

Deuteronomy: Historical Prologue (Deut. 1-3)

Session 2; Dr. Cynthia Parker

This is Dr. Cynthia Parker and her teaching on the book of Deuteronomy. This is session 2, the historical prologue of Deuteronomy 1 - 3.

Introduction

We are now going to be moving into Deuteronomy chapters 1 through 3. So, these are considered to be the historical chapters. This is all part of the introduction, and as we move into the introduction of Deuteronomy, we need to recognize that we're setting the stage for the whole entire book. So, there is something about why are we talking about these things? What is the purpose of the book? So, we're setting the stage, which means we need to place ourselves geographically. We pay attention to the where because, as we said in the last lecture, the where or the land is very important. So, we have lots of geographical information in these first three chapters.

So, we need to look at what is happening with the land, but we're also being placed historically. So, according to the narrative, where are we? And we get lots of information that's just jammed right into the very first few verses even. When we start Deuteronomy, we just start running, and there is lots of information at the very beginning.

So, we are going to spend the majority of our time placing ourselves geographically, and then we'll pick up the historical narrative part as well. So, before we even engage with the book of Deuteronomy, let me introduce you to the bigger context because this would have been very intuitive for the original audiences, which becomes less intuitive for us now.

Map: Riverine Cultures: Egypt & Mesopotamia

So, I'm going to put up a picture of a map. This map probably looks familiar to many of you. I got this map from Biblical Backgrounds. So, Biblical Backgrounds is a company that produces lots of very detailed maps that pertain primarily to the narratives of the Bible, and biblical lands. The maps are very inexpensive. I would highly recommend that every single person go and buy the maps and do some of the map works—the markings on those maps. So Biblical Backgrounds.com or Bibback.com is their website, but these maps are from them.

I drew, on top of the map, those green lines. So, you'll notice that there is a green line in the south. And so, this southern green line is here drawn right on top of the Nile River. It's green for purpose because the Nile River floods its banks every single year, and as it floods, its banks produce, it brings lots of very fertile soil and dumps it on either side of the river bank. So, you have all along the Nile freshwater and very valuable soil on which it is very easy to produce agriculture. And so, we have some of the very first of human habitation, like humans that are settling, that are developing agriculture with cereal crops. Some of the first human communities that are doing that are found here along the Nile.

Now, I have another green line, and this one is up north in Mesopotamia. So, this follows the flow of the Tigris and the Euphrates that flow this way down into the Persian Gulf. Now the Tigris and Euphrates are the same as the Nile; they flood every single year. There's abundant freshwater, and there's lots of wonderful fertile soil. The soil floods onto the banks of the rivers. It makes it very easy to develop agriculture. So, just like some of the very first human permanent settlements were found down by the Nile, they were also found up

here in Mesopotamia. So, what we're finding is riverine communities, encouraged by the geography itself, encourage humans to settle.

Rivers and Human Communities

Now, we also find historically that because these rivers are so powerful, they easily unite communities. Let's say I live in a community and I'm close to one of these rivers, and so my agricultural season follows the flood cycle of the river. And let's say you have decided to build a community a little further, up the river. One year I might have too much wheat, and maybe you have too much flax. Well, it's pretty easy for our communities to build a very simple raft and float up or down the river and exchange and barter goods. Well, we may enter into this relationship that lasts through generations, and we become familiar with the other community; communication was very easy. Before you know it, we're able to establish systems of government. We pay taxes to the government, and before you know it, the government is going out and conquering the world.

It's a little simplistic, but basically, that tells us what happens along these riverine communities. So, all along the Nile, and all along the Tigris and the Euphrates, we have communities throughout all of biblical history that grew up along those areas. They were able to develop and foster very strong governments and kingdoms that, at some point in time, went out and conquered the rest of the land on the map.

Middle of the Fertile Crescent: The Land Between

This is the area we call the Fertile Crescent, but on the edges of the crescent are the only places we have these powerful rivers. Well, we are actually interested in the biblical narrative, so where does the biblical narrative take place? Well, for that, we're going to look right here at the center of the crescent.

