

Isaiah Chapter 16, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes
Enigmatic, Puzzling Prophetic Word to Moab Continued,
with Counsel to Treat Refugees with Mercy,
in View of Messianic Hope,
with Justice and Righteousness for All¹

¹Slotki comments that “In this **chapter [16]** the oracle on Moab is continued. In **verses 1-6** the Moabites on their arrival in Edom, which was under the political influence of Judah, appeal to Jerusalem for asylum.” (P. 77)

But, we ask, where is anything said in the text about the Moabites “arrival in Edom”? Slotki has probably drawn this conclusion from the phrase **מִסֵּלַע**, “from Sela / Cliff / Petra” (his translation has “from the crags”) here in **16:1**, thinking that this means the famous Edomite capital of Sela / Petra, which is part of the Kingdom of Jordan today. He comments that the “Hebrew *sela* (‘rock’) is here understood by some authorities as Petra, a well-known city in Edom.” (P. 77) He refers to **2 Kings 14:7**, which states concerning Amaziah, king of Judah:

He, he struck Edom in Salt-Valley, ten thousand (Edomites);
and he seized the Sela / Rock in the battle.
And he called its name Yoqtheel, until this day.

Perhaps, but remember that the beautiful “rose-red” city of Petra—Jordan’s most famous tourist site—was not in existence in the time of Isaiah. Its most ancient tombs date from the sixth century B.C.E., a century later than Isaiah. But there could have been a city named “Sela” in the same area in Isaiah’s time, located on one of the high rocky mountains. We quote from **Wikipedia**:

“Sela, meaning ‘rock’ was the capital of Edom, situated in the great valley extending from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea (**2 Kings 14:7**). It was near Mount Hor, close by the desert of Zin. It is called “the rock” (**Judges 1:36**). When Amaziah of Judah took it he called it Joktheel (also spelled Jokteel and Jectehel). It is mentioned by the prophets (**Isaiah 16:1**; **Obadiah 1:3**) as doomed to destruction.

“Sela is identified with the ruins of Sela, east of Tafileh in Jordan (identified as biblical Tophel) and near Bozrah, all Edomite cities in the mountains of Edom.

“The oldest known civilization to establish a kingdom on Tafilah soils was that of Edom, and Tafilah lies on the ruins of the Edomite city of Tophel. The capital of Edom was at Busairah 14.2 miles to the south of Tafilah. The Edomites often allied with their neighbors in Moab. Tafilah was then annexed to the Nabatean kingdom who had their capital in Petra.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/16/2016)

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Alexander states that “This chapter opens with an exhortation to the Moabites to seek protection from their enemies by renewing their allegiance to the house of David, accompanied by an intimation that this prospect of deliverance would not in fact be realized (**verses 1-6**). From this transient gleam of hope, the prophecy reverts to a description of the general desolation and distress, in form almost identical with that in the foregoing chapter (**verses 7-12**). The prophecy then closes with a specification of the time at which it was to be fulfilled (**verses 13-14**).” (P. 321)

We find it strange that Alexander, who so often finds the Messiah in texts that make no mention of the Messiah, does not find the Messiah in **chapter 16**, with its mention of a coming king of righteousness! For, in spite of the many difficulties that face the interpreter in this chapter, it does breathe the hope for a coming king in Judah, as a word of hope for Moab as well!

Oswalt entitles **16:1-14** “Response,” and then entitles **verses 1-5** “Plea for mercy.”

He comments that “The response to the lament for Moab contains three parts: The first, **verses 1-5** seems to be [a] plea to Judah from the Moabites...The second, **verses 6-12**, is not so much a response to that plea as it is a reaction to it. It contrasts the former pride and abundance of Moab with its fallen state, which, it may be supposed, would lead to such a plea being entered. The final section, **verses 13 and 14**, calls to the reader’s attention that all these events could be expected to happen within three years, suggesting a possible date of 715 / 714 B.C.E. for these final verses at least. The overall thrust of the response is to stress again the helplessness of Moab despite her proud abundance and to emphasize to the Judeans that they should not put their trust in Moab. In fact, Moab will one day come to them and their Messiah.

“**Verses 1-5** continue to present severe textual and interpretational difficulties. The ancient versions frequently give dramatically different readings from the Masoretic Text but with little agreement among them, testifying to the fact that they too were struggling with a difficult passage and were attempting to make sense of it in diverse ways. Earlier interpreters took the passage as Zion addressing Moab, but some thought it might be the counsel of the Edomites to the Moabites. More recently it has been thought to be a message which the prophet puts in the mouth of some of the Moabites to their embassy in Jerusalem requesting asylum for themselves. This interpretation is not without problems...but on the whole it seems the best proposal to date.” (Pp. 340-41)

Gray unites **15:9b** with **16:1-5**, and entitles it “Further distress to befall Moab.” He comments that “This exceedingly difficult and obscure section seems to be mainly, or entirely, a prophetic interpolation in the elegy on Moab.” (P. 285)

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Motyer entitles **16:1-4a** “Moab’s plea for shelter.” He comments that “The scene changes and we find Isaiah eavesdropping at a Moabite ‘Cabinet’ meeting at Sela (**verse 1**) in the far south, whither, presumably, the government has fled. In the panting, breathless Hebrew which he writes we catch the panic of the leaders, one saying one thing, another something else.” (P. 151)

But where is anything said in the text concerning a “Moabite Cabinet meeting”? And as Motyer admits, his idea of the Moabite government having fled from Moab to Sela in the far south, is only his “presumption.” We think it is only Motyer’s imagination that the Hebrew of these verses is “panting, breathless.” The Hebrew is admittedly difficult to read, even choppy—but the difficulties are much more than simply the labored speech of a breathless messenger. Gray calls the passage “difficult and obscure”—and Oswalt has the courage to admit that this is the case.

Are we to assume with Motyer that numerous different voices are being heard, “one saying one thing, another something else”? Where are the indications of changes in speakers? Where does the text say “one said, while another said”? Motyer is attempting to make sense of a very difficult text—but imagination is hardly a proper tool of biblical exegesis.

In contrast to Motyer, who says nothing concerning difficulties in this text, we appreciate Oswalt’s calling attention to those difficulties. And we emphasize once again that the condition of the text here should not be unexpected, since the prophetic message was by its very visionary / dream-like nature, filled with inexactness, enigma, puzzle. Remember **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12!**

Kaiser entitles **16:1-5** “The answer to the request for a place of refuge.”

²Alexander comments on / translates **verse 1**: “In their extremity, the Moabites exhort one another to return to their allegiance to the family of David, by whom they were subdued and rendered tributary (**2 Samuel 8:2**). When the kingdom was divided, they continued in subjection to the ten tribes till the death of Ahab, paying yearly, or perhaps at the accession of every new king, a tribute of a hundred thousand lambs and as many rams with the wool (**2 Kings 3:4, 5**). After the kingdom of the ten tribes was destroyed, their allegiance could be paid only to Judah, who had indeed been all along entitled to it. *Send ye the lamb* (i.e., the customary tribute [but does the singular ‘the lamb’ mean a hundred thousand lambs? We say, hardly!]) *to the ruler of the land* (your rightful sovereign) *from Sela* (or Petra) *to the wilderness, to the mountain of the daughter of Zion*.

“The older writers understand these as the words of the prophet himself; but Knobel objects that both the prophet and the Edomites must have known that the course here recommended would be fruitless. It is best to understand them, therefore,

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as the mutual exhortations of the Moabites themselves in their confusion and alarm... The verse then really continues the description of the foregoing chapter.” (P. 321)

Alexander assumes that the Moabites are speaking—but the text doesn’t say this, or make it clear. And, similar to Motyer’s later interpretation, he assumes that the statements are being made in “confusion and alarm.” But the text doesn’t say this—it is only the state of the text with its many difficulties that leads to such a conclusion.

Gray comments on **verse 1** that “Text and interpretation continue most uncertain. In [the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**)] this verse continues the threatening words of Yahweh in **15:9b, c**—‘*I will send the likeness of creeping things upon the land.*’ The unpointed Hebrew text might be a continuation of the description of Moab in **15:1-9a**—they have sent, etc., or an address to some people, presumably Moabites, *send ye* [plural imperative] (so the Masoretic pointing). The object of the verb in the unpointed Hebrew text is *the [?] lamb of the ruler of the land*, which is commonly supposed to refer to the tribute paid in kind by Moab to the king of Israel (compare **2 Kings 3:4**), or Judah, as overlord of Moab. The words that follow in the unpointed Hebrew text might mean:

(1) *from Sela* [Rock] *to Midbar* [desert, wilderness]. Sela is then identified by many with the great Edomite, or Nabatean, emporium, Petra, which was famous from the 4th century B.C.E., or with some place in Edom...less remote from Moab; Midbar may possibly be the proper name of a place in Moab (**Numbers 21:18**); or

(2) *from the rocks* of the Arnon valley...or of Moab generally, or of Edom...*to the wilderness*, which is supposed to mean in the direction of Judah, because Moab and Judah were separated (if an indirect way was taken) by wilderness. This would be much as though we were to speak in England of ‘sending seawards to Italy’...

“It must suffice to refer to one or two of the interpretations of the whole verse built up on these uncertain details...Dillmann sees in the verse advice tendered by the Edomites, or by leading Moabites, to the Moabite refugees in Edom; the refugees are advised to seek the protection of the king of Zion, backing up their request by a present of lambs which they are to send, not by the nearer route north of the Dead Sea and across the Jordan, which must be supposed closed to them, but first south over the rocky land of Edom and then north through the wilderness...

“Marti, in part following [**Rahlfs**], renders *the Edomites will send (the refugees) like a swarm of insects on the land to Zion*...

“The assumption that Moabite refugees have fled to Edom is not supported by any clear indication of such a flight in **chapter 15**; and the following verse...is distinctly unfavorable to it, for there the Moabites appear at the Arnon, far away from Edom.” (Pp. 287-88)

אֶל-תֵּר בֵּת-צִיּוֹן:

Send (plural imperative)³ a male-lamb⁴ (of / to the) one ruling a land,⁵

³Where our Hebrew text has שְׁלַח־וּ, qal imperative, masculine plural, some Hebrew manuscripts point the verb שְׁלַח־וּ, qal perfect, 3rd person masculine plural, “they sent. **Rahlfs** has ἀποστειλῶ, “I will send forth.” Reading the Hebrew imperative verb, to whom is the imperative addressed? Is it addressed to Moabite refugees gathering in a rock city in southern Moab / Edom, telling them to send a message to the one ruling in Judah, to come to their assistance, or to allow them to take refuge in Judah? Perhaps...but it is difficult to be certain.

⁴Where our Hebrew text has כֶּבֶד, masculine singular, “a lamb,” Slotki’s translation has “lambs.” He explains that “The Hebrew singular is used as a collective noun. The lambs were to be sent as tribute. In **2 Kings 3:4** it is recorded that Moab used to send to the king of Israel a large quantity of wool annually [the verse says 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams annually]. Now they seek the favor of the ruler of the Southern Kingdom [Judah].” (P. 77)

But we ask, how can a group of refugees, fleeing from terror, send, or even promise to send, anything like such an enormous gift to the Judean ruler?

Alexander comments that while some have supposed that כֶּבֶד means “a battering-ram,” or is meant “as a figurative term for soldiery or military force,” Calvin “understands by it a sacrificial lamb to be offered to Jehovah as the *Ruler of the earth*, in token of repentance and submission. Most other writers understand the tribute of lambs paid by Moab to the kings of Israel.” (P. 321)

Kaiser states that “the expression ‘ram of the ruler of the land’ is ambiguous. It may be a technical term for a gift handed over on the occasion of submission (**2 Kings 3:4**) or a request for protection; it is uncertain whether it is a subjective or objective genitive, i.e. whether the ram is to be sent from the Moabite ruler of the land or to the Judean ruler of the land.” (P. 72)

Oswalt translates by “Send a landlord’s lamb,” noting that it is literally “a lamb of the lord of the land.” But he adds that it is “an ambiguous phrase since the genitive could be objective or subjective. Thus either ‘from the lord of the land’ or ‘to the lord of the land.’ The present interpretation assumes the latter. [**Rahlfs**] apparently divides the Hebrew consonants to arrive at ‘I will send as it were creeping things on the earth.’”

