

CHAPTER IV  
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**D**EUTERONOMY is rich in geographical material, some of it concentrated in the opening and closing chapters and some scattered through the book. There are many place names, several of which are peculiar to Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, and there are descriptions which throw light upon the information, the interests and the outlook of the author. The material may be classified as follows:

1. The place where 'Moses spake' (i. 1).
2. From Egypt to Horeb.
3. The wilderness: Horeb to Kadesh.
4. The journey round Edom.
5. Natural features of Transjordan.<sup>1</sup>
6. The early inhabitants.
7. Canaan seen from outside.

THE PLACE OF THE DISCOURSES

At the beginning of the book of Deuteronomy the narrator takes great care to define the places where 'Moses spake these words'. It was 'beyond Jordan, in the wilderness in the Arabah over against Suph, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Di-zahab. It is eleven days' journey from Horeb . . . to Kadesh-barnea' (i. 1, 2, RV). This short passage is full of interest, though not devoid of difficulty.

The river Jordan assumes great prominence in Deuteronomy, being mentioned twenty-six times,<sup>2</sup> which would justify its being classed along with the characteristics considered in Chapter II. Of these occurrences one is in the legislation (xii. 10), one in the closing chapters (xxxii. 2) and the remainder in chapters i–xi. Fifteen of them refer to the crossing of the river, in which Moses was

<sup>1</sup> See G. T. Manley 'The Moabite Background of Deuteronomy', *EQ*, xxii, 1949, pp. 81–92.

<sup>2</sup> Only six times in the prophets.

forbidden to share,<sup>1</sup> one defining the boundaries of Reuben's territory, and ten of them in the expression 'beyond Jordan'. It has been said that the use of the latter expression marks the writer as a resident in western Palestine,<sup>2</sup> but a full examination of all the places where the words occur proves the argument to be fallacious.

Its meaning is shown to be somewhat indefinite by the fact that twenty-four times at least it is accompanied by a defining clause such as 'towards the sunrising' or 'towards the sea'. The Hebrew words *bē'ēber hayyārēn* can be translated literally as 'by (or at)—across—the Jordan', which could mean 'at the crossing of', or 'by the banks of', the Jordan.<sup>3</sup> A Sabaean word '*brt*' means 'the neighbourhood of a stream', and B. Gemser<sup>4</sup> has adduced much evidence to show that the real meaning is 'the region of Jordan' or 'Jordania'. He denies that the author of Dt. iii. 8 has forgotten that Moses is supposed to be speaking from the eastern side; he is using the words as a general description of the region.

In Deuteronomy the words are used six times by the narrator (i. 1, 4, iv. 41, 46, 47, 49), who probably wrote after Jordan had been crossed, but always with some qualifying clause, and of the eastern side. It is used three times by Moses (iii. 20, 25, xi. 30) of the western side, in the last instance with a defining clause, and once of the eastern, with added words which make its meaning plain, in iii. 8.

It is therefore unfortunate that in all these instances the RV rigidly adheres to 'beyond Jordan', whereas the AV with greater elasticity varies the translation with the application. In 1 Ki. iv. 24, however, even the RV is compelled by the meaning to adopt 'on this side' and relegate 'beyond' to the margin. This should also have been done in Jos. ix. 1,<sup>5</sup> for there the writer is certainly referring to the western bank, which was presumably also his home.

<sup>1</sup> ii. 29, iii. 20, 27, iv. 21, 22, 26, ix. 1, xi. 31, xii. 10, xxvii. 2, 4, 12, xxx. 18, xxxi. 2, xxxii. 47. The distribution of these is significant.

<sup>2</sup> S. R. Driver, *ICC*, p. xlvi.

<sup>3</sup> See Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1906, p. 716.

<sup>4</sup> 'Be'ēber Hajjarden: In Jordan's Borderland', *VT*, Vol. II, October 1953, pp. 349–355.

<sup>5</sup> Note also Is. ix. 1.

It follows that the use of this expression cannot decide the location of the writer.

Returning now to i. 1, we may paraphrase it thus: 'in the open country around Jordan, in the arid land<sup>1</sup> over against Suph, between Paran and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.' These places are evidently familiar to the narrator and he writes them down without explanation. We are left wondering how he came to know them and why he thought it desirable to record their names. Had he himself passed through them?

Suph is unknown unless, which seems unlikely, it is used for the Red Sea (Yam Suph). Tophel and Dizahab ('a place productive of gold') are named only here in the Old Testament. Laban and Hazeroth are puzzling, for they seem to be the same as Libnah and Hazeroth, two of the camping-places between Horeb and Kadesh given in Nu. xxxiii. 18, 20, 21. This, with the mention of the journey from Horeb to Kadesh in i. 2, gives the impression that perhaps the 'words' that follow in i. 6–iv. 40 were spoken earlier on the way. If so, the words 'beyond Jordan' represent the last place where the words were spoken.

The geographical description in iv. 44–49 is quite different from that in i. 1, 2, and makes it evident that, however we interpret the latter, the 'words' were not 'spoken' in the *same* place where the 'law' was 'set before' the people (i. 1, iv. 44).

