

## Isaiah Chapter 15, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

### Description of, and Lament for Calamity in Moab<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Slotki entitles **chapters 15-16** “The Invasion and Fall of Moab.”

He comments that “The invader, whose name is not mentioned, is presumed to be any of the following: Jeroboam II who reigned over the Northern Kingdom when Uzziah was king of Judah; Shalmaneser or Sennacherib, kings of Assyria and contemporaries of Hezekiah. With this oracle over Moab, **Jeremiah 48** should be compared.” (P. 74) See our preliminary study of **Jeremiah 48** at the end of this chapter.

Alexander comments on these two chapters that they “contain a prediction of the downfall of Moab...The simplest view of the [chapters] is that which regards the whole as a continuous composition, and supposes the prophet at the close to fix the date of the prediction which he has just uttered...[Likewise,] the safest conclusion seems to be, that the prediction is generic, and intended to describe the destruction of Moab.” (P. 312)

Gray comments on **chapters 15-16** that they contain “the oracle...of Moab, in part describes and laments, in part, as it seems, predicts a great calamity. An appendix, **16:13-14**, treats the entire oracle as a ‘word of Yahweh,’ i.e., a prophecy, which was spoken long ago and has hitherto remained unfulfilled, but is now to be fulfilled within the term of three years...”

“The major part of the oracle re-appears with many textual variations and much difference of order in **Jeremiah 48** [see our translation of the text of **Jeremiah 48** at the close of these notes on **chapter 15**]...”

“Whereas almost the whole of **15:1-7a** [and] **16:6-11** is quoted, or has left its trace, in **Jeremiah 48**, no trace of the long intervening section is to be found there. Was then the compiler of the cento [a poem composed of odd fragments] in **Jeremiah 48** familiar with **Isaiah 15, 16**, or did he and the editor of **Isaiah** alike make use of an elegy over Moab of which the whole or much of **Isaiah 15:b-16:5** and **16:12** formed no part? The latter alternative seems the more probable...”

“The first strophe (**15:1-5a**) states the disaster, and its effect—the destruction of Moab—and then depicts the lamentation that spreads with the news through Moab. The disaster appears to have been an attack from the south; Ar and Kir (sites to the south of [Wadi] Arnon) taken unawares, fell before the enemy almost without a blow (**verse 1**). The news spreads northwards across [the Wadi] Arnon to Dibon and to the extreme northern towns of Moab—Heshbon and Elealeh (**verse 4**). The refrain in the present text records the emotion of both Moab and the poet (**verses 4c,d, 5a**).

“The second strophe (**15:5b-8a, 16:7**) [depicts] further scenes of lamentation and desolation. The sites mentioned are all uncertain; but some at least probably lay in

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southern Moab, though not necessarily, with the exception perhaps of Zoar, in the extreme south, i.e. on the Edomite border...Many writers find in this strophe a description of the flight of Moabite refugees into Edom...[but] an allusion to flight into Edom is anything but certain.

“[The] third strophe (**16:8-11**) [depicts] a special feature in the disaster—the extensive and famous vineyards of northern Moab are destroyed. The enemy have fallen on the country in the time of vintage, and there will be no joy of the vintage and no wine for Moab. The refrain records the poet’s emotion...

“[Moab] ceased to be Israelite in 722 at latest, and much at least of it was Moabite at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century (**Ezekiel 25:9**); but there is no definite evidence to show precisely how long before and how long after the time of Ezekiel the Moabites held it...The strong sympathy with Moab displayed by the poet would find some parallel in the **Book of Ruth**.” (Pp. 274-76)

Motyer entitles **15:1-16:14** “Moab: Pride before a fall and the conditions of Gentile hope.”

He comments that “The Moab oracle corrects any impression that the hope expressed in the Davidic promises is exclusivist. Isaiah now says that the promises which will be fulfilled for David in Zion are for all who will take refuge there. The oracle is expressed in emotionally charged, allusive poetry but its message is plain...

“Mauchline holds that **15:1** refers to Sargon II’s campaign in 715, targeting northwestern Arabian tribes and devastating Moab en route, and that **16:13-14** refers to his later campaign of 711, or maybe to Sennacherib’s campaign ‘which caused great havoc in the whole area.’ It is, however, simpler to see the same event predicted in each section. The perfect tenses of **15:1** express certainty as if it had already happened, and in **16:13-14** Isaiah gives renewed publicity to his prediction by setting a time limit on its fulfillment...

“The question remains whether it represents an actual historical event. Did a Moabite delegation ever thus approach Zion for asylum and alliance? In the anxieties caused by the Assyrian threat there would be nothing unusual in supposing that this did happen and that it provided Isaiah with a base for an imaginative portrayal of the circumstances...Had Isaiah considered that the oracle needed a clear historical setting, he would have given it. But the wording throughout is non-specific and even the foe is the unnamed ‘rulers of the nations’ (**16:8**). Attention is focused on content not on occasion.

“The Moab oracle is linked with the immediately foregoing ones by its revelation of a real Gentile security in Zion. The fact that Moab had lost this through pride links with the Babylon oracle (**13:19; 14:12-14**). Pride is not the preserve of great powers

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nor reserved for the eschatological day. It brings destruction and sorrow here and now...Isaiah's intention is not to mark out a situation but to underline a reaction: pride and the doom it brings." (Pp. 149-50)

Watts entitles **chapters 15-22** "Opportunity and Disappointment"

He comments that "The end of [**chapters 2-14**] was marked by reference to the death of Ahaz (**14:28**). The end of [**chapters 15-22**] will be marked by the demission [relinquishment of office] of Hezekiah's chief ministers (**22:14-25**). This short period marks the years when the party represented by Shebna and Eliakim controlled Judah's foreign policy. Their ill-conceived adventures spoiled any hope that the prophecies of **Isaiah 9:1-6** and **chapters 11-12** could be fulfilled in Hezekiah.

"...**Chapters 15-16** portray the hopes and opportunities that existed for Judah early in Hezekiah's reign, about 715 B.C.E...**Chapters 17-19** continue the theme of optimism but ends on a shocking reversal (**chapter 20**). The time is about 715-712 B.C.E...**Chapters 21-22** portray the results of challenging Assyria's suzerainty in 705 to 701 B.C.E.

"Following Ahaz's death about 715 B.C.E. (compare **Isaiah 14:28**), Gilead, Samaria, and Ashdod had become Assyrian provinces. Attention then turned to the small nations to the east of Judah.

"Moab's problem came, not from the Assyrians, but from someone out of the desert, or from a revolt of the poor in their own land (**Isaiah 15-16**). She turned to Jerusalem for help, thereby rousing the city to hope for a renewal of David's old authority (**Isaiah 16:5**) over Moab.

"The ruin of Damascus and the fate of Israel are balanced by a hint of emissaries from far-off Cush who seek Jerusalem's favor (**Isaiah 17-18**).

"The center of [**Isaiah 15-22**] deals with the third generation (roughly the age of Hezekiah, about 715-701 B.C.E.) and portrays an Egypt that is weak and in disarray. Her condition provides an opportunity for the Lord to picture hope for an age of blessing in which Assyria, Egypt (under Ethiopian rule), and Israel will play leading roles. Isaiah's prophecy at the time of the Ashdod rebellion (713-712 B.C.E.) is directed against any idea in Jerusalem that help against Assyria could be expected from the Egyptian. Judah apparently did support the Philistine rebels initially, but then sent tribute to Sargon II before he arrived at the theater of war. Hezekiah's essential tendency toward seeking independence by force presages the tenor and events of his reign. The tendency precluded the fulfillment of the beautiful vision of **Isaiah 19:25**.

"The destruction of Babylon, the site of the only major rebellion against Sargon to succeed for any length of time, came in 710 B.C.E. and is noted in **Isaiah chapter 21**

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with the emotional disappointment of Jerusalem. The uneasiness of the region is reflected in the burden on Edom and the picture of the Dedanites from Arabia, which matches the depiction of Moab in **Isaiah chapters 15-16**.

“**[Isaiah 15-22]** closes with a bitter scene of Jerusalem in confusion, poorly armed, and poorly prepared for battle. Two high officials are charged with neglect of duty.

“Astonishingly, the chapters...avoid the name of Hezekiah altogether. He is not mentioned in the hints of hope, in the warnings concerning royal policy, or in the blame for disaster in 701 B.C.E...Instead, senior officials of his administration are introduced by name (**Isaiah 22:15-24**): Shebna and Eliakim, who are also known from **2 Kings 18:18**. Throughout **[Isaiah 15-22]** a speaker using the first person represents the attitudes of the government (**15:5-9; 16:9, 11; 21:2-4, 6-7, 10, 16; 22:4, 14**). Shebna is not identified until the end, but he is probably this spokesman...

“**2 Kings** and **2 Chronicles** make much of Hezekiah’s religious reforms. The **[Book of Isaiah]** ignores them. Instead it points to his political policies and military ambitions. The unfortunate way in which religious zeal is often equated with ‘hawkish’ and chauvinistic political and military policies is a major problem that receives too little attention. The **[Book of Isaiah]** faces up to the issues involved.

“Hezekiah and Josiah are two cases in point. Both are praised in the histories of **Kings** and **Chronicles** for monotheistic reforms in conformity with the old confederacy and with the authority of Moses (**2 Kings 18:4-6** and **2 Chronicles 30:14-15**). They are also recognized for their conformity to David’s ways (**2 Kings 18:3** and **2 Chronicles 29:2**). They, more than any others, strove to reestablish the power and greatness of David’s era. Like David, they blended commitment to cultic renewal and glory with efforts to expand their borders and press their military advantages to the limit. This entire program won the approval of the historians in **2 Kings** and **2 Chronicles**. Both of them succeeded briefly (Hezekiah for about four years; Josiah for some twenty-five to thirty years) but the historians uncritically attribute to them total success (**2 Kings 18:7a; 22:2; 23:25; 2 Chronicles 20:2; 31:20-21; 2 Chronicles 34:2**)...

“**Isaiah 22**...argues that Judah under Shebna and Eliakim, Hezekiah’s ministers, presumed upon God’s intentions. They presumed that Yahweh wanted independence and power for Judah, that God’s will and their policies were identical. On this basis they whipped up support for the war (**Isaiah 22:13**) and made desperate efforts to arm the city (**Isaiah 22:9-11a**) without asking about Yahweh’s specific intentions for that moment (**Isaiah 22:11b**).

“The **[Book of Isaiah]** has contended that political independence did not necessarily lead to fidelity to Yahweh. Political power had not brought justice to the

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poor. Success was more likely to create hubris [excessive pride or self confidence] than to breed spirituality...

“Therefore, Yahweh was not necessarily committed to a policy of independence and power for Israel or Judah. He looked for more. The Deuteronomic History [the books of **Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel** and **Kings** (the ‘Former Prophets’ in the Hebrew canon), in attributing total ‘success’ to Hezekiah failed to see that. The Chronicler also missed that point, as many churchmen since that time have done. Both the Chronicler and the Deuteronomist thought of Hezekiah and Josiah as ‘bright spots’ in Judah’s history. The [**Book of Isaiah**] sees them rather as two more steps to ultimate doom. God has had enough of blood sacrifices and rituals, which cultic reform proliferated (**1:11-17**). There is no emphasis in **2 Kings** or **2 Chronicles** on justice for the poor in the land. God wanted political decisions that were realistic in view of His support of the Assyrians (**chapters 8-10**). He wanted recognition that only in repentance and turning to Yahweh could salvation be found (**Isaiah 30:15**). Neither Shebna nor Eliakim was capable of this. The both lost God’s support and favor.

“The [**Book of Isaiah**] refuses to see hope for Judah in cultic reform or in religious revival, as **2 Kings** and **2 Chronicles** apparently do. It calls instead for a consistent political and religious policy that accepts God’s decisions about Israel’s and Judah’s roles in history. These had been revealed through Isaiah (**Isaiah chapters 7-10**) and are viewed as still valid in 705-700 B.C.E., in 640-609 B.C.E., and indeed in 435 B.C.E. Nationalistic revival is not a part of God’s plan for Israel or Judah in that time. Cultic reform that is seen as a means to nationalistic revival is flawed from the start. [Here Watts depicts theological conflict between the **Book of Isaiah** and the historical works, **2 Kings** and **2 Chronicles**, similar to the way we have found theological conflict between **Isaiah 40-55** and the program of **Ezra-Nehemiah**. What do you think? Did you ever think there could be theological conflict within the biblical books like this?]

Watts continues: “The potential for progress toward peace and prosperity that was open to Hezekiah is pictured in **Isaiah 19**. It lay in cooperation with Assyria and Ethiopia. His government, in 715 B.C.E. presumably under Shebna, chose instead to depend on Egypt’s illusory promises, i.e., those of the Delta kings whose days were numbered anyway. Judah entered briefly into the Ashdod conspiracy. Fourteen years later, their policies unchanged, they came under the condemnation of God and the retribution of Assyria.

“The [**Book of Isaiah**] names Shebna and Eliakim, but not Hezekiah, although [**Isaiah 15-22**] certainly applies to his reign. It does so in order that full judgment may fall upon the policies involved, rather than be diverted by personal attacks on the popular king.” (Pp. 220-222)

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These are challenging comments, that call for years of study of **Kings, Chronicles, Joshua, Judges** and the **Book of Deuteronomy**, alongside the **Book of Isaiah**. We cannot claim to have made such an intensive study, but long to do so in the future—if life permits. We have concluded that any fair reading of **Second Isaiah** will have to conclude that it is a document that is in strong conflict with the movement embodied in **Ezra-Nehemiah**. Watts' conclusion is that the **Book of Isaiah** as a whole is in strong conflict with the basic views of the "Deuteronomic History" (the books mentioned above). What do you think? Are you willing to enter into such an intensive study, open to the view that biblical documents such as these are in conflict with one another? Or will you hold to the view that these are only "apparent conflicts," which can be resolved by further study? We deeply appreciate Watts' willingness to take such a stand.

Slotki entitles **chapter 15** "The Pitiable Condition of Moab."

Alexander states that "This chapter is occupied with a description of the general grief, occasioned by the conquest of the chief towns and the desolation of the country at large. Its chief peculiarities of form are the numerous names of places introduced, and the strong personification by which they are represented as grieving for the public calamity. The chapter closes with an intimation of still greater evils." (P. 313)

<sup>2</sup>Oswalt entitles **15:1-9** "Lament."

He comments that "Moab was the term used to describe the region on the east side of the Dead Sea, extending from the Arnon River, which drains into the Dead Sea about twenty miles south of the sea's north shore, to the Zered River at the southern end of the sea where the territory of Edom began (**Numbers 21:10-13**). On the east the border would have been less well defined, merely extending to the edge of the arable land. The total territory would have been about thirty miles long and thirty wide.

"Israel's relations with Moab were always somewhat ambiguous (as compared with Edom, where the hostility was mutually unrelenting). That there was a close kinship between the two nations is not only argued by the genealogical statements (**Genesis 19:37; Deuteronomy 2:9**) but also by the near-identity of language and script as shown in the well-known Mesha Inscription (see footnote 7 and end-note 1). The relative ease of emigration and immigration ['immigration' is the act of entering a foreign country to live while 'emigration' is the act of leaving a country to live in another] described in **Ruth** also points to rather close and harmonious relations. This closeness may account for what seem to be genuine tones of grief that appear in these chapters.

"On the other hand, that both nations laid claim to the lands north of the Arnon (the land of Ammon which was given to Reuben and Gad, **Numbers 32:1-5; 33-38**) was a continuing source of conflict between them (**Numbers 21:24-30; Judges 3:12-**

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**30; 11:22-26; 1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Kings 3:4-27**) until there was ultimately a deep hostility (**Zephaniah 2:9, 10**).

“The segment begins with a lament over a sudden disaster which will fall upon Moab and reduce the nation to refugees (**15:1-9**)...

“The language and style of **chapter 15**...are often very obscure. This difficulty, coupled with the fact that **Jeremiah 48** duplicates certain portions but in different order and structure, has led many scholars to posit a very complex literary history for the present chapter...

“However, there is virtually no agreement from one scholar to the next, as Kaiser has shown...At the least, the similarity between the statements in **Jeremiah** and **Isaiah** and the fact that they are admittedly reused in **Isaiah** suggest there may have been a standard poetic treatment of Moab that has entered ‘the common domain’ and was thus drawn upon by both prophets.

“The first part of the prophecy, **15:1-9** tells of the devastating effect of the disaster which was to befall Moab...The major emphasis is upon the effect, which will be that the Moabites will be so demoralized that their only response will be weeping and flight...

“The difference in the tone from the words addressed to Babylon, Assyria, or the Philistines is apparent at once and carries through into **chapter 16**. There is a much greater sympathy for the fate of the Moabites, whereas a sort of grim delight greeted the downfall of the others.” (Pp. 335-36)

Watts gives an “Excurus: Moab,” in which he states that “Moab is mentioned by name in **Isaiah 15:2, 4, 8, 9** and **16:2, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14**. All of the place names in the passage are to be found in the strip of land east of the Dead Sea which extends just north of the sea’s north end, eastward to the edge of the wilderness, and southward just beyond the sea’s southern tip. This is the territory that Moab inhabited during its thousand-year history...

