

# CHAPTER 16

## INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 16

This chapter is a continuation of the prophecy against Moab; in which the prophet gives good advice, but in case of a haughty neglect of it, which he foresaw, threatens with ruin, and fixes a time for it. He advises the Moabites to pay their tribute to the king of Judah, or otherwise they should be turned out of their land, as a bird out of its nest, (<sup>2360B</sup>Isaiah 16:1,2) to protect, and not betray the people of the Jews that should flee to them, because of the Assyrian army, (<sup>2368B</sup>Isaiah 16:3,4) and for this end gives a great character of the king of Judah, and assures them of the stability of his kingdom, (<sup>2365B</sup>Isaiah 16:5) but for their pride, wrath, and lying, they are threatened with destruction, and are represented as howling under it, (<sup>2366B</sup>Isaiah 16:6,7) because of the spoil of their cities, vineyards, and fields, so that they have no harvest, nor vintage, nor gathering of summer fruits, or joy on these accounts, (<sup>2368B</sup>Isaiah 16:8-10) for which even the prophet expresses a concern, (<sup>2361B</sup>Isaiah 16:11) and after having observed the application of the Moabites to their gods without success, (<sup>2362B</sup>Isaiah 16:12) the chapter is closed with an assurance of the certain ruin of Moab, and of the time when it should be, (<sup>2363B</sup>Isaiah 16:13,14).

**Ver. 1.** *Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land,* &c.] Or tribute, as the Targum rightly interprets it. The Moabites, being conquered by David, paid tribute to him, (<sup>1082B</sup>2 Samuel 8:2) and when the kingdom was divided in Rehoboam's time, the tribute was paid to the kings of Israel, which continued till the times of Ahab, when the Moabites rebelled, and refused to pay it, (<sup>1182B</sup>2 Kings 3:4,5) and this tribute, as appears from the passage now referred to, was paid in lambs and rams; which now they are bid to pay to the king of Judah, David's lawful heir and successor in his kingdom; who is supposed to be meant by the ruler of the land, that is, of the land of Judah, whose reigning king at this time was Hezekiah; but rather by "the ruler of the land" is meant the king of Moab, for the words may be rendered, more agreeably to the language and the accents, "send ye the lamb" (or lambs, the singular for the plural), "O ruler of the land"<sup>f313</sup>; though others, "send ye the lamb of the ruler of the land"<sup>f314</sup>; that is either,

O king of Moab send the tribute that is due; or ye people of the land send the tribute which your ruler owes to the king of Judah; so Jarchi understands it of the king of Moab: some indeed expound the ruler of the land of God himself, who is the Governor of the world; and take the sense to be, that the Moabites are bid to send a lamb, or lambs, for sacrifice, to the God of the whole earth, in order to appease him, and atone for their sins; which is said either seriously, as some think, this being to answer a good purpose, or ironically, as other's, it being now too late; but the sense given is the best: in the Talmud<sup>f315</sup> it is applied to Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of the land, who came to the mount of the daughter of Zion, by the way of rocks and mountains. The Targum applies it to the Messiah, paraphrasing it thus,

“they shall be bringing tributes to the Christ of Israel, who is strong over them.”

Jerom interprets it of Christ, the Lamb of God, the ruler of the world, or who was to be sacrificed to the ruler of the world; who descended from Ruth, the Moabitess, who he supposes is meant by the rock of the wilderness, as he renders the next clause:

*from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount the daughter of Zion:*

according to Kimchi, and others, Sela was the chief city of the kingdom of Moab. The word signifies a rock; it is the same with Petra<sup>f316</sup>, the chief city of Arabia, and from whence Arabia Petraea had its name. Some take it to be Selah, the chief city of Edom, afterwards called Joktheel, (~~1247~~ 2 Kings 14:7) it was a frontier city, and lay upon the borders of Moab and Edom to the south; as the wilderness of Jordan was on the border of Moab to the north, and is thought to be here meant; or, according to Vitringa, the plains of Jericho, the same with the wilderness of Judea, where John the Baptist came preaching; which lay in the way from Sela or Petra, the chief city in Moab, unto Jerusalem. Strabo<sup>f317</sup> says of Petra, the metropolis of the Nabataeans, that it lies in a plain, surrounded with rocks and precipices, and within it fountains and gardens, and without it a large country, for the most part desert, especially towards Judea, and from hence it is a journey of three or four days to Jericho; and so the sense is, send the lambs, or the tribute, from Sela or Petra, the chief city of Moab; send them, I say, to the wilderness of Judea, or by the way of that, even to Mount Zion or Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, and the seat of the king of it.