#### FROM EGYPT TO HOREB

The references to Egypt, fifty in number, are evenly distributed, seven in chapters i–iv, nineteen in chapters v–xi, seventeen in chapters xii–xxvi, and seven in chapters xxvii–xxxiv. They are mainly historical, and can be arranged thus: (i) the descent *into* Egypt; (ii) the abode *in* Egypt; (iii) the deliverance *out of* Egypt; (iv) possible return to Egypt; and (v) characteristics of Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

(i) *The descent into Egypt* 'with threescore and ten persons' is mentioned in x. 22, and again in the ancient formula of xxvi. 5, where Jacob is described as 'a Syrian ready to perish'.

(ii) *In Egypt* the people abode (xxix. 16) as strangers (x. 19),

<sup>1</sup> See p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> In Isaiah Egypt is seen with Assyria as a great power which might be either friend or foe (vii. 18, xx. 4, xxx. 2, 3), or as about to come under divine judgment (xix.). The contrast is striking.

then as servants (v. 15) or bondmen (vi. 21a, xv. 15, xvi. 12, xxiv. 18, 22). There God wrought signs and wonders by the hand of Moses (xxxiv. 11), before the eyes of some of the people addressed (i. 30, iv. 34, xxix. 2), 'upon' Pharaoh, his land and his army (vi. 22, vii. 18, xi. 3, 4).

(iii) After this the people came '*out of Egypt*' (iv. 45, 46, ix. 7, xvi. 3, 6, xxiii. 4, xxiv. 9, xxv. 17)—more frequently it is stated that God brought them forth out of Egypt (i. 27, v. 6, ix. 12, xvi. 1, xx. 1, xxix. 25) with great power (iv. 37) and a mighty hand (vi. 21b, vii. 8, ix. 26, xxvi. 8), out of the 'iron furnace' (iv. 20) and the 'house of bondage' (vi. 12, viii. 14, xiii. 5, 10).

(iv) Twice a possible return to Egypt is mentioned. The future king must not favour this (xvii. 16), and yet disloyalty to Jehovah might involve it as a punishment (xxviii. 68).

(v) The land of Egypt is contrasted with Canaan as one needing laborious irrigation (xi. 10), and the diseases and 'the boil' of Egypt are mentioned as things with which the people were familiar (vii. 15, xxviii. 27, RV, xxviii. 60).

The treatment of Egypt in the legislation is of special interest. Their redemption from Egypt is used as a reason for cleaving to Jehovah (xiii. 5, 10) and keeping the memorial feasts (xvi. 12); and the historical connection of the Passover with their deliverance is emphasized (xvi. 1, 3, 6). It affords a reason for merciful treatment of the poor (xxiv. 18), for courage in battle (xx. 1), and for thanksgiving (xxvi. 5).

The instruction regarding a future king brings forth a warning against a return to Egypt (xvii. 16); that concerning leprosy calls to mind the case of Miriam after their exodus from Egypt (xxiv. 9); and the cruel treachery of the Amalekites 'by the way ... out of Egypt' is not to be forgotten but avenged. These memories are vivid and detailed.

Of the events immediately following the departure from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea is recalled in xi. 4 (cf. Ex. xiv.), the 'water from the rock of flint' at Massah (vi. 16, viii. 15, ix. 22; cf. Ex. xvii. 1–7), and the dastardly attack of the Amalekites (Dt. xxv. 17–19; Ex. xvii. 8–16).

Horeb is named nine times<sup>1</sup> and Sinai once.<sup>2</sup> The two are not

<sup>1</sup> i. 2, 6, 19, iv. 10, 15, v. 2, ix. 8, xviii. 16, xxix. 1.

<sup>2</sup> xxxiii. 2.

quite identical, and to use them as such for the purpose of documentary analysis is to employ a false criterion. Horeb seems usually to mean the region or range, so that in i. 2, 19 we get 'from Horeb' and elsewhere 'in Horeb', thus in Ex. xvii. 6 Rephidim is 'in Horeb'; Sinai is apparently a single mountain, and normally referred to as 'the mount (*hāhār*)'. Thus in iv. 10, 11 we read 'in Horeb . . . under the mountain', and ix. 8, 9 'in Horeb . . . gone up into the mount'. The name Sinai is not found in the prophets, and Horeb only in Mal. iv. 4, in connection with 'the law of Moses'.

#### THE WILDERNESS: HOreb TO KADESCH

The journey from Horeb to the banks of the Jordan divides into two parts, namely from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea (Nu. x. 33, xx. 1, xxxiii. 16, 36), and that from Kadesh to the banks of Jordan.

Comparing the list of camping grounds in Nu. xxxiii with the narrative in Nu. x-xx, and what we read in Dt. i, it becomes clear that between the first arrival at Kadesh and the final departure we must place most of the thirty-eight years of Dt. ii. 14, and the 'many days' of Dt. i. 46 and ii. 1, 2. Doubtless the host with their flocks sought other pastures during this period, over which there hangs a veil of obscurity.

