

# Deuteronomy 1:1-4:49

## Moses' First Sermon: Historical Prologue

### Introduction to Deuteronomy

The name **"Deuteronomy"** comes from the Greek for **"repetition of the law,"** or **"second law,"** which is an **early mistranslation** of **"copy of this law"** in from verse 17:18. Nevertheless it is largely a **repeating** of **God's original Law** given to **Israel** at **Sinai** through **Moses**. Deuteronomy **31:9** records that **Moses** wrote down **"this law,"** most likely referring to **chapters 1-30**. Here **Moses** gives **3 sermons** and **2 prophetic poems** to **Israel** on the **plains of Moab** as his **life** was **nearing its end**, and **Israel** was about to enter the **Promised Land** under the **leadership** of **Joshua**. **Israel** had wandered in the **wilderness 40 years** prior to this as the **first generation** that experienced the **Exodus** from **Egypt**, **perished** in the **wilderness** under the **judgment** of **God**. Reflecting on the **nation's sins** and **failures**, **Moses** urges the people to **obey God's Law** so that they can **experience** His **blessing** and **prosperity** when the **enter the land** and possess it. It is important to **take notice** that **Israel's privilege** and **blessing** is always **tied together** with their **prosperity in the land** that **God** promised to them in the **Abrahamic** and **Mosaic Covenants**, a **"land flowing with milk and honey"** (Ex 3:8, Deut 11:9). When **Israel obeyed God** they would **live in prosperity in the land**. And when they **rebelled** and **disobeyed**, they would be **exiled from the land** (4:26-27).

**Deuteronomy 11:8-17 - 8 "You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land** into which you are about to cross to possess it; **9 so that you may prolong your days on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.** 10 For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. 11 But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, **a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, 12 a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year.** 13 "And it shall come about, **if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, 14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine**

and your oil. 15 And He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be satisfied. 16 Beware, lest your hearts be deceived and you turn away and serve other gods and worship them. 17 Or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you. NASB

Deuteronomy really is Moses' farewell address, and is a comprehensive overview of all that has happened with Israel under Moses leadership. In these sermons he seeks to recall their failures and God's displeasure, seeking to motivate them to obedience and therefore to God's good pleasure and their blessing, when they go in and possess the land which He promised to their fathers. God has been faithful to bring them here, now they must be faithful to remain in His blessing by the obedience of faith. The *ESV Study Bible* comments, *"The circumstance of the sermon carries added significance because of Israel's failure, a generation earlier, to conquer the land starting at Kadesh-barnea on the southern border of Canaan (see [1:19–46](#)). Now that they are back at the eastern border of the Promised Land, Deuteronomy seeks to ensure that such failure does not recur. The rhetorical style of the sermon motivates obedience by constantly reassuring them of God's faithfulness and his power to keep his promise of land. This faithfulness of God remains despite Israel's persistent sin, detailed at length ([1:19–46](#); [9:1–29](#)). Thus Deuteronomy demonstrates that God's faithfulness results in mercy to his sinful people, for the sake of his promises to Abraham. The theology of Deuteronomy is focused on convincing Israel to trust and obey, and to conquer the land. The uniqueness and incomparability of God is clearly argued ([ch. 4](#)). His power over other nations and armies is evident ([2:1–23](#)). His grace and faithfulness are also stressed, with frequent reminders that the land is sworn by him on oath and is undeserved ([9:4–6](#)) and full of good things ([6:10–12](#)). The book's emphasis on the continuation of the covenant made at Sinai with the previous generation underscores the abiding significance of God's law for his people (see [5:1–3](#)). The large central section of Deuteronomy ([12:1–26:19](#)) recites the law, consistently urging Israel to keep it. The law is wide-ranging, incorporating all areas of life—economics, family and sexual relationships, religious observance, leadership, justice, guidance, food, property, and warfare. To some extent, the detail of the laws fleshes out the great command of [6:5](#), that Israel is to love the Lord with all its heart, soul, and strength. [Chapters 12–16](#) show what such total love of God will look like and, in many respects, provide examples of what the Ten Commandments ([ch. 5](#)) mean in practice."* End quote.

