

## Deuteronomy 2-3 Dealing With the –ites and -ims

In Deuteronomy 2-3, we have the record of the Israelites leaving the wilderness and finally preparing to enter the PL. The record describes how Israel had to deal with various ethnic groups—the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Amorites. The record also mentions the Emmim, the Anakim, the Nephilim, the Zamzummim, the Avim, and the Capthorim. Between the –ites and the –ims, Israel had a lot of groups to deal with.

Several of the groups Moses mentions were giants, and yet, they were driven out of their land. Moses' point seems to be that if God gave them victories over the giants on this side of the Jordan, he will surely give them victory over the people on the other side of the Jordan.

Note Deuteronomy 3:21–22 *“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 will the LORD do to all the kingdoms through which you pass. 22 You must not fear them, for the LORD your God Himself fights for you.’”*

Although we are not fighting giants and taking over their territory, these two chapters in Deuteronomy are valuable for us as well. They encourage us to trust God and believe that he will fulfill his promises to us. The text reminds us about the cost of rebellion and disobedience. At the end of the chapter, we learn some important things about prayer.

In Deuteronomy 1, Moses is reviewing the last 38 years of Israel's history of wandering around in the desert. Chapter 2 begins the journey out of the desert and into the PL.

### 5. The journey from Kadesh to Kedemoth (2:1–25)

This section is all about how the Israelites passed through the lands belonging to the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites.

- a) .1 “Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness”—  
This is a tragic turn. After the rebellion and failure at KB, instead of going north into the PL, they turned and went south into the wilderness. They would spend the next 38 years wandering around in the region between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea, a very inhospitable desert region.

**App:** The entire nation felt the effects of the rebellion of a few—i.e., 10 of the spies. Those soldiers and their bad report caused the entire nation to complain and rebel. And the result was the death of that generation of soldiers and 38 years of wilderness wandering.

The disobedience and bad attitude of a *few* can have a huge impact on *many*. It often happens that way in a church—a few disaffected, critical people ruin things for everyone else.

- b) .2f After years in the desert, the Lord finally directed the people to turn to the north. They started traveling toward the east side of the Dead Sea and eventually into the regions of Edom and Moab.
- c) .5f Israel was not supposed to meddle with the Edomites, the Moabites, or the Ammonites.

These three groups were all relatives of the Israelites. The Edomites were descendant of Esau (Jacob's brother), and the Moabites and Ammonites were descendants of Lot (Abraham's nephew) (vs. 19). So these were all Semitic people—related to the Hebrews.

Don't confuse the *Ammonites* with the *Amorites*. Amorites are Canaanites; they had no family relationship to Abraham, Esau or Lot. Amorites are the enemy, and Israel is about to dispossess them from their land.

.5end We also see here that God takes responsibility for giving these people their land. God is sovereign over the land and gives it to whomever he wants. The Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites are pagans by this time, but because of their previous connection to Israel, God still is providing for them.

**App:** It matters to us as a nation how we are related to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. America does not have a direct tie to the Jews, but the principle is still valid: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." God blesses those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel.

- d) .7 God has been faithfully supplying the needs of his people in a very inhospitable land for many years. The people have been stubborn, stiff-necked, and disobedient, but God still loves them and provides for them as they trudge through “this great wilderness.”

**App:** Even when we fail, God still loves us. Even when under discipline, God still cares for us.

- e) .10-11 This is the first reference to several groups of giants living in the land. Some of the names given to these giants:

- (1) Emim/Emites—“terrors, dreaded ones”
- (2) Anakim—the descendants of an earlier giant named Anak. He descended from the Nephilim.

Genesis 6:4 *There were giants (גִּבּוֹרִים) on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.*

Numbers 13:33 *There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); ...*

Nephilim means “fallen ones.”

We frankly don’t know much about some of the ancient civilizations.

- (3) .11 “they were regarded as giants” – the Hebrew word is “rephaim” (רִפְּאִים) – apparently meaning “the dead” or “fearful ones.”
- (4) .20 Zamzummim—“murmurers”; the Zuzites/Zuzim (Gen 14:5)
- (5) .21 Apparently, numerous giants were in that land. “A people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim.” Vs 23 mentions the Avim/Avites who also were another group of giants.
- (6) So it was a well-known fact that giants were in the land; it was no myth or legend. They apparently inhabited that whole region.

- (7) Critics and skeptics, of course, see all references to giants as nothing but myth and legend. But there is good historical and archaeological evidence that some humans grew to be around 9 feet tall.

If you consult the Guinness Book of World Records, the tallest man in recent history, Robert Wadlow (1918-1940), was 8'11" tall. Wadlow had a pituitary gland problem, and it resulted in his huge size.

Angus MacAskill (1825-63) was 7'9", and his height was entirely natural and his body was proportional in size and strength.

Yao Ming, the BB player, was 7'6". His mom and dad were both tall.

So it's no myth or legend that giant humans used to live in various parts of the earth. There is a great deal of variety within human nature that can lead to all sorts of sizes.

- f) Note vs. 14b—Moses again reminds us that Israel wandered in the wilderness for 38 years, and during that time, the whole first generation of the men of war died. They were supposed to enter the PL at KB, but instead they wandered around the desert and died over the course of 38 years.

.14end—"just as the Lord had sworn." God carried out his threat—that whole generation of soldiers died.

Note the cause--.15. These people did not die of old age; they died early because God was against them because of their cowardice and rebellion at KB.

**App:** God follows through on his threats. When he said that the entire generation of fighting men would die in the wilderness, that's exactly what happened. Rebellion led to disaster. And these were God's chosen people.

That is a profound and timeless principle that still applies to us today. When God's people disobey and rebel, God often brings discipline upon them.