**Ver. 2.** *For it shall be, &c.*] Or, “otherwise it shall be”<sup>f318</sup>; if ye do not pay this tribute:

*[that] as a wandering bird cast out of the nest:* or, “as a wandering bird, the nest sent out”: that is, as a bird that has forsaken its nest, and wanders about, and its young ones are turned out of the nest, scarcely fledged, and unable to shift for themselves, but flutter about here and there, trembling and frightened, (see <sup><3B></sup>Proverbs 26:2):

*[so] the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon:* turned out of their houses, wandering up and down, not knowing where to go; unable to help themselves, and in the utmost fright and consternation, fleeing to the very borders of their land, as the fords of Arnon were, (see <sup><3B></sup>Numbers 21:13,14).

**Ver. 3.** *Take counsel, execute judgment, &c.*] This refers either to what goes before, that they would take the counsel given, and do that which was just and right, by paying tribute to the king of Judah; or to what follows, that they would enter into a consultation, the king of Moab with his nobles, and resolve upon what was right, and do it, by protecting and harbouring the distressed Jews, who would flee unto them from the enemy:

*make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday;* a time of the greatest heat, to which the Assyrian army, for its force and fury, and the mischief done by it, is compared: and the Moabites they are advised to make a shadow, as large and as strong as the dark night, that is, to protect the Jews in their distress, and to refresh and comfort them under it; (see <sup><3B></sup>Isaiah 4:6 25:4,5):

*hide the outcasts;* such as were driven out of their land through the fury and persecution of the enemy, receive and conceal, as Rahab did the spies:

*bewray not him that wandereth;* from his native place, as a bird from its nest, being forced to it; such an one, or as many as may be, in such a case, do not discover them where they are, or betray them, and deliver them up into the hands of their enemy.

**Ver. 4.** *Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, &c.*] Not whom God had cast out, but who were the Lord’s people, and whom he owns as such, though cast out by the enemy, or obliged to flee, and quit their country; let these be sojourners in thy land; let them continue awhile there; let them dwell privately and peaceably:

*Moab, be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler:* that is, O king of Moab, or kingdom of Moab, as the Targum, hide and protect the Jews that shall flee to thee for shelter, from the face of the spoiler of their land and substance, Sennacherib king of Assyria; and, to encourage them to do these things, it is suggested that they would not be long troublesome to them, and would quickly be in a capacity of requiting them, and of being serviceable to them in like distress:

*for the extortioner is at an end;* or “the squeezer”, or “wringer out”<sup>f319</sup>; that oppressed them, and wrung their property out of their hands; that milked them out of their substance, and even sucked their blood; meaning the Assyrian monarch, whose time was short, and an end was soon put to all his schemes and oppressions:

*the spoiler ceaseth:* out of the land, being obliged to depart out of it:

*the oppressors are consumed out of the land:* the Assyrian army, and its officers, who were all consumed in one night by an angel, (~~2~~ Kings 19:35).

