

# Isaiah Chapters 15-17 – Proclamation Against Moab; Moab Destroyed; Proclamation Against Syria and Israel!

## OBSERVATION

Monday 7:00pm, H 112 (1st floor, backside of the High School, facing Mac Arthur, near the east corner, adjacent to the High School office), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – [Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com); email – [ptwente@gmail.com](mailto:ptwente@gmail.com) For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: [www.ptwente.com](http://www.ptwente.com) Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

## INTERPRETATION

## APPLICATION

### BE THOU MY VISION – Mary Byrne – Maranatha Praise Band

*1 Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me, save that Thou art -  
Thou my best thought in the day and by night, waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.  
2 Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word; I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father, and Thou Thy true son; Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.  
3 Be Thou my shield, my sword for the fight; be Thou my armor and be Thou my light,  
Thou my soul's shelter and Thou my high tower: raise Thou me heaven-ward, O Power of my power.  
4 Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise, Thou mine inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and Thou only, the first in my heart, High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.  
5 High King of heaven, my victory won, may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, still be my vision, O Ruler of all.*

### GENERAL OUTLINE OF ISAIAH: Referred to as the “Fifth Gospel” since the third century!

*Possible date of kings reign”*

*Uzziah, - 792-740*

*Jotham, - 750-736*

*Ahaz, - 735-720 Northern Kingdom of Israel falls to Assyria in 722BC*

*Hezekiah, - 715-699/686*

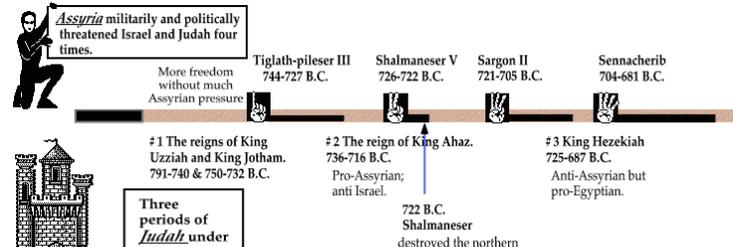
*Manasseh – 687-642*

*Isaiah's time of prophecy - About a minimum of 40 years and possibly more than 60 years!*

*In the tenth year of Nabopolassar (616 BC) the Babylonians defeated the Assyrian army.*

*Cyrus takes Babylon. In October (539 BC), the Persian king Cyrus took Babylon.*

- I. **THE ASSYRIAN PERIOD - CONFLICT AND VICTORY (Isa 1-39)**
  - A. **PROPHECIES CONCERNING JUDAH AND JERUSALEM (Isa 1-12)**
  - B. **PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE NATIONS (Isa 13-27)**
  - C. **DELIVERANCE FOUND NOT IN EGYPT, BUT IN THE LORD (Isa 28-35)**
  - D. **HISTORICAL INTERLUDE (Isa 36-39)**
- II. **THE BABYLONIAN PERIOD - HOPE FOR TROUBLED TIMES (Isa 40-66)**
  - A. **THE ONE TRUE GOD VERSUS IDOLS (Isa 40-48)**
  - B. **LORD'S SERVANT WILL BRING SALVATION THROUGH SUFFERING (Isa 49-57)**
  - C. **THE FUTURE GLORY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE, THE NEW ZION (Isa 58-66)**



### Isaiah – Bible Timeline

739 BC	Isaiah Complains of Zion's Corruption	<a href="#">Isaiah 1 - 5</a>
739 BC	Isaiah's Vision and Commission	<a href="#">Isaiah 6</a>
735 BC	Isaiah's Prophecy of Immanuel	<a href="#">Isaiah 7</a>
734 BC	Uriah/Zechariah Verification	<a href="#">Isaiah 8</a>
730 BC	Isaiah Prophecies a Child Is Born	<a href="#">Isaiah 9</a>
730 BC	Isaiah Prophecies Judgments Upon Israel	<a href="#">Isaiah 9:8</a>
730 BC	Isaiah Prophecies Judgment on Assyria	<a href="#">Isaiah 10</a>
730 BC	Isaiah Prophecies The Root of Jesse	<a href="#">Isaiah 11</a>
730 BC	Isaiah's Joyful Thanksgiving	<a href="#">Isaiah 12</a>
<b>725 BC</b>	<b>Isaiah Prophecies against the Nations</b>	<b><a href="#">Isaiah 13 - 22</a></b>
725 BC	Isaiah's Valley of Vision	<a href="#">Isaiah 22</a>
725 BC	Isaiah's Burden of Tyre	<a href="#">Isaiah 23</a>
725 BC	Devastation on the Earth	<a href="#">Isaiah 24</a>
725 BC	Isaiah's Songs of Praise	<a href="#">Isaiah 25 - 27</a>
725 BC	Isaiah's Further Warnings	<a href="#">Isaiah 28 - 32</a>
725 BC	Isaiah Prophecies a King Shall Reign	<a href="#">Isaiah 32</a>
725 BC	Isaiah Declares God's Judgments	<a href="#">Isaiah 33, 34</a>
725 BC	Isaiah Declares the Joyful Will Flourish in Zion	<a href="#">Isaiah 35</a>
712 BC	Hezekiah's Illness and Healing	<a href="#">2 Kings 20, Isaiah 38</a>
711 BC	Hezekiah Shows Treasures	<a href="#">2 Kings 20:12, Isaiah 39</a>
711 BC	Isaiah Prophecies Captivity and Restoration	<a href="#">Isaiah 40 - 66</a>
701 BC	Sennacherib Threatens Jerusalem	<a href="#">2 Kings 18, Isaiah 36, 2 Chronicles 32</a>
701 BC	Hezekiah's Prayer	<a href="#">2 Kings 19, Isaiah 37</a>

