

## PART I

# REFUGEE MEMORIES: NEGOTIATING RELATIONS AND BORDERS WITH NEIGHBORING STATES

The Pentateuch presents the newly liberated nation of Israel as a band of refugees trekking through the wilderness on its way to the Promised Land. As they approach their destination, marching from the south up through the Transjordan, they come into contact with a wide array of neighboring peoples: the Edomites, the kingdom of Arad, King Sihon and the Amorites, King Og of Bashan, King Balak of the Moabites, and the Midianites. The Israelites send messengers to request permission to pass through these peoples' respective territories, promising not to tarry within their borders and to pay for any food and water that they might consume. Yet instead of being treated hospitably, the fledgling nation is consistently harassed and assaulted.

The memories of Israel's first encounters with its future neighbors bear on a long-standing convention of international relations, according to which a state is expected to permit passage to the armies of its allies, while refusal to do so was a sign of enmity. In this first part of our study, we begin by surveying and studying these Pentateuchal accounts in Chapter 1, before focusing our attention on the emblematic case of the Edomites in Chapter 2.

Although we do not engage in detailed textual analyses in these two chapters, we will witness how the Pentateuchal accounts evolved from exchanges between scribes working over generations. The myriad voices inscribed in the literary monument they created is a characteristic feature of war commemoration produced in contexts that are not governed by a monolithic authority, and the fall of Israel's and Judah's kings created de facto the conditions for the vibrant exchanges memorialized in the texts that we examine here.

