OUDTESTAMENTISCHE STUDIËN

CONVERTING THE PAST

*Studies in Ancient Israelite
and Moabite Historiography*

BY

KLAAS A.D. SMELIK

election of David, the "faithful priest" thus standing for the faithful king[117]. The passages about the fall of the house of Eli prepare the reader for the predominant theme in the Book of Samuel: the replacement of one king by another.

This theme is also found in the conclusion of II Samuel vi. We have already seen that when we interpret II Samuel vi not as the concluding part of a separate AN but as a component of the Book of Samuel as a whole, the story focuses not only on the arrival of the Ark in Jerusalem as a preparation for building the Temple but also on the quarrel between David and Michal, which leads to the repudiation of Saul's daughter. In this conflict, Michal represents her deceased father and is thus designated "the daughter of Saul" in verses 16, 20 and 23, instead of "the wife of David"[118]. In this way, the central theme of the second part of I Samuel, to wit, the contrast between Saul and David, is resumed — Michal taking over the role of Saul.

Finally, the conflict between the spouses results in a complete rupture between David and Michal. She will not become the mother of David's heir: another heir is needed. In this way, the rejection of Saul and his house, announced in I Samuel xiii and xv, is completed, and the subsequent theme, that of David's succession, is introduced.

The literary style of the author, when he intertwines three different themes (the Ark/Temple theme, the replacement theme and the succession theme) into one narrative, is eminently skilful. The earlier story featuring the Ark is also excellently written. In particular, the contrast between the despondency of chapter iv and the comedy of chapter v achieves a fine effect. The author succeeds in presenting a profound theological message through a compelling story that combines dramatic scenes with comic relief.

---

[117] In the context of the Deuteronomistic History, the fall of the house of Eli is paradigmatic of the destruction of the Judaean kingdom; in both cases, the failure of Israel's leaders brought about the suffering of the people and the exile of the most sacred cult-objects.

Saul and his dynasty. See also GARSIEL, First Book, pp. 99-106.

[118] See i Sam. xix 11, where the latter designation does occur in a context where Michal opposes her father in favour of her husband. Cf. also R. ALTER, The Art of Biblical Narrative, New York 1981, p. 123, and D.J.A. CLINES, "X, X ben Y, ben Y: Personal Names in Hebrew Narrative Style", in: CLINES & ESKENAZI, Queen Michal's Story, pp. 124-128, especially p. 123.

III. KING MESHA'S INSCRIPTION

Between History and Fiction

The literary structure of the famous inscription immortalizing the Moabite king Mesha has been neglected in comparison with the intensive research carried out on the lexicographical and historical problems relating to it. Nevertheless, the literary analysis of this text is an indispensable stage in historical research. The present chapter consists therefore of two parts. In the first part, the literary structure of the Mesha inscription is established; the second part deals with the implications of this literary analysis for the investigation into historical events. In conclusion, a new reconstruction of the political and military conflicts between Moab and Israel in the ninth century BCE is suggested[1].

1. Earlier literary research

As said, little research on the literary aspects of Mesha's inscription has been done. SEGERT[2] devotes some attention to the literary structure, and ANDERSEN[3] does so in more detail. He distinguishes eighteen paragraphs in the text[4]. Although his division is not entirely satisfactory, ANDERSEN offers some useful comments

---

[1] The first part of this chapter is based on two earlier publications: "De structuur in de inscriptie van Mesa van Moab", in: K.A. DEURLOO & F.J. HOOGEWOUD (eds.), Beginnen bij de letter Beth: Opstellen over het Bijbels Hebreeuws en de Hebreeuwse Bijbel voor Aleida G. van Daalen, Kampen 1985, pp. 155-170, and "The Literary Structure of King Mesha's Inscription", JSOT 46 (1990), pp. 21-30. The second part is the revised version of an unpublished paper read at the SBL-meeting at Vienna in 1990.

[2] S. SEGERT, "Die Sprache der moabitischen Königsinschrift", ArOr 29 (1961), pp. 197-268, especially pp. 236-39.

[3] F.I. ANDERSEN, "Moabite Syntax", Orientalia NS 35 (1966), pp. 81-120.

[4] ANDERSEN, "Syntax", pp. 82-84 and 114-16.

on the style of the inscription[5]. AUFFRET[6] provides a detailed discussion of the literary structure of the Mesha-text. He divides it into three main blocks:

A. line 1 up to and including the two first words of line 10;
B. line 10 up to and including the two first words of line 21;
C. line 21 up to and including the two first words of line 31.

2. Division and translation of the text

As will appear, my approach to the text is different from that of AUFFRET. Therefore, I propose a new division of the text:

Part I	lines 1-4	Introduction
Part II	lines 4-21	Military operations
Part III	lines 21-28	Building activities
Part IV	lines 29-31	Conclusion
Part V	lines 31-end	Appendix.

For the sake of convenience, a transliteration of the Mesha inscription in square characters and an English translation[7] are included here, with Roman numerals indicating my division into five parts, and Arabic numerals referring to the lines of the original text. As far as possible, Moabite names are represented by their biblical counterparts, written according to English orthography. In the text, square brackets surround a preferable restoration of a lacuna; where a reconstruction proved impossible, the amount of missing characters is indicated by dots between square brackets. In the original, words are divided by a dot, and

---

[5] ANDERSEN, "Syntax", pp. 116-19. He discerns two distinct styles of writing used in the two main parts of the text. He underlines also the fact that the sign of the definite object את is used especially in the sections relating to military operations. See also J.C.L. GIBSON, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions I: Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions*, Oxford 1973[2], p. 74. I do not agree with GIBSON's conclusion: "Probably the writer simply slipped unconsciously from one style to the other depending on his main subject matter". I think that this change of style was a deliberate choice of the author, as will appear below.
[6] P. AUFFRET, "Essai sur la structure littéraire de la stèle de Mésha", *UF* 12 (1980), pp. 109-124.
[7] I am grateful to Dr. G.I. DAVIES for his kind assistance in making this translation.

sentences by a stroke. This ancient custom has been adopted here. The sign ˙ over a letter indicates that the reading of the character at hand is doubtful. In the translation, italics indicate an uncertain rendering; ... indicates a break in the original text; parentheses surround a necessary addition, square brackets a possible restoration of a lacuna.

2.1. Text of the Mesha inscription

אנכ.משע.בנ.כמש[ית].מלכ.מאב.הד[2]יבני | [1]
אבי.מלכ.על.מאב.שלשֹ.שת.
ואנכ.מלכ[3]תי.אחר.אבי |

ואעש.הבמת.זאת.לכמש.בקרחה |
בֹ[...] [4]שע.
כי.השעני.מכל.המֹלכנ.
וכי.הראני.בכל.שנאי |

עמר[5]י.מלכ.ישראל.
ויענו.את.מאב.ימנ.רבנ.
כי.יאנפ.כמש.בארצ[6]ה |
ויחלפה.בנה.
ויאמר.גמ.הא.
אענו.את.מאב |
בימי.אמר.כֹ[נ]
[7]וארא.בה.ובבתה |
וישראל.אבד.אבד.עלמ.

וירש.עמרי.את.כל.אֹ[ר]צ.מהדבא | [8]
וישב.בה.ימה.וחצי.ימי.בנה.ארבענ.שת.
וֹ[9]שֹבה.כמש.בימי |
ואבנ.את.בעלמענ.
ואעש.בה.האשׁח.
ואבנ[10].את.קריתנ |

ואש.גד.ישב.בארצ.עטרת.מעלמ.
ויבנ.לה.מלכ.י[11]שראל.את.עטרת |
ואלתחמ.בקר.
ואחזה.
ואהרג.את.כל.העמ.מֹ[12]הקר.רית.לכמש.ולמאב |

.ואשב.משמ.את.אראל.דודה
ואש[13]חבה.לפני.כמש.בקרית |
ואשב.בה.את.אש.שרד.ואת.א[נשי.14]מחרת |

ויאמר.לי.כמש.
לכ.אחז.את.נבה.על.ישראל |
ואה[15]לכ.בללה.
ואלתחם.בה.מבקע.השחרת.עד.הצהרם |
ואח[16]זה.
ואהרג.כלה.
שבעת.אלפן.[גברן].וגרן |
וגברת.ת.[גר]ת.ורחמת |
כי.לעשתר.כמש.החרמתה |
ואקח.משמ.א[ת.כ]18לי.יהוה.
ואסחב.הם.לפני.כמש |

ומלכ.ישראל.בנה.את.[19]יהצ.
וישב.בה.בהלתחמה.בי |
ויגרשה.כמש.מפני [|]
ו[20]אקח.ממאב.מאתן.אש.כל.רשה |
ואשאה.ביהצ.
ואחזה.[21]לספת.על.דיבן |

אנכ.בנתי.קרחה.
חמת.היערן.וחמ[ת.22]העפל |
ואנכ.בנתי.שעריה.
ואנכ.בנתי.מגדלתה |
ואנ[23]כ.בנתי.בת.מלכ.
ואנכ.עשתי.כלאי.האש[ו]ח.למ[י]ן.בקרב.[24]הקר |
ובר.אנ.בקרב.הקר.בקרחה.
ואמר.לכל.העמ.
עשו.ל[25]כמ.אש.בר.בביתה |
ואנכ.כרתי.המכרתת.לקרחה.באס[ר]י.[26]מ[י]שראל |

אנכ.בנתי.ערער.
ואנכ.עשתי.המסלת.בארנן [|]
[27]אנכ.בנתי.בת.במת.
כי.הרס.הא |
אנכ.בנתי.בצר.
כי.עין.[28]הא[ן] |

[וא]ש.דיבן.חמשנ.
כי.כל.דיבן.משמעת |
ואנכ.מלכ[29]תי[.על.ה]מאת.בקרב.
אשר.יספתי.על.הארצ |

ואנכ.בנת[30]י.[בת.מה]דב[א.ובת.ד]בלתן |
ובת.בעלמען.
ואשא.שמ.את.נ.[..31].........[צאנ.הארצ |

וחורנן.ישב.בה.בת.בב.[...]ד.[..]א.[..32].........
וי[אמר.לי.כמש.
רד.הלתחמ.בחורנן |
וארד.[...]33.........
ויש[בה.כמש.בימי.
ועל.[..]ה.משמ.עש |
...[34].............
.............[ת.שדק |

ואנ[כ.............

2.2. Translation of the Mesha inscription

Ia (1) I am Mesha, the son of Chemosh[-yatti]8, the king of Moab, the Di(2)bonite.

My father was king over Moab for thirty years,
and I was ki(3)ng after my father.

Ib And I made this high-place for Chemosh in Karchoh9,

8 The complete name of Mesha's father is not preserved in the Mesha inscription, but supplemented on the base of a reconstruction of another Moabite inscription found at Kerak in 1958 and published by W.L. REED & F.V. WINNETT, "A Fragment of an Early Moabite Inscription from Kerak", *BASOR* 172 (1963), pp. 1-9. See however the critical remark by J.M. MILLER, "Moab and the Moabites", in: J.A. DEARMAN (ed.), *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, Atlanta 1989, pp. 1-40, especially p. 35. Cf. also S. TIMM, *Moab zwischen den Mächten: Studien zu historischen Denkmälern und Texten* (ÄuAT, 17), Wiesbaden 1989, pp. 269-277.

9 F.M. ABEL, *Géographie de la Palestine*, II, Paris 1967³, p. 418, vocalizes "Qorḥa"; S.H. HORN, "Why the Moabite Stone was Blown into Pieces: 9th-Century B.C. Inscription Adds New Dimension to Biblical Account of Mesha's Rebellion", *BAR* 12 (1986), no. 3, pp. 50-61, especially p. 58, spells

... (4) ...
because he has delivered me from all *kings*,
and because he has made me look down on all my enemies.

IIa   Omr(5)i was the king of Israel,
and he oppressed Moab for many days,
for Chemosh was angry with his la(6)nd.
And his son succeeded him,
and he said — he too —
I will oppress Moab!
In my days did he say [so],
(7)but I looked down on him and on his house,
and Israel has gone to ruin, yes, it has gone to ruin for ever!

IIb   And Omri had taken possession of the whole la[n](8)d of
Medeba,
and he lived there (in) his days and half the days of his son,
forty years,
but Chemosh [resto](9)red[10] it in my days.
And I built Baal Meon,
and I made in it a water reservoir,
and I built (10) Kiriathaim.

IIc   And the men of Gad lived in the land of Ataroth from
ancient times,
and the king of I(11)srael built Ataroth for himself,
and I fought against the city,
and I captured it,
and I killed all the people [from] (12)the city as a *sacrifice*

"Qorchah". The vocalisation "Qarhoh" is found in: J.M. MILLER & J.H. HAYES, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, London 1986, p. 283. G.W. AHLSTRÖM, *Royal Administration and National Religion in Ancient Palestine* (StHANE, 1), Leiden 1982, p. 16, suggests the vocalisation *qarḥo* or *qirḥo* . A.H. VAN ZYL, *The Moabites* (POS, 3), Leiden 1960, p. 80, suggests the reading קרחה or קרחה; cf. also F.V. WINNETT & W.L. REED, *The Excavations at Dibon (Dhîbân) in Moab* (AASOR, 36-37), New Haven 1964, p. 6 n. 12, and H. DONNER & W. RÖLLIG, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften*, II, Wiesbaden 1973³, p. 172.

[10] Literary: "I returned it". I derive this form from the root שוב (Hiphᶜil), and not from שב (Qal).

for Chemosh and for Moab,
and I brought back the fire-hearth of his *uncle* from there,
and I ha(13)uled it before the face of Chemosh in Kerioth,
and I made the men of Sharon live there, as well as the
men of (14)Maharith.

IId   And Chemosh said to me:
Go, take Nebo from Israel!
And I w(15)ent in the night,
and I fought against it from the break of dawn until noon,
and I to(16)ok it,
and I killed [its] whole population,
seven thousand *male citizens and aliens*,
and female citizens and aliens[11], (17)and servant girls;
for I had put it to the ban for Ashtar Chemosh.
And from there, I took th[e ves](18)sels of YHWH,
and I hauled them before the face of Chemosh.

IIe   And the king of Israel had built (19)Jahaz,
and he stayed there during his campaigns against me,
and Chemosh drove him away before my face,
and (20)I took two hundred men of Moab, all its *division*,
and I led it up to Jahaz.
And I have taken it (21)in order to add it to Dibon.

IIIa   I have built Karchoh,
the wall of the woods and the wall (22)of the citadel,
and I have built its gates,
and I have built its towers,
and I (23)have built the house of the king,
and I have made *the double reser[voir for the spr]ing* in
the innermost part (24)of the city.
Now, there was no cistern in the innermost part of the city,
in Karchoh,
and I said to all the people:
Make, each (25)one of you, a cistern in his house.
And I *cut out the moat* for Karchoh by means of
prisoner(26)s from Israel.

---

[11] For this translation, see GIBSON, *Textbook*, pp. 80-81.

IIIb I have built Aroer,
and I made the military road in the Arnon.
(27)I have built Beth Bamoth,
for it was destroyed.
I have built Bezer,
for [it lay in] ruins.(28)

IVa [And the me]n of Dibon stood in battle-order,
for all Dibon, they were in subjection.
And I am the ki(29)n[g over the] hundreds in the towns
which I have added to the land.

IVb And I have bui(30)lt [the House of Mede]ba and the House
of Diblathaim
and the House of Baal Meon,
and I brought there... (31)... flocks of the land.

Va And Horonaim, there lived...
(32)And Chemosh said to me:
Go down, fight against Horonaim!
I went down... (33)...
[and] Chemosh [resto]red[12] it in my days.
and... from there...
... (34)...
...

Vb And I...

3. Reasons for the division of the text

An important criterion for dividing the text in the above suggested way is the occurrence of the personal pronoun אנכ[13]. This pronoun (not required in either Moabite or Hebrew when used in connection with the perfect or imperfect tense)[14] is found predominantly

---

[12] I restore ה[שיב], and derive this from the root שב (HiphᶜiI), and not from ישב (Qal).

[13] Cf. GIBSON, Textbook, p. 74.

[14] I do not want to discuss here the difficult question of whether or not this inscription is written in Moabite or in Israelite Hebrew. If it is Moabite, this language was closely related to Hebrew. See the opposing views of

in part III (ten out of fourteen or fifteen occurrences)[15]. It is also found in parts I and IV[16], but not in II. Moreover, we see that the name of the Moabite god Chemosh is mainly found in part II, and also in I and V, but not in III and IV. This division suggests that the most important caesura in the text lies between part II (dominated by Chemosh) and part III (dominated by the first-person narrator, king Mesha).

This caesura corresponds with a difference in theme. Part II describes mainly military victories, part III exclusively building operations. Through this careful use of the pronoun אנכ and the name of Chemosh, the author emphasizes the view that the land of Moab has been delivered by Chemosh rather than by Mesha, who only executed Chemosh's orders. The credit for the building operations, however, is given to the king, not to the Moabite god; therefore, the name of Chemosh does not figure in that part of the text. Instead, the pronoun אנכ is repeated time and again.

4. Dramatis personae

There are four main characters in the text: Mesha, Chemosh, the Israelite king Omri and his "son" (whoever he may be)[17]. The two Israelite monarchs are only mentioned in part II, not in the other parts[18], but they feature in the text as the great adversaries of the Moabite god and king.

Mesha, Chemosh and Omri's "son" are all introduced into the text as speaking characters. Mesha is in fact speaking all the time, but in part III he gives a building order to his people in direct speech. Chemosh addresses Mesha twice (the first time in part II, the second in V); in both cases, Chemosh's order relates to a military operation. The king of Israel, however, does not address anyone; he only speaks to himself. This variation agrees with the general characterization of the dramatis personae: Mesha is con-

---

SEGERT ("Sprache") and GIBSON (Textbook, p. 72).

[15] The number depends on the correctness of the reading [כל]ה in line 34. If we accept it, the total number of occurrences amounts to fifteen.

[16] Possibly also in part V, see the preceding note.

[17] This problem is discussed below in paragraph 14.

[18] Note that "Israelite prisoners" are mentioned in part III. They do not belong to the same category as the Israelite kings however, and have a different function in the text.

cerned with his people and his building activities, whilst Chemosh is responsible for the military operations[19]. He addresses the king of his people, but Omri's "son" merely expresses an intention to himself, in which he will not succeed. This emphasizes his isolation: on the Israelite side there is no god like Chemosh, no successful king like Mesha, no obedient people like the Moabites.

5. *The use of tenses*

The use of verbal tenses is also striking[20]. In part II, the waw-consecutive construction is mainly used; in part III, a construction with the perfect or a verbless clause[21]. In this way, part II is full of action, whereas the style in part III is lapidary, the emphasis being placed on the outcome of the action. Only when describing Mesha's building operations at Karchoh, does the author go into more substantial detail, possibly in order to indicate the importance of these operations.

6. *Part I: Introduction*

We have established that the main caesura in the text is found in line 21 after דיבן[22]. But what about the divisions between the other parts of the text? A definite change can be found in line 4 (end). Until then, the author expresses himself in general terms; at this point, however, he becomes specific by introducing Omri into his account. Thus, lines 1-4 form an introduction to the whole text.

This introduction can be subdivided into two sections. Section Ia (line 1-3 [first two words]) introduces the speaker (Mesha) and legitimates his kingship (he is the son of the previous

---

[19] ANDERSEN ("Syntax", p. 116) underlines the fact "that in the war sections obedience to Chemosh's commands is described immediately in similar words [...]. But Meša^C's command [...] has no such counterpart". Also in this respect, the writer's style is more succinct in part III.

