



## **Deuteronomy 2:13-23** **From the Midst of the Camp**

Three times in just three verses, the narrative today notes that the generation of the men of war was consumed and had perished. And yet, in all three of these verses, it adds on a qualifier. Twice it says, “from the midst of the camp;” once “from among the people.”

What is the Lord conveying to us with that thought? I’ll let you wait until we get there to explain it, but maybe you can guess in advance simply by thinking of the typology of what is being pictured.

Or, maybe you can put it together based on what the rest of the verses say about the nations which are noted as being destroyed in the other verses of our passage. Or, maybe you can put it together by thinking of the fate of those nations which did the destroying.

What is the common denominator between them, and what is the contrast between them and Israel? As you read the word, think on such things. Compare them to the rest of the word, and to what occurs in redemptive history as well, and you can usually piece such things together.

**Text Verse:** “Every word of God *is* pure;  
He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him.  
<sup>6</sup>Do not add to His words,  
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar. Proverbs 30:5, 6

It’s a good set of words for our text verse for several reasons, but particularly for the words “He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him.” As long as Israel trusted the Lord, Israel was unstoppable. But as soon as they failed to trust Him, or when they trusted in another god, which is no god at all, they would quickly be crushed by their foes.

Israel is given to us as an example to live by and learn from. Sometimes, those lessons apply to us individually, and sometimes they apply to us in a more general sense, but they all have meaning. In following the history of Israel, and by comparing it to what Scripture says about them, one can form a plan for his own walk in this life, even if it is just one big broad plan – “The Lord has spoken, and I will obey the Lord.”

If you go no further than that, you will be far better off than most of the Christians in the world today. Just simply heed His word and obey it... in context of course. If you do these things, you will do well. But you cannot do those things unless you... Anyone? Yes, unless you know His word.

Pay heed to His word after you learn His word. God’s directives for you are all to be found in His superior word. And so, let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

## **I. Just As the Lord Had Sworn to Them (verses 13-16)**

<sup>13</sup> “Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.”

Moses now recounts a momentous event in the life of Israel. In this, he begins with these words, *atah qumu v'ivru lakem eth nakhal zared* – “Now rise and cross over Valley Zered.” The word *nakhal* signifies a wadi where water would flow through during the seasons of rain. That word comes from *nakhal* meaning, “to take possession,” or “inherit.” Zared comes from an unused root meaning to be exuberant in growth of foliage.

This location was first mentioned in Numbers 21:12. Israel had gone from Oboth, to Ije Abarim which is in the wilderness east of Moab, and then they camped in this valley. After camping there, Moses was specifically told to rise and cross over the Valley of Zered. In obedience to that, it next says...

<sup>13</sup> (con't) So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered.

*va'naabor eth nakhal zered* – “And crossed over Valley Zered.” It is obviously an important point in their travels. How rare it is to record the command of the Lord and then for the execution of that to be immediately and specifically stated again in this fashion.

The direct command, followed by the immediate obedience, is not unexpected. But the stress in the word of recording both, one right after the other, asks us to consider the event. It is either the beginning of something extremely important, or the ending of something of particular note, or it is both.

Based on the next words, at least the second option is certainly true. A milestone has been reached which is marked out for Israel to remember in the crossing of the Valley of Zered...

<sup>14</sup> And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered was thirty-eight years,

Deuteronomy 1:2 notes the arrival at Kadesh Barnea, saying, “*It is eleven days’ journey* from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea.” This was the detail given to show that Israel had left Sinai (here called Horeb), and they had an 11-day walk to Kadesh Barnea. From that short walk, they had been offered Canaan, meaning the Land of Promise. All they had to do was go in and receive it.

