

Ammonite

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Am'monite (*Heb.*, *Ammoni'*, עַמּוֹנִי, *Sept.* Α'μμωνίτης and Α'μμανίτης; also בְּנֵי עַמְּוֹן, "children of Ammon;" *Sept.* υἱοὶ Α'μμών), the usual designation of the people descended from Ben-Ammi, the son of Lot by his younger daughter ([Ge 19:38](#); comp. [Ps 83:7-8](#)), as Moab was by the elder; and dating from the destruction of Sodom. The near relation between the two peoples indicated in the story of their origin continued throughout their existences from their earliest mention ([Deuteronomy 2](#)) to their disappearance from the biblical history ([Jg 5:2](#)) the brother-tribes are named together (comp. [Jg 10:10](#); [2Ch 20:1](#); [Zep 2:8](#), etc.). Indeed, so close was their union, and so near their identity, that each would appear to be occasionally spoken of under the name of the other. Thus the "land of the children of Ammon" is said to have been "given to the children of Lot," i.e. to both Ammon and Moab ([De 2:19](#)). They are both said to have hired Balaam to curse Israel ([De 23:4](#)), whereas the detailed narrative of that event omits all mention of Ammon ([Nu 22](#); [Nu 23](#)). In the answer of Jephthah to the king of Ammon the allusions are continually to Moab ([Jg 11:15,18,25](#)), while Chemosh, the peculiar deity of Moab ([Nu 21:29](#)), is called "thy god" (ver. 24). The land from Arnon to Jabbok, which the king of Ammon calls "my land" (ver. 13), is elsewhere distinctly stated to have once belonged to a "king of Moab" ([Nu 21:26](#)). "Land" or "country" is, however, but rarely ascribed to them, nor is there any reference to those habits and circumstances of civilization —

the "plentiful fields," the "hay," the "summer fruits," the "vineyards," the "presses," and the "songs of the grape-treaders" — which so constantly recur in the allusions to Moab (Isa 15; Isa 16; Jer 48); but, on the contrary, we find everywhere traces of the fierce habits of marauders in their incursions, thrusting out the right eyes of whole cities ([1Sa 11:2](#)), ripping up the women with child ([Am 1:13](#)), and displaying a very high degree of crafty cruelty ([Jer 41:6-7](#); [Jg 7:11-12](#)) to their enemies, as well as a suspicious discourtesy to their allies, which on one occasion ([2Sa 10:1-5](#)) brought all but extermination on the tribe (12:31). Nor is the contrast less observable between the one city of Ammon, the fortified hold of Rabbah ([2Sa 11:1](#); [Ezra 25:5](#); [Am 1:13](#)), and the "streets," the "house-tops," and the "high-places" of the numerous and busy towns of the rich plains of Moab (Jer 48; Isa 15; Isa 16). Taking the above into account, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, while Moab was the settled and civilized half of the nation of Lot, the Bene-Ammon formed its predatory and Bedouin section. A remarkable confirmation of this opinion occurs in the fact that the special deity of the tribe was worshipped, not in a house or on a high place, but in a booth or tent designated by the very word which most keenly expressed to the Israelites the contrast between a nomadic and a settled life ([Am 5:26](#); [Ac 7:43](#)). *SEE SUCCOTH*. (See Stanley, *Palest.* App. § 89.) On the west of Jordan they never obtained a footing. Among the confusions of the times of the judges we find them twice passing over; once with Moab and Amalek, seizing Jericho, the "city of palm-trees" ([Jg 3:13](#)), and a second time "to fight against Judah and Benjamin, and the house of Ephraim;" but they quickly returned to the freer pastures of Gilead, leaving but one trace of their presence in the name of Chephar ha-Ammonai, "the hamlet of the Ammonites" ([Jos 18:24](#)), situated in the portion of Benjamin

somewhere at the head of the passes which lead up from the Jordan valley, and form the natural access to the table-land of the west country.

Unlike Moab, the precise position of the territory of the Ammonites is not ascertainable. They originally occupied a tract of country (sometimes called *Ammonitis*, Ἀμμωνίτις, 2 Maccabees 4:26; comp. Joseph. *Ant.* 5,7, 9; 11:2, 1) east of the Amorites, and separated from the Moabites by the river Arnon, and from Bashan or Gilead by the Jabbok ([De 3:16](#); [Jos 12:2](#)). The capital of this naturally well-fortified territory ([Nu 21:24](#)) was Rabbath-Ammon ([De 3:11](#); [Am 1:14](#); comp. Reland, *Palœst. r.* 103 sq.; Cellarii *Notit.* 2, 671 sq.). It was previously in the possession of a gigantic race called "Zamzummim" ([De 2:20](#)), "but the Lord destroyed them before the Ammonites, and they succeeded them and dwelt in their stead." The Israelites, on reaching the borders of the promised land, found Sihon, king of Heshbon, in possession by conquest of the district adjoining the Dead Sea ([Nu 21:26](#)), but were commanded not to molest the children of Ammon, for the sake of their progenitor Lot ([De 2:19](#)). But, though thus preserved from the annoyance which the passage of such an immense host through their country might have occasioned, they showed them no hospitality or kindness; they were therefore prohibited from "entering the congregation of the Lord" (i.e. from being admitted into the civil community of the Israelites) "to the tenth generation forever" ([De 23:3](#)). This is evidently intended to be a perpetual prohibition, and was so understood by Nehemiah ([Ne 13:1](#)). The first mention of their active hostility against Israel occurs in [Jg 3:13](#): "The king of Moab gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel." Later we are informed that the children of Israel forsook Jehovah and served the gods of various nations, including those of the children of Ammon,

