



• God feels for Moab

Isaiah 15:1–16:14 focuses on Moab, one of a number of pagan nations that Isaiah knows has need of a Saviour. They have suffered much under the attacks of the Assyrians<sup>1</sup> but God feels for them in their sufferings<sup>2</sup>.

15:1-4  
15:5-9

1. There is mercy for God's enemies if they will seek it

**1. There is mercy for God's enemies if they will seek it.** In Isaiah 16:1–4a, the Moabites are considering the possibility of asking for mercy. The women of the land are in special distress, as they try to escape from Moab crossing over the border at the River Arnon.

*<sup>2</sup>Like fluttering birds pushed from the nest, so are the women of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.*

• The Moabites ask for help from Zion

So the people of Moab ask help from Zion.

*<sup>3</sup>'Give us counsel, render a decision.'*

• They badly need help – the shade of Judah's protection

They are like people being burnt by the midday sun. They need to stand in the deep shade of Judah's protection. They need help badly.

*'Make your shadow to be like night, at high noon. Hide the fugitives, do not betray the refugees. <sup>4</sup>Let the Moabite fugitive stay with you; be their shelter from the destroyer.'*

• Even God's enemies can have hope if they submit to God

Moabites were among the traditional enemies of God's people, but there is hope even for God's enemies, if they will submit to the promises attached to God's king in Jerusalem.

2. There is security in Zion

**2. There is security in Zion.** The people of Moab are right to believe that God's mercy is to be found in Zion. It is Zion that is the location of the promises of God. In Jerusalem Jesus will die the death that is the hope of mercy for God's enemies.

*The oppressor will come to an end, and destruction will cease; the aggressor will vanish from the land!*

3. A royal Saviour is available for them

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*<sup>5</sup>In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it – someone from the house of David – someone who when he judges seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.*

• The promise is eventually fulfilled in Jesus

• Temporarily foreshadowed by occupant of the throne of David

Security is available to the pagan refugees because of the promise in Zion of God's king, as saviour, protector, faithful administrator of righteousness in the lives of all who come to him. Eventually the promise is fulfilled in Jesus. Temporarily — until the Saviour came — it was intended to be foreshadowed in whoever occupied the throne of David.

**4. The salvation offered the Moabites involved their humble faith**

**4. The salvation offered the Moabites involved their humble faith.** There was rescue and protection for them if they would humble themselves before Zion's king, but this they were unwilling to do.

*<sup>6</sup>We have heard of Moab's pride –  
he is very proud!  
We have heard of his conceit, his  
arrogance and his insolence, but  
his boasts are not right.*

• They will stay in their distress – they will not humble themselves

Because they will not humble themselves they will stay in their distress.

*<sup>7</sup>Therefore the Moabites wail,  
all who belong to Moab wail.  
Lament and grieve  
for the raisin-cakes of Kir-Hareseth.*

• 'Raisin-cakes' represent lost prosperity

The 'raisin-cakes' were compressed dried grapes. They speak of lost prosperity.

*<sup>8</sup>The fields of Heshbon wither,  
the vines of Sibneh also.  
The rulers of the nations  
have trampled down the choicest vines,  
which once reached Jazer  
and spread toward the desert.  
Their shoots spread out  
and went as far as the sea.*

• Continuing distress in Moab because of the Assyrian attack – found no refuge in Zion

Kir-Hareseth, Heshbon, Sibneh and Jazer are obviously places in Moab. Throughout many of the towns of Moab there will be continuing distress because they are being attacked by the Assyrians but have found no refuge in Zion or anywhere else.

• Salvation is still on offer – God weeps over their sufferings

Salvation is still on offer for them, and God still weeps over their sufferings.

*<sup>9</sup>Therefore I weep as Jazer weeps,  
for the vines of Sibmah.  
O Heshbon, O Elealeh,  
I drench you with tears!  
The shouts of joy over your ripened fruit  
and over your harvests have been stilled.  
<sup>10</sup>Joy and gladness are taken away from the orchards;  
no one sings or shouts in the vineyards;  
no one treads out wine at the presses,  
for I have put an end to the shouting.  
<sup>11</sup>Therefore my heart laments for Moab like a harp,  
my inmost being for Kir Heres.*

• Moab has refused refuge in Zion – other attempts to find help end in failure

Moab has refused refuge in Zion but all other attempts to find help end in failure.

*<sup>12</sup>When Moab appears at her high place,  
she only wears herself out;  
when she goes to her shrine to  
pray, it is to no avail.*

**Judgement is not very far away**

**Judgement is not very far away.** Moab has refused help, but (at the time when this oracle was originally given) a day of judgement for Moab is precisely three years away.

*<sup>13</sup>This is the word Yahweh has already spoken concerning Moab. <sup>14</sup>But now Yahweh says: 'Within three years, like the years of a hired man, Moab's splendour and all her many people will be despised, and her survivors will be very few and feeble.'*

• Moab's judgement is 3 years away at the time of Isaiah's prophecy

• Three nations doomed

• Mercy available for Zion and Moab

A man hired out on contract knows the exact date of the end of his term of service. So Moab has exactly three years before Isaiah's prediction will come to pass. A day of fearful humiliation is not so far away.

So Isaiah has spoken of three nations upon whom judgement has been pronounced with no offer of escape<sup>☞1</sup>. And he has spoken of the possibility of mercy for Zion and even for Moab<sup>☞2</sup>. There is mercy for God's enemies if they will seek it, but only if they will submit to the promises attached to God's king in Jerusalem. One who sits on a throne will rule over their lives and their circumstances, but only if they will come in humble faith. Salvation is on offer for them. Judgement is not very far away. The chapter ends with the offer still open but with no sign that Moab will ever benefit by it. But Moab will never be able to blame God for the destruction that is coming. God was willing to save them; they were unwilling to accept a salvation that was embarrassingly attached to a king ruling in Zion.

☞1 13:1-14:32  
☞2 14:28-16:14

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