The Lord promised to go before them, and He promised that it would be their possession. But, as we saw, this did not come about. Immediately after recording the fact that it was an 11-day journey, the next verse said –

“Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month, *that* Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them,”  
Deuteronomy 1:3

Something had happened which caused an extended delay in Israel’s entering and receiving the promise. They failed to simply believe the Lord and trust His offer. From there, Deuteronomy 1 gave all of the details of that corporate failure of them to simply believe, trust, and receive. The chapter ended with these words –

“So you remained in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you spent *there*.” Deuteronomy 1:46

Without going on, one can do an approximate guess concerning the math based on what has been presented so far. Israel left Egypt and eventually arrived at Sinai (Horeb). Israel departed there, as it says in Numbers 10:11, “on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year.” Moses spoke to Israel the words of Deuteronomy, as it says in Deuteronomy 1:3, “in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month.”

The fortieth year, minus the second year, would make 38 years, exactly as noted in this verse. The eleventh month, minus the second month, would make 9 months. Understanding this, the crossing of the Valley of Zered happened sometime before this point – sometime before the passing of the 38 years and 9 months when Moses spoke out these words to the people. That specific timeframe was...

14 (con't) until all the generation of the men of war was consumed

This is exactly what the Lord has promised them, first in Numbers 14:26-30, and then as was repeated in an abbreviated form in Deuteronomy 1:34-38 –

“And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, <sup>35</sup> ‘Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, <sup>36</sup> except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD.’ <sup>37</sup> The LORD was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, ‘Even you shall not go in there. <sup>38</sup> Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.’”

It cannot go without note at this time, that Peter uses the same terminology as is used here when speaking to Israel about their rejection of Christ in Acts 2 –

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

<sup>40</sup> And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” Acts 2:38-40

Moses called them an evil generation; Peter called them a perverse generation. Both words speak of the moral state of the people of that generation.

Further, and more directly, the author of Hebrews uses this same account from their past, and he equates it directly to their rejection of Jesus their Messiah –

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

“Today, if you will hear His voice,

<sup>8</sup> Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,

In the day of trial in the wilderness,

<sup>9</sup> Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,

And saw My works forty years.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore I was angry with that generation,

And said, ‘They always go astray in *their* heart,

And they have not known My ways.’

<sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath,

‘They shall not enter My rest.’” Hebrews 3:7-11

The entire congregation of men of war was set to die outside of the Land of Promise with the exception of those few (meaning Joshua and Caleb) who simply believed.

The same was to be true for Israel at the coming of Jesus. None of those who failed to believe in the Messiah would be brought into the inheritance and God’s rest. Rather it would only be those few who would, by faith, accept and believe. Think of this account of Israel’s past as we continue the letter to the Hebrews –

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; <sup>13</sup> but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, <sup>15</sup> while it is said:

“Today, if you will hear His voice,

Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

<sup>16</sup> For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? <sup>17</sup> Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.  
Hebrews 3:12-19

None who failed to believe entered the inheritance, not one. Only Joshua and Caleb, who trusted the Lord, could enter. This thought is then summed up in the first verses of Hebrews 4 –

“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*. <sup>3</sup> For we who have believed do enter that rest...” Hebrews 4:1-3

The Bible is so abundantly clear on this. Israel’s rejection of the Lord’s provision was simply a lack of faith. In that rejection, they died outside of the promise. That was typologically given to us to see Israel’s rejection of the Lord’s provision in Christ.

Their rejection of Him means that they die outside of the promise. They shall never enter His rest, meaning what God has prepared for His people since man’s expulsion from Eden. But for those who simply believed, they do enter that rest. It is in the present tense, indicative mood in the Greek – believe and enter, and it is real and certain.

Despite this rejection of the people, Israel, and despite their banishment from entry into the promise, there is a truth which is inescapable based on Moses’ next words...

<sup>14</sup> (con’t) from the midst of the camp,

The people who rejected the Lord were consumed from the midst of the camp. What does that imply? Without even giving it a second worth of thought, it tells us that there is a camp, and that the camp continues on.

God did not destroy Israel completely. Rather, He maintained them as a people, carefully protecting them from either separating into individual clans and spreading out from one another into different people groups, or from being destroyed as a people, thus ending their nation and culture.