And I know it's a little bit washed out, maybe in this picture, but the land on this map has a much darker brown color, and it's there to demonstrate the high mountains. There is no powerful river in this land, which means there is no easy way to develop communication; there's no easy way to unify the people who are there. In fact, all of the mountains, the texture, the bend, and the folds of the hills actually prevent people from being cohesive. So, if you and I had communities and we were the same distance apart, but we're up in the mountains instead of down along the river if you are just up and over the edge of the hill because I can't see you and because it's much harder for me to get to you, I am going to be suspicious of you. I will not necessarily want to embrace you as part of my community. So, it is much more difficult to unify people who are in the middle part of the Fertile Crescent. And yet, that is the portion of land that contains the majority of our biblical narrative. Until we get beyond the gospels, almost all of our narrative is taking place here inside this oval.

So, that in and of itself, and we haven't even gotten to Deuteronomy yet, but I still think that is a really fascinating concept that plays into the type of kingdom that God must want his people to develop because he's not purposely putting them in a place where they can go out and conquer the world. If he would have wanted that, he would have to put them in Egypt or Mesopotamia along the rivers. Instead, he put them here. So, there's a certain type of lesson learned by living in that kind of land. And that is what we'll get into a little bit later once we start thinking about the types of laws that God has given to his people -- the laws, those helpful hints, for how to live a fulfilled human existence.

Trade Routes

Now we can; before we move on, we have to decide what actually is the benefit if the land isn't the benefit; if they can't go out and conquer the world, is there another benefit to this land? Why on earth would this be the place?

Well, I'm going to show you a different map where I have zoomed out a little bit. And I've drawn lots of different arrows on this map. So, we have blue or bluish-purple arrows. Those are there marking for us the sea trade routes. And then I have red arrows that are there marking the land trade routes. And so, if you take a moment and look at the map, what you see is that all the big empires want to trade with each other. So, we have Egypt, which wants to trade with Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia wanted to trade with what would become modern-day Greece. These are the places where the geography, and the produce that comes out of that geography, is very valuable. So, the big trade people want to play with big trade people. In modern-day, we could say it's like the USA wants to trade with China because China is a major player on the international scene so is the USA. We care very much about those trade alliances, where trading with the Philippines, maybe not as much. We still do care about it, and we still are trading with the Philippines, but we care more about the China trade. This would be the ancient Near Eastern equivalent. So, those trade routes are very valuable because they connect the big players on the scene.

But when you take a look at this map, what do you notice about all those trade routes? Well, they all have to pass through this middle section of land. This land, which contains a lot of the biblical narrative, may not, in and of itself, be valuable. But it is valuable because of what is passing through.

Deuteronomy will touch on this because Deuteronomy as it is a casting vision for this place that the people are going into in order to live there purposely

according to God's commands; the people, the Israelites, are there for the sake of other nations, and we will run into this in chapter 4. So, in our next lecture, you need to keep this map in mind. So, this is the bigger context that the people are living within. So, all the trade routes moving through that land of the Bible, so the people who live here will never be able to go out and conquer the world. Their land does not allow for that to happen, but the people of the world come through that land, and that will end up being significant for us.

Patriarchal Sojourning as a Foreigner

Okay, so we talked about placing ourselves geographically. I also want to do this big picture, placing ourselves geographically but also as far as the narrative goes. So we have the stories of the Patriarchs, all of the narratives we've had prior to Deuteronomy are showing us a nomadic lifestyle. We're having people who are transitioning from place to place to place until Deuteronomy, and Deuteronomy is saying, now, go in and plant yourself, and belong and grow deep roots, and cultivate the land.

Prior to that, we're going to see in the stories of the Patriarchs that they are landless. So, they are sojourners, which means they are going to be people transitioning through place. And even though Abraham spends a lot of time in the land of the Bible, he doesn't own land until the very end of his life. So, without owning land, you don't have very many rights in the land. So, he's a foreigner in a foreign place.

Patriarchal Storyline in and Out of Riverine Locations

So, as we follow this, we'll keep our eye on the land of the Bible. But we recognize that Abraham, coming from Ur, going through Haran, following God's call to go to this unknown place, to leave behind land, leading God's family into this new place. We also find Abraham, but then also, we're going to have, we'll

also follow Abraham first. Abraham shortly after going into the land, there was a drought, so Abraham leaves and goes down into Egypt, and then God says don't stay in Egypt. Come back out. And so he does.

