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The Life and Times of Hezekiah, King of Judah

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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH

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Introduction

The reign of King Hezekiah of Judah is one of the most interesting and instructive in the entire history of God's Chosen People. It was during this period that the greatest catastrophe occurred in the history of Israel before the Exile -- the Fall of Samaria -- an awful object lesson to the people of Hezekiah's day, as well as to us moderns. The little kingdom of Judah itself was beset on all sides by powerful enemies, and was in sore need of the protection and guidance of the all-powerful and all-wise God. And the guiding hand of God in the broad sweep of human history was never more evident than in Hezekiah's time.

This was also the period in which the great prophet Isaiah lived and worked. Since the major portion of his ministry falls into the reign of Hezekiah, a knowledge of the social, political, and economic conditions during this period is indispensable for the proper understanding of his prophetic writings.

The history of Hezekiah also presents to the student of antiquity some vexing historical and critical problems. The effort to solve these difficulties bulks large in the following pages.

It is hoped that this paper will contribute to a better understanding of those critical days of old, and that the reader will acquire a deeper appreciation of the virtues and shortcomings of the ancient stalwarts who march across its pages. If this thesis fails to do this, it is not the fault of the subject matter, but that of the writer.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH

I. The Kingdom which Hezekiah Inherited

When Hezekiah ascended the throne of Judah in 728/27 B.C., he by no means entered upon a life of ease and security.[1] Great problems were pressing in on him from every side, and it now became his responsibility to steer the little kingdom of Judah through perilous times and great pitfalls. The very existence of Judah as an independent nation was at stake. That he succeeded to some degree at least is an unmistakable evidence of the providence of God.

Foreign Problems

One of the problems confronting Hezekiah was the foreign situation, and the foreign situation could all be summed up in one word: Assyria. The great colossus of the Tigris, which had been temporarily stopped at Qarqar in 853, had been expanding westward for almost a hundred years. Shalmaneser III (d.824) had placed Assyria on a firm basis. His successors, Shamshi-adad III (824-811) and Adad-nirari III (811-782), extended Assyrian conquests to the Mediterranean north of Palestine, and managed to retain control of Babylon. Shalmaneser IV (782-772) spent most of his time warring against Urartu (Armenia), a strong nation on

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1. All questions of chronology will be treated in detail in Chapter V of this thesis.

the northern boundary of the empire. Under the leadership of Argistis, the Urartu succeeded in weakening the Assyrians, but did not win complete freedom from Assyrian rule. They were destined to be a troublesome enemy of Assyria for many years. From 772 to 746, weak kings and internal revolts left Assyria more shaken than she had been in a hundred years. With the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727), the moribund empire revived, and began the most glorious era of its history. In a series of well-planned campaigns in the North and Northwest he secured the boundaries of the empire and opened the trade routes to the West. He conceived and inaugurated the policy followed by all succeeding Assyrian and Babylonian kings of deporting the populations of conquered countries, and replacing them with people from other portions of the empire. This proved to be a very effective means of making permanent the gains won by the force of arms.[2] It was natural that in the course of this expansion Tiglath-pileser should encounter the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in Palestine; and indeed, we read in II Kings 15:19,20 and I Chron. 5:26 that he received tribute from king Menahem of Israel and devastated much of the Northern Kingdom. This humiliation of Israel took place in 743 B.C.[3]

In an attempt to halt the march of Assyria, Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, buried their differences and formed an anti-Assyrian alliance. They invited Ahaz of Judah to join them. At his refusal they

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2. T.H. Robinson, The Decline and Fall of the Hebrew Kingdoms, pp. 1-2.
3. Edwin R. Thiele, "Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, III (July, 1944), 163. For a discussion of this date and the question of identifying Pul with Tiglath-pileser, see pp. 155-163.

invaded Judah with the intent of putting a king on the throne who would be favorable to their cause.[4] Ahaz was terror-stricken, and contrary to the words of Isaiah begged Tiglath-pileser for help. This was unnecessary, for Tiglath-pileser was not likely to acquiesce in the existence of an anti-Assyrian league.[5] He came to Palestine in 734, and in a series of campaigns captured Damascus in 732, thus wiping out the last buffer state between Palestine and Assyria. He also deposed Pekah as king of Israel, putting Hoshea on the throne. A heavy tribute was laid on the land; and not only on Israel, for Ahaz also had to pay the price of the Assyrian's aid. He submitted to him at Damascus, and paid a large indemnity; this, we can be sure, made him very unpopular in his kingdom. Ahaz' submission had thus brought Judah under the crushing yoke of Assyria.

