

## The Mesha Stele / Moabite Stone (D. Graves)

The Mesha Stele (or Moabite Stone) is a 3 foot high basalt slab inscription that was discovered near Dibon (modern Dhiban, Jordan) in 1868 by Frederick Augustus Klein. It dates to 850-840 BC and speaks to the Moabite/Israelite relations in the 9th century BC the time of King Ahab. It is presently housed in the Louvre Museum, Department of Oriental Antiquities (AP 5066).

This is the time of the prophet Elisha. The land of Moab lay east of the Dead Sea and was roughly 600 miles long by 25-30 miles wide. David and Solomon subdued it as a vassal state, but after 930 BC it threw off the yoke of Israel. However, the Bible records that by 853 BC (the year Ahab died) Moab had long been subdued once again by Israel and was preparing for a second attempt at independence (2 Kings 3:4-5).

Serving as a commemoration of military victory of the Moabite vassal king Mesha over Israel, the Mesha Stele lists the accomplishments of Mesha, King of Moab. Significant to the Bible, the Moabite Stone names the God of Israel YHWH, Northern Kingdom of Israel kings Omri and Ahab, confirms the existence of ancient cities and the pagan national god of Moab Chemosh:

"I am Mesha...king of Moab...As for Omri, King of Israel, he humbled Moab many years...and his son [Ahab]...also said, I will humble Moab. In my time he thus spoke, but I have triumphed over him..."

"I am Mesha, son of Chemosh, the king of Moab ... As for Omri the king of Israel, and he humbled Moab for many years, ... And his son reigned in his place: and he also said, 'I will oppress Moab!' In my days he said so. But I triumphed over him and over his house, and Israel has perished; it has perished forever!"

"I am Mesha, king of Moab, Dibonite. I made this high place for Chemosh, [...] because it made me triumph over all my opponents. Omri was king of Israel and he oppressed Moab for many days [...]. From there I took the sacred vessels (?) of Yahweh, and I dragged them before Chemosh."

Masters states:

The Moabite Stone goes on to speak of the taking of other districts from Israel, and of the building of reservoirs and townships. It is certainly a most significant confirmation of the accuracy of the historical details in the Bible. (1)

The parallels can be seen in the following biblical accounts:

Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. He did evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. So he served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done. (1 Ki 22:51-53)



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Now Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. And Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber which was in Samaria, and became ill. So he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I will recover from this sickness." But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?' Now therefore thus says the Lord, 'You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die.'" Then Elijah departed. (2 Ki 1:1-4)

Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. (2 Ki 3:4-5)

### Footnotes:

1. Peter Masters, *Heritage of Evidence in the British Museum*. London, Wakeman Trust, 2004, 28.

### Reference:

1. Brian B. Schmidt "Neo-Assyrian and Syro-Palestinian Texts I: The Moabite Stone", in *Ancient Near East Historical Sources in Translation*, ed. Mark W. Chavalas (Oxford: Wiley & Sons, 2006), 311-12.