**Ver. 5.** *And in mercy shall the throne be established, &c.]* That is, the throne of Hezekiah, and his government over Judah, which was more firmly settled and established after the overthrow of the Assyrian army, through the mercy of God vouchsafed to him, and on account of the mercy he exercised among his subjects, (see ~~28~~ Proverbs 20:28). Hezekiah was a type of Christ, and his throne typical of his, and the ultimate view of the prophecy may be to the stability of the kingdom of Christ; so the Targum,

“then the Christ of Israel, his throne shall be established in goodness:”

*and he shall sit upon it in truth;* which does not so much intend the reality of his sitting there, as his continuance, signified by sitting, and the constancy and stability of his reign, or his governing with faithfulness and truth;

*in the tabernacle of David;* or “tent”; meaning his palace, or house in Jerusalem, alluding to his having been a shepherd before he was a king, or referring to the unsettled state of David’s house; this was typical of the church of God, where Christ sits and reigns as King, (see ~~30~~ Amos 9:11); the Targum is,

“in the city of David;”

Jerusalem, as Aben Ezra:

*judging and seeking judgment*; acting the part of a righteous, faithful, and diligent Judge; seeking to do justice to the poor and needy, and searching into the cause that comes before him, to find out, and take the right side of it:

*and hasting righteousness*; not delaying justice, protracting a cause, deferring the sentence, and the execution of it, but dispatching the whole as speedily as may be; all which characters, though they may be found in Hezekiah, yet are much more eminently in Christ.

**Ver. 6.** *We have heard of the pride of Moab*, &c.] These are the words of the prophet, either in the name of the Lord, or in the person of the Jews, or of other nations, who had heard very frequently, and from many persons, and from every quarter, of the excessive pride of this people, and had many instances of it related to them, which foretold their ruin; for pride comes before a fall:

*[he] is very proud*): though his original was so base and infamous; and therefore there is little reason to hope or expect that he would take the advice above given him, or do the good offices for the Jews he was exhorted to; his pride was such, that he would despise the counsel of God, and would never stoop to do any favour for his people:

*[even] of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath*; of his contempt of the people of God, and his wrath against them:

*[but] his lies [shall] not be so*; or, “his strength” shall “not be so”<sup>f320</sup>; as his wrath: he shall not be able to do what in his pride and wrath he said he would do; all his wicked thoughts and devices, all his haughty and wrathful expressions, will signify nothing; they will all be of no effect, for God resisteth the proud, (see <sup>2483</sup>Jeremiah 48:30). It may be rendered, “not right”, that of “his diviners”<sup>f321</sup>; their words and works, what they say or do; so the word is used in (<sup>2345</sup>Isaiah 44:25).

**Ver. 7.** *Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab*, &c.] One Moabite shall mourn for another; the living for the dead; or one part of the country for another; or to Moab, they shall howl in turns, answering to one another:

*everyone shall howl*: every Moabite, or the whole country of Moab shall howl, being everywhere desolate:

*for the foundations of Kirhareseth shall ye mourn: surely [they are] stricken*; this was a very principal city in the land of Moab, and a very strong one, (see <sup><1101></sup>2 Kings 3:25). It signifies, according to some, “the city of the sun”, so called, it may be, because the sun was worshipped here; or, according to others, “the earthen city”, or “city of brick”, because its houses and walls were made of brick; and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it, “the walls of burnt brick”. Now this strong city was to be razed even to the foundations, so that these would be discovered, which would occasion mourning to its inhabitants, and those of other places. Kimchi interprets “the foundations”, of the great men and princes of Moab, (see <sup><2483></sup>Jeremiah 48:31) so the Targum,

“and they shall howl over the men of the city of their strength;”

R. Jonah, of the men of the army, the foundation of the kingdom; so Ben Melech. The word translated “foundations” signifies also flagons or bottles, and so Aben Ezra and Abendana understand it here; and accordingly the words may be thus rendered, “for the bottles of Kirhareseth shall ye mourn, verily they are broken”<sup>f322</sup>; this agrees with the signification of the word in (<sup><2301></sup>Hosea 3:1 <sup><2105></sup>Song of Solomon 2:5) and with what follows, concerning the vine of Sibmah; the reason of the mourning seems to be, that there would be no wine, and the bottles would lie useless, and be broken.

