

Expansions on the Book of Deuteronomy

Introduction

This document comes after the conclusion of another in the same “expansion” format, that is to say, *Expansions on the Book of Romans*. As noted in the Introduction there as well as in other texts from the Old and New Testaments, the word “expansion” suggests an expanding or fleshing out of the book at hand. It involves taking a certain liberty but at the same time not overstepping its bounds. So how are these bounds to be defined without devolving into fancifulness? It comes down to putting Deuteronomy at the service of *lectio divina*. That means a slow, deliberate and open-ended reading of the text quite alien to how we read nowadays with the goal of gaining information and then moving on to the next subject as quickly as possible. *Lectio* expressly has the text at the service of prayer, of disposing the reader to enter God’s presence. And this presence will act as a guide in expanding the text as well as not to overstep its bounds and devolve into personal interpretation. Such is the goal of this document as well as others relative to sacred scripture as posted on this home page. It can’t be stressed enough that without the intent of fostering God’s presence in our lives this and the other “expansion” texts are simply useless.

Instead of going through Deuteronomy line by line as with Romans and some other biblical texts already online, the current document deals with each chapter, elaborating not especially on each verse but by taking a more general approach. It’s also helpful to keep in mind that Deuteronomy refers much to the books of Exodus and Numbers. While certain points of contact are mentioned, it simply would be too burdensome to detail each and every point where they correspond. Again, the text at hand is designed as an aide for *lectio divina*, nothing more.

References are given to various transliterated words sticking with Deuteronomy as much as possible which enables a search of them front to back and visa versa. If this book doesn’t contain such references, others are given. A quick note in this regard is in order. Hebrew verbs come in different forms meaning that the next occurrence of a given verb with the same form is referred to even if a closer one of another form applies. Because Deuteronomy bears a close relationship with the Book of Numbers, many references between the two are made.

At the end of each chapter a list of transliterated words noted within the text, along with their respective verses, is inserted.

Information about the Book of Deuteronomy can be gathered from many sources which may be helpful. Then again, temptation to fall into this tendency detracts from the goal at hand, of having Deuteronomy at the service of prayer. One pertinent observation, however, that’s helpful from the Introduction to Deuteronomy in **The Zondervan NIV**

Study Bible: “Deuteronomy’s literary structure supports its historical setting. By its interpretive, repetitious, reminiscent and somewhat irregular style it shows that it is a series of more or less extemporaneous addresses, sometimes describing events in non-chronological order.”

With regard to the text at hand, each chapter of the Bible is inserted beforehand. The one used here is from the **RSV** or more specifically, **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha** (New York, 1973). Also consulted is **The Zondervan NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, 2002).

Chapter One

1) These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah over against Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Di-zahab. 2) It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. 3) And 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 Edre-i. 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) Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them.' 9) "At that time I said to you, 'I am not able alone to bear you; 10) the Lord your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. 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 alone the weight and burden of you and your strife? 13) Choose wise, understanding, and experienced men, according to your tribes, 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 brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the alien that is with him. 17) You shall not be partial in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of man, 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. 19) "And we set out from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which 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 gives us. 21) Behold, 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 of you, one man for 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 which the Lord our God gives 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 forth out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. 28) Whither are we going up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, "The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; and moreover 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 bore you, as a man bears his son, in 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, to show you by what way you should go, and in the cloud by day. 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 which 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 upon which he has trodden, because he has wholly followed the Lord!' 37) The Lord was angry with me also 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) Moreover your little ones, who you said would become a prey, and your children, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, 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 will go up and fight, just as the Lord our God commanded us.' And every man of you girded 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 the midst of you; lest you be defeated before your enemies.' 43) So I spoke to you, and you would not hearken; but you rebelled against the command of the Lord, and were presumptuous and 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 hearken to your voice or give ear to you. 46) So you remained at Kadesh many days, the days that you remained there.

Deuteronomy opens with *'eleh hadbarym* or "these (are) the words" which Moses spoke, the verb *davar* being the root of the noun with the same spelling. *Davar*—whether the verb or the noun—sets the stage for everything that follows because it means more than the utterance of words willy-nilly or the giving out of information. It's something along the lines of the Greek *logos*, word-as-expression. *Davar* is used throughout the Hebrew scriptures, but it assumes special importance as here at the beginning of a book. Everything that follows is an expression, a divine expression. It's interesting to note that

at the very end of Deuteronomy after Moses had died, there's the observation that "there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses whom the Lord knew face to face." This comes from Ex 33.11 which reads "the Lord spoke (*davar*) face to face." With this in mind the entire book at hand can be sandwiched in between these two *davars*.

Clearly someone other than Moses is presenting an introduction in the first four verses just before Moses himself begins to speak in vs. 5. This anonymous person (who he is secondary, actually irrelevant) prepares the reader for what Deuteronomy represents, the proper name translated as "second law." It's not just a rehash of the legal stuff in Exodus but deals with the renewal of the covenant given in the Sinai wilderness. Also Moses and the covenant—the Torah—are inextricably connected as a single mediating source for the Israelites. So we could say that while Moses does speak in Deuteronomy, he comes off as in a mediating role, not in the negative sense that phrase can imply, a glorified secretary upon holy Mount Horeb but as someone who *davar* the *davar* of God. As for the notion of "second," such indeed is the translation of the formal title Deuteronomy, the second law, *nomos* being the Greek noun for Torah.

Although we're left without knowing the identity of the person speaking in the first few verses. It may seem a minor point, but the way a biblical book begins is very important, setting the tone for all that follows. There are two candidates for this anonymous person. One could be Moses' brother Aaron who isn't mentioned until 9.20 and after that, just a handful of times. Back in the context of Exodus, Aaron becomes not just a spokesman of his brother Moses, but as 7.1 puts it boldly, he was a prophet. The second candidate is Joshua mentioned next in vs. 38 and appears far more frequently in Deuteronomy than Aaron. Regardless of the two, each is well qualified. Aaron had tested himself already, and Joshua is destined to take over as a charismatic leader of Israel. He had proved himself by defeating Amalek (Chapter Seventeen of Exodus). That singles him out for assuming Moses' role once Israel leaves the Sinai wilderness for Canaan. Once this issue of anonymous speaker is clarified, we can settle down and follow Moses as he begins to speak in vs. 3.

The mediating words of Moses, if you will, are directed to Israel as a whole ('all Israel') meaning that they had gathered for this solemn occasion to hear the *davar* about to come from their leader. Regardless of their position, each and every Israelites could hear these *davar* which are to deal essentially with centralizing worship of the Lord. This is a deliberate ploy to counter the inclination toward idol worship which unfortunately will plague Israel in Canaan and, of course, later. If you want to get depressed, just read Joshua and Judges. Both books form a dreary account of continuous infidelities with equally continuous interventions by the Lord to save his people. However, that lays in the future. For now it's time to concentrate on the positive. As for the people listening to Moses, it doesn't matter how far removed they were from him. A *davar* as in this instance is no obstacle with regard to space and time. Actually Moses is the embodiment of *davar*, so his presence among "all Israel" radiated outwards with ease.

The opening verse of Deuteronomy is specific as to where this *davar* by Moses takes place, beginning with “beyond the Jordan” which means in the plains of Moab. Then it narrows down to five different places. The author goes into these details for a specific reason. He wishes to make sure the *davar* which Moses *davar* has some physical restraints around it so they may reverberate deep within the assembly of “all Israel,” nobody being excluded. Later Israel could look back at this confined space, if you will, and recall the importance of the event, of how everyone received the *davar* with equal force. But as just noted, much of Israel later in Canaan apostatized by succumbing to local divinities. It’d be up to just a few faithful people to look back upon *‘eleh hadbarym* and insert them into their present situation as a reminder of their nation’s true identity. Thus this phrase became both an inspiration as well as an intimidation.

Just as important as narrowing down the locale for utterance of *‘eleh hadbarym* is the element of time. Vs. 2 phrases this in terms of a journey of eleven days or *derek* which means a road or way. The origin of this journey is Horeb where God had revealed himself to Moses as first noted in Ex 3.1 where it’s called “the mountain of God.” So for now on or the time before Israel enters Canaan and later constructs the temple at Jerusalem, Horeb is the axis point *par excellence*, the point from which Israel derives its identity. There’s no question that the people had an identity much earlier, even before they had entered Egypt some four hundred years ago or when they had lived in Canaan. You might think that the Israelites might remain at Horeb and set up a temple. However, now they had the Torah, its portability became the chief guide to prepare them for retaking the land from which they had departed. While such place names are important for orientation, they remain secondary to Horeb proper and even more so to the *davar* of Moses. Besides, where Israel is right now—the Sinai desert—always was considered as temporary, Canaan being the ultimate destination. No one had any doubt throughout the forty years spent there.

Vs. 3 continues to stress the element of time by mentioning the fortieth year and first day of the eleventh month. It’s well known that Israel had wandered in the Sinai Desert for forty years, so at the beginning of Deuteronomy it’s appropriate to mark the end, or very close to the end, to this phase of her history. There doesn’t seem to be any precedent for Moses himself to speak at the beginning of the eleventh month. If this is so, why not make one right now for future commemoration? Here the phrase “sons of Israel” is used compared with “people of Israel,” a more intimate form of address. Also a very close connection exists, actually an immediate one, between the *davar* of Moses and the Lord having commanded him to do so. To carry out such a command means that Moses more than memorized all that the Lord had transmitted to him on the mountain. Being up there away from the people prepared Moses for reception of all that the Lord commanded. We get a glimpse of this as in reference to him before Pharaoh several paragraphs above. There the Lord himself told Moses that “See, I make you as God to Pharaoh.” If that happened way back then, why not now? Moses will speak at

considerable length both with ease and accuracy concerning the law or Torah, making absolutely no mistakes. Such is the power of *davar* as it informs Moses' recollective faculty.

Vss. 4 and 5 again situates Moses within a specific period of time or when he speaks to the "sons of Israel" [vs. 3] which is after his defeat of two kings, Sihon of the Amorites and Og of Bashan. The verb is *nakah* meaning to smite or to strike is found next in 2.33: "We defeated him and his sons and all his people." This defeat is recounted in Num 21.21-35 which started innocently enough when Moses requested passage through their land but was denied. In other words, this twofold victory was unexpected and showed Israel's mettle. Once safely in the land of Moab, Moses could *davar* which vs. 5 puts in terms of undertaking to explain the Torah. *Ya'ah* is the verb for undertook which connotes a sense of striving. "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes" [Gen 18.27]. *Ya'al* is used with *ba'ar* or to explain which fundamentally means digging or engraving. The idea is that the starting point of *davar* as applicable to Moses digs down into the Torah as given him because it was given to him by the Lord. Note that vs. 5 says "this law" or "this Torah" which can suggest the meaning of Deuteronomy itself, "second law."

From vs. 6 pretty much non-stop through the end of Deuteronomy Moses begins to speak which at first glance seems a formidable task but is less so when taking into account what was said in vs. 3, the relationship between the Lord commanding Moses and Moses passing on this commanding to the Israelites. In other words, this divine impressing is so deep that it spills over effortlessly despite the details and length of Deuteronomy, thirty-four chapters. Moses begins appropriately enough with God speaking on Mount Horeb using the words "to us" which mirrors the phrase "our God." This shows the identity of Moses with the people and the two with the Lord himself. Vs. 6 contains a rebuke, if you will. The Lord says that Moses had remained long enough on the mountain, that it's time to get moving. Being there was a special opportunity, understandably so, but it had one negative consequence which Moses must have regretted. The people saw that Moses had delayed his descent which led them to have Aaron make a golden calf as their god (cf. Ex 32.1+).

Vs. 7 continues with the Lord telling Moses first to turn and then take his journey, *panah* and *nasah* (fundamentally meaning to pull up or to pluck out). Both verbs are found in vs. 40: "But as for you, turn and journey into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea." It's an apt way of describing Moses' contentedness on Horeb from which he had to leave for the sake of the people. That's why the verse at hand says "for you" or *lakem*, the second person plural. The immediacy and even urgency of this order from on high is to enter not essentially a foreign land but return to the heritage of their ancestors. Vs. 7 divides this land into nine geographical areas, the furthest east being the Euphrates River. The promise is larger than what both Moses and the people anticipated which filled them both with joy and dread. How would they ever bring such a large area with so many

peoples under their rule? If we go to the end of Deuteronomy the picture is reduced quite dramatically. First, Moses isn't allowed to enter Canaan. Second, the Lord does show him "all the land" [34.1] from atop Pisgah which stretched as far as Zoar. So between the beginning of Deuteronomy and its conclusion the Lord must have debated within himself his original promises. The crucial part of all his interventions was anticipation of Israel's apostasy which would held out the danger of nullifying the original promise.

