided into three parts. In the first part, Moses reviews the history of the people's wandering, emphasizing Israel's lack of fidelity and gratitude. This is followed by a legal section, and finally by Moses' farewell address. Hirsch detects a tone of urgency throughout Moses' remarks, prompted, he suspects, by the concern that when the families of Israel are no longer camped around the tabernacle but are living each on its own property, the benign influence of God's Presence will be lost.

1. Moses began his career by pleading that he was not "a man of words" (*ish d'varim*, Exod. 4:10). After 40 years of teaching Torah, however, he has become an eloquent "man of

words." The change is not due to improved rhetorical skills but to his enthusiastic commitment to his message (Deut. R. 1:1).

The Midrash, noting the similar sound of *d'varim* (words) and *d'vorim* (bees), comments that Moses' criticisms of the people are like the stings of a bee. A bee's sting hurts the person stung but it hurts the bee more, causing its death. Moses dies at the end of Deuteronomy because criticizing Israel has taken so much out of him (Deut. R. 1:6). This would imply that we should judge the validity of criticism not only by its factual accuracy but by how much it pains the critic to say it. The harsh criticisms of Moses are spoken with love, in contrast to the praises of Balaam, spoken as flattery.

to all Israel Including Moses himself. His criticisms gain credibility because he criticizes his own behavior as well.

1–2. Why list all these place-names? To avoid shaming Israel excessively, lest they lose all hope of ever pleasing God. For Moses had been inclined to remind Israel of all the times they exasperated and disappointed God; instead, he referred only to the locations where those events occurred (Rashi). Or perhaps Moses is recalling all the places God and Israel have been together, as reminiscing lovers might do.

Horeb to Kadesh-barnea by the Mount Seir route.—³It was in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, that Moses addressed the Israelites in accordance with the instructions that the LORD had given him for them, ⁴after he had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroah [and] Edrei. ⁵On the other side of the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this Teaching. He said:

⁶The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying: You have stayed long enough at this mountain. ⁷Start out and make your way to the

דָּרָךְ הַר־שֵׁעִיר עַד קִדְשׁ בְּרַנֵּעַ: ³ וַיְהִי
בְּאַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּעֵשְׂתֵי־עָשָׂר הַיּוֹם
בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
כָּל־אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ אֲלֵהֶם: ⁴ אַחֲרֵי
הִכְתּוֹ אֶת סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר יוֹשֵׁב
בְּחֶשְׁבוֹן וְאֶת עוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן אֲשֶׁר־יוֹשֵׁב
בְּעֵשְׂתָרֹת בְּאֲדָרְעִי: ⁵ בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן בְּאֶרֶץ
מוֹאָב הוֹאִיל מֹשֶׁה בְּאֶרֶץ אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה
הַזֹּאת לְאָמֹר:

⁶ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ דִּבֶּר אֵלֵינוּ בְּחָרֵב לְאָמֹר
רַב־לָכֶם שָׁבַת בְּהָר הַזֶּה: ⁷ פָּנוּ | וְסֻעוּ
לָכֶם וּבְאוּ הַר הָאֲמֹרִי וְאֶל־כָּל־שְׁכֵנֵינוּ

Horeb Deuteronomy's name for Mount Sinai. Situated somewhere in the Sinai peninsula, its precise location remains unknown.

Kadesh-barnea Sometimes called simply Kadesh, it was near the western border of Seir-Edom, on the southern boundary of the Promised Land, in essence the gateway to it.

by the Mount Seir route Seir, or Edom, the southernmost of the Transjordanian kingdoms, extended westward into the highlands of the eastern Negeb. "(Mount) Seir" usually refers to this part of Edom.

3. eleventh month Later known as *Sh'vat*, which falls in January and February. This verse merges Deuteronomy into the chronologic framework of the previous books of the Torah.

4. Ashtaroah [and] Edrei These two cities

were twin seats of government for Og, king of Bashan. Both places are mentioned in Egyptian documents and in a Ugaritic text.

5. in the land of Moab In the steppes of Moab, so called because the area belonged to Moab before it was conquered by Sihon (see Num. 21:29), from whom the Israelites wrested it.

this Teaching Hebrew: *ha-Torah*, derived from "*horah*" (teach, instruct). "*Torah*" refers to rules of civil and ritual procedures, moral exhortation, and instructive narrative as well as prophetic teaching and reproach. Moses frequently refers to Deuteronomy as "this *Torah*." In later times the term "*Torah*" was applied to the entire Pentateuch and, ultimately, to the totality of the Jewish religious tradition.

Moses' First Discourse (1:6–4:40)

Moses' first discourse serves as a prologue to the book. It emphasizes that the people's fate depends on their response to God's commands and promises. This address reflects the importance of his-

tory as the basis of Israelite religion. Religious belief in the Bible is based mostly on Israel's experience of God rather than on theological speculation.

5. to expound this Teaching He interpreted the Torah in many languages, so that future generations of Jews in many lands would have access to the Torah in a language and in terms that they could understand (*S'fat Emet*). There is holiness in the Hebrew language—"the holy tongue" (*l'shon ha-kodesh*)—in and of itself. It is also necessary, though, for people to learn what God requires of them in a language that they can understand.

6. You have stayed long enough There is a danger that the people Israel will grow too comfortable where they are and will be reluctant to move on into the unknown. There are times when our fulfillment as individuals or as a group requires us to leave the familiar and move on toward a goal.

hill country of the Amorites and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, the hill country, the Shephelah, the Negev, the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and the Lebanon, as far as the Great River, the river Euphrates. ⁸See, I place the land at your disposal. Go, take possession of the land that the LORD swore to your fathers,

בְּעֶרְבָה בְּהַר וּבְשֵׂפֵלָה וּבְנֶגֶב וּבְחוֹף
הַיָּם אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַלְבָּנוֹן עַד־הַנָּהָר
הַגָּדֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת׃ ⁸רְאֵה נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיכֶם
אֶת־הָאָרֶץ בָּאוּ וְרָשׁוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר

ISRAEL DISOBEYS THE FIRST COMMAND TO PROCEED TO THE PROMISED LAND (1:6–2:1)

FROM HOREB TO REBELLION (vv. 6–33)

PROCEEDING TO THE PROMISED LAND
(vv. 6–8)

Moses begins his address by reminding his audience—the generation about to enter the Promised Land—that Israel had been commanded to enter the land a generation earlier (see Exod. 32:34–33:3; Num. 10:11–34). The entire retrospective that follows, through the end of chapter 3, deals with Israel's response to God's command and the consequences of that response.

6. You have stayed long enough The Hebrew for this phrase expresses impatience, indicating that God was eager for Israel to enter the land immediately. The nearly 40-year delay was not God's original intention but the result of Israel's failure to trust and obey God.

7. The Promised Land is described here in terms of its main regions.

hill country of the Amorites The central highlands running south to north, which would become the heartland of Israelite settlement. The Amorites were the inhabitants of these mountains, especially the southern ones that the Israelites would reach first, entering from the Sinai.

all their neighbors That is, the neighboring regions.

Arabah Here, the Jordan Valley from Lake Tiberias in the north to the Dead Sea (see 3:17, 4:49). The Arabah Rift south of the Dead Sea (mentioned in v. 1) was in Edomite territory and was not part of the Promised Land.

hill country The neighboring regions of the Amorites in the central highlands included the lands of the Hittites, Jebusites, Amalekites, Canaanites, and Perizzites.

Shephelah The “lowland,” the low hills between the Judahite part of the central highlands and the coastal plain.

Negev In the Bible, the northern section of what is called the Negev today. Beginning 10 to 15 miles north of Beer-sheba, it extends about 30 miles southward to the wilderness of Zin, the

southern boundary of the Promised Land. Here the western part of the Negev is meant; the eastern part, like the Arabah, was part of Seir-Edom. The name “Negev,” from the Hebrew נֶגֶב (dry), reflects the relative aridity of the region. Its average annual rainfall is 300 mm at the northern end and 100 mm at the southern end.

seacoast Of the Mediterranean.

land of the Canaanites The translation understands this phrase as referring to one part of the Promised Land: the seacoast, especially the area later called Phoenicia, and part of the Jordan Valley (see Gen. 10:15,19; Num. 13:29). Later Phoenician sources likewise call Phoenicia “Canaan.” The Masoretic trope of the Hebrew text, however, implies that the phrase refers to all the regions named in the first part of the verse, and takes the phrase in its common biblical meaning of the entire Promised Land (e.g., Deut. 11:30; Gen. 12:5). This meaning corresponds to the use of “Canaan” in ancient Egyptian sources when reference is made to the region of Canaan under Egyptian control.

Lebanon The inland Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges, including the Bekáa Valley between them, but not to the entire territory of modern Lebanon.

river Euphrates The part of the Euphrates that is on a direct line with the Lebanon range, i.e., the northwestern sector of the river in northern Syria. The Euphrates, therefore, represents the northern extremity of the Promised Land (e.g., 11:24).

8. take possession God's gift of the land to the Israelites was viewed as analogous to a sovereign's grant of land to a loyal servant. In an ancient Near Eastern document, a Hittite king makes a similar declaration to his vassal: “See, I gave you the Zippashla mountain land; occupy it.”

the LORD swore Here God refers to Himself in the third person, after using the first person in verses 6–8a. Such grammatical variation is common in the Bible and in other ancient Near Eastern literature. By referring to His oath to the pa-

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to them and to their heirs after them.

⁹Thereupon I said to you, “I cannot bear the burden of you by myself. ¹⁰The LORD your God has multiplied you until you are today as numerous as the stars in the sky.—¹¹May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase your numbers a thousandfold, and bless you as He promised you.—¹²How can I bear unaided the trouble of you, and the burden, and the bickering! ¹³Pick from each of your tribes men who are wise, discerning, and experienced, and I will appoint them as your heads.” ¹⁴You answered me and said, “What you propose to do is good.” ¹⁵So I took your tribal leaders, wise and experienced men, and appointed them heads over you: chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens, and officials

triarchs, God shows the people that He fulfills His promises. As Moses explains later (4:37, 7:8, 9:5), this oath is the basis of the relationship between God and the present generation.

CHIEFS APPOINTED FOR THE JOURNEY
(vv. 9–18)

9. Moses was worn out by the pressures of leadership (see Num. 11:11–15). The appointment of the chiefs is related in Exod. 18:13–27.

Thereupon Literally, “at that time.”

11. Lest his audience think that he is complaining about their increase, Moses adds his hope that God will continue to enlarge their numbers.

the LORD, the God of your fathers Deuteronomy normally refers to God as “the LORD your God,” and uses “God of your fathers” only when referring to the covenantal promises God made to the patriarchs.

