

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 Here is a message about Moab:
 Indeed, in a night it is devastated,
 Ar of Moab is destroyed!
 Indeed, in a night it is devastated,
 Kir of Moab is destroyed!
- 2 They went up to the temple,
 the people of Dibon went up to the high places to lament.
 Because of what happened to Nebo and Medeba, Moab wails.
 Every head is shaved bare,
 every beard is trimmed off.
- 3 In their streets they wear sackcloth;
 on their roofs and in their town squares all of them wail,
 they fall down weeping.
- 4 The people of Heshbon and Elealeh cry out,
 their voices are heard as far away as Jahaz.
 For this reason Moab's soldiers shout in distress;
 their courage wavers.
- 5 My heart cries out because of Moab's plight,
 and for the fugitives stretched out as far as Zoar and Eglath Shelishiyah.
 For they weep as they make their way up the ascent of Luhith;
 they loudly lament their demise on the road to Horonaim.
- 6 For the waters of Nimrim are gone;
 the grass is dried up,
 the vegetation has disappeared,
 and there are no plants.
- 7 For this reason what they have made and stored up,
 they carry over the Stream of the Poplars.
- 8 Indeed, the cries of distress echo throughout Moabite territory;
 their wailing can be heard in Eglaim and Beer Elim.
- 9 Indeed, the waters of Dimon are full of blood!
 Indeed, I will heap even more trouble on Dimon.
 A lion will attack the Moabite fugitives
 and the people left in the land.

A Moabite Request for Shelter in Judah

- 16:1 Send rams as tribute to the ruler of the land,
 from Sela in the desert to the hill of Daughter Zion.
- 2 At the fords of the Arnon
 the Moabite women are like a bird
 that flies about when forced from its nest.
- 3 "Bring a plan, make a decision!
 Provide some shade in the middle of the day!
 Hide the fugitives! Do not betray the one who tries to escape!
- 4 Please let the Moabite fugitives live among you.
 Hide them from the destroyer!"
 Certainly the one who applies pressure will cease,
 the destroyer will come to an end,
 those who trample will disappear from the earth.
- 5 Then a trustworthy king will be established;
 he will rule in a reliable manner,
 this one from David's family.
 He will be sure to make just decisions
 and will be experienced in executing justice.

A Lament: Pride Will Cause the Devastation of Moab

- 6 We have heard about Moab's pride,
their great arrogance,
their boasting, pride, and excess.
But their boastful claims are empty!
- 7 So Moab wails over its demise—
they all wail!
Completely devastated, they moan
about what has happened to the raisin cakes of Kir Hareseth.
- 8 For the fields of Heshbon are dried up,
as well as the vines of Sibmah.
The rulers of the nations trample all over its vines,
which reach Jazer and spread to the desert;
their shoots spread out and cross the sea.
- 9 So I weep along with Jazer over the vines of Sibmah.
I will saturate you with my tears, Heshbon and Elealeh,
for the conquering invaders shout triumphantly
over your fruit and crops.
- 10 Joy and happiness disappear from the orchards,
and in the vineyards no one rejoices or shouts;
no one treads out juice in the wine vats—
I have brought the joyful shouts to an end.
- 11 So my heart constantly sighs for Moab,
like the strumming of a harp,
my inner being sighs for Kir Hareseth.
- 12 When the Moabites plead with all their might at their high places,
and enter their temples to pray,
their prayers will be ineffective!

Moab's Destruction Within Three Years

13 This is the message the LORD previously announced about Moab.

14 Now the LORD makes this announcement: "Within exactly three years Moab's splendor will disappear, along with all her many people; there will be just a few, insignificant survivors left."

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

Isaiah 17–18

Syria (Damascus) and Israel (Ephraim)

- 17:1 Here is a message about Damascus:
"Look, Damascus is no longer a city,
it is a heap of ruins!
- 2 The cities of Aroer are abandoned.
They will be used for herds,
which will lie down there in peace.
- 3 Fortified cities will disappear from Ephraim,
and Damascus will lose its kingdom.
The survivors in Syria
will end up like the splendor of the Israelites,"
says the LORD who commands armies.
- 4 "At that time
Jacob's splendor will be greatly diminished,
and he will become skin and bones.
- 5 It will be as when one gathers the grain harvest,
and his hand gleans the ear of grain.
It will be like one gathering the ears of grain
in the Valley of Rephaim.
- 6 There will be some left behind,
like when an olive tree is beaten—
two or three ripe olives remain toward the very top,

- four or five on its fruitful branches,”
says the LORD God of Israel.
- 7 At that time men will trust in their creator;
they will depend on the Holy One of Israel.
- 8 They will no longer trust in the altars their hands made,
or depend on the Asherah poles and incense altars their fingers made.
- 9 At that time their fortified cities will be
like the abandoned summits of the Amorites,
which they abandoned because of the Israelites;
there will be desolation.
- 10 For you ignore the God who rescues you;
you pay no attention to your strong protector.
So this is what happens:
You cultivate beautiful plants
and plant exotic vines.
- 11 The day you begin cultivating,
you do what you can to make it grow;
the morning you begin planting,
you do what you can to make it sprout.
Yet the harvest will disappear
in the day of disease and incurable pain.
- 12 The many nations massing together are as good as dead,
those who make a commotion as loud as the roaring of the sea’s waves.
The people making such an uproar are as good as dead,
those who make an uproar as loud as the roaring of powerful waves.
- 13 Though these people make an uproar as loud as the roaring of powerful waves,
when he shouts at them, they will flee to a distant land,
driven before the wind like dead weeds on the hills,
or like dead thistles before a strong gale.
- 14 In the evening there is sudden terror;
by morning they vanish.
This is the fate of those who try to plunder us,
the destiny of those who try to loot us!

