

DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 1

The Command to Leave Horeb

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. 2 It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. 3 In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment 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 in Edrei. 5 Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to explain this law, saying, 6 "The LORD our God said to us in Horeb, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. 7 Turn and take your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland and in the Negeb and by the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. 8 See, I have set the land before you. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their offspring 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)

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. (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. Here the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea area. (CSB)

hill country. The midsection running north and south. (CSB)

seacoast. 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)

Leaders Appointed

9 "At that time I said to you, 'I am not able to bear you by myself. **10** The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are today as numerous as the stars of heaven. **11** May the LORD, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as he has promised you! **12** How can I bear by myself the weight and burden of you and your strife? **13** Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.' **14** And you answered me, 'The thing that you have spoken is good for us to do.' **15** So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and set them as heads over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officers, throughout your tribes. **16** And I charged your judges at that time, 'Hear the cases between your brothers, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the alien who is with him. **17** You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. And the case that is too hard for

you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.’ 18 And I commanded you at that time all the things that you should do.

1:9–18 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)

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

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

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)

Israel's Refusal to Enter the Land

19 “Then we set out from Horeb and went through all that great and terrifying wilderness that you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us. And we

came to Kadesh-barnea. 20 And I said to you, ‘You have come to the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. 21 See, the LORD your God has set the land before you. Go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has told you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’ 22 Then all of you came near me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, that they may explore the land for us and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up and the cities into which we shall come.’ 23 The thing seemed good to me, and I took twelve men from you, one man from each tribe. 24 And they turned and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol and spied it out. 25 And they took in their hands some of the fruit of the land and brought it down to us, and brought us word again and said, ‘It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us.’ 26 “Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. 27 And you murmured in your tents and said, ‘Because the LORD hated us he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. 28 Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying, “The people are greater and taller than we. The cities are great and fortified up to heaven. And besides, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.”’ 29 Then I said to you, ‘Do not be in dread or afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31 and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.’ 32 Yet in spite of this word you did not believe the LORD your God, 33 who went before you in the way to seek you out a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night and in the cloud by day, to show you by what way you should go.

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 fear or be dismayed. See 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.* Near the city of Hebron. (TLSB)

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

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 *The LORD hated 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.* 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. (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)

The Penalty for Israel's Rebellion

34 “And the LORD heard your words and was angered, and he swore, **35** ‘Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to give to your fathers, **36** except Caleb the son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has trodden, because he has wholly followed the LORD!’ **37** Even with me the LORD was angry on your account and said, ‘You also shall not go in there. **38** Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. **39** And as for your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who today have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there. And to them I will give it, and they shall possess it. **40** But as for you, turn, and journey into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea.’ **41** “Then you answered me, ‘We have sinned against the LORD. We ourselves will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.’ And every one of you fastened on his weapons of war and thought it easy to go up into the hill country. **42** And the LORD said to me, ‘Say to them, Do not go up or fight, for I am not in your midst, lest you be defeated before your enemies.’ **43** So I spoke to you, and you would not listen; but you rebelled against the command of the LORD and presumptuously went up into the hill country. **44** Then the Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do and beat you down in Seir as far as Hormah. **45** And you returned and wept before the LORD, but the LORD did not listen to your voice or give ear to you. **46** So you remained at Kadesh many days, the days that you remained there.

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)

1:37 *on your account.* 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)

have no knowledge of good and evil. 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 *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 command of the LORD.* 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.* 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)