

Parashat Devarim
(Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22)
July 29, 2017 / 6th of Av
Beit Tikvah, Newcastle, WA
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Abstract (not used in oralization)

In this Torah *parasha* (portion) of the week of July 29th, on the Shabbat before Tisha b'Av (9th of the Jewish month of Av), Moses retells the story of people's journey from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea, the rebellion of the people there, and the LORD God's judgement on that generation to die in the desert over the next 40 years. Since they refused to enter the land as commanded, they were banned from ever entering it. In Rabbinic reckoning this event was the first in a long line of tragedies of the Jewish people that happened on, or are remembered on Tisha b'Av. Now, in his final address to the people, Moses brings this new generation back, emotionally and spiritually, to the foot of Sinai, connecting them to the story that defines who they are—a covenant peoplehood whose corporate solidarity transcends generations. Moses prepares them for their new opportunity to now enter the land promised to their fathers. The God of Israel is the God of new beginnings. And Israel/the Jewish people are a people of assured and certain destiny fulfillment, because God is faithful to His covenant. Through and beyond the tragedies of the 9th of Av, just as He brought them into the land of Canaan, God will bring His people Israel into a good and everlasting future of blessing, in this Age and in the Messianic Age to Come.

I include below the full text of two oral-friendly versions: The NLT and THE VOICE. Light gray sections are not part of the oratory.

(This was presented at a service in which a Bat Mitzvah ceremony was enacted. The mother of the Bat Mitzvah girl was from a Sephardic Jewish family. For a special application to the Sephardic *conversos/marranos* experience, which I included as part of this oratory or *drash* (sermon), and related to the 9th of Av, see the "A Story From 2011 (519 Years After)" at the end of this study sheet).

Introduction

Setting: *End of the 40 years wandering in the wilderness by the people of Israel*

*They are on the **threshold** of entering the land, assembled on the East Bank of the Jordan River...on the plains of Moab, modern day Jordan, facing into the land of Canaan.*

This is the second generation among the people who left Egypt in the exodus. Their parents, the older generation had died in the desert over the previous 40 years, due to judgement for the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea.

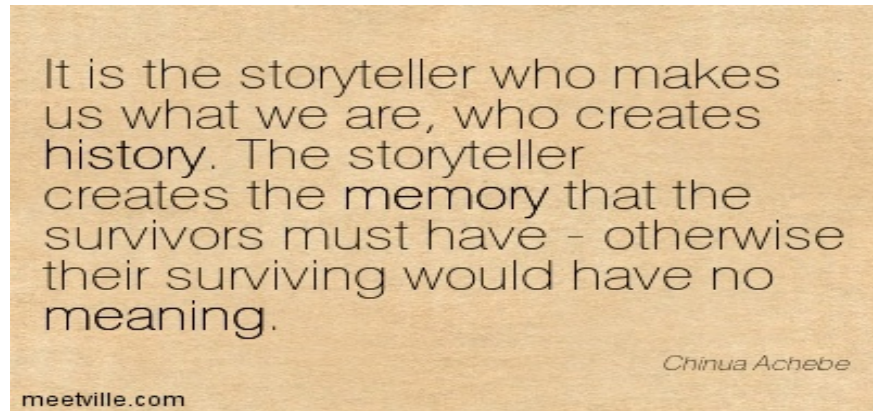
*This is Moses **final farewell, his last words** to the people he has led for 40 years. These are his final charges and sermons.*

*Moses seeks to bring this second generation back to the foot of Sinai, so they stand in continuity as one people. Moses uses "**we**" when he speaks to the people... as if they were there in those early episodes of their now deceased parents' journey— The **corporate solidarity** of the people of Israel, transcending time (generations) and place.*

“A Second Sinai” as it were, to a “Second Generation.” (Deutero nomos...second law). A new generation, and new challenges, and their shepherd is preparing them.

Moses **re-tells the Story...** he **reviews, recapitulates**, in flashbacks, **episodes** of their story since leaving Egypt in the exodus.

By having the people rehearse their story and its meaning, they are reaffirmed in **where they have come from and in who they are!**



The Book is called **“Devarim” (Words)** in Hebrew; this is a fitting title in that Deuteronomy is **“the most sustained use of rhetoric in the Bible”** (Robert Alter). It is a transcription of oral speeches and sermons, such that they are best understood **when they are oralized**, brought back to living speech.

That’s what I want to do now, with the first parasha: 1:1 – 3:22.

So, now think of yourselves as the whole assembly of Israel, poised on the East Bank of the Jordan in the plains of Moab. And think of me as Moses, addressing you. Listen Up!
Hear O Israel!

NLT Version:

These are the words that Moses spoke to all the people of Israel while they were in the wilderness east of the Jordan River. They were camped in the Jordan Valley^[a] near Suph, between Paran on one side and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab on the other.

² Normally it takes only eleven days to travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea, going by way of Mount Seir. ³ But forty years after the Israelites left Egypt, on the first day of the eleventh month,^[c] Moses addressed the people of Israel, telling them everything the LORD had commanded him to say. ⁴ This took place after he had defeated King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon, and at Edrei had defeated King Og of Bashan, who ruled in Ashtaroth.

⁵ While the Israelites were in the land of Moab east of the Jordan River, Moses carefully **explained** the LORD’s instructions as follows. (Verses 1: 1-5 omitted in the oratory, substituting my Introduction above).