12. The burden that prompted the appoint-

נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלִיעֲקֹב לָתֵת לָהֶם וּלְזֶרְעָם אַחֲרֵיהֶם: 9 וְאָמַר אֲלֵכֶם בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר לֹא-אוּכַל לְבִדִי שְׂאֵת אֲתֶכֶם: 10 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הֲרִיבָה אֲתֶכֶם וְהִנְכֶם הַיּוֹם שְׂנִי כַכּוֹכָבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם לְרַב: 11 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵכֶם יִסֹף עֲלֵיכֶם כִּכְּסֵי אֵלֶּף פְּעָמִים וַיְבַרְךָ אֲתֶכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לָכֶם: 12 אֵיכָה אֲשָׂא לְבִדִי טְרַחְכֶם וּמִשְׂאֵכֶם וְרִיבֵכֶם: 13 הֲבוּ לָכֶם אַנְשִׁים חֲכָמִים וְנִבְנִים וַיִּדְעִים לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם וְאֲשִׁימָם בְּרֹאשֵׁיכֶם: 14 וַתַּעֲנוּ אֹתִי וַתֹּאמְרוּ טוֹב-הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּרְתָּ לַעֲשׂוֹת: 15 וְאָקַח אֶת-רֹאשֵׁי שְׁבֵטֵיכֶם אַנְשִׁים חֲכָמִים וַיִּדְעִים וְאֶתֶּן אוֹתָם רֹאשִׁים עֲלֵיכֶם שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים וְשָׂרֵי מֵאוֹת וְשָׂרֵי חֲמִשִּׁים וְשָׂרֵי עֶשְׂרֹת

ment of officers was Moses' need to adjudicate legal disputes all day long (Exod. 18:13–18).

13. Pick In Exod. 18:13–23, the proposal to appoint judges was made by Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. In Numbers 11:11–17, it is God's suggestion. Here it is accounted to Moses. These sources reflect three different traditions. In Exodus and Numbers, Moses selects the candidates; here the people are asked to make the selection.

wise, discerning, and experienced In Exod. 18:21, the qualifications highlight moral qualities; here they emphasize intellectual traits. Deuteronomy regards justice and piety as expressions of wisdom (see 4:6,8).

15. The people recommended their tribal leaders, and Moses appointed them “heads,” a term that refers to tribal leaders whose responsibilities include both military and judicial matters. Titles such as “chief of thousands” and “chief of hundreds” usually refer to military officers. Such integration of roles was common in tribal societies.

9. I cannot bear the burden Moses is aware that the era of teaching Torah is about to end and the era of doing battle to conquer the Land will soon begin. Realizing that he is no longer the right leader for the new era, he feels his strength diminish.

12. How can I bear unaided Hebrew:

eikhah essa l'vadi. Traditionally in public reading this verse is chanted to the plaintive melody for the Book of Lamentations (*Eikhah*). This *parashah* is always read on the *Shabbat* before *Tisha b'Av*, the fast day on which Lamentations is recited.

for your tribes. ¹⁶I charged your magistrates at that time as follows, “Hear out your fellow men, and decide justly between any man and a fellow Israelite or a stranger. ¹⁷You shall not be partial in judgment: hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is God’s. And any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it.” ¹⁸Thus I instructed you, at that time, about the various things that you should do.

¹⁹We set out from Horeb and traveled the great and terrible wilderness that you saw, along the road to the hill country of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded us. When

וְשֹׁטְרִים לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם: ¹⁶וְאֶצְוָה אֶת-שֹׁפְטֵיכֶם בְּעַת הַהוּא לְאֹמֵר שְׁמַע בֵּין-אָחִיכֶם וּשְׁפֹטֵתֶם צֶדֶק בֵּין-אִישׁ וּבֵין-אָחִיו וּבֵין גֵּר: ¹⁷לֹא-תִכְזְבוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט פִּקְטָן בְּגֹדֶל תִּשְׁמַעוּן לֹא תִגְוְרוּ מִפְּנֵי-אִישׁ כִּי הַמִּשְׁפָּט לְאֱלֹהִים הוּא וְהִדְבַר אֲשֶׁר יִקְשֶׁה מִכֶּם תִּקְרְבוּן אֵלַי וּשְׁמַעְתִּיו: ¹⁸וְאֶצְוָה אֶתְכֶם בְּעַת הַהוּא אֵת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשׂוּן:

¹⁹וּנְסַע מִחֹרֵב וְנָלַךְ אֶת כָּל-הַמִּדְבָּר הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא הַהוּא אֲשֶׁר רְאִיתֶם דֶּרֶךְ הַר הָאֱמֹרִי בְּאֲשֶׁר צָוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

16. In the ancient Near East it was traditional to address a charge to newly appointed judges, either at the time of their appointment or in codes defining their responsibilities.

Hear Idiomatic for “try a case,” as in the English “hear a case.”

fellow men Literally, “brothers,” meaning fellow Israelites. Deuteronomy regularly uses this term to emphasize the equality and fraternity of all Israelites, whether king or servant, prophet or priest.

stranger Hebrew: *ger*. The resident alien, the non-Israelite residing among Israelites. This law protects the right of a *ger* to a fair trial.

17. Moses will not function as an appellate judge but will take over cases that lower judges find too difficult to decide, including those in which the law is not known and Moses has to consult God (e.g., Lev. 24:10–23; Num. 9:1–14).

for judgment is God’s The judge is the representative of God who, as lawgiver, is concerned about justice.

18. At that time Shortly before the Israelites left Sinai. This verse refers to instructions ad-

ressed to the entire people (see Exod. 18:20). Teaching the laws to the entire citizenry is virtually unparalleled in other ancient cultures. Because Israel’s primary duty to God is obedience to His laws, it is imperative that every Israelite be taught those laws. This is Moses’ main goal in Deuteronomy.

ARRIVAL AT THE PROMISED LAND (vv. 19–21)

19. The route through the wilderness is described in detail in Num. 10:33, 11:35, 12:16, and 33:16ff.

the great and terrible wilderness The Sinai Peninsula, a land “with its *seraph* serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it” (Deut. 8:15).

road to the hill country A road leading from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, on the southern border of the Promised Land (Num. 34:4). The precise route is unknown.

as the LORD our God had commanded us The initial response of the Israelites to God’s command had been obedience, and as a result they reached their destination.

16. Hear out The first obligation of a judge is to listen to all sides. This is embodied in Jewish law by the requirement that both litigants be present when either states his or her case (BT Sanh. 7b).

17. low and high alike The judge must not

only treat prominent and unknown individuals alike but also treat major and minor cases with equal seriousness (BT Sanh. 8a). What may seem trivial to a judge compared to other cases under adjudication is nonetheless important to the litigants (see Exod. 23:3).

HALAKHAH L'MA'ASEH

1:17. Not only must rich and poor be judged alike but, contrary to American law, cases involving major and minor amounts of money or penalties also must be treated equally (BT Sanh. 8a). See Exod. 23:3.

we reached Kadesh-barnea,²⁰I said to you, “You have come to the hill country of the Amorites which the LORD our God is giving to us.²¹ See, the LORD your God has placed the land at your disposal. Go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. Fear not and be not dismayed.”

²²Then all of you came to me and said, “Let us send men ahead to reconnoiter the land for us and bring back word on the route we shall follow and the cities we shall come to.”²³I approved of the plan, and so I selected twelve of your men, one from each tribe.²⁴They made for the hill country, came to the wadi Eshcol, and spied it out.²⁵They took some of the fruit of the land with them and brought it down to us. And they gave us this report: “It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving to us.”

²⁶Yet you refused to go up, and flouted the command of the LORD your God.²⁷You sulked in your tents and said, “It is because the LORD hates us that He brought us out of the land of

אתנו ונבא עד קדש ברנע: ²⁰ ואמר אלכם באתם עד-הר האמורי אשר-יהוה אלהינו נתן לנו: ²¹ ראה נתן יהוה אלהיך לפניך את-הארץ עלה רש כאשר דבר יהוה אלהי אבותיך לך אל-תירא ואל-תחת:

²² ותקרבון אלי כלכם ותאמרו נשלח אנשים לפנינו ויחפרו לנו את-הארץ וישבו אתנו דבר את-הדרך אשר נעלה-בה ואת הערים אשר נבא אליהן: ²³ וייטב בעיני הדבר ואקח מכם שנים עשר אנשים איש אחד לשבט: ²⁴ ויפנו ויעלו ההרה ויבאו עד-נחל אשכול וירגלו אתה: ²⁵ ויקחו בידם מפרי הארץ ויורדו אלינו וישבו אתנו דבר ויאמרו טובה הארץ אשר-יהוה אלהינו נתן לנו: ולא אביתם לעלות ותמרו את-פי יהוה אלהיכם: ²⁷ ותרגנו באהליכם ותאמרו בשנאת יהוה אתנו הוציאנו

20. hill country of the Amorites Seems to refer to the Promised Land as a whole, just as the term “Amorites” sometimes designates its entire population, perhaps because these highlands became the Israelite heartland.

The LORD our God is giving to us At this very moment.

21. as the LORD . . . promised you This formula (attested also in Akkadian and Aramaic documents) assures Moses’ listeners of success. God had promised that the same generation that experienced the Exodus would receive the land (Exod. 3:8,17, 6:8).

Fear not and be not dismayed This formula usually expresses assurance, although it is phrased as an imperative. Here it is based on the promise to which Moses has just alluded.

THE PEOPLE’S REFUSAL TO PROCEED
(vv. 22–33)

22. reconnoiter Explore the land and its resources. Information about the land is important both for strategic military purposes and for preparing to settle in it.

bring back word on the route . . . and the

cities That is, the scouts themselves should determine the best route and the order in which the cities should be attacked, or that they should obtain information about possible routes (such as which are narrow and dangerous) and the fortifications of the cities.

23. Named in Num. 13:2–16, where they are described as tribal chieftains.

24. wadi Eshcol “The wadi of the grape cluster(s).” Moses singles out this place, because it is where the scouts found the grapes that typified the land’s fertility and where they saw the giants who so terrified the Israelites that they refused to enter the land.

25. some of the fruit of the land The “grapes, some pomegranates, and figs,” which serve as evidence that the land is good (Num. 13:23,27).

good Rich in produce and other natural resources.

27. sulked Better: “grumbled.”

in your tents At night (Num. 14:1).

the LORD hates us Literally, “hatred of the LORD for us,” a word order that emphasizes the people’s perversity and ingratitude. (In the Bible,

Egypt, to hand us over to the Amorites to wipe us out. ²⁸What kind of place are we going to? Our kinsmen have taken the heart out of us, saying, 'We saw there a people stronger and taller than we, large cities with walls sky-high, and even Anakites.'"

²⁹I said to you, "Have no dread or fear of them. ³⁰None other than the LORD your God, who goes before you, will fight for you, just as He did for you in Egypt before your very eyes, ³¹and in the wilderness, where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you traveled until you came to this place. ³²Yet for all that, you have no faith in the LORD your God, ³³who goes before you on your journeys—to scout the place where you are to encamp—in fire by night and in cloud by day, in order to guide you on the route you are to follow."

clauses normally start with a verb; any other word that appears at the beginning has thus been singled out for emphasis.)

