

DID GOD LOSE A BATTLE IN MOAB? An Examination of 2 Kings 3:27

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Introduction

I came across a short video on YouTube that had the provocative title “When the God of Israel Was Defeated By Another God.”[\[1\]](#) In this video, one Dan McClellan, a Mormon, discusses 2 Kings 3, which, he says, “tells a fascinating story where the God of Israel promises victory in a military invasion of another country but is unable to deliver it and is driven off after being defeated by the patron deity of that other nation.”[\[2\]](#) Quite a claim from McClellan; how does he justify it?

McClellan starts by claiming that there is “an exact parallel” in 2 Kings 18-19 to what happens in 2 Kings 3, to wit:

2 KINGS 18-19	2 KINGS 3
The new king of Judah, Hezekiah, rebels against the vassalage [3] to Assyria	The new king of Moab, Mesha, rebels against the vassalage to Israel
Assyria invades and traps Hezekiah in his capital city, Jerusalem	Israel, with allies Judah and Edom, invade and trap Mesha in his capital
The local patron God of Judah, YHWH, intervenes and kills 180,000 Assyrians	Mesha offers his firstborn son as a human sacrifice to the local patron god Chemosh, who intervenes against the invaders; “there was great fury against Israel”
The invaders “pack up and leave”	The invaders “ pack up and leave ”

According to McClellan, the term “[great fury](#)” always refers to “[divine fury](#)”[\[4\]](#); usually, he says, this is the fury of the God of Israel, but in this case, it would make no sense that God’s fury would be directed against Israel to drive them

away after He had promised them victory. *Ergo*, the “**divine fury**” here must be that of Chemosh, the local patron god of Moab. Mesha, by sacrificing his own son and heir apparent, succeeds in stirring up Chemosh to help, and Chemosh drives off the invading forces, which means he defeated the patron God of Israel, who promised victory to the Israelite coalition but was unable to deliver and must now “**return to his own purview.**” McClellan finishes by saying,

Now, this is a difficult story for a lot of folks to accept and people for many years have tried to gin up all kinds of imaginary scenarios to find another way to account for what happens in this story but given we have an exact parallel to this story of an invading force being driven off by the local patron deity and failing to return a rebel state to vassalage, that is the best explanation for what's going on here and that is the only one that does not require ginning up imaginary scenarios that are not in evidence.

In sum, McClellan makes the following charges:[\[5\]](#)

- *A coalition of Israel, Judah, and Edom invaded Moab to return Moab to vassalage, and God promised them victory.*
- *During the battle, the king of Moab offered his son and heir as a human sacrifice, Chemosh.*
- *This catalyzed the intervention of the patron god of Moab, Chemosh, who poured out divine fury on the coalition and drove them off.*
- *So, although God promised victory to the coalition, they failed and were driven off by the patron god of Moab.*
- *Thus, God is defeated by the patron deity of Moab and must return to their own purview.*
- *Any other explanation of the account requires ginning up “**imaginary scenarios.**”*

Is McClellan correct? Was the God of the Bible defeated by the god of the Moabites here? Do all other explanations require ginning up imaginary scenarios? Let us see.

Ginning Up Imaginary Scenarios? Popular-Level Commentators

Popular-level commentators do not seem to offer much help on this matter.

William Sanford, for example, in *The New Bible Commentary*, writes,

When the king of Moab saw that the battle was going against him, he sacrificed his eldest son upon the wall, probably at Kir-hareseth, as a burnt-offering to Chemosh, the god of Moab ... There came great wrath: the tide of battle suddenly turns and the Israelite coalition withdraws. Some scholars take the statement to mean that the sacrifice performed by the king of Moab was efficient and that Chemosh turned his anger against Israel - a highly unlikely suggestion.[\[6\]](#)

Unfortunately, Sanford does not explain exactly why this suggestion is “highly unlikely,” nor does he address any of the points McClellan makes.[\[7\]](#)

William MacDonald, in the *Believer's Bible Commentary*, opines that the king of Moab “offers **his eldest son** as a sacrifice on **the wall** of the city to appease his gods, to incite his men to fiercer battle, and to frighten the enemy. Israel was stunned by this human sacrifice which was, of course, an abomination. Smitten directly by God or by their own consciences, they withdrew without bringing Moab back into subjection.”[\[8\]](#)

This seems wholly inadequate an explanation, even if one overlooks the fact that it answers none of McClellan's points. Human sacrifice was certainly not unknown or even rare during some periods of Israelite history, so it is not clear why the Israel would be “stunned” by this. It is less clear why God would smite the Israelites for this rather than the Moabites, and why Israel would withdraw as a result.