**Ver. 8.** *For the fields of Heshbon languish, &c.]* Through drought; or because of the forage of the enemy, and their treading upon them; or because there were no men left to till and manure them. Of Heshbon (see Gill on <sup><2354></sup>Isaiah 15:4”). It seems to have been a place famous for fields and pastures, and to have been a very fruitful and well watered place; hence we read of the fish pools in Heshbon, (<sup><2104></sup>Song of Solomon 7:4) though Aben Ezra and Kimchi think the word signifies vines, as they suppose it does in (<sup><4522></sup>Deuteronomy 32:32):

*[and] the vine of Sibmah*; called Shebam and Shibmah, in (<sup><0813></sup>Numbers 32:3,38) thought to be the Seba of Ptolemy<sup>f323</sup>; and seems to have been famous for vines and vineyards:

*the lords of the Heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof*; that is, the Chaldeans and their army, and commanders and principal

officers of it, dealing with them as the Turks do with vines, wherever they meet with them, destroy them; though Jarchi and Kimchi interpret all this figuratively, both here and in the above clauses, of the inhabitants of these places, the multitude of the common people, and their princes, some being killed, and others carried captive; to which sense the Targum,

“because the armies of Heshbon are spoiled, the multitude of Sebama are killed, the kings of the people have killed their rulers:”

*they are come [even] unto Jazer*; meaning either the Chaldean army, or the Moabites, who had fled hither; or rather this is to be understood of the vines of Sibmah, expressing the excellency and large spread of them, which reached even to Jazer; which, as Jerom says<sup>f324</sup>, was fifteen miles from Heshbon, called Jaazer, (<sup><0213></sup>Numbers 21:32 32:35) (<sup><0213></sup>Joshua 21:39):

*they wandered [through] the wilderness*; the wilderness of Moab, (<sup><0213></sup>Deuteronomy 2:8) not the lords of the Heathen, nor the Moabites, but the vines and their branches, which crept along, and winded to and fro, as men wander about:

*her branches are stretched out*; that is, the branches of the vine Sibmah:

*they are gone over the sea*; the Dead Sea, called the sea of Jazer, (<sup><2482></sup>Jeremiah 48:32) or rather a lake near that city.

**Ver. 9.** *Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah, &c.*] That is, bewail the one, as he had done the other, both places with the fruits about them being destroyed by the enemy; or “therefore with weeping I will bewail” (most vehemently lament, an usual Hebraism) “Jazer”, and “the vine of Sibmah”: the prophet here represents the Moabites weeping for their vines more especially, they being a people addicted to drunkenness, in which their father was begotten; hence Bacchus is said to be the founder of many of their cities, (see <sup><2482></sup>Jeremiah 48:32). The Targum is,

“as I have brought armies against Jazer, so will I bring slayers against Sibmah;”

*I will water thee with my tears*: shed abundance of them, (see <sup><1016></sup>Psalms 6:6):

*O Heshbon, and Elealeh*; perhaps alluding to the fishponds, in the former, (<sup><2104></sup>Song of Solomon 7:4) of these places, (see Gill on “<sup><2150></sup>Isaiah 15:4”):

*for the shouting for thy summer fruits, and for thy harvest, is fallen*; is ceased, so as not to be heard; namely, the singing and shouting which used to be made by labourers, while they were gathering the summer fruits, or reaping the harvest, with which they amused and diverted themselves, and their fellow labourers, and so their time and their work went on more pleasantly; or else that great joy and shouting they expressed when all was ended, something of which nature is still among us at this day; but now in Moab it was at an end, because the enemy had destroyed both their summer fruits and harvest; though Jarchi and Kimchi interpret this shouting of the enemy, of the spoilers and plunderers, upon their summer fruits and harvest, when they destroyed them; and so the Targum,

“upon thy harvest, and upon thy vintage, spoilers have fallen;”

so Noldius<sup>f325</sup> renders the words, “for upon thy summer fruits, and upon thy harvest, the shouting shall fall”; that is, the shouting of the enemy, spoiling their fruits and their harvest; and this seems to be the true sense, since it agrees with (<sup>2480</sup>Jeremiah 48:32) and the ceasing of the other kind of shouting is observed in the next verse (<sup>2360</sup>Isaiah 16:10).