Oswalt adds that this “suggests the sending of tribute to an overlord, such as Mesha did for Omri of Israel (**2 Kings 3:4**), as an indication of submission. Moab was excellent sheep-grazing country (**Numbers 32:4**), and so this would be a logical tribute for those seeking Judah’s protection.” (Pp. 40-41). Perhaps...but the use of the

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from Sela / Rock / Petra⁶ to (the) desert,⁷

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singular seems strange, even though it can be taken as a “collective noun.” And again, it seems like a preposterously large tribute to be suggested or demanded of refugees fleeing for their lives. Perhaps the Moabites could promise that later, when the terror is ended, and they had control of their country—then, perhaps, they could return to sending yearly tribute—but they certainly could not send such a tribute in their apparent present situation!

⁵Where our Hebrew text has the phrase **כֶּרֶם מִשְׁלֵ-אֶרֶץ**, literally “a lamb one ruling earth / land,” **Rahlf**s has $\omega\varsigma \epsilon\rho\pi\epsilon\tau\alpha \epsilon\pi\iota \tau\eta\upsilon \gamma\eta\upsilon$, “like reptiles upon the earth / land.”

Motyer comments that “The vague description *the ruler of the land* [the text is literally ‘a ruler of a land’] is intentional; driven by desperation, Moab’s leaders feel compelled to approach Judah but are not ready to admit that they will have to recognize the Davidic king as their overlord.” (P. 151)

We think Motyer is reading all of this into the text, which makes no mention of Moab’s leaders or of their views concerning Israel’s king.

⁶Watts comments that **סֵלַע**, “may be a proper name. If so, it is the forerunner of Petra at *wadi Musa*. But it is far more likely to be a reference to flight to the rocky heights.” (P. 231)

We agree, and say, To a city named “Rock” in the heights of the rocky mountains of Edom. See footnote 1.

Alexander states that “*Sela*, which properly denotes a *rock*, is now [mid-19th century] commonly agreed to be here used as the name of the city Petra, the ancient capital of Idumea, so called because surrounded by impassable rocks, and to a great extent hewn in the rock itself.” (P. 322)

But as we write, in the 21st century, as more and more is known about Petra, it has become clear from study of the tombs at Petra that the city of Petra grew up at least a century after Isaiah’s time, and the reference here is most probably to some other “Rock” city built on the rocky mountainous heights of Edom, the same area that would later become the home of Petra.

⁷Watts notes that the phrase **מִן-בְּרָהַר**, “to a desert” [but this phrase is literally ‘from a desert’!] is “a problem since Sela [Petra] is not in the desert.” (P. 227) Perhaps not...but it is certainly on the edge of the desert, and the entire area appears to be desert to anyone coming from areas accustomed to much more trees and vegetation.

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to Mount of Zion's daughter!⁸

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For these last two lines **Rahlf's** has μή πέτρα ἔρημός ἐστιν τὸ ὄρος Σιων, "Is not the Mount Zion a rock (of the) desert?" **NETS** translates this Greek text by "is Mount Sion a desolate rock?" If such a statement could be made concerning Jerusalem, it most certainly could be made concerning Petra!

Alexander states that the original Hebrew line, מִסֵּלַע מִדְּבָרָה אֶל־הַר, "from Sela to a desert to Mountain of Zion's daughter," "can only mean from Petra to the wilderness (and thence) to mount Zion (or Jerusalem)." (P. 322)

If this is the case, we think it means the route would proceed east from Sela / Petra towards the wilderness, which stretches out to the east, and then go northwards, crossing the Arabah below the Dead Sea, and then continuing northwards through Hebron, Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Oswalt states that "from the rock...to the mountain seems to be a play on words. However, Sela' is also a place name in Edom (**2 King 14:7...**) that has been associated with Petra, the capital of Nabatea. Thus it may be that the fugitives of **chapter 15** are visualized as having escaped to Edom and are sending their embassy from there. At the same time, it is not necessary to assume a direct connection between **16:1-5** and **chapter 15**. The point may simply be that the Moabites have retreated to some wilderness stronghold and are sending their plea for help to the greater stronghold, Mount Zion." (P. 341)

⁸Translations of **verse 1** vary:

King James, "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion."

Tanakh, "Dispatch as messenger The ruler of the land, From Sela in the wilderness To the mount of Fair Zion:";

New Revised Standard, "Send lambs to the ruler of the land, from Sela, by way of the desert, to the mount of daughter Zion."

New International, "Send lambs as tribute to the ruler of the land, from Sela, across the desert, to the mount of Daughter Zion."

New Jerusalem, "Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela by the desert, to the mountain of the daughter of Zion";

Rahlf's, ἀποστελῶ ὡς ἕρπετὰ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν μή πέτρα ἔρημός ἐστιν τὸ ὄρος Σιων, "I will send forth like reptiles upon the earth / land. Is not the Mountain Zion a rock of a desert?" **NETS** translates "I will send as it were creeping animals on the land: is Mount Sion a desolate rock?"

וְהָיָה כְּעוֹף־נוֹדֵד קִן מְשָׁלַח 16:2⁹

תְּהֵי־יָנְהָ בָנֹת מוֹאָב מֵעֶבְרַת לְאַרְנוֹן:

⁹Alexander comments on / translates **verse 2**: “This verse assigns the ground or reason of the exhortation in the one before it. *And it shall be (or come to pass) like a bird wandering, (like) a nest cast out, shall be the daughters of Moab, the fords of Arnon...*“*Nest* may be understood as a poetical term for its contents.” (P. 322)

Motyer comments on **verse 2** that “The government may have put as many miles as possible between themselves and the advancing foe but they are not heartless. What drives them to approach Zion’s king is the news of things sixty miles to the north and only a few miles short of the blood-red waters of Dibon (**15:9**): the jam of Moabite girls desperate to cross the Arnon in hope of safety. Refugees are the most pathetic sight in war (**15:8**) but girls suffer the cruellest fate.” (P. 151)

But again we ask, where is anything said in the text concerning “the government,” i.e., the government of Moab? This is Motyer’s imagination at work!

Oswalt states that **verse 2** “does not follow **verse 1** closely but can be connected with **15:8, 9**,” and this “has prompted the suggestion that it was the original conclusion of the lament and, as such, immediately preceded what is now **16:1**. In some way, then, the two verses became transposed. This is certainly not impossible, but there is no manuscript evidence in support of such a transposition, and it is difficult to imagine how or why it would have taken place given the difficult reading it has created...

[We agree; the idea of verses being transposed may seem easily accomplished in this age of word processors, where statements can be blocked out and quickly transported to another location in a text--but such was not the case with ancient documents written on leather! And the idea that verses were “lying around,” waiting to be attached wherever seemed best to a copyist, makes no sense to us.]

Oswalt continues: “On the other hand, it is possible that this verse constitutes the opening words of the plea for asylum that the messengers were to make to the Judeans. Since the inhabitants of Moab (the ‘daughters of Moab’ may refer to the actual women of Moab, but equally likely it speaks of the villages and towns of Moab, and thus its inhabitants) are like birds pushed from the nest, they must seek refuge elsewhere. Thus the verse supplies the rationale for the request. If the refugees were in Edom, the reference to the fords of the Arnon at the north edge of Edom seems a bit strange.” (P. 342)

We think the mention of refugees at the fords of the Arnon can be understood to mean that not only are refugees fleeing to the south, they are also fleeing to the north.

And it will be like a bird fleeing (from) a nest, sent forth / cast out,¹⁰

Moab's daughters¹¹ will be—at crossings / fords belonging to Arnon.¹²

¹⁰Gray comments that “*Nestlings*, קֶן, a nest, has here the transferred meaning *brood that inhabited the nest*.” (P. 288)

¹¹Slotki states that “daughters of Moab” means “The inhabitants of the provincial towns, uprooted from their homes and in search of a resting-place.” (P. 77)

Alexander states that “There are three interpretations of בְּנוֹת מוֹאָב [‘daughters of Moab’]. The first gives the words the geographical sense of villages or dependent towns...The second explanation makes it mean the people generally, here called *daughters*, as the whole population is elsewhere called *daughter*. The third gives the words their strict sense as denoting the female inhabitants of Moab, whose flight and sufferings are a sufficient index to the state of things. In the absence of any conclusion for dissenting from this strict and proper sense of the expressions, it is entitled to the preference.” (Pp. 322-23)

Yes, but the fact is that Isaiah’s language is highly ambiguous, and differing interpretations are given.

¹²Watts comments that מַעְבְּרוֹת לְאַרְנוֹן, ‘Fords of Arnon’ must refer to the point where the [‘King’s’] highway crosses the Arnon south of Dibon.” (P. 231)

Alexander states that “The ל in the last word denotes possession—the fords which belong to Arnon.” (P. 323)

From the **Jewish Encyclopedia** the following statement is taken, describing the Arnon wadi or river:

“A river and wady of eastern Palestine, the modern Wady Mojib (or Wady el-Mojib). The name means perhaps “noisy,” a term which well describes the latter part of the course of the river. Its length is about 45 miles, from its rise in the desert to its entrance into the Dead Sea. It spreads out to a breadth of 100 feet here and there, but for the most part is narrow; and though low in summer, in the winter season it is in places 8 or 10 feet deep. It runs at first northwesterly, but afterward its course becomes westerly. Its striking feature is the steepness and narrowness of the ravine through which it passes shortly before it empties into the lake, opposite Engedi. Between the lofty limestone hills, which cause this precipitous descent, and the lake, the river expands into a shallow estuary [where the wady meets the Dead Sea] nearly 100 feet wide...”

“The Arnon has always been an important boundary-line. Before the Hebrew period it separated, for a time at least, the Moabites from the Amorites (**Numbers**

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21:13, 26; Deuteronomy 3:8; Judges 11:18). After the Hebrew settlement it divided, theoretically at least, Moab from the tribes of Reuben and Gad (**Deuteronomy 3:12, 16**). But in fact Moab lay as much to the north as it did to the south of the Arnon. To the north, for example, were Aroer, Dibon, Medeba, and other Moabite towns. Even under Omri and Ahab, who held part of the Moabite territory, Israel did not hold sway farther south than Ataroth, about ten miles north of the Arnon. Meshah in his inscription (**Moabite Stone**, line 10) says that the Gadites (not the Reubenites) formerly occupied Ataroth, whence he in turn expelled the people of Israel. He mentions (line 26) his having constructed a road along the Arnon. The ancient importance of the river and of the towns in its neighborhood is attested by the numerous ruins of bridges, forts, and buildings found upon or near it. Its fords are alluded to by **Isaiah (16:2)**. Its "heights," crowned with the castles of chiefs, were also celebrated in verse (**Numbers 21:28**). From the **Internet**, 8/13/2016)

But this statement does not mention any "fords" across the Arnon in its western gorge area, nor do we find any pictured in the Internet articles on, and photos of, the Arnon / Wadi Mojib. The "King's highway" turns east and crosses over the Arnon in its eastern area; and while in modern times it would certainly be possible to build bridges over the Arnon in its western area, it was a much more difficult task in ancient, biblical times. Still, this verse, **Isaiah 16:2** mentions "fords" in the plural.

Translations of **verse 2** vary:

King James, "For it shall be, *that*, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon."

Tanakh, "Like fugitive birds, Like nestlings driven away, Moab's villagers linger By the fords of the Arnon."

New Revised Standard, "Like fluttering birds, like scattered nestlings, so are the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon."

New International, "Like fluttering birds pushed from the nest, so are the women of Moab at the fords of the Arnon."

New Jerusalem, "for soon, like a fluttered bird, like nestlings cast out, will be the women of Moab at the fords of the Arnon."

Rahlf's, ἔση γὰρ ὡς πετεινοῦ ἀνιπταμένου νεοσσὸς ἀφηρημένος θύγατερ Μωαβ ἔπειτα δέ Αῤῥων, "For you will be like a bird flying up / fluttering about, a young bird taken away, daughter of Moab—but then, Arnon..."; **NETS** has "For you will be as a nestling taken away from a bird that is flying, O daughter of Moab! And then, O Arnon..."

Gray comments that "Arnon, cutting through its lofty canyon formed at times the northern boundary of Moab, but at others, as here (**15:2, 4**), it roughly bisected the territory occupied and governed by Moab." (P. 288)

¹³Slotki describes **verses 3-5** as “Moab’s appeal to Judah.” (P. 78)

Gray comments on **verses 3-4** that “The fugitive Moabites, thrust forth from their country like birds from their nest (**verse 2**), now arrived in Jerusalem (**verse 1**), supplicate for shelter and protection against the devastator of their land.” (P. 288)

But where in the text is anything said concerning the fugitives having arrived in Jerusalem?

