

Deuteronomy 2-3 Dealing With the –ites and the –ims, part 2

In the first several chapters of Deuteronomy, Moses is reviewing Israel's history, from the time they left Egypt until the time they were ready to enter the PL.

Last Sunday, we worked our way through Deuteronomy chapter 2. In that chapter, we learn how the Israelites had to deal with various –ites and –ims – the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Amorites, along with the Emmim, the Anakim, the Nephilim, the Zamzummim, and the Caphtorim. There were many different groups living in the area that Israel was about to conquer, some of which Israel was to leave alone, and others of which Israel was to engage in battle.

In chapter 2, Israel had defeated and destroyed Sihon, king of Heshbon and his people. Chapter 3 describes Israel's victory over Og, king of Bashan. This region was on the east side of the Jordan River, and two-and-a-half of the tribes of Israel settled there.

Some of these people were giants, yet Israel defeated them with God's help.

De 2:33 *And the LORD our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people.*

As Israel was victorious against Sihon and Og, they would be victorious against the Canaanites on the other side of the Jordan.

The text reminds us that we can trust in God; he will do what he promised to do. When we serve and honor God, we can trust in his presence with us and his blessing upon us. We also see here the cost of rebellion and disobedience. At the end of the chapter, we learn some important things about prayer.

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

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

b) The defeat of Og (3:1–11) (Num 21:33-35)

(1) .1 The region of Bashan (בְּשָׁן ba-SHAWN) is on the north-east of the Sea of Galilee.

(2) .2-3 The same thing happened to Og, king of Bashan, as what happened to Sihon. Israel took 60 cities from him and destroyed all the people.

Note: .3 “the LORD our God also delivered into our hands” – So the Lord caused this to happen. Israel conquered their enemies because the Lord was with them.

App: Even for us today, we are able to accomplish our goals only when the Lord our God is with us and blesses us. We are totally dependent on God, and it’s good for us to remember that.

God has promised us, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” When we are doing his will, we can count on his presence and his blessing.

- (3) .8 the borders here refer to an area about 140 miles north to south—all along the east side of the Dead Sea up to the east side of the Sea of Galilee.
- (4) .11 Og was also one of the giants (*rephaim*), and the author records the size of his bed—9 x 4 cubits—13 feet long and 6 feet wide. At the time of this writing, the bed still existed.

Side note: The Bible mentions a place called the Valley of Rephaim—the Valley of the Giants. So the giants were an historical fact, not a mere myth or legend.

- (5) .13end That whole region was called “the land of the giants.” So there must have been many of them, and they were no doubt very intimidating. Imagine a whole army composed of Goliaths.
- (6) In spite of the giants, Israel defeated them. God gave the land to Israel, and they defeated the giants and took their land.

Why was Moses reviewing all of this history? No doubt, to encourage the people as they were about to cross the Jordan and begin the conquest of the PL. Moses wanted to remind them about how God had empowered them to defeat two powerful nations with gigantic soldiers inhabiting large, walled cities. Israel defeated them; they could surely defeat anyone in Canaan.

App: Reviewing what God has done for us in the past can encourage us for the future. When facing great difficulties in the present, think about what God has already done for you in the past.

c) The division of the land (3:12–20) (Num 32)

(1) .12-13 Moses divided the land that formerly belonged to the Amorites to two and a half tribes—Reuben, Gad, and half tribe of Manasseh (cf. Num 32:4).

(2) .14-17 More info on how parts of the land were divided up among the 2.5 tribes.

.17 “Chinnereth/Kinnereth” is the Sea of Galilee.

.17end Pisgah is the same as Nebo or Abarim, the mountain from which Moses viewed the PL. cf. 34:1

(3) .18 The agreement was that the soldiers from the 2.5 tribes would cross the Jordan and help in the conquest of the land, while the women and children would stay on the east side of the Jordan and occupy those cities.

(4) .20 After the conquest, the soldiers from those tribes could come back and rejoin their families. As it turned out, the soldiers from the 2.5 tribes were busy in battle for the next seven years before returning to their allotment on the east side of the Jordan (22:1-4).

App: Even though the Jordan River divided the 2.5 tribes from the others, Israel fought against their enemies as a unit. This shows the value and importance of unity within an organization. The entire nation worked together to defeat its enemies.