**Ver. 10.** *And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field,* &c.] Or “is gathered”<sup>f326</sup>, though their harvest was not; all cause of joy and gladness was removed; a plentiful field being foraged, trampled upon, and destroyed by the enemy, and left desolate without any to manure it:

*and in the vineyards there shall be no singing*; as there used to be by the men that gathered the grapes, and trod the wine presses; but now there would be no men in the vineyards, there being no grapes to gather or tread, as follows:

*the treaders shall tread out no wine in [their] presses*; the way in those times and countries being for men to tread the grapes, and the wine out of them, with their feet, in vats or vessels, and not in presses with screws and weights, as now:

*I have made their [vintage shouting] to cease*; by suffering the enemy to come in among them, which had destroyed their vintage, and so prevented their shouting, and spoiled their song.

**Ver. 11.** *Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab,* &c.] Making a noise as the harp does, and a mournful one as that, when used at funerals; which it makes when it is stricken or played on with the hand, as



these were, through the afflictive and punitive hand of God; and which, when stricken, causes a quavering of the strings, to which the inward trembling of the bowels is compared, and is very expressive of the prophet's sympathy, or those he personates; for, when one string of the harp is touched, the rest sound. For these words, as Kimchi says, are spoken in the language of the Moabites; those that survived lamenting the desolate state of their country, which must be very great and affecting; and to show that it was so is the design of the prophet's expressing himself after this manner; for if it was painful to him, it must be much more so to them; so the Targum,

“wherefore the bowels of the Moabites shall sound as a harp;”

of the sounding of the bowels, (see <sup><2615></sup>Isaiah 63:15 <sup><2449></sup>Jeremiah 4:9):

*and mine inward parts for Kirharesh*: the same with Kirhareseth, (<sup><2347></sup>Isaiah 16:7) which being a principal city, the destruction of it was greatly laid to heart. The Targum is,

“and their heart shall grieve for the men of the city of their strength;”

it being a strong city, in which they placed their confidence; but being destroyed, and the inhabitants of it, it was very affecting, to which agrees (<sup><2483></sup>Jeremiah 48:31).

**Ver. 12.** *And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, &c.*] With weeping there, (<sup><2352></sup>Isaiah 15:2) or with frequent sacrifices, and going from one high place to another, as Balak king of Moab did; and by comparing places together, it looks as if this was the way of the Moabites in their distress, to offer up a multitude of sacrifices in different places; now, when it should be seen by others, and appear to themselves, that they wearied themselves in vain, and all their cries and sacrifices were to no purpose, they should then be ashamed of them, leave off, and betake themselves to some other method; though Jarchi interprets it of their being weary of fighting on the high places of their towers, which when observed, they would take another course, and apply to devotion:

*that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray*; to the temple of Chemosh, and to pray to that idol to help him, (<sup><11107></sup>1 Kings 11:7):

*but he shall not prevail*; his prayers shall be ineffectual; his suit will be fruitless, and without success; or “he cannot”, that is, his idol cannot help him. So Kimchi interprets his sanctuary of the house of his God; and the Targum, of the house of his idolatry; yet since the house or temple of an idol is never called a sanctuary, it may be understood of God’s sanctuary, the temple at Jerusalem; and the sense be, that when Moab shall see that his praying and sacrificing to idols are in vain, and he has tired himself with his superstition and idolatry, without having any redress, he shall think and express his desire of going up to the temple of Jerusalem, and of praying to the God of Israel; but he shall not be able to do it, because of the enemy; and could he get thither, he would not prevail with God, for the decree was gone forth, which could not be frustrated, as follows. Ben Melech interprets it of the palace of the king.

**Ver. 13.** *This [is] the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning Moab,* &c.] That is, this prophecy now delivered out is what comes from the Lord; it is the word of the Lord, and not of man, and so shall certainly come to pass; when this word was spoken follows:

*since that time*; from eternity, as some, and so refer it to the decree of God within himself; or from the time that Moab was in being, or a nation, as others; or from the time that Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, so Jarchi; or rather from the time that the Lord made known his mind and will, concerning this matter, to the prophet Isaiah: for it should be rendered, “this is that word which the Lord spake concerning Moab then”<sup>f327</sup>; that is, at the time or year in which Ahaz died, (<sup>2948</sup>Isaiah 14:28) and is observed, to distinguish it from what the prophet spoke, or was about to speak, now or from this time, concerning him, as in the next verse (<sup>2964</sup>Isaiah 16:14).