Alexander comments on **verse 3**: “Most of the older writers, from Jerome downwards, understand this verse as a continuation of the advice to the Moabites, in which they are urged to act with *prudence* as well as *justice*, to take counsel (i.e. provide for their own safety) as well as execute judgment (i.e. act right towards others). In other words, they are exhorted to prepare for the day of their own calamity, by exercising mercy towards the Jews in theirs...

“Calvin adopts this general view of the meaning of the verse, but interprets it ironically as he does the first, and understands the prophet as intending to reproach the Moabites sarcastically for their cruel treatment of the Jewish fugitives in former times...It is not the first case in which Calvin has allowed his exposition to be marred by the gratuitous assumption of a sarcastic and ironical design...

“Gesenius and most of the later writers follow Saadias in regarding this verse as the language of the Moabitish suppliants or messengers, addressed to Judah...The explanation of the verse as the words of the Moabites addressed to the Jews, is favored by the foregoing context, which relates throughout to the sufferings of Moab...

“Relieve, refresh the sufferers—or at least conceal them—or if that is too much to ask, at least do not betray them.” (P. 323)

Motyer comments that **verse 3** “sets out the message with which the envoys were sent to Zion. *Give, render, make* and *hide* are all feminine singular imperatives, addressed to the daughter of Zion (**verse 1**). In the Masoretic text the verbs in **verse 3** are difficult. For the first, the *kethibh* reads second person plural, the *qere* reads second person singular feminine. It is easy, of course, to harmonize them to second person singular feminine throughout as an address to Zion [as suggested in the footnote of **Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia**]. If the first two are retained as second person plural, they represent discussion among the Moabite leaders.” (P. 152)

Oswalt comments on **verses 3-4a** that “The message here moves into its request for refuge. *Counsel* here is not so much advice as it is a plan of action, as the parallel phrase shows...*To perform the office of judge* was not merely to give a neutral decision; it was to take positive action on behalf of those who had a justifiable need for deliverance [yes—the biblical ‘judges’ were in fact military deliverers of their people in times of peril!]. So, then, the request for the Judeans to become a shelter from the

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עֲשׂוּ פְּלִילָה
 שִׁיתִי כְּלִיל צֶלֶף
 בְּתוֹךְ צְהָרִים
 סִתְּרֵי נְדָחִים
 נִדְר אֶל־תִּגְלִי:

Bring¹⁴ counsel!

¹³(...continued)

noonday sun is a figurative way of asking them to take steps to become a refuge from the terrible blows which had so demoralized the Moabites. In the Near East, the shelter of some great rock at noon was a gift for which to be devoutly thankful (see **Isaiah 4:6; 30:2, 3; 32:3; 49:2; 51:6; Judges 9:15; Psalms 91:1; 121:5; Hosea 14:7**)." (P. 342)

Kaiser likewise comments on **verses 3-4a** that they "reveal the task given to the ambassadors. On Zion they are to ask counsel and obtain a decision...Just as men need shade under the hot southern midday sun, those who have been driven from their home country need protection in the country that receives them...In legal terms, they are seeking the status of a גֵּר, **ger**, protected person [our 'temporary resident / immigrant'], which was associated with permission to reside in a foreign country (compare, e.g. **Genesis 15:13; Ruth 1:1 and 2 Samuel 4:3**)." (P. 72)

¹⁴The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, "what is written," הִבִּיאִי, the hiphil masculine plural imperative, "Bring!"; and second, the *qere*, "ro be read," [הִבִּיאִי], the hiphil feminine singular imperative, with the same meaning. 1QIs^a has הִבִּי, apparently from the root יָהַב, "to give," perhaps a feminine plural imperative, but we are uncertain as to the meaning of this form. For the root יָהַב with the noun עֲצָה, "counsel," see:

Judges 20:7, where a Levite, the husband of a murdered woman says to all Israel:

Look, all of you, sons / children of Israel:
 give a word for yourselves, and counsel here / in this situation!

2 Samuel 16:20,

(continued...)

Make¹⁵ a judge / umpire!¹⁶

Place / make¹⁷ your shadow / shade like the night in the midst of mid-day,¹⁸

¹⁴(...continued)

And Abshalom said to Ahiythophel,
Give for yourselves counsel, what we shall do!

¹⁵The verb עֲשֵׂי is masculine plural imperative, whereas the following verbs are 2nd person feminine singular.

¹⁶The noun here is פְּלִיָּלָה, defined by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** as “office of judge or umpire.” This is its only occurrence in the **Hebrew Bible**, making it very difficult to determine its meaning. The related noun פְּלִיל, “judge,” or “umpire” occurs only three times, and only in the plural, at **Deuteronomy 32:31**; **Job 31:11** and **Exodus 21:22**.

Slotki’s translation has “give counsel, execute justice.” He comments that this means “Devise means to secure us against our enemy.” (P. 78)

Gray translates the first two lines of **verse 3** by “Bring counsel, make decision.” He comments that “A request for counsel is a curious opening for refugees, who want rather what they go on to ask for, protection. It is disputed whether the second clause means

(1) settle (quickly) whether we may remain in your country, or

(2) decide the rights and the wrongs of the case between us and our enemies;

perhaps the original text expressed something entirely different and more appropriate.” (P. 288)

¹⁷The verb שִׁיתִי, “place / set” is qal feminine singular imperative, whereas the previous verb was masculine plural. Is the address being made to Jerusalem / Zion as female, but also to the male ruler of Judah and his people the Judeans as masculine?

¹⁸Slotki comments that this first line of **verse 3** is “a figurative expression for protection.” (P. 78)

Alexander states that “As noonday heat is a common oriental figure to denote distress (**Isaiah 4:6**; **25:4**; **32:2**), so a shadow is relief from it. Possibly, however, the allusion here is to the light of noonday, and the shadow dark as night denotes concealment.” (P. 323)

Gray paraphrases by “Be to us a protection against the hot anger of our foes, like deep shade at high noon-day.” (P. 288)

hide carefully¹⁹ my banished ones--Moab!²⁰
One fleeing you shall not reveal!²¹

¹⁹The verb סִתְּרִי, “hide carefully,” is piel feminine singular imperative.

²⁰Slotki’s translation of the phrase נְדָחֵי מוֹאָב is “mine outcasts.” He says this means “the refugees forced to leave Moab.” (P. 78)

Gray translates the phrase נְדָחֵי מוֹאָב by “*The outcasts of Moab*,” as read by the Greek and Syriac translations. “The Masoretic pointed text and the Latin Vulgate...distort the sense of the unpointed Hebrew text...‘*my outcasts; as for Moab*, etc. Possible also, but improbable, would be the rendering *my outcasts, O Moab*.” (P. 289)

Oswalt comments that the phrase “*my fugitives...Moab* was a major reason for some older commentators’ belief that the passage was addressed to Moab. This view assumes that the fugitives mentioned are from Judah. But this interpretation is very strange in the context of Moabite destruction...

“Modern commentators, adducing support from the versions, solve the problem by changing ‘my fugitives,’ *niddahay*, to ‘the fugitives of,’ *niddehe*. The present reading [‘Let my fugitives sojourn among you; Moab–’] understands the fugitives to refer to Moab, but without emending the text. Rather, it sees the speaker as a personification of Moab with the ‘my’ then referring to the speaker.” (Pp. 342-43)

This is a rather complicated statement, which we can hardly understand. What do you think?

Gray paraphrases the next line: “Hide us also from them, do not discover us to them.” (P. 289)

Motyer comments that the first part of **verse 4** is for protected status as resident aliens...The fretful Hebrew of **verses 1-3** increases in intensity here as if we could actually hear the envoy panting from his hurried journey: ‘Let my outcasts stay with you–Moab–be a shelter for him from the destroyer.’” (P. 152)

²¹The verb תִּגְלִי, “you shall (not) uncover / reveal,” is 2nd person feminine piel imperative.

Translations of **verse 3** vary:

King James, “Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; betray not him that wandereth.”

(continued...)

16:4²² יגורוּ בְךָ נְדָחֵי מוֹאָב

הוֹי־סֵתֶר לִמּוֹ מִפְּנֵי שׁוֹרֵד

כִּי־אֶפֶס הַיּוֹץ

²¹(...continued)

Tanakh, “Give advice, Offer counsel. At high noon make Your shadow like night: Conceal the outcasts, Betray not the fugitives.”

New Revised Standard, “Give counsel, grant justice; make your shade like night at the height of noon; hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive;”

New International, “‘Make up your mind,’ Moab says. ‘Render a decision. Make your shadow like night-- at high noon. Hide the fugitives, do not betray the refugees.’”

New Jerusalem, “Hold a council, make a decision. At noon spread your shadow as if it were night. Hide those who have been driven out, do not betray the fugitive...”

Rahfs, πλείονα βουλεύου ποιείτε σκέπην πένθους αὐτῆ διὰ παντός ἐν μεσημβρινῇ σκοτίᾳ φεύγουσιν ἐξέστησαν μὴ ἀπαχθῆς, “Take counsel / consider more things; make a shelter of mourning for her; constantly at mid-day they flee in darkness; they were amazed; do not be led away.” **NETS** has, “take further counsel, and make for her a shelter for mourning for all time. They flee in darkness at noon; they were astonished; do not be taken away.”

²²Alexander translates / comments on **verse 4**: “*Let my outcasts, Moab, sojourn with thee; be thou a covert (refuge or hiding-place) to them from the face (or presence) of the spoiler (or oppressor). For the extortioner is at an end, oppression has ceased, consumed are the trampers out of the land.* Here, as in the preceding verse, the sense depends upon the object of address. If it be Moab, as the older writers held, the outcasts referred to are the outcasts of Israel. If the address be to Israel, the outcasts are those of Moab. The latter interpretation seems to be irreconcilable with the phrase **מוֹאָב נְדָחֵי** [literally, ‘my banished ones Moab’; that is, Alexander thinks the text is addressed to Moab, and the outcasts are Israelites]...”

“Calvin gives the verbs in the last clause a past or present tense, and supposes the first clause to be ironical. As if he had said, ‘Yes, give them shelter and protection now, now when their oppressor is destroyed, and they have no need of assistance. Ewald also takes the preterite strictly, but understands the second clause to mean that the Moabites were encouraged thus to ask aid of Judah, because the former oppressive government had ceased there, and a better reign begun, more fully described in the next verse. But most interpreters, ancient and modern, give the verbs in this last clause a future sense. As if he had said, ‘Give the fugitives a shelter; they will not need it long, for the extortioner will soon cease,’ etc. This gives an appropriate sense, whether the words are addressed to Israel or Moab.” (P. 324)

But we wonder, do interpreters have the right to give verbs whatever tense they think appropriate, regardless of the tense of the text? We think not!

כִּלְהָ שֶׁד

תִּמְוּוּ רְמִים מִן־הָאָרֶץ:

They shall live / let them live as temporary residents among you,²³ My / my²⁴ banished ones
(of / from) Moab;

become²⁵ a shelter / hiding-place for them from before a destroyer!

Because²⁶ the oppressor²⁷ ceased,²⁸

²³The phrase בְּךָ, “among you,” has the 2nd person feminine singular “you.” The preceding verb, יִגְוּרוּ, “they shall live temporarily / let them live temporarily” is translated by Gray as “find guest-right amongst thee, be גִּירִים [temporary residents]... in thy midst.” (P. 289)

²⁴Whether the 1st person singular suffix in the phrase נִדְחֵי, the niph'al plural participle with a 1st person suffix, “my / My banished ones,” should be translated with “My” or “my” depends on who is speaking. Is this a Divine speech, or the words of a Moabite? For other uses of this niph'al participle in **Isaiah**, see **11:12** (נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), “banished of Israel”); **27:13** (תִּנְדְּחוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם), “the banished ones (of Israel) in the land of Egypt” and **56:8** (נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), “banished ones of Israel” whom YHWH gathers).

But here in **Isaiah 16:4** the banished ones are Moabite refugees. Would YHWH claim them as “His Own”? Not if He is only God of the Jews; but if He is indeed God of the universe, Creator of all peoples and nations, He could certainly claim the Moabites as “His Own”!

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has simply οἱ φυγάδες Μωαβ, “the fugitives of Moab,” with no 1st person suffix. Some Hebrew manuscripts also do not have the suffix.

²⁵The verb הָיִי, “become,” is qal feminine singular imperative.