28. What kind of place Suggesting that the land is flawed. This aspersion is another illustration of the people's perversity, for the goodness of the land of Israel is practically an article of faith in the Bible.

Our kinsmen That is, the scouts. Referring to them as kinsmen emphasizes their credibility in the people's eyes.

taller than we The legendary height of the Amorites was later recalled by the prophet Amos (2:9), who describes them as having been tall as cedars and stout as oaks.

walls sky-high Canaanite cities were built on tells (mounds atop the remains of settlements) that were often founded on natural hills. Their walls must indeed have looked sky-high to people who had been living in the wilderness. In similar fashion, an Assyrian inscription describes an Israelite city as "reaching the sky."

27. the LORD hates us We often attribute to others our own feelings about them. The Israelites may have been ambivalent in their feelings about God, often resenting the demands that God placed on them, and they as-

מֵאַרְץ מִצְרַיִם לָתֵת אֶתְנוּ בְיַד הָאֱמֹרִי
לְהַשְׁמִידֵנוּ: ²⁸ אָנָּה | אֲנַחְנוּ עֲלֵימָּה אַחִינוּ
הַיְמָסוּ אֶת־לִבְבָנוּ לְאֹמֹר עִם גְּדוֹל וְרָם
מִמֶּנּוּ עָרִים גְּדֹלֹת וּבְצוּרֹת בַּשָּׁמַיִם וְגַם־
בְּנֵי עֲנָקִים רָאִינוּ שָׁם:

²⁹ וְאָמַר אֲלֵכֶם לֹא־תַעֲרָצוּן וְלֹא־תִירָאוּן
מֵהֶם: ³⁰ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הֵהָלֵךְ לְפָנֵיכֶם
הוּא יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם כָּכֵל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֶתְכֶם
בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיכֶם: ³¹ וּבְמִדְבָּר אֲשֶׁר
רָאִיתָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַף יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר
יִשְׂאֵאֵיִשׁ אֶת־בְּנוֹ בְּכָל־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר
הִלַּכְתֶּם עַד־בְּאֵמֶם עַד־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה:
³² וּבְדַבַּר הַזֶּה אֵינְכֶם מֵאֲמִינִם בִּיהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ³³ הֵהָלֵךְ לְפָנֵיכֶם בְּדֶרֶךְ לְתוֹר
לָכֶם מָקוֹם לְחַנְתְּכֶם בְּאֵשׁ | לִילָה
לְרַאתְכֶם בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר תִּלְכוּ־בָּהּ וּבְעֵנָן
יוֹמָם:

Anakites A particularly gigantic group, next to whom the scouts felt like grasshoppers (Num. 13:32–33). It is quite possible that there were some exceptionally tall people in the area. Two 7-foot female skeletons have been found in a 12th-century B.C.E. cemetery on the east bank of the Jordan, at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh.

30. who goes before you That is, the vanguard (advance guard), protecting those who follow.

will fight for you, just as He did in Egypt At the Sea of Reeds (Exod. 14:14,25).

31. and in the wilderness God protected Israel from the Amalekites (Exod. 17:8–16) and from the natural dangers there (Deut. 8:15).

this place Kadesh-barnea.

33. The people ignore the evidence of God's care and guidance, although it is never out of their sight. The cloud and the fire have been constant, visible signs of God's presence since the day they left Egypt.

sumed that God had equally negative feelings toward them. One *midrash* imagines them saying: "If God really loved us, God would have given us the land of Egypt and sent the Egyptians into the wilderness" (Rashi).

³⁴When the LORD heard your loud complaint, He was angry. He vowed: ³⁵Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers—³⁶none except Caleb son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his descendants will I give the land on which he set foot, because he remained loyal to the LORD.

³⁷Because of you the LORD was incensed with me too, and He said: You shall not enter it either. ³⁸Joshua son of Nun, who attends you, he shall enter it. Imbue him with strength, for he shall allot it to Israel. ³⁹Moreover, your little ones who you said would be carried off, your children who do not yet know good from bad, they shall enter it; to them will I give it and they shall possess it. ⁴⁰As for you, turn about and march into the wilderness by the way of the Sea of Reeds.

THE PEOPLE'S ABOUT-FACE (vv. 34–41)

Moses' plea to the people fell on deaf ears. According to Num. 14:11–20, God would have destroyed the entire generation and replaced them with Moses' descendants, had Moses not persuaded Him to be lenient.

34. your loud complaint According to Num. 14:11 and 22, it was the people's lack of faith in God that provoked His ire.

He vowed That is, God swore, echoing verse 8. This generation's rejection of the sworn Land is met by a new swearing that now deprives them of it.

35. this evil generation Refers to males who were 20 and older at the time of the incident (Num. 14:29, 32:11), spoken of as warriors (i.e., men of military age) in Deut. 2:14,16. The phrase here contrasts with "the good land" and suggests the fitness of the decree: An evil generation may not enter a good land.

36. Caleb, a leader of the tribe of Judah (Num. 13:6), is exempted from the decree because he kept his faith that the Lord would enable Israel to overcome the Amorites and pleaded with the people to remain faithful (Num. 13:30, 14:6–9). According to Num. 14:6 and other passages, Joshua joined Caleb in this plea.

the land on which he set foot Hebron.

37. Although Moses does not specify what provoked God's anger at him, there is an implication here that somehow it was connected with

וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת-קוֹל דְּבָרֵיכֶם וַיִּקְצֹף
וַיִּשְׁבַּע לֵאמֹר: ³⁵ אִם-יִרְאֶה אִישׁ
בְּאַנְשֵׁים הָאֵלֶּה הַדּוֹר הַרְעֵה הַזֶּה אֶת
הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לָתֵת
לְאַבְתֵּיכֶם: ³⁶ זֹולָתִי כָּלֵב בֶּן-יִפְנֶה הוּא
יִרְאֶנָּה וְלוֹ-אֶתְּן אֶת-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר דָּרָךְ-בָּהּ
וּלְבָנָיו יַעַן אֲשֶׁר מָלֵא אַחֲרֵי יְהוָה:
³⁷ גַּם-בִּי הִתְאַנַּף יְהוָה בְּגַלְלֵכֶם לֵאמֹר
גַּם-אֶתָּה לֹא-תָבֵא שָׁם: ³⁸ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נֹון
הָעֹמֵד לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא יָבֵא שָׁמָּה אִתּוֹ חִזְק
רַבִּיעִי כִּי-הוּא יַחַלְנֶה אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל: ³⁹ וְטַפְכֶם
אֲשֶׁר אַמְרָתֶם לָבֹז יִהְיֶה וּבְנֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר
לֹא-יָדְעוּ הַיּוֹם טוֹב וְרַע הֵמָּה יָבֵאוּ שָׁמָּה
וְלָהֶם אֶתְנַנֶּה וְהֵם יִירָשׁוּהָ: ⁴⁰ וְאַתֶּם פְּנוּ
לְכֶם וְסַעְדוּ הַמִּדְבָּרָה דֶּרֶךְ יַם-סוּף:

the rebellion. The plain sense of the passage seems to be that Moses, personally blameless, was caught up in God's anger at his contemporaries. Possibly this was due to Moses' acceding to the people's request for scouts. Even if that request did not imply a lack of faith in God initially, it eventually led to the people's loss of faith. Perhaps Moses was held accountable for the consequences of their initiative because he had approved it.

38. Joshua, Moses' aide (see Exod. 24:13), is his natural successor. His fitness is indicated in Num. 27:18 where he is described as "an inspired man," a man moved by the spirit of God. Joshua's prior military experience also prepares him to lead Israel in the coming wars (Exod. 17:8–13).

Joshua Hebrew: *Y'hoshu-a*. The name probably means "the LORD (*y'ho*) is a noble (*shu-a*)." **allot** Joshua will assign each of the tribes and clans its territory.

39. Here God's address to the people is resumed.

who you said would be carried off See Num. 14:3.

your children who do not yet know good from bad Therefore, they cannot be held accountable for the rebellion. The parallel passages in Numbers indicate that this refers to children below the age of 20.

40. God's reversal of His promise is now made real. At the very border of the Promised Land the people are sent back into the wilderness from which they had just come. Thus the journey

⁴¹You replied to me, saying, “We stand guilty before the LORD. We will go up now and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.” And you all girded yourselves with war gear and recklessly started for the hill country. ⁴²But the LORD said to me, “Warn them: Do not go up and do not fight, since I am not in your midst; else you will be routed by your enemies.” ⁴³I spoke to you, but you would not listen; you flouted the LORD’s command and willfully marched into the hill country. ⁴⁴Then the Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you like so many bees and chased you, and they crushed you at Hormah in Seir. ⁴⁵Again you wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not heed your cry or give ear to you.

2 ⁴⁶Thus, after you had remained at Kadesh all that long time, ¹we marched back into

“through the great and terrible wilderness” was for naught.

by the way of the Sea of Reeds That is, “on the road to the Sea of Reeds,” which led from Kadesh-barnea to the Gulf of Aqaba. The “Sea of Reeds” refers both to the sea the Israelites crossed when leaving Egypt and to the Gulf of Aqaba. The latter is meant here, because the Israelites never returned to the former.

41. The people’s response to God’s decree seems one of contrition, but in fact it is as rebellious as their reaction to the original command. When ordered to “turn about and march” and “go up” to the land (vv. 7,21) they “refused to go up” (v. 26). Now that they are commanded to “turn about and march” away from the land, they respond “we will go up” to the land.

We will go up It is we who will go up, not the next generation, contrary to God’s decree.

GOD RETURNS THE PEOPLE TO THE WILDERNESS (1:42–2:1)

42. The people believed that God would not enforce His decree if they reversed themselves. God makes His intentions explicit, countermarching both the people’s declaration that they would go up and fight (v. 41) and His own earlier command (v. 21).

I am not in your midst The Israelites, believing that God was still in their midst, were certain of their ability to overcome militarily superior

41 וַתַּעֲנוּ אֵלַי וַתֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי חָטְאנוּ לַיהוָה אֲנַחְנוּ נַעֲלֶה וְנִלְחַמְנוּ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וַתַּחַגְרוּ אִישׁ אֶת-כַּפְּלֵי מִלְחַמָּתוֹ וַתַּהֲיִנוּ לַעֲלֹת הַהָרָה: 42 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי אֲמַר לָהֶם לֹא תַעֲלוּ וְלֹא-תִלְחַמוּ כִּי אֵינְנִי בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְלֹא תִנְגַּפוּ לִפְנֵי אֹיְבֵיכֶם: 43 וַאֲדַבֵּר אֲלֵיכֶם וְלֹא שְׁמַעְתֶּם וַתִּמְרוּ אֶת-פִּי יְהוָה וַתִּזְדּוּ וַתַּעֲלוּ הַהָרָה: 44 וַיֵּצֵא הָאֱמֹרִי הַיֵּשֵׁב בְּהַר הַהוּא לְקִרְאֹתְכֶם וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אֶתְכֶם כְּאִשׁ תַּעֲשִׂינָה הַדְּבָרִים וַיִּפְתּוּ אֶתְכֶם בְּשַׁעִיר עַד-חֲרָמָה: 45 וַתִּשְׁבוּ וַתִּבְכוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְלֹא-שָׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹלְכֶם וְלֹא הֶאֱזִין אֲלֵיכֶם:

ב 46 וַתִּשְׁבוּ בְּקֹדֶשׁ יָמִים רַבִּים כִּי־יָמִים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבַתֶּם: 1 וַאֲפֹן וְנִסַּע הַמִּדְבָּרָה

enemies. Indeed, Moses had reminded them of God’s presence when they refused to go up and fight. Ironically, it is only after God withdraws from their midst that they insist on going.

