



REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

REASON TOGETHER STUDY

GIANTS IN THE BIBLE

PART FOUR OF EIGHT



WHO WERE THE EMIM AND ZAMZUMMIM?

DEUTERONOMY 2:9-23 | GENESIS 14:5

They were great and many and tall. The Lord remained greater.



SERMON & PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

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WHO WERE THE EMIM AND ZAMZUMMIM?

Sermon Transcript

The Giants Israel Never Had to Fight

Deuteronomy 2:9-23 | Genesis 14:5

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley
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Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

If you are worshipping with us for the first time, we are especially glad you are here.

You will not be singled out or asked to stand.

If you would like us to stay in touch, our guest card asks only for your first name and email address.

After the service, please join us at the Reason Together Cafe.

The coffee is free.

The conversation is free.

And we offer free refills on both.

We do not pass an offering plate at Reason Together Church.

Guests are not expected to give, and members of another church should give through their home church.

For those led to support this ministry, there is a giving box in the back.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for gathering us around Your Word.

Give us courage to believe what You have said and humility to stop where You have not spoken.

Teach us to recognize the difference between faith and presumption.

Show us the danger of unbelief within our own hearts.

Help us see that no enemy is greater than You and no desire of ours is greater than Your authority.

Lead every person here to the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

In the name of Jesus we pray.

Amen.

Our primary passage is Deuteronomy chapter 2, verses 9 through 23.

I will be reading from the King James Version.

Beginning in verse 9:

“And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.”

“The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims;”

“Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims.”

“The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the LORD gave unto them.”

Now look at verse 19:

“And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession.”

“That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims;”

“A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; but the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead:”

“As he did to the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horims from before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even unto this day:”

“And the Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, even unto Azzah, the Caphtorims, which came forth out of Caphtor, destroyed them, and dwelt in their stead.”

Most Christians have heard of Goliath.

Many have heard of the Anakim or the Rephaim.

Very few have heard a sermon about the Emim.

Even fewer could explain who the Zamzummim were.

Their names seem strange to us.

Their appearances in Scripture are brief.

The Emim are named only in Genesis 14 and Deuteronomy 2.

The Zamzummim are named only here in Deuteronomy 2.

Israel was never commanded to fight either people.

By the time Israel arrived, both had disappeared from their former lands.

Why would Moses stop Israel’s journey to speak about enemies Israel would never meet and battles Israel would never fight?

That question takes us to the heart of the passage.

Sometimes God prepares us for tomorrow by reminding us what He has already done.

The Emim and Zamzummim proved that no enemy was too great for God.

The land of Moab and the land of Ammon proved that God’s people still had to remain within the boundaries of His command.

Faith did not mean fighting every battle.

Faith meant advancing when God said advance.

Faith meant passing by when God said pass by.

Faith meant trusting God in both.

Israel was standing near the land of promise after almost forty years in the wilderness.

This was not the first generation to reach that opportunity.

Their fathers had stood near the land before them.

They sent twelve men to search it.

The spies returned carrying evidence that the land was fruitful.

They also reported strong inhabitants, fortified cities and the sons of Anak.

Deuteronomy 1:28 remembers their words:

“The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there.”

The people were powerful.

The cities were fortified.

The Anakim were unusually tall.

Those observations were not the heart of Israel's failure.

Their failure began when they allowed the size of the obstacle to determine the size of their God.

They reasoned that because the enemy was greater than Israel, the enemy must also be greater than Israel's God.

They had watched the Lord bring judgment upon Egypt.

They had crossed the Red Sea on dry ground.

They had eaten bread from heaven.

They had received water in the wilderness.

Yet when they saw the inhabitants of Canaan, they said, “We be not able.”

The giants were real.

But their unbelief made the giants greater than God in their own thinking.

That generation died in the wilderness.

Now their children were moving toward the same land.

They would hear the same intimidating names.

They would see fortified cities.

They would confront powerful kings.

Before they faced those enemies, God led them through a region filled with evidence that intimidating peoples had already fallen.

Verse 10 says, “The Emims dwelt therein in times past.”

Even in the days of Moses, the Emim belonged to an earlier period.

They had lived in territory later possessed by Moab.

Scripture does not present them as a handful of unusual individuals.

They were a people.

They occupied territory.

Their existence was remembered by the nation that followed them.

The Bible describes them with three words.

They were great.

They were many.

They were tall.

Great speaks of an imposing and powerful population.

Many tells us that they were numerous.

Tall describes their unusual physical stature.

Then Moses adds the comparison, “as the Anakims.”

The Anakim were the people whose name had frightened Israel at Kadeshbarnea.

The Anakim had become the standard by which Israel pictured an overwhelming opponent.

Moses was telling the new generation that the Anakim were not the first formidable people to live in that region.

The Bible does not tell us the average height of the Emim.

It does not say that every individual was the same size.

It does not give us creatures of fantastic dimensions.

It tells us they were unusually tall and compared with the Anakim.

We should believe what Scripture says.

We should also refuse to add what Scripture does not say.

Genesis 14 gives us the earlier reference.

Verse 5 says:

“And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim.”

This places the Emim in the account associated with Abraham.

They lived at or near Shaveh Kiriathaim in Transjordan, east of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

The invading kings moved through a series of established peoples.

They struck the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim.

They struck the Zuzim in Ham.

They struck the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim.

They struck the Horites in Mount Seir.

Genesis treats the Emim as a known population in a real geographical setting.

The attack in Genesis 14 did not necessarily end their entire history.

