

Isaiah 15:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My heart shall cry out for Moab; his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar, an heifer of three years old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

Analysis

Isaiah's "heart shall cry out for Moab" demonstrates the prophet's compassion despite being Israel's enemy. This reflects God's own heart—taking no pleasure in judgment (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11) yet remaining committed to justice. The refugees fleeing to Zoar (south of the Dead Sea, spared in Sodom's destruction, Genesis 19:22-23) seek any refuge from advancing armies. The vivid image of fugitives as "an heifer of three years old" suggests strength turned to flight, productive animals becoming refugees. The phrase "going up of Luhith with weeping" and "way of Horonaim" describe literal geographical ascents and descents, but also spiritual desperation. Reformed pastoral theology emphasizes that true ministers must combine unflinching proclamation of judgment with genuine grief over the lost—never celebrating others' destruction while maintaining conviction about divine justice.

Historical Context

Zoar's association with Lot connects Moab's origin and end—both linked to divine judgment. The geographical references (Luhith, Horonaim) describe mountain passes used by refugees, confirmed by archaeological surveys showing these as ancient routes. The comparison to "an heifer of three years old" references an animal in its prime before breaking to yoke—strong but untrained for hardship,

thus particularly distressed when forced to flee. Ancient Near Eastern warfare regularly produced massive refugee movements, documented in Assyrian annals and archaeological evidence of destroyed cities.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How can we maintain both conviction about God's righteous judgment and genuine compassion for those under judgment?
2. What does Isaiah's grief for Moab teach us about proper Christian attitude toward enemies?
3. Why is Zoar's connection to Lot's story significant for understanding Moab's end?

Interlinear Text

לְבִי	לְמוֹאָב	יִזְעַק	בְּרִיָּה	עַד	צֵר
My heart	for Moab	shall cry out	his fugitives	H5704	shall flee unto Zoar
H3820	H4124	H2199	H1280		H6820
עֵגְלָת	שְׁלֹשִׁי	כִּי	מֵעֹלָה		הַלֹּחֵת
an heifer	of three years old	H3588	for by the mounting up		of Luhith
H5697	H7992		H4608		H3872
בְּבִכִּי	יֵעָלֶה	כִּי	דֶּךָ	חֹרֵן	יַעֲקֹת
with weeping	shall they go it up	H0	for in the way	of Horonaim	a cry
H1065	H5927		H1870	H2773	H2201
שִׁבְרָה	יִעָלֶה:				
of destruction	they shall raise up				
H7667	H5782				

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 48:5 (Parallel theme): For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction.

Jeremiah 4:20 (Parallel theme): Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.

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