²⁶Motyer entitles **16:4b-5** “Security in Zion.”

He comments that “The content of these verses shows that this is the reply to Moab. But who is the speaker? Is it the prophet voicing what he hopes would be the reply were Moab ever to make such an approach? Is it the Lord speaking? Since the Lord intervenes to speak in **15:5ff.** and **16:9ff.**, it suits the drama of the poem that He speaks here too [but there is no indication of this in the text!]. His message is one of assurance to the Moabites (the first two verbs are perfects of certainty, the third a

(continued...)

²⁶(...continued)

future). Realistically, it is not said how soon this will happen, for the promises of God do not offer immunity from earth's trials, and the **Bible** does not entice by unreal expectations [but is this the case? What about, for one example, the promises made in **Psalm 91?**]. It is the way of faith to accept life as it comes and to see behind it the hand of God. This is what Zion can offer Moab: the certainty that there will be an end, full of righteousness." (P. 152)

Oswalt likewise comments on **verses 4b-5**: "The prophet here puts words in the Moabite messenger's mouth. He looks forward to the day when the oppression which has driven the Moabites into the Hebrews' arms will be brought to an end by that ideal ruler of the Davidic house. Because of his attachment to mercy, faithfulness, justice, and righteousness, oppression will not be able to coexist with him. Compare **Psalm 89:2-5^{Heb} / 1-4^{Eng}**,

- 1/2 Steadfast-loves of YHWH (to) long-lasting-time I will sing (about);
to generation and generation I will make known Your true-faithfulness with
my mouth!
- 3/2 Because I said (to) long-lasting-time steadfast-love will be built up;
heavens--You will establish Your true-faithfulness in them!
- 4/3 I cut a covenant for My chosen one;
I swore to David My servant:
- 5/4 to long-lasting-time
I will establish your descendant(s)! Selah.

"He will offer a kind of security that will be more permanent than any heretofore known. This vision is clearly messianic, as comparison with **Isaiah 9:1-6^{Heb} / 2-7^{Eng}** and **11:1-9** must show. Isaiah recognizes that Moab's hope is identical with Judah's. Both wait for a King of Israel who will somehow embody those traits which are in fact of the character of God (**Psalm 89:14-38^{Heb} / 13-37^{Eng}**). Here then is another way of expressing the truth of **Isaiah 2:1-4**: Moab is representative of the nations which will come to the mountain of God to learn His ways, ways which are incarnated in a person who is the true ruler of Israel." (P. 343)

But Oswalt is reading much of this into the text, which says nothing concerning Moab's coming to the mountain of God to learn of His ways," not does it say a word concerning "incarnation."

Kaiser comments on **verses 4b-5**: "Whereas **verse 6** was originally intended as a mocking rejection of the plea, **verses 4b-5**, which now follow the announcement of the petition for help to Zion, it now explains the situation in Jerusalem during the attack upon Moab, which is thought of as taking place in the future: the siege of the city by the nations will already be over (compare **Isaiah 29:1-3; chapter 33**, but also **28:14-16**). Thanks to God's love and faithfulness the throne will already have been set up there again (compare **Isaiah 55:3**). On it descendants of David will sit for all time (compare **2**

(continued...)

²⁶(...continued)

Samuel 7:13; Psalm 89:3-5 and Isaiah 9:6). As the king of the age of salvation, he will seek justice and be swift to bring about the triumph of righteousness (compare **Psalms 72; 101; Isaiah 11:1ff. and 32:1-3**). This hope is really of comfort only to the Jews. They can look beyond the distress which is coming upon them (compare **Isaiah 14:24ff.**) to the age of salvation. It is of no benefit to the Moabites who beg for protection in their need.” (Pp. 72-73)

But there is no stringing together of passages such as this in **Isaiah 16**. All the verses contain is the prediction of a coming king, a descendant of David whose reign will be established in steadfast-love—resulting in true faithfulness with justice and righteousness—it is the “messianic” hope of Israel that is offered to the refugees of Moab, apparently meaning that they too can share in Israel’s hope for the future.

Can we add to this, that if this is indeed the future that YHWH is going to bring into existence in the future, should not the people of Judah in the present act in this light? That is, should they not reach out to the Moabite refugees in steadfast-love, in true faithfulness, with justice and righteousness? Can those who believe in such a future cruelly reject the plea of homeless refugees for protection? Should we not pray as Jesus is said to have taught his disciples to pray, “Your [God’s] will be done on earth as it is in heaven”?

²⁷The definite noun **הַמְצִיץ**, “the squeezer / extortioner / one who drains out / oppressor” occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, and therefore its exact meaning is difficult to determine. It is probably related to the verb **מָצַח**, “to drain out,” or to the verb **מָצַץ**, with the same meaning. 1QIs^a reads either **הַמְצִיץ**, “the chaff,” or **תְּמוֹץ**, “a ruthless one.” Motyer states that it is “one who cramps lives and limits freedom.” (P. 152)

Gray, beginning with this line, comments that “The various attempts...to explain this passage, as it stands or is arbitrarily emended, in its present connection have been so unsatisfactory as to lend considerable probability to the suggestion that it is an interpolated Messianic passage which has re-acted on the interpretation of **verse 4a, b**, turning what was an address to Zion (**verse 1**) into an address to Moab. Standing by itself, the passage would suggest familiar features of the Messianic age—the land of Israel no more troubled by enemies and war...the throne of David re-established through Yahweh’s loving-kindness and fidelity...and occupied by a just and righteous ruler...

“It is quite unnecessary, and indeed incorrect, to see here the description of some vassal or viceroy of the king of Israel stationed in Edom...or Moab.” (P. 289)

²⁸Slotki comments that with this line a description begins “of the happy conditions prevailing in Judah, drawn by Isaiah, who is now commenting on Moab’s appeal for

(continued...)

violence / devastation was finished--
they were finished (synonym)—one trampling—from the land,²⁹

²⁸(...continued)

shelter. It is possible, however, that these are compliments which conclude the appeal, Moab paying homage to Judah's immunity from foreign invasion and from internal disorder." (P. 78)

We see no indication in the text of a change in speakers.

²⁹The verb **וַתִּמְנוּ**, "they were finished," is qal perfect, 3rd person plural, while the apparent subject of the verb, **רַגְלִים**, is a qal participle, masculine singular. 1QIs^a reads the singular verb **נָתַת**, eliminating the problem—but probably intentionally changing the difficult original text. **Rahlf's** also has a singular verb, ἀπώλετο, "he perished," but we suspect the Greek translator is also correcting the difficulty in the original.

Translations of **verse 4** vary:

King James, "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land."

Tanakh, "'Let Moab's outcasts Find asylum in you; Be a shelter for them Against the despoiler.' For violence has vanished, Rapine is ended, And marauders have perished from this land."

New Revised Standard, "'let the outcasts of Moab settle among you; be a refuge to them from the destroyer.' When the oppressor is no more, and destruction has ceased, and marauders have vanished from the land..."

New International, "'Let the Moabite fugitives stay with you; be their shelter from the destroyer.' The oppressor will come to an end, and destruction will cease; the aggressor will vanish from the land."

New Jerusalem, "let those who have been driven out of Moab come and live with you; be their refuge in the face of the devastator. Once the oppression is past, and the devastation has stopped and those now trampling on the country have gone away..."

Rahlf's, παροικήσουσίν σοι οἱ φυγάδες Μωαβ ἔσονται σκέπη ὑμῖν ἀπὸ προσώπου διώκοντος ὅτι ἦρθη ἡ συμμαχία σου καὶ ὁ ἄρχων ἀπώλετο ὁ καταπατῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, "The fugitives of Moab will dwell beside you [singular]; they will be a shelter for you (plural) from (the) face of one pursuing / persecuting; because the alliance of yours (singular) was taken away, and the ruler perished, the one trampling under foot upon the earth." **NETS** has "The fugitives of Moab will sojourn with you; they will be a shelter to you from before a pursuer, because your alliance has been taken away and the ruler who trampled on the land has perished."

16:5³⁰ וְהוֹכֵן בְּחֶסֶד כִּסֵּא

וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלָיו בְּאַמֶּת

בְּאֵהֶל דָּוִד

שֹׁפֵט וְדָרֵשׁ מִשְׁפָּט

וּמְהֵרָ צְדָקָה:

and a throne will be established³¹ in the steadfast-love,³²

³⁰Alexander comments on / translates **verse 5**: “This verse contains a promise, that if the Jews afforded shelter to the fugitives of Moab, their own government should be strengthened by this exercise of mercy, and their national prosperity promoted by the appearance of a king in the family of David, who should possess the highest qualifications of a moral kind for the regal office. *And a throne shall be established in mercy; and one shall sit upon it in truth in the tent of David, judging and seeking justice, and prompt in equity...*”

“Barnes, who follows the old writers in making Moab the object of address, understands this as a promise that the Jewish government would hereafter exercise kindness towards the Moabites. Grotius understands this verse as a promise to the Moabites that their throne would be established (if they harbored the Jewish refugees) in the tabernacle of David, i.e. under the shadow or protection of his family...”

“Most writers understand it as a promise of stability to Judah itself. Some suppose a reference to Hezekiah; but the analogy of other cases makes it probable that the words were intended to include a reference to all the good kings of the house of David, not excepting the last king of that race, to whom God was to give the throne of his father David, who was to reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of whose kingdom there should be no end’ (**Luke 1:22, 33**).” (Pp. 324-25)

Motyer states that “So far the reply has taken up and imitated the excited speech of the envoys but now this gives way to a majestic rhythm affirming the Davidic hope. If faith see the present as ordained by God, it sees the future as secure in His sovereign purposes.” (P. 152)

³¹We take the phrase וְהוֹכֵן as hophal perfect with waw-consecutive / conversive, making it an imperfect / future verb, “and it will be established.” Slotki translates, however, by “is established,” and he states that this means established “firmly without danger of being overthrown, as happened with Moab’s house. Implied is a desire by the appellants to be allowed to live in the security of allegiance to the dynasty of David.” (P. 78)

(continued...)

and he / one will sit upon it in true-faithfulness,³³

³¹(...continued)

We understand the statement to mean that if the Moabite refugees are accepted by the Judeans, the refugees affirm that they will make the Davidic king and his throne their own, i.e., pledging loyalty to the Judean government.

Motyer comments, “That a *throne will be established* is the opposite of what Moab is experiencing, the changing fortunes of human rule; there will be no more fright or flight.” (P. 152)

³²This line is translated by **Rahlf**s as καὶ διορθωθήσεται μετ’ ἐλέους θρόνος, “and a throne will be restored to order / set on the right path with mercy.”

Motyer translates רֹחַם by “love,” and states that “it is the Lord’s covenanted love for His people, prompting all He is and all He does towards them, guaranteeing that He will never let them go, steadfast in all His obligations. The kings of Israel, for all their faults, had a reputation for רֹחַם ...

Compare **1 Kings 20:31**, where Ben-Hadad’s servants speak:

And his servants said to him (Ben-Hadad, the Syrian king):
Look now—we heard that kings of Israel’s house,
that they (are) kings of steadfast-love;
let us now put on sack-cloth around our waists,
and ropes on our heads,
and we will go forth to Israel’s king—
perhaps He will let you live!

Motyer concludes, “Here it [רֹחַם] is the mark of the coming kingdom.” (P. 152)
Yes, and if it is, shouldn’t it be the rule of life for lovers of YHWH?

³³Gray translates by “Through loving-kindness...through fidelity,” and comments that this translation, which refers the qualities named to God, is favored by the analogy of **Psalms 89**...Compare also **Isaiah 55:3**. Others refer the loving-kindness to the king...who secures his throne by his humanity...

“Of the attempts to interpret the passage as an integral and original part of the prophecy, two may be mentioned:

- (1) Gesenius renders the perfect [past tense] verbs as prophetic perfects, *For the oppression will cease*, etc., and comments, ‘so that we (Moabites) shall be able to return again to our country, and no longer need to be a burden to you (Jews),’ when the country of Moab is free from the foe. In **verse 5** the suppliants urge as a motive for favor the blessing which such humanity would bring on the House of

(continued...)

in David's tent,³⁴

³³(...continued)

David. [But we ask, is it legitimate for interpreters like Gesenius to arbitrarily change the tense of verbs in this manner? Sometimes, it seems imperative—but here?]....