Deuteronomy tells us that the Moabites later succeeded them and possessed their territory.

The name Emim is probably connected with the language of terror or dread.

It may carry the sense of “terrors” or “dreaded ones.”

We do not know whether they used that name for themselves.

It may have been the name by which the Moabites remembered them.

Their appearance, military reputation or memory may have caused fear.

But a terrifying reputation is not the same as invincibility.

The people remembered as terrors became a people remembered in the past tense.

Verse 11 says they “were accounted giants.”

The Hebrew term underneath the KJV word “giants” is Rephaim.

The Emim were reckoned or classified among the Rephaim.

The verse gives us three distinct ideas.

Rephaim is the broader classification.

Emim is the name used by the Moabites.

The Anakim are the people used for comparison.

The verse does not say that all three names mean exactly the same thing.

The Emim were not called Anakim.

They were like the Anakim in stature and reputation.

They were counted among the Rephaim.

That may indicate that these populations were related.

It may indicate a broad ethnic category.

It may describe several ancient peoples who shared a recognized reputation for unusual stature and power.

Scripture does not provide the genealogy that would settle every question.

Classification does not necessarily prove genealogy.

Comparison does not require identity.

Similarity does not turn every giant group in the Bible into the same people.

Some readers connect every Rephaim directly with the Nephilim of Genesis 6.

The Bible does not make that statement here.

Numbers 13:33 connects the sons of Anak with the Nephilim in the report of the spies.

Deuteronomy 2 compares the Emim and Zamzummim with the Anakim.

That creates an association.

It does not supply an inspired family tree joining every group.

These passages do not call the Emim angels, demons or spirits.

They do not call the Zamzummim supernatural beings.

They present peoples who occupied land, fought other peoples, suffered defeat and were succeeded by human nations.

We honor Scripture when we say everything it says.

We also honor Scripture when we refuse to make it say more.

Verse 12 turns from the Emim to the Horites.

“The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime.”

The descendants of Esau displaced them and lived in their territory.

The Horites are not described here as giants.

That tells us Moses is doing more than listing tall people.

He is describing a repeated movement in the history of nations.

An earlier population lived in a territory.

A later population displaced it.

National boundaries and rulers changed.

God remained sovereign through those changes.

The people living on a piece of land today were not necessarily the first people ever to live there.

Then Moses tells Israel to cross the brook Zered.

Verses 14 and 15 say:

“And the space in which we came from Kadeshbarnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, was thirty and eight years; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the LORD swore unto them.”

“For indeed the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from among the host, until they were consumed.”

Do not miss where these words appear.

Moses has just spoken about the Emim who were gone.

He has spoken about the Horites who were displaced.

He is about to speak about the Zamzummim who were gone.

Between those accounts he speaks about a generation of Israelites that had also disappeared.

Great stature did not preserve the Emim.

An established homeland did not preserve the Horites.

Membership in Israel did not excuse an unbelieving generation.

The earlier generation feared that the hand of the Canaanites would be against them.

They should have been more concerned that the hand of the Lord would be against them.

Which should frighten us more, the opposition of people or the opposition of God?

The greatest danger in the wilderness was not the giant outside the camp.

It was unbelief inside the camp.

A person may attend church and still refuse to trust God.

A person may know Biblical language and still resist Biblical truth.

A person may remember what God did for others and still refuse to follow Him personally.

A family heritage cannot substitute for faith.

A church position cannot substitute for obedience.

An ordination cannot substitute for a heart surrendered to God.

Israel had seen what God could do.

Yet an entire generation chose the safety they imagined in retreat over the faithfulness God promised in obedience.

Now the new generation approached the children of Ammon.

God said in verse 19:

“Distress them not, nor meddle with them.”

Then Scripture tells us who had lived there before them.

The land was accounted a land of Rephaim.

The Ammonites called its earlier inhabitants Zamzummim.

Once again, the description is “great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims.”

The parallel with the Emim is unmistakable.

The Emim lived in land later occupied by Moab.

The Zamzummim lived in land later occupied by Ammon.

The Moabites had their regional name.

The Ammonites had theirs.

Both peoples were classified as Rephaim.

Both were compared with the Anakim.

The meaning of Zamzummim is uncertain.

Some have proposed “murmurers” or “noisy ones.”

Others connect the name with speech that sounded strange to neighboring peoples.

Still others connect it with devising or plotting.

Those are linguistic proposals.

They are not revealed definitions.

When Scripture is clear, we should speak clearly.

When the evidence is uncertain, we should speak humbly.

We know what the Ammonites called them.

We know their general location.

We know how Scripture describes them.

We do not know exactly what the name meant.

Many interpreters believe the Zuzim of Genesis 14 were the same people later called Zamzummim.

The names sound similar.

The geographical setting is compatible.

Both occur in connection with the Emim and other Transjordanian peoples.

The identification is reasonable.

But the Bible never says in so many words, “The Zuzim are the Zamzummim.”

Reasonable is not the same word as certain.

Our conclusion should remain as measured as the evidence.

The identification may be correct, but the message of Deuteronomy 2 does not depend upon it.

Now listen to the decisive words in verse 21:

“But the LORD destroyed them before them.”

The Ammonites acted in history.

They succeeded the Zamzummim.

They settled in their land.

Yet Moses looks behind the visible history and says the Lord destroyed the Zamzummim before them.

Human beings fought.

God remained sovereign over the outcome.

The victory did not prove that the Ammonites were naturally larger than the Zamzummim.

The text has just told us that the Zamzummim were great, numerous and tall.

