
“LET THE METAPHORS
SPEAK TO YOU”

An LDS Commentary on Isaiah

ANN N. MADSEN

Dedicated to those who live in the time about which Isaiah prophesied

Isaiah 15

15:1. In the biblical account, the Moabites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot, through Lot's daughters (Genesis 19:30–38). Moab is the region on the east side of the Dead Sea, north of Edom, about thirty miles long and thirty miles wide, and within sight of Judah across the River Jordan and the Dead Sea. Relationships between Judah and Moab were sometimes positive and sometimes negative (unlike Judah's relationships with Edom, which were only negative). The Moabites were attacked by Assyria in circa 711 BC.

Ar, located to the north and near the Arnon River, and Kir-hareseth, the main fortress located further south, were the two chief cities of Moab.

15:2. Dibon, located three miles north of the Arnon River, contained a high place or temple for the Moabite god Chemosh.

Nebo is the great mountain at the north end of the Dead Sea from which Moses saw the Holy Land. Its height would have made it a defensive strongpoint. Medeba is five miles south of Nebo.

Verses 2–3 describe mourning or slavery.

15:4. Heshbon and Elealeh are in the north of Moab, located two miles from each other, north of the Dead Sea, in an area often in dispute. Jahaz was located about twelve miles south of Heshbon. Wailing was heard from city to city. At the end of verse 4, we read, "Therefore, the armed men of Moab cry out and

their hearts are faint.” Verse 5 begins with “My heart cries out over Moab.” The speaker is either Isaiah or the LORD.

15:5. Zoar was located near Edom, to which refugees from Moab fled. See NRSV translation. “An heifer of three years old” is likely better translated as the place-name “Eglath-shelishiyah.”

15:6. Nimrim may refer to Wadi Numeira at the southern end of Edom. Water only flows periodically in a wadi.

15:7. See NRSV translation. The “Wadi of the Willows” (NRSV) or the “Ravine of Poplars” (NIV) may be the Zered River, which formed the border with Edom.

15:8. These verses describe wailing along the borders of Moab. Eglaim may be synonymous with Beer-elim.

15:9. The location of Dimon is unknown. The closest place-name is Dibon, which was an important religious site for the Moabites. The Dead Sea Scrolls, some Septuagint manuscripts, and the Vulgate have Dibon, so “Dimon” is a scribal error.

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