

Deuteronomy 3:1-7

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Moses continues the history lesson. Now, he recounts Israel's victory over King Og of Bashan.

This section rightly begins with the word “then” suggesting that it follows the previous section (2:32-37). That is to say, after Israel's triumphant victory over King Sihon, they *turned and went up the road to Bashan*. Bashan was a rich and fertile land in what is now the Golan Heights, east of the Sea of Galilee. The text tells us that *Og, king of Bashan with all his people came out to meet the Israelites in battle at Edrei*, Edrei was a town located near the Jordanian border, not far from the Syrian site called “Ashtaroth.” It was a city of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

In verse two, the LORD commanded the Israelites to confront Og. He said, “*Do not fear him!*” In times of war, fear (terror) seems to be the first natural reaction of human beings. It is easy to be terrified by the size and/or the reputation of an army. That was exactly the case with King Og who was a remarkable giant, as we shall see below in verses 8-11. For this reason, God reassured His people that they would be victorious by confirming the defeat of Og and his army to them. He said: “*I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand.*” The tense used for the verb “to deliver” suggests that the victory was a *fait accompli* (a done deal), as in the previous chapter (2:24). The victory had already been granted to the Israelites before they began to fight. Therefore, they must simply show up and confront the enemy.

Moreover, God said to Israel, “*Just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.*” In the narrative concerning the defeat of Sihon ([Deuteronomy 2:32-37](#)), we saw that the Israelites “captured all his cities and utterly destroyed the men, women and children of every city” (v. 34). This was the kind of destruction God anticipated for Og also. Therefore, God's command to the Israelites to do to Og as they did to Sihon served as a motivation for them. In other words, when Moses and the Israelites remembered how they executed judgment on King Sihon and his people (2:34), they would be encouraged to do likewise to King Og and his people.

Og intended to defeat Israel. In verses three to seven, we see that the victory instead went to Israel, as God planned. Moses stated, “*So the LORD our God delivered Og also, king of Bashan, with all his people into our hand, and we smote them until no survivor was left.*” Not only did the Israelites smite all the people of Bashan, they also captured all its cities. Moses said, “*We captured all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.*”

The place called “Argob” was a district of Bashan located eastward of the Jordan valley. It is probably used here as synonymous with the whole region of Bashan ([Deuteronomy 3:14](#)). The cities the Israelites conquered were well *fortified with high walls, gates and bars, besides a great many unwallied towns*. The LORD of hosts caused His people to destroy them completely because He is all-powerful. Moses declared, “*We utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women and children of every city.*” God is faithful and true. He told the Israelites to attack King Og because He had weakened him in order that His chosen people might be victorious. So, it went exactly as God had stated. This tells us, once again, that the faithful God (Yahweh) was the one fighting for His people.

Thus, the Israelites *utterly destroyed* Og and his people. They left *no survivor*. It is clear God intended to execute full judgment. In this case, the animals were spared. For, Moses said, “*But all the animals and the spoil of the cities we took as our booty.*” God allowed His people to eliminate the enemy in order to possess their land and their belongings. The animals were kept safe for the benefits of the Israelites.

Biblical Text:

¹ Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan, and Og, king of Bashan, with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Edrei.² But the Lord said to me, ‘Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; and you shall do to him just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.’³ So the Lord our God delivered Og also, king of Bashan, with all his people into our hand, and we smote them until no survivor was left.⁴ We captured all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.⁵ All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars, besides a great many unwallied towns.⁶ We utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women

and children of every city. ⁷ But all the animals and the spoil of the cities we took as our booty.