Rather, the camp continued through the wilderness, and Israel continued throughout the many generations since their rejection of Christ. The camp remained. These things happened to them. While the camp continued, those who rejected them were consumed...

14 (con't) just as the LORD had sworn to them.

This goes right back to the words of Deuteronomy 1:34, 35 which was cited earlier. As it said –

“And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, <sup>35</sup> ‘Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers...’”

The Lord took an oath, and as He swore, so He fulfilled. And this fulfillment wasn't a passive waiting around for time to accomplish its work, as is seen in the next words...

15 For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them,

In the previous verse, the word *tamam* was used. It was translated as “consumed.” It means to come to an end or to finish a matter. Here, it shows that this was actively accomplished by the Lord. His hand was against them as they wandered.



It could be that some tried to escape the camp, leaving the body and heading for some people group around them. If so, He may have sent a lion to destroy them. Or, the person may have come to a camp and been killed by those he came to seek refuge with. Further, he may have sent disease into the camp.

We can only speculate, but the deaths of this generation were complete in scope and number, and they served the purpose of bringing to an end those who had seen the Lord's glory and who failed to believe.

This is exactly what happened to those of Israel who were exiled after rejecting Christ. They may have tried to hide who they were, or they may have tried to leave their collective body, but the Lord searched them out and pursued them relentlessly, just as He promised He would in Leviticus 26.

What Israel faced can only be blamed on Israel. They were warned in advance, they were given the opportunity to believe the Lord. They failed to do so. And, the Lord pursued them, even to the ends of the earth. And yet, the same thought of God's sure punishment is mingled with His unending grace, as is seen in the next words...

15 (con't) to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed.

Here, he says that the Lord was against them to *hamam*, or destroy them. The word signifies to put in commotion or throw into confusion. By implication then, it means to destroy. This is what the Lord did to Egypt as Israel crossed through the Red Sea. He threw them into confusion, resulting in their destruction.

Likewise, this was the active hand of the Lord against Israel, until they had come to their end. And yet, the camp remained. The grace

of maintaining Israel, even as He destroyed Israel, served a purpose. It was to show Israel, and indeed all peoples of the earth – His holy character.

He had promised to forever keep Israel, and He kept them through the wilderness. Likewise, He had promised to keep Israel, and He has kept them throughout their exile –

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. <sup>23</sup> And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that *I am* the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. <sup>24</sup> For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup> Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup> I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. <sup>28</sup> Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup> I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. <sup>30</sup> And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. <sup>31</sup> Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that *were* not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. <sup>32</sup> Not for your sake do I do *this*,” says the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!” Ezekiel 36:22-32

Replacement theology fails because it does not take into account the nature of God, the unconditional nature of His spoken word, or the surety of His covenantal promises.

Israel rejected the Lord Jesus, but God did not reject Israel collectively. Instead, He rejected them individually while

maintaining them. The camp remains. And because it both remained and remains, there is a time for the punishment to end. For Israel in the wilderness, that time was to end in the crossing of the Valley of Zered.

As we saw, the word translated as “valley,” *nakhal*, comes from *nakhal* meaning, “to take possession,” or “inherit.” Zered comes from an unused root meaning to be exuberant in growth of foliage. The significance of the place is that for Israel, abundant life is once again ready to be possessed.

*A whole generation had perished along the way  
But the journey brought them back to the land again  
Before them lay the prospect of a new day  
Behind them lay the bodies of that generation of men*

*In going forward they were to have faith in the Lord  
They were to trust, unlike that generation of men  
He would give them the land, according to His word  
Because He had brought them back to the land again*

*Faithful and True is the God of Israel  
Though He destroyed them to the last unfaithful of those men  
He also preserved them for the story to tell  
That He had faithfully brought them back to the land again*

## **II. Just as He Had Done (verses 16-23)**

<sup>16</sup>“So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people,

Maybe Moses was thinking of the events recorded in this verse when He penned these words of Psalm 90 –

“For we have been consumed by Your anger,  
And by Your wrath we are terrified.