Meanwhile, John MacArthur suggests that

In desperate hope for intervention by his idol god, Mesha sacrificed his oldest son to the Moabite god Chemosh ... It seems best to understand that the king's sacrifice inspired the Moabites to hate Israel more and fight more intensely. This fierceness perhaps led Israel to believe that Chemosh was fighting for the Moabites. Thus, the indignation or fury came from the Moabites.[\[9\]](#)

Yet it does not seem reasonable to imagine that the Moabites were not already fighting at maximum intensity when their very lives were threatened, or that they would hate Israel more because their own king killed their own crown prince.

This, too, seems like casting about for a solution and not finding one.

Popular-level commentators, then, do not seem to have an adequate response to the issues McClellan raises. What about the scholars? Can they do better?

Ginning Up Imaginary Scenarios? Scholars

As we look into the scholarly efforts to explain 2 Kings 3:27, we are reminded that popular-level commentators are usually capable only of being merely wrong; it takes scholars to enter the realm of sheer lunacy. I was reminded of that while watching a video called “Was Yahweh [*sic*] Defeated By Another god?”[\[10\]](#) that was posted on YouTube by internet apologist Michael Jones (under the imprint InspiringPhilosophy). This video explores scholarly pronouncements on the problem of 2 Kings 3:27, though it is not the only place where scholars pontificate on 2 Kings 3:27. Cobbling together the various scholarly offerings results in something like this (along with my comments in bold):

- *The Hebrew word for wrath in 2 Kings 3:27 usually refers to divine wrath, and since there is no reason for God to shower wrath on Israel here, it must be the divine wrath of Chemosh, but that can't be, because a Biblical author wouldn't think that Chemosh had any real power. So it must have been the wrath of God.*
- *God promised that Israel would conquer Moab and that promise was not fulfilled, so God must have been defeated by a rival god, but a Biblical author wouldn't think that, so it couldn't be. Therefore, either God didn't really promise that, or it was fulfilled.*
- *Apropos to that, Elisha wanted the Israelite mission to fail because he was hostile to King Jehoram, so “Elisha's prophecy is certainly incomplete. Yahweh [*sic*] gives Moab into the hand of Israel, as Elisha predicts, but Elisha does not finish the story, and that incompleteness, like the prophecies of the false prophets in 1 Kgs. 22, sets a trap for Jehoram.”[\[11\]](#) So the Israelites were essentially tricked, as “the rest of the story was withheld from them”. **(While Elisha did not like the evil Jehoram, by his own testimony he respected the good King Jehoshaphat of Judah, which is why he prophesied, and he did so***

truthfully. Let us not slander Elisha.)

- *Apropos to that, no, they weren't. The prophecy was fulfilled. It just went south after it was fulfilled.*
- *According to one scholar, the prophecy did not say the Israelites would conquer Moab, because the Hebrew term *nāḳâ* that Elisha used simply means to strike or attack. Another scholar says that the Israelites did have to conquer Moab because the term *nāḳâ* when used of a city generally refers to conquering or destroying it.*
- *The story is a "perverse Exodus" story. It has Exodus motifs, such as water, a song, and water and blood, and the death of a firstborn. **(Those elements are more noteworthy from their differences with the Exodus account than their similarities.)** But it's perverse because these things apply to the Israelites, until the very end when the rug is pulled out from them and it is actually an exodus of Moab from Israelite control. **(The idea of God bringing a pagan people who worship false gods out of captivity is rather questionable.)** It is also suggested that this exodus is "perverse" because God doesn't take either side. **(Yet if this exodus was bringing Moab out from Israelite control, it certainly seems God did take sides, doesn't it?)***
- *If it was God's divine wrath directed against the Israelites in 3:27, what occasioned it? Well, they were flagrantly ignoring their Torah obligations. One scholar suggests they should not have ruled Moab as a vassal state or made war against them, as they were instructed in Deuteronomy 2:9 to leave Moab alone. **(In that case, the wrath should have been directed against David, for it was he who made Moab into a vassal state long before this cf. 2 Samuel 8:2, but no wrath was levied against him. It seems that the dispensation for Moab that had been given at the time of the conquest had long since expired, no doubt due to their sins. This is backed up by the rather harsh judgments foretold by God against Moab, in, for***

example, Isaiah 15.) The scholar also complains that the Israelites cut down trees, in violation of Deuteronomy 20:19-20. (In this case, they were told to do so by Elisha's prophecy.)

