

# The Punishment and Restoration of Mo'ab

## 48: 26-47

**DIG:** Besides worshiping Chemosh, what has Mo'ab done to Judah (Second Kings 24:1-2)? What was Mo'ab's problem? Why does God condemn her pride and arrogance so severely? What was evil about them? What product was Mo'av particularly famous for (48:11-12, 32-33)? What form of political domination is Mo'ab going to suffer for the first time? When Mo'ab was invaded by the Babylonians soon after the fall of Y'hudah, who occupied their land (Ezekiel 25:10)? Verses 36-38 describe an ancient Near Eastern funeral. Why do you think these things were done? Around 150 years earlier, Isaiah prophesied against Mo'ab (see the commentary on Isaiah Dv - Mo'ab is Destroyed in a Single Night). Why do you think Jeremiah's language is so similar? How final does Mo'ab's defeat sound to you?

**REFLECT:** How does the sin of the Moabites sometimes turn up in your life? The Moabites no longer exist as a national group. What do you make of God's promise to restore their fortunes? Does seeing and hearing about disasters from the media affect you anymore? What is the effect of broadcasting disaster after disaster every day? How can you keep from being hardened to the suffering of others in the world?

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

In his near historical prophecy, Jeremiah declared: **Make her drunk, for she has defiled ADONAI.** This indictment, on the face of it, seems more than a little curious, because Mo'ab would not have imagined herself in any way in relation to YHVH. But God's claim, which is the basis to these "Prophecies Concerning the Gentile Nations," assumes this to be true. Mo'ab's failure to realize this is the reason for her judgment.

The very origin of Mo'ab was associated with wine and drunkenness (see the commentary on Genesis Fb - **Let's Get Our Father to Drink Wine, and then Lie With Him to Preserve Our Family Line**). **Make her drunk so she can drown out her coming sorrow.** People can respect limited drinking, but they look down upon those who throw up all over themselves. **Let Mo'ab wallow in her vomit; let her be an object of ridicule.** Mo'ab had treated Judah with contempt (Psalm 59:8; Lamentations 1:7; Jeremiah 20:7). This was a way in which Mo'ab had violated YHVH. Therefore, sin against her sister Y'hudah was indeed sin against God. Mo'ab didn't love the sister whom she had seen, and surely she didn't love the sister whom she hadn't seen (First John 4:20).

So **Mo'ab**, which had been held in great esteem because of her great winemaking ability, will now drink the cup of **God's** wrath and will be looked down upon. More to the point was **Mo'ab's** anti-Semitism. Was not **Judah** the object of your ridicule? Was she caught among thieves, that you shake your head in scorn whenever you speak of her (48:26-27)? **ADONAI** told **Abram**: I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse (**Genesis 12:3a**). From such a foundational indictment came a severe sentence, **Mo'ab** was about to experience the full force of **God's** cursing.

**Mo'ab** would then be treated in the same way that she cynically treated **Y'hudah**. The only counsel **God** offers through his prophet is that the **Moabites** should abandon their towns and dwell among the rocks. Be like a dove that makes its nest at the mouth of a cave. Run to the mountains because your cities are about to be destroyed. There would be no hope except to flee.

The pride of **Mo'ab** was well known in the ancient world (**Isaiah 25:10-11**; **Zephaniah 2:8-11**). We have heard of **Mo'ab's** pride - how great her arrogance - of her insolence, how proud she is, her boastfulness, and the haughtiness of her heart. Here **Jeremiah** piles up a number of synonyms designed to emphasize **Moab's** pride. They all sound alike coming from the same Hebrew root word for pride beginning with the hard "g" consonant: arrogance (*ga'on*) pride (*ga'on*), proud (*ge'eh*), boastfulness (*ga'wa*), and haughtiness (*gaboah*). The rhetorical effect is cumulative.

**Mo'ab** thought she was immune to **God's** sovereignty and could do anything that she wanted. But **God's** perspective is terse and abrupt. **ADONAI** declared: I know her insolence, but it is futile and her boasts accomplishing nothing (48:29-30). All her boasting was futile, and to prove it, verses 31-35 now deal with the punishment itself.

Therefore, in light of all of this, I wail over **Mo'ab**, for all **Mo'ab** I cry out, I moan for the people of **Kir Hareseth** (48:31; also see **2 Kings 21:32**; **Second Samuel 24:5**). The strong sympathy of the prophet with **Mo'ab** should be noted. **Isaiah** expressed the same sentiment in almost identical words. There was a close bond between **Mo'ab** and **Judah**, notwithstanding the apparent tones of part of this chapter and in spite of the fact that when **Nebuchadnezzar** attacked **Y'hudah** in **Jehoiakim's** reign, he was assisted by the **Moabites** (**Second Kings 24:2**). It may well be that the prophets, with their sense of universalism, felt this sympathy with the sufferings of the peoples whose downfall they had to announce even where their words suggested approval. A distinction is probably to be drawn between their official words and their personal feelings.

