DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 2

*Wanderings in the Desert*

**Then we turned back and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea, as the Lord had directed me. For a long time we made our way around the hill country of Seir.2 Then the Lord said to me, 3 “You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now turn north. 4 Give the people these orders: ‘You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. 5 Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own. 6 You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.’ ” 7 The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything. 8 So we went on past our brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber, and traveled along the desert road of Moab. 9 Then the Lord said to me, “Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.” 10 (The Emites used to live there—a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. 11 Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Emites. 12 Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land the Lord gave them as their possession.) 13 And the Lord said, “Now get up and cross the Zered Valley.” So we crossed the valley.14 Thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Valley. By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the Lord had sworn to them. 15 The Lord’s hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp. 16 Now when the last of these fighting men among the people had died, 17 the Lord said to me, 18 “Today you are to pass by the region of Moab at Ar. 19 When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I will not give you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites. I have given it as a possession to the descendants of Lot.” 20 (That too was considered a land of the Rephaites, who used to live there; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummites. 21 They were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. The Lord destroyed them from before the Ammonites, who drove them out and settled in their place. 22 The Lord had done the same for the descendants of Esau, who lived in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites from before them. They drove them out and have lived in their place to this day. 23 And as for the Avvites who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorites coming out from Caphtor destroyed them and settled in their place.)**

**2:1–3:11** See Nu 20:14–21:35. (CSB)

**2:1** *Red Sea.* Here probably the Gulf of Aqaba (see note on 1Ki 9:26). (CSB)

*hill country of Seir.* The mountainous area south of the Dead Sea. (CSB)

Also known as Edom. Region southeast of the Salt Sea, now part of Saudi Arabia. See color map 2.

**2:3** A decisive change in plan.

**2:4** *brothers*. The Israelites were not to take the land of the Edomites (descendants of Esau) or of the Moabites or Ammonites (vv 9, 19). This command shows that the conquest was not a greedy landgrab on the part of the Israelites. Rather, it was part of God’s plan of salvation, which included punishment for the Canaanites and preservation of Abraham’s descendants for the sake of God’s promises of salvation for the whole world through the Messiah. (TLSB)

*afraid of you*. God strikes fear in the Canaanites. (TLSB)

**2:5** *I will not give you any of their land.* See vv. 9, 19. The Lord told Moses to bypass Edom, Moab and Ammon because of their blood relationship to Israel. The Israelites were to take over only those lands east of the Jordan that were in the hands of the Amorites (see v. 24; 3:2). *I have given.* See vv. 9, 19. The Lord had given the descendants of Esau (Edomites) and Lot (Moabites and Ammonites) their lands, just as he was giving the Israelites the territories of Transjordan and Canaan. (CSB)

Descendants of Esau were also promised land (Gn 36:8–9). (TLSB)

**2:7** The Israelites had plundered sufficient wealth from Egypt (Ex 12:35–36). They did not need to plunder their relatives. (TLSB)

**2:8** *Elath and Ezion Geber.* At the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. The “Arabah road” ran from the head of the gulf northward and to the east of Moab. (CSB)

*Arabah road*. Difficult to trace the exact route, but most likely they kept to the southeast border of Edom. (TLSB)

*direction of the wilderness*. The Israelites’ journey “northward” carried them east of Moab and across the Valley of Arnon (Nu 21:13). (TLSB)

**2:9** Moses begins to describe specific peoples Israel will encounter (vv 9–12, 19–23). (TLSB)

*Do not harass Moab*. Moabite land was north of Edom. (TLSB)

*Ar.* Location unknown. (CSB)

Once the center of the Moabite territory; location unknown (Nu 21:28). (TLSB)

*people of Lot*. Descendants of Abraham’s nephew Lot. (TLSB)

**2:10–12, 20–23** Parentheses set off digressions about the nations. (Hbr has no parentheses.). (TLSB)

**2:10** *Emites.* Possibly meaning “terrors.” (CSB)

“Frightful ones.” These people once inhabited Moabite land and may have moved into Canaan from the west. (TLSB)

*Anakites.* See note on 1:28. (CSB)

**2:11** *Rephaites.* Ancient people of large stature. (CSB)

Ancient race of large people known for their historic deeds. (TLSB)

**2:12** *Horites.* See note on Ge 14:6. (CSB)

Non-Semitic peoples who inhabited Canaan and the Transjordan. They descended from the Hurrians, an ancient Mesopotamian race, and are also known by that name. (TLSB)

*the land the Lord gave them.* Either (1) the Transjordan regions (see 2:24–3:20), (2) Canaan itself or (3) Transjordan and Canaan. If either (2) or (3) is intended, editorial updating is involved (see note on Ge 14:14). (CSB)

Esau’s descendants (Edomites) drove the Horites out, and their culture disappeared. (TLSB)

**2:13** *Zered.* The main stream (intermittent) that flows into the southern end of the Dead Sea from the east (see map No. 4 at the end of the Study Bible). (CSB)

Intermittent stream that still flows into southern tip of the Salt Sea; once served as the northern border of Edom. (TLSB)

**2:14** *Thirty-eight years.* See note on 1:3. (CSB)

*men of war*. The previous generation of eligible men had died. (TLSB)

*Lord* *had sworn*. God said that their bodies would fall in the wilderness because of their unfaithfulness (Nu 14:29). (TLSB)

**2:19** *sons of Lot*. Lot’s daughters bore Moab and Ben-ammi, whose descendants were the Moabites and the Ammonite. (TLSB)

**2:20** *Zamzummites.* Possibly meaning “murmurers,” and perhaps to be identified with the Zuzites of Ge 14:5. (CSB)

Murmurers.” Perhaps the Zuzim of Gn 14:5. (TLSB)

