

What is the significance of Moab in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Moab-in-the-Bible.html>

Moab, a small kingdom in the central Transjordan, was a familiar setting in the Bible.

Genesis 19:30-38 accounts for the origins of the nation of Moab. After Lot and his daughters escaped from Sodom, they lived in a cave in the hills near Zoar. When Lot became drunk, his daughters seduced him. Both conceived and bore children. Lot's oldest daughter named her son Moab, from whom the Moabites descended, and Lot's younger daughter called her son Ben-ammi, from whom the Ammonites descended. The Septuagint explains that the name Moab means "he is of my father," a perpetual reminder of Moab's incestuous beginnings.

Moab was located on a high geographical plateau directly east of the Dead Sea, between Edom and Ammon. The territory was skirted by the valleys of the Arnon and the Zered, the scarps of the Dead Sea Rift, and the gorge of the Arnon River. With desert land to the east and the rift-valley to the west, Moab measured only about 60 miles from north to south and 20 miles from east to west.

Moab's northern boundary shifted in times of military strength, but even at its greatest extent, Moab encompassed no more than about 1,400 square miles. The main region north of the Arnon River was assigned to Reuben in the tribal allotment, but the tribe was not able to hold onto the land. Gradually, the territory was absorbed into Moab.

Moab's terrain consisted mostly of gently rolling tableland separated by numerous ravines. It was known for its rich pastureland for sheep and other livestock (Numbers 32:1; 2 Kings 3:4). Moab's soil and climate were ideal for growing wheat, barley, and

other grains. Stretching through the heart of Moab, in its eastern part, was the King's Highway, a major trade route that led to Syria in the north and the Gulf of Aqaba in the south.

After leaving Egypt and camping at Mount Sinai, Israel wandered in the wilderness for 38 years before arriving at the boundary of the Promised Land in the plains of Moab (Numbers 10:11-22:1). From this point forward, Moab supplied the background for much of the biblical drama until Joshua 3.

God's chosen people were now poised to move swiftly toward their final destination in Canaan. To advance, Israel had to fight against King Sihon of the Amorites (Deuteronomy 2:26-37; Numbers 21:21-23) and King Og of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:1-7; Numbers 21:33-35). Both kings were defeated in Moab.

Subsequently, on the order of Balak, king of Moab, the prophet Balaam attempted to curse the Israelites. Instead, Balaam ended up confirming God's magnificent promise of blessing on His people and, through them, on the whole world (Numbers 22-24).

Moses reviewed the law and transferred leadership from himself to Joshua on the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy 29-33). And in the land of Moab, Moses died and was buried (Deuteronomy 34:1-6).

Other mentions of Moab and the Moabites occur throughout the Old Testament:

- Judges 3:12-31 gives an account of the 18-year oppression of Israel under King Eglon of Moab until God raised Ehud to deliver the people.

- Second Kings 3 describes the war between Israel and Moab in the ninth century BC.
- David entrusted his father and mother to the king of Moab while he dealt with Saul's hostility (1 Samuel 22:3-4).
- Solomon took foreign wives, including women from Moab, and pursued idolatrous worship of Chemosh, the god of Moab, which turned his heart away from the Lord and cost him his kingdom (1 Kings 11:1, 7, 33).
- The first part of Ruth and Naomi's story took place in Moab, a nation hostile to Israel (Ruth 1-2). Ruth, a Moabitess, became the great grandmother of King David. Her place in the genealogy of Jesus Christ is a beautiful example of God's impartiality.
- The Psalms and several prophets refer to Moab as the enemy of Israel (Psalm 60:8; Isaiah 15-16; Jeremiah 48).