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The Destruction of Mo'ab

48: 1-25

The destruction of Mo'ab DIG: How are Judah and Mo'ab related (Genesis 19:30-38)? Where is Mo'ab located? How many towns does Jeremiah mention? Why do you think he knows so much about Mo'ab? Who is the most prominent god of the Moabites (First Kings 11:7 and 33)? What form of political domination would Mo'ab suffer for the first time? When the Babylonians invaded Mo'ab after the fifth year of the fall of Judah, Babylon occupied all her land (Ezekiel 25:10)? Although YHVH had not given Mo'ab the Torah, what did He expect from her (48:13; First Kings 12:26-30)?

REFLECT: Are there any longstanding feuds in your family? What issues do relatives fight about? What punishments do they exact? What damage do they cause? Why is it so easy for family members to be so hard on each other? Why does God condemn Mo'ab's pride and arrogance so severely? What is evil about them? Where do they show up in your life?

**Sometime between 604 and 601 BC
during the eleven-year reign of Jehoiakim**

Concerning Mo'ab: This is what ADONAI-Tvau'ot, the God of Isra'el says: Woe (trouble, death, judgment) to Nebo, for it will be ruined. This long chapter is an in-depth explanation of this simple utterance. **Nebo** mentioned here by **Jeremiah** was not the mountain of the same name on which Moshe viewed the Promised Land and died (**Deuteronomy 32:48-50**), although it was very near. It was originally given to the tribe of Reuben (**Numbers 32:37-38**), however in **Jeremiah's** day **the Moabites** had gained control.

On one hand, the cities, the great centers of economic power and military pride, are named: **Nebo, Kiriathaim, Heshbon, Madmen, Horonaim, and Luhith**. But, on the other hand the language is that of an intelligence report for a coming invasion. **They** will be **disgraced, captured, destroyed, slaughtered, and shattered**. Therefore, these seemingly indestructible cities will be emptied of their power and

pride

Kiriathaim will be disgraced and captured; the stronghold will be disgraced and shattered (48:1). This city was also originally inhabited by the tribe of Reuben (**Numbers 32:37; Joshua 13:19**) and later captured by **Mo'ab**.

The glory of **Mo'ab will be praised no more; In Heshbon people will plan her downfall.** In a play on words, **Jeremiah** indicated that **in Heshbon** (*behesbon*) **men will plan** (*hasebu*) **Moab's downfall. "Come, let us put an end to that nation."** **Heshbon** was the capital of Sihon, king of the Amorites, during the exodus (**Numbers 21:25-30**). It was given to the tribe of Reuben that rebuilt it (**Numbers 33:37; Joshua 13:17**), though it was on the border of the tribe of Gad (**Joshua 13:26**). The Moabite Stone (now in the British Museum, London) implies that individuals from the tribe of Gad later occupied **Heshbon**, but it was eventually taken by **Mo'ab. You, the people of Madmen** (pronounced Maudmen, place unknown), **will also be silenced; the sword will pursue you (48:2).**

Cries of anguish arise from Horonaim (Second Samuel 13:34), cries of great havoc and destruction. Then **Jeremiah** turns **his** attention to **the Moabite** children. **Mo'ab will be broken; her little ones will cry out.** The fugitives would flee all the way **up the hill to Luhith** seeking higher ground, **weeping bitterly as they go** because they know the ones left behind will die; and having reached the summit, those traveling **down the road to Horonaim** would shout **anguished cries over the destruction** that they heard behind them (**48:3-5**). A similar thing happened in **Isaiah 15:5**.

Rhetorically and ironically, **Jeremiah** issues a call for **the Moabites** to take flight. **Flee! Run for your lives** to escape the coming judgment; **become like a bush in the desert** - deserted and forlorn. Then the reasons for the judgment are given: **Since you trust in your deeds and riches, you too would be judged and taken captive.** Her national god, **Chemosh (First Kings 11:7)** would also be judged and **go into exile together with his priests and officials. The destroyer will come against every town, and not a town will escape (to see link click [Ae - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh](#)).** **The valley will be ruined and the plateau** (the Transjordan highland where most of the **Mo'ab** cities were located) **destroyed, because ADONAI has spoken (48:6-8).**

Put salt on Mo'ab, for she will be laid waste; her towns will become desolate, with no one to live in them. Ha'Shem warns the Babylonians who

would do **His** bidding. **A curse on anyone who is lax in doing the LORD's work! A curse on anyone who keeps their sword from bloodshed (48:9-10)!** The Jewish historian Josephus records that Nebuchadnezzar came to fight against Ammon and **Mo'ab** in the fifth year after the destruction of **Zion**.²¹⁹