1. Go Possess! (The Command to Leave Sinai)

⁶ “When we were at Mount Sinai, the LORD our God said to us, ‘You have stayed at this mountain long enough. ⁷ It is time to break camp and move on. Go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the neighboring regions—the Jordan Valley, the hill country, the western foothills, the Negev, and the coastal plain. Go to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, and all the way to the great Euphrates River. ⁸ Look, **I am giving all this land to you!** Go in and occupy it, for it is the land the LORD swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to all their descendants.’”



2. Moses Appoints Leaders from Each Tribe

⁹ Moses continued, “At that time I told you, ‘You are too great a burden for me to carry all by myself. ¹⁰ The LORD your God has increased your population, making you as numerous as the stars! ¹¹ And may the LORD, the God of your ancestors, multiply you a thousand times more and bless you as he promised! ¹² But you are such a heavy load to carry! How can I deal with all your problems and bickering? ¹³ Choose some well-respected men from each tribe who are known for their wisdom and understanding, and I will appoint them as your leaders.’”

¹⁴ “Then you responded, ‘Your plan is a good one.’ ¹⁵ So I took the wise and respected men you had selected from your tribes and appointed them **to serve as judges and officials over you**. Some were responsible for a thousand people, some for a hundred, some for fifty, and some for ten.

¹⁶ “At that time I instructed the judges, ‘You must hear the cases of your fellow Israelites and the foreigners living among you. Be perfectly fair in your decisions ¹⁷ and impartial in your judgments. Hear the cases of those who are poor as well as those who are rich. Don’t be afraid of

anyone's anger, for the decision you make is God's decision. Bring me any cases that are too difficult for you, and I will handle them.'

¹⁸ "At that time I gave you instructions about everything you were to do.



3. Scouts Explore & Return to Kadesh Barnea

¹⁹ "Then, just as the LORD our God commanded us, we left Mount Sinai and traveled through the great and terrifying wilderness, as you yourselves remember, and headed toward the hill country of the Amorites. When we arrived at Kadesh-barnea, ²⁰ I said to you, 'You have now reached the hill country of the Amorites that the LORD our God is giving us. ²¹ Look! He has placed the land in front of you. Go and occupy it as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you. Don't be afraid! Don't be discouraged!'

²² "But you all came to me and said, 'First, let's send out scouts to explore the land for us. They will advise us on the best route to take and which towns we should enter.'

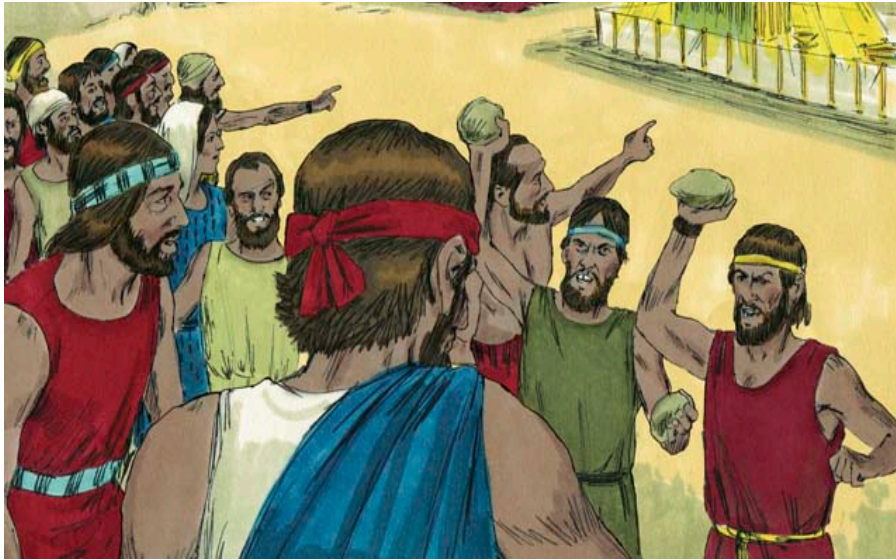
²³ "This seemed like a good idea to me, so I chose twelve scouts, one from each of your tribes.

²⁴ They headed for the hill country and came to the valley of Eshcol and explored it. ²⁵ They picked some of its fruit and brought it back to us. And they reported, 'The land the LORD our God has given us is indeed a good land.'



4. Israel's Rebellion

²⁶ “But you **rebelled** against the command of the LORD your God and **refused** to go in. ²⁷ You **complained** in your tents and said, ‘**The LORD must hate us**. That’s why he has brought us here from Egypt—to hand us over to the Amorites to be slaughtered. ²⁸ Where can we go? Our brothers have demoralized us with their report. They tell us, “The people of the land are taller and more powerful than we are, and their towns are large, with walls rising high into the sky! We even saw giants there—the descendants of Anak!””



²⁹ “But I said to you, ‘Don’t be shocked or afraid of them! ³⁰ The LORD your God is going ahead of you. He will fight for you, just as you saw him do in Egypt. ³¹ And you saw how the LORD your God cared for you all along the way as you traveled through the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child. Now he has brought you to this place.’”

³² “But even after all he did, you refused to trust the LORD your God, ³³ who goes before you looking for the best places to camp, guiding you with a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day.

³⁴ “When the LORD heard your complaining, he became very angry. So he solemnly swore, ³⁵ ‘Not one of you from this wicked generation will live to see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, ³⁶ except **Caleb son of Jephunneh**. He will see this land because he has followed the LORD completely. I will give to him and his descendants some of the very land he explored during his scouting mission.’”

³⁷ “And the LORD was also angry with me because of you. He said to me, ‘Moses, not even you will enter the Promised Land! ³⁸ Instead, your assistant, **Joshua son of Nun**, will lead the people

into the land. Encourage him, for he will lead Israel as they take possession of it. ³⁹ I will give the land to your little ones—your innocent children. You were afraid they would be captured, but they will be the ones who occupy it. ⁴⁰ As for you, turn around now and go on back through the wilderness toward the Red Sea.’

