

Numbers 21:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh: he hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites.

Analysis

Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh (קְמוֹשׁ, Kemosh)—Chemosh was Moab's national deity (1 Kings 11:7), here mocked for inability to protect his worshipers. **He hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon**—The false god delivers his own people to defeat, reversing expected divine protection. This taunt exposes pagan deities' impotence.

Jeremiah 48:46 later repeats this woe when Babylon conquers Moab, proving the ongoing validity of prophetic judgment. Chemosh's failure contrasts with Yahweh's faithfulness—Israel's God actually delivers, fights, conquers. The comparative theology is pointed: worship determines destiny.

Historical Context

Chemosh worship involved child sacrifice (2 Kings 3:27) and ritual prostitution. Archaeological finds include the Mesha Stele (Moabite Stone), where King Mesha credits Chemosh with military victory over Israel—demonstrating that Moabites attributed political-military outcomes to their god, just as Israel attributed victories to Yahweh.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What false 'gods' in contemporary culture promise protection but deliver captivity to those who trust them?
2. How does comparing Yahweh's actual deliverance with idols' empty promises strengthen your faith?
3. Where might you be tempted to trust functional 'Chemoshes'—career, reputation, wealth—that cannot ultimately save?

Interlinear Text

וְאַיִלְלָה מִזְמָרָה אֶת־עַם כְּמַשְׁחִים נָתַן |
Woe H0 to thee Moab thou art undone O people of Chemosh he hath given
H188 H4124 H6 H5971 H3645 H5414

אֶת־בָּנָיו וּבָנָתָיו לְמִלְחָמָה בֶּן־יַהֲוֵדָה אָמֹר |
his sons that escaped and his daughters H7628 king of the Amorites
H1121 H6412 H1323 H4428 H567

סִיחוֹן:
unto Sihon
H5511

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 48:46 (Parallel theme): Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives.

2 Kings 23:13 (Kingdom): And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of

Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

Judges 11:24 (Parallel theme): Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the LORD our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.

Jeremiah 48:7 (Parallel theme): For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together.

1 Kings 11:33 (Parallel theme): Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father.

1 Kings 11:7 (Parallel theme): Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.