

Numbers 21:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon.

Analysis

For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon—This poetic metaphor describes Sihon's military devastation of Moab. **It hath consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon** (בְּעֵלֵי בָמוֹת אַרְנוֹן, ba'ale bamot Arnon)—The "lords" (ba'alim) likely refers to both political rulers and cultic officiants at Canaanite high places. Fire imagery evokes total military destruction.

Ancient victory songs used cosmic imagery—Sihon's conquest depicted as divine fire consuming all opposition. Israel inherited not just territory but the symbolic language of conquest, now redirected toward Yahweh's purposes. The 'fire from Heshbon' would be surpassed by the fire of God's presence leading Israel (Numbers 9:15-16).

Historical Context

Ar was Moab's ancient capital. The 'high places' (bamot) were elevated worship sites central to Canaanite religion—combining political and religious authority. Sihon's conquest destroyed both Moab's political power and cultic centers, leaving the region ripe for Israelite occupation.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does God co-opt enemy imagery and language to accomplish His purposes?
2. What 'fires' of destruction in your life has God transformed into preparation for His presence and blessing?
3. How can you redeem cultural symbols and language for gospel purposes without compromising truth?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אֵשׁ	יָצָא ה	מִחֶשֶׁב וִן	לְהָבָה	מִקֵּרֵי ת	סִיחַ ו
H3588	For there is a fire	gone out	of Heshbon	a flame	from the city	of Sihon
	H784	H3318	H2809	H3852	H7151	H5511
אֲכָלָהּ	עַר	מוֹאָב	בְּעֵלֵי י	בְּמֹת	אַרְנוֹן:	
it hath consumed	Ar	of Moab			of Arnon	
H398	H6144	H4124	H1167	H1116	H769	

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 21:15 (Parallel theme): And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab.