

ISAIAH: JUDGMENT AND HOPE

16. Isaiah 15-16

The Oracle Concerning Moab

Tonight, we pick up in our study of the book of Isaiah. We are in the second major section of the book that begins at [chapter 13](#). It consists of **eleven chapters** that contain a series of prophecies that are commonly referred to as *The Oracles against the Nations* because each of these prophecies begin with the words “*The oracle concerning...*” The [NKJV](#) translates it as “*the burden concerning.*”

It’s important to bear in mind that each of these oracles — these “heavy messages” against these nations — were not spoken directly to those nations. YHWH was very intentional in this! He directed Isaiah to tell the descendants of Abraham what He was going to do to those nations so they would know that YHWH controls and governs not just the affairs of His people — but the entire world. YHWH wanted them to know that He is sovereign over all nations — that YHWH alone defines what is right and wrong — that YHWH alone makes future plans that shall certainly come to pass. [Isaiah 14:26-27](#) capture this huge truth —

Isaiah 14:26-27 This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. ²⁷For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

We need to remember that the **gods** (the *elohiym*) of the Ancient Near East people groups were very real and powerful spiritual entities. Those Ancient Near East peoples believed that **their gods** (*elohiym*) would fight in their best interests — “regional” deities fighting against the **gods** (the *elohiym*) of other regions.

Isaiah is saying that the **God of Israel** — YHWH — is the only **true God** and He is **at work** in all the nations; **sovereign** not just on His soil (Israel and Jerusalem) — but sovereign on the soil of faraway Babylon — **sovereign** over all peoples and every nation. Again — I love this quote by Peter Gentry

QUOTE: Peter Gentry — *No one and no nation can challenge his right, spurn his will, or thwart his actions.*¹

¹ Peter J. Gentry “How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets”

THAT is the way God’s people at the end of the 8th century BC and God’s people in the beginning of the 21st century AD are to process the events and the superpowers that roll across the stage of history.

WE DON’T WANT TO MISS THIS — We said that we read and understand the prophets of the Old Testament in light of the covenant between YHWH and Abraham.

YHWH made a covenant with a man named Abraham and his descendants. They were His chosen people. Through them YHWH intended to bless all the families of the earth.

*Genesis 12:2–3 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, **and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”*

The redeemer of the world would come through Abraham’s descendants. THAT is why YHWH rescued Abraham’s descendants from bondage and death in Egypt. Almost immediately after their deliverance from bondage and death in Egypt YHWH led them to the wilderness of Mt. Sinai where He essentially entered into a marriage covenant with the nation of Israel.

*Exodus 20:1–3 (ESV) And God spoke all these words, saying, ²“I am the **YHWH your God (your elohiym)**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³“You shall have **no other gods (elohiym)** before me.*

Just before YHWH lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan (**15th Century BC**) — which He promised to Abraham — He warned His people to not worship the **elohiym** of peoples in and around Canaan .

The Northern Kingdom had been led away into captivity by the Assyrians in 721 BC, and Babylon would end up leading the southern kingdom of Judah into captivity in 586 BC **because** they turned away from YHWH and worshipped **the elohiym** — the gods of the nations around them.

Everything Isaiah is saying to Judah and Jerusalem; **everything** Isaiah said about Babylon, Assyria and Philistia in **chapters 13-14**, and everything Isaiah is going to say is saying to the nations in **chapters 14-23** is wrapped up in YHWH dealing with Israel because of their unfaithfulness to Him.

Chapter 14 ended with the oracle against Philistia.

²⁸In the year that King Ahaz died came this oracle:

We can look at this in a different way. We can look at it as: *In the year Hezekiah became king*. Ahaz was a horrible king. Hezekiah was a good king. But when Hezekiah ascended to the throne the southern kingdom was under the thumb of Assyria. Hezekiah wanted to get out of that position — and he would. YHWH wants to prevent Hezekiah from looking to the Philistines to help Judah overthrow the Assyrians.

²⁹Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of you, that the rod that struck you is broken, for from the serpent's root will come forth an adder, and its fruit will be a flying fiery serpent.

The Assyrian king Tiglath Pileser was dead. But that was no cause to think it was going to be easier to get out from under the thumb of Assyria. Tiglath Pileser's son was going to be WAY worse than anything they had faced at the hands of the Assyrians up to this time.

³⁰And the firstborn of the poor will graze, and the needy lie down in safety; but I will kill your root with famine, and your remnant it will slay.

There will only be a small remnant left among the Philistines, but the Lord was going to wipe out even the remnant.

³¹Wail, O gate; cry out, O city; melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you! For smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in his ranks.

Have you ever noticed that there are no Philistines in the Gospels? They never survive Assyria. They never make it to captivity in Babylon.

