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THE ISRAELITE JOURNEY
THROUGH (AROUND) MOAB
AND MOABITE TOPONYMY

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The Israelite encounter with the Moabites at the time of the exodus from Egypt is reported in four biblical passages: Num 21:10–20, which recounts the Israelite march from Oboth to the Mount Pisgah vicinity; Num 33:5–49, an itinerary of all the stages of march from Egypt to the plains of Moab; Deuteronomy 2, part of Moses' summary of the wilderness events; and Judg 11:12–28, Jephthah's exchange of messages with an Ammonite king. Even a casual reader will notice some confusion in these passages regarding whether the Israelites went through Moabite territory or circled around the eastern (desert) side. Related to this confusion regarding the route of their journey are some long-standing problems in Moabite toponymy. This paper is concerned primarily with the toponymy problems, but begins with some general observations and a brief review of the four crux passages.

I. Preliminary Observations

The usefulness of the four passages as sources of information regarding Moabite toponymy does not depend on their historical accuracy. Even if the exodus journey never occurred, the biblical narrators will have been concerned to give their story an authentic setting to the best of their knowledge. More crucial for our purposes than historicity, therefore, is the question of whether the biblical writers were very familiar with Moabite geography in the first place and whether whatever authentic geographical information they provided has been changed or garbled during secondary stages of compilation and redaction.

The actual boundaries of Moab is one of the points of contention in the passages. For our purposes, Moab may be identified as the narrow strip of cultivable land paralleling the Dead Sea along its eastern side. It will be useful, moreover, to distinguish between Moab proper (the region south of the Arnon, present-day Wādī el-Mūjib) and northern Moab (the region north of the Arnon). Moab proper was isolated by geographical barriers – the steep Arnon/Mūjib canyon on the north, the Dead Sea escarpment on the west, the

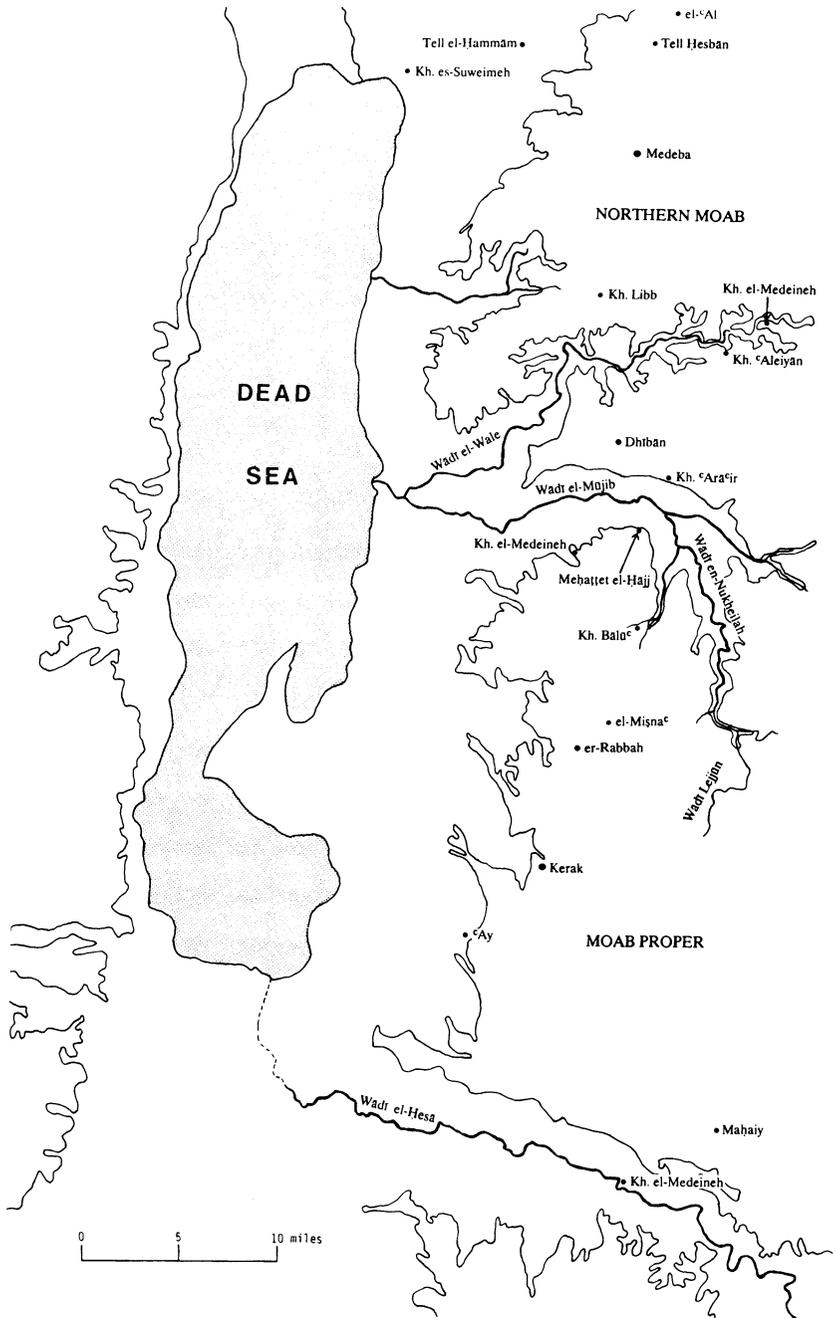
Arabian desert on the east, and the Wādī el-Ḥesā canyon on the south. Northern Moab was easily accessible to the outside world, on the other hand, especially to the Israelites and the Ammonites. Correspondingly, the Moab known to the Israelites was essentially northern Moab. Where it is reported that certain Israelite kings conquered and ruled Moab, for example, the references are almost certainly to northern Moab.¹ 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.

Not only did the kings of Israel and Ammon encroach on northern Moab from time to time; the local population of that region will have had mixed loyalties, and all three national groups (the Moabites, Israelites, and Ammonites) will have had their respective versions of the early history of the region which supported their respective claims to it. Central to the Israelite claim was the alleged Sihon episode. It was contended, namely, that Moab had already lost the territory north of the Arnon to the Amorites before the Israelites appeared on the scene and that the Israelites conquered this territory in turn from the Amorite king Sihon. Israelite presence north of the Arnon could not be regarded as encroachment on either Moab or Ammon, therefore, according to this line of argument. The Arnon was already established as Moab's northern boundary before the days of Moses, and Israel conquered the region north of this boundary fair and square from a non-Moabite, non-Ammonite king.