**2:21** *Lord* *destroyed*. God removed all obstacles as Israel prepared to enter Canaan. (TLSB)

**2:23** *Avvites.* Pre-Philistine people otherwise unknown (Jos 13:3). (CSB)

A coastal tribe. (TLSB)

*Caphtorites.* See note on Ge 10:14. (CSB)

Perhaps the Sea People of Crete who settled in Canaan and conquered the homeland of the Avvim. The Philistines also came from Crete and settled along the Mediterranean coast. (TLSB)

*Defeat of Sihon King of Heshbon*

**24 “Set out now and cross the Arnon Gorge. See, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his country. Begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle. 25 This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you.” 26 From the desert of Kedemoth I sent messengers to Sihon king of Heshbon offering peace and saying, 27 “Let us pass through your country. We will stay on the main road; we will not turn aside to the right or to the left. 28 Sell us food to eat and water to drink for their price in silver. Only let us pass through on foot— 29 as the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for us—until we cross the Jordan into the land the Lord our God is giving us.” 30 But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the Lord your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done. 31 The Lord said to me, “See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land.” 32 When Sihon and all his army came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz, 33 the Lord our God delivered him over to us and we struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army. 34 At that time we took all his towns and completely destroyed them—men, women and children. We left no survivors. 35 But the livestock and the plunder from the towns we had captured we carried off for ourselves. 36 From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the town in the gorge, even as far as Gilead, not one town was too strong for us. The Lord our God gave us all of them. 37 But in accordance with the command of the Lord our God, you did not encroach on any of the land of the Ammonites, neither the land along the course of the Jabbok nor that around the towns in the hills.**

**2:24** *Arnon.* See note on Nu 21:10–13. (CSB)

**2:25** *dread and fear*. As the Israelites begin their conquest of Canaan, God is already at work. (TLSB)

**2:1–25** God’s promise of land for the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites means that the Israelites must pass farther east. God leads the charge to drive the Amorites from the land. The Israelites’ victories belong only to God. Our victories, too, belong to God. Our salvation is only by God’s hand, not our own. By His Son’s precious blood, we are justified; by His Spirit, we are sanctified. • Father, whenever we are tempted to boast of our own deeds, let us recall Paul’s words: “ ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’ For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends” (2Co 10:17–18). Amen. (TLSB)

**2:26–37** Recounts Nu 21:21–30 but adds an important detail. Sihon refused to allow the Israelites to travel through his land because God hardened his heart as part of God’s plan to provide land to the Israelites. (TLSB)

**2:26** *messengers*. Moses sent emissaries to announce his intention to pass through Sihon’s land. (TLSB)

*Kedemoth.* Means “eastern regions.” (CSB)

“Eastern regions,” east of the Jordan River. (TLSB)

**2:27** *road*. After bypassing Edom and Moab to the east and crossing the Arnon River, the Israelites traveled north on the King’s Highway. (TLSB)

**2:29** At first the Edomites refused Israel passage Nu 20:19–21). However, it seems that they did allow Israel to pass along the eastern border instead of going through the middle of their country. (TLSB)

**2:30** *his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate.* In the OT, actions are often attributed to God without the mention of mediate or contributing situations or persons. Sihon by his own conscious will refused Israel passage, but it was God who would give Sihon’s land to Israel (see note on Ex 4:21). (CSB)

**2:31** *occupy his land*. Sihon’s land was given to the Reubenites. (TLSB)

**2:32** *Jahaz.* See note on Isa 15:4. (CSB)

C 15 mi SE of Heshbon. (TLSB)

**2:34** *completely destroyed.* See NIV text note. The Hebrew for this expression usually denotes the destruction of everyone and everything that could be destroyed. Objects like gold, silver and bronze, not subject to destruction, were put in a secure place as God’s possession. Destruction of people and things made them useless to the conquerors but put them in the hands of God. So the word is sometimes translated “destroyed” and sometimes “devoted” (see, e.g., Jos 6:17). The practice was sometimes limited, as when God assigned captured livestock and other plunder to his people as recompense for service in his army (see v. 35; 3:7; Jos 8:2). (CSB)

Sihon’s sin led to complete annihilation; the sin of the Amorites had reached its full measure (cf Gn 15:16). (TLSB)

**2:36** *Aroer.* See note on Isa 17:2. (CSB)

*Gilead.* See note on Ge 31:21. (CSB)

Archaeologists note that kings often surrounded their territories with armed fortresses. Sihon could have stayed in his fortifications and allowed the Israelites to pass, but instead he stubbornly marched against them over open ground. The high walls of the Canaanite cities frightened the first generation of Israelites (1:28). (TLSB)

**2:37** For now, God preserved the territory occupied by the Ammonites. (TLSB)

*Jabbok.* See note on Ge 32:22. (CSB)

C 30 mi N of Mount Nebo. (TLSB)

*hill country*. The east side of the Jordan River is marked by mountains and hills extending north like a backbone. (TLSB)

**2:26–37** The conquest is underway. Stubborn King Sihon places his army in God’s path, and it is swallowed up as easily as Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea. The Lord fights the battles of His people. • Lord, soften our hearts and create in us a faith that never rejects Your precious Word, like Sihon and Pharaoh did. Bring us to a richer understanding of how the waters of Baptism have drowned the old Adam and made us new people. Amen.[[1]](#footnote-1) (TLSB)

1. Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). [*The Lutheran Study Bible*](https://ref.ly/logosres/lsbconcordia?ref=Bible.Dt2.37&off=5&ctx=elites+(1:28).%0a2:37+~For+now%2c+God+preserv) (p. 281). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)