43. An ironic contrast with verse 26: “you refused to go up [into the hill country], and flouted the command of the LORD.” The similar wording highlights the people’s stubborn contrariness.

44. By their own action, the Israelites had brought about the disaster they had feared (v. 27): defeat at the hands of the Amorites.

Amorites Here, a general designation for all the natives of the Promised Land.

bees Wild honeybees of the type found in ancient Israel. Similar remarks relating to bees are found in Mesopotamian and Greek sources.

45. Again you wept Having swung from despair to overconfidence (vv. 27–28,41), the people’s mood swung back to grief.

46. Literally, “And you remained at Kadesh many days, like the days that you remained.” “Many days” can refer to periods of a few days or of many years. The translation implies that “you remained at Kadesh” refers to the time up through the return from battle, with no further delay there.

2:1. In their first act of obedience since leaving Horeb, the Israelites leave Kadesh-barnea and return to the wilderness, as commanded in 1:40.

long time Literally, “many days.” Nearly 38 years (see 2:14).

the wilderness by the way of the Sea of Reeds, as the LORD had spoken to me, and skirted the hill country of Seir a long time.

²Then the LORD said to me: ³You have been skirting this hill country long enough; now turn north. ⁴And charge the people as follows: You will be passing through the territory of your kinsmen, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. Though they will be afraid of you, be very careful ⁵not to provoke them. For I will not give you of their land so much as a foot can tread on; I have given the hill country of Seir as a pos-

דָּרַךְ יַם־סוּף בְּאֶשֶׁר דָּבַר יְהוָה אֵלַי וַיִּסָּב
אֶת־הַר־שֵׁעִיר יָמִים רַבִּים: ס
חמישי ² וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: ³ רַב־לָכֶם סָב
אֶת־הָהָר הַזֶּה פָּנּוּ לָכֶם צָפֹנָה: ⁴ וְאֶת־
הָעָם צֵוּ לֵאמֹר אֲתֶם עֲבָדִים בְּגִבּוֹל
אֲחֵיכֶם בְּנֵי־עֵשָׂו הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשֵׁעִיר וַיִּירָאוּ
מִכֶּם וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מְאֹד: ⁵ אֶל־תִּתְּנוּ לָהֶם
כִּי לֹא־אֲתַן לָכֶם מֵאֲרָצָם עַד מְדֻרָה
בְּהַרְגֵל כִּי־יִרְשָׁה לַעֲשׂו נְתַתִּי אֶת־הָר

ISRAEL OBEYS THE SECOND COMMAND TO PROCEED TO THE PROMISED LAND (2:2–3:29)

God begins to move the Israelites into a position from which they can enter the Promised Land as soon as the previous generation has died out. Instead of entering directly from the wilderness in the south, as they could have done 38 years earlier, the Israelites must now approach from the east. This route requires them to pass five states that run the length of Transjordan, from south to north: Edom, Moab, Ammon, and the Amorite kingdoms of Sihon and Og.

PASSING THROUGH SEIR (vv. 2–8)

The first stage of the northward march through Transjordan takes the Israelites through part of the territory of Seir-Edom, east of the Negev highlands. Inhabitants there were seminomads, as indicated by Egyptian inscriptions of the 13th century B.C.E. and the paucity of archaeological evidence of a sedentary population.

3. This command was uttered near the end of the last year of the wanderings in the wilderness, as is evident from verse 7, which states that they were in their 40th year.

turn north To judge from verse 8, the Israelites were now at the southern tip of Seir-Edom, near Elath and Ezion-geber.

4. the descendants of Esau The Edomites, descendants of Jacob's brother and hence the Israelites' kinsmen (see Gen. 36).

Seir Because the territory about to be traversed is south of Moab (see vv. 3,8), Seir refers here to the eastern part of Seir-Edom, either the part in the 'Arabah or the part in the highlands farther east. Eastern Seir-Edom extended northward for 100 miles (160 km) from the Gulf of Aqaba to the southern end of the Dead Sea and wadi Zerel.

afraid of you The prospect of a huge population and its cattle traversing their territory would be alarming.

5. The verse expresses one of the pervasive themes of this chapter: God gave the Edomites their land, just as He is about to give the Israelites theirs. The same is said of the lands of the Moabites and Ammonites in verses 9 and 19. Their right to their lands must be respected.

CHAPTER 2

4-5. Until now, Israel's encounters with other nations have been uniformly negative: enslavement in Egypt and war with Amalek, Sihon, and Og. Once they settle in the Land, however, they will have to live at peace with neighboring nations. That will require their learning to see the descendants of Esau as "your kinsmen." Perhaps regarding them as

kinsmen will even turn them into friendlier, more cooperative neighbors.

be very careful not to provoke them Your ancestors had to deal with feelings of weakness and inadequacy when confronting the Canaanites. You will have to deal with the moral challenge of not abusing your superior power in dealing with weaker peoples (N. Leibowitz).

I have given . . . as a possession to Esau God's special relationship to Israel does not

session to Esau. ⁶What food you eat you shall obtain from them for money; even the water you drink you shall procure from them for money. ⁷Indeed, the LORD your God has blessed you in all your undertakings. He has watched over your wanderings through this great wilderness; the LORD your God has been with you these past forty years: you have lacked nothing.

⁸We then moved on, away from our kinsmen, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the road of the Arabah, away from Elath and Ezion-geber; and we marched on in the direction of the wilderness of Moab. ⁹And the LORD said to me: Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war. For I will not give you any of their land as a possession; I have assigned Ar as a possession to the descendants of Lot.—

6. The seminomadic Edomites were able to supply produce and water. Abraham and Isaac, also seminomads, dug wells, and Isaac engaged in agriculture (Gen. 21:30, 26:12,18–22). Seminomads in the Negev today still engage in agriculture.

7. blessed you in all your undertakings Made you prosperous in every way. The prosperity of the Israelites explains why they are able to pay the Edomites.

8. The Israelites first traveled north through Seir-Edom along “the road of the Arabah” (presumably, a road running the length of the Arabah) to its northern end, and then turned east onto a road leading to the wilderness east of Moab.

Elath and Ezion-geber These two sites on the Gulf of Aqaba later served as ports.

PASSING THROUGH MOAB (vv. 9–16)

The next stage of the march through Transjordan took the Israelites through Moab in the highlands east of the Dead Sea. Entering Moab marked a turning point, for by then the last of the wilderness generation, those who had rebelled at Kadesh-barnea, had died out.

9. The territory of Moab at this time consisted of the southern half of the high tablelands

שְׂעִיר: ⁶אֲכַל תִּשְׁבְּרוּ מֵאֲתָם בַּכֶּסֶף וְאֲכַלְתֶּם וְגַם־מַיִם תִּכְרוּ מֵאֲתָם בַּכֶּסֶף וּשְׂתִיתֶם: ⁷כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בֵּרַכְךָ בְּכָל־מַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ יִדַע לְכַתֹּף אֶת־הַמְדַבֵּר הַגָּדֹל הַזֶּה זֶה | אֲרַבְעִים שָׁנָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עִמָּךְ לֹא חָסַרְתָּ דָבָר:

⁸וַנַּעֲבֹר מֵאֵת אַחֵינוּ בְּנֵי־עֵשָׂו הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשְׂעִיר מִדְרָף הָעֲרָבָה מֵאֵילָת וּמֵעִזִּין גְּבַר* ⁹וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי אֶל־תִּצַּר אֶת־מוֹאָב וְאֶל־תִּתְנַגַּר בָּם מִלְחָמָה כִּי לֹא־אֶתֶן לָךְ מֵאֶרְצוֹ יִרְשָׁה כִּי לְבָנֵי־לוֹט נָתַתִּי אֶת־עַר יִרְשָׁה:

v. 8. פיסקא באמצע פסוק

east of the Dead Sea. The earliest references to Moab are found in Egyptian documents of the 13th century B.C.E. Archaeological investigation shows that in Moab, unlike in Edom, there were some settlements.

Ar A town or a region in Moab.

descendants of Lot The Moabites were also kin to the Israelites, although not as close as the Edomites. They were traced back to Abraham’s nephew, as were the Ammonites (v. 19; see also Gen. 19:30–38).

10–12. This is the first of several parenthetical notes describing the prehistory of neighboring lands. The others appear in verses 20–23 and in 3:9,11,13. The notes indicate that Transjordan and Philistia once had been inhabited by earlier populations who were supplanted by the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines, just as the land promised to the Israelites was inhabited by peoples whom they would supplant. Because verse 12 refers to Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land in the past tense, modern scholars regard these notes as having been added to the text after the conquest. The purpose of these notes, apparently, is to underscore God’s ability to fulfill His promise to Israel to give it the land of Canaan.

preclude a benevolent involvement in the affairs of other nations (Hirsch). Esau, despite his many flaws, scrupulously obeyed the com-

mandment to honor his father. As a reward, God promises that his territory will be handed down from father to son (Deut. R. 1:15).

¹⁰It was formerly inhabited by the Emim, a people great and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. ¹¹Like the Anakites, they are counted as Rephaim; but the Moabites call them Emim. ¹²Similarly, Seir was formerly inhabited by the Horites; but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them, wiping them out and settling in their place, just as Israel did in the land they were to possess, which the LORD had given to them.—

¹³Up now! Cross the wadi Zered!

So we crossed the wadi Zered. ¹⁴The time that we spent in travel from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the wadi Zered was thirty-eight years, until that whole generation of warriors had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn concerning them. ¹⁵Indeed, the hand of the LORD struck them, to root them out from the camp to the last man.

It The land of Moab, not only Ar; all the parentethic notes refer to entire lands.

Rephaim The generic name or epithet of the gigantic aborigines. Local peoples had different names for them. To the Moabites they were the Emim; to the Ammonites, the Zamzumim. The Rephaim are also listed among the pre-Israelite peoples living in the Promised Land (Gen. 15:20; Josh. 17:15). Their great height is indicated by the size of Og's bedstead (Deut. 3:11), by Goliath's size and that of his weapons (1 Sam. 17:4–7), and by the size of the weapons of their descendants in Philistia (2 Sam. 21:16–22).

Horites A people who preceded the Edomites in Seir. According to Gen. 14:6 and 36:20–30, the Edomites were descended from Seir the Horite.

wiping them out As verses 21–22 make clear, God made this happen.

13. wadi Zered The southern boundary of Moab.

