DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 1

*The Command to Leave Horeb*

**These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the Jordan—that is, in the Arabah—opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab. 2 (It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.) 3 In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the Lord had commanded him concerning them. 4 This was after he had defeated Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and at Edrei had defeated Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth. 5 East of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses began to expound this law, saying: 6 The Lord our God said to us at Horeb, “You have stayed long enough at this mountain. 7 Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighboring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. 8 See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the Lord swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them.”**

**1:1** *Moses spoke.* Almost all of Deuteronomy is made up of speeches by Moses during the final months of his life, just before the Israelites crossed the Jordan to enter Canaan. (CSB)

Moses delivers his final sermon east of the Jordan River, c 15 mi SW of modern Amman, Jordan. (TLSB)

*all Israel*. All the Israelites are assembled, not just their tribal representatives. (TLSB)

*Arabah.* Includes the valley of the Jordan (from the Sea of Galilee to the southern end of the Dead Sea) and the valley extending down to the Gulf of Aqaba. (CSB)

*Suph … Paran … Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab.* Places along the route from Sinai to the territory of Moab. (CSB)

**1:2** *eleven days’ journey*. Covering c 150 mi. (TLSB)

*Horeb.* The usual name for Mount Sinai in Deuteronomy (the only exception is in 33:2). (CSB)

*Kadesh Barnea.* See note on Ge 14:7. (CSB)

*Seir.* See note on Ge 36:8. (CSB)

**1:3** *fortieth year.* After leaving Egypt. The Lord had condemned Israel to 40 years of wandering in Sinai as punishment for not entering Canaan as he had commanded them to do at Kadesh (Nu 14:33–34). The 40 years included the time spent at Sinai and on the journey to Kadesh as well as the next 38 years (see 2:14). See 8:2–5; 29:5–6; Nu 14:29–35; 32:13; Heb 3:7–19. (CSB)

*eleventh month.* January-February. (CSB)

*spoke*. Historians date this event to Dec/Jan 1407/1406 BC. (TLSB)

*given him in commandment*. Moses reissues God’s Commandments to a new generation. The older generation died for their disobedience (Nu 13–14). (TLSB)

**1:4** *Sihon* … *Og*. Both were defeated by Israel but fell by God’s hand (cf 2:33; 3:3). (TLSB)

**1:5** *this law.* The Ten Commandments and other laws given at Mount Sinai and recorded in Ex 20–24, Leviticus and Numbers. In Deuteronomy the laws are summarized and interpreted, and adjusted to the new, specific situation Israel would face in Canaan. Thus Deuteronomy is, in essence, a covenant renewal (and updating) document. (CSB)

Moses expounds God’s instruction prescribed in Ex 20–24; Lv; and Nu. (TLSB)

**1:6** *Horeb*. Name for Sinai Peninsula and Mount Sinai. Here Moses received God’s Commandments. (TLSB)

*long enough*. After 40 years, God was about to fulfill the promise He swore to Abram. (TLSB)

**1:7** See Jos 1:4. The land is described by its various geographical areas (see map No. 2 at the end of the Study Bible). (CSB)

Moses repeats God’s intention to deliver them into the Promised Land by describing the area geographically. These are the same dimensions God gave by covenant to Abram (Gn 15:18–21; cf Gn 26:2–4; 35:11–12). (TLSB)

*Arabah.* See note on v. 1; here the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea area. (CSB)

*mountains.* The midsection running north and south. (CSB)

*western foothills.* Sloping toward the Mediterranean. (CSB)

*Negev.* See note on Ge 12:9. (CSB)

*coast.* The Mediterranean coastal strip. The “land of the Canaanites” and “Lebanon, as far as … the Euphrates” make up the northern sector. The “hill country of the Amorites” is, in general, the central and southern mountains. This description of the land agrees with that in the promise (see v. 8) to Abraham in Ge 15:18–21, a promise later given to Isaac’s descendants (Ge 26:2–4) and still later to the descendants of Jacob (Ge 35:11–12). (CSB)

