

**Jer. 48, The Oracle Against Moab**  
**29-47, Jeremiah's Exposition of Isaiah and Numbers**  
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**Overview**

1. Major break between 28-29:
  - a) 29-47 is mostly reworked quotations from Isaiah and Numbers; 1-28 is almost entirely original (though the two halves do trade images back and forth)
  - b) The structure of 1-28 is symmetric, while that of 29-47 is syntactic (dialog between Jer and the Lord).
  
2. 29-47 is an interchange between Jer and the Lord; the breaks are NOT concurrent with the shifts between original material and quotations. That is, sometimes Jer takes into his own mouth the words of Isaiah. The basic interchange outlines the same major elements of judgment that we saw for Judah in ch. 2-13:
  - a) Sin in ch. 2 (the *rib*)
  - b) Judgment added in 3-6
  - c) Supplemented with mourning in 7-10
  - d) Promises of restoration added in 11-13So here,
  - a) Sin  
29 Jer: Moab is a proud nation.  
30 The Lord: Yes, but it's all bluff.
  - b) Judgment and Mourning, mingled in one section.  
31a Jer mourns over the victims 31 (AL-K."N ...  
31b-35 The Lord proclaims that Moab will mourn, because of the coming judgment.
  - c) Sin, Destruction, and Restoration  
36ab Jer mourns the fall of Moab 36 (AL-K."N ...  
36c-47 The Lord: They will be destroyed, but then restored.

**A. 29-30, The Sin of Moab**

The movement from Jer to the Lord is seen in the shift from "we" to "I." Note also the increase in certainty: "We have heard," but "I know" (with emphasis on "I").

*Application:* Here is the answer to Ps. 73:10,11. God knows who the evil are and how wicked they are. Sometimes when we are in the midst of suffering, we are tempted to think that God is ignorant of our plight, but he understands it far better than we do.

**B. 31-35, Judgment and Mourning**

Jer's response to this announcement is to mourn, whereupon the Lord announces that a lot more people will be mourning before it's over, because of the coming judgment.

1. 31a, Jer mourns over the victims. Note
  - a) the *reason* for his mourning. "Therefore" looks back to v.30. He knows what the implications of God's knowledge are.
  - b) the *emphasis* of his mourning. "Moab" is in the emphatic

pre-verb position in each clause.

- c) the *fact* of his mourning. Early in his career Jer weeps for his own rejection, but that weeping stops with ch. 20. He continues to weep for his people and the judgment that is coming on them; we can understand that, and might be tempted to rationalize it by saying that to some extent he shares in their sorrows. But here he weeps for the judgment yet to come on their enemies!

*Application:* Jer's weeping for Moab shows us the attitude that we should have toward the lost: a sense of compassion for them as fellow-humans. It is true that God's elective love is focused on his chosen ones; it is also true that we are to show compassion for all people, without first inquiring whether or not they are elect. The difference is that between a sovereign God and mortal, suffering people. The two come together in our Lord Jesus, who showed compassion on all men even as he specifically bore the sins of his elect.

NB: The sin for which Moab is rebuked throughout this chapter is not her mistreatment of Israel, but her failure to trust in the Lord: 48:7, 26, 42. Is this why Jer can weep for her, but not for Egypt or Philistia? Watch this issue as we go through the oracles against the nations.

*The Lord's response consists of two paragraphs, each presenting the mourning of Moab and then explaining it as the result of judgment. Note in both explanations the phrase, "I will cause to fail/cease" (same word in Hebrew).*

- 2. 31b-33, The Lord explains that Moab will mourn because of agricultural collapse.
  - a) We hear the mourning of the nation in 31b-32. The last verb in v.31 is singular; AV interprets it of Jer's heart, but it is better understood as a collective, describing the mourning of the people of Moab. The Lord is saying, "Yes, Jer, there will be mourning--Moab will mourn." He then goes on to give their mourning, which is focused on the coming agricultural collapse in the face of invasion. Their vineyards had been renowned afar; now they will be destroyed.
  - b) In v.33, the Lord announces that he is the one who will cause the wine to fail, and with it the joy of harvest.
- 3. 34-35, The Lord repeats the prediction of mourning in the face of judgment.
  - a) The cry will extend throughout the entire land. Heshbon and Elealeh are in the north, Jahaz in the central tableland, and Zoar and Horonaim at the southern border.
  - b) Reason: even the faithful springs will dry up. As a result, there will be nothing left to offer to the pagan gods.

### C. 36-47, Sin, Judgment, Mourning, and Restoration

Now all the strains of the message come together.

