

Am Yisrael Chai! The “Fake News” Message of the Mesha Stele

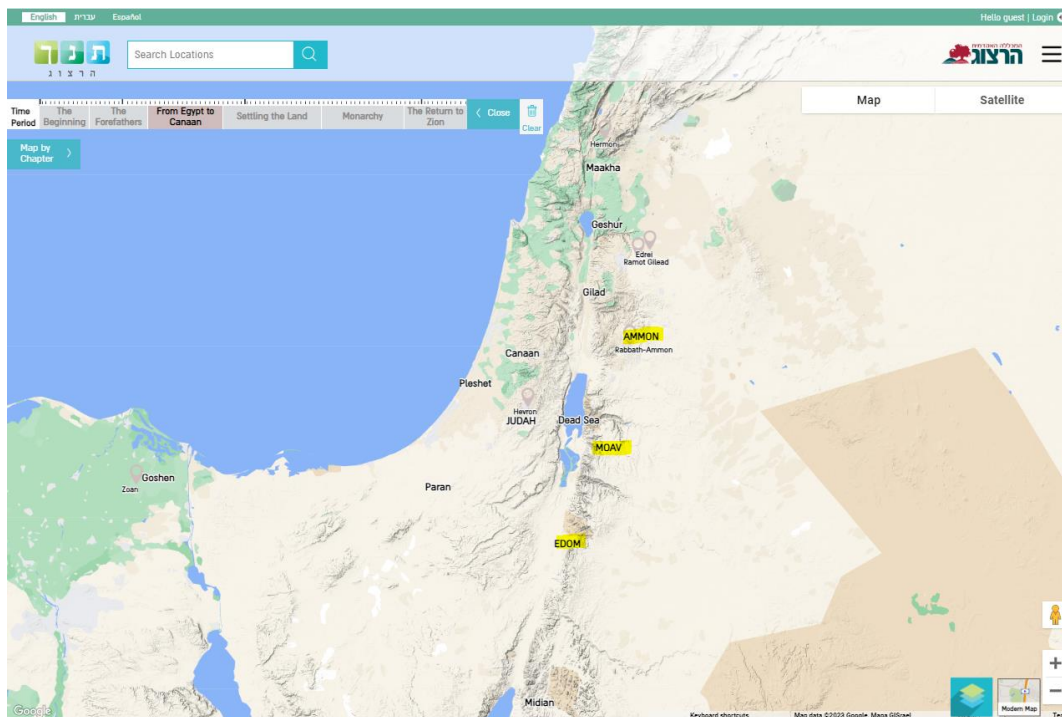
Like many others, Mesha, king of Moav, believed that he had destroyed the nation of Israel, even carving his “victory” into a celebratory stone that survived to this day (the “Mesha Stele”). But the people of Israel are eternal. They have survived through the ages while their enemies have been destroyed and forgotten.

Throughout its history, Israel has been surrounded by nations that sought to destroy it. Indeed, the three nations on the Eastern Bank of the Jordan River had familial ties with the people of Israel – the Torah teaches that **Moav** and **Ammon** are descended from Lot ([Bereishit 19](#)), while **Edom** is descended from Esav ([Breishit 36](#)). This familial connection forbade the people of Israel from attacking them during the Exodus on their way to Israel ([Devarim 2](#)), but they, nevertheless, found opportunities to war with the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov throughout Tanakh. Note that the refusal of Moav and Ammon to assist the people of Israel on their way through the desert has serious repercussions. The Torah forbids us from allowing them to join the people of Israel as converts ([Devarim 23](#)).

A good way to see how these neighboring nations are positioned, you can go to <https://www.hatanakh.com/en/map>

Choose “Map by Era” and choose “From Egypt to Canaan.”

The map you get clearly shows the three Eastern Bank nations, **Ammon**, **Moav** and **Edom**.



We will focus on the story of Moav's rebellion against King Jehoram of Israel. According to the Tanakh ([II Melachim, Chapter 3](#)), when King Mesha of Moav rebels, Jehoram called on his allies, the King Yehoshafat of Judea and the King of Edom, to go to war with Moav. According to Tanakh the King of Moav brought a human sacrifice (either of his own son or the son of the King of Edom), an act which brought the war to an inconclusive end.

One of the earliest extra-biblical finds that relates a parallel version to a story that we find in navi is the "Mesha Stele" or the "Moabite Stone." (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesha_Stele for a description of the stone and how it was found.)



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:P1120870_Louvre_st%C3%A8le_de_M%C3%A9sha_AO5066_rwk.JPG

The story told on the stone describes the (alleged) great accomplishments and victories of King Mesha. Among the statements that appear is the following (obviously in translation from the Moabite language):

*Omri was the king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab for many days, for Kemosh was angry with his land. And his son reigned in his place; and he also said, "I will oppress Moab!" In my days he said so. But I looked down on him and on his house, and **Israel has been defeated; it has been defeated forever!***

Full text at: <https://www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/westsem/mesha.html>

Indeed, back in the 9th Century BCE, the king of Moav declared that "Israel has been defeated; it has been defeated forever!"

Many of our enemies have declared the demise of our people, but, to paraphrase Mark Twain "The reports of our death are greatly exaggerated."

In contrast with Moav that refused to welcome us generously in our time of need ([Devarim 23:5](#)), the show of brotherly love and concern that we have seen shown by the Jewish people – in Israel and around the world – gives us reason to hope and believe that the current war will strengthen us and bring us to victory over our enemies.

[Tehillim 83](#) is an appropriate mizmor to recite with students in these times. The mizmor lists the nations of **Ammon**, **Moav** and **Edom** among those neighboring nations who proclaim: “Let us wipe them out as a nation; Israel’s name will be mentioned no more.” The mizmor closes with our prayer to HaShem to destroy those who threaten us:

<p><i>O my God, make them like thistledown, like stubble driven by the wind. As a fire burns a forest, as flames scorch the hills, pursue them with Your tempest, terrify them with Your storm. Cover their faces with shame so that they seek Your name, O LORD. May they be frustrated and terrified, disgraced and doomed forever. May they know that Your name, Yours alone, is the LORD, supreme over all the earth.</i></p>	<p>אַלְקֵי שִׁיתְמוּ כַגִּלְגָל כְּקֶשׁ לַפְּנֵי־רוּחַ: כְּאֵשׁ תִּבְעַר־יַעַר אִכְלֵה־בָּהּ תִּלְהֶט הַרִים: גַּן תִּרְדָּפֶם בְּסַעַרְךָ וּבְסוּפֹתֶךָ תִּבְהֶלֶם: מִלֵּא פְנֵיהֶם קִלּוֹן וַיִּבְקֹשׁוּ שְׁמֶךָ ה': יִבְשׁוּ וַיִּבְהֻלוּ עַד־עֵד וַיִּחְפְּרוּ וַיִּאֲבֹדוּ: יִדְעוּ כִּי־אַתָּה שְׁמֶךָ ה' לְבַדְּךָ לְעִלְיוֹן עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:</p>
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See: <https://www.hatanakh.com/content/%D7%A2%D7%9D-%D7%99%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%90%D7%9C-%D7%97%D7%99>

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