

## Isaiah's Prophecy to Judah—Book of Oracles: Moab (c. 715–711 BC)

### Isaiah 15–16

#### A Lament Over the Ruin of Moab

15:1 The oracle concerning Moab.

- Surely in a night Ar of Moab is devastated *and* ruined;  
 Surely in a night Kir of Moab is devastated *and* ruined.
- 2 They have gone up to the temple and to Dibon, *even* to the high places to weep.  
 Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba;  
 Everyone's head is bald *and* every beard is cut off.
- 3 In their streets they have girded themselves with sackcloth;  
 On their housetops and in their squares  
 Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears.
- 4 Heshbon and Elealeh also cry out,  
 Their voice is heard all the way to Jahaz;  
 Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud;  
 His soul trembles within him.
- 5 My heart cries out for Moab;  
 His fugitives are as far as Zoar *and* Eglath-shelishiyah,  
 For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping;  
 Surely on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of distress over *their* ruin.
- 6 For the waters of Nimrim are desolate.  
 Surely the grass is withered, the tender grass died out,  
 There is no green thing.
- 7 Therefore the abundance *which* they have acquired and stored up  
 They carry off over the brook of Arabim.
- 8 For the cry of distress has gone around the territory of Moab,  
 Its wail *goes* as far as Eglaim and its wailing even to Beer-elim.
- 9 For the waters of Dimon are full of blood;  
 Surely I will bring added *woes* upon Dimon,  
 A lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon the remnant of the land.

#### A Moabite Request for Shelter in Judah

- 16:1 Send the *tribute* lamb to the ruler of the land,  
 From Sela by way of the wilderness to the mountain of the daughter of Zion.
- 2 Then, like fleeing birds *or* scattered nestlings,  
 The daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon.
- 3 "Give *us* advice, make a decision;  
 Cast your shadow like night at high noon;  
 Hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive.
- 4 "Let the outcasts of Moab stay with you;  
 Be a hiding place to them from the destroyer."  
 For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has ceased,  
 Oppressors have completely *disappeared* from the land.
- 5 A throne will even be established in lovingkindness,  
 And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David;  
 Moreover, he will seek justice  
 And be prompt in righteousness.

**A Lament: Pride Will Cause the Devastation of Moab**

- 6 We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride;  
*Even* of his arrogance, pride, and fury;  
 His idle boasts are false.
- 7 Therefore Moab will wail; everyone of Moab will wail.  
 You will moan for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth  
 As those who are utterly stricken.
- 8 For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah *as well*;  
 The lords of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters  
 Which reached as far as Jazer *and* wandered to the deserts;  
 Its tendrils spread themselves out *and* passed over the sea.
- 9 Therefore I will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vine of Sibmah;  
 I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh;  
 For the shouting over your summer fruits and your harvest has fallen away.
- 10 Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field;  
 In the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting,  
 No treader treads out wine in the presses,  
*For* I have made the shouting to cease.
- 11 Therefore my heart intones like a harp for Moab  
 And my inward feelings for Kir-hareseth.
- 12 So it will come about when Moab presents himself,  
 When he wearies himself upon *his* high place  
 And comes to his sanctuary to pray,  
 That he will not prevail.

**Moab's Destruction Within Three Years**

- 13 This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab.  
 14 But now the LORD speaks, saying, "Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all *his* great population, and *his* remnant will be very small *and* impotent."

**Isaiah's Prophecy to Judah—Book of Oracles: Damascus (c. 715–711 BC)**

## Isaiah 17–18

**Syria (Damascus) and Israel (Ephraim)**

17:1 The oracle concerning Damascus.

- "Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city  
 And will become a fallen ruin.
- 2 "The cities of Aroer are forsaken;  
 They will be for flocks to lie down in,  
 And there will be no one to frighten *them*.
- 3 "The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim,  
 And sovereignty from Damascus  
 And the remnant of Aram;  
 They will be like the glory of the sons of Israel,"  
 Declares the LORD of hosts.
- 4 Now in that day the glory of Jacob will fade,  
 And the fatness of his flesh will become lean.

- 5 It will be even like the reaper gathering the standing grain,  
As his arm harvests the ears,  
Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain  
In the valley of Rephaim.
- 6 Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree,  
Two *or* three olives on the topmost bough,  
Four *or* five on the branches of a fruitful tree,  
Declares the LORD, the God of Israel.
- 7 In that day man will have regard for his Maker  
And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.
- 8 He will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands,  
Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made,  
Even the Asherim and incense stands.
- 9 In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken places in the forest,  
Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel;  
And the land will be a desolation.
- 10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation  
And have not remembered the rock of your refuge.  
Therefore you plant delightful plants  
And set them with vine slips of a strange *god*.
- 11 In the day that you plant *it* you carefully fence *it* in,  
And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom;  
*But* the harvest will *be* a heap  
In a day of sickness and incurable pain.
- 12 Alas, the uproar of many peoples  
Who roar like the roaring of the seas,  
And the rumbling of nations  
Who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!
- 13 The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters,  
But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away,  
And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind,  
Or like whirling dust before a gale.
- 14 At evening time, behold, *there is* terror!  
Before morning they are no more.  
Such *will be* the portion of those who plunder us  
And the lot of those who pillage us.

### **Nubia/Ethiopia (Cush)**

- 18:1 Alas, oh land of whirring wings  
Which lies beyond the rivers of Cush,  
2 Which sends envoys by the sea,  
Even in papyrus vessels on the surface of the waters.  
Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth,  
To a people feared far and wide,  
A powerful and oppressive nation  
Whose land the rivers divide.
- 3 All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth,  
As soon as a standard is raised on the mountains, you will see *it*,  
And as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear *it*.

4 For thus the LORD has told me,

“I will look from My dwelling place quietly  
Like dazzling heat in the sunshine,  
Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.”

5 For before the harvest, as soon as the bud blossoms  
And the flower becomes a ripening grape,  
Then He will cut off the sprigs with pruning knives  
And remove *and* cut away the spreading branches.

6 They will be left together for mountain birds of prey,  
And for the beasts of the earth;  
And the birds of prey will spend the summer *feeding* on them,  
And all the beasts of the earth will spend harvest time on them.

7 At that time a gift of homage will be brought to the LORD of hosts  
From a people tall and smooth,  
Even from a people feared far and wide,  
A powerful and oppressive nation,  
Whose land the rivers divide—  
To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, *even* Mount Zion.

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### **Chronological Notes**

- 1) Smith comments on the setting of Isaiah 17–18: “Since the oracle seems to be related to two different events, one has two choices in hypothesizing a setting. (a) The interpreter can date this prophecy within a few years of 701 BC and view the prophet as quoting an earlier prophecy about the Syro-Ephraimite War as an historical illustration teaching principles that were still valid in 701 BC. (b) One can place this prophecy during the Syro-Ephraimite War and understand 17:12–14 as a warning to Ahaz that he should not trust Assyria, because eventually God will destroy that nation sometime in the future. The first option fits best in this context.”<sup>1</sup> I concur with Smith’s assessment that this prophecy is being referenced again in a new setting, and I have chosen to date this prophecy c. 715-711 since Isaiah 14:28 is dated to 716 BC and Isaiah 20 is dated to 711 BC (this is in keeping with my current approach of presenting Isaiah in its canonical order).

<sup>1</sup> Gary V. Smith, “Isaiah 1–39,” *New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN 2007), p. 340. See also Keil (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, “Isaiah,” *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 7, p. 220) and Watts (John D. W. Watts, “Isaiah 1–33,” *Word Biblical Commentary*, p. 234). Watts dates the prophecy to 716–714 BC.