1 John 5 mentions “a sin unto death.” In some cases, God may shorten the life of a rebellious believer. Disobedience may cost you your life. And even if rebellion does not take your life, it may end up wasting your life or years of your life.

- g) .19 The Ammonites occupied territory just north of Moab. God prohibited the Israelites from meddling with the Ammonites.

.19end “descendants of Lot” – cf. Gen 19:36-38—Lot’s daughters had two children—Moab and Ben Ammi. The Ammonites descend from Ben Ammi. Israel had a family connection to these people.

And it’s interesting that these two grandsons of Lot were illegitimate sons; their family background was far less than ideal. Yet God still recognizes them as related to the Jews; that family connection still pertained. God spared these people at this time because of their previous family connections to the Jews. That shows God’s concern for Israel and those connected to it.

- h) Vs. 23 “Caphtorim/Caphtorites” are the people who came from Caphtor, another name for Crete. Who are these Caphtorites? It’s likely another name for the Philistines (cf. Gen 10:14; Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7).

- i) The point of all this information about the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites is that, although giants occupied that country previously, these descendants of Lot came in and took over. They dispossessed these powerful people from their land because (vs. 21b) “the Lord destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place.”

If God could do that for the children of Esau and Lot, he could do it for the sons of Jacob as well. They don’t need to be afraid of anyone in the PL. God will dispossess them; he’ll drive them out. If they believe God and obey his commands, they’ll have no worries.

**App:** One of the reasons we read these OT accounts is to learn the same lesson—if God could do that in the past for these people, he can certainly do great things for us in the present. These stories give us confidence in God’s plan and power.

- j) .24 The Lord now gives Moses permission to start engaging the Amorites/Canaanites in battle. Conquest of the PL is about to begin. And God had already determined who would be victorious — “I have given [him] into your hand.”

Remember that God had previously spoken to Israel about the Amorites.

Genesis 15:16 ... *the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*

Exodus 34:11 ... *Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.*

God drove out these people because of their wicked, violent, brutal, idolatrous practices, including child sacrifice. God was judging and destroying those nations because of their wickedness. God had given this land to Israel, and God had also commanded Israel to destroy those nations because of their iniquity.

**App:** Obviously, we don’t have the same command; we don’t take over territory by force. We don’t spread the Gospel or make converts by force. We don’t build the church by force. We don’t defeat our enemies by force.

The NT tells us that we don’t wrestle against flesh and blood. The weapons of our warfare are not physical; they are spiritual. Our enemies are spiritual—the world, the flesh, and the devil. Our victory is in Jesus, not in dispossessing idolaters from their territory. We persuade men, we don’t force them to believe in Jesus.

Does God still bring judgment on nations for their wickedness? God may destroy a nation because of its violence, immorality, and brutality.

Ps 9:17 *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*

I'm rather concerned about our nation in that regard.

6. The conquest of Transjordan (2:26–3:20)

The Transjordan is that region just to the east of the Jordan River and just north of the Dead Sea. That's where Israel gathered to cross the Jordan into Canaan.

Two Amorites kings ruled over this area—Sihon in the south, and Og in the north.

a) The defeat of Sihon (2:26–37) (cf. Num 21:21f)

(1) .26-27 Israel first sent messengers to Sihon. They asked for permission to pass through his territory on the road. They offered terms of peace.

(2) .30 But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his land and attacked Israel (.32). God delivered Sihon and his people over to the Israelites, and they took all his cities (.34). God hardened his spirit (same as with Pharaoh—Ex 7:3) so that this was the outcome.

Once again, we see God intervening directly for the benefit of his people.

**App:** God can influence the human heart—"the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord." Sihon acted according to his own desires, but his hard-hearted refusal was part of God's plan.

(3) .33-34 The people of Sihon were completely destroyed. Note the connection between God's will and human action—God delivered, we defeated.

.34 "utterly destroyed" -- The word here refers to something devoted to destruction. The Hebrew word is *herem* (הָרַם) "a devoted thing," a thing to be destroyed.

**Quote:** The *herem* principle ... required the extermination of everyone and everything that could be destroyed. ... The verb **הָרַם** (*hāram*) sometimes carries the sense of “devote.” Someone or something is devoted to the Lord; i.e., it is given altogether to the Lord. From this stems the practice of destroying whoever or whatever is devoted, for then it goes to God and cannot be used by the giver.... The practice ... was sometimes limited by the Lord’s decree, as here, where the livestock and other valuable plunder were kept by the Israelites. ... [Herem] was one of the means used to bring destruction on the sinful inhabitants of Canaan and to isolate the Israelites from them and their wicked practices.<sup>1</sup>

We recognize that God commanded Israel to devote the Canaanites to destruction. This kind of extermination is justified if God so decrees it. God had good reason to devote these people to destruction, and Israel was the tool.

It seems that God’s primary reason for destroying these people was their iniquity—their wicked idolatry and sinful behavior.

**App:** Of course, God has not commanded us to impose the *herem* principle on anyone. God does not command us to destroy anyone. That was for Israel at that time.

Cf. 2 Cor 10:5

- (4) .36b Not one city was “too strong,” lit. “too high.” Remember that back in 1:28, the spies had said that the cities were “fortified up to heaven.” The cities were impregnable because the walls were too high.

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<sup>1</sup> Earl S. Kalland, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 35.

The spies were wrong; the walls were not too high for them to conquer. The high walls were no defense when God fought for Israel. If they could do that on this side of the Jordan, they could do it on the other side, too. This victory should have boosted their confidence for further victories.

**App:** The NT assures us, “I can do all things through Christ. “If God be for us, who can be against us.” All things are possible with God.