**What does the Moabite Stone reveal about the Biblical revolt of Mesha?**

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| http://www.christiananswers.net/0.gif | http://www.christiananswers.net/0.gif | Moabite Stone. Copyrighted photograph.  The Mesha inscription, now in the Louvre in Paris  “I am [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html), son [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html)[it], [king](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/king.html) of [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html), the [Dibonite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dibon.html).”[[1]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a019.html#ref1)  So begins one of the most extraordinary ancient documents ever found. (For the unusual circumstances surrounding its discovery, see *Archaeology and Biblical Research*, Winter 1991: 2-3). [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html) was ruler of the small kingdom of [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html), east of the [Dead Sea](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/deadsea.html), in the mid-ninth century BC. He was a contemporary of [Jehoshaphat](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehoshaphat.html), [king](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/king.html) of the southern [kingdom of Judah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judahkingdomof.html) (870-848 BC), and [Joram](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joram.html), king of the northern [kingdom of Israel](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/israelkingdomof.html) (852-841 BC). Everything we know about Mesha from the Bible is recorded in [2 Kings 3](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html). But we know a lot more about him from a record he left us, referred to as the Mesha Inscription, or [Moabite Stone](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moabitestone.html). It was discovered in Dhiban, Jordan, in 1868 by a French Anglican medical missionary by the name of F.A. Klein.  Mesha InscriptionBoth documents, [2 Kings 3](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html) and the [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html) Inscription, describe the same event, the revolt of [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html), but from entirely different perspectives. Mesha made his record of the event on a stone slab, or stela, 3 ft. high and 2 ft. wide. Unfortunately, the stone was broken into pieces by the local Bedouin before it could be acquired by the authorities. About two-thirds of the pieces were recovered and those, along with an impression made before the stela was destroyed, allowed all but the last line to be reconstructed. There are a total of 34 lines, written in [Moabite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moabite.html), a language almost identical to [Hebrew](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hebrewlanguage.html). It is the longest monumental inscription yet found in [Palestine](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/palestine.html).  The heartland of [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html) was the territory east of the southern half of the [Dead Sea](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/deadsea.html), from the great [Arnon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/arnon.html) Gorge in the north to the [Zered](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/zered.html) River in the south. North of the Arnon River, to about the northern end of the Dead Sea, was a disputed area called the “land of [Medeba](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/medeba.html)” in the Mesha Inscription (line 8). [Medeba](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/medeba.html) was a major city in the region some 18 mi. north of the Arnon. The area was sometimes under the control of [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html), sometimes under the control of others. At the time of the Conquest at the end of the 15th century BC, the region was occupied by the [Amorites](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/amorites.html), who had earlier taken it from the [Moabites](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moabite.html) ([Num. 21:26](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num21.html#26)). The [Israelites](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/israel.html) then captured the area ([Num. 21:24](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num21.html#24); Dt. [2:24](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/deu2.html#24), [36](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/deu2.html#36); [3:8](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num3.html#8), [16](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num3.html#16)), with the [tribe](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/tribe.html) of [Reuben](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/reubentribeof.html) taking possession ([Jos. 13:16](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#16)). The area seesawed back and forth for the next several centuries, passing to the Moabites ([Jgs. 3:12](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg3.html" \l "12)), Israelites ([Jgs. 3:30](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg3.html" \l "30)), [Ammonites](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ammonite.html) (Jgs. [11:13](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg11.html#13), [32-33](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg11.html#32)), and back to Israel ([Jgs. 11:32-33](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg11.html" \l "32)).  In the mid-ninth century BC, Mesha was successful in throwing off the yoke of Israel and bringing the area once again under the authority of Moab ([1 Kgs. 3:5](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki3.html#5); Mesha Inscription).  [2 Kings 3](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html#3) recounts how [Joram](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joram.html), [Jehoshaphat](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehoshaphat.html), and the [king](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/king.html) of [Edom](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/edom.html) combined forces to attempt to bring Moab back under Israelite control. They attacked from the south and were successful in routing the Moabite forces and destroying many towns ([2 Kgs. 3: 24-25](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html#24)). But when the coalition tried to dislodge [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html) from [Kir Hareseth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/kir-haraseth.html) (modern Kerak), they were unsuccessful. After Mesha [sacrificed](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/sacrifice.html) his oldest son on the ramparts of the city,  “the fury against Israel was great; they withdrew and returned to their own land” ([2 Kgs. 3: 27](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html#27)).  The campaign must have taken place between 848 and 841 BC, the only time when [Joram](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joram.html) and [Jehoshaphat](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehoshaphat.html) were both on the throne. Although the campaign met with some success, it appears that Moab retained its independence. This is confirmed by the Mesha Inscription.  The Mesha Inscription gives us “the rest of the story.” It reads, in fact, like a chapter from the Old Testament. Its language, terminology and phraseology are exactly the same as what we find in the Bible. Mesha credits his successful revolt and recapture of [Moabite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moabite.html) territory, as well as other accomplishments, to [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html), national god of Moab. He does not, of course, record his defeat in the south at the hands of the coalition armies. Similarly, although the Bible records Mesha's revolt, it gives no details on his successes. So each record, accurate in its own way, records events from a different perspective.  **Chronology of the Revolt of Mesha**  The main problem in correlating the Mesha Inscription with the [Bible](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/home.html) has to do with synchronizing the chronology of the two sources. [2 Kings 3:5](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html#5) (cf. [1:1](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki1.html)) simply states,  “But after [Ahab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ahab.html) died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.”  Ahab, father of [Joram](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joram.html), died in ca. 853 BC, so Mesha's revolt must have taken place some time after 853 BC. According to the Mesha Inscription,  [Omri](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/omri.html) had taken possession of the land of [Medeba](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/medeba.html). And he dwelt in it in his days and half [[2]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a019.html#ref2) the days of his son [[3]](http://www.christiananswers.net/q-abr/abr-a019.html#ref3): 40 years; but [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html) restored it in my days (lines 7-9).  The Mesha Inscription not only mentions [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html), king of Moab, known in the Bible, but also [Omri](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/omri.html), one of the most powerful kings of the Northern Kingdom ([1 Kgs. 16:21-28](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki16.html#21)), who ruled 885-873 BC.  [Omri](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/omri.html) established a dynasty which lasted until his grandson Joram was assassinated by [Jehu](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehu.html) in 841 BC. The term “son” in the inscription simply means descendent, as we know from the Bible and other ancient Near Eastern texts. Adding the years of Omri (12, [1 Kgs. 16:23](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki16.html#23)), the years of his son [Ahab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ahab.html) (22, [1 Kgs. 16:29](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki16.html#29)), the years of Ahab's son [Ahaziah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ahaziah.html) (2, [1 Kgs. 22:52](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki22.html#52)) and half the years of [Joram](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joram.html), brother of [Ahaziah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ahaziah.html), (6, [2 Kgs. 3:1](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html#1)), we obtain a span of 42 years. Some of the reigns of these kings could be common years, making the true span 40 years, or, the 40 year figure simply could be a round number. Thiele gives absolute years for the period from the beginning of the reign of Omri to the sixth year of Joram as 885 to 846 BC, or 40 years (1983: 217). Thus, it appears that [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html) revolted in the sixth year of [Joram](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/joram.html), ca. 846 BC. The [Bible](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bible.html) indicates that the retaliation by Joram recorded in [2 Kings 3](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html) took place immediately upon Mesha's revolt (verses 5-7), or 846 BC. This date falls within the time period of 848-841 BC when both Joram and [Jehoshaphat](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehoshaphat.html) were ruling.  **The Gods of Israel and Moab**  In describing his victories over [Israel](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/israel.html), Mesha tells of defeating the town of [Nebo](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nebo.html). Among the spoils he acquired were the “[altar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/altar.html)-[hearths](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hearth.html)? of [Yahweh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehovah.html)” (lines 17-18). This is the earliest mention of Yahweh, God of the Israelites, outside the Bible.  The Bible records the names of many deities worshipped by the nations around Israel. One of those gods is [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html). He is mentioned eight times in the Old Testament ([Num. 21:29](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num21.html#29); [Jgs. 11:24](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg11.html#24); [1 Kgs. 11:7](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki11.html#7), [33](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1ki11.html#33); [2 Kgs. 23:13](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki23.html#13); Jer. [48:7](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#7), [13](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#13), [46](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#46)), always (with the exception of [Jgs. 11:24](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg11.html#24)) as the national god of the Moabites. The Mesha Inscription verifies that this indeed was the case. [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html) is mentioned some 11 times in the inscription:   * Mesha made a high place for Chemosh, since Chemosh gave Mesha victory over his enemies (line 3) * Because Chemosh was angry with Moab, [Omri](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/omri.html) oppressed [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html) (line 5) * Chemosh gave Moab back her territory (line 9) * [Mesha](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html) slew the people of [Ataroth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html) to satisfy Chemosh (lines 11-12) * Mesha dragged the [altar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/altar.html)-[hearth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hearth.html)(?) of [Ataroth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html) before Chemosh (lines 12-13) * Chemosh directed Mesha to attack the town of [Nebo](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nebo.html) (line 14) * Mesha devoted the inhabitants of Nebo to Chemosh (line 17) * The altar-hearths(?) of [Yahweh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehovah.html) from Nebo were dragged before Chemosh (lines 17-18) * Chemosh drove the king of Israel out of [Jahaz](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jahaz.html) (lines 18-19) * Chemosh directed Mesha to fight against Horanaim (line 32) * Chemosh gave Mesha victory over Horanaim (line 33)   **The Cities of Northern Moab**  Most of the inscription is taken up with Mesha's success in regaining the land of [Medeba](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/medeba.html), the disputed territory north of the [Arnon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/arnon.html) Gorge. He claims to have added 100 towns to his territory by means of his faithful army from [Dibon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dibon.html):  [And] the men of [Dibon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dibon.html) were fitted out for [war](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/war.html) because all Dibon was obedient. And I ruled [over a] hundred of towns that I added to the land (lines 28-29).  Some 12 towns in the land of Medeba are mentioned, all of them known from the Old Testament.  **“I am Mesha …the Dibonite”** (line 1)  Later on in the inscription he says,  *I built Qeriho: the wall of the parkland and the wall of the acropolis; and I built its* [*gates*](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gate.html)*, and I built its* [*towers*](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/towers.html)*; and I built the king's house; and I made banks for the water reservoir inside the town; and there was no* [*cistern*](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/cistern.html) *inside the town, in Qeriho, and I said to all the people: “Make yourself each a cistern in his house”; and I dug the ditches for Qeriho with prisoners of* [*Israel*](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/israel.html) *(lines 21-26).*  Since Mesha erected his stela to honor [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html) in “this high place for Chemosh in Qeriho,” and since the stela was found at Dhiban, identified as ancient Dibon, most scholars believe that Qeriho was the name of the royal citadel at [Dibon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dibon.html). Note that Israelite captives were used to cut the timber used to construct Qeriho.  Dibon was captured from the [Amorites](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/amorites.html) by Israel (Num. [21:21-25](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num21.html#21), [31](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num21.html#31)) and assigned to the [tribe of Reuben](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/reubentribeof.html) ([Jos. 13:17](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#17)). But evidently it was reassigned to the tribe of [Gad](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gad.html), since Gad built the [city](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/city.html) ([Num. 32:34](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num32.html#34)) and it was called “Dibon of Gad”; ([Num. 33:45, 46](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num33.html#45)).  