[20] See also W.J. ADAMS, JR., "Diachronic Development of Narrative and Exhortation Discourse Structures in Hebrew Epigraphical Sources", in: K.H. RICHARDS (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature 1984 Seminar Papers* (Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers Series, 23), Chico 1984, pp. 75-91, especially pp. 77-78.

[21] Cf. also GIBSON, *Textbook*, p. 74.

[22] Contra J.M. MILLER, "The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stela", PEQ 106 (1974), pp. 9-18, especially p. 14. He takes lines 18-29 as a unit.

Moabite king)[23]. מלך is a motif-word in this section. Relating to Mesha, it recurs in section IVa. Section Ib clarifies the purpose of this inscription: it commemorates the dedication of a "high place" to Chemosh. Consequently, the text is — contrary to current opinion — not a victory stela but a building inscription[24]. It also explains why Mesha made this high place: Chemosh had granted him complete victory over all his enemies. This is recounted in two sentences with parallelismus membrorum[25]. Thus, both themes of the text are introduced: building operations and military activities[26]. The introduction is now complete: what has been mentioned in general terms, will be later discussed in more detail.

7. *Part II: Military operations*

Section IIa (lines 4-7), introducing Omri and his "son", shows an inclusion. It starts with Moab's oppression by Israel and ends with the total destruction of Israel by Moab. The situation is completely reversed: Omri oppressed the Moabites during the reign of king Chemosh-yatti; but Omri's "son", who had the same intention, was defeated by Chemosh-yatti's son Mesha[27]. This reversal of Moab's fate was caused by Chemosh, who ceased being wrathful with his people during the reign of Mesha. The difference between past and present is indicated by the use of temporal appositions: the length of time during which Moab was oppressed by Omri (ימ רבן), the moment of Mesha's victory (ביםי) and the indefinite period of Israel's destruction (עלם). The emphasis on the difference between past and present is standard in this kind of inscription: it enhances the present king's glory[28].

The struggle against Israel having been described in a general way in section IIa, the topic is treated again in the sequel, this time in detail. Therefore, section IIa can be regarded as a second

---

[23] See also MILLER, "Moabite Stone", p. 13.

[24] MILLER ("Moabite Stone", p. 12) prefers the designation "memorial stela". See also A. LEMAIRE, "La stèle de Mésha et l'histoire de l'ancien Israël", in: D. GARRONE & F. ISRAEL, *Storia e tradizioni di Israele: Scritti in onore di J. Alberto Soggin*, Brescia 1991, pp. 143-169, especially pp. 144-146.

[25] Parallelismus membrorum reoccurs once in section IIIc.

[26] Cf. AUFFRET, "Essai", p. 110.

[27] In paragraph 14, we will return to this question.

[28] Cf. MILLER, "Moabite Stone", pp. 10 and 15.

introduction and, thus, as a literary bridge between part I and the description of Mesha's war with Israel in sections IIb-d.

In the first of these sections (IIb, lines 7-10), the reconquest of the land of Medeba is mentioned. Here, the author again emphasizes the difference between past (ימה וחצי ימי בנה) and present (בימי). In the past, Omri occupied and settled (וישב) the land; in the present, Chemosh drove him out (וישבה). This play on words occurs again in part V.

Having reintroduced Mesha with בימי, the author goes on to mention three building operations. This topic recalls part III, but here the imperfectum consecutivum is used and the personal pronoun אנכ does not occur. Therefore, it agrees with the style typical of part II, and should be considered as a consequence of the military operation, not as a separate building activity.

In section IIc (lines 10-14), there is an inclusion: "And the *men* of Gad *settled in* the land of Ataroth" parallels "And *I settled in* it *men* of Sharon and Meharit". By this inclusion, the striking difference between past and present is once more emphasized. As in section IIa, b and e, the Israelite king takes the initiative. The closest parallel is offered by section IIe, where an unnamed king of Israel is also reported to have built a city. Unlike IIb, d and e, in IIc the counterattack is ascribed to Mesha, not to Chemosh. The Moabite god is only mentioned afterwards in the description of the ceremonies celebrating the victory. Most of the section is devoted to the latter topic, the military action being described very succinctly.

There is greater interest in military matters in section d (lines 14-18), which is bounded by the two references to the name of Chemosh. This difference shows that the author has tried to enliven his account by introducing variety into the description of fairly similar events. The victory ceremonies, moreover, are not described in exactly the same words, although the general pattern (killing of inhabitants, ceremony in honour of the god, carrying off cult-objects) is similar.

The opening of section IIe (lines 18-21) recalls IIc: the verbs בנה ,ישב and לחם occur again but this time have the king of Israel as subject[29]. Before Mesha's operation is described, the author focuses on Chemosh, who is credited with the Moabite victory.

Compared to IIc and d, the importance of Chemosh's role as deliverer culminates in this section. In IIc, he is only honoured; in IId, he gives the command to attack, but in IIe, Chemosh himself drives out the enemy before Mesha.

The concluding part of section IIe is remarkable. In IId, Mesha *takes* cult-objects belonging to the enemy in order to bring them before Chemosh; in IIe, he *takes* Moabite soldiers in order to place them in Jahaz. Instead of a description of victory ceremonies, the author concludes this passage with a statement about administrative measures related to the annexation of Jahaz to the Moabite capital Dibon. Thus, he provides both a link with the conclusion in section IVa (where the verb יסף is also used indicating the annexation of occupied territory), and a literary bridge to the next part that opens with Mesha's building activities at Karchoh, probably the royal quarters of Dibon[30].

8. Part III: Building activities

The third part of the text (lines 21-28) consists of an enumeration of Mesha's achievements in rebuilding and fortifying several cities in his realm. We have already looked at the repeated use of the first personal pronoun and the rather different style in Part III. Notwithstanding the emphasis he lays on repetition, the author here also uses stylistic devices to liven up the text, like the introduction of Mesha speaking directly to his people in lines 24-25, the variation between the verbs בנה and עשה in section IIIb[31], and the use of parallelismus membrorum in IIIc. Part III ends with the reconstruction of Bezer in line 27 (and the first word of line 28).

9. Part IV: Conclusion

Contrary to current opinion[32], there is actually a definite shift within line 28, since I read ש[אן] instead of ש[בא][33]. This leads to the

---

30 Cf. GIBSON, *Textbook*, p. 78.

31 See also the second part of section IIc.

32 See e.g. GIBSON, *Textbook*, p. 75. He translates (p. 77): "with fifty men of Dibon".

33 The latter reading is improbable because the third character of line 28 is clearly a stroke, and not a dot. This means that the previous sentence ended with: כי.ע[אן] ו, and that here a new sentence begins. Therefore, the

following translation: "[And the me]n of Dibon stood in battle-order, for all Dibon, they were in subjection". This must be the beginning of part IV (lines 28-31). In section IVa, the author emphasizes the military loyalty of the Dibonites towards their king, and the annexation of new territory to Moab. Following MILLER[34], I interpret the sequel (section IVb) as an enumeration of sanctuaries (re-)built by Mesha in the newly-conquered territory. Thus, part IV is a kind of conclusion to the text, as it closely resembles part I. In both passages, the emphasis is placed on Mesha's successful kingship, and on his building of sanctuaries. Unfortunately, the closing sentence of part IV remains unclear because of the lacuna in line 31.

10. Part V: Appendix

It is also unfortunate that the end of the inscription has been lost; so we do not know whether we should divide it into two (lines 31-34 and lines 34-end) or not. The former seems more probable. The military action against Horonaim occurred later and was thus added to the text. This made a new conclusion necessary. It may have opened with [ואנכ מלכתי] (cf. section Ia).

The literary style in section Va resembles that of part II. The section shows a nice inclusion by a play on words: וישבה / ישב בה, a pun the author had already used in section IIb. It is also comparable to the inclusion of section IIc. The command given by Chemosh recalls IId. The last sentence of section Va is unfortunately incomprehensible.

11. Conclusion of the literary analysis

This literary analysis shows that the author of Mesha's building inscription did not record his master's successes at random. He constructed a well-organized text and used several literary devices to enliven it. By avoiding the first personal pronoun in section II and frequently using it in section III, the author not only stresses the magnitude of Mesha's building achievements, but also Chemosh's importance as the deliverer of his people.

restoration ש[א] is the most obvious.
34 Cf. MILLER, "Moabite Stone", p. 14.

This analysis has bearing not only on the history of North-west Semitic literature, but also on the historical reconstruction of Mesha's reign. For this reason, we turn now to a survey of the main problems in the Mesha inscription, seen from an historical point of view.

12. Methodological questions

The discovery of the Mesha inscription in 1868 aroused much scholarly interest[35], because the stela appeared to be an important historical source, especially suited for comparison with II Kings iii and II Chronicles xx, the biblical accounts of the struggle between Moab and Israel in the ninth century BCE. It proved very difficult, however, to reconstruct the actual sequence of events on the basis of these three accounts. Various reconstructions have been proposed. LIVER[36] and RENDSBURG[37], for example, tried to harmonize the sources, but reached different results[38].