The Hebrew word *midhbār*, translated 'wilderness', does not mean a dry, sandy desert, but any wild uninhabited country, including places where camels or sheep might be driven to pasture. It needs to be borne in mind, as we trace the wanderings and the references to them in Deuteronomy, that the *midhbār* may vary from the most arid rock and sand to comparatively fertile, but uncultivated, ground. The word is often attached to the name of a town or region, Moab (ii. 8), Kedemoth (ii. 26), the table-land (iv. 43, RV mg.), Zin (xxxii. 51), specifying the locality,<sup>1</sup> but in Deuteronomy more often<sup>2</sup> as a general term.

The author knows the wilderness which lies to the south of

<sup>1</sup> In xi. 24 'the wilderness' is clearly that lying on the southern boundary of Canaan.

<sup>2</sup> i. 1, 19, 31, 40, ii. 1, 7, viii. 2, 15, 16, ix. 7, 28, xi. 5, 24, xxix. 5, xxxii. 10 (EV 'desert').

the mount of the Amorites to be 'great and terrible' (i. 19). This is the desert of Et Tih between Sinai and Palestine, described in similar terms by travellers.<sup>1</sup> He has met with fiery serpents and scorpions (viii. 15),<sup>2</sup> yet though God humbled and proved them (viii. 2, 16) He provided for them and brought them through (i. 31, 33, xxix. 5).<sup>3</sup>

Twelve places are connected with this part of the journey: in ix. 22, 23 we have Taberah, Massah, Kibroth-hattaavah and Kadesh; in i. 1 Libnah and Hazeroth; in x. 6, 7 Beeroth Benjaakan, Mosera, Gudgodah and Jotbath; in xxxii. 51 Meribah-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin; in i. 44 Hormah. Some scholars have taken these to be place-names to which aetiological legends have been attached. It is equally possible, and wiser, to regard them as names of events, and only in a secondary sense names of the places where they occurred. The Hebrew thought embraces in one complex idea the event, the place and the description. Massah (tempting) and Meribah (striving) are examples. Both words are applied to the murmuring at Rephidim (Ex. xvii. 7),<sup>4</sup> the latter also to the 'strife' at Kadesh (Nu. xx. 1-12) which in Dt. xxxii. 51 is specified by the additional words 'in the wilderness of Zin'. In like manner Kadesh (holy) is distinguished from other holy places by the addition of Barnea. A further example is Hormah ('devoted' or 'destruction', i. 44), which is also given more than one application (see Nu. xxi. 13); so, as W. M. Flinders Petrie has said, Hormah 'should be regarded more as a description than a proper name, and it is therefore misleading to unify all sites named Hormah'.<sup>5</sup>

The word Massah in the singular recalls the event at Rephidim (vi. 16, ix. 22, xxxiii. 8). It is also used in the plural ('temptations', EV) in iv. 34, vii. 19, xxix. 3; the two uses of the word illuminate each other.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. H. Palmer, *The Desert of the Exodus*, Vol. II, Cambridge, 1871, pp. 283ff.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 173 below.

<sup>3</sup> Only those who have paced the desert sand can appreciate the words in i. 33.

<sup>4</sup> The combination is also found in Dt. xxxiii. 8, where the meaning is obscure.

<sup>5</sup> *Palestine and Israel*, London, 1934, p. 66.

The story of Taberah (burning) is told in Nu. xi. 1-3, and of Kibroth-hattaavah (graves of lust) in 31-35 (cf. xxxiii. 37).

Another interesting group of names is found in Dt. x. 6, 7, which are easily identified with those in Nu. xxxiii. 31-33, where they occur in a different order, and Moseroth (plural, 'chastenings') replaces Moserah. In Deuteronomy the word Beeroth ('wells') is prefixed to Benejaakan, and after Jotbath is added 'a land of rivers of waters'.

These additions mark the sites as oases, and therefore liable to be visited more than once. They are followed in Nu. xxxiii. 35 by Ezion-gaber on the way to Kadesh, which, as Dt. ii. 8 informs us, was revisited by the Israelites on their departure from Kadesh. It is not improbable that during the many years spent in that neighbourhood several oases were visited more than once (see below, p. 157), Kadesh affording a centre (Nu. xx. 1; Dt. i. 46) from which they went forth to seek for pasturage.

