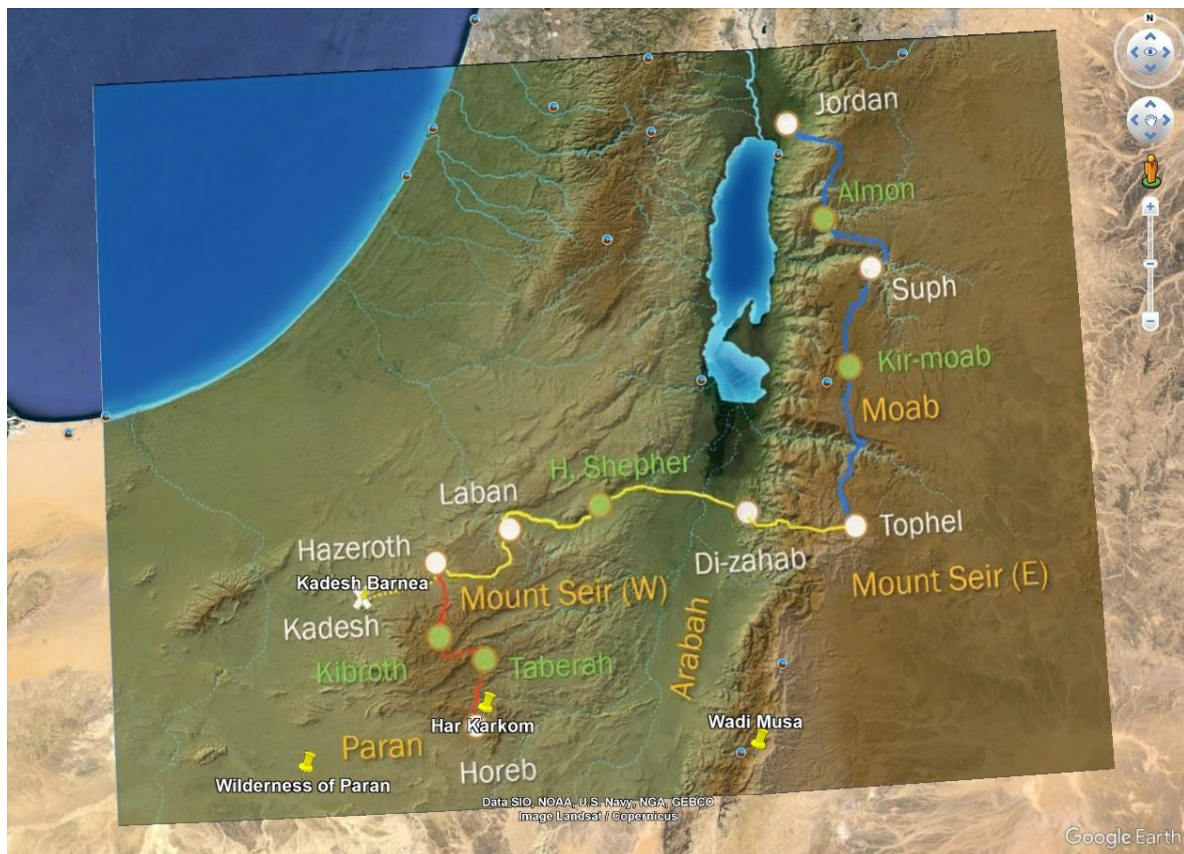


We begin the last book of the Law of Moses, known to Jews as the Torah. They call it *Elleh Ha Deverim* meaning *These be the Words* – which are the first words of the book. In Greek it is called *Deuteronomy* which means *Second Law*, and also in Hebrew *Mishneh Torah*, the *repetition of the law*. It is not a second law but a second giving of the law to which is also added several particular laws and instructions which were necessary as Moses was addressing a new generation from the one which received the original on Mount Sinai as an inheritance on condition that they kept the law of God. It was therefore proper that they should now be reminded of that law. God in his mercy and compassion is aware of the short-term collective memory of mankind! Further, Moses was about to leave them. He had been told to go up into Mount Abarim, where he would see the land but then after that he would die. Moses requested that another should lead the nation of Israel, *that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd*. Moses, despite being prevented from entering the land, and despite being denied the glorious end to a long struggle through the difficult 40-year journey, here in the book of Deuteronomy we see how he faithfully discharges his final duties as a shepherd. In this book, Moses under divine inspiration uses the occasion for instilling discipline. Sometimes the Jews call this book *the book of reproofs*, for this book reproves the nation for their previous rebelliousness and disobedience. The whole of this book towards the end of the 40th year of their coming out of Egypt frequently by the apostles and by the Lord Jesus, significantly during his 40 day trial of temptation in the wilderness, Each time he used a verse from this book to counter his temptations.

It is worth reminding ourselves of Moses prayer, in Psalm 90, as we consider the dedication he showed in the last thirty days of his life.

