

The Moabite Stone

This important inscription was discovered intact in 1868; it was subsequently broken by the Arabs and in 1873 it was taken to the Louvre. The best publication is found in Dussaud, *Les monuments palestiniens et judaïques (Musée du Louvre)*, 1912, pp. 4 - 22, with a magnificent photograph of the stela and a good bibliography. The work of Smend and Socin, *Die Inschrift des Königs Mesa von Moab* (1886), which was long standard, is not reliable, as was pointed out in detail by Renan and Clermont - Ganneau; see especially Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris*, I, pp. 1 - 10. The most recent competent translation is that of Gressmann, *AOT*, pp. 440 - 42. On the question of the authenticity of the text, which was strangely disputed for a long time (in spite of the fact that no forger of that time could possibly have divined the correct forms of letters in the ninth century B.C.), cf. Albright, *JQR*, xxxv, 1945, pp. 247 - 250.

For details of translation which depend on recent discoveries see especially Poebel, *Das appositionell bestimmte Pronomen* (Chicago, 1932), pp. 7 - 11; Albright, *BASOR*, 89, p. 16. n. 55. There are a number of words which were formerly obscure but which have now been found in other Northwest - Semitic inscriptions.

The date of the Mesha Stone is roughly fixed by the reference to Mesha, king of Moab, in II Kings 3:4, after 849 B.C. However, since the contents of the stela point to a date toward the end of the king's reign, it seems probable that it should be placed between 840 and 820, perhaps about 830 B.C. in round numbers.

I (am) Mesha, son of Chemosh - [...], king of Moab, the Dibonite - my father (had) reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father, - (who) made this high place for Chemosh in Qarhoh [...] because he saved me from all the kings and caused me to triumph over all my adversaries. As for Omri, (5) king of Israel, he humbled Moab many years (lit., days), for Chemosh was angry at his land. And his son followed him and he also said, "I will humble Moab." In my time he spoke (thus), but I have triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel hath perished for ever! (Now) Omri had occupied the land of Medeba, and (Israel) had dwelt there in his time and half the time of his son (Ahab), forty years; but Chemosh dwelt there in my time.

And I built Baal-meon, making a reservoir in it, and I built (10) Qaryaten. Now the men of Gad had always dwelt in the land of Ataroth, and the king of Israel had built Ataroth for them; but I fought against the town and took it and slew all the people of the town as satiation (intoxication) for Chemosh and Moab. And I brought back from there Arel (or Oriel), its chieftain, dragging him before Chemosh in Kerioth, and I settled there men of Sharon and men of Maharith. And Chemosh said to me, "Go, take Nebo from Israel!" (15) So I went by night and fought against it from the break of dawn until noon, taking it and slaying all, seven thousand men, boys, women, girls and maid-servants, for I had devoted them to destruction for (the god) Ashtar-Chemosh. And I took from there the [...] of Yahweh, dragging them before Chemosh. And the king of Israel had built Jahaz, and he dwelt there while he was fighting against me, but Chemosh drove him out before me. And (20) I took from Moab two hundred men, all first class (warriors), and set them against Jahaz and took it in order to attach it to (the district of) Dibon.

It was I (who) built Qarhoh, the wall of *the forests* and the wall of the citadel; I also built its gates and I built its towers and I built the king's house, and I made both of its reservoirs for water inside the town. And there was no cistern inside the town at Qarhoh, so I said to all the people, "Let each of you make (25) a cistern for himself in his house!" And I cut *beams* for Qarhoh with Israelite captives. I built Aroer, and I made the highway in the Arnon (valley); I built Beth-bamoth, for it had been destroyed; I built Bezer - for it lay in ruins - with fifty men of Dibon, for all Dibon is (my) loyal dependency.

And I reigned [*in peace*] over the hundred towns which I had added to the land. And I built (30) [...] Medeba and Beth-diblathen and Beth-baal-meon, and I set there the [...] of the land. And as for Hauronen, there dwelt in it [. . . . And] Chemosh said to me, "Go down, fight against Hauronen. And I went down [and I fought against the town and I took it], and Chemosh dwelt there in my time