Their defeat proved that human size and strength cannot place anyone outside the authority of God.

They were great.

But they were not greater than God.

They were many.

But they were not more than God could handle.

They were tall.

But they were not beyond the reach of God.

Faith does not require us to pretend an obstacle is small.

Faith requires us to remember that God is greater.

Verse 22 returns to the descendants of Esau.

The Lord destroyed the Horites before them.

Verse 23 speaks about the Avim who lived in settlements extending toward Gaza.

The Caphtorim came from Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place.

Moses has now placed several examples before Israel.

The Horites were displaced by Edom.

The Emim were displaced by Moab.

The Zamzummim were displaced by Ammon.

The Avim were displaced by the Caphtorim.

Israel was not entering a world where human powers had never changed.

Every earthly power eventually discovers that it is not eternal.

Archaeology confirms that ancient peoples lived throughout Transjordan.

It confirms the later historical kingdoms of Moab and Ammon.

It has uncovered ancient cities, defenses, tombs and inscriptions.

It has also uncovered large stone monuments throughout portions of the region.

But archaeology has not produced a skeleton labeled Emim.

It has not identified a Zamzummim city beyond dispute.

It has not demonstrated that every large stone structure was built by giants.

The Internet contains photographs of enormous skeletons and stories about suppressed discoveries.

Claims without verifiable excavation records are not evidence.

We do not honor the truth of Scripture by supporting it with claims that are not true.

The Bible says these peoples were tall.

We can affirm that without inventing measurements or discoveries.

The central point of the passage is stated repeatedly in the words of the Lord.

Concerning Edom, God said in verse 5, “I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.”

Concerning Moab, He said in verse 9, “I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.”

Concerning Ammon, He said in verse 19, “I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession.”

The Lord was governing more than Israel’s history.

He was sovereign over Edom, Moab and Ammon.

He had been working before Israel arrived.

He had been working beyond Israel’s sight.

He had been working among people Israel did not control.

The God of Israel was not a local deity whose authority ended at Israel’s border.

He is the Lord of all the earth.

This does not mean God approved everything Moab, Ammon or Edom later did.

Each nation would be accountable for its sins.

Providential use is not permanent moral approval.

But their histories show that God was active beyond the immediate experience of Israel.

There are times when we think nothing is happening because we cannot see God working.

There are times when God is arranging circumstances we do not understand.

He was working in places Israel had not reached and through histories Israel had not witnessed.

By the time His people arrived, the evidence of His sovereignty was already waiting for them.

Israel could have drawn a dangerous conclusion from these victories.

They might have said that if God removes nations and gives land, then Israel may take whatever it wants.

God closed that door immediately.

He told them not to meddle with Edom.

He told them not to distress Moab.

He told them not to contend with Ammon.

Israel’s election did not authorize unlimited expansion.

Their military ability did not create a moral right to seize another people’s land.

Their need did not cancel God’s command.

Their spiritual privilege did not justify wrongdoing.

Opportunity is not authorization.

Ability is not permission.

Desire is not calling.

Success is not proof of God’s approval.

If God did not give it to Israel, Israel had no right to take it.

Then the command changes in verse 24.

“Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon.”

“Behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land.”

“Begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle.”

Concerning Ammon, God said, “Do not meddle.”

Concerning Sihon, God said, “Contend with him in battle.”

The same people received two different instructions.

Attacking Ammon would have been rebellion.

Refusing to face Sihon would also have been rebellion.

One person can disobey God by fighting the wrong battle.

Another can disobey God by refusing the right battle.

Faith is not measured by how aggressively we fight.

Faith is measured by whether we obey what God has said.

Sometimes obedience says, “Stand still.”

Sometimes obedience says, “Go forward.”

Sometimes obedience says, “Leave it alone.”

Sometimes obedience says, “Contend for it.”

The question is not merely, “Do I have courage?”

The question is, “What has God said?”

Are you running from a responsibility God has clearly commanded you to face?

Are you fighting for something God has commanded you to leave alone?

Are you calling fear wisdom?

Are you calling ambition faith?

Are you trying to force a relationship that violates Biblical truth?

Are you pursuing a position through methods God has forbidden?

Are you asking God to bless a battle He never gave you?

Are you refusing a clear responsibility because the obstacle appears too large?

We must be careful here.

Israel received direct commands concerning specific lands.

We should not treat every personal feeling as if it carried the authority of Scripture.

Our decisions must be governed by the written Word of God.

They should be tested by Biblical morality, godly wisdom, honest counsel and humble attention to providence.

God will never lead a person to violate what He has already revealed in His Word.

A feeling of peace cannot make sin holy.

An open door cannot make disobedience right.

A difficult path does not necessarily mean we have chosen the wrong one.

The old generation wanted to retreat because the land looked dangerous.

The new generation had to move forward because God had spoken.

The Emim were gone.

The Zamzummim were gone.

The Horites had been displaced.

The Avim had been displaced.

The generation of unbelief was gone.

But the Word of God remained.

The promise of God remained.

The purpose of God remained.

Israel stood in a land filled with evidence that no intimidating population was beyond God's authority.

The question was not whether God could defeat great enemies.

The question was whether Israel would trust Him.

The earlier generation had said the cities were "walled up to heaven."

After the victory over Sihon, Moses said in Deuteronomy 2:36:

"There was not one city too strong for us: the LORD our God delivered all unto us."

The walls had not become smaller.

The cities had not become weaker.

God had not changed.

What changed was Israel's response to God.

Unbelief looked at the walls and decided God was too small.

Faith looked at God and discovered the walls were not too high.