#### THE JOURNEY ROUND EDOM

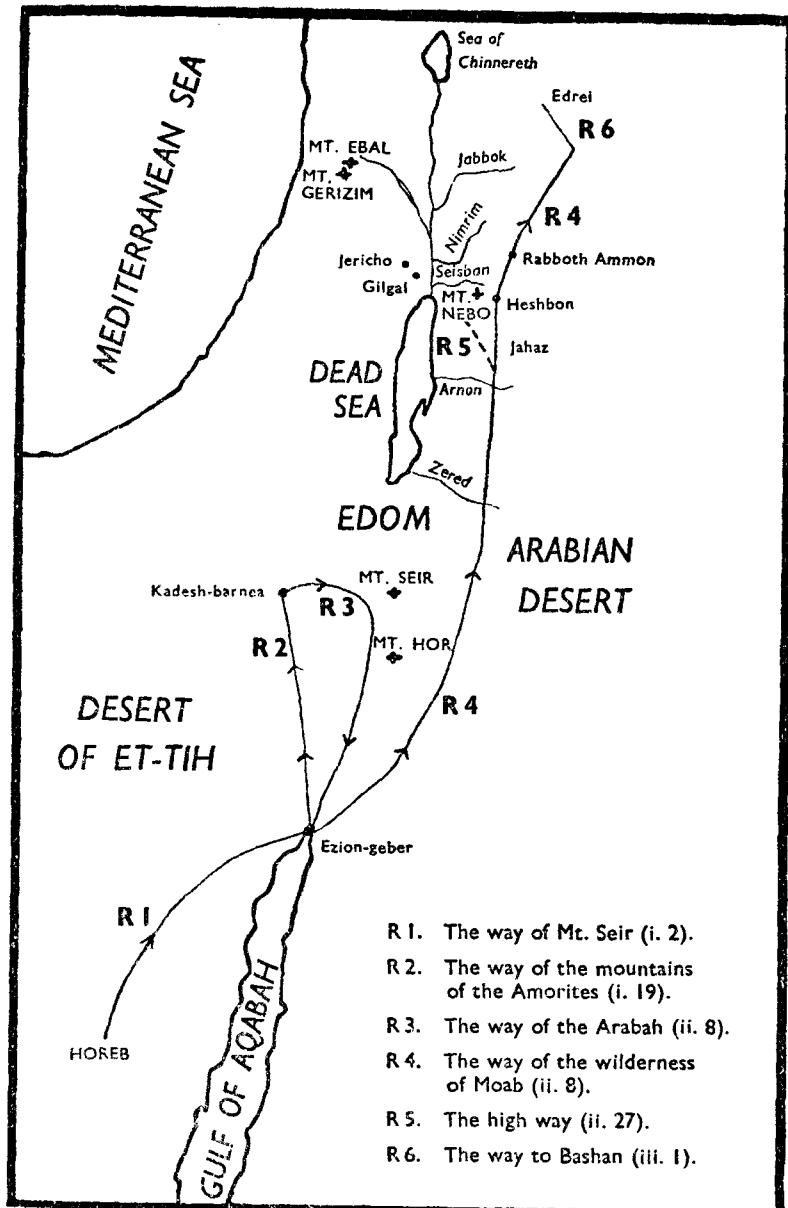
In reading chapters ii and iii we are struck not only by the geographical knowledge displayed, but by the mode of its presentation. It reads like a traveller's diary, and we seem to be with him in his journey round the borders of Edom. The writer knows the country not only by hearsay; he has travelled over it and knows the ways, the turnings, the crossings and the ascents.<sup>1</sup> (See the accompanying map, p. 55.)

Leaving Kadesh after 'many days' (i. 46) they 'turned' and took their 'journey by the way (*derekh*) of (or 'to') the Red Sea' (ii. 1, cf. i. 40). The word *derekh* connotes a road or well-marked track, in this case a customary desert route, probably the pilgrim road from Suez to 'Akaba.<sup>2</sup>

The first of these roads is mentioned in i. 2, which tells us that it is eleven days' journey by the 'mount Seir road' from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea. A second name for this route, or part of it, is 'the way of the mountain of the Amorites' (i. 19); which passes through the 'great and terrible wilderness' which now goes by the

<sup>1</sup> Thus at Hormah the people 'went up' (i. 43), where the mountain is steep only on the southern side.

<sup>2</sup> See Driver, *ICC*, p. 28.



THE JOURNEY ROUND EDOM

name of the desert of Et-Tih and which well deserves this description.

Reverting again to chapter ii we follow our guide round the 'border' of Edom<sup>1</sup> (ii. 4), and pass by 'from the way of the Arabah' (ii. 8; note the rv), that is, the route which traverses the Wadi el Arabah, and then 'from Elath<sup>2</sup> and from Ezion-gaber'. Here the southernmost point of the route is reached, so they 'turned'<sup>3</sup> and proceeded 'by the way of the wilderness of Moab'. This ancient track was used later by the Romans, who made a road the traces of which remain, and along it today runs the railway used by pilgrims from Damascus to Mecca. It skirts the western edge of the Arabian desert, and was flanked on the other side by pasture-land (*midhbār*), above which were the inhabited parts of Moab.

Two obstacles are now to be overcome, the mountain torrents of Zered and Arnon. The people are bidden to 'rise up' and cross them (ii. 13, 24), which implies a previous halt, not stated here, but recorded in Nu. xxi. 12, 13.

They now seek permission (ii. 27) to pass through Sihon's land, promising 'to go along by the highway', lit. 'by the way, by the way', that is by the appointed way. This is refused, and a battle ensues at Jahaz (32), where Sihon is overcome, and his country invaded. After the invasion and conquest, the journey is resumed; 'they turned' north-westwards, and 'went up', the ground rising in this direction, 'the way to Bashan', the sixth of these routes to be specified by name or description. A battle ensues at Edrei, Bashan is overrun, and the people abide in 'the valley over against Beth-peor' (iii. 29), and the long journeying comes to an end.

