DEUTERONOMY
Chapter 2

The Wilderness Years

"Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea, as the LORD told me. And for many days we traveled around Mount Seir. 2 Then the LORD said to me, 3 'You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward 4 and command the people, "You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful. 5 Do not contend with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as for the sole of the foot to tread on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. 6 You shall purchase food from them with money, that you may eat, and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink. 7 For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing."' 8 So we went on, away from our brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road from Elath and Ezion-geber. "And we turned and went in the direction of the wilderness of Moab. 9 And the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab or contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the people of Lot for a possession.' 10 (The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim. 11 Like the Anakim they are also counted as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim. 12 The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, as Israel did to the land of their possession, which the LORD gave to them.) 13 'Now rise up and go over the brook Zered.' So we went over the brook Zered. 14 And the time from our leaving Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the brook Zered was thirty-eight years, until the entire generation, that is, the men of war, had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. 15 For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from the camp, until they had perished. 16 "So as soon as all the men of war had perished and were dead from among the people, 17 the LORD said to me, 18 'Today you are to cross the border of Moab at Ar. 19 And when you approach the territory of the people of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession.' 20 (It is also counted as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly lived there—but the Ammonites call them Zamzummim— 21 a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim; but the LORD destroyed them before the Ammonites,[a] and they dispossessed them and settled in their place, 22 as he did for the people of Esau, who live in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites before them and they dispossessed them and settled in their place even to this day. 23 As for the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and settled in their place.) 24 'Rise up, set out on your journey and go over the Valley of the Arnon. Behold, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to take possession, and contend with him in battle. 25 This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you on the peoples who are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.'

2:1 *Red Sea.* Here probably the Gulf of Aqaba. (CSB)

around Mount 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.

2:4 *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.* 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. 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 *Emim.* Possibly meaning "terrors." (CSB)

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

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

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

2:12 *Horites.* 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. (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 *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. 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)

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)

The Defeat of King Sihon

26 "So I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon the king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, 27 'Let me pass through your land. I will go only by the road; I will turn aside neither to the right nor to the left. 28 You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink. Only let me pass through on foot, 29 as the sons of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me, until I go over the Jordan into the land

that the LORD our God is giving to us.' 30 But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day. 31 And the LORD said to me, 'Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to take possession, that you may occupy his land.' 32 Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Jahaz. 33 And the LORD our God gave him over to us, and we defeated him and his sons and all his people. 34 And we captured all his cities at that time and devoted to destruction[h] every city, men, women, and children. We left no survivors. 35 Only the livestock we took as spoil for ourselves, with the plunder of the cities that we captured. 36 From Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of the Arnon, and from the city that is in the valley, as far as Gilead, there was not a city too high for us. The LORD our God gave all into our hands. 37 Only to the land of the sons of Ammon you did not draw near, that is, to all the banks of the river Jabbok and the cities of the hill country, whatever the LORD our God had forbidden us.

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. "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 *hardened his spiritand made 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 (CSB)

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

2:32 *Jahaz.* C 15 mi SE of Heshbon. (TLSB)

2:34 *destruction.* 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 *Gilead.* 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. 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. (TLSB)