Copyrighted photograph.  Dhiban Nabatean temple ruins  The site of Dhiban and was excavated 1950-1956 and 1965. A city [wall](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/wall.html) and [gateway](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gate.html) were found, as well as a large podium which the excavators believe supported the royal quarter constructed by Mesha. In addition, a text from around the time of Mesha was found which refers to the “temple of Che[mosh],” and nearly 100 [cisterns](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/cistern.html) were found on the site and in the surrounding area, possibly made in response to Mesha's directive to “make yourself each a cistern in his house” (lines 24- 25).  In his [prophecy](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/prophecy.html) against [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html), [Isaiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/isaiah.html) states, “[Dibon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dibon.html) goes up to its temple, to its [high places](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/highplace.html) to weep” ([15:2](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/isa15.html#2), NIV). [Jeremiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeremiah.html) predicted that the fortified cities of Dibon would be ruined ([48:18](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#18); cf. [48:21-22](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#21)).  ***“And I built*** [***Baal***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/baal.html) ***Meon, and made a reservoir in it”*** (line 9)  Baal Meon was allotted to the Reubenites ([Jos. 13:17](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#17), where it is called [Beth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/beth.html) [Baal](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/baal.html) Meon), and built by them ([Num. 32:38](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num32.html#38)). An eighth century BC ostracon [an inscribed [potsherd](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/potsherd.html)] from [Samaria](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/samaria.html) (no. 27) contains a reference to “[Baala](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/baalah.html) the Baalmeonite.” [Jeremiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeremiah.html) predicted that the [judgment of God](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judgmentsofgod.html) would come upon the city ([48:23](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#23), where it is called Beth Meon). Ezekiel said God would expose the flank of Moab, beginning with its frontier towns, including Baal Meon ([25:9](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/ezek25.html#9)). It is thought to be located at Kh. Ma'in, 5 mi southwest of modern Madaba, which has not been excavated.  Toward the end of the inscription, Baal Meon is mentioned again when Mesha records,  “And I built… the temple of Baal Meon; and I established there […] the [sheep](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/sheep.html) of the land” (lines 29-31).  The reference to sheep is significant, as it reflects the main occupation of the people of [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html), in agreement with the Bible. [2 Kings 3:4](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/2ki3.html#4) tells us,  Now Mesha king of Moab raised sheep, and he had to supply the king of Israel with 100,000 [lambs](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/lamb.html) and with the [wool](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/wool.html) of 100,000 [rams](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ram.html).  ***“And I built Kiriathaim”*** (lines 9-10)  Kiriathaim was another [city](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/city.html) allotted to the [Reubenites](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/reubentribeof.html) and built by them ([Jos. 13:19](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#19); [Num. 32:37](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num32.html#37)). [Jeremiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeremiah.html) predicted that the city would be disgraced and captured ([48:1](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#1)), and [Ezekiel](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ezekiel.html) said [God](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judgmentsofgod.html) would expose the flank of Moab, beginning with its frontier towns, including Kiriathaim ([25:9](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/ezek25.html#9)). It is possibly located at al Qureiye, 6 mi. northwest of Madaba.  ***“And the men of*** [***Gad***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gad.html) ***had dwelt in the land of*** [***Ataroth***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html) ***from of old”*** (line 10)  Mesha devoted 3 lines of his memorial to a description of his operation against [Ataroth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html). Although mentioned only twice in the Old Testament, the city seems to have been an important place. The name means “[crowns](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/crown.html)” and was said by the Reubenites and Gadites to be a good place for livestock ([Num. 32:3-4](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num32.html#3)). The Gadites built up [Ataroth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html) as a fortified city, and built pens there for their flocks ([Num. 32:34-36](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num32.html#34)). This agrees with Mesha's inscription which says that the men of Gad had lived there “from of old.” Ataroth is most likely located at Kh. 'Attarus, unexcavated, 8 mi. northwest of Dhiban.  