The account here, whilst not conflicting with that in Nu. xxi. 4-35, is clearly independent.<sup>4</sup> When Nu. xx, xxi is compared

<sup>1</sup> This was after the king's refusal to let them pass through the heart of the country (Nu. xx. 20). On the borders the inhabitants were Bedouin and as such would be friendly. The words of ii. 5 find a strange echo in the contemporary Ras Shamra tablets. In the story of Keret the king of Edom sends a message, 'Do not fight against the great Edom, for Edom is a gift from El'. (Schaeffer, *op. cit.*, p. 75, or *ANET*, p. 144.)

<sup>2</sup> Only here and in 2 Ki. xiv. 22. <sup>3</sup> For other turnings see i. 7, 24, 40, ii. 1, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Driver's statement (*ICC*, pp. 9, 10) that the narrative in i. 6-iii. 39 is 'throughout dependent upon that of JE', coming from a scholar usually so cautious, can only be described as surprising. Unfortunately he is not alone. (See Oesterley and Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 45.)

with Dt. ii. iii it can be seen that more is peculiar to each than is common to both. For example, of Nu. xxi. 1-11 not a word is found in Deuteronomy except 'the way of the Red Sea'. The mention of the Zered and Arnon in Nu. xxi. 12, 13 differs in form and partly in substance from Dt. ii. 13-15, 24, 25. The stages in Nu. xxi. 10, 11, 19, 20 are not reproduced in Deuteronomy. What is said concerning Ar in Nu. xxi. 15, 28 is quite different from that in Dt. ii. 9, 18, 29.

Regarding this place, Dt. ii. 29 informs us that its inhabitants sold the Israelites food and water 'for money', which seems to contradict Dt. xxiii. 3. But the contradiction is more apparent than real. From Jdg. xi. 17 we learn that Moses sent a message to the 'king of Moab', who refused permission to pass through the land. So they compassed it round and came to Ar, which lay upon the 'border' to the north and east. There, far away from the capital, the border people showed a friendliness which differed from the official attitude, and, incidentally, made a profit.

Of the ten names of cities in Dt. i. 6-iv. 40 four only are found in the JE narrative<sup>1</sup> in Numbers: Ar, Heshbon, Jahaz and Edrei. The others are as follows:

(i) Kedemoth (ii. 26) recurs in Jos. xiii. 18 and 1 Ch. vi. 79 (Heb. 64). In the latter passage the surrounding land, or 'suburbs' (*mighr̄šōthi*), corresponds to the *midhbār* in Deuteronomy.

(ii) Aroer (ii. 36, iii. 12, iv. 48) is cited, with another called 'the city that is in the valley', as captured from Sihon. In Jos. xiii. 8, 9, 16 both of these are assigned to Reuben and Gad; in Nu. xxxii. 34 (P) Aroer is said to have been rebuilt by Gad (cf. Je. xlvi. 19).

(iii) The region of Argob (iii. 4, 13, 14), taken from Bashan, is named again in 1 Ki. iv. 13.

(iv) The cities called Havoth-jair (iii. 14) are found also in Nu. xxxii. 41 (P), Jdg. x. 4, and 1 Ch. ii. 23.<sup>2</sup>

(v) Salchah is linked with Edrei in Dt. iii. 10 as a border town (cf. Jos. xii. 5, xiii. 11; 1 Ch. v. 11).

(vi) Rabbath (iii. 11) is named in Deuteronomy for the first time.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 26, n. 1 above.

<sup>2</sup> The various references to these cities create difficulty (see Reider, *in loc.*) and have given rise to the conjecture that Dt. iii. 14 may be a later addition.

<sup>3</sup> The modern Amman. As this lies on the pilgrim road mentioned above, the Israelites would have passed through it.

Other names are Chinnereth (iii. 17; Nu. xxxiv. 11, P) and Ashdoh-pisgah.

If our inquiry were to include i. 1–iv. 43 we should have also to include Tophel, Laban, Dizahab (i. 1), Ashtaroth (i. 4), Bezer, Ramoth and Golan (none of them found in JE). With these facts before him the reader may be left to judge what value is to be attached to the statement that ‘this section (i.e. i. 1–iv. 43) includes nothing that is not also found in E’.<sup>1</sup>

#### NATURAL FEATURES OF TRANSJORDAN

Apart from the number of places named, no one who has travelled in Transjordan can fail to recognize the appropriateness of some of the descriptive terms. A characteristic feature of the country is the *wadi* or mountain stream which rushes down the hillsides where they slope steeply down to the Jordan valley. Rising among the mountains, when swollen by the rains they become roaring torrents, and make deep clefts in the land, whilst in summer they dry up, sometimes altogether. Like the Arabic *wadi*, the Hebrew word *nahal* stands both for the stream itself and for the valley it has created, and in the AV is variously translated ‘brook’ (ii. 13, 14, viii. 7, ix. 21), ‘river’ (ii. 24, 36, 37, iii. 8, 12, 16, iv. 48), or ‘valley’ (i. 24, iii. 16). The word thus occurs no fewer than sixteen times in all. The AV translation is not fortuitous. The Arnon and the Jabbok, always referred to as ‘rivers’, are perennial streams, cutting deep into the land, so forming natural boundaries, and as such they are treated in the book of Deuteronomy. Their valleys are deep and wide; hence we read of Aroer as situated ‘on the edge of the valley’ (ii. 36, RV) and as a ‘city in the valley’ (ii. 36); and in the following verse ‘the side of the river Jabbok’ is contrasted with ‘the hill country’ which rises above it (ii. 37, RV).