(2) Dillmann...translates and interprets *until the extortioner shall have ceased... out of the land of Moab, and a throne shall be set up* for a vassal or viceroy ruling in Moab under the protecting shelter of his over-lord in Zion; i.e., the passage, together with **verse 4a.b**, is an insincere promise of the Moabites, in return for shelter in their hour of need, to be humble subjects of the Jews hereafter; the Jews, detecting this insincerity, refuse the request of the Moabites (**verse 6**).” (Pp. 289-90)

Motyer states that “Faithfulness [our ‘true faithfulness’] means reliability or steadiness and is the opposite of fickleness [changeability] and capriciousness [being inconstant, unpredictable]. This is also the mark of the coming king.” (P. 152)

³⁴For other passages referring to David's tent, see:

2 Samuel 6:17,

And they brought YHWH's chest / ark,
and they set it in its place,
in the tent's midst which David spread / pitched for it.
And David offered up offerings-up before YHWH, and peace-offerings.

1 Chronicles 15:1,

And he (David) made for himself houses in David's city;
and he prepared a place for the chest / ark of the God;
and he spread / pitched for it a tent.

1 Chronicles 16:1,

And they brought the God's chest / ark,
and they placed it in the tent's midst
which David spread / pitched for it.
And they brought near offerings-up
and peace-offerings before the God.

1 Chronicles 17:1,

And it happened just as David dwelt in his house—
and David said to Nathan the prophet:

(continued...)

one judging, and seeking justice³⁵
and swift righteousness.³⁶

³⁴(...continued)

Look, I am dwelling in a house (made) of the cedar-lumbers;
and (the) chest / ark of YHWH's covenant (dwells) beneath curtains.

Also see **Amos 9:11**, where instead of “tent,” the word “booth” is used:

In that day I will raise up David's **תֹּכֵחַ** booth / temporary shelter,
the one fallen,
and I will wall-up their (feminine plural) broken places,
and his ruins I will raise up,
and I will build it (feminine singular) like days of ancient time.

Motyer comments that the coming king “will sit enthroned (literally) ‘in the tent of David,’ i.e. he will not be a usurper but one with a true lineage, an undoubted claim.” (Pp. 152-53)

³⁵Motyer states that “the king will administer his kingdom (literally) ‘judging and seeking justice and swift in righteousness.’” (P. 153)

³⁶The last phrase in **verse 5**, **וְיָמְהָר צֶדֶק** is literally “and swift righteousness” with the adjective preceding the noun.

Translations of **verse 5** vary:

King James, “And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.”

Tanakh, “And a throne shall be established in goodness In the tent of David, And on it shall sit in faithfulness A ruler devoted to justice And zealous for equity.”

New Revised Standard, “then a throne shall be established in steadfast love in the tent of David, and on it shall sit in faithfulness a ruler who seeks justice and is swift to do what is right.”

New International, “In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it-- one from the house of David-- one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.”

New Jerusalem, “the throne will be made secure in faithful love and on it will sit in constancy within the tent of David, a judge seeking fair judgement and pursuing uprightness.”

Rahfs, καὶ διορθωθήσεται μετ' ἐλέους θρόνος καὶ καθίεται ἐπ' αὐτοῦ μετὰ ἀληθείας ἐν σκηνῇ Δαυιδ κρίνων καὶ ἐκζητῶν κρίμα καὶ σπεύδων δικαιοσύνην, “And a throne will be made straight / restored with mercy; and he

(continued...)

³⁶(...continued)

will sit upon it with truth in David's tent, judging and seeking judgment / justice, and hurrying righteousness." For the last phrase, **NETS** has "and quickly procuring righteousness."

Motyer states that "Thus, when the Moabites come in desperate need, there is held out to them, without question, the Messianic best that Zion can offer. Nothing could show more clearly that Messianic faith as Isaiah cherished it was consciously universal." (P. 153)

³⁷Kaiser entitles **16:6-12** "A lament upon the destruction of the vineyard of Moab."

He comments that "As a result of the redaction [the verse's being relocated by a later editor], **verse 6** has lost its previous function as a negative answer to the boastful Moabites, so that it has become the introduction to the taunt [sneer, ridicule] in the form of a lament which now concludes the poem and elaborates upon the theme of the vineyards of Moab, which were clearly famous in their time. The emptiness of the Moabites' confidence in themselves has been demonstrated by the collapse of their country, the basic conditions for wine production which permitted the preparation from the grapes of raisin cakes, a particular delicacy (compare **2 Samuel 6:19** and **Song of Solomon 2:5**), has now been destroyed." (P. 73)

Slotki comments that **verse 6** contains "Judah's reply declining Moab's request, recalling her notorious pride and arrogance which would constitute a menace to any country that gave her shelter." (P. 78)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6**: "*We have heard the pride of Moab, the very proud, his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath, the falsehood of his pretensions.* Those writers who suppose Moab to be addressed in the preceding verses, understand this as a reason for believing that he will not follow the advice just given. As if he had said, 'It is vain to recommend this merciful and just course, for we have heard,' etc..."

"But the modern writers who regard what immediately precedes as the language addressed by the Moabitish fugitives to Judah, explain this as a reason for rejecting their petition." (P. 325)

Gray notes that **verse 6** should be compared to:

Jeremiah 48:29,

We heard (of) Moab's exaltation / majesty--
exceedingly proud!

(continued...)

³⁷(...continued)

His height / haughtiness and his exaltation / majesty,
and his exaltation / majesty and height / haughtiness of heart!

Isaiah 16:6,

We heard (of) Moab's exaltation / majesty--
exceedingly proud!
His majesty, and his exaltation, and his arrogance / fury--
his empty talk is not right!

Gray comments that "It is customary, indeed, to see in **Isaiah 16:6** Zion's reply to the Moabite suppliants...and refusal to grant them protection. This is very doubtful:

- (1) the words contain no actual refusal;
- (2) the reply is given in the 1st person plural, whereas the community is addressed in the 2nd person singular in **verses 3b-4**.

The verse is best regarded as an isolated reflection on the pride of Moab." (P. 291)

Motyer entitles **verses 6-8** "Moab's pride and her grief explained."

He comments that here "the scene changes again and Moab returns to wailing. Since Zion did not rebuff their appeal (**verses 4b-5**), their unchanged plight can only mean that they refused what was offered. The entry fee was too high, for they could only enjoy Zion's security at the price of owning Zion's king. If they had been asked for money or required to double or treble their tribute of lambs (**verse 1**) their pride would have been left intact. But to submit to Zion's king was tantamount to admitting that only he could save them. But, keeping their pride intact, they remained in unrelieved misery." (P. 153)

He comments on **verse 6** that "In **verse 5**, four words (love, faithfulness, justice, righteousness) described what the Moabites might have enjoyed. In this **verse [6]**, four words tell what they chose instead: *pride, conceit, pride* and *insolence*...Isaiah's implication is that the way of faith is the way of realism, of facing facts as they are. To reject the way of faith for self-confidence is to retreat into a dream world—except that its consequences (**verses 7-8**) are far from dreamlike." (P. 153)

Oswalt entitles **verses 6-12** "The fall of Moab's proud vines." He comments that these verses "contain an elegaic [mournful, melancholic] reflection on Moab's pride and abundance and on the futility of it all." (P. 345)

He comments on **verse 6** that "These words have frequently been taken as a response to **verses 1-5** and their plea for refuge. As such they would contain a not-so-

(continued...)

גִּאֲוֹתוֹ וְגִאֲוֹנּוֹ וְעִבְרָתוֹ

לֹא־כֵן בְּדִיּוֹ:

We heard (of) Moab's exaltation / majesty--exceedingly proud!³⁸

His majesty, and his exaltation, and his arrogance / fury--
his empty talk³⁹ is not right!⁴⁰

³⁷(...continued)

subtle mockery of the suppliants who are no longer proud and overbearing, but now come creeping with piteous cries for mercy. It is also possible that the words are not so much a direct response as they are the beginning of a larger reflection on the ephemeral [fleeting, temporary] nature of human pride and glory. This interpretation would take some of the sting of mockery away that seems somewhat inconsistent with the apparently genuine grief expressed in **verse 9**." (P. 345)

³⁸For the last two words in this line, our Hebrew text reads גִּאֲוֹתוֹ וְגִאֲוֹנּוֹ, which we translate by "exceedingly proud." **Brown-Driver-Briggs** states that the spelling גִּאֲוֹנּוֹ is a scribal mistake for גִּאֲוֹתוֹ, an adjective meaning "proud." 1QIs^a reads גִּאֲוֹתוֹ as do a few Hebrew manuscripts, evidently correcting the mistaken spelling of the original.

Slotki comments that "This characteristic [pride of Moab] is referred to again in **Isaiah 25:11**, also in **Jeremiah 48:29** and **Zephaniah 2:10**.

³⁹The phrase בְּדִיּוֹ has the 3rd person masculine singular suffix attached to the plural noun בְּדִיּוֹת. **Brown-Driver-Briggs** states that the noun has the following meanings: "empty, idle talk," "empty talkers," "praters" (those who talk incessantly and meaninglessly).

Alexander comments that בְּדִיּוֹת is variously explained as denoting lies, vain pretensions, plausible speeches, idle talk, all which ideas are perhaps included...The simplest construction of the last clause [is]: 'we have heard the falsehood of his vain pretensions.'" (P. 325)

⁴⁰The last line of **verse 6**, לֹא־כֵן בְּדִיּוֹ, is given varying translations:

King James, "but his lies shall not be so."

Tanakh, "And of the iniquity in him."

New Revised Standard, "his boasts are false."

New International, "but her boasts are empty."

New Jerusalem, "which will come to nothing!"

(continued...)

לִכְן יִלֵּיל מוֹאֵב לְמוֹאֵב 16:7⁴¹

כִּלְהָ יִלֵּיל לְאַשִׁישֵׁי קִיר־חֲרֶשֶׁת

תִּהְגֹּו

אֶדְ-נִכְאִים:

⁴⁰(...continued)

Rahfs, οὐχ οὕτως ἡ ματεία σου, “your divination [the practice of seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means] is not this way.”

Slotki, “his ill-founded boastings,” or “false (literally, not right) are his pratings.”

⁴¹Oswalt comments on **verses 7-11** that they “contain an extended metaphor in which Moab is compared to a luxurious grapevine which had spread out over the whole region but now is trampled down, so that the shouts of laughter and excitement which once attended the harvest have now been silenced and replaced with wails of grief.”

He comments on **verse 7** that in the phrase “*Therefore, Moab howls,*” it is difficult to know whether the ‘therefore’ is intended to express the result of the emptiness of Moab’s boasts or the prior result of the cause stated in **verse 8**. That **verse 8** begins with כִּי, ‘for,’ suggests that the latter alternative is the correct one: ‘Howl, because the fertile fields are empty.’” (P. 345)

Slotki comments on **verses 7-10** that “Moab’s position being now hopeless, the prophet resumes his pronouncement over her fall.” (P. 79)

Motyer comments on **verses 7-8** that “This is the first of three ‘therefore’ sections (**verses 7-8, 9-10, 11-12**). The second and third record the Lord’s reactions; the first records the consequences of refusing security in Zion. *Therefore the Moabites wail* is (literally) ‘Therefore wails Moab; belonging to Moab all who are his wail.’ Note how the verb begins and ends the line, bracketing Moab and all who are his.” (P. 153)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 7**: “Therefore (because thus rejected) Moab shall howl for Moab; all of it shall howl; for the grapes (or raisin-cakes) of Kir-hareseth shall ye sigh (or moan), only (i.e. altogether) smitten...”

“By *Moab howling for Moab*, Jerome understands the mutual lamentations of the city and the provinces, or town and country...The idea may be that the nation of Moab mourns for the land of Moab, but the simplest supposition is that *Moab for Moab* means *Moab for itself*.” (P. 325)

Gray comments that **verse 7** contains “Moab’s emotion at her fate; but the original text, like **Jeremiah 48:31**, perhaps expressed the poet’s emotion at Moab’s fate.” (P. 291)

Therefore, let Moab howl for Moab,⁴²

All of it, let it howl for the raisin-cakes⁴³ of Qir-Chareseth,⁴⁴

⁴²Slotki states that this means “the fugitives from Moab [shall wail] for their ruined country.” (P. 79)

⁴³Slotki’s translation has “sweet cakes,” and he comments that “These were made from raisins and flour and were regarded as a dainty (compare **Song of Songs 2:5**); the Moabites will lament the loss of the rich food they formerly ate...The allusion may be to the happy vintage festivals which have become only a memory of the past.” (P. 79)

Gray translates by “The raisin-cakes of Kir-hareseth,” and compares **Jeremiah 48:31** which has:

Therefore over Moab I will howl;
and for Moab, all of him, I will cry out.
For (the) men of Qir-cheresh he will mourn.