⁴¹ “Then you confessed, ‘We have sinned against the LORD! We will go into the land and fight for it, as the LORD our God has commanded us.’ So your men strapped on their weapons, thinking it would be easy to attack the hill country.

⁴² “But the LORD told me to tell you, ‘Do not attack, for I am not with you. If you go ahead on your own, you will be crushed by your enemies.’

⁴³ “This is what I told you, but you would not listen. Instead, you again rebelled against the LORD’s command and arrogantly went into the hill country to fight. ⁴⁴ But the Amorites who lived there came out against you like a swarm of bees. They chased and battered you all the way from Seir to Hormah. ⁴⁵ Then you returned and wept before the LORD, but he refused to listen. ⁴⁶ So you stayed there at Kadesh for a long time.

Remembering Israel’s Wanderings

2 “Then we turned around and headed back across the wilderness toward the Red Sea, ^[f] just as the LORD had instructed me, and we wandered around in the region of Mount Seir for a long time.

² “Then at last the LORD said to me, ³ ‘You have been wandering around in this hill country long enough; turn to the north. ⁴ Give these orders to the people: “You will pass through the country belonging to your relatives the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. The Edomites will feel threatened, so be careful. ⁵ Do not bother them, for I have given them all the hill country around Mount Seir as their property, and I will not give you even one square foot of their land. ⁶ If you need food to eat or water to drink, pay them for it. ⁷ For the LORD your God has blessed you in everything you have done. He has watched your every step through this great wilderness. During these forty years, the LORD your God has been with you, and you have lacked nothing.”’



⁸“So we bypassed the territory of our relatives, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We avoided the road through the Arabah Valley that comes up from Elath and Ezion-geber.

“Then as we turned north along the desert route through Moab, ⁹ the LORD warned us, ‘Do not bother the Moabites, the descendants of Lot, or start a war with them. I have given them Ar as their property, and I will not give you any of their land.’”

¹⁰ (A race of giants called the Emites had once lived in the area of Ar. They were as strong and numerous and tall as the Anakites, another race of giants. ¹¹ Both the Emites and the Anakites are also known as the Rephaites, though the Moabites call them Emites. ¹² In earlier times the Horites had lived in Seir, but they were driven out and displaced by the descendants of Esau, just as Israel drove out the people of Canaan when the LORD gave Israel their land.)

¹³ Moses continued, “Then the LORD said to us, ‘Get moving. Cross the Zered Brook.’ So we crossed the brook.

¹⁴ “Thirty-eight years passed from the time we first left Kadesh-barnea until we finally crossed the Zered Brook! By then, all the men old enough to fight in battle had died in the wilderness, as the LORD had vowed would happen. ¹⁵ The LORD struck them down until they had all been eliminated from the community.

¹⁶ “When all the men of fighting age had died, ¹⁷ the LORD said to me, ¹⁸ ‘Today you will cross the border of Moab at Ar ¹⁹ and enter the land of the Ammonites, the descendants of Lot. But do not bother them or start a war with them. I have given the land of Ammon to them as their property, and I will not give you any of their land.’”

²⁰ (That area was once considered the land of the Rephaites, who had lived there, though the Ammonites call them Zamzummites. ²¹ They were also as strong and numerous and tall as the Anakites. But the LORD destroyed them so the Ammonites could occupy their land. ²² He had done the same for the descendants of Esau who lived in Seir, for he destroyed the Horites so they could settle there in their place. The descendants of Esau live there to this day. ²³ A similar thing

happened when the Caphtorites from Crete invaded and destroyed the Avvites, who had lived in villages in the area of Gaza.)

²⁴ Moses continued, “Then the LORD said, ‘Now get moving! Cross the Arnon Gorge. Look, I will hand over to you Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and I will give you his land. Attack him and begin to occupy the land. ²⁵ Beginning today I will make people throughout the earth terrified because of you. When they hear reports about you, they will tremble with dread and fear.’”

Victory over Sihon of Heshbon

²⁶ Moses continued, “From the wilderness of Kedemoth I sent ambassadors to King Sihon of Heshbon with this proposal of peace:

²⁷ ‘Let us travel through your land. We will stay on the main road and won’t turn off into the fields on either side. ²⁸ Sell us food to eat and water to drink, and we will pay for it. All we want is permission to pass through your land. ²⁹ The descendants of Esau who live in Seir allowed us to go through their country, and so did the Moabites, who live in Ar. Let us pass through until we cross the Jordan into the land the LORD our God is giving us.’

³⁰ “But King Sihon of Heshbon refused to allow us to pass through, because the LORD your God made Sihon stubborn and defiant so he could help you defeat him, as he has now done.

³¹ “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Look, I have begun to hand King Sihon and his land over to you. Begin now to conquer and occupy his land.’

³² “Then King Sihon declared war on us and mobilized his forces at Jahaz. ³³ But the LORD our God handed him over to us, and we crushed him, his sons, and all his people. ³⁴ We conquered all his towns and completely destroyed everyone—men, women, and children. Not a single person was spared. ³⁵ We took all the livestock as plunder for ourselves, along with anything of value from the towns we ransacked.



³⁶ “The LORD our God also helped us conquer Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Gorge, and the town in the gorge, and the whole area as far as Gilead. No town had walls too strong for us.

³⁷ However, we avoided the land of the Ammonites all along the Jabbok River and the towns in the hill country—all the places the LORD our God had commanded us to leave alone.