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

#### *An Oracle Concerning Moab*

*Isa 15:1 The burden against Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste And destroyed, Because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste And destroyed,*

*Isa 15:2 He (inhabitants of Moab) has gone up to the temple (of Chemosh) and Dibon, To the high places to weep. Moab will wail over Nebo and over Medeba; On all their heads will be baldness, And every beard cut off.*

*Isa 15:3 In their streets they will clothe themselves with sackcloth; On the tops of their houses And in their streets Everyone will wail, weeping bitterly.*

*Isa 15:4 Heshbon and Elealeh will cry out, Their voice shall be heard as far as Jahaz; Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab will cry out; His life will be burdensome to him.*

*Isa 15:5 "My heart will cry out for Moab; His fugitives shall flee to Zoar, Like a three-year-old heifer. For by the Ascent of Luhith They will go up with weeping; For in the way of Horonaim They will raise up a cry of destruction,*

*Isa 15:6 For the waters of Nimrim will be desolate, For the green grass has withered away; The grass fails, there is nothing green.*

*Isa 15:7 Therefore the abundance they have gained, And what they have laid up, They will carry away to the Brook of the Willows.*

**1-4** A night invasion against Moab. *Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste and destroyed . . . Kir of Moab . . . Heshbon and Elealeh:* God announces coming judgment on Moab, against these cities. Many of these sites were originally part of Israel’s territory when Moses and Joshua defeated Sihon, King of the Amorites. All the cities north of the Arnon River and once belonged to the tribe of Reuben. Throughout the years, however, the Moabites had persistently pushed the Israelites out of these regions. *He has gone up to the temple:* The picture is of a Moabite man fleeing the destruction of his city, running to his temple and his pagan gods for protection and mourning (*To the high places to weep*). *They will clothe themselves with sackcloth . . . everyone will wail, weeping bitterly:* Because of this invasion, there will be great distress and mourning in Moab. **Jer 48:1-13** also prophesies the judgment of Moab, and also gives the reason why. “*Moab has been at ease from his youth; he has settled on his dregs, and has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, nor has he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent has not changed. Therefore behold, the days are coming,*” says the LORD, “*That I shall send him wine-workers who will tip him over and empty his vessels and break the bottles.*” When we are at ease, and are never “poured” from vessel to vessel, we “settle on the dregs” and are never refined. God uses the “pouring” process to refine us.

**5– 7** *My heart will cry out* - This short sentence gives us a look into Isaiah’s heart, showing his deep feelings and sympathy for the people of Moab. Moabites were not his people and had often plagued Judah, but now in his observing the wretched condition of that nation, he sorrows as if one of them! The flight of the refugees from Moab. *His fugitives shall flee to Zoar:* The connection is interesting, because Zoar was the city Lot and his daughters escaped from, hiding in the mountains, before Lot’s daughters committed incest with their father, and brought forth the child Moab, the father of the Moabites. *Like a three-year old-heifer*, apparently to indicate Zoar had never been under the yoke of strangers. *The green grass has withered away:* The beautiful plains of Moab were wonderful grazing land. But now, under the hand of God’s judgment, *the green grass has withered away.* Assyria blocked the water system with sand. *Therefore the abundance they have gained . . . they will carry away to the Brook of the Willows:* The picture is of fleeing refugees, carrying with them all their possessions.

**1-4** – What an oracle against Moab. Within a couple of years following this prophecy, Assyria will go through Moab, conquering it completely in one night on their way to Arabia. They will also go through again on their return following their victory over Arabia. Here is another example of how quickly God, in His time, can bring judgment on a person or a whole nation! **We need to keep our house in order at all times!**



**5-7** – Fugitives, weeping, cry of destruction, desolate, green grass withered, carried away – just words on a page to us, but **think of the fear, dread and pain that occurs in war with such a defeat as this. Our God’s righteous judgment is thorough and complete!**

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

**Isa 15:8** *For the cry has gone all around the borders of Moab, Its wailing to Eglaim And its wailing to Beer Elim.*

**Isa 15:9** *For the waters of Dimon will be full of blood; Because I will bring more upon Dimon, Lions upon him who escapes from Moab, And on the remnant of the land."*

**Isa 16:1** *Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, From Sela to the wilderness, To the mount of the daughter of Zion.*

**Isa 16:2** *For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; So shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.*

**Isa 16:3** *"Take counsel, execute judgment; Make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; Hide the outcasts, Do not betray him who escapes.*

**Isa 16:4** *Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler (AntiChrist). For the extortioner is at an end, Devastation ceases, The oppressors are consumed out of the land.*

**Isa 16:5** *In mercy the throne (Throne of David, by the Messiah!) will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness."*

**8-9** The cry of the refugees from Moab. *The cry has gone all around the borders of Moab:* Their pain in the midst of judgment is evident to all.

