

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 15

This chapter is a prophecy of the destruction of the Moabites; two of their principal cities are mentioned as made desolate, (^{<2151>}Isaiah 15:1) the inhabitants in divers places are represented as weeping and mourning, and showing various signs of it, (^{<2152>}Isaiah 15:2,3) yea, not only the common people, but the armed soldiers also, (^{<2154>}Isaiah 15:4) nay, even the prophet himself, (^{<2155>}Isaiah 15:5) the reasons of which were the great drought, so that there were no grass, nor green thing, (^{<2156>}Isaiah 15:6) the carrying away of their good things, either by themselves or others, (^{<2157>}Isaiah 15:7) the flight and cry of the people to the very borders of the land, (^{<2158>}Isaiah 15:8) and the great effusion of blood, (^{<2159>}Isaiah 15:9).

Ver. 1. *The burden of Moab*, &c.] A heavy, grievous prophecy, concerning the destruction of Moab. The Targum is,

“the burden of the cup of cursing, to give Moab to drink.”

This seems to respect the destruction of it by Nebuchadnezzar, which is prophesied of in (^{<2481>}Jeremiah 48:1-22) for that which was to be within three years, (^{<2364>}Isaiah 16:14) looks like another and distinct prophecy from this; though some think this was accomplished before the times of Nebuchadnezzar, either by Shalmaneser king of Assyria, some time before the captivity of the ten tribes, as Vitringa and others; or by Sennacherib, after the invasion of Judea, so Jarchi.

Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, [and] brought to silence; this was a chief city in Moab, perhaps the metropolis of it; (see ^{<0228>}Numbers 21:28 ^{<0619>}Deuteronomy 2:9,18). Kimchi conjectures it to be the same with Aroer, which was by the brink of the river Arnon, (^{<0626>}Deuteronomy 2:36) (^{<0612>}Deuteronomy 3:12) and is mentioned with Dibon, as this, in (^{<0634>}Numbers 32:34) of which notice is taken, and not of Ar, in (^{<2489>}Jeremiah 48:19,20). Some versions take Ar to signify a “city”, and render it, “the city of Moab”, without naming what city it was; and the Targum calls it by another name, Lahajath; but, be it what city it will, it was destroyed in the night; in such a night, as Kimchi interprets it; in the

space of a night, very suddenly, when the inhabitants of it were asleep and secure, and had no notice of danger; and so the Targum adds,

“and they were asleep.”

Some have thought this circumstance is mentioned with a view to the night work, that work of darkness of Lot and his daughter, which gave rise to Moab; however, in a night this city became desolate, being taken and plundered, and its inhabitants put to the sword, and so reduced to silence; though the last word may as well be rendered “cut off”^{f283}, utterly destroyed, being burnt or pulled down; two words are made use of, to denote the utter destruction of it:

because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, [and] brought to silence; either in the same night, or rather in another. Kir, another city of Moab, met with the same fate as Ar. This is called Kirhareseth, and Kirhareth, in (²⁹⁶⁷Isaiah 16:7,11) and so Kirheres in (²⁴⁸³Jeremiah 48:31,36) called Kir of Moab, to distinguish it from Kir in Assyria, (Amos 1:5 ¹²⁶⁹2 Kings 16:9) and Kir in Media, (²³²⁶Isaiah 22:6).

Ver. 2. *He is gone up to Bajith, &c.]* That is, Moab; the king or people of Moab, particularly the inhabitants of the above cities. Bajith signifies house; and here a house of idolatry, as Kimchi interprets it; it was an idol’s temple, very likely the temple of their god Chemosh, the same which is called Bethbaalmeon, (⁶³⁷Joshua 13:17) “the house of Baal’s habitation”, and is mentioned with Dibon and Bamoth, as here; hither the Moabites went in their distress, to lament their case, ask advice, make supplication, and offer sacrifice:

and to Dibon, the high places, to weep; Dibon was another city of Moab, (⁹²³Numbers 21:30) where probably were high places for idolatrous worship, and from whence it might have the name of Dibonhabbamoth, as it may be here called; or since there was such a place in Moab as Bamoth, here rendered “high places”, it may be taken for a proper name of a place, (⁹²³Numbers 21:20) and the rather, since mention is made of Bamothbaal along with Dibon, and as distinct from it, (⁶³⁷Joshua 13:17) and Jarchi interprets the words thus,

“and the men of Dibon went up to Bamoth to weep.”

Kimchi takes all three to be places of idolatrous worship, and which is not unlikely.

Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba; two cities in the land of Moab, now taken, plundered, and destroyed; the former of these, Nebo, had its name either from the Hebrew word *abn*, “naba”, to prophesy, because of the prophecies or oracles which is thought were delivered here from the Heathen priests, as from their deities; and among the Chaldeans there was a god of this name, (^{<2340>}Isaiah 46:1) or from the Arabic word “naba”^{f284}, to be eminent, and so had its name from its height; near to it was a mountain of the same name, where Moses had a view of the land of Canaan, and died, (^{<4524>}Deuteronomy 32:49,50 ^{<4524>}34:1) of this city (see ^{<4633>}Numbers 32:3,38 ^{<2481>}Jeremiah 48:1,22). Jerom says^{f285}, that in his time a desert place called Naba was showed, eight miles distant from the city Ebus (Heshbon, (^{<2350>}Isaiah 15:4)) to the south. The latter of these, Medeba, is mentioned in (^{<4633>}Numbers 21:30 ^{<4636>}Joshua 13:16) this city is by Ptolemy^{f286} called Medava. Josephus^{f287} speaks of it as a city of Moab, in the times of Alexander and Hyrcanus; so that if it was now destroyed, it was built again: and Jerom^{f288} says of it, that in his days it was a city of Arabia, retaining its ancient name, near Esebon, or Heshbon.

On all their heads [shall be] baldness; that is, on the heads of the Moabites, especially the inhabitants of these cities that survived the destruction, who through sorrow and distress, and as a token of mourning, tore off the hair of their heads, which caused baldness, or else shaved it:

[and] every beard cut off; with a razor, which makes it probable that the hair of the head was tore off; both these used to be done as signs of mourning and lamentation, even shaving of the head and beard, (^{<3011>}Job 1:20 ^{<3072>}Jeremiah 7:29 ^{<3078>}Ezekiel 7:18 ^{<4216>}Leviticus 21:5).

Ver. 3. *In their streets they shall girt themselves with sackcloth*, &c.] Instead of their fine clothes, with which they had used to deck themselves, being a very proud people; (see ^{<2346>}Isaiah 16:6) this was usual in times of distress on any account, as well as a token of mourning for the dead; (see ^{<2008>}Joel 1:8,13). The word for “streets” might be rendered “villages”, as distinct from cities, that were “without” the walls of the cities, though adjacent to them; and the rather, seeing mention is made of streets afterwards:

on the tops of their houses; which were made flat, as the houses of the Jews were, on which were battlements, (^{<4528>}Deuteronomy 22:8) hither they went for safety from their enemies, or to see if they could spy the enemy,

or any that could assist them, and deliver them; or rather, hither they went for devotion, to pray to their gods for help; for here it was usual to have altars erected, to burn incense on to their deities; (see ^{<123D>}2 Kings 23:12 ^{<249B>}Jeremiah 19:13 ^{<300B>}Zephaniah 1:5) and in such places the people of God were wont to pray, (^{<440B>}Acts 10:9):

and in their streets; publicly, as well as privately, where they ran up and down to get from the enemy, and save themselves:

everyone shall howl, weeping abundantly: or, “descending with weeping”: the tears running down his cheeks in great abundance, so that his whole body was as it were watered with them; or the meaning may be, that everyone that went up to the temples of the idols, and to the high places, (^{<234D>}Isaiah 15:2) or to the roofs of the houses, as here, to pray the assistance of their gods, should come down weeping and howling, having no success.

Ver. 4. *And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh, &c.*] Two other cities in the land of Moab. The first of these was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who took it from the Moabites, (^{<025>}Numbers 21:25-30) it came into the hands of the Reubenites, (^{<03B>}Numbers 32:3,37) and afterwards was again possessed by the Moabites, (^{<48D>}Jeremiah 48:2,34,45). Josephus ^{f289} calls it Essebon, and mentions it among the cities of Moab; it goes by the name of Esbuta in Ptolemy ^{f290}; and is called Ebus by Jerom ^{f291}, who says it was a famous city of Arabia in his time, in the mountains over against Jericho, twenty miles distant from Jordan; hence we read of the Arabian Esbonites in Pliny ^{f292}. Elealeh was another city of Moab, very near to Heshbon and frequently mentioned with it, (^{<234D>}Isaiah 16:9 ^{<03B>}Numbers 32:3,37 ^{<48B>}Jeremiah 48:34). Jerom says ^{f293} that in his time it was a large village, a mile from Ebus, or Heshbon. By these two places are meant the inhabitants of them, as the Targum paraphrases it, who cried for and lamented the desolation that was coming, or was come upon them:

their voice shall be heard [even] unto Jahaz; sometimes called Jahazah, (^{<03B>}Joshua 13:18 21:36 ^{<48D>}Jeremiah 48:21) it was a frontier town, at the utmost borders of the land, (^{<023>}Numbers 21:23 ^{<18D>}Deuteronomy 2:32) hence the cry of the inhabitants of the above cities is said to reach to it, which expresses the utter destruction that should be made; (see ^{<48B>}Jeremiah 48:34) this is thought to be the same place Ptolemy ^{f294} calls Ziza. Jerom ^{f295} calls it Jazza, as it is in the Septuagint here, and says that in his time it was shown between Medaba and Deblathai.

Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; not as when they go to battle, with courage and cheerfulness, as some have thought; but through fear, and as in great terror and distress; and so it signifies, that not only the weak and unarmed inhabitants, men and women, should be in the utmost confusion and consternation, but the soldiers that should fight for them, and defend them; who were accoutred, or “harnessed”, as the word signifies, and were “girt” and prepared for war, as the Targum renders it; even these would be dispirited, and have no heart to fight, but lament their sad case:

his life shall be grievous to everyone; the life of every Moabite would be a burden to him; he would choose death rather than life; so great the calamity: or the life of every soldier; or “his soul shall cry out”, grieve or mourn for “himself”^{f296}; for his own unhappy case; he shall only be concerned for himself, how to save himself, or make his escape; having none for others, for whose defence he was set, and for whom he was to fight; but would have no concern for his king or country, only for himself.

Ver. 5. *My heart shall cry out for Moab*, &c.] These seem to be the words of the prophet, pitying them as they were fellow creatures, though enemies; which shows humanity in him, and signifies that their calamities were very great, that a stranger should be concerned for them, and such to whom they had been troublesome; so Jarchi understands it, who observes the difference between the true and false prophet, particularly between Isaiah and Balaam; but others, as Kimchi, interpret it of the Moabites themselves, everyone expressing their concern for the desolation of their country; and so the Targum,

“the Moabites shall say in their hearts:”

his fugitives [shall flee] unto Zoar; a city where Lot fled to, when he came out of Sodom, to which it is thought the allusion is, (see ^{<192>}Genesis 19:20,22) the meaning seems to be, that those that escaped out of the above cities, when taken and destroyed, should flee hither for safety: the words may be supplied thus, “his fugitives” shall cry out “unto Zoar”; that is, those that flee from other places shall cry so loud as they go along, that their cry shall be heard unto Zoar, (^{<383>}Jeremiah 48:34):

an heifer of three years old; which is not to be understood of Zoar in particular, or of the country of Moab in general, comparable to such an heifer for fatness, strength, beauty, and lasciviousness; but of the cry of the

fugitives, that should be very loud and clamorous, like the lowing of an ox, or an heifer in its full strength, which is heard a great way; (see ^{<408>}1 Samuel 6:9,12 ^{<248>}Jeremiah 48:34). Dr. Lightfoot^{f297} conjectures that “Eglath Shelishiah”, translated an heifer of three years old, is the proper name of a place; and observes, that there was another place in this country called Eneglaim, (^{<347>}Ezekiel 47:10) which being of the dual number, shows that there were two Egels, in reference to which this may be called the “third” Eglath; and so the words may be rendered, “his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar, unto the third Eglath”; and he further conjectures, that this may be the Necla of Ptolemy^{f298}, mentioned by him in Arabia Petraea, along with Zoara; and also to be the Agella of Josephus^{f299}, reckoned with Zoara and Oronai, and other cities of Moab:

for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; which seems to have been a very high place, and the ascent to it very great; and as the Moabites went up it, whither they might go for safety, they should weep greatly, thinking of their houses and riches they had left to the plunder of the enemy, and the danger of their lives they were still in. This place is thought by some to be the same with the Lysa of Ptolemy^{f300}; Josephus^{f301} calls it Lyssa; Jerom^{f302} says in his time it was a village between Areopolis and Zoara, and went by the name of Luitha; it is mentioned in (^{<248>}Jeremiah 48:5):

for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction; of Moab, and the several cities of it; or “of breaking”, of breaking down of walls and of houses. The Targum is,

“the cry of the broken (or conquered) in battle;”

whose bones are broken, or however their strength, so that they are obliged to surrender; or a “broken cry”, such as is made when there is a multitude of people together, and in great distress. The word Horonaim is of the dual number, and signifies two Horons, the upper and the lower, as say Kimchi and Ben Melech; which is true of Bethhoron, if that was the same place with this, (^{<668>}Joshua 16:3,5). By Josephus^{f303} it is called Oronas and Oronae; it is taken by some to be the Avara of Ptolemy^{f304}; it seems, by the Targum, that as Luhith was a very high place, this lay low, since it renders it,

“in the descent of Horonaim;”

to which its name agrees, which signifies caverns; and mention is made of Bethhoron in the valley, along with Bethnimrah^{f305}.