The Zered, though smaller, would yet present a formidable crossing for the Israelite host. In Nu. xxi. 12 (JE) it forms one of a list of camping-places, and in Dt. ii. 13, 14 special attention is called to the command to cross over it, and to its fulfilment.

Quite distinct from the *nahal* is the *gay*, the glen or ravine, which may or may not have water running through it, but is always a hollow in a hilly country. Such was the upland ‘valley

<sup>1</sup> Oesterley and Robinson, *loc. cit.*

over against Beth-peor’ (iii. 29, iv. 46, xxxiv. 6), where Moses delivered the law, and whence he looked across to Ebal and Gerizim (xi. 30).<sup>1</sup>

Still a third word is translated ‘valley’, namely *biq‘â*, which denotes a wide vale, flanked by hills on either side (viii. 7, xi. 11, xxxiv. 3); this is used only of the western side, where they are common.

The references to mountains and plains are equally true to the character of the country. Three Hebrew words are in EVV translated ‘plain’; they are very different and are used with discrimination. *Mišor* (iii. 10, iv. 43) comes from the root *yâšar* meaning to be ‘straight’ or ‘even’, and so denotes land having a flat or level surface, particularly when found in a mountainous district. Such ‘table-lands’ (so RV mg.) are found in Bashan, and to these only is the word applied.

A second word *kikkâr* means ‘circle’ and is used once (xxxiv. 3) of the plain of Jericho, which is round in shape.

The third word ‘*râbâ*’ is rather an attribute of the soil, and by Driver is translated ‘steppe’, because the districts so called, although arid, afford a certain amount of pasture. The AV translates either as ‘plain’ (so mostly in Deuteronomy), ‘desert’ (e.g. Is. xxxv. 1) or ‘champaign’ (Dt. xi. 30). When applied to the low-lying tract north and south of the Dead Sea it becomes almost a proper noun, ‘the Arabah’ (see ii. 7). But it is used in Deuteronomy of other steppe regions—Moreh (xi. 30) and ‘the plains of Moab’ (xxxiv. 1, 8).<sup>2</sup> Both of these lie well above the Jordan valley, but are rightly called ‘*râbôth*’ because of the nature of the ground. The latter is generally thought to be situated a short distance up the Wadi Seisban, a stream which flows into the Jordan opposite Jericho.<sup>3</sup> This would have afforded an excellent camping-ground, and Bedouin tents and camels can be seen there today.

It is a mistake, due to excessive zeal for analysis, to regard ‘the plains of Moab’ and ‘the land of Moab’ as alternative terms indicating respectively the style of P and that of D. The meanings are distinct and not interchangeable. The former term, as explained above, describes a limited region of a specific kind; the

<sup>1</sup> The same word is used for ‘the valley of Hinnom’ in Je. vii. 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> See also Jos. xi. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Driver, ICC, p. 418.

latter the whole area belonging to the kingdom of Moab, as it was then known to the author, and the two are used by him with discrimination. In i. 5 and xxxii. 49 he used 'in the land of Moab' of places within that area, and in xxxiv. 1 'from the plains of Jordan', leaving them behind; to change these over would destroy the sense.

In similar fashion he distinguishes the 'wilderness (*midhbār*) of Moab' (ii. 8), by the road of which the people went, from the 'border of Moab' (ii. 18) which they reached, the limit of the Moabite territory.<sup>1</sup>

The mountains described also show acquaintance with the scenery.<sup>2</sup> We have Mount Seir (i. 1, ii. 2, 5, xxxiii. 2), the lofty range at the heart of the Edomite country, and Mount Hor (xxxii. 50), a peak belonging to it.

In xxxii. 49 Moses is bidden 'get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, unto mount Nebo', and in xxxiv. 1 'he went up . . . unto the mount Nebo'. Here we have *ha<sup>a</sup>bhārīm*, which Gemser translates 'the mountains of the borderland',<sup>3</sup> which is the range<sup>4</sup> of which Nebo is the summit.

Of particular interest are the references to Mount Hermon, invisible from Jerusalem, but easily seen on a clear day, with its snowy top, from the heights of Moab. The name comes three times as being the northern limit of the conquered territory (iii. 8, 9, iv. 48). The narrator is particularly interested in the various names given to this outstanding landmark. 'The Sidonians call (it) Seirion'; it was indeed so, for in the Ras Shamra tablets of that age we can read Lebanon and Shariyanu (Sirion).<sup>5</sup> 'The Amorites call it Shenir', and this name reappears in Arabic, confirming its eastern usage.<sup>6</sup>

He has also heard a third name Sion,<sup>7</sup> known only from his words in iv. 48. Lebanon, the western part of the same range, is given in Dt. i. 7, xi. 24 as the northern limit of the land of promise.