This does not mean God has promised to remove every hardship from the Christian life.

Some hardships must be endured.

Some doors remain closed.

Some losses are not restored in this life.

Some faithful prayers receive an answer different from the one requested.

Israel possessed a specific promise concerning a specific land.

We must not turn Israel's conquest into a promise of financial success, physical healing or the fulfillment of every personal dream.

God has not promised that believers will receive everything they want.

He has promised that nothing can prevent Him from accomplishing everything He has determined.

Our confidence rests in His faithfulness, not in our preferred outcome.

The external giants in Israel's path were visible.

The internal giant was easier to hide.

Unbelief said the enemy was greater than the promise.

Unbelief said obedience was too dangerous.

Unbelief called retreat the safer choice.

Presumption moved in the opposite direction.

Presumption said, "I want it, so God must have given it."

Presumption said, "I can take it, so I must have permission."

Presumption said, "The opportunity exists, so it must be God's will."

Fear and presumption appear different, but both refuse to submit to God's Word.

Fear refuses to go where God sends.

Presumption refuses to stop where God forbids.

What is God exposing in your heart today?

Do you need courage to obey?

Do you need restraint to obey?

Do you need to stop asking whether the task is easy and begin asking whether God has commanded it?

Do you need to surrender something you have wanted but cannot pursue righteously?

The history of the Emim and Zamzummim directs us beyond human strength.

It also directs us toward the greatest victory in Scripture.

Israel faced enemies that appeared impossible to overcome.

Every human being faces enemies we truly cannot overcome in our own strength.

We cannot conquer our sin by determination.

We cannot erase our guilt through good works.

We cannot defeat death through courage.

We cannot earn entrance into the presence of a holy God.

Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The greatest victory in the Bible was not won against a nation of giants.

It was won by Jesus Christ.

Jesus lived the sinless life we could not live.

He bore our sins upon the cross.

He received the judgment our sins deserved.

He died and was buried.

On the third day, He rose from the dead.

Jesus did not merely show us how to win.

He won the victory we could never win.

You do not need to become strong enough to save yourself.

You need to admit that you cannot save yourself.

Jesus faced the enemy you could never defeat.

Jesus paid the debt you could never pay.

Jesus opened the way you could never open.

Turn from your sin.

Believe that Jesus Christ died for you and rose again.

Trust Him alone as your Savior and Lord.

Romans 10:9 says:

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

If you are ready to trust Christ, call upon Him today.

He will not reject the sinner who comes to Him in faith.

For those who already know Christ, there is a question of obedience before us.

Some are standing before a responsibility God has commanded them to face.

Fear is telling them to retreat.

They need courage.

Others are exhausting themselves in a struggle God never gave them.

Ambition is telling them to keep fighting.

They need restraint.

Some need to cross the river.

Some need to pass by the border.

All need to obey God.

What has God clearly said in His Word?

Are you submitting to Him, or are you allowing fear or desire to rewrite His instructions?

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father,

You are the Lord of history and the ruler of every nation.

No power can prevent Your purpose and no obstacle is greater than You.

Forgive us for the times we have allowed fear to make Your promises seem small.

Forgive us for the times we have called our ambition faith and asked You to bless what You never authorized.

Give us courage to face every responsibility You have given us.

Give us restraint to leave alone what You have forbidden.

Teach us to build our decisions upon Your written Word.

Expose unbelief within us and lead us into faithful obedience.

For every person who does not yet know Christ, bring conviction of sin and saving faith in Jesus.

Thank You that Jesus bore our sin, conquered death and rose again.

We place our confidence in Him alone.

In the name of Jesus we pray.

Amen.

The Emim are gone.

The Zamzummim are gone.

The generation of unbelief is gone.

But the Word of God remains.

The promises of God remain.

The boundaries of God remain.

The faithfulness of God remains.

Do not fear what God has commanded you to face.

Do not seize what God has commanded you to leave alone.

Trust Him enough to advance, and trust Him enough to pass by.

The giant does not decide the outcome.

Your ambition does not decide the boundary.

God does. Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

WHO WERE THE EMIM AND ZAMZUMMIM?

Biblical Commentary

Moab Ammon Rephaim and the Lord of History

Deuteronomy 2:9-23 | Genesis 14:5

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Giants in the Bible | Part Four of Eight

Commentary in Brief

Deuteronomy 2:9-23 is not an isolated catalog of vanished tribes. It belongs to Moses' review of Israel's journey from Kadesh-barnea toward the plains of Moab. Israel had once recoiled from Canaan because the people seemed greater and taller than they were. Now the Lord reminds the new generation that peoples described in those same intimidating terms had already been displaced under His providence.

The Emim had occupied territory later held by Moab. The Zamzummim had occupied territory later held by Ammon. Both were "accounted" or "counted" as Rephaim and both were compared with the Anakim. The text says that they were great, many and tall. It does not give their individual heights, describe their ancestry in detail or identify their remains archaeologically.

Genesis 14:5 independently names "the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim" among peoples defeated by the eastern kings. That reference probably concerns the same broad population remembered in Deuteronomy, although Genesis does not supply enough detail to reconstruct their history. Genesis 14 also names Zuzim in Ham. Many interpreters connect Zuzim with Zamzummim, but the Biblical text does not state that identity.

The theological center of Deuteronomy 2 is the Lord's rule over lands, nations and Israel's path. Edom, Moab and Ammon possessed lands the Lord had given them. Israel was therefore forbidden to seize those territories. When the Lord finally commanded Israel to cross the Arnon and face Sihon, Israel could advance in obedience. The history corrects two opposite errors: fear may not veto God's command and ambition may not trespass God's boundary.

