

## A Backward Look at Israel's History, Obedience Insisted On

### *Deuteronomy 1 - 11*

**Four stages** to the journey of the children of Israel, encompassing 42 encampments:

1. From Egypt to Sinai (2 years) - Exodus
2. from Sinai to Kadesh (11 days) - Deut. 1
3. From Kadesh to Kadesh (38 years) - Deut. 2:1
4. from Kadesh to Canaan (1 year) - Deut. 2:2 - ch. 3

**Why** does the Lord Have Moses review Israel's history of failures? the real purpose of this first section of the book is to show Israel that the flesh profits nothing, and that they should distrust themselves, and "put no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3)."

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## Israel's Journey to Kadesh-Barnea: Their Unbelief

### *Deuteronomy 1*

**Chapter 1** traces Israel's journey from Horeb where they received the law to Kadesh-barnea where Israel failed in unbelief. after that pivotal point in Kadesh-barnea, God turns them back into the wilderness to wander for 38 years.

**The great lesson** of Ch. 1-4 is that the flesh hindered Israel from possessing their inheritance.

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## Setting (1:1-5)

### CHAPTER 1

**1** These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side the Jordan, in the wilderness, in the plain, opposite to Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. **v.1** the book of Deuteronomy was delivered at the end of the wilderness pathway, just before they crossed over Jordan into Canaan.

**2** There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. **v.2** There are not eleven days' journey from Egypt to Canaan as is often said. The eleven days is from Horeb (southern tip of Sinai peninsula) to Kadesh (southern border of Canaan).

**3** And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that Jehovah had given him in command to them; **4** after he had smitten Sihon the king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth *and* at Edrei. **v.4** this address is made after two enemies are conquered which both speak of the flesh. If we read Num. 21:21-32 we will find that Sihon king of the Amorites was Not willing to let the people pass through without taking of the world's joy and refreshment. If we read Num. 21:33-35 we will find that Og the King of Bashan speaks of the material snares and business world that would trap us in the land. "Og" means round, and Bashan was the best land for cattle.

5 On this side the Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to unfold this law, saying,

## The Land Given to Israel (1:6-8)

6 Jehovah our God spoke unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have stayed long enough in this mountain. v.6 Horeb is the scene where Israel fell from grace... they put themselves under Jehovah's law, rather than fall back upon his sovereign grace. But once the bridge is crossed, God wants to get on with his purpose of blessing in spite of failure. The Land of Canaan was in store for his people, and he wanted them to get moving towards it. we all have a human tendency to linger by the mountain that burned with fire. We cannot enjoy our heavenly blessings if we are occupied with the legal system. we need to "turn".

7 Turn and take your journey, and go to the hill-country of the Amorites, and unto all the neighbouring places in the plain, in the mountain, and in the lowland, and in the south, and by the seaside, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. v.7 a poetic way of referring to "settle before them (v.8)" the whole land of Canaan: "the South", the north (Lebanon, the river Euphrates), the east (the mount of the Amorites, or Kadeshbarnea), and the west (the sea side).

8 Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which Jehovah swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them. v.8 we find the land is given to Israel according to the sovereign promises of God, made to their fathers.

## Moses Appoints Judges to Share His Burden (1:9-18)

9 And I spoke unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone. 10 Jehovah your God hath multiplied you, and behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. vv.9-18 this seems to be a reference to Exodus 18 (not to be confused with Numbers 11). C.H. Macintosh sees this as a failure on Moses' part, but F.B. Hole and J.N.D see it as all in due order. It is Jethro giving fatherly recommendations to Moses, but he says "If thou do this thing, and God command thee so." So Jethro here is

simply the mouthpiece of God, describing to Moses what distributed oversight would look like. Moses was not to “do this thing” unless God commanded him. I think what we see here is the wisdom of God in establishing the foundation of oversight, like we have in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3. Exodus 18 is actually a picture of the millennial administration of the kingdom. I prefer this “positive” interpretation; however, I would call attention to Numbers 11 - where we see the 70 elders as a result of Moses complaining - that is a distinct loss for Moses due to his unbelief.

**11** Jehovah, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you as he hath said unto you! **v.11** the large population was not a “problem”, it was actually part of God blessing on them, and Moses wished that growth to continue. It was the fleshly squabbles that were burdening Moses.

**12** How can I myself alone sustain your wear, and your burden, and your strife? **v.12** He is laying down the fact that the state of the people was such that there were too many issues and disputes for one person to handle.

**13** Provide you wise and understanding and known men, according to your tribes, that I may make them your chiefs. **14** And ye answered me, and said, The thing that thou hast spoken is good *for us* to do. **15** So I took the chiefs of your tribes, wise men and known, and made them chiefs over you, captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens, and officers for your tribes. **16** And I commanded your judges at that time, saying, Hear *the causes* between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother, and him also that sojourneth with him. **17** Ye shall not respect persons in judgment: ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's; and the matter that is too hard for you shall ye bring to me, that I may hear it. **v.17** the judgment needed to be righteous judgment (John 7:24). If those in oversight are biased... it will cause disruption of order. “for the judgment is God's.” We can always bring the matter before the Lord, and He “will hear it”.