“The language of Moab is preserved on the Moabite stone which was discovered in 1868 and is now in the Louvre in Paris [see Pritchard’s **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, pp. 320-21]. The language is west-semitic, like Hebrew...[The Moabites] apparently occupied their land before the Israelites arrived (**Numbers 21:25; 22:23**).

“Interaction between Moab and Israel is attested by biblical references. Balaam’s story in **Numbers 22-24** documents a rivalry for territory at an early time [and depicts Balaam as a prophet who speaks only what YHWH says]. Apparently Benjamin paid tribute to King Eglon of Moab until Ehud delivered it [by deceptively murdering the Moabite king, **Judges 3:12-30**]. **1 Samuel 14:48** mentions Saul’s war with Moab. **1**

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**Samuel 22:3-5** tells of David's seeking refuge in Moab. He later subjugated Moab (**2 Samuel 8:2-12; 1 Chronicles 18:11**).

"The Moabite Stone reports that Omri and Ahab ruled the northern part of Moab for forty years. King Mesha brought tribute to the King of Israel (**2 Kings 3:4**). Later he stopped the tribute, leading to an expedition by Joram of Judah and Jeshoshaphat (**2 Kings 3:4-27**). Amos refers to a continued break between Moab and Edom (**Amos 2:1-3**). But not much else is known of her history during the following century.

"Then it was touched, like its neighbors, by Assyrian expansion. In 728 B.C.E. its name appears along with Ammon, Ashkelon, Judah, Edom, and Gaza in the list of those bringing tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III...It would seem that Moab like Ahaz bought the Assyrians off from an invasion of their land. However, during this time Moab was threatened by nomadic elements from the desert, as a letter from that time relates...The invaders are reported to have come from the land of Gidir. But nothing more is known of this.

"Moab participated in the Ashdod rebellion against Sargon in 713-711 B.C.E., but like Judah and Edom changed their minds and paid tribute (compare Pritchard, **ANET** p. 287). In 701 B.C.E. Sennacherib reports that Kammusunabdi of Moab brought tribute and kissed his feet (**ANET** p. 287)...

"Other references to Moab continue in the following century. They withstood an attack by Arabs in the reign of Ashurbanipal. Later they fought in Nubuchadnezzar's armies (**2 Kings 24:1**). **Jeremiah (27:3 and 40:11)** speaks of Moab, while **Ezekiel** records a threat against Moab (**25:8-11**). Later references refer to Moabites as persons, but never more as a country." (Pp. 229-30)

Slotki comments on **verse 1** that "Ar and Kir, Moab's most important cities, are laid waste in one night...Ar (was located) on the southern bank of the Arnon (and was the) capital of Moab...Kir (is) the modern Kerkak, (located) about 17 miles south of the Arnon." (P. 74)

For pictures of the Arnon River / Gorge (the "Grand Canyon" of the Near East, see the Internet photos at "Arnon Gorge" and "Wadi Mujib." Viewing these photos leaves no doubt as to the suitability of the Arnon as a boundary between nations in ancient times! For the River Zered or Wadi Hasa, see the Internet article "Wadi Hasa (Nahal Zered)—May, 2007," with its numerous photos taken on a 3-day hike down Wadi Hasa which demonstrate its like suitability as a boundary line between nations.

Alexander translates **verse 1**: "*(This is) the burden of Moab, that in a night Ar-Moab is laid waste, is destroyed; that in a night Kir-Moab is laid waste, is destroyed.*" (P. 313)

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כִּי בַלַּיִל שָׁדַד עַר מוֹאֵב נְדָמָה

כִּי בַלַּיִל שָׁדַד קִיר-מוֹאֵב נְדָמָה:

Oracle / utterance of Moab:<sup>3</sup>

Because in a night<sup>4</sup> Ar Moab<sup>5</sup> is devastated, it is cut off;

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<sup>2</sup>(...continued)

The Greek translation of the opening line of **verse 1** is: τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ κατὰ τῆς Μωαβίτιδος [genitive feminine singular adjective], “The word, the one against the Moabitess.”

Gray comments on **verse 1** that “this verse gives the cause of the alarm described in the following verses. ‘Ar (Moab) and Kir (Moab) have been taken by sudden assault; the country was hardly aware of danger till the blow had actually fallen, and its fall had been sealed. In **verses 2-4** follow scenes of the lamentation called for by the news as it travels northwards through Dibon, Nebo, and Medeba, to Heshbon and Elealeh.” (P. 278)

Oswalt comments on **verse 1**: “This verse acts as an introduction, repeating the same words over the two chief cities of Moab proper, Ar on the Arnon and Kir farther south, the central fortress. While the verse may not mean that the nation literally fell in one night, it surely does mean to stress that the blow was sudden and swift upon a land which perhaps felt reasonably secure. (Mesha’s claim to have captured the Israelite center of occupation, Ataroth, in one night gives rise to the speculation that the statement in **Isaiah**, or in **Isaiah’s** original, is in response to Mesha’s.)” (P. 337)

<sup>3</sup>The Aramaic Targum translates / comments on this line by “The burden of the cup of cursing to give Moab to drink.” (Jonathan ben Uzziel’s translation)

<sup>4</sup>Where our Hebrew text has בַּלַּיִל, “in a night of,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has בַּלַּיְלָה, “in a / the night,” and **Rahlfs** has νυκτὸς (genitive feminine singular) “by night.”

Gray comments that the phrase “in a night” depicts “the suddenness with which the assault was made and the rapidity with which all was over seem to be expressed... emphasized as it is by being placed before the verb.” (P. 278)

<sup>5</sup>Where our Hebrew text has עַר מוֹאֵב, “Ar of Moab,” **Rahlfs** has ἡ Μωαβίτις, which we take to mean “the Moabitess.”

The **Wikipedia** article on Ar Moab states that “Ar is mentioned in the **Hebrew Bible** several times as a city of ancient Moab (**Numbers 21:15**). While the exact location is unknown, it is likely to have been in the southern part of the Arnon Valley, which is the present day Wadi Mujib gorge in Jordan. The city was one of Moab's most

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because in a night Qir Moab<sup>6</sup> is devastated, it is cut off.

עֲלֵה הַבַּיִת וְדִיבֶן הַבְּמוֹת 1, 15:2<sup>7</sup>

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prominent, being listed by the prophet Isaiah in his denunciation [is this a 'denunciation'? We think not] of the Moabite nation (**Isaiah 15:1**)." (8/4/2016)

The Wadi Mujib gorge is also known as the Arnon Gorge; see footnote 2.

Gray states that Ar Moab "appears to have lain on the upper waters of the Arnon ...i.e. east of Dibon and south of Nebo, Medeba, Heshbon and Elealeh. [The Greek translation (**Rahfs**)] gives for Ar of Moab, as for Moab throughout the section, ἡ Μωαβίτις, 'the Moabites.'" (Pp. 278-79)

Watts notes that with regards to both עַר מוֹאָב "Ar of Moab" and קִיר־מוֹאָב, "Qir / Wall of Moab," [the Greek translation (**Rahfs**)] "has failed to see the names or towns or cities, trying instead to understand them as other Hebrew words." (P. 226) The other words are ἡ Μωαβίτις, "the Moabites," and τὸ τεῖχος τῆς Μωαβίτιδος, "the wall of the Moabites."

Watts also states that עַר מוֹאָב "Ar (in) Moab" is taken by Simons to refer to a district in Moab which may also stand for the entire country. Its capital is קִיר 'Kir' 'which is located in the center of the district by the same name' near the middle of Moab in the upper *wadi el-kerak*, as it is known today (see the next footnote and footnote 36).

<sup>6</sup>Alexander states that "In connection with the capital city, the prophet names the principal or only fortress in the land of Moab. [קִיר, **qiyr**] *Kir* originally means a wall, then a walled town or fortress. The place here meant is a few miles southeast of Ar, on a rocky hill, strongly fortified by nature, and provided with a castle. The Chaldee paraphrase of this verse calls it "Kerakka de Moab, 'the fortress of Moab,' which name it has retained among the orientals, who extend it to the whole of ancient Moab." (P. 313)

Gray states that Kir Moab is "commonly identified with קִיר־חֶרֶשֶׁת [**qir charesheth**] (**16:7**), and so with the modern Kerak, which is situated in the extreme south of Moab on a lofty spur between two ravines whose bottoms lie about 1,000 feet below—a position almost impregnable in ancient warfare...But...there is no convincing reason for the equation." (P. 279) See our footnote on **Isaiah 16:7**.

We disagree, thinking that there is good reason that this should be identified with the known fortified city in Moab. What do you think?

<sup>7</sup>Slotki entitles **verses 2-4** "Moab's cry of agony." Motyer entitles them "Moab's grief expressed."

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לְבִכִּי עַל-נְבוֹ וְעַל מִדְבָּא

מִזֹּאב יִלְיֵל

בְּכָל-רֵאשֵׁי קְרָחָה כָּל-זִקֵּן גְּרוּעָה:

He went up to the house / temple<sup>8</sup> and Dibon,<sup>9</sup> the high places,

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<sup>7</sup>(...continued)

Gray entitles **verse 2** “Lamentation in Dibon, Nebo, and Medeba.”

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 2** that “The destruction of the chief cities causes general grief. *They* (indefinitely) *go up to the house* (i.e. the temple), *and Dibon (to) the high places* for (the purpose of) *weeping*. *On Nebo and on Medeba, Moab howls—on all his heads baldness—every beard cut off.*” (P. 313)

Oswalt states that “These verses describe the lamentation which will take hold of the whole land.” (P. 337)

<sup>8</sup>Oswalt states that the phrase “He went up to the house” is “a rather cryptic phrase, which, if correct, probably is in parallel with *high places* and refers to a temple. For a similar expression see the Sumerian ‘Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur’ (in Pritchard’s **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, p. 457, lines 116-33).” (P. 337)

<sup>9</sup>Concerning Dibon, the following statement is adapted from **Encyclopedia Britannica** on the Internet: “Dibon, modern Dhībān, ancient capital of Moab, is located north of the Arnon River in west-central Jordan. Excavations conducted there since 1950 by the archaeologists affiliated with the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem have uncovered the remains of several city walls, a square tower, and numerous buildings. The pottery found on the site dates from Early Bronze (about 3200–2300 B.C.E.) to Early Arabic (about 7th century C.E.), although pottery dating from the Middle and Late Bronze ages (about 2300–1550 B.C.E., and 1550–1200 B.C.E.) is very rare, thus adding weight to the modern assumption that a great part of Transjordan reverted to nomadism during that time.

“One of the most important finds at Dibon was the discovery in 1868 C.E. of the so-called Moabite Stone, bearing an inscription of Mesha, king of Moab, about the 9th century B.C.E.; its 34-line inscription commemorates a victory over the Israelites that reestablished the independence of Moab.” See on the Internet, Mesha Stele, and see our end-note 1.

Gray notes that “Dibon, modern Dhiban, lay about 4 miles north of the Arnon and 13 miles east of the Dead Sea.” He quotes G.A. Smith as stating that ‘Dhiban is usually described as lying on two hills; but there are really three...Probably...the ancient city comprised all three hills...but...also spread eastward over the road and the shallow wady beside it to the slopes beyond on which are many scattered ruins...At one period

(continued...)

to weep over Nebo,<sup>10</sup> and over Medeba--<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>(...continued)

or another the town must have been as large as any in Moab; compare the epithet *παμμεγέθης*, *pammegethes* [‘very great,’ ‘immense’] applied [to Dibon] by Eusebius.” (P. 279)

Oswalt notes that Dibon is located “in the land that Israel claimed. It was Meshah’s native city, and a high place of the Moabite God Chemosh was located there. Obviously a part of the reason for the lament at the sanctuary was that the God had been unable to deliver His people.” (P. 337)

Motyer states that “*Dibon* was north of the Arnon; *Nebo* and *Medeba* further north still. The heaping up of names is characteristic of **Isaiah** (e.g. **10:9-10, 28-32**) and here creates the impression of widespread disaster.” (P. 150)

<sup>10</sup>Oswalt states that “*Nebo* is the great mountain at the north end of the Dead Sea from which Moses saw the promised land (**Deuteronomy 34:1**).” (P. 337)

“Mount Nebo Arabic: *Jabal Nībū*; Hebrew: **הַר נְבוֹ**; is an elevated ridge in Jordan, approximately 2,680 feet above sea level, mentioned in the **Hebrew Bible** as the place where Moses was granted a view of the Promised Land. The view from the summit provides a panorama of the Holy Land and, to the north, a more limited one of the valley of the River Jordan. The West Bank city of Jericho is usually visible from the summit, as is Jerusalem on a very clear day.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/4/2016)

There are also many photos of Nebo on the Internet, which are valuable for those unable to travel to Israel / Jordan and see the site for themselves.

Gray comments that “The modern *Jebel Neba*, on or near which the town of the same name presumably lay, is about 18 miles due north of Dibon and 5 miles southwest from Heshbon. It is about 4 miles northwest from Medeba...which lies about 15 miles slightly east of north from Dibon. The mountain top, which is 10 miles back from, and 4,000 feet above the Dead Sea, commands a very extensive view...Both Nebo (**Numbers 32:8**) and Medeba (**Numbers 21:30**) are mentioned in Meshah’s inscription and several times in the **Old Testament**. The remains of a stone-circle, as probably its name also, is a token of the sacred character of Nebo.” (Pp. 279-80)

We take the text to mean the town of Nebo has suffered destruction—not, of course, the mountain.

<sup>11</sup>**מֵדְבָא**, **medhebha**’ is the capital city of Madaba Governorate in central Jordan, with a population of about 60,000. It is best known for its Byzantine and Umayyad mosaics, especially a large Byzantine-era mosaic map of the Holy Land.

(continued...)

<sup>11</sup>(...continued)

Madaba is located 19 miles south-west of the capital of Jordan, Amman. It is directly east of the northern end of the Dead Sea. (Information from **Wikipedia**, 8/4/2016)

Slotki notes that Medeba [his spelling] is “not far from Nebo and to the south of it.” (P. 75)

“The Madaba Mosaic Map is a map of the region dating from the 6th century and preserved in the floor of the Greek Orthodox Basilica of Saint George, sometimes called the "Church of the Map." With two million pieces of colored stone, the map depicts hills and valleys, villages and towns in Palestine and the Nile Delta. The mosaic contains the earliest extant representation of Byzantine Jerusalem, labeled the "Holy City." The map provides important details about its 6th-century landmarks, with the *cardo*, or central colonnaded street, and the church of the Holy Sepulcher clearly visible. This map is one key in developing scholarly knowledge about the physical layout of Jerusalem after its destruction and rebuilding in 70 AD.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/3/2016)

We take the text to mean that the town of Madaba, like the town of Nebo, had also suffered destruction. These are both towns in the northern part of Moab, and this means that the destruction was throughout the country of Moab, not just in the south.

<sup>12</sup>Translations of the first three lines of **verse 2** vary:

**King James**, “He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep: Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba”;

**Tanakh**, “He went up to the temple to weep, Dibon *went* to the outdoor shrines. Over Nebo and Medeba Moab is wailing”;

**New Revised Standard**, “Dibon has gone up to the temple, to the high places to weep; over Nebo and over Medeba Moab wails.”

**New International**, “Dibon goes up to its temple, to its high places to weep; Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba.”

**New Jerusalem**, “The daughter of Dibon has climbed to the high places to weep; on Nebo and in Medeba Moab laments.”

**Rahfs**, λυπεῖσθε ἐφ’ ἑαυτοῖς ἀπολείται γὰρ καὶ Δηβων οὗ ὁ βωμὸς ὑμῶν ἐκεῖ ἀναβήσεσθε κλαίειν ἐπὶ Ναβαυ τῆς Μωαβίτιδος ὀλολύζετε, “Grieve for yourselves, for it will perish! And Lebon, where the high place of yours (plural) is, there go up to weep over Nabau of the Moabites; howl!

**Slotki**, “He is gone up to Baith, and to Dibon, To the high places, to weep; Upon Nebo, and upon Medeba, Moab howleth.”

Slotki comments that “*Baith...Dibon* [were locations] where presumably sanctuaries (*the high places*) were situated. *Baith* cannot be located. *Dibon* is six miles north of the Arnon.” (P. 74)

On all his (Moab's) heads,<sup>13</sup> baldness, every beard shaved.<sup>14</sup>

15:3<sup>15</sup> בְּחֹצְתָיו חֲגָרוּ שֵׁק

עַל גְּגֹתֶיהָ וּבְרַחֲבֹתֶיהָ פְּלֵה יַיִלִיל

יָרַד בְּבָכָיו

In his streets they wore sackcloth;

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<sup>13</sup>Where our Hebrew text reads רִאשָׁיו, “his heads,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> reads רִאשׁוֹ, “his head.” **Rahlf**s has ἐπὶ πάσης κεφαλῆς, “upon every head.” **Jeremiah 48:37** has כָּל-רִאשׁוֹ “every head.”