Recognizing that the Sihon pericopes have a nationalistic political agenda does not necessarily mean that they are historically untrustworthy. Yet there are additional factors which suggest that this is indeed the case. For example, this episode is confined to the deuteronomistic and/or post-deuteronomistic strata of the Genesis–2 Kings corpus. The same is true of the territorial claim that these pericopes advance. Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible it is consistently assumed that the land of Moab extended as far north as the Heshbon-Elealeh vicinity and even included some of the Jordan Valley (compare, for example, Isaiah 15–16 and Jeremiah 48). Also there is the well-known archaeological problem with Heshbon (Tell Ḥesbān), the alleged capital of Sihon's Amorite kingdom. Excavations at the site produced no Late Bronze Age remains and very meager remains from the opening centuries of the Iron Age.

In their attempts to trace the Israelite route through/around Edom and Moab, scholars usually give precedence to Num 21:10–20, the first of the four passages mentioned above. Not only does it come first in the biblical narrative; it seems to provide more specific geographical detail than any of the other three. The general consensus among literary critics also favored this

¹ See J. M. Miller and J. H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster; London: SCM, 1986) 182, 269.



approach until the 1970s. It was generally agreed, namely, that Numbers 20–21 belonged essentially to JE and that the other three passages were literarily dependent on Numbers 20–21 and/or belonged to later literary strata of the Genesis–2 Kings corpus. However, this consensus may be said to have collapsed during the 1970s. As will become apparent below, recent studies strongly suggest that Numbers 20–21 is literarily dependent on Num 33:5–49, Deuteronomy 2, and Judg 11:12–28 rather than the other way around.

II. The Four Crux Passages

Numbers 33:5–49

This passage presents an itinerary of stops (stages of march) that the Israelites supposedly followed during their exodus journey from Egypt to the plains of Moab. It combines and essentially duplicates itinerary segments introduced here and there throughout the preceding narrative account of the journey (see especially Exod 12:37; 13:29; 14:2; 15:22; 15:27–16:1; 17:1; Num 20:1, 22; 21:4, 10–20). Earlier literary critics assigned the segments to JE for the most part and saw the full itinerary in Num 33:5–49 as a redactional summary.² Graham Davies, however, on the basis of a thorough examination of all the itinerary materials in Exodus–Numbers along with a comparative study of related extrabiblical texts, reached the following conclusions:³ (1) Allowing for some “P” additions, the Num 33:5–49 itinerary represents a coherent and unified text. It is not a composite of the itinerary segments presented earlier in the Exodus–Numbers narrative. On the contrary, where there are parallels it is the earlier segments which were derived literarily from Num 33:5–49 and not the other way around.⁴ (2) Probably it was at a fairly late (deuteronomistic) stage in the compilation process that the segments were excerpted from the full Num 33:5–49 itinerary and reintroduced at “appropriate” places earlier in the narrative. (3) The Num 33:5–49 itinerary probably described an actual route which would have been widely known in ancient times. Although Davies’s third conclusion may be challenged for reasons given below, the first two seem unavoidable. Accordingly, attempts

² E.g., M. Noth, *Numbers* (trans. J. D. Martin; London: SCM; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968) 241–46; see also the discussion and references cited by P. J. Budd, *Numbers* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984) 348–57, esp. 350.

³ G. Davies, *The Way of the Wilderness: A Geographical Study of the Wilderness Itineraries in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1979).

⁴ This first conclusion, that the Num 33:5–49 itinerary is a coherent source to be associated primarily with “P” rather than a summary of “JE” elements was anticipated to some degree by M. Noth and F. M. Cross: see Noth, “Der Wallfahrtsweg zum Sinai (Nu 33),” *PJ* 36 (1940) 5–28; reprinted in *Aufsätze zur biblischen Landes- und Altertumskunde* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971) 1. 55–74; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 308–21.

to locate the places mentioned must begin with the full itinerary rather than with the excerpted segments since the segments are in secondary contexts that could be misleading.

The last seven stages of the Num 33:5–49 itinerary concern us here (see vv. 43–49): → Punon → Oboth → Iye-abarim → Dibon-gad → Almondiblathaim → Mountains of Abarim before Nebo → Plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim. Punon, Oboth, and Iye-abarim are unknown elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible except in Num 21:10–13, the parallel segment to be discussed below. The exact names Dibon-gad, Almondiblathaim, and Abel-shittim are also unique to this passage, but they clearly correspond to Dibon, Beth-diblathaim, and Shittim well known in other texts.⁵ It seems safe to associate Punon with Khirbet el-Feinan in Wādī el-Feinan and Dibon(-gad) with Dhībān immediately north of Wādī Mūjib. ‘Ain el-Weibeh on the western side of the Arabah roughly opposite Khirbet el-Feinan is often suggested as the site of Oboth,⁶ but there is little to support this identification apart from the vague similarity in the names, and ‘Ain el-Weibeh is not on a direct route from Khirbet el-Feinan to Dhībān.⁷

Davies identifies Iye-abarim with the present-day village of ‘Ay approximately ten kilometers southwest of Kerak. The possibility must be considered, however, that Iye-abarim (עַיִ הָעֲבָרִים) was not a specific site — that is, that the name should be translated with full appellative force, something like “the ruins on the other side.” Certainly this is true of the Mountains of Abarim (הַרְרֵי הָעֲבָרִים), which would be the rugged western escarpment of the Moabite plateau at the northeastern corner of the Dead Sea. That being the case, the itinerary turns out to be surprisingly vague for the southern Transjordan leg of the exodus journey. Specific camping spots are indicated for the main part of the journey (from Egypt to Oboth) and also for the last leg of the journey through northern Moab (from Dibon-gad to the vicinity of Jericho). For the march from Oboth to Dibon-gad, however, we are told simply and vaguely that they camped “among the ruins on the other side.” Note that the text knows

⁵ Dibon: Num 21:30; 32:3, 34; Josh 13:9, 17; etc. and the Mesha inscription; Beth-diblathaim: Jer 48:22 and the Mesha inscription; Shittim: Num 25:1; Josh 2:1; 3:1; Joel 3:18; Micah 6:5.

⁶ See, e.g., Noth, “Der Wallfahrtsweg zum Sinai (Nu 33),” in *Aufsätze zur biblischen Landes- und Altertumskunde*, 65.