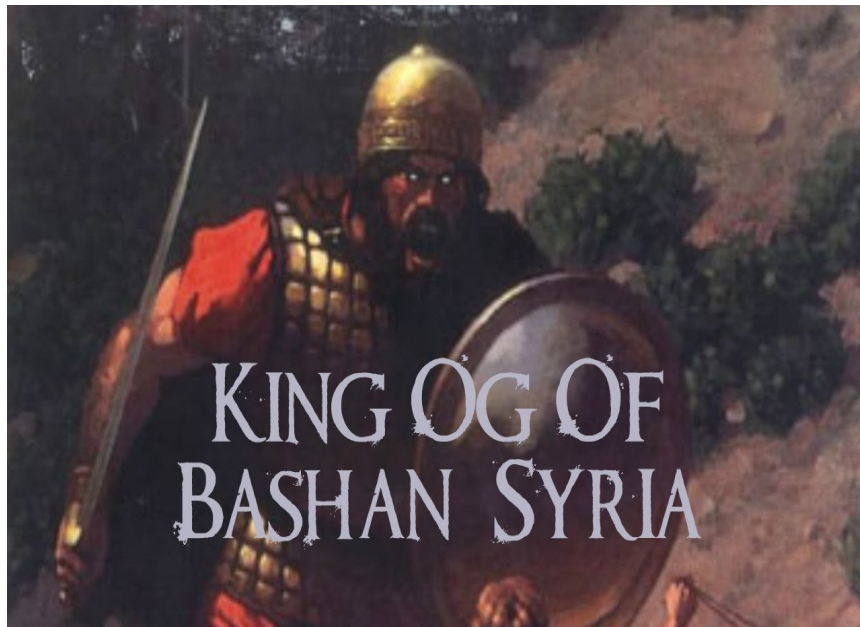
Victory over Og of Bashan

³ “Next we turned and headed for the land of Bashan, where King Og and his entire army attacked us at Edrei. ² But the LORD told me, ‘Do not be afraid of him, for I have given you victory over Og and his entire army, and I will give you all his land. Treat him just as you treated King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon.’

³ “So the LORD our God handed King Og and all his people over to us, and we killed them all. Not a single person survived. ⁴ We conquered all sixty of his towns—the entire Argob region in his kingdom of Bashan. Not a single town escaped our conquest. ⁵ These towns were all fortified with high walls and barred gates. We also took many unwalled villages at the same time. ⁶ We completely destroyed the kingdom of Bashan, just as we had destroyed King Sihon of Heshbon.

We destroyed all the people in every town we conquered—men, women, and children alike.
⁷ But we kept all the livestock for ourselves and took plunder from all the towns.

⁸ “So we took the land of the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River—all the way from the Arnon Gorge to Mount Hermon. ⁹ (Mount Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians, and the Amorites call it Senir.) ¹⁰ We had now conquered all the cities on the plateau and all Gilead and Bashan, as far as the towns of Salecah and Edrei, which were part of Og’s kingdom in Bashan. ¹¹ (King Og of Bashan was the last survivor of the giant Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It can still be seen in the Ammonite city of Rabbah.)



Land Division East of the Jordan

¹² “When we took possession of this land, I gave to the tribes of Reuben and Gad the territory beyond Aroer along the Arnon Gorge, plus half of the hill country of Gilead with its towns.

¹³ Then I gave the rest of Gilead and all of Bashan—Og’s former kingdom—to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (This entire Argob region of Bashan used to be known as the land of the Rephaites.

¹⁴ Jair, a leader from the tribe of Manasseh, conquered the whole Argob region in Bashan, all the way to the border of the Geshurites and Maacathites. Jair renamed this region after himself, calling it the Towns of Jair, as it is still known today.) ¹⁵ I gave Gilead to the clan of Makir.

¹⁶ But I also gave part of Gilead to the tribes of Reuben and Gad. The area I gave them extended from the middle of the Arnon Gorge in the south to the Jabbok River on the Ammonite frontier.

¹⁷ They also received the Jordan Valley, all the way from the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea, ^[1] with the Jordan River serving as the western boundary. To the east were the slopes of Pisgah.

¹⁸ “At that time I gave this command to the tribes that would live east of the Jordan: ‘Although the LORD your God has given you this land as your property, all your fighting men must cross

the Jordan ahead of your Israelite relatives, armed and ready to assist them. ¹⁹ Your wives, children, and numerous livestock, however, may stay behind in the towns I have given you. ²⁰ When the LORD has given security to the rest of the Israelites, as he has to you, and when they occupy the land the LORD your God is giving them across the Jordan River, then you may all return here to the land I have given you.’



²¹ “At that time I gave Joshua this charge: ‘You have seen for yourself everything the LORD your God has done to these two kings. He will do the same to all the kingdoms on the west side of the Jordan. ²² Do not be afraid of the nations there, for the LORD your God will fight for you.’

THE VOICE (Version):

1 These are the words Moses spoke to all the people of Israel *who were gathered* in the wilderness in the Arabah Valley east of the Jordan River, across from Suph. *They’d traveled through many places on their way here*, from Paran through Tophel and on to Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

These places serve as various destinations along Israel’s wilderness route before they reach the plains of Moab, facing the Jordan River, just outside the land of Canaan.

² It’s *only* an 11-day journey by the Mount Seir road from Horeb (*also known as Mount Sinai*), where God made a covenant with Israel, to Kadesh-barnea, where the people first tried to enter the promised land. ³⁻⁴ Now on the first day of the 11th month, 40 years after the nation left Egypt and sometime after Moses had defeated Sihon (king of the Amorites who ruled in Heshbon) and Og (king of Bashan who ruled in Ashtaroth and Edrei), Moses began to give to a new generation of the Israelites each word the Eternal had commanded him to tell them. ⁵ Beyond the Jordan River in the land of Moab, Moses tried to explain this law and its outworking for the people.