<sup>1</sup> Different from both of these is 'the field of Moab', the cultivated land (Nu. xxi. 20).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. Adam Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, 25, 1931, pp. 68ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Art. cit.*, p. 355.

<sup>4</sup> The plural denotes this, and in Nu. xxxiii. 48, 49, the plural 'mountains' is used.

<sup>5</sup> Albright, *OTMS*, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Driver, *ICC*, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> Sion, not to be confused with Mount Zion.

It is a small point, but worthy of notice, that Lebanon is not elsewhere mentioned in the Pentateuch; the limits are described differently in Gn. xv. 18 and Ex. xxiii. 31 (JE); the 'sea of the Philistines' in the latter verse becomes 'the western sea' in Dt. xi. 24. Ebal and Gerizim also now come into sight (xi. 29), where they stand out against the western horizon.

Perhaps the most interesting of all these geographical points is the use in the Pentateuch of the word Pisgah, or, as it is always written, 'the pisgah', so making it apparent that it is a common and not a proper noun. Much confusion could have been avoided by observing this distinction. This fact has been obscured by its invariable association with the place from which Moses viewed the promised land, but a closer examination of the places where it occurs<sup>1</sup> shows that other heights are also thus described.

*Pisgā* is connected with the root *pāsagh*, which in later Hebrew means to 'cleave'. The LXX represents it as *τὴν λαξευτήν*, 'the cleft' in iv. 49, but in xxxiv. 1 as *φάσγα*, and the Talmud by *ramatha*, or 'hill'. The mountains to the north and east of the Dead Sea are full of clefts and rugged peaks, and the word probably is a common term for a serrated ridge. The references to Ashdoth-pisgah, 'the slopes' or 'springs' of the *pisgā*, indicate proximity to the Dead Sea.

It is first found in Nu. xxi. 20, where we are told that the people 'went up<sup>2</sup> from . . . the field of Moab to the top of the *pisgā* which looketh down upon the desert'. The LXX translates, '*τοῦ λελαξευμένου, τὸ βλέπον κατὰ πρόσωπον τῆς ἐρήμου.*'

For several reasons this cannot be the same as the peak ascended by Moses. (1) It is described quite differently, the 'field' often denoting arable land (Dt. xiv. 22, xxiv. 19) which is not the same as the 'Araboth or sterile region. (2) It is a camping-ground for the people, for which the top of a high mountain would be quite unsuitable. (3) The ascent of this ridge (xxi. 20) precedes the sending of messengers to Sihon (21) and the subsequent battle of Jahaz (23). It corresponds therefore with the occasion of Dt. ii. 26, when the Israelites had just left the 'way of the wilderness of

<sup>1</sup> Alone in Nu. xxi. 20, xxiii. 14; Dt. iii. 27, xxxiv. 1; in the compound Ashdoth-ha-pisgah, Dt. iii. 17, iv. 49; Jos. xii. 3, xiii. 20. On the antiquity of the 'oracles of Baalam', Nu. xxii-xxiv, see Albright, *OTMS*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Wherever a *pisgā* is mentioned, it must be *ascended*.

Moab' (ii. 8) which bordered the Arabian desert. This site therefore must be located on the *eastern* border of Moab, and the 'desert' which this ridge overlooked was that of Arabia.

A second pisgah is that to which Balaam and Balak ascended to view a 'part' of the Israelites (Nu. xxiii. 13, 14). This was in 'the field of Zophim', and is distinguished from the top of Peor (xxiii. 19) to which he went next.<sup>1</sup>

The interpretation of a pisgah as a ridge with a broken outline fits in well with the character of the mountains *as seen from Moab itself*, where many of the mountain tops show a jagged outline against the sky. On the contrary, when seen from Jerusalem, the mountains of Moab appear on the horizon, in the blue distance, to be one straight, unbroken line.

#### THE EARLY INHABITANTS

The notes on the previous inhabitants of the land are twofold. In Dt. vii. 1 there is a list of seven nations occupying the land when the Israelites, led by Moses, arrived, 'the Hittites, and the Gergashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites'.

This is the only place in the Pentateuch where this list appears in this complete form.<sup>2</sup> The scepticism once entertained concerning these nations has been banished by archaeological research.<sup>3</sup> The spread of the Amorites into the hill country (i. 7) is now an established fact, as is the infiltration of the Hittites from the north.

The lists in ii. 10–12, 20–23 go back still earlier and are equally interesting.<sup>4</sup> According to Gn. xiv. 5, 6<sup>5</sup> the Emim inhabited Edomite territory in the time of Abraham. The last few years have thrown a flood of light upon the Hurrians (Horim, ii. 12). Many Hurrian tablets and texts have been translated, and it is known that in the Hyksos period they spread southwards through Palestine as far as Egypt. Zamzummiim and Avvimi (cf. Jos. xiii. 3) are named here only in the Pentateuch.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nebo and pisgah are thus certainly not alternative names for the same place, used respectively by P and JE.