We have Isaac. So, after Abraham, Isaac. Now let's follow Jacob's storyline. Jacob, when he is fighting with Esau, is going to run up to his dad's old hometown, and find family up here and marry and have kids and grow his wealth. But he, too, is called to come back into this land. Then we have his descendants following, mainly Joseph, going down into Egypt, and then all of his brothers; there's the push again because of drought to go down into Egypt.

Now if we pause there, so we're still not yet at the storyline of Deuteronomy, but if we pause there and we think this is actually a remarkable precursor to the book of Deuteronomy because what happens is God has called his people out of riverine land into a much harder place to live, and they've gone down into riverine land, and God keeps calling them out, back up to Mesopotamia and God keeps calling them out. And so, there's this sojourning movement between powerhouses, and God still tells his people, this is where I want you to be. This is where we're going to have to end up with our narrative.

Coming out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai

So, we have the very beginning part of Deuteronomy is going to give us a narrative that corresponds to this map. So, on this map, this pink, kind of pinkish-red line is the International Highway. So, that is the way the majority of people would travel in and out of Egypt. Notice it follows right along the Mediterranean Sea.

The Israelite people, however, if we follow through the books of Exodus and Numbers, the people come out of Egypt and they go south somewhere down here is, Mount Sinai. There are a couple of debated places for which

Mount Sinai is Mount Sinai. But down into the southern regions of the Sinai peninsula for receiving the law, receiving the Torah from God. There is the wandering up to Kadesh Barnea, there's the failed entrance into the land, and they fail, and God says you're going to be moving for 40 years through the wilderness. So, they wander through this part of the land down close to modern-day Eilat and then up this eastern side of the Rift Valley.

This is all part of the narrative and where we get to the very beginning part of Deuteronomy. So, by the time Deuteronomy starts, and we will read it in just a moment, the people are roughly here and looking this way into the land that God has promised to give to them.

Deuteronomy 1:1 and a Geographical Context

Let's pause just a moment and pick up a couple of verses in the book of Deuteronomy. So, I'll read from Deuteronomy, chapter 1. So, it says, Deuteronomy 1 starting in verse 1: "These are the words which Moses spoke to all the people across the Jordan," meaning on the east side of the Jordan. And if we pause just for a second, even though we're not talking about authorship until later, one of the things we notice already from the very beginning is there is evidence of the hand of an editor here because we get the majority of the book that is put into the mouth of Moses. It is like Moses is the one speaking. These are the sermons of Moses as he is talking to the people. He is giving this pep talk to his troops, sending them on ahead of him. But we can see already. We get these moments throughout the book of Deuteronomy, where we see this editorial hand where it becomes a third person. So already that is what we have here. So, "these are the words which Moses spoke to all in Israel." So, we have this outside editor explaining to us what is going on.

And then we get a geographical placement. It says, "across the Jordan, in the wilderness in the Arabah opposite, Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab." All these places, well, not all of them, but we're not exactly sure where all of them are. Some of them are known, and some of them are not known, but it is giving us a basic trajectory of where the Israelites have been in order to get us up here.

Editor's Historical Time Framing

So, we also get a time frame. "It is 11 days Journey from Horeb," and Horeb is going to be Deuteronomy's version of referring to Mount Sinai. So Horeb, every time it is used, it is referring to Mount Sinai.

So, "it is 11 days journey from Horeb, by way of Mount Seir, to Kadesh Barnea." So, remember that was the big oasis where the people were.

"In the 40th year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had commanded him to give to them after he defeated Sihon, the king of the Amorites who lived in Hesbon. And Og, the king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei." These two stories with these two kings we're going to pick up in the second chapter of Deuteronomy, so we're going to skip that. But we're noticing that this editor is giving us context, geographical context, and historical context. So, we've gotten a timeframe, it's after this event, and it's after this event, Moses gets up to speak.

Moses – Who is the Audience? "You"

So, it says in verse 5, "Across the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law saying." And now we get the words of Moses,

"The Lord, our God, spoke to us at Horeb saying, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain.'"

Okay, so we're going to pause one more time. This is another introduction to something that Deuteronomy is quite good at doing. I could ask you, who is the actual audience of Deuteronomy? And if we read this verse that I just read, we would say the immediate audience is the people who are here with Moses, who are listening to Moses speak. Moses says, "The Lord, our God spoke to us at Horeb."