In vs. 8 the Lord exclaims that he has set the land "before you" (second person plural), the common verb to give being used. In a sense, this before-ness hearkens back to Abram's relationship with the Lord before he entered the very same land, that is, "the land I will show you" [Gen 12.1]. Already this showing had taken place and rooted itself in Israel's collective memory through thick and thin. Such is the sense behind the verb *shavah*, to swear (the number seven derives from it). "And the Lord heard your words and was angered, and he swore" [vs. 34]. Now it was time to transform this showing into a giving. As for Abram, the showing is not unlike the promise in vs. 3: "To your descendants I give this land from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" [Gen 15.18] after which are added ten tribes which inhabited this area.

Chances are the Israelites, most of whom had been born in the isolation of the Sinai desert, hadn't a clue as to the nine areas given in vs. 7 except by occasional traders or passers-by. After all, you had to pass through the Sinai to reach Egypt. Surely memory of their ancestors of four hundred years ago didn't include such a vast area, they being pretty much unsettled there despite God's promise. So here we have an image something like Moses and Israel sitting at the edge of Sinai after having defeated two local kings, Sihon and Og. They were pretty much flushed with a confidence that would have to work wonders at the prospect of going all the way to the Euphrates. A daunting prospect, to be sure, but the Lord did give it all to his people. Everyone saw it at once not so much in a vision but by the Lord reminding them through first-hand reports they had garnered over the years.

After revealing what hopefully will be Israel's future heritage reaching from the hill country of the Amorites to the Euphrates River, the Lord told Moses and Israel first to enter and then take possession of it. They had to actually cross the Jordan River to get a real feel for the place which would inspire them to possess it, *yarash*. And that meant, of course, subduing the local population. *Yarash* is significant at such a critical juncture because it also means to receive as an inheritance. "Go up, take possession, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has told you" [vs. 21]. More accurately, this is a re-possession and re-inheritance after Joseph had invited his father and brothers to take up residence in Egypt so long ago (cf. Ex 46.3). Although Israel was equipped with the new Torah, all the people now had at their disposal were distant memories and stories as to what this land might contain. Then there remained the intriguing prospect that they just might stumble upon some descendants of theirs. At least the people were reassured by the Lord's words

in vs. 8, that he had sworn this land to the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This promises goes all the way back to just before Israel departed Egypt in dramatic form: “And when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites as he swore to you and your fathers and shall give it to you” [Ex 13.11].

So despite reminding the people about the divine promise of inheriting a land Israel had possessed at one time, Moses speaks of his own weakness or inability to bear the strain. Strangely Moses fails to mention his father-in-law Jethro who advised him to delegate the task of judging the people. As Ex 18.15 puts it, “because the people come to me to inquire of God,” *darash* being the verb fundamentally meaning to frequent a place or treading which is more forceful. This omission could be due to the fact that since Jethro came from Midian, he wasn't a natural-born Israelite, Moses' being married to his daughter. That connection might sow some doubts in the minds of the people now shortly before they were about to enter Canaan.

On the other hand, there is a positive side to this which Moses acknowledges, namely, that the Lord has multiplied the people. He quotes from memory words the Lord addressed to Abram: “Look toward heaven and number the stars if you are able to number them...So shall your descendants be” [Gen 15.5]. Not only does Moses acknowledge this growth, he wishes that the people increase all the more, that is, in accord with the promise he had made, another use of the verb *davar*. In other words *davar* here fleshes out the *davar* of the very first verse of Deuteronomy. A reference to this may be found in Gen 26.24: “Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your descendants for my servant Abraham's sake.” It's important for Moses to remind the people again and again of this promise, for it extends way back to before they had come into Egypt and thus bridges a considerable period of time. In fact, Moses is so overjoyed that he wishes the people to increase a thousand fold.

Moses has second thoughts, if you will, as to what he had just exclaimed. In vs. 12 he reverts to awareness of the increased multitude he must carry, *torach* being the noun which derives from a verbal root meaning to cast down...as though the burden not only weighed down Moses but cast him flat on the ground and kept him pinned there. The only other biblical reference to *torach* is Is 1.4: “Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them.”

If *torach* weren't enough, Moses adds what really bothers him, the strife the people had shown on numerous occasions. *Ryv* is the noun for this word and also applies to pleading a case or cause. “If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another” [17.8]. The verse at hand is part rhetorical and part a genuine question put squarely to the people. Moses asks them to choose qualified judges which in vs. 13 are called heads or *ro'sh* (cf. vs. 15) which is more generic in nature, pretty much as subordinates answerable to Moses. This communal choice is different from Jethro's recommendation noted above; he advised that Moses alone make the choice. Such a

decision in Deuteronomy could be yet another way of Moses distancing himself from his father-in-law. Also it could be a way of priming the people to make decisions on their own, for Moses knew he wouldn't be around much longer. Joshua was waiting in the wings to assume his mantle, but essentially he was untested as a leader. Besides, entering Canaan was a wholly different experience of what the Israelites had than their wanderings in the Sinai.

As for those chosen to take the role of head, they are to be wise, of understanding and experienced: *chakam* (cf. vs. 15), *byn* (participle, cf. 4.6) and *yadah* (participle, cf. 1.39). Most had been born in the Sinai wilderness, even have fought as with Joshua, and thus proved themselves. Moses bids that these men be chosen according to their tribes which makes their election all the more reliable since they were well known among this small division of the entire nation. Still, Moses had the final say. That's why he appoints them. Chances are that Jethro was following all this closely albeit from a distance, eager to see how Moses would implement his recommendation. Actually he isn't mentioned at all in Deuteronomy.

Obviously Moses had to get the consent of the Israelites. That's why in vs. 14 they responded that the *davar* or thing he had spoken (*davar*) is good. In a broader context, the people consented to Moses' *davar* which began Deuteronomy and were eager to have it played out in how they would govern themselves. In response, Moses breaks down the more generic heads or *ro'sh*—wise and experienced men; those of understanding aren't mentioned—and sets them as commanders or *sar* which also refers to a prince. “When the officers have made an end of speaking to the people, then commanders shall be appointed at the head of the people” [20.9]. Starting with the broadest group they are to be broken down into four general categories of descending order. The first and largest consists of thousands and the last of tens. That turns out to be a fairly good system of governing the people, at least in their nomadic form of existence. Following this model in Canaan would be another story. Nothing is said of it later when Joshua actually leads the people into Canaan. Furthermore, exposure to the local deities had an unexpectedly quick and long term damaging effect upon the Israelites...the secret weapon of the locals.

In vs. 16 for the first time Moses uses the word judges (literally judging) or *shaphat* for those put in charge over the people. It's used only twice in Deuteronomy, 16.18 and 25.1, the former being cited here: “and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.” Again, this follows Jethro's advice who remains awkwardly silent: “And let them judge the people at all times” [Ex 18.22]. The *shaphat* to be accomplished is of two general parts, between a man and his brother (that is, Israelites) and an alien or *ger* referring, for example, to Ex 12.49: “There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.” Here “stranger” derives from the verbal root *gur* for “sojourns.” The next reference in Deuteronomy is 5.14: “But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you...or the sojourner who is within your gates.” Even though provision has been made for this *ger* way back in Genesis, reflective

of desert hospitality, still it must have been difficult for the Israelites in the Sinai wilderness. But as they looked back once in Canaan, exposure to these so-called aliens helped them relate to the people of that land because the tables have been turned.

To counter any prejudice towards a *ger*, Moses adds quickly in vs. 17 that the Israelites shouldn't show partiality, *nakar* being the verb which fundamentally means to estrange or alienate; also it means to be ignorant as well as to acknowledge. *Nakry* is an adjective meaning alien which derives from it. "You shall not show partiality" [16.19]. So interestingly the newly appointed judges are not to demonstrate alienation in any case that comes their way. That is to say, they are not to show alienation (*nakar*) to both Israelite and *ger*. Moses is clever here, in one word forcing the judges to perform their duty that won't have any bad decision rebound upon themselves. As for the use of *nakar*, the text runs literally "you shall not be partial faces (*panym*) in judgment." Similarly the noun for face applies as "you shall not be afraid of the face of a man." This is a reminder to the judges that judgment belong to God; they are his agents and are not to act on their own accord.

Again referring to Jethro's influence, Moses says that any difficult case is to be given to him, the verb *qarav* meaning to approach, draw near. "And when you approach the frontier of the sons of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them" [2.19]. Most likely some of the judges had debated among themselves before passing it on to Moses. At the same time he was on the look-out for instances of giving him cases in order to get themselves off the hook. Moses says beforehand that he'll hear such cases. That doesn't mean he'll take them on, just sound them out and pass them down if necessary. As a warning of sorts, Moses says that he had commanded the judges to do all the things which he told them, *davar* being used again.

In vs. 19 Moses now changes the subject matter of his extended address to the pressing issue of moving on. With the important business of establishing judges out of the way the people could set out from Horeb. Although it was necessary to leave, it must have been painful for many, especially Moses, as all watched the mountain fade behind them. However, as noted earlier there's no mention of the Israelites having set up a memorial there nor even of leaving a small contingent of Levites, for example, to foster religious observances or the like. Would anyone later make the trek back to Horeb at a later date? Again, nothing is said of the matter although chances are Horeb became a pilgrimage site of sorts. Although Sinai as a whole is desolate, Moses calls the road ahead a terrible wilderness, the verbal root *yare'* (to fear) being used. Even more terrible is the unknown prospect of entering Canaan. "For the Lord your God is in the midst of you, a great and terrible God"[7.21]. The reason for using *yare'* is obvious in light of being at Horeb where God appeared and gave Israel the Torah. Some would wonder if after that experience it'd be worth entering Canaan.

The first destination after Horeb is Kadesh-barnea (cf. vs. 2) from where Moses sent out

spies to reconnoiter Canaan: “Thus did your fathers when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land” [Num 32.8]. These men sent back a fearful report, that is, “a land that devours its inhabitants” [Num 13. 32] making Horeb all the more appealing. As for Egypt, it must have seemed a long-lost paradise. “We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic” [Num 11.5]. Nevertheless in vs. 21 Moses says boldly that the Lord has set this land before the people where the common verb to give is used. In other words, already the Lord has given Canaan into Israel’s possession just as Moses says in vs. 8, the verb be *yarash*. With such assurance Israel is neither to fear (*yare’*, cf. vs. 19) nor be dismayed, *chatat* meaning to break. “Do not fear or be dismayed” [31.8]. While similar words are found throughout the Bible, rarely if ever do we hear a response from those to whom they’re addressed.

Now that Israel has taken up temporary residence at Kadesh-barnea Moses reminds the people of the spies sent into Canaan as associated with that place. He claims that not just the people had made this request but “all the people.” Compare with Num 13.17 which says that “Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan.” The purpose of these spies is twofold. First they are to explore the land, *chaphar* fundamentally meaning to dig as a pit or well. “He makes a pit, digging it out, and falls into the hole which he has made” [Ps 7.15]. Secondly the spies are to bring back word (*davar*) as to the best way into Canaan as well as an assessment of their cities. As we know from Joshua, the first major town Israel ran up against was Jericho.

Upon hearing this request, Moses concurred, for it was a *davar* which was good to him as vs. 23 notes. Next he makes a symbolic decision, if you will, by choosing one man from each of Israel’s twelve tribes. Before setting out on what clearly is a dangerous mission Moses reminded the twelve—later Jesus would chose twelve disciples to go throughout the world—that some four hundred years earlier twelve tribes of Israel had settled in Canaan. At the time their hold was tenuous and was left in abeyance all that time. Perhaps these men just might find descendants or at least those who kept alive memory of that time which in reality amounted to quasi-occupation and see how they were faring.