Though he owed his throne largely to the king of Assyria, Hoshea of Israel also found the Assyrian yoke galling. Incited, no doubt at least in part, by Egypt, he rebelled against Assyria in 725. After the devastating reign of Tiglath-pileser, there was little likelihood of a successful rebellion in any part of the empire. Therefore, Israel could not dare to fight Assyria alone, but she would attempt it with the help of Egypt, being unaware of the weaknesses of Egypt.[6]

Hoshea could hardly have picked a less opportune time to rebel. In 727 and 726 Shalmaneser V, who had succeeded Tiglath-pileser III in

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4. Isaiah 7:6.
5. Robinson, op. cit., p. 16.
6. Robert William Rogers, A History of Babylonia and Assyria, II, pp. 303-306.

727, was near at hand with his army in Syria. Evidently, Hoshea, abandoned by Egypt, met him in battle, was defeated and captured. The land was overrun, but Samaria, the capital, held out heroically for three years.[7] Finally, in 722/21, the city fell.

An interesting controversy has arisen as to the identity of the Assyrian king who actually took the city of Samaria. It appears that the writer of Kings implies that the same king, Shalmaneser (II Kings 18:9), who began the siege of Samaria, also captured it; he makes no mention at all of Sargon II, Shalmaneser's successor, who assumed the throne on Tebet 12, 722, or about the last of December.[8] While there are no good reasons for doubting the Hebrew chronicler, it is well known that the Assyrian accounts contain a "personal equation," for "the royal scribe would have every reason for carrying over into his master's reign events which took place in the final year of a predecessor."[9] It is also well-known that Assyrian kings never record their defeats.[10] Hence, we may infer that Assyrian records do not always speak the truth. Moreover, the Babylonian Chronicle I:28 indicates to several competent authorities that it was Shalmaneser, and not Sargon, who took the city.[11] Sargon's accession year was from December, 722, to April, 721, the worst time of the year for aggressive siege operations. For these reasons, it appears that the impression given by the Biblical account is correct in

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7. Ibid., pp. 307-308. II Kings 17:4,5.
8. Babylonian Chronicle I:31, cited by Thiele, op. cit., p. 173, n. 92.
9. Ibid., p. 173.
10. George A. Barton, Archaeology and the Bible, p. 473.
11. eg., Delitzsch, Olmstead, and Luckenbill. See Thiele, loc. cit.

ascribing the capture of Samaria to Shalmaneser rather than to Sargon.[12]

Both the Biblical and Assyrian accounts tell us that the Assyrian king deported a large part of the population of the Northern Kingdom. Sargon tells us that he carried off 27,290 people of Israel, who represented the best in the land, as is seen from subsequent history.[13] He settled Arabians in the land in 715, evidently intending to repopulate Israel.[14] II Kings 17:24 tells us that the former homes of certain of the new immigrants had been in Babylon. It seems that this repeopling of Israel went on for some time, for Ezra 4:8-10 states that the people of the land had been brought in by Asnaper, who has been identified with Ashurbanipal (d. 626).[15] It is likely, therefore, that the syncretistic religion practiced by the new inhabitants of the land (II Kings 17:25-41) was a gradual development that took many years.