In the church, it’s important for the body to act in unity. A house divided against itself cannot stand. We must act together with everyone contributing to reaching to goals God has set for the church.

We also see gender roles here. The women and children could stay at home while the soldiers fought the battles.

In our society, women have been integrated into the military for a long time. Women are now allowed in combat situations.

I read just the other day that the Navy had fielded a co-ed submarine for the first time.

In my mind, men ought to do the fighting. Men ought to be protecting women and children. Women may be able to do certain jobs in the military, but I don't think it's a good idea for women to be in combat operations. We should not expect women to protect or fight men. Women in those roles reduces the lethality of the military.

7. Joshua is commissioned, Moses is forbidden (3:21–29)

- a) .21-22 Moses encourages Joshua that God will do the same thing to all the other kings on the other side of the Jordan as what he did to Sihon and Og. So they should not fear the occupants of Canaan. .22b “God himself fights for you.”

App: It sounds something like “If God be for us, who can be against us.” “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.” “With God, all things are possible.”

We certainly want to be on God's side of the battle. We want the Lord fighting for us.

And that also implies that we must recognize and fight God's enemies. We are still engaged in a battle—not a physical one for territory, not one in which we destroy people, but a battle of ideas. Cf. 2 Cor 10:5; Jude 3.

- b) .23f Moses made another appeal to God for him to let him cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. In fact, the grammar here suggests that Moses made his request urgently and repeatedly.

.25 Moses asked, “let me cross over and see the good land...” Maybe Moses could convince God to change his mind. He’d really love to finish the job of leading the people into the PL. He wants to go and see the place himself. So he asks again.

.26 God became rather angry with Moses for his request. This was a rather sharp rebuke, and God was not willing to discuss the matter any further. God would allow Moses to see the land, but he could not enter the land.

.26b “Enough of that” (KJV “Let it suffice thee”) – lit. “you have much.”

From God’s perspective, Moses has seen enough. He’s had a rich life full of amazing experiences. God will show him the PL from the top of Mt. Pisgah (.27), but he won’t allow him to cross the Jordan. God would not change his mind; the matter was settled.

App: Again we see that our decisions have long-lasting consequences. Because Moses disobeyed one seemingly insignificant command, he lost the opportunity to enter the PL.

We never know what the long-term consequences of our disobedience might be. It might seem like a fairly minor failure, but it could have major results. When we obey, we enjoy the long-term rewards of faithfulness; we avoid many problems. It’s always in our best interests to submit to God and obey his commands. But when we disobey, we might end up losing many blessings and rewards.

I wonder what doors close and what opportunities are lost because of sin and rebellion. What will God *not* allow us to do because of a past sin? Even though that sin is forgiven, there may be long-lasting consequences that we cannot change.

Illus.: I just heard about the moral failure of a very highly respected Christian leader. The consequences of his sin already have been huge— dishonor brought on the faith, loss of his reputation, his position as pastor and teacher, his speaking engagements, influence, etc.

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

I'm reminded of what David said in Ps 19:13 *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous [sins]; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*

Regarding prayer: We should *not* see prayer as an effort to change God's mind. Moses fervently asked God to allow him to enter the PL. He asked urgently and repeatedly, but God refused to allow it—"Speak no more to me of this matter" (vs. 26end). We must simply accept the fact that, in some cases, perhaps because of our sins, God will not grant our requests.

When we pray, we must ask within God's sovereign purpose—"if it be thy will." God told Moses very clearly that he would *not* grant the request, and Moses accepted that answer. He didn't become bitter about it; he accepted it as God's sovereign will.

God has the right to deny our requests, especially if we've been disobedient. We must accept God's answers to our prayers. We must accept the fact that our sins may prevent God from giving us what we request.

.27 God graciously allowed Moses to see the land from the "top of Pisgah." He could see it but not enter it.

Mt. Nebo (aka Pisgah/Abiram) is not far from the Jordan River where it flows into the Dead Sea. From this elevation and vantage point it is possible to view all of Canaan, from Mt. Hermon in the north to Beersheba in the south and all the way west to the Mediterranean.¹

Maybe God will not grant us our request, but he may allow us to do something else; maybe not quite what we wanted, but better than nothing. We have to be satisfied with whatever God gives us.

¹ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 112.