We commence the book finding the nation of Israel located in the plains of Moab, between Bethjeshimoth and Abelshittim - between the *House of the Deserts* and the *Meadow of the Acacia trees* as the names mean. Between *Paran*, and *Tophel*, and *Laban*, and *Hazeroth*, and *Dizahab*. (verse1) Looking at a map, these places are actually quite far apart. The camp of Israel was very big. We recall how the nations tents spread out were described by Balaam in Numbers 24:5,6 *5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.*



But looking at the map again, the camp of Israel was not that big, so one suggestion is that the nation of Israel were given this second reading of the law, as they travelled through these places.

It is noted that verse 2 is in brackets.

*2 (There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadeshbarnea.)*

Moses called for a solemn assembly, he was 120 years old, His audience was less than half his age, yet Moses stood as firm and strong as the day he began his journey. His eye was not dim nor his natural force abated. His voice ringing out and amplified by the surrounding hills, inspired by the Holy Spirit instilling awe and respect of YAHWEH to his listeners.

Before he delivered the speech, Moses notes (verse 4) how just previously, it was God who had brought about the destruction of Sihon the king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan – (giving God the glory!) As God had conquered the Amorites, so He would conquer all Canaan , if they continued in all that the Lord commanded them.

Moses began speaking to the nation and reminded them when they were back at the Mount Horeb, (v6) near the beginning of their journey from Egypt. It was there they first received the law, and they were there for almost a year and it was *long enough*! In this second giving of the law, it took just thirty days. Why the difference? it was because first time round, the nation got distracted by the worshipping of the golden calf! Moses doesn't mention it here, - time to move on! (It is not always a good idea to keep raking up the past.) Instead the only things worth reminding from the past is the promises God has made He is sure to fulfil, so Moses places before them the promises made to the fathers, the land which was theirs to inherit. Thus far, God had fulfilled what He had promised – they were as the stars of heaven for multitude (v10)

It seems that no one needed reminding that the distance from Mount Horeb to where they were now, was just eleven days journey. The whole audience had been raised in tents, and used to travelling, and the landscape of sand, mountains, and scrub, was all they had

seen, for all their lives. Quite why they had to wander around in circles in the desert for 38 years, Moses reminded them, but in a way which was restrained and diplomatic. He placed before them their recent history was a direct result of their decisions – and not his, and not God's. It was their mothers and fathers, who had caused so much *cumbrance, burden and strife* (v12) which overloaded Moses, so that it was impossible for him to concentrate on the important work of teaching the Word of God to them. It was their requirement that representatives of each of their tribes be chosen. It was their parents, who chose these men, wise men and of reputation (v 15) to be heads over the tribes, and their choice of leaders. So there could be no grumbling against their leaders, when they themselves chose them. It is human nature to always look to blame someone else!

We recall the episode when despite this, Moses was still accused Numbers 16:3 *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?* But Moses is described in scripture as being very meek (Numbers 12:3) Moses did not lift himself up, he was not an autocrat or a dictator, but simply a mouthpiece for God. His advice had been to all the people to choose leaders among them who would be impartial, wise, not a respecter of persons.

In fact, this is the Apostolic advice: Acts 6:3,6 *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.* See also 1 Timothy 3:2-3, Titus 1:7-9.

In the event, as Moses goes on to explain in his presentation to the people about their recent history, it was these same men, that they had elected, who forgot that they were to be unbiased, and to be honest, and instead, gave a dishonest report, an evil report. It was the faithlessness of their parents who demanded that spies be sent into the land (see this additional detail in verse 22)

It was this incident, that became the root cause and the reason that they had to wander in the wilderness for 38 years, even though the destination was a just a few days journey.



This was the root cause:

*26 Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God:*

They had been so close: *21 Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it,... fear not, neither be discouraged.* It was given to them it had been promised to them... Just go and do it!!

Jesus said the same to a young man in Mark 12:34 *Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.* The promise is there for those who BELIEVE in faith and do not rebel! Hebrews 4:1 *Let us therefore fear,*

*lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*

The cause of the rebellion Moses makes clear. He gives again more information, (he has had 38 years to analyse it) 28,29: *our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people are 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. Then I said unto you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them.*

Walled up to heaven! Really? Were not the leaders supposed to be men of honest report? The last time leaders exaggerated about building up to heaven was at Babel! (Genesis 11:4)

Moses reminded the nation, at what pains God went - through Moses as His spokesman, to encourage the people, that God would preserve them how He had cared for them *as a man doth bear his son*, (v31) It was Gid who had suffered their manners in the wilderness as Paul puts it in Acts 13:18...

Moses in presenting these historical facts framed them in such a way, as to show the generation following, standing there before him, that they were just as capable as their parents, for making the same mistakes. Moses was quite direct in his language... you rebelled (v26) you murmured (v27) you did not believe (v32). Yes, they had inherited the nature of their parents – as do we.

Moses had to remind them that the repentance their parents showed, was not genuine (v41) *we have sinned against the Lord...* but even as the words came from their mouths, they were busy getting ready to disobey another command (v43) assuming that God would always be there to help them, they presumed his protection would give them the victory – and how instead they were further humiliated.

Not a glorious history, not a pleasant reminder. But is this not the honest appraisal we must all make when we take a look back at our own lives?