Then, after all this background, we are finally given the explanation of 1 Kings 3:27. You remember the part in which Mesha performed the sacrifice and there was great fury against Israel and they were sent packing? It certainly *looks* like they are defeated. No, say our scholars! Mesha performed that sacrifice *because he had been defeated!*

How do they figure that? According to Michael Jones,[\[12\]](#)

The cultural and Biblical context does not support the understanding that Mesha did this to turn the tide of the battle but actually sacrificed his son after he knew he was defeated, as an act of repentance for breaking his oath to Israel. Raymond Westbrook reminds us that before Mesha rebelled, he would have been bound to Israel by an oath he likely made to his god Chemosh, so he would have been expected to face punishment from his god if he broke his oath. Thus, Westbrook says, "in sacrificing his son, Mesha was expiating his sin to his own god for breach of the oath... the action of king Mesha in 2 Kgs 3:27 suggests that he also had offered the besiegers a compromise. He sacrificed his first-born in their full view, thus demonstrating his contrition before his god and his willingness to abide by the treaty.

That is certainly a fascinating hypothesis. How do the scholars justify it? First, they claim that

within the culture of the southern Levant, sacrifices were often performed at the end of a battle either to give thanks to a god for victory or to atone for the sins that led to defeat.[\[13\]](#)

By way of proof, they assert that "**similar examples**" are found in Judges 20:26 (wherein they say, the children of Israel offered sacrifices as atonement for their defeat at the hands of the Benjamites), 2 Kings 16, 2 Kings 18-19 (the same "**close parallel**" to which McClellan appealed) specifically 2 Kings 18:14, and Micah 6:7.

Yet none of these shows what the scholars claim. In Judges 20, the Judahites attacked the Benjamites in express obedience to God's command, so they can hardly have been in the wrong or doing something that required atonement. The sacrifices in Judges 20:26, therefore, seem more like entreating God's will for the future.

In 2 Kings 16, King Ahaz of Judah persuades the king of Assyria to assist him against Syria and Israel by paying him "the silver and gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasuries of the king's house" (2 Kings 16:8), whereupon the king of Assyria overthrows Damascus and kills the king of Syria. Nowhere in all this is there a sacrifice of atonement or of celebration or of showing allegiance to the king of Assyria; it was strictly a cash deal. The only mention of sacrifices came after Ahaz had a new altar, modelled after the one in Damascus, installed in Jerusalem. Only a scholar could pretend that this somehow supports the bizarre idea they are positing to explain 2 Kings 3:27.

Meanwhile, in 2 Kings 18:14, after Sennacherib the king of Assyria has invaded Judah and taken the fortified cities and besieged Jerusalem, whereupon

¹⁴ Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay." And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. ¹⁵ So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king's house.

¹⁶ At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria. (2 Kings 18:14-16)

Here, too, the "atonement" is a monetary payment; no sacrifice is mentioned or involved. Here, too, we have to wonder how scholars think this supports the bizarre idea they are positing to explain 2 Kings 3:27.

Finally, the scholars offer Micah 6:7:

"Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

Now, at first blush this one—and only this one—might seem to support the bizarre idea, but if one reads the context, he sees the opposite:

⁶ *“With what shall I come before the Lord,
And bow myself before the High God?
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves a year old?*

⁷ *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
Ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

⁸ *He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?”*

What we see in context is God *rejecting* the idea one should give his firstborn for his transgression, seeing it as absurd. One wonders why the scholars did not look at the context of Micah 6:7 before adducing it in support of their bizarre theory.

