

The Death of Moses
Deuteronomy 34:1–12
Veritas Class
April 29, 2018

A. The Context of the Chapter

1. The Literary Context: The Death Narrative (31:1–34:12)

Moses' Actions to Secure Israel's Future

- a. Commissioning of Joshua (31:1–8, 23)
- b. Transcribing his Farewell Addresses and Arranging for the Regular Reading of the Torah in the Future (31:9–13)
- c. Teaching the People Their National Anthem (31:14–22, 30–32:47)
- d. Blessing the Tribes (33:1–29)

2. The Historical Context: The Contrast with ANE Rulers

- a. Naram-Sin King of Akkad (2200 BC)
- b. Rameses II King of Egypt (1279–1213 BC)
- c. Sennacherib, King of Assyria (705–681 BC)

B. Structure

1. Moses' ascent up Mount Nebo and his observation of the land (vv. 1–4).
2. Moses' Death and Burial on Mount Nebo (vv. 5–6).

C. Interpretation

1. The Account of Moses' Death (vv. 1–6)

a. Moses' Ascent up Mount Nebo and His Observation of the Land (vv. 1–4)

(1) Note the topographical markers:

“Plains of Moab” (*'arbôt mō'āb*)

“Mount Nebo” (*'el har nēbo*) Jebel en-Nebo (2739 feet above sea level)

“the top of the Pisgah” (mountain range)

“opposite Jericho” (*'al pēnê yēreḥô*)

“opposite Jericho” (*‘al pēnê yĕrēḥô*)

(2) Note the focus on YHWH’s actions

(a) YHWH’s Revelation of the land to Moses (vv. 1b–3)

“All the Land”

- Gilead
- Up to Dan
- All Naphtali
- Ephraim and Manasseh
- All the land of Judah till the Western Sea
- The Negev
- The “dish” (הַכֶּבֶר) in the valley of Jericho, the city of Palms
- As far as Zoar

(b) YHWH’s Last Words to Moses (v. 4)

- His Interpretation of the Revelation
- His Reminder to Moses

Deuteronomy 3:27

Deuteronomy 32:50–52

b. YHWH’s Burial of Moses (vv. 5–6)

(1) The Narrator’s Announcement of Moses’ Death (v. 5)

- (a) His Disposition toward Moses: “The servant of YHWH” (*‘ebed yhw̄h*)
- (b) His Disposition toward YHWH

(2) The Narrator’s Announcement of YHWH’s Burial of Moses (v. 6a)

- (a) The divine action
- (b) The secret location

(3) Later Traditions concerning the Death of Moses

- (a) Jude 5–9
- (b) Josephus *Antiquities* 4.48
- (c) The Testament of Moses