However, in his 1989 contribution[39], DRINKARD gives this warning: "[...] assertions or reconstructions of routes of military

[35] A survey of the first discussions on the Mesha inscription is given by M.P. GRAHAM, "The Discovery and Reconstruction of the Mesha[C] Inscription", in: DEARMAN, Studies, pp. 41-92, especially pp. 79-90.
[36] J. LIVER, "The Wars of Mesha[C], King of Moab", PEQ 99 (1967), pp. 14-31.
[37] G. RENDSBURG, "A Reconstruction of Moabite and Israelite History", JANES 13 (1981), pp. 67-73.
[38] LIVER does not consider II Chron. xx. He assumes that the Mesha inscription was written before the Israelite king Jehoram embarked on the counter-campaign against Mesha, described in II Kings iii. The Moabite actions commemorated in the Mesha inscription must therefore have preceded this campaign. LIVER has to ascribe the military actions by the Israelites mentioned in the Mesha inscription to king Ahab instead of Jehoram, which is not very probable. The same applies to his early dating of the Mesha inscription, as has been elucidated by MILLER, "Moabite Stone", p. 12. In his reconstruction of the historical events, RENDSBURG also includes the account of II Chron. xx. He places the military campaign described there between the events commemorated in the Mesha inscription and Jehoram's counter-attack related in II Kings iii, but the introduction of II Chron. xx into his reconstruction does not increase its probability. See also the critical remarks by J.A. DEARMAN, "Historical Reconstruction and the Mesha[C] Inscription", in: DEARMAN, Studies, pp. 155-210, especially pp. 197-199.
[39] J. DRINKARD, "The Literary Genre of the Mesha[C] Inscription", in: DEARMAN, Studies, pp. 131-154, especially p. 154.

campaigns, geographical or chronological reconstructions based on the [Mesha, K.S.] stela, must be viewed with great caution. The stela did not intend to present such information. Had that been its intention, a different genre would have been used. Models were readily available from both Egypt and Mesopotamia. One must recognize the limitations that genre place[s] on the understanding of the stela".

In chapter I, we have seen that the same applies to the Hebrew Bible. Only those parts that still reflect the original wording of the Israelite and Judaean chronicles used by the biblical authors can be treated as immediate historical sources. Other genres (such as the prophetic narrative) do not primarily intend to give historical information, although the authors may have used such information when writing these texts.

13. The location of Jahaz

We can elucidate the principles of this critical approach of our sources, biblical as well as extrabiblical, by the following example. Both in the Bible and in the Mesha inscription, the city of Jahaz[40] is mentioned, though not in the same context. In lines 20 and 21, the author of the Mesha inscription writes: "And I have taken it [= Jahaz] in order to add it to Dibon". From this statement, we can conclude that Jahaz must have been a city in the vicinity of Dibon.

In Numbers xxi 23, however, we read that the Heshbonite king Sihon "went out against Israel into the wilderness; and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel". From this passage, some scholars have inferred that Jahaz was situated on the fringes of the desert[41], and have identified Jahaz with a site to the northeast of Dibon on the edge of the cultivated land, notwithstanding the fact that these sites are quite remote from present-day *Dhiban*, which can easily be identified with ancient Dibon[42].

---

[40] This place name is spelled in various manners: יהץ (Mesha), יַהַץ (Isa. xv 4; Jer. xlviii 34), יָהְצָה (Jos. xiii 18, xxi 36; Jer. xlviii 21; I Chron. vi 63) or יַהְצָה (Num. xxi 23; Deut. ii 32; Judg. xi 20).

[41] See e.g. LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 15.

[42] See e.g. WINNETT & REED, *Excavations*, p. 66.
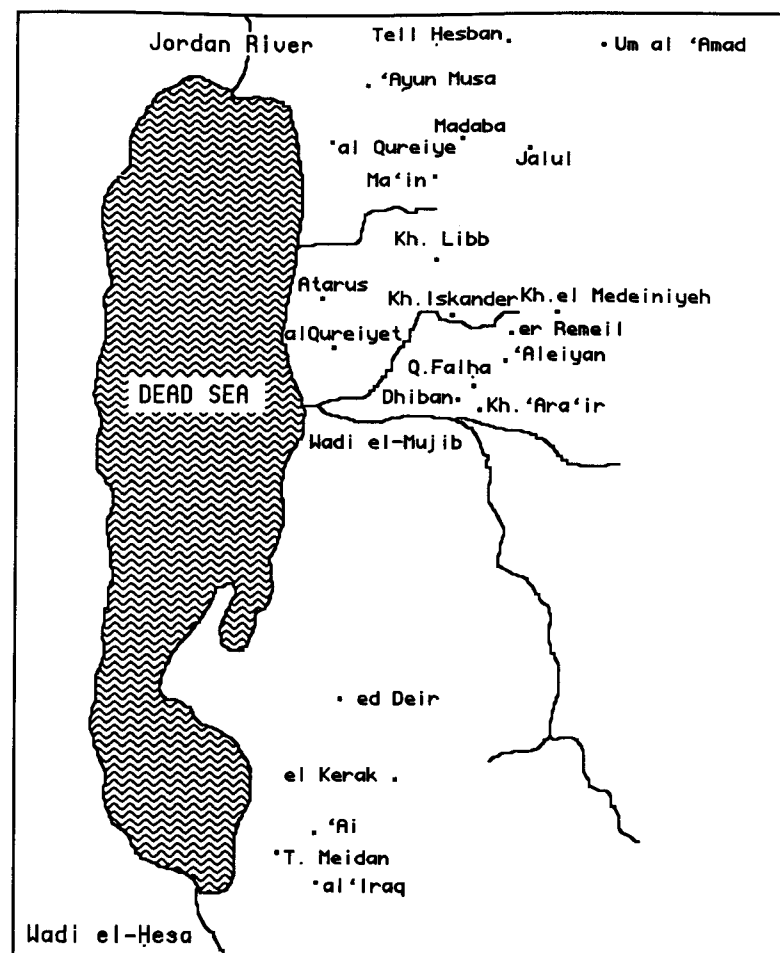
POSSIBLE IDENTIFICATIONS

בעלמען	Baal Meon	Ma'in
בצר	Bezer	Um al 'Amad
בח במה	Beth Bamoth	Jalul
דיבן	Dibon	Dhiban
יהץ	Jahaz	Kh. Libb
מהדבא	Medeba	Madaba
נבה	Nebo	Kh. 'Ayun Musa
עטרת	Ataroth	'Atarus
קרית	Kerioth	al Qureiyet
קריתן	Kiriathaim	al Qureiye

Figure 3: Map of Moab with list of possible identifications

The following sites have been suggested: *Khirbet el-Medeiniyeh*[43], *er-Remeil*[44] and *Khirbet cAleiyan*[45].

When we consider more closely the context of Numbers xxi, we see that the biblical author has Sihon advance into the desert because the author wanted to prove that the Israelites did not cross the Moabite frontier, just as they had not crossed the Edomite border before. According to this presentation of the events, the Israelites passed Moab to the east before they approached the kingdom of Sihon. Notice however that the biblical author is not stating that Jahaz itself was situated in the wilderness. The same applies to the passage in Judges xi. In verse 18, it is recalled that the Israelites compassed Edom as well as Moab, and came by the east side of Moab to Sihon's kingdom without crossing the Moabite frontier. Subsequently, it is said that "Sihon trusted Israel not to pass through his territory. Instead, Sihon gathered all his people together, and pitched in Jahaz, and fought against Israel".

There was an ideological reason for the authors of Numbers xxi and Judges xi to stress the fact that the Israelites did not cross either the Edomite or Moabite border. They wanted to prove that the Israelites did not commence hostilities with the Edomites and Moabites, and that they had not occupied Edomite or Moabite territories in the past[46]. The Transjordan part of Israel that had been conquered by them used to be Amorite territory, not Edomite, Moabite or Ammonite. And even the conquest of this territory was for the purpose of self-defence on the part of the Israelites: the Amorite king Sihon attacked them at Jahaz. In fact, there is no historical evidence for the existence of an independent Amorite kingdom at Heshbon, as we have noted in chapter I.

Moreover, the tradition that Israel compassed Moab to the east conflicts with another biblical tradition according to which Israel did cross Moab[47]. This tradition is found in Numbers xxxiii 43-49. Jahaz, however, is not mentioned in this passage. In another version of the story, this time in Deuteronomy ii, the author first states that Israel "passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab" (vs. 8), but in the sequel he let Moses say: "This day thou art to pass the frontier of Moab, to wit Ar" (Deut. ii 18). Judging from the latter passage, the Israelites traversed Moab instead of the desert on their journey to the kingdom of Sihon. For this reason, we have to reconsider what is meant by "the way of the wilderness" in Deuteronomy ii 8. MILLER plausibly suggests that the wilderness "should be understood here as a general designation for the region east of the Dead Sea rather than as a specific reference to the desert east of Moab"[48].

Jahaz is mentioned in Deuteronomy ii 32, where it is stated: "Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz". So it can be seen that in Deuteronomy Jahaz is in no way connected with the desert. It is situated near the frontier between Sihon's kingdom and Moab, that is to say north of the river Arnon: in the Hebrew Bible, this river is considered to be the northern frontier of Moab.

Jahaz is mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. It is presented as one of the four Levitical cities in the territory of Reuben[49]. The others are Bezer, Kedemoth and Mephaath. According to this tradition, Jahaz was an Israelite city. But Jahaz is also mentioned in the oracles against Moab where it is a Moabite town, connected with Heshbon and Elealeh[50], or with Holon and

---

[43] Suggested by J.A. DEARMAN, "The Location of Jahaz", *ZDPV* 100 (1984), pp. 122-126. See also Y. AHARONI, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, London 1979², pp. 204, 339 and 437. Note however that there are at least five different sites within the territorial realm of ancient Moab that are called by this name; cf. J.M. MILLER, "Recent Archaeological Developments Relevant to Ancient Moab", in: A. HADIDI (ed.), *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, I, Amman 1982, pp. 169-173, especially p. 173. Here *Khirbet el-Medeiniyeh* on *Wadi eth-Themed* is meant.
[44] Suggested by E.A. KNAUF in a review of my *Historische Dokumente aus dem alten Israel*, in: *ZDPV* 104 (1988), pp. 174-176. See also Z. KALLAI, *Historical Geography of the Bible: The Tribal Territories of Israel*, Jerusalem & Leiden 1986, p. 441.
[45] Suggested by N. GLUECK, *Explorations in Eastern Palestine III* (AASOR, 18-19), New Haven 1939, pp. 116-117; VAN ZYL, *Moabites*, pp. 80-81; LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 15.
[46] See also J.M. MILLER, "The Israelite Journey Through (Around) Moab and Moabite Toponomy", *JBL* 108 (1989), pp. 577-595, especially p. 578.