<sup>2</sup> It is repeated in varying order in Jos. ii. 10, xxxiv. 11.

<sup>3</sup> See Albright, OTMS, pp. 41f.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Petrie, *op. cit.*, pp. 19–26.

<sup>5</sup> 'Evidence continues to strengthen the case for the underlying historicity of this chapter', Albright, OTMS, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Unless the former are the Zuzim of Gn. xiv. 5.

The use of Caphtorim (cf. Gn. x. 14) to denote the people who came later to be known as Philistines is an archaism which indicates the early recording of these lists.

There is no reason to doubt that these names have survived from the period of the occupation; and the words 'as Israel did' (ii. 12) and 'unto this day' (ii. 22) need not imply the lapse of more than a generation.

#### CANAAN SEEN FROM OUTSIDE

However it may be accounted for, the fact must be reckoned with that the land of Canaan to the west of Jordan is always viewed from the outside, either from the southern border or from the Moabite highlands, but never as from within. In the south Eshcol (i. 24) and Gaza (ii. 23) are named, but not Hebron; and when the limits of the holy land are given, they are 'the mount of the Amorites' and 'Lebanon' (i. 7), not Dan and Beersheba.

The modern traveller who crosses the Jordan by the bridge near Jericho, and, having ascended some way up the Wadi Seisban, looks back, can see the view exactly as described in Dt. xi. 29, 30. The view from the nearby Wadi Nimrin is similar.

From the plains ('rābōth) of Moab (cf. xxxiv. 1) he looks 'beyond Jordan' to the 'Arabah . . . near . . . Moreh', with Gilgal<sup>1</sup> at his feet. Ebal and Gerizim stand out against the western sky. Then there is the view of the land described in Dt. xxxiv. 3. Three words are used to describe the viewpoint, 'Abarim' the range, Nebo the mountain, and the pisgah, the topmost ridge. Hither Moses 'went up from the plains of Moab' where the people were encamped in the ravine (Nu. xxxiii. 48; cf. Dt. iii. 29). Josephus<sup>2</sup> records a tradition that Eleazar and Joshua went up with him, embraced him and returned.

A spot south of the Wadi Seisban, eight miles or more east of the junction of the Jordan with the Dead Sea, which now goes by the name of Jebel Neba, was in Christian tradition thought to be Mount Nebo. The view from thence fits fairly with the conditions in chapter xxxiv and Nu. xxxiii, but is more restricted and further from the Jordan than that which we proceed to describe.

Local Moslem tradition, which in this matter is to be preferred,

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Driver (ICC, p. 133) rightly prefers to identify this as the well-known Gilgal near Jericho (cf. Jos. iv. 19).

<sup>2</sup> *Antiquities*, iv. 8. 48.

identifies it with Jebel Osha, which is 1,000 feet higher, somewhat to the north of Jericho, towards which and the Dead Sea its sides slope steeply<sup>1</sup> down. A small erection near the summit is supposed to mark the site of Moses' grave!

The view from this peak corresponds so minutely with the description here given as to impress anyone who has been privileged to see it.<sup>2</sup> Conspicuous to the north the snowy peak of Hermon glitters against the blue sky, with the rolling hills of Gilead in between 'as far as Dan'.<sup>3</sup>

To the north-west the Galilean hills are visible (Naphtali),<sup>4</sup> to the west the highlands of Ephraim where Nablus (Shechem) is seen nestling between the heights of Ebal and Gerizim; then slightly to the south the mount of Olives (hiding Jerusalem), beyond which the land slopes down to the Mediterranean Sea. Six thousand feet below lies Jericho with the plain (*kikkār*) or circular area around it; then the Dead Sea even unto Zoar, at the southern end,<sup>5</sup> with all the Negeb, or southern part of Palestine. The description is as true as the view is marvellous, and it is hard to believe that it was conceived by one who had not seen it.

#### CONCLUSION

When we review the geographical data as a whole the details appear to be much too accurate to be due either to chance or to oral tradition. The account of the journeyings in chapters i–iii is altogether realistic and quite unlike an introduction prefixed to a collection of old laws; it bears every sign of originality. The views described and the features of the Moabite country reproduced must have been seen by human eyes; the antiquarian notes also belong to the period and are not the result of archaeological research.

The omissions also are significant: there is no hint of Jerusalem, nor of Ramah, dear to Samuel's heart, not even of Shiloh, where the tabernacle came to rest. Everything points to its historical character and early date.

<sup>1</sup> Are these slopes the Ashdoth-pisgah?

<sup>2</sup> As the writer of these words did on a cloudless spring morning.

<sup>3</sup> Some authorities identify this with Dan-jaan in 2 Sa. xxiv. 6, and place it in northern Gilead; others think it is the better known Dan.

<sup>4</sup> The use of the tribal names to define the areas need not imply a late date (cf. Jos. xiv). On the modernizing of names see W. Albright, *Biblical Period*, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> So Josephus (*Jewish War*, iv. 8. 4) and G. Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 506, n. 4.