SECOND KINGS

Chapter 3

***Moab Revolts***

**Joram son of Ahab became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned twelve years. 2 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but not as his father and mother had done. He got rid of the sacred stone of Baal that his father had made. 3 Nevertheless he clung to the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he did not turn away from them. 4 Now Mesha king of Moab raised sheep, and he had to supply the king of Israel with a hundred thousand lambs and with the wool of a hundred thousand rams. 5 But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. 6 So at that time King Joram set out from Samaria and mobilized all Israel. 7 He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat king of Judah: “The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?” “I will go with you,” he replied. “I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.” 8 “By what route shall we attack?” he asked. “Through the Desert of Edom,” he answered. 9 So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After a roundabout march of seven days, the army had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them. 10 “What!” exclaimed the king of Israel. “Has the Lord called us three kings together only to hand us over to Moab?” 11 But Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there no prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of the Lord through him?” An officer of the king of Israel answered, “Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah.” 12 Jehoshaphat said, “The word of the Lord is with him.” So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. 13 Elisha said to the king of Israel, “What do we have to do with each other? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother.” “No,” the king of Israel answered, “because it was the Lord who called us three kings together to hand us over to Moab.” 14 Elisha said, “As surely as the Lord Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you. 15 But now bring me a harpist.” While the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha 16 and he said, “This is what the Lord says: Make this valley full of ditches. 17 For this is what the Lord says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. 18 This is an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord; he will also hand Moab over to you. 19 You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones.” 20 The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, there it was—water flowing from the direction of Edom! And the land was filled with water. 21 Now all the Moabites had heard that the kings had come to fight against them; so every man, young and old, who could bear arms was called up and stationed on the border. 22 When they got up early in the morning, the sun was shining on the water. To the Moabites across the way, the water looked red—like blood. 23 “That’s blood!” they said. “Those kings must have fought and slaughtered each other. Now to the plunder, Moab!” 24 But when the Moabites came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and fought them until they fled. And the Israelites invaded the land and slaughtered the Moabites. 25 They destroyed the towns, and each man threw a stone on every good field until it was covered. They stopped up all the springs and cut down every good tree. Only Kir Hareseth was left with its stones in place, but men armed with slings surrounded it and attacked it as well. 26 When the king of Moab saw that the battle had gone against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom, but they failed. 27 Then he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall. The fury against Israel was great; they withdrew and returned to their own land.**

**3:1** *Joram son of Ahab became king … in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat.* See note on 1:17. (CSB)

*twelve years.* 852–841 b.c. (CSB)

**3:2** *not as his father and mother had done.* Not as Ahab (see notes on 1Ki 16:30–34) and Jezebel (see 1Ki 18:4; 19:1–2; 21:7–15). (CSB)

*sacred stone of Baal that his father had made.* Apparently a reference to the stone representation of the male deity (see note on 1Ki 14:23 ) that Ahab placed in the temple he had constructed for Jezebel in Samaria (see 1Ki 16:32–33). From 10:27 it appears that this stone was later reinstated, perhaps by Jezebel. (CSB)

**3:3** *sins of Jeroboam … he had caused Israel to commit.* See note on 1Ki 14:16. (CSB)

**3:4** *Mesha king of Moab.* See note on 1:1. (CSB)

*a hundred thousand lambs and … the wool of a hundred thousand rams.* The heavy annual tribute (see Isa 16:1) that Israel required from the Moabites as a vassal state. (CSB)

**3:5** *king of Moab rebelled.* See note on 1:1. (CSB)

**3:7** *Will you go with me to fight against Moab?* Joram wished to attack Moab from the rear (v. 8), but to do that his army had to pass through Judah. (CSB)

*I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.* See 1Ki 22:4. Jehoshaphat had already been condemned by prophets of the Lord for his alliance with the northern kings Ahab (see 2Ch 18:1; 19:1–2) and Ahaziah (2Ch 20:35–37), yet he agreed to join with Joram against Moab. Perhaps he was disturbed by the potential danger to Judah posed by the growing strength of Moab (see 2Ch 20), and he may have considered Joram less evil than his predecessors (see v. 2). (CSB)

**3:8** *Through the Desert of Edom.* This route of attack took the armies of Israel and Judah south of the Dead Sea, enabling them to circumvent the fortifications of Moab’s northern frontier and to avoid the possibility of a rearguard action against them by the Arameans of Damascus. The Edomites, who were subject to Judah, were in no position to resist the movement of Israel’s army through their territory. (CSB)

**3:9** *king of Edom.* Although here designated a king, he was in reality a governor appointed by Jehoshaphat (see 8:20; 1Ki 22:47). (CSB)

**3:11** *Is there no prophet of the Lord here … ?* See 1Ki 22:7. Only after the apparent failure of their own strategies did the three rulers seek the word of the Lord (v. 12). (CSB)

*Elisha son of Shaphat is here.* Since Elijah is reported to have sent a letter to Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram after his father’s death (2Ch 21:12–15), it seems that Elisha accompanied the armies on this campaign as the representative of the aged Elijah. The event is narrated here after the account of Elisha’s initiation as Elijah’s successor and the two events that foreshadowed the character of his ministry. Following this introduction to Elisha’s ministry, the present episode is topically associated with the series of Elisha’s acts that now occupies the narrative. (CSB)

**3:13** *Go to the prophets of your father and … mother.* See 1Ki 22:6. (CSB)

**3:14** *if I did not have respect for … Jehoshaphat … I would not look at you.* Joram will share in the blessing of the word of God only because of his association with Jehoshaphat. (CSB)

**3:15** *bring me a harpist.* To create a disposition conducive to receiving the word of the Lord. (CSB)

**3:16** *this valley.* The Israelite armies were encamped in the broad valley (the Arabah) between the highlands of Moab on the east and those of Judah on the west, just south of the Dead Sea. (CSB)

**3:17** *will be filled with water.* The word of the Lord contained a promise and a directive. The Lord will graciously provide for his people, but they must respond to his word in faith and obedience (v. 16). (CSB)

**3:19** The two armies will devastate the rebellious country. (CSB)

**3:20** *time for offering.* See Ex 29:38–39; Nu 28:3–4. (CSB)

*water flowing from the direction of Edom.* Flash floods in the distant mountains of Edom caused water to flow north through the broad, usually dry, valley that sloped toward the Dead Sea (see note on v. 16). (CSB)

**3:23** *Those kings must have … slaughtered each other.* The Moabites would have good reason to suspect that an internal conflict had arisen between the parties of an alliance whose members had previously been mutually hostile. (CSB)

**3:25** *Kir Hareseth.* The capital city of Moab (see Isa 16:7, 11; Jer 48:31, 36), usually identified with present-day Kerak, located about 11 miles east of the Dead Sea and 15 miles south of the Arnon River. (CSB)

**3:26** *break through to the king of Edom.* A desperate attempt by the king of Moab to induce Edom to turn against Israel and Judah. (CSB)

**3:27** *offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall.* King Mesha offered his oldest son, the crown prince, as a burnt offering (see 16:3; Jer 7:31) to the Moabite god Chemosh (see 1Ki 11:7; Nu 21:29; Jer 48:46) in an attempt to induce the deity to come to his aid. (CSB)

*The fury against Israel was great.* The Hebrew underlying this clause would normally refer to a visitation of God’s wrath. It may be that just when total victory appeared to be in Israel’s grasp, God’s displeasure with the Ahab dynasty showed itself in some way that caused the Israelite kings to give up the campaign. Comparing Aramaic and later Hebrew usage, a few scholars suggest that the Hebrew here can be translated, “There was great dismay upon/in Israel.” (CSB)