

27 Wadi Arnon

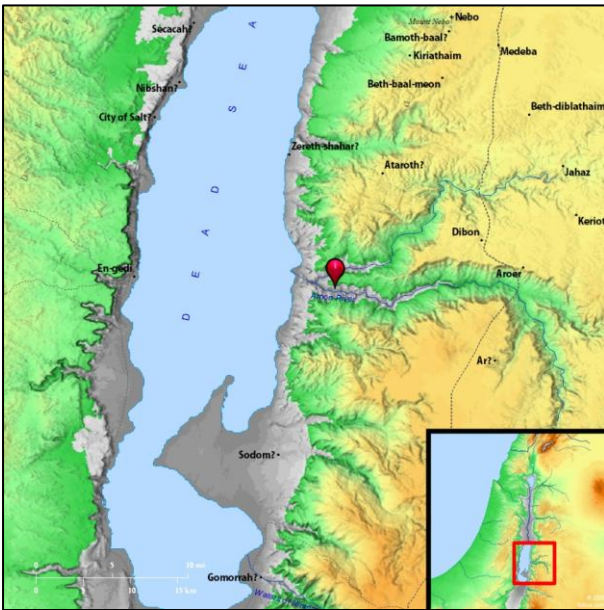
Names (also known as)

Wady el-Mojeb, Wadi Mujib

Etymology

Strong's H769 - *arnon*; *ar-nohn'*, *ar-nohn'* - From H7442; a brawling stream; the Arnon, a river east of the Jordan; also its territory.

Location/Description



Wadi Mujib, historically known as Arnon, is a river in Jordan which enters the Dead Sea at 410 metres (1,350 ft) below sea level.

About halfway down the eastern side of the Dead Sea the deep gorge of the Arnon Valley cuts through the high plateau region. This torrent, the Wadi Mujib (Nahal Arnon), is fed by numerous tributaries (Num. 21:14) and, after the Jordan, is the only important stream emptying into the Dead Sea. The sheer red and yellow sandstone cliffs drop down abruptly to flank the sides of the narrow valley with its small perennial stream of limpid waters, replete with fish. Alongside grow willows, oleanders, and other vegetation in abundance. Where the stream leaves the steep chasm walls to enter the flat shore of the Dead Sea its size varies from 12 to 30 m (40 to 100 ft) in width, with a flow of from 0.3 to 1.2 m (1 to 4 ft) in depth.

The Mujib Reserve of Wadi Mujib is located in the mountainous landscape to the east of the

Dead Sea, approximately 90 kilometres (56 miles) south of Amman. A 220-square-kilometre (85 square miles) reserve was created in 1987 by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature and is regionally and internationally important, particularly for the bird life that the reserve supports. It extends to the Kerak and Madaba mountains to the north and south, reaching 900 metres (3,000 ft) above sea level in some places. This 1,300-metre (4,300 ft) variation in elevation, combined with the valley's year round water flow from seven tributaries, means that Wadi Mujib enjoys a magnificent biodiversity that is still being explored and documented today.



Scriptural references

Old Testament

Numbers 21:13,14,24,26,28; 22:36;
Deuteronomy 2:24,36; 3:8,12,16; 4:48;
Joshua 12:1,2; 13:9,16; Judges 11:13,18,22,
26; 2 Kings 10:33; Isaiah 16:2; Jeremiah
48:20



Brief history

The Arnon River is mentioned a number of times in the Old Testament, primarily as a boundary marker or geographic point of reference. This river flows into the Dead Sea on its eastern side, in the modern country of

Jordan. Much of its water flow has now been restrained and diverted, resulting in minimal flow into the Dead Sea (see photo below).



Arnon Gorge where it comes into the Dead Sea

The formidable canyon, which, at the top, measures some 3 km (2 miles) in width and is nearly 520 metres (1,700 ft) deep, was crossed by only a few passages (Isa. 16:2) and hence became an obvious natural boundary.

At the time of the Israelite conquest it separated the Amorites on the north from the Moabites on the south (Num. 21:13), but Jephthah's message to the Ammonites shows that the side to the north had once been under Ammonite control and had been invaded by the Amorites prior to Israel's arrival (Jud. 11:12-27). Israel, having skirted the territory of Moab, reached the Arnon, probably at its upper reaches. Attacked by Sihon, the Amorite king, Israel gained the victory and took possession of the land from the Arnon up to the Jabbok. This first conquest thereafter became the territory of the tribes of Reuben and Gad – Deut. 3:16; Josh. 12:1,2; 13:8, 9,15-28.

Because of Jehu's failure to walk strictly according to Yahweh's law, this region was later overrun by the invading forces of Hazael of Syria (2 Kings 10:32,33). The Arnon is referred to on line 26 of the famed Moabite Stone. King Mesha of Moab boasted that he had constructed a highway through the valley. Archaeological discoveries give evidence of a number of forts and bridges in the area testifying to the strategic importance of the Arnon. Its name figures in prophecies directed against Moab – Isa. 16:2; Jer. 48:20.

The great lesson of Arnon

The very first reference to Arnon provides a clue to the lesson that Israel (and ourselves

who like them are approaching the borders of the Land of Promise) were intended to learn as they stood on the southern lip of the massive barrier that stood between them and their inheritance.

Moses in Num. 21:13-15 records - “From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. **Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of Yahweh, What he did in the Red sea, and in the brooks of Arnon,** And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab.”

Comparing the triumph over Pharaoh in the crossing of the Red Sea with the crossing of Arnon reveals how critically important this stage of their journey was. On the verge of receiving their inheritance they would need faith that Yahweh could bring them into the Land of Promise. All of the difficulties and the presence of determined enemies could only be overcome if they looked back and took courage that God could complete the work He had begun (Phil. 1:6). So it is with us today.

Sources:

Smith's Bible Dictionary
Wikipedia
KJV on line
Strong's Concordance

(Compilers – Ron Leadbetter/Jim Cowie)

