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Introduction

The war with Og, king of Bashan, Deuteronomy 3:1, Deuteronomy 3:2. He is defeated, Deuteronomy 3:3. Sixty fortified cities with many unwallied towns taken, Deuteronomy 3:4, Deuteronomy 3:5. The utter destruction of the people, Deuteronomy 3:6. The spoils, Deuteronomy 3:7; and extent of the land taken, Deuteronomy 3:8-10. Account of Og's iron bedstead, Deuteronomy 3:11. The land given to the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh, Deuteronomy 3:12, Deuteronomy 3:13. Jair takes the country of Argob, Deuteronomy 3:14. Gilead is given unto Machir, Deuteronomy 3:15. And the rest of the land possessed by the Reubenites and Gadites, Deuteronomy 3:16, Deuteronomy 3:17. The directions given to those tribes, Deuteronomy 3:18-20. The counsel given to Joshua, Deuteronomy 3:21, Deuteronomy 3:22. Moses's prayer to God for permission to go into the promised land, Deuteronomy 3:23-25; and God's refusal, Deuteronomy 3:26. He is commanded to go up to Mount Pisgah to see it, Deuteronomy 3:27; and to encourage Joshua, Deuteronomy 3:28. They continue in the valley opposite to Beth-peor, Deuteronomy 3:29.

Verse 4

All the region of Argob - *כָּל־אֶרֶץ־אֲרֻגּוֹב* (col chebel Argob), all the cable or cord of Argob; this expression, which is used in various other parts of Scripture, (see, in the original, Amos 7:17; Micah 2:5; Deuteronomy 32:9; Psalm 16:6), shows that anciently land was measured by lines or cords of a certain length, in a similar way to that by the chain among us, and the schoenus or cord among the Egyptians. Some think that it was the region of Argob that was afterwards called the region of Trachonites.

Verse 9

Hermon the Sidonians call - Shenir - I suppose this verse to have been a marginal remark, which afterwards got incorporated with the text, or an addition by Joshua or Ezra.

Verse 11

Og king of Bashan remained - Og was the last king of the Amorites; his kingdom appears to have taken its name from the hill of Bashan; the country has been since called Batanaea.

Remnant of giants - Of the Rephaim. See on Deuteronomy 2:10 (note), Deuteronomy 2:11 (note).

His bedstead was - of iron - Iron was probably used partly for its strength and durability, and partly to prevent noxious vermin from harbouring in it.

Is it not in Rabbath, of the children of Ammon? - The bedstead was probably taken in some battle between the Ammonites and Amorites, in which the former had gained the victory. The bedstead was carried a trophy and placed in Rabbath, which appears, from 2 Samuel 12:26, to have been the royal city of the children of Ammon.

Nine cubits was the length - four cubits the breadth - Allowing the bedstead to have been one cubit longer than Og, which is certainly sufficient, and allowing the cubit to be about eighteen inches long, for this is perhaps the average of the cubit of a man, then Og was twelve feet high. This may be deemed extraordinary, and perhaps almost incredible, and therefore many commentators have, according to their fancy, lengthened the bedstead and shortened the man, making the former one-third longer than the person who lay on it, that they might reduce Og to six cubits; but even in this way they make him at least nine feet high.

On this subject the rabbins have trifled most sinfully. I shall give one specimen. In the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel on Numbers 21:33-35, it is said that "Og having observed that the camp of the Israelites extended six miles, he went and tore up a mountain six miles in its base, and put it on his head, and carried it towards the camp, that he might throw it on the Israelites and destroy them; but the word of the Lord prepared a worm, which bored a hole in the mountain over his head, so that it fell down upon his shoulders: at the same time his teeth growing out in all directions, stuck into the mountain, so that he could not cast it off his head. Moses, (who was himself ten cubits high), seeing Og thus entangled, took an axe ten cubits long, and having leaped ten cubits in height, struck Og on the ankle bone, so that he fell and was slain."

From this account the distance from the sole of Og's foot to his ankle was thirty cubits in length! I give this as a very slight specimen of rabbinical comment. I could quote places in the Talmud in which Og is stated to be several miles high! This relation about Og I suppose to be also an historical note added by a subsequent hand.

Verse 14

Bashan-havoth-jair - Bashan of the cities of Jair; see Numbers 32:41.

Verse 17

From Chinnereth - See on Numbers 34:11 (note).

Verse 24-25

The prayer of Moses recorded in these two verses, and his own reflections on it, Deuteronomy 3:26, are very affecting. He had suffered much both in body and mind in bringing the people to the borders of the promised land; and it was natural enough for him to wish to see them established in it, and to enjoy a portion of that inheritance himself, which he knew was a type of the heavenly country. But notwithstanding his very earnest prayer, and God's especial favor towards him, he was not permitted to go over Jordan! He had grieved the Spirit of God, and he passed a sentence against him of exclusion from the promised land. Yet he permitted him to see it, and gave him the fullest assurances that the people whom he had brought out of Egypt should possess it. Thus God may choose to deprive those of earthly possessions to whom he is nevertheless determined to give a heavenly inheritance.

Verse 26

Let it suffice thee - רַב־לַחַם (rab lach), there is an abundance to thee - thou hast had honor enough already, and may well dispense with going over Jordan. He surely has no reason to complain who is taken from earthly felicity to heavenly glory. In this act God showed to Moses both his goodness and severity.

Verse 28

But charge Joshua, etc. - Give him authority in the sight of the people, let them see that he has the same commission which I gave to thee. Encourage him; for he will meet with many difficulties in the work to which he is called. And strengthen him - show him my unfulfilling promises, and exhort him to put his trust in me alone; for he shall go over before this people, and shall cause them to inherit the land; of this let him rest perfectly assured.

Verse 29

Beth-peor - This was a city in the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites; and as בֵּית־פְּעוֹר (beth) signifies a house, the place probably had its name from a temple of the god Peor, who was worshipped there. Peor was nearly the same among the Moabites that Priapus was among the Romans - the obscene god of an obscene people. This we have already seen.

It is very likely that what God speaks here, both concerning Moses and Joshua, was designed to be typical of the procedure of his justice and grace in the salvation of man.

1. The land of Canaan was a type of the kingdom of heaven.

2. The law, which shows the holiness of God and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, could not bring the people to the possession of that kingdom.

3. Moses may probably be considered here as the emblem of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, but not redemption from it

4. Joshua, the same as Jesus, the name signifying a Savior, is appointed to bring the people into the rest which God had provided for them; thus it is by Jesus Christ alone that the soul is saved - fitted for and brought into the possession of the heavenly inheritance, (see John 1:17; Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:12, Galatians 3:13, Galatians 3:24); for he is the end of the law - the great scope and design of the law, for righteousness - for justification, to them that believe; Romans 10:4. Such a use as this every pious reader may make of the circumstances recorded here, without the danger of pushing analogy or metaphor beyond their reasonable limits.