Mo'ab's history was one of relative peace. **She had been** complacent and **at rest from youth**. **She** was very boastful. While being invaded for short periods of time, **she** had never been sent **into exile**. **Like wine left on its dregs, not poured from one jar to another - she had not gone into exile. So she tastes as she did and her aroma is unchanged (48:11)**. **Mo'ab** was very proud and famous for **her** vineyards (**Isaiah 16:8-11**). In making wine, first the grapes were stomped, then the juice was placed into bottles or skins and allowed to ferment. During this time the sediment, or **dregs**, would settle to the bottom. After 40 days **the** fermented **wine** was carefully poured into another container to separate it from the dregs. If **the dregs** were allowed to remain, **the wine** became too sweet and thick and was spoiled. This object lesson from nature was ultimately applied to people who had become too complacent (**Zephaniah 1:12**). **Moab** had never **tasted** the harsh reality of **exile**, so, like **wine not poured from one jar to another, her aroma was unchanged**.²²⁰

In light of this, **the days are coming**, declares **the LORD**. When **Jeremiah** (under the direction of **the Holy Spirit**) uses the phrase **in the days to come; the days are coming; in those days; in that day, at that time; or for the time will surely come**, the context points either to **the near historical future** or **the far eschatological future** and which one should be used. This is the eighth of twenty-five times that **Yirmeyahu** uses one of **these phrases**. In this case the context is **the near historical future** of the Babylonian invasion and destruction of **Mo'ab**. **The days are coming when God will send men who pour wine from pitchers, and they will pour her out; they will empty her pitchers of wine and smash her jars**. It will be **poured out** not because it's bad **wine**, but **the pouring out of judgment** itself.



Then Mo'ab will be ashamed of Chemosh, as Isra'el was ashamed when they trusted in Bethel (46:12-13). The Moabites would suffer bitter disillusionment for having put trust in their god that had proved helpless to protect them. Here Yirmeyahu draws a comparison to the children of Isra'el. The Israelites worshiped the golden calf at Bethel (First Kings 12:26-30), but eventually it became obvious that the golden calf was unable to save the northern Kingdom from destruction from Assyria. At the time of this writing Isra'el had been in exile about 100 years. She eventually became ashamed of what happened at Bethel because it was the center of northern idolatry. Likewise, the Moabites would eventually be ashamed of their god Chemosh sometime after the Babylonians had taken them into exile.

The Moabites were so sure of their military ability that they thought nothing would be able to defeat them. They felt confident that their warriors were valiant in battle (46:14) But they would not be able to prevent her destruction: Mo'ab will be destroyed and her towns invaded; her finest young men will go down in the slaughter, declares the King, whose name is ADONAI of heaven's angelic armies (46:15). YHVH as King was a direct challenge to the rule of Chemosh, who was being dethroned and displaced.

The fall of Mo'ab is at hand; her calamity will come quickly (46:16). What Yirmeyahu did was to take a statement from Deuteronomy and apply it to Mo'ab. It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them (Deuteronomy 32:35).

Jeremiah called for those nations surrounding **Mo'ab** to come and **console her** at the time of **her calamity**. Together they would **mourn** the fact that **her mighty scepter** (signifying her rule) had been **broken (48:17)**.

Come down from your glory and sit on the parched ground, you inhabitants of Daughter Dibon (Numbers 21:30; 32:3, 34, 45-46; Joshua 13:9, 17), for the One who destroys Mo'ab will come up against you and ruin your fortified cities (46:18). Stand by the road and watch, you who live in Aroer (Joshua 12:2, 13, 13:9, 16). Ask the man fleeing and the woman escaping, ask them, 'What has happened?' (48:18-19)."

They would be told that **Mo'ab is disgraced, for she is shattered. Wail and cry out!** News of **her fall** would cause mourning even as far south as Aroer **by the Arnon River (Numbers 21:13)**.

Jeremiah then listed **the cities** of the Transjordan **plateau** that would be **destroyed. Judgment has come to the plateau - to Holon, Jahzah and Mephaath, to Dibon, Nebo and Beth Diblathaim, to Kiriathaim, Beth Meon, to Kerioth and Bozrah** (not the same place as Edom). Though the location of some is not certain, **he** seemed to follow a general movement from north to south. **His** point in naming these eleven **cities** was to show that **all the towns in Mo'ab**, both **near and far**, would be **demolished**.

Yirmeyahu used two symbols to show that **Mo'ab's** power would be **broken**. First, **he** said that **Mo'ab's horn** would be **cut off**. An animal **horn** was a symbol of strength (**First Samuel 2:1, 10; Psalm 75:4-5, 89:17, 24; Micah 4:13; Zechariah 1:19-21**). And secondly, **the prophet from Anathoth** says that **Mo'ab's arm**, also a symbol of strength, would be **broken (48:20-25)**.