Incredibly, at least one scholar claims that

nowhere in the Biblical text do we find the burnt offering functioning as the means by which one would appropriately provoke a deity for military victory assistance.[\[14\]](#)

And yet that is exactly what we do see in 1 Samuel 7:

⁷ *Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.* ⁸ *So the children of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”*

⁹ And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Then Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. ¹⁰ Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the Lord thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. ¹¹ And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. ¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the Lord has helped us." (1 Samuel 7:7-12)

We see it again in 1 Samuel 13

⁵ Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven. ⁶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. ⁷ And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.

As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

⁸ Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. ⁹ So **Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me."** And he offered **the burnt offering.** ¹⁰ Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him.

¹¹ And Samuel said, "What have you done?"

Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, ¹² then **I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.'**

Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering.” (1 Samuel 13:5-12)

So it is not remotely true that “nowhere in the Biblical text do we find the burnt offering functioning as the means by which one would appropriately provoke a deity for military victory assistance.”[\[15\]](#)

Now, all this is groundwork for the scholars’ proposed solution to the problem of 2 Kings 3:27. Let us see the final pieces assembled:

If one loses the battle, the burnt offering has repentant force ... The significance attached to burnt offerings affirms not only the rationale for Mesha’s sacrifice but also the point of the prior section that the battle of Kir-hareseth was complete and that Israel won, fulfilling Elisha’s prophecy.[\[16\]](#)

Now, according to 2 Kings 3:26,

And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not.

This certainly sounds as if the battle is continuing at the time that Mesha performed his sacrifice; there is no mention of the end of the battle or of an Israelite victory. So why should we simply assume that was the case?

Our scholars tell us why:

The cultural and Biblical context does not support the understanding that Mesha did this to turn the tide of the battle but actually sacrificed his son after he knew he was defeated, as an act of repentance for breaking his oath to Israel.[\[17\]](#)

Now, we have seen that they have utterly failed to demonstrate these claims, but we are to assume it nonetheless.

What is next? Well, the sacrifice was not simply an act of repentance; our scholars go on to tell us that

The burnt offering was commonly sacrificed in a wartime situation by battle losers to express apology, and it was also done by vassal kings to solidify a relationship with a suzerain king. Both types fit Mesha in 2 Kgs 3, the rebellious vassal wishing to re-establish his relationship with his suzerain after defeat.[\[18\]](#)

The fact that there is no indication in the text that Mesha was doing either of these things is not to be an impediment.

However, there is still the issue of the “**great fury against Israel**”—and remember that our scholars take the position that this must be divine fury, and, *contra* the opinion of McClellan, it cannot be the fury of Chemosh and so must be the fury of God. But God has just led His people to victory over the Moabites, and their king is submitting to them in repentance for breaking his oath to them, so it certainly seems that God is happy with His people at this point. So why is there suddenly divine fury from Him against the Israelites? There must be a reason, mustn't there? Inquiring minds want to know what that reason is.

Let the imagination run wild! Let us assume that the kings of Israel and Judah *participated* in the human sacrifice!

Holland also notes that when such a sacrifice was performed, the suzerain was likely present and a willing participant at the ceremony, like what we see with the Assyrian king in 2 Kings 16, which means the suzerain would actually be partaking in the sacrifice. Given this, when we read 2 Kings 3, Israel and Jehoram would have been participants in Mesha's sacrifice of his firstborn, something that was an abomination to the Lord and would explain why divine wrath came against them.[\[19\]](#)

Now, there is nothing in the text to give aid and comfort to this bizarre scenario, and our scholars offer no actual evidence for it. “Likely,” it should be noted, in Biblical scholarship generally means “this is what we are going with,” rather than what “likely” actually means, which would require a preponderance of evidence, of which there is none here. This is underscored by the blithe claim that this is “**like what we see with the Assyrian king in 2 Kings 16,**” whereas, as we saw, *no such thing happened in 2 Kings 16.*[\[20\]](#)

The dearth of evidence is immaterial, however, as an explanation of divine wrath

from God at the moment of the Israelite victory is needed and will be invented. Since the king of Israel and the king of Judah were participating in the human sacrifice, “this means that the recipient of Mesha’s sacrifice was not strictly Chemosh. Rather, even if the Moabites and Israelites had their respective gods in mind while sacrificing, the net result of their deed was a worshipful action directed to an unknown god. The text reflects this syncretistic situation in its ambiguity.”^[21] (Let us note that “the text” says nothing about the kings of Israel and Judah participating in the human sacrifice and so cannot “reflect this syncretistic situation” in any way.)