<sup>8</sup>You have set our iniquities before You,

Our secret *sins* in the light of Your countenance.  
<sup>9</sup> For all our days have passed away in Your wrath;  
We finish our years like a sigh.” Psalm 90:7-9

In the previous two verses, it said, the men of war were destroyed from the midst of the camp. Here it says they were destroyed from among the people. The word *ha'am*, or “the people,” is singular. It speaks of the collective whole.

The camp remained, because the people remained. The generation had perished, but the generations continue. Israel remains. Praise God for His faithfulness. Israel remains.

<sup>17</sup> that the LORD spoke to me, saying:

The Lord set a time and a location, along with the event (meaning the final death of the disobedient generation) to speak out words of a new direction and purpose for Moses, and thus for Israel. He begins that new direction with...

<sup>18</sup> ‘This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab.

The words are explaining the crossing of the Valley of Zered. It is the border of Moab, and the location is by Ar, the city of Moab. Or, it could be as in verse 9 where Ar, the city, is representative of the land of Moab. In that case, it is saying that by crossing the river, they are in the land of Moab, regardless of the actual location of the city.

The latter seems more likely, because it then skips over anymore mention of Moab and goes directly to Ammon. The Lord has already taken care of his words of warning concerning Moab in verse 2:9, and so there is no need to repeat that again. Thus, he next continues with...

19 And when you come near the people of Ammon,

Lot had a child through each of his own daughters. The account is found in Genesis 19:36-38 –

“Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. <sup>37</sup> The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he *is* the father of the Moabites to this day. <sup>38</sup> And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he *is* the father of the people of Ammon to this day.”

The people of Ammon are descended from Ben-Ammi, or “Son of My People.” The name Ammon comes from *am*, meaning “people,” or *im*, meaning “with.” And so, it means either “A People” or maybe “Kinsmen.” The name is derived from this incestuous relationship, just as Moab, or “From Father,” is. Of them, like Moab, the Lord says...

19 (con’t) do not harass them or meddle with them,

Here, the Lord uses the same words as He did concerning Moab in verse 2:9. In essence, the words mean that they are not to besiege them in their cities or fortifications, and they are not to stir up trouble with them in order to provoke them to war...

19 (con’t) for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession,

Again, this follows on in thought with the words of verse 2:9 which concerned Moab, which said, “for I will not give you any of their land as a possession.” And the same reason is then given for this command...

19 (con’t) because I have given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession.”

The land of Ammon is where the descendants of Ben-Ammi settled. It became their possession, and they dwelt in it. Israel was to leave this land alone, and to leave the inhabitants of the land alone as well. They were not allowed to cause any damage or harm to them, and this is for a specific, yet somewhat hidden reason.

As with verse 2:9, without being dogmatic about a typological picture, it again looks to what God would do in Gentile believers. Ammon descends from Ben-Ammi, or Son of My People. Citing Hosea, Paul speaks of the Lord's people in Romans 9 –

“I will call them My people, who were not My people,  
And her beloved, who was not beloved.”  
<sup>26</sup> “And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them,  
'You *are* not My people,'  
There they shall be called sons of the living God.” Romans 9:25, 26

Israel of the future is to accept God's chosen Gentiles, and they are not to harm them, even when they are again God's chosen instrument for revealing Himself to the world.

The picture fits, especially because of the naming of Lot which, as we saw then, means “Covering.” The Lord has called them His people and thus they are covered as such.

But despite this, and again like for that of Moab, there is a more immediate reason for sparing Ammon as a people. Like Moab, they too will come into the line of Christ Jesus. Moab did through Ruth. But some generations later, this is said of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon –

“And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam *was* forty-one years old when he became king. He reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name *was* Naamah, an Ammonitess.” 1 Kings 14:21

From that marriage came the next king of Israel, Abijam (Abijah), and through him, eventually came the Messiah, our Lord Jesus. Thus, the family of Lot – all of them – are in the genealogy of Jesus.

