Israel's Journey to the Promised Land: Exodus to Deuteronomy

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Bible Citations
All Scripture quotations are my own translation.

1) From Goshen to Mount Sinai (Exodus 1 – 18)

- Israelites oppressed; Moses' birth; his exile in Midian (chaps. 1 – 2).
- The Burning Bush incident (chap. 3)
- Moses' return to Egypt (chap. 4).
- The Ten Plagues (chaps. 7 – 11).
- The Passover and Exodus (chap. 12).
- Crossing of the Red Sea (chap. 14).
- The Song of Moses and Miriam; on to Marah and Elim (chap. 15).
- Miraculous provision of manna and quail (chap. 16). The manna continued for the entire 40-year duration of their desert wanderings (16:35).
- The first Water-from-the-Rock incident, at Massah/Meribah in the wilderness of Sin, with Moses told to STRIKE the rock (17:1-7).
  (Not to be confused with a similar incident related in Numbers 20:2-13 that took place 40 years later, at "Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin" [Num 27:14].)
- Amalekites defeated by Joshua; Moses' hands are held up by Aaron and Hur (17:8-16; cf. Dt 25:17-19).
- Jethro visits Moses; appointment of leaders to decide disputes (chap. 18).

2) At Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1 – Numbers 10:10)

Exodus 19 – 40

- Israel is encamped at the base of Mt. Sinai (19:2).
- The Sinaitic Covenant (chaps. 19 – 24):
  Preparations (19:3-25); the Decalogue (20:1-17)[1]; the people's reaction (20:18-21).
  The Book of the Covenant (20:22 – 23:19; cf. 24:7): proper worship; laws relating to Hebrew servants; personal injuries, protection of property, social responsibility, justice and mercy, sacred seasons (sabbath years and days, the three annual festivals).
  God's Angel to aid their conquest of Canaan (23:20-33).
- The Covenant ratified (chap. 24).
- Instructions for the tabernacle (25:1 – 31:11):
  Request for contributions; the Ark; the table for the bread; the golden lampstand; the tent; the bronze altar; the court; the oil for the lamp; priestly garments; etc.

[1] The Ten Commandments are "the words of the covenant, the ten words" (Ex 34:28), or simply "the ten words" (Dt 4:13; 10:4).

- The Sabbath (31:12-17).
- Moses receives the tablets (31:18).
- The Golden Calf incident; Moses' mediation; covenant renewal and new tablets (chaps. 32 – 34).
- The tabernacle: the people's contributions; its construction and assembly; finally filled with the LORD's glory (35:4 – 40:38).
  And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was set up (40:17).

Leviticus

- The five main offerings (chaps. 1 – 7).
- Establishment of the priesthood (chaps. 8 – 10):
  Ordination of Aaron and his sons; the first tabernacle service; the Nadab and Abihu incident.
- Laws on clean vs. unclean (chaps. 11 – 15).
- The annual Day of Atonement (chap. 16).
- The place of sacrifice; eating blood forbidden (chap. 17).
- The call to holiness (chaps. 18 – 22):
  Unlawful sexual relations; holy behavior; punishments for disobedience; holiness of the priests and offerings; acceptable sacrifices.
- Holy seasons (chaps. 23 – 25):
  The feasts; oil and bread set before the LORD; the case of a blasphemer; the sabbatical year and Jubilee; laws of redemption.
- Covenant blessings and curses (chap. 26).
- Regulations for offerings vowed to the LORD (chap. 27).

Numbers 1:1 – 10:10

- Israel is still at Sinai, but about to journey to the Promised Land.
  The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of <u>the second month, in the second year</u> after they had left the land of Egypt, … (1:1).
- A census of fighting men is undertaken (chap. 1).
- Various regulations and laws.

3) Journey from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 10:11 – 12:16)

- Grumbling about the monotonous food — the manna. Quail provided (chap. 11).
  God's Spirit on Moses is shared with 70 of Israel's elders, so that they prophesied (11:24-30).
- Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses (chap. 12).

