

## Breaking Israel News/Latest News Biblical Perspective

<https://www.breakingisraelnews.com/136246/recently-discovered-moabite-altar-proof-biblical-battle-kings-2/>

# Recently Discovered Moabite Altar: Proof of Biblical Battle in Kings 2

By [BIN staff](#) August 29, 2019 , 3:04 pm

*But when Achav died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Yisrael. (Kings 2 3:5)*



ancient battle (courtesy: Shutterstock)

**Facebook****Twitter****Email****WhatsApp****Print****Share**

800

The word “Hebrews” was recently discovered on an ancient Moabite altar unearthed by archaeologists in Jordan. The altar was located at the biblical site of Atarot (Khirbat Ataruz) in Jordan reports [TOI](#).



Ataruz inscribed altar (c

Lead epigrapher Christopher Rollston says that the find “stitches together the Biblical and inscripational evidence”.

Researcher Adam Bean explains that regarding the biblical story, “it is a new and important piece in the puzzle.”

The discovery found two 9th century/ early 8th century BCE Moabite writings engraved into the cylindrical stone altar provide historical indications of a “battle of epic proportions”.

Researcher Adam Bean of John Hopkins University describes the find as: “An inscribed altar from the Khirbat Ataruz Moabite sanctuary”. the inscriptions provide new insight regarding King Mesha of Moab’s revolt against Israel:

*Now King Mesha of Moab was a sheep breeder, and he used to pay as tribute to the king of Yisrael a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. But when Achav died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Yisrael. (Kings 2 3:4-5)*

“The inscriptions on this ‘pedestal’ come from the site mentioned by King Mesha in his Mesha Stele as a site that he himself (i.e., Mesha) took from the Omrides and then rebuilt!” noted leading epigrapher Prof. Christopher Rollston told The Times of Israel. “Fascinatingly also, the inscriptions are not only written in the Moabite language, they are also written in the Early Moabite script.”

Rollston also explained that the Ataruz inscription complements Mesha Stele's account "and even provides evidence for the veracity of Mesha's statements." When considering the Moabite language carved onto the altar, "Clearly the Moabites are in charge here at Ataruz," said Rollston.

Etched in seven lines of text in two separate inscriptions, the 50 cm x 18.5 cm cylindrical altar is considered to have been utilized for burning incense. It was found inside a structure that Chang-ho Ji, Khirbat Ataruz excavation director calls a "simple sanctuary, or perhaps a Moabite shrine to the historic battle".

The sanctuary, a 4.8 m x 4.9 m room, was built at the highest point in the town, explains Ji. It featured a platform, an altar, offering tables as well as a fireplace. The altar was discovered in situ in a layer that Ji, and other archaeologists, dated to 9th–8th centuries BCE based on stratification, carbon dating, as well as pottery typology.

Regarding content and language, the inscriptions represent a "missing link" between the Mesha Stele and later Moabite texts such including the Khirbet Mudineyah Incense Altar.

Regarding the find, Rollston laid out several important points as follows:

"The Old Testament book of Kings mentions (2 Kings 3:4-5) that after the death of King Ahab of Israel (reigned ca. 869-850 BCE), Mesha King of Moab rebelled against Israelite hegemony. This is an important reference, but sparing with regard to verbiage.

Then in 1868, there was a remarkable discovery, namely, on the site of Dhiban an inscription was found that dovetailed remarkably, and provided a great deal of additional information about these laconic verses from the Bible. This inscription is known as the Mesha Stele or the Mesha Inscription and contains a great deal of history about the great Moabite King Mesha.

The Mesha Stele, was commissioned by King Mesha of Moab, was written in the Moabite language (which is closely related to Hebrew but differs in certain demonstrable ways. This stele and its inscription can be dated to the 9th century BCE (i.e., the time of King Mesha himself, of course).

The Mesha Stele states that the country of Moab had fallen under the hegemony of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Omri of Israel (Omri reigned ca. 876-869 BCE). Omri is also mentioned, of course, in the Bible (e.g., 1 Kings 16:16-30) and he is also mentioned in Neo-Assyrian Inscriptions (written in the Assyrian dialect of Akkadian).

The Mesha Stele states makes it clear that Kemosh was the national God of ancient Moab. Thus, it is Kemosh who was worshiped at Ataruz, and it is also Kemosh, therefore, to whom the offerings mentioned on the Ataruz Inscriptions would have been dedicated.

Then, according to Mesha's own words in the Mesha Stele, Moab rebelled against Israel and gained its independence from Israel.

Then (again, according to the Mesha Stele), Mesha himself regained territory which had been taken from Moab during the reign of Omri (and his successors).

Very important: The Mesha Stele also mentions that the "Gadites" had lived in the land of 'Atarot (i.e, Ataruz) forever and that the king of Israel had built 'Atarot (i.e, Ataruz) for himself (note that the tribe of Gad was an Israelite tribe, which had received a tribal allotment in this region, as per the narratives of Joshua 4:12; 13:24ff, etc.]. Note that this reference in the Mesha Stele to Atarot is very important as it's King Mesha's own reference to the site which we know to be Ataruz]

Then Mesha notes that Mesha rebok the city of Ataruz, killed the Gadite population, and then Mesha made Ataruz a Moabite city (this is in lines 10 and 11 of the Mesha Stele)."

Regarding the significance of the Ataruz Inscriptions, Rollston notes the following:

This is where the Ataruz Inscriptions becomes particularly important. Namely, the script of the Ataruz Inscriptions is late 9th century or very early 8th century. Thus, the inscriptions on this "pedestal" come from the site mentioned by King Mesha in his Mesha Stele as a site that he himself (i.e., King Mesha of Moab) took from the Omrides and then rebuilt!

-

Fascinatingly also, the inscriptions are not only written in the Moabite language, they also written in the Early Moabite script (known also from later inscriptions such as the Khirbet Mudiney Incense Altar).

Thus, the Ataruz Inscription complements the great Mesha Stele inscription and even provides evidence for the veracity of Mesha's statements. After all, the Ataruz Inscriptions written in the Moabite language and the Moabite script, not the Hebrew language and script....so clearly the Moabites are in charge here at Ataruz!

Also important is the fact that the Ataruz Inscriptions, with their use of Hieratic Numerals (which were originally developed in Egypt, of course) and an impressive Moabite script (in terms of morphology and stance), constitute important evidence for the sophisticated scribal apparatus of ancient Moab. That is, we often talk about the sophistication of the scribal education of ancient Israel, and rightfully so, but the inscriptions on the pedestal from Ataruz provide us a window into the scribal apparatus of ancient Moab during the late 9th or early 8th century, and it's crystal clear that ancient Moab had some gifted scribes as well.

Also worth of emphasis, the Ataruz Inscriptions are the earliest evidence we have so far for a distinctive Moabite script. After all, the Mesha Stele is written in the Moabite language but in the Old Hebrew script (as Joseph Naveh noted in 1982), but the Ataruz Inscriptions are written not only in the Moabite language, but also in the fledgling "Early Moabite script."

In sum, when one combines the biblical material in Kings (i.e., 2 Kings 3:4ff), the Mesha Stele, and the Ataruz Inscriptions, a fairly full picture comes to life, one in which one can stitch together the biblical and inscriptional evidence and know a great deal about geopolitics in the ancient Levantine world of the late 9th and early 8th centuries. And, of course, these data connect with additional inscriptions, such as the Tel Dan Stele inscription (written in Aramaic by Hazael of Damascus), and various Neo-Assyrian inscriptions of the 9th and 8th centuries