
The final month...

Rabbi Alon Meltzer

*A New Page of Talmud –
Devarim 5782*



These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan.— Through the wilderness, in the Arabah near Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazereth, and Di-zahab, it is eleven days from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea by the Mount Seir route. It was in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, that Moses addressed the Israelites in accordance with the instructions that God had given him for them, **Devarim 1:1-3**¹ Because these are words of reproof and he is enumerating here all the places where they provoked God to anger, therefore he suppresses all mention of the

matters in which they sinned and refers to them only by a mere allusion contained in the names of these places out of regard for Israel (cf. Sifrei Devarim 1:1; Onkelos and Targum Jonathan). - **Rashi on Devarim 1:1**² Moses held

back with these words of admonition until the Israelites had reached the banks of the Jordan. Once they saw with their own eyes that they had come very close to their eventual destination they would be in a better frame of mind to accept admonitions. As long as they had been a long way from their objective they would not have been in a suitable frame of mind to listen to admonitions. – **Or HaChaim on Devarim 1:1**³ This tells us that he reprovved them only shortly before his death (Jewish tradition holds that Moses died on the seventh day of the twelfth month; cf. Megillah 13b). From whom did he learn this? From Jacob, who reprovved his sons only shortly before his death. He said, "Reuben, my son, I will tell you why I have not reprovved you for your unfit conduct during all these years: it was in order that you should not leave me and go and join Esau, my wicked brother". — And on

account of four things one should not reprove a person except shortly before one's death: that one should not reprove him and again have to reprove him; and that his fellow whom he reprovves should not, when he afterwards happens to see him, feel ashamed before him, etc.; as it is set forth in Siphre. And similarly, Joshua reprovved Israel only shortly before his death (cf. Joshua 24:1—29), and so, too, Samuel, as it is said, (I Samuel 12:3) "Behold, testify against me", and so, also, David reprovved his son Solomon only shortly before his death (cf. 1 Kings 2:1—9).- **Rashi on Devarim 1:3**⁴ The more deeply immersed I

These were the marches
of the Israelites ...

וְהָיָה בְּאֶרֶץ בְּנֵי שֵׁנָה
Bamidbar 33:1

became in the thinking of the prophets, the more powerfully it became clear to me what the lives of the Prophets sought to convey: that morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one

must feel for the suffering of human beings, that indifference to evil is worse than evil itself, that in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible. – **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel**⁴ If we were destroyed, and the world with us, due to baseless hatred, then we shall rebuild ourselves, and the world with us, with baseless love — ahavat chinam. – **Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Orot HaKodesh viii**⁵

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