[47] See G.I. DAVIES, *The Way of the Wilderness: A Geographical Study of the Wilderness Itineraries in the Old Testament*, Cambridge 1979; IDEM, "The Wilderness Itineraries and the Composition of the Pentateuch", *VT* 33 (1983), pp. 1-13, and MILLER, "Israelite Journey".
[48] MILLER, "Israelite Journey", p. 582.
[49] See Jos. xxi 36 and I Chron. vi 63 (E.T. vi 78).
[50] See Isa. xv 4 and Jer. xlviii 34.

Mephaath[51]. The connection with Heshbon is evident in Joshua xiii 18, where it is mentioned as one of the Heshbonite cities. From these biblical passages, we can conclude that Jahaz must have been a rather important site in the vicinity of Heshbon and Elealeh, in the borderland between Israel and Moab. On the other hand, it cannot have been too far from the river Arnon.

When we return to the Mesha inscription, we read in lines 18 and 19 that the Israelite king had fortified Jahaz, and selected it as his military base in the war against Moab[52]. It would be very strange from a strategic point of view if Jahaz were situated to the northeast of Dibon as proposed by some scholars. The Israelite supply route to the king's headquarters would have been constantly threatened by Moabite raiders[53]. But if we were to identify Jahaz with a site such as Khirbet Libb[54], which lies to the north of Dhiban and which must have been an important settlement in that period, we can understand better the Israelite strategy. From this site, it was easy to check Moabite attacks undertaken from Mesha's capital Dibon northward. Another possibility would be Khirbet Iskander[55], but the archaeological remains at this site do

---

[51] See Jer. xlviii 21.

[52] Note that the text states here that the Israelite king waged war against Mesha, and not the other way around; cf. also S. TIMM, *Die Dynastie Omri: Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Israels im 9. Jahrhundert vor Christus* (FRLANT, 124), Göttingen 1981, p. 168. I do not agree with LIVER's interpretation of this passage. According to him, the author of the inscription refers here to "Omri's Moabite campaign in which he captured the city of Medeba"; cf. LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 20 n. 19, and p. 24 n. 30.

[53] Cf. also R.E. MURPHY, "Israel and Moab in the Ninth Century B.C.", *CBQ* 15 (1953), pp. 409-417; MILLER, "Moabite Stone", pp. 16-17, and DEARMAN, "Reconstruction", p. 198.

[54] Suggested by R. DE VAUX, "Notes d'histoire et de topographie transjordaniennes", reprinted in: IDEM, *Bible et Orient*, Paris 1967, pp. 115-149, especially pp. 119-120. See also J. SIMONS, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament: A Concise Commentary in XXXII Chapters*, Leiden 1959, p. 118, and MILLER, "Israelite Journey", p. 589. Earlier, MILLER ("Moabite Stone", p. 14 n. 24) favoured the identification of Jahaz with Khirbet ᶜAleiyan.

[55] Suggested by ABEL, *Géographie II*, p. 354, and by K.-H. BERNHARDT, "Beobachtungen zur Identifizierung moabitischer Ortslagen", *ZDPV* 76 (1960), pp. 136-158, especially pp. 155-158. Cf. also DONNER & RÖLLIG, *Inschriften*, II, p. 177.

not suggest a strong Iron Age fortress[56]. For this reason, the identification of Jahaz with *Khirbet Libb* is to be preferred. Moreover, this identification agrees with Eusebius' comment in the *Onomasticon* (124, 9-11) that Jahaz was between Medeba and Dibon[57], for *Khirbet Libb* lies in the middle of the road between present-day *Madaba* and *Dhiban*.

If this identification is right[58], why did the author of the Mesha inscription mention the capture of Jahaz only at the end of his passage celebrating the Moabite military achievements? Surely, the Moabites cannot have conquered the territory to the north of Jahaz while the Israelite king and his army were threatening their capital Dibon from this stronghold. We can solve this problem by considering the sequel to the text. The passage ends with: "in order to add it [=Jahaz] to Dibon", and the next line begins with "I [=Mesha] have built Karchoh". In this way, the author begins his description of Mesha's building activities at Karchoh, probably the royal quarters of Dibon. As already concluded, the author placed the capture and annexation of Jahaz at the end of his paragraph on military actions in order to make a literary bridge towards the next topic of the inscription, the city of Dibon. For this reason, he deviated from the chronological order of events[59].

We learn from this example that it is necessary to analyze all our sources for their historical reliability, considering their context and the literary or ideological aims of their authors. Only then can we try to combine the evidence deduced from these sources[60].

---

[56] See DEARMAN, "Location of Jahaz", p. 123.

[57] There has been some discussion about the spelling of Dibon here as Δηβοῦς, instead of Δαιβών or Δίβων; cf. KALLAI, *Historical Geography*, p. 440.

[58] Cf. also the argument by MILLER, "Israelite Journey", pp. 589-590.

[59] Cf. also MILLER, "Moabite Stone", pp. 16-17. *Contra* VAN ZYL, *Moabites*, pp. 140-141; LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 22, and RENDSBURG, "Reconstruction", p. 68, all of whom assume that in the Mesha inscription these actions are described in a chronological order.

[60] In the following, the account of II Chron. xx will not be discussed as one of our sources, as I accept NOTH's historical analysis of this chapter, according to which it reflects a local situation around 300 BCE instead of an event from the ninth century BCE. Cf. M. NOTH, "Eine palästinische Lokalüberlieferung in 2. Chr. 20", *ZDPV* 67 (1945), pp. 45-71. See also

14. *Dating the events*

The same applies to the complicated problem of the correspondence between the dates in II Kings and those in the Mesha inscription. In II Kings i 1 and iii 4-5, it is stated that the Moabite king Mesha rebelled against the king of Israel after Ahab's death, that is, after 852 BCE. The Israelite punitive expedition was led by king Jehoram, who probably reigned from 851 to 845. Jehoram was accompanied by the Judaean king Jehoshaphat (868-847). Therefore, we can date this expedition around 850 BCE[61], and Mesha's rebellion around 852.

According to the Mesha inscription, it was Omri who had subjugated Moab. This Israelite king reigned from 882-871, but it took him four years to establish his absolute monarchy. In 876 BCE, he founded his capital Samaria[62]. It is probable that his action against Moab and his conquest of the land of Medeba (see lines 7-8) should be dated later, around 875 BCE[63]. In the inscription, it is stated that the land of Medeba was under Israelite rule during Omri's days and "half the days of his son, forty years" (line 8)[64]. If by "his son" Ahab were meant, who reigned twenty-two years from 871 to 852, the Moabite reconquest of the land of Medeba took place around 860. This date is, however, hard to reconcile with the fact that according to the Book of Kings Mesha's rebellion took place after Ahab's death. A reconquest of the land of Medeba would not have been possible without causing a conflict with the Israelite king. Inevitably, such a deed would have been considered by the Israelites as an act of rebellion[65]. Be-

---

DEARMAN, "Reconstruction", p. 203, and above chapter I.

[61] LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 26, suggests 849 BCE.

[62] See also K.-H. BERNHARDT, "The Political Situation in the East of the Jordan during the Time of King Mesha[c]", in: HADIDI, *Studies*, p. 165.

[63] Note however that LEMAIRE, "Stèle de Mésha", p. 151, suggests that Omri conquered the land of Medeba earlier ("vers 881-880, avant la construction de la nouvelle capitale Samarie").

[64] There has been much discussion about the translation of this passage, more, however, due to chronological problems than to the wording of the text, which is fairly clear. For this reason, I do not accept the translation by WALLIS: "Abschnitt der (Regierungs)zeit der Söhne Omris"; cf. G. WALLIS, "Die vierzig Jahre der achten Zeile der Mesa-Inschrift", ZDPV 81 (1965), pp. 180-186, especially p. 184. See also the critical remarks in: TIMM, *Dynastie Omri*, p. 164.

[65] *Contra* LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 21. For this reason, B. ODED,

---

cause of Ahab's military power (known from Assyrian sources[66]), any solution that places Mesha's revolt during Ahab's reign[67] is implausible[68]. Ahaziah's ephemeral reign, however, would have been a good time for Mesha to rebel[69].

Moreover, the literary form of the verses in II Kings i and iii concerning Mesha's rebellion still displays their original provenance from the Israelite and Judaean chronicles used by the biblical authors. There is no reason to assume that these writers changed the information they obtained from their sources. The section concerning the tribute Mesha payed to the Israelite king sounds particularly authentic and does not serve any of the literary or ideological aims of the biblical authors.

However, the wording in the Mesha inscription concerning the reconquest of the land of Medeba does serve one of the apparent intentions of the author. I assume that he actually meant Omri's grandson Jehoram instead of Omri's son Ahab, when he wrote "half the days of his son, forty years"[70]. Had the reconquest of the land of Medeba taken place in half of Jehoram's days, this would have been the year 848[71]. Accordingly, the Israelite oc-

---

"Mesha", in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. XI, Jerusalem 1971, col. 1397, assumes that Mesha rebelled twice, the first time during Ahab's reign, and a second time after his death. There is, however, no evidence for this assumption; *contra* KALLAI, *Historical Geography*, p. 89. According to MURPHY, "Israel and Moab", pp. 415-416, "Mesha had in mind his accession to the throne, which would have occurred in the middle of Achab's reign". In line 8, the author of the inscription does not refer to Mesha's accession to the throne however, but to the end of the Israelite occupation.

[66] Cf. e.g. MILLER, "Moabite Stone", p. 15.

[67] Thus, for example, VAN ZYL, *Moabites*, p. 139.

[68] Cf. also TIMM, *Dynastie Omri*, p. 163 n. 19.

