

Jeremiah

Chapter 48

Judgment on Moab

Concerning Moab. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Woe to Nebo, for it is laid waste! Kiriathaim is put to shame, it is taken; the fortress is put to shame and broken down; 2 the renown of Moab is no more. In Heshbon they planned disaster against her: ‘Come, let us cut her off from being a nation!’ You also, O Madmen, shall be brought to silence; the sword shall pursue you. 3 “A voice! A cry from Horonaim, ‘Desolation and great destruction!’ 4 Moab is destroyed; her little ones have made a cry. 5 For at the ascent of Luhith they go up weeping; for at the descent of Horonaim they have heard the distressed cry of destruction. 6 Flee! Save yourselves! You will be like a juniper in the desert! 7 For, because you trusted in your works and your treasures, you also shall be taken; and Chemosh shall go into exile with his priests and his officials. 8 The destroyer shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape; the valley shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD has spoken. 9 “Give wings to Moab, for she would fly away; her cities shall become a desolation, with no inhabitant in them. 10 “Cursed is he who does the work of the LORD with slackness, and cursed is he who keeps back his sword from bloodshed. 11 “Moab has been at ease from his youth and has settled on his dregs; he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, nor has he gone into exile; so his taste remains in him, and his scent is not changed. 12 “Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I shall send to him pourers who will pour him, and empty his vessels and break his jars in pieces. 13 Then Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence. 14 “How do you say, ‘We are heroes and mighty men of war’? 15 The destroyer of Moab and his cities has come up, and the choicest of his young men have gone down to slaughter, declares the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts. 16 The calamity of Moab is near at hand, and his affliction hastens swiftly. 17 Grieve for him, all you who are around him, and all who know his name; say, ‘How the mighty scepter is broken, the glorious staff.’ 18 “Come down from your glory, and sit on the parched ground, O inhabitant of Dibon! For the destroyer of Moab has come up against you; he has destroyed your strongholds. 19 Stand by the way and watch, O inhabitant of Aroer! Ask him who flees and her who escapes; say, ‘What has happened?’ 20 Moab is put to shame, for it is broken; wail and cry! Tell it beside the Arnon, that Moab is laid waste. 21 “Judgment has come upon the tableland, upon Holon, and Jahzah, and Mephaath, 22 and Dibon, and Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim, 23 and Kiriathaim, and Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, 24 and Kerioth, and Bozrah, and all the cities of the land of Moab, far and near. 25 The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, declares the LORD. 26 “Make him drunk, because he magnified himself against the LORD, so that Moab shall wallow in his vomit, and he too shall be held in derision. 27 Was not Israel a derision to you? Was he found among thieves, that whenever you spoke of him you wagged your head? 28 “Leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, O inhabitants of Moab! Be like the dove that nests in the sides of the mouth of a gorge. 29 We have heard of the pride of Moab—he is very proud—of his loftiness, his pride, and his arrogance, and the haughtiness of his heart. 30 I know his insolence, declares the LORD; his boasts are false, his deeds are false. 31 Therefore I wail for Moab; I cry out for all Moab; for the men of Kir-hareseth I mourn. 32 More than for Jazer I weep for you, O vine of Sibmah! Your branches passed over the sea, reached to the Sea of Jazer; on your summer fruits and your grapes the destroyer has fallen. 33 Gladness and joy have been taken away from the fruitful land of Moab; I have made the wine cease from the winepresses; no one treads them with shouts of joy; the shouting is not the shout of joy. 34 “From the outcry at Heshbon even to Elealeh, as far as Jahaz they utter their voice, from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah.

For the waters of Nimrim also have become desolate. 35 And I will bring to an end in Moab, declares the LORD, him who offers sacrifice in the high place and makes offerings to his god. 36 Therefore my heart moans for Moab like a flute, and my heart moans like a flute for the men of Kir-hareseth. Therefore the riches they gained have perished. 37 “For every head is shaved and every beard cut off. On all the hands are gashes, and around the waist is sackcloth. 38 On all the housetops of Moab and in the squares there is nothing but lamentation, for I have broken Moab like a vessel for which no one cares, declares the LORD. 39 How it is broken! How they wail! How Moab has turned his back in shame! So Moab has become a derision and a horror to all that are around him.” 40 For thus says the LORD: “Behold, one shall fly swiftly like an eagle and spread his wings against Moab; 41 the cities shall be taken and the strongholds seized. The heart of the warriors of Moab shall be in that day like the heart of a woman in her birth pains; 42 Moab shall be destroyed and be no longer a people, because he magnified himself against the LORD. 43 Terror, pit, and snare are before you, O inhabitant of Moab! declares the LORD. 44 He who flees from the terror shall fall into the pit, and he who climbs out of the pit shall be caught in the snare. For I will bring these things upon Moab, the year of their punishment, declares the LORD. 45 “In the shadow of Heshbon fugitives stop without strength, for fire came out from Heshbon, flame from the house of Sihon; it has destroyed the forehead of Moab, the crown of the sons of tumult. 46 Woe to you, O Moab! The people of Chemosh are undone, for your sons have been taken captive, and your daughters into captivity. 47 Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, declares the LORD.” Thus far is the judgment on Moab.