Deuteronomy 1:19-33: The Fear That Precedes the Review

The interpretation of Deuteronomy 2 begins in the preceding chapter. Moses recalls Israel's arrival at Kadesh-barnea and the report of the spies. The people said, "The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there" (Deuteronomy 1:28).

That language matters because Deuteronomy 2 will repeat the ideas of greatness, number and height. The first generation treated formidable people as proof that the Lord's promise could not be trusted. Moses answered, "Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The LORD your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you" (1:29-30).

The sin was not merely that Israel noticed large people and fortified cities. Those observations could be true. The sin was that Israel interpreted visible strength as greater than the word and presence of God. Biblical faith does not deny evidence. It places the evidence under the authority of what God has said.

The historical notices in chapter 2 therefore have pastoral force. Before Israel again faces peoples associated with unusual stature, Moses shows that no ancient population stands outside the Lord's government.

Deuteronomy 2:1-8: Seir and the Children of Esau

Israel turned into the wilderness and compassed Mount Seir "many days" (2:1). The Lord then directed the people northward. Yet movement toward the promised land did not authorize unrestricted conquest.

The children of Esau would fear Israel, but Israel was commanded, "meddle not with them" (2:5). The reason was theological and territorial: "for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau for a possession."

The Hebrew verb rendered "meddle" can refer to stirring oneself up or engaging in conflict. The command is not based on Edom's military superiority. It rests on the Lord's grant. Israel must buy food and water rather than seize them. God-given strength is not permission to take whatever is within reach.

Verse 7 reviews the Lord's care in the wilderness: "these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." This provision supports obedience to restraint. Israel does not need to plunder a forbidden land because its God is able to provide.

Deuteronomy 2:9: The Boundary of Moab

The Lord next commands, "Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle." Ar, here associated with Moab's territory, is not to be given to Israel because the Lord has given it "unto the children of Lot for a possession."

Moab and Ammon descended from Lot according to Genesis 19:30-38. Deuteronomy calls attention to that relationship, but the decisive reason for restraint is the Lord's allocation of land. Scripture does not portray every neighboring nation as morally innocent. It does portray the Lord as sovereign over national boundaries and Israel as accountable to His particular command.

This verse also protects the following historical note from being misread. The earlier displacement of the Emim is not offered as a precedent for Israel to attack Moab. It explains how Moab came to occupy the land and demonstrates that the Lord's providence had already operated there.

Deuteronomy 2:10: The Emim

The parenthetical history begins, "The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims."

"In times past" places the Emim before the Moabite possession known to Moses' audience. The verse does not give a date for their arrival or removal. It identifies them as an earlier population of the region.

Three adjectives form the portrait. They were great, many and tall. "Great" may include the sense of large or formidable. "Many" describes a numerous people. "Tall" describes stature. The comparison "as the Anakims" gives Israel a familiar point of reference, since the Anakim had figured prominently in the spies' report.

The text gives a corporate description rather than an anatomical record. It does not state that every Emite had the same height. It does not provide a measurement. It gives sufficient information to show why such a people would have appeared intimidating.

The KJV uses the plural form "Emims." Modern discussions often use "Emim," reflecting the Hebrew plural ending already present in the name. Either English form may refer to the people. Care should be taken not to build an etymological conclusion merely from the English spelling.

Deuteronomy 2:11: Counted as Rephaim

The verse continues, "Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims."

The KJV's "giants" translates Rephaim. The statement is classificatory: the Emim "were accounted" as Rephaim. The underlying verb carries the ordinary sense of being reckoned, considered or counted. It does not explain the exact basis of the classification.

The second half distinguishes names used by different communities. They were counted among Rephaim, while Moabites called them Emim. This may indicate that Rephaim is a broader designation and Emim a more local or ethnic name. That is a reasonable inference, not an exhaustive definition supplied by the verse.

The Hebrew term Rephaim has more than one contextual use in the Old Testament. In historical and geographical texts it can name an ancient people or class of peoples. In poetic texts, a related form can refer to the departed in the realm of the dead, as in Isaiah 14:9 and Proverbs 9:18. Similar spelling does not require that every occurrence carry the same sense. Here living inhabitants of a land are in view.

The safest conclusion is modest. In Deuteronomy 2, Rephaim is a recognized classification for ancient, formidable peoples associated with exceptional stature. The text does not explain whether it is strictly genealogical, ethnic, geographical or descriptive. More precise claims exceed the evidence.

The Name Emim

The name is often associated with a Hebrew word for terror or dread. That proposed connection fits the portrait of an intimidating people and is frequently reflected in glosses such as "terrible ones" or "terrors."

This is a plausible linguistic observation, not an inspired definition provided by the passage. Ancient names can be inherited, adapted across languages or explained by popular association. A sermon may mention the proposed sense if uncertainty is made explicit. It should not preach the etymology as though Deuteronomy itself translates the name.

Deuteronomy 2:12: Horites in Seir

"The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead."

The Horites provide a parallel case. An earlier population lived in Seir before the descendants of Esau dispossessed them. Genesis 36 gives additional names and genealogical material connected with Seir and the Horites. Deuteronomy emphasizes succession in the land.

The verse concludes, "as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the LORD gave unto them." Interpreters discuss the time perspective of this statement. It may summarize Israel's victories east of the Jordan that Moses recounts later in Deuteronomy, or it may be a retrospective explanatory

statement within the final form of the book. In either case, the theological assertion is clear: Israel's possession came from the Lord.

