

**Adam Clarke:**

## Introduction

The reign and idolatry of Jehoram, king of Israel, 2 Kings 3:1-3. Mesha, king of Moab, rebels against Israel, 2 Kings 3:4, 2 Kings 3:5. Jehoram, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom join against the Moabites, and are brought into great distress for want of water, 2 Kings 3:6-10. The three kings go to Elisha to inquire of the Lord; who promises them water, and a complete victory, 2 Kings 3:11-19. Water comes the next morning, and fills the trenches which these kings had made in the valley, 2 Kings 3:20. The Moabites arm against them; and suppose, when they see the sun shining upon the waters, which look like blood, that the confederate kings have fallen out, and slain each other; and that they have nothing to do but take the spoil, 2 Kings 3:21-23. The Israelites attack and completely rout them, beat down their cities, and mar their land, 2 Kings 3:24, 2 Kings 3:25. The king of Moab, having made an unsuccessful attack on the king of Edom, takes his eldest son, and offers him for a burnt-offering upon the wall; and there is great indignation against Israel. 2 Kings 3:26, 2 Kings 3:27.

## Verse 2

He put away the image of Baal - He abolished his worship; but he continued that of the calves at Dan and Beth-el.

### Verse 4

[illegible]

**A hundred thousand lambs - The Chaldee and Arabic have a hundred thousand fat oxen.**

### Verse 7

**My people as thy people - We find that Jehoshaphat maintained the same friendly intercourse with the son, as he did with the father. See 1 Kings 22:4.**

### Verse 8

**Through the wilderness of Edom - Because he expected the king of Edom to join them, as we find he did; for, being tributary to Judah, he was obliged to do it.**

### Verse 9

**A compass of seven daysâ€™ journey - By taking a circuitous route, to go round the southern part of the Dead Sea, they probably intended to surprise the Moabites; but it appears their journey was ill planned, as they at last got into a country in which it was impossible to obtain water, and they were brought in consequence to the utmost extremity.**

## Verse 10

**The Lord hath called these three kings together - That is, This is a Divine judgment; God has judicially blinded us, and permitted us to take this journey to our destruction.**

### Verse 11

**Is there not here a prophet of the Lord - The kings of Judah still acknowledged the true God, and him only.**

**Poured water on the hands of Elijah - That is, was his constant and confidential servant.**

## Verse 12

**The word of the Lord is with him - He has the gift of prophecy.**

### Verse 13

**Get thee to the prophets of thy father - This was a just, but cutting reproof.**

**Nay - The Chaldee adds here, I beseech thee, do not call the sins of this impiety to remembrance, but ask mercy for us; because the Lord hath called, etc. The Arabic has, I beseech thee, do not mention of our transgressions, but use kindness towards us. It is very likely that some such words were spoken on the occasion; but these are the only versions which make this addition.**

#### Verse 14

Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat - He worshipped the true God; Jehoram was an idolater.

#### Verse 15

Bring me a minstrel - A person who played on the harp. The rabbins, and many Christians, suppose that Elisha's mind was considerably irritated and grieved by the bad behavior of the young men at Beth-el, and their tragical end, and by the presence of the idolatrous king of Israel; and therefore called for Divine psalmody, that it might calm his spirits, and render him more susceptible of the prophetic influence. To be able to discern the voice of God, and the operation of his hand, it is necessary that the mind be calm, and the passions all in harmony, under the direction of reason; that reason may be under the influence of the Divine Spirit.

The hand of the Lord came upon him - The playing of the harper had the desired effect; his mind was calmed, and the power of God descended upon him. This effect of music was generally acknowledged in every civilized nation. Cicero, in his Tusculan Questions, lib. iv., says, that "the Pythagoreans were accustomed to calm their minds, and soothe their passions, by singing and playing upon the harp." Pythagoraei mentes suas a cogitationum intentione cantu fidibusque ad tranquillitatem traducebant. I have spoken elsewhere of the heathen priests who endeavored to imitate the true prophets, and were as actually filled with the devil as the others were with the true God. The former were thrown into violent agitations and contortions by the influence of the demons which possessed them, while the latter were in a state of the utmost serenity and composure.