<sup>14</sup>Slotki notes that baldness and shaving of the beard “are oriental manifestations of grief and mourning.” (P. 75)

Gray comments that this last line in **verse 2** and all of **verse 3** describe how “the mourning continues, with particular reference to the chief rites of the mourners—the tonsure [shaving a part] of the head (compare e.g. **Amos 8:10**; **Jeremiah 16:6**; **Leviticus 21:5**), the shorn [sheared] beard (compare **Jeremiah 41:5**), and the girding on of sackcloth (**Isaiah 20:2**.” (P. 280)

Add to these passages **Jeremiah 48:37** (where gashing of the hands is mentioned); **Isaiah 22:12**; **2 Samuel 3:31** (where tearing of clothes is mentioned); **Jeremiah 4:8** and **Lamentations 2:10** (where sitting on the ground in silence and throwing dust on one’s head, along with bowing the head to the ground are mentioned).

<sup>15</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 3**: “*In its streets, they are girded with sackcloth; on its roofs and in its squares (or broad places) all (literally, all of it) howls, coming down with weeping (from the house-tops or the temples)...*”

“In this verse there is a singular alternation of masculine and feminine suffixes, all relating to Moab, sometimes considered as a country, and sometimes as nation... Sackcloth is mentioned as the usual mourning dress and badge of deep humiliation.” (P. 314)

Watts agrees, stating that the masculine suffix “probably refers to Moab as a people,” while the feminine suffix “refers to it as a country or to its cities.” (P. 226)

Motyer comments on **verse 3** that “Now mourning becomes local and domestic, war sorrow has come into the home.” (P. 150)

upon rooftops and in her broad places all of him<sup>16</sup> howls,  
going down with the weeping.<sup>17</sup>

15:4<sup>18</sup> וַתִּזְעַק חֶשְׁבֹן וְאַלְעֵלָה

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<sup>16</sup>The phrase in the first line in Hebrew, בְּחֻצוֹתָיו, has a 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix, evidently understanding Moab as a masculine name for a country. **Rahfs** translates this phrase by ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις αὐτῆς, “in the streets of hers,” with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine pronoun. The phrase is followed by the word נְגוֹתֶיהָ, “her rooftops,” with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular feminine suffix. Then in this second line, the phrase וּבְרַחְבֵּיהָ כָּל־הִם, “and in her broad places all of him,” with first a feminine suffix and then a masculine suffix.

Gray comments that the masculine singular suffix in “his streets” “refers, rather awkwardly, to Moab.” (P. 280) Compare the similar exchange of pronouns in **Jeremiah 48:38**,

Upon all rooftops of Moab,  
and in her broad open places / plazas  
all of him—wailing.  
Because I broke Moab like a clay-vessel--  
there is no delight / pleasure / business in him—  
(it is) a saying of YHWH.

It seems apparent that both **Isaiah** and **Jeremiah** refer to Moab in this two-fold way, as both a masculine and a feminine noun.

<sup>17</sup>Slotki’s translation has “weeping profusely.” He comments that the Hebrew is literally “going down in weeping.” “Elsewhere ‘the eye’ is said to ‘go down in tears’ (**Jeremiah 9:17**; **Lamentations 1:16**; **3:48**), but only here is the phrase used of the whole person.” (P. 75)

Motyer comments that “*Prostrate with weeping* / ‘going down in weeping’ probably means ‘with tears flooding down.’” (P. 150) Watts translates by “collapsing with weeping.”

<sup>18</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 4**: “*And Heshbon cries and Elealeh—even to Jahaz is their voice heard—therefore the warriors of Moab cry—his soul is distressed to him (or in him)...*”

“Heshbon, a royal city of the Amorites, assigned to Reuben and to Gad at different times, or to both jointly, famous for its fish-ponds, was a celebrated town in the days of Eusebius, the ruins of which are still in existence, under the slightly altered name of Hesban. Elealeh, often mentioned with it, was also assigned to the tribe of Reuben. Eusebius describes these towns as near together in the highlands in Gilead,

(continued...)

עֲרֵי־הַיָּזְבַּח נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם  
עַל־כֵּן חָלְצֵי מוֹאָב יִרְעוּ  
נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְעָה לֹא:

And Heshbon<sup>19</sup> and Elealeh<sup>20</sup> cry out;

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<sup>18</sup>(...continued)

opposite to Jericho. Robinson and Smith, while at the latter place, conversed with an Arab chief, who pointed out to them the Wady Hesban, near which, far up in the mountain, is the ruined place of the same name, the ancient Heshbon. Half an hour northeast of this lies another ruin called El Al, the ancient Elealeh (**Palestine**, ii. 278).” (P. 314)

“The name is also pronounced Hesebon, Esebon, Esbous, and Esebus. It is an ancient town located 20 miles east of the Jordan River in the modern kingdom of Jordan and historically within the territories of Ammon and Ancient Israel. Its altitude is some 4,000 feet above the Jordan River.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/3/2016)

See the photos of Heshbon on the Internet, in which the ancient ruins are surrounded by modern homes and businesses.

Motyer comments that “*Heshbon, Elealeh and Jahaz* were the furthest north of the cities so far mentioned. The tragedy is so overwhelming that the military (*armed men*; compare **Amos 5:16**) can only turn to helpless sorrow.” (P. 150)

Watts comments that “The disaster seems to have devastated the northern villages of Nebo and Medeba, Heshbon and Elealeh. Towns further south, like Yahats and Dibon, mourn and tremble.” (P. 231)

<sup>19</sup>Slotki notes that Heshbon is located “some 4 miles northeast of Nebo,” and that it was “the capital of the Amorites (**Numbers 21:26**).” (P. 75)

<sup>20</sup>Slotki notes that Elealeh is located “about six miles northeast of Nebo.” (P. 75)

But the location is uncertain. See footnote 12 for the ancient ruin El Al as the possible site of Elealeh.

Oswalt states that “Heshbon and Elealeh were the northernmost cities in the area disputed by Israel and Moab, situated within about two miles of each other.” (Pp. 337-38)

as far as Yahats / Jahaz<sup>21</sup> their voice is heard.<sup>22</sup>  
For this reason armed men of Moab raise a shout,<sup>23</sup>  
his innermost-being trembles<sup>24</sup> for himself.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>The Hebrew place-name יָהָז, **yahats**, is spelled Jahaz by Slotki's translation. He notes that it is "probably not far from Heshbon (compare **Numbers 21:23**), but its position is not known." (P. 75)

The Jewish Virtual Library on the Internet states that "Jahaz, Jahaza...[refers to] a city in Moab where Sihon the Amorite was decisively defeated by the Israelites (**Numbers 21:23; Deuteronomy 2:32ff.; Judges 11:20**). Jahaz was included in the territory of the tribe of Reuben and was a levitical city of the family of Merar (**Joshua 13:18; I Chronicles 6:63**). After being lost to Moab for a time, it was seized by Omri and later apparently by Ahab who fortified it. Mesha king of Moab recaptured the city and annexed it to Dibon (**Mesha Stele, lines 18, 19, 20**). From this time on Jahaz remained a Moabite city and is mentioned as such in the **Bible (Isaiah 15:4; Jeremiah 48:34)**. It has been proposed to identify it with Khirbat Islandar (by Abel) or with several other sites in the vicinity of the Wadi al-Wāla, southeast of Heshbon." (8/5/2016)

<sup>22</sup>Gray comments that in these first two lines of **verse 4**, "The cry of distress raised by the news in Heshbon and Elealeh, situated close together in the most northern district of Moab, is heard as far as Yahats." (P. 280)

<sup>23</sup>Watts notes that the verb here, יָרָעוּ, normally means "raise a war cry," but this seems to him not to fit in a context of mourning and dismay. (P. 226) **Rahlf's** translates by the verb βοᾶ, which means to use the voice with high volume, "to cry out," whether with joy or with cries of anguish.

<sup>24</sup>Slotki's translation has "is faint," but Slotki suggests the translation "trembles." (P. 75)

<sup>25</sup>Translations of the last two lines of **verse 4** vary:

**King James**, "therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto him."

**Tanakh**, "Therefore, The shock troops of Moab shout, His body is convulsed."

**New Revised Standard**, "therefore the loins of Moab quiver; his soul trembles."

**New International**, "Therefore the armed men of Moab cry out, and their hearts are faint."

**New Jerusalem**, "That is why the warriors of Moab are shivering, his soul trembles at the sound."

**Rahlf's**, "because of this the loin / waist of the Moabite cries out—its innermost-being will know."

(continued...)

<sup>25</sup>(...continued)

Gray comments that “The point of **verses 2-4** is that lamentation follows the news of **verse 1** as it travels northward from Arnon to Elealeh and echoes back again through the whole length of this district.” (P. 280)

<sup>26</sup>Oswalt comments on **verses 5-9** that “In these verses flight is added to lament, and the speaker is moved at the thought of long lines of frightened, uprooted people, clutching a pitiful bit of their possessions, trying to reach some place of security. These images should also grip us of the twentieth [and now twenty-first century!], which has seen perhaps more refugees than any other century yet.” (P. 338)

Motyer entitles **verses 5-9** “The Lord’s grief over Moab,” and comments that “*My heart (verse 5)* is matched by *I will bring (verse 9)*, identifying the mourner as the Lord. He grieves over the plight of the fugitives (**verse 5**), the stricken environment (**verse 6**), the futile efforts to salvage something from the overthrow (**verses 7-8**) and over what is yet to come (**verse 9**)...

“These verses are a long list of what touches the heart of God, Who weeps as He smites. The grief of the Judge of all the earth is one of the two striking truths of this oracle. The other is that all this total loss and suffering arises from the single sin of pride (**16:6**).” (Pp. 150-51)

But we wonder—is the text this clear in identifying the speaker as YHWH? We think not. We think the verse may well be describing the prophet Isaiah’s grief. What do you think?

Slotki comments on **verses 5-7** that “The fugitives make their way through the ruins of their country to Edom, collecting their belongings which they were able to carry away at *the brook of the willows*.” (P. 75)

The word translated by the gentle-sounding “brook” is נַחַל, **nachal**, which should be translated “wadi,” or “arroyo (from my New Mexico past)” or “torrent valley.” It is the same word that is used for the Arnon Gorge / River—did you look at the photos of the Arnon on the Internet? Of course, not all wadis are as fierce as the Arnon near the Dead Sea; but when water comes rushing down any wadi, it can be a very dangerous place (as I learned early in life when a friend of mine driving down an arroyo near Quemado, New Mexico, lost his life as a flood of water rushed down the arroyo, drowning him, just as did a Navajo cousin of my Navajo son, near Manuelito, New Mexico. As a little boy, I remember the arroyos coming down from Sandia Mountain into the 1930’s town of Albuquerque, causing great damage.

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 5**: “*My heart for Moab cries out—her fugitives (are fled) as far as Zoar—an heifer of three years old—for he that goes up Luhith with weeping goes up by it—for in the way of Horonaim a cry of destruction they lift up...*

(continued...)

בְּרִיחָהּ עַד-צֶעַר עֲגַלַּת-שֶׁלִּישִׁיָּה  
כִּי מֵעֲלָה הַלּוֹחֵת בְּבִכֵי יַעֲלֶה-בּוֹ  
כִּי יִדְרֹךְ חוֹרְנִים זַעֲקַת-שָׁבֵר יַעֲרֹו:

My heart cries out for Moab—<sup>27</sup>

her refugees<sup>28</sup> (flee) as far as Tsoar / Zoar,<sup>29</sup> Eglath-Shelishiyah;<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup>(...continued)

“Every part of this obscure verse has given rise to some diversity of exposition. It has been made a question whose words it contains. Junius connects it with the close of the preceding verse and understands it to contain the words of the warriors there mentioned, endeavoring to rally and recall the fugitives. Others suppose the Moabites in general, or some individuals among them, to be here the speaker. Cocceius doubts whether these are not the words of God Himself. Calvin supposes the prophet to be speaking in the person and expressing the feeling of a Moabite. All these hypotheses appear to have arisen from an idea that the prophet cannot be supposed to express sympathy with these sinners of the Gentiles. But such expressions are not only common elsewhere, but particularly frequent in this part of **Isaiah** (see **16:11; 21:3,4; 22:5**).” (P. 315)

<sup>27</sup>Slotki comments that “The Hebrew prophet, viewing Moab’s calamity, is moved to commiseration [sympathy and sorrow; compassion], and he cannot help expressing his sympathy with a suffering people even though they had ill-treated Israel.” (P. 75)

Where our Hebrew text has לְבִי לְמוֹאָב יִזְעַק, “my heart for Moab cries out,” **Rahlfs** has ἡ καρδία τῆς Μωαβίτιδος βοᾷ ἐν αὐτῇ, “the heart of the Moabites cries out within her.” Compare:

**Isaiah 16:9,**

For this reason I will weep with Yaezer’s weeping (for) Sibmah’s vineyard;  
I will water / drench you (with) my tear(s), Heshbon and Elealeh.  
Because over your summer-fruit and over your harvest a shout fell / ceased.

**Isaiah 16:11,**

For this reason my stomach groans / murmurs like the harp for Moab,  
and my innards for Qir-Hares.

<sup>28</sup>Where our Hebrew text reads בְּרִיחָהּ, “her fugitives / refugees,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has

(continued...)

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<sup>28</sup>(...continued)

ברוחה, “in her spirit.” **Rahlf**s has ἐν αὐτῆ, “in her, “in herself.”

<sup>29</sup>Transliterating the Hebrew זְעַר (our Tsoar) by **Zoar**, Slotki notes that it is located “south-east of the Dead Sea, near Sodom (compare **Genesis 19:22**).” (P. 75)

Alexander states that “Zoar, one of the cities of the plain, preserved by Lot’s intercession, is now [mid-19th century] ascertained to have been situated on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, near its southern extremity, and at the foot of the mountains (Robinson’s **Palestine**, ii. p. 480)

**Wikipedia** states that “Zoara, the biblical Zoar, previously called Bela, was one of the five “cities of the plain”--a pentapolis apparently located along the lower Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea plain and mentioned in the **Book of Genesis**.” (8/4/2016)

We are accustomed to thinking of the land of Jordan as a very dry, non-productive desert-land, especially in the area adjacent to the Dead Sea and southward into the area known as Edom in the **Bible**. But the fact is that the area on the southeastern end of the Dead Sea is at least fairly good farming land, and the town of Ghor es-Safi, the modern name of the ancient Zoar, produces crops of wheat, barley, sesame and tomatoes, along with fruits such as dates--as well as being the home for goats and beehives. See the photos of Ghor es-Safi, on the Internet. Looking at those photos reminds me of areas around Roswell and Carlsbad, New Mexico.

Oswalt states that “Zoar, if correctly identified, is located at the southern end of the Dead Sea within the territory of Edom. Evidently the refugees were escaping the main area of conflict further north.” (P. 338) Zoar is also mentioned in **Jeremiah 48:34**.

<sup>30</sup>Slotki’s translation of the Hebrew עֵגְלַת שְׁלִישִׁיָּהּ, **eglath shelishiyah**, is “heifer of three years old,” or perhaps “(the) third heifer,” almost identical to the **King James** translation. Our other English translations transliterate the Hebrew as “Eglath-shelishiyah.” **Rahlf**s has δάμαλις γάρ ἐστὶν τριετής, “for she is a heifer–three years (old?)” The name Eglath Shelishiyah is also found at **Jeremiah 48:34**.

Slotki states that the name is “a symbol of health and vigor.” He also states that “The phrase is in apposition [the two words are grammatically parallel and have the same referent (e.g., my friend Sue; *the first US president, George Washington*)] to Zoar...The locality...has not been discovered.” (Pp. 75-6)

Gray comments that “On the very questionable supposition that these words can mean *a heifer of three years old*, Eglath Shelishiyah has been taken as an epithet expressing either the beauty and strength of hitherto unsubdued cities, or as comparing

(continued...)

because he goes up on (the) ascent (to / of) the Luchith<sup>31</sup> with weeping;  
because (on the) road<sup>32</sup> to Choronayim,<sup>33</sup> an outcry of crushing they raise.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>(...continued)

the cry of Moab...to that of a heifer on the point of being broken in, or as alluding to the celebrated cattle-rearing in the Ghor es-Safiye.” (P. 283)

<sup>31</sup>Slotki holds that the Hebrew phrase הַלְלוּחִית, “the Luchiyth,” points to a location “between Zoar and Rabba.” (P. 76). We see no way for ascertaining the location for this place name, other than that it is evidently in southern Jordan.

<sup>32</sup>Alexander comments that “As Jeremiah instead of הַרְרָה, ‘way,’ has בְּמוֹרָד, (‘at the) descent’ [**Jeremiah 48:5**] it is not improbable that Luhith and Horonaim were on opposite faces of the same hill, so that the fugitives on their way to Zoar, after going up the ascent to Luhith, are seen going down the descent of Horonaim.” (P. 317)

<sup>33</sup>The Hebrew dual noun חוֹרְנַיִם, **choronayim**, is the name of another location that cannot be determined, perhaps meaning “Two caves / hollows / ravines.”

Alexander comments that “Horonaim is mentioned only here and in **Jeremiah 48:3, 5, 34**. The name originally means two caverns.” (P. 317) As we have stated concerning Luhith, so also with Horonaim—we see no way for ascertaining the location of this place name, other than somewhere in southern Jordan.