The Horite parallel broadens the lesson beyond peoples called Rephaim. National displacement occurred in the region, yet Deuteronomy does not reduce history to stronger groups taking from weaker ones. It places these movements under God's sovereign permission and gift.

Deuteronomy 2:13-16: Zered and the End of a Generation

Israel crossed the brook Zered. Moses then marks the passing of thirty-eight years from Kadesh-barnea "until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host" (2:14).

This note anchors the surrounding geography in covenant history. Israel's long delay was not caused by the strength of the Emim, Zamzummim or Amorites. It resulted from Israel's unbelief and the Lord's judgment. Verse 15 says that the hand of the Lord was against that generation until it was consumed.

The contrast is sobering. The Lord had removed formidable populations before other nations, yet unbelieving Israelites fell in the wilderness. Physical size is not the decisive issue. The decisive issue is one's relation to the word of God.

The death of that generation also prepares for a transition. The new generation must learn from the old failure without inheriting its paralysis. Historical remembrance is intended to produce present obedience.

Deuteronomy 2:17-19: The Boundary of Ammon

After the men of war had died, the Lord commanded Israel to pass over Ar, the coast or border of Moab, and approach the children of Ammon. Again the command is restraint: "distress them not, nor meddle with them" (2:19).

The reason repeats the pattern: "for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession."

The repetition is deliberate. Israel's calling cannot be defined simply as taking territory from Canaanite or Transjordan peoples. The Lord names lands Israel must not take and later names the conflict Israel must undertake. Obedience requires hearing both commands.

Deuteronomy 2:20: Zamzummim and the Land of Rephaim

The explanatory notice says, "That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims."

Again "giants" represents Rephaim. This time the land itself was "accounted" a land of Rephaim because Rephaim had lived there formerly. The Ammonite name for them was Zamzummim.

The construction closely parallels the Emim notice. Earlier inhabitants, regional names and a wider Rephaim classification are placed side by side. This parallelism is stronger evidence than imaginative efforts to supply a detailed family tree.

The name Zamzummim is uncertain. Suggestions connect it with sounds such as murmuring, buzzing or plotting. Some writers have paraphrased it as "murmurers" or "buzzers." None of these proposals

is stated in Deuteronomy and none should control interpretation. The passage tells readers what the Ammonites called them, not why they did so.

Deuteronomy 2:21: Great, Many and Tall

The Zamzummim are described as "A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims." The same triad used of the Emim establishes the intended comparison.

The verse then gives the theological explanation of their disappearance: "but the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead."

Ammon acted in history, yet the Lord is named as the ultimate agent. Scripture can speak truly of human conflict and divine sovereignty without eliminating either. The verse is not a general endorsement of every conquest claimed in God's name. It interprets this particular history by revelation.

For Israel, the implication is unmistakable. Peoples like the Anakim were not invincible. The Lord who had acted before Moab and Ammon was able to fulfill His promise to Israel. Yet that same Lord had forbidden Israel to attack the present occupants of these lands. His power never cancels His moral authority.

Deuteronomy 2:22: The Edomite Parallel Repeated

"As he did to the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the Horims from before them." The Lord's action for Edom is expressly compared with His action for Ammon.

This is important for the theology of election. Israel is uniquely bound to the Lord by covenant and called to a particular redemptive role. Nevertheless, the Lord's providential rule is not confined to Israel. He governs neighboring peoples and grants territories according to His purpose.

The end of the verse, "unto this day," locates the statement in the remembered situation of the audience. Edomites remained in the land formerly occupied by Horites. The visible map testified to the historical claim.

Deuteronomy 2:23: Avim and Caphtorim

The final example concerns "the Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, even unto Azzah." The Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and occupied their territory.

"Azzah" is Gaza. "Hazerim" may describe settlements or villages, though proposals differ over whether it should be treated as a proper place-name. Caphtor is commonly associated with Crete or the Aegean world in Biblical and ancient Near Eastern study. Jeremiah 47:4 and Amos 9:7 also connect Philistines with Caphtor.

Those associations help locate the wider historical tradition, but Deuteronomy 2:23 does not identify a specific archaeological layer, migration date or excavated group. The verse's purpose is to add another known example of one population replacing another.

Unlike the notices about Emim and Zamzummim, this verse does not call the Avim Rephaim or compare them with Anakim. It belongs to the same pattern of displacement but should not be made to say more than it says.

Deuteronomy 2:24-37: From Forbidden Territory to Commanded Conflict

After the review, the command changes: "Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon" (2:24). The Lord gives Sihon the Amorite and his land into Israel's hand and commands Israel to begin to possess it.

The change is not inconsistency. Moabite and Ammonite territory was withheld by divine command. Sihon's territory was given by divine command. Israel must neither fight the wrong battle nor refuse the right one.

Moses first sent words of peace to Sihon and requested passage along the highway, offering to purchase food and water (2:26-29). Sihon refused. The narrative then records Israel's victory and possession from Aroer by the Arnon northward toward Gilead.

Verse 36 deliberately answers the fear of chapter 1: "there was not one city too strong for us: the LORD our God delivered all unto us." Chapter 1 had described cities "walled up to heaven." Chapter 2 shows that fortified cities are not too strong when the Lord gives the victory.

Verse 37 closes with restraint still intact: Israel did not approach the land of Ammon or other places the Lord had forbidden. Success in a commanded campaign did not erase the boundary.