That is, where **Isaiah 16:7** has “raisin-cakes,” **Jeremiah 48:31** has “men.” Gray also notes that the **Rahlfs** translation of **Isaiah 16:7** has τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν Δεσεθ, “(howl) for the ones inhabiting Deseth.”

He adds that “If Kir-heres is Kerak (**15:1**), and its raisin-cakes rather than its inhabitants were here mentioned, it is to the point to observe that there is much vine culture, ‘for eating only,’ round Kerak in modern times...The allusion, like that in **verse 9**, points to autumn as the season when disaster fell on Moab.” (P. 291)

⁴⁴“Kir is mentioned in the **Hebrew Bible** as one of the two main strongholds of Moab, the other being Ar. It is called also Kir-haresh, Kir-hareseth (**Isaiah 16:7**), Kir-heres (**Isaiah 16:11**; **Jeremiah 48:31**; **48:36**) and Kir of Moab (**Isaiah 15:1**). The word Kir alludes to a wall or fortress.

From **Wikipedia** we quote: “It is identified with the later city Al Karak. According to the **Books of Kings**, after the death of Ahab of Israel, Mesha, the king of Moab (see “Mesha Stele”), threw off allegiance to the king of Israel, and fought successfully for the independence of his kingdom. After this Jehoram of Israel, in seeking to regain his supremacy over Moab, entered into an alliance with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and with the king of Edom. The three kings led their armies against Mesha, who was driven back to seek refuge in Kir-hareseth. The Moabites were driven to despair. Mesha then took his eldest son, who would have reigned in his stead, and sacrificed him as a burnt-offering on the wall of the fortress in the sight of the allied armies. “There was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.” The invaders evacuated the land of Moab, and Mesha achieved the independence of his country.” (**2 Kings 3:20-3:27**)

(continued...)

Let them groan!

Surely (they) were stricken!

16:8⁴⁵ כִּי שִׁדְמוֹת חֶשְׁבֹן אִמָּלֵל

⁴⁴(...continued)

“The **Bible** notes elsewhere that this is the place to which Tiglath-pileser carried the captives after he had taken the city of Damascus (**2 Kings 16:9; Amos 1:5; 9:7**). **Isaiah 22:6** mentions it along with Elam.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/5/2016)

Watts states that קִיר-חֶרֶשֶׁת “Kir-Hareseth’ is equivalent of Kir (**Isaiah 15:1**).” (P. 231)

⁴⁵Gray comments on **verses 8-10**: “For the famous vines of northern Moab the poet now weeps (**verse 9**). They have ripened not for the Moabites to gather with the customary joy of the vintage, but for the enemy to destroy. Of these verses **8a, b** and **9b** are absent from **Jeremiah 48**; while **8c, d** is found there (**verse 32**) with considerable variations.

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 8**: “*For the fields of Heshbon are withered—the vine of Sibmah—the lords of the nations broke down its choice plants—unto Jazer they reached—they strayed into (or through) the desert—its branches—they were stretched out—they reached to (or over) the sea...All this, however, is really predicted [predicated?] of the vines, the luxuriant growth of which is the subject of the following clauses...The choice vines of Sibmah overcame the rulers of the nations, i.e. the wine was drunk at the royal tables [and, we say, intoxicated them, causing them to do foolish things]...*

“Eusebius speaks of [Sibmah] as a town of Gilead, and Jerome describes it as not more than half a mile from Heshbon...Jazer is mentioned in **Numbers 21:32**, and described by Eusebius as fifteen miles from Heshbon, and ten west of Philadelphia, on a stream running into the Jordan. It is here mentioned as a northern point, the desert and the sea representing the east and the west or south. Knobel infers from this that Sibmah was a well-known center of wine-culture.” (Pp. 326-27)

Oswalt states that “The vine is depicted not as staked up but creeping along the ground northward toward Jazer, the extreme northern border of the territory claimed by Moab, to the east to the edges of the desert, and westward, even across the Dead Sea, probably indicating export of Moabite wines and raisins to Judah.” (P. 346)

Gray quotes Jerome as stating, “Between Heshbon and Sibmah there are scarce five hundred paces.” “A site 2 ½ miles west northwest of Hesban bearing the name Sumia may give an echo of the ancient Sibmah. From **Numbers 32:3, 38** and **Joshua 13:19** we should infer that the place lay in northern Moab though not necessarily so close to Heshbon as Jerome’s Subama, or the modern Sumia.” (P. 292)

(continued...)

גִּפְּן שִׁבְמָה בְּעַלֵּי גוֹיִם הִלְמוּ שְׂרוּקֶיהָ

עַד־יַעֲזֹר נִגְעוּ

תַּעֲנוּ מִדְּבַר

שְׁלַח־חֹתֶיהָ נִטְשׁוּ

עֲבָרוּ יָם:

Because fields of Heshbon grew feeble / languished.⁴⁶

Sibmah's⁴⁷ vine⁴⁸--rulers of nations struck down⁴⁹ its branches / tendrils⁴⁹ / its

⁴⁵(...continued)

Kaiser comments on **verse 8** that “The extent of the destruction of the wine-growing areas gives a further indication of the wide extent of the Moabite territory, which stretched to the north and to the east as far as the edge of the desert. One inevitably wonders whether the vines and grapes are not meant here as a symbol of the Moabite population.” (P. 73)

⁴⁶In this line a plural subject (שְׂדֵמוֹת, “fields,” feminine plural) has a singular verb (אִמְלַל, pual perfect, 3rd person masculine singular), “grew feeble,” “languished.”

Slotki states that “שְׂדֵמוֹת, **shadmoth** [‘fields’] here denotes more particularly ‘vineyards’” as in **Deuteronomy 32:32**. (P. 79)

⁴⁷Slotki comments that Sibmah is “in the neighborhood of Heshbon and famous for its vineyards. Remains of winepresses have been found among its ruins.” (P. 79)

Perhaps—but we find no references to such a site on the Internet, although there are a number of mentions of Sibmah in the **Hebrew Bible: Numbers 32:38; Isaiah 16:8** (here), **9; Jeremiah 48:32**.

Motyer states that “The exact location of Heshbon (**Isaiah 15:4**) and Sibmah (**Joshua 13:19**...) are unknown.” (P. 153)

⁴⁸Gray comments that “So famous was this vine that kings—lords of the nations—drank and became smitten down (**28:1**), i.e. drunk, with the wine of it. Less probable is the view that the line gives the cause of the destruction of the vine.” (P. 292)

⁴⁹The phrase here, שְׂרוּקֶיהָ, is from the root word שָׂרַק, which **Brown-Driver-Briggs** says means “vine-tendrils [specialized stems of the grape-vine with a threadlike

(continued...)

branches / tendrils struck down rulers of nations.⁵⁰

As far as Yaezer⁵¹ they touched;
they wandered (into the) wilderness;
its shoots were forsaken,
they crossed over (the) sea.⁵²

⁴⁹(...continued)

shape that enable it to climb a trellis; see the numerous photos on the Internet on ‘Grape-tendrils’]” or perhaps “clusters.”

Gray insists the translation should be “Red-clusters,” but states that others suggest “vine-tendrils” or “choice plants.” (P. 292)

⁵⁰Watts asks concerning the subject of this line—is it the rulers of nations, or the branches, tendrils? Compare the differences in **King James** where “the lords of the heathen” are the subject, and **Tanakh**, where “the tendrils” are the subject.

Slotki’s translation has “Whose choice plants did overcome The lords of nations.” He comments that the plants overcame “by intoxicating them.” (P. 79)

Compare **Isaiah 28:1**, which states that the drunkards of Ephraim were “overcome by wine.”

⁵¹Watts states that יַעֲזֵר, “Jazer,” is “probably modern *hirbet gazzir* just northeast of the northern tip of the Dead Sea.” (P. 231) See our footnote 97 on **Isaiah 15**.

⁵²Translations of **verse 8** vary, especially the Greek:

King James, “For the fields of Heshbon languish, *and* the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come *even* unto Jazer, they wandered *through* the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.”

Tanakh, “The vineyards of Heshbon are withered, And the vines of Sibmah; Their tendrils spread To Baale-goim, And reached to Jazer, And strayed to the desert; Their shoots spread out And crossed the sea.”

New Revised Standard, “For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vines of Sibmah, whose clusters once made drunk the lords of the nations, reached to Jazer and strayed to the desert; their shoots once spread abroad and crossed over the sea.”

New International, “The fields of Heshbon wither, the vines of Sibmah 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.”

(continued...)

⁵²(...continued)

New Jerusalem, “For Heshbon's vineyards are withering, the vine of Sibmah whose red grapes used to overcome the overlords of the nations. It used to reach to Jazer, had wound its way into the desert, its shoots grew so numerous they spread across the sea.”

Rahfs, τὰ πεδία Εσεβων πενθήσει ἄμπελος Σεβαμα καταπίνοντες τὰ ἔθνη καταπατήσατε τὰς ἀμπέλους αὐτῆς ἕως Ιαζηρ οὐ μὴ συνάψητε πλανήθητε τὴν ἔρημον οἱ ἀπεσταλμένοι ἐγκατελείφθησαν διέβησαν γὰρ τὴν ἔρημον, “The plains / fields of Esebon (it) will mourn [plural subject with singular verb]--a vine of Sebama. Drinking down / swallowing the nations, trample (2nd person plural imperative) the vines of hers as far as lazer. Do not come together! Be led astray (in) the desert, the ones being sent forth! They were left behind, for they crossed the desert. **NETS** has “The plains of Hesebon will mourn, the vine of Sebama. As you swallow up the nations, trample down her vines as far as lazer. You will not come together; you will not wander in the wilderness; those who were sent have been forsaken, for they crossed the wilderness.”

Slotki comments concerning this verse that the choice plants reached out “to Jazer in the north, the desert in the east and the Dead Sea in the west.” (P. 79)

Gray states that these last lines of **verse 8** “give a hyperbolic description of the size and ramifications of the celebrated vine...Westwards the vine *stretched out*, i.e. *extended to*, or perhaps rather *across*, the Dead Sea, the northeast corner of which lies about 16 miles in a straight line from Heshbon and some 4,000 feet below it. Eastwards the vine extends till the cultivated land passes into the vast Syrian desert.” (P. 292)

That is, as we understand it, the wine-making industry of Moab has had a permeating (and harmful) influence on all of Moab and its immediate neighbors.

⁵³Slotki comments on **verses 9-11** that “The prophet expresses his sympathy with the desolate city.” (P. 79)

Should he not have said “desolate cities,” i.e., Jazer, Sibmah, Heshbon, Elealeh and Kir-heres, all of which are named in these verses?

Kaiser comments on **verses 9-11** that “In this stanza the poet appears to be emphasizing his profound distress at what he has experienced, or rather observed. **Verse 6** does not suggest that he played a very honorable part in it. Deeply moved, he wishes to mourn with Jazer for the vines of the neighboring Sibmah, and even water Heshbon and Elealeh with his tears. The essential point of this rhetoric is found in the

(continued...)

אֲרִיֹד דְּמַעְתִּי חֶשְׁבֹן וְאֶלְעָלָה

⁵³(...continued)

contrast between the anticipated joy of the harvest and the echoing shouts of the enemy, followed by silence in the vineyards.” (Pp. 73-4)

Motyer entitles **verses 9-12** “The Lord’s grief over Moab.”

He comments that “The conjunction between *I weep* (**verse 9**) and *I have put an end...*(**verse 10**) indicates that once more the Lord is the subject. The initial *So / ‘Therefore’* of **verse 9**...means that the Lord too grieves over the pride of Moab and its consequences. In **15:5** He wept for Moab [?] but now He weeps *with* Moab, *as Jazer weeps*...making its tears His Own. He is no onlooker at the world’s sorrow but identifies with the mourners even though it is the weight of His Own justly imposed punishment that He feels.” (Pp. 153-54)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 9**, “Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer (for) the vine of Sibmah. I will wet thee (with) my tears, Heshbon and (thee) Elealeh! For upon thy fruit and upon thy harvest a cry has fallen. Some suppose these to be the words of a Moabite bewailing the general calamity. There is no objection, however, to the supposition that the prophet here expresses his own sympathy with the distress of Moab, as an indirect method of describing its intensity...