I weep for you, as **Jazer** weeps, you vines of **Sibmah** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Dx - My Heart Laments for Mo'ab Like a Harp**). The wine of **Sibmah** was superior to

others in **Mo'ab** and was exported. Those looking forward to drinking it feel its loss. **Your branches spread as far as the sea; they reached as far as Jazer, indicating deportation to a great distance. Having mentioned the vines, the prophet makes use of a metaphor in which the whole nation is likened to a huge vine. In fact, no sea would have to be crossed, the phrase is symbolic for going into captivity.** All prosperity, however, was gone. **The destroyer has fallen on your ripened fruit and grapes. Joy and gladness are gone from the orchards and fields of Mo'ab.** The harvest time is a time of cheerful celebration, a time of fruitful profit, an assurance of blessing, and no doubt of excessive drinking. All of that extravagant celebration, however, would now stop. **I have stopped the flow of wine from the presses; no one treads them with shouts of joy. Although there are shouts, they are not shouts of joy (48:32-33).** Celebration had been replaced by grief and mourning. The very thing that made **Mo'ab** famous was **destroyed**.

The cry now extends throughout the land of **Mo'ab**. The sound of their cry rises from Heshbon to Elealeh and Jahaz, from Zoar as far as Horonaim and Eglath Shelishiyah, for even the waters of Nimrim are dried up (48:34). The point is that not only will Moabite cities on the plateau be destroyed, but also cities further down the slopes into the Jordan Valley. The conclusion: **In Mo'ab I will put an end to those who make offerings on the high places and burn incense to their gods, declares ADONAI (48:35).**

The dirge begins: **So My heart laments for Mo'ab like the music of a funeral flute (Mt 9:23-24); it laments like a pipe for the people of Kir Hareseth. The wealth they acquired is gone. Every head is shaved and every beard cut off; every hand is slashed and every waist is covered with sackcloth. Mourning will be seen everywhere: On all the roofs in Mo'ab and in the public squares there is nothing but mourning, for I have broken Mo'ab like a jar, the kind of jar that wine was kept in, that no one wants, declares the LORD (48:36-38).** The extremity of the lament indicates the depth of the loss.

**How shattered she is! How they wail! How Mo'ab turns her back in shame! Moab has become an object of ridicule, an object of horror to all those around her (48:39).** That which God prophesied will come true; she who ridiculed Judah will be ridiculed herself (Genesis 12:3a).

The totality of **destruction** can be seen. This is what ADONAI says: **Look! The enemy, like an eagle is swooping down, spreading its wings over Mo'av.** The metaphor of an eagle quickly yields to a more concrete, graphic description. The attack will be against the centers of power. Kerioth will be captured and the strongholds taken. In that day the hearts of **Mo'ab's warriors will be like the heart of a woman in labor. Mo'ab will be destroyed as a nation because she defiled the LORD, but there will be a remnant (48:40-42).**

Her destruction is inescapable. **Terror and pit and snare await you, you people of Moab**, declares ADONAI. **Whoever flees from the terror will fall into a pit. Then one moved from one danger to another. Whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare; for I will bring on Mo'ab the year of her punishment**, declares the LORD (48:43-44). The cumulative effect of the judgment is a sense of inescapability, and therefore, hopelessness. There would be no way to circumvent the harsh reality already set in motion.

The sin of **pride** and anti-Semitism comes from within the Moabites themselves. Sin always carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. So the fire actually originates within the cities of **Mo'ab** and branches out and destroys everything around it. **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 Mo'ab, the skulls of the noisy boasters (48:45 this is a quote from Numbers 21:28). The sense of the whole verse is that the fugitives of Mo'ab took refuge under the walls of the neighboring city of the Ammonites, but as they stand there in hopes of aid, there explodes from the city on which their only hopes rest a flame kindled by the Babylonians.**

**Woe to you, Mo'ab! The people of Chemosh are destroyed.** The defeat of **Mo'ab** is in actuality the defeat of their god who, in reality, is no god at all. **Your sons are taken into exile and your daughters into captivity (48:46 this verse is a quote from Numbers 21:9).** Consequently, **the Moabites** were exiled to Babylon just like the Jews were. After being taken captive, **their** lands were settled by the Nabateans, one of the Arab tribes. Later in the Byzantine Period it was settled by more Arab tribes; however, Balaam's complete prophecy concerning **Mo'av** (which is reiterated here in **Chapter 48**) will find its full fulfillment in the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming.

Nevertheless, **ADONAI will restore (shuwv) the fortunes of Mo'ab in the days to come (48:47a).** When **Jeremiah** (under the direction of the **Ruach HaKodesh**) 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 ninth of twenty-five times that **Yirmeyahu** uses one of **these phrases**. In this case **Jeremiah** issues a prophecy for the **far eschatological future**. There is more promised for **Mo'ab** than ultimate destruction (see the commentary on **Isaiah Dw - The Hope of Moab's Salvation**, and also my commentary on **Revelation Fk - Gentiles in the Messianic Kingdom**). Here ends the judgment on **Mo'ab**.