THE END OF THE EXODUS GENERATION
(vv. 14–16)

These verses mark the transition between the gen-

10 הָאֵמִים לְפָנִים יָשְׁבוּ בְּהָ עַם גָּדוֹל וְרַב וְרָם כְּעֲנָקִים: 11 רֵפָאִים יִחְשְׁבוּ אֶפְיָהֶם כְּעֲנָקִים וְהַמֵּאֲבִים יִקְרְאוּ לָהֶם אֵמִים: 12 וּבִשְׁעֵיר יִשְׁבוּ הַחֹרִים לְפָנִים וּבְנֵי עֵשָׂו יִירְשׁוּם וַיִּשְׁמִדוּם מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ תַחְתָּם כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶרֶץ יִרְשָׁתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן יְהוָה לָהֶם: 13 וַנַּעֲבֹר אֶת-זֶרֶד וְזָרַד: 14 וְהַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-הָלַכְנוּ מִקַּדְשׁ בְּרִנְעַ עַד אֲשֶׁר-עָבְרָנוּ אֶת-זֶרֶד וְזָרַד שְׁלֹשִׁים וּשְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנָה עַד-הַיּוֹם כֹּל-הַדּוֹר אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה מִקְּרֵב הַמַּחֲנֶה כַּאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לָהֶם: 15 וְגַם יַד-יְהוָה הִיטָה בָּם לְהַמִּם מִקְּרֵב הַמַּחֲנֶה עַד תַּמָּם:

eration of the Exodus (who had rebelled at Kadesh-barnea) and the generation that would enter the Promised Land. With the crossing of wadi Zered, God's oath (1:35) was fulfilled: All those of age when the Israelites refused to proceed to the land had died. The transition is noted at this point because they now entered Moab, which would be the springboard for their conquests: From it, they would march on the kingdoms of Sihon and Og and then on the Promised Land itself.

14. thirty-eight years Because the Israelites left Kadesh-barnea during the 2nd year after the Exodus, they must have crossed wadi Zered in the 40th year, before Moses began this address on the first day of the 11th month.

warriors Those of age for the military.

15. hand of the LORD struck them Not all of the previous generation died of natural causes. Some were killed by destructive forces unleashed by God, such as pestilence, because of various sins.

to root them out The verb הָמַם is usually used in military contexts to describe the confusion that God inflicts on Israel's enemies (see 7:23; Exod. 14:24). It means "to throw into chaos" and

14. generation of warriors Literally, "people of battle." Ironically, that name is given to those who quarreled constantly with God and with Moses in the wilderness—not

to their children, who will actually conquer the Promised Land. Ultimately, Israel's quarrels with God and with each other prove a greater obstacle than any external foe.

¹⁶When all the warriors among the people had died off, ¹⁷the LORD spoke to me, saying: ¹⁸You are now passing through the territory of Moab, through Ar. ¹⁹You will then be close to the Ammonites; do not harass them or start a fight with them. For I will not give any part of the land of the Ammonites to you as a possession; I have assigned it as a possession to the descendants of Lot.—

²⁰It, too, is counted as Rephaim country. It was formerly inhabited by Rephaim, whom the Ammonites call Zamzummim, ²¹a people great and numerous and as tall as the Anakites. The LORD wiped them out, so that [the Ammonites] dispossessed them and settled in their place, ²²as He did for the descendants of Esau who live in Seir, when He wiped out the Horites before them, so that they dispossessed them and settled in their place, as is still the case. ²³So, too, with the Avvim who dwelt in villages in the vicinity of Gaza: the Caphtorim, who came from Crete, wiped them out and settled in their place.—

is onomatopoeic for the humming sound made by a large crowd, such as an army in flight. It is also used of the roaring of the waters of chaos. Here it implies that God's punishment of the rebellious generation amounted to a divine war against it, in which Israel is treated as God normally would treat Israel's enemies.

16. all . . . had died off This verse links God's orders in verses 17–19 and 24–25 to the death of the rebels. No sooner had the rebels died off than the Lord directed the Israelites to their first victory and territorial possession. The preceding 38 years had been a deviation from God's original plan, to which He now returns.

BYPASSING AMMONITES, ATTACKING AMORITES (vv. 17–30)

The territory of the Ammonites was centered around the capital city Rabbah (modern Amman), some 20 miles east of the Jordan. It was separated from the Jordan by Sihon's territory. Excavations in Amman have unearthed remains of this period, the Late Bronze Age.

19. Ammonites Literally, “the children (de-

וַיְהִי כִּאֲשֶׁר-תָּמוּ כָּל-אֲנָשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה לָמוּת מִקְרֵב הָעָם: ס ¹⁷וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: ¹⁸אֵתָּה עֹבֵר הַיּוֹם אֶת-גְּבוּל מוֹאָב אֶת-עָרָיִךְ: ¹⁹וְקִרְבַּתְּ מוֹל בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן אֶל-תַּעֲרֵם וְאֶל-תִּתְגַּר בָּם כִּי לֹא-אֶתָּן מֵאֶרֶץ בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹן לָךְ יִרְשָׁה כִּי לְבְנֵי-לוֹט נָתַתִּיהָ יִרְשָׁה:

²⁰אֶרֶץ-רִפְאִים תַּחֲשַׁב אֶף-הוּא רִפְאִים יִשְׁבוּ-בָהּ לְפָנַי וְהָעַמְנִים יִקְרְאוּ לָהֶם זַמְזָמִים: ²¹עַם גָּדוֹל וְרַב וְרָם כְּעַנְקִים וַיִּשְׁמִידֵם יְהוָה מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיִּירָשֵׁם וַיִּשְׁבוּ תַחְתָּם: ²²כִּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְבְנֵי עֲשׂוּ הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשַׁעֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר הַשְּׁמִיד אֶת-הַחֲרִי מִפְּנֵיהֶם וַיִּירָשֵׁם וַיִּשְׁבוּ תַחְתָּם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: ²³וְהָעַיִים הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּחֻצְרוֹת עַד-עַתָּה כְּפִתְרִים הַיִּצְאִים מִכְּפִתּוֹר הַשְּׁמִידֵם וַיִּשְׁבוּ תַחְתָּם:

scendants) of Ammon (*b'nei Ammon*).” The Bible refers to them and their land as “the children of Ammon” and “the land of the children of Ammon,” and almost never speaks simply of “Ammon,” though it regularly speaks of “Moab.” This distinction accurately reflects the names these peoples used to refer to themselves. An Ammonite inscription speaks of the “king of the children of Ammon,” and a Moabite inscription speaks of the “king of Moab.”

20. Zamzummim The name, used by the Ammonites, seems to be an imitation of their speech. It means, roughly, “the Buzz-buzzers,” i.e., “the people whose speech sounds like buzzing.”

23. This second note digresses from the context of Transjordan to deal with the inhabitants of Philistia, near Gaza.

Avvim Mentioned again in Josh. 13:3 as living near Philistia, they are not known from elsewhere. They lived in unwalled villages, which suggests they may have been herders like the Ishmaelites and the Kedarites, who also lived in such villages (see Gen. 25:16; Isa. 42:11).

Caphtorim Presumably Philistines, who are

²⁴Up! Set out across the wadi Arnon! See, I give into your power Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin the occupation: engage him in battle. ²⁵This day I begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under heaven, so that they shall tremble and quake because of you whenever they hear you mentioned.

²⁶Then I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to King Sihon of Heshbon with an offer of peace, as follows, ²⁷“Let me pass through your country. I will keep strictly to the highway, turning off neither to the right nor to the left. ²⁸What food I eat you will supply for money, and what water I drink you will furnish for money; just let me pass through—²⁹as the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir did for me, and the Moabites who dwell in Ar—that I may cross the Jordan into the land that the LORD our God is giving us.”

³⁰But King Sihon of Heshbon refused to let us pass through, because the LORD had stiffened his will and hardened his heart in order to deliver him into your power—as is now the case. ³¹And the LORD said to me: See, I begin by plac-

²⁴קומו סעו ועברו את־נחל אַרְנוֹן רְאֵה נְתַתִּי בְיָדְךָ אֶת־סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ־חֶשְׁבוֹן הָאֱמֹרִי וְאֶת־אָרְצוֹ הַחֵל רֶשׁ וְהִתְגַּר בּוֹ מִלְחָמָה: ²⁵הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֶחַל תֵּת פְּחָדְךָ וַיִּרְאֲתְךָ עַל־פְּנֵי הָעַמִּים תַּחַת כָּל־הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְעוּן שְׁמֶעְךָ וְרָגְזוּ וְחָלוּ מִפְּנֶיךָ:

²⁶וְאֶשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים מִמִּדְבַּר קְדֵמוֹת אֶל־סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבוֹן דְּבַרִי שְׁלוֹם לֵאמֹר: ²⁷אָעֲבִירָה בְּאֶרְצְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֵלַי לֹא אֶסּוּר יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל*²⁸: אֲכַל בְּכֶסֶף תִּשְׁבְּרֵנִי וְאֶכְלֵתִי וּמִים בְּכֶסֶף תִּתֶּן־לִי וְשִׁתִּיתִי רַק אָעֲבִירָה בְּרַגְלִי: ²⁹כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ־לִי בְנֵי עֵשָׂו הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּשֵׁעִיר וְהַמוֹאבִים הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעַר עַד אֲשֶׁר־אָעֵבֵר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ נֹתֵן לָנוּ:

³⁰וְלֹא אָבָה סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבוֹן הָעֵבְרָנוּ בּוֹ כִּי־הִקְשָׁה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־רוּחוֹ וְאָמַץ אֶת־לִבּוֹ לִמְעַן תִּתּוּ בְיָדְךָ כַּיּוֹם שִׁשִּׁי הַזֶּה: ³¹וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי רְאֵה

מלא ו' v. 27.

said to have come from Caphtor (Gen. 10:14; Amos 9:7; Jer. 47:4), in the area of the Aegean Sea—either Crete and the surrounding islands, or on the coast of Asia Minor, or both.

24–25. These verses resume the instructions of verses 18–19. The victory over Sihon would cause other peoples to fear the Israelites, as had happened earlier when they crossed the sea (Exod. 15:14–16). This was to demoralize potential enemies.

Sihon He is not mentioned outside of the Bible.

26. wilderness of Kedemoth Probably near the city of Kedemoth in the former Moabite part of Sihon’s territory. If so, the Israelites had already crossed the Arnon and entered Sihon’s territory when the messengers were sent.

offer of peace Literally, “words of peace.” This is either a statement of friendly intentions

or a proposal of a nonaggression pact. The essence of Moses’ message is his request for the peaceful use of a corridor through Sihon’s territory under the terms stated in verses 27–28.

30. stiffened his will and hardened his heart

Although the Bible presupposes that God normally enables men and women to exercise free will, it records cases in which He punishes evildoers by causing them to act in a sinful or reckless way that will lead to their downfall. The best known instance is that of Pharaoh in Exod. 7:3–5, 10:1–2.