Vs. 24 has the twelve men from the twelve tribes turning, that is, turning away from Moses and their brethren, a deeply moving departure, for upon their shoulders the whole enterprise now rests. Nothing is said of how long they were to be in Canaan; the same applies to whether or not they’d split up and meet at a prearranged place and time. Note that after having turned, the twelve go up into the hill country, this upward journey symbolic of the long, arduous road of re-taking Canaan. The first stop is the Valley of Eshcol which they spied out, *ragal* being the verb meaning to tread and from which is derived the noun foot. For the same context, cf. Jos 7.2: “Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai...and said to them, ‘Go up and spy out the land.’”

The verbal root *ragal* obviously implies a lot of walking which the spies did. They were taken aback by the produce of Eschcol (cf. Num 13.23), figuring it’d be good evidence of

Canaan's fruitfulness. Nothing further is said of their mission, how dreadful were the inhabitants (cf. Num 13.32+), the grapes hopefully being sufficient enticement for the Israelites to make their next move. Such is the word or *davar* vs. 25 mentions to Moses and the people. While circulating throughout Canaan, the spies were confident that already the Lord had given it to Israel as in vs. 8. There Moses said that the Lord had set Canaan before the Israelites whereas here the spies had actually set foot (*ragal* in the broader sense) and had first hand knowledge of it. Upon their return Moses was afraid that report of their adventure which Num 13. 32 reports might frighten the people.

Although Moses wanted his spies to keep their report confidential except for a few generalities and the evidence of the huge grapes from Eshcol, the people panicked. Vs. 26 puts this in terms of a rebellion or the verb *marah* and understandably so. "Then you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God and did not believe him or obey his voice" [9.23]. With regard to the incidents at hand, they are fleshed out in the Book of Numbers, this one in reference to 14.1-4. Vs. 27 continues as part of the previous verse, spelling out this rebellious attitude in terms of murmuring, *ragan* also meaning to be insubordinate not unlike *marah*. It has two other biblical references, Is 29.24 and Ps 106.25, the latter being cited here: "They murmured inside their tents and did not obey the voice of the Lord." In this verse as well as the one at hand the sense of murmuring is heightened by the phrase "inside their tents" meaning they did it in small groups—families and friends—away from others. One can just picture a vast plane of pitched tents at night with this subdued yet persistent murmuring sound emanating from within. Anyone walking through the camp would be horrified at what he heard.

The murmuring just described by groups of Israelites within their tents certainly dismayed Moses who speaks plainly of their outrageous claim that the Lord hated them, *sin'ah* (noun), more like hatred shown towards an enemy. The text reads literally (and more forcefully) as "saying in hatred," the next reference being in 9.28: "and because he hated them, he has brought them out to slay them in the wilderness." When this collective hatred grew to a fever pitch, the Israelites were convinced that the Lord's intent was to destroy them in the Sinai desert. This, of course, runs contrary to everything that happened there, especially events at Mount Horeb. On the other hand, it's understandable because the people were on the threshold of entering Canaan, and the pressure of being so close yet in a sense so distant was almost too much to bear.

The just mentioned tension is amplified in vs. 28 ('Where can we go?') by the report brought back by the twelve spies whom the people call "our brethren." Everyone gathered around these men, pressing each one for information which caused the hearts of the Israelites to melt, *masas* also meaning to waste away. "Let him go back to his house lest the heart of his fellows melt as his heart" [20.8]. Such melting is expressed as one voice by the people egged on by their murmuring. That, in turn, led them to believe that the Lord intends their destruction. Obviously such internal discord would delight the Egyptians to the west and the Canaanites to the east. When in such a state of mind

exaggeration of facts runs wild: the huge size of the people, cities whose walls reach to heaven and especially the Anakim. As for these people, earlier inhabitants of Canaan, the spies in Num 13.33 compare themselves as grasshopper. But if anyone had memory of stories concerning their forefathers in Canaan prior to coming to Egypt some four hundred years earlier, they'd find no such evidence. Chances are that once the twelve spies finished speaking with the people, they regretted what they had said, of having roused them unnecessarily.

In vs. 29 Moses chimes in right away to counter the spies' report telling the people not to fear the inhabitants of Canaan, especially the Anakim. The verb to be in dread is *harats* meaning to tremble. "You shall not be in dread of them; for the Lord your God is in the midst of you, a great and terrible God" [7.22]. He brings to mind that the Lord went before the Israelites, possibly in reference to the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night (cf. Ex 13.22). Some of the older folks among the crowd recalled that clearly and must have been embarrassed at not having trusted in the Lord. Now as then just before Moses parted the Red Sea the Lord will fight for Israel which is rendered literally "will fight to you," the preposition *l-* suggesting direct action. Moses also brings to mind the Lord doing the same in the wilderness where he carried them as a man bears his son. Many centuries later Isaiah may have had in mind these when he said "He will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young" [Is 40.11-12].

Despite this word (*davar*, cf. vs. 32) the people did not believe the Lord who preceded the people pretty much like a scout. That is to say, he sought a place for pitching their tents, the verb being *tur* which is not unlike spying. "To seek out a resting place for them" [Num 10.33]. This spying, if you will, took the form of that pillar of cloud and fire which crossed the Red Sea and continued to lead the way. You'd think that such dramatic manifestations of divine power and presence would elicit an automatic faith and allegiance by the Israelites. It did so here and there but did not sustain them as much as the giving of the Torah on Horeb which itself would outlast the ark of the divine presence bestowed much later. As for the pillar of fire by night, the text says that it shows Israel the way to go; nothing is said of traveling by day with the cloud as guide.

As for the murmuring brought up earlier in vs. 27, Moses claims in vs. 34 that the Lord heard not just the people's words (*davar*) but literally "the voice (*qol*) of your words," *qol* being added for emphasis. Naturally this made him angry (*qatsaph*) and to swear an oath (*shavah*, cf. vs. 8). The former is found next in 9.7: "Do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness." The oath the Lord is about to pronounce is quite severe, calling everyone of the current generation—and that could omit those who actually crossed the Red Sea and died in the Sinai—an evil generation. The Lord says nothing about wiping them out, just that they won't see Canaan. Implied is that the majority of Israelites will linger at the border area, glancing from time to time into Canaan without going there.

The exception to the harsh rule just laid out is Caleb and his descendants, the only one who “quieted the people before Moses” [Num 13.30], *hasah* being the verb which implies making still. He was alone in urging the people to enter and occupy Canaan after the spies’ report came back. In response “all the congregation raised a loud cry” [Num 14.1]. So in a sense Caleb was able to see something everyone else hadn’t even though he was one of the twelve spies (cf. Num 13.6). The same applies to the other spies who seemed to have lacked the courage to join in with Caleb. Even though Caleb walked up and down Canaan, he seemed to be alone in having followed the Lord wholly. Vs. 36 lacks the verb “followed” which makes the text read literally “fully after the Lord.”

In vs. 37 Moses is quite candid as to what the Lord revealed to him. That is to say, the Lord was angry with him because of the people, this being expressed by the noun *galal* which uses the preposition *b-* (in), literally as something like “in due to you.” So while Moses is speaking freely of himself, he gets in a jab...a kind of parting shot...as to why the Lord doesn’t let him enter Canaan. Actually he uses the rather abrupt, almost dismissive “there” (*sham*) for Canaan. This attitude is echoed later in 3.26 (‘on your account’). Apparently such divine anger hearkens back to the Israelites complaining about lack of water, forcing Moses to strike a rock. There he called them rebels, *marah* being the verbal root, echoing vs. 26 where that same word is used.

This rejection of Moses must have hit many Israelites hard, but at the same time they knew a wholly new phase of their adventure is about to begin which requires new leadership. That fell to Joshua whom in vs. 38 is standing beside Moses as well as the entire congregation. He was an obvious choice, having proved himself in battle and was present on Horeb with Moses. So when Moses bade the people to encourage Joshua, all readily agreed, *chazaq* being the verb which means to be strong. The same sentiment is expressed in 3.28: “But charge Joshua and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land which you shall see.” To make sure the people understood fully what he had just said, Moses told them that Joshua would be the agent to have them inherit or more accurately, re-inherit Canaan, *nachal* occurring next in 3.28 as just cited.

Moses strikes some fear into the people, using the Lord’s words as a reminder in vs. 39 of a fear that their little ones (*taph*, cf. 2.34) could become prey or *baz* which also means spoil. This refers to Num 14.3 once they Israelites heard of the spies’ report: “Our wives and our little ones will become a prey; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” So far they managed to survive in the relative safety of Sinai wilderness. Here they were, in between Egypt (surely the Egyptians would enslave them again) and Canaan with unknown dangers. Interestingly, the idea of residing at the base of Mount Horeb wasn’t an option, the place where Moses encountered God who gave him the Torah. Thus the only option is to move forward.

As for the *taph* or little ones, the Lord reminds the people that they are innocent, not knowing good or evil, words which intimate the tree “of the knowledge of good and evil” [Gen 2.9] in Eden. In a sense, Sinai had been a paradise with Horeb its “tree” at its center. Yet because of the people’s disobedience, one example being the *marah* of vs. 26, they were destined to be expelled from this second paradise like the first man and take up residence elsewhere. Again, the Lord says that he will give Canaan to the Israelites as a possession and thus inheritance.

In vs. 40 the Lord continues to speak, this time with the somewhat abrupt, contemptuous words, “but as for you.” He bids them to head back into the wilderness towards the Red Sea. In other words, the Lord is willing to comply with their request to return to Egypt, putting their choice squarely before them. This brought home to the Israelites the reality of their situation, for in vs. 41 Moses recounts how the people expressed their sinful words and behavior. Even more important, they’d be willing not just to enter Canaan but to fight anyone opposing them. And so the threat issued in vs. 40 changed everything in a second. Despite the whining about the lost apparent benefits of living in Egypt, when push comes to shove, the Israelites would rather press forward.

Right after this dramatic turn-around in attitude, Moses makes the observation in vs. 41 that the people prepare ready for war. They thought it’d be easy to walk right into Canaan and settle down, this after having demonstrated near cowardice after the spies’ report. The verb here is *hun* which means to be of little moment, to be in easy circumstances, the only occurrence in the Bible. To counter this bold presumption colored with some genuine fear at the real possibility of the Lord send them packing back to Egypt, the Lord steps in. He bids Moses to prevent the people from going up because he isn’t in their midst, *qerev* suggestive of that which is interior or smack in the middle. “Until the entire generation had perished from the camp” [2.14].

What prevented this divine *qerev* is, of course, the people murmuring and rebelling. While doing it they weren’t aware in the slightest fashion of the Lord’s absence, so taken up with their self-centered pity. So revelation of this came as a second shock, the first one when the Lord had threatened the people with the specter of returning to Egypt. Moses was present among the people, obviously, but he was powerless to stop the Israelites from wallowing in their self-absorption. As vs. 42 says plainly, no divine *qerev* will result in defeat, *nagaph* being the verb which means to smite or strike. “The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you” [28.7].

Vs. 43 has the Lord more or less repeating to the Israelites what they had been thinking, namely, rebelling (*marah* again) against him which involves murmuring though he doesn’t mention it here. This verse refines the rebelling, if you will, by mentioning the Lord’s command or *peh* which literally means mouth. So the Israelites are on very thin ice this time, looking right at the Lord and not even paying attention to the words...the *davar*...that come directly from his mouth. Next he says that the people were

presumptuous, *zyd* meaning to boil up or to seethe. “And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again” [17.13]. In the verse at hand the Israelites showed this by going into the hill country. Note the twofold ascent, if you will: first they must go up and then into this hill country, both ups symbolic of their presumption without divine assistance.

As a result of this presumption the Amorites located above or in the hill country came out against the Israelites, *radaph* also meaning to put to flight or persecute which certainly they did. “Justice and only justice you shall follow that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God gives you” [16.20]. The vehemence of the Amorites’ response is depicted as a swarm of bees descending unawares upon the Israelites, driving them to Hormah noted in Num 14.45: “and defeated them and pursued them even to Hormah.” As for the image of bees, Ex 23.28 has a similar one: “And I will send hornets before you which shall drive out Hivite, Canaanite and Hittite from before you.”

Upon this (literally) stinging defeat, the Israelites did what they do normally in such a predicament, that is, they cried out to the Lord. “And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plain of Moab thirty days” [30.8]. They thought this would elicit an automatic response from the Lord or at least from Moses, but all they got was silence. More accurately, the Lord didn’t listen to their collective voice, the sense of which is intensified by not giving them ear. So once the weeping and self-recrimination faded away, Israel had no choice but to bide time. In other words, they remained in the relative safety of Kadesh (last mentioned in Num 33.37) many days, the time not being more specified but intimating more that the Israelites were licking their wounds.

