

2 Kings 3 and Mesha

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¹Jehoram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of King Jehoshaphat of Judah; and he reigned twelve years. ²He did what was displeasing to YHWH, yet not like his father and mother, for he removed the pillars of Baal that his father had made. ³However, he clung to the sins which Jeroboam son of Nebat caused Israel to commit; he did not depart from them.

⁴Now King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder; and he used to pay as tribute to the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. ⁵But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. ⁶So King Jehoram promptly set out from Samaria and mustered all Israel. ⁷At the same time, he sent this message to King Jehoshaphat of Judah: “The king of Moab has rebelled against me; will you come with me to make war on Moab?” He replied, “I will go. I will do what you do: my troops shall be your troops, my horses shall be your horses.” ⁸And he asked, “Which route shall we take?” [Jehoram] replied, “The road through the wilderness of Edom.”

⁹So the king of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom set out, and they marched for seven days until they rounded [the tip of the Dead Sea]; and there was no water left for the army or for the animals that were with them. ¹⁰“Alas!” cried the king of Israel. “YHWH has brought these three kings together only to deliver them into the hands of Moab.” ¹¹But Jehoshaphat said, “Isn’t there a prophet of YHWH here, through whom we may inquire of YHWH?” One of the courtiers of the king of Israel spoke up and said, “Elisha son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah, is here.” ¹²“The word of YHWH is with him,” said Jehoshaphat. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. ¹³ Elisha said to the king of Israel, “What have you to do with me? Go to your father’s prophets or your mother’s prophets.” But the king of Israel said, “Don’t [say that], for YHWH has brought these three kings together only to deliver them into the hands of Moab.” ¹⁴“As YHWH ‘of Hosts’ lives, whom I serve,” Elisha answered, “were it not that I respect king Jehoshaphat of Judah, I wouldn’t look at you or notice you. ¹⁵Now then, get me a musician.” As the musician played, the hand of YHWH came upon him, ¹⁶and he said, “Thus said YHWH: This wadi shall be full of pools. ¹⁷For thus said YHWH: ‘You shall see no wind, you shall see no rain, and yet the wadi shall be filled with water; and you and your cattle and your pack animals shall drink.’ ¹⁸And this is but a slight thing in the sight of YHWH, for He will also deliver Moab into your hands. ¹⁹You shall conquer every fortified town and every splendid city; you shall fell every good tree and stop up all wells of water; and every fertile field you shall ruin with stones.” ²⁰And in the morning, when it was time to present the meal offering, water suddenly came from the direction of Edom and the land was covered by the water.

²¹Meanwhile, all the Moabites had heard that the kings were advancing to make war on them; every man old enough to bear arms rallied, and they stationed themselves at the border. ²²Next morning, when they rose, the sun was shining over the water, and from the distance the water appeared to the Moabites as red as blood. ²³“That’s blood!” they said. “The kings must have fought among themselves and killed each other. Now to the spoil, Moab!”

²⁴They entered the Israelite camp, and the Israelites arose and attacked the Moabites, who fled before them. They advanced, constantly attacking the Moabites, ²⁵and they destroyed the towns. Every man threw a stone into each fertile field, so that it was covered over; and they stopped up every spring and felled every fruit tree. Only the walls of Kir-hareseth were left, and then the slingers surrounded it and attacked it. ²⁶Seeing that the battle was going against him, the king of Moab led an attempt of seven hundred swordsmen to break a way through to the king of Edom; but they failed. ²⁷So he took his first-born son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him up on the wall as a burnt offering. A great wrath came upon Israel, so they withdrew from him and went back to [their own] land.

Mesha-stele

¹I am Moša‘ son of Kamošyat, king of Mo‘ab, the Diban²ite. My father was king over Mo‘ab for thirty years and I became king after my father. And I made this high-place for Kamoš on its (=Diban) acropolis, a high-place of salvation for he saved me from all my enemies and because lets me triumph over all those who hate me:

When Omr⁵i had been king over Israel he oppressed Moab for a long time for Kamoš was angry with ⁶his ⁵lan⁶d. His son (=Ahab) succeeded him and he as well said: I will oppress Moab. In my days he said thus; but I triumphed over him and his house. Israel utterly perished forever! Omrī had taken the lan⁸d of Mahaddaba ⁷into possession. ⁸And he lived there during his days and half of the days of his ‘son(s)’, forty years. But Kamoš returned it in my days. I built Ba‘al-Ma‘an and I made a cistern therein and I built ¹⁰Qiryaten.

The men of Gad had lived in the land of ‘Aṭārot since always, when the king of I¹¹srael fortified ‘Aṭārot ¹⁰for himself. ¹¹I attacked the city and took it. I killed all the inhabitants since the ¹²city belongs to Kamoš and Mo‘ab. And I returned from there the altar of its beloved, I dragged it before Kamoš in Qiryot. And I settled in it the men of Sharon and the men ¹⁴of Mēharit. And Kamoš said to me: “go, seize Nebo from Israel.” And I ¹⁵went in the night and I fought against it from the sunrise until noon. And I seized it and I killed all of its inhabitants, seven thousand men and servants, women and maid-servants and concubines. For I had

devoted it to destruction for ¹⁸°Aštar Kamoš. And I took from there the ve¹⁸ssels of YHWH and I dragged them before Kamoš. The king of Israel had built Yahaš and he lived in it while he was at war with me. But Kamoš drove him out before me and ²⁰I took from Moab 200 men, all his commanders. And I brought them into Yahaš and I seized it ²¹in order to annexe it to Diban. I built its acropolis, the walls of the lowlands and the walls ²²of the acropolis. And I built its gates and I built its towers. And ²³I built the palace and I turned the banks of the well into the spring in the ²⁴city. But there was no well in the city, in its acropolis, so I said to all the people: ‘make yo²⁵rselves, each man a well in his own house. And I dug the trenches for its acropolis with ²⁶Israelite ²⁵prisoner²⁶s. I built °Aro°er and I made the highway along/over the Arnon. And ²⁷I built Beth-Bamoth for it had been destroyed. I built Bešer for ²⁸it ²⁷was a ruin, ²⁸with 50 men from Diban, for all Diban is subjugated. And I became²⁹ ²⁸king ²⁹over hundreds in the cities which I annexed to the land. And ³⁰I ²⁹built ³⁰also Mahaddaba and Bet-Diblathon and Beth-Ba°al-Ma°an. And I caused ³¹my ³⁰shepherds to go up ³¹in order to shepherd the animals of the land. And with regard to Ḥoronaim, in it lived [...] ³²[...] and Kamoš said to me: ‘go down and fight against Ḥoronaim. So I went down and I f³³ought against the city and I seized it and Kamoš dwelt in it in my days. [...].