“The sense is not that he will weep for the vine of Sibmah as he does for Jazer... but that he will weep for the vines of Sibmah as Jazer (i.e., the inhabitants of Jazer) did, who were particularly interested in them.” (P. 327)

Gray translates by “I weep with the weeping of Ya’zer,” and comments, “the poet joins his tears...to those of Ya’zer; but why he singles out Ya’zer is not clear, unless, indeed, we could believe that he was himself a man of Ya’zer...and therefore a Moabite.” (P. 292)

Oswalt states that “The prospect of the destruction of the rich land reduces the prophet to tears. Some have suggested that this show of emotion was only feigned, since he was after all announcing the destruction of, if not an enemy, at least a hostile party. But this need not be the case. One need only think of a Jeremiah weeping over the fate of those he was denouncing. Furthermore, the prospect of the destruction of so much effort and care on the part of so many people and the reducing of ordered, cultivated lands to wilderness is certainly cause for despair, no matter who the people may be.” (P. 346)

So, where Motyer insists that the text is describing YHWH / God as weeping, these other commentators see the passage as depicting the prophet as doing the weeping. Who do you agree with? We think it is the prophet, YHWH’s spokesperson, who is doing the weeping.

כִּי עַל-קִינֹץ וְעַל-קִצִּירֶךָ הֵיָדָד נָפַל:

For this reason I will weep with Yaezer's weeping (for) Sibmah's vineyard;

I will water / drench you⁵⁴ (with) my tear(s), Heshbon and Elealeh.

Because over your summer-fruit⁵⁵ and over your harvest a shout fell.⁵⁶

⁵⁴The phrase אֲרִיִן is said by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** to be piel imperfect, 1st person singular, with 2nd person singular feminine suffix, "I will saturate you." But this is a very unusual form. 1QIs^a has אֲרִיִן, "I will cause you to grow lean."

⁵⁵Alexander comments that קִיץ, which elsewhere means the fruit of summer (**Jeremiah 40:12; Amos 8:1**), is used here and in **28:4**, to denote the ingathering of the fruit." (Pp. 327-28)

⁵⁶Slotki translates הֵיָדָד by "battle-shout," and comments that "The Hebrew **hedad** means 'shouting,' 'cheering.' It signifies both the cry of wine-pressers (**Jeremiah 25:30**) and of charging soldiers (**Jeremiah 51:14**). The prophet may be implying that it used to be the former, but now it is the latter." (P.80)

Motyer states that "*The shouts of joy (hedad)*, the traditional vintage shout...are also the triumphant shout of the victor...Thus what once signaled Moab's prosperity (**verse 8**) is the sound of its ruin, its pride and its downfall in one word." (P. 154)

Translations of **verse 9** vary:

King James, "Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen."

Tanakh, "Therefore, As I weep for Jazer, So I weep for Sibmah's vines; O Heshbon and Elealeh, I drench you with my tears. Ended are the shouts Over your fig and grain harvests."

New Revised Standard, "Therefore I weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vines of Sibmah; I drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; for the shout over your fruit harvest and your grain harvest has ceased." **New International** and **New Jerusalem**, similar.

Rahlfs, διὰ τοῦτο κλαύσομαι ὡς τὸν κλαυθμὸν Ἰαζηρ ἄμπελον Σεβαμα τὰ δένδρα σου κατέβαλεν Εσεβων καὶ Ελεαλη ὅτι ἐπὶ τῷ θερισμῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ τρυγήτῳ σου καταπατήσω καὶ πάντα πεσοῦνται, "Because of this I will weep, like the weeping of lazer—a vine of Sebama. The trees of yours he felled, Esebon and Eleale, because over harvest and over the vintage of yours I will trample and all things will fall. **NETS** has "Therefore I will weep as with the weeping of lazer for the vine of Sebama. He has cut down your trees, O

(continued...)

16:10⁵⁷ וְנֶאֱסַף שְׂמֵחָה וְגִיל מִן־הַפְּרִמָּל
 וּבַכְּרָמִים לֹא־יִרְנֵן לֹא יִרְעַע
 זֵין בִּיקְבֵּיִם לֹא־יִדְרֹף
 הַדְּרֹף הַיִּדְרֹד הַשְּׁבֵתִי:

And gladness and rejoicing are removed from the garden;
 and in the vineyards no ringing-cry is given,⁵⁸ not⁵⁹ a shout is raised.
 Wine in the wine-vats is not treaded;

⁵⁶(...continued)

Hesebon and Eleale, because I will trample down your harvest and vintage, and all things will fall.”

⁵⁷Alexander translates / comments on **verse 10**: “*And taken away is joy and gladness from the fruitful field: and in the vineyards shall no (more) be sung, no (more) be shouted; wine in the presses shall the treader not tread; the cry have I stilled (or caused to cease).*” (P. 328)

Motyer states that here (in **verse 10**) “from the land (**verse 9**) the description passes to the people.” (P. 154)

Oswalt comments that “The harvest was normally concluded with the gathering of the grapes, when the whole population would move out from the villages and live in makeshift shelters in the vineyards (**Isaiah 1:8; Leviticus 23:33-43**). This occurred in late September or early October. Particularly if the rest of the harvest had been good this was a great time of relaxation and exuberance...The new wine, only recently trodden out in the great stone vats which resided in the vineyards for that purpose, added its own measure of gaiety.

“But none of this would be so in the Moab which Isaiah envisioned. The vine of Moab is broken down and withered...God has ended the shouting.” (P. 347)

⁵⁸Slotki’s translation has “there shall be no singing.” But he suggests, “Better, ‘there is no singing,’ a rendering which harmonizes the verse with the expressions of sympathy to which he is giving utterance.” (P. 80)

We see no reference to “singing” in the text.

⁵⁹A large number of Hebrew manuscripts along with 1QIs^a interpolate the word “and,” וְלֹא, “and not...”

the one treading (with a) shout I caused to cease!⁶⁰

16:11⁶¹ עַל־כֵּן מֵעַי לְמוֹאָב כִּפְנוֹר יִהְמוּ

⁶⁰Where our Hebrew text has הַיָּדָר הַשְּׁבִתִי, “shouting I caused to cease,” **Rahlfs** has πῆπαιστα γάρ, “for it has ceased.” The Greek text has nothing for the Hebrew הַיָּדָר, “the one treading.”

Slotki comments that “It is not clear to whom the pronoun refers [‘I have made...cease’], and the perfect of the verb disturbs the preceding tenses of the verb. The context seems to require rendering somewhat like ‘the vintage shout is ceased.’” (P. 80)

We think the first person statement would be most appropriately understood as a Divine word—but then **verse 13** introduces YHWH as speaking, implying that the preceding words are not His. Should we understand it as a statement of the prophet, implying that his message has been the cause of the harvest-shout ceasing? What follows in **verse 11** sounds much more like a statement of the prophet, rather than a statement of YHWH. What do you think?

⁶¹Motyer comments on **verses 11-12** that “This is the final ‘therefore’...*My heart... my inmost being* / *my intestines...my inward parts*’ denotes the whole emotional center of the Divine nature...Here is a deep-seated agony of God, audibly moved (*like a harp*) within...The content of **verse 12** returns to that of **15:1-2**; the religious expression of grief forming an *inclusio* [In biblical studies, *inclusio* is a literary device based on a concentric principle, also known as bracketing or an envelope structure, which consists of creating a frame by placing similar material at the beginning and end of a section] for the whole poem...

“Moab may go to *her high place* but *she only wears herself out*; she may *pray* but *it is to no avail*. Once the Lord has been rejected there is no religious alternative, no matter how great the zeal or how valid as such the practice.” (P. 154)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 11**: “*Therefore my bowels for Moab like the harp shall sound, and my inwards for Kirharses*. The viscera [the main organs in the main cavities of the body] are evidently mentioned as the seat of the affections. Modern usage would require heart and bosom...The comparison is either with the sad notes of a harp, or with the striking of its strings, which may be used to represent the beating of the heart or the commotion of the nerves.” (P. 329)

We think it quite strange that Motyer understands these statements concerning intestines or bowels as “moaning like a harp” to be revelations concerning the Divine nature. It seems much more likely that the prophet is speaking of his own emotions, of his own “stomach churning” or “growling” over the suffering of his neighbors.

(continued...)

וְקִרְבֵי לְקִיר־חֶרֶשׁ:

For this reason my stomach groans / murmurs like the harp for Moab,
and my innards for Qir-Hares.⁶²

16:12⁶³ וְהָיָה כִּי־נִרְאָה כִּי־נִלְאָה מוֹאָב עַל־הַבִּמָּה

⁶¹(...continued)

Oswalt states that the phrase “my bowels moan” “may sound at first almost ludicrous to a Westerner. Yet, we know what it is to feel our stomach churn over some shock or anxiety or grief. So it should not come as a surprise that people of the Near East should see the upper abdominal area (the pit of the stomach?) as the seat of emotions (**Isaiah 63:15; Song of Songs 5:4; Jeremiah 31:20; Lamentations 1:20; 2:11; Philippians 1:8; Colossians 3:12**; so also the liver, **Lamentations 2:11**).”

He also notes that “It is interesting to note that the [Aramaic] Targum makes it Moab’s bowels. Apparently by the time the Targum was written, compassion for one’s enemies had become inconceivable.” (P. 347)

⁶²The words for “stomach” and “entrails” are מֵעֵי, the plural of מֵעָה, with the 1st person singular suffix, which we translate by “my stomach”; and קִרְבֵי, “my inward part,” “my inwards,” which we translate by “my innards.” Slotki’s translation has “heart” and “inward parts.” He states that “heart” is literally “bowels,” “in Hebrew the seat of the emotions.” (P. 80)

The speaker is expressing his deep emotions of sympathy for the suffering people of Moab—quite different from a self-righteous criticism of the people because of their pride and arrogance.

⁶³Alexander comments on / translates **verse 12**: “From the impending ruin Moab attempts in vain to save himself by supplication to his Gods. They are powerless and he is desperate. *And it shall be* (or come to pass), *when Moab has appeared* (before his Gods), *when he has wearied himself* (with vain oblations) *on the high place, then* (literally *and*) *he shall enter into his sanctuary to pray, and shall not be able* (to obtain an answer)...

“According to the true interpretation of the verse [as if there is only one ‘true’ interpretation, with all others being false!], the last clause may either represent the worshiper as passing from the open high place to the shrine or temple where his God resided, in continuation of the same religious service, or it may represent him as abandoning the ordinary altars, and resorting to some noted temple, or to the shrine of some chief idol, such as Chemosh (**1 Kings 11:7**)...The [Greek translation] refers לְיֹכֵל [‘be able’] to the idol (he shall not be able to deliver him)...

(continued...)

וּבֵּא אֶל-מִקְדָּשׁוֹ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל

וְלֹא יִכְלֵל:

And it will happen when it is seen that Moab was made weary upon the high place,⁶⁴
and he will come to his set-apart place to pray / intercede--
and he will not be able / succeed!⁶⁵

⁶³(...continued)

“As applied to Moab, it does not mean that he should not be able to reach or to enter the sanctuary on account of his exhaustion, but that he should not be able to obtain what he desired, or indeed to effect anything whatever by his prayers.” (Pp. 329-30)

Oswalt states that “Not only are Moab’s pride and abundance futile, but so too is his religion. When he goes to the high place the only thing he gets is weariness... Chemosh, the national God, is unable to help. Moab is left with nothing upon which to rely.” (P. 347)

⁶⁴Slotki comments that the “wearying himself” either means “in battle,” or, according to others, “invoking the help of his Gods.” (P. 80)

⁶⁵Translations of **verse 12** vary:

King James, “And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail.”

Tanakh, “And when it has become apparent that Moab has gained nothing in the outdoor shrine, he shall come to pray in his temple -- but to no avail.”

New Revised Standard, “When Moab presents himself, when he wearies himself upon the high place, when he comes to his sanctuary to pray, he will not prevail.”

New International, “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.”

New Jerusalem, “Moab will be seen, wearing itself out on the high places and going to its temple to pray, but it will accomplish nothing.”