⁷ There is very little archaeological evidence available pertaining to Khirbet el-Feinan, ‘Ain el-Weibeh, or Dhībān, and none of it is decisive for determining their ancient identifications. Only Dhībān has been excavated (five seasons of excavations during 1950–56 and a sixth season in 1965). The excavations there were neither extensive nor conclusive. Nothing was found from the Middle or Late Bronze Ages. Apparently there was a small amount of Iron I material, but none of it located stratigraphically. See F. V. Winnett and W. L. Reed, *The Excavations at Dibon (Dhībān) in Moab*, AASOR 36–37 (1964); A. D. Tushingham, *The Excavations at Dibon (Dhībān) in Moab: The Third Campaign 1952–53*, AASOR 40 (1972); and W. Morton, “Report of the Director of the School in Jerusalem,” BASOR 140 (1955) 47.

nothing of King Sihon and presumes that Moabite territory extended even as far north as the Jordan Valley across from Jericho.⁸

Deuteronomy 2

This chapter combines two quite different traditions regarding the early Israelite encounter with the peoples of the Transjordan. One of the traditions dominates the first part of the chapter; the other dominates the latter part. According to the first, Yahweh commanded the Israelites to avoid any conflict with the sons of Esau who lived in Seir, the sons of Lot associated with Ar, and the sons of Ammon whose frontier they would reach after passing beyond Ar. Boundaries are vague; in fact, one gets the impression that the sons of Esau and Lot were relatively isolated groups who could be bypassed without major detours. Dominating the latter part of the chapter, especially vv. 24ff., is the Sihon episode with its concern to specify that the Arnon was the historic northern boundary of Moab and to establish Israel's claim to the disputed territory north of the Arnon. The redactional process of combining these two traditions required some loose, ambiguous, and probably misleading correlations. What happens, in effect, is that by the end of the chapter the sons of Lot have been transformed into Moabites,⁹ Ar has been equated with Moab, and Ar/Moab has been defined specifically as the region south of the Arnon. The following verses require individual comment.

Verses 8b–9. “Wilderness of Moab” 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. מְדִבְרָה is a broadly inclusive term for uncultivated land,¹⁰ and nothing else in the chapter suggests a detour around the desert side. On the contrary, the central thrust of the verses that follow clearly presupposes a route through rather than around Moab.

Verse 13. The Zered is mentioned only here and in Num 21:12. Since the Israelites supposedly were approaching from the south or southwest, and

⁸ Included in the Plains of Moab are Beth-jeshimoth and Shittim, both situated in the Jordan Valley across from Jericho. Beth-jeshimoth (cf. Jeshimon), mentioned in Josh 12:3; 12:20; Ezek 25:9 and Josephus (*J.W.* 4.7.5 §§426–36), is identified with a place called Ismuth by Eusebius (*Onom.* 266.27; 233.81) and Jerome (*Onom.* 103.9). The ancient name probably is preserved in that of present-day Khirbet es-Suweimeh, although contemporary scholars usually accept N. Glueck's view that Tell 'Azeimeh nearby is the actual site. Earlier scholars generally identified Shittim with Tell Kefrein, but the more recent tendency, again following Glueck, has been to associate it with Tell el-Hammām. See esp. N. Glueck, “Some Ancient Towns in the Plains of Moab,” *BASOR* 91 (1943) 24–25.

⁹ As in some texts, although never in this one, the sons of Esau and Seir are equated with Edomites and Edom; see J. R. Bartlett, “The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom,” *JTS* 20 (1969) 1–20.

¹⁰ מְדִבְרָה גְּבֻעוֹן in 2 Sam 2:24, for example, would not be a desert.

since Wādī el-Ḥesā is the most formidable canyon south of the Arnon/Mūjib, the Zered is usually equated with Wādī el-Ḥesā (but see below).

Verses 18–19. The geographical confusion that resulted from combining the two traditions is especially evident in these verses, which are problematic on three counts: (1) They seem to ignore that the Israelites have already entered Moab several verses earlier and will be exiting again several verses later. (2) The phrase אֶת־גְּבֹול־מוֹאָב אֶת־עַר is ambiguous, perhaps intentionally so: does it mean that the Israelites crossed “the boundary of Moab at Ar” or crossed “the territory of Moab which is Ar?” (3) These verses assume that the Israelites, after leaving Moab, will be approaching the region of the Ammonites rather than entering Amorite territory as will be assumed in the remainder of the chapter.

Verse 24. While conflicting with vv. 18–19, which have the Israelites reaching the territory of the Ammonites after leaving Ar/Moab, this verse seems to refer to v. 13, where they are commanded to cross the Zered. That is, they are understood to have crossed first the Zered and then the Arnon, which brought them to the edge of King Sihon’s Amorite realm.

Verses 26–29. The Israelites are envisioned as already having crossed the Arnon when messengers were sent from the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon. Although there was a place called Kedemoth in northern Moab (Josh 13:17–20; 21:37; 1 Chr 6:34), the mention here of “the wilderness of Kedemoth” is not entirely convincing. The reader was never informed that the Israelites had reached the wilderness of Kedemoth, and Kedemoth is not mentioned in any of the other passages pertaining to the Israelite journey through the Transjordan. Possibly some confusion has occurred here between Kedemoth and Kedesh (cf. Deut 1:46).

Verses 32–37. Nothing is to be learned from these verses about the location of Jahaz, the scene of the battle with Sihon, other than that it presumably was located between Kedemoth (unless one reads “Kedesh”) and Heshbon. Aroer may be identified confidently with present-day Khirbet ‘Arā‘ir on the northern rim of the Mūjib. The strange reference to “the city that is in the valley” will require further comment below.

To summarize: Deuteronomy 2 combines competing traditions regarding Israel’s encounter with the peoples of the Transjordan. The redactional process involved some loose correlations which probably are misleading—namely, the equation of the sons of Lot with Moab and Ar with the region south of the Arnon. It also produced a not entirely coherent itinerary for the Israelite journey from Kedesh to northern Moab. Even allowing for the composite character of the chapter and the garbled nature of its itinerary, however, it is clear that the Israelites were understood to have passed through, rather than around, Moab proper (see especially vv. 28–29).

Judges 11:12–28

According to these verses, which report an exchange of messages between an Ammonite king and Jephthah, the Ammonite king justified an attack on Israel by claiming that “Israel on coming from Egypt took away my land, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and to the Jordan” (v. 13). Jephthah responded that this was untrue, that Israel had taken the disputed territory from neither Ammon nor Moab, but from the Amorite king Sihon. Jephthah insisted, moreover, that the Israelites did not even pass through Moabite territory at the time: “Then they journeyed through the wilderness, and went around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and arrived on the east side of the land of Moab, and camped on the other side of the Arnon; but they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon is the boundary of Moab” (v. 18).

Thus, while Jephthah’s response in Judges 11 represents another “deuteronomistic” version of the Israelite journey through the Transjordan, there are significant differences between it and the version in Deuteronomy 2. The sons of Esau at Mount Seir and the sons of Lot at Ar disappear from the scene entirely in the Judges 11 version and are replaced by kingdoms of Edom and Moab. Israel sent messages to the kings of both nations from Kedesh with requests for permission to pass through their respective realms. When the requests were denied, the Israelites somehow bypassed Edomite and Moabite territory, ending up on the east (sunrise) side of Moab and on the other side of the Arnon.

