

## A Prophecy Against Mo'av ~ Part 1 Yesha'yahu 15:1-9

In my last post, we completed our examination of **A Prophecy Against Ashur and P'leshet** in **Yesha'yahu 14:24-32**. In this post, we begin to examine **A Prophecy Against Mo'av** in **Yesha'yahu 15**. This is a two-part study in that the prophecy continues 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).

***<sup>1</sup> This is a prophecy about Mo'av: The night 'Ar is sacked, Mo'av is ruined. The night Kir is sacked, Mo'av is ruined.***

Those cities listed as destroyed or damaged in verses 1-4 are all in the northern sector of Moab:

**'Ar** was a city on the **Vadi Arnon** in the middle part of **Mo'av**, and **Kir** was further south. **N'vo** and **Meidva Mo'av** were two northern sites east of the north tip of the **Dead Sea**. **N'vo** was further known as the mountain that **Moshe** ascended to catch sight of the promised land before he died. **Dibon** was further south about midway down the coast of the **Dead Sea** and some 20 miles inland. **Heshbon** and **El'aleh** were northeastern cities in **Mo'av**. **Yachatz** was further south parallel to **Dibon**. <sup>1</sup>

***<sup>2</sup> He went up to the temple, to Dibon, and to the high places, to weep. On N'vo and Meidva Mo'av is howling, every head shaved bald, every beard cut off. <sup>3</sup> In the streets, they wear sackcloth; on their roofs and in their squares, everyone howls and weeps profusely.***

I must confess that I have not been able to identify **he** in verse 2. Some translations indicate **Dibon** goes up to its temple. In any case, there was a lot of weeping, wailing, and mourning. Communal and individual laments throughout the ancient Near East included weeping, the shaving of heads and beards, wearing sackcloth and lying on the ground or rolling about. These are all illustrative of grief as well as a temporary (usually seven-day) identification with the dead.

***<sup>4</sup> Heshbon and El'aleh cry out, they are heard as far as Yachatz. Mo'av's best troops cry aloud, as their courage faints away. <sup>5</sup> My heart cries out for Mo'av! Its fugitives flee to Tzo'ar, a calf three years old. They ascend the slope of Luchit, weeping as they go; on their way to Horonayim, they utter heartrending cries.***

The prophecy in these verses describes the attempted escape route of those who survived the devastation of northern **Mo'av**. The key to the line of flight for the **Mo'avi** fugitives is **Tzo'ar** since none of the other sites mentioned can be identified. According to Genesis 14:2-3, **Tzo'ar** is one of the cities of the plain. Speculation on its exact location, however, places it near **Mount N'vo** (Deuteronomy 32:1-3), near the northern tip of the **Dead Sea**, as well as in the area at the southern end of the **Dead Sea**. Considering the apparent focus of the

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<sup>1</sup> HCSB Study Bible.

attack in **Yesha'yahu** 15:1-4 around **Kir** and **N'vo**, it seems that a southern site for **Tzo'ar** and these other cities would be more appropriate for a flight to safety towards **Edom**.

***<sup>6</sup> The waters of Nimrim are desolate; the grass is dried up, the new growth fails, nothing green is left.***

Following the same reasoning regarding a flight south by the **Mo'avi** fugitives, it seems best to identify **Nimrim** with the **Wadi en-Numeirah**, which flows west into the southern end of the **Dead Sea**.<sup>2</sup>

***<sup>7</sup> Therefore they carry away their wealth, everything they have put aside, across the Vadi of the Willows.***

Assuming a southern route for the fugitives, the poplar-lined ravine would be the Vadi el-Hesa (Zered River), which marks the border between **Mo'av** and **Edom**. This broad valley (up to four miles across) runs for thirty-five miles and concludes at the southeast end of the **Dead Sea**.

***<sup>8</sup> For the cry has circulated throughout Mo'av's territory— its howling has reached Eglayim, its howling has reached Be'er-Elim.***

**Yesha'yahu's** prophecy would indicate a southern location for **Eglayim**, but no precise identification has been made.

Likewise, **Be'er-Elim** has not been positively identified. Some scholars speculate that it is to be equated with **Be'er** of Numbers 21:16, but the large number of place names which begin with **Be'er** (well) makes such an identification problematic. Following the line of thought used on other sites in this prophecy, one would expect it to be a southern site near the **Dead Sea**.

***<sup>9</sup> For the waters of Dimon are full of blood, yet I have worse in store for Dimon - a lion for those who escape from Mo'av and for those who remain in its land.***" ~ Isaiah 15:1-9 (CJB)

In verse 9, it's as if God was saying, *"You can't beat the rap. Even if you elude the Ashurim, there will be lions waiting to devour you."* We might think we can get away with sin - but the only solution is to be cleansed from it by the blood **Yeshua** shed when He died in our place.

In my next post, we will continue in our study of **A Prophecy Against Moav ~ Part 2** in **Yesha'yahu 16**.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.