Now, if we think about that in context and what we know historically of the Israelites who were traveling with Moses is, it is the second generation who is now standing with Moses outside the land. The first generation is the generation that was with Moses down at Horeb or down at Mount Sinai.

Deuteronomy conflates things and brings them together all the time throughout all of Deuteronomy, but we're seeing it for the first time here. When Moses is speaking, he's addressing you. And it's you, the listener of the story; it's you, the audience standing with him, but he says, "You were with me at Sinai."

Were they actually there? Maybe some of them, maybe they were infants or tiny children at the time at Sinai. Maybe. Or what we're doing is we're seeing that Deuteronomy is addressing all of the Israelites throughout generations. It is supposed to be a teaching that is applicable to everyone regardless of which generation they're in. And so, already at the beginning of Deuteronomy, we're having Moses address you, and it's collectively all of you standing here listening to me, but it's you -- depths of generations, every generation. You, even though it might have been your parents or your grandparents at Mount Sinai. It is all of you together -- who were there, who were listening. This is all your history. All of this, it belongs to you. And it explains why you are where you are here in the

present. So, this is actually going to come up quite a bit in Deuteronomy the "you," as Deuteronomy keeps saying "you" and addresses you. It is wide, everyone there, and it is deep, multiple generations.

Deuteronomy 1:7

Okay, so in verse 7, so, this is chapter 1 verse 7: "Turn and set your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country, in the lowland, in the Negev by the sea coast, the land of the Canaanites and Lebanon as far as the Great River, the river Euphrates."

And then it says in verse 8, "See, I have placed the land before you. Go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob to them and their descendants after them."

Now, the list of place names that we had in that previous verse is not a random list of names. It's actually quite specific, and we can put almost all those places on this map.

Arabah

So, the first one mentioned is the Arabah. The Arabah is the Rift Valley. It stretches from the area of the Dead Sea all the way down south, so past the Dead Sea. Sometimes in biblical literature, when it refers to the Arabah, it is also referring to the Jordan Valley, so the area between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. So, sometimes it's the whole entire region. Sometimes the Arabah is just south of the Dead Sea, but we're just going to draw in this color here and say roughly, this is the Arabah, the Rift Valley.

Hill Country and Shephelah [lowlands]

So that is the first geographical place name in verse 7. The next one says, "And to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country." Well, the hill country

is here. This would be the hill country of Judah. If we were to go further north, it would be Benjamin, Ephraim, and part of Manassah's land as well. All of this is the hill country.

The next place listed says, "in the lowland." The lowland, or this Shephelah, which in Hebrew is actually called Shephelah, but it actually means "lowland." And we have just to the west of the hill country; we have this one little region where the hills of the hill country, the very steep, the V-shaped hills of the hill country kind of melt towards the coast. And in this one little area, they become very gentle, rolling hills; the valleys open up, and you can see much further to the north and the south and the west. Your horizon line opens, but you're still within some hills. There is still a lot of texture to the ground.

Now, these hills are only low, if you're seeing them from the vantage point of the high hills of the hill country. Through the hill country here we have the Shephelah or the lowlands there.

Negev

The next geographical place, it says, the Negev. So, the Negev is down here. It's actually a really thin band of land. It sits right at the southern edge of the hill country and the Shephelah. If I were to amplify the map and look at it in detail, it almost looks like an infinity sign, like a figure eight kind of pushed over on its side a little bit. So, it's a really narrow area of land. This is the southernmost land that people could live in.

If you go any further south than the Negev, this area on the map here, is uninhabitable land. There's not enough rain, and there's not enough good soil for people to survive not even sheep and goats. So, this is a very harsh land. This is where the Israelites were wandering for 40 years through terrain that looks like

this. The Negev is the last place where you can actually build a city, and you can support a city. So, this would be the southernmost land.

Now, this isn't to be confused because in the modern day, when people go to Israel, they talk about the Negev and they mean this area all the way down to Eilat. In the Bible, though, anytime you see a reference to the Negev, it means the small band here at the south end of the foothills.

Seacoast

To the next geographical region, it says, "and the seacoast." So that nice big wide-open coastal plain to the far west.