The entire section dealing with [Ataroth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html) reads as follows:  And the men of [Gad](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gad.html) had dwelt in the land of [Ataroth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/ataroth.html) from of old, and the king of Israel built Ataroth for himself, but I fought against the town and took it, and I slew all the people: the town belonged to [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html) and to [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html). And I brought thence the [altar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/altar.html)-[hearth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hearth.html) of his Beloved, and I dragged it before Chemosh in [Kerioth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/kerioth.html)/my town. And I settled in it the men of [Sharon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/sharonsaron.html) and the men of Maharath (lines 10-14).  ***“And I brought thence the*** [***altar***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/altar.html)***-***[***hearth***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hearth.html) ***of his Beloved, and I dragged it before*** [***Chemosh***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html) ***in*** [***Kerioth***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/kerioth.html)***/my town”*** (lines 12-13)  Kerioth was [judged by God](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judgmentsofgod.html) ([Jer. 48:24](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#24)), with the town being captured and its strongholds taken ([Jer. 48:41](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#41)). Its location is uncertain. If “my town” is the correct reading in line 13, then the text refers to [Dibon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dibon.html), [Mesha's](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mesha.html) capital.  ***“And Chemosh said to me: ‘Go! Take*** [***Nebo***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nebo.html) ***against Israel’”*** (line 14)  Mesha's assault of Nebo is detailed in 4 lines, the most of any of the cities mentioned in the stela. Nebo is mentioned seven times in the Old Testament, being one of the cities built by the [tribe of Reuben](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/reubentribeof.html) ([Num. 32:38](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer32.html#38)). In his [prophecy](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/prophecy.html) against Moab, [Isaiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/isaiah.html) [wrote](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/isaiahthebookof.html) that Moab would wail over Nebo ([15:2](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/isa15.html#2), NIV). Similarly, [Jeremiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeremiah.html) said that judgment would come upon her, and she would be laid waste ([48:1](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#1), [22](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#22)).  Mesha's nighttime foray against Nebo is reported as follows:  And [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html) said to me: “Go! Take [Nebo](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nebo.html) against Israel.” And I went by night and fought against it from break of dawn till noon. And I took it and slew all: 7,000 men, boys, women, girls, and pregnant women, because I had devoted it to Ashtar-[Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html). And I took thence the [altar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/altar.html)-hearths of [YHWH](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jehovah.html) and I dragged them before Chemosh (lines 14-18).  It appears that there was a [worship](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/worship.html) center for [Yahweh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/lord.html) at [Nebo](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/nebo.html) since among the spoils were “[altar](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/altar.html) [hearths](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hearth.html)(?) of Yahweh.” It is perhaps for this reason that Mesha devoted the inhabitants to his god(s) Ashtar-Chemosh. The word used for “devoted” is the same as the [Hebrew word](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/hebrewlanguage.html) *harem* used in the Old Testament for offering a [city](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/city.html) completely to Yahweh, such as [Jericho](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jericho.html) ([Jos. 6:17, 21](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh6.html#17)). Nebo is most likely Kh. al Muhaiyat, northwest of Madaba and just south of Mt. Nebo.  ***“And the*** [***king***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/king.html) ***of Israel had built*** [***Jahaz***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jahaz.html)***”*** (lines 18-19)  Jahaz is the town where the Israelites fought and defeated [Sihon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/sihon.html) and his [Amorite](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/amorites.html) army as they first approached the promised land ([Num. 21:21-31](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num21.html#21); [Dt. 2:31-36](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/deu2.html#31); [Jgs. 11:19-22](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/judg11.html#19)). It was included in the Reubenite allotment ([Jos. 13:18](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#18)), and later transferred to the [Levites](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/levite.html) ([Jos. 21:36](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh21.html#36); [1 Chr. 6:78](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1chr6.html#78)). Jeremiah predicted doom for the city as part of [God's judgment](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judgmentsofgod.html) against Moab ([48:21](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#21), [34](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#34)). Mesha goes on to say,  And the king of Israel had built [Jahaz](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jahaz.html), and dwelt therein while he fought against me; but Chemosh drove him out from before me, and I took from [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html) 200 men, all the chiefs thereof, and I established them in Jahaz; and I took it to add it to [Dibon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dibon.html) (lines 18-21).  