Nubia/Ethiopia (Cush)

- 18:1 The land of buzzing wings is as good as dead,
the one beyond the rivers of Cush,
2 that sends messengers by sea,
who glide over the water’s surface in boats made of papyrus.
Go, you swift messengers,
to a nation of tall, smooth-skinned people,
to a people that are feared far and wide,
to a nation strong and victorious,
whose land rivers divide.
- 3 All you who live in the world,
who reside on the earth,
you will see a signal flag raised on the mountains;
you will hear a trumpet being blown.
- 4 For this is what the LORD has told me:
“I will wait and watch from my place,
like scorching heat produced by the sunlight,
like a cloud of mist in the heat of harvest.”
- 5 For before the harvest, when the bud has sprouted,
and the ripening fruit appears,
he will cut off the unproductive shoots with pruning knives;
he will prune the tendrils.
- 6 They will all be left for the birds of the hills
and the wild animals;
the birds will eat them during the summer,

and all the wild animals will eat them during the winter.

- 7 At that time
tribute will be brought to the LORD who commands armies,
by a people that are tall and smooth-skinned,
a people that are feared far and wide,
a nation strong and victorious,
whose land rivers divide.
The tribute will be brought to the place where the LORD who commands armies has chosen
to reside, on Mount Zion.

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

Isaiah 19

God Will Defeat Egypt and Her Gods

- 1 Here is a message about Egypt:
Look, the LORD rides on a swift-moving cloud
and approaches Egypt.
The idols of Egypt tremble before him;
the Egyptians lose their courage.
- 2 "I will provoke civil strife in Egypt,
brothers will fight with each other,
as will neighbors, cities, and kingdoms.
- 3 The Egyptians will panic,
and I will confuse their strategy.
They will seek guidance from the idols and from the spirits of the dead,
from the pits used to conjure up underworld spirits, and from the magicians.
- 4 I will hand Egypt over to a harsh master;
a powerful king will rule over them,"
says the sovereign master, the LORD who commands armies.
- 5 The water of the sea will be dried up,
and the river will dry up and be empty.
- 6 The canals will stink;
the streams of Egypt will trickle and then dry up;
the bulrushes and reeds will decay,
along with the plants by the mouth of the river.
- 7 All the cultivated land near the river
will turn to dust and be blown away.
- 8 The fishermen will mourn and lament,
all those who cast a fishhook into the river,
and those who spread out a net on the water's surface will grieve.
- 9 Those who make clothes from combed flax will be embarrassed;
those who weave will turn pale.
- 10 Those who make cloth will be demoralized;
all the hired workers will be depressed.
- 11 The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools;
Pharaoh's wise advisers give stupid advice.
How dare you say to Pharaoh,
"I am one of the sages,
one well-versed in the writings of the ancient kings?"
- 12 But where, oh where, are your wise men?
Let them tell you, let them find out
what the LORD who commands armies has planned for Egypt.
- 13 The officials of Zoan are fools,
the officials of Memphis are misled;
the rulers of her tribes lead Egypt astray.
- 14 The LORD has made them undiscerning;
they lead Egypt astray in all she does,
so that she is like a drunk sliding around in his own vomit.

15 Egypt will not be able to do a thing, head or tail, shoots and stalk.

Egypt Will Worship God in the Millennium

16 At that time the Egyptians will be like women. They will tremble and fear because the LORD who commands armies brandishes his fist against them.

17 The land of Judah will humiliate Egypt. Everyone who hears about Judah will be afraid because of what the LORD who commands armies is planning to do to them.

18 At that time five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD who commands armies. One will be called the City of the Sun.

19 At that time there will be an altar for the LORD in the middle of the land of Egypt, as well as a sacred pillar dedicated to the LORD at its border.

20 It will become a visual reminder in the land of Egypt of the LORD who commands armies. When they cry out to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a deliverer and defender who will rescue them.

21 The LORD will reveal himself to the Egyptians, and they will acknowledge the LORD's authority at that time. They will present sacrifices and offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and fulfill them.

22 The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and then healing them. They will turn to the LORD and he will listen to their prayers and heal them.

23 At that time there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will visit Egypt, and the Egyptians will visit Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together.

24 At that time Israel will be the third member of the group, along with Egypt and Assyria, and will be a recipient of blessing in the earth.

25 The LORD who commands armies will pronounce a blessing over the earth, saying, "Blessed be my people, Egypt, and the work of my hands, Assyria, and my special possession, Israel!"

Isaiah's Prophecy to Judah—Book of Oracles: Egypt and Cush (c. 711 BC)

Isaiah 20

1 The LORD revealed the following message during the year in which King Sargon of Assyria sent his commanding general to Ashdod, and he fought against it and captured it.

2 At that time the LORD announced through Isaiah son of Amoz: "Go, remove the sackcloth from your waist and take your sandals off your feet." He did as instructed and walked around in undergarments and barefoot.

3 Later the LORD explained, "In the same way that my servant Isaiah has walked around in undergarments and barefoot for the past three years, as an object lesson and omen pertaining to Egypt and Cush,

4 so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, both young and old. They will be in undergarments and barefoot, with the buttocks exposed; the Egyptians will be publicly humiliated.

5 Those who put their hope in Cush and took pride in Egypt will be afraid and embarrassed.

6 At that time those who live on this coast will say, "Look what has happened to our source of hope to whom we fled for help, expecting to be rescued from the king of Assyria! How can we escape now?"

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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."¹ 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 716t BC and Isaiah 20 is dated to 711 BC (this is in keeping with my current approach of presenting Isaiah in its canonical order).

¹ 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.