"The land of the Canaanites," and then we get a few regions that are up off the map, "Lebanon, and as far as the Great River, the river Euphrates." So, what we see is that even in this first introduction, as our editor is explaining for us or as Moses is explaining where they are going, when they're looking at the land and a list these geographical places, what we notice as it's in a very logical order. There is someone who is very familiar with the land, who can say in the Arabah, in the hill country, in the Shephelah, the Negev, and the seacoast, and then all the regions that are further to the south.

So, Moses is speaking to the people, and he's kind of giving a reason for why are we standing here. But we already saw that. We are here; Moses is there talking to the people because God is the one who is faithful. Because God said, this is the land I promised to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And because of that, you are here. It's obviously not for anything you have done, but it's because God is the one who is faithful to bring the people in.

Leadership Structures

So, in the next part of the narrative, as we get a little bit of this organization, the governmental structure, when Moses was in the wilderness with the people, and there were too many people. They had too many complaints. And he just had way too much to do. They organize the people into groups and into tribes.

So, what will you see? There are leaders from each of the tribes that are anointed or given leadership positions so that they can handle the small issues, and only the big issues go to Moses. Now, we will see that Deuteronomy, once we get into chapters 16, 17, and 18, is going to give us another type of leadership structure that is useful for when the people go into the land and are permanent inhabitants of a place. It's a little bit different than what we have here in chapter one because, in chapter one, they've been wandering through the wilderness.

Moses Refreshing Their Memory: Failure to Go into the Good Land

Okay, so now Moses is going to refresh the memory of the people who were listening to him. So, he's going to take them on a little narrative journey. What we want to pay attention to is, of all the historical events he could choose from, which are the ones that he chooses to tell the people?

This is the way he's going to build part of a lesson off of this. So, I'm going to continue reading in chapter 1. So, I'm skipping down to verse 19. So chapter 1, verse 19, "Then we set out from Horeb and went through all the great and terrible wilderness, which you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, just as the Lord, our God has commanded us, and we came to Kadesh-Barnea. I said to you, 'You have come to the hill country to the Amorites, which the Lord our God is about to give to you. See, the Lord your God has placed the land

before you. Go up, take possession, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

"Then all of you approached me and said, 'Let us send men before us that they may search out the land for us and bring us back word by way of which, we should go up to the cities which we shall enter.' The thing pleased me, and I took twelve of your men, one man from each tribe. They turned and went up into the hill country and came to the Valley of Eschol and spied it out. Then they took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us, and they brought us back a report and said, 'It is a good land which the Lord our God is about to give to us.' Yet, you were not willing to go up."

We are going to pause here in the story. This is a retelling of some of the narratives that we've heard in Numbers, the book of Numbers. So, when the spies go out, and they come back. It's Caleb and Joshua, actually, who fight really hard to tell the people they really should go in. But it is this adjective; it is a good land. Remember, I was saying there's a whole lot of effort put into the book of Deuteronomy to borrow language from Genesis 1 and 2 to say this is a land you can go into. This has Edenic-type qualities, the good land, the *to'v*, in Hebrew. This good land aspect is something that Deuteronomy repeats over and over and over. This land is good.

It echoes; maybe you could say, some people would agree, some people wouldn't, but I would argue that it is starting to pick up how in the creation narratives, every time God created, he divides places, he creates order, and then he fills each of those places with the things that belong in those places that will flourish in those places. And each time he does that, he calls it "good."

So now we have this land which you can go into; this can be that good land. And two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, recognized that it was good. But the people were unwilling to go.

So, we pick up the narrative again in verse 27, which says, "And you grumbled in your tents and said, 'It because the Lord hates us, he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, 'The people are bigger and taller than we. The cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.' Then I said to you, 'Do not be shocked; do not fear them. The Lord your God who goes before you will himself fight on your behalf, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes.'"

So, for the very first time in Deuteronomy, we have another concept that shows up, that is, God is the warrior on behalf of his people. So, again, the people are receiving the benefit of God dwelling with them. He is the powerhouse. He is the big fortress. He is the one who goes before his people. He is the one who is the strength of his people.

We've already seen that in the previous narrative down in Egypt already, God has shown himself to be a warrior. And Moses has to remind the people. We have two versions of the story. We have the version you are telling yourselves that you are afraid, the cities are too big, the people are too big, that this is really awful that we cannot go in and take the land. And we have the narrative God has already shown you. He's your warrior; it doesn't matter what your context is; he can go up against huge empires, and he can provide for you in the wilderness.