With a great army so near Jerusalem, as the Assyrians had during the siege of Samaria, it is surprising at first glance to note that the Assyrians did not attack Judah at this time. They could have easily done so, and apparently with every chance of success. No doubt, the reasons for Judah's survival had something to do with her geographical position. She was off the road between Egypt and Assyria, while Israel had been on it. Since the Assyrians seem to have been already planning the conquest of Egypt, they had to put Israel out of the way first. The road between

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12. This is also the opinion of Thiele, though it may be noted that this is not a point vital to establishing the chronology followed in this paper. With Thiele this is not the case.

13. Daniel David Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia, II, secs. 4,55.

14. John Urquhart, The New Biblical Guide, VI, p. 101. And Ira Maurice Price, The Dramatic Story of Old Testament History, p. 308.

15. Robinson, op. cit., p. 72.

Egypt and the Tigris crossed the plain of Esdraelon, and Samaria commanded this valley. Jerusalem, being off the regular route, could be by-passed by the Assyrian kings. Another possible reason for Judah's continued existence was Ahaz' submission to Tiglath-pileser III.[16] Judah was now the vassel and "friend" of the Assyrians. To destroy Judah would also have meant destroying the source of profitable tribute. Thus, the Assyrian monarch did not molest the country of Judah at this time, since he had no cause for expending the men, money, and material necessary for her reduction, and at the same time had every reason to let her remain paying tribute.

The other great foreign power at Hezekiah's accession was Egypt. Not too much is known about its history during this period. The twenty-second dynasty, which had come into power in Solomon's time, had been weakening for some time.[17] The country gradually came under the rule of the powerful nobles. The Ethiopians in the South threw off their Egyptian overlordship and attained their independence. About 741, Piankhi, king of the Ethiopians, began the absorption of Egypt, and by 722 or 721 he ruled all of Upper Egypt. At this time, Osorkon III, the last king of the twenty-third dynasty, actually held only the country around Bubastis. There were many rival kinglets in the Delta. In 720, Tefnakhte, one of these Delta kings, gained the ascendency over the entire Delta, and became the most powerful king in Lower Egypt. He challenged the northward advance of the Ethiopian. However, Piankhi defeated him, though he

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16. Ibid., pp. 17-19.
17. Charles Foster Kent, The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, p. 8.

managed to escape with his army. The next year, 719, Piankhi continued his advance, taking place after place. Osorkon III recognized Piankhi's suzerainity, and the twenty-third dynasty came to an end. One after another the various Delta kinglets made obeisance and paid tribute, and finally even the redoubtable Tefnakhte submitted. Piankhi was now overlord of all Egypt. However, as soon as he returned home to the South, his authority weakened. The son of Tefnakhte, Bocchoris, managed to establish himself over Lower Egypt from about 718 to 712. He is the only known king of the twenty-fourth dynasty. In 720, Sargon of Assyria met and defeated at Raphia an Egyptian army led by a certain Sib'i, who escaped into Egypt. Evidently it was Bocchoris who had to pay the tribute demanded by Sargon.[18] The situation was now reversed from that of earlier days, when Assyria made gifts to Egypt. The memory of Egypt's former greatness probably kept both Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon out of her territory.[19]

Ethiopian authority was firmly re-established over all Egypt about 711, when Shabaka, brother of Piankhi, took the throne. He was the founder of the twenty-fifth, or Ethiopian dynasty.[20]

In II Kings 17:4, it is recorded that Hoshea of Israel appealed to a certain "So king of Egypt" for aid in his rebellion against Assyria. Egyptian history, as far as we know it, contains nothing about a "So king of Egypt." It is generally agreed by all authorities that this So is the same person whom Sargon calls Sib'i, the commander of the army at Raphia.[21]

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18. Luckenbill, op. cit., II, secs. 18,55.
19. James Henry Breasted, A History of Egypt, pp. 539-550.
20. Ibid.
21. The Cambridge Ancient History, III, p. 275.