**Ver. 14.** *But now the Lord hath spoken,* &c.] Something else. What follows is a distinct prophecy from the former, and has a date annexed to it, when it should be fulfilled: the former prophecy relates to the utter destruction of the Moabites by the Babylonians, in the times of Nebuchadnezzar; of which Jeremiah, (<sup>2480</sup>Jeremiah 48:1-47) prophesies, in much the same language as Isaiah; and so Jarchi observes, that the final destruction of Moab was by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar: but this was of a lesser nature, and to be accomplished in a short time, either by Shalmaneser, or by Sennacherib king of Assyria, or Esarhaddon his son:

*saying, within three years, as the year of an hireling*; that is, precisely and exactly three years, neither more nor fewer, neither sooner nor later; as

whatever time is agreed upon by an hireling, as soon as ever it is out, which he often thinks of, and counts exactly, he demands his wages, and his freedom. Some think this prophecy bears date with the former, concerning the Philistines, which was the year King Ahaz died, (~~2343~~ Isaiah 14:28) and so had its accomplishment in the fourth year of Hezekiah, when Shalmaneser came up against Samaria <sup>f328</sup>, and took Moab in his way, (~~1289~~ 2 Kings 18:9) others, that it was given out in the fourth year of Hezekiah, when the Assyrian besieged Samaria, and after three years took it, and then returned and fell upon the Moabites; others place it in the eleventh year of Hezekiah, and suppose it to be fulfilled in his fourteenth by Sennacherib, about the same time he came up and took the fenced cities of Judah, and besieged Jerusalem, (~~1283~~ 2 Kings 18:13) and with this agree the Jewish writers <sup>f329</sup>, whose words are these,

“after those things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came into Judah, (~~4301~~ 2 Chronicles 32:1) and at the same time sent Tartan to Ashdod, (~~2301~~ Isaiah 20:1) who overran the Ammonites and Moabites, who helped him when he besieged Samaria three years, that it might be fulfilled what is said, (~~2364~~ Isaiah 16:14) at the same time the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem.”

Upon which Kimchi observes, as an interpretation of the phrase, “as the years of an hireling”,

“it is as if it was said, because they helped the king of Assyria three years against Samaria, it was as if they had been hired; therefore they fell by his hand, and the glory of Moab was light in the hand of the king of Assyria.”

But others make it to be three years after this time; but very likely it might be later still, about the eighteenth or nineteenth year of Hezekiah, as Gataker thinks, who, in his notes on this place, has collected all these senses, and made his observations on them; and so had its accomplishment in some expedition of Esarhaddon, who greatly weakened and impoverished the country of Moab, though he did not destroy it, and which was an earnest and pledge of the utter destruction of it before prophesied of. Noldius renders it, “after three years”; and so Grotius: it was in the first year of Hezekiah, as Noldius observes, that this was said; and in the fourth year of his reign, Shalmaneser came against Samaria, and in his way was the beginning of this destruction, and but a beginning of it, as he observes,

yet a pledge of the consummation by Nebuchadnezzar, which was long after these three years of Isaiah.

*And the glory of Moab shall be contemned with all that great multitude;* of cities and towns, of the inhabitants of them, and of wealth and riches, things in which Moab gloried, and were reckoned weighty and heavy things; these were accounted light by the king of Assyria, who spoiled them, or at least greatly diminished them:

*and the remnant [shall be] very small [and] feeble;* or, “not mighty” or “strong”; those that were not cut off by the Assyrian army would be but few, and these weak and without strength, being dispossessed of their cities, and of their wealth; though, in process of time, between this, and the fulfilment of the former prophecy, and that of Jeremiah, they recovered themselves, and became very numerous and flourishing.