1. 36ab Upon hearing this judgment, Jer mourns the fall of Moab. He continues to emphasize the recipients of judgment, but now even over that emphasizes his heart, the instrument of mourning. He is personally involved in the wellbeing of the Moabites! Oh, that the Lord would give us such a heart of compassion for the lost folk around us.

*The Lord's response again has two parts. This time the first continues the theme of judgment and mourning, in a chiasm with Moab's proud sin at the focal center. The second part recaps the judgment to fall, but then surprisingly turns to the promise of a coming restoration for the nation.*

2. 36c-45, The Lord gives the reasons for Moab's impoverishment. The end of 36 really belongs to 37: "Therefore [not 'because'] the riches ['abundance'] that he has gotten are perished: that is [not 'for'], ...." There follow five paragraphs, each giving a description of some aspect of the impoverishment that will come on Moab, and describing the reason for it.

Based on the reasons given for Moab's suffering, the five paragraphs are ordered AB C AB, where

- a) A = disaster resulting from the Lord's intervention;
- b) B = disaster resulting from the enemy's invasion;
- c) C = disaster because the people have glorified themselves against the Lord (cf. v.30).

B gives the immediate cause, A the divine influence that lies behind it, and C the ultimate reason for the disaster. The species of psychological pain described in A and B also correlate in the same pattern: fear and mourning in A; shame and frustration in B.

Now the five paragraphs:

- a) 37-38, The people mourn because the Lord has broken Moab.
  - 1) The disaster is described as psychological. 37 describes the traditional (largely pagan) signs of mourning (cf. 47:5), summarized in 38a.
  - 2) 38b gives the reason for the disaster: The Lord himself has shattered the nation like a vessel that brings him no pleasure.
    - a> Recall the lesson of ch. 18-19 from the potter. While clay is still soft, there is time to change, but once it hardens, only judgment remains. True for Moab as much as for Judah.
    - b> The wording also recalls the pottery image in 2 Tim.

2:20,21; Rom. 9. Isaiah also uses this image (45:9).

c> What in particular is the point of the image?

1> God is our creator. He is the potter; we are only clay, "dust of the earth", Gen. 2:7.

2> We are formed for his pleasure, not someone's else, and certainly not our own.

3> If we do not please him, it is entirely appropriate for him to destroy us.

b) 39-40, The nation is broken (better, dismayed) and ashamed because the invader has come.

Again, the emphasis is on psychic pain.

An invader who comes like a swift bird of prey was one of the curses promised to Israel if they disobeyed the covenant (Deut. 28:49), and Jer has already reported the coming of Neb against Judah in terms of this metaphor (4:13). Now we see the same curse directed against Moab.

c) 41-42, Destruction and suffering have come because they have magnified themselves against the Lord. This is the central paragraph of the chiasm.

The description of the judgment differs from those on either side by including material loss as well as psychic pain.

The reason for the judgment goes deepest to the heart of the matter: Moab's sin of pride. This is why the Lord must judge her (first and fourth paragraphs) by means of human armies (second and fifth). Thus the focus falls on the sin with which the interchange began in 29-30, the unseemly pride of Moab. The wording here was also seen in v.26, and the manifestation of pride, trusting in their own works and treasures, led off in v.7.

*Application:* Beware the fundamental sin, that of unbelief.

d) 43-44, Terror will come upon the Moabites, because the Lord will visit them.

The judgment in this verse is a word-play in Hebrew: "fear" is *paxad*, "the pit" (used to trap large animals) is *paxat*, and "the snare" (a trap for small animals) is *pax*. Moab will be hunted down like a wild animal, and though she may escape the first danger or the second, she cannot evade all three.

The explanation returns us once again to the Lord's agency, as in v.38.

- e) 45, Those who trust in Heshbon are without strength, because the city will burn up.

Better translation of 45: "They that fled stand without strength under the shadow of Heshbon." They come from the villages to the great city where they hope to find defense, but when they get there they are "without strength" because the enemy is already within the city.

"From the midst of Sihon:" Heshbon was one of the Moabite cities captured by Sihon, and later inhabited by Reuben and Gad. Though the Moabites regained it by the end of the Divided Kingdom, the mention of Sihon here calls up visions of the enemy comfortably ensconced within one's own fortress. In fact, the reason here is from Num. 21:28, where it is part of an ancient song dating back to before the time of Moses.

- f) *Application*: Looking back over these five paragraphs, we see two lessons.

- 1) The impoverishment of Moab has two forms. There is physical loss (41a), but most of the emphasis is the psychic loss, the mourning, shame, and sorrow that they must bear. And in fact, that is the real suffering. Those who do not love this present world, who can use material things without loving them, do not suffer when they are taken away. The suffering that comes from loss of wealth really results from the ungodly love we have for such things.
- 2) The reason for this judgment is ultimately their failure to trust in the Lord. Thus he judges them, by the hand of human armies. It is important to keep in mind these successive layers of cause, and avoid fallacious "either-or" questions.