Genesis 14:1-7: The Emim at Shaveh Kiriathaim

Genesis 14 describes a campaign by an eastern coalition led by Chedorlaomer. After subject peoples rebelled, the coalition marched through several territories before the battle in the vale of Siddim.

Verse 5 says that the kings "smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim." The sequence places the Emim in a Transjordan setting consistent with Deuteronomy's association of them with the land later held by Moab.

Kiriathaim is also associated with Moab in Numbers 32:37, Jeremiah 48:1, 23 and Ezekiel 25:9. The precise location of Shaveh Kiriathaim remains debated. The geographic fit supports, but does not mathematically prove, that Genesis 14 and Deuteronomy 2 refer to the same Emim population.

Genesis 14 demonstrates that the name Emim belongs to the Biblical record outside Moses' parenthetical review. It also portrays the Emim as a recognizable people at the time represented by the patriarchal narrative. It does not say that all Emim were annihilated in that campaign. "Smote" reports defeat, not necessarily total extermination.

The campaign may help explain a history of weakening or displacement before Moab's full occupation, but that is an inference. Deuteronomy attributes the eventual succession to the Lord without narrating every human stage by which it occurred.

Were the Zuzim the Zamzummim?

Genesis 14:5 places Zuzim "in Ham," while Deuteronomy 2 says that Ammonites called an earlier Rephaim population Zamzummim. The similarity of the names, the Transjordan setting and the association with Rephaim have led many interpreters to identify or connect the two groups.

The proposal is reasonable. It would create a close literary pattern in Genesis 14: Rephaim, Zuzim and Emim, followed in Deuteronomy by Emim and Zamzummim counted as Rephaim.

Still, Scripture never says, "the Zuzim are the Zamzummim." The locations cannot be fixed with enough precision to settle the question. Similar ancient names can represent alternate forms, related groups or different peoples. The responsible formulation is that the identification is possible and perhaps probable, but unverified.

The KJV form "Zuzims" should not be confused with the term "Zamzummims" simply because English readers notice repeated letters or sounds. Textual, linguistic and geographical arguments must be weighed together.

What Does Rephaim Mean Here?

The Old Testament uses Rephaim in several settings. Genesis 14:5 names Rephaim at Ashteroth Karnaim. Genesis 15:20 includes Rephaim among peoples in the land promised to Abram. Deuteronomy 2 counts Emim and Zamzummim as Rephaim. Deuteronomy 3 associates Og of Bashan with the remnant of Rephaim.

These passages support a historical use for populations remembered in and around Canaan and Transjordan. Several are connected with unusual stature. The KJV's translation "giants" reflects that association and is suitable as the primary wording for this study.

Other passages use repheim for the dead. In Isaiah 26:14, Psalm 88:10 and Proverbs 21:16, the context is death or the grave. Lexical range is normal in language. A word's meaning is determined by its context, not by combining every possible sense into one theory.

One scholarly question is whether the historical and underworld senses share an ancient cultural background. Proposals sometimes appeal to Ugaritic texts that use a cognate term, *rpum*, for figures associated with the dead or ancestral royal beings. Such comparisons may illuminate the ancient language environment. They do not prove that Deuteronomy's Emim and Zamzummim were spirits, demigods or deified ancestors.

Another question is whether Rephaim is a bloodline. Deuteronomy may preserve an ethnic classification, but it never supplies a genealogy linking every group so labeled. "Accounted" is cautious language. The commentary should preserve that caution.

Chronology and Geography

Genesis 14 places the Emim within the patriarchal narrative, before Israel's sojourn in Egypt and long before the wilderness generation. Deuteronomy looks back on both Emim and Zamzummim as inhabitants "in times past" or "in old time."

By the time Israel approached from the south and east, Moab occupied territory east of the Dead Sea and Ammon occupied territory farther northeast. Exact borders changed through conflict, especially with Amorite powers. Numbers 21 indicates that Sihon had previously taken Moabite territory as far as the Arnon. This helps explain why Israel could conquer Sihon's kingdom without violating the command not to seize the land then assigned to Moab.

Seir lay south of Moab and was associated with Edom. The Arnon formed a major boundary east of the Dead Sea. The Jabbok farther north was connected with Ammon's border. Gaza lay far to the west on the southern coastal plain. Deuteronomy 2 therefore surveys a wide regional pattern rather than one compact battlefield.

Chronological precision is limited. The text does not date the Moabite defeat of the Emim or the Ammonite defeat of the Zamzummim. It does not say whether those changes occurred in a single campaign or over generations. The most defensible chronology is relative: the older populations preceded Moab and Ammon, and their displacement was already remembered when Israel arrived.

Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Evidence

Archaeology can describe settlement patterns, fortifications, material culture and population change in Transjordan. It cannot normally recover an ancient people's Biblical name unless an inscription or secure textual link identifies them.

Large stone monuments, including dolmens, are found in parts of Transjordan. Earlier interpreters sometimes connected such monuments with Biblical giants. A dolmen is a stone burial structure, not a measurement of the people who built or used it. Monumental stones do not verify an Emim or Zamzummim identification.

Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts preserve names of places and peoples in the wider Levant, but no widely accepted extrabiblical inscription securely says, in effect, "these are the Emim" or "these are the Zamzummim" of Deuteronomy. Claims of exact identification should therefore be labeled proposals.

The absence of a secure identification does not disprove the Biblical notice. Many ancient populations are known from few texts and names can change between languages and periods. It does mean that artifacts should not be assigned to these groups merely because they were found in the right broad region.