Numbers = Verses

NB: the noun and verb (same spelling) *davar* is omitted by reason of its frequency both here and in the other chapters.

derek: 2, nakah: 4, ya’ah: 5, ya’al: 5, ba’ar: 5, panah: 7, nasah: 7, shavah: 8, yarash: 8, torach: 12, ryv: 12, ro’sh: 13, chakam: 13, byn: 13, yadah: 13, sar: 15, shaphat: 16, ger: 16, chakam: 15, byn: 15, yadah: 15, sar: 15, shaphat: 16, gur: 16, nakar: 17, qarav: 17, yare’: 19, yarash: 21, chatat: 21, chaphar: 22, ragal: 24, ragan: 26, marah: 26, sin’ah: 27, masas: 28, harats: 29, tur: 32, qol: 34, qatsaph: 34, shavah: 34, galal: 37, chazaq: 38, nachal: 38, taph: 39, hun: 41, qerev: 42, nagaph: 42, marah: 43, radaph: 44.

Chapter Two

1) “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 went about Mount Seir. 2) Then the Lord said to me, 3) ‘You have been going about this mountain country long enough; turn northward. 4) And

command the people, You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren the sons of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So take good heed; 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 for money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water of them for 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 brethren the sons 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 sons 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 known as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim. 12) The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the sons of Esau dispossessed them, and destroyed them from before them, and settled in their stead; 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 when all the men of war had perished and were dead from among the people, 17) the Lord said to me, 18) 'This day you are to pass over the boundary of Moab at Ar; 19) and when you approach the frontier of the sons of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession.' 20) (That also is known 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 them; and they dispossessed them, and settled in their stead; 22) as he did for the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites before them, and they dispossessed them, and settled in their stead 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 stead.) 24) 'Rise up, take 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 upon the peoples that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.' 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 which the Lord our God gives 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 at 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 utterly destroyed every city, men, women, and children; we left none remaining; 35) only the cattle we took as spoil for ourselves, with the booty of the cities which 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, and wherever the Lord our God forbade us.

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* usually translated as “and” but here as “then” which is indicative of a seamless connection between what had transpired in the last verse of Chapter One and the contents of this new chapter. The verb *panah* (cf. 1.7) as turned comes after the Israelites had remained at Kadesh many days as noted in 1.46. It was a dreaded turning indeed after having been rebuked by the Lord, the people heading toward the Red Sea which could mean only one thing, the prospect of returning to Egypt. The dread is intensified by the words “into the wilderness.” Actually Israel was already in Sinai, a general type of wilderness if you will, but the way this phrase is used brings home their overall desperation. Implied is that no reconciliation was effected or at least it wasn’t manifest to the people. On top of everyone’s mind was what would happen once they reached the Red Sea...some kind of reverse miraculous crossing? The only ray of hope at this juncture are the words “as the Lord told me,” that is, his words to Moses whose position with the Lord just might have some pull with him.

A quick note with regard to the noun “wilderness” used here as well as elsewhere. *Midbar* derives from the verbal root *davar* which as noted already several times means to speak. So we could take *midbar* as place for speaking or better, listening to whom is speaking, i.e., the Lord. It turns out that Israel’s forty years in the *midbar* was a training to listen to the Lord, something in which they failed miserably once established in Canaan.

In vs. 2 Moses says that “we” (he uses the first person plural so as to identify with the people’s plight) went about Mount Seir, the verb being *savav* (found in the next verse) suggesting that the people wandered about aimlessly. As for Seir, it has been mentioned twice thus far, 1.2 & 44. The Israelites didn’t necessarily circle this mountain but roamed around the area, almost avoiding the dread of what might be a forced return to Egypt. They had left that country some forty years ago; perhaps a new generation and a new pharaoh might welcome them, but that’s pretty much wishful thinking on their part. Note that the people did this *savav* “for many days” echoing the same as when they were at Kadesh in 1.46.

Vs. 2 begins with another conjunctive *v-* as “then” showing the close connection between the apparently aimless wandering around Mount Seir and the Lord’s intervention which for the Israelites couldn’t come quickly enough though with some understandable trepidation. He tells the people through Moses to turn again (*panah*), only this time

heading north, without a doubt receiving the news with great joy for at last getting out of their aimless wandering. This joy, however, was tempered immediately by the Lord telling them to go through territory belonging to the descendants of Esau. Everyone knew the story of how Jacob usurped his brother's birthright with the ominous warning still in their minds: "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger" [Gen 25.23]. This was tempered, however, by the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau in Gen 33.4+. Hopefully for Esau's descendants and their now very distant relatives the Israelites the same reconciliation would hold true. After all the Lord calls these descendants "your brethren."

The prospect of going northward was tempered by the Lord's assurance who said the Esau-ites would be afraid of them. Nevertheless, the Israelites are to take good heed, *shamar* being the verb which also means to keep watch or observe. "Therefore take good heed to yourselves" [4.15]. By doing this they'd be mirroring the same caution Jacob showed when he first encountered Esau after many years as recounted in Gen 33.1. *Shamar* is intensified by the adverb *me'od* which usually applies to excessiveness or something extreme. Apparently word had reached the Esau-ites well before their distant kinsman had approached causing them to be afraid or more likely being super-cautious of them. Word had gotten around quickly of their passage through the Red Sea many years ago as well as the Lord appearing to them at Horeb. Though of the same stock, they seem to have lacked any form of divine intervention, a sign that they lacked the Lord's favor despite his promise to them.

At the same time the Israelites were to tread softly with respect Esau's descendants: "do not contend with them," this deference and fear stemming from their patriarch who was renowned for his hunting skills which had been passed down from generation to generation (cf. Gen 25.27). *Garah* is the verb for contend which connotes being rough. "Do not harass Moab or contend with him them in battle" [vs. 9]. The reason apart from some distant relationship? Israel is simply passing through Seir, the middle of which has that mountain around they had circled for what seems forever. The Lord shows pretty much the same contempt for the Esau-ites as he had done for their father who had despised his birthright. At the same time he esteemed Esau's reception of Jacob much later on and didn't want to renew the friction between these two patriarchs. So when the Lord says that Seir is Esau's possession or *yerushah*, he intimates that they're stuck in that inhospitable place; they might eke out a living there but essentially would have no future. As for *yerushah*, it derives from *yarash* (to inherit) noted earlier in 1.8 and found next in vs. 9. Because the Esau-ites represent a dead-end, the Lord doesn't wish to allow his people even to tread on their land which means somehow bypassing it. However, he allows the Israelites to purchase basic necessities. Most likely the meeting between the two halves was polite but guarded, taking place not in the territory of Seir but at its border so that the soles of the Israelites wouldn't have to step on it (cf. vs. 5).

Right after this tense but cordial contact the Israelites move on. Now they realize that the divine threat of returning to Egypt has been lifted they can travel with greater ease and confidence. However, memory of that threat must have affected them profoundly. They had reassurance that God was prospering them throughout their forty years in the wilderness of Sinai, that they have lacked nothing, *chasar* being the verb as in a similar account, Neh 9.21: “Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing.” Essential to this sustenance is the Lord knowing his people, *yadah* meaning intimate knowledge enabling them, for example, to turn aware from the Esau-ites at Seir with confidence. Surely those inhabitants must have been impressed, seeing that while they were well adapted to their harsh desert environment, they lacked such trust. Perhaps by the time these two peoples met the Esau-ites have devolved into some form of quasi-pagan worship but with enough memories and rituals to keep some memory of their roots alive.

In the **RSV** vs. 8 continues with a second sentence opening a new paragraph with regard to Israel entering the wilderness of Moab and begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and.” The intent is to show the close connection of events, intimating that the divine *yadah* or knowing of vs. 7 continues along with the people. In fact, this *yadah* has undergone a transition, if you will, from the original pillar of fire by night and pillar of cloud by day to something more abstract but just as effective.

The Lord bids Moses to treat the inhabitants of Moab not unlike those of Esau...i.e., leave them be. What’s to be avoided is harassing or contending, *tsur* and *garah* [vs. 9]. Both occur together in vs. 19, a similar situation: “Do not harass them or contend with them (sons of Ammon), for I will not give Ammon a possession.” The reason for leaving Moab alone? Already the Lord has given Ar (cf. Num 21.15) to Lot’s descendants. Lot, of course, is inextricably associated with Abraham. The flocks of both had grown so large that the two had the potential for serious conflict. Therefore Lot ended up in the Jordan valley which “was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord” [Gen 13.10]. Also inhabiting Moab are the Amim, similar to the Anakim, people who struck terror into the spies sent to scout the land (cf. 1.29). Vs. 12 includes another group, the Horites who later the sons of Esau had dispossessed (cf. Gen 36.20).

Vs. 13 has the people continuing their way over the brook Zered which uses the word *nachal*, more a river or even torrent and applies to a valley as well (cf. 1.24, ‘valley of Eshcol’). This apparently minor transitus is significant in that it marks the passage of thirty-eight years since leaving Egypt. That is to say, everyone who crossed the Red Sea (‘the entire generation,’ vs. 14) had died and hence a direct link with vital memories of the past is severed. Surely Moses saw this coming, he being of that generation. This compelled him to make sure younger people could get the facts right about the past so they could transmit them to the next generation. In fact, they may have practiced reciting already familiar stories in order to nail down the correct version. If this were lost, Israel in essence would be lost among the inhabitants of Canaan. However, something similar

was destined to happen in an unforeseen way. Once exposed to local gods which so enticed them, they forgot their past almost at once. Only a handful managed to keep Israel's tradition alive and that with divine intervention.

Although vs. 14 speaks of thirty-eight years of wandering in the Sinai desert, the Israelites don't seem to have had a clear idea that only two years were left. Then again, perhaps they sensed their years of wandering was up, this dashed by the Lord's threat in vs. 1 to send them packing back to Egypt. It shook them like nothing else. At this late stage not so much the "entire generation" of Israelites is mentioned but the phrase is applicable to the "men of war" who had died, *tamam* being the verb which suggests coming to a completion or close. *Tamam* occurs next in vs. 16, the reference after that being 31.24: "When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end." Not only are these venerable warriors singled out, their death "from the camp" enhances the sense of loss. Certainly younger men were trained but lacked that unique experience of having set out from Egypt with the threat of the Egyptian army bearing down upon them. They'd have to use their example in preparation for subjection of Canaan, a longer and more formidable task.

Vs. 15 intimates strongly that Israel's failure to trust in the Lord after the spies brought a fearful report of Canaan was instrumental in the loss of her fighting force: "your dead bodies shall fall in the wilderness (etc.)" [Num 14.29]. And so the Lord's hand weighed down upon Israel resulting in this destruction or literally as "in (*b-*) them." The in-ness of this divine hand won't relent until it destroys them, *hamam* along with a second use of *tamam* as perished. In fact the two are similar in sound, the first suggesting putting in motion. "For Haman...the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them" [Est 9.23].

Vs. 16 pretty much repeats what is said in vs. 15 leaving the impression of near total annihilation of the Israelites. All the while the younger generation of warriors are keenly aware of the death of their forebears knowing that the same fate could away them. Vs. 14 uses the phrase "from the camp" whereas here it's "from among the people," the preposition *b-* along with *qerev*, in the midst of (cf. 1.42). One can't but come away with the impression that the Lord is hell-bent on revenge. Even though it terrifies the people but is for their benefit, reading the Book of Joshua reveals how quickly memory of this experience has faded.

Once the Lord finishes with this rather extreme form of annihilation of "the men of war" [vs. 14], he continues to speak with Moses in vs. 17 telling him that the people are to pass from Moab to the frontier of the Ammonites. There are descendants of Lot, one of his daughters having had intercourse with him (cf. Gen 19.37-38). And so this stigma had remained with the people all these years. The Israelites knew about this, of course, and were glad to move on at Lord's request. While no conflict is recorded, the passing certainly was tense. The Israelites are bidden strictly neither to harass nor contend with

the Ammonites, *tsur* and *garah*, these two verbs being used with respect to the same behavior concerning the Moabites in vs. 9. The Lord makes it clear that the land in which they live was given to Lot and his descendants. As far as Israel is concerned, they're more than welcome to keep it. "The younger also bore a sons and called his name Ben-ammi; he is the father of the Ammonites to this day" [Gen 19.38].