4) 38+ years spent near Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13 – 19)

- This section of Numbers covers 38+ years, when the Israelites lived in or near Kadesh Barnea.
  Kadesh was a large oasis near the southern boundary of the Promised Land (34:4).
- Exploring Canaan: Spies sent out and report back (chap. 13).
- The people's unbelief and rebellion; sentenced to wander around the desert for 40 years until all those aged 20 or more have perished, except for Joshua and Caleb (chap. 14).
  Note that the 40 years includes the time already spent at Sinai and their journey to Kadesh, to be followed by 38+ further years of wandering — see Exodus 16:35; Deuteronomy 2:14.
- Various laws; Sabbath-breaker executed (chap. 15).
- Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (chap. 16).
- The budding of Aaron's staff, vindicating the Aaronic priesthood (chap. 17).
- Duties of the priests and Levites (chap. 18).
- Cleansing from death (chap. 19).

5) Towards the end of the 40 years:
Journey from Kadesh Barnea to the Plains of Moab (Numbers 20 – 21)

- Regrouping at Kadesh Barnea; the death of Miriam (20:1).
- Rebellion at "Meribah" (20:13) = "Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin" (27:14).
  This is the second Water-from-the-Rock incident, with Moses told to SPEAK to the rock.
  Moses strikes the rock twice; he and Aaron are prohibited from entering the Promised Land (20:2-13).
- Israel's request to pass through Edom is denied (20:14-21).
  The Israelites must now skirt around Edom. Various routes have been proposed, but they probably journeyed through the desert to the east of both Edom and Moab.[2]
- Aaron's death, aged 123 (20:22-29).
- The Bronze Snake incident (21:4-9).
- Journeying north:
  Encampment at Oboth; then at Iye Abarim, in the desert to the east of Moab (21:10-11).
  Then, encampment in the Zered Valley (21:12).[3]
  After that, encampment on the far, northern side of the Arnon River. The Arnon marks the border between Moab and the Amorites (21:13).
- Continuing northwest into Amorite territory (21:16-20).
  Arrival at the Plains (or Valley) of Moab, above the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan (21:20).
  The Amorites lived to the east of the Jordan River and east of the Sea of Galilee:
  Og ruled Bashan in the north; Sihon ruled from the Jabbok River all the way south to the Arnon River east of the Dead Sea, a north-south length of about 75 km.

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[2] The Edomites, as descendants of Esau, and the Moabites and Ammonites, as descendants of Lot, were not to be harassed or provoked to war. God had assigned to them the territories they occupied (Dt 2:5, 9, 19).

[3] The Zered stream is usually shown on Bible maps as flowing into the southern end of the Dead Sea, marking the southern boundary of Moab and its border with Edom. But this is doubtful, because the Israelites, heading north, camped to the east of Moab prior to their encampment in the Zered Valley (Num 21:11-12). The Zered is more likely to be in north-eastern Moab near the Arnon River. It should probably be identified with either Wadi es-Sawaqa (the Arnon's eastern tributary), Wadi Nukheile (which discharges into the Arnon), or Wadi Tarfawiyye (which discharges into Wadi Nukheile). See the following online article by Brandon Marlon in the *Times of Israel:* https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/18-remarkable-facts-of-the-land-of-israel/.

- Israel's request to pass through Sihon's territory is denied. He engages Israel in battle at Jahaz.
  The Israelites rout him and acquire his land and cities, including his capital, Heshbon (21:21-26).
  But they do not enter Ammonite territory (21:24).
  Sihon had previously defeated a former Moabite king and acquired the territory of Moab down to the Arnon — presumably this explains why the Plains of Moab were not now a part of Moab (21:26).
- The Israelite army heads north towards Bashan, where they rout the army of Og at Edrei and take possession of his land (21:33-35).