<sup>34</sup>Watts notes that the last verb in this verse, יַעֲרֹר, “is a unique word. **Brown-Driver-Briggs** explains it as a pilpel form from עָרַר = יַעֲרֹר, “raise a cry of destruction.” The word occurs nowhere else and remains obscure.” (P. 226)

Gray comments on **verse 5b** that in the phrase “*He goeth up...they raise*, the subject is Moab; the change from the singular...to the plural is suspicious...Choronaim (**Jeremiah 48:3,5, 34**) clearly lay on, or at the bottom of, some descent from the Moabite plateau; the phrase ‘from So’ar as far as Choronaim’ (**Jeremiah 48:34**) implies that it was remote from So’ar.” (P. 283)

Motyer observes that “The impressionistic list of towns beginning here runs southwest, in contrast to the northern towns of **verses 2-4**. The enemy enters from the north and Moab flees southwards. *Zoar* (**Genesis 19:21-22**) was in the southern Dead Sea area. *Eglath Shelishiyah* is unknown. *Luhith* and *Horonaim* were presumably in the same general area (compare **Jeremiah 48:5**).” (P. 151)

15:6<sup>35</sup> כִּי־מֵי נִמְרִים מְשֻׁמֹּת יִהְיוּ

כִּי־יִבֶשׂ חֲצִיר כָּלָה רֹשָׁא

יִרְק לֹא הִיָּה:

Because Waters of Nimrim<sup>36</sup> will be wastes / desolations,<sup>37</sup>  
because herbage dried up, grass was finished;

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<sup>35</sup>Oswalt comments on **verses 6-8** that “*Nimrim* may possibly be the Wadi Numeira on the southeastern shore of the Dead Sea. The sense may be that the crowd of refugees is so great that the oasis cannot support them and their animals, with the result (**verse 7**, ‘therefore’) that they must abandon the animals and continue on with what little they can carry themselves. More figuratively, the dried up waters and dead grass may refer to the general devastation of the land as a whole.” (P. 339)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6**: “*For the waters of Nimrim (are and) shall be desolations; for withered is the grass, gone is the herbage, verdures there is none...*”

“The description is itself continued, the desolation of the country being added to the capture of the cities and the flight of the inhabitants...It is now agreed that Nimrim is another name for the town itself, which is mentioned in **Numbers 32:3, 36**, and **Joshua 13:27** as a town of Gad.” (P. 318)

<sup>36</sup>Slotki states that the *Waters of Nimrim* are “identified with Wadi Sahib, a tributary of the Jordan, about eight miles from its mouth or, more probably, with Wadi Numeirah which flows into the Dead Sea not far from Kerak.” (P. 76)

“Al-Karak, also known as just Karak or Kerak, is a city in Jordan known for its Crusader castle, the Kerak Castle. The castle is one of the three largest castles in the region, the other two being in Syria. Al-Karak is the capital city of the Karak Governorate.

“Al-Karak lies [80 miles] to the south of Amman on the ancient King's Highway. It is situated on a hilltop about 3,300 feet above sea level and is surrounded on three sides by a valley. Al-Karak has a view of the Dead Sea [to its west / northwest]. A city of about 20,000 people has been built up around the castle and it has buildings from the 19th-century Ottoman period. The town is built on a triangular plateau, with the castle at its narrow southern tip.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/3/2016)

<sup>37</sup>Slotki quotes Whitehouse to the effect that this line “is best explained by the description of the combined expedition against Moab by Israel and Judah in alliance (Jehoram and Jehoshaphat) in the days of Mesha (**2 Kings 3:25**), when the wells were stopped up.” (P. 76)

there was no greenness!

15:7<sup>38</sup> עַל-כֵּן יִתְּרָה עֲשָׂה וּפְקֻדָּתָם

עַל נַחַל הָעֲרָבִים יִשְׂאוּם:

For this reason (the) abundance<sup>39</sup> he made and their stored up goods--<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 7**: “Therefore (because the country can no longer be inhabited) *the remainder of what (each) one has made* (i.e. acquired), *and their hoard* (or store), *over the brook of the willows they carry them away...*”

“Not one of the ancient versions has given a coherent or intelligent rendering of this obscure sentence. Jerome suggests three different interpretations of נַחַל הָעֲרָבִים—first, the brook of the Arabians or of the Ravens...who fed Elijah; second, the brook of the willows...third, Babylon, the plains of which were full of willows...

“It is now commonly agreed that whatever the meaning of the name may be, it denotes the...Wady El Ahsy of Robinson and Smith, running into the Dead Sea near its southern extremity, and forming the boundary between Kerek and Gebal [see footnote 2], corresponding to the ancient [boundary line between] Moab and Edom.

“On the whole, the most probable meaning of the verse is that the Moabites shall carry what they can save of their possessions into the adjacent land of Edom [as they have to cross the Arnon Gorge, an ancient ‘Grand Canyon’].” (P. 319)

Motyer states that **verse 7** “describes a pathetic war occurrence: refugees frantic to save something of what they have spent their lives acquiring. Imperial glory comes at the expense of those at the bottom of life’s heap not those at the top.” (P. 151)

But no-war oftentimes also destroys the fortunes of those at the top!

<sup>39</sup>Watts notes that the word יִתְּרָה “occurs only here. **Brown-Driver-Briggs** reads it as a construct feminine noun related to יָתַר ‘remain over.’” (P. 226) But, as is well known, when a word occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible, it is very difficult to determine its meaning.

<sup>40</sup>The word פְּקֻדָּה, is given a number of meanings by **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, including “oversight” (i.e., ‘charge,’ or ‘office’), “muster” (gathering troops for battle), “visitation” (for either punishment or for blessing) and “store” (things laid up).

(continued...)

over Wadi Haarabim / Wadi of the poplars<sup>41</sup> they will carry them.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>(...continued)

Oswalt translates by “the gains they have made and their provisions,” and comments that “gains and provisions speak poignantly of our human attempt to care for ourselves and to stock up enough in advance so that we will never be in want. Unfortunately, those provisions are hard to keep for ourselves and they cannot satisfy the want we have (**Isaiah 32:9-15; Matthew 6:25-32**).” (P. 339)

<sup>41</sup>Motyer comments that “The Ravine of the Poplars may be Wadi Zered on the southern border of Moab (**Numbers 21:12; Deuteronomy 2:13**).” (P. 151) See our footnote 2.

<sup>42</sup>Translations of **verse 7** vary, especially the Greek:

**King James**, “Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows.”

**Tanakh**, “Therefore, The gains they have made, and their stores, They carry to the Wadi of Willows.”

**New Revised Standard**, “Therefore the abundance they have gained and what they have laid up they carry away over the Wadi of the Willows.”

**New International**, “So the wealth they have acquired and stored up they carry away over the Ravine of the Poplars.”

**New Jerusalem**, “That is why they are carrying what they could save of their stores across the Ravine of the Willows.”

**Rahlfs**, μὴ καὶ οὕτως μέλλει σωθῆναι ἐπάξω γὰρ ἐπὶ τὴν φάραγγα Ἰσραήλ καὶ λήμψονται αὐτήν, “And in this way is she not about to be saved? For I will bring Arabs upon the wadi, and they will take her.”

Slotki’s translation has “the brook of the willows,” and he comments that “This was evidently on the border between Moab and Edom and may, therefore, be identified with Wadi el-Ahas (valley of water pits) which formed the boundary between those lands.” (P. 76)

“Wadi Zered is a wadi in western Jordan, also known in Jordan as Wadi al-Hisa...According to **Deuteronomy 2:13-18** it was the boundary between Moab and Edom in ancient times. Mentioned in the **Torah (Deuteronomy 2:13-14, Numbers 21:12**.

“The wadi is very big and long and ends in the Dead Sea in the town Safi (Al-Safi). The Wadi area is full of farmers who use the water mostly for vegetables like tomatoes and melons.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/8/2016)

Photos of Wadi Zered can be seen on the Internet. I have traveled through Jordan more than once—but have never seen anything to compare with the photos now available on the Internet.

15:8<sup>43</sup> כִּי־הִקִּיפָה הַזְעָקָה אֶת־גְּבוּל מוֹאָב

עַד־אֶגְלַיִם יִלְלָתָהּ

וּבְאֵר־אֵילִים יִלְלָתָהּ:

Because the outcry surrounded Moab's boundary,<sup>44</sup>  
as far as Eglayim<sup>45</sup> her howling (is heard),

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<sup>43</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 8**: "The lamentation is not confined to any one part of the country. For the cry goes round the border of Moab (i.e. entirely surrounds it); even to Eglaim (is) its howling (heard), and to Beer Elim, its howling...The meaning...is not that the land is externally surrounded by lamentation, but that lamentation fills it." (P. 319)

Oswalt comments that "The cries of the fugitives fill the land from end to end and border to border. They reach from the Zered in the south to Eglaim near Kir and Beer-elim north of the Arnon." (P. 339)

Motyer similarly states that while Eglaim and Beer Elim are unknown, "the verse would be suited if they were the 'Dan and Beersheba ['top to bottom'] of Moab, expressing the whole length of the land." (P. 151)

<sup>44</sup>Translations of this first line of **verse 8** vary:

**King James**, "For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab";

**Tanakh**, "Ah, the cry has compassed The country of Moab";

**New Revised Standard**, "For a cry has gone around the land of Moab";

**New International**, "Their outcry echoes along the border of Moab";

**New Jerusalem**, "For the cry for help re-echoes round the territory of Moab";

**Rahlf's**, συνῆψεν γὰρ ἡ βοή τὸ ὄριον τῆς Μωαβίτιδος τῆς Αγαλλίμ, "For the cry united the border of the Moabites of the Agallim."

<sup>45</sup>Slotki states that Eglaim is "probably the village Aigaleim, described by Eusebius as about 8 Roman miles south of Rabba." (P. 76)

Rabba is a town in Jordan in the Karak Governorate. The Greek name given to it is Areopolis. It is a little over 9 miles away from the city of Al Karak, and has a population of about 9 thousand people. It has also been known as Rabbath Moab. Nabatean ruins can be seen in the center of the town, consisting of a temple and a cavernous ancient water-reservoir. (Information taken from **Wikipedia**, 8/4/2016)

and (as far as)<sup>46</sup> Beer-Eylin<sup>47</sup> her howling (is heard).

15:9<sup>48</sup> כִּי מִי דִּימוֹן מְלֵאוֹ דָּם  
כִּי-אֲשִׁית עַל-דִּימוֹן נוֹסֵפּוֹת  
לְפַלִּיטָה מוֹאֵב אַרְיָה  
וְלִשְׂאֵרִית אֲדָמָה:

Because Dimon's waters were full of blood,<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>This last line of **verse 8** is translated by **Rahlfs** as καὶ ὀλολυγμὸς αὐτῆς ἕως τοῦ φρέατος τοῦ Αἰλιμ, “and her loud crying as far as the well of the Ailim.”

<sup>47</sup>**בְּאֵר אֵילִים**, **be'er 'eylim**, means “pit / well of terebinths, (a leafy tree--see the photos of terebinths on the Internet). Slotki states that the place meant is “possibly in the north of Moab, but the locality is unknown. Some identify it with the Be'er mentioned in **Numbers 21:16ff.**” (P. 76)

<sup>48</sup>Alexander comments on / translates **verse 9**: “The expressions grow still stronger. Not only is the land full of tumult and disorder, fear and flight; it is also stained with carnage and threatened with new evils. *For the waters of Dimon are full of blood; for I will bring upon Dimon additions (i.e. additional evils), on the escaped (literally, the escape) of Moab a lion; and on the remnant of the land (those left in it, or remaining of the population)...*

“By the waters of Dimon or Dibon, most writers understand the Arnon, near the north bank of which the town was built...”

“Hitzig supposes Judah to be called a lion in allusion to the prophecy in **Genesis 49:9**. Cocceius and Vitranga understand it to mean Nebuchadnezzar, whose conquest of the Moabites, though not historically recorded, may be gathered from such passages as **Jeremiah 4:7; 49:28; 25:11-21, 27:3, 6.**” (P. 320)

Oswalt comments on **verse 9** that “This verse puts a capstone on the horror, indicating that although people may flee, they will not escape. Blood will be added to blood.” (P. 339)

<sup>49</sup>Slotki comments concerning **דִּימוֹן**, “Dimon,” that “This is assumed to be another name for Dibon (**verse 2**) providing an alliteration with **דָּם**, **dam** in the sentence, which is the Hebrew for *blood*: **Dimon** full of **dam.**” (P. 77)

(continued...)

because I will place / bring upon Dimon<sup>50</sup> even more—<sup>51</sup>  
for the escapees of Moab, a lion,<sup>52</sup>  
and for a remnant, land.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>(...continued)

Motyer agrees, stating that “the assonance of *me-dimon maleu dam* (‘the waters of Dimon are full of blood’) would certainly have appealed to Isaiah. There is an allusion to **2 Kings 3:22-23**: once Moab saw a mirage of blood but now it is all too real, and it is their own! But even blood enough to make rivers run red does not satisfy the Divine wrath ‘for’...*I will bring still more. Tears (verse 5) and the utmost wrath (verse 9) are at one in the Divine nature.*” (P. 151) See Motyer’s reference to this verse at **Isaiah 16:2**.

Watts notes that where the Masoretic Hebrew text has דִּימוֹן, “Diymon,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has דִּיבוֹן, “Diybon.” The Latin Vulgate has *Bibon*, while **Rahlfs** has τὸ Ρεμμων, “the Remmon.” He states that “No Moabite city called Ribon or Dimon is known. So it would be easy to follow 1QIs<sup>a</sup> to substitute the well-known town דִּיבוֹן, ‘Diybon.’” (P. 227)

<sup>50</sup>Instead of “Dimon,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> reads “Dibon” in both of these lines.

<sup>51</sup>Slotki comments that the “yet more” has reference to “the evil specified in the second part of the verse and in **16:2**.” (P. 77)

<sup>52</sup>Slotki comments that the “lion” is an allusion “to some powerful invader, and the king of Assyria has been suggested.” (P. 77)

Oswalt comments that “The reference to a *lion* has been looked upon by many as a textual corruption. Yet it is very similar to the figure used by Amos when he talks of fleeing a lion and meeting a bear (**Amos 5:19**). In this same vein, the prophet here could be saying that running may not give any more security than staying behind. To strike out across the wilderness may deliver you *from* an army but *unto* a ravaging animal.” (P. 339)

Motyer states that “The *lion* was used as a descriptive human title, denoting a fierce, implacable attacker (it is a subtlety worthy of Isaiah to threaten *aryeh* [a lion] on the land of *Ariel* (‘lion of God’). Did they boast of lions? Lions they shall have!) destroying alike *fugitives* and those who remain in the land.” (P. 151)

<sup>53</sup>Translations of **verse 9** vary, especially **Tanakh** and **Rahlfs**:

**King James**, “For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.”

(continued...)

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<sup>53</sup>(...continued)

**Tanakh**, “Ah, the waters of Dimon are full of blood For I pour added water on Dimon; I drench it -- for Moab's refugees -- With soil for its remnant.”

**New Revised Standard**, “For the waters of Dibon are full of blood; yet I will bring upon Dibon even more-- a lion for those of Moab who escape, for the remnant of the land.”

**New International**, “Dimon's waters are full of blood, but I will bring still more upon Dimon-- a lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon those who remain in the land.”

**New Jerusalem**, “Dimon's waters are swollen with blood, and I have worse in store for Dimon: a lion for those of Moab who survive, for those left on its soil.

**Rahfs**, τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ τὸ Ρεμμων πλησθήσεται αἵματος ἐπάξω γὰρ ἐπὶ Ρεμμων Ἄραβας καὶ ἀρῶ τὸ σπέρμα Μωαβ καὶ Αριηλ καὶ τὸ κατάλοιπον Ἀδαμα,  
“But then the water, that of Remmon will be filled with blood; for I will bring upon Remmon Arabians--and I will take away the seed of Moab and Ariel and the remainder of Adama.”

(It is very easy to understand the change of the “d” in Dimon to “r” in Remmon, since these two letters are easily confused in a written Hebrew text. We do not see anything in the Hebrew text about Arabians, and consider it an interpolation by the Greek translator. Ariel in Hebrew means “Lion of God,” and the word אֵרִיִּל also means “lion.” The last word in the Greek text, Adama, is a transliteration of the Hebrew noun אֲדָמָה, “ground” or “land,” perhaps showing that the translator did not understand the Hebrew word.

Oswalt comments that “*Dimon* is unknown, and it was suggested as early as Jerome that the labials ב and מ were both used in the name Dibon and that the מ is used here as wordplay on ‘blood,’ דָּם. If Dibon was as important a political and religious center as [the Mesha stele] indicates it was, it would be fitting to close this portion of the lament by using the part to represent the whole.” (P. 339) See our footnote 8.