Archaeology is most useful here as background. It confirms that Transjordan had long and complex settlement histories and that population shifts occurred. The specific theological interpretation in Deuteronomy, including the Lord's allocation of lands, comes from the Biblical text.

Exegesis, Inference and Speculation

The following distinctions help a pastor answer questions without flattening the evidence.

Biblical fact

- Emim lived in the territory later associated with Moab and were called great, many and tall like the Anakim.
- Emim were accounted Rephaim.
- Genesis 14:5 names Emim at Shaveh Kiriathaim and records their defeat by the eastern kings.
- Zamzummim formerly lived in the territory later associated with Ammon.
- Zamzummim were accounted Rephaim and were great, many and tall like the Anakim.
- The Lord destroyed them before the Ammonites, who occupied their land.
- The Lord gave lands to Edom, Moab and Ammon and forbade Israel to seize them.
- Horites, Avim and Caphtorim appear in parallel notices of population displacement.

Reasonable inference

- Genesis 14 and Deuteronomy 2 probably remember the same broad Emim population.

- Rephaim functions in Deuteronomy as a broader classification than the local names Emim and Zamzummim.
- The history was intended to strengthen Israel against fear of the Anakim and other formidable inhabitants of Canaan.
- Zuzim and Zamzummim may be variant or related names for the same population.

Scholarly proposal

- Emim may be related etymologically to a word for terror.
- Zamzummim may be associated with murmuring, buzzing or plotting.
- Comparative ancient Near Eastern texts may shed light on the wider semantic background of Rephaim.
- Particular sites proposed for Shaveh Kiriathaim may clarify the route of Genesis 14.

Unsupported speculation

- Exact heights for the Emim or Zamzummim.
- Claims that a particular oversized skeleton or viral photograph proves their existence.
- A detailed genealogy connecting all Rephaim groups when Scripture supplies none.
- Claims that dolmens were necessarily built by giants.
- Certainty that Zuzim and Zamzummim are identical.

Theological Purpose

Moses' historical review teaches that the Lord rules the map. He gave Seir to Esau, Ar to Moab and Ammon's territory to the children of Lot. He also gave Israel its appointed inheritance. Land is not treated as the automatic possession of the strongest army.

The review also teaches that intimidating people are not sovereign. The descriptors that had fueled Israel's fear are repeated, but the outcome is different. Great, numerous and tall peoples had been displaced. The Lord's promise was not limited by their reputation.

At the same time, courage is disciplined by revelation. Israel was courageous when it refrained from taking forbidden land and courageous when it crossed the Arnon at God's command. Biblical courage is not aggression. It is obedience despite fear, appetite or opportunity.

The death of the unbelieving generation shows that covenant privilege does not excuse unbelief. God can bring down a powerful nation and He can judge His own disobedient people. The passage calls the church to humility as well as confidence.

For Christian proclamation, the passage should lead beyond fascination with ancient giants to trust in the Lord. Human strength cannot save, human weakness does not frustrate God's promise and forgiveness is found through Jesus Christ. The historical text must not be turned into an allegory in which every difficulty is called an Emim. Its legitimate pastoral principle is that God's people should obey His revealed word within His appointed boundaries.

Pastoral Questions

Were the Emim and Zamzummim literal peoples?

Yes. Deuteronomy presents them as earlier inhabitants of real lands, and Genesis 14 names the Emim in a campaign narrative. The text uses historical and geographical language.

Does "giants" mean they were all of fantastic height?

The KJV calls them giants because they were accounted Rephaim and the passage describes them as tall like the Anakim. Scripture gives no measurement and does not say every individual had identical stature. Their unusual reputation should be affirmed without inventing dimensions.

Were they descendants of the Nephilim?

Deuteronomy does not make that genealogical statement. Numbers 13:33 records the spies' association of Anakim with giants or Nephilim, but the report occurs within a speech marked by fear and exaggeration. A direct lineage from Genesis 6 to every Rephaim group cannot be demonstrated from Deuteronomy 2.

Were the Zuzim another name for the Zamzummim?

Possibly. Name similarity, geography and association with Rephaim support the proposal. The lack of an explicit Biblical identification requires caution.

Why did God protect Moab and Ammon here when later prophets condemn them?

A divine land grant is not a declaration that every act of a nation is righteous. The prophets can condemn Moab, Ammon or Edom for pride, violence and hostility while Deuteronomy can affirm the territorial boundaries God assigned at this point in history. Judgment and providential gift are not contradictions.

Does the passage justify modern territorial conquest?

No modern nation can simply transfer Israel's specific command to itself. The narrative records particular revelation to Israel concerning particular peoples and boundaries. Its enduring moral lessons include God's sovereignty, respect for His limits, justice and obedient trust.

Concluding Exposition

Deuteronomy 2:9-23 turns obscure names into a clear theological testimony. The Emim and Zamzummim were real former populations of Transjordan, remembered for number, power and stature. Moabites and Ammonites used local names for them, while the Biblical narrator counted them among Rephaim.

That is where certainty should stop. The record does not reveal their exact heights, full ancestry or securely identified remains. Name meanings and the connection between Zuzim and Zamzummim remain proposals.

The purpose of the passage is not to satisfy every curiosity about ancient giants. It prepares Israel to obey. The Lord had already shown that intimidating peoples could be removed. He had also set

boundaries Israel must honor. His people were to fear neither the size of their opponents nor the limits of His command.

The strongest pastoral conclusion follows the movement of the text: remember what the Lord has done, respect what the Lord has forbidden and enter what the Lord has given. The history of the Emim and Zamzummim matters because it directs attention away from human reputation and toward the faithful rule of God.

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