Ch 48 The storm of God’s judgment moves to the ancestral territory of the Moabites, along the eastern shore of the Salt Sea. They are descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew. In Jeremiah’s time, Moab ravaged Judah after Nebuchadnezzar invaded Israel (2Ki 24:2). Later, emissaries of the king of Moab tried to involve Zedekiah in a plot against the Babylonians (27:1–6). The oracle concerning Moab is surpassed in length only by the threat against the Babylonians (chs 50–51). (TLSB)

48:1 *Concerning Moab.* See Isa 15–16; Eze 25:8–11; Am 2:1–3; Zep 2:8–11. Josephus (*Antiquities*, 10.9.7) implies that Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning the future destruction of Moab was fulfilled in the “twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign” (582 B.C.; see 52:30). (CSB)

Nebo. A town originally allotted to the tribe of Reuben. (CSB)

A number of the cities are mentioned on the Moabite, or Mesha, Stone found over a century ago (see note, 2Ki 3:4). A few cities, such as Madmen (v 2), are not found anywhere else in Scripture and remain unidentified. (TLSB)

Kiriathaim. An ancient town (see Ge 14:5), it too was allotted to Reuben. Nebo, Kiriathaim and several other towns referred to in this chapter are mentioned also in an important Moabite inscription written by Mesha king of Moab (see 2Ki 3:4) and discovered in 1868. (CSB)

put to shame and broken down – literally, “the citadel,” probably Kir-Moab, the strongest fort of the Moabites, or a general expression denoting the overthrow of Moab’s power. (Kretzmann)

48:2 *Heshbon.* See vv. 34, 45; 49:3; Nu 21:25. Originally allotted to Reuben (see Nu 32:37; Jos 13:17), it was later reassigned to Gad as a Levitical town (see Jos 21:39). (CSB)

This ancient capital of the Amorites, almost directly opposite Jericho, being in the hands of the invaders, who were there making plans for further humiliating Moab. (Kretzmann)

plan disaster. The Hebrew for this phrase is a pun on “Heshbon.” (CSB)

brought to silence – Moab, although repeatedly tributary to the kingdom of Israel, especially under David and Solomon, nevertheless retained its national organization and finally regained its independence, even to the extent of joining in an attack on Judah. But this glory would now be definitely ended. (Kretzmann)

Madmen. Location unknown; perhaps a longer spelling of “Dimon” (Isa 15:9—but see note there). In Isa 25:10, the feminine form of the Hebrew word *madmen* is translated “manure.” (CSB)

Hebrew name, perhaps from Medeba, and Moabite town or region whose name may mean “water of quietness.” A wordplay such as, “Silent one, you shall be silenced. (TLSB)

48:4 *destroyed*. Like a clay jar (see 19:11). (CSB)

little ones – Children suffered horribly in the ravages of war (cf 49:20; 50:45) (TLSB)

48:5 *go up weeping* – As the enemy advances from the north, the inhabitants of Moab, weeping bitterly over the devastation of their cities, flee over the heights of Luhith and down the long incline toward Horonaim to save their lives if possible. (Kretzmann)

48:7 *Chemosh*. See vv. 13, 46; the national god of Moab (see 1Ki 11:7, 33; 2Ki 23:13). The Hebrew text here implies the alternate spelling Chemish, as in “Carchemish.” (CSB)

shall be taken...shall go into exile ... and officials. A stock phrase (see 49:3; Am 1:15). Images of pagan deities were often carried about from place to place (see 43:12; Am 5:26). (CSB)

This includes both the spiritual and the temporal rulers of the country included in the judgment of Jehovah. (Kretzmann)

48:8 *valley ... plain*. Much of western Moab overlooks the Jordan Valley. (CSB)

The plateau which extended from the Arnon toward the north and northeast beyond what had been Rabbath-Ammon. (Kretzmann)

48:10 *slackness*. Or “lazy” (as in Pr 10:4; 12:24). Those whom the Lord designates to destroy Moab are urged on in their appointed task. (CSB)

Those refusing God’s appointment as instruments of His wrath will also receive God’s curse. (TLSB)