So, in case human sacrifice was not bad enough, there was also syncretism, and thus Israel was going too far. God turned against them with divine fury and drove them from the land.

Problem solved.

Let’s sum up this scholarly solution by presenting the actual text and then the “scholars’ version,” annotated in bold red:

²⁶And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not. ²⁷Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall; and there was great indignation against Israel. So they departed from him and returned to their own land. (2 Kings 3:26-27, NKJV)

*²⁶And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not. **So the battle was over, and Moab was defeated.***

*²⁷Then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering upon the wall **to atone for his sin in rebelling against Israel. The king of Israel and the king of Judah joined him in a syncretistic human sacrifice;** and there was great indignation against Israel **from God because of the syncretistic human sacrifice.** So they departed from him and returned to their own land. (2 Kings 3:26-27, “Scholars’ version”)*

Recall that McClellan the Mormon had claimed that, instead of admitting that in 2 Kings 3:27 the patron deity of Moab defeats the patron deity of Israel, “people for many years have tried to gin up all kinds of imaginary scenarios to find another way to account for what happens in this story.”[\[22\]](#) He is not wrong, and I wonder if he dreamed of the unhinged lengths to which these “imaginary scenarios” would be carried by scholars.

The Solution

First, we have to point out that “great indignation/fury/wrath” (לִדְּבָרִים-רַעֲשֵׁבָה *qeṣeṣēb gāḏôl*) does not necessarily mean “divine fury,” though most of the commentators accept it as such without question.[\[23\]](#) It is true that in most cases, *qeṣeṣēb* does refer to divine fury, but if one checks, he will see that in most such cases it is explicitly stated that this is the wrath of the Lord, and in the others it is evident either because it is in direct speech by God or the context makes it explicitly clear. In the few cases where these are not in evidence (Esther 1:18, Ecclesiastes 5:17), *qeṣeṣēb* refers to the wrath of man—and the reference in 2 Kings 3:27 clearly fits into the latter category. So it should be taken as the “great fury” of men and not “divine fury.”

Now, then, to solve the problem, it is necessary to (a) read the text carefully, and (b) to pay attention to what one is reading. Nothing more is needed. Let us look at the passage, then, and find the solution:

*²⁶And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, **he** took with **him** seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but **they** could not. ²⁷Then **he** took **his** eldest son who would have reigned in **his** place, and offered **him** as a burnt offering upon the wall; and there was great indignation against Israel. So **they** departed from **him** and returned to their own land. (2 Kings 3:26-27, NKJV)*

Pay careful attention to the pronouns,[\[24\]](#) particularly at the beginning of 3:27, “then he took his eldest son who would have reigned in his place,” and ask the key question: *whose* eldest son? It seems to be universally assumed that it is the king of Moab’s eldest son, so that he was sacrificing his *own* son, but is that correct? The nearest antecedent is the “king of *Edom*,” so why do we assume that the “him” who was sacrificed in 3:27 was the king of Moab’s own son, which is

not necessitated by the text? It is much more reasonable to see the “him” as the son of the king of *Edom*, so that the king of Moab was sacrificing not his own son and heir but the son and heir of the king of Edom.

Now it all makes perfect sense. The king of Moab with his force of seven hundred men made a bid to seize the king of Edom (3:26) in a desperate bid to change the outcome of the battle. They failed to seize the king, but they succeeded in seizing his eldest son “who would have reigned in his place” and sacrificed him on the city wall. That seems far more reasonable than the idea that the king of Moab would murder his own son. And it would explain the “great indignation against Israel”; it would be great indignation of the Edomites, who had lost their crown prince in aiding the king of Israel. It was only the *Edomites*, then, who “departed from him and returned to *their own land*,” not the Israelites and Judahites. Did the combined Israelite and Judahite armies continue on to victory? We are not told here explicitly, but in light of Elisha’s prophecy there is no reason to doubt it.

Conclusion

According to certain skeptics, including the Mormon Dan McClellan, 2 Kings 3:27 is the account of a defeat by the patron God of Israel at the hands of the patron god of Moab. According to such skeptics, commentators and apologists have to “gin up all kinds of imaginary scenarios to find another way to account for what happens in this story.”[\[25\]](#) Biblical scholars certainly oblige such skeptics by “ginning up” explanations that seem completely unhinged, but they are not necessary; a careful reading of the text in its most natural way removes all difficulties and puts paid to any idea that God was defeated by the patron god of Moab.