According to this theory, there has been a miss-pointing in the Massoretic text. "So" can also be read "Savah" or "Saveh." This is identical with the Assyrian "Sab'i" (Sib'i).[22] Attempts have been made to identify this Sib'i with Shabaka, the Ethiopian Pharaoh, who began to rule about 711.[23] Those who favor this view explain that Shabaka was probably left by Piankhi in control of Lower Egypt after Piankhi's successes, ca. 720. Thus he would be Piankhi's Tartan, as the Assyrian records show. Later he became king of Ethiopia and Egypt.[24]

But Hoshea revolted in 725. Could Shabaka (So ?) have been in a position of authority at that time? It is very unlikely, in fact almost impossible, that Shabaka was already Piankhi's governor in Lower Egypt then.[25] Therefore, we must conclude that the So of II Kings 17:4 was not the Shabaka of the twenty-fifth dynasty. But who was he? Two possible explanations have been offered. Stade was the first to suggest one of the unimportant Delta kinglets. Winkler ably seconded him.[26] But later he changed his mind, and considered him a general of Musri in northern Arabia, "the name of which is so like that of Egypt as to cause confusion in our understanding of the documents of the time, a confusion which perhaps existed in the minds of the cuneiform scribes."[27] Rogers says that he goes too far in eliminating Egypt from the picture.[28] Since So is believed to have been the same person as Sib'i, I am inclined to agree with him; it must be remembered

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22. Urquhart, op. cit., VI, pp. 71-72.
23. e.g., Urquhart, Ibid.
24. The Cambridge Ancient History, III, p. 274.
25. Ibid., p. 275.
26. Winkler, Untersuchungen, pp. 92-94, 106-108. Cited by Rogers, op. cit., II, p. 306, n. 1.
27. Winkler, Mittheilungen der Vorderas. Gesell., 1898, 1, p. 5, cited by Rogers, ibid. Breasted, op. cit., p. 549.
28. Rogers, loc. cit.

that Sib'i escaped into Egypt.

The foreign policy of the Egyptian kings and kinglets at this time lends credence to this view.[29] Palestine had once been a part of the long-vanished Egyptian empire, and when Israel and Judah became weak, as they did in Hezekiah's day, Egypt all during this period tried to stir up rebellion against the Assyrians. No doubt she realized that eventually she would have to face the invincible armies of the kings of Nineveh, and she did all in her power to delay that day of reckoning. There was an active pro-Egyptian party at the court of Hezekiah in Jerusalem, as will be shown elsewhere in this paper. No doubt there were other pro-Egyptian parties in the other states of Palestine. Gaza in Philistia was one of the cities which, with the backing of Egypt, rebelled against Sargon in 720.[30] The defeat of Sib'i by Sargon succeeded only temporarily in changing the Egyptian foreign policy.

The success of the kings of Judah from Hezekiah onward can be measured by their ability to resist the enticements of the pro-Egyptian party. Hezekiah himself was outstandingly successful in this, mainly because of the powerful influence of the prophet Isaiah, who opposed an alliance with anyone but Yahweh.[31] The nations of Palestine, including Judah, do not seem to have known the great weakness of Egypt: local jealousies, political corruption, the benumbing effect of the power of the priests. All this was hidden by the glamour of Egypt's glorious past.[32] But Isaiah was fully aware of the decadence of Egypt. He says, speaking as the oracle

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29. Breasted, loc. cit.
30. Luckenbill, op. cit., II, secs. 5, 55.
31. Kent, op. cit., p. 158
32. Rogers, op. cit., II, p. 306.

of Yahweh:

> ...I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city and kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel Lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts....Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit.[33]

Could a more vivid description of the weakness of Egypt be found?

Domestic Problems

But the foreign situation was not the only problem that faced Hezekiah as he took his father's place on the throne. Social, economic, and religious conditions were very bad in his own kingdom. Most of our knowledge of these conditions is from the contemporary prophets. Isaiah denounces "the same evils which have disgraced civilization through the ages. They are the fruits of bestial selfishness and greed and class pride, entrenched behind the bulwarks of wealth and authority."[34]

For the last century and more, trade and commerce had been gradually increasing among the Hebrews. By the time of Azariah and Jeroboam II

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33. Isaiah 19:2-4, 11-14.
34. Kent, op. cit., p. 138.