[69] Cf. F.M. CROSS & B.N. FREEDMAN, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence* (AOS, 36), New Haven 1952, p. 39 n. 13: "The accession of the sickly king Ahaziah would offer the desired opportunity". See also LEMAIRE, "Stèle de Mésha", p. 155.

[70] Cf. CROSS & FREEDMAN, *Hebrew Orthography*, p. 39 n. 13; WINNETT & REED, *Excavations*, p. 8; J. BRIGHT, *A History of Israel: Revised Edition*, London 1977[4], p. 244 n. 58, and E. LIPIŃSKI, "Etymological and Exegetical Notes on the Meša[c] Inscription", *Orientalia* NS 40 (1971), pp. 325-340, especially p. 331. *Contra* KALLAI, *Historical Geography*, p. 88 n. 156.

[71] This date presupposes that the inscription was made after Jehoram's death. This is in accordance with the exclamation in line 7 that Israel "has gone to ruin for ever!" This must have been a reference to Jehu's revolt and the ensuing misfortunes during his reign. A possible date for the in-

cupation of the land of Medeba lasted about thirty years instead of the forty years indicated in the Mesha inscription. This difference, however, need not trouble us, as "forty years" is a standard expression for a long period of time, also in biblical literature[72], and it is not probable that the author of the Mesha inscription had access to a list containing the dates of the reigns of the Israelite kings, which he could have used for his calculations[73].

But why did the author skip both the reigns of Ahab and Ahaziah? I think he did this in order to stress the correspondence he constructed between the two Moabite and the two Israelite kings. Omri oppressed the Moabites during the reign of Mesha's father, Chemosh-yatti, and probably occupied the land of Medeba[74]. Omri's "son" had the same intention, but was defeated

scription would be then 835 BCE; *contra* KALLAI, *Historical Geography*, p. 90, who wants to date the Mesha inscription in the period directly following Ahab's death (852 BCE), which is hard to reconcile both with the biblical account and the Mesha inscription. Note however that W.F. ALBRIGHT (in: J.B. PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton 1969³, p. 320) suggests 830 as a possible date, while WINNETT & REED, *Excavations*, p. 9, propose 841 or 840. In any case, much later than 830 BCE would be improbable (*contra* A. LEMAIRE, "Notes d'épigraphie nord-ouest sémitique", *Syria* 64 [1987], pp. 205-216, especially p. 213, who suggests c. 810 BCE as date of the Mesha inscription; see also his "Stèle de Mésha", pp. 146-150) as, according to II Kings x 33, king Hazael of Damascus, who reigned from ca. 844-842 to ca. 800 BCE (according to W.T. PITARD, *Ancient Damascus: A Historical Study of the Syrian City-State from Earliest Time until its Fall to the Assyrians in 732 B.C.E.*, Winona Lake 1987, p. 189) conquered the whole eastern part of Israel up to "Aroer, which is by the river Arnon". This would imply that the land of Medeba and even Dibon were occupied by the Aramaeans during the reign of Jehu (842-818). The erection of the Mesha stela must have preceded the Aramaean conquest of Gilead.

[72] Cf. B. BONDER, "Mesha's Rebellion Against Israel", *JANES* 3 (1970-71), pp. 83-88, especially pp. 87-88. See also M. NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien; Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, Tübingen 1957², p. 21: "[...] die Zeitspanne [...], innerhalb deren die Gesamtzahl der erwachsenen und im Leben aktiv handelnden Männer sich in der Regel völlig auswechselt". Possibly, the generation of Mesha's father Chemos-yatti had to die out before Chemosh's anger against Moab would cease.

[73] See also DONNER & RÖLLIG, *Inschriften*, p. 174, and MILLER, "Moabite Stone", p. 16 n. 35. *Pace* WALLIS, "Vierzig Jahre", p. 182.

[74] If this is correct, Mesha's accession to the throne can be dated between 870 and 860, for Mesha must have been king in the time of Ahab, since we

by Chemosh-yatti's son Mesha, and the land of Medeba was liberated again. In this scheme of fathers and sons, Ahab and Ahaziah were redundant. Probably out of contempt[75], Jehoram's name has not been mentioned in the inscription. Instead, he is indicated as "his son" (lines 6 and 8) or "the king of Israel" (lines 10/11 and 18)[76].

15. Military victories

When we turn to the military victories celebrated in the Mesha inscription, the passage seems rather monotonous because of its lenghty enumeration. This impression is deceptive. As already noted above, the various military actions are described in a different manner, the author hereby showing his literary skill. Still, we can consider the possibility that this variety is not only the result of a literary device, but that it, to a certain degree, reflects the historical circumstances as well.

Apart from his more general remarks in lines 4-7, the author of the Mesha inscription devotes his attention to five military actions or conquests: the conquest and rebuilding of the land of Medeba (lines 7-10), the siege of Ataroth (lines 10-14), the capture of Nebo (lines 14-18), the military action against the Israelite stronghold at Jahaz (lines 18-21), and the operation against Horonaim (lines 31-33). Because of the poor state of the text, we shall not discuss the last mentioned military action but concentrate on the other four.

have a note of his tribute to Ahab in II Kings iii 4. Cf. also K.-H. BERNHARDT, "Der Feldzug der drei Könige", in: IDEM (ed.), *Schalom: Studien zu Glaube und Geschichte Israels* (Festschrift A. Jepsen), Stuttgart 1971, pp. 11-22, especially p. 20.

[75] See also TIMM, *Dynastie Omri*, p. 161.

[76] There are various possibilities as to who is meant by the designation "the king of Israel": Omri (cf. ODED, "Mesha", col. 1397; see also MILLER, "Moabite Stone", p. 18: "Either Omri or Ahab"), Ahab (cf. GIBSON, *Textbook*, p. 81; see also TIMM, *Dynastie Omri*, pp. 166-167; BERNHARDT, "Beobachtungen", p. 149, DEARMAN, "Reconstruction", p. 205, and LEMAIRE, "Stèle de Mésha", pp. 152f.). However, if we follow the Bible in dating Mesha's revolt after Ahab's death, Jehoram is the most likely candidate for the identification of Mesha's main opponent in the Israelite-Moabite conflict; cf. LIPIŃSKI, "Notes", p. 332, and also WINNETT & REED, *Excavations*, p. 9.

15.1. *The conquest of the land of Medeba*

It is striking that in the section dealing with the reconquest of the land of Medeba Mesha's role is confined to building activities in Baal Meon (identified with *Ma^cin*)[77] and Kiriathaim (identified with *al Qureiyet* or with *al Qureiye*)[78]. The conquest itself is ascribed to Chemosh, not to Mesha: Chemosh restored the land in Mesha's days (line 8-9). Of course, this does not preclude the possibility that Mesha had to do battle in this area; but, when we compare this passage with the following two on Ataroth and Nebo, we notice the difference. In these two passages, it is explicitly stated that Mesha fought against the city and captured it. Such a statement is lacking in the passage on Medeba. In this case, all the credit goes to the Moabite god. It can be concluded from these differences that the reconquest of Medeba — unlike the capture of Ataroth and Nebo — did not involve significant military action on Mesha's part[79].

15.2 *The annexation of Jahaz*

The same applies to the action against Jahaz. Also here, all credit for the conquest goes to Chemosh: "Chemosh drove him [= the king of Israel] away before my face". Only afterwards, Mesha "took two hundred men of Moab, all its *division*, and led it up to Jahaz". Apparently, the Israelite king had already abandoned Jahaz before Mesha's arrival[80]. There has been some discussion about the translation of this part of the inscription. MILLER suggests that we should translate: "I elevated them, i.e., placed them in charge of the city"[81]. This is not very convincing: no prudent king will place two hundred chiefs in charge of a small-sized city. The interpretation of the passage by ALBRIGHT also raises doubts. He translates: "And set them against Jahaz"[82], but "it is doubtful

---

[77] See DEARMAN, "Historical Reconstruction", pp. 175-176.
[78] See DEARMAN, "Historical Reconstruction", pp. 176-177, who mentions as other possibilities: *Jalul, Khirbet et Teim,* and *Khirbet Muḥaiyat* .
[79] Cf. LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 24: "He [=Mesha] apparently did not encounter any strong resistance". See also TIMM, *Dynastie Omri*, p. 166.
[80] Cf. MILLER & HAYES, *History*, p. 282: "Jahaz [...] apparently was abandoned by the Israelites without a struggle".
[81] MILLER, "Moabite Stone", p. 17 n. 38.
[82] ALBRIGHT in: PRITCHARD, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 320.

that Mesha would have laid siege to and could have conquered an occupied fortress with only 200 men"[83]. This suggests the following translation: "I led it [= all its division] up to Jahaz". That is to say: Mesha took 200 men and placed them as a garrison in Jahaz, a fortress already abandoned by the Israelite king.

15.3. *Military actions against Ataroth and Nebo*

The military actions against Ataroth and Nebo, however, did involve Mesha. Although Ataroth was fortified by the Israelite king, Mesha was able to capture it. In order to take Nebo, Mesha planned a dawn attack. Therefore, he marched his army to the stronghold during the night. The surprise assault was successful, and the city was captured at noon. In both cases, Mesha slaughtered the population, apparently Israelites, and, in the case of Ataroth, replaced them by Moabite settlers[84]. Similar massacres are not mentioned in the accounts concerning the conquest of the land of Medeba and the annexation of Jahaz. This may be due to the fact that those areas already had a Moabite population[85], but it is also a further indication that the conquest of Jahaz and the land of Medeba did not require warfare on a scale comparable to the military operations against Ataroth and Nebo. Had that been so, the slaughter of Israelite soldiers and colonists would certainly have been recorded.