The main trunk of the Arnon/Mūjib flows east to west into the Dead Sea and thus marks what both Deuteronomy 2 and Judges 11 obviously intend as the northern boundary of Moab. However, one of the main tributaries of the Mūjib (Wādī en-Nukheilāh, also called Wādī Lejjūn) flows north by northwest before joining the main trunk some thirty kilometers east of the Dead Sea. Since this tributary represents roughly the dividing line between the settled area in ancient times and the desert fringe, one might think of it as marking a segment of the eastern frontier of Moab proper. Developing this line of argument further, it is possible to interpret Jephthah’s statement as meaning that the Israelites camped east of the Wādī en-Nukheilāh/Lejjūn tributary, which would have placed them on the east (sunrise) side of the land of Moab and at the same time on the other side of the Arnon.

However, this would be a forced interpretation in my opinion, and one which tends to contradict the narrator’s overriding concern to emphasize that the Arnon was the *northern* boundary of Moab and that all the territory north of the Arnon was conquered from a non-Moabite, non-Ammonite king. Moreover, this line of interpretation assumes that the narrator of the Jephthah episode had more detailed knowledge of Moabite geography than the passage suggests otherwise.¹¹ Probably he had no clear notion in mind of the exact

¹¹ Even late nineteenth-century geographers were unclear regarding the upper tributaries of

route that the Israelites could have followed, but realized that the only way they could have avoided Edomite and Moabite territory was to detour around through the desert.

Numbers 21:10–20

We come finally to Num 21:10–20, which commentators and biblical cartographers have struggled with for years on the mistaken assumption that it is supposed to make geographical sense. But it simply does not, and recent studies by Mittmann, Van Seters, and Davies explain why. Siegfried Mittmann reexamined Num 20:14–21, where Moses sends messengers to the king of Edom requesting permission for the Israelites to pass through his land, and concluded that it is a late redactional piece with pronounced deuteronomistic influence.¹² John Van Seters reached an even more startling conclusion on the basis of a word-for-word comparison of Num 21:21–35, which reports Moses' dealings with Sihon, with the corresponding passages in Deuteronomy 2–3 and Judges 11. Van Seters concluded that both Num 20:14–21 and 21:21–35 are post-deuteronomistic compositions *derived from* Deuteronomy 2–3 and Judges 11. Moreover, as Van Seters pointed out, the redactional process involved geographical as well as literary conflation. Deuteronomy presupposes a peaceful journey through Edom and Moab; Judges has the Israelites going around through the desert; Numbers 21 conflates the two perspectives.¹³ Graham Davies, in a follow-up to his initial examination of the wilderness itineraries, demonstrated in the same fashion, by word-for-word comparison, that Num 21:10–13 is a conflation of the Numbers 33 and Judges 11 texts. "A major issue," Davies observes, "was whether the Israelites had passed through or around Edomite and Moabite territory. Num. xxxiii represents the first view (cf. Dibon-Gad in verses 45–46), but Judg. xi 18 (in the speech of Jephthah) equally clearly represents the second, which provided a stronger response to charges leveled against the Israelites in that context."¹⁴

the Müjib, as is apparent from maps of the period. See, for example, the *PEFQS* map published in 1890: *Palestine: From the Surveys Conducted for the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund and Other Sources* (compiled by G. Armstrong; revised by C. W. Wilson and C. R. Conder). F. J. Bliss was able to clarify much of the confusion in 1895; see his "Narrative of an Expedition to Moab and Gilead in March 1895," *PEFQS* (1895) 203–34.

¹² S. Mittmann, "Num 20,14–21 – eine redaktionelle Kompilation," in *Wört und Geschichte: Festschrift für Karl Elliger zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. H. Gese and H. R. Rüger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973) 143–49.

¹³ J. Van Seters, "The Conquest of Sihon's Kingdom: A Literary Examination," *JBL* 91 (1972) 182–97; "Once Again – the Conquest of Sihon's Kingdom," *JBL* 99 (1980) 117–19; the latter in response to J. R. Bartlett, "The Conquest of Sihon's Kingdom: A Literary Re-examination," *JBL* 97 (1978) 347–51.

¹⁴ G. Davies, "The Wilderness Itineraries and the Composition of the Pentateuch," *VT* 33 (1983) 1–13.

 Num 21:10–13 compared with Num 33:43–44; Deut 2:13, 24; and Judg 11:18

Num 21:10–11a

And the people of Israel set out, and encamped in Oboth. And they set out from Oboth, and encamped at Iye-abarim,

Num 33:43–44

And they set out from Punon, and encamped at Oboth. And they set out from Oboth, and encamped at Iye-abarim in the territory of Moab. . . .

Num 21:11b

in the wilderness which is opposite Moab, toward the sunrise.

Judg 11:18

Then they journeyed through the wilderness . . . and arrived on the east (sunrise) side of the land of Moab.

Num 21:12–13a

From there they set out, and encamped in the Valley of Zered. From there they set out, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon,

Deut 2:13, 24

Now rise up, and go over the the brook Zered. . . . Rise up take your journey, and go over the valley of the Arnon.

Num 21:13b

which is in the wilderness, that extends from the boundary of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the boundary of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

Judg 11:18

. . . and camped on the other side of the Arnon; but they do not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the boundary of Moab.

Num 21:10–11a

וַיֵּסְעוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּחֲנוּ
בְּאֹבֹתַי: וַיֵּסְעוּ מֵאֹבֹתַי וַיַּחֲנוּ
בְּעֵי הָעֲבָרִים

Num 33:43–44

וַיֵּסְעוּ מִפּוּנוֹן וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּאֹבֹתַי:
וַיֵּסְעוּ מֵאֹבֹתַי וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּעֵי
הָעֲבָרִים בְּנֹכַח מוֹאָב:

Num 21:11b

בַּמִּדְבָּר אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי מוֹאָב
מִמְזֹרַח הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:

Judg 11:18

וַיֵּלֶךְ בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיִּסַּב אֶת-אֶרֶץ
אֲדוֹם וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב וַיָּבֵא
מִמְזֹרַח-שָׁמֶשׁ לְאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב

Num 21:12–13a

מִשָּׁם נָסְעוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּנַחַל זֶרֶד:
מִשָּׁם נָסְעוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ מֵעֵבֶר אַרְנוֹן

Deut 2:13, 24

קָמוּ וְעָבְרוּ לָכֶם אֶת-נַחַל זֶרֶד
. . . קָמוּ סָעוּ וְעָבְרוּ אֶת-נַחַל
אַרְנוֹן

Num 21:13b

אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְבַר הַיָּצֵא מִגְּבוּל הָאֱמֹרִי
כִּי אַרְנוֹן גְּבוּל מוֹאָב בֵּין
מוֹאָב וּבֵין הָאֱמֹרִי:

Judg 11:18

וַיַּחֲנוּן בְּעֵבֶר אַרְנוֹן וְלֹא-בָאוּ
בְּגְבוּל מוֹאָב כִּי אַרְנוֹן גְּבוּל
מוֹאָב:

Davies was less explicit regarding whether Num 21:10–13 draws on Deuteronomy 2 as well as on Num 33:5–49 and Judges 11. One might suspect that it does in view of Van Seters’s demonstration that other verses in Numbers 20–21 draw on Deuteronomy 2; and the suspicion is confirmed when all four passages are compared. Note that Num 21:10–11 follows the wording of Num 33:43–44 through the mention of Iye-abarim. At that point, however, rather than locating Iye-abarim in “the territory of Moab” as does the Numbers 33 itinerary, it places Iye-abarim “in the wilderness which is opposite Moab, toward the sunrise.” This latter is Judges 11 terminology. Next (vv. 12–13a) there is an attempt to accommodate Deuteronomy 2, which has the Israelites crossing first the Zered then the Arnon. Finally (v. 13b), the passage seeks to harmonize the Israelite crossing of the Arnon (Deuteronomy 2) with their bypassing Moab on the wilderness side (Judges 11) and to reaffirm that the Arnon was the boundary between Moab and the Amorites (Deuteronomy 2 and Judges 11). The result of all this, of course, is a geographical hodgepodge totally incomprehensible in terms of the geographical realities of southern Transjordan.

The conflated itinerary is followed by a quotation from the Book of the Wars of Yahweh which supposedly verifies that the Arnon was the boundary of Moab (vv. 14–15) and another itinerary segment which takes the Israelites through northern Moab to the vicinity of Pisgah (vv. 16–20). However, the quotation cannot be translated with any degree of confidence (see below) and seems irrelevant to the boundary issue regardless of how one interprets it. The itinerary segment finds no parallel elsewhere in the biblical materials. Moreover, contradicting what precedes and follows in the same chapter, it assumes that “the region of Moab” extended north of the Arnon, at least as far as Pisgah.

III. Four Problems in Moabite Toponymy

While the preceding analysis of the four passages pertaining to the Israelite journey through/around Moab does not lead to immediate solutions for the related problems in Moabite toponymy, it does enable us to avoid some mistaken inferences often made on the basis of the passages. For one thing, the analysis seems to confirm that the biblical writers were not very familiar with the region south of the Mūjib/Arnon. Accordingly, we must be cautious not to extract from these passages more precise information regarding the geography and toponymy of Moab proper than the passages are able to give. Also to be taken into account is the fact that some of the meager information provided has become garbled as a result of the blending of traditions and redactional activity. The following cases illustrate the necessity of taking literary-critical factors into account when dealing with toponymy problems.

Iye-abarim and the River Zered

Num 21:10–13 has the Israelites camping at Iye-abarim on the eastern (sunrise) side of Moab before crossing the Zered. Deuteronomy 2 seems to imply that the Zered marked Moab's southern boundary, on the other hand, which suggests its identification with Wādī el-Ḥesā. But how could the Israelites, supposedly coming from the south, have reached Iye-abarim in the region east of Moab before crossing the Zered/Ḥesā? One proposed solution is to deny that the Zered was Moab's southern boundary, dissociate it also from Wādī el-Ḥesā, and equate it instead with one of the less impressive wadis north of the Ḥesā.¹⁵ Another proposed solution seeks to maintain the Zered/Wādī el-Ḥesā identification by locating Iye-abarim near or in the Wādī el-Ḥesā canyon and as far east as possible. Thus, the Israelites might have reached Iye-abarim before completely crossing the Zered/Ḥesā; yet, with some imagination, Iye-abarim could be regarded as situated on the eastern side of Moab.¹⁶ Both of these solutions are unnecessarily forced, however, and fail to recognize that the whole problem is an artificial one created by the conflated text of Num 21:10–13. This is not just a vague and obscure text; it is composite, misleading, and should not be allowed to distract.

¹⁵ A. H. Van Zyl, for example, equated it with one of the southeastern branches of the Mūjib (*The Moabites* [Pretoria Oriental Series 3; Leiden: Brill, 1960] 56).

¹⁶ F.-M. Abel associated Iye-abarim with Maḥaiy, but Glueck favored Kh. el-Medineh and current Bible atlases tend to follow Glueck; see Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine. II. Géographie Politique. Les Villes* (Paris: Gabalda, 1938) 216–17; N. Glueck, "Explorations in Eastern Palestine III," *AASOR* 18–19 (1939) 68–69 n. 224; *The Macmillan Bible Atlas* (ed. Y. Aharoni and M. Avi-Yonah; Jerusalem: Carta, 1968) 42, 179; *Reader's Digest Atlas of the Bible* (ed. J. L. Gardner; Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, 1981) 70, 226; *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands* (ed. B. J. Beitzel; Chicago: Moody Press, 1985) 86–87; *The Times Atlas of the Bible* (ed. J. B. Pritchard; London: Times Books Limited, 1987) 56–57.

Unfortunately, since there are no other ancient references to either place, disqualifying Num 21:10–13 leaves us entirely dependent on Deuteronomy 2 for locating the River Zered and on Num 33:5–49 for locating Iye-abarim. The River Zered/Wādī el-Ḥesā equation seems likely enough from the context in Deuteronomy 2, but locating Iye-abarim on the basis of Num 33:5–49 is complicated by the uncertainty regarding (a) the location of Oboth and (b) whether “Iye-abarim” should be treated as the name of a specific place or as an appellative phrase (“the ruins on the other side”). In short, we can conclude nothing more than that Iye-abarim was between Punon (Khirbet Feinan) and Dibon-gad (Dhibān).

Jahaz

Isa 15:4 associates Jahaz with Heshbon and Elealeh (present-day Tell Ḥesbān and el-‘Al respectively). Jer. 48:21 lists it among Moabite settlements in the מִישָׁר (i.e., the region north of the Arnon). The Mesha inscription implies that it was a place of some military importance located reasonably near to Dibon. Eusebius places it along the main road between Dibon and Medeba (*Onom.* 104:9f.). In short, Jahaz seems from these references to have been located in northern Moab, along the main north–south road, and probably nearer to Dibon than Medeba. Khirbet Libb, now a resettled village with the “khirbet” no longer visible, was suggested by R. de Vaux¹⁷ and meets all of the requirements.