Ver. 6. *For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate, &c.*] Or dried up, through a great drought that should come upon the land at this time; or being defiled with the blood of the slain, as Jarchi: it may denote the well watered pastures about Nimrim, that should become the forage of the enemy, and be trodden under foot by its army, or be forsaken by the proprietors of them. Josephus^{f306} speaks of fountains of hot water springing up in the country of Peraea, where Nimrim was, of a different taste, some bitter, and others sweet; which, Dr. Lightfoot^{f307} suggests, might be these waters of Nimrim; and, according to the Jerusalem Talmud^{f308}, Bethnimrah was in that part of the country which was called the valley, and so was very fruitful with springs of water. The word is in the plural number, and may design more places of the same name; and we read of Nimrah and Bethnimrah, (^{-0818B}Numbers 32:3,36). Jerom^{f309} calls it Nemra, and says it was a large village in his time; it seems to have its name from panthers or leopards, of which there might be many in these parts:

for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing; by which it seems that the desolation spoken of was not merely through the forage and trampling of the enemy's army, but by a drought.

Ver. 7. *Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, &c.*] The great substance which the Moabites had got, and hoarded up:

shall they carry away to the brook of the willows; either the Moabites should carry their substance to some brook, it may be near Nimrim, where many willows grew, and cast it into the brook, or lay it by the brook side, in some private place, or under and among the willows, to preserve it from the enemy; or else the meaning is, that their enemies should take what they had with a great deal of labour got, and with a great deal of care had laid up, and carry it to the brook of the willows, some place without the city, and there divide it; or to the valley of the Arabians^{f310}, as some render it, some part of Arabia lying between Moab and Babylon, whither they might carry it, in order to the conveyance of it into their own country at a proper time: it may be observed, that the country of Moab came after this into the hands of the Arabians; and, according to Jerom, the valley of Arabia lay in the way from Moab to Assyria; but it may be rendered "the valley of the willows", and design the land of Babylon, or Babylon itself, which was

built in a plain, or on a flat by the river Euphrates, out of which many canals and rivulets were cut and derived, near to which willows in great abundance grew; as they usually do in marshy and watery places; hence the Jews in Babylon are said to hang their harps upon the willows which were by its rivers; so Jarchi thinks the land of Babylon is meant, and compares it with (^{3D71}Psalm 137:1,2) which sense is approved of by Bochart and Vitringa. The Septuagint version is,

“I will bring upon the valley the Arabians, and they shall take it;”

and the Targum is,

“their border, which is by the western sea, shall be taken from them.”

Ver. 8. *For the cry is gone found about the borders of Moab*, &c.] The cry of destruction and howling because of it; the places mentioned, as is observed by some, being upon the borders of the land. Heshbon was on the north east, Elealeh on the north west, Jahaz on the south west, Horonaim further west, Zoar the utmost west, and the places following seem to be upon the borders likewise:

the howling thereof unto Eglaim; which word signifies a border, and so the Arabic word Agalon; some take it to be the same with the brooks of Arnon, (⁰²¹³Numbers 21:13,14) said so be the border of Moab:

and the howling thereof unto Beerelim; the same with Beer, (⁰²¹⁶Numbers 21:16) called Beerelim, or “the well of the mighty ones”, being dug by the princes of Israel, (⁰²¹⁸Numbers 21:18).

Ver. 9. *For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood*, &c.] Of the slain, as the Targum adds. This was a river in the land of Moab, as say Jarchi and Kimchi; it had its name from the blood of the slain, Some take it to be the name of a city, and the same with Dibon, (²³⁵²Isaiah 15:2) but, because of the abundance of blood shed in it, got this new name; and the Vulgate Latin version here calls it Dibon; and the Syriac version Ribon; and the Arabic version Remmon:

for I will bring more upon Dimon; or “additions”^{f311}, not merely add blood to the waters of the river, as Jarchi and Kimchi; but bring additional evils and plagues, as Aben Ezra. The Targum interprets it,

“the congregation of an army;”

but what these additions were are explained in the next clause:

lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land; or a “lion”^{f312}; the meaning is, that such who escaped the sword should be destroyed by lions, or other beasts of prey, which was one of the Lord’s four judgments, (³⁴⁰Ezekiel 14:21). The Targum is,

“a king shall ascend with his army, and so spoil the remainder of their land;”

and Aben Ezra interprets it of the king of Assyria; and Jarchi of Nebuchadnezzar, who is called a lion, (²⁴⁰Jeremiah 4:7) and the sense is thought to be this, that whom Sennacherib king of Assyria should leave, Nebuchadnezzar should destroy. The Septuagint and Arabic versions render the last clause, “the remnant of Adama”, a city of Moab; so Cocceius.