

What is the significance of Bozrah in the Bible?

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

Three ancient cities bore the name Bozrah. Two are mentioned in the Old Testament, and the third is found in the apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees and secular historical texts. The word Bozrah in English Bibles is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “fortress, sheepfold, inaccessible, or enclosed.”

The first mention of Bozrah in the Bible refers to the capital city and administrative center of Edom (from approximately 800–582 BC). Bozrah of Edom was located in the hill country about 20 miles southeast of the Dead Sea. This fortress stood guard 3,608 feet above sea level and just 2.5 miles west of the King’s Highway (Numbers 20:17; 21:22), the major north-south trade route running the length of the ancient Transjordan between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Today, the modern village of Buseirah in Jordan is situated here.

According to Genesis 36:33 and 1 Chronicles 1:44, Bozrah in Edom was the hometown of Jobah, son of Zerah, one of the Edomite kings. The city was known for its strong fortifications due to the craggy sandstone hills, steep ravines, and sheer walls protecting the settlement on three sides. Its name is probably derived from the natural defensive position its rugged geography afforded. Based on Isaiah 63:1-3 and Micah 2:12, some scholars suggest that Bozrah may have been a center for the garment dying industry and sheep farming.

In pronouncements of judgment, the prophets often cited Bozrah of Edom to represent the entire Edomite territory (Isaiah 34:6; Jeremiah 49:13, 22; Amos 1:12; Micah 2:12). In Obadiah’s indictment against Edom, the prophet most likely had the city of Bozrah in mind when he observed, “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the

clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’ (Obadiah 1:3).

A second Bozrah in the Bible is a city of Moab, which Jeremiah condemned (Jeremiah 48:24). The exact location of the historical site remains unknown. Some archaeologists suggest that this Bozrah may refer to Bezer in the tribal territory of Reuben (Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 20:8). Bezer was a city of refuge set aside for the Levites (Joshua 21:36; 1 Chronicles 6:78). According to etchings on the Moabite Stone, the Moabite King Mesha (2 Kings 3:4-5) took the city from Israel and rebuilt it. Others theorize that Bozrah of Moab may be associated with Umm el-Amad, a Levitical city of refuge approximately eight miles northeast of Medeba.

The third Bozrah (of 1 Maccabees 5:26-28) was a fortified town in Gilead, east of Lake Galilee. This Bozrah was one of the cities conquered by Judas Maccabeus in the extrabiblical account. According to the text, the Nabateans encountered Judas and his brother Jonathan in the wilderness. They informed the brothers that many Jews were being held captive at Bozrah and other strongholds in Gilead. Enemies were poised to attack the next day and destroy everyone. Judas gathered his army and immediately marched to the aid of his fellow Jews in Bozrah, defeating their captors and plundering the town.

After the annexation of the Nabatean kingdom around AD 105, the town of Bozrah was renamed Nova Trajana Bostra by Trajan, who made it the capital of the newly created province of Arabia. This area is identified today with modern Buṣra aš-Šām (Busra Eski-Sham).

Isaiah's prophecy concerning Bozrah in Edom is significant in the chronology of the end

times. The passage consists of a short interview containing two questions and answers:

“Who is this coming from Edom,
from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson?
Who is this, robed in splendor,
striding forward in the greatness of his strength?
'It is I, proclaiming victory,
mighty to save.'
Why are your garments red,
like those of one treading the winepress?
'I have trodden the winepress alone;
from the nations no one was with me.
I trampled them in my anger
and trod them down in my wrath;
their blood spattered my garments,
and I stained all my clothing.
It was for me the day of vengeance;
the year for me to redeem had come.
I looked, but there was no one to help,
I was appalled that no one gave support;
so my own arm achieved salvation for me,
and my own wrath sustained me.
I trampled the nations in my anger;
in my wrath I made them drunk
and poured their blood on the ground” (Isaiah 63:1-6).

According to this prophecy, a victor will return in splendor from Bozrah, or Edom. His garments are stained crimson. Upon interrogation, the victor says that the red stains are the blood of the nations that he has defeated singlehandedly in his wrath. We identify this individual as the Lord Jesus, the One who by His “own arm achieved salvation” (Isaiah 63:5). The victory of Jesus Christ over the nations is related in Revelation 19 with wording similar to that of Isaiah: “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood. . . . He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.” He will “strike down the nations” (verses 13 and 15).

In Revelation 12, a woman, representing Israel, is escaping a dragon, representing Satan. “The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days” (Revelation 12:6). Some commentators believe the wilderness refuge is Bozrah, known for its rocky strongholds and natural defenses. The word Bozrah means “sheepfold” (ISBE), which is fitting for a place providing protection for God’s people.

Israel’s flight to Bozrah will occur in the middle of the tribulation. Prompting their journey will be the abomination of desolation Jesus warned of in Matthew 24:15-21. Later, when the nations of the world, led by the Antichrist, gather at Armageddon, the Lord intervenes to protect His people. The final battle will begin in Bozrah, where the remnant of Israel is gathered. The forces of the Antichrist are defeated, Israel is saved, and the Lord Jesus is the Victor (Isaiah 63).