**Deuteronomy** also sums up much of the **earlier revelation** of the **Pentateuch**. It shows how the **patriarchal promises** have been **fulfilled**, it recounts the account of the **Exodus** and the **historical narrative** of the **wilderness wanderings**, and it recounts the **Law given** at **Sinai**. It gives an important **theological foundation** for the **rest** of the **Bible**, and is **quoted** in many other places in **both** the **Old** and **New Testaments**. In this sense **Deuteronomy** is the **heart** of the **Old Testament**, pumping the **revelation** and **truth** that was **established** in **Genesis** thru **Numbers** into all the **other sections** of the **Old Testament**. **Deuteronomy** includes many **unique passages** emphasizing **important themes** which are **foundational** to the **rest** of the **Bible**. It teaches the **uniqueness** of **God** and His **election of Israel** to be **His own people**. It displays the **faithfulness** of **God**, despite **Israel's sin**, to **keep His promise** of **land** made originally to **Abraham**. The **Sovereignty** and **Providence** over the **nations** is on display as **Israel defeats enemies** much more **numerous** than them. It expresses the true **worship** of **God** in its call for **Israel** to **love, serve, fear, and obey God**, even as it exhorts them hold the **Word of God** in their **hearts**.

**Deuteronomy 6:4-13** - 4 "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5 "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; 7 and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. 10 "Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, 12 then watch yourself, lest you forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 13 You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. NASB

Lastly, in **Deuteronomy**, God has **renewed His covenant** with **Israel's second generation** and exhorted them to **uphold** the **covenant stipulations** so that they may **worship** and **serve Him only**, and experience the **profound blessing** of having **Yahweh** as their **God**.

## **Moses' First Speech: Historical Prologue Deuteronomy 1:6-4:43**

In this section Moses will **remind Israel** how their **fathers failed to obey God** at **Kadesh Barnea**, near the beginning of the **40-year wilderness wandering**. This resulted in **God's judgment**, barring them from **entering the land**, but only their children of the **second generation** would **enter the land**. It also **recounts** the period of **passing through Edom, Moab, and Ammon** without **fighting**, and also **successes in battle** over **Sihon** the king of the Amorites, who lived in **Heshbon**, and **Og** the king of **Bashan**, and the **distribution** of those **two lands** as an **inheritance** to the **tribes** of Ruben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. The purpose of **chapters 1–3** is not simply to retell history but to **use history** to **persuade Israel** to **trust God** and **obey Him** and go in to **conquer the land**. **Chapter 4** is an exhortation for Israel to **consider** the **profound** thing God has done in **choosing them** out of **all the nations** of the **earth**, and bringing them into a **Promised Land** of **blessing** and **privilege**.

### **Prologue - 1:1-5**

This **prologue section** introduces the **entire book** of **Deuteronomy**. Notice here the **profound irony** of **verse 2**. The **Israelites** turned an **11 day journey** from **Horeb** (Mount Sinai) to **Kadesh Barnea**, the **first site** for **entering** into the **Promised Land** from the south, into a **40-year wandering** in the **wilderness** before they came to a **second potential site** for entering the land, on the **plains of Moab**.

**Deuteronomy 1:1-5 - 2 It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. 3 And it came about in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month,** that Moses spoke to the children of

Israel, according to all that the Lord had commanded him to give to them, 4 after he had defeated Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei. 5 Across the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law NASB

There surely is an **implicit warning** here for us all to see. **Resisting God** and His **good purposes** for your life can send you **wandering** in a **trackless waste**, discontented, **sick and sore**. **Persistence** in one's **rebellion** against **God** will bring you in **awful suffering** to **death's door**. Let us all learn **one great lesson** from the **wilderness wandering** of Israel, the **fear of the Lord** is the **beginning of wisdom!**

**Proverbs 10:27-30 - 27 The fear of the Lord prolongs life, But the years of the wicked will be shortened. 28 The hope of the righteous is gladness, But the expectation of the wicked perishes. 29 The way of the Lord is a**

stronghold to the upright, But ruin to the workers of iniquity. **30 The righteous will never be shaken, But the wicked will not dwell in the land.**

### **The faithfulness of God despite Israel's sin - 1:1-46**

In this section of His **first sermon**, Moses seeks to **motivate** the **people** to **obedience** by recounting **Israel's failure** to obey God at Kadesh, while reminding them of the **faithfulness of God** despite their persistent sin, which is detailed at length. **God** has **remained faithful** to **His promise** to Abraham, which is seen not only in that He has brought them to the **brink of the land**, but also that He has made them as numerous as the stars.