6) On the Plains of Moab (Numbers 22 – 36)

- The Israelites are now encamped on the Plains of Moab, along the Jordan opposite Jericho (22:1).
- The Moabites are terrified: King Balak hires Balaam to curse the Israelites (chaps. 22-24).
- Israelite men indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women and offer sacrifices to their gods.
  A plague from God kills 24,000 Israelites; this is halted only through the courageous actions of Phinehas (chap. 25). Balaam was a prime instigator of this apostasy (31:16).
- The second census of fighting men (chap. 26). Tribal numbers differ (sometimes markedly) from the previous census taken 38+ years earlier at Mt. Sinai (see chap. 1).
- Inheritance rules for daughters; Joshua commissioned to succeed Moses; regulations for offerings, the annual festivals; vows (chaps. 27-30).
- Vengeance on those Midianites who had been allied with the Moabites in seducing Israel (chap. 31).
  This was to be one of Moses' last actions (31:2).
- The Transjordan Tribes:
  Men from the tribes of Reuben and Gad request to be allowed to settle in the hilly territory east of the Jordan — the land taken from the Amorite kings Og and Sihon. This land was suitable for cattle grazing. Moses is initially shocked, since most of this region lies outside the Promised Land. He only agrees after they promise to aid their fellow Israelites in the conquest of the Promised Land proper, which lies to the west of the Jordan. In the meantime, their families and livestock may settle there (chap. 32).
- Summary of the entire 40-year journey, from Egypt to Canaan (chap. 33)..
- Boundaries of the Promised Land proper, not including that given to the Transjordan tribes.
  Tribal leaders appointed (chap. 34).
- Towns reserved for the Levites: 48 towns, together with surrounding pastureland.
  Six of these are to be cities of refuge (chap. 35).
- Inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters: in the absence of sons, daughters can inherit their father's property, provided they marry within their own tribe (chap. 36; cf. Num 27:1-11).

A brief introduction to Deuteronomy

Date: Around 1406 BC.

Deuteronomy means "second law" or "repetition of the law".

In chapter 5 the Decalogue is recorded once more. Many other familiar laws are encountered again as well.

Deuteronomy consists of three sermons (chaps. 1 – 4; 5 – 26; 27 – 30), along with a prophetic song (32:1-43) and poem (chap. 33), all delivered by Moses just prior to his death.

The Israelites are encamped on the Plains of Moab, waiting to cross the Jordan into Canaan.

The Amorite kings Sihon and Og have recently been defeated (1:4); the Baal-Peor incident is also past (4:3).

Moses is now 120 years old (31:2).

In Deuteronomy 1 – 3, Moses recounts aspects of nation's history:

- 1:2-3: What normally was an eleven-day journey lasted 40 years, highlighting the time lost as a result of God's punishment for their rebellion.
- 1:9-18: The appointment of leaders recounts the events of Exodus 18:13-26.
  There were so many people to care for. God had fulfilled his promises to bless and multiply them, so that they were as numerous as the stars of heaven (1:10; cf. Gen 15:5).
- The spies sent out, and the people's rebellion (1:19-46) recounts Numbers 13 – 14.
  A bit of telescoping here: God's anger with Moses (recounted in 1:37) took place nearly 40 years after the rebellion described in 1:34-36. But Moses is emphasizing his solidarity with the people in their sin.
- Towards the end of the 40 years:
  Skirting around Edom and Moab (2:1-19) recounts Numbers 21:4-13.
  Defeat of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og (2:24 – 3:11) recounts Numbers 21:21-35.
- Division of the land east of the Jordan (3:12-20) recounts Numbers 32.
- Joshua is not to fear the inhabitants of the land for, like Sihon and Og, they will be overthrown (3:21-22).
- Moses is forbidden to cross the Jordan (3:21-29).

Deuteronomy 1:3-5:

3 *In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, Moses spoke to the people of Israel everything that the LORD had commanded him to tell them,* 4 *after he had struck Sihon the king of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth and in Edrei.*

5 *Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began to expound this law, …*

Deuteronomy 2:14:

The time from our leaving Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Brook was 38 years, until the entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them.

