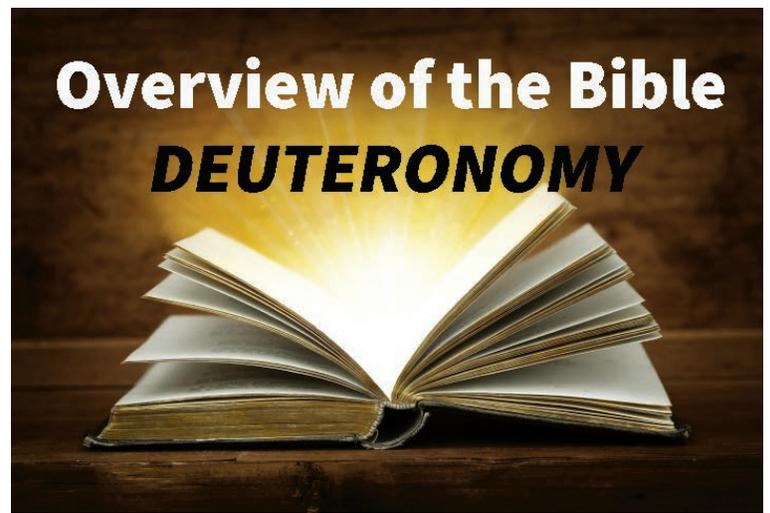


DEUTERONOMY:  
*Deuteronomy 1.1-4:44*  
*Lesson 36*  
Wednesday, March 17, 2021



After Forty Years, God Renews the Covenant with Sinful Israel before the Conquest of Canaan

Deuteronomy concludes the larger composition we know as the Pentateuch (*"five books"*), but which Jews call the Torah. Although Genesis to Deuteronomy is cast as a continuous narrative, in its content and structure Deuteronomy is a self-contained literary unit. Here the narratives and divine speeches revealing in detail the terms of Yahweh's covenant with Israel give way to a report of verbal and ritual events that took place within the last weeks or days of Moses' life. As Jesus would do with his disciples (John 13–17), here Moses prepares his people for his imminent departure (Deut. 31:2, 14), by supervising a covenant-renewal ceremony (29:1 [Heb 28:69]), delivering a series of farewell addresses, developing the grace-based theology underlying the covenant (1:1–31:22), publicly presenting and charging Joshua as Israel's divinely chosen leader in conquering the promised land (31:3–8, 23), providing them with a written copy of the Torah he had proclaimed orally (31:9–13, 24–29), teaching the people what is in effect to serve as their national anthem (31:14–22, 30, 32:1–47), and offering a blessing for each of the tribes (33:1–34).

Moses' First Address: Remembering the Grace of Yahweh (1:1–4:44)

A prose introduction (1:1–5) and a prose conclusion (4:44) frame Moses' first address. Within this framework, Moses sets the historical context for the covenant ritual underlying the book and the addresses that follow. Moses' address divides into four parts, reflecting three phases in Israel's recent experience, but all highlight Yahweh's grace in bringing the people to the present state. Phase 1 concerns the exodus generation (1:6–2:1). Moses begins by recalling the last events at Horeb (Sinai) before the Israelites left Horeb (Sinai) and headed for the promised land (1:6–18), and ends with the debacle at Kadesh Barnea, on the outskirts of the promised land, from which they refused to receive it (1:20–45). Phase 2 concerns the new generation that had been raised during the forty years in the wilderness (2:2–3:29), focusing on the Israelite encounters with their relatives (Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, 2:3–23) and their defeat of the Transjordanian Amorite kings, Sihon and Og (2:24–3:11), and ending with several personal recollections (3:12–29). In Phase 4 Moses looks forward (4:1–40), encouraging his people to stay true to Yahweh in response to his grace in the gift of the Torah (4:1–8), his gift of covenant relationship with himself (4:9–31), and his gift of salvation (4:32–40). Between the end of the speech (4:10) and the summary conclusion (4:44), the author recalls Moses' setting aside cities of refuge in the Transjordan (4:41–43).

THE PREAMBLE TO MOSES' FIRST ADDRESS (1:1–5)

The narrative introduction to the first address also functions as a preamble to the entire book, identifying the speaker (Moses), the audience (all Israel), the location (across the Jordan from the promised land, in Moab), the time (forty years after the Israelites had left Egypt, and after the recent defeat of the Amorite kings), and the genre of the addresses: *"the words that Moses spoke"* (1:1) and *"this Torah"* (1:5), which means *"instruction,"* not *"law."* As we will see that instruction may include laws, but it comes in many other forms as well. Finally, with the rare Hebrew word *bē'ēr* the narrator declares the goal of Moses' address. Although, usually translated as *"explain"* or *"expound,"* the word means *"put into legal effect."* The proclamation of the Torah was an essential part of the covenant-ratification procedure.

## MOSES RECALLS YAHWEH'S GRACE TO THE EXODUS GENERATION (1:6–2:1)

Moses begins his address by remembering Yahweh's instructions to leave Horeb and head for the land he promised the ancestors. To lighten Moses' administrative load, Yahweh authorized him to appoint qualified men to assist him. Thereafter, the Israelites set out for Canaan, but Moses restricts his memories involving the exodus generation to events at and around Kadesh Barnea. In the wake of the twelve scouts' report of the land, they spurned Yahweh's grace and refused to accept Yahweh's promise to give them the land, for which Yahweh sent them back into the wilderness to die. However, because Caleb and Joshua demonstrated deep faith in Yahweh, he rewarded them with the promise of entry. However, they will enter without Moses (1:36–39).