Rahfs, καὶ ἔσται εἰς τὸ ἐντραπήναί σε ὅτι ἐκοπίασεν Μωαβ ἐπὶ τοῖς βωμοῖς καὶ εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὰ χειροποίητα αὐτῆς ὥστε προσεύξασθαι καὶ οὐ μὴ δύνηται ἐξελέσθαι αὐτόν, “And it will be for putting yourself to shame, because Moab labored upon the high places; and he will enter into the hand-made (idols) of hers, so as to pray—and he will not be able to deliver himself.” **NETS** has “And it will be for your shame, because Moab has become weary at the altars, and she will enter the works of her hands in order to pray but will not be able to deliver him.”

(continued...)

⁶⁵(...continued)

Slotki states: “Neither physical defense (or worship) on the *high place* nor prayer to his idols in their sanctuary will save a people the Lord had condemned.” (P. 80)

⁶⁶Slotki comments on **verses 13-14** that they form an “epilogue, intimating that the destruction of Moab is to take place within three years.” (P. 80)

Motyer entitles **verses 13-14** “Moab’s imminent ruin.”

He comments that “Moab’s downfall, predicted in **15:1-16:12**, is linked to a time limit. It is not impossible that these verses originated (compare **21:11-12**) in response to a Moabite inquiry, for the prophets were sought by foreigners (**2 Kings 8:7-9**). In the intense diplomatic activity occasioned by the common Assyrian threat, Isaiah could have published **15:1-16:12** to coincide with a Moabite delegation to Zion in order to share with them his sense of urgency, to impress the policy he would desire to be followed and to urge upon them his awareness that their real foe was not Assyria but their own pride. In such a context, one or more Moabites could well have sought a word from him...

“On the other hand, as with the ‘foreign oracles’ of the prophets, **15:1-16:12** may have been addressed to an absent audience (Moab) in order to give teaching to a present audience (Judah), to inculcate the lessons of the deadly menace of proud self-reliance and disregard of the Divine promises...

“In either case, the message is now associated with a time-limitation. They will see before their very eyes that outside the Lord’s promises there is no salvation and that pride, inhibiting a spirit of trust, is really a killer.” (P. 154)

Oswalt entitles **verses 13-14** “Within three years.”

He comments that they “are the prediction concerning the fulfillment of the oracle. Formerly (מֵאִז׃) can refer to a long time (**Isaiah 44:8; Proverbs 8:22**) or a short time (**2 Samuel 15:34**) in the past. Thus this material on Moab could have been derived from sources considerably older than Isaiah and compiled by him for this purpose, or they could be words spoken by him a few months or years prior to this indication of their significance by the Spirit.” (P. 348)

Kaiser entitles **verse 13-14** “The end of Moab will come soon!”

He states that these are “the words of someone who believed that he possessed a more exact knowledge of God’s plan for history, a belief that had been current in apocalyptic circles since the second century (compare **Daniel 12:11-12**). The condemnation of Moab uttered by Yahweh sometime in the past will now be carried out, with the certainty which it possesses as a word of Yahweh, within the next three years...

(continued...)

This is the word which YHWH spoke to Moab, at that time;⁶⁷

16:14⁶⁸ וַעֲתָה דְבַר יְהוָה לֵאמֹר

⁶⁶(...continued)

The years are compared with those of a שָׂחִיר, **sakhiyr**, a day laborer...It should be noted that **16:13-14** finds an almost literal parallel in **21:16-17**.” (P. 74)

Alexander translates **verse 13** by “This is the word which Jehovah spake concerning Moab of old.” He comments that מֵאָזְ (literally “from that time”) “does not mean since the date of the foregoing prophecy, or since another point of time not specified...but more indefinitely, ‘heretofore,’ ‘of old.’ It may be applied either to a remote or a recent period, and is frequently used by Isaiah elsewhere, in reference to earlier predictions.” (P. 330)

The phrase is found in **Isaiah** at: **14:8; 16:13; 44:8; 45:21; 48:3, 5, 7 and 8**.

⁶⁷Slotki’s translation has “in time past.” He comments that “the phrase modifies the verb spoke. The time, according to tradition, is that when Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel (compare **Numbers 22-24**).” (P. 81)

⁶⁸Alexander translates / comments on **verse 14**: “*And now Jehovah speaks (or has spoken), saying, In three years, like the years of an hireling, the glory of Moab shall be disgraced, with all the great throng, and the remnant shall be small and for not much.* By the years of an hireling most writers understand years computed strictly and exactly, with or without allusion to the eager expectation with which hirelings await their time, and their joy at its arrival, or to the hardships of the time of servitude...”

“Barnes understands the **thirteenth verse** to mean that such had been the tenor of the prophecies against Moab from the earliest times, which were now to receive their final accomplishment. A majority of writers look upon **verses 13-14** as a postscript or appendix by Isaiah to an earlier prediction of his own or of some other prophet...”

“The only safe conclusion is that these two verses were added by Divine command in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, or that if written by Isaiah they were verified in some of the Assyrian expeditions which were frequent at that period, although the conquest of Moab is not explicitly recorded in the history.” (Pp. 330-31)

And we wonder what Alexander means by stating that this is “the only safe conclusion”? Does he mean that the only safe conclusion that can be drawn has to be limited to those conclusions that fit within the creedal statements of the Presbyterian or some other church body, which holds that the entire Protestant canon of scripture is “God-breathed” and cannot be added to by copyists or editors or translators or commentators after its original writing? And if so, then a passage such as this, which appears to be a later addition to the original text, must have been placed there by “Divine command”?

(continued...)

⁶⁸(...continued)

For over 65 years, I have devoted my life to the reading and understanding of the biblical text in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek—and to the preaching and teaching of that text. I deeply love the **Bible** and its teaching—powerful teaching that is unequaled anywhere else, including other religious documents such as the **Koran**, the **Bagavad-Gita**, and the writings of the great philosophers—all of which, in my view, pale in comparison with the **Bible**.

But the human element is obvious throughout the biblical text—in the **Hebrew Bible**, the **Greek New Testament**, and in the formation of the canon of the **Bible**. No, the **Bible** didn't fall down from heaven without using limited, fallible human instruments, and it wasn't put together apart from fallible human bishops and church councils called together by Roman emperors.

Human fingerprints are evident everywhere, as we see here in **Isaiah 16**. It is folly to treat the **Bible** as a Divine Book without human writers, with all their weaknesses and limitations—to pretend that the biblical text is infallible, with no mistakes, with no evidences of human involvement, with no contradictions, no conflicts of theological statements.

The theological conflicts are there—as becomes obvious in our study of **Isaiah 40-55** over against the teaching of **Ezra-Nehemiah**, etc.

But with that said, I must add that it is also my conviction that God has used, and continues to use the biblical text to speak His message and His call, transforming the lives of those who choose to search for and listen to its message, in powerful ways, bringing them to repentance and humility before God, and sending them out in loving, caring mission to the ends of the earth. Written by fallible human beings, such as you and I—but used by the Spirit of God to speak to our hearts, convicting us of sin, offering us Divine forgiveness, sending us out to serve others in unselfish love, warning us, as **Isaiah 16** does, against the folly of human pride, and giving us the hope of a coming king of all the nations. Indeed, the study of theological conflicts within the canon of the **Bible** is one of its most powerful sources of teaching, and impulse to mission.

What do you think? How do you make sense of your reading of the **Bible**? Will you, like Motyer, arbitrarily decide whose voice is speaking, make the text say what sounds good to you, excusing its seeming mistakes on the writer's "panting" or being out of breath, or being interrupted by other voices? Or like Oswalt, and many others, will you recognize its faults and inconsistencies, not trying to make the text say something it doesn't say?

And we ask, Is it true humility to think yourself able to create the Divine word, rather than quietly waiting to hear that word? Is it not far better to admit our ignorance, when in fact we do not know? Is it not better to confess with Paul that we see through a mirror darkly, that we prophesy in part and know in part (**1 Corinthians 13:9-12**)? Is it

(continued...)

בְּשָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים כְּשָׂנֵי שָׂכִיר
 וְנִקְלָהּ כְּבוֹד מוֹאָב
 בְּכָל הַהֲמוֹן הָרֹב
 וְשָׂר מְעַט מְזַעַר
 לֹא כְּבִיר:

And now YHWH spoke, saying:

In three years—like years of a hired worker—⁶⁹
 and Moab's glory will be dishonored
 with all the great roar / crowd;
 and a tiny remnant,⁷⁰ a trifle--

⁶⁸(...continued)

not better to say what Jesus is reported to have said, when asked concerning the time of the end, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but the Father only”? (**Matthew 25:36; Mark 13:32**)

⁶⁹Watts suggest that שָׂכִיר, “hired worker,” may be “mercenary,” a professional soldier, hired to work in a foreign army. Compare **Jeremiah 46:21**,

Also her hired soldiers / mercenaries in her midst—
 like calves of a stall;
 because they ran—
 they turned, they ran together.
 They did not stand.
 Because a day of their distress came upon them,
 a time of their visitation (for punishment).

Slotki's translation has “*as the years of a hireling*.” He comments that “As a hireling does not work a moment longer than the stipulated time, so the fall of Moab will not be deferred for a moment longer than the three years' period mentioned.” (P. 81)

⁷⁰Where our Hebrew text has וְשָׂר, “and a remnant / residue,” **Rahlf**s has καὶ καταλειφθήσεται, “and it will be left.”

not great / mighty.⁷¹

⁷¹Where our Hebrew text has the adjective לֹא כְבִיר, “not great / mighty / much,” 1QIs^a לֹא כְבוֹד, “not glory / honor”; Rahlfs has καὶ οὐκ ἔτιμος, “and not valued / precious.”

Slotki’s translation has “and without strength,” and Slotki states that the Hebrew is literally “not strong.” (P. 81)

Watts explains **chapters 15-16** by asking: “What happened in Moab to occasion this outcry? Dibon’s mourning (**15:2**) concerns the devastation of, first, the villages of Nebo and Medeba and, soon after, their neighboring villages, Heshbon and Elealeh (**15:4**). It is a national disaster (**15:2**). People flee the countryside around the southern end of the Dead Sea (**15:5**) and around the northern tip toward the Jordan...

“Jerusalem is to be entreated by gifts to accept the refugees (**16:1-2**). Moab asks for advice and support (**16:3-4a**). An announcement is heard that aggression will cease when the Davidic dynasty holds sway over the territory again (**16:4b -5**).

“A chorus of Judeans proclaims Moab’s pride to be the cause of her calamity (**16:6-8**). Yahweh laments Moab’s destruction, although he had occasioned it himself as judgment on her false worship (**16:9-12**). He acknowledges that this is judgment upon [Moab—not Edom!] (**16:13**) but relents to grant her a tiny and weak surviving remnant (**16:14**).

“No evidence exists to suggest that Assyria invaded the country at this time or that a large army moved down the Jordan toward Moab or approached her from the south. The transjordanian states were threatened repeatedly in their history by tribes from the desert...

“Moab’s rulers appeal to Jerusalem to receive their refugees. A symbolic lamb is to be sent, reminiscent of the thousands which Mesha once sent in tribute to the king of Israel (**2 Kings 3:4**). Judah’s authorities and people are sympathetic to the appeal. Even Yahweh is sympathetic.

“The implication is that Moab becomes Judah’s vassal again. The Lord’s judgment drives Moab back into the arms of the Davidic king in Jerusalem (**16:5**). It may well be that Moab joined Jerusalem and Ashdod in the rebellion against Assyria that was suppressed by 710 B.C.E. through Sargon II in his campaign against the Philistine states. Moab and Jerusalem withdrew from the coalition soon enough to avoid Assyrian wrath by paying tribute.

“The scene portrays the beginning of that process as Jerusalem is beginning to dream of restored glory. The first step is acceptance of Moab’s invitation to Jerusalem

(continued...)

⁷¹(...continued)

to 'establish her shadow' (**16:3**), that is, to cast the cloak of her protection over Moab."
(Pp. 231-32)

And we wonder—is there anything comparable to this material in the religious literature of other nations—which shows such knowledge of, and concern for, the goings-on in other nations than their own, and which promises to other nations with different religions from their own a share in their hope?

We have heard it claimed that the prophets of Israel were only concerned for their own nation, and not for others. But these chapters in **Isaiah 13-20**, along with **Jeremiah 46-51** and **Ezekiel 25-32**, etc. demonstrate that this is simply not the truth. Israel's God, YHWH, is God of all the earth; and just as Israel belongs to YHWH, so do all nations and peoples, who are responsible to YHWH for their conduct, and who are included in His purposes and future hope. It is true that the prophets of Israel often speak a message of judgment on other nations—but upon none so severely as upon their own! What do you think?