Everyone *around the borders of Moab* sees God’s judgment against them.

*Lions upon him who escapes from Moab:* If the judgment of the night attack did not complete the work of judgment, God would send *lions upon him who escapes*. God will finish His work of judgment!

**Chap 16:1-2** Counsel to Moab. The idea behind *send the lamb to the ruler of the land* is that Moab should resume their bringing of tribute to Jerusalem, thereby submitting themselves to God again. This kind of tribute is described in **2Ki 3:4-5**, where Mesha, King of Moab, who once paid tribute to Israel, stopped doing so when King Ahab of Israel died. Here, Isaiah counsels Moab to resume this payment of tribute. Isaiah paints a powerful picture of the helpless, confused state of Moab under the hand of God’s judgment. They are like a *wandering bird thrown out of the nest*, confused, weak, and vulnerable. Their only recourse is to submit themselves to Jerusalem and its King.

**3** – Here, in the compassion of his prophecy, Isaiah pleads with the rulers of Judah to *hide the outcasts* of Moab. Again, his great sympathies are probably due to the connection between Moab and the royal house of David. *Do not betray him who escapes:* Isaiah wanted Judah to be a place of refuge and protection for Moab under judgment. This is exactly what the church should be, when people are under the strong hand of the LORD in the world. We should be a place that will

**4-5** A plea for refuge among Moab in the day of the righteous King. *Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab:* This is a sudden and curious change of focus. In **Isa 16:3**, Judah was counseled to receive the outcasts of Moab. Now, Moab is asked to receive the outcasts of Judah. **Isa 16:4-5** may be an end-times prophecy of how Moab will be a place of refuge for Jews escaping the fury of the Antichrist after the abomination of desolation. Israel, fleeing from the fury of the Antichrist, will find refuge in places like Moab (**Is. 63:1-6; Mt. 24:15-16; Rev 12:6; Rev 12:13-14**). They will be protected 1,260 days – 3.5 years, *from the face of the spoiler* until *devastation ceases* and *the oppressors are consumed out of the land*. In those end times, the *throne* of the Messiah *will be established*, and the Messiah Himself will sit on the throne: *One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David*. His reign will be wonderful, *judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness*. The pain of the prophet.

**8-9** The destruction of Moab by Assyria is so complete the cry has gone throughout the country. The Brook Dimon was red from the blood of the slain. The grass had withered because the water conduits has been stopped up with sand by the enemy. **God’s judgment is severe!**

**Chap 16:1-2** Isaiah, who had already prophesied that Israel would be the safest place to be, even though judgment was coming. shows that God does not delight in the ruin of sinners by telling them what they may do to prevent the ruin. He advises them to be just to the house of David, and to pay the tribute they had formerly covenanted to pay. **Not to depend on any nation, but to depend on the LORD. Perfect advice for us ads well!**

**3** Like the advice here to Judah to help those who escape from Moab, we Christians need to be people that will *hide the outcasts* and receive *him who escapes*, never to betray them.

**4-5** Looking way ahead to the Day of the LORD, when the Antichrist is destroyed? At that time, Jesus is going to set up the kingdom. Jesus will come and establish God’s kingdom upon the earth. Your prayers, *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done”*, will be fulfilled at that point. The fifth verse has to do with the establishing of the kingdom of God, through Jesus. *“In mercy the throne will be established; And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”* So that everlasting kingdom will be established at that time. **Jesus is coming soon! Be ready!**

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

*Isa 16:6 We have heard of the pride of Moab—He is very proud—Of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath; But his lies shall not be so.*

*Isa 16:7 Therefore Moab shall wail for Moab; Everyone shall wail. For the foundations of Kir Hareseth you shall mourn; Surely they are stricken.*

*Isa 16:8 For the fields of Heshbon languish, And the vine of Sibmah; The lords of the nations have broken down its choice plants, Which have reached to Jazer And wandered through the wilderness. Her branches are stretched out, They are gone over the sea.*

*Isa 16:9 Therefore I will bewail the vine of Sibmah, With the weeping of Jazer; I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; For battle cries have fallen Over your summer fruits and your harvest.*

*Isa 16:10 Gladness is taken away, And joy from the plentiful field; In the vineyards there will be no singing, Nor will there be shouting; No treaders will tread out wine in the presses; I have made their shouting cease.*

*Isa 16:11 Therefore my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab, And my inner being for Kir Heres.*

*Isa 16:12 And it shall come to pass, When it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, That he will come to his sanctuary to pray; But he will not prevail.*

**6-8** The pain in Moab at the judgment of God. *We have heard of the pride* (boasting) *of Moab*: Here is the only place where the sin of Moab is detailed. It is significant that Moab’s sin was *pride*, because they were a fairly small and insignificant nation. We can easily understand how the empires of Babylon or Assyria might fall through pride, but we may be slower to see pride in smaller things. But the small can be just as consumed with pride as the great! Moab was like Assyria and Babylon, extremely proud. Isaiah piled term upon term to show that the nation’s relative insignificance did not make it immune to pride. This *pride* is also referred to in the prophecy of judgment found in *Jer 48:1-13*. God would judge the proud nation, so that *Moab shall wail for Moab*. The Moabites took great pride in their vineyards, but God used the **lords of the nations** to break them down, and to destroy everything Moab took pride in. Even though Moab had been advised to seek help from Zion’s King, the prophet foresaw at the same time the futility of this advice on account of Moab’s pride. Whenever pride is not broken by humility, it will have to be broken by other measures – God uses judgment!