So, Moses is now trying to flesh out the story of the confidence that people should have because of their past narrative.

Israel and God in the Wilderness

So, in verse 31, it says, "And in the wilderness, where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as a man carries his son." So, again, God, as a parent carrying a child. "In all the way, which you have walked until you came to this place. But for all this, you did not trust the Lord who goes before you on your way, to seek out a place for you to encamp in fire by night and a cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go." This is when I wish I could take all of you down into the wilderness because if you're in the wilderness in the high desert at night, it can turn quite cold, and then you're really glad to have a pillar of fire. And in the day, it is scorching hot as the sun beats down on you. And you're really glad to have a pillar of cloud by day. So, there's compassion even in the way that God is showing up with his people.

I love it because the rabbis, when they talk about this passage they talk about these pillars as being like the legs of God -- pillar of fire, pillar of smoke, pillar of fire. So, it is God who is walking with his people as they travel through the wilderness. So, it is a really compassionate way of looking at God.

So, in choosing to tell this part of the narrative, Moses is setting the stage. You failed to go in because you trusted in yourselves, you read your own instincts, and you failed to see the land as a good land. What you should have been trusting is your experience of God that you've already had. He's been with you. He's been your warrior, and he's going to be the warrior who's going to go with you.

Other People Groups in the Area: Edom

Well, another thing that we have, as we move out of chapter one and then into chapter 2, is an awareness of the fact that there are other people who are around the Israelites. They're not living in a vacuum, but they actually have lots

of other people who are around them. So, I'm going to draw in on this map a couple of dividing lines. So, this blue line here goes right through a big massive canyon; it's going to act as a geographical divide for us between people groups.

So, I'm going to put three of them in here. So, we have to the south end of this dividing line here; this land becomes the heartland of Edom.

And we have a road; I forgot to tell you, this is the road that the Israelites are actually going to travel up this road on the far eastern side of the people who live here in order to find this passageway into the land.

Okay, so now we can talk about Edom. So, Edom is going to be living down here. Now, Deuteronomy is fully aware that the Edomites already exist. I put up a couple of verses here if you want to pause the video and take a look; read these verses. You should be asking yourself, Who is Edom? Who are the people who live here? We have all these stories of the Edomites of the Israelites who are in conflict or who are making trade agreements with Edomites. So, who are they? This is their heartland. This is the land that they are able to control for the majority of the time that they are in existence. When they're really powerful, sometimes they can expand outwards. But Edomite land is to the south here.

So, read those verses and figure out who Edom is. Now, of course, this would be from the Israelite perspective. So, this is how the Israelites are telling their narrative. We don't have big long histories from the Edomites telling us of their version of the history, but Edom stretches all the way back to Abraham. So, Abraham's first son Ishmael was born to Hagar, the Egyptian slave. Ishmael received a blessing from God that God would bless him and he would turn into a nation.

Well, then we see a couple of generations later. We have, then Isaac, then Jacob. And Jacob is the twin brother of Esau. So, when Jacob and Esau go

head-to-head and have their conflict, and Isaac doesn't love Esau as much, and Esau sees there's a strain in the relationship. Esau then goes to his additional family side to Ishmael, and he marries Ishmael's family. And it is the descendants of Esau who become the country of Edom. So, we have this recognition that they are a family of sorts.

But Deuteronomy says, in chapter 2, God tells the Israelites, when you are traveling up this road, and you're getting ready to go into the land I've given you, don't go into Edom's land. This isn't your land because God has his own relationship that his own covenant, he promised Hagar. He told Hagar, "Your son will turn into a powerful nation," and what we're seeing in the book of Deuteronomy is God recognizing these people are here; they have gone into their land. Don't take it from them. This isn't your land to take.

Moab and Ammon

So, then we go a little bit further to the north in between these two areas here. This geographical area is what is known as the heartland of Moab. So where does Moab come from? Moab is related to Ammon up in the top. Ammon is on the northern side of this valley here.