Let us take a final look at McClellan’s charges and respond to them (in bold):

- *A coalition of Israel, Judah, and Edom invaded Moab to return Moab to vassalage, and God promised them victory.*
- *During the battle, the king of Moab offered his son and heir as a human sacrifice, Chemosh. **It seems clear that the king of Moab sacrificed the son of the king of Edom, not his own son.***
- *This catalyzed the intervention of the patron god of Moab, Chemosh, who poured out divine fury on the coalition and drove them off. **The fury engendered by this act was from the Edomites, not from any patron***

god. The Edomites were not “driven off” but seem to have left of their own accord.

- *So, although God promised victory to the coalition, they failed and were driven off by the patron god of Moab. It seems clear that only the Edomites left. There is no compelling reason to think that the Israelites and Judahites were driven off and there is no reason to think they failed. There is no mention of the impotent patron god of Moab being involved in any way.*
- *Thus, God is defeated by the patron deity of Moab and must return to their own purview. God was not defeated, and the patron god of Moab did nothing (nor can it do anything).*
- *Any other explanation of the account requires ginning up “imaginary scenarios.” Although scholars and apologists do gin up imaginary scenarios, we have shown that they are not necessary. The correct understanding of this story is quite simple.*

In conclusion, the idea that the God of the Bible can be defeated by another so-called god is a nonstarter:

For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens” (Psalm 96:5).

Idols are inert effigies made of wood, stone, or metal and have no power to do anything, whereas “the living and true” God of the Bible is omnipotent (Revelation 19:6). The idea that He can be defeated--by anyone or anything--is completely absurd.

Endnotes

[1] Posted at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aFbbiC5m3A4> by Dan McClellan (April 10, 2023).

[2] All quotes from McClellan are from *ibid*.

[3] A vassal state recognized another, more powerful state as its suzerain and by treaty had to fulfill certain obligations and payments to the suzerain state.

[4] Except where it does not; McClellan admits that there a couple of passages in which it refers to something else.

[5] McClellan, *op.cit.*

[6] Guthrie, D. *et al.* (eds.) *New Bible Commentary*. Third Edition. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press and Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970, p. 351

[7] Sanford does suggest that “It is of course possible that the Israelites believed that the sacrifice to Chemosh was efficacious in his own land.” (*ibid.*)

[8] MacDonald, William. Edited by Art Farstad. *Believer’s Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995, p. 394

[9] MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur Study Bible. New King James Version*. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997, p. 520

[10] Michael Jones, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rq8F_9Yg-Y, posted on January 13, 2023.

[11] Leithhart, Peter J. *1 & 2 Kings, Bazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*, as cited and show in *ibid.*

[12] Jones, *op.cit.* The quote from Westbrook is identified as coming from Hapern, Baruch and André Lemaire. *The Book of Kings: Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception. Vetus Testamentum, Supplements, Volume: 129*. Brill, 2010, pp. 464-466

[13] Jones, *ibid.*

[14] Holland, Drew, “An Alternative Approach to the Dilemma of 2 Kgs. 3:2,” *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* 7:2 (2020), p. 7-31

[15] *ibid.*

[16] *ibid.*

[17] Jones, *ibid.*

[18] Holland, *op.cit.*

[19] Jones, *ibid.*

[20] Besides the obvious fact that no sacrifice is mentioned in 2 Kings 16, we have to ask who was playing the Mesha role here? Was it the defeated Syrian king, Rezin? No. There is no stated indication that the king of Assyria was Rezin's suzerain, and the king of Assyria killed Rezin; there was no "re-establishing his [putative] relationship." Was it Ahaz? He never rebelled against the king of Assyria. Such a bother, isn't it, when one has to pay attention to the actual stated facts!

[21] Holland, *ibid.*

[22] McClellan, *op.cit.*

[23] All three industry-standard Hebrew lexicons list both the wrath of man and the wrath of God as definitions for this word.

[24] These are mostly pronominal suffixes in Hebrew.

[25] McClellan, *op.cit.*