

Notes

The Judgment Against Moab (15:1–16:14)

- Isaiah 15–16 records a solemn and sorrowful prophecy against Moab: “*Within three years... the glory of Moab shall be contemned*” (16:14). Unlike other prophecies, this passage is not a celebration of victory; it is a lament (15:5). God’s justice is real, but His heart is compassionate (Ezek 33:11). Even in judgment, there is a message of hope—an offer of refuge under a righteous King (16:5).
 - Background on Moab:
 1. Moab was located east of the Dead Sea, in present-day Jordan. It was a fertile land known for agriculture & vineyards (16:8–10).
 2. Moab descended from Lot through an incestuous relationship with his eldest daughter (Gen 19:36–37). This contrasts with Israel, whose identity was rooted in the covenant promises of the LORD.
 3. Moab had a troubled relationship with Israel:
 - Moab opposed Israel during the Exodus (Num 22–24).
 - Eglon, king of Moab, oppressed Israel for 18 years (Judg 3:12–14).
 - Moab was later subdued by King David (2 Sam 8:2).
 4. Despite the conflicts, Moab was related to Israel:
 - They descended from Lot, Abraham’s nephew & God commanded Israel not to take their land (Deut 2:9).
 - Ruth, a Moabitess, became part of the lineage of David and Christ (Ruth 4:13–17; Matt 1:5).
 - David entrusted his parents to the king of Moab for protection while fleeing Saul (1 Sam 22:3–4).
- Because of this relationship, the prophecy is filled with sorrow.

1. The Lament Over Moab (15:1–9)

- The prophecy begins with the sudden and unexpected destruction of Moab’s key cities: “*In the night... laid waste*” (15:1). In a single night, Moab’s cities - Ar and Kir will crumble. This shows that no nation is secure apart from God (Ps 127:1b). Instead of turning to the LORD, Moab turned to its high places: “*He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep...*” (15:2). The people turned to their national god Chemosh (cf. Num 21:29; 1 Kgs 11:7) & powerless idols (Ps 115:5, 8).
- The mourning was intense and public (15:2-3) - heads shaved, beards cut off, sackcloth worn, and cries of anguish filling the streets. Even Moab’s

warriors - symbols of strength and pride - lost courage (15:4). God's judgment is thorough and irresistible:

- Nebo & Medeba (Num 32:3, 34–38; Deut 34:1) lie in ruin and became places of national mourning.
 - The listing of cities in 15:4 shows the thoroughness of devastation.
 - Refugees fled to cities like Zoar (cf. Gen 19:22–23).
 - Water sources dried up, leading to economic collapse.
 - Survivors carried what they could and escape.
- Though certain, God does not delight in judgment. Isaiah laments, *"My heart shall cry out for Moab"* (15:5). God is just, but He is also compassionate (Ezek 33:11).
 - The cry of Moab spreads beyond its borders (15:8-9):
 - The entire land is affected & violence spreads.
 - Even those who escape face further danger.Judgment can come suddenly; it is complete and affects all areas of life. Do not wait until a crisis to seek God.

2. A Plea and a Promise (16:1–5)

- After the lament, there is now an appeal: *"Send ye the lamb..."* (16:1). Moab is urged to send a tribute and seek peace with Judah (cf 2 Kgs 3:4-5). Moab's only hope is to humble itself before God's appointed king. Sela (meaning "rock") is often identified with Petra, a strong fortress. Yet even strong defences cannot save. True safety is found only in God.
- Moab is described as: *"a wandering bird cast out of the nest"* (16:2) - weak, displaced, and vulnerable. Moab cries out: *"Hide the outcasts"* and *"Bewray not him that wandereth"* (16:3), asking for protection and mercy.
- God says: *"Let mine outcasts dwell with thee..."* (16:4). Moab is urged to seek shelter in Judah. Historically, Moabites fleeing from Assyrian invasion sought safety in Judah. Grace is extended even to a former enemy. This echoes Ruth the Moabitess, who found refuge under God's wings in Bethlehem (Ruth 2:12; Deut 10:19).
- The glorious promise of a righteous King: *"In mercy shall the throne be established..."* (16:5). This points to Jesus Christ, whose throne is established forever (2 Sam 7:16; Luke 1:32–33). Unlike earthly rulers, His reign is marked by mercy, truth, and righteousness. Judgment is certain - but God still extends mercy to the humble. True refuge is found in God, not in human strength. Christ is the only safe and righteous King.

3. The Pride and Fall of Moab (16:6–14)

- Isaiah reveals the root cause of Moab's downfall - Pride: *"We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud"* (16:6; cf Jer 48:29).
 - Moab was known for boasting in her strength, wealth, and fertile land. Her vineyards and prosperity fed a sense of superiority.
 - Moab trusted in her fortified cities and high places rather than in the LORD. Pride blinded her to impending judgment.Pride is a sin that destroys both the mighty and the small. Scripture repeatedly warns against the danger of pride (Prov 16:18; Jas 4:6).
- Moab trusted in its wealth and fertile land, but these very sources of confidence will be stripped away:
 - Vineyards will be destroyed.
 - Joy and celebration disappear.
 - Prosperity turns into sorrow.God's judgment removes the very things in which people place their trust.
- Isaiah mourns deeply over Moab's downfall:
 - *"I will bewail..."* (v9).
 - *"My bowels shall sound like an harp..."* (v11).Isaiah's grief reflects God's own sorrow over sin and judgment (cf Luke 19:41). True servants of God do not delight in judgment; they grieve over sin and its consequences.
- In desperation, Moab turned to its pagan sanctuaries and prayed to its idols: *"He shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail"* (16:12). Yet their prayers will go unanswered because false gods cannot save (cf 1 Kgs 18:29).
- Isaiah concludes the oracle with a precise timeframe of God's judgment: *"Within three years..."* (16:14). Judgment would come quickly and surely. Moab was devastated by invading powers (first Assyria, later Babylon), and eventually disappeared as a distinct nation, and absorbed into surrounding peoples. Pride led to their downfall. Anything trusted apart from God - whether wealth, strength, or false religion - will ultimately fail.
- This passage is both a warning and an invitation:
 - Moab trusted in wealth, land and idols. All failed (Prov 11:28).
 - There is only one safe refuge - the King God has appointed (16:5). Jesus Christ is a merciful King, a righteous Judge and safe Refuge.Moab clung to pride—and perished. We must respond to God's call today: *"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found..."* (55:6).