

# 2 Kings 03 - Annals of Israel: Miracles of Elisha

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

(13) Israel during Elisha's Ministry (2 Kings 2:1—8:15)

(C) Jehoram, Jehoshaphat and the King of the Edom defeat the rebel vassal Mesha of Moab through Elisha's miraculous provision of water in the wilderness of the Edom (3:1-27)

## 2 Kings 3

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1 Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

- Jehoram was the 2nd son of Ahab and Jezebel, and successor of his brother Ahaziah, who died without having any children

— In the 18th year after Jehoshaphat began reigning as sole king of Judah, Jehoram became king over Israel and reigned 12 years (852-841 BC)

2 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, though not like his father and his mother; for he removed the memorial stone of Baal which his father had made.

2 He did evil in the sight of the LORD, though not like his father and his mother; for he put away the *sacred* pillar of Baal which his father had made.

2 practicing evil in the LORD's presence, only not to the extent that his mother and father had done—he forced abolition of the sacred pillar to Baal that his father had crafted.

2 And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made.

- Though Jehoram did get rid of this idol, he remained sympathetic to and supportive of Baal worship in Israel (Cf. 10:19-28)

3 Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, into which he misled Israel; he did not abandon them.

3 Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.

3 Even so, he kept on committing the sins that Nebat's son Jeroboam had done, which ensnared Israel in sin—he never abandoned them.

3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

- Though wicked, he was less evil than his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel, but he did cleave "unto the sins of Jeroboam" which was calf worship

### **Elisha's Ministry (2 Kings 3:4—8:15)**

The great ministry of Elisha, already begun and revealed in part, is now recorded in this large section of stories.

4 Now Mesha the king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and he used to make *tribute* payments to the king of Israel of a hundred thousand lambs, and the wool of a hundred thousand rams.

4 Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.

4 Meanwhile, Moab's King Mesha was a sheep breeder. He used to pay 100,000 lambs and the wool from 100,000 rams to the king of Israel as tribute.

4 And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool.

- The Moabites raised sheep. When Omri subjugated Moab he imposed a tribute of lambs & wool which the Moabites grudgingly provided for years.

5 However, when *King* Ahab died, the king of Moab broke with the king of Israel.

5 But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

5 After Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

- When Ahab died in battle, Mesha the Moabite king rebelled against King Ahaziah (1:1)

— Mesha considered Israel weakened enough, after Ahab's death, for Moab to attempt to gain her freedom (see 2 Chr 20 for a previous Moabite invasion of Judah, when the Moabites were destroyed, and Moab was left too weak to repel the alliance)

— This rebellion seems to have been ineffective since Mesha also rebelled against Ahaziah's successor, Jehoram (3:4-27). Jehoram, therefore, gathered his troops together and made an alliance with Jehoshaphat to join forces with him to bring Moab back into subjection.

— Jehoram of Israel evidently sought an alliance with Jehoshaphat because he wanted to cross Judean territory to get to Moab. The southern approach to Moab through Edom apparently did not have as strong defenses as Moab's northern border (v8).

6 So King Jehoram left Samaria *for battle* at that time and mustered all Israel.

6 And King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel.

6 So King Jehoram left Samaria at that time and mustered the entire army of Israel.

6 And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

7 Then he went and sent *word* to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, "The king of Moab has broken away from me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" And he said, "I will go up. Consider me yours, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

7 Then he went and sent *word* to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?" And he said, "I will go up; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses."

7 As he was going out, he sent this message to King Jehoshaphat of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight Moab?"

"I'm coming," Jehoshaphat replied. "I'm like you! My army will act like your army and my cavalry like your cavalry," Then Jehoshaphat added:

7 And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.

- The fact that Jehoram sought an alliance with Jehoshaphat indicates that he needed to cross Judean territory in order to advance against Moab

— This in turn indicates that Mesha had strengthened his northern border

— If Jehoram could gain Jehoshaphat, he would also gain Edom, which was now under Judah. Jehoshaphat forgot that alliances with those who sin against the Lord are forbidden to believers.