**9-12** Isaiah’s sorrow of heart for Moab. *I will bewail the vine of Sibmah . . . I will drench you with my tears*: As Isaiah prophesied of the judgment coming upon Moab, he wasn’t happy. He was not pleased that judgment was coming upon a rival nation. As far as he was concerned, *Gladness is taken away, and joy from the plentiful field*. In fact, Isaiah would not even let others be happy at a time like this: *I have made their shouting cease*. He hurts so badly for Moab that he says, *“my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab.”* At the same time, Isaiah knows that Moab is looking in the wrong places for answers: *When it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he will come to his sanctuary and pray; but he will not prevail*. Isaiah knew the pain of seeing calamity come, and watching people turn to the wrong places in the midst of the destruction. This was the same attitude Jesus had when He wept for Jerusalem: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!”* (*Mat 23:37-39*) When Jesus saw the desolation to come upon the city that rejected Him, He did not rejoice. Jesus also knew that in the midst of their calamity, they would turn to themselves instead of the LORD.

**6-8** Note Moab’s great pride here. It results in judgment which results in its destruction, including its luxurious vineyards. **How necessary for us to be watching our pride!**

**9-12** Note the intensity and compassion in Isaiah’s heart: *I will bewail the vine of Sibmah . . . I will drench you with my tears*: . . . *“my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab.”* At the same time, Isaiah knows that Moab is looking in the wrong places for answer. Isaiah knew the pain of seeing calamity come, and watching people turn to the wrong places in the midst of the destruction. **What a good example of compassion and concern Isaiah gives us here. What is the level of my compassion?**

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

*Isa 16:13 This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning Moab since that time.*

*Isa 16:14 But now the LORD has spoken, saying, "Within three years, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be despised with all that great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble."*

*An Oracle Concerning Damascus*

*Isa 17:1 The burden against Damascus. "Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, And it will be a ruinous heap.*

*Isa 17:2 The cities of Aroer are forsaken; They will be for flocks Which lie down, and no one will make them afraid.*

*Isa 17:3 The fortress also will cease from Ephraim, The kingdom from Damascus, And the remnant of Syria; They will be as the glory of the children of Israel," Says the LORD of hosts.*

*Isa 17:4 "In that day it shall come to pass That the glory of Jacob will wane, And the fatness of his flesh grow lean.*

*Isa 17:5 It shall be as when the harvester gathers the grain, And reaps the heads with his arm; It shall be as he who gathers heads of grain In the Valley of Rephaim.*

*Isa 17:6 Yet gleaning grapes will be left in it, Like the shaking of an olive tree, Two or three olives at the top of the uppermost bough, Four or five in its most fruitful branches," Says the LORD God of Israel.*

**13-14** Three years until judgment comes on Moab. This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning Moab since that time, prophesied by Balaam - **Num 24:17** "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult. **But now the LORD has spoken, saying, "Within three years, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be despised with all that great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble."** Within three years: Isaiah, speaking for the LORD, announces that judgment will come upon Moab in this time period. The judgment will humble Moab: **The glory of Moab will be despised.** Since we don't know the exact date of Isaiah's prophecy, it is impossible to independently verify the accuracy of the **within three years** prediction. But in the phrasing **this is the word of which the LORD has spoken concerning Moab since that time**, we gather that most of **Isaiah 15-16** was given at an earlier time, and the **within three years** aspect was added at the right time, at a later date. Some believe King Sargon of Assyria conducted a major operation against the Arabians in 715 B.C., and he may have devastated Moab en route to encountering those tribes. Why did God announce the time frame for His judgment? It was a warning to Moab and an invitation for their humble repentance. It was a lesson for God's people on how the LORD judges the proud. Finally, it assured God's people that the LORD would deal with other, worse, nations as He also dealt with Israel.

**Chap 17:1-6** The LORD speaks to **Damascus** and **Ephraim**. **Damascus** is one of the great cities of the ancient world, and the capital of the ancient nation of Syria. Syria is positioned to the immediate north-east of Israel, and the northern tribes, around the Sea of Galilee, had constant contact and interaction with Syria. **Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, and it will be an ruinous heap:** Damascus was one of the most beautiful cities of the ancient world, but the coming Assyrian judgment would reduce it to a **heap** of ruins; however its ceasing being a city still appears to be a future event, as the city remains to this day, being one of the oldest cities. **The fortress will also cease from Ephraim:** As is often the case, the northern kingdom of Israel is referred to by its dominate tribe, **Ephraim**. At this time, Israel and Syria were closely aligned against Judah. Since they are such close friends, God will announce His judgment against **Ephraim**, against Israel, at the same time He speaks to Syria! **2Ki 15:29; 2Ki 16:9** describe the fulfillment of this prophecy. Israel's modern interaction with Syria is interesting, and a potential hot-spot for future conflict. When Syria occupied the Golan Heights, a strategically crucial high plateau above the whole region of Galilee, Israel was under constant threat of invasion and shelling from Syrian placements on the Golan. But when Syria eventually made a full on invasion of Israel from the Golan, Israel miraculously beat them back and captured the Golan Heights. Now, Syria insists that this strategically crucial region is theirs and must be given back. The Israelis are adamant that they will never give back land that belongs to them, and is necessary for their security. In the meantime, Syria fights Israel through terrorism and their support of militia groups in Lebanon. The dream of a "Greater Syria," encompassing Syria, Lebanon, and parts of northern Israel is a powerful influence in the Syrian leadership.