(ca. 750), this commerce seems to have been well established. And with this increase in trade, a class of rich traders and merchants developed, who coveted the lands of the small farmers, the bulk of the population. More and more the poor classes began to feel the pinch of changed conditions. As the cost of living increased, they had to borrow money from the rich, mortgaging their lands at high oriental rates of interest. Usually this meant the loss of the ownership of their land, and an ever-increasing number of them became mere tenant farmers. Amos complains of the high rents they had to pay. Further financial embarrassment would force a man to sell himself and his family into slavery to meet his debts.[35] Thus, as Isaiah warned, "the pernicious effects of land monopoly" were gradually bringing about the economic and social decay of the Israelite nation.[36]

The prophets also point to another evil, corruption of the courts, and decay in both the political and religious hierarchies. An honest judge was rare; the mortgage-courts, for no doubt that is what they were, could be bought for a small fee. "Amos speaks passionately of the fact that it was possible to buy a man for a pair of shoes."[37] Isaiah denounces the governmental leaders in no weak words, and Micah, especially, spoke of these evils being carried out under the shadow and approval of organized religion. He denounces the mercenary prophets who would do anything for a bribe.[38]

As Judah became tributary to Assyria under Ahaz, the burden of

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35. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 31-34. Amos 5:11,12.
36. Kent, loc. cit. Isaiah 5:8-10.
37. Robinson, op. cit., p. 34. Amos 8:6.
38. Kent, op. cit., pp. 167-168. Micah 3:5-7.

the lower classes was no doubt increased. To meet the heavy tribute the king would have to lay a tax on the people, and that tax would no doubt come, indirectly at least, from the poor.[39]

As wealth and affluence increased, the love of the moneyed class for luxurious living also grew. Both Amos and Isaiah blame the women for this condition, as well as the men.[40] They set the fashions and standards, which made such heavy demands on the men that they could only be met by further corruption and oppression. "Cows of Bashan," Amos calls them, fat, sensuous, stupid, self-indulgent.[41] They were as bad as the men, if not worse, and they were as much to blame for Israel's decadence and rottenness under a glittering surface as the men.[42]

It would appear that all this corruption was greater at Hezekiah's day in the Northern Kingdom, and was a prime factor in her downfall. Judah had to some extent escaped the inroads of a large commerce. She was farther from the trade routes, and her natural terrain was conducive to a more wholesome and conservative philosophy of life than in Israel. But one must not press this too far, and assert that the Judahites were paragons of virtue in comparison with their brothers to the North. The testimony of both Isaiah and Micah shows without a doubt that the same decadence and rottenness was rampant also in Judah. And this was accentuated by the following.

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39. George Buchannan Gray and Arthur S. Peake, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah," The International Critical Commentary, I, p. lxxvi. cf. II Kings 15:20.
40. Isaiah 3:16-17, 24; 4:1. Amos 4:1-3.
41. Amos 4:1.
42. Robinson, loc. cit.

Hand in hand with the social decay of the Israelite nation went the decay of the worship of Yahweh and, as has been shown, of morals. The worship of Yahweh had degenerated into a mere observance of a few outward acts: the perfunctory sprinkling of incense, the mechanical offering of sacrifices. The law of God was unknown and ignored and had little effect on the lives and hearts of most of the people. The temptation that beset all Israel before the Exile--that of worshiping the gods of the surrounding heathen nations--had been too powerful. Idols were worshipped side by side with Yahweh. The groves and images mentioned in the Old Testament as objects of worship by the Israelites were no doubt the wooden symbols (trees, poles) of the goddess Ashirat (Asherat), the wife of El, and the counselor of the gods in the Canaanite pantheon.[43] This apostasy from the true religion was everywhere. Isaiah warned and condemned "those who persisted in their foolish, guilty course, defying Jehovah to punish them if he would."[44] Scepticism was making its inroads into Judah. Also there were the sophists of the day, who called evil good, following the force of public opinion, and held the great virtues in derision.[45] Isaiah scorns those who are wise in their own eyes, and cannot judge themselves.[46] He denounced the big criminals, pillars of society, men of position, wealth, culture, influence, champions of the state religion.[47]