and the anger of Jehovah was kindled against them, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines and of the children of Ammon. The Ammonites crossed over the Jordan, and fought with Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim, so that "Israel was sore distressed." In answer to Jephthah's messengers ([Jg 11:12](#)), the king of Ammon charged the Israelites with having taken away that part of his territories which lay between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok, which, in [Jos 13:25](#), is called "half the land of the children of Ammon," but was in the possession of the Amorites when the Israelites invaded it; and this fact was urged by Jephthah, in order to prove that the charge was ill-founded. Jephthah "smote them from Aroer to Minnith, even twenty cities, with a very great slaughter" ([Jg 11:33](#); Josephus, *Ant.* 5, 7, 10). The Ammonites were again signally defeated by Saul ([1Sa 11:11](#)), and, according to Josephus, their king, Nahash, was slain (*Ant.* 6, 5, 3). His successor, who bore the same name, was a friend of David, and died some years after his accession to the throne. In consequence of the gross insult offered to David's ambassadors by his son Hanun ([2Sa 10:4](#); Joseph. *Ant.* 7, 6, 1), a war ensued, in which the Ammonites were defeated, and their allies, the Syrians, were so daunted "that they feared to help the children of Ammon any more" ([2Sa 10:19](#)). In the following year David took their metropolis. Rabbah, and great abundance of spoil, which is probably mentioned by anticipation in [2Sa 8:12](#) ([2Sa 10:14](#); [2Sa 12:26-31](#); Joseph. *Ant.* 7, 7, 8). In the reign of Jehoshaphat the Ammonites joined with the Moabites and other tribes belonging to Mount Seir to invade Judah; but, by the divine intervention, were led to destroy one another. Jehoshaphat and his people were three days in gathering the spoil ([2Ch 20:25](#)). The Ammonites "gave gifts" to Uzziah ([2Ch 26:8](#)), and paid a tribute to his son Jotham for three successive years, consisting of 100 talents of silver, 1000

measures of wheat, and as many of barley. When the two and a half tribes were carried away captive, the Ammonites took possession of the towns belonging to the tribe of Gad ([Jer 49:1](#)). "Bands of the children of Ammon" and of other nations came up with Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem, and joined in exulting over its fall ([Eze 25:3,6](#)). Yet they allowed some of the fugitive Jews to take refuge among them, and even to intermarry ([Jer 40:11](#); [Ne 13:13](#)). Among the wives of Solomon's harem are included Ammonite women ([1Ki 11:1](#)), one of whom, Naamah, was the mother of Rehoboam ([1Ki 14:31](#); [2Ch 12:13](#)), and henceforward traces of the presence of Ammonite women in Judah are not wanting ([2Ch 24:26](#); [Ne 13:23](#); [Ezr 9:1](#); see Geiger, *Urschrift*, p; 47, 49; 299). In the writings of the prophets terrible denunciations are uttered against the Ammonites on account of their rancorous hostility to the people of Israel, and the destruction of their metropolis, Rabbah; is distinctly foretold ([Zep 2:8](#); [Jer 49:1-6](#); [Eze 25:1-5,10](#); [Am 1:13-15](#)). *SEE RABBAH*. On the return of the Jews from Babylon the Ammonites manifested their ancient hostility by deriding and opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem ([Ne 4:3,7-8](#)). Both Ezra and Nehemiah expressed vehement indignation against those Jews who had intermarried with the heathen ([Ezr 10](#); [Ne 13:25](#)), and thus transgressed the divine command ([De 7:3](#)). The last appearances of the Ammonites in the biblical narrative are in the books of Judith (5-7) and of the Maccabees (1 Maccabees 5:6, 30-43), and it has been already remarked that their chief characteristics — close alliance with Moab, hatred of Israel, and cunning cruelty — are maintained to the end. Judas Maccabeus fought many battles with the Ammonites, and took Jazer, with the towns belonging to it (1 Maccabees 5:6, 3-43). In the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, Josephus (*Ant.* 13, 8, 1) speaks of a certain Zeno Cotylas as ruler of Philadelphia (the older

Rabbah). Justin Martyr affirms that in his time the Ammonites were numerous (*Dial. cum Tryph.* § 119). Origen speaks of their country under the general denomination of Arabia (*In Job.* c. i). Josephus says that the Moabites and Ammonites were inhabitants of Coele-Syria (*Ant.* 1, 11, 5; 11, 5, 8). *SEE AMMON.*

The tribe was governed by a king (*Jg* 11:12, etc.; *1Sa* 12:12; *2Sa* 10:1; *Jer* 40:14) and by "princes," שָׂרִים (*2Sa* 10:3; *1Ch* 19:3). Their national idol was Molech or Milcom (see *Jour. Sac. Lit.* 1852, p. 365 sq.), whose worship was introduced among the Israelites by the Ammonitish wives of Solomon (*1Ki* 11:5,7); and the high-places built by that sovereign for this "abomination" were not destroyed till the reign of Josiah (*2Ki* 23:13). Besides Nahash and Hanun, an Ammonitish king, Baalis, is mentioned by Jeremiah (40:14) and Josephus (*Ant.* 10, 9, 3). The following Ammonite names are preserved in the sacred text: Achior (*Judith* 5:5, etc.), Baalis (*Jer* 40:14), Hanun (*2Sa* 10:1, etc.), Molech, Naamah (*1Ki* 14:21, etc.), Nachash (*1Sa* 11:1, etc.), Shobi (*2Sa* 17:27), Timotheus (*1 Maccabees* 5:6. etc.), Tobijah (*Ne* 2:10, etc.), Zelek (*2Sa* 23:37); to which may probably be added the name Zamzummim, applied by the Ammonites to the Rephaim whom they dispossessed. *SEE CANAANITE.*