Moses: ⁶ The Eternal, our True God, spoke to us back at Horeb. He told us, “You’ve stayed long enough at this mountain! ⁷ Break camp, and head up into the Amorite highlands, into the territories of all their neighbors—into the arid valley, the hills, the lowlands, the southern desert, and the *Mediterranean* seacoast. Go into the land of the Canaanites, *as far north as Lebanon* and all the way *east* to the great Euphrates River. ⁸ Look! I’ve brought you right to the edge of the land that I, the Eternal, swore I’d give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their descendants after them. Go in, and take possession of it!”

⁹ I had to tell you at the time, “I can’t bear you *as a people and deal with all of your cases* by myself anymore. ¹⁰ The Eternal your God has kept increasing your numbers, and just look at you today! There are as many of you as there are stars in the sky! ¹¹ I hope the Eternal, the God of your ancestors, makes you a thousand times more numerous and blesses you just as He said He would. ¹² But how can I alone handle your problems and burdens and cases? ¹³ Choose some wise, perceptive, knowledgeable men from your tribes, and I’ll put them in authority over you.” ¹⁴ You told me you thought it was a great plan, ¹⁵ so I took some leaders from your tribes who were wise and well respected; I chose them as authorities over you all—of groups of thousands or hundreds or fifties or tens, and I appointed some as tribal representatives. ¹⁶ Then I gave your judges careful instructions: “Listen to the disputes between your neighbors *that are brought to you*, and judge them fairly regardless of who is involved—two Israelites or an Israelite and a foreigner. ¹⁷ Don’t show any favoritism when you judge; whether a person is important or unimportant, hear him out. Don’t be intimidated by anybody because it’s really God who is the judge; *you are just His agents*. If any case is too difficult for you, bring it to me, and I’ll handle it.” ¹⁸ At that time, I told you everything you needed to do.

¹⁹ Then we left Horeb, as the Eternal, our True God, commanded us; and we went through that awful, vast wilderness—none of us will ever forget the sight! We headed toward the Amorite highlands until we got to Kadesh-barnea. ²⁰ I told you, “You’ve reached the Amorite highlands, and the Eternal our God is going to give them to us soon. ²¹ Look! The Eternal, your True God, has put this land within your grasp! Go up *into these highlands*, and take possession of them as the Eternal, the God of your ancestors, promised you would. *Go!* Don’t be afraid, and don’t be intimidated!”

The Book of Deuteronomy, even as it follows a covenant-treaty form, has almost a cinematic quality to it. Much of the action takes place in flashbacks as Moses recalls events and describes them to the Israelites in a drama. As we’ve been seeing in this opening historical section of the book, sometimes there are even layers of voices. At one point, Moses speaks in the voice of the people as they speak in the voice of the

spies. Shortly we'll see Moses speaking in the voice of the Lord as He speaks in Moses' own voice! It begins by showing a storyteller and then shifts locations repeatedly in space and time to depict the various episodes he's describing, with his voice providing continuity throughout. Deuteronomy has a timeless, ancient-modern feel because the story of God's work on earth really is written and told by people as they struggle, with varying degrees of success, to understand God's purposes and to join with those people of God who have gone before us. (THE VOICE).

²² But you approached me *with ideas of your own*: “Couldn't we send *a few* people in to *investigate* first? They could explore the land, come back, and tell us what route we should take and what cities we'd come to *along the way*.” ²³ I agreed this was a good idea, so I chose 12 of you to go, one from each tribe. ²⁴ They went up into the highlands. They explored the Eshcol Valley ²⁵ and picked some of the *enormous* fruit growing there. Then they came back down to us with the fruit and a report: “This is a wonderful land that the Eternal our God is going to give to us!”

²⁶ But *even after all this encouragement*, you still weren't willing to go up *and fight*. You rebelled against what the Eternal your God told you to do. ²⁷ In your homes, you complained *to each other*, “The Eternal hates us! That's why He brought us out of the land of Egypt—so He could hand us over to the Amorites. They're going to destroy us! ²⁸ *He tells us*, ‘Go up,’ but go up where? The report of the rest of those we sent out was terrifying: ‘The people there are bigger and taller than we are. Their cities are huge, with walls as high as the sky! We even saw *giants* there—descendants of the Anakim.’”

²⁹ So I told you, “Don't be scared! Don't be afraid of them! ³⁰ *You won't have to fight this battle yourselves*; the Eternal your God, who *always* goes ahead of you, will fight for you just as He did in Egypt—you saw Him do it! ³¹ And here in this wilderness, all along the route you've traveled until you reached this place, haven't you seen the Eternal, your True God, carrying you the way a parent carries a child? ³² But you still don't trust the Eternal your God, ³³ even though He *always* goes ahead of you as you travel and finds places for you to camp. In a *pillar of fire* by night and in a cloud by day, He *always* shows you the right way to go.”

³⁴ When the Eternal heard your *untrusting* words, He angrily swore an oath: ³⁵ “Not a single person in this wicked generation will see the good land I swore to give to your ancestors! ³⁶ There'll be only one exception: Caleb (Jephunneh's son). He will see it. I'll give the *very* land he walked through *when he spied it out* to him and his descendants because he remained completely loyal to the Eternal.” ³⁷ And He was angry with me, too, because of the way you acted. He told me, “Not even you will go into the land! ³⁸ It will be Joshua (Nun's son), a man you've already entrusted *with important responsibilities*, who will enter it instead. Encourage him, because he will *lead the people into the land* and give it to Israel as their possession. ³⁹ You said *that if you fought, all your soldiers would be killed and your little ones would become plunder for your enemies*. But it will be those children *under age 20*, who don't know right from wrong yet, who will enter the land. I'll give it to them, and it will belong to them. ⁴⁰ But as for you, head back into the wilderness, toward the Red Sea.”

