

Deuteronomy 3: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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Preacher: Alastair Roberts

[0 : 0 0] Deuteronomy chapter 3 And we took all his cities at that time. There was not a city that we did not take from them.

Sixty cities. The whole region of Agab. The kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars. Besides very many unwalled villages.

And we devoted them to destruction. As we did to Sihon the king of Heshbon. Devoting to destruction every city, men, women and children. But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took as our plunder.

So we took the land at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites. Who were beyond the Jordan. From the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon. The Sidonians call Hermon Sirion.

While the Amorites call it Senea. All the cities of the Tableland and all Gilead and all Bashan. As far as Selica and Adreai. Cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. For only Og the king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim.

[1 : 2 9] Behold his bed was a bed of iron. Is it not in Rabah of the Ammonites? Nine cubits was its length. And four cubits its breadth. According to the common cubit. When we took possession of this land at that time.

I gave to the Reubenites and the Gadites the territory beginning at Oroa. Which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon. And half the hill country of Gilead with its cities. The rest of Gilead and all Bashan.

The kingdom of Og. That is all the region of Agob. I gave to the half tribe of Manasseh. All that portion of Bashan is called the land of Rephaim. Jair the Manassite took all the region of Agob.

That is Bashan. As far as the border of the Geshurites and the Meacathites. And call the villages after his own name. Havath Jair as it is to this day. To Meacathia I gave Gilead.

And to the Reubenites and the Gadites. I gave the territory from Gilead as far as the valley of the Arnon. With the middle of the valley as a border. As far over as the river Jabbok. The border of the Ammonites.

[2 : 2 8] The Araba also. With the Jordan as the border. From Kinnareth as far as the Sea of the Araba. The Salt Sea. Under the slopes of Pisgah on the east. And I commanded you at that time saying.

The Lord your God has given you this land to possess. All your men of valor shall cross over armed before your brothers. The people of Israel. Only your wives, your little ones and your livestock.

I know that you have much livestock. Shall remain in the cities that I have given you. Until the Lord gives rest to your brothers as to you. And they also occupy the land that the Lord your God gives them beyond the Jordan.

Then each of you may return to his possession which I have given you. And I commanded Joshua at that time. Your eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings. So will the Lord do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing.

You shall not fear them. For it is the Lord your God who fights for you. And I pleaded with the Lord at that time saying. O Lord God you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand.

[3 : 28] For what God is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours. Please let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan. That good hill country in Lebanon.

But the Lord was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the Lord said to me. Enough from you. Do not speak to me of this matter again. Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward.

And look at it with your eyes. For you shall not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua and encourage and strengthen him. For he shall go over at the head of this people. And he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see.

So we remained in the valley opposite Beth Peor. Deuteronomy chapter 3 continues the opening account of the victories of Israel over the Transjordanian kings.

Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan. The end of Deuteronomy chapter 2 spoke of the defeat of Sihon of Heshbon. And this chapter describes the defeat of Og of Bashan in a similar manner.

[4 : 30] Once again there was a total routing of the Amorite king. And a complete conquest of his territory. 60 towns. Og was one of the remaining giants. And the size of his bedstead is described as evidence of his great stature.

The land of the Amorite king stretched from the Salt or Dead Sea above the Moabite kingdom up to Mount Hermon. Some way north of Kinnerath, the Sea of Galilee, adjoining Aram.

All of this land was parceled out to the half-tribe of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites. The land was conquered from south to north, but the parceling out of the land here is described from north to south in the verses that follow.

Jair, the son of Manasseh was Manasseh's great-great-grandson. In 1 Chronicles 2, verses 21-22, he's described as follows. Afterward, Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir, the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was 60 years old.

And she bore him Segub, and Segub father Jair, who had 23 cities in the land of Gilead. We shouldn't presume that Jair is an individual here. It most likely refers to a clan.

[5 : 37] Machir was the son of Manasseh. In Genesis chapter 50, verse 23, And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were counted as Joseph's own.

Machir and Jair are two subgroups of the half-tribe of Manasseh, and these two clans received the northern parts of the conquered territory. Jair was one of the names of the judges in Judges chapter 10.

He was a Gileadite from the region occupied by that Manasseh clan. This stage of the conquest is also described in Numbers chapter 32, verses 29-42.