Gray comments that from **verse 9b** through **16:5** the prediction is made that “Further distress is to befall Moab.” He adds that “This exceedingly difficult and obscure section seems to be mainly, or entirely, a prophetic interpolation in the elegy on Moab...The distress described in **verses 1-9a** (‘the elegy’), which has already befallen Moab, does not exhaust Yahweh’s judgment: further distress is in store: compare **16:13f**. Such appears to be the meaning of these lines and the general purport [meaning or substance of something] of what follows down to **16:5**; but the details are most uncertain.”

## Preliminary Study of Jeremiah 48

48:1 לְמוֹאָב  
כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
הוּי אֶל־נְבוֹ כִּי שָׁדְדָהּ  
הַבִּישָׁה נִלְכְּדָה קִרְיָתַיִם  
הַבִּישָׁה הַמְּשֻׁגָּב וַחֲתָהּ:

To / for Moab<sup>54</sup>

In this way YHWH of Armies, God of Israel, spoke:

Woe to Nebo,<sup>55</sup> because it was devastated!

Qiryathayim<sup>56</sup> was put to shame, it was captured!

The secure height / stronghold<sup>57</sup> was put to shame, and it was shattered /  
dismayed!

48:2 אֵין עוֹד תְּהִלַּת מוֹאָב  
בְּחֻשְׁבּוֹן חֲשָׁבוּ עָלֶיהָ רָעָה

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<sup>54</sup>Holladay states that “Moab designates the high plateau immediately to the east of the Dead Sea, and its people, whose history is known only in part.” (P. 355)

<sup>55</sup>Holladay states that “Nebo is here not the mountain (**Deuteronomy 32:49; 34:1**) but the city associated with it. See footnote 10 on **Isaiah 15**. Holladay holds that “This city is most likely to be identified with hirbat al-muhayyat [or Khirbet al-Mukhayyat] about five kilometers (3.10 miles) northwest of Medeba.” (P. 355)

<sup>56</sup>Qiryathayim occurs here in **verse 1** and again in **verse 24**. Holladay states that “Kiriathaim has usually been identified with hirbat al-qurayyat [or Al Qurayyat] about twenty-two kilometers (13 ½ miles) south-southwest of Medeba...Eusebius states that Kiriathaim lies ten Roman miles (thus roughly 14 kilometers [8.7 miles] west of Medeba.” (P. 355)

<sup>57</sup>Holladay comments that “The expression הַמְּשֻׁגָּב is here translated ‘the Citadel’; it is not known whether the word functions here as a common noun [‘the secure height / stronghold’], as it does elsewhere, or as a proper noun [‘the name of a city].” (P. 355) Holladay goes on to state that “the presence of feminine verbs suggests that the subject is a city...like the others in this section. But it is impossible to be sure.” (P. 356)

לְכוּ וְנִכְרִיתְנָהּ מִגּוֹי

גַּם-מִדְּמֵן תִּדְמִי

אַחֲרַיִךְ תִּלְךְ חֶרֶב:

There is no longer praise of Moab—

in Heshbon<sup>58</sup> they devised evil against her!<sup>59</sup>

Come! And we will cut her off from (being) a nation!

Also, Madhemen,<sup>60</sup> you will be silent!<sup>61</sup>

After you / pursuing you will go a sword!

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<sup>58</sup>See footnote 19 on **Isaiah 16** for Heshbon. Holladay comments that “The name of Heshbon still survives in the modern *hisban*...This site has been extensively excavated and deposits of the Iron Age brought to light.” (P. 356)

<sup>59</sup>There is alliteration in the Hebrew that we can’t make apparent in English translation: בְּחֶשְׁבוֹן חָשְׁבוּ, **becheshbon chashebhu**, “in Heshbon they devised.”

<sup>60</sup>Holladay comments that “The text here indicates a city called מִדְּמֵן ‘Madmen,’ but the name only occurs here...Given the form of the place-name...commentators refer to **Isaiah 25:10b**,”

וְנִדְּוֹשׁ מִזֶּאֱבִי תַחְתָּיו

כְּהִדְּוֹשׁ מִתַּבֵּן (בְּמֵי) [בְּמֵן] מִדְּמֵנָה:

and Moab will be trampled beneath Him,

like straw is trampled in waters / in a dung-hill!

“Clearly in that passage the word means ‘dung-pit,’ a cognate of דִּמְוֵן, ‘dung’...

“Tentatively, then, one may assume that Jeremiah is using either ‘Madmen’ or ‘Dimon’ for the sake of word-play with the following verb תִּדְּמִי [‘you will be silenced’ / ‘you will weep’], and that the implication of ‘dung-pit’ hangs in the background. If ‘Dibon’ is being referred to, it is the modern *diban* [see footnote 8 on **Isaiah 15**].” (P. 356)

<sup>61</sup>Here again there is alliteration in the Hebrew that is not apparent in English translation: גַּם-מִדְּמֵן תִּדְּמִי, **gam-madhmen tiddommiy**, “Also, Madhmen, you will be silent!”

48:3 קוֹל צַעֲקָה מִחֲרוֹנַיִם

שֶׁד וְשֹׁבֵר גָּדוֹל:

A voice / sound of an outcry from Choronayim--<sup>62</sup>

Violence / devastation! And great crashing / destruction!

48:4 נִשְׁבְּרָה מוֹאֵב

הַשְּׁמִיעוּ זַעֲקָה (צַעֲרִיָּה) [צַעֲרִיָּה]:

Moab was broken!

Her little ones / Zoar<sup>63</sup> caused an outcry to be heard!<sup>64</sup>

48:5 כִּי מֵעֲלָה (הַלְּחֹת) [הַלְּחֹתִית]

בְּכִי יַעֲלֶה-בְּכִי

כִּי בְּמוֹרֵד חוֹרְנַיִם

צָרִי צַעֲקַת-שֹׁבֵר שָׁמְעוּ:

Because (at the) ascent of the Luchiyth,

with weeping he ascended weeping;

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<sup>62</sup>Holladay comments that “The location of Horonaim is disputed. The context of Isaiah 15:5, the use of ‘descent’ with Hornaim in verse 5 of Jeremiah 48, and other evidence suggest a location in the southwest part of Moab, below the highest part of the plateau.” (P. 356)

Suggestions include *hirbat ad-dubb*, *hirbat al-mayday*, and *ed-dayr*.

<sup>63</sup>See **Isaiah 15:5** with its footnote 25. Holladay comments that “‘Zoar’ is doubtless a correct reading in **verse 4**...but again the location is uncertain; it is one of the ‘cities of the valley’ (**Genesis 13:12**). Most assume a location at or near *as-safi*...The verses here then suggest that the cry from Horonaim comes down off the Moabite plateau all the way to the Dead Sea.” (P. 356)

<sup>64</sup>The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” צַעֲרִיָּה, “her Zoars”; second, the *qere*, “to be read,” צַעֲרִיָּה, “her little ones.” This may only be a difference in spelling.

because at (the) descent of Choronayim<sup>65</sup>  
adversaries heard an outcry of brokenness!

48:6 נִסּוּ מִלְּטוֹ נַפְשֵׁיכֶם

וְתִהְיֶינָה כְּעֲרוֹעֵר בַּמִּדְבָּר:

Flee / escape! Deliver your (plural) innermost-beings / lives!  
And you will be like the juniper / Aroer in the desert!<sup>66</sup>

48:7 כִּי יַעַן בִּטְחָךְ

בְּמַעֲשֶׂיךָ וּבְאֲצִרֹתֶיךָ

גַּם־אֶת־תִּלְכָּדִי

וַיֵּצֵא (כְּמִישׁ) [כְּמוֹשׁ] כְּהֲנִי וְשָׂרָיו (יַחַד) [יַחְדָּיו]:

Because on account of your (feminine singular)<sup>67</sup> trusting  
in your deeds and in your treasures,<sup>68</sup>

also you will be captured!

And Khemosh<sup>69</sup>, <sup>2</sup> will go forth, his priests and his princes together!

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<sup>65</sup>Holladay notes that “With Horonaim this verse associates Luhith, a city whose location is likewise unknown; but ‘ascent’ suggests a city standing above a nearby road...There is a Roman road still evident that goes from *gawr isal*, near the Dead Sea, along the south flank of the *wadi isal* (*wadi sulayman*) and up to *katrabba*; this road would then mark the ‘ascent of Luhith.’” (Pp. 356-57)

<sup>66</sup>Holladay notes that “the juniper does survive in the wilderness, but normally only as a low shrub (see **Jeremiah 17:6**). For the lives of refugees to be so stunted is hardly to be living at all.” (P. 357)

<sup>67</sup>Holladay comments that “The address shifts from second-person [masculine] plural (**verse 6**) to second-person singular feminine here. Who is being addressed as ‘you, too’? One assumes Moab as a whole.” (P. 357)

<sup>68</sup>Holladay states that “If ‘in your treasures’ is a correct reading, the expression refers to all kind of supplies, not only gold, silver, and the like, but also weapons as well (compare the diction of **Jeremiah 50:25**).” (P. 357)

<sup>69</sup>The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” כְּמִישׁ,

(continued...)

48:8 וַיָּבֹא שִׁדְרֵי אֶל-כָּל-עִיר

וְעִיר לֹא תִמָּלֵט

וְאֶבֶד הָעֵמֶק

וַיִּנְשָׁמַד הַמִּישָׁר

אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה:

And one destroying will come to every city,  
and not a city will escape!

And the valley will perish,  
and the plateau<sup>70</sup> will be exterminated—  
that which YHWH said!

48:9 תְּנוּ-צִיץ לְמוֹאָב

כִּי נִצָּא תֵצֵא

וְעַרְיָה לְשִׁמָּה תִהְיֶינָה

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<sup>69</sup>(...continued)

**khemiysh**, and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” כְּמוֹשׁ, **khemosh**, a correction in spelling.

Holladay comments that “Chemosh is the God of the Moabites; a Deity by the same name is already known in the Ugaritic texts (*kmt*), and the Moabites are called the ‘people of Chemosh’ in Numbers 21:29. Inasmuch as the inscription of the Moabite King Mesha the God Chemosh is compounded with Ashtar, the God of the planet Venus, one may suppose that Chemosh is the manifestation of (or is identified with) this astral Deity.” (P. 357) See end-note 2 for an article in **Wikipedia** on the God Chemosh.

<sup>70</sup>Holladay notes that “‘The valley’ (הָעֵמֶק) and ‘the plateau’ (הַמִּישָׁר) occur in **Joshua 13** as designations of specific regions in what was in Jeremiah’s time Moabite territory, and these terms appear to carry those specific references here...’The Valley’ refers to the Jordan rift valley north of the Dead Sea (see **Joshua 13:27**), here doubtless the eastern side only; ‘the Plateau’ (see **Joshua 13:15-17**) refers to the region north of the Arnon as far as the latitude of Heshbon.” (P. 357)

מֵאֵין יוֹשֵׁב בְּהֵן:

Give *tsits* / a wing / a blossom / a salt-field<sup>71</sup> to Moab,  
because flying, she will go forth;  
and her cities will be for waste / horror,  
from there not being an inhabitant in them.

48:10 אָרוֹר עֲשֵׂה מְלֹאכֶת יְהוָה רְמִיָּה

וְאָרוֹר מִנֵּעַ חֲרָבוֹ מִדָּם:

Cursed (is) one doing YHWH's work (with) slackness!  
And cursed (is) one withholding his sword from blood!<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Holladay notes that “The establishment of the meaning ‘salt-field’ for לַיִן on the basis of Ugaritic evidence now seems assured. The colon [line] would then mean ‘make Moab a salt-field (by sowing it with salt)’; for this idea compare **Judges 9:45.**” (P. 357)

<sup>72</sup>**Verse 10** is commonly dismissed as a “prose” comment that has been inserted for no obvious reason into the “poetical” text. For example, Holladay does not even comment on the verse. But we insist that the verse is an excellent example of Hebrew parallelism, which is normally considered “poetry.”

The staunch German conservative, C. F. Keil, in his commentary on **Jeremiah**, states that “The devastation [of Moab] is a work of the Lord, and those who execute it must carry out the Divine decree, so that they may not bring the curse upon themselves. The first clause is taken quite generally: the more exact specification of the work of the Lord follows in the second clause; it is the employment of the sword against Moab. ‘His sword’ does not mean Jahveh’s, but the sword carried by the devastator.” (P. 217)

Robert T. Carroll, in **The Book of Jeremiah**, comments on **verse 10** that it is a “glossing of the poem...with holy war motifs or a transference of holy war language to describe the conquests of Babylon would provide a better reading of the material...The holy war motif knows nothing of unwilling or half-hearted participation...**48:10** represents a pious glossator’s response to the destruction of the Moabites. It expresses the hope that the destroyer will not hold back from doing Yahweh’s work until Moab is annihilated. It is a word of encouragement stated in negative terms.” (Pp. 782-83)

Compare **Psalm 149:6b-7**, and **1 Kings 20:42**; and see on the Internet, “Jeremiah 48 as Christian Scripture,” by Julie Irene Woods (2011).

(continued...)

48:11<sup>73</sup> שֵׂאֵן מוֹאֵב מִנְעוּרָיו

וְשִׁקְטָה הוּא אֶל-שִׁמְרָיו

וְלֹא-הוֹרַק מִכֵּלִי אֶל-כֵּלִי

וּבְגוּלָה לֹא הִלָּךְ

עַל-כֵּן עִמָּד טַעְמוֹ בּוֹ

וְרִיחוֹ לֹא נִמְרָ:

Moab was at ease from his youth,

and he was being undisturbed upon his lees.

And he was not emptied out from vessel to vessel,

and he did not go into the captivity.

Therefore his taste stood / remained in him,

and his scent did not change.

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<sup>72</sup>(...continued)

And what a proof-text this can be for those who pick out statements in the **Bible** to support their views! The first line can appropriately be used as a Divine word to religious people to be diligent in doing the work of the Lord. And the second line can be used as a Divine word to warriors, to urge them on in their work of annihilating an enemy without any holding back of their weapons—a proof-text that would well suit the Muslim jihadists! As a matter of fact, proof-texts can be found throughout the **Bible** to support almost any and every view taken by its readers! What do you think?

<sup>73</sup>Holladay comments on **verses 11-12** that “Moab, among other districts, produced wine... With this background Jeremiah develops the metaphor of Moab as wine, but wine which is ‘resting on its lees,’ that is, allowed to remain with its dregs without having been strained...The image of ‘resting on the lees’ was doubtless proverbial for complacency...

“But **verse 11b** is puzzling: the wording, literally ‘that is why his flavor remains in him, and his scent is unchanged,’ sounds as if the wine of Moab is being praised...But the half verse is part of the reason of Yahweh’s judgment: the wine is therefore being disparaged. Moffatt has caught this nuance...

‘Moab from the first has lain at ease, never known exile afar,  
lain like wine left on the lees, never poured from jar to jar,  
that tastes the same as ever, and its scent mellows never.’” (Pp. 357-58)

48:12 לִכֹּן הַנְּהַיִּמִים בָּאִים

נֹאמֵי־הוָה

וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי־לוֹ צִעִים

וְצִעְהוּ

וְכִלְיוּ יִרְיָקוּ

וְנִבְלִיהֶם יִנְפְּצוּ:

Therefore look–days (are) coming,

(it is) a saying of YHWH,

and I will send forth for him those stooping / cellarers,

and they will pour him out,

and they will empty his vessels;

and their skin-bottles they will shatter!<sup>74</sup>

48:13 וּבֶשׂ מוֹאֵב מִכְמוֹשׁ

כַּאֲשֶׁר־בָּשׂוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

מִבֵּית אֵל מִבְּטָחָם:

And Moab will be ashamed from / of Kemosh,<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Holladay comments that “Yahweh now intervenes to send decanters [A decanter is a vessel that is used to hold the decantation of a liquid (such as wine) which may contain sediment. Decanters are normally used as serving vessels for wine. Decantation is a process for the separation of mixtures, by removing a layer of liquid, generally one from which a precipitate (a substance) deposited in solid form from a solution) has settled]...The decanters (**verse 12**), representing the enemy, evidently the Babylonians, will not only pour the wine to other vessels, a figure for exile (**verse 11**), but also will smash the (old) jars. All the former serenity, all the former identity of Moab will be gone.” (P. 358)

<sup>75</sup>“In the **Hebrew Bible**, כְּמוֹשׁ, **kemosh** was the God of the Moabites (**Numbers 21:29; Jeremiah 48:7, 13, 46**). The etymology of "Chemosh" is unknown; it is speculated to be related to the name of the Babylonian deity Shamash. He is also

(continued...)

just as Israel's house was ashamed  
from / of Beth-El, their trust / confidence.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>(...continued)

known from Ebla as Kamish. Chemosh was the national deity of the Moabites whose name most likely meant "Destroyer," "Subduer," or "Fish God." While He is most readily associated with the Moabites, according to **Judges 11:24** he seems to have been the national deity of the Ammonites as well.

"According to the **Hebrew Bible**, the worship of this God, "the abomination of Moab," was introduced at Jerusalem by Solomon (**1 Kings 11:7**), but was abolished by Josiah (**2 Kings 23:13**). (Note: the **Talmud** quoted by Rashi says that his wives built the temples and he is considered responsible for not stopping them.) On the Moabite stone, Mesha (**2 Kings 3:5**) ascribed his victories over the king of Israel to this God, "And Chemosh drove him before my sight."