⁴¹ After *God's judgment* you responded, “We've sinned against the Eternal! We'll go up and fight now, just as the Eternal, our True God, commanded us.” So each of you strapped on your weapons and prepared to fight. You thought it would be easy to get up into the highlands. ⁴² The

Eternal tried to warn you *that it was too late* by telling me, “Tell them not to go up and not to fight! I am not with them. They’ll be crushed by their enemies.”⁴³ I told you *everything*, but you wouldn’t listen. You rebelled against the Eternal’s command, and you went up arrogantly into the highlands.⁴⁴ The Amorites who lived there came out and attacked you, and you ran away from them as if they were a swarm of bees! They crushed *more and more of your soldiers all the way* from Seir to Hormah, *until they gave up the chase*.⁴⁵ You came back and wept before the Eternal. But He wouldn’t listen to a word you said.⁴⁶ So you just stayed in Kadesh and didn’t leave for a long time.

2 Moses: Finally we did as the Eternal had commanded me, and we headed back into the wilderness toward the Red Sea. For a long time, we wandered around Mount Seir,² until *at last* I got new instructions from the Eternal:³ “You’ve wandered around this mountain long enough. Turn north,⁴ and give the people these directions *from Me*: ‘You’re going to cross into the territory of a people who are related to you. They’re the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They’ll be afraid of you, so be very careful *what you do*.’⁵ Don’t incite a fight with them because I won’t give you even a square foot of their land. I gave Mount Seir to Esau, *and I want his descendants* to live there.⁶ ‘You may purchase food from them with silver and eat; you may buy water from them with silver and drink.’”⁷ *You are not to plunder this nation* because the Eternal your God, has blessed you in every way. He’s watched over you as you’ve journeyed through this vast wilderness. Throughout these 40 years, the Eternal your God has been with you, and you haven’t lacked a thing.

⁸ So we traveled *peacefully* past our relatives, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We left the road through the arid valley, bypassing Elath and Ezion-geber, and took the desert road to Moab.⁹ There the Eternal gave me more instructions: “Don’t attack the Moabites, and don’t fight any battles with them because I’m not going to give you any of Moab’s land. I gave Ar to these descendants of Lot, so it belongs to them.”

¹⁰ The Emim were formerly living in Ar. They were a large and powerful nation, and they were as tall as the *giant* Anakim were.¹¹ They and the Anakim are usually known as “Rephaim,” but the Moabites call them *just* “Emim.”¹² The Horites were formerly living in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. *The Edomites* destroyed them and took their place, just as Israel did in the land the Eternal gave them as their possession, saying,¹³ “Now cross the Wadi Zered *into their territory*.”

Moses: So we crossed the Zered Valley.¹⁴ At that point, we’d been traveling for 38 years, from Kadesh-barnea to the Zered Valley. The last of the people in our camp who had been old enough to fight back then, those men of war, finally died. The Eternal had sworn to them *that none of them would be left among us when we did enter the land*, and this happened *just as He said*.

¹⁵ The Eternal struck them with one disaster after another inside the camp until they were all dead.

¹⁶ Just as soon as the last man of war was gone,¹⁷ the Eternal spoke to me:¹⁸ “Today you will pass into the territory of Moab when you cross Ar.¹⁹ When you get to the other side, you’ll be facing the descendants of Ammon. Don’t attack them, and don’t fight any battles with them

because I'm not going to give you any of Ammon's land. I already gave this land to these descendants of Lot, so it belongs to them."

²⁰ The land of the Ammonites is also considered the land of the Rephaim because the Rephaim (whom the Ammonites call the Zamzummin) were formerly living in it. ²¹ They, too, were a large and powerful nation, as tall as the Anakim, but the Eternal destroyed them so the Ammonites could take their place. ²² He did the same thing for the descendants of Esau who now live in Seir: He destroyed the Horites so the Edomites could take their place. Esau's descendants are still living in Seir. ²³ In the same way, some Caphtorim came from Caphtor and destroyed the Avvim, who were *the first to* live in villages as far away as Gaza, and took their place.

Moses: ²⁴ *The Lord continued, saying,* "Get up, get going, and move on through the Arnon Valley. Listen: I'm going to defeat Sihon, the Amorite king of Heshbon, for you; I'll give you his land *as the beginning of your new territory*. Go get it, and attack him! ²⁵ Starting today, I'm going to make every nation under the sky terrified of you. When they hear about you, they will tremble and despair."

Episodes like the one described in [2:34-35](#), in which entire populations are wiped out, are among the most deeply troubling parts of the Bible. Particularly when this is done under the leadership of people appointed by God, or even on God's direct instructions, many serious questions are raised. How is this consistent with God's mercy? Interpreters have taken different approaches to try to account for episodes like these, but many problems still remain.

Perhaps the best that can be done is to acknowledge that the Bible presents us with a mixture of materials. Mostly God's mercy, kindness, and forgiveness are stressed; but sometimes we do see judgments of God, whether through natural forces such as flood and fire, or through human armies, carried out against entire populations. Which of these attributes, mercy or justice, most essentially characterizes God? Which passages should we consider normative for our own guidance today, and which ones should we see as exceptional and interpret in light of the others? Discerning why and how these exceptional circumstances arose remains a matter for thoughtful students of the Bible to reflect on with reverence and concern. (THE VOICE).