Here, Mesha refers to a northern campaign by the king of Israel which is not recorded in the Old Testament. In order to achieve victory, Mesha had to marshal the best of his forces, 200 chiefs. Once captured, Jahaz became a daughter city of Dibon. The location of Jahaz is uncertain, although Kh. Medeineyeh 10 mi southeast of Madaba is a likely candidate.  ***“I built*** [***Aroer***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/aroer.html)***, and made the*** [***highway***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/highway.html) ***through the*** [***Arnon***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/arnon.html)***”*** (line 26)  The name [Aroer](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/aroer.html) means “crest of a [mountain](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/mount.html),” and that certainly describes this site. It was a border fortress located at Kh. 'Ara'ir on the northern rim of the [Arnon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/arnon.html) [river](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/river.html) gorge. Three seasons of excavation were carried out there between 1964 and 1966. Remnants of the fortress constructed by the king of Israel were found, as well as a substantial new fortress constructed by Mesha over the earlier one. In addition, a [reservoir](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/cistern.html) to store [rainwater](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/rain.html) was built on the northwest side of the fortress.  Arnon Gorge. Photo copyrighted.  View south across the Arnon gorge, the “Grand Canyon” of the Middle East.  [Aroer](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/aroer.html) marked the southern boundary of the Transjordanian territory originally captured by the Israelites (Dt. [2:36](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/deu2.html#36); [3:12](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/deu3.html#12); [4:48](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/deu4.html#48); [Jos. 12:2](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh12.html#2); [13:9](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#9), [16](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#16), [25](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#25)). It was occupied and fortified by the [Gadites](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/gad.html) ([Nm. 32:34](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num32.html#34)). Later, the [prophet](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/prophet.html) [Jeremiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeremiah.html) [said](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeremiahbookof.html) that the inhabitants of Aroer would witness fleeing refugees as God poured out His wrath on the cities of Moab ([48:19-20](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#19)).  ***“I built*** [***Beth***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/beth.html)[***Bamoth***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bamoth.html)***, for it was destroyed”*** (line 27)  The [Beth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/beth.html) [Bamoth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bamoth.html) of the Mesha Stela is most likely the same as the [Bamoth](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bamoth.html) [Baal](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/baal.html) of the Old Testament. It was here that God met with [Balaam](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/balaam.html) ([Num. 22:41-23:5](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num22.html#41)); the town was later given to the [tribe of Reuben](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/reubentribeof.html) ([Jos. 13:17](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#17)). The location of the place is uncertain.  ***“And I built*** [***Bezer***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bezer.html)***, for it was in ruins”*** (line 27)  Under the Israelites, [Bezer](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bezer.html) was a [Levitical](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/levite.html) city and a [city of refuge](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/cityofrefuge.html) ([Dt. 4:43](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/deu4.html#43); Jos [20:8](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh20.html#8); [21:36](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh21.html#36); [1 Chr. 6:78](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/1chr6.html#78)). It may be the same as [Bozrah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/bozrah.html) in [Jer. 48:24](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#24), a Moabite city [judged by God](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judgmentsofgod.html). Its location is uncertain.  ***“And I built [the temple of*** [***Mede]ba***](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/medeba.html)***”*** (lines 29-30)  The city of [Medeba](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/medeba.html) was conquered and occupied by Israel ([Nu. 21:30](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num21.html#30); [Jos. 13:9, 16](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/josh13.html#9)). It suffered under the hand of God when He poured out His [judgment](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judgmentsofgod.html) on [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html) ([Isa. 15:2](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/isa15.html#2)). The ancient site is located at modern Madaba, and remains unexcavated.  ***“And I built …the temple of Diblaten”*** (lines 29-30)  Diblaten is mentioned in [Jeremiah's](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeremiah.html) [oracle](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/oracle.html) against [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html) as [Beth Diblathaim](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/beth-diblathaim.html) ([48:22](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#22)) and is possibly the same as [Almon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/almon.html) Diblathaim, a stopping place for the Israelites as they approached the promised land ([Num. 33:46-47](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/num33.html#46)). It is perhaps located at Deleitat esh-Sherqiyeh 10 mi. north-northeast of Dhiban, but that location is far from certain.  **The House of David and Southern Moab**  ***“And the house [of Da]vid dwelt in Horanaim”*** (line 31)  Line 31 is perhaps the most significant line in the entire inscription. In 1993, a stela was discovered at Tel [Dan](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dan.html) in northern Israel mentioning the “House of [David](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/david.html)” (*Bible and Spade*, Autumn 1993: 119-121). This mid-ninth century BC inscription provided the first mention of [David](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/david.html) in a contemporary text outside the Bible. The find is especially significant since in recent years several scholars have questioned the existence of [David](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/david.html). At about the same time the [Dan](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/dan.html) stela was found, French scholar Andre Lemaire was working on the Mesha Inscription and determined that the same phrase appeared there in line 31 (*Bible and Spade*, Summer 1995: 91-92). Lemaire was able to identify a previously indistinguishable letter as a “d” in the phrase “House of [David](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/david.html).” This phrase is used a number of times in the Old Testament for the [Davidic](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/david.html) dynasty.  From this point on in Mesha's record it appears that he is describing victories south of the [Arnon](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/arnon.html) river, an area previously controlled by [Judah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/judah.html). Although there are only three lines left in the surviving portion, Lemaire believes we only have about half of the original memorial (1994: 37). The missing half would have told how Mesha regained the southern half of Moab from Judah. The complete text regarding Horanaim reads as follows:  And the house [of [Da]vid](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/david.html) dwelt in [Horanaim](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/horonaim.html) […] and [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html) said to me: “Go down! Fight against Horanaim.” And I went down, and [I fought against the town, and I took it; and] [Chemosh](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/chemosh.html) [resto]red it in my days (lines 31-33).  [Horanaim](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/horonaim.html) is mentioned in [Isaiah's](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/isaiah.html) [prophecy](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/prophecy.html) against Moab ([15:5](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/isa15.html#5)). He says that [fugitives](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/fugitive.html) would lament their destruction as they travelled the [road](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/road.html) to [Horanaim](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/horonaim.html). [Jeremiah](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/jeremiah.html) says much the same in [48:3, 5](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#3), and [47](http://www.christiananswers.net/bible/jer48.html#47). The town is located south of the Arnon, but exactly where is a matter of conjecture.  **Notes**   1. The translation used in this article is that of A. Lemaire (1994: 33). 2. In his translation, Lemaire renders the word *hsy* as “sum.” We have adopted the meaning “half,” from classical Hebrew, which is the meaning used by most other translators. 3. Lemaire translates *bnh* as “sons.” It is uncertain from the consonantal text whether it should be “son” or “sons.” We have chosen “son,” in agreement with most other translations, since it is more consistent with the historical reconstruction proposed here.   **References**   * Dearman, A., ed. 1989 *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*. Atlanta: Scholars Press. * Lemaire, A. 1994 “House of David Restored in Moabite Inscription”. *Biblical Archaeology Review* 20/3: 30-37. * Thiele, E.R. 1983 *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan.   More information   * [Moabite Stone](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moabitestone.html) * [Moab](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/moab.html) * [King David](http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/david.html)   Author: Bryant G. 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