16. *The identification of Kir-Hareseth*

It is interesting to note that Kir-hareseth, the most important Moabite town in the account of II Kings iii, is surprisingly missing

---

[83] MILLER, "Moabite Stone", p. 17 n. 38. The same objection can be raised against the interpretation of the passage by DAHOOD: "And I took from Moab 200 men, all its chiefs, and assaulted him [= the Israelite king] in Jahaz"; cf. M. DAHOOD, "The Moabite Stone and Northwest Semitic Philology", in: L.T. GERATY & L.G. HERR (eds.), *The Archaeology of Jordan and Other Studies Presented to Siegfried A. Horn*, Berrien Springs 1986, pp. 429-441, especially p. 436.
[84] Apparently, Mesha was not interested in the annexation of Nebo to his realm, since he did not rebuild or resettle it. See also LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 25.
[85] See e.g. LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 15.

in the Mesha inscription. This is all the more striking because twelve Moabite place names known from the Hebrew Bible are mentioned in the Mesha inscription[86]. We could try to explain this absence by pointing to the fact that eleven of these twelve sites were located north of the Arnon river, whereas Kir-hareseth is usually considered to have been a southern Moabite town. Following this reasoning, Kir-hareseth is not mentioned in the Mesha inscription, because the author of this text was only interested in the northern part of Moab.

This explanation, however, is not satisfactory. The southern Moabite city Horonaim is mentioned in the Mesha inscription (line 32). Moreover, although Kir-hareseth has been identified with present-day *el Kerak* without much supporting argument[87], the Hebrew Bible is not very explicit about its location, nor even about its name[88]. Actually, there is no compelling reason why we

should agree with the generally accepted identification of Kir-hareseth with *el Kerak*, or with the assumption that Kir-hareseth was located to the south of the Arnon[89]. In the account of II Kings iii, it is nowhere stated that Kir-hareseth was situated there. From the rather obscure verse 25 of II Kings iii, it can only be concluded that it was the last stronghold that remained in Mesha's hand during the Israelite attack on Moab. Since this attack came from the south — at least according to this account — it is rather improbable that Kir-hareseth was situated in southern Moab. Confronted with a successful attack from the south, the Moabite king would have withdrawn his forces to the north.

From the other biblical passages concerning Kir-hareseth, we also gain the impression that this city was situated north of the Arnon. In Isaiah xvi 7 and 11, only Moab and Kir-hareseth are mentioned, but in the intermediate verses, we read about Heshbon, and the neighbouring cities Sibmah, Jazer and Elealeh. This suggests that Kir-hareseth was situated in the vicinity of Heshbon.

In the parallel passage in Jeremiah xlviii 31-36, which is textually based on Isaiah xv and xvi[90], we encounter the same place names: Kir-heres, Sibmah, Jazer, Heshbon and Elealeh, but also Jahaz, Zoar, Horonaim, and the waters of Nimrim in verse 34. The last three places in this list were probably situated south of the Arnon[91]. However, we do not find them mentioned in Isaiah xvi, but in the preceding chapter Isaiah xv 5 and 6, where Kir-hareseth does not appear. It seems that the author of Jeremiah xlviii combined the two passages from Isaiah without considering the rather different location of the cities mentioned. For this reason, it is more probable that Kir-hareseth was situated north of the Arnon than south of it.

---

[86] See DEARMAN, "Historical Reconstruction", p. 170.

[87] Cf. VAN ZYL, *Moabites*, p. 70 n. 4: "This identification is based on the text of the Targum which reads כַּרְכָּא". See also ABEL, *Géographie II*, p. 418. Note, however, the critical remarks of O. KAISER, *Der Prophet Jesaja Kapitel 13-39* (ATD), Göttingen 1973, pp. 55-56; H. WILDBERGER, *Jesaja: 2. Teilband, Jesaja 13-27* (BKAT), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1978, p. 626, and especially MILLER, "Moab and Moabites", p. 35, in regard to this identification. Moreover, the given argument is not valid. The Targum does not identify Kir-Moab or Kir-hareset with *el Kerak*. The Targum does not even consider Kir-Moab or Kir-hareset to be place-names; they just translate the word קִיר with כְּרַךְ, which means "fortified place", "city", "capital". This becomes apparent when we consider the rendering of Kir-hares(et) in Isa. xvi 7, 11; Jer. xlviii 31, 36 with כרך תוקפהון, "their strong fortified city". In the Targum rendering of II Kings iii 25: "until the stone was not left in the wall", קיר has even been interpreted as "wall"; see also D.J. HARRINGTON & A.J. SALDARINI, *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets: Introduction, Translations and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible, 10), Edinburgh 1987, p. 269 n. 39.

[88] We find the following names for this town: קִיר חֶרֶשׂ (Jer. xlviii 31,36) or קִיר חָרֶשׂ (Isa. xvi 11), קִיר חֲרָשֶׂת (Isa. xvi 7) or קִיר חֲרָשֶׂת (II Kings iii 25), and possibly also קִיר מוֹאָב (Isa. xv 1 // עָר מוֹאָב). The situation becomes even more complicated if we take into consideration one of the renderings of this place-name in the Septuagint (cf. VAN ZYL, *Moabites*, p. 70 n. 7). Possibly, the LXX rendering of Jer. xxxi 31,36 (= MT xlviii 31,36) which reads Κιραδας reflects an alternative Hebrew name of קִיר חָרֶשׂ, to wit, קִיר חָרָשׂ. This rendering of the name is actually found in a few Hebrew manuscripts. See, however, WILDBERGER, *Jesaja 2*, p. 625: "Doch sieht auch das nach Erleichterung aus".

[89] Cf. also MILLER, "Israelite Journey", p. 578: "Correspondingly, the Moab known to the Israelites was essentially northern Moab [i.e. the region north of the Arnon; K.S.]. Where it is reported that certain Israelite kings conquered and ruled Moab, for example, the references are almost certainly to northern Moab. Virtually all of the Moabite place-names mentioned in the Hebrew Bible pertain to the region north of the Arnon. When places south of the Arnon are mentioned, the clues provided as to their locations are exceedingly vague".

[90] Cf. W. RUDOLPH, *Jeremia* (HAT), Tübingen 1968³, p. 281.

[91] See the convenient list in: RUDOLPH, *Jeremia*, pp. 284-288.

We can translate Kir-hareseth as "Shard-city". Thus, it is possible that the Hebrew name was a pun[92]. If this is the case, the original Moabite name of Kir-hareseth must have been similar to the Hebrew one, but probably not identical. Moreover, we note that Karchoh, which plays an important role in the Mesha inscription and must have been the royal town of Moab, does not occur in the Hebrew Bible[93]. In the same way, Kir-hareseth (considered by many scholars to have been the Moabite capital) is not mentioned in the Moabite inscriptions. This is hard to explain, unless we assume that these two names indicate the same settlement. For this reason, and because of the similarity between the two names, I would suggest that Kir-hareseth is a Hebrew nickname for the Moabite capital, actually called Karchoh or even Kirchoh[94], since the vowels of the name are not indicated in the Mesha inscription. This identification would explain why it was in Kir-hareseth that Mesha defended himself against the invader. This was the stronghold where he had built "the wall of the woods and the wall of the citadel", "the towers" and "the house of the king", even "the double reservoir for the spring in the in-

---

[92] Cf. VAN ZYL, *Moabites*, p. 71: "The strongly fortified קיר חרש of Moab was but a mere קיר חרש, a city of potshards, according to the prophets of Judah".

[93] According to WINNETT & REED, *Excavations*, p. 7: "The most natural solution of the problem is to suppose that Qrḥh was the official name of a new royal suburb added to the existing town of Dibon, but that the twin city continued to be generally known of the older half". This proposition, however, does not account for the fact that Kir-hareseth is not mentioned in the Moabite inscriptions either. Recently, E. EASTERLY, "Is Mesha's *Qrḥh* mentioned in Isaiah xv 2?", *VT* 41 (1991), pp. 215-219, reconstructed the original version of Isa. xv 2 as follows (in his translation): "Among all the leaders (heads) of *qrḥh*, every descendant is cut off". He does not elaborate however on the parallel with Jer. xlviii 37 (see our next note), which seems to preclude his interpretation.

[94] In this respect ABEL, *Géographie II*, p. 418, points to Jer. xlviii 37. Whereas in the preceding verse (vs. 36) Kir-heres is mentioned, we read in the beginning of vs. 37: כִּי כָל־רֹאשׁ קָרְחָה ("For every head will be bald"). According to ABEL, this is "un jeu de mots sur le vrai nom indigène de la capitale de Moab: *Qorḥa*". Note however that he and also RUDOLPH (*Jeremia*, p. 287) identify Karchoh both with Kir-hareseth and with *el Kerak*! This dual identification has been critized by VAN ZYL, *Moabites*, pp. 79-80. I agree with him that Karchoh cannot have been the ancient name of *el Kerak*, but this does not preclude the identification of Karchoh with Kir-hareseth. Cf. also BERNHARDT, "Feldzug", p. 20.

nermost part of the town" (lines 21-24). No wonder the Israelite king and his allies had difficulty capturing it.

17. *The siege of Kir-hareseth*

The identification proposed here for Kir-hareseth does not presuppose, but nevertheless agrees, with the view of MILLER[95] and others that in reality there was no Israelite counter-attack from the south. The tale of II Kings iii has been based on the account of Numbers xx concerning Israel's sojourn in the wilderness near Edom, and on the stories at the end of I Kings (especially I Kings xxii)[96]. BARTLETT has even suggested that II Kings iii is largely unhistorical[97]. In general, it is possible to agree with this estimation of the historicity of the story, but there are parts in II Kings iii that are unique, and may reflect actual events especially in the concluding verses[98].

If we accept this identification of Kir-hareseth, we are able to combine the presentation of II Kings iii with that in the Mesha inscription in a new manner. We have already discussed the passage: "And the king of Israel had built Jahaz, and he stayed there during his campaigns against me, and Chemosh drove him away before my face" (lines 18-19), and concluded that the conquest of Jahaz probably took place without much fighting. It is now possible to suggest that the somewhat incomprehensible conclusion to the story of II Kings iii refers to the same events.