²⁶ We were in the wilderness of Kedemoth when I sent messengers to King Sihon in Heshbon and offered him these terms of peace: ²⁷ "Allow me to go across your land. I'll keep to the *King's Highway*; I won't turn off to the right or to the left. ²⁸ *I ask only for these rights*: sell me food and water for silver, so that I can eat and so that I can drink. Just let me walk across your land. ²⁹ The descendants of Esau who live in Seir let me pass through their territory this way, and so did the Moabites who live in Ar. I'll keep going right to the *Jordan River*, where I'll cross into the land the Eternal, our True God, is giving to us." ³⁰ But Sihon, king of Heshbon, refused to let us go through his land *marching so close to his capital*. The Eternal your God made him stubborn and obstinate so that he would *fight and* be defeated by you, and that's just what happened. ³¹ The Eternal told me, "Look! I have already begun to hand Sihon and his land over to you. Go and take it! His land will be *the first of your new territories*." ³² Then Sihon and his whole army came out to fight against us at Jahaz. ³³ The Eternal, our True God, defeated him for us; we destroyed Sihon and his sons and his whole army. ³⁴ We captured all his cities at that time, and we killed all the men, women, and children in each one of them. We didn't leave a single survivor. ³⁵ We kept only the livestock as our plunder, along with the loot from the cities we had captured. ³⁶ Not a

single city was strong enough to keep us out—from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Valley, including the settlement down in the valley, all the way to Gilead! The Eternal our God gave all of them to us.³⁷ But you didn't go near the land of the Ammonites along the Jabbok River, or toward their cities in the highlands, or anywhere else the Eternal our God told us *not to go*.

3 Moses: Then we left *those conquered regions* and continued up the road toward Bashan. Og, the king of Bashan, came out with his whole army to fight against us at Edrei.² But the Eternal reassured me, “Don't be afraid of him! I'm going to defeat him and his whole army for you, and I'll give you his land. You'll do the same thing to him that you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon.”³ The Eternal, our True God, defeated Og, king of Bashan, for us. We destroyed his whole army—there were no survivors *left to fight for him*.⁴⁻⁵ We captured all 60 of his *large cities and their surrounding villages* at that time; there wasn't a single one we didn't take from them in the whole region of Argob (which was the kingdom of Og in Bashan) in spite of their strong defenses: high walls, *fortified gates*, and *strong bars latching the gates' doors, but we took them all*, and a large number of villages.⁶ We killed all the men, women, and children in each one of them, just as we had done to Sihon, king of Heshbon.⁷ We kept *only* the cattle and the loot from the cities as our plunder.

⁸ This is how at that time we conquered the whole land east of the Jordan *River*. *We captured it all* from those two *ruling* Amorite kings, everything from the Arnon Valley *all the way up* to Mount Hermon:¹⁰ all the cities of the plateau, all of Gilead, and all of Bashan, right out to the cities of Salecah and Edrei (which were in King Og's Bashan).^{12a} From then on, all of that land belonged to us.

⁹ The Sidonians *in the north* call Mount Hermon “Sirion,” and the Amorites call it “Senir.”

¹¹ King Og of Bashan was the last of the *giant* Rephaim. He had a bed made of iron; it was over thirteen feet long and six feet wide! You can still see it in *the city of Rabbah* in Ammon.

Moses:^{12b} To the children of Reuben and Gad, I gave *the kingdom of Sihon*, the area *north* of Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Valley, including half the Gilead highlands and all the cities there.¹³ I gave the kingdom of Og to half of *Joseph's descendants* in the tribe of Manasseh who *settled east of the Jordan*, including the rest of Gilead, the region of Argob, and Bashan.

All of Bashan is known as the “land of the Rephaim” *because of the size of King Og and his ancestors*.¹⁴ Jair, a leader of Manasseh, conquered the *outlying areas* in the whole region of Argob, as far as the border of the Geshurites and Maacathites. He named them after himself, so *that portion of Bashan* is now known as Havvoth-jair, *which means “the villages of Jair.”*

Moses:¹⁵ I gave *the city of Gilead* to Machir, *another leader of Manasseh, because he conquered it*.¹⁶ And I gave the children of Reuben and Gad the land from Gilead *south* to the middle of the Arnon Valley, *north* to the Jabbok River, *east* to the border with Ammon;¹⁷ and *west* to the Jordan *River Valley*, from the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea, beneath where Mount Pisgah rises to the east.¹⁸ Do you remember what I commanded you at the time? *I told the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh*, “The Eternal your God has given you this land, and now it belongs to you. I want all of your warriors to cross *the Jordan*, fully armed, ahead of your fellow Israelites.¹⁹ Only your wives and children and cattle (I know you have a lot of cattle *thanks to*

the plunder you earned) will stay behind in the cities I've given you. ²⁰ When the Eternal your God has given the rest of the Israelites the land that will belong to them on the other side of the Jordan, when they are living in peace just as you are now, then each of you can come back here and live on your own land which I've given you."

²¹ I told Joshua, "You've seen with your own eyes everything the Eternal your God has done to these two kings. He will do the same thing to the kingdoms you're now going into. ²² Don't be afraid of them—*any of you!* The Eternal your God will do the fighting for you."

Ninth of Av, A Marranos Story

One of the most documented of Jewish tragedies that occurred on the 9th of Av was the expulsion of all Jews from Spain in 1492. As a child growing up in Minnesota, we were taught this little jingo:

In 1492, Columbus sailed the Ocean Blue...