As if this were not bad enough, every kind of religious evil was

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43. Jack Finnegan, Light from the Ancient Past, pp. 143, 147.
44. Kent, op. cit., p. 139.
45. Isaiah 5:20.
46. Isaiah 5:21.
47. Ibid., pp. 139-141. Isaiah 9:13-17.

aggravated by Hezekiah's notorious father Ahaz. The Assyrian records give his name as Jeho-ahaz, and it may be that because of his sins the chronicler has dropped the name of Jehovah in referring to him.[48] Ahaz was an individualist, who "longed to be himself and to live his own kind of life."[49] He decided to break with the tradition of his grandfather Azariah and his father Jotham, and to go his own way. He embarked upon a wild religious debauch. He worshiped all the gods of the heathen in a gross and public manner; he closed the temple, and had his own altar made, patterned after one he had seen at Damascus; he introduced the worship of Syrian gods; he set altars in every corner in Jerusalem. And when he was sorely pressed by Pekah and Rezin, he offered his own children as human sacrifices, despising the offer of a sign by Yahweh through Isaiah. But all his gods "were the ruin of him and all Israel."[50] And when he died, fortunately at an early age, the chronicler makes it a point to mention that he was not buried with the rest of the kings.[51]

Thus, when Hezekiah came to the throne, things that had been very bad were made even worse. The remembrance of Ahaz was still in the land. The young king would need the guiding hand of Isaiah and the strength of Yahweh Himself to steer his kingdom over the rocky road ahead.

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48. Urquhart, op. cit., VI, p. 64.
49. Price, op. cit., p. 300.
50. II Chron. 28:23.
51. II Chron. 28:27.

II. Hezekiah's First Years

According to the chronology followed in this thesis, Hezekiah was probably only about twelve years old when he began to reign.[1] In such perilous times as these a mature and steady hand was needed to guide the affairs of Judah, and Yahweh had provided a man for this purpose. Isaiah, the great statesman-prophet, stepped into the breach. Under his tutelage the boy-king Hezekiah steered a wise and judicious course during the early years of his reign. No doubt Hezekiah had been acquainted with Isaiah prior to his ascent to the throne.[2] This acquaintance now became a firm friendship, to the benefit of the kingdom of Judah. We can be sure that at this time Isaiah took pains not to appear high-handed in his advice to Hezekiah. All royal decrees were made by Hezekiah, in his own name. Isaiah's enemies were too strong to admit any other course. We may say that Hezekiah held the scepter, but Isaiah carried it.

Foreign Policy

Isaiah's influence can be plainly seen in the conduct of Hezekiah's foreign policy over against Assyria, in the first fifteen or sixteen years of his reign. There can hardly be any doubt that year after year he forwarded to Assyria the required tribute.[3] Costly as this tribute must have been, it was a cheap price to pay for continued peace with that mighty power.

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1. See page 67.
2. Price, op. cit., p. 310.
3. Ibid., p. 311.

There must have been some temptation for Hezekiah to join in the rebellion of Hoshea against Shalmaneser, but he prudently refrained. It is possible that this was Isaiah's doing.

It was the usual thing for the vassal states of the Assyrian empire to rebel at the death of an Assyrian monarch, for the Assyrian empire depended much on the strength of its individual king.[4] Almost immediately after Sargon II, a usurper, had taken the throne in 722/21, a certain Merodach-baladan seized the throne of Babylon, and threw off the Assyrian overlordship.[5] This Merodach-baladan proved himself a worthy antagonist of the Assyrian. Sargon met him in battle and claimed the usual victory, but it is very clear that he did not defeat Merodach-baladan. The latter still ruled in Babylon for some years, and Sargon did not molest him. However, Merodach-baladan did not succeed in driving the Assyrians from the northern part of Babylon. This defeat was bad for Sargon's prestige.[6]