Vss. 20-22 are a kind of footnote with regard to the land which Lot's descendants possessed and went by the name Raphaim. These are inhabitants who pre-dated the Ammonites and considered as giants much like the Anakim (cf. vs. 11). The Lot-ites dispossessed them, this being the meaning of *yarash* which is the exact opposite of the common use. It's found in 1.8 and used here with the phrase which runs literally as "before their faces." In other words, the Lot-ites took possession of the land belonging to the Raphaim from right under them. This wouldn't have been possible unless the Lord intervened first, for prior to doing so the Lord destroys them, *shamad* also meaning to lay waste and found next in vs. 23. So it was only natural for the Lord to have the Israelites bypass completely this land whose original inhabitants were giants (intimating something gross as having gone awry from God's creation) and taken over by a descendant of Lot whose ancestry is morally questionable.

Vs. 22 concludes a lengthy sentence begun with vs. 20, mentioning Esau's descendants once again as well as vs. 23 (a new sentence) with regard to the Avvim who also suffered annihilation or *shamad*. Next in line for extermination is Sihon, king of Heshbon whose land the Israelites are to possess (*yarash* again). Here the Lord adds that they will have to contend with him in battle, *garah* (cf. vs. 19), this word suggesting that conquering Heshbon won't be easy but can be done. As Israel progresses, we see more and more the importance of what the verb *yarash* or to inherit or possess means. In fact, the central theme of Deuteronomy can be wrapped up in this one word.

After having enumerated a number of local peoples, the Lord gives the Israelites a considerable boost by saying that he will begin to put dread and fear not just on any other people but every people not just under heaven but the whole (*kal*: all) of it. That means the four cardinal points extending east to west and north to south, the land under the heavens being something like a tent.

Vs. 25 begins with "this day" or the day when Israel begins to fight against Sihon. Actually "this day" will echo down the years and act as a kind of warning for the Israelites, "day" meaning more than a span of twenty-four hours. The nouns for fear and dread or *yir'ah* and *pachad*, the latter connoting trembling. "Serve the Lord with fear" [Ps 2.11] and "There they shall be in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous" [Ps 14.5]. The *yir'ah* and *pachad* will reach everyone by way of hearing reports about Israel, the verb *shamah* and the noun derived from it, *shemah*. "As soon as they heard (report) of me they obeyed me; foreigners came cringing to me" [Ps 18.44]. Such double hearing, if you will, automatically re-enforces a sense of anguish, *chul* being the

verb which also means to twist. For another use of this verb, cf. 32.18: “You were unmindful of the Rock that begot (*chul*) you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.”

Vs. 26 mentions messengers or *mal'ak* for the first time during Israel's passage, that is, to the Sihon, king of Heshbon. This word can also apply to angels, for that is their duty as in Gen 16.7: “The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness.” They are to communicate peaceful intentions, *shalom* being the noun as in 20.10: “When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it.” All Moses wants is for the people to pass as quickly as possible through this king's territory as well as to provide provision which Moses will pay. That is, he uses money, most likely spoil from the Egyptians who gladly handed over valuable items as they left Egypt (cf. Ex 12.6). Moses brings up the example of the Esau-ites who had done the same. Sihon could contact the king of that territory should he have any doubts.

Unfortunately in vs. 30 Sihon refuses Moses' request through the messengers, the number of which isn't given. The Lord has turned the king against him in two ways:

1) Hardened his spirit (*ruach*), *qashah* implying heaviness. It's mentioned in 1.17 but not noted there. The only other reference in Deuteronomy to *ruach* is 34.9: “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom.”

2) Made his heart (*levav*) obstinate or '*amets* which also means to be firm or strong. “But charge Joshua and encourage and strengthen him” [3.28]. As for *levav*, cf. 1.28 but not noted there. The reason for this comes from the Lord himself, that is, in order to hand over Sihon to the Israelites. Note that vs. 30 specifies this handing over as “on this day” or immediately. Compare with “this day” of vs. 25 when the Lord begins to put dread and fear into all peoples.

Vs. 31 has the Lord telling Moses that he will hand over Sihon and his land or more accurately, he has begun to do this. The verb here is *chalal* meaning to pierce, lay open, an apt term in that the Lord will have Israel penetrate and take over this king and what belongs to him. “O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand” [3.24]. *Chalal* is also used in this same verse with regard to the people taking possession of the land. Although King Sihon did battle with the Israelites (note that they fared well despite the death of the 'men of war' noted in vs. 14 or those who originally had left Egypt), the Lord handed him over to the Israelites. In vs. 32 Moses speaks in the first person plural, that is, that we not only defeated Sihon but carried out a program of extermination, leaving no one alive. *Saryd* is the noun here as in 3.3: “And we left him (Og, king of Bashan) until no survivor was left to him.”

Although the Lord gave Sihon and especially his land into Israel's hands, the people moved on, perhaps leaving some as settlers in order to rebuild. Vs. 36 continues to recount Israel's success by using the familiar words (God) “gave all into our hands.” There is a major exception noted in vs. 37 which concludes Chapter Two, namely, the

sons of Ammon. "And when you approach the frontier of the sons of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them" [2.19]. In addition to this people, the Lord gives a similar warning, that is, "wherever the Lord our God forbade us." The verb here is *tsavah*, commonly as to order or command and used frequently in Deuteronomy, the first reference being found in 1.3.

Numbers = Verses

panah: 1, midbar: 1, savav: 2, panah: 2, shamar: 4, me'od: 4, garah: 5, yerushah: 5, chasar: 7, yadah: 7, nachal: 13, tamam: 14, hamam: 15, tamam: 16, qerev: 16, yarash: 21, shamad: 22, shamad: 23, garah: 24, yarash: 24, yir'ah: 25, pachad: 25, shamah: 25, chul: 25, mal'ak: 26, shalom: 26, ruach: 30, qashah: 30, levav: 30, 'amets, chalal: 31.

Chapter Three

1)"Then we turned and went up the way to Bashan; and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edre-i. 2) But the Lord said to me, 'Do not fear him; for I have given him and all his people and his land into your hand; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon the king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.' 3) So the Lord our God gave into our hand Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people; and we smote him until no survivor was left to him. 4) And we took all his cities at that time—there was not a city which we did not take from them—sixty cities, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 5) All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars, besides very many unwallled villages. 6) And we utterly destroyed them as we did to Sihon the king of Heshbon, destroying every city, men, women and children. 7) But all the cattle and the spoil of the cities we took as our booty. 8) So we took the land at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan from the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon 9) (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, while the Amorites call it Senir), 10) all the cities of the tableland and all Gilead and all Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edre-i, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. 11) (For only Og the king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbah of the Ammonites? Nine cubits was its length and four cubits its breadth, according to the common cubit.) 12) "When we took possession of this land at that time, I gave to the Reubenites and the Gadites the territory beginning at Aroer which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon and half the hill country of Gilead with its cities; 13) the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, that is, all the region of Argob, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (The whole of that Bashan is called the land of Rephaim. 14) Jair the Manassite took all the region of Argob, that is, Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Ma-acathites, and called the villages after his own name, Havvoth-jair, as it is to this day.) 15) To Machir I gave Gilead 16) and to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory from Gilead as far as the valley of the Arnon with the middle of the valley as a boundary as far over as the river Jabbok, the boundary of the Ammonites; 17) the Arabah also, with the Jordan as the boundary from Chinnereth as far as the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, under the slopes of Pisgah on the east. 18) "And I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The Lord your God has given you this land to possess; all your men of valor shall pass over armed

before your brethren the people of Israel. 19) But your wives, your little ones, and your cattle (I know that you have many cattle) shall remain in the cities which I have given you 20) until the Lord gives rest to your brethren as to you, and they also occupy the land which the Lord your God gives them beyond the Jordan; then you shall return every man to his possession which I have given you.' 21) And I commanded Joshua at that time, 'Your eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings; so will the Lord do to all the kingdoms into which you are going over. 22) You shall not fear them; for it is the Lord your God who fights for you.' 23) "And I besought the Lord at that time saying, 24) 'O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours? 25) Let me go over, I pray, and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that goodly hill country and Lebanon.' 26) But the Lord was angry with me on your account and would not hearken to me; and the Lord said to me, 'Let it suffice you; speak no more to me of this matter. 27) Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and behold it with your eyes; for you shall not go over this Jordan. 28) But charge Joshua and encourage and strengthen him; for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land which you shall see.' 29) So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

The notes relative to Chapter Three are rather sparse since the text deals with allotment of territory for Israel.

“And we turned” is found last in 2.8 with regard to Moab, *panah* being the verb but not noted there. In the verse at hand such turning is away from the sons of Ammon which brought the Israelites immediately face to face with Og, the king of Bashan. This seems to be a rather sudden confrontation which Israel had to face with Ammon on its back, that is, the possibility of attack from that direction. In other words, the people found themselves squeezed into a vice. Although the precise reason for this conflict isn't given, the Israelites were posing a growing threat to the area. Vs. 1 says that not just soldiers confronted Israel but “all his people” meaning it was an all-out effort.

So when Moses caught sight of Og and the people coming towards him in battle array they knew it was a do-or-die situation. However, vs. 2 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated here as “but.” This “but” leads to the Lord's intervention through Moses telling him not to fear both Og and his entire people who accompanied him. It's yet another instance of the Lord giving an enemy into Israel's hand just as was the case with Sihon, king of the Amorites in 2.30. Such giving into the hand is another way of saying that Israel smote this people, the verb *nakah* being used in vs. 4 and as in 1.4 with no survivor or *saryd* to be left (cf. 2.34). The battle resulted in the largest victory thus far, vs. 4 reporting the total to be sixty cities described in vs. 5 as well-fortified. However, the word “cities” (*hyr*) refers most likely to villages.

Vs. 6 uses the verb *charam* or utterly destroy which has the notion of consecrating to the Lord that which is doomed to destruction. “Then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them” [7.2]. *Charam* is used a

second time in the same verb, here applicable to women and children as well. In other words, it's a war of extermination. Vss. 6-10 flesh out this total warfare which can be summed up by the words "out of the hand" in vs. 8. That is to say, the Israelites took from the hands of Og and Sihon and put their lands into their hands. While it's figurative language, to the people it amounted to an actual picking up of the soil and delivering it to them.

Vs. 11 has a curious remark about Og of Bashan who was a remnant or *yeter* of the Rephaim, this word found next in vs. 13. The Rephaim are mentioned in 2.11 were giants, the bedstead being a piece of curiosity. Just the fact that it was kept as a museum piece of sorts shows the high esteem such people were held.

Vs. 12 has Moses saying that Israel (he uses the first person plural) possesses the land which is followed by dividing it up, another way of saying that the tribes mentioned are to inherit it. This process of dividing and taking possession or *yarash* (cf. 2.22) is a central theme of Deuteronomy as noted elsewhere and is more a re-possession. Although Israel had been engaged in this process, vs. 18 has the men of valor passing before the assembled congregation of Israel, *chayl* meaning strength or force. "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth" [8.17]. This display of might is intended to reassure and remind the people that the task in which they are engaged actually is reclaiming what the Lord had promised to Abraham. Although everyone was familiar with their ancestors having lived there, it was another thing to be back in a place surrounded by essentially hostile usurpers, if you will. This is followed by a quasi-warning where Moses orders the women, children and cattle to remain within the cities. Some if not most of these cities are well fortified as vs. 5 makes clear. In other words, it took some time to subdue the local population which must have been unsettling for all involved.

Vs. 20 says that this quasi-defensive posture will last until the Lord gives the people rest, *nuach* which also means to settle down and in the context here is similar to *yarash* or possessing/inheriting which is found in this same verse. "That your man servant and your maid servant may rest as well as you" [5.14]. There is a difference between the two verbs, however: *yarash* is one thing...the first step...whereas *nuach* is a settling down or making more permanent.

In vs. 21 Moses speaks of Joshua, successor of Moses, who had witnessed what the Lord had done to King Og and King Sihon. He is to do the same to any other kings who stand in the way, for the Lord himself is fighting for Israel (cf. vs. 22).