39 years and 11 months have elapsed since the Israelites left Egypt.

In accordance with the sentence God imposed, an entire generation of fighting men has perished.

God keeps his promises!

God had promised the land of Canaan to their forefathers (1:8).

He had promised Abraham many descendants, and they had become as numerous as the stars in the sky (1:10-11; cf. Gen 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; Dt 10:22). Indeed, there were so many people to care for that additional leaders had to be appointed to help Moses (1:12-18, recounting Exodus 18).

Moses is showing that God is altogether faithful to his promises.

The failure of the Exodus Generation

Moses recounts Israel's response to the report of the spies (1:19 – 2:1).

Their lame excuses:

"The natives are strong and tall, their cities are large with towering walls, Anakite giants live there" (1:28).

Unbelief despite God's power displayed in Egypt and his care and guidance on their journey (1:29-33).

God was angry and swore that no one (except Joshua and Caleb) would enter the land.

And Moses, when he struck the rock 38 years later, was also forbidden to enter (1:37; cf. Num 20:12).

Moses hereby shows his solidarity with the Israelites in their sin.

The New Generation

Moses recounts their progress north towards Canaan (2:2 – 3:29).

God has told them not to provoke the Edomites, Moabites or Ammonites — descendants of Esau and Lot.

For he has assigned them their respective territories (Dt 2:4-5, 9-10, 19). Indeed, with divine help they had displaced tall and strong nations, just as the Israelites themselves were about to do (2:10-12, 20-22).

Which make the former generation's fears completely unfounded!

The defeat of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og showed what could be accomplished with God's blessing.

Og was the last of the Rephaite giants. His four-meter-long iron bed had become something of a museum piece in the Ammonite town of Rabbah.

After overcoming these kings, the territory east of the Jordan was given to the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh. While their wives, children and livestock could immediately settle there, their fighting men were to accompany the other Israelite tribes in conquering the territory west of the Jordan (3:18-20).

Though pleading to be allowed to enter the land, Moses is still forbidden to cross the Jordan. He may only view the land from the summit of Mt. Pisgah (aka Nebo). And he is to commission and encourage Joshua, who will lead the people into the land (3:23-28).

Deuteronomy 4:13-14:

13 *He declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform — the Ten Words.*
He wrote them on two stone tablets.
14 *The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, so that you might do them in the land which you are crossing over to possess.*

Moses here is harking back to God's revelation at Mt. Sinai.

The Sinaitic (or Mosaic) Covenant was enacted in Exodus 19 – 24.

The Ten Commandments are the Ten Words of the Covenant (Ex 34:28). Alone of God's laws, they were spoken audibly to all Israel and written by God himself on the stone tablets (Ex 20:1, 18-19; 24:12).
They are central to, and sum up, the relationship between God and the people whom he has redeemed and made his own (Ex 19:5-6; 20:2).
Conversely, the "statures and rules" (Dt 4:14) refer to the other laws given at Sinai — those revealed to Moses and which he was to relay to the nation. These are found in Exodus 21 – Leviticus 27.
In some ways the rest of the Law is an expansion and explanation of the Ten Commandments.

Deuteronomy 5:2-3:

[2] *The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb [Mt. Sinai].*
[3] *Not with our fathers did the LORD make this covenant, but with us — we who are here today, all of us who are alive.*

Deuteronomy is the Book of Covenant Renewal. The Sinai Covenant was made with the previous generation, but Israel is treated as a unit so that the present generation is just as bound by its stipulations as their parents were.
Indeed, "you" throughout Deuteronomy treats the current generation as having been present at Sinai.
They were present in and through their parents. So, when Moses recites Israel's history, the current generation are equally implicated in their parents' sin. See 1:20-22, 26-34; 4:10-15; etc.