He, his wife, his two daughters, and their two sons are all in this perfectly structured genealogy which was to usher in the Messiah of the world. The story of Lot and his daughters in the cave is one of the most misunderstood of the Bible. It is there for a reason, but not the reason that most people ascribe to it.

Of this land, like that of the land of Moab, a parenthetical thought is now introduced...

<sup>20</sup> (That was also regarded as a land of giants;

Here, we have the same translational problem as verse 2:11. The word “giants” is misleading. The Hebrew says Rephaim. The fact that they may be large is irrelevant.

As we saw, Rephaim comes from a word meaning to sink down or relax. This is similar to the Nephilim. That comes from *naphal*, meaning to fall. However, Rephaim could also come from the word meaning “to heal.”

The land of Ammon was called a land of Rephaim. This would be akin to saying, the land of Florida is the land of the Seminoles. They are the original inhabitants of the land. The name isn't so much given based on their size, but on their clan, even if their size is part of the equation. The thought continues with...

<sup>20</sup> (con't) giants formerly dwelt there.

It should say, “Rephaim formerly dwelt there.” This is the same as “Seminole Indians formerly dwelt there.” The thought goes on...

20 (con’t) But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim,

Rather than identifying them by their clan, the people of Ammon gave these people their own name. The name is believed to come from *zamam*, meaning to consider, purpose, or devise – often in a bad way, but not always. Thus, these are maybe “The Schemers.”

The inclusion of this clause is to identify the group based on their attributes rather than their clan. This would not be unlike calling the Seminoles, “The Unconquered People,” because they eluded capture by the US Army in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Again, as before, by bringing in this subject matter, it is to show Israel, even before entering into Canaan, that just as these tribes who were closely related to them – Edom, Moab, and Ammon – could subdue their enemies, so Israel should not fear that they too could subdue the inhabitants of Canaan.

This continues to be seen with the next words...

21 a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim.

Like what was said of the Emim in verse 2:11, they are noted for their greatness, their numbers, and their height – thus they were terrifying to those who came into contact with them. It is also possible that, like the Emim, they were noted at the time of Abraham in Genesis 14. There, a group known as the Zuzim is recorded. It may be an abbreviated form of their name.

If this is so, the Rephaim, the Emim, and the Zamzummim are all ethnically related. No matter what, they were eventually destroyed, and the descendants of Lot filled their land.



Bringing in their similarity to the Anakim is again a note intended to bolster Israel as they entered Canaan. The Anakim still dwelt there, and if the Ammonites could wipe out the Zamzummim, Israel could wipe out the Anakim. There should be complete confidence for them in the battle ahead. This is especially so because of the next words...

21 (con't) But the LORD destroyed them before them,

Here, it is specifically stated that it is the Lord, meaning Yehovah, who destroyed the people before them. It is not that the Edomites, Moabites, or the Ammonites were the principal force behind the destruction of these people, but that they were the weapon the Lord wielded to destroy them.

This thought is seen in the setting up of kings in Daniel 2, and of the building up and destroying of nations in Jeremiah 18 and elsewhere. In Jeremiah, it says –

“The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy *it*, <sup>8</sup> if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. <sup>9</sup> And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*, <sup>10</sup> if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it. Jeremiah 18:7-10

This is the confidence-boosting thought that is now given to Israel. They will be the instrument of destruction against His enemies. The victory is assured, because the battle belongs to the Lord, just as for those in Ammon...

21 (con't) and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place,

*va'yirashum va'yeshvu takhtam* – literally, “and disinherited them, and sat under them.” To sit is to dwell or reside and to come under another is to replace them. Ammon, because of the Lord’s destruction of these people, took possession of their land...

<sup>22</sup> just as He had done for the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them.

This has not been stated before. In verse 2:12, it said that “Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them” as in the coming clause. However, here it ascribes that to having been accomplished by the Lord, as is seen in the word *ka'asher*, or “just as.” The Lord was the principal cause, and Esau was the instrumental cause.