The picture here is that the armies of Assyria are seen marching and getting closer. I have been in the Golan Heights in Israel listening to the sounds of heavy artillery. Jews living in the Golan have heard the sound and seen the smoke of Russia bombing Syria to aid the Syrian rebels. THAT has been business as usual in that region for millennia! Isaiah is picturing for Philistia the sound of the bombs getting closer and louder and the sight and smell of the smoke getting closer and closer (if-you-would).

32What will one answer the messengers of the nation?

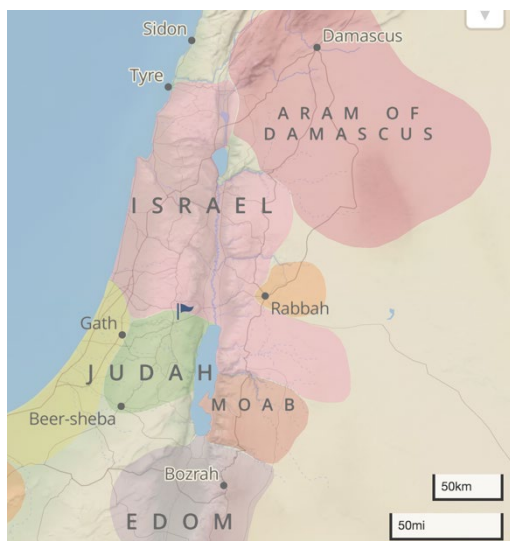
How was Judah supposed to answer the Philistines when they come knocking on the door asking to form an alliance with them against Assyria?

“The Lord has founded Zion, and in her the afflicted of his people find refuge.”

Your safety is NOT an alliance with Philistia! Your safety is in YHWH who founded Zion — who placed His Name on Jerusalem.

Tonight, we pick up in Isaiah 15 with the oracle/burden concerning Moab.

Moab is on the East side of the Dead Sea.



The Moabites descended from Lot — Abraham’s nephew. They were not only related to the Israelites, they were enemies of the Israelites. Ruth, of the book of Ruth, was a Moabite. She’s listed in the genealogy of Jesus. Here an oracle is

pronounced concerning Moab. Most commentators do not see this oracle as a warning to Judah against finding a false hope in making an alliance with Moab. Another purpose of these oracles is that Judah would not despair and lose hope in the presence of their enemies.

So, this oracle speaks of the **fate** of **Moab** for the **sake** of **Judah!**

ISAIAH 15

¹An oracle concerning Moab. Because Ar of Moab is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone; because Kir of Moab is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone.

These were both significant cities within Moab. They were not geographically close to one another. For both to be destroyed in a night means that the collapse of Moab came with great speed.

²He has gone up to the temple, and to Dibon, to the high places to weep; over Nebo and over Medeba Moab wails. On every head is baldness; every beard is shorn;

This is a picture of refugees of war fleeing and moving northward towards Israel — wearing public forms of mourning as they go.

³in the streets they wear sackcloth; on the housetops and in the squares everyone wails and melts in tears. ⁴Heshbon and Elealeh cry out; their voice is heard as far as Jahaz; therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; his soul trembles.

⁵My heart cries out for Moab;

This is Isaiah speaking! This is not the only time we see this in Isaiah.

***Isaiah 21:3–4** Therefore my loins are filled with anguish; pangs have seized me, like the pangs of a woman in labor; I am bowed down so that I cannot hear; I am dismayed so that I cannot see. ⁴My heart staggers; horror has appalled me; the twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.*

Isaiah 22:4 Therefore I said: “Look away from me; let me weep bitter tears; do not labor to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people.”

But here — Isaiah begins to lament — NOT because of what is about to come upon Judah — but because of what is about to come upon a neighboring enemy of Judah.

her fugitives flee to Zoar, to Eglath-selishiyah. For at the ascent of Luhith they go up weeping; on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of destruction; ⁶the waters of Nimrim are a desolation; the grass is withered, the vegetation fails, the greenery is no more.

Isaiah has such a vivid picture of these refugees and what they’re going to experience that he is moved with compassion. THAT is an important thing for us to see about this man who would speak for YHWH in a time of great national brokenness and impending judgment. The heart of YHWH’s spokesman was connected to the heart of YHWH.

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Exodus 34:6 (NET) The Lord passed by before him and proclaimed: “The Lord, the Lord, the **compassionate** and gracious **God**, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness,

Psalms 145:8 (NET) The Lord (**YHWH**) is merciful and compassionate; he is patient and demonstrates great loyal love.

HERE’S THE POINT — We are living in a time of great national brokenness and impending judgment. How are we going to speak by way of our words and our lives with power to those around us who have been and continue to be enemies of the Gospel and those who proclaim it? ANSWER: Our hearts must be connected to the heart of the Lord who is **compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness!**

⁷Therefore the abundance they have gained and what they have laid up they carry away over the Brook of the Willows. ⁸For a cry has gone around the land of Moab; her wailing reaches to Eglaim; her wailing reaches to Beer-elim. ⁹For

the waters of Dibon are full of blood; for I will bring upon Dibon even more, a lion for those of Moab who escape, for the remnant of the land.