All this breath-taking expansion under Moses' guidance which could be effected only with direct reliance upon the Lord leads Moses to entreat the Lord in vs. 23, *chanan* being the verb also as to be gracious, to pity. "You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them" [7.2]. Such desire for divine mercy takes place "at that time" or when

Israel is about to enter Canaan under the guidance of Jordan. In other words, Moses wishes the Lord to show this *chanan* to him which, of course, includes the Israelites.

Moses exclaims in vs. 24 that what the Lord has done is only the beginning of greater things to come. It's followed by a personal request or appeal to that divine *chanan* to accompany Joshua into Canaan, the promised land including Lebanon. Then Moses rebukes the people because they forced the Lord's hand against him, that their rebellion didn't allow his entry. In vs. 26 the verb *havar* is used to show this anger which normally pertains to passing over as in vs. 25 and in the verse at hand is used with the preposition *b-*, "in me." The only other uses of *havar* with this meaning are vss. 21 & 59 of Ps 78, the first reference being quoted here: "Therefore when the Lord heard, he was full of wrath." It's almost as though the Lord threw back into Moses' face his desperate desire to *havar*, the idea behind this verb so essential to Israel originating at the Red Sea, through the Sinai wilderness and finally to the Jordan River. Once this extended *havar* comes to and end in Canaan, the people must have felt a certain unease at no longer having to move on even though they were in the place from which they ancestors had lived.

The reason for this divine displeasure?: "Because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin during the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the waters before their eyes" [Num 27.14]. This verse hearkens back further to 20.13: "These are the waters of Meribah where the people of Israel contended with the Lord, and he showed himself holy among them." Note that we can trace this problem back to *davar*, the divine word ('against my *davar*'). Clearly the source of the rebellion is attributed to Israel yet the Lord takes out his anger upon Moses.

In vs. 27 the Lord relents, knowing that he responded too harshly, but given the irrevocable nature of *davar*, he couldn't retract it. Chances are that Moses kept all this from Israel, sharing it only with Joshua who after Moses' death made it know to the people. The concession consists of Moses viewing from the top of Pisgah the land beyond the Jordan which is put in terms of viewing in the four cardinal directions. "And Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land." While Moses was ascending this mountain, he couldn't help but compare it with his earlier ascent of Horeb where he conversed with the Lord and received the Torah. After glancing for the briefest time north, south, east and west Moses realized his life's work had been accomplished.

From this point on the story begins a major switch from the old guard represented by Moses to Joshua. It's to Moses' lasting credit that his experience on Pisgah, however brief it had been, informed him not to linger or attempt to retain power and influence. And so in vs. 28 the Lord has Moses speak with Joshua about this transition, if you will. There are three verbs: *yatsa'*, *chazaq* and *'amets* (charge, encourage and strengthen). The first is found frequently throughout Deuteronomy thus far but not mentioned; the second is found last in 2.28; the third mentioned in 2.30. This threefold task of giving support was

easy for Moses. Joshua had been with him a long time, more trustworthy than his brother Aaron who had consented to the people's apostasy by fashioning a golden calf. Vs. 28 reads literally that Joshua is to "cross before the people." In a way it counters the *havar* of vs. 26 where the Lord had been angry with Moses. This intimates that Joshua will be the very first to cross the Jordan River and enter Canaan. Once there already he will have claimed the land for Israel which the people can see from their side of the Jordan. In other words, essentially the possession or re-possession had taken place.

Chapter Three concludes with a brief notation, if you will, after the dramatic effects that had unfolded. "We" or again, the first person plural, remained in a valley for an indefinite period of time. Moses used this as an opportunity to introduce Joshua to the people, that is, as his successor. Some wondered if any of Moses' advisors would continue in their current role. Nobody was surprised, really. They knew Aaron wouldn't get the job, given the just mentioned apostasy which lingered like a bad taste among the people. Moses hadn't yet told the people of his impending death though everyone sensed it was fast approaching. That comes in vs. 22 of the next chapter.

Numbers = Verses

panah: 1, nakah: 2, saryd: 2, hyr: 4, charam: 6, yarash: 12, chayl: 18, nuach: 20, yarash: 20, chanan: 23, havar: 26, yatsa': 28, chazaq: 28, 'amets: 28.

Chapter Four

1) "And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you and do them; that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you. 2) You shall not add to the word which I command you nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. 3) Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal-peor; for the Lord your God destroyed from among you all the men who followed the Baal of Peor; 4) but you who held fast to the Lord your God are all alive this day. 5) Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me that you should do them in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. 6) Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' 7) For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call upon him? 8) And what great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day? 9) "Only take heed and keep your soul diligently lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children – 10) how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, the Lord said to me, 'Gather the people to me that I may let them hear my words so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth and that they may teach their children so.' 11) And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while the

mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud and gloom. 12) Then the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. 13) And he declared to you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, that is, the ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. 14) And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess. 15) "Therefore take good heed to yourselves. Since you saw no form on the day that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16) beware lest you act corruptly by making a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17) the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18) the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. 19) And beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them, things which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. 20) But the Lord has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own possession as at this day. 21) Furthermore the Lord was angry with me on your account, and he swore that I should not cross the Jordan, and that I should not enter the good land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance. 22) For I must die in this land, I must not go over the Jordan; but you shall go over and take possession of that good land. 23) Take heed to yourselves lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God which he made with you and make a graven image in the form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you. 24) For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God. 25) "When you beget children and children's children and have grown old in the land, if you act corruptly by making a graven image in the form of anything and by doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke him to anger, 26) I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess; you will not live long upon it but will be utterly destroyed. 27) And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you. 28) And there you will serve gods of wood and stone, the work of men's hands, that neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. 29) But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30) When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God and obey his voice, 31) for the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them. 32) "For ask now of the days that are past which were before you since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of. 33) Did any people ever hear the voice of a god speaking out of the midst of the fire as you have heard and still live? 34) Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation by trials, by signs, by wonders and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and by great terrors according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35) To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him. 36) Out of heaven he let you hear his voice that he might discipline you; and on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire. 37) And because he loved your fathers and chose their descendants after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence by his great power, 38) driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring

you in, to give you their land for an inheritance as at this day; 39) know therefore this day and lay it to your heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. 40) Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments which I command you this day that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your God gives you for ever." 41) Then Moses set apart three cities in the east beyond the Jordan, 42) that the manslayer might flee there who kills his neighbor unintentionally without being at enmity with him in time past, and that by fleeing to one of these cities he might save his life: 43) Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland for the Reubenites and Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites. 44) This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel; 45) these are the testimonies, the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt 46) beyond the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon the king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon whom Moses and the children of Israel defeated when they came out of Egypt. 47) And they took possession of his land and the land of Og the king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who lived to the east beyond the Jordan; 48) from Aroer which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon as far as Mount Sirion (that is, Hermon), 49) together with all the Arabah on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah under the slopes of Pisgah.

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now” to show the close connection between Israel under the newly designated Joshua along with Moses reminding the people of their mission. The common verb *shamah* or to listen translates *give heed* and has two objects, statutes and ordinances or *choq* and *mishpat*, the latter also meaning judgment. Both occur next in vs. 5: “Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me.” In the case at hand, Moses is to teach the people both, *lamad* being the verb, also found next in vs. 5. The two verses also add the injunction not just to hear but to do or to put them into practice. If both are carried out, Israel will live suggesting that hitherto they weren’t alive...physically yes but spiritually, no. Being so alive will enable the people to enter Canaan and possess it, the now familiar *yarash* (cf. 3.30) implying that they will inherit it.

Moses is pretty strict about the statutes and ordinances insofar as no one is to add nor subtract a word or *davar* (cf. 3.26) which he commands. The words for add and take from are *yasaph* and *garah*, the latter connotes a scraping off. Both verbs are found in 12.32 (13.1 in the Hebrew text): “Everything that I command you you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it or take from it.” Any problem caused by an increase or subtraction is designed to maintain a balance represented by *shamar*, or to keep the Lord’s commands. Note that Moses enjoins these commandments which intimates the close proximity of *davar* or speaking as expression. History would soon prove that the Israelites failed miserably in this *shamar*. They swung between *yasaph* and *garah*, increase and subtracting, the latter as scraping away noted above, both once in contact with Canaanite divinities.

In vs. 3 Moses brings up the embarrassing incident at Baal-peor recounted in Num 25.1-9,

that is to say, when the people “began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab” [vs. 1]. In retribution the Lord bade Moses to hang the chiefs of the people. In the verse at hand, the Lord destroyed (*shamad*, cf. 22) those who had followed the Baal of Peor, “from among you” or *qerev* (cf. 2.16) suggests that the harlotry leading to apostasy originated in the very center of the people, not from the outside. Nevertheless, there were some (the number isn’t given) who remained faithful to the divine statutes and ordinances of vs. 1. Vs. 4 say that they held fast to the Lord, *daveq* being an adjective meaning to cling. It has two other biblical references, 2Chron 3.12 and Prov 18.24, the former being cited here: “and of this cherub, one wing of five cubits touched the wall of the house and the other wing also of five cubits was joined to the wing of the first cherub.” In sum, those who were characterized by *daveq* survived the divine retribution at Baal-Peor.

Vs. 5 is a kind of rehash of vs. 1, at first making you wonder why Moses repeats the same thing. It’s understandable, however, once you realize how prone the Israelites are to commit apostasy. After all, the Canaanite divinities were very attractive after the stark, demanding experience of the one God in the Sinai wilderness. Now the Israelites had left that environment of forty years for quite a different land. This verse also contains *qerev* as in vs. 3, that the people are to do both the statutes and ordinances in the very heart or center of the land which they are about to enter as well as possess, *yarash*. Chances are only the few mentioned in vs. 4 with regard to the Baal-Peor incident will end up remaining faithful. The people could sense Moses’ doubt as to their future which must have caused some dismay. However, their track record in the Sinai desert should have sufficed to warn them about any future apostasy standing in the way of taking over Canaan.

In vs. 6 Moses again bids the Israelites to do and keep the statutes and ordinances, *shamar* being used as in vs. 2. Here he specifies both as being their wisdom and understanding, *chakmah* and *bynah*. The first has one other reference in Deuteronomy, 34.9: “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom.” As for the latter, this is the only occasion in the book. The lack of both is revealing, even ominous, in light of the often mentioned potential for apostasy. *Chakmah* and *bynah* are to be in the sight of the peoples, that is, the inhabitants of Canaan. If they manage to pull that off, any conflict will be kept at a minimum. Again, history proves otherwise.

Vs. 7 is the first of two rhetorical questions Moses exclaims to the people. He (and they) boast of the Lord’s nearness to them, *qerev* as noted last in vs. 5, that is, the Lord being in their center. Such *qerev*-ness becomes manifest, if you will, when the people call upon the Lord, *qara’* as in 3.14 but not mentioned there. The second rhetorical question in vs. 8 is similar, Moses praising the divine statues and ordinances which he defines as righteous, *tsadyq*. “For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous” [16.19]. Both observances comprise the law or *torah* he first mentions in 1.5. Here as there *torah* is familiar to everyone yet needs to be fleshed out for better comprehension. Such is the sense of Moses setting it to the Israelites, *natan* being the

common verb meaning to give.

In vs. 9 Moses gets down to business after having expressed his two rhetorical questions, this verse beginning with *raq* or only. It serves to put the people at ease and as well as to warn them at the same time being bound up with the two verbs to take heed and keep diligently, *shamar* (cf. vs. 6) as for both. The first *shamar* has the preposition *l-* or “to you” and the second the noun *nephesh* or soul which can be taken as oneself. “Take good heed to yourselves” [vs. 15]. *Me’od* (cf. 2.4) is the adverb for diligently, connoting excessiveness. A lot was going through Moses’ mind while speaking thus, having an intimation that many if not most of the people would fail.

In an urgent appeal which almost borders upon desperation Moses warns against forgetting or *shakach*, the same as in vs. 23: “Take heed to yourselves lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God.” The object of this verb in the verse at hand is *davar* or things, intimating strongly what the Lord has said (*davar*) through Moses as noted frequently thus far. Vs. 9 situates *davar* with the faculty of sight which, of course, were interventions by the Lord starting before Israel left Egypt, the Red Sea crossing and subsequent forty years in Sinai. Moses also warns against *davar* departing from the heart (*lev*), the verb *sur* more as a turning aside and found in 2.27 but not noted there. One way to maintain the just mentioned taking heed, keeping diligently and not departing is by making known the same things to the next generations (‘your children’ and ‘your children’s children’). Hopefully fidelity to this oral tradition will guide those Israelites once they’ve established themselves in Canaan.