Rebellion flamed also in the West. We can well imagine that Hezekiah was sorely tempted to join Hamath, Arpad, Simina, and Damascus, and even Samaria, in their attempt to throw off the yoke of Assyria.[7] But Isaiah's counsel prevailed, and Judah remained neutral.[8] It was well for her that she did, for Sargon struck before the allies could act in concert and defeated Hamath, Gaza, and the Egyptian army commanded by Sib'i. Sargon was vindicated in the eyes of his people, and

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4. Robinson, op. cit., p. 20.
5. Urquhart, op. cit., VI, p. 77.
6. Rogers, op. cit., II, p. 317.
7. Ibid., II, pp. 318-319.
8. Sargon does not mention the land of Judah in his account of this rebellion. Luckenbill, op. cit., II, secs. 5,55.

peace was again brought to the Westland.[9] The next years Sargon spent campaigning against the troublesome Urartu in the North, and by 711 he had crushed their power for many years to come.[10]

As has been said, through all this conflict Judah remained neutral. But this does not mean that Hezekiah was inactive all this time and took no steps to insure the safety of his country. No doubt he "solidified his kingdom by building cities, fortresses, and walled towns."[11] He probably thought that he would need these precautions in the not-too-distant future.

His greatest work was the improvement of the water supply of the city of Jerusalem, thereby making it more impregnable to a siege. This was done by a remarkable engineering feat. A tunnel was bored through the solid rock from the Virgin's Spring (the Biblical Gihon) to a pool in Tyropoeon Valley; it is about 1700 feet long and 6 feet high through its entire length.[12] Hezekiah also extended the walls of the city to include the pool.[13] The workers cut from both ends at once, and, after many twistings and windings, met. In 1880 the following inscription was discovered on the right side of the tunnel, evidently at the place where the workers came together:

> The boring through [is completed]. And this is the story of the boring through: while yet [they plied] the drill, each toward his fellow, and while yet there were three cubits to be bored through, there was heard the voice of one calling unto another, for there was a crevice in the rock on the right hand. And on the day of the boring through the stone-cutters struck, each to meet his fellow, drill upon drill; and the water

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9. Rogers, loc. cit.
10. Ibid., II, pp. 320-332.
11. Price, loc. cit.
12. Barton, op. cit., p. 476. II Kings 20:20.
13. Ibid., p. 241.

> flowed from the source to the pool for a thousand and two hundred cubits, and a hundred cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the stone cutters.[14]

There is no way to date this tunnel precisely in Hezekiah's reign. It could also be very plausibly assigned to the years 712-701, when the pro-Egyptian party was becoming more powerful.[15]

Even though Hezekiah remained neutral toward Assyria in his first years, he did not hesitate to send his armies on a punitive expedition against the Philistines, his neighbors to the West. During the reign of Ahaz, the Philistines had made a plundering expedition against the western border of Judah, capturing Bethshemesh, Ajalon, Gederoth, Shocho, and Timnah, with their surrounding villages.[16] In retaliation, the armies of Hezekiah "smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city."[17] Though there is no absolute way of dating this campaign of Hezekiah, it is reasonable to suppose that it took place early in his reign.[18] The victory must have been very complete, for we hear of no more trouble with the Philistines during the remainder of Hezekiah's reign. Indeed, it may have been that Hezekiah was henceforth regarded as somewhat of an overlord over the Philistines, as seems to be indicated by the rebellion of 701, when the people of Ekron in Philistia threw off the Assyrian yoke against the will of Padi, their own king, and delivered him in

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14. From a facsimile in Kautzsch-Gesenius, Hebraische Grammatik, 1902, found in Barton, op. cit., p. 476.
15. See pages 31 and 35.
16. II Chron. 28:18.
17. II Kings 18:8.
18. Rogers. op. cit., II, p. 362.

chains to Hezekiah.[19]

During the reign of Ahaz, the Edomites, always the bitter enemies of the Hebrews, had also made a border raid on Judah, taking captives.[20] We have no record of any retaliatory