#### Verse 16

Make this valley full of ditches - The word נַחַל (nachal) may be translated brook, as it is by the Vulgate and Septuagint. There probably was a river here, but it was now dry; and the prophet desires that they would enlarge the channel, and cut out various canals from it, and reservoirs, where water might be collected for the refreshment of the army and of the cattle; and these were to be made so wide that the reflection of the sun's rays from this water might be the means of confounding and destroying the Moabites.

#### Verse 17

Ye shall not see wind - There shall be no wind to collect vapours, and there shall be no showers, and yet the whole bed of this river, and all the new made canals, shall be filled with water.

#### Verse 19

Shall fell every good tree - Every tree by which your enemies may serve themselves for fortifications, etc. But surely fruit trees are not intended here; for this was positively against the law of God, Deuteronomy 20:19, Deuteronomy 20:20: "When thou shalt besiege a city - thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof - for the tree of the field is man's life - only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down."

Stop all wells of water - In those hot countries this would lead sooner than any thing else to reduce an enemy.

Mar every good piece of land with stones - Such a multitude of men, each throwing a stone on a good field as they passed, would completely destroy it.

#### Verse 20

When the meat-offering was offered - This was the first of all offerings, and was generally made at sun-rising.

There came water - This supply was altogether miraculous, for there was neither wind nor rain, nor any other natural means by which it could be supplied.

#### Verse 22

Saw the water on the other side as red as blood - This might have been an optical deception; I have seen the like sight when there was no reason to suspect supernatural agency. The Moabites had never seen that valley full of water, and therefore did not suspect that their eyes deceived them, but took it for the blood of the confederate hosts, who they thought might have fallen into confusion in the darkness of night and destroyed each other, as the Midianites had formerly done, Judges 7:22, and the Philistines lately, 1 Samuel 14:20.

#### Verse 23

Therefore, Moab, to the spoil - Thus they came on in a disorderly manner, and fell an easy prey to their enemies.

#### Verse 25

On every good piece of land - On all cultivated ground, and especially fields that were sown.

Only in Kir-haraseth - This was the royal city of the Moabites, and, as we learn from Scripture, exceedingly strong; (see Isaiah 16:7, Isaiah 16:11); so that it is probable the confederate armies could not easily reduce it. The slingers, we are informed, went about the wall, and smote all the men that appeared on it, while no doubt the besieging army was employed in sapping the foundations.

#### Verse 26

Seven hundred men - These were no doubt the choice of all his troops, and being afraid of being hemmed up and perhaps taken by his enemies, whom he found on the eve of gaining possession of the city, he made a desperate sortie in order to regain the open country; and supposing that the quarter of the Edomites was weakest, or less carefully guarded, he endeavored to make his impression there; but they were so warmly received by the king of Edom that they failed in the attempt, and were driven back into the city. Hence he was led to that desperate act mentioned in the following verse.

#### Verse 27

Took his eldest son - The rabbins account for this horrible sacrifice in the following way: -

When the king of Moab found himself so harassed, and the royal city on the point of being taken, he called a council of his servants, and asked them how it was these Israelites could perform such prodigies, and that such miracles were wrought for them? His servants answered, that it was owing to their progenitor Abraham, who, having an only son, was commanded by Jehovah to offer him in sacrifice. Abraham instantly obeyed, and offered his only son for a burnt-offering; and the Israelites being his descendants, through his merits the holy blessed God wrought such miracles in their behalf. The king of Moab answered, I also have an only son, and I will go and offer him to my God. Then he offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall.

Upon the wall - חֶחָמָה חֶחָמָה (al hachamah). Rab. Sol. Jarchi says that the letter ח (vau) is wanting in this word, as it should be written חֶחָמָה (chomah), to signify a wall; but חֶחָמָה (chammah) signifies the sun, and this was the god of the king of Moab: And he offered his first-born son for a burnt-offering unto the sun. This is not very solid.

There was great indignation - The Lord was displeased with them for driving things to such an extremity: or the surrounding nations held them in abomination on the account; and they were so terrified themselves at this most horrid sacrifice, that they immediately raised the siege and departed. In cases of great extremity it was customary in various heathen nations to offer human sacrifices, or to devote to the infernal gods the most precious or excellent thing or person they possessed. This was frequent among the Phoenicians, Romans, and Greeks; and it was the natural fruit of a religious system which had for the objects of its worship cruel and merciless divinities. How different the Christian system! Wilt thou that we shall bring down fire from heaven and destroy them? Ye know not what manner of spirits ye are of; the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.