### 3. 46-47, Promise of Restoration after captivity.

Verse 46 continues the quotation from Num. 21, describing how the people will be taken captive. In Num, the captivity was to Sihon. Now it will be to a much greater foe. And then, just as Sihon fell to Israel, so the Lord himself will restore the fortunes of Moab at the end of the days.

NB: Only four of the nine countries discussed in these oracles are promised restoration: Egypt, Moab, Ammon, and the Arabian kingdoms of Qedar and Hazor, who are treated in a single oracle.

#### D. **Summary**

This interchange between Jer and the Lord cautions us not to be too parochial in our vision for the gospel. The dynamic of sin, judgment, repentance, and restoration is not just for Israel (ch. 2-13), but for "foreigners" as well. It is all too easy to box Christianity into our own culture, but our Lord has commanded us to take it to the ends of the earth. And as we go, we should be marked

with the compassion of Jer for the lost.

**Hymn:** Passion for Souls; some missionary hymn.

**Analysis**

Here the clauses are grouped according to the interchange in Jer; prefixes show source if not Jer.

- A. 29 Jer: Moab is a proud nation.  
(Isa) 29 \$FMA(:NW. G:)OWN-MOW)FB G.)EH M:)OD G.FB:H/OW  
W./G:)OWN/OW W:/GA):AWFT/OW W:/RUM LIB./OW
- B. 30 The Lord: Yes, but it's all bluff.  
1. (Isa) 30 ):ANIY YFDA(:T.IY N:)UM-Y:HWFH (EB:RFT/OW  
2. (Isa) W:/LO)-K"N  
3. (Isa) B.AD.FY/W LO)-K"N (F&W.
- C. 31a Jer mourns over the victims 31 (AL-K."N ...  
In each of these, the OBJECT of the mourning is thematicized.  
1. (Isa) (AL-MOW)FB ):AY"LIYL  
2. (Isa) W./L:/MOW)FB K.UL.OH )EZ:(FQ
- D. 31b-35 The Lord proclaims that Moab will mourn, because of the coming judgment. Two parallel reason paragraphs.
1. reason p  
a) text: quote p  
1) quote f: (Isa) )EL-)AN:\$"Y QIYR-XERE& YEH:G.EH  
2) quote: ampl p  
a> text: (Isa) 32 MI/B.:KIY YA(:Z"R )EB:K.EH-L./FK:  
HA/G.EPEN &IB:MFH  
b> ampl: contrast  
1> Thesis: you were exceedingly fruitful  
a: (Isa) N:+IY\$OTAY/IK: (FB:RW. YFM  
b: (Isa) (AD YFM YA(:Z"R NFGF(W.  
2> Antithesis: (Isa) (AL-Q"YC/"K: W:/(AL-B.:CIYR/"K:  
\$OD"D NFPFL  
b) reason  
1) (Isa) 33 W:/NE)ES:PFH &IM:XFH WF/GIYL MI/K.AR:MEL  
W./M"/)EREC MOW)FB  
2) (Isa) W:/YAYIN MI/YQFBIYM HI\$:B.AT.IY  
3) (Isa) LO)-YID:ROK: H"YDFD  
4) (Isa) H"YDFD LO) H"YDFD
2. reason p  
a) text: (Isa) 34 MI/Z.A(:AQAT XE\$:B.OWN (AD-)EL:(FL"H (AD-YAHAC  
NFT:NW. QOWL/FM MI/C.O(AR (AD-XORONAYIM (EG:LAT \$:LI\$IY.FH  
b) reason: K.IY ...  
1) (Isa) G.AM-M"Y NIM:RIYM LI/M:\$AM.OWT YIH:YW.  
2) 35 W:/HI\$:B.AT.IY L:/MOW)FB N:)UM-Y:HWFH MA(:ALEH BFMFH  
W./MAQ:+IYR L"/)LOH FY/W
- E. 36ab Jer mourns the fall of Moab 36 (AL-K."N ...  
Now the INSTRUMENT of mourning is thematicized.

1. (Isa) LIB./IY L:/MOW)FB K.A/X:ALILIIYM YEH:EMEH
2. (Isa) W:/LIB./IY )EL-)AN:\$"Y QIYR-XERE& K.A/X:ALIYLIYM YEH:EMEH

F. 36c-47 The Lord: They will be destroyed, but then restored.

1. 36c-45, Reason p: destruction

- a) Text: (Isa) (AL-K."N YIT:RAT (F&FH )FBFDW.
- b) Reason: 5-fold reason par. 37 K.IY ...