And Moses said to them, If the people of Gad and the people of Reuben, every man who is armed to battle before the Lord, will pass with you over the Jordan, and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession.

However, if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. And the people of Gad and the people of Reuben answered, What the Lord has said to your servants we will do.

[6 : 40] We will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, and the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us beyond the Jordan. And Moses gave to them, to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan.

The land and its cities were their territories, the cities of the land throughout the country. And the people of Gad built Dibon, Ataroth, Aroah, Atrosh-Shophan, Jezer, Jogbihah, Beth-Nimrah, and Beth-Haran, fortified cities and foals for sheep.

And the people of Reuben built Heshbon, Eliale, Kiriathim, Nebo, and Baal-Meon. Their names were changed. And Sibma. And they gave other names to the cities that they built.

And the sons of Makir, the son of Manasseh, went to Gilead and captured it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it. And Moses gave Gilead to Makir, the son of Manasseh, and he settled in it.

And Jair, the son of Manasseh, went and captured their villages, and called them Havath-Jair. And Noba went and captured Kenath and its villages, and called it Noba after his own name.

[7 : 51] This is also described in Joshua chapter 13, verses 8 to 13. With the other half of the tribe of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance, which Moses gave them beyond the Jordan eastward, as Moses the servant of the Lord gave them, from Araah, which is on the edge of the valley of the Anon, and the city that is in the middle of the valley, and all the tableland of Medibah, as far as Dibon, and all the cities of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the boundary of the Ammonites, and Gilead, and the region of the Geshurites, and the Meakathites, and all Mount Hermon, and all Bashan, to Selechah, all the kingdom of Og in Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth, and in Edrei.

He alone was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. These Moses had struck and driven out. Yet the people of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites, or the Meakathites, but Geshur and Meakath dwell in the midst of Israel to this day.

Geshur and Meakath appear to be micro-kingdoms. In Numbers chapter 32, verses 6 to 27, Moses had required Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh to join the rest of the tribes in their conquest of the land on the west side of the Jordan.

But Moses said to the people of Gad, and to the people of Reuben, Shall your brothers go to the war while you sit here? Why will you discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land that the Lord has given them?

Your fathers did this, when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. For when they went up to the valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land that the Lord had given them.

[9 : 28] And the Lord's anger was kindled on that day, and he swore, saying, Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me, none except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the Lord.

And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone. And behold, you have risen in your father's place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel.

For if you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all this people. Then they came near to him and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, but we will take up arms, ready to go before the people of Israel, until we have brought them to their place.

And our little one shall live in the fortified cities, because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our homes, until each of the people of Israel has gained his inheritance.

For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan, to the east. So Moses said to them, If you will do this, if you will take up arms to go before the Lord for the war, and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before the Lord, until he has driven out his enemies from before him, and the land is subdued before the Lord, then after that you shall return and be free of obligation to the Lord and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord.

[11:07] But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out. Build cities for your little ones, and flocks for your sheep, and do what you have promised.

And the people of Gad and the people of Reuben said to Moses, Your servants will do as my Lord commands. Our little ones, our wives, our livestock, and all our cattle shall remain there in the cities of Gilead, but your servants will pass over every man who is armed for war before the Lord to do battle as my Lord orders.

In the willingness of the tribes of Gad and Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh to fight with their brothers for the rest of the land, there is an expression of the commonality of the people of Israel. They are not just detached tribes, but they are coming together for a common purpose and a common destiny.

They are divided in the land into different territories, but they have a common possession in the land as they all belong to the one nation, fighting for each other's territories is one of the ways in which this is expressed.

Moses also charges Joshua as the new leader of the people at this point. The defeat of the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, is held forth as an example of how the Lord would bring them victory on the other side of the Jordan.

[12:19] The Lord fights for Israel. Having been told that he could not enter the land, Moses pleaded with the Lord that he might be permitted to go over and see it. However, the Lord was angry with Moses on account of Israel and he could not.

His association with an unfaithful people and his own unfaithfulness with the striking of the rock at Meribah Kadesh meant that he had to die on the far side of the Jordan. However, he does get to view the land from Pisgah.

A question to consider. In Genesis chapter 13, verses 14 to 15, we find a very similar description to that of Moses on Pisgah concerning Abram. The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward.

For all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. How might Israel have seen their own experience in that of Abram in Genesis 13 and 14 and what might they have learned from him?