The only possible evidence to the contrary comes from Judges 11 and Numbers 21. Since the Israelites, according to these two texts, approached northern Moab from the desert side of Moab proper and had just crossed the Arnon when Sihon met them in battle at Jahaz, it is often assumed that Jahaz was situated farther east than the main road, nearer to the desert fringe. Thus Glueck proposed Khirbet ‘Aleiyān on one of the upper tributaries of Wādī el-Wale.¹⁸ Y. Aharoni proposed Khirbet el-Medeineh in the same general vicinity, and this latter identification has been championed recently by Andrew Dearman.¹⁹

However, this line of argument loses force when one takes into account (a) the obviously tendentious nature of the claim in Judges 11 that the Israelites went around rather than through Moab, (b) the literary dependence of Num 21:10–13 on Judges 11 in precisely that regard, and (c) the fact that neither Num 33:5–49 nor Deuteronomy 2 is aware of a desert detour.

¹⁷ R. de Vaux, “Notes d’histoire et de topographie Transjordaniennes,” in *Vivre et Penser I* (Paris, 1941) 16–47 = *Bible et Orient* (Paris: Cerf, 1967) 115–49.

¹⁸ N. Glueck, “Explorations in Eastern Palestine III,” 116–17. He is followed by Van Zyl (*Moabites*, 80–81) and by the present writer in an earlier study: J. M. Miller, “The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stele,” *PEQ* 106 (1974) 9–18.

¹⁹ J. A. Dearman, “The Location of Jahaz,” *ZDPV* 100 (1984) 122–26.

Again, in my opinion, we should not be distracted by Judges 11 and Numbers 21. The former tells us more about ancient politics than about historical geography, and the garbled itinerary of the latter is the result of a late redactional attempt to harmonize the vague geographical claims set forth in Judges 11 with conflicting materials in other sources. Otherwise all the evidence places Jahaz somewhere in the vicinity of Libb. The same point is to be made for Kedemoth. Except for the line of argument explained above, which depends ultimately on the tendentious claim in Judges 11, there is no compelling reason to search for Kedemoth near the desert fringe.

Ar (Moab)

We come now to one of the most problematic of all Moabite place-names, an overriding issue being whether Ar was a city or a region. The name suggests that it was a city (i.e., אֲרַ is related to אֲרַי, “city”),²⁰ and naturally it could have been both—a city with the surrounding region. One should not be led astray by Deuteronomy 2, however, which sometimes is interpreted to mean that Ar was primarily a regional name and roughly synonymous with Moab proper.²¹ As seen above, the situation in Deuteronomy 2 is the result of a blending of two traditions, one which had to do with the sons of Lot and Ar, the other concerned to emphasize that the Arnon was the northern boundary of Moab. Considered separately, neither of these traditions provides any specific information about Ar apart from the implication of the first that one would pass in the vicinity of Ar before reaching the frontier of the sons of Ammon.

Aside from the references in Deuteronomy 2, Ar (Moab) appears in three poetical texts: the quotation from the Book of the Wars of Yahweh in Num 21:14–15; a quotation from another old poem in Num 21:27b–30; and Isa 15:1, the opening lines of Isaiah’s Moab oracles. Any translation of the obscure lines from the Book of the Wars of Yahweh must be largely conjectural, including the following translation by D. L. Christensen.²²

YHWH came in a whirlwind,
Came to the Wadis of Arnon,
He marched through the wadis
turning aside to the seat of Ar,
Leaning toward the border of Moab.

²⁰ Against A. M. Gazov-Ginzberg, who sees אֲרַ as a cognate of Arabic *gawr* and interprets it to mean “basin” or “valley” (“Ar-strana Mō’āba,” *Palestinskij sbornik* 67 [1959] 12–16, summarized in *ZAW* 72 [1960] 84).

²¹ E.g., J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1959) 117 n. 79.

²² D. L. Christensen, “Num 21:14–15 and the Book of the Wars of Yahweh,” *CBQ* 36 (1974) 359–60.

אֶת־הַבְּסוּפָה
 וְאֶת־הַנְּחָלִים אֲרֹנוֹן;
 וְאֲשֶׁר הַנְּחָלִים אֲשֶׁר נָטָה לְשִׁכְתָּ עַר
 וְנִשְׁעַן לְגִבּוֹל מוֹאָב:

One gets the impression, nothing more, that Ar was an important city associated somehow with the Arnon, or perhaps with one of the tributaries of the Arnon. The other poem in Numbers 21 also associates Ar with the Arnon.²³

For fire went forth from Heshbon
 flame from the city of Sihon.
 It devoured Ar of Moab,
 the lords of the heights of the Arnon. (v. 28)

בִּי־אֵשׁ יֵצְאָה מִחֶשְׁבוֹן
 לְהִבָּה מִקִּרְיַת סִיחֹן
 אֶכְלָה עַר מוֹאָב
 בְּעֵלֵי בָמוֹת אֲרֹנוֹן:

The syntax of Isa 15:1 is puzzling. Clearly, parallelism is involved, but what exactly are the parallel units? Is Ar parallel with Kir, as presupposed by the RSV?

Because Ar is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone;
 Because Kir is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone;

בִּי בְלִיל שָׁדַד עַר מוֹאָב נִדְמָה
 בִּי בְלִיל שָׁדַד קִיר־מוֹאָב נִדְמָה:

Or should we read “Ar Moab” and “Kir-Moab” as parallel units, and translate the lines something as follows?

Because it is laid waste in a night, Ar Moab is undone;
 Because it is laid waste in a night, Kir Moab is undone.

Should קִיר be read as a proper noun (“Kir”) or as a common noun (“wall” or “fortified city”)? Is only one city involved, referred to either by alternate names (Ar and Kir) or by its name (Ar) in parallelism with a reference to the city’s strategic role in the defense of Moab (“the fortress of Moab”)? Or should Kir be understood as a separate city (perhaps identical with Kerioth, Kiria-thaim, or Kir-hareseth) also crucial to the defense of Moab?²⁴ Considering

²³ Note, however, that the alternate version of the poem in Jer 48:45–47 does not mention Ar.

²⁴ For a discussion of the issues involved and bibliography, see esp. W. Schottroff, “Horonaim,

these uncertainties, about the only thing to be said with confidence is that Isa 15:1 confirms the impression derived from bits of poetry quoted in Numbers 21, namely that Ar was a city of some importance in Moab.