**Deuteronomy 1:8, 10-11 - 8 'See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.' ... 10 'The Lord your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. 11 'May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand-fold more than you are, and bless you, just as He has promised you! NASB**

Because they are **so numerous** Moses couldn't bear the **burdens of ministry alone**, so he **appoints wise and discerning leaders** to **govern** and **judge** the people, **1:9-18**. Now that they are back at the **eastern border** of the **Land of Promise**, Moses **reminds** them of the **failure** of the **first generation** to possess the land, and of **God's great displeasure** with them. He rehearses **Israel's failure** to **enter the land** at **Kadesh** some 38 years previously to warn the **current generation** not to **repeat** the sins of their **parents**.

**Deuteronomy 1:21, 26-33- 21 'See, the Lord your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession,** as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. **Do not fear or be dismayed.'** .... **26 "Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the Lord your God;** 27 and you grumbled in your tents and said, 'Because the Lord hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. 28 'Where can we go up? **Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, "The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven.** And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.'" 29 "Then I said to you, **'Do not be shocked, nor fear them. 30 'The Lord your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes,** 31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as a man

carries his son, in all the way which you have walked, until you came to this place.' **32 "But for all this, you did not trust the Lord your God, 33 who goes before you on your way,** to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go. NASB Although **God** had **shown Himself** mighty over the **nations**, and provided for them and **brought them** all the way from **Egypt**, yet the people **failed to trust the Lord** and **believe His promises** and **obey His commands**. Therefore, **God** was **greatly displeased** and swore that they would **not enter the land**, but only their **children** would, **1:34-46**.

**Deuteronomy 1:34-39 - 34 "Then the Lord heard the sound of your words, and He was angry and took an oath, saying, 35 'Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers,** 36 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the Lord fully.' 37 "The Lord was angry with me also on your account, saying, 'Not even you shall enter there. 38 'Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. **39 'Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them, and they shall possess it.** NASB

Here is **one great example** of how **God** can be **displeased** with **one generation** of **ethnic Israelites** and **judge** them, and yet **bless** another generation or **remnant** of ethnic Israelites and **fulfill His promises** to them.

### **Israel passes through Edom, Moab, and Ammon – 2:1-23**

Moses recounts how they passed peacefully through the 3 nations **Edom, Moab, and Ammon**, who were related to them through **Esau** and **Lot**. Here notice how both **God's Sovereignty** over the **nations** and their land, and **His faithfulness** to **Israel** are on display here. If God will control **promises** and **fulfilment** to **Israel**, He must **control all nations** and **history** itself. His power over the **nations** and **armies** is evident, and His **specific ordering** of **events** shows His **meticulous Providence**.

**Deuteronomy 2:4-7 - 4** and command the people, saying, "You will pass through **the territory of your brothers the sons of Esau** who live in Seir; and **they will be afraid of you. So be very careful; 5 do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land, even as little as a footstep because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession.** 6 You shall buy food from

them with money so that you may eat, and you shall also purchase water from them with money so that you may drink. **7 For the Lord your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing.**" NASB

God gives the land as a possession to whom He wills, in this case the descendants of Esau which He calls **"4 the territory of your brothers the sons of Esau."** He does the same with the **descendants** of **Lot**, whose children were **Moab** and **Ammon**.

**Deuteronomy 2:9 - 9** Then the Lord said to me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor provoke them to war, for **I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.** NASB

Here again He **recounts God's displeasure** with the **first generation** and explains that **God's active judgment** pursued them until they had **perished** during the 40 year **wandering** in the **wilderness**.

**Deuteronomy 2:14-15 - 14** Now the time that it took for us to come from Kadesh-barnea, until we crossed over the brook Zered, **was thirty-eight years; until all the generation of the men of war perished from within the camp, as the Lord had sworn to them. 15 Moreover the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from within the camp, until they all perished.** NASB

Next as he points out that **God is sovereign** in the **distribution** of **lands** to **nations** as **He wills**, he also explains that **God is with them**, and will **go before them** and **conquer their enemies**. This, God will do even over **numerous** and **giant enemies**, just as he did for the **sons of Esau** and **Ammon**.

**Deuteronomy 2:19-23 - 19** 'And when you come opposite the sons of Ammon, do not harass them nor provoke them, **for I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot as a possession.**' **20** (It is also regarded as the land of the Rephaim, for Rephaim formerly lived in it, but the Ammonites call them **Zamzummin, 21 a people as great, numerous, and tall as the Anakim, but the Lord destroyed them before them. And they dispossessed them and settled in their place, 22 just as He did for the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them; and they dispossessed them, and settled in their place** even to this day. NASB

See here how this **section** of the **sermon** is seeking to **motivate** them not to **repeat** the **sins** of their **parents**, but instead to **go in** and **conquer the land**, that **God** has **promised** to **give them**. He is **exhorting** them to **trust the Lord**, to **believe** His **promises** and **obey** His **commands**, so that it will **go well** with them and **God** can fulfill **His good plans** for them.