What should have been added was this:

And King Ferdinand expelled all the Jews too...

From the 1492 decree and Proclamation of King Ferdinand II of Aragon, who reigned from 1475-1504):

... "We have therefore seen fit to totally banish the Jews from all places in our kingdom, even though they deserve a greater punishment than this for what they have done.

*However, we have had mercy on them, and we are content to limit ourselves to this punishment. We therefore decree and command that every male and female, young and old, who is a Jew and who lives in our kingdom is to be banished and is to leave all those places where they live and to go outside the provinces of our kingdom to another land within the coming three months, starting with 1 May and ending **on the last day of July. [the 9th of Av]** And whoever disobeys us and does not leave will be sentenced to death by hanging or to convert to Christianity. ... "* (bolding and brackets by Bjoraker)

by David Raphael pp. 13-17 Section I – The Minor Order of Elijah (Seder Eliyahu Zuta), quoted from Elijah Capsali (c. 1483-1555)

<http://www.aish.com/h/9av/aas/The-Expulsion-1492-Chronicles.html>

Further on the Marranos: <http://www.jewishhistory.org/the-marranos/>

Mateo's Mezuzah: A Story From 2011 (519 Years After)

I was invited in 2011 to teach a course as an adjunct professor at Denver Seminary. My hosts were a Mexican Messianic Jewish couple named Moy & Alicia, who were living in Denver. They had an 8 or 9-year-old son named Mateo. Moy was from a solid Jewish family from Mexico City. Alicia was raised in a nominal Catholic family.

One evening at dinner Alicia was telling me her story. She related how that her family would periodically rail on the Jews at the dinner table, saying things like *"Stay away from those Jews, you cannot trust them!... they will swindle you out of your money! They are not like us...they will use you! ...if you ever marry a Jew, I will disown you!"*

But then she shared how that, occasionally, like during a holiday, when her father had had a little too much to drink, he would say, *"You know you have Jewish blood, don't you?!"* This really confused and conflicted Alicia, as you can imagine.

Well, shortening this part of the story, when she grew up, she met Moy, they fell in love, and got married. Alicia, you guessed it, stayed away from her father. Moy and Alicia also met Spirit-filled born again believers in Jesus and came to faith through their witness. They knew nothing about Messianic Judaism. But they happened to hear about a congregation of Jews who believed in Jesus as Messiah and met for worship on Shabbat, in Guadalajara. They attended and were amazed, that here were Jews worshipping as Jews, but also followers of Yeshua (Jesus)!

After the service the rabbi talked with them, and asked Alicia what her family name was. When she said "Tostada," the rabbi got animated! He went over to his office and came back with an old dusty book and started paging through it to find what he wanted to show Alicia and Moy. He came to a list of names and pointed out to Alicia, that the name "Tostada" was among the list of those Jewish families who fled Spain for the New World to escape the Inquisition and related persecution of Jews in Spain hundreds of years ago. Alicia was stunned! She realized her ancestors were Jewish... marranos! She has Jewish background!

It began to dawn on her that her father's confusing, love-hate relationship to the Jews was because his ancestors were *conversos*, that he had an identity conflict over this, and that this explained his perplexing behavior to her when she was growing up.

Back to my stay at Moy and Alicia's home in Denver in 2011. She and Moy by now had been thoroughly identifying as Messianic Jews, attending a Messianic congregation in Denver, and studying Messianic Jewish studies at Denver Seminary. The evening she shared this with me, after dinner she walked me up to the guest room. As we walked down the hall, we passed her son Mateo's room. I noticed on his bedroom door a little mezuzah, made from a color book, colored in my crayon. Alicia and I both stopped and looked at the mezuzah.

I thought a moment and then said, *"Isn't it amazing, Alicia?... you come from a marrano family...from the Jews of Spain who were killed and expelled by persecutors who wanted them dead and gone. But now, in 2011, several generations later, your son is identifying as Jewish, as you do. And those persecutors and inquisitors are long dead and gone."* We both looked at each other, and tears rolled down both our faces. We shared an unspoken moment of deep realization, aware at a deeper level than we could articulate at that moment, that the powerful presence of God, which we felt, had also been overseeing in sovereign providence and in covenant-keeping care and faithfulness, the Jewish people, and that He still is...and that little Mateo's mezuzah on his bedroom door was one poignant reminder of that *chesed* (loving-kindness and steadfast love).

The inquisitors and the Nazis are dead and gone. But millions of young "Mateos" are today growing up identifying as Jews with the Jewish peoplehood. *Am Yisrael Chi !* (the people of Israel live!).

"Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness **to a thousandth generation** with those who love Him and keep His commandments; (Deuteronomy 7:9).

And from **the Song of Moses**, at the end of the book (Deuteronomy 32:6b-14 NKJV):

“... Is He not your Father, *who* bought you?
Has He not made you and established you?

⁷ “Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of many generations.
Ask your father, and he will show you;
Your elders, and they will tell you:

⁸ When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,
When He separated the sons of Adam,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.

⁹ For the LORD’s portion *is* His people;
Jacob *is* the place of His inheritance.

¹⁰ “He found him in a desert land
And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness;
He encircled him, He instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye.

¹¹ As an eagle stirs up its nest,
Hovers over its young,
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,
Carrying them on its wings,

¹² So the LORD alone led him,
And *there was* no foreign god with him.

¹³ “He made him ride in the heights of the earth,
That he might eat the produce of the fields;
He made him draw honey from the rock,
And oil from the flinty rock;

¹⁴ Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock,
With fat of lambs;
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the choicest wheat;
And you drank wine, the blood of the grapes.”