

A Prophecy Against Mo'av ~ Part 2

Yesha'yahu 16:1-14

In my last post, we began to examine **A Prophecy Against Mo'av ~ Part 1** in **Yesha'yahu 15**. In this post, we complete our examination in **A Prophecy Against Mo'av ~ Part 1** in **Yesha'yahu 16**.

At the time **Yesha'yahu** was prophesying, war clouds were gathering in the north. The formidable, seemingly invincible **Ashurim** empire was preparing to move out in its attempt to conquer the world. That is the scene as **Yesha'yahu** continues to prophesy concerning the countries that would be affected by this invasion and by the judgment that was falling due to their hard-heartedness and rebellion against a God who desired to draw them to Himself.

The prophecy against **Mo'av** is the second in a series of prophecies against nations that were immediate neighbors of Israel. **Mo'av** was in Transjordan opposite **Jericho** and on the east bank of the **Dead Sea**. The Bible and other sources record a long history of conflict between **Isra'el** and **Mo'av** whose origins go back to the incestuous union between Lot and his daughter (Genesis 19:30-38).

¹ Send lambs for the ruler of the land from the crags toward the desert to the mountain of the daughter of Tziyon.

The land from the crags toward the desert is commonly identified as **Sela** in most English translations. **Sela** (widely recognized as the cliff fortress of **Petra**) was in **Edom**, so the **Mo'avi** refugees apparently will go that far. Then they will send gifts (lambs) to **Tziyon**. Many eschatologists believe that Petra which still exists in modern-day Jordan will become a refuge for Tribulation saints.

² The daughters of Mo'av at the fords of the Arnon are like fluttering birds pushed from the nest.

The **Valley of the Arnon** is in places three miles across and is a significant barrier to traffic north and south. The fords refer to the point where the north-south highway crosses the wadi at **Dibon**. This would be a natural crossing point for the Mo'avi fugitives as well as an extremely strategic site.

³ "Give [us] counsel! Decide [to help]! Make your shadow [over us] like night in the middle of noonday. Hide [our] outcasts! Don't betray [our] fugitives!

The request for shelter as well as shade is a request for protection, and it implies that **Mo'av** will be willing to become a vassal state of **Y'hudah**.

⁴ Let our outcasts live with you! Protect Mo'av from the attacks of robbers!" For when the extorting ends, the spoiling ceases, and those trampling on the land are destroyed, ⁵ a throne will be set up by grace, and on it, in the tent of David, will sit an honest judge, seeking justice and pursuing righteousness.

The prophecy evokes the picture of a just descendant of David ruling on the throne forever. The language is a reminder of the Davidic covenant in 2Sam 7:12-16, and it hints at the expectation of the Messiah.

In response to **Mo'av**'s request for shelter, the prophet can only lament its destruction. The following part of the prophecy is similar in wording and imagery to Jeremiah 48:29-39.

⁶ We have heard about Mo'av's pride, how very proud they are; about their haughty arrogance, their insolence, and bravado.

In keeping with a significant theme throughout the book of **Yesha'yahu**, the heart of **Mo'av**'s sin is described as pride.

⁷ Therefore Mo'av will wail for Mo'av - they will all wail! You will sigh, stricken by grief, for the raisin-cakes of Kir-Hareset.

Raisin cakes were a delicacy mentioned in Song of Solomon 2:5 along with apples as providing sustenance for lovemaking, though it may not have been an aphrodisiac. Hosea 3:1 suggests that raisin cakes were associated with pagan rituals.

⁸ For the grain fields of Heshbon are withering, also the vineyards of Sibmah, whose red grapes overpowered rulers of nations— once they reached as far as Ya'zer and trailed out into the desert; their spreading branches even crossed the sea. ⁹ Therefore I will weep for Sibmah's vine as I weep for Ya'zer; I will water you with my tears, Heshbon and El'aleh; because the shouts of battle are falling on your summer fruits and harvest;

Recapping the area of devastation, the prophecy describes the physical and economic ruin of the northern section of **Mo'av**. This includes the tableland cities of **Heshbon** and **Ya'zer** at the north end of the Dead Sea. Both **Sibmah** and **El'aleh** are listed as part of the **Heshbon** district and were at one time part of Reuven's allotment.¹

¹⁰ gladness and joy are removed from the fruitful fields. No revelry in the vineyards, no happy shouting, no one treading grapes in the winepresses - I have silenced the vintage-cheers.

Because of the devastation, joy, singing, and wine will vanish from the land of **Mo'av**.

¹¹ This is why my heart throbs like a lyre for Mo'av, and everything in me for Kir-Heres. ¹² Even when Mo'av is seen growing weary of worshipping on the high places and entering their sanctuaries to pray, they will have accomplished nothing.

Mo'avi worship is ineffective. His sanctuary refers to the temple of **Chemosh**, who was no god and therefore could not respond to prayer.

¹³ This is the word Adonai spoke against Mo'av in the past. ¹⁴ But now Adonai has said, "Within three years [and not a day more], as if a hired worker were keeping track of the time, the glory of Mo'av will be brought into contempt, despite its large population; and the surviving remnant will be few and feeble." ~ Yesha'yahu 16:1-14 (CJB)

The concluding comment about the **Mo'avi** prophecy declares that it had been delivered at an earlier time, but from this moment **Mo'av** had only three more years. Presumably, a hired worker would count the time until his work was over with great attention and precision.

Most scholars associate this **Mo'avi** devastation with the **Ashurim** king **Sargon's** campaign against the people of northwest Arabia in approximately 718 BCE.²

In my next post, we will continue in our study of **A Prophecy About Dammesek** in **Yesha'yahu 17**.

¹ The IVP Bible Background Commentary – Old Testament.

² HCSB Study Bible.