Vs. 10 forms part of a continued sentence from the previous verse where Moses speaks of the collective “you” who had been present before the Lord at Mount Horeb. Note that the specific verb *zakar* as remember isn’t used until 5.15. From the beginning of Deuteronomy to now or vs. 10 emphasis is placed upon verbs relative to *zakar* but not quite that. In other words, verbs which are more suggestive of an active presence compared with something accomplished in the past. Moses has in mind chapters nineteen and twenty of Exodus, unforgettable to anyone who had been alive then, their number ever dwindling and passing into the collective memory of their children.

Vs. 10 further recounts how Moses gathered the people, *qahal* being the verb which usually pertains to a solemn religious assembly. “Assemble the people...that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God” [31.12]. The purpose of this *qahal* is for the Israelites to hear God’s *davar* hopefully resulting in learning (*lamad*, cf. vs. 1) to fear him throughout their lives as well as passing on these *davar* to future generations by *lamad*.

In vss. 11-14 Moses reminds the people about their experience at Mount Horeb, let’s say about half of them being alive and the other half born after that. He starts off with them coming near and standing (*hamad*) at the mountain’s base, *qarav* (cf. 2.19), the preposition *qerev* noted elsewhere as derived from it with the connotation of being in the

center of something. As for *hamad*, it's found in vs. 10 but not noted there, the same context. Also the preposition *tachat* as "at the foot" can mean under, that the people were under the mountain which pressed down upon them. Reference, of course, to this is found in Chapter Nineteen of Exodus. Vs. 11 describes the mountain not just burning with fire which reached to the heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 9) of heaven. In other words, the Lord who descended from heaven to the top of Horeb sent his fire to the mountain's base with the people under it, if you will. Once the fire reached that bottom-most place, it shot up at once not just to heaven from where the Lord came but to its very heart.

Vs. 11 continues with Horeb being wrapped in the following three: cloaks of darkness, cloud and gloom, there being no verb: *choshek*, *hanan* and *haraphel*. The first is a more general term also applicable to misery and found next in 5.23: "And when you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness." The second can be a cloud of any type but here suggests darkness. It is found in 1.33 but not noted there. The last connotes thickness and impenetrability: "These words the Lord spoke...out of the midst of the fire, the cloud and the thick darkness" [5.22].

Once the threefold cover noted in vs. 11 has come down upon Mount Horeb, vs. 12 has the Lord speaking (*davar*) from the fire, *tok* being the middle of anything (compare with *qerev* connoting midst). The shifting flames of the fire must have changed the tone of the Lord's voice (*qol*, cf. 1.34) as the Israelites heard it but still they saw no form or *temunah* which also means appearance found next in vs. 15. As for *temunah*, what the people beheld was only the shimmering flame giving *qol* to *davar* or "only a voice."

Instead of *davar*, vs. 13 has *nagad* for declared which suggests a type of showing or a transition from hearing to showing. "Then you shall do according to what they declare to you" [17.10]. What's declared is God's covenant or *beryth*, this being the first mention in Deuteronomy, the next being in vs. 23: "Take heed to yourselves lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God." Such a *beryth* the Lord commanded to be performed, *hasah* the common verb to do which here means put into practice. Vs. 13 speaks of the covenant in terms of the ten commandments or the ten *davar*, words. While *davar* thus far has been associated with the divine and communicated through an agent such as Moses, here they are concretized as written on stone tablets. Those ten "words" can be found in Ex 20.12-17 which are more an easy to remember summary of the Torah. The Lord himself had written them which given the nature of stone suggests carving, for him it was more like writing on wax. There also comes to mind the following image: "the finger of a man (which) wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace" [Dan 5.5].

Vs. 14 has Moses addressing the people, that is, the Lord bidding him to teach (*lamad*, cf. vs. 10) both his statutes and ordinances, a process which can begin immediately. Once so interiorized, the people will do (*hasah*, cf. vs. 13) them in the land they are about to possess or re-possess, *yarash* once again. Thus a temporal gap exists between this teaching and doing; the former not in Canaan and the latter within Canaan.

Vs. 15 is comprised of two sentences, the second continuing through vs. 18. The first further encourages the Israelites to take not just heed to themselves or *nephesh*, soul as in vs. 9, the verb being *shamar* as it is there. The adverb *me'od* as good means something done excessively again as in vs. 9. Although the Israelites heard these words a second time, it's a good bet they went over their heads and wondered why the Lord was so insistent with regard to this *shamar*. As noted several times earlier, once Israel crossed into Canaan, quickly the people adopted local divinities and customs, throwing the divinely appointed *shamar* completely out the window.

The second sentence (that is, extended) of vs. 15 brings up the *temunah* or form mentioned in vs. 12 where the people saw fire and heard God's words. It is an important reminder which again the Israelites didn't grasp because once in Canaan they'll see an infinite variety of forms, that is, gods, goddesses and everything associated with such divinities. A read of the Book of Joshua gives a rather dismal picture of this *shamar* or lack of it.

Vs. 16 gets right TO the heart of the matter, the Lord sternly telling the Israelites to beware, this verb with regard to acting in a corrupt manner and not in the Hebrew text. *Shachat* also means to behave wickedly or to destroy. "He will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them" [vs. 31]. In the verse at hand *shachat* is aimed at fashioning images, *temunah*, if you will which has two nouns:

1) *Pesel* which applies to anything graven or molten. It appears next in vs. 23 and has in mind Ex 20.4: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image (etc.)." Immediately there comes to mind the golden calf of Ex 32.4 which Aaron had fashioned.

2) *Semel* or image or figure as in 2Chron 33.7: "And the image of the idol which he (Manasseh) had made he set in the house of God." In the verse at hand *semel* is with regard to anything male or female.

Vs. 17 deals with the *temunah* of beasts on the earth as well as birds of the air; vs. 18 with the *temunah* of things which creep on the ground and fish. Interestingly, fish are presented in the water under (*tachat*; cf. vs. 11 'at the foot of') the earth. Also vs. 19 lacks "beware" as in vs. 16; the same applies to any heavenly bodies summed up by the phrase "hosts of heaven" to which the Israelites might be drawn, *nadach* connoting expulsion. "And his hand swings the axe to cut down a tree" [19.5]. In the verse at hand, *nadach* leads to *shatach* which leads to *havad*, that is, to worship and serving all the created things both animate and inanimate the Lord had warned against. The Lord is quick to add that he has allotted them to all peoples, *chalaq* meaning to divide. "Gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them" [29.26]. Use of *chalaq* in vs. 19 suggests that the Lord himself is responsible for allowing all peoples to worship such created beings instead of the Lord himself. Note the inclusiveness indicated by "all (*kal*) peoples" and "under the whole (*kal*) heaven."

As indicated earlier, the Israelites must have felt awed by the strict prohibitions enjoined upon them. While they succumbed to idolatry such the golden calf, interestingly this doesn't seem to have happened among the local divinities in Egypt over a four hundred year period, the pharaoh as a living god and all. Memory of their patriarchs certainly remained strong. Besides, Joseph had been in charge of Egypt, and he made certain that people of his generation were taught well not just then but for ensuring generations in Egypt and beyond. As for Egypt, vs. 20 first has the Lord taking Israel from there and bringing her forth, the latter most likely intimating the crossing of the Red Sea.

As for this taking forth, it's described as an iron furnace, *kor* or one in which metals are smelted, higher in temperature than other types of furnaces or ovens which is why it's made of iron. "I have tried you in the furnace of affliction." Although the Book of Daniel uses a word other than *kor* for furnace, one can't help but be reminded of the three men cast in there and who nevertheless had survived. In the verse at hand Moses it reads "out of Egypt" immediately after "out of the iron furnace" with respect to being the Lord's own possession or *nachalah*, a noun also meaning occupation of anything and found in the next verse.

Vss. 21-31 are a series of warnings by Moses to the people as introduced by the conjunctive *v-* translated here as "furthermore." It begins with him speaking of the Lord being angry with him not personally but at the text literally reads, "on your words" (*davar*). By making an example of Moses, the Lord wishes the people to pass beyond his leadership. Not that it was defective but wouldn't be suited for a new phase in their lives, crossing into Canaan which is their original inheritance or *nachalah* as in the previous verse. Should Moses balk—and it was within his power, even right to do so—Israel would meet with disaster. He had the rarest of gifts pertaining to a leader, knowing when to step down. Yet even that is questionable. Would Moses have stepped down if the Lord hadn't intervened? And what would have happened to Israel once in Canaan under his guidance?

The Lord's determination not to have it otherwise comes across strongly by having sworn a promise (*shavah*, cf. 1.8) with regard to the possession of Canaan as a good land, *nachalah*. Contrast "good land" with "this land" (vs. 22) in which Moses said he will die.

Vs. 23 has the verb *shamar* for take heed noted last in vs. 15 with regard to the Lord lacking no form compared with the dizzying array of forms pertaining to the Canaanite deities. It is directed to the behavior of the Israelites in light of this very real threat to their common identity. And that threat Moses puts in terms of forgetting (*shakach*, cf. vs. 9) the covenant or *beryth* (cf. vs. 13) which the Lord made literally as "to (*l-*) you," the directness of this *l-* paralleling the *l-* of *shamar* "to you." Vs. 23 further cautions that the necessity of *shamar* be directed toward not making any graven image, *pesel* and *temunah* as in vs. 16.

Vs. 24 puts *shamar* and what it involves into perspective, that the Lord is jealous, *qana'* also meaning zealous. "For I the Lord your God am a jealous God" [5.9]. In the verse at hand such jealousy is compared to a burning fire, *'akal* meaning to eat in the sense as to devour. Such language reminded the Israelites who were alive at the time of Mount Horeb: "Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring (*'akal*) fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people" [Ex 24.17].

In vs. 25 Moses is fully aware of the apostasy to which Israel will most likely succumb by speaking both of the people's children and their children. In other words, he is projecting three generations into the future which would make the present generation great-great grandparents, well beyond the life span of those whom he's addressing. The danger always lurking in the background is acting corruptly or *shachath* as found in 9.12: "For your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly." This behavior is in the context of graven images spoken of earlier, *pesel* and *temunah* (cf. vs. 23) as well as by doing evil or *rah* found in 1.39 but not noted there. Such *rah* isn't done in secret but in the Lord's sight or literally his eyes. It will result in angering him, *kahas* also meaning to be displeased. "Because of all the sin...to provoke him to anger" [9.18], this anger manifesting itself in the devouring fire of vs. 24.

As if the Lord himself weren't sufficient to get after the Israelites for future misbehavior, in vs. 26 Moses invokes the heaven and earth, *hud* which essentially means to turn back. "I solemnly warn you this day that you shall surely perish" [8.19]. *Hud* is used with the preposition *b-*, reading literally as "in you," a way of intensifying such witnessing by earth below and heaven above. It has a dire sense of foreboding, that is, that the Israelites will perish (*'avad* connotes losing as well as wandering) not just from the land but from upon it (*mahal: min-* as from and *hal-* as upon) it. The specter of such a fate is made worse by this land being the one the people are to possess, *yarash* once again. So here we have heaven and earth as witnesses; note that earth or *'erets* is used twice): as one half of the witness and the other as Canaan, in this instance the two being pretty much the same.

So while the Israelites are awaiting judgement from the testimony of heaven and earth, from above and from below, they realize their living in Canaan is doomed which is communicated by the double use of the verb *shamad* (cf. vs. 22). That can be rendered literally as something like "destroyed destroyed."

Vs. 27 plays upon the greatest fear of Israel, namely, to be scattered among the peoples. The preposition *b-* is used, "in the peoples," with the verb *puts* which connotes a pouring out or being broken into pieces. "And the Lord will scatter you among all the peoples, from one end of the earth to the other" [28.64]. Such dispersal will weaken Israel beyond recovery, the only exception being when they call out to the Lord, that is, being driven in *nahag* with the preposition *b-* (in) the nations. *Goy* is used here instead of *ham*, this term suggestive more of foreign-ness. As for *nahag*, it pertains more to a leading. "You shall

become...a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away" [28.37].