### **Israel defeats Sihon King of Heshbon and Og King of Bashan - 2:24-3:11**

**God's promises** and His **power** are on **display** in this **section** as He fulfills **prophecy** made **400 years earlier** to **Abraham** concerning his **descendants**, the **Exodus**, and the **destruction** of the **Amorites**.

**Genesis 15:13-16** - 13 And God said to Abram, **"Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions.** 15 And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. **16 Then in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."**

Even though **Heshbon** lies on the **east side** of the **Jordan**, its conquest marks the beginning of **possessing the Promised Land**. Now as the **Lord brings Israel** to **possess the Land**, He will **use Israel** as His **means of judging** and **destroying** the **Amorites**, as He told **Abraham** He would **400 years earlier**. According to **Genesis 15:16**, the land would be **given to Israel** when the **iniquity** of the **Amorites** was **complete**, and now **that time has come**. Thus, the **defeat** of various nations **represents God's punishment** for their **iniquity**, because **God detests** the practices of these nations to such degree, He will annihilate them from the land.

**Deuteronomy 18:12** - 9 "When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, **you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations.** 10 There shall not be found among you anyone **who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you.** NASB

So meticulous is **God's Providence** seen in this text, that He **hardened Sihon's spirit** and **made his heart obstinate**, just as with **Pharaoh** during the series of plagues (Ex. 9:12; 10:1-2, 20, 27; 11:9-10; 14:4, 8, 17-18). This was God's specific



purpose in **bringing destruction** on the **Amorites**, whom **God wanted** completely **annihilated** for the **detestable practices** that they had engaged in for **so long**.

**Deuteronomy 2:30-37 - 30 "But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as he is today.** 31 And the Lord said to me, 'See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to occupy, that you may possess his land.' 32 "Then Sihon with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz. 33 **And the Lord our God delivered him over to us; and we defeated him with his sons and all his people. 34 So we captured all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, women and children of every city. We left no survivor.** 35 We took only the animals as our booty and the spoil of the cities which we had captured. 36 From Aroer which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon and from the city which is in the valley, even to Gilead, there was no city that was too high for us; **the Lord our God delivered all over to us.** NASB

The **total destruction** of **Sihon's cities** and **people** reflects **God's instructions** for **battle** within the **Promised Land**. These **Canaanites enemies** were to be **devoted to destruction**, in a **holy war** of sorts. God is **bringing His judgment** against them, and **Israel** is the **means**. Since **God** is the **victor**, the spoils of battle belong to him and not to Israel, hence their destruction as an **act of devotion** to **God**, according to His command.

**Deuteronomy 20:16-18 - 16 Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. 17 But you shall utterly destroy them,** the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, **as the Lord your God has commanded you, 18 in order that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord your God.** NASB

At the Lord's command they did the same thing to giant King Og of Bashan.

**Deuteronomy 3:1-4 - 3 "Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan, and Og, king of Bashan, with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Edrei. 2 But the Lord said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; and you shall do to him just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.'** 3 **"So the Lord our God delivered Og also, king of Bashan, with all his people into**

**our hand, and we smote them until no survivor was left....** 8 Thus we took the land at that time from the hand of the **two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan**, from the valley of Arnon to Mount Hermon 9 (Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir): 10 all the cities of the tableland and all Gilead and all Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. **11 (For only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his bedstead was an iron bedstead; it is in Rabbah of the sons of Ammon. Its length was nine cubits and its width four cubits by ordinary cubit.)** NASB

See here how **Moses** seeks to **encourage** this **second generation** of Israelites who are to go in and possess the land, by **recounting** the **sovereignty, faithfulness, and mighty power** of **God**, even over the **largest** and **most numerous** enemies. The **giant King Og's bed** was **13 feet long** and **6 feet wide**, a detail given to obviously encourage them to see that **God would deliver** them even **against the strongest of enemies**. Conquering the land will require **courage** and **faith** in God's **deliverance**, and also important, **obedience** to His **detailed instructions**. It is **God** who has **designed** and **planned** this **Conquest**, in order to **bless Israel** because of **His promise** to the **Patriarchs**. Therefore, all these **actions** in the **Conquest** are **acts of worship** and **devotion unto God**, who expects their **full obedience**. God has decided to **bless them** and give them **"a land flowing with milk and honey,"** but in the **obedience of faith** they must **go in and take the land**.