48:11 A copy of the Hebrew text of this verse has been found inscribed on a large clay seal, dating to the early Christian era and apparently used for stamping the bitumen with which the mouths of wine jars were sealed. (CSB)

from his youth. From her early history. (CSB)

left on its dregs. In order to improve with age (see Isa 25:6). (CSB)

Like wine left undisturbed on its fermented sediment to improve its quality. (TLSB)

nor has he gone into exile. Unlike Israel. (CSB)

Because the people of Moab had not suffered the calamities which befell some other nations because they had not been tried out by repeated exiles, their character had become harsh and supercilious. (Kretzmann)

48:12 *days are coming.* Moab will be destroyed him. (CSB)

The Babylonians will effect the change. They will destroy Moab as if tilting the wine jars, emptying them, and breaking the vessels. (TLSB)

Because the people of Moab had not suffered the calamities which befell some other nations because they had not been tried out by repeated exiles, their character had become harsh and supercilious. (Kretzmann)

pour him. Gently, in order to leave the unwanted sediment in the bottom. But these men will be the agents of divine judgment and will “smash” Moab. (CSB)

The conquerors would not only lead the Moabites away into exile, but would also destroy their national organization. (Kretzmann)

48:13 *house of Israel.* The northern kingdom, destroyed and exiled in 722–721 B.C. (CSB)

Bethel. Either (1) the well-known town where one of Jeroboam’s golden calves was placed (see 1Ki 12:28–30) or, (2) in parallelism with Chemosh, the West Semitic deity known from contemporary Babylonian inscriptions as well as from the Elephantine papyri a century later. (CSB)

Where Israel worshiped idols such as Chemosh. (TLSB)

48:14 *How do you say ... ?* Moab would no longer boast of its courage and strength, because terror would possess every heart. (Kretzmann)

48:15 *go down to slaughter.* See 50:27; for war depicted as the slaughter of sacrificial animals see Isa 34:6 and note. (CSB)

King. The true King is the Lord, not Chemosh. (CSB)

The one supreme Ruler of the whole world. Before Him all nations must finally bow, either in meek submission, which accepts His rule, or in the subjection of terror, which fawns before the Victor. (Kretzmann)

48:17 *who are around him... who know his fame.* Nations near and far respectively. (CSB)

mighty. At one time Moab had been powerful and feared (see 27:3; 2Ki 1:1; 3:5; 24:2). (CSB)

scepter ... staff. Symbols of authority and dominion (see Ge 49:10; Ps 2:9; Eze 19:11, (CSB)

The breaking of Moab's scepter of beauty and splendor signifies the total overthrow of his government and rule. The admonition is addressed in a general way, to emphasize the total ruin of the former mighty people. (Kretzmann)

48:18 *Come down ... sit.* These were her surroundings becoming an arid wilderness. (Kretzmann)

48:19 *watch* – They were watching, as it were, for the fugitive Moabites coming down from the north to escape the Chaldean invaders. (Kretzmann)

flees – Both men and women were seeking to save their lives by a hurried flight. (Kretzmann)

ask –The answer to this question is given in the next verse. (Kretzmann)

48:20 *Arnon*. Moab's most important river. (CSB)

River that bisected Moab and emptied into the Salt Sea (TLSB)

48:21 *tableland*. Upon the plateau; north of the Arnon, cities which had been in the possession of the tribe of Reuben for some centuries after the conquest. (Kretzmann)

Holon. Not the same as the town mentioned in Jos 15:51; 21:15. Its location is unknown. (CSB)

Jahzah. See 1Ch 6:78; elsewhere called Jahaz. (CSB)

48:23 *Beth Gamul*. Modern Khirbet Jumeil, five miles east of Aroer. (CSB)

Beth Meon. The same as Baal Meon (see Nu 32:38) and Beth Baal Meon (see Jos 13:17). (CSB)

48:24 *Bozrah*. Not the same as Bozrah in Edom, but another name for Bezer in Moab. (CSB)

48:25 *horn...arm* – Moab has lost all his former great power, his mighty position is shattered. All this, as the prophet now points out, is the result of Moab's pride. (Kretzmann)

48:26 The Lord speaks to the Babylonian invaders. (CSB)

Make him drunk. By drinking down the cup of God's wrath (see 13:13; 25:15–17, 28). (CSB)

wallow in his vomit. The consequence of his intoxication which can be deadly when people choke on the vomit. (Kretzmann)

be held in derision. As she had once ridiculed others (see v. 27; Zep 2:8, 10). (CSB)

They would be an object of mockery on the part of all men. This is retribution in kind. (Kretzmann)