J. Lewis Burckhardt, one of the first Europeans to explore southern Transjordan in the early nineteenth century, suggested Meḥaṭṭet el-Hājj as a likely site for Ar of Moab.²⁵ Situated on the south bank of Wādī el-Mūjib near the modern Kerak-Dhibān road, Meḥaṭṭet el-Hājj could at least claim close association with the Arnon. This suggestion never gained wide acceptance, however, and can be safely dismissed now in light of closer and more recent archaeological examination. The modest ruins at Meḥaṭṭet el-Hājj represent a small Roman fort with no clear evidence of earlier occupation. Certainly there was never a city of any prominence at this site.²⁶

The leading candidate site for Ar before the 1930s was er-Rabbah, suggested first it seems by H. B. Tristram, who made an excursion into the Moabite region in 1872.²⁷ Er-Rabbah clearly was an important city in ancient times; it was known during the Roman period by the alternate names Rabbath Moab and Areopolis;²⁸ and Jerome associates the names Ar and Areopolis in his commentary on Isaiah.²⁹ Thus emerged the theory that Ar Moab and Rabbath Moab were alternate names for the place during ancient Moabite times and that these alternate names continued in use during classical times, except that Ar was transformed to Areopolis under classical influence. However, there are three problems with this theory: (1) there is no etymological connection between the names Ar and Areopolis; (2) Eusebius treats Ar and Areopolis as separate places in his *Onomasticon*;³⁰ and (3) er-

Nimrin, Luhith und der Westrand des 'Landes Ataroth,' *ZDPV* 82 (1966) 163–208, esp. 179–81. The early versions seem to be equally puzzled as to what to do with Isa 15:1. The LXX combines מִצָּדָה with the single word ἡ Μωαβίτις; Symmachus and Aquila translate עַר as πόλις; Theodotus renders it as a proper name; all four translate קִיר as a common noun (τείχος). עַר מִצָּדָה and קִיר-מִצָּדָה both become עִיר מוֹאָב in the Isaiah scroll from Qumran, while both are rendered "fortress of Moab" (לְחֵיִת מוֹאָב and כְּרֵכָה דְמוֹאָב respectively) in the Targum.

²⁵ Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land* (London: John Murray, 1822) 374.

²⁶ S. Thomas Parker, *Romans and Saracens: A History of the Arabian Frontier* (ASOR Dissertation Series 6; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986) 55–56.

²⁷ H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Moab: Travels and Discoveries on the East Side of the Dead Sea and the Jordan* (New York: Harper, 1873) 121, 124, 133; see also C. W. Wilson, "Address Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Fund," *PEFQS* (1899) 304–16, esp. 310; A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea I. Moab* (Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften; Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1904) 370–73, 381–82; the 1890 *PEFQS* map; and Abel, *Géographie*, 248.

²⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.1.4 §18; Ptolemy, *Geogr.* 5.16.4; Eusebius, *Onom.* 10.17; 36.24; 124.15–17; A. Negeb, "Seal Impressions from Tomb 107 at Kurnub (Mampsis)," *IEJ* 19 (1969) 89–106; H. J. Polotsky, "The Greek Papyri from the Cave of the Letters," *IEJ* 12 (1962) 258–62; A. Spijkerman, *The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia* (ed. M. Piccirillo; Studii Biblici Franciscani Collectio Maior 25; Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1978) 262–77.

²⁹ *PL* 24, col. 171. Note, however, that, following Eusebius, Jerome distinguishes between Ar and Areopolis in his translation of and notes to the *Onomasticon* (see below).

³⁰ See esp. 10.15–16 and 11.13–24 in Eusebius: *Das Onomastikon der Biblischen Ortsnamen* (ed. E. Klostermann; Hildesheim: Olms, 1966).

Rabbah is some distance from the Arnon. Against these last two objections, it was countered that the sound of the name Ar could have suggested that the city was sacred for Ares, thus giving rise to the name Areopolis; and that while er-Rabbah itself was not near the Arnon, the surrounding plateau (also called Ar according to the theory) was bounded by the Arnon.

Not everyone was convinced, needless to say,³¹ and the Ar/er-Rabbah identification received a serious setback when Glueck found no early Iron Age pottery at the site. Indeed, it is not clear from his report whether he found any Iron Age pottery there at all.³² Glueck did find Iron Age pottery at el-Miṣnaʿ, however, a small “tell” approximately three kilometers north by northeast of er-Rabbah,³³ so it was possible to adjust the theory by locating ancient Ar/Rabbath Moab at el-Miṣnaʿ and supposing that the settlement shifted to the site of er-Rabbah during the Roman (Areopolis) phase of the city’s history.³⁴ Noting that el-Miṣnaʿ is not much nearer the Arnon than er-Rabbah, on the other hand, E. D. Grohman speculated that Ar of Moab may have been identical with Aroer, which can be identified in turn with present-day ‘Arā‘ir.³⁵ The names are admittedly similar (אַרְוֵר/אַרְעֵר),³⁶ and ‘Arā‘ir is situated on the very edge of the Arnon. Yet even Grohman was not entirely convinced of the Ar/Aroer equation, observing that one would have expected Ar to be on the south bank of the Arnon rather than the north bank. In the meantime, Iron Age pottery has been discovered at er-Rabbah—not much, but enough to requalify it as an Iron Age site.³⁷ Of course, there is still the problem that neither er-Rabbah nor el-Miṣnaʿ is located very near the Arnon.

Khirbet Bālūʿ apparently has never been considered a candidate for Ar. Yet it has more to recommend it, in my opinion, than any of the proposals discussed above. Khirbet Bālūʿ is a major city ruin situated on another of the southeastern tributaries of the Arnon. It was occupied during both the Late Bronze and the Iron Ages.³⁸ Here was discovered the famous Bālūʿ stele, for

³¹ E.g., L. Gautier, *Autour de la Mer Morte* (Geneva: Ch. Eggimann, 1901) 84; and G. A. Smith, “Ar, Ar of Moab,” *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (New York: Macmillan, 1914) 270–71.

³² N. Glueck, “Explorations in Eastern Palestine I,” *AASOR* 14 (1934) 62–66; “Explorations in Eastern Palestine III,” 63, 249.

³³ Glueck, “Explorations in Eastern Palestine I,” 62–63, 67, 82, 102.

³⁴ See, e.g., Van Zyl, *Moabites*, 71–73; *Macmillan Bible Atlas*, map 131 and p. 175; and the *Oxford Bible Atlas* (ed. H. G. May; revised for 3d ed. by J. Day; New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1984) 57, 63, 73, 122.

³⁵ E. D. Grohman, “A History of Moab” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1958) 116–17.

³⁶ In fact, אַרְ is often rendered ἀροερ in the LXX.

³⁷ J. M. Miller, “Recent Archaeological Developments Relevant to Ancient Moab,” in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan I* (ed. A. Hadidi; Amman: Department of Antiquities of Jordan, 1982) 169–73.

