

Isaiah 15

Read Isaiah 15

At the first reading, this seems to be an account of when Moab fell, city by city. It speaks of people fleeing in the face of destruction. Those fugitives who escaped were hunted down and captured and killed. All of the treasure gathered was now a burden to save and try to escape with. Like Lot's wife, everything these people accumulated was their burden now. It prevented them from being freed. Is there a story behind all of this?

We just finished reading about how God made harsh corrections in Judah. He used the surrounding nations to force them to reconsider asking for God's help. These surrounding nations (like Moab) are now being called to account for their overboard excesses and abuses against Judah.

We should look at Moab from its origins. Moab and Ammon were the sons of Lot, so **Moab is the legacy of Lot**. Lot was righteous, but he was known for making **spiritual compromises**. These compromises had big impacts on his legacy. The name Lot, first mentioned in Genesis 11:27 was Abram's nephew who was allowed to join him on his journey. The name Lot means *veil*, or covering. You could say that he saw spiritual things vaguely. That seems appropriate for a man who did not work too hard to clarify God's will for his life. We have all been in situations where we were more interested in the minimum we could get away with, rather than do it God's way. Our application is a tale of woe to those who are slack in carrying out their faith.

Here is a list of Lot's faith malfunctions that resounded in his future generations of Moabites and Ammonites:

- He took the work of God negligently. As you may recall, he moved his family near wicked Sodom for business opportunities. Then he became a civic leader in that hell hole. It would be like Chuck Smith becoming mayor of San Francisco. It's not a good fit.
- He was eager to take what he could get that may not have been rightfully his. God gave Abram a lot of land, and Abram graciously let Lot share that space until Lot needed more space. Lot kept taking, and he took the best for himself.

- Lot devalued how God blessed Abram. Lot refused to humble himself and return to Uncle Abram after his multiple colossal life mistakes. Surely Abram coached him, but he let Lot live his life. Accordingly, Abram had to rescue Lot by defeating a pillaging confederation of armies. Later on, again, Lot refused to face Abram when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot preferred to keep his independence than to reconsider his trajectory or seek godly counsel.

What do the scriptures say about Moab? They are highlands dwellers who raised a lot of sheep and grapes. It was an agricultural lifestyle with an eye on building an empire. So much so, that they were envious extortioners, who are very prideful and arrogant. They also had volatile tempers. They are big talkers who are full of themselves. It was like a small man's complex about their comparison to Israel. When we refuse to sacrifice anything for God, our walk becomes stale and useless. The God-made man is more blessed than the self-made man.

For because of your trust in your own achievements and treasures, You yourself will also be captured; And Chemosh will go off into exile Together with his priests and his leaders...Cursed is the one who does the Lord's work negligently... "Moab has been at ease since his youth; He has also been peaceful, like wine on its dregs, And he has not been poured from vessel to vessel, Nor has he gone into exile. Therefore he retains his flavor, And his aroma has not changed. (Jeremiah 48)

He was self-oriented. He was perhaps too motivated to acquire, own and dominate his space. So much so, that he resorted to unholy methods to get ahead. Perhaps more than anything, he is the classic negligent Christian; who does what suits him. His faith is ankle deep. He minimizes his faith walk. His conscience has ruined this world's pleasures to him. They all have a bad aftertaste. And yet, he keeps putting himself in harm's way. His life is an unhappy one, because he is living in between two worlds; without the pleasures of either. He is not willing to distance himself from temptations and compromising things.

He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example of what is coming for the ungodly; ⁷ and if He rescued righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the perverted conduct of unscrupulous people ⁸ (for by what he saw and heard that righteous

man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), (2 Peter 2)

They had no regard for any extended family members or history with anyone. They cared nothing for descendants of Jacob or Esau whatsoever.

This is what the Lord says: “For three offenses of Moab, and for four, I will not revoke its punishment, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. (Amos 2:1)

They participated with the Babylonians in corralling the escaped Judeans during the siege of Jerusalem. They looted and hunted down Jews to be sold as slaves. They wanted so badly to be more significant and more successful than the Jews. Envy has a lot to do with antisemitism. Achieving excellence is not the elimination of any competition of those who are more blessed than you. This can be the separation between talkers and doers.

“I have heard the taunting of Moab And the abusive speech of the sons of Ammon, With which they have taunted My people And boasted against their territory. ⁹ Therefore, as I live,” declares the Lord of armies, The God of Israel, “Moab will assuredly be like Sodom, And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah— Ground overgrown with weeds and full of salt mines, And a permanent desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them, And the remainder of My nation will inherit them.” ¹⁰ This they will have in return for their arrogance, because they have taunted and boasted against the people of the Lord of armies. ¹¹ The Lord will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place. (Zephaniah 2)

In God’s poetic justice, God gives the property of the land thieves to others.

⁸ ‘The Lord God says this: “Because Moab and Seir say, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations,’ ⁹ therefore, behold, I am going to deprive the flank of Moab of its cities, of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim; ¹⁰ and I will give it as a possession along with the sons of Ammon to the people of the east, so that the sons of Ammon will not be remembered among the nations. ¹¹ So I will execute judgments on Moab, and they will know that I am the Lord.” (Ezekiel 25)

We see that Lot, who compromised his faith died without having anything to show for his time on earth. His family got destroyed; and he caused a lot of problems for God's people too. Lot's life was a classic tale of Murphy's Law. Similarly, when we just live for ourselves we effect many souls who come along after us. We are all connected in so many ways. Lot wanted to be left alone to sort out the consequences of his decisions; but nobody lives in a vacuum.

You can see more clearly into the soul of the Moabite man in the story of Balaam and King Balak of Moab. He feared God's people so much that he wanted to do them harm to keep them at bay. Just like Lot who explored every option possible to avoid returning to his Uncle Abram. King Balak hired a freelance prophet to curse the Hebrews. The shallow believer knows deep down that he is not a God enthusiast, but he still feels that he has to prove that he is not the one who made the wrong decisions in life. Character assassination never feels good for a reason. If he can disparage the Hebrews, that somehow makes his lot in life look better? To do so, he will call in all kinds of out-of-bounds methods. In other words, if you are not a God lover, you will eventually become a God hater.