VICTORY OVER SIHON (2:31–3:1)

This Israelite victory is described only schematically, as is the victory over Og (below). Here the two battles function as overall models of how Israel should conduct itself in war, and of what they can expect when they do so.

ing Sihon and his land at your disposal. Begin the occupation; take possession of his land.

³²Sihon with all his men took the field against us at Jahaz, ³³and the LORD our God delivered him to us and we defeated him and his sons and all his men. ³⁴At that time we captured all his towns, and we doomed every town—men, women, and children—leaving no survivor. ³⁵We retained as booty only the cattle and the spoil of the cities that we captured. ³⁶From Aroer on the edge of the Arnon valley, including the town in the valley itself, to Gilead, not a city was too mighty for us; the LORD our God delivered everything to us. ³⁷But you did not encroach upon the land of the Ammonites, all along the wadi Jabbok and the towns of the hill country, just as the LORD our God had commanded.

3 We made our way up the road toward Bashan, and King Og of Bashan with all his men took the field against us at Edrei. ²But the LORD said to me: Do not fear him, for I am delivering him and all his men and his country into your power, and you will do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon.

הַחֲלֹתִי תַתּוּ לְפָנָי אֶת-סִיחֹן וְאֶת-אֶרְצוֹ
הַחֲלֵל רֶשֶׁת לְרִשְׁתָּ אֶת-אֶרְצוֹ׃
³² וַיֵּצֵא סִיחֹן לְקָרְאֵתָנוּ הוּא וְכָל-עַמּוֹ
לְמַלְחָמָה יְהִצֵּה׃ ³³ וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
לְפָנֵינוּ וַנֶּחֱמָה אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-בָּנָיו וְאֶת-כָּל-
עַמּוֹ׃ ³⁴ וַנִּלְכֹּד אֶת-כָּל-עָרָיו בְּעַת הַהוּא
וַנַּחֲרֵם אֶת-כָּל-עִיר מֵתָם וְהַנְּשִׁים וְהַטָּף
לֹא הִשְׁאֲרָנוּ שְׂרִיד׃ ³⁵ רַק הַבְּהֵמָה בְּזוֹנוֹ
לָנוּ וְשָׁלַל הָעָרִים אֲשֶׁר לְכַדְנוֹ׃ ³⁶ מֵעָרֶךָ
אֲשֶׁר עַל-שְׂפַת-נַחַל אַרְנוֹן וְהָעִיר אֲשֶׁר
בְּנַחַל וְעַד-הַגְּלֵעָד לֹא הִיִּתְּהָ קְרִיָּה אֲשֶׁר
שָׁגַבְהָ מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת-הַפֶּלֶל נָתַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
לְפָנֵינוּ׃ ³⁷ רַק אֶל-אֶרֶץ בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹן לֹא
קָרַבְתָּ כְּלַיִד נַחַל יַבְבֹּק וְעָרֵי הַהָר וְכָל
אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ׃

ג וַנִּפְּן וַנַּעַל דֶּרֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן וַיֵּצֵא עוֹג
מֶלֶךְ-הַבָּשָׁן לְקָרְאֵתָנוּ הוּא וְכָל-עַמּוֹ
לְמַלְחָמָה אֶדְרֵעִי׃ ² וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי
אֶל-תִּירָא אֹתוֹ כִּי בְיָדִי נִתְּתִי אֹתוֹ
וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמּוֹ וְאֶת-אֶרְצוֹ וְעָשִׂיתָ לוֹ
כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ לְסִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר
יוֹשֵׁב בְּחֶשְׁבּוֹן׃

32. took the field That is, went to war, unlike Edom, which made a show of force and was not challenged by Israel (Num. 20:20).

33. the LORD . . . delivered him to us Exactly as He had promised (vv. 24,31). This is an implicit rejoinder to the previous generation's doubt that God would fulfill His promises (see 1:27).

34–35. The population of Sihon's territory was killed in accordance with the provisions for cities in the Promised Land (20:16–17). The same is done in Og's territory in 3:6. These instances, too, may reflect a view that northern Transjordan was part of the Land.

36. Gilead The hill country extending eastward from the Jordan 25 to 30 miles (40–50 km). It was divided into northern and southern sections by the western leg of the Jabbok River.

not a city was too mighty for us A rejoinder to the previous generation's fears in 1:28.

37. The territory of the Ammonites was a narrow strip abutting the northeastern corner of Sihon's territory. It was spread along the eastern Jabbok (which flows northward in an arc from near Amman) and extended eastward toward the wilderness. The Israelites obeyed God's command and did not encroach upon it. The wadi/river Jabbok today is known as the Zerka (called Wadi Amman near Amman).

3:1. From Sihon's territory, the Israelites headed north to the Amorite kingdom of Og, ruler of Bashan.

Og The name does not appear in sources outside the Bible, but similar names are found in texts of the Late Bronze Age from the Canaanite city of Ugarit in northwest Syria.

³So the LORD our God also delivered into our power King Og of Bashan, with all his men, and we dealt them such a blow that no survivor was left. ⁴At that time we captured all his towns; there was not a town that we did not take from them: sixty towns, the whole district of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan—⁵all those towns were fortified with high walls, gates, and bars—apart from a great number of unwalled towns. ⁶We doomed them as we had done in the case of King Sihon of Heshbon; we doomed every town—men, women, and children—⁷and retained as booty all the cattle and the spoil of the towns.

⁸Thus we seized, at that time, from the two Amorite kings, the country beyond the Jordan, from the wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon—⁹Sidonians called Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir—¹⁰all the towns of the Tableland and the whole of Gilead and Bashan as far as Salcah and Edrei, the towns of Og's kingdom in Bashan. ¹¹Only King Og of Bashan was left of the remaining Rephaim. His bedstead, an iron bedstead, is now in Rabbah of the Ammon-

³ וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְיָדֵנוּ גַם אֶת-עוֹג מֶלֶךְ-הַבָּשָׁן וְאֶת-כָּל-עַמּוֹ וַנִּכְהוּ עַד-בְּלֹתֵי הַשְּׂאִירֵי-לוֹ שָׂרִיד: ⁴ וַנִּלְכַּד אֶת-כָּל-עָרָיו בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֹא הָיְתָה קְרִיָּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא-לָקַחְנוּ מֵאַתָּם שְׂשִׁים עִיר כָּל-חֵבֶל אַרְגָּב מִמְּלַכַת עוֹג בַּבָּשָׁן: ⁵ כָּל-אַלֶּה עָרִים בְּצֻרֹת חוֹמָה גְבוּהָ דְלָתִים וּבְרִיחַ לְבַד מְעַרְי הַפְּרָזִי הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד: ⁶ וַנַּחֲרֵם אוֹתָם כְּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂינוּ לְסִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ חֶשְׁבּוֹן הַחָרֶם כָּל-עִיר מִתָּם הַנְּשִׁים וְהַטָּף: ⁷ וְכָל-הַבְּהֵמָה וְשָׁלַל הָעָרִים בְּזוֹנוֹ לָנוּ:

⁸ וַנִּקַּח בְּעֵת הַהוּא אֶת-הָאָרֶץ מִיַּד שְׁנֵי מַלְכֵי הָאֱמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן מִנַּחַל אַרְנֹן עַד-הַר חֶרְמוֹן: ⁹ צִידוֹנִים יִקְרָאוּ לְחֶרְמוֹן שְׂרִין וְהָאֱמֹרִי יִקְרָאוּ לוֹ שְׁנִיר: ¹⁰ כָּל אֶרֶץ הַמִּישֹׁר וְכָל-הַגְּלָעַד וְכָל-הַבָּשָׁן עַד-סֹלְכָה וְאֶדְרָעִי עָרֵי מִמְּלַכַת עוֹג בַּבָּשָׁן: ¹¹ כִּי רַק-עוֹג מֶלֶךְ הַבָּשָׁן נִשְׁאַר מִיֵּתֵר הָרֶפְאִים הַנֶּה* עַרְשׁוֹ עַרְשׁ

v. 11. סבירין ומטעין "והנה"

VICTORY OVER OG (3:2–26a)

The defeat of Og followed that of Sihon. Moses then allotted their territories to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. Encouraged by these victories, Moses pleaded with God that he be allowed to enter the Promised Land.

4. sixty Probably a round number. Bashan could have many cities because of the region's fertility.

5. gates, and bars The city gates had two-leaf doors (double doors, *d'latayim*) held closed by a bar running along their inner sides.

8. Mount Hermon The southern section of the Anti-Lebanon range, running northeast from above the Huleh Valley. Today it is part of the border between Lebanon and Syria.

9. Sidonians The people of the Phoenician city Sidon. Here, as frequently, the term probably refers to the Phoenicians in general.

10. Tableland The plateau taken from

Moab by Sihon, stretching eastward from the Dead Sea to the desert and from the Arnon north to Gilead.

the whole of Gilead North and south of the Jabbok.

Salcah and Edrei Two towns on the southern boundary of Bashan: Salcah on the east and Edrei on the west.

11. The parenthetic comment about Og demonstrates that even the giants feared by the previous generation could not prevent God from granting Israel victory.

Only Og . . . was left The Moabites and the Ammonites had wiped out the others (see 2:10–11, 20–22). According to Gen. 14:5, Rephaim were living in one of Og's capitals, Ashtaroth, as early as the time of Abraham.

an iron bedstead This may mean that Og's bed was ornamented with iron. In the Late Bronze Age, when iron was still uncommon, it was sometimes used for ceremonial objects, jewelry, and decoration.

ites; it is nine cubits long and four cubits wide, by the standard cubit!

¹²And this is the land which we apportioned at that time: The part from Aroer along the wadi Arnon, with part of the hill country of Gilead and its towns, I assigned to the Reubenites and the Gadites. ¹³The rest of Gilead, and all of Bashan under Og's rule—the whole Argob district, all that part of Bashan which is called Rephaim country—I assigned to the half-tribe of Manasseh. ¹⁴Jair son of Manasseh received the whole Argob district (that is, Bashan) as far as the boundary of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and named it after himself: Havvoth-jair—as is still the case. ¹⁵To Machir I assigned Gilead. ¹⁶And to the Reubenites and the Gadites I assigned the part from Gilead down to the wadi Arnon, the middle of the wadi being the boundary, and up to the wadi Jabbok, the boundary of the Ammonites.

¹⁷[We also seized] the Arabah, from the foot of the slopes of Pisgah on the east, to the edge of the Jordan, and from Chinnereth down to the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea.

Rabbah Present-day Amman, Jordan.

nine cubits long and four cubits wide Approximately 13½ by 6 feet. The dimensions of Og's bed are naturally larger than Og himself, but they indicate how enormous he must have been.

standard cubit Hebrew: *amah*; literally, "forearm." The basic standard of measurement in the ancient world. Roughly the length of a forearm, it was standardized at about 18 inches.

