

**2Kings 3:1 ¶ 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.**

**2Kings 3:2 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.**

**2Kings 3:3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.**

This chapter opens by telling us that Jehoram, son of Ahab, became king over Israel in Samaria in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Jehoram reigned for 12 years.

It is noted that Jehoram was an evil king in the sight of the LORD, but not quite as bad as his parents. He at least got rid of the image of Baal that his father had made. That's about the best thing you could say about him. He maintained the worship of the golden calves established by Jeroboam.

**2Kings 3:4 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.**

**2Kings 3:5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.**

Moab was a land that provided a great environment for raising sheep. Mesha, king of Moab, recognized this, and his country was known for the sheep raised there. He paid tribute to the king of Israel in the form of the wool of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams. Once Ahab died, however, he rebelled and quit paying tribute.

The IVP Commentary has an interesting historic note regarding Mesha: "Mesha is known from the inscription (the Moabite Stone) that details the past control of Israel over Moab and celebrates Mesha's breaking free of that control. The four-foot-high inscription was found at the site of Dibon, just north of the Arnon river, in 1868. It commemorates the building of a sanctuary, and it mentions Omri by name and refers to his son (Ahab, or perhaps his grandson, Joram) without naming him. It makes reference to the Moabite national god Chemosh who had used Israel for punishment of his land but now had brought victory. The next verse makes reference to Mesha's successful revolt against Israelite control (during the reign of Ahaziah?), so the events of the Moabite stone precede the events of this chapter."

**2Kings 3:6 ¶ And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.**

**2Kings 3:7 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.**

In light of the rebellion of Moab, Jehoram proceeded to number Israel to determine how large an army he could muster. As his father before him, he sought the support of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah. Once again, Jehoshaphat agreed to go to war with the king of Israel—this time against Moab.

**2Kings 3:8 And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.**

**2Kings 3:9 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.**

**2Kings 3:10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!**

Jehoshaphat asked Jehoram (or possibly vice versa; the wording is not clear) from what direction he wanted to launch an attack. He told him they would go through the wilderness of Edom. JFB notes: "This was a long and circuitous route, by the southern bend of the Dead Sea." The NIV Commentary adds this observation: "...it would ensure the invaders not only protection for the rear, but the advantage of avoiding a head-on assault across the Arnon River and into the Moabite strength that a northern invasion would necessitate."

It is implied that the king of Edom had also agreed to give support to Jehoram. This makes more sense in light of this note from Guzik quoting Dilday: "Verse 9 mentions the king of Edom, but we have already been told in 1 Kings 22:47 that there was no king in Edom at this time. So king here must refer to a vice-regent appointed by the king of Judah."

After seven days of traveling, they could find no water for their troops or their cattle.

Jehoram bemoaned the fact that the LORD had called these three kings together for the purpose of delivering them into the hands of the Moabites. It seems he at least recognized that the LORD had a right to be angry with him.

**2Kings 3:11 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, *Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.***

**2Kings 3:12 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.**

**2Kings 3:13 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.**

Jehoshaphat wasn't ready to accept defeat. He wanted to know if there was not a prophet of the LORD close by through whom they could seek the counsel of the LORD. One of Jehoram's servants answered that Elisha, son of Shaphat, Elijah's successor was nearby.

Jehoshaphat evidently knew of Elisha and agreed that he was a true prophet of the LORD. So the three kings went to seek an audience with Elisha.

Elisha greeted Jehoram with contempt. He told the king of Israel to go seek counsel from the prophets that had served his parents. Jehoram basically said there was no need because he knew that the LORD had determined to let the Moabites conquer them.

**2Kings 3:14 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.**

**2Kings 3:15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.**

Elisha then seemed to take note of the fact that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, one who worshipped the LORD, was with Jehoram. In light of that fact, he agreed to help them. He asked for a minstrel, one that sang as he played a stringed instrument. When the minstrel played, the power of the LORD came upon him.

So many times in scripture, music is shown to have great influence over men—both as a force for good as well as evil. David was able to soothe the troubled spirit of Saul by playing on his harp. The Israelites used music as part of their frenzied worship around the golden calf. In this instance, it seems that the LORD used the music to prepare Elisha to receive the power of the Spirit. I am reminded of these verses in Ephesians.

*Ephesians 5:18–19 “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord....”*

**2Kings 3:16 And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.**

**2Kings 3:17 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.**

**2Kings 3:18 And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.**

**2Kings 3:19 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.**

**2Kings 3:20 ¶ 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.**

Elisha then gave the kings a message from the LORD. He told them to dig ditches throughout the valley. Though they would not see a rainstorm, the ditches would be filled with water that would provide drinking water for both the troops and their animals. He went on to say that this was but a small miracle. The LORD was also going to help them defeat the Moabites. They were to

conquer all of their fortified cities and towns. They were to cut down every good tree, stop up all their wells of water and ruin all their fields by filling them with stones.

The very next morning, about the time of the morning sacrifice, water came from Edom and filled all the hollowed areas in the ground.

**2Kings 3:21 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.**

**2Kings 3:22 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:**

**2Kings 3:23 And they said, This *is* blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.**

The Moabites eventually heard that the three kings were preparing to attack them. So they gathered together all their troops and prepared to defend their border. They got up early in the morning, and the sun reflected on the water sent by the LORD so that it looked like blood. They reasoned that the kings and their armies must have turned on one another and were dead; so they advanced, thinking that they would take the spoil that remained.

**2Kings 3:24 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.**

**2Kings 3:25 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.**

When they reached the camp of Israel, they were surprised to face an attack. They fled, but soon suffered a great defeat. As the LORD had directed, they conquered all the fortified cities and towns, threw stones over all the good land, stopped up all the wells of water and cut down all the good trees.

Only the city of Kirharaseth (the capital city in southern Moab) remained secure behind its stone wall. The slingers surrounded it and launched their attack.

**2Kings 3:26 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.**

**2Kings 3:27 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.**

The king of Moab realized that he was losing. In one last attempt, he gathered 700 swordsmen, some of the best fighters at close quarters, and tried to get through the ranks led by the king of Edom; they failed. In desperation, the king

of Moab then took his firstborn son and offered him as a sacrifice to their false god on the wall of the city.

The last part of verse 27 is confusing. Maybe this is the first time the men of Israel and Judah had witnessed a human sacrifice. Sadly, it would eventually become a practice even in Judah. It seems, however, that the sight so disgusted them that they left without further fighting leaving the country of Moab in ruins.