The destruction that God is going to bring upon Moab is not going to end with the initial attack. The attacking forces will pursue the refugees like lions pursuing their prey.

ISAIAH 16

¹Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela, by way of the desert, to the mount of the daughter of Zion.

What's this all about? Write this in the margin of your Bible next to Isaiah 16:1

***2 Kings 3:4** Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and he had to deliver to the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.*

2 Kings 3 took place when Moab was under the taxation and service to Israel. Their currency for paying taxes was sheep. Isaiah was so overwhelmed by the destruction that was going to come upon Moab — so moved with compassion for them that he says: *Appeal to Jerusalem for help!*

²Like fleeing birds, like a scattered nest, so are the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon. ³“Give counsel; grant justice; make your shade like night at the height of noon; shelter the outcasts; do not reveal the fugitive; ⁴let the outcasts of Moab sojourn among you; be a shelter to them from the destroyer.

Isaiah appeals to Judah to let the refugees in! Appeals to Judah to be a shelter for them — to protect them — and not turn them over to their enemies.

Isaiah doesn't finish there.

When the oppressor is no more, and destruction has ceased, and he who tramples underfoot has vanished from the land, ⁵then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.”

FIRST — This looks forward to the day when Jesus the Messiah returns and sits on the throne of David

*Isaiah 9:6–7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with **justice and with righteousness** from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

SECOND — God is saying: Since THIS is where I'm taking you — since THIS is what I have wrapped up in my Covenant with Abraham — LIVE IT NOW!!

HERE'S THE DEAL — Our lives should be shaped by our future! The Kingdom of Jesus is *already* and *not yet*. Right now we are rescued rebels, who by the grace of God are at this very moment citizens in the Kingdom of Jesus. But the Bible is very clear that the Kingdom of Jesus that has already been inaugurated is *not yet* expressed in its full glory. One day, the true King above all kings is going to return and rule and reign over the whole earth. The fulness of His Kingdom that we long for should be, in some way, expressed right now in the life of every single rescued rebel. The church (that's you and me) is the preview of the way *the not yet* Kingdom of Jesus is going to live and breathe.

Jesus Messiah Son of God is not just **our** safety net — He's a refuge for all nations. We should live that out now.

⁶We have heard of the pride of Moab— how proud he is!— of his arrogance, his pride, and his insolence; in his idle boasting he is not right.

Pride doesn't just say: "*I do not need.*" Pride also says "*I don't want what I can't deserve.*" They have nothing left — but they won't ask for help.

⁷Therefore let Moab wail for Moab, let everyone wail. Mourn, utterly stricken, for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth. ⁸For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the

vine of Sibmah; the lords of the nations have struck down its branches, which reached to Jazer and strayed to the desert; its shoots spread abroad and passed over the sea.

This was the former glory of Moab.

⁹**Therefore I weep** with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah; I drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; for over your summer fruit and your harvest the shout has ceased. ¹⁰And joy and gladness are taken away from the fruitful field, and in the vineyards no songs are sung, no cheers are raised; no treader treads out wine in the presses; I have put an end to the shouting.

¹¹Therefore my inner parts (**my bowels**) moan like a lyre for Moab, and my inmost self for Kir-hareseth. ¹²And when Moab presents himself, when he wearies himself on the high place, when he comes to his sanctuary to pray, he will not prevail.

Moab won't turn to YHWH — they turn to their *elohiym* — who always lie, and who can't save.

But this is so amazing! Even when Moab has doubled down and dug in — refusing to repent of their pride — Isaiah's posture is still one of deep compassion. Again — so much like the heart of YHWH.

Look at what we see when YHWH came into human flesh and Jerusalem refused to receive Him.

***Luke 19:41–44** And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*

There was YHWH — in human flesh! The maker of the tear duct sobbing convulsively over the very ones who would say, *Crucify Him!*

We usually let a single emotion dominate us. God is so amazing that He can be angry and yet weep in compassion. One of the young men who is involved in the vision of the Calvary Global Network put it like this — *In Jesus we hear God saying: You can experience the full wrath you deserve over my dead body!*

We so desperately need Jesus because *apart from Him we can do nothing* like Him.

The Christian life is a supernatural life. It is a living relationship with the Jesus of **Luke 19**. It is a living relationship with the LORD who is *compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness*

¹³This is the word that the Lord spoke concerning Moab in the past.

This is most like a reference to the Word of God spoken to Moab about their coming destruction by the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 48) which pre-dates this passage.

¹⁴But now the Lord has spoken, saying, “In three years, like the years of a hired worker, the glory of Moab will be brought into contempt, in spite of all his great multitude, and those who remain will be very few and feeble.”

Jeremiah said, “Judgment is coming.” Isaiah is now saying: It’s imminent! It’s coming soon!