"According to Morris Jastrow, Jr. and George Aaron Barton in the **Jewish Encyclopedia**, 'כְּמוֹשׁ, **kemosh**] the national God of the Moabites, became angry with His people and permitted them to become the vassals of Israel; His anger passed, He commanded Mesha to fight against Israel, and Moabite independence was reestablished (**Moabite Stone, lines 5, 9, 14 et seq**)...

"An ancient poem, twice quoted in the **Old Testament (Numbers 21:27-30; Jeremiah 48: 45, 46)**, regards the Moabites as the children of Chemosh, and also calls them 'the people of Chemosh.'

"The name of the father of Mesha, was 'Chemosh-Melek' ('Chemosh is King' (compare Moabite Stone, line 1)...Solomon is said to have built a sanctuary to Chemosh on the Mount of Olives (**1 Kings 11:7, 33**), which was maintained till the reform of Josiah (**2 Kings 23:13**). This movement by Solomon was no doubt to some extent a political one, but it made the worship of Chemosh a part of the religious life of Israel for nearly 400 years.

"According to **1 Kings 11: 7**, evidence is given that Chemosh and Moloch were perhaps two manifestations of the same God, at least to the peoples who worshiped them. Solomon had "high places" built for both Gods at the same time and in the same location, "on the mountain which is East of Jerusalem." Both Chemosh and Molech may have had the same origins but if so, by Solomon's time they had been denominated into differing objects for different peoples, Chemosh for the Moabites and Molech for the Ammonites." (Adapted from **Wikipedia**, 8/6/2016)

<sup>76</sup>As is well known, Beth-El was the site of worship in ancient Israel, where Abram and Jacob built altars and worshiped (**Genesis 12, 28**). When Northern Israel separated itself from Southern Israel–Judah, Beth-El again became a center of worship,

(continued...)

48:14 אֵיךְ תֹאמְרוּ גְבוּרִים אֲנַחְנוּ

וְאֲנֹשֵׁי־חַיִל לְמִלְחָמָה:

How will you (plural) say, We are mighty men,  
and men of strength for the war?

48:15 שָׂדֵר מוֹאָב

וְעָרֶיהָ עָלָה

וּמִבְּחַר בְּחֹרֵיו יִרְדּוּ לַטֶּבֶחַ

נְאֻם־הַמֶּלֶךְ

יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ:

Moab was devastated,

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<sup>76</sup>(...continued)

but one that was condemned by the Prophet Amos (about 750 B.C.E.): "Do not seek Bethel, do not go to Gilgal, do not journey to Beersheba. For Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing." (**Amos 5:5**). "Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom." (**Amos 7:13**)

A few years later the prophet Hosea speaks of the 'wickedness' of Bethel (at least according to modern translations of **Hosea 10:15**) and **Jeremiah 48:13** (6th century B.C.E.) speaks of the 'shame' which it brought on Israel. **Hosea 13:1-3** describes how the Israelites are abandoning YHWH for the worship of Baal, and accuses them of making or using images for 'idol' worship. Chief among these, it appears, was the image of the bull at Bethel, which by the time of Hosea was being worshipped as an image of Baal. (Adapted from **Wikipedia**, 8/6/2016)

Holladay comments that "To this judgment [expressed in verse 12], someone has added a remark about Moab's becoming ashamed of (or because of) Chemosh...

"'Bethel' here implies the designation of a Deity in Israel, devotion to Whom was illegitimate. A God by this name is attested outside Israel...The Deity would originally have been the Deification of a temple ('beth') of the God El [the Canaanite Supreme God]; and the fact that there was a sanctuary city in Israel named 'Bethel' with patriarchal traditions meant that worship of the God Bethel could be syncretized with a normative Yahwistic cult. Nevertheless this verse suggests that someone affirmed such a syncretism to be illegitimate." (P. 358)

and its cities went up;<sup>77</sup>  
and the choice of his young men went down to the slaughter—<sup>78</sup>  
(it is) a saying of the King--  
YHWH of Armies—His name!

48:16 קָרוֹב אֵי־מוֹאָב לְבוֹא

וְרַעַתּוֹ מִהֵרָה מְאֹד:

Moab's distress / calamity (is) near to come,  
and his injury / misery hurried exceedingly!

48:17 נִדְרוּ לּוֹ

כָּל־סְבוִיבָיו

וְכָל יֹדְעֵי שְׁמוֹ

אָמְרוּ אֵיכָה נִשְׁבַּר

מִטֵּה־עֹז

מִקַּל תְּפֹאֲרָה:

Lament for him,  
all those surrounding him,  
and all those knowing his name!  
Say, How broken--  
(the) staff of strength,

---

<sup>77</sup>The first two lines of **verse 15** are given varying translations:

**King James**, “Moab is spoiled, and gone up *out of* her cities”;  
**Tanakh**, “Moab is ravaged, His towns have been entered”;  
**New Revised Standard**, “The destroyer of Moab and his towns has come up”;  
**New International**, “Moab will be destroyed and her towns invaded”;  
**New Jerusalem**, “Moab has been ravaged, his cities scaled”;  
**Rahifs**, ὤλετο Μωαβ πόλις αὐτοῦ, “Moab was destroyed; its city...”

<sup>78</sup>Holladay notes that “‘Be brought down’ with ‘to slaughter’ suggests dead bodies prostrate on the ground.” (P. 358)

(the) rod of beauty!

48:18 רְדִי מִכְבוֹדִי

(יֵשְׁבִי) [וְיֵשְׁבִין] בְּצִמָּא

יִשְׁבֶּת בְּתַדִּיבֹון

כִּי־שָׁדַד מוֹאָב

עֲלֵה בָךְ

שַׁחַת מִבְּצֻרֶיךָ:

Descend from (your) glory / honor,

and sit on the dry land,

inhabitant, daughter of Dibon!<sup>79</sup>

Because one destroying Moab

came up on you;

he ruined your strong-holds!

48:19 אֶל־דֶּרֶךְ עֲמָדִי וְצַפִּי

יּוֹשֶׁבֶת עֲרוּעֵר

שְׂאֵל־יָנֹס וְנִמְלֹטָה

אֲמַרִי מִה־נִּהְיִיתָ:

Stand to / on (the) road and watch,

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<sup>79</sup>For Dibon, modern Dhiban, see footnote 9 on **Isaiah 15**.

Holladay comments that “Dibon has retained its name, the modern diban, 21 kilometers [13 miles] east of the Dead Sea and 5 kilometers [3.1 miles] north of the Arnon...It is the site where the inscription of King Mesha was discovered, and it was evidently his capital. The site was excavated in the 1950s; there are wadis around it, so that ‘descend’ and ‘come up’ can be understood literally as well as figuratively.” (Pp. 358-59)

she who inhabits Aroer!<sup>80</sup>

Ask (the) one fleeing, and a woman escapee--

Say, What happened?

48:20 הַבִּישׁ מוֹאָב

כִּי־חָתְתָה

(הַיְלִילִי) [הַיְלִילִי] | (וְזָעַקְי) [וְזָעַקְו]

הִגִּידוּ בְּאֲרֹנוֹן

כִּי שָׂדַד מוֹאָב:

Moab was put to shame,

because she was shattered!

Howl, and cry out!

Declare in Arnon

that Moab was destroyed!

48:21 וּמִשְׁפַּט בָּא אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַמִּישָׁר

אֶל־חֹלוֹן וְאֶל־יַהֲצָה

וְעַל־ (מוֹפְעַת) [מִי־פְעַת]:

And justice / judgment came to a land of tableland;

to Cholon and to Yahtsah,

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<sup>80</sup>Holladay comments that “The name of Aroer, again, is preserved in the modern arair, 5 kilometers [3.1 miles] to the southeast of Dibon...The ancient mound is just west of the modern village...The city stands just north of the deep gorge of the River Arnon (the modern wadi al-mawjib).” (P. 359)

For pictures of the Arnon River / Gorge (the “Grand Canyon” of the Near East, see the Internet photos at “Arnon Gorge” and “Wadi Mujib.”

and upon Miypha'ath;<sup>81</sup>

48:22 וְעַל־דִּיבּוֹן וְעַל־נָבוֹ

וְעַל־בֵּית דְּבַלְתַּיִם:

and upon Diybon, and upon Nebho,<sup>82</sup>

and upon Beth-dibhlathayim;<sup>83</sup>

48:23 וְעַל קִרְיַתִּים

וְעַל־בֵּית גַּמּוּל

וְעַל־בֵּית מְעוֹן:

and upon Qiryathayim,<sup>84</sup>

and upon Beyth Gamul,<sup>85</sup>

and upon Beyth Me'on;<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” מוֹפְעַת, **mopha'ath**, and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” מֵיפְעַת, **meypha'ath**, a correction in spelling. It is the name of a Levitical city in the tribe of Reuben.

Holladay comments that “‘Holon’ is mentioned only here, and its site is unknown... ‘Jahazh,’ an alternative form of ‘Jahaz’ (**verse 34; Numbers 21:23** and elsewhere) is mentioned in the Mesha inscription... The location is... very much still an open question. Mephaath is also not securely identified, but opinion favors tall aj-jawa, ten kilometers [6.2 miles] south of Amman.” (P. 359)

<sup>82</sup>For Nebho, see footnote 10 on **Isaiah 15**.

<sup>83</sup>Holladay notes that “Beth-dibhlathaim is mentioned in the Mesha inscription, but it is mentioned only here in **Old Testament**.” (P. 359)

<sup>84</sup>For Qiryathayim / Kiriathaim, see the footnote on **verse 1**.

<sup>85</sup>Holladay states that “Beth-gamul is evidently hirbat al-jumayl, about 12 kilometers [7.5 miles] east of Dibon.” (P. 359)

<sup>86</sup>Holladay states that “Beth-meon is also called Baal-meon (**Numbers 32:38**) and Beth-ball-meon (**Joshua 13:17**); the Mesha inscription mentions ‘Baal-meon’ and ‘Beth-baal-meon.’ The name is preserved in the modern *ma'in*.” (P. 359) See the photos of the hot springs at *ma'in* on the Internet.

48:24 וְעַל-קְרִיּוֹת וְעַל-בְּצָרָה

וְעַל כָּל-עָרֵי אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב

הַרְחָקוֹת וְהַקְּרִבּוֹת:

and upon Qeriyoyth<sup>87</sup> and upon Botsrah,<sup>88</sup>

and upon all cities of Moab-land,

those far off and those near.

48:25 נִגְדַעַה קַרְן מוֹאָב

וְזָרְעוּ נִשְׁבְּרָה

נֵאֵם יְהוָה:

Moab's horn<sup>89</sup> was cut off,

and his arm was broken—

(it is) a saying of YHWH.

48:26<sup>90</sup> הַשְׁכִּירָהּ

<sup>87</sup>Holladay comments on the Hebrew feminine plural noun קְרִיּוֹת, Qeriyoyth, commonly spelled “Kerioth,” that it “occurs in **Amos 2:2**,” and “the implication there is that it was the capital in Amos’ day; the name also occurs in the Mesha inscription. It has been identified with *hirbat al-qurayyat*...but...surface exploration has indicated that this site was not occupied at this period.” (Pp. 559-60) Another suggestion is *hirbat qurayyat alayyan*.

<sup>88</sup>Holladay states that “The ‘Bozrah’ here is to be distinguished from the Edomite capital (**Jeremiah 49:13**). The city here is perhaps to be identified with Bezer (**Joshua 20:8; 21:36**), but location of Bezer itself is not secure; the suggestion usually accepted is *umm al-amad* (14 kilometers [8.7 miles] northeast of Medeba.” (P. 360)

<sup>89</sup>Holladay notes that “‘Horn’ is a well-known metaphor for strength,” but mentions the view that “horn” here may connote “bow.” (P. 360)

<sup>90</sup>Holladay comments on **verses 26-27**: “The addition here [he thinks these two verses are a prose addition to the original text], with its call to make Moab drunk because of her mocking of Israel, is reminiscent of the word to Edom in **Lamentations 4:21-22** that she shall become drunk and be paid back for her taking advantage of Israel. In **verse 26** the writer takes the judgment mediated by Jeremiah that Moab has set himself up against Yahweh (**verse 42**) and makes it more vivid and immediate! But

(continued...)

כִּי עַל־יְהוָה הִגְדִּיל

וְסַפַּק מוֹאֵב בְּקִיאָו

וְהָיָה לְשִׁחַק גַּם־הוּא:

Make him drunk (plural imperative),

because he made (himself) great over YHWH!

And Moab will clap / splash<sup>91</sup> in his vomit,

and he will be for laughter—even he!

48:27 וְאִם לֹא הַשְׁחֵק הָיָה לְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל

אִם־בְּגַנְבִים (נִמְצָאָה) [נִמְצָא]

כִּי־מִדֵּי דְבַרְיֶךָ בּוֹ

תִּתְנַוֶּדֶד:

And if Israel was not the laughter to / for you--

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<sup>90</sup>(...continued)

here it is the mockery of Israel that is the substance of the arrogance against Yahweh.” (P. 360)

We agree that these two verses can certainly be translated as prose, since there is little parallelism in their lines.

<sup>91</sup>Holladay comments that “The meaning of the verb [which he translates] ‘overflow’ (סַפַּק) has been disputed...The verb is normally transitive, meaning ‘slap’ (one’s thigh), ‘clap’ (one’s hands); Bright assumes, therefore, that it means here ‘slap one’s thigh’ (in disgust) or the like. **Brown-Driver-Briggs** and Zorell, assuming that the verb betokens a sudden loud noise, suggest ‘splash.’ But recently Godfrey Driver has suggested ‘overflow’...This seems to be the best solution.” (P. 360)

Translations of the second line of **verse 26** vary:

**King James**, “Moab also shall wallow in his vomit”;

**Tanakh**, “Moab shall vomit till he is drained”;

**New Revised Standard**, “let Moab wallow in his vomit”; **New International** same (but “her vomit”); **New Jerusalem**, same.

**Rahfs**, καὶ ἐπικρούσει Μωαβ ἐν χειρὶ αὐτοῦ, “and Moab will clap with his hand.”

**Holladay**, “and Moab will overflow with his vomit.”

if he was found among thieves--  
because / for as often (as) your words against him,  
you tottered / wagged (your head)!<sup>92</sup>

48:28 עֲזָבוּ עָרִים וְשָׁכְנוּ בְּסֵלַע

יֹשְׁבֵי מוֹאָב

וְהָיוּ כִּיּוֹנָה

תִּקְנֶן בְּעֵבְרֵי פִי־פֶחַת:

Leave cities, and settle / dwell in the rock,  
inhabitants of Moab!  
And be like a dove--  
it makes a nest in sides of a pit's mouth!<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Translations of **verse 27** vary:

**King James**, "For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves?  
for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy."

**Tanakh**, "Wasn't Israel a laughingstock to you? Was he ever caught among thieves,  
That you should shake your head Whenever you speak of him?"

**New Revised Standard**, "Israel was a laughingstock for you, though he was not caught  
among thieves; but whenever you spoke of him you shook your head!"

**New International**, "Was not Israel the object of your ridicule? Was she caught among  
thieves, that you shake your head in scorn whenever you speak of her?"

**New Jerusalem**, "Was Israel not a laughing-stock to you? Was he caught red-handed  
with the thieves, for you to shake your head whenever you mention him?"

**Rahlf's**, καὶ εἰ μὴ εἰς γελοιασμὸν ἦν σοι Ἰσραηλ εἰ ἐν κλοπαῖς σου εὐρέθη ὅτι  
ἐπολέμεις αὐτόν, "and if Israel was not for jesting for you, if in your thefts he was  
found, so that you were waging war (against) him? NETS translates by "And if  
not, was Israel a jest for you? If he was found among your thefts, is it because  
you kept fighting him?"

**Holladay**, "Surely for you Israel has been (a laughingstock, has he not? Surely he has  
never been found among thieves, has he? Yet whenever you have spoken of  
him you have wagged your head."

<sup>93</sup>The last phrase in **verse 28** is given varying translations:

**King James**, "in the sides of the hole's mouth."

**Tanakh**, "In the sides of a pit."

**New Revised Standard**, "on the sides of the mouth of a gorge."

(continued...)

48:29<sup>94</sup> שְׁמַעְנוּ גְאוֹן־מוֹאָב

גְּבֵהַ מְאֹד

וְגֵאוֹנוֹ

---

<sup>93</sup>(...continued)

**New International**, “at the mouth of a cave.”

**New Jerusalem**, “in the walls of the gaping gorge.”

**Rahfs**, ἐν πέτραις στόματι βοθύνου, “in rocks at (the) mouth of a hole.”

Holladay comments on **verse 28**: “The call to flee the cities to make the rocks one’s home is reminiscent of **Jeremiah 4:29**. If the call to nest like the dove in the walls of the gorge is a reference to territory like the gorge of the Arnon, then it is a call to do the implausible. This is the only mention of the ‘dove’ (יֹדֵה) in **Jeremiah**.” (P. 361)

This sounds implausible to Holladay; but the fleeing of refugees from Judah into the caves of the mountains of Judah in times of invasion by foreign armies makes the call very plausible to us. We think refugees could find caves or places of refuge in the Arnon gorge in which to hide until a marauding army passed by. What do you think?