8 Then he said, "Which way shall we go up?" And he answered, "The way of the wilderness of Edom."

8 He said, "Which way shall we go up?" And he answered, "The way of the wilderness of Edom."

8 "What road do we take?"

Jehoram answered, "We'll go along the Edom desert road."

8 And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

- Jehoram suggested attacking from the south through the Desert of Edom rather than from the north, the more normal though heavily defended frontier

— The route chosen by Jehoshaphat passed along the west side of the Dead Sea and around its southern end

9 So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom, and they made a circuit of seven days' journey. But there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them.

9 So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom; and they made a circuit of seven days' journey, and there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them.

9 So the king of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom made a complete circuit on the road for seven days, but there was no water for the army or for the livestock that accompanied them.

9 So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

- When they were unable to find water for their troops, their campaign not only was halted, but they were in danger of being conquered by the Moabites

— Edom at this time was under Judah's authority and joined the alliance

— After marching through Judah down the southwestern coast of the Dead Sea, around the southern end, and into Edom, the army ran out of water

10 Then the king of Israel said, "It is hopeless! For the LORD has called these three kings to hand them over to Moab!"

10 Then the king of Israel said, "Alas! For the LORD has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab."

10 Then the king of Israel remarked, "Oh no! The LORD has summoned us three kings so he can hand us over to Moab, hasn't he?"

10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

- Jehoram regarded the water shortage as a judgment from God

11 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah."

11 But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah."

11 Jehoshaphat asked, "Isn't there a prophet who belongs to the LORD and through whom we can ask the LORD a question?"

One of the king of Israel's attendants replied, "Shaphat's son Elisha lives here. He used to be Elijah's personal attendant."

**11** But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said,

- As on an earlier occasion (1 Kings 22:7), Jehoshaphat suggested they find a prophet of the LORD who could obtain instructions for them

— One of Jehoram's officers volunteered that Elisha was nearby. Probably the Lord had directed him there to be ready for this mission; it is unlikely that he was traveling with the army.

- Elisha used to serve Elijah by pouring water on his hands while Elijah washed them, which was a menial task (Cf. 1 Kings 19:21)

12 And Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

12 Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

12 Jehoshaphat answered, "He receives messages from the LORD." So the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom went to visit Elisha.

**12** And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

- King Jehoshaphat, being a God-fearing man, suggested they call a prophet of God to give them direction. Of course it would've been much better and easier had he asked for God's guidance before he formed this alliance with Israel's godless king.

**13** Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What business do you have with me? Go to your father's prophets and your mother's prophets." But the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the LORD has called these three kings *together* to hand them over to Moab."

**13** Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother." And the king of Israel said to him, "No, for the LORD has called these three kings *together* to give them into the hand of Moab."

**13** Elisha asked the king of Israel, "What do I have in common with you? Go visit your parents' prophets."

The king of Israel replied, "No! The LORD has summoned these three kings so he can hand them over to Moab!"

**13** And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

- The prophet's suggestion that Jehoram go to his parents' prophets implies that since the king promoted Baal worship, he should seek his own god

— This barb forced Jehoram to face up to the impotency of Baal

— Jehoram's response placed the blame for the army's predicament on the LORD. He had come to Elisha because now it was up to *Yahweh* to get them out of their trouble.

14 Elisha said, "As *surely* as the LORD of armies lives, before whom I stand, if I did not respect Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you.

14 Elisha said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you.

14 But Elisha responded, "As the LORD of the Heavenly Armies lives, in whose presence I stand, I would never pay attention to you or even look in your direction were it not for my continuous respect for the presence of King Jehoshaphat of Judah.

**14** And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

- Elisha was not intimidated by Jehoram's charge. He knew God had not directed Israel into its difficulty but that the army was there on the king's initiative

— Nevertheless for Jehoshaphat's sake Elisha consented to seek a word from the Lord

15 But now bring me a musician." And it came about, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

15 But now bring me a minstrel." And it came about, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

15 Now bring me a musician."

As the musician played, the hand of the LORD rested on Elisha,

15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

- Harp music helped put Elisha into a frame of mind in which he could readily discern the Lord's direction

16 And he said, "This is what the LORD says: 'Make this valley full of trenches.'

16 He said, "Thus says the LORD, 'Make this valley full of trenches.'

16 so he said, "This is what the LORD says: 'Fill this valley with trench after trench!'