This could almost be inferred from the words of verse 2:12 which continue by saying that Esau dispossessed and destroyed them “just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the Lord gave them.” The Lord gave the land of their possession to Israel, but He also did so for the descendants of Esau and Ammon. For each...

<sup>22 (con't)</sup> They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day.

There is a time when the Ammonites and Edomites were overthrown to the point where their names died out. From a biblical perspective, only the lands which they dwelt in still bear their names. The peoples were either killed or assimilated into other people groups.

For the Edomites, surprisingly, it was into the nation of Israel. That is recorded by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus who says that about 129 BC John Hyrcanus –

“...subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews;

and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and of the rest of the Jewish ways of living; at which time therefore this befell them, that they were hereafter no other than Jews.” Antiquities, Book 13 Chapter 9 Section 1

At the time of the Deuteronomy narrative, however, Esau dwelt in the land of their possession because the Lord so determined it to be. Likewise, and to even further bolster Israel’s confidence that it is the Lord who establishes and destroys nations, the verses today speak of the destruction of another people group on the other side of the land of Canaan...

<sup>23</sup> And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza—

The meaning of Avim is hard to pin down. It is related to a word meaning to bend or twist, but also a distortion or ruin, or even perversity or moral evil. Because no definitive name is given, I will venture out on a limb and call them the Mischief-makers, but that shouldn’t be used as a definition to dogmatically pass on to others.

Whatever their name actually means, this group of people lived on the other side of Canaan, along the coast where Gaza is today. The name Gaza, or as it is said in Hebrew Azzah, comes from the word *az*, or strong, and that is its meaning, Strong.

It seems that nothing has changed in 3500 +/- years, because there are still mischief-makers in that stronghold. However, those known as the Avim were overthrown by, as it says...

\*<sup>23</sup> (fin) the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.)

This group of people is identified in Genesis 10:14. These people descended from Ham through Mitsraim, meaning the founder of

Egypt. The meaning of Caphtor is extremely hard to pin down. But, because these people will become very prominent in Scripture in the coming books, a short explanation of them from Abrahim is worthy of note –

“Through the prophet Amos, YHWH declared that he brought up the Philistines from Caphtor, and through Jeremiah that the Philistines emerged as a separate derivative culture from a remnant of Caphtor.

At that time this remnant of Caphtor appears to have been concentrated on an island (the noun יָם, 'i refers to a coast region: coast, capes and islands off the coast). Most commentators seem to favor Crete as the last stronghold of the Caphtorim, which would make the Philistines displaced survivors of the Minoan culture. The Minoans had maintained a highly advanced civilization from the 4th millennium BCE, which had absorbed much of Egypt's culture and which in turn had radiated its own identity to the Greek and Canaan coasts. After a series of natural calamities and attacks by Hittites and probably others, the Minoan culture began to decline halfway the 2nd millennium BCE. Around 1200 BCE, the Minoan culture had been eradicated from the island.

It seems reasonable to expect that certain Minoan refugees began to seek refuge with their old business partners. Right around the time that the Minoan culture came to an end, Egyptian records begin to make mention of the Philistines in their realm, and the distinct Philistine identity may very well have come about when waves of late-Minoan refugees overwhelmed native Canaanite tribes.” Abrahim

It is this group of people, probably from the Minoan culture, who came into the land of Canaan and destroyed the Avim. However, Joshua 13:3 records some of them still living in the land at that time, having been assimilated into what become known as the Philistines.

The point of this verse, like that of the others previously given, is that it was the Lord who directed the nations, and it is He who rules over the nations. Ultimately, it is He who decides when a nation, people group, or culture is to be expanded or ended.

As He had done this on both sides of the land of Canaan, He is the One who would ensure that the land of Canaan itself would be brought under Israel's hand according to His promise. The only time this would not be the case is when Israel failed to obey Him.

