These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the Wilderness, the Arava, opposite the Red Sea, between Paran and between Tofel, and Lavan, and Chatzerot, and Di-Zahav (1:1 - translated according to Rashi).

The bulk of Sefer D'varim contains Moshe's final address to B'nei Yisrael before his death. The first third was to remind them of their past sins and rebellions from Yetzi'at Mitzrayim onwards.

In order not to open by offending or embarrassing them, he alluded-to rather than emphasized the offences, by stating where they were located (following Rashi to 1:1). Thus for example, Di-Zahav was a euphemism for the place where the Israelites built the Golden Calf, which was made possible because they had dai zahav, enough gold.

Once the Israelites were tuned into his hints of castigation, he continued to detail the offences, which form a large part of this and the oncoming parashiot. However the content of his warnings shows clearly that he gave his listeners self-respect. When Moshe reproved the people he did not refer to the misdeeds of any individual families, such as Korach's.

The Ohr HaChayim suggests that the words in the opening pasuk are remazim, hints, to what is the correct frame of mind to absorb Torah teaching, including what Moshe himself was delivering.

Specifically, the word EIVER in Eiver HaYardein contains the same core letters as IVRI, which refers to Avraham Ha-Ivri (B'reishit 14:13). As Yeshayahu would put it, B'nei Yisrael must turn to its distinguished origins: "Look to the rock from which you were hewn… look to Avraham your forefather… when he was one alone, I summoned him, I blessed him, and I made him many" (Yeshayahu 51:1-2).

Further hints emanate from the next words. Yardein's core letters are similar to lirdot, meaning to castigate, including self-castigate. A person should be self-critical and strive to constantly improve. Bamidbar, literally in the wilderness, alludes to the quality of humility, concerning which "a person should always see himself as a wilderness" (Eruvin 54a), but at the same time not being too humble to speak up take responsibility for others when necessary, the word Arava having similar letters to areivut, all Israelites having a responsibility to one another.

Other remazim include Mul Suf, opposite the Red Sea, but can be literally rendered as "facing the end", regarding which Akavia b. Mahallel
would emphasize: "Consider these three things and you will never sin: where you started life, where you will finish life, and to Whom you will be giving account of your deeds" (Avot 3:1). They also include dizahav, enough gold, hinting that a person should not strive for wealth beyond his needs, but bear in mind: "Who is wealthy? He that is satisfied with the wealth he has" (Avot 4.1).

In sum, the Ohr HaChayim expounds the opening words of Sefer D'varim as creating the attitude among Am Yisrael that is most receptive to learning Torah, even when containing words of rebuke. That mindset includes remembering the examples set within one's distinguished ancestral roots, and the balancing of self-improvement, initiative and responsibility to others with humility, appreciating what one has, and an eye to one's final destiny that is common to all people. Not having such a mindset is like throwing seeds on an unploughed desert surface; even the best ones will not take root. Conversely, cultivating that attitude makes it possible for those "seeds" to "germinate and flourish"; a lesson to teachers and purveyors of Torah. ☜️