There are **many lessons** of **Christian faith** contained in these **narratives**. Even as we have been **saved by grace** through **faith in Christ alone**, yet in the **obedience of faith** we must **follow Christ** in the midst of a **hostile and sinful world**. True **saving faith** does the **good works** of faith, **"which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."**

**Ephesians 2:8-10 - 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;** 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.** NASB

Many times, we **Christians** face **enemies** far **greater** than our **strength** and **ability** can **accomplish**. We fight against **Goliath sins** and **vices** as we bring our sinful lives under the **Lordship of Christ**. Yet the Lord calls us unto a **life of obedience**, and often times overcoming **extraordinary obstacles**. These will require pressing on in **faith** and **trust in God's ability** to overcome for us (2 Cor 10:3-5).

**Ephesians 6:10-13** - 10 Finally, **be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.** 11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. **12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.** **13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day,** and having done everything, to stand firm. NASB

### **The command to all Israelites to fight - 3:12-22**

The tribes of **Simeon, Gad,** and the **half tribe** of **Manasseh** already **possess** their **land,** but they are **commanded** here to join the **remaining tribes** to **conquer** the land **west** of the **Jordan.** Only then can they **return to inhabit** their **land** on the **east** side of the Jordan. See here how **Moses encourages** their **obedience** by explaining that **God has planned** for them to be **victorious** in **battle,** and then return to the **land** to **rest** and **enjoy it.**

**Deuteronomy 3:18-22** - 18 "Then I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The Lord your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel. 19 'But your wives and your little ones and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock), shall remain in your cities which I have given you, **20 until the Lord gives rest to your fellow countrymen as to you, and they also possess the land which the Lord your God will give them beyond the Jordan. Then you may return every man to his possession, which I have given you.'** 21 "And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, 'Your eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings; **so the Lord shall do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. 22 'Do not fear them, for the Lord your God is the one fighting for you.'** NASB

### **Reiteration of Moses being denied entry into the land – 3:23-29**

Although **Moses fervently desires** and **prays** to the Lord to **enter the land** and see it, **God denies** him the right. Learn here that **often times** we don't know the **plans** and **purposes** of **God,** and **sometimes** even when we **pray hard** the answer may be no.

**Deuteronomy 3:23-27** - **23 "I also pleaded with the Lord at that time,** saying, 24 'O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can

do such works and mighty acts as Thine? 25 'Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.' 26 "But the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the Lord said to me, 'Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter.' NASB

It is important to note that **Moses maintains** that **“the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me.”** Moses says that his own sin was provoked by Israel, and says that this is why God would not answer his prayer and allow him to see the land.

### **Exhortation to Israel – 4:1-40**

Here the text transitions from **narrative** to **discourse** as Moses gives a lengthy exhortation to obedience to the Law. Moses will begin with a noted feature of Deuteronomy calling them to **“hear,”** or **“listen.”** The **word** in the **Hebrew** is **Shema**, meaning **to listen and do**. Here see the requirement for Israel to live in **obedient faith** in order that **“you may live and go in and take possession of the land.”** This is a great theme in Deuteronomy, that **Israel’s privilege** and **blessing** is always **tied together** with their **prosperity in the land** that God promised to them in the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, a **“land flowing with milk and honey.”** When **Israel obeyed God**, they would **live in prosperity in the land**. And when they **rebelled** and **disobeyed**, they would be **exiled from the land** (4:26-27).

**Deuteronomy 4:1-8** - 4 "Now, O Israel, **listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you.** 2 "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. 3 "Your eyes have seen what the Lord has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the Lord your God has destroyed them from among you. 4 "**But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you.** 5 "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. 6 "**So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples** who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' 7 "**For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him?** 8 "Or what

**great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?** NASU

Notice how **prominent** the **Word** is to be, its **“statutes and judgments,”** and how **sacred** it is to be held. **“2 You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it.”** This same **warning** is **repeated** at the **end** of the **book of Revelation**, as **God** is **jealous** to make **sure His Word** remains **pure** and **undefiled** by **revisions**.