---

[95] See MILLER, "Moab and Moabites", pp. 35-36, especially p. 36 n. 90.

[96] Cf. J.R. BARTLETT, "The 'United' Campaign against Moab in 2 Kings 3:4-27", in: J.F.A. SAWYER & D.J.A. CLINES (eds.), *Midian, Moab and Edom: The History and Archaeology of Late Bronze and Iron Age Jordan and North-West Arabia* (JSOTS, 24), Sheffield 1983, pp. 135-146, especially pp. 134-138, and MILLER, "Moab and Moabites", p. 35.

[97] BARTLETT, in: SAWYER & CLINES, *Midian*, especially p. 145.

[98] The arguments given by BERNHARDT, "Feldzug", and IDEM, "Political Situation", p. 163, are not convincing. He proposes to date the campaign commemorated in II Kings iii "about the year 800", which would imply that the Moabite king mentioned in the story cannot have been Mesha, who must have died by then, but would have been one of his successors. The story of II Kings iii, however, is clearly connected with the kings Jehoram (cf. vv. 6 and 13) and Jehoshaphat (mentioned in vv. 7, 11, 12 [2x] and 14), which precludes such a late date for the campaign.

In II Kings iii, we read that the Moabite king offered his firstborn son as a burnt offering upon the city wall of Kir-hareseth[99]. Then it says: "And there came a great indignation against Israel. And they departed from him, and returned to the Land [of Israel]" (II Kings iii 27). In this lapidary sentence, it is not stated who became so angry: the God of Israel or the Moabite god Chemosh. From the author's reticence, we may conclude that the second possibility is the most likely. In the eyes of the witnesses, this cruel act forced Chemosh to interfere, or to put it in the words of our inscription: made Chemosh drive away the Israelites before Mesha's face.

Because of Mesha's burnt offering and the divine retribution it incurred[100], the Israelites panicked and fled. This sudden retreat of the Israelite forces from Moab to Israel also explains why only two hundred Moabite soldiers were needed when subsequently Mesha marched against Jahaz and placed a garrison there. The Israelite defences had already been broken and the stronghold had been abandoned by king Jehoram. It is easy to understand why the author of the Mesha inscription did not elaborate on this topic. He had to conceal how high the price was which Mesha was forced to pay for his victory[101].

18. Historical reconstruction of the events

In conclusion, we suggest the following reconstruction of the historical events. After his succession to the throne, Mesha fortified Karchoh, the royal quarters of his native town Dibon. Having secured his military base there, he refused to pay tribute to Israel after Ahab's death. Possibly, his rebellion led to some slight skirmishes with Israelite forces encamped in this area. This would account for the fact that Mesha used Israelite prisoners for building activities at Karchoh (lines 25-26).

---

[99] B. MARGALIT, "Why King Mesha of Moab Sacrificed His Oldest Son", *BAR* 12 (1986), no. 6, pp. 62-63, 76, draws the attention to a possible Ugaritic parallel to the sacrifice of Mesha's firstborn son, although the translation of this text is rather uncertain.

[100] According to LIVER, "Wars of Mesha", p. 30, "it may perhaps be surmised [...] that the 'greath wrath' refers to a plague, or the symptoms of a plague, which broke out within the camp of the allied armies".

[101] See also LEMAIRE, "Stèle de Mésha", p. 154.

Due to the transient reign of Ahaziah, it took the Israelites some time to send a punitive expedition to Moab[102]. When Jehoram started his war against Mesha, he chose Jahaz as his headquarters, and fortified the city. He started to ransack Moab, and forced Mesha to retreat to his stronghold Kir-hareseth/Karchoh. However, after Mesha's desperate action to sacrifice his firstborn son, the Israelite army panicked. They retreated to the northwest, probably to Ataroth or Nebo, and it proved easy for Mesha to take Jahaz. Subsequently, Mesha attacked first Ataroth and then Nebo. Because these were Israelite cities, he slaughtered the population and replaced it with Moabite settlers (only in case of Ataroth). In the inscription, these massacres are described in cultic terms; this is reminiscent of II Kings iii 27 where it is stated that the Moabite king sacrificed his first-born son on the city wall of Kir-hareseth. Mesha brought the booty from Ataroth to a sanctuary of Chemosh at Kerioth[103], which already must have been in his hands. It is not clear to which Moabite sanctuary he took the booty from Nebo[104].

Mesha concluded his conquest in the north by occupying the land of Medeba[105] without much military resistance on the part of the Israelites, who by then were probably either engaged in a war against Aram-Damascus or confronted with several Assyrian campaigns to the west[106]. After the conquest, Mesha rebuilt Beth

---

[102] This explains why the Israelites did not embark upon a counter-attack earlier; *contra* RENDSBURG, "Reconstruction", p. 70 n. 16.

[103] Kerioth used to be identified with *al Qureiye*, but this site is too far north. DEARMAN, "Historical Reconstruction", p. 179, suggests *Qureiyet Falḥa* or *Qureiyet ʿAleiyan*. The latter site was already suggested by BERNHARDT, "Beobachtungen", p. 143.

[104] BERNHARDT, "Beobachtungen", p. 150, suggests that he also brought it to Kerioth.

[105] Note that in this reconstruction of the events, the conquest of the land of Medeba is the conclusion of Mesha's war against Israel, in contrast to general opinion according to which Mesha started his campaign against Israel by occupying this region. However, if one follows the reconstruction of the events proposed here and also my interpretation of line 8 of the inscription, one can account for the fact that the Israelite occupation of Medeba ended "half the days of" Jehoram, i.e. 848 BCE. See also, TIMM, *Dynastie Omri*, p. 165, who doubts whether Mesha's rebellion occurred in the same period as the reconquest of the land of Medeba.

[106] Cf. also DEARMAN, "Historical Construction", pp. 169 and 208.

Bamoth[107] and Bezer[108], settlements probably destroyed by the Israelites during their earlier campaign (line 27).

Mesha, subsequently, turned his attention to the south, or should we say: Chemosh became interested in that region, since he ordered Mesha to take Horonaim[109] (line 32)? Because of the poor state of the text at this point, we do not know whether Mesha's opponent in the south was the king of Judah or the king of Edom[110]. The campaign was probably also successful. Chemosh was entitled to a new high place at Karchoh, just as Mesha was entitled to commemorate all his achievements on a stela. And so he did.

---

[107] "There is no conclusive evidence for the location of Beth Bamoth but it is likely to be a *tell* or high point north of *Dhiban*" (DEARMAN, "Historical Construction", p. 185). In the sequel (p. 186), DEARMAN proposes to identify Beth Bamoth (the biblical Bamoth Baal) with *Khirbet Libb*. Since I identify *Khirbet Libb* with Jahaz, *tell Jalul* would be a preferable suggestion.
[108] This city can be identified with *Um al ᶜAmad* or with *Jalul*; cf. DEARMAN, "Historical Reconstruction", p. 186. Of these possibilities, I would prefer *Um al ᶜAmad*.
[109] Horonaim has been identified with several modern sites to the south of the *Wadi Mujib: Tell Meidan, ᶜAi, al ᶜIraq, Khirbet Dhabab,* and *ed Deir.* Cf. DEARMAN, "Historical Reconstruction", pp. 188-189.
[110] If there were a king of Edom at that time. See BARTLETT in: SAWYER & CLINES, *Midian*, pp. 138-144. According to RENDSBURG, "Reconstruction", p. 70, the final lines of the Mesha inscription refer to Moab's subjugation of the Edomites, but there is no proof for this assumption.

IV. KING HEZEKIAH ADVOCATES TRUE PROPHECY

Remarks on Isaiah xxxvi and xxxvii // II Kings xviii and xix

Chapters xxxvi-xxxix[1] constitute a part of the Book of Isaiah that was rather neglected until recently. This neglect was mainly due to the fact that they are almost identical to parts of II Kings (II Kings xviii 13 and xviii 17 - xx 19). According to general opinion[2], the parts in Kings are more original than the chapters in Isaiah. It is assumed that Isaiah xxxvi-xxxix were extracted from II Kings and added to the already complete first part of the Book of Isaiah (Isa. i-xxxv) in the same way as the concluding chapter of Kings was added to the Book of Jeremiah. The other possibility that

---

[1] See also my earlier publications: "'Zegt toch tot Hizkia': Een voorbeeld van profetische geschiedschrijving", *ACEBT* 2 (1981), pp. 50-67, and "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy: The Purpose of Isaiah xxxvi and xxxvii", in: A.S. VAN DER WOUDE (ed.), *Crisis and Perspectives: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Polytheism, Biblical Theology, Palestinian Archaeology and Intertestamental Literature: Papers read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference held at Cambridge, U.K. 1985* (OTS, 24), Leiden 1986, pp. 70-93.
[2] The argumentation was given by W. GESENIUS, *Der Prophet Jesaja*, II, 2, Leipzig 1821, pp. 932-936, and has been accepted since. "Zweifellos haben die vier Kapitel ihren ursprünglichen Ort im zweiten Königsbuch", as is stated by H. WILDBERGER, "Die Rede des Rabsake vor Jerusalem", *ThZ* 35 (1979), pp. 35-47, especially p. 35 n. 3. Some scholars suppose that the Hezekiah (or Isaiah) narratives had existed separately before their inclusion into the Book of Kings; cf. H. WILDBERGER, *Jesaja: 3. Teilband, Jesaja 28-39: Das Buch, der Prophet und seine Botschaft* (BKAT), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1982, p. 1374. But see also A. JEPSEN, *Die Quellen des Königsbuches*, Halle 1956², p. 77, who considers it to be possible that the second redactor of Kings (R[II]) used Isaiah i-xxxix for revising the Book of Kings. It is interesting to note that in Chron. xxxii 32 and Sir. xlviii 17-25 these narratives are held to be a part of the Book of Isaiah rather than of Kings.