

Deuteronomy 3:23-29

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Moses recalls his impassioned plea to God. He pleads with the LORD that he be allowed to enter Canaan with the new generation of Israelites. Although God precludes Moses from entering the Promised Land, He graciously allows him to view the land from afar. Joshua, the successor of Moses, is the one who enjoys the privilege of leading the Israelites to Canaan.

In this final section, Moses alluded to the act of disobedience that had precluded him from entering the Promised Land ([Numbers 20:8-12](#); [Deuteronomy 1:37](#)). Having witnessed the mighty acts of God—for instance, how He delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, provided for them during the wilderness wandering and defeated both kings of the Amorites — Moses *pleaded with the LORD* to ask for grace and mercy so that he too could participate in the full conquest of Canaan.

In his petition, Moses began with, “*O Lord GOD*,” a phrase that first appears in [Genesis 15:2](#) in Abram’s address to God. The term translated as “Lord” here is the Hebrew word Adonai which basically means “lord,” “master,” or “owner.” It is a title that is often used to address God as the superior or as master. The second term translated as “GOD” here is the personal name Yahweh, the covenant name God gave to Moses when He “appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush” ([Exodus 3:1-15](#)).

The name “Yahweh” was significant for Moses because God gave it to him in the context of Israel’s imminent deliverance from Egypt. As we know, Yahweh delivered the Israelites from Egypt so that He could fellowship with them. Indeed, the Israelites were to be God’s “own possession among all the peoples of the earth” ([Exodus 19:5](#)). Therefore, the use of the title along with the personal name of God by Moses here not only describes the personal relationship that he had with God but also points out his confession in which he acknowledged God as His owner or lord, as supported by the word “*servant*” below.

Furthermore, Moses declared, “*You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand.*” Here, Moses described what God began to show him, not as land or the way leading to the land, but as His *greatness* and His *strong hand*. Hence, the rhetorical purpose of this statement is twofold: (1)

it served to remind God of the work He had begun and His need to complete it; and (2) it served to demonstrate the gratitude of Moses toward God and His mighty acts.

In the last part of the verse, Moses used a rhetorical question. It reads, “*for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours?*” A rhetorical question is a type of question that someone asks in order to make a point rather than to get an answer. In other words, the person who asks the question already knows the answer. The goal of the rhetorical question then is to create a dramatic effect on the listeners or the audience. In this verse, Moses used the rhetorical question to compare the true God, Yahweh, with the “so-called” pagan gods in order to show the uniqueness of Yahweh. There is clearly no other god that can do the mighty acts that Yahweh has done, whether in heaven or on earth. The use of heaven and earth together is another literary device that combines two contrasting words to refer to an entirety. Here, heaven and earth represent both the domain of God (heaven) and of man (earth). The idea here is that there is nobody anywhere who can do what Yahweh has done or does.

Having acknowledged the greatness of God, Moses asked that God let him see the good land *beyond the Jordan*. Moses said, “*Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.*” However, *the LORD was angry with Moses on the account of the Israelites and would not listen to him*. God told him that a decision has already been made and no further discussion is required: “*Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter.*” Nevertheless, because of His grace, the LORD allowed Moses to view the Promised Land from afar. He said to him, “*Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan.*” The mountain called “Pisgah” probably refers to Mount Nebo ([Deuteronomy 34:1-4](#)). It lies east of the Jordan River and northeast of the Dead Sea. It is identified with modern Ras es-Siyaghah, about ten miles of the Jordan River.

At this point, the LORD commanded Moses to *charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as inheritance the land which Moses shall see*. Joshua, not Moses, was the one who would enjoy the privilege of leading the Israelites to Canaan. Thus, after viewing the land from a distance, Moses concluded, “*we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.*” The valley opposite Beth-peor was the place where Moses was buried, according to [Deuteronomy 34:6](#). It is in the land of Moab, north of Mount Pisgah (Mount Nebo), about ten miles of the Jordan River.

Biblical Text:

²³ I also pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying, ²⁴ ‘O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? ²⁵ Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.’ ²⁶ But the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the Lord said to me, ‘Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter. ²⁷ Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see *it* with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. ²⁸ But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.’ ²⁹ So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.