³⁸ Khirbet Bālūʿ was sherded in connection with the Moab Survey in 1978 and produced abundant LB, Iron I and Iron II surface pottery. A full report is in preparation. In the meantime see J. M. Miller, “Archaeological Survey of Central Moab: 1978,” *BASOR* 234 (1979) 43–52; and U. Worschech, U. Rosenthal, and F. Zayadine, “The Fourth Survey Season in the North-west Arḍ el-Kerak, and Soundings at Baluʿ 1986,” *ADAJ* 30 (1986) 285–28.

example, now dated to the twelfth or eleventh century BC.³⁹ Moreover, from the perspective of someone approaching from northern Moab via the main north–south road, the ancient city represented by Khirbet Bālū‘ would have been the gateway city to Moab proper. This ancient route began its descent from northern Moab into the Arnon/Mūjib canyon at approximately Aroer. Having reached the canyon floor, however, an ancient traveler normally would not have climbed the steep southern bank of the Arnon opposite Aroer (as does the modern road and a branch of the Roman road), but would have followed the canyon floor southeastward to the Wādī Bālū‘ junction, then followed the Wādī el-Bālū‘ floor southward to the Wādī el-Qurrī juncture, and eventually completed his or her ascent onto the plateau of Moab proper at Khirbet Bālū‘.⁴⁰

Since all of the biblical references to Ar Moab are ambiguous in one way or another, there can be no claim of certainty regarding the location of Ar. However, in addition to the fact that Khirbet Bālū‘ meets the main criteria—that is, it represents a prominent city which was located on the Arnon and was occupied during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages—it also makes reasonable sense when the three crucial poetical texts are considered individually. The obscure references to Ar in the two ancient poems quoted in Num 21:14–15 and 27b–30 could easily be allusions to Ar/Bālū‘ which was tucked away in one of the main tributaries of the Arnon, yet dominated the Arnon crossing and protected the entrance to the heights of Moab proper. The destruction of Ar/Bālū‘ would have represented disaster for the defense of Moab, as presupposed in Isa 15:1.

עַר apparently is an appellative name derived from עִיר, which raises the possibility that these terms were used interchangeably in some instances. This is suggested, in fact, by two passages which mention an otherwise anonymous “city” (עִיר) in connection with the Arnon. According to Num 22:36, Balak met Balaam at עִיר מוֹאָב, which was “on the boundary (*or* at the edge *or* in the territory) of the Arnon, at the extremity of the boundary (*or* edge *or* territory; עַל-נְבוּל אֲרָנָן אֲשֶׁר בְּקִצְהָ הַנְּבוּל).” Josh 13:9 (see also Deut 2:36 and 2 Sam 24:5) refers to “. . . Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the city which is in the middle of the valley (עָרְעַר אֲשֶׁר עַל-).” (שְׁפֹת-נַחַל אֲרָנָן וְהָעִיר אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹךְ-הַנַּחַל).” Whether Ar Moab was in fact identical

³⁹ For a detailed examination of the Bālū‘ stele and full bibliography, see W. A. Ward and M. F. Martin, “The Balu‘a Stele: A New Transcription with Palaeographical and Historical Notes,” *ADAJ* 8–9 (1964) 5–29.

⁴⁰ U. J. Seetzen followed this old route in 1806 and, although one cannot be absolutely certain from his description, Tristram may have also in 1872; see Seetzen, *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phönicien, die Transjordan-Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter Aegypten* (ed. Fr. Kruse; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1854–55) I. 410–11; and Tristram, *Land of Moab*, 138–45. Note also that G. A. Smith shows this route from Aroer through Wādī Bālū‘ in his *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1915) 29–30.

with the anonymous city in these passages must remain an open issue.⁴¹ It is worth noting, however, that Khirbet Bālū‘ would be a convincing setting for Balak’s first meeting with Balaam as well as a reasonable candidate for the “city in the middle of the valley,” which Josh 13:9 and related passages associate with Aroer. It would have been natural to associate Ar/Khirbet Bālū‘ with Aroer since, as indicated above, the main highway crossed the Arnon from one to the other. Also it would have been entirely reasonable to think of Ar/Bālū‘, situated on a triangular shelf between two tributaries of the Arnon, as “the city in the middle of the valley.”⁴²

⁴¹ This repeated reference to “the city in the middle of the valley” may be a literary construct created by the compilers of Genesis–2 Kings or a garbled tradition that they preserved without fully understanding it. See in this regard M. Wüst, *Untersuchungen zu den siedlungsgeographischen Texten des Alten Testaments I. Ostjordanland* (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients 19; Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1975) 133–41; and H. Donner, “The Interdependence of Internal Affairs and Foreign Policy During the Davidic-Solomonic Period (With Special Regard to the Phoenician Coast),” in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays* (ed. T. Ishida; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982) 205–14, esp. 210–12.

⁴² Two sites have been proposed for this anonymous “city in the middle of the valley” by scholars who distinguished between it and Ar. Musil (*Arabia Petraea I. Moab*, 329–30 and n. 1 on pp. 332–33), followed by Abel (*Géographie*, 351), suggested a small ruin called Khirbet el-Medeineh situated at the juncture of Wādī Sa‘īdeh and Wādī Sālīyeh (PG: 40.6/92.4; UTMG: 80.5/80.2). Actually Musil called this site as “Ar,” but cited passages which read אֶרֶץ rather than or as a textual variant to אֶרֶץ (Num 21:28; 22:36; Josh 13:9) and clearly distinguished it from the Ar of Deuteronomy 2 and Isa 15:1 (which he equated with Areopolis/er-Rabbah). Note that Van Zyl (*Moabites*, 72–73 n. 5) confuses this Khirbet el-Medeineh with another site bearing the same name and implies that both Musil and Abel identified this second Khirbet el-Medeineh as Ar Moab. A third Khirbet el-Medeineh (the name is ubiquitous in southern Transjordan) has now been proposed by U. Worschech as the “city in the middle of the valley” (Worschech, Rosenthal and Zayadine, “Fourth Survey Season,” 285, 290). Worschech’s Medeineh (PG: 19.7/93.2; UTMG: 60.0/80.5), reported already by Musil (*Arabia Petraea I. Moab*, 137), is on the south bank of Wādī el-Mūjib some seven or eight kilometers west of where the modern road crosses. Both of these candidates apparently were occupied during the Iron Age and both quite literally are located in the Mūjib/Arnon canyon bed. But neither is a particularly prominent site (compared for example to Khirbet el-Bālū‘), neither is situated on a main road, and it is difficult to see why either would have been mentioned in association with Aroer.

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- Page 1 of 1 -



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¹³ **The Conquest of Sihon's Kingdom: A Literary Examination**

John van Seters

Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 91, No. 2. (Jun., 1972), pp. 182-197.

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¹³ **The Conquest of Sihon's Kingdom: A Literary Re-Examination**

John R. Bartlett

Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 97, No. 3. (Sep., 1978), pp. 347-351.

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¹⁴ **The Wilderness Itineraries and the Composition of the Pentateuch**

G. I. Davies

Vetus Testamentum, Vol. 33, Fasc. 1. (Jan., 1983), pp. 1-13.

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