16 And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

17 For the LORD says this: 'You will not see wind, nor will you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you will drink, you, your livestock, and your *other* animals.

17 For thus says the LORD, 'You shall not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, both you and your cattle and your beasts.

17 This is what the LORD says: 'Though you won't see wind or storm, nevertheless that river will overflow with water so that you, your cattle, and your livestock may drink.'

17 For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

— Elisha received a direct revelation and proceeded to explain God's plan. The campaign against Moab demonstrates how utterly abominable heathen religion was to God.

— The outcome was an object lesson to Israel showing her why she should turn from her idolatry. Nevertheless, she did not turn from it.

18 And this is an insignificant thing in the sight of the LORD; He will also give the Moabites into your hand.

18 This is but a slight thing in the sight of the LORD; He will also give the Moabites into your hand.

18 And this is the easy part for the LORD—he's also going to hand the Moabites over to you!

18 And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

19 Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and cut down every good tree and stop up all the springs of water, and spoil every good plot of land with stones."

19 Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones."

19 Then you are to attack every fortified city and every significant city. Cut down every significant tree, fill in all of the water springs, and ruin every prime piece of land with stones."

19 And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

- Cutting down all the good trees would make it difficult for the Moabites to have fruit to eat and would mean they would have little shade

— Stopping up all the springs would limit the Moabites' water supply, and putting large stones in the fields would retard cultivation and lessen their productivity

20 And it happened in the morning about *the time of* offering the sacrifice, that behold, water came from the direction of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

20 It happened in the morning about the time of offering the sacrifice, that behold, water came by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

20 The very next day, about the time of the morning offering, water suddenly appeared, coming from the direction of Edom, and the land overflowed with water!

**20** And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

- Evidently God caused the water from rains in Edom to flow down into the valley and fill the trenches that had been dug. This water was an expression of God's love for His people. — The fact that it had not rained locally probably caused the Moabites to think that having water in the valley was impossible

**21** Now all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them. And all who were able to put on armor and older were summoned and they took their positions on the border.

**21** Now all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them. And all who were able to put on armor and older were summoned and stood on the border.

**21** Meanwhile, all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to attack them, so everyone old enough to wear battle armor was mustered to stand guard at the border.

**21** And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

22 Then they got up early in the morning, and the sun shone on the water, and the Moabites saw the water opposite *them* as red as blood.

22 They rose early in the morning, and the sun shone on the water, and the Moabites saw the water opposite *them* as red as blood.

22 As the Moabites arose early that morning, the sun cast its rays on the water, and to the Moabites, the water across from them appeared to be red like blood.

22 And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood:

23 So they said, "This is blood; the kings must have fought each other, and they have killed one another. Now then, Moab, to the spoils!"

23 Then they said, "This is blood; the kings have surely fought together, and they have slain one another. Now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!"

23 So they concluded, "This must be blood! The kings must have had one mighty big fight and each man killed the other! So let's go get the battle spoil, Moab!"

23 And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

- Not expecting water, the Moabites assumed that the water shining in the sunlight was blood. So the Moabite army erroneously concluded that the Israelites, Judahites, and Edomites had had a falling out and had slaughtered each other—not an unrealistic possibility.

— Thinking that the confederate kings had come to blows and the troops had destroyed each other, the Moabites forget about warfare and each man takes off to get his share of the spoil. This, of course, gives Israel a distinct advantage.

24 But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and struck the Moabites, so that they fled from them; and *the Israelites* invaded the land, killing the Moabites.

24 But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites arose and struck the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they went forward into the land, slaughtering the Moabites.

24 But when the Moabites arrived at the Israeli encampment, the Israelis got up and attacked them. The Moabites ran away from the Israelis, who followed them into the land as they continued their pursuit against Moab.