If such should occur, He would redirect His purposes according to their behavior. This is seen, explicitly, in the book of Judges –

“Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, “Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, <sup>21</sup> I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, <sup>22</sup> so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept *them*, or not.” Judges 2:20-22

But Israel had been warned of exactly this thing. Joshua, an old man and ready to die, warned them of this—

“Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God. <sup>12</sup> Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, <sup>13</sup> know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.” Joshua 23:11-13

As we close, we must then consider what is going on in today's verses. Israel had disobeyed the Lord. They had gone into exile in the wilderness, and they were destroyed – entirely – for having

failed to believe the Lord. And yet, in their utter destruction – meaning those who had not believed – they were also preserved.

However, the nations that the Lord chose to destroy – and with whom He had made no covenant – were destroyed and not preserved. And those nations whom he had used to destroy those same nations, such as Edom, Moab, and Ammon, were eventually destroyed and not preserved.

What is the difference between them and Israel? It comes down to one thing alone. It is not Israel's goodness. It is not Israel's intelligence, wisdom, power, ability, or righteousness – they lacked all of these things in abundance.

It is because the Lord spoke, and in His speaking, He cannot lie. He further solidified His spoken word in a covenant, and in that covenant, He laid His honor on the line. The other nations were destroyed and perished, Israel was destroyed, and yet preserved. Israel stands and Israel shall stand – not because of their own goodness, but because of the faithful and tender mercies of the covenant-keeping Lord.

The same good and kind God who watches over Israel also watches over those who have come to Him through the giving of His Son. The covenant has been made, and God can no more betray those who come to Him than He could betray Israel.

The word is an everlasting surety that He is God, that He is faithful, and that His people are secure in Him. The lesson today is that in Christ you stand, and in Christ you shall stand – to the glory of God the Father.

**Closing Verse:** “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy and say to them,

‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. <sup>14</sup> I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the LORD.’” Ezekiel 37:13-16

**Next Week:** Deuteronomy 2:24-37 *The tales of valor could go on and on...*  
(The Defeat of Sihon, King of Heshbon) (8<sup>th</sup> Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **From the Midst of the Camp**

“Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered  
So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered, as the LORD said

And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea  
Until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered  
Was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war  
Was consumed from the midst of the camp  
-----just as the LORD had sworn to them; just as He said

For indeed, was against them the hand of the LORD  
To destroy them from the midst of the camp  
-----until they were consumed, according to His word

“So it was, when all the men of war  
Had finally perished from among the people; when it came to be  
That the LORD spoke to me, saying:  
This day you are to cross over at Ar, Moab’s boundary

And when you come near the people of Ammon  
Do not harass them or meddle with them; use no such aggression

For I will not give you as a possession any of the land  
-----of the people of Ammon  
Because I have given it to the descendants of Lot as a possession

(That was also regarded as a land of giants  
Giants formerly dwelt there, with giants the place did teem  
But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim  
A people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim

But the LORD destroyed them before their face  
And they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place

Just as He had done for the descendants of Esau  
Who dwelt in Seir; as the record does say  
When He destroyed the Horites from before them  
They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day

And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza  
-----such was the case  
The Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them  
-----and dwelt in their place

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word  
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You  
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard  
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone  
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise  
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown  
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...



<sup>13</sup>“ ‘Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.’ So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered. <sup>14</sup> And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered *was* thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the LORD had sworn to them. <sup>15</sup> For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed.

<sup>16</sup>“So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, <sup>17</sup> that the LORD spoke to me, saying: <sup>18</sup> ‘This day you are to cross over at Ar, the boundary of Moab. <sup>19</sup> And *when* you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you *any* of the land of the people of Ammon *as* a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot *as* a possession.’ ”

<sup>20</sup> (That was also regarded as a land of giants; giants formerly dwelt there. But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, <sup>21</sup> a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them before them, and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, <sup>22</sup> just as He had done for the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them. They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to this day. <sup>23</sup> And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza—the Capthorim, who came from Capthor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.)