

# Deuteronomy 4:44-49

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*This section provides the historical and geographical setting for the covenant message. It also summarizes Israel's victory over the two kings of the Amorites, across the Jordan to the east.*

This section, which concludes the first four chapters of the book of Deuteronomy, describes the contents of the speech indicating the time and the place it was delivered. It thus forms an envelope figure (frame) with 1:1-5, because the content is almost similar and both texts highlight the law that Moses set before the sons of Israel. An envelope figure (frame) is a literary device which consists of using similar words or phrases at the beginning and end of a literary unit. As such, this section provides the narrative framework that gave rise to the author's speech.

The narrator begins by saying, "*This is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel.*" The term translated as "law" is the Hebrew word "torah," a noun that usually refers to the five books of Moses. In our context, however, it refers specifically to the covenant text, that is, the precepts and stipulations that Moses was about to teach the Israelites (see also [Deuteronomy 1:5](#); [Deuteronomy 4:8](#)). This meaning is further confirmed in the next verse which describes the law as "testimonies," "statutes," and "ordinances." Verse 45 reads, "*These are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out from Egypt.*"

The first term ("testimonies") denotes covenant stipulations upon which the contracting parties agree. The second term "statutes" ("ḥuqqîm" in Hebrew) refers to something prescribed, like an ordinance. As such, it could be translated as "prescriptions," or "decrees." The third term ("mišpāṭîm") refers to legal procedures, or commands issued by a judge. The use of these three terms together highlights the significance of the whole decree of God for Israel as a covenant partner.

These decrees were given *to the sons of Israel when they came out from Egypt, across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon.* The Israelites were redeemed from bondage in Egypt and were camped east of the Jordan river, *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 *Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon*. There, Moses explained the significance of the law to the Israelites so that they might learn how to fear the LORD.

Furthermore, the narrator tells us that *Moses and the sons of Israel defeated King Sihon when they came out from Egypt*. God told His people that He had “hardened” Sihon’s spirit and “made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into” their hands ([Deuteronomy 2:30](#)). Since God had already paved the way for His people, they *defeated* Sihon and the Amorites. *They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who were across the Jordan to the east*. It will be recalled that after the conquest of King Sihon (2:30-37), God instructed His people to conquer Og, king of Bashan (3:1-11).

Thus, the LORD delivered King Og into the hand of His people and asked them to defeat him, just as they did to King Sihon (3:2). The Israelites defeated both kings of the Amorites. The victory of the Israelites extended *from Aroer which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon), with all the Arabah across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah*. Aroer lies on the northern border of the valley of Arnon, just one mile from the river. The *Arabah*, a term used as a virtual synonym for “desert” is the continuation of the Jordan rift between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Elath, approximately 110 miles long.

### **Biblical Text:**

**<sup>44</sup> Now this is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel; <sup>45</sup> these are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out from Egypt, <sup>46</sup> across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt. <sup>47</sup> They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, *who were* across the Jordan to the east, <sup>48</sup> from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon), <sup>49</sup> with all the Arabah across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.**