**18** And I commanded you at that time all the things that ye should do.

## The Journey from Horeb to Kadesh-

## barnea (1:19-21)

**19** And we departed from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw, on the way to the mountain of the Amorites, as Jehovah our God had commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. **vv.19-21** Israel was dealt with in grace, despite their murmurings, etc., until they reached Sinai. There they put themselves under law, and as a result received a different type of treatment. Compare Exodus 16, when they murmured for food, with afterwards in Numbers 11, when they again murmured for food being then under law. Earlier God gave them quails (as well as manna) without any reproof before Sinai, but afterwards, “while it was yet in their mouths, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote them with a very great plague.” the wilderness was especially “great and terrible” because they had put themselves under law.

**20** And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which Jehovah our God giveth us. **21** Behold, Jehovah thy God hath set the land before thee: go up, take possession, as Jehovah the God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be dismayed. **v.21** we see that Kadesh-barnea was a decision point; would they go in to possess the Land? or would they turn back and wander in the wilderness. This verse shows us that the purpose of God was for them to go in to possess it... but the 38 year wandering circle was part of his ways to exhaust the energy of the flesh, to give circumstance for self-judgment, and to bring them a second time to Kadesh-barnea. however, “fear” and “discouragement” do not come from God.

## The Day of Provocation, the Day of Temptation (1:22-46)

**The Day of Provocation.** At the time Deuteronomy was written the people were in a good state, but here he takes them back to that pivotal point where the previous generation provoked the Lord to anger. See Psalm 95:7 where this great test is called the “day of provocation, the day of temptation in the wilderness.” See also Heb. 3:7, which refers to the same event.

**Having a right spirit is very important.** as the father of spirits (Heb. 12:9), the Lord is correcting our attitude:

1. II timothy 4:22. it is easy to get a bad attitude when we look around a see failure in a day of public ruin.
2. Galatians 6:18. it is easy to get a bad attitude when we have been carrying on in a legal way, and when we have been corrected.
3. Philemon 25. It is easy to have a bad attitude when called on to forgive one who has offended us.

## **the flesh insists on a second opinion (the word of man) (vv.22-25)**

**22** And ye came near to me all of you, and said, We will send men before us, who shall examine the land for us, and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up, and of the cities to which we shall come. **v.22** this is the first symptom of Israel's state... the lord had said (v.21) go up and possess it. But this is a human idea... I need to check it out first; "We will send men before us." the word of god is not enough ... we need men to "bring us word again".

**23** And the matter was good in mine eyes; and I took twelve men of you, one man for a tribe. **24** And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came to the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. **25** And they took of the fruit of the land in their hand, and brought it down unto us, and brought us answer, and said, The land is good that Jehovah our God hath given us. **v.25** this "good report" is called in Hebrews 4:2 the "gospel"... it is the gospel of the inheritance. This gospel was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it." Also, it says in Gal. 3:8 that god "preached before the gospel unto Abraham"... again the good news of promised blessing. Abraham "believed god", but in kadesh-barnea the children of israel would not believe. It was only caleb and Joshua that presented this good report... the other ten spies returned an evil report (v.28). But the word of two witnesses was adequate enough to make the people responsible.

## **the flesh refuses to believe the good report (vv.26-33)**

**26** But ye would not go up, and rebelled against the word of Jehovah your God; **v.26** disobedience to the word of God is rebellion against God's authority.

**27** and ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because Jehovah hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy

us. **v.27** god knew what they said privately. They were in such a state of soul that that that attribute the Lord's love in the light of hatred. How utterly absurd are the arguments of unbelief! if god had hated them, nothing would have been easier than to leave them to die amid the brick kilns of Egypt, beneath the cruel lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters. This would be like a christian doubting the Love of God in light of the cross.

**28** Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, *They are a people greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.* **v.28** "our brethren have discouraged our heart" - may that never be truly said of us. this is a reference to the bad report of the ten spies. "The people *is* greater and taller than we" - they made the mistake fo comparing the enemies with themselves. instead they sould have compared the enemies with the Lord (v.30). "walled up to heaven" - the gross exaggeration of unbelief! "We have seen the sons of the Anakim" - contrast the way they saw the giants with the way david saw goliath (I Sam. 17:45-47).

**29** And I said unto you, Be not afraid, neither fear them; **30** Jehovah your God who goeth before you, he will fight for you, according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; **v.30** see I John 4:4.

**31** and in the wilderness where thou hast seen that Jehovah thy God bore thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came to this place. **v.31** they had seen how "the LORD thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son." if wasn't as if they had been on their own up to this point! They hadnt been paddling their own canoe... every time we draw breath it is by the power of God. There is scarcely a picture so tender as a father carrying his boy over rough terrain. They got half-way through the wilderness on the Lord's shoulders (v.33, etc.), and then refused to go further in faith... "until ye came into this place."