Based on the reasons given for Moab's suffering, the five paragraphs are ordered AB C AB, where

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- 2) B = disaster resulting from the enemy's invasion;
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B gives the immediate cause, A the divine influence that lies behind it, and C the ultimate reason for the disaster.

Now the paragraphs:

1) (Isa) 37-38, Reason p (1st person): The people mourn KY the Lord has broken Moab.

a> Text: Summary p

1> Detail: coordinate p

- a: (Isa) KFL-RO)\$ QFR:XFH
- b: (Isa) W:/KFL-ZFQFN G.:RU(FH
- c: (Isa) (AL K.FL-YFDAYIM G.:DUDOT
- d: (Isa) W:/(AL-MFT:NAYIM &FQ

2> Summary: (Isa) 38 (AL K.FL-G.AG.OWT MOW)FB W./BI/R:XOBOTEY/HF K.UL.OH MIS:P."D

b> Reason: (Isa) K.IY-\$FBAR:T.IY )ET-MOW)FB K.I/K:LIY )"YN-X"PEC B./OW N:)UM-Y:HWFH

2) (Jer) 39-40, Reason p (Thus Says Lord): The nation is broken and ashamed KY the invader has come.

a> Text

- 1> 39 )"YK: XAT.FH
- 2> H"YLIYLLW.
- 3> )"YK: HIP:NFH-(OREP MOW)FB B.OW\$
- 4> W:/HFYFH MOW)FB LI/&:XOQ W:/LI/M:XIT.FH L:/KFL-S:BIYBFY/W S

b> 40-42 Reason

- 40 K.IY-KOH )FMAR Y:HWFH
- 1> HIN."H KA/N.E\$ER YID:)EH
- 2> W./PFRA& K.:NFPFY/W )EL-MOW)FB

3) (Jer) 41-42, Reason p (3rd person): Destruction and suffering have come KY they have magnified themselves against the Lord.

a> Text

- 1> 41 NIL:K.:DFH HA/Q.:RIY.OWT
- 2> W:/HA/M.:CFDOWT NIT:P.F&FH
- 3> W:/HFYFH L"B G.IB.OWR"Y MOW)FB B.A/Y.OWM HA/HW.) K.:/L"B )I\$.FH M:C"RFH
- 4> 42 W:/NI\$:MAD MOW)FB M"/(FM

b> Reason: K.IY (AL-Y:HWFH HIG:D.IYL

4) (Isa) 43-44, Reason p (1st person): Terror will come upon the Moabites, KY the Lord will visit them.  
 a> 43-44a, Text: Ampl p  
 1> Text: (Isa) 43 P.AXAD WF/PAXAT WF/PFX (FLEY/KF YOW\$"B MOW)FB N:)UM-Y:HWFH  
 2> Ampl:  
 a: (Isa) 44 {HA/N.IYS} [HA/N.FS] MI/P.:N"Y HA/P.AXAD YIP.OL )EL-HA/P.AXAT  
 b: (Isa) W:/HF/(OLEH MIN-HA/P.AXAT YIL.FK"D B.A/P.FX  
 b> Reason: K.IY-)FBIY) )"LEY/HF )EL-MOW)FB \$:NAT P.:QUD.FT/FM N:)UM-Y:HWFH

5) (Jer + Num) 45, Reason p (3rd person): Those who trust in Heshbon are without strength, KY the city will burn up.  
 a> Text: 45 B.:/C"L XE\$:B.OWN (FM:DW. MI/K.OXA NFSIYM  
 b> Reason  
 1> (Num) K.IY-)"\$ YFCF) M"/XE\$:B.OWN W:/LEHFBFH MI/B."YN SIYXOWN  
 2> (Num) WA/T.O)KAL P.:)AT MOW)FB W:/QFD:QOD B.:N"Y \$F)OWN

2. 46-47, Promise of Restoration after captivity. Contrast p  
 By posing this as contrast paragraph, get transition from previous section.

a) Thesis: Ampl. p  
 1) Text:  
 a> (Num) 46 )OWY-L/:KF MOW)FB  
 b> (Num) )FBAD (AM-K.:MOW\$  
 2) Ampl. (Num) K.IY-LUQ.:XW. BFNEY/KF B.A/\$.EBIY W./B:NOTEY/KF B.A/\$.IB:YFH  
 b) Antithesis  
 1) 47 W:/\$AB:T.IY \$:BW.T-MOW)FB B.:/)AX:ARIYT HA/Y.FMIYM N:)UM-Y:HWFH

G. (AD-H"N.FH MI\$:P.A+ MOW)FB S