**Revelation 22:18-19** - 18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city,** which are written in this book. NASB

Here also **Deuteronomy** functions like **wisdom literature**, as it **applies** the **command** to **listen** and **obey** the **Word** to **Israel**, calling it their **wisdom** and **understanding** if they will keep it. **“5 "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. 6 "So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples.”** Land possession is **not** linked to **military strategy** or **strength**, but to **comprehensive obedience** of the **statutes** and the **rules** that govern all aspects of life. Obedience to **God’s Word** is of **paramount importance** to the **blessing** and **prosperity** of **living** in the **land** and **continuing** to **possess** it. If they disobey, like those that sinned at **Baal Peor (v-3)**, they would **perish quickly**, but if they **keep** and **obey God’s Word**, they will **live** in the **land** and **posses** it. And this is all to the **glory** of the **God**, who has called them and the **glory** of His **Word**. **“7 “For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? 8 "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”** The obedience of God’s people adorns their life with the very glory of God, putting His character and nature on display. **“6 "So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples.”** This is the relation of **God’s Word** to His **true worshippers** and **bearing His image** in order to **glorify Him**, shining as lights in the world (Phil 2:15).

In **4:14-24** Moses exhorts them to stay **free from idolatry** as this would surely bring them to **ruin**, for **God is jealous** for His **glory** and His **name**.

**Deuteronomy 4:23-24** - 23 So watch yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the Lord your God has commanded you. 24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. NASB

In 4:25-31, Moses speaks prophetically about Israel's future, explaining that indeed that when they **"25 do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger,"** that they will perish quickly from the land and be exiled. God will scatter them among the nations where they will serve other gods. But in the when **"30 in the latter days you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice."**

**Deuteronomy 4:25-31** - 25 "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed. 27 And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the Lord shall drive you. 28 And there you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. 29 But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. 30 When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and listen to His voice. 31 For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them. NASB

Because God is a **compassionate God**, He will **not fail Israel** nor **destroy them** or forget His covenant with **"your fathers,"** but will indeed **"29 you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul."** Even in spite of Israel's severe and continual disobedience and idolatry, **God** will be **faithful** to His promises to Israel and in the **latter days** restore them (Jeremiah 31:23-40). Now all of these **great promises** put **God** on **center stage** in this **whole matter** with **God's election** and **plan of redemption** with Israel. These events are **unprecedented** and **epic** beyond **comprehension!** Has anything like this **ever happened** in the **history** of the **world?**

**Deuteronomy 4:32-38** - 32 "Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, **since the day that God created man on the earth, and inquire from one end of the heavens to the other.** Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it? **33 "Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived? 34 "Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?** 35 "To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him. 36 Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. 37 Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, 38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in and to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today. NASB

Here God calls them to **account** to **consider** the **great things** that He has done in **choosing them, delivering** them from **slavery in Egypt**, and **appearing** to them at Sinai in fire! All of this that He might **reveal Himself** to them as **Savior** and **Lord**, that they might **know** Him. **"35 "To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God; there is no other besides Him. 36 Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire."** The Lord's approach to **Israel at Sinai** is the **greatest event** in **any time** (since the day that God created man) or any place (one end of heaven to the other). And all of this was because of God's special electing love upon Israel's Patriarchs. **"37 Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them."** On the background of God's **universal sovereignty** is his **love of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**, and for His people in general which is an important theme in Deuteronomy. And even as God loves His people whom He has chosen, yet He calls them and requires them to love Him in return (6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20). As God has called them to **see** these **unprecedented** and **epic events**, He brings them to this great all-life encompassing principle which must govern their hearts and lives.

**Deuteronomy 4:39-40** - **39 Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.** 40 So you shall **keep His statutes and His**

**commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the Lord your God is giving you for all time."** NASB

**God is ultimate, His Word is preeminent, and His blessing only comes for those who hear and obey it.** This of course was the teaching of our blessed **Lord Jesus.**

**Luke 11:28 - 28** But He said, "On the contrary, **blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it."** NASB

### **Setting apart cities of refuge 4:41-43**

Three cities, **Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan**, are set apart on the east side of the Jordan as places to which a **person guilty of manslaughter** can **flee** to evade revenge from the dead person's family.

**Deuteronomy 4:41-43** - 41 Then Moses set apart three cities across the Jordan to the east, 42 that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities **he might live: 43 Bezer** in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, and **Ramoth** in Gilead for the Gadites, and **Golan** in Bashan for the Manassites. NASB

### **Introduction to Moses' second speech 4:44-49**

Here the text switches back to **narrative** and this provides a **geographical and historical setting** for Moses **second sermon**.

**Deuteronomy 4:44-49** - 44 Now this is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel; 45 these are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, **when they came out from Egypt, 46 across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt. 47 And they took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who were across the Jordan to the east,** 48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon), 49 with all the Arabah across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah. NASB