In vs. 28 "there" comes after the verb *havad* (cf. vs. 19) meaning to serve but is more along the lines of becoming a slave with respect to human-made gods which are deprived of senses. Compare seeing, hearing, eating and smelling with the lack of form in vs. 15. Such a lack naturally makes the Israelites susceptible for idols, actually craving for any type of physical contact with the divine. Although the Lord would never admit it, he concurs which is why he goes through the motion of railing against the Israelites but offers them a way back to him. In fact, he doesn't seem to mind doing this many times as the Book of Joshua bears witness.

Vs. 29 starts off from "from there" in contrast to the "there" of the previous verse. That is to say, "from there" or from the experience of having fashioned idols the Israelites will seek or *baqash* the Lord, the primary sense of this verb being related to touch or feeling. "Because he has sought to draw you away from the Lord your God" [13.10]. In the verse at hand such *baqash* automatically results in finding (*matsa'*, cf. vs. 30).

Right after this comes another seeking, this time *darash* which connotes a rubbing or treading. "But you shall seek the place which the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name" [12.5]. For such *darash* (which can be said to include *baqash*) to be effective, it's to be done with one's whole heart and soul, *lev* and *nepesh* (cf. vs. 11 and vs. 15 respectively) or better "in (*b-*) one's whole heart and in one's whole soul."

Vss. 30-31 form an extended sentence beginning with the tribulation to come upon Israel, that is, in Canaan or in latter days, days which are '*acharyth*. "That he might humble you and test you to do you good in the end" [8.16]. The noun for tribulation is *tsar* or distress as in 32.27: "lest their adversaries should judge amiss." Along with *tsar* are "all these things," *davar* being the noun. As for the '*acharyth*, they can apply to when Israel had prostituted herself to the Canaanite deities, the Lord being the only one able to rectify this situation. The extremity suggested by '*acharyth* causes Israel to return to the Lord, *shuv* (cf. 3.20). In other words, first comes *shuv* followed by listening to his voice, *shamah* and *qol* (cf. vss. 5 and 12 respectively).

The second half of the extended sentence continues in vs. 31 reassuring Israel during its initial *shuv* or return that the Lord is merciful or *rachum*, from a verbal root meaning to extend tender affection. "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" [Ex 34.6]. The Lord holds out a two-fold promise: not to fail and not to destroy or not to forget: *raphah* and *shachat* (cf. vs. 15). The former connotes a casting or letting down as well as being slack. "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them" [31.6]. Also in the same breath the Lord won't forget (*shakach*, cf. vs. 23) his covenant or *beryth* (cf. vs. 23). Such not forgetting has little to do with the present generation of Israelites but with their fathers,

a way of shaming those listening to Moses.

Vs. 32 contains a bold request from Israel with regard to asking of a time long past, *ri'shon* being an adjective which fundamentally pertains to what is first or the head. "I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights" [9.18]. When presenting this, the Lord realized that most Israelites kept alive their history and thus sense of identity not only before they came to Egypt but after four hundred years living there. Something went wrong with the generation that left Egypt and wandered forty years in the Sinai and was bound to infect those about to enter Canaan. The text adds "before you" (*lepaneykah*), another way of stating that the Lord is hearkening to the beginning of time or when God created man. The Israelites are to stand out in the open shouting from one end of heaven to the other or from left to right, east to west as well as north to south. Implied here is that they are to shout with all their might with regard to a thing or *davar*...word...which has happened to them. If all the Israelites were to participate in this shout as one person, without a doubt the heavens would shake as the Lord would like to happen.

Vs. 33 contains the first of two questions which have rhetorical overtones to be broadcast aloud, namely, has any nation heard their god speaking (*davar*) from fire and still remain alive? In other words, the Israelites are to inquire about a thing (*davar*) which consists in God speaking (*davar*). Reference is to the fairly recent experience at Mount Horeb (cf. Ex 20.19) where the people would rather have Moses speak (*davar*) than the Lord speak (*davar*).

The second rhetorical question in vs. 34 has to do with the Lord (both questions use 'god,' lower case in deference) taking a nation for himself, more accurately, as attempting to take a nation, *nasah* also meaning to tempt or prove. This has some irony in that given Israel's stubbornness and constant need for rebuke, the Lord didn't shy away from the challenge. "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" [6.16]. In the verse at hand the challenge is heightened in several ways. It has the Lord going and taking with regard to Israel from the midst of another which isn't mentioned but obviously is Egypt. *Qerev* here as "from the midst" implies a wrenching as if by force.

Vs. 34 gives an unprecedented seven means by which the Lord pulls this off, the preposition *b-* or "in" being prefaced to each of the following:

1) Trials or *masah* which also means temptation. "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" [6.16]. *Nasah* above is derived from this verbal root.

2) Signs or *'oth* which also means a portent. "And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand" [6.8].

3) Wonders or *mopheth* which also means a sign or proof. "And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt" [6.22].

4) War or *milchamah* last found in 3.1 but not noted there.

- 5) Mighty hand, the adjective *chazaq* (cf. 3.28).
- 6) Outstretched arm, the participle being *natah*. “The great trials which your eyes saw...and outstretched arm”[7.19].
- 7) Great terrors, the noun being *mora’* which also means fear. “The Lord your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that you shall tread” [11.25].

This list of seven divine manifestations had been done in Egypt, that is, the ten plagues recounted in Exodus: water turned to blood, frogs, biting insects, wild animals, livestock disease, boils, fiery hail, locusts, darkness and slaying of the first born. The phrase “before your eyes” is meant not only to point out the obviousness of each event but that they may register upon the collective memory of Israel.

Vs. 35 has “it was shown,” the common very *ra’ah* being used as a way of speaking about a revelation to the Israelites concerning their privilege of knowing the Lord. The verb *yadah* (cf. 2.7) implies intimate knowledge which here pertain to the fact that the Lord is God and no other god exists beside him. While the Israelites understood this, they forgot it as soon as they heard it, preferring *yadah* of Canaanite divinities. Vs. 36 makes no hesitation about the clarity of this *yadah* when the Lord lets the people hear his voice, *shamah* and *qol* being found together in vs. 30.

In vs. 36 *shamah* is used in a way so as to have the people disposed to hear instead doing so directly, if you will. *Shamah/qol* is intended for their discipline or *yasar*, a verb meaning to correct or to admonish. “Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you” [8.5]. Harkening back to the revelation at Horeb when the Israelites asked Moses to speak to them instead of the Lord, they knew instinctively it would involve this *yasar* and wanted no part of it even if forced to obey. A similar attitude is conveyed in the second half of vs. 35 when the Lord mentions his manifestation through fire from which came his words or *davar* (i.e., not his *qol*, voice).

Vss. 37-39 form one extended sentence where the Lord informs Israel why he’s so loyal to them. One can just picture them listening to all this like spoiled children forced to listen to a parent after which they promptly forget every word. Obviously the Lord is aware of it which is why he begins vs. 37 with reference to Israel’s fathers and descendants he brought the Israelites from Egypt. The text reads literally “in his face” along with great power or *koach* which also means substance in the sense of wealth. “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth’” [8.17].

Vs. 38 speaks of the Lord driving out nations greater and mightier than Israel, *yarash* being the verb last found in vs. 26, here with a double-edge meaning, for to drive out means to possess. *Hatsum* (the noun *hetsem* or bone is derived from it) is the adjective for mightier found next in 7.1: “Seven nations greater and mightier than yourselves.” The

reason: for Israel to inherit the land, the noun *nachalah* (cf. vs. 21) suggests a possession compared with the sense of *yarash* as inheritance. Vs. 38 concludes with the phrase “as at this day” as found in the next two verses and which equivalent to a *kairos* event.

Vs. 39 takes up the “this day” which the Lord bids Israel to know or to have intimate knowledge of, *yadah* (cf. vs. 35). *Yadah* is the first step upon which follows laying it (*shuv*, cf. vs. 30) upon their hearts or *levav* (cf. 2.30) with the preposition *‘el-* or literally “to your heart.” The result of this *yadah/shuv* is that the Lord is God in (*b-*) heaven and on (*hal-*) the earth thus spanning the space in between both extremes. The totality expressed here leaves no room for another god (‘there is no other’).

The next expression of “this day” is in vs. 40 when the Lord bids Israel to keep or *shamar* (cf. vs. 21) the commandments which he commands, the two words being *choq* (cf. vs. 1) and *mitsvah* (cf. vs. 2 but not noted there). The former is with regard to an appointed time or decree and the latter often associated with a prohibition. Both are directed not just to make the people prosper but their children which implies further generations beyond the current one. Also the *shamar* at hand is intended to have the current generation prolong their days, *‘arak* (cf. vs. 26 but not noted there) on (*hal-*) the land the Lord is giving them forever, literally “all the days.” In light of all this, it is interesting to go through the Book of Joshua and look up all the instances of *shamar*, when it was in effect and when it was not, unfortunately more often the case with the latter.

Vss. 41-43 are an appendix of sorts where Moses establishes cities of refuge east of the Jordan River, the verb being *badal* also as to separate and to shut out. “You shall set apart three cities for you in the land which the Lord your god gives you to possess” [19.2]. Another reference to these cities is found in Num 35.11. The intent set forth in the second of these verses pertains to someone who had killed a person, *ratsach* meaning to dash into pieces. “You shall not kill” [5.17]. In the verse at hand, *ratsach* applies to someone who had done this deed unintentionally or literally without knowledge, *dahath*. “If anyone kills his neighbor unintentionally without having been at enmity with him in time past” [19.4]. As for the three cities listed in vs. 43, each for their respective inhabitants as listed, they had to be forewarned about this to prevent any pursuer from causing trouble within their walls. As for the person who had committed the act, nothing is said.

Vss. 44-49 or to the end of Chapter Four sum up the law or *torah* (cf. vs. 8) set before the Israelites, *sum* being the verb. Although the *torah* is delivered orally (*davar* as in vs. 45), the chief means of transmitting information, nevertheless it has a permanence just as good as if it were set in writing, hence the meaning of *sum*. And this *torah* is broken down into the familiar testimonies, statutes and ordinances of vs. 45: *hedah*, *choq* (cf. vs. 40), *mishpat* (cf. vs. 1). *Hedah* is found next in 6.17 (along with the other two): “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his testimonies and his statutes which he has commanded you.”

The *davar* of vs. 45 concerning the testimonies, statutes and ordinances Moses take place when Israel existed Egypt, that is, at Mount Horeb although that is not mentioned specifically.

Numbers = Verses

shamah: 1, choq: 1, mishpat: 1, lamad: 1, yasaph: 2, garah: 2, shamar: 2, shamad: 3, qerev: 3, daveq: 4, yarash: 5, shamah: 6, chakmah: 6, bynah: 6, qerev: 7, qara': 8, tsadyq: 8, torah: 8, natan: 8, shamar: raq: 9, 9, nephesh: 9, me'od: 9, shakach: 9, zakar: 10, lamad: 10, hamad: 11, qarav: 11, tachat: 11, lev: 11, choshek: 1, hanan: 11, haraphel: 11, temunah: 12, qol: 12, nagad: 13, beryth: 13, lamad: 14, hasah: 14, yarash: 14, nephesh: 15, shamar: 15, me'od: 15, temunah: 15, shachat: 16, temunah: 16, pesel: 16, semel: 16, temunah: 17, nadach: 19, havad: 19, chalaq: 19, kor: 20, nachalah: 21, shamar: 23, shakach: beyrth: 23, pesel: 23, temunah: 23, qana': 24, 'akal: 24, shachath: 25, rah: 25, kahash: 25, hud: 26, 'avad: 26, yarash: 26, shamad: 26, puts: 27, nahag: 27, havad: 28, baqash: 29, matsa': 29, darash: 29, lev: 29, nephesh: 29, 'acharyth: 30, tsar: 30, shuv: 30, shamah: 30, qol: 30, rachum: 31, raphah: 31, shachat: 31, shakach: 31, beyrth: 31, ri'shon: 32, nasah: 34, qerev: 34, masah: 34, 'oth: 34, mopheth: 34, milchamah: 34, chazaq: 34, natah: 34, mora': 34, ra'ah: 35, yadah: 35, shamah: 35, qol: 35, koach: 37, yarash: 38, hatsum: 38, nachalah: 38, yadah: 39, shuv: 39, levav: 39, shamar: 40, choq: 40, mitsvah: 40, 'arak: 40, badal: 41, ratsach: 42, dahath: 42, torah: 44, sum: 44, hedah: 45, choq: 45, mishpat: 45.