So, they have a very risqué type of history. So, if you go and you read that, then you're taking all the way back again to Abraham but to his nephew, to Lot. So, Lot and Abraham, when their families are getting big, the herds are getting too big, and they have to split. Lot goes south and hangs out near Sodom and Gomorrah. You know this story. And then the big fires are going to come and destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. And when Lot leaves with his wife and his two daughters, instead of fleeing and going to the west up into the hill country, which is where Abraham was, they flee and go to the east. I've always kind of puzzled at that. The ancient Near Eastern custom would mean they would go to their

family, or extended family, and they choose to go in the opposite direction. So, Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt. His two daughters then decide we're not going to get married. How are we going to have kids? We need a family structure. Let's sleep with dad. And then we get Moab and Ammon. So, very kind of risqué.

Now we can almost imagine the Israelites telling the story of Moab and Ammon kind of, this is our version of their history of where they come from, and it's a little bit improper, we should say. So, Moab is from the oldest daughter, and Ammon is from the youngest daughter.

In the book of Deuteronomy, in Deuteronomy chapter 2, God says to pass around Moab. Do not go in. I have my own covenant with Moab. Moab has gone into the land that they get to inherit. Don't take their land. And don't take the land of Ammon because I have a covenant with them, and they have gone into the land they get to live in. So, don't go and take their land. That is not your land. That is not the land you get to have. So that we already have an awareness that God is interacting in the histories of other people.

How Do the Israelites Enter the Good Land: The Medeba Plateau

Now, how are the people that are supposed to get over to the land that is their inheritance? How did they get there? Well, we have this middle land in between these two large canyons. Notice I have no big white square here. This land is called the Medeba Plateau now. But this land never belonged to one entire people group ever. It flip-flopped back and forth. So, Ammon took it when they were very wealthy. Moab took it when Moab was wealthy. Later in Israelite history, we find that Israelites came over and took it. It's not an empty land, it's a very well-developed land, but it's not the heartland of any particular people group. And so, God says, you can pass through this way.

The Philistines on the Western Sea Coast

Now, before we get there and tell that story, we have a few more people groups to talk about.

It is all the way on the far coast on the western coast. We have the Philistines. And so, the Philistines get mentioned in Deuteronomy, chapter 2. If we were to follow, who are they? Where do they come from now? Now we have to cut and piece together lots of other different types of extra-biblical histories. We call them the Sea Peoples. A portion of them come from what we would call modern-day Greece. And why they fled and why they traveled as big caravans into a new land; we're still working on some of that. There's other extra-biblical literature, modern-day literature; you can read the people who are studying that. But what we need to know as far as time periods go, the Philistines are a fairly new people group coming into the land and settling on the coast roughly the same time that Israelites are coming into the land. The Philistines were not considered part of the Canaanite culture, which filled the whole hill country area that the Israelites were going into.

Og and Sihon Defeated

Let's just finish out a little bit of chapters 2 and 3, and we'll close out portions of our historical narratives. So, we've seen the comparison between how the people are being afraid to act and go in, and Moses is saying, but you should have confidence because God is your father; God is the warrior going before you. We've seen in chapter 2 how God says, go around these other people groups; you can slide in through the Medeba Plateau, where Sihon is. And interestingly enough, we have, leading up to the people crossing the Jordan and going into the land, we have God going into battle with Moses as the leader. They fight Sihon first, and then they go to the far north and they fight Og.

And you might say, these are kind of weird; why do we need these stories? Well, if we put this into context, the whole reason the people were afraid to go in is because they were afraid to fight the battle. And so, now, with Moses at their head, they go through very real battles, but it's almost like they're practice battles. This is how to behave with a human leader and God as your warrior, and they win. And they're able to conquer Sihon and open up a portion of land so that they have access to the Jordan and access over into their land. They're able to go up and conquer Og, who was the leader of an area that had great big, huge cities with big city gates.

And so now Moses can say, so remember those battles. Now, as I pass leadership on to Joshua, you will follow Joshua into the land, and God will still be your warrior, and you can still go in. So even though you were afraid initially and didn't go into the land, you may still be afraid now; you still need to go in. But the land has the potential to be like Eden. And so you can do it if you do it with God, who is with you. And then, from here, we'll move into chapter 4.

This is Dr. Cynthia Parker and her teaching on the book of Deuteronomy. This is session 2, the historical prologue of Deuteronomy 1 - 3.