

# THE SEVEN MAIN SINS OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

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## A STUDY ON VERSES 1:1-11:

D'varim is a commentary on the first four books of Torah. D'varim is not just a repetition of the Torah Law as the name *Deuteronomy* suggests and as Christian commentators teach, for of D'varim's 100 mitzvots (laws) 70 are new having not been previously mentioned in the other Torah books. Therefore, the Jewish sages suggest that the added mitzvots (laws) found in D'varim help to clarify and explain the rest of Torah, hence the alternate name for D'varim: *Mishneh Torah* or explanation of Torah; i.e. commentary on Torah.

D'varim is largely for the benefit of the younger generation who hadn't experience much of what went on in Egypt or in the wilderness either because they were too young or they hadn't been born yet. It was a recitation or synopsis of the Torah commands to prepare the younger generation for entering the Promised Land.

**Verse 1** — *These words that Moshe spoke...*

- Here Moshe delivers a sermon containing strong words of rebuke against Israel. D'varim is Moshe's last words before his death — his last will and testament
- Here follows a list of place names which various sages take as *code words for sins* in which Israel had committed. These are the seven most egregious sins which resulted in their being condemned to wander the wilderness for 40 years.
- We need to be reminded of our sins and challenged to grow and overcome them else we'll become like the Laodiceans of Revelation 3: rich and increased with goods, poor, blind, miserable, naked and lukewarm.
- One of the main purpose of Torah community is to provoke one another to good works (Heb. 10:24-25).
- We must be constantly overcoming and striving against sin. There is no place for complacency, apathy, lukewarmness or indifference. That is why we're Messianics — the status quo was not acceptable. (On overcoming see: John 16:33; 1 John 5:4; Rev. 2:7, 11, 26; 3:5, 12)

### Moshe Recounts the Seven Main Sins Israel Committed

- 1) Wilderness of Sin (thorn; Sinai = thorny): Here Israel complained about lack of food (Ex. 16:1-3)
  - No trust or faith in God.
  - Their perspective is skewed by their carnality. If God had wanted to kill them he could have easily done so at the Red Sea, but rather he miraculously preserved them there. How much more so now? They did not trust the consistency of the character of God.
  - They encounter their first pothole in the wilderness road and their faith melts.
  - They accused Moshe of planning to starve them. How often a faithless and carnal people turn the good intents of selfless and self-sacrificing leadership into evil and malicious intent against them?
  - They undervalue their deliverance and wish they had died in Egypt. Where would we be if God

hadn't delivered us from our past? Think about it! A praiseworthy and thankful heart-attitude will carry us safely through to the other side of many of life's trials and adversities. Never take your eyes off of the goodness of God and place them on the complaints of the flesh.

- 2) Arabah (desert, sterile valley near the Jordan): Here Israel was seduced by Midianite women (Num. 36:13).
  - Spiritual and Physical Whoredoms.
  - Israel was enticed by the lusts and appetites of the flesh. Up to this point Israel had resisted many frontal military attacks and would have done so again had King Balak tried this means to overcome Israel. But the enemies of Israel attacked her (with help from Balaam, the false prophet) through subtlety and seduction. If the enemy can't get us one way, he'll try another! Lusts of the flesh can be a real snare, especially for men. To wit: Solomon and his wives or Adam with Eve.
- 3) Opposite the Red Sea: Here Israel complains that they're going to die —sarcasm and cynicism against God: "...because there were no graves in Egypt...?" (Ex. 14:11)
  - Fear, Faithlessness, False Accusation and Malcontentment.
  - The straits of their physical circumstances propel them into fear and accusation (i.e. faithlessness) against God and Moshe. The comforts of slavery, servitude and bondage in Egypt seemed good to them now, though a short time earlier while suffering in Egypt they had cried out to God for deliverance from the very thing to which they now wanted to return. The fickleness and vicissitudes of human nature! The grass is always greener on the other side. Man is never content with his circumstances.
- 4) Between Paran (beauty): The spy incident. (Num. 13-14)
  - Again, Walking By Sight and Not By Faith.
  - Though Moshe had charged them "to be of good courage," they were not. Courage springs from strong faith which Caleb and Joshua alone possessed. They distrusted God's power and promise. Unbelief overlooks the greatness, goodness and power of God and focuses on the human plane. Fear/faithlessness/unbelief magnifies every danger and difficulty and fills the heart with discouragement and hopelessness. We must resist that within ourselves.
- 5) Tophel (calumny = false charges or misrepresentation maliciously calculated to damage another's reputation) and Laban (white = the color of manna [Ex. 16:34]) — Israel complains twice about manna (Nu. 10:12; 11:6).
  - Lust, Ungratefulness and False Accusation
  - Manna, God's supernatural answer to one of Israel's first complaints itself becomes a source of complaint and contempt. There is no pleasing a lustful, carnal, faithless and ungrateful heart!
- 6) Hazeroth (enclosures) — Korah's rebellion (Nu. 12:1-16)
  - Rebellion Against God-Ordained Authority
- 7) Di-zahab (gold) — God blessed Israel with an abundance of gold when they left Egypt and they used his gifts to make the golden calf.
  - Riches Lead to Idolatry.
  - God's overabundant blessings can become a snare. We become "rich and increased with goods having need of nothing" including God, as was the case with the Laodicean church in Revelation 3.

## •Verse 2

He reminded them of how, because of their shortcomings (sin, pride, rebellion, murmuring, faithlessness, idolatry, greed), an 11-day journey from Sinai to Canaan resulted in a 38-year trek just on the outskirts of the Promised Land.

- Horeb (i.e. Sinai) (= waste) to Kadesh Barnea (holy fruitful fields).
- *River of God* = river of life from God's throne containing his perfect, good and acceptable will (See Rom. 12:2). Sin and disobedience keeps us out of his perfect will and the anointed place of the fast, clear and deep current of God's river.

**Verse 5** — *Moshe took it upon himself to expound this Torah...*

The purpose of Torah needs to be reiterated again and again! (See *Torah Rediscovered*, p. 21 and following):

1. Torah helps man to recognize his own sinfulness (Rom. 3:20).
2. Torah helps bring man to the wrath of God (for violating Torah and sinning against him and his word) (Rom. 4:15).
3. Torah is a protector (pedagogue) to keep us in the path of righteousness (Gal. 3:23).
4. Torah brings us into blessings and relationship with God. It brings life (Deut. 32:47).
5. Torah reflects God's holiness and goodness and righteousness. When we learn about Torah we learn about God himself (Rom. 7:12).
6. Torah functions as a reminder. It has built into it things to help keep our focus singular and on him. Tzitzit = daily reminders; Sabbath = weekly reminder; Rosh Chodesh and woman's cycle/niddah = monthly reminder; moedim = annual reminders.