## MOSES RECALLS YAHWEH'S GRACE TO THE NEW GENERATION (2:2–3:29)

Almost forty years later, Yahweh instructed the new generation of Israelites who had been born in the desert to turn around and head back to the promised land. However, instead of entering from Kadesh Barnea in the south, they were to go around the east side of the Dead Sea, passing through the territories of the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, to whom Yahweh had granted their respective lands. Despite resistance from these nations, who are the Israelites' relatives, they arrived at the Jordan on the northern end of the Dead Sea. However, to give them access to the river, Yahweh granted them resounding victories over the Amorite kings of the Transjordanian highlands, Sihon and Og. Moses ends this part of the address with three personal recollections: his granting the two-and-a-half tribes (Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe Manasseh) permission to settle in the lands formerly occupied by the Amorites (3:12–20), a personal word of encouragement for Joshua (3:21–22), and an embarrassing and bitter interchange he had with Yahweh regarding Yahweh's refusal to let him enter the land (3:23–29).

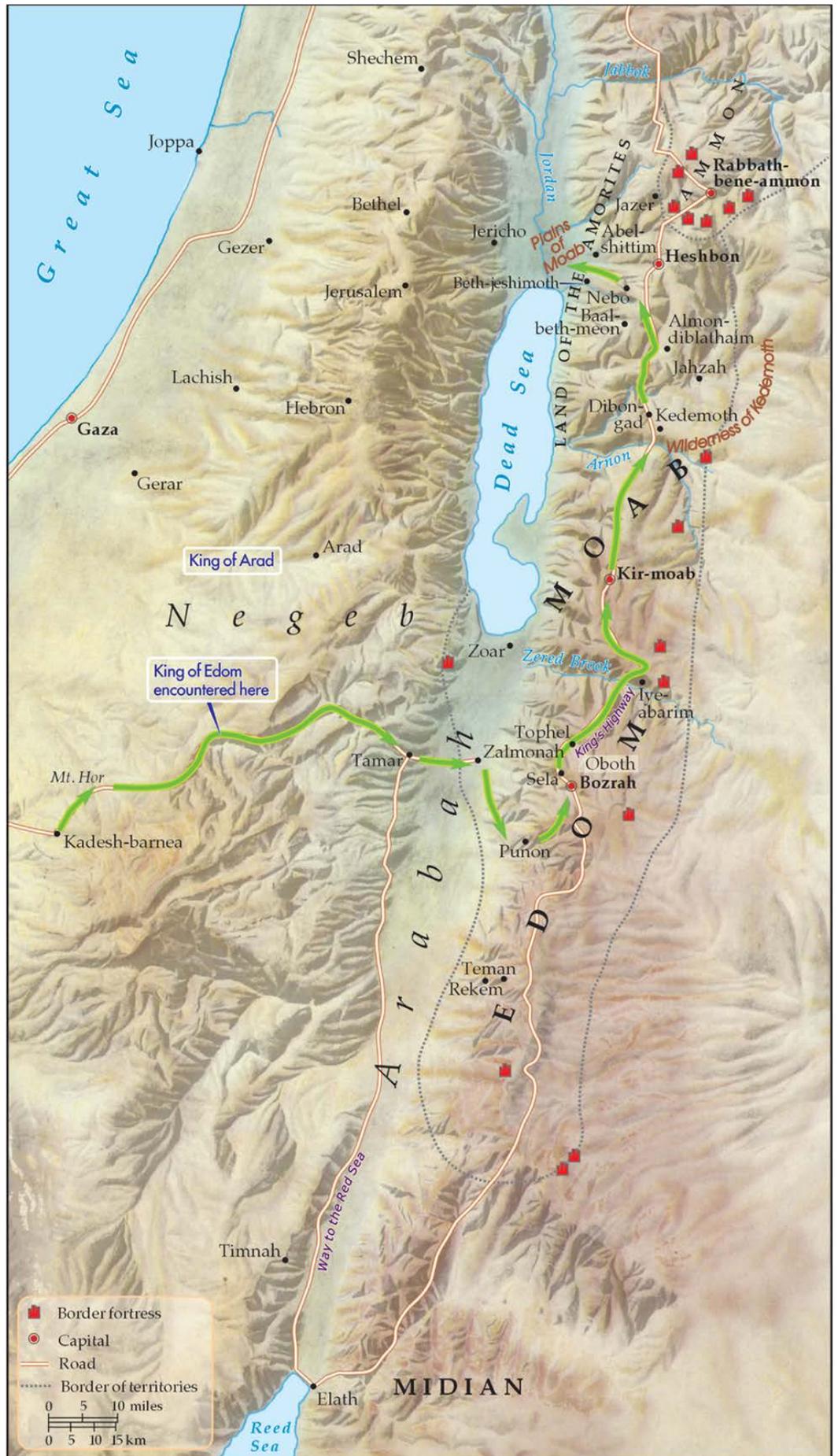
## MOSES RECALLS YAHWEH'S GRACE WITH THE FUTURE IN MIND (4:1–44)

Although the recollections continue, Moses' tone becomes significantly more sermonistic as he looks ahead to Israel's possession and occupation of the land of Canaan. Recalling the events in the reverse order of their actual occurrence, he presents Yahweh's incredible demonstrations of grace to Israel in his distinctive revelation of his will in the Torah (4:1–8), his unparalleled establishment of his covenant with Israel (4:9–31), and his awe-inspiring and unprecedented actions in rescuing Israel from slavery of Egypt (4:32–44). In the future, keeping alive these memories will be the key to Israel's grateful and faithful service to Yahweh and their fulfillment of the mission to which Yahweh has called them.

## FIRST GENERATION JOURNEY



# SECOND GENERATION-JOURNEY



Work Cited

Douglas Mangum, ed., *Lexham Context Commentary: Old Testament*, Lexham Content Commentary (Bellington, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), Dt.