APPORTIONMENT OF CONQUERED LANDS (vv.12–17)

After summarizing the territory conquered, Moses describes its apportionment. Numbers 32 explains why these territories were given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. The half-tribe of Manasseh consists of two groups, represented by Jair and Machir.

¹⁴. **received** Hebrew: לקח; literally, "captured," or "seized," which is how this verb is translated in verses 4 and 8.

Geshurites . . . Maacathites Peoples of small states in the Golan Heights: Geshur, east of Lake Tiberias; Maaca, farther north.

בְּרֹל הֵלֵךְ* הוּא בְּרֶבֶת בְּנֵי עֲמֹן תִּשַׁע אַמּוֹת אַרְבָּה וְאַרְבַּע אַמּוֹת רְחֵבָה בְּאַמַּת-אִישׁ:

¹² וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת יִרְשָׁנוּ בְּעַת הַהוּא

מֵעֲרֵר אֲשֶׁר-עַל-נַחַל אַרְנוֹן וְחֻצֵי הַר-

הַגְּלָעַד וְעָרָיו נָתַתִּי לְרֵאוּבֵנִי וּלְגָדִי:

¹³ וְיִתֵּר הַגְּלָעַד וְכָל-הַבָּשָׁן מִמְּלֶכֶת עֹג

נָתַתִּי לְחֻצֵי שֶׁבֶט הַמְּנַשֶּׁה כָּל חֶבֶל

הָאֲרָגָב לְכָל-הַבָּשָׁן הַהוּא יִקְרָא אֶרֶץ

רְפָאִים: ¹⁴ וַיֵּאִיר בֶּן-מְנַשֶּׁה לָקַח אֶת-כָּל-

חֶבֶל אֲרָגָב עַד-גְּבוּל הַגְּשׁוּרִי וְהַמַּעֲכָתִי

וַיִּקְרָא אֹתָם עַל-שְׁמוֹ אֶת-הַבָּשָׁן חֹוֹת

וַיֵּאִיר עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: ¹⁵ וּלְמַכִּיר נָתַתִּי

אֶת-הַגְּלָעַד: ¹⁶ וּלְרֵאוּבֵנִי וּלְגָדִי נָתַתִּי

מִן-הַגְּלָעַד וְעַד-נַחַל אַרְנוֹן תּוֹף הַנַּחַל

וְגַבֵּל וְעַד יְבֶק הַנַּחַל גְּבוּל בְּנֵי עֲמֹן:

¹⁷ וְהָעֲרָבָה וְהַיַּרְדֵּן וְגַבֵּל מִכְפָּרֶת וְעַד יַם

הָעֲרָבָה יַם הַמֶּלַח תַּחַת אֲשֵׁרֵת הַפְּסָגָה

מִזְרָחָה:

שביעי

v. 11. ה' במקום א'

15. Machir That is, the descendants of Machir, as stated in Num. 32:39. As a grandson of Joseph, Machir himself could not have been alive at this time.

Gilead Its northern part (see v. 13).

16. Gilead Its southern part (see v. 12).

wadi Jabbok The eastern Jabbok, which flows northward, formed the eastern boundary of the Reubenite–Gadite territory.

17. Pisgah This mountain, or mountain chain, is the southeastern boundary of the 'Arabah (here meaning the Jordan Valley, as in 1:7). Pisgah overlooks the northeast corner of the Dead Sea and the southeastern end of the Jordan Valley.

Chinnereth The Sea of Kinneret, present-day Lake Tiberias.

Dead Sea Literally, "Salt Sea." So called because of its exceptionally high mineral content, which makes it unable to support life. The earliest known explanation of the translation "Dead Sea" connects it to the stillness of the waters.

¹⁸At that time I charged you, saying, “The LORD your God has given you this country to possess. You must go as shock-troops, warriors all, at the head of your Israelite kinsmen. ¹⁹Only your wives, children, and livestock—I know that you have much livestock—shall be left in the towns I have assigned to you, ²⁰until the LORD has granted your kinsmen a haven such as you have, and they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is assigning them, beyond the Jordan. Then you may return each to the homestead that I have assigned to him.”

²¹I also charged Joshua at that time, saying, “You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so shall the LORD do to all the kingdoms into which you shall cross over. ²²Do not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who will battle for you.”

18–20. Moses repeats the condition under which he permitted the two and a half tribes to settle in Transjordan (Num. 32:16–18).

21. at that time Some time after the victories, but not necessarily after the apportioning of the land to the two and a half tribes.

You have seen with your own eyes In He-

18 וְאַצְוָה אֶתְכֶם בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם נָתַן לָכֶם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת
לְרִשְׁתָּהּ חִלּוּצִים תַּעֲבֹרוּ לִפְנֵי אַחֵיכֶם
בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל־בְּנֵי־חֵיל׃ 19 רַק נְשִׁיכֶם
וְטַפְּכֶם וּמִקְנֵיכֶם יִדְעֵתִי כִּי־מְקַנְהָ רַב לָכֶם
וְיָשְׁבוּ בְּעָרֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָכֶם׃ 20 עַד
מִפְּטִיר אֲשֶׁר־יָנִיחַ יְהוָה | לְאַחֵיכֶם כְּכֶם וְיִרְשׁוּ
גַם־הֵם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
נָתַן לָהֶם בְּעֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן וְשִׁבְתֶּם אִישׁ
לְיִרְשָׁתוֹ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָכֶם׃
21 וְאַתִּי־הוֹשׁוּעַ צִוִּיתִי בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר
עֵינֶיךָ הִרְאִית אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְשְׁנֵי הַמְּלָכִים הָאֵלֶּה כִּן־יַעֲשֶׂה
יְהוָה לְכָל־הַמְּמַלְכוֹת אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹבֵר
שָׁמָּה׃ 22 לֹא תִירָאוּם כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
הוּא הַנֹּלָחֵם לָכֶם׃ ט

brew, “your eyes” appears first for emphasis: “It is your own eyes that saw”—you have no grounds for doubt, because you saw personally.

kingdoms Canaan in the Late Bronze Age was not a nation-state but a land of separate city-states ruled by kings.

הפטרה שלישית דפורענותא

THIRD HAFTARAH OF ADMONITION HAFTARAH FOR D'VARIM

ISAIAH 1:1–27

(Recite on the 3rd Shabbat after the 17th of Tam-muz, called Shabbat Hazon—named after the first word of this haftarah. This occasion coincides with the reading of D'varim.)

In this passage that opens the Book of Isaiah, the prophet censures all levels of society for iniquity, infidelity to God, and false reliance on ritual sacrifices. Judah and Jerusalem shall be laid waste; only those who repent will be saved.

Isaiah's prophetic career spanned the reigns of several Judean kings during the last half of the 8th century B.C.E. In those decisive times, Assyrian and Aramean foes repeatedly threatened Zion and its leaders. Jerusalem, however, was miraculously saved in 701 B.C.E., and Isaiah's forecast of imminent doom did not come to pass. (The city fell to the Babylonians a century later, in 587–586 B.C.E.)

Three separate pronouncements of doom and disaster make up this *haftarah*. Viewed as a whole, the three speeches present the inverse of what a society should value: the betrayal of covenantal loyalty, the perversion of ritual, and the blindness of moral vision. The first of these speeches (1:2–9) is the most bleak. Totally negative, it charges the people with rebellion against God.

The second speech (vv. 10–20) is linked to the first through language but differs in content. Rather than pronounce irrevocable doom, it provides corrective counsel as a divine “instruction.”

The people's fate hangs on their decision to follow God's instruction of social justice. This is the core of divine concern.

The third speech (vv. 21–27) continues the themes of the second one but is distinct in genre and theological emphasis. Like its predecessor, it emphasizes the injustice that fills the city. This speech, however, is a lament bewailing the destitution of fair Zion and the coming doom. Still, the concluding verse of the *haftarah* is a teaching of less finality and more hope.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE CALENDAR

This passage is a special reading for the *Shabbat* immediately preceding the fast of *Tish-ah b'Av* (and thus is not linked to the *parashah*). This *haftarah's* content anticipates that of Lamentations, which is recited on *Tish-ah b'Av*; both readings depict the devastation and desolation of Judea and Zion. Beyond this thematic link is a striking verbal correspondence. In his lament, Isaiah cries, “Alas (*eikha*), she has become a harlot, / The faithful city” (1:21). This verse eerily foreshadows the opening words of Lamentations: “Alas (*eikha*)! / Lonely sits the city / Once great with people! / She that was great among nations / Is become like a widow” (1:1). Traditionally, most or all of this *haftarah* is chanted with the elegiac trope used in the recitation of Lamentations on *Tish-ah b'Av*.

1 The prophecies of Isaiah son of Amoz, who prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

א חֲזוֹן יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ בֶן-אָמוֹץ אֲשֶׁר חָזָה
עַל-יְהוּדָה וּירוּשָׁלַם בְּיָמֵי עֲזִיָּהוּ יוֹתָם
אָחָז יְחֻזְקִיָּהוּ מַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה:

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,
For the LORD has spoken:
“I reared children and brought them up—
And they have rebelled against Me!
³An ox knows its owner,
An ass its master’s crib:
Israel does not know,
My people takes no thought.”

² שְׁמַעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהֶאָזִינִי אֶרֶץ
כִּי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר
בָּנִים גִּדְלֹתַי וְרוֹמְמֹתַי
וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי:
³ יָדַע שׁוֹר קִנְיָהוּ
וְחֹמֹר אֲבוּס בְּעֻלְיוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע
עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבוּנָן:

⁴Ah, sinful nation!
People laden with iniquity!
Brood of evildoers!
Depraved children!
They have forsaken the LORD,
Spurned the Holy One of Israel,
Turned their backs [on Him].

⁴ הֲוִי | גּוֹי חַטָּא
עִם כְּבֹד עֹן
זֶרַע מְרַעִים
בָּנִים מְשַׁחֲתִים
עֲזְבוּ אֶת-יְהוָה
נֶאֱצַו אֶת-קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל
נִזְרוּ אַחֲוֹר:

⁵Why do you seek further beatings,
That you continue to offend?
Every head is ailing,
And every heart is sick.
⁶From head to foot
No spot is sound:
All bruises, and welts,
And festering sores—

⁵ עַל מָה תִּבּוּ עוֹד
תּוֹסִיפוּ סָרָה
כָּל-רֹאשׁ לְחָלִי
וְכָל-לֵבָב דָּגִי:
⁶ מִכַּף-רֶגֶל וְעַד-רֹאשׁ
אֵין-בּוֹ מָתָם
פָּצַע וְחִבּוּרָה
וּמִכָּה טְרִיָּה

Isaiah 1:1. in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah The reigns of these kings extended from 785 to 698 B.C.E.

2. Hear, O heavens . . . / For the LORD has spoken The call for heaven and earth to witness a divine admonition is also found in Deut. 32:1. In ancient Near Eastern treaties, divinities of heaven and earth were invoked as enduring witnesses. In the Bible, the invocation of nature’s as-

pects is largely a matter of rhetoric (see Micah 6:1–2).