**32** But In this thing ye did not believe Jehovah your God, **v.32** "in this thing" - this was a specific test from god, to see if their profession was real.

**33** who went in the way before you, to search you out a place for your encamping, in fire by night, to shew you by what way ye should go, and in the cloud by day. **v.33** the Lord undertakes for his people in every detail. somehow, unbelief doesn't see all these things.

## the government of god on account of unbelief (vv.34-40)

**34** And Jehovah heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore, saying, **v.34** they provoked the Lord to anger be unbelief.

**35** None among these men, this evil generation, shall in any wise see that good land, which I swore to give unto your fathers! **v.35** a contrast is made between “this evil generation” and “that good land”. the problem was not with the land... it was with the people. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, but unbelief can hinder us from possessing our inheritance.

**36** Except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed Jehovah. **v.36** “caleb” means faithful follower. It is possible to walk the wilderness pathway and have it said of us that we “wholly followed the LORD.”

**37** Also Jehovah was angry with me on your account, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither. **v.37** It was needful to remind the congregation that it was on their account (“for your sakes”) that Moses was prevented from crossing the Jordan, and setting his foot upon the land of Canaan. True, “he spake unadvisedly with his lips;” but “they provoked his spirit” to do so. This would have touched their hearts because they knew that moses longed to see “that goodly mountain and Lebanon” (Psa. 106:32) and that their unbelief had prevented them from entering in themselves, but also the beloved servant of God.

**38** Joshua the son of Nun, who standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: strengthen him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. **v.38** the government of God in our life should produce a spirit of grace. The result will be that we will encourage others to lay hold of that which we have failed in, and to lead others into the blessings that god has purposed. Joshua is a picture of Christ (the hebrew name for Jesus) who alone is able to accomplish the purpose of god.

**39** And your little ones, of whom ye said, They shall be a prey, and your children, who this day know neither good nor evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. **v.39** there is a solemn irony to the government of God. The land was purposed for the older generation, and they had used their “little ones” as a prop for their unbelief. Therefore, their little ones would enter the land and enjoy its blessings, and the



older generation would die in the wilderness.

**40** But ye, turn, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea. **v.40** as for the older, unbelieving generation, they would wander until the energy of the flesh was exhausted. this was the government of God. “the way of the Red sea” - refers to the eastern arm of the red sea. The red sea speaks of the death of Christ. This is where we need to go when we have had a failure... it will produce repentance.

## the flesh rebels against the government of god (vv.41-46)

**41** — And ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against Jehovah, we will go up and fight, according to all that Jehovah our God hath commanded us. And ye girded on every man his weapons of war, and ye would go presumptuously up the hill. **v.41** when we have sinned and are under the government of God for that sin, we need to submit to it so that god can produce the spirit of grace that he is looking for. The flesh however rebels against the government of god. “We have sinned” - those were empty words (c.p. psa. 51:16-17). Israel “changed their mind” and wanted to go up and fight “according to all that Jehovah our God hath commanded us”... except it was too late, god’s decision was final. to rebel against god’s government is “presumption”, a terrible sin, which always results in futher judgment. They were proceeding to accomplish the purpose of God in the energy of the flesh, in opposition to the will of God. Compare “Whither shall we go up?” (v.28) with “we will go up” (v.41).

**42** And Jehovah said to me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. **v.42** rebellion has three results:

1. cuts off communion with the lord - “I am not among you”
2. brings hurt to us - “lest ye be smitten”
3. brings shame on the testimony - “before your enemies”

**43** And I spoke unto you, but ye would not hear, and ye rebelled against the word of Jehovah, and acted presumptuously, and went up the hill.

**v.43** It is an “up hill” battle when we do not have the Lord’s mind. they would go up without the lord... c.p. Exodus 33:15 where moses said “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” When a soul reaches this point, there is no other recourse but to have a fall.

**44** And the Amorite that dwelt on that hill came out against you, and chased you, like as

bees do, and cut you in pieces in Seir, as far as Hormah. **v.44** this illustrates that judgment must begin at the house of god (1 Peter 4:17). The iniquity of the Amorites was now full (Gen 15:16, Deut. 9:5) and yet god would use these wicked amorites to chasten his erring people rather than allow them to go on “acting presumptuously.” **Bees** - they are extremely fast, they come in swarms before you know what has hit you, and their stings are very painful. notice that the Lord would use literal hornets to drive out the canaanite nations 38 years later (Deut. 7:20). “Hormah” - means “utter destruction.”

**45** And ye returned and wept before Jehovah, but Jehovah would not listen to your voice, nor give ear unto you. **v.45** these were not true tears of repentance... There was no more reality in their tears than in their words. they were unhappy because of the slaughter, but their hearts were unchanged toward Jehovah. “the LORD would not hearken” - communion isn't cheap, and may take some time to be restored (song. 5).

**46** And ye abode in Kadesh many days, according unto the days that ye abode *there*. **v.46** it is interesting that if God had let this rebellion be successful, Israel would have entered the land from the south without crossing the Jordan, a picture of our death with Christ.