Take another look at the photos of the Arnon Gorge / Wadi Mujib on the Internet. We are reminded of **Obadiah 1:3-4**.

<sup>94</sup>Holladay comments on **verses 29-30**: “These verses are an elaboration of **Isaiah 16:6**: the last half of that verse reads ‘his arrogance and his pride and his insolence, his bragging is false’...Divine judgment on nations for their pride is a convention [a customary feature of a literary work] among the prophets (on Moab and Ammon, see **Zephaniah 2:10**; on Judah see **Jeremiah 13:9**); one wonders, however, whether in this instance it is not only Moab’s complacency but also her geographical elevation on the Moabite plateau that is at issue here.” (P. 361)

**Zephaniah 2:10**,

This (will be) for them (Moab), in return for their exaltation / pride--  
because they reproached and made (themselves) great over YHWH of  
Armies’ people!

**Jeremiah 13:9**,

In this way YHWH spoke:  
In this way I will spoil / ruin Judah’s pride,  
and Jerusalem’s great pride.

וּגְאוֹתוֹ וְרֵם לְבוֹ:

We heard (of) Moab's exaltation / majesty--  
exceedingly proud!

His haughtiness and his majesty,  
and his exaltation and haughtiness of heart!

48:30 אֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי נְאֻם־יְהוָה עֲבַרְתּוּ

וְלֹא־כֵן בְּדִיּוֹ

לֹא־כֵן עָשׂוּ:

I knew--(it is) a saying of YHWH--his arrogance;  
and his boasting (is) not right;  
and they did not do right.

48:31<sup>95</sup> עַל־כֵּן עַל־מוֹאֵב אֵלֵּיל

וְלְמוֹאֵב כָּלָה אֲזַעַק

אֶל־אֲנָשֵׁי קִיר־חֶרֶשׁ יִהְיֶה:

Therefore over Moab I will howl;  
and for Moab, all of him, I will cry out.

To / for (the) men of Qir-cheresh he will mourn.

48:32<sup>96</sup> מִבְּכֵי יַעֲזֹר אֲבָכָה־לָךְ הַגִּפֹּן שְׁבִמָּה

נְטִישְׁתִּיךָ עֲבְרוּ יָם עַד יָם

יַעֲזֹר נִגְעוּ

עַל־קִינָךְ וְעַל־בְּצִירֶךָ

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<sup>95</sup>Holladay states that **verse 31** is “an adaptation of **Isaiah 16:7**, which reads, ‘On this account let Moab wail, let everyone wail for Moab; for the raisin-cakes of Kir-hareseth you (?) Shall moan, utterly broken.’” (P. 361)

<sup>96</sup>Holladay comments on **verses 32-33** that they are “a shortened adaptation of **Isaiah 16:8-9**.” (P. 361)

שָׂדֵד נָפַל:

From / more than weeping (for) Ya'zer,<sup>97</sup>

I will weep for you, the vine of Sibhmah!<sup>98</sup>

Your tendrils<sup>99</sup> crossed over (from) sea to / as far as / sea--<sup>100</sup>

they touched Ya'zer / Jazer.

Upon your summer fruit and upon your vintage / grapes

a destroyer fell!

48:33 וְנִאֲסַפָּה שְׂמֵחָה וְגִיל

מִבְּרִמְל וּמֵאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב

וְיִין מִיִּקְבֵּים הַשְּׂבִתִּי

לֹא-יִדְרֹךְ הַיָּדָד

הַיָּדָד לֹא הַיָּדָד:

And gladness and rejoicing will be gathered / removed

from Moab's garden and land;

and I have caused to cease (the) wine from (the) wine-vats.

He will not tread (the grapes with) shout(s);

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<sup>97</sup>Holladay notes that "The location of Jazer is uncertain. It was an important site; it was evidently an Ammonite border city (**Numbers 21:24**, Greek) and was designated a Levitical city (**Joshua 21:39**). Eusebius and Jerome locate a place named Azer of lazer ten Roman miles (i.e. 14 kilometers [8.7 miles] west of Rabbah of the Ammonites (that is, the present-day Amman; see **Jeremiah 49:2**)...Since the middle of the nineteenth century an identification with hirbat es-sar was assumed, ten kilometers [6.2 miles] west of Amman...but this site is too close to Amman [in the light of Eusebius' and Jerome's statements]." (P. 362) See **Isaiah 16:8**.

<sup>98</sup>Holladay notes that "The location of Sibmah is likewise uncertain; general opinion favors hirbat (qurn) al-qibs about five kilometers [3.1 miles] east-northeast of Mount Nebo." (P. 362)

<sup>99</sup>Tendrils are slender threadlike appendages of a climbing plant, often growing in a spiral form, that stretches out and twines around any suitable support.

<sup>100</sup>Holladay notes that "The vine of Sibmah reaches from Jazer in the north to the 'sea' in the west: it is the Dead Sea that is meant." (P. 362)

shout(s)–no shout(s)!

48:34 מִזְעַקַת חֶשְׁבוֹן עַד־אֶלְעָלָה עַד־יָהִץ

נִתְנוּ קוֹלָם

מִצְעַר עַד־חֲרוֹנַיִם עֲגֹלַת שְׁלוֹשִׁיָּה

כִּי גַם־מֵי נִמְרִים

לְמַשְׁמוֹת יִהְיוּ:

From Cheshbon's outcry as far as Ele'aleh as far as Yahats

they raised their voice,

from Tso'ar as far as Choronayim, 'Eghlath Sheloshiyyah–

because even Nimrim's waters<sup>101</sup>

will become devastations!<sup>102</sup>

48:35 וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי לְמוֹאָב

נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה

מֵעֵלָה בָּמָה

וּמִקְטִיר לְאֱלֹהֵיוֹ:

And I will cause to cease to / for Moab–

(it is) a saying of YHWH--

one going up (to) a high place,

---

<sup>101</sup>Holladay states that “Though the likeness of names might suggest that ‘the waters of Nimrim’ be identified with *wadi nimrim*, that wadi empties into the Jordan [River] about thirteen kilometers [8 miles] north of the Dead Sea, just north of the present-day Allenby Bridge...and if the passage refers to locations in the southern area of Moab...then a more likely candidate is *wadi* [or *sayl*] *en-numayra* (= *wadi hudayra*).” (P. 363)

<sup>102</sup>Holladay states that **verse [34]** is an adaptation of **Isaiah 15:4, 5, 6a.**” (P. 362) For these place names, see those verses in **Isaiah 15.**

and one burning incense to his God(s)!<sup>103</sup>

48:36<sup>104</sup> עַל-כֵּן לְבִי לְמוֹאָב׃

כַּחֲלִילִים יִהְיֶה

וְלִבִּי אֶל-אֲנָשֵׁי קִיר-חֶרֶשׁ׃

כַּחֲלִילִים יִהְיֶה

עַל-כֵּן יִתְרַת עֲשָׂה

אֲבָרוּ׃

Therefore my heart for Moab,  
will growl / groan like the flutes;  
and my heart to / for (the) men of Qir-cheres,  
like the flutes will growl / groan.  
On account of (the) abundance he made,  
they perished!

48:37 כִּי כָל-רֵאשׁׁ קָרְחָה׃

וְכָל-זָקֹן גְּרָעָה׃

עַל כָּל-יָדַיִם גְּדָדָת׃

וְעַל-מַתְנִיִּים שֶׁק׃

Because every head–baldness!  
And every beard–diminished / clipped!  
Upon every pair of hands–cuttings!

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<sup>103</sup>Holladay states that “This **verse [35]** appears to be a marginal note of contempt for the paganism of Moab...perhaps triggered by **Isaiah 16:12**, which also mentions Moab’s activity ‘upon the high place’...’His Gods’ could as well be translated ‘his God’ (that is Chemosh, **verse 7**).” (P. 363)

<sup>104</sup>Holladay comments on **verses 36-38a**: “**Verse 36a** is a copy of **Isaiah 16:11**...and **verse 36b** is an adaptation of **Isaiah 15:7**...**Verses 37-38a** are an adaptation of **Isaiah 15:2b-3**.” (P. 363)

And upon hips–sack-cloth!<sup>105</sup>

48:38 עַל כָּל־גִּגְוֹת מוֹאָב

וּבְרַחֲבֵיהָ

כִּלְהַ מְסַפֵּד

כִּי־שִׁבַּרְתִּי אֶת־מוֹאָב

כְּכִלְי

אֵין־חֶפֶץ בּוֹ

נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

Upon all rooftops<sup>106</sup> of Moab,  
and in her broad open places / plazas--  
all of him–wailing.

Because I broke Moab  
like a clay-vessel--  
there is no delight / pleasure in him--<sup>107</sup>  
(it is) a saying of YHWH.

48:39 אֵין חֶתָּה הַיְלִילוֹ

אֵין הַפְּנֵה־עֶרְף מוֹאָב בּוֹשׁ

וְהָיָה מוֹאָב לְשָׁחֵק

וְלִמְחַתָּה לְכָל־סְבִיבָיו:

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<sup>105</sup>Holladay states that “For the various signs of mourning see **Jeremiah 4:8; 16:6; 41:5.**” (P. 363)

<sup>106</sup>Holladay notes that “In **Jeremiah 19:13** there is mention of ‘roofs’ as a place of cultic observance, and that may be the implication here; or it may be that the mention of both ‘roofs’ and ‘squares’ simply implies the ubiquity of lamentation.” (P. 363)

<sup>107</sup>Holladay notes that “For the implication of ‘vessel no one cares for’ see **Jeremiah 22:28.**” (P. 363)

How she was shattered! they howl.

How Moab's neck was turned (to) shame!

And Moab will be for laughter / derision,<sup>108</sup>

and for a terror to all surrounding him!

48:40 כִּי־כָה אָמַר יְהוָה

הִנֵּה כַנְּשֵׁר יִדְאָה

וּפְרָשׁ כַּנְּפִיו

אֶל־מוֹאָב:

Because in this way YHWH spoke:

Look-like the griffon-vulture he will fly swiftly,<sup>109</sup>

and will spread out his wings

to / over Moab!<sup>110</sup>

48:41 נִלְכְּדָה הַקְּרִיּוֹת

וְהַמְצָדוֹת נִתְּפְשָׁה

וְהָיָה לֵב גְּבוּרֵי מוֹאָב בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

כָּל־בֵּית אִשָּׁה מְצָרָה:

The (city of) Qeriyoth was captured!

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<sup>108</sup>Holladay notes that the phrase “become a laughing-stock” has “already occurred in **verses 26** and **27**.” (P. 363)

<sup>109</sup>Holladay comments that “The verb **דָּאָה** means ‘soar,’ as of an eagle (**Deuteronomy 32:11**)...It does not mean ‘swoop,’ except as swooping is potential in the flight of a bird of prey. And it should be pointed out that **נִשָּׁר** may mean ‘vulture’ as well as ‘eagle.’” (P. 363)

<sup>110</sup>Holladay states that “This verse evidently describes the enemy attacking Moab.” (P. 363)

And the fortresses<sup>111</sup> was (sic.) seized!  
And (the) heart of Moab's mighty men on that day--  
(will be) like the heart of a suffering woman!

48:42 וְנִשְׁמַד מוֹאָב מֵעַם

כִּי עַל־יְהוָה הִגְדִּיל:

And Moab will be exterminated from (being) a people--<sup>112</sup>  
because he made (himself) great over YHWH!

48:43 פַּחַד וּפַחַת וּפַחַע עֲלֶיךָ

יּוֹשֵׁב מוֹאָב

נֹאֵם־יְהוָה:

Dread and pit and snare (are) upon you,  
inhabitant of Moab--<sup>114</sup>

(it is) a saying of YHWH!

48:44 (הַנִּסִּים) [הַנִּסִּים] מִפְּנֵי הַפַּחַד

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<sup>111</sup>Holladay comments that “The noun מִצְדָּה means a place difficult of access, thus a ‘stronghold,’ particularly a mountain fastness (the place-name Masada is a related word).” (P. 363)

<sup>112</sup>Compare the third line of **verse 2**, where the same language is used.

<sup>113</sup>Holladay comments that “**Verse 43** begins with a spectacular triple word-play, פַּחַד וּפַחַת וּפַחַע, **pachadh waphachth waphach**; these nouns are etymologically [with regard to their origin and development] unrelated. Though the third noun is more accurately ‘snare’ than ‘trap,’ it seems worth trying to find three words in English language that communicate some of the assonance.” (P. 364)

<sup>114</sup>Holladay states that “The phrase יּוֹשֵׁב מוֹאָב is universally understood to be ‘inhabitant of Moab,’ and the quick sketches of refugees that follow fit that interpretation. But I suggest that more prominent is the possibility of translating ‘enthroned Moab.’” Compare **verse 18** and **Jeremiah 21:13** and **10:17**. “If Moab has arrogated to himself a position which is only to be Yahweh’s, then ‘enthrones Moab’ is an appropriate expression.” P. 364)

יִפֹּל אֶל־הַפִּתְּחַת

וְהֵעֵלָה

יִפֹּל אֶל־הַפִּתְּחַת

מִן־הַפִּתְּחַת יִלְכֹּד בַּפֶּחַח

כִּי־אָבִיא אֵלֶיהָ אֶל־מוֹאָב

שָׁנַת פְּקֻדָּתָם

נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

The one fleeing<sup>115</sup> from before the dread,  
will fall to / into the pit;  
and the one going up / climbing out  
will fall to / into the snare;  
from the snare he will be captured by the trap!  
Because I will bring to her, to Moab,  
a year of visitations (for punishment)!  
(It is) a saying of YHWH!

48:45<sup>116</sup> בְּצֵל חֶשְׁבֹּן עֲמָדוֹ מִכַּף נְסִים

<sup>115</sup>The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” הַנִּסִּים, “the one fleeing,” and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” הַנִּסִּים, with the same meaning, changing the qal infinitive to the qal participle.

<sup>116</sup>Holladay observes that **verse 45b** is an adaptation of **Numbers 21:28a** and **Numbers 24:17b** and likewise, **verse 46** is an adaptation of **Numbers 21:29**. (P. 364)

Translations of **verse 45** vary:

**King James**, “They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.”

(continued...)

כִּי־אֵשׁ יֵצֵא מִחֶשְׁבֹּן

וְלִהְבֵּה מִבֵּין סִיחֹן

וְתֹאכַל פְּאֵת מוֹאָב

וְקִדְקַד בְּנֵי שַׁאוֹן:

In Cheshbon's shadow those fleeing stopped without strength--

because fire went forth from Cheshbon,<sup>117</sup>

and a flame from between Sichon.<sup>118</sup>

And it devoured Moab's corner / side / forehead,<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>(...continued)

**Tanakh**, "In the shelter of Heshbon Fugitives halt exhausted; For fire went forth from Heshbon, Flame from the midst of Sihon, Consuming the brow of Moab, The pate of the people of Shaon."

**New Revised Standard**, "In the shadow of Heshbon fugitives stop exhausted; for a fire has gone out from Heshbon, a flame from the house of Sihon; it has destroyed the forehead of Moab, the scalp of the people of tumult."

**New International**, "In the shadow of Heshbon the fugitives stand helpless, for a fire has gone out from Heshbon, a blaze from the midst of Sihon; it burns the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of the noisy boasters."

**New Jerusalem**, "In the shelter of Heshbon the fugitives have paused, exhausted. But fire will burst from Heshbon, a flame from the palace of Sihon, consuming the brows of Moab, the head of a turbulent brood."

**Rahlf's** does not have this verse.

<sup>117</sup>Compare **verse 2**, and footnote 19 on **Isaiah 16** for Heshbon.

<sup>118</sup>The phrase here is סִיחֹן מִבֵּין, literally "from between Siychon." סִיחֹן, commonly spelled in English "Sihon," is the name of the ancient king of the Amorites (see **Numbers 21:21-30**, where it is said that the Amorites inhabited Cheshbon and all of its villages). In that ancient story, to which **Jeremiah 48** is indebted, Siychon was defeated by the Israelites and his territory was occupied by the Israelite tribes. But here, as we understand the text, Siychon is being used metaphorically, perhaps as personifying the proud nation of Moab, returning to life, and pouring out fire on these helpless refugees.

<sup>119</sup>Holladay notes that "**Numbers 24:17** says 'has crushed the forehead of Moab,' whereas the present text, linking the material with **Numbers 21:28a**, where the subject is 'fire, flame,' reads 'has consumed the forehead of Moab.' **Numbers 24:17** thus implies the use of a club to crush the skull of personified Moab." (P. 364)

and (the) children of crash's / uproar's crown of their head!

48:46 אוֹיֵלֶיךָ מוֹאָב

אָבַד עִם־כְּמוֹשׁ

כִּי־לָקַחוּ בְנֵיךָ בַּשָּׁבִי

וּבָנֹתֶיךָ בַּשְּׁבוּיָה:

Woe to you Moab--

people of Kemosh perished!

Because your sons were taken into the captivity (male),

and your daughters into the captivity (female)!