**13-14** Note here the dual fulfillment of prophecy. Balaam prophesied (**Num. 24:17**) about 800 years earlier that A Star-A Scepter shall come out of David/Israel and destroy Moab. Here is an update by Isaiah. Within three years of Isaiah's prophecy, the glory of Moab will be despised and only a very small and very weak remnant will remain. The total destruction will not occur until the Great Tribulation, which is still future, even today about 2700 years after Isaiah's prophecy! **We need to be sure that this prophecy will be fulfilled when Messiah comes back, the second time!**

**Chap 17:1-6** We again see multiple fulfillment in this prophecy. The league of Syria and the northern ten tribes of Israel will be judged in the near term by the conquering Assyrians. It appears that Damascus was never totally destroyed to this date. Therefore, most believe that the total destruction of Damascus won't occur until the Great Tribulation. One thing we can be sure of. God is righteous and just and sin will eventually be judged.

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

**Isa 17:7** *In that day a man will look to his Maker, And his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel.*

**Isa 17:8** *He will not look to the altars, The work of his hands; He will not respect what his fingers have made, Nor the wooden images nor the incense altars.*

**Isa 17:9** *In that day his strong cities will be as a forsaken bough And an uppermost branch, Which they left because of the children of Israel; And there will be desolation.*

**Isa 17:10** *Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation, And have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold, Therefore you will plant pleasant plants And set out foreign seedlings;*

**Isa 17:11** *In the day you will make your plant to grow, And in the morning you will make your seed to flourish; But the harvest will be a heap of ruins In the day of grief and desperate sorrow.*

**7-9** The humble response to the judgment of the LORD. *In that day a man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel:* In the midst of such severe judgment, some will respond as they should, with humble *respect* for God. *He will not look to the altars, the work of his hands:* One of God’s purposes in judgment is to turn our focus away from our idols and the things we have trusted in instead of Him. This speaks of this purpose being fulfilled. *His strong cities will be as a forsaken bough:* In judgment, God would strip away from Israel every wrong thing they might have trusted in - pagan *altars, wooden images, incense altars*, and even their **strong cities** would give no protection. Their only hope was in the LORD. When the Israelites came into the land of Canaan many years before, the strong cities of the land were abandoned to them. Now the situation has changed, and the same cities will be abandoned by the Israelites as they are under the judging hand of God.

**10-11** God’s judgment will bring man’s work to nothing. *You will plant pleasant plants . . . you will make your seed to flourish; but the harvest will be a heap of ruins.* One aspect of the LORD’s judgment against Israel will be to bring their hard work to nothing. They will work hard to plant and grow crops, but *the harvest will be a heap of ruins.* This can be one of the most devastating aspects of the LORD’s judgment. **Hag 1:6** speaks of this work of the LORD: *You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.* How much better it is to be listening to Jesus, and to have our service directed and blessed by Him (**Luk 5:1-10**). Why did the LORD bring this judgment on Israel? *Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation.* In one way, this does not seem like a “great” sin. After all, why does God need us to remember Him? Why can’t we just leave Him alone, and He leave us alone? It is a sin to *forget the God of your salvation* because He created you, and because He is *the God of your salvation*. If you forget Him, you can forget about your salvation. Satan does not need to make us bank robbers or murderers to destroy us. It is quite enough to simply make us *forget*. We can forget because of sleepiness, we can forget because of a lack of attention, we can forget because we are distracted. Satan doesn’t care much about how he does it, but he does want us to forget the God of our salvation. God will destroy the nation that brings the doom upon Syria and Israel.

**7-9** Israel had not trusted in the Lord and had been heavily involved in treaties and alliances with other nations to try to withstand Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah had tried unsuccessfully to align with Assyria. Here is an excellent reminder for us to keep our eyes on the Lord at all times and not to trust in anything, anybody or any worldly power or government.

**10-11** We are shown here that God’s judgment will bring the work of man to nothing! We may exert ourselves tremendously working very hard and if it’s not of the Lord, it will not amount to anything, producing no spiritual fruit. We cannot forget *the God of our salvation*. Israel tried to bring pagan foliage from the false god altars in Syria, but they wouldn’t grow in Israel. - *Harvest will be a heap of ruins.* Believers must be on guard of compromising and bringing the worldly things into the church or into our Christian lives – they won’t work or be fruitful, *leading to grief and desperate sorrow!*

## Isaiah Chapters 15-17 – Proclamation Against Moab; Moab Destroyed; Proclamation Against Syria and Israel!

### OBSERVATION

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

*Isa 17:12 Woe to the multitude of many people Who make a noise like the roar of the seas, And to the rushing of nations That make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!*

*Isa 17:13 The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters; But God will rebuke them and they will flee far away, And be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, Like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.*

*Isa 17:14 Then behold, at eventide, trouble! And before the morning, he is no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us, And the lot of those who rob us.*

**12-14** The rush of the nations against Syria and Israel. *The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters*: God will use other nations to bring judgment against Syria and Israel. They will come against them like a flash flood that can't be stopped. *But God will rebuke them* God's judgment against the nations that rush against Israel. When God brings the rush of nations against Israel, it doesn't mean that the nations He uses to judge will be walking right with Him and exempt from judgment. Instead, *God will rebuke them and they will flee far away*. God can use one sinner to judge another, and then judge the sinner He just used! This is a comforting principle: Even in the midst of judgment, God shows mercy. As bad as it was going to be for Israel, it could have been worse. Instead, God will allow it for a time, then He would *rebuke* those attacking Israel. Israel was not at the mercy of circumstances or their enemies; they were at the mercy of God. **Multiple fulfillments: Single nation**: - *Isa 37:36-37* Then the angel of the LORD went out and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. [37] So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh.

**Multiple Nations**: - *Eze 38:17-23* Thus says the Lord GOD: "Are you he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them? [18] "And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord GOD, "that My fury will show in My face. [19] For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, [20] so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.' [21] I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains," says the Lord GOD. "Every man's sword will be against his brother. [22] And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. [23] Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD."

**12-14** God will use other nations to bring judgment against Syria and Israel, coming against them like a flash flood that can't be stopped. God will rebuke them and they will flee far away. God can use one sinner to judge another, and then judge the sinner He just used! This is a comforting principle: Even in the midst of judgment, God shows mercy. As bad as it was going to be for Israel, it could have been worse. Instead, God will allow it for a time, then He would rebuke those attacking Israel. Israel was not at the mercy of circumstances or their enemies; they were at the mercy of God.

## Isaiah Chapters 15-17 – Proclamation Against Moab; Moab Destroyed; Proclamation Against Syria and Israel!

### OBSERVATION

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

**THE MOABITE STONE:** The Moabite Stone, otherwise known as the Mesha Stele, contains an ancient inscription by Mesha, King of Moab during the late 9th century BCE, elements of which match events in the Hebrew [Bible](#). The inscription describes two aspects of how Mesha led Moab into victory against ancient [Israel](#). First, he claims to have defeated ancient Israel on many fronts, capturing or reclaiming many [cities](#) and slaying the inhabitants. Second, Mesha claims to have reconstructed or repaired many cities and buildings, including a fortress, king’s residence, and cisterns for water storage. Unfortunately, the last five lines of the inscription are broken. So, scholars are unsure exactly how the Moabite Stone ends.

In what follows, we will first consider how the Moabite stone was discovered. Subsequently, a brief summary of the Moabite stone, along with a full translation, will be presented. To understand the purpose of the text, we will briefly consider the function of the Moabite Stone. Having identified the function of the Moabite Stone in history, we will consider how it sheds light on the broader history of the region. Finally, two pressing issues will be discussed: the Moabite deity Chemosh and the representation of [religion](#) and politics in the Moabite Stone.

#### Discovery

The Moabite Stone was discovered 1868 CE at Dhibān, amidst a time in which scholars sought for any inscriptions and other proofs for the historicity of the Bible. So, when the scholar Charles Clermont-Ganneau heard that the missionary F.A. Klein had discovered a large stone with [writing](#) in Dhibān, he sent two people for further information. The first person made a copy of the text. For unknown reasons, his second intermediary aroused the anger of villagers. This resulted in the shattering of the Moabite stone. After purchasing and locating the various fragments on the antiquities market, Clermont-Ganneau was able to reconstruct the entire stone.

#### **MOAB WAS LOCATED EAST OF ANCIENT ISRAEL & JUDAH ACROSS THE DEAD SEA.**

Its measurements are 1.15 meters high and 60-68 centimeters wide. 33 lines of writing are legible on the stone. The written language is most likely Moabite. Currently, the original Moabite Stone is housed at the Louvre Museum in [Paris](#). A copy is on display at the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

#### Summary of the Moabite Stone

The Moabite Stone is written in the 1st person, the speaker being Mesha, King of Moab. Mesha ruled from about 850 BCE until the late 9th century BCE. Moab was located east of ancient Israel and Judah across the Dead Sea. To the south of Moab was Edom and to the north of Moab was [Ammon](#).

The inscription opens by describing who Mesha is. In addition, the purpose of the stone itself is expressed: “because he (Chemosh, the Moabite deity; also written as Kemoš) delivered me from all assaults and because he let me see my desire upon all my adversaries” (modified from Gibson 1971). The adversary is specified as Israel, for King Omri of Israel had captured portions of Moab. Around the time when the son of Omri was king (c. 850 BCE), Mesha began to recapture lost territory, rebuilding, slaying inhabitants, and taking Israelite slaves (lines 7-21). The next section of text describes various things which Mesha claims to have accomplished for the greater good: rebuilding towns, building cisterns for water, mending roads, and providing land for shepherds (lines 22-31). Unfortunately, the final five lines of the text are unclear and broken. Though conjectural, it is most likely that these lines further detail alliances established by Mesha or other campaigns completed by Mesha.



