

ISAIAH 15 | Much Moaning in Moab

1 An oracle concerning Moab:

Because Ar of Moab is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone. Because Kir of Moab is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone. 2 He has gone up to the temple and to Dibon, to the high places to weep. Over Nebo¹ and over Medeba Moab wails. On every head is baldness. Every beard is shorn. 3 In the streets they wear sackcloth. On the housetops and in the squares everyone wails and melts in tears. 4 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out. Their voice is heard as far as Jahaz. Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud. His soul trembles. 5 My heart cries out for Moab. Her fugitives flee to Zoar, to Eglath-shelishiyah. For at the ascent of Luhith they go up weeping. On the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of destruction. 6 The waters of Nimrim are a desolation. The grass is withered, the vegetation fails, the greenery is no more. 7 Therefore the abundance they have gained and what they have laid up they carry away over the Brook of the Willows.² 8 For a cry has gone around the land of Moab. Her wailing reaches to Eglaim. Her wailing reaches to Beer-elim. 9 For the waters of Dibon are full of blood. For I will bring upon Dibon even more, a[n Assyrian/Babylonian] lion for those of Moab who escape, for the remnant of the land.

¹ **Dt 32:48-50** 48 That very day Yahweh spoke to Moses, 49 Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, opposite Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel for a possession. 50 And die on the mountain which you go up, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died in Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. **Dt 34:1** 1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And Yahweh showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan.

² The waters of Nimrim (Is 15:6) probably refer to the Wadi en-Numeirah, in southern Moab. Because it was dried up, the refugees went farther south to the Brook of the Willows, possibly near the Dead Sea's southern tip (J. A. Martin, *BKC*, 1:1063).

Commentary

1. Introduction.

- a. Is 15-16 seems set in 715-11 bc, around when Sargon invaded.
- b. Read Jeremiah 48 and notice the similarities.
- c. See *Moab*.
- d. For geographical locations, see Yohanan Aharoni et al., *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*, 3rd ed., 128, 151.
- e. Every nation has a theological story with respect to the one, true God. See *Nations*.
- f. “The Babylon oracle revealed that world history, even in its most threatening and climactic forms, is so organized that the people of God are cared for. The Philistia oracle confirmed this by insisting that the Davidic promises would be kept, and the Moab oracle corrects any impression that the hope expressed in the Davidic promises is exclusivist.”³

2. Much Moaning in Moab (Is 15:1-9).

- a. **Is 15:1-9** 1 An oracle concerning Moab: Because Ar of Moab is laid waste in a night [by Sargon in 718 bc or Sennacherib in 701 bc], Moab is undone. Because Kir of Moab is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone. 2 He has gone up to the temple [of Chemosh] and to Dibon, to the high places to weep. Over Nebo [where Moses died] and over Medeba Moab wails. On every head is baldness. Every beard is shorn. 3 In the streets they wear sackcloth. On the housetops and in the squares everyone wails and melts in tears. 4 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out. Their voice is heard as far as Jahaz. Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud. His soul trembles. 5 My heart cries out for Moab. Her fugitives flee to Zoar [thought to be unconquerable], to Eglathshelishiyah. For at the ascent of Luhith they go up weeping. On the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of destruction. 6 The waters of Nimrim are a desolation. The grass is withered, the vegetation fails, the greenery is no more. 7 Therefore the abundance they have gained and what they have laid up they carry away over the Brook of the Willows. 8 For a cry has gone around the land of Moab. Her wailing reaches to Eglaim. Her wailing reaches to Beer-elim. 9 For the waters of Dibon are full of blood. For I will bring upon Dibon even more, a lion for those of Moab who escape, for the remnant of the land.
- b. The Assyrian army will conquer Moab very quickly (v. 1), causing great distress among the Moabites. Famine has also hit the Moabites (v. 6).
- c. The Moabites weep to Chemosh (v. 2), their national god, but to no avail. Their heads are bald, their beards are shorn, and they wear sackcloth (vv. 2-3). These are all signs of great humiliation and sadness.
- d. Yahweh’s heart cries out for Moab (v. 5). It is not his desire to discipline her, but it must be done due to her pride (Is 16:6).
- e. To escape the Assyrians, the Moabites flee south to Edom, carrying all their belongings (vv. 5-7). The crowd of refugees is so great the oasis cannot support them and their animals.⁴ The waters of Nimrim (v. 6) probably refer to the Wadi en-

³ Alec Motyer, 149.

⁴ J. N. Oswalt, *NICOT*, 1:339.

Numeirah, in southern Moab. Because it was dried up, the refugees went farther south to the Brook of the Willows, possibly near the Dead Sea's southern tip.⁵

- f. Yahweh will bring on Dibon even more blood, and there will be no rest for Moab's remnant (v. 9). Their only hope is to seek refuge in Zion (Is 16:1-2).

⁵ J. A. Martin, *BKC*, 1:1063.