48:47 וּשְׁבִי שְׁבוֹת־מוֹאָב

בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

נֹאסִיָּהוּהָ

עַד־הֵנָּה מִשְׁפָּט מוֹאָב:

And I will return / restore Moab's captivity

in (the) end of the days!<sup>120, 3</sup>

(It is) a saying of YHWH.

As far as here, Moab's justice / judgment.

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<sup>120</sup>For the noun שְׁבוּיָה, "captivity," combined with the verb שׁוּב, see our end-note 3. YHWH's returning the captivity / fortune of people is certainly not limited to Israel / Judah!

1.

## The Mesha Stele / Moabite Stone

“The Mesha Stele (also known as the "Moabite Stone") is a stele (inscribed stone) set up around 840 B.C.E. by King Mesha of Moab (a kingdom located in modern Jordan). Mesha tells how Chemosh, the God of Moab, had been angry with his people and had allowed them to be subjugated to Israel, but at length Chemosh returned and assisted Mesha to throw off the yoke of Israel and restore the lands of Moab. Mesha describes his many building projects. It is written using the Phoenician alphabet.

“The stone was discovered intact by Frederick Augustus Klein, an Anglican missionary, at the site of ancient Dibon (now Dhiban, Jordan), in August 1868 C.E., who was led to it by a local Bedouin. Before it could be seen by another European, the next year it was smashed by local villagers during a dispute over its ownership. A "squeeze" (a papier-mâché impression) had been obtained by a local Arab on behalf of Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau, and fragments containing most of the inscription (613 letters out of about a thousand) were later recovered and pieced together. The squeeze and the reassembled stele are now in the Louvre Museum.

“The Mesha stele is the longest Iron Age inscription ever found in the region, and constitutes the major evidence for the Moabite language. It is a "corner-stone of Semitic epigraphy and Palestinian history." [Quoting Albright] The stele, whose story parallels, with some differences, an episode in the **Bible's Books of Kings (2 Kings 3:4–8)**, provides invaluable information on the Moabite language and the political relationship between Moab and Israel at one moment in the 9th century B.C.E. It is the most extensive inscription ever recovered that refers to the kingdom of Israel (the "House of Omri"); it bears the earliest certain extra-biblical reference to the Israelite God Yahweh, and—if French scholar André Lemaire's reconstruction of a portion of line 31 is correct—the earliest mention of the "House of David" (i.e., the kingdom of Judah). It is also one of only four known ancient inscriptions interpreted to mention the term "Israel", the others being the Merneptah Stele, the Tel Dan Stele, and the Kurkh Monolith. Its authenticity has been disputed over the years (some Biblical minimalists suggest the text was not historical, but a biblical allegory) but the stele is regarded as genuine and historical by the vast majority of biblical archaeologists today.

“The stele is currently on display in France at the Louvre museum and Jordan has demanded its return.” (Internet, 8/5/2016)

2.

## The Moabite God Chemosh

“In the **Hebrew Bible**, Chemosh (from Hebrew: כִּמּוֹשׁ) was the God of the Moabites (**Numbers 21:29; Jeremiah 48:7, 13, 46**). The etymology of "Chemosh" is unknown; it is speculated to be related to the name of the Babylonian Deity Shamash. He is also known from Ebla as Kamish.

“Chemosh was the national Deity of the Moabites whose name most likely meant "Destroyer," "Subduer," or "Fish God." While He is most readily associated with the Moabites, according to **Judges 11:24** he seems to have been the national deity of the Ammonites as well.

“According to the **Hebrew Bible**, the worship of this God, "the abomination of Moab," was introduced at Jerusalem by Solomon (**1 Kings 11:7**), but was abolished by Josiah (**2 Kings 23:13**). (Note: The **Talmud** quoted by Rashi says that his wives built the temples and he is considered responsible for not stopping them.) On the Moabite stone, Mesha (**2 Kings 3:5**) ascribed his victories over the king of Israel to this God: "And Chemosh drove him before my sight."

“According to Morris Jastrow, Jr. and George Aaron Barton in the **Jewish Encyclopedia**, כִּמּוֹשׁ, 'the national God of the Moabites...became angry with His people and permitted them to become the vassals of Israel; His anger passed; He commanded Mesha to fight against Israel, and Moabite independence was reestablished (**Moabite Stone**, lines 5, 9, 14 et seq. [and what follows]) A king in the days of Sennacherib was called "Chemoshnadab"... Chemosh was a God associated with the Semitic Mother-Goddess Ashtar, Whose name He bears (Moabite Stone, line 17)...Whatever differences of conception may have attached to the God at different shrines, there is no adequate reason for doubting the substantial identity of the Gods to Whom these various names were applied. **Hosea 9:10** is proof that at some period (according to Wellhausen, at the time of the prophet himself) the impure cult of the Semitic Goddess was practiced at Baal-peor...Chemosh, therefore, was in general a Deity of the same nature as Baal. On critical occasions a human sacrifice was considered necessary to secure his favor (compare **2 Kings 3:27**), and when deliverance came, a sanctuary might be built to him (**Moabite Stone**, line 3). An ancient poem, twice quoted in the **Old Testament (Numbers 21: 27-30; Jeremiah 48:45, 46)**, regards the Moabites as the children of Chemosh, and also calls them "the people of Chemosh."

“The name of the father of Mesha, Chemosh-melek ("Chemosh is King"; compare Moabite Stone, line 1), indicates the possibility that Chemosh and Malik (or Moloch) were one and the same Deity. **Judges 11: 24** has been thought by some to be a proof of this, since it speaks of Chemosh as the God of the Ammonites, while Moloch is elsewhere their God (compare **1 Kings 11: 7, 33**). Solomon is said to have built a sanctuary to Chemosh on the Mount of Olives, which was maintained till the reform of Josiah (**2 Kings 23:13**). This movement by Solomon was no doubt to some extent a political one, but it made the worship of Chemosh a part of the religious life of Israel for nearly 400 years.

“According to **1 Kings 11: 7**, evidence is given that Chemosh and Moloch were perhaps two manifestations of the same God, at least to the peoples who worshiped them. Solomon had ‘high places’ built for both Gods at the same time and in the same location, ‘on the mountain which is East of Jerusalem.’ Both Chemosh and Molech may have had the same origins but if so, by Solomon's time they had been denominated into differing objects for different peoples, Chemosh for the Moabites and Moloch for the Ammonites. According to **Genesis 19:30-38**, both the people of Moab and Ammon were descended from the two sons of Lot (themselves half-brothers by his two daughters), Moab and Ben-ammi.” (Wikipedia, 8/9/2016)

### 3. YHWH's Returning People's Captivity / Fortune

**Deuteronomy 30:3**, when Israel returns YHWH's word to its heart, and returns to YHWH,

then YHWH your God will return your captivity / restore your fortune,  
and He will have compassion on you;  
and He will return and will gather you from (among) all the peoples  
where YHWH your God scattered you.

[the phrase is וְיָשָׁב... שְׁבוּתְךָ, “and He will return...your captivity / restore your fortune”]

**Jeremiah 29:14**, where YHWH promises that after 70 years in Babylonian captivity, when Israel seeks YHWH with all their heart--

And I will be found by you!  
--a saying of YHWH--  
And I will return your captivity;  
and I will gather you from all the nations  
and from all the places where I have banished you!  
-a saying of YHWH--  
And I will return you to the place  
from which I have removed you!

[the phrase is וְיָשַׁבְתִּי אֶת- (שְׁבִיתְכֶם) [שְׁבוּתְכֶם], “and I will return your captivity.”]

**Jeremiah 30:3**, Israel and Judah

Because look--days (are) coming--(it is) a saying of YHWH--  
and I will return My people Israel's and Judah's captivity, said YHWH;  
and I will cause them to return to the land which I gave to their fathers,  
and they will possess it!

[the phrase is וְיָשַׁבְתִּי אֶת-שְׁבוּתְךָ, “and I will return captivity.”]

**Jeremiah 30:18**, Jacob's tents

In this way YHWH spoke--Look at Me, returning (the) captivity of Jacob's tents!  
And I will have compassion (on) his dwelling-places!

[the phrase is הֲנִי-שָׁב שְׁבוּת אֱהִי יַעֲקֹב, “look at Me, returning captivity of tents of Jacob.”]

**Jeremiah 31:23**, Judah and its cities

In this way YHWH of Armies spoke, God of Israel:  
They will still speak this word in (the) land of Judah and in its cities,  
when I return their captivity / fortune:

May YHWH bless you, habitation of righteousness, set-apart mountain!  
[the phrase is בְּשׁוּבִי אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם, literally, “when My returning their captivity”]

**Jeremiah 32:44**, Land of Benjamin, Jerusalem, Judah’s cities, cities of mountains and shephelah, cities of the Nebegeh

Fields will be purchased for the silver / money,  
and (be) written in the document, and (with) a seal, and summoning of witnesses,  
in (the) land of Benjamin and in Jerusalem’s surroundings, and in Judah’s cities;  
and in cities of the mountain, and in cities of the shephelah / low-land,  
and in cities of the Negebh / south-land.  
Because I will return their captivity—a saying of YHWH!  
[the phrase is אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם אֲשִׁיב, “I will return their captivity”]

**Jeremiah 33:7**, Judah and Israel

And I will bring back / restore Judah’s captivity / fortune, and Israel’s captivity / fortune!  
And I will rebuild them like at the first!  
[the phrase is וְהִשְׁבֵּיתִי אֶת־שְׁבוּת יְהוּדָה וְאֶת שְׁבוּת יִשְׂרָאֵל, “and I will cause to return (the) captivity of Judah and (the) captivity of Israel.”]

**Jeremiah 33:11**, YHWH promises that there will be heard in the land of Israel

a voice of rejoicing and a voice of gladness,  
a voice of a bride-groom and a voice of a bride,  
a voice of ones saying Give thanks to YHWH of Armies,  
because YHWH (is) good, because His steadfast-love is to long-lasting time!  
(The voice of) ones bringing a thank-offering (to) YHWH’s house / temple.  
Because I will return / restore the land’s captivity like at the first,  
said YHWH!  
[the phrase is אֶת־שְׁבוּת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשִׁיב, “I will cause to return the land’s captivity.”]

**Jeremiah 33:26**, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

then also Jacob’s seed / descendant(s) and David My servant I will reject,  
from taking from his seed / descendant(s) kings to / over (the) seed / descendant(s) of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;  
Because I will bring back their captivity, and I will have compassion on them!  
[the phrase is אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם [אֲשִׁיב] (אֲשִׁיב), “I will return their captivity.”]

**Jeremiah 48:47**, here, Moab

And I will return / restore Moab's captivity in (the) end of the days!

(It is) a saying of YHWH.

As far as here, Moab's justice / judgment.

[the phrase is **וְשָׁבְתִי שְׁבוּת־מֹאָב**, "and I will return Moab's captivity"]

**Jeremiah 49:6**, Ammon's children

And afterwards I will cause to return Ammon's children's captivity–

(it is) a saying of YHWH!

[the phrase is **אֶת־שְׁבוּת אֲשִׁיב**, "I will cause to return (the) captivity"]

**Jeremiah 49:39**, Elam, descendants of Noah, in southern Iran / Persia

**וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים**

**(אֲשׁוּב) [אֲשִׁיב] אֶת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוּת] עֵילָם**

**נְאֻם־יְהוָה:**

And it will happen in (the) after-part / end of the days,

I will cause to return (the) captivity of Elam–

(it is) a saying of YHWH.

[the phrase is **[שְׁבוּת] (אֲשׁוּב) [אֲשִׁיב] אֶת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוּת]**, "I will cause to return (the) captivity"]

**Lamentations 2:14**, Jerusalem

Your (feminine singular) prophets saw / envisioned emptiness and white-wash,

and they did not uncover / reveal concerning your iniquity,

to cause your captivity to return!

And they envisioned for you oracles of emptiness and enticement!

[the phrase is **לְהַשִּׁיב (שְׁבִיתָ) [שְׁבוּתָ]**, "to cause your captivity to

return," i.e., if Israel's prophets had spoken the truth, Israel's captivity could have been returned.]

**Ezekiel 16:53** Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem

**וְשָׁבְתִי אֶת־שְׁבִיתָהֶן**

**אֶת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוּת] סֹדֶם וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ**

**וְאֶת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוּת] שְׁמֶרוֹן וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ**

**(וְשְׁבִית) [וְשְׁבוּת] שְׁבִיתָךְ בְּתוֹכָהֶנָּה:**

And I will return their captivity,

those taken captive (from) Sodom and her daughters,  
 and those taken captive from Samaria and her daughters;  
 and those taken captive, your captives, in their midst,  
 [the phrase is וּשְׁבַתִּי אֶת־שְׁבִיתָהֶן, “and I will return their captivity,” which  
 is then made specific in the singular with regard to Sodom and Samaria as  
 well as Jerusalem]

**Ezekiel 29:14, Egypt**

And I will return Egypt’s captivity;  
 and I will return them (to) Pathros-land,  
 upon (the) land of their origin.  
 And they will be there, a lowly kingdom.  
 [the phrase is וּשְׁבַתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוֹת [שְׁבוֹת], “and I will return (the) captivity.”]

**Ezekiel 39:25, Jacob / Israel**

לְכֵן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה  
 עֲתָה אֲשִׁיב אֶת־ (שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוֹת] יַעֲקֹב  
 וְרַחֲמֹתַי כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 וְקִנְיָתִי לְשֵׁם קְדָשִׁי:  
 Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:  
 Now I will return Jacob’s captivity;  
 and I will have compassion upon Israel’s house;  
 and I will be zealous / jealous for My set-apart name!  
 [the phrase is [שְׁבוֹת] אֶת־ (שְׁבִית) אֲשִׁיב, “I will cause to return captivity”]

**Hosea 6:11, Judah**

גַּם־יִהְיֶה־לְךָ שֶׁת קִצִּיר לָךְ  
 בְּשׁוּבֵי שְׁבוֹת עַמִּי:  
 Also Judah—a harvest was set for you,  
 in My returning My people’s captivity!  
 [the phrase is בְּשׁוּבֵי שְׁבוֹת, “in My returning captivity”]

**Joel 4:1, Judah and Jerusalem**

For look! In those days and in that time,  
 when I will bring back Judah and Jerusalem's, captivity  
 ([he phrase is [אֲשִׁיב] אֶת־שְׁבוֹת (אֲשׁוּב), “I will cause to return (the)  
 captivity”]

### Amos 9:14, Israel

And I will return the captivity of My people Israel!  
And they will build (the) devastated cities, and they will settle down,  
and will plant vineyards, and they will drink their wine;  
and they will make gardens, and they will eat their fruits!

[the phrase is וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּתָם, “and I will return (the) captivity”]

### Zephaniah 2:7, Judah

And a region will be for a remnant of Judah’s household;  
upon them they will graze.  
And in houses of Ashqelon, in the evening they will lie down.  
Because YHWH their God will visit them (with blessing),  
and He will return their captivity!

[the phrase is וְשָׁב (שְׁבוּתָם) [שְׁבִיתָם], “and He will return their captivity”]

### Zephaniah 3:20, Zion

At that time I will bring you (plural),  
and at that time I gathered you—  
because I will give / make you for a name and for praise  
among all peoples of the land / earth,  
when I return your captivity (before) your eyes—  
said YHWH!

[the phrase is בְּשׁוּבִי אֶת־שְׁבוּתֵיכֶם, “when I return your (plural) captivity”]

### Job 42:10, Job

And YHWH returned Job’s captivity,  
when he prayed on behalf of his friends;  
and YHWH added everything to Job, doubled.

[the phrase is שָׁב אֶת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוּתָם], “He returned (the) captivity.” We understand why English translations commonly have “when He restored (the) fortune,” but in fact the language here is the same as in all the other passages. Should we not understand the text to mean that Job has been held captive by his suffering?]

### Psalms 14:7, Israel

O that Israel’s salvation / deliverance would come, from / out of Zion—  
when YHWH returns (the) captivity of His people!  
Jacob would rejoice; Israel would be glad!

[the phrase is שׁוּב אֶת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוּתָם], “to return captivity”]

**Psalm 53:7<sup>Heb</sup> / 6<sup>Eng</sup>, Israel**

מִי יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּשׁוּב אֱלֹהִים שְׁבוֹת עַמּוֹ  
יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Would that salvations / deliverances of Israel (might come) from Zion,  
when God returns His people's captivity!

Jacob would rejoice (with) Israel's joy!

[the phrase is בְּשׁוּב שְׁבוֹת, "when returning captivity"]

**Psalm 85:2<sup>Heb</sup> / 1<sup>Eng</sup> Jacob**

You were pleased, O YHWH, (with) Your land;  
You returned Jacob's captivity [fortune].

[the phrase is [שְׁבִית] (שְׁבוֹת) שָׁבַת, "you returned captivity."]

**Psalm 126:4, Israel**

Return, O YHWH our captivity–  
like the water-channels in the Negebh / Southland!

[the phrase is [שְׁבִיתֵנוּ] (שְׁבוֹתֵנוּ) אֶת-שׁוֹבֵהָ... "Return our captivity!"]