**24** And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country.

- Rather than advancing with weapons drawn for battle, they ran to plunder the “dead” soldiers’ armor and weaponry. But instead, they ran into the waiting ranks of their enemies. — Defenseless, the Moabites fled before the Israelites. The Israelites, and presumably their allies with them, invaded Moab, slaughtered the people, destroyed many towns, and did to the fields, springs, and trees what God had instructed (Cf. v19).

25 So they destroyed the cities; and each one threw a stone on every plot of good land and filled it. So they stopped up every spring of water and cut down every good tree, until in Kir-hareseth *only* they left its stones; however, the rock slingers surrounded *it* and struck it.

25 Thus they destroyed the cities; and each one threw a stone on every piece of good land and filled it. So they stopped all the springs of water and felled all the good trees, until in Kir-hareseth *only* they left its stones; however, the slingers went about *it* and struck it.

25 They destroyed their cities, and all of them threw stones onto every piece of farm land, ruining the fields.

Then they filled in all the water wells and chopped down all of the useful trees. Stone walls remained surrounding Kir-hareseth only, until the archers surrounded and attacked that city.

25 And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kirharaseth left they the stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it.

- Such destruction represented the ordinary war policy of that time, now called a "scorched earth" policy

— Kir Hareseth, the major city and King Mesha's refuge, could not be taken. It was situated at the end of a valley and successfully resisted the attacks of the stone slingers surrounding it.

26 When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not.

26 When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him 700 men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not.

26 When the king of Moab realized that the battle was going strongly against him, he took 700 expert swordsmen to attempt to break through to the king of Edom, but was unable to do so.

**26** And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

- Courageously he assembled 700 swordsmen, broke out of the city, and attacked the king of Edom, whom he apparently concluded was the weakest link in the three-nation alliance — He was not successful, however, and was forced back behind the walls

27 Then *the king of Moab* took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And **great anger came upon Israel**, and they departed from him and returned to their own land.

27 Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall. And there came great wrath against Israel, and they departed from him and returned to their own land.

27 So he took his firstborn son, whom he intended to reign after him, and offered him up as a burnt offering on the wall. There subsequently came great anger against Israel, so they abandoned the attack and returned to their homeland.

27 Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

- Defeat in battle was regarded by pagan Near Eastern warriors as a sign that their gods were angry with them

— To propitiate his god, Chemosh (1 Kings 11:7,33; 2 Kings 23:13), Mesha offered his firstborn son, the heir to his throne, as a human sacrifice on top of the city wall

— This sacred rite of warfare virtually guaranteed, from Mesha's point of view, that his god would save the lives of the entire population under siege

— It was not Israel's intent to annihilate the Moabites; they only wanted to keep their neighbors from rebelling against their sovereignty to keep them under their control

- "...great anger came upon Israel" - the Hebrew preposition here indicates that Judah and Israel were indignant because of this abominable act (Cf. Lev 18:21; 20:3)

— So offensive to the allies was Mesha's act of sacrificing his son that they withdrew and returned home. Israel had won the battle even though they had not destroyed Kir Hareseth or captured Mesha.

— From Israel's point of view, the object of the campaign had been attained; the power of Moab was broken, the rebellion suppressed, and the country again placed under the scepter of the king of Israel.

A remarkable archeological discovery, the Moabite Stone, contains Mesha's own record of this battle and other battles with Israel. On this stone the Moabite king claimed to have been delivered from the Israelites by his god Chemosh on this day. Though it is true that he was not captured at Kir Hareseth and the Israelites withdrew, Israel and her allies were the real victors in this campaign. The account of this battle provides further proof of the sovereignty of *Yahweh* and of the complete vanity of idols and idolatry. But even with so many proofs, Israel continued to spurn the Lord and foolishly worshiped pagan deities. This chapter shows that God was willing to give Israel victory because she allied with Jehoshaphat, who humbled himself under God (Cf. 2:23-25). God in His grace sometimes allows His blessings for obedience to spill over to those who are less worthy (Cf. 1 Cor 7:14).