

MOAB

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Moab was a kingdom across the River Jordan from Israel and Judah. The residents of Moab spoke Moabite, a Canaanite language closely related to Hebrew. The authors of Genesis understood the Moabites to be descended from Abraham's nephew, Lot, through an incestuous relationship with one of Lot's daughters. The Moabites are mentioned at various points throughout scripture.

The Moabites refused passage to the Israelites in the Exodus, but the Israelites were told that they were not to conquer the land of the Moabites (Deuteronomy 2:9). Throughout the course of the Exodus, Balak, a Moabite king, hired the rogue prophet Balaam to curse Israel. According to 2 Samuel 8:2, King David militarily dominated the Moabites. Moabite women are listed among Solomon's foreign wives.

Second Kings 3:4–27 tells of the rebellion of Mesha, king of Moab, against his overlord, Jehoram, king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. In the nineteenth century, a stele commissioned by Mesha was discovered in what is now Jordan, describing this event from the perspective of the Moabites. It is a powerful example of an extra-biblical example of events described in the Bible. In this inscription, Mesha described how the national god of the Moabites, Chemosh, allowed Moab to come under control of Israel but then helped them in throwing off Israel.

According to Deuteronomy 23:3–4, individual Moabites were forbidden from ever becoming part of the Israelite commonwealth because they refused hospitality to the Israelites during the Exodus. The Bible is not consistent on this point, though, because Ruth, the protagonist of the book of Ruth and the great-grandmother of David, was a Moabite and married an Israelite and worshipped Jehovah (see Ruth 1:16).

Related verses

Genesis 19:31–37

Exodus 15:15

Numbers 22:1–6

Numbers 25:1

Deuteronomy 2:9

Deuteronomy 23:3–4

Judges 3:12–14

Ruth 1:1–5

2 Samuel 8:2

1 Kings 11:1, 7, 33

2 Kings 3:4–27

Nehemiah 13:1

Psalms 60:8

Isaiah 11:14

Isaiah 15:1–9

Isaiah 25:9–10

Jeremiah 9:25–26

Jeremiah 27:3

Jeremiah 48:1–13

Amos 2:1–3

Micah 6:5

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