## Isaiah Chapters 15-17 – Proclamation Against Moab; Moab Destroyed; Proclamation Against Syria and Israel!

### OBSERVATION

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION



**Mesha Stele - Moabite Stone -** The Text of the Moabite Stone- [1] I am Mesha, the son of Kemoš-yatti, the king of Moab, from Dibon. My father was king over Moab for thirty years, and I was king after my father. [2] And in Karchoh I made this high place for Kemoš [...] because he has delivered me from all kings, and because he has made me look down on all my enemies. [3] Omri was the king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab for many days, for Kemoš was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him, and he said - he too - "I will oppress Moab!" In my days he did so, but I looked down on him and on his house, and Israel has gone to ruin, yes, it has gone to ruin forever! [4] Omri had taken possession of the whole land of Medeba and he lived there in his days and half the days of his son, forty years, but Kemoš restored it in my days. And I built Ba'al Meon, and I made in it a water reservoir, and I built Kiriathaim. [6] And the men of Gad lived in the land of Ataroth from ancient times, and the king of Israel built Ataroth for himself, and I fought against the city, and I captured, and I killed all the people from the city as a sacrifice for Kemoš and for Moab, and I brought back the fire-hearth of [Daudoh] from there, and I hauled it before the face of Kemoš in Kerioth, and I made the men of Sharon live there, as well as the men of Maharith. [7] And Kemoš said to me: "Go, take Nebo from Israel!" And I went in the night, and I fought against it from the break of dawn until noon, and I took it, and I killed its whole population, seven thousand male citizens and aliens, female citizens and aliens,

and servant girls; for I had put it to the ban of Aštar Kemoš. And from there, I took the vessels of YHWH, and I hauled them before the face of Kemoš. [8] And the king of Israel had built Jahaz, and he stayed there during his campaigns against me, and Kemoš drove him away before my face, and I took two hundred men from Moab, all its division, and I led it up to Jahaz. And I have taken it in order to add it to Dibon. [9] I have built Karchoh, the wall of the woods and the wall of the citadel, and I have built its gates, and I have built its towers, and I have built the house of the king, and I have made the double reservoir for the spring, in the innermost of the city. Now, there was no cistern in the innermost of the city, in Karchoh, and I said to all the people: "Make, each one of you, a cistern in his house." And I cut out the moat for Karchoh by means of prisoners from Israel. [10] I have built Aroer, and I made the military road in the Arnon. I have built Beth Bamoth, for it had been destroyed. I have built Bezer, for it lay in ruins. [11] And the men of Dibon stood in battle-order, for all Dibon, they were in subjection. And I am the king over hundreds in the towns which I have added to the land. [12] And I have built the House of Medeba and the House of Diblathaim, and the House of Ba'al Meon, and I brought there [...] the flocks of the land. [13] And Horonaim, there lived [...]. And Kemoš said to me: "Go down, fight against Horonaim!" I went down [...] and Kemoš restored it in my days. And [...] from there [...] [14] And I [...]

(from “The Stela of Mesha,” at [Livius.org](http://Livius.org))

Historical Function of the Moabite Stone as Divine Justification

In the Moabite Stone, Mesha employs the same imperial strategies as other ancient Near Eastern kings: “A king must convince his god(s) and his subjects that his military acts have just causes in order to gain both divine and public support” (Na’aman 1997). In the Moabite Stone, Mesha accomplishes this by noting that Israel had suppressed Moab. Moreover, he mentions two times that Chemosh, the primary Moabite deity, commanded him to go and take the cities of Nebo and Horonaim. In doing so, Mesha provided divine justification for the wars that he waged against Israel. Similar rhetoric is present in texts like the Tel Dan inscription by an Aramaic King and 1 Samuel 23:2, both of which illustrate how kings needed to justify their military campaigns before their respective deities and subjects. That is to say, the Moabite Stone and its inscription are essentially a form of propaganda by Mesha, intended to justify his actions to both deities and people. Unfortunately, poorly planned archaeological digs at Dhibān, along with the problematic recovery of the Moabite Stone, make it difficult to identify how the Moabite Stone functioned in the broader, archaeological context.

History

Certain aspects of the Moabite Stone inscription agree with the only one other contemporary historical source, namely 2 Kings 3. According to 2 Kings 3:4, Mesha was subjugated under Ahab. Then, “when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel” (2 Kings 3:5). Subsequently, Joram, son of Ahab, attacked Moab: “When the Moabites came to Israel’s camp, the Israelites rose up and struck down the Moabites. The Moabites fled from before them. They went forth into the land, slaughtering the Moabites” (2 Kings 3:24). In other words, the Moabites were suppressed by ancient Israel during the reigns of Omri (c. 885-874 BCE), Ahab (874-853 BCE), and Joram (854-841 BCE).

### Detail, Moabite Stone

The Moabite Stone includes the similar timeline: “Omri, king of Israel, had oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. His son succeeded him, and he too said, I will oppress Moab” (Gibson 1971). Though the son is not mentioned by name, he is most likely the offspring of Omri, namely Joram. This is a point of contact consistent between the Moabite Stone and 2 Kings 3. At the same time, the Moabite Stone fails to mention how Omri, Ahab, and Joram went on campaigns against the Moabites. Likewise, 2 Kings does not detail how Mesha seized Israelite territory.