**1:8** *set the land before you*. God considers the land as though already possessed by Israel. (TLSB)

**1:1–8** Through many trials, God raises a new generation in Israel and brings them to the plains of Moab just east of the Jordan River. The Promised Land is in sight. God’s covenant promise is sure. He keeps His word to His people, including His word to you. Rejoice in the Lord’s faithfulness as you share His testimonies with others. The Gospel is fresh and precious for every new generation. • Heavenly Lord, we praise You and thank You for Your faithfulness in Christ, our Lord. Amen. (TLSB)

*The Appointment of Leaders*

**9 At that time I said to you, “You are too heavy a burden for me to carry alone. 10 The Lord your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as many as the stars in the sky. 11 May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised! 12 But how can I bear your problems and your burdens and your disputes all by myself? 13 Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you.”14 You answered me, “What you propose to do is good.” 15 So I took the leading men of your tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them to have authority over you—as commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens and as tribal officials. 16 And I charged your judges at that time: Hear the disputes between your brothers and judge fairly, whether the case is between brother Israelites or between one of them and an alien. 17 Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it. 18 And at that time I told you everything you were to do.**

**1:9–18** Cf. 16:18–20; Ex 18:13–26. (CSB)

Moses restates the events of Ex 18:13–26. (TLSB)

**1:10** *The Lord your God.* This title occurs almost 300 times in Deuteronomy in addition to the many times that “Lord” is used alone or in other combinations. (CSB)

Title occurs more than 250 times in Dt. The living Lord who called Israel out of Egypt continues to be with them (cf Ex 3:14). (TLSB)

*as the stars in the sky.* See 10:22; 28:62; Ge 13:16 and note; 15:5 and note; 22:17; 26:4; Ex 32:13. (CSB)

God faithfully blessed His people with numerous offspring in keeping with His pledge to Abram. (TLSB)

**1:11** *bless*. Cf Nu 6:24–26; see p 842.

**1:12** *strife?* Sin brings strife. Moses faced an impossible task when trying to administer justice to so many.

**1:13** *Choose* … *experienced men*. The judges were leading Israelite men. Moses wisely urged the people to choose their own leaders, whom he would approve. Moses retained the authority to handle the most difficult cases and provided the appropriate training (cf v 18). (TLSB)

*appoint*. A cooperative (TLSB)

cooperative effort between a congregation and its called servant. See note, Ac 6:3. Luth: “Beasts are managed by power and skill. Men should be ruled by wisdom and understanding, since man thrives on reason, which cannot be assaulted with a rope or brandished sword but through a word directed to the ear. And when reason has been grasped through a word, the whole man is moved and led wherever you wish” (AE 9:18). (TLSB)

**1:15** *heads*. Male judges selected by the people. (TLSB)

*commanders* … *tribes*. Israel’s judicial system, under God, was as far reaching as the local tribes, or family groups. (TLSB)

**1:16** *judges*. Other specific responsibilities are given in 17:8; 19:17. (TLSB)

**1:17** *not be partial*. Show no favoritism. *not be intimidated*. Provide fair treatment even in the face of reprisals. (TLSB)

*judgment is God’s*. God rules through the judges. *bring to me*. Moses is the ultimate human authority in Israel. (TLSB)

**1:18** *at that time*. When the Israelites were encamped at Sinai (1446 BC). (TLSB)

**1:9–18** In His great love, God establishes a judicial system administered by God-fearing men selected from among the Israelites. God knows the human heart. He knows that sin brings discord and dissent. Left unchecked, sin can destroy a nation and finally cause eternal separation from God. But thanks be to God, we have a faithful Judge in heaven who wishes not to condemn us but to deliver us from sin. • Lord, we thank You because we know that on Judgment Day, You will see believers through the blood of Jesus Christ and declare us “not guilty!” Amen. (TLSB)

*Spies Sent Out*

**19 Then, as the Lord our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through all that vast and dreadful desert that you have seen, and so we reached Kadesh Barnea. 20 Then I said to you, “You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the Lord our God is giving us. 21 See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” 22 Then all of you came to me and said, “Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to.” 23 The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. 24 They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol and explored it. 25 Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, “It is a good land that the Lord our God is giving us.”**

**1:19–46** See Nu 13–14. (CSB)

**1:19–33** Moses recounts the events of Nu 13. He includes only the reassuring words of Joshua and Caleb (v 25) and omits the negative reports. (TLSB)