4. Ab Hebrew: *hoy*, a cry of woe (Radak). It is a recurrent element of Isaiah’s rebukes (see 5:8, 18, 21–22).

Holy One of Israel A characteristic divine epithet in the Book of Isaiah; God is called “holy” (*kadosh*) 17 times in chapters 1–39 (see 5:16, 19) and 15 times in chapters 40–66. The transcen-

Not pressed out, not bound up,
 Not softened with oil.
 7Your land is a waste,
 Your cities burnt down;
 Before your eyes, the yield of your soil
 Is consumed by strangers—
 A wasteland as overthrown by strangers!
 8Fair Zion is left
 Like a booth in a vineyard,
 Like a hut in a cucumber field,
 Like a city beleaguered.
 9Had not the LORD of Hosts
 Left us some survivors,
 We should be like Sodom,
 Another Gomorrah.

10Hear the word of the LORD,
 You chieftains of Sodom;
 Give ear to our God's instruction,
 You folk of Gomorrah!
 11“What need have I of all your sacrifices?”
 Says the LORD.
 “I am sated with burnt offerings of rams,
 And suet of fatlings,
 And blood of bulls;
 And I have no delight
 In lambs and he-goats.
 12That you come to appear before Me—

לֹא-זָרוּ וְלֹא חָבְשׁוּ
 וְלֹא רֻכְּכָה בְשֶׁמֶן:
 7 אֶרְצְכֶם שְׂמֵמָה
 עָרֵיכֶם שְׂרָפוֹת אֵשׁ
 אֲדַמְתֶּכֶם לְנִגְדְּכֶם
 זָרִים אֲכָלִים אֹתָהּ
 וְשְׂמֵמָה כְּמַהֲפֹכֶת זָרִים:
 8 וְנוֹתְרָה בַת־צִיּוֹן
 כְּסֹפֵה בְכָרִים
 כְּמִלּוּנָה בְּמִקְשָׁה
 כְּעִיר נְצוּרָה:
 9 לֹוִלִי יִהְיֶה צְבָאוֹת
 הַחַיִּים לָנוּ שְׂרִיד כְּמֵעַט
 כְּסֹדֶם הָיִינוּ
 לְעִמְרָה דְּמִינוּ: ס

10 שְׁמַעוּ דְּבַר־יְהוָה
 קְצִינֵי סֹדֶם
 הֶאֱזִינוּ תוֹרַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ
 עִם עֲמִרָה:
 11 לְמַה־לִּי רַב־זְבָּחֵיכֶם
 יֹאמְרָ* יְהוָה
 שְׁבַעְתִּי עֲלוֹת אֵילִים
 וְחֶלֶב מְרִיאִים
 וְדָם פְּרִים
 וְכַבְשִׁים וְעֵתוּדִים
 לֹא חָפְצָתִי:
 12 כִּי תָבֹאוּ לִרְאוֹת פָּנָי

v. 11. סבירין ומטעין "אמר"

dent sanctity of God is emphasized in the three-fold repetition of *kadosh* in 6:3. (See commentary on the *haftarah* for *Yitro*.)

8. Like a booth in a vineyard After the coming destruction, God will abandon Israel as a watchman does his booth (Radak) after the grapes have been plucked. Alternatively, the figure speaks the desolation of the nation itself.

9. like Sodom The story from Gen. 19 serves as a model of divine destruction (see Deut. 29:22;

Amos 4:11). The perversity of the people of Sodom also serves as a negative model for the prophet in v. 10 (see Deut. 32:32).

10. instruction Hebrew: *torah* (instruction) here means prophetic teaching (Luzzatto). This is also the sense of the word in Isa. 2:3, “For instruction will come forth from Zion,” in the context of a vision of universal peace.

11. Isaiah does not reject sacrifices per se. He rejects hypocrisy. Self-purification and moral rec-

Who asked that of you?
 Trample My courts ¹³no more;
 Bringing oblations is futile,
 Incense is offensive to Me.
 New moon and sabbath,
 Proclaiming of solemnities,
 Assemblies with iniquity,
 I cannot abide.
¹⁴Your new moons and fixed seasons
 Fill Me with loathing;
 They are become a burden to Me,
 I cannot endure them.
¹⁵And when you lift up your hands,
 I will turn My eyes away from you;
 Though you pray at length,
 I will not listen.
 Your hands are stained with crime—
¹⁶Wash yourselves clean;
 Put your evil doings
 Away from My sight.
 Cease to do evil;
¹⁷Learn to do good.
 Devote yourselves to justice;
 Aid the wronged.
 Uphold the rights of the orphan;
 Defend the cause of the widow.
¹⁸“Come, let us reach an understanding,”
 —says the LORD.

מִי־בִקֵּשׁ זֹאת מִיְדֹכֶם
 רָמַס חֲצִרַי: ¹³ לֹא תוֹסִיפוּ
 הָבִיא מִנְחַת־שָׁוְא
 קְטֹרֶת תּוֹעֵבָה הִיא לִי
 חֹדֶשׁ וְשַׁבָּת
 קְרֹא מִקְרָא
 לֹא־אוּכַל
 אֲוֹן וְעֲצָרָה:
¹⁴ חֲדָשֵׁיכֶם וּמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם
 שָׂנְאָה נַפְשִׁי
 הֵיוּ עָלַי לְטָרַח
 נִלְאִיתִי נֶשֶׂא:
¹⁵ וּבִפְרֹשְׁכֶם כְּפִיכֶם
 אֲעֲלִים עֵינַי מִכֶּם
 גַּם כִּי־תִרְבּוּ תִפְלָה
 אֵינְנִי שֹׁמֵעַ
 יְדֵיכֶם דָּמִים מְלֹאוּ:
¹⁶ רַחְצוּ הַזְּכוֹ
 הַסִּירוּ רַע מֵעַלְלֵיכֶם
 מִנְגֵד עֵינַי
 חֲדְלוּ הָרַע:
¹⁷ לְמַדּוֹ הֵיטֵב
 דַּרְשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט
 אֲשֶׁרוֹ חֲמוּץ
 שִׁפְטוּ יְתוּם
 רִיבוּ אֶל־מְנָה: ¹⁸ ס

¹⁸ לְכוּ־נָא וְנִוְכַחְתָּה
 יֹאמְרָ* יְהוָה

v. 18. סבירין ומטעין "אמר"

titude are conditions for proper use of the altar. (See Ps. 15, 24. The prophet Amos also emphasized morality over sacrifices; see 5:21–24.)

16–17. This is the positive core of prophetic “instruction” (*torah*, v. 10). The need for purification and purgation of evil is combined with an emphasis on justice and righteousness. Based on

the commands in these two verses, the Midrash specified nine virtues and linked them to the nine days between *Rosh ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*.

As the 10th day is the day of purification and atonement, so here the 10th feature of the list (v. 18) is “Come, let us reach an understanding. / . . . / Be your sins like crimson, / They can turn

“Be your sins like crimson,
They can turn snow-white;
Be they red as dyed wool,
They can become like fleece.”
19If, then, you agree and give heed,
You will eat the good things of the earth;
20But if you refuse and disobey,
You will be devoured [by] the sword.—
For it was the LORD who spoke.

21Alas, she has become a harlot,
The faithful city
That was filled with justice,
Where righteousness dwelt—
But now murderers.
22Your silver has turned to dross;
Your wine is cut with water.
23Your rulers are rogues
And cronies of thieves,
Every one avid for presents
And greedy for gifts;
They do not judge the case of the orphan,
And the widow’s cause never reaches them.

24Assuredly, this is the declaration
Of the Sovereign, the LORD of Hosts,
The Mighty One of Israel:
“Ah, I will get satisfaction from My foes;
I will wreak vengeance on My enemies!
25I will turn My hand against you,
And smelt out your dross as with lye,

אִם־יִהְיוּ חַטָּאֵיכֶם כַּשָּׁנִים
כְּשֶׁלֶג יִלְבִּינוּ
אִם־יֵאָדִימוּ כְּתוֹלַע
כְּצֹמֶר יִהְיוּ:
19 אִם־תִּאָבֹדוּ וְשָׁמַעְתֶּם
טוֹב הָאָרֶץ תֹּאכְלוּ:
20 וְאִם־תִּמְאָנוּ וּמְרִיתֶם
חֶרֶב תֹּאכְלוּ
כִּי פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר: ס

21 אֵיכָה הִיְתָה לְזוֹנָה
קְרִיָה נְאֻמָּנָה
מִלְּאֲתֵי מִשְׁפָּט
צַדִּיק יִלִּין בָּהּ
וְעֵתָה מְרֻצָּחִים:
22 כְּסַפֵּךְ הָיָה לְסִיגִים
סְבֹאֶךָ מִהוּל בְּמִים:
23 שָׂרִיף סוֹרְרִים
וְחֹבְרֵי גִנְבִים
כֹּל אֶהָב שְׂחָד
וְרֹדֵף שְׁלֵמָנִים
יְתוֹם לֹא יִשְׁפֹטוּ
וְרֵיב אֶלְמָנָה לֹא־יָבֹא אֲלֵיהֶם: פ

24 לָכֵן נֹאֵם
הָאֲדוֹן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
אֲבִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל
הוּא אֲנַחֵם מִצָּרֵי
וְאֲנַקְמָה מֵאוֹיְבָי:
25 וְאֶשְׂיבָה יָדִי עָלֶיךָ
וְאֶצְרֶךָ כְּבַר סִיגֶיךָ

snow-white” (Yalkut Sh. 2:389). Rashi refers to this list as “10 exhortations to repentance.”

21–26. This reproof opens with reference to Zion’s transformation from a “faithful city” where “righteousness dwelt” into a callous city of injustice and disregard for the needy. It closes with the promise of Zion’s restoration as a “City

of Righteousness, Faithful City” after a divine purification. The language of verse 26 is recalled in Jewish liturgy; the divine promise “I will restore your magistrates as of old, / And your counselors as of yore” is reformulated in the daily *Amidah* (blessing 11) as a request for the renewal of justice (“Restore our magistrates as of old”).

And remove all your slag:

²⁶I will restore your magistrates as of old,

And your counselors as of yore.

After that you shall be called

City of Righteousness, Faithful City.”

וְאָסִירָה כָּל־בְּדִילֶיךָ:

²⁶וְאָשִׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֶיךָ כְּבְרָאשְׁנָה

וְיַעֲצִינְךָ כְּבַתְחִלָּה

אַחֲרֵי־כֵן יִקְרָא לְךָ

עִיר הַצְּדָק קְרִיָּה נְאֻמָּנָה:

²⁷Zion shall be saved in the judgment;

Her repentant ones, in the retribution.

²⁷צִיּוֹן בְּמִשְׁפַּט תִּפְדָּה

וְשׁוֹבֵיהָ בְּצַדָּקָה:

27. Perhaps better: “Zion shall be redeemed with justice; / Her repentant ones with righteousness.” Stressing human justice as a precondition seems to fit best with the chapter as a whole.