## Isaiah Chapters 15-17 – Proclamation Against Moab; Moab Destroyed; Proclamation Against Syria and Israel!

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### INTERPRETATION

### APPLICATION

**FOLLOWING THE REIGN OF MESHA, THOUGH, THE STRONG POLITICAL ENTITY IMAGINED IN THE MOABITE STELE FAILED TO MATERIALIZE.**

Moreover, 2 Kings 13:20 comments further on the Moabites: “Elisha died, and they buried him. And a group of Moabites regularly invaded the land in the spring of that year.” If Elisha died around the beginning of the 8th century BCE, it suggests that Mesha successfully annexed certain regions of Israel during his reign, sometime between 840 BCE and 800 BCE; however, Moabite incursions into Israelite territory after the reign of Mesha were smaller in nature (i.e. groups of Moabites as opposed to the Moabite political entity). The incursions of Moabites as small groups rather than a single, unified political entity by the end of the 9th century BCE can be corroborated with archaeological evidence, which suggests that Dhibān “shows little evidence from excavations of being a royal establishment” during the 9th century BCE (Dever 2016). In other words, Mesha appears to have attempted to make Moab a stronger political entity during his reign. Although Moabite leaders are mentioned in Neo-Assyrian documents in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE after the reign of Mesha, the strong, independent, political entity imaged in the Moabite stele failed to materialize, nonetheless. Importantly, though, this interpretation is subject to change, as the studies on ancient Moabite [archaeology](#) are problematic and few in number.

For this reason, it is necessary to critically approach the Moabite Stone, or 2 Kings as a matter of fact, as it concerns history. Instead, the Moabite Stone needs to be corroborated with other historical texts, inscriptions, and archaeological data in order to identify the degree to which the Moabite stone reflects broader regional conflicts and the degree to which the Moabite stone reflects personal biases.

The Moabite Deity: Chemosh

As a chthonic (underworld) deity, Chemosh shows up in texts as early as the late 3rd millennium BCE in Ebla, [Syria](#). He later appears in [Ugarit](#) texts around the 13th century BCE. He also appears as a chthonic deity in Neo-Assyrian texts (c. 8th century BCE). In the text of the Moabite Stone, he is mentioned ten times as the primary Moabite deity. So, though Chemosh is particularly significant to Moab in the 9th century BCE, he functioned in many cultures throughout the [Levant](#) prior to Moab.

Beyond the Moabite Stone, scholars know that Chemosh was important to Moabites based on other archaeological sites and Moabite royal names in Neo-Assyrian texts. Another Moabite inscription, for example, is a brief dedicatory inscription, wherein Mesha claims to have built and dedicated a [temple](#) to Chemosh. Building temples to deities as a means of showing commitment to the deity and securing divine favor was common throughout the ancient [Near East](#).

Religion & Politics in the Moabite Stone

Throughout the ancient Near East, religion and politics were inseparable. It is also so with the Moabite Stone. First, the primary deity of Moab, namely Chemosh, is said to have been the cause for Moab’s oppression and Israel’s success in war and politics: “Omri, king of Israel, had oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land” (Gibson 1971). Mesha, then, claims to have become the remedy and means for re-capturing the land at the will of Chemosh. Similar sentiments are expressed throughout the Hebrew Bible, Assyrian inscriptions, and Babylonian inscriptions.

Second, one of the ways that Mesha established his political rule over ancient Israel was through employing symbolic, religious actions. So, after defeating the Israelite town of Ataroth, he claimed to have “brought back from there the cult stand of the god Daudoh and dragged it before Chemosh at Kerioth” (modified from Gibson 1971; drawing from Na’aman 1997). Na’aman suggests that the cult stand of the god Daudoh was an object originally belonging to Moab, an object which a king of Israel had previously captured (Na’aman 1997). As such, it demonstrates how returning religious materials to their proper place was a way of demonstrating political might.

Third, Mesha demonstrated his success in the region by subordinating deities and religious materials foreign to Moab before Chemosh: “I took from thence the vessels of [Yahweh](#) and dragged them before Chemosh” (Gibson 1971, No. 16, ln. 17-18). Rather than just defeat a nation through reclaiming their cities and killing inhabitants, Mesha confirmed his success by bringing Yahweh’s religious items before Chemosh. In doing so, Mesha ritually subordinated Yahweh to Chemosh. Such an action illustrates how his attempt to establish political rule over ancient Israel was accomplished through means of subordinating the primary deity of ancient Israel to the primary deity of Moab.

Conclusion

Though one of thousands of ancient inscriptions, the Moabite Stone is one of the longest inscriptions. As such, it can be extremely useful for reconstructing history. Nonetheless, we should be careful to recognize that even inscriptions have both implicit and explicit biases. These biases can result in a skewed understanding of history. As such, it must, as with any inscription, be corroborated with other data. Moreover, our readings of such ancient inscriptions should be careful not to strongly distinguish between “politics” and “religion.” As has been demonstrated, these categories were more intertwined in the ancient world than they are in our own world.