**1:19** *set out*. At God’s direction, the Israelites broke camp after 11 months in Sinai (cf Ex 19:1; Nu 10:11) and traveled to Kadesh-barnea, c 50 mi SW of Beersheba. (TLSB)

*terrifying wilderness*. The terrain along their route (over 100 mi) to Kadesh-barnea is nothing but sand and limestone. (TLSB)

*Kadesh-barnea*. The site of Israel’s most vehement rebellion. (TLSB)

**1:21** *as the Lord… told you.* The promise of the land (see note on v. 7) was reaffirmed to Moses at the burning bush (v. 8; Ex 3:8, 17). Now the Israelites are told to enter the land and conquer it. (CSB)

*Do not be afraid … discouraged.* See 31:8; Jos 1:9; 8:1; 10:25. (CSB)

**1:22** *all of you*. Previous generation, now deceased. (TLSB)

*explore*. Unwilling to take God at His word, the Israelites insist on sending spies to assure them that they can defeat the Canaanites. By comparing this account with Nu 13, we learn that the Lord told Moses to send spies after the people grumbled. (TLSB)

*go up*. Has two senses: (1) to go into the land; and (2) a rise in elevation. (TLSB)

**1:23** *twelve.* They are named in Nu 13:4–15. (CSB)

**1:24** *Eshcol.* See NIV text note on Nu 13:23. (CSB)

Near the city of Hebron. (TLSB)

**1:25** *good land*. Cf Nu 13:23. (TLSB)

*Rebellion Against the Lord*

**26 But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. 27 You grumbled in your tents and said, “The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. 28 Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, ‘The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.’ ” 29 Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. 30 The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, 31 and in the desert. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” 32 In spite of this, you did not trust in the Lord your God, 33 who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go. 34 When the Lord heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: 35 “Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers, 36 except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the Lord wholeheartedly.” 37 Because of you the Lord became angry with me also and said, “You shall not enter it, either. 38 But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it. 39 And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad—they will enter the land. I will give it to them and they will take possession of it. 40 But as for you, turn around and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea.” 41 Then you replied, “We have sinned against the Lord. We will go up and fight, as the Lord our God commanded us.” So every one of you put on his weapons, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country. 42 But the Lord said to me, “Tell them, ‘Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.’ ” 43 So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the Lord’s command and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country. 44 The Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you; they chased you like a swarm of bees and beat you down from Seir all the way to Hormah. 45 You came back and wept before the Lord, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you. 46 And so you stayed in Kadesh many days—all the time you spent there.**

**1:26** *you rebelled.* Although they themselves had not rebelled, the people were being addressed as a nation united with the earlier rebellious generation (see 5:2; cf. 29:1). (CSB)

Cf Nu 14. (TLSB)

**1:27** *grumbled.* See note on Ex 15:24. (CSB)

*The Lord hates us.* The people’s statement is ironic indeed in the light of Deuteronomy’s major theme (see Introduction: Theological Teaching). (CSB)

So deep was the Israelite rebellion, they falsely concluded that God hated them and only brought them to this point to die at the hands of the Amorites. (TLSB)

**1:28** *Where*. Instead of following God, the Israelites sought an alternative route. (TLSB)

*brothers*. The 10 spies who returned with a negative report. The Israelites trusted their word above God’s. (TLSB)

*Anakites.* Earlier inhabitants of Canaan, described as giants (see 2:10, 21; 9:2; Nu 13:32). (CSB)

The name “Anak” appears in Egyptian texts for a ruler in Canaan. These descendants of Anak lived near Hebron. The spies also exaggerated their claim by comparing the Anakim to the Nephilim (Nu 13:33), a race of ungodly men from before the time of the flood (Gn 6:4). (TLSB)

**1:30** *goes before you*. God leads the Israelites into Canaan. (TLSB)

*fight*. The battles in Canaan are won because it is God who does the fighting. (TLSB)

*as he did for you in Egypt.* See Ex 14:1–15:19. (CSB)

**1:31** *God carried you.* See notes on Isa 41:10, 13; 43:1–2; cf. Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Eze 34:11–16. (CSB)

The God of creation has sustained the Israelites, bearing them up throughout their Sinai journey. (TLSB)