48:27 *wagged your head*. "Had he been found among thieves that thou, as often as thou spakest of him, shookest thy head?" Moab had given every exhibition of derision and mockery over Israel, while, in truth, this nation, together with other heathen nations near by, had been the cause of Israel's criminal conduct. (Kretzmann)

48:28 *like the dove ... mouth of a gorge*. Like their ancestor Lot, they will be forced to take refuge in remote caves Cf. Gn 19:30-38. (TLSB)

48:29–30 An expanded version of the description of Moab found in Isa 16:6. (CSB)

Jeremiah draws heavily on Isaiah's denunciation of Moab. (TLSB)

48:29 *pride of Moab*. It had long since become proverbial (see Isa 25:10–11; Zep 2:8–10). (CSB)

48:30 *his boasts are false*. His boastings are nothingness, idle talk, vain vauntings; his deeds being just as vain as his words. All this causes the prophet to give expression to his sympathy for Moab, well as it had deserved its fate. (Kretzmann)

48:31–32 *I*. The prophet (as in Isa 16:9; cf. Isa 15:5). (CSB)

48:31 *wail*. Like a mourning dove (see Isa 38:14; 59:11). (CSB)

Kir Hareseth. See Isa 16:7, 11. (CSB)

This was the strongest citadel of the country, probably identical with Kir-Moab. (Kretzmann)

48:32 *for Jazer*. Or “more than Jazer.” Since, because the vines of Sibmah excelled in grapes which they produced, their destruction by the enemy was a calamity. (Kretzmann)

Jazer ... Sibmah ... sea. Amorite and Moabite towns. (TLSB)

destroyer. See v. 8; probably Nebuchadnezzar. (CSB)

fruitful land – This entire industry was ruined. (Kretzmann)

48:33 *no...shouts of joy*. Instead, shouts of judgment (see 25:30; 51:14). (CSB)

This was with the usual cry of "Hedad!" heard in the fields. (Kretzmann)

48:34 This was, throughout the entire country inhabited by the Moabites, from the northern part to the southern end of their land, the cry of distress was heard. (Kretzmann)

waters of Nimrim – These were copious springs with the meadow-lands belonging to them, near the southern end of the Dead Sea. (Kretzmann)

48:35 *offers...in high places* – He was making an end of all idolaters, as He would break down their places of worship. The same fate eventually awaits all idolaters, also those who indulge in the finer forms of the sin only and consider themselves safe in their insolent behavior. (Kretzmann)

48:36 *flute*. Played by mourners at funerals (see Mt 9:23–24). (CSB)

riches they gained have perished – literally, "because the remnant that they had gained, perished." Because the judgment of destruction had struck Moab, therefore his heart was wailing so bitterly, and therefore also the wealth of Moab was lost. (Kretzmann)

48:37 *are gashes*. These were incisions such as the heathen made in deep sorrow. (Kretzmann)

sackcloth – The whole nation lamenting on account of the great losses which had come upon the land. (Kretzmann)

48:38 *housetops* – The site of pagan sacrifice becomes the site despondent mourning. (TLSB)

broken ... like a vessel for which no one cares. The description of King Jehoiachin in 22:28. (CSB)

48:39 *become a derision.* They were no longer proud and insolent, but utterly broken in spirit. (Kretzmann)

48:40 *eagle.* Nebuchadnezzar (as in Eze 17:3). (CSB)

48:43 *Terror and pit and snare.* The Hebrew original illustrates Jeremiah's fondness for the well-turned phrase—though in this case Jeremiah was not its creator. (CSB)

48:44 *Whoever flees... shall fall ... whoever climbs ... shall be caught.* Divine judgment, once determined, is unavoidable (see Am 5:19). (CSB)

48:45 *Heshbon.* Apparently at this time it was controlled by the Ammonites (see 49:3). (CSB)

Sihon. Refers to the associates of Sihon king of the Amorites, whose chief city was Heshbon (see Nu 21:27) during the time of the exodus. (CSB)

48:47 *restore the fortunes.* Moab will be among the “many peoples” (Is 2:3) constituting the redeemed of the Lord. (TLSB)

latter days.† During the Messianic era. (CSB)

thus far is the judgment. A note by the final compiler of the book of Jeremiah (see 51:64). (CSB)

Ch 48 Moab was known for its vineyards and wine. Here, Jeremiah prophesies their destruction as a symbol of judgment on the Moabite people (fulfilled in 582 BC). Because of Moab's arrogance, its people will go into exile, as did the Judeans. In His mercy, God promised to preserve some of the population and Moab's identity as a people, at least for a time. Though Moab disappeared from history before the NT era, some of its descendants received the blessings of the new covenant. • Father, keep us humble. When others suffer, lead us to reach out to them in love. Teach us also to depend on You and not on ourselves. Amen. (TLSB)