**1:33** *seek*. Hbr *tur*, “search out”; used here to describe God’s work. Also used in Nu 13:17 to describe the mission of the spies. (TLSB)

*in fire by night and in a cloud by day.* The presence of the Lord was in the cloud over the tabernacle to guide the Israelites through their desert journeys (see Ex 13:21 and note; 40:34–38). (CSB)

**1:19–33** Moses retells the story of the Israelites’ rebellion. Although God promised to drive out the Canaanites, the Israelites listened to the 10 spies instead and recoiled in fear. As a result, an entire generation of Israelites died in the desert. Today, we are wrong to trust the word of others over the Word of God. God gives His Word for our blessing and to strengthen us in faith. • Lord, at those times when we rebel against You, send Your Spirit to show us the error of our ways. Remember that we are Your sons and daughters through Holy Baptism, and sustain and strengthen us by the body and blood of Your own dear Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

**1:34–35** The Lord took an oath; when He does so, He swears by His own faithfulness (cf Gn 22:16). (TLSB)

**1:36** *except Caleb*. Caleb and Joshua (v 38) were the only spies who brought favorable reports. (TLSB)

*land*. By God’s decree, the land of Caleb’s inheritance included Hebron (Jsh 14:13–15). (TLSB)

*wholly followed*. Caleb trusted God completely. (TLSB)

*Caleb.* See Nu 13:30–14:38; Jos 14:6–15. (CSB)

**1:37–46** Cf Nu 20:9–13. (TLSB)

**1:37** *Because of you.* See 3:26; 4:21. God was angry with Moses when in a wrong spirit he struck the rock at Meribah to get water (Nu 20:9–13; 27:12–14). And since it was the Israelites who had incited him to sin, God was angry with them too. This event (v. 37) occurred almost 40 years after that of the preceding verses (vv. 34–36), but Moses, interested in telling of the Israelites’ sin and his own, brings the two events together. (CSB)

**1:38**  *stands before you*. Joshua is soon named Moses’ successor. (TLSB)

*inherit*. Under Joshua’s leadership, Israel will inherit what God had promised. (TLSB)

**1:39** Except for Caleb, Joshua, and Israelites under 20 years old, none of the Israelites who came out of Egypt would enter the Promised Land (Nu 32:11). (TLSB)

*do not yet know good from bad.* See notes on Ge 2:9; Isa 7:15. (CSB)

These children were too young to carefully distinguish between right and wrong. (TLSB)

**1:40** *direction of the Red Sea*. God commands Moses to lead His people away from the Promised Land. (TLSB)

**1:41** *you.* See note on v. 26. (CSB)

*sinned*. Although the older generation confessed their sin of rebellion, the consequences remained. (TLSB)

**1:42** *not in your midst*. God has withdrawn His presence. (TLSB)

**1:43** *You rebelled against the Lord’s command.* The same charge as in v. 26. First the people rebelled against the Lord’s command to go into the land, then against his command not to enter the land. After their first rebellion the Lord would not go with them. His presence was essential, and Israel needed to learn that lesson. (CSB)

**1:44** *bees.* See note on Ex 23:28. (CSB)

Without God to fight their battle, the Israelites were driven from the battlefield in disarray. (TLSB)

*Seir as far as Hormah*. The rout was complete; the defeated Israelites fled some 30 mi S of Hebron (TLSB)

**1:45** *before the Lord*. At the tabernacle. (CSB)

The Israelites’ stinging defeat brings heartfelt contrition. (TLSB)

**1:46** Difficult to determine whether the 38 years were spent in the wilderness near Kadesh-barnea or journeying through Edom (2:14). Luth: “This gave those nations which were already about to perish a period of time for repentance, that they might be terrified by the threats of God and be converted [cf Jsh 2:9]. So even at the cost of damage and peril to His own people He is concerned for the Gentiles too as He smites it and spares them to show that He is the God not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles” (AE 9:20–21). (TLSB)

**1:34–46** The Israelites’ disobedience causes God to withdraw His presence and delay giving them the Promised Land. After 40 years, God teaches His faithfulness to a new generation and prepares them as a father prepares his dear children. How patient is our heavenly Father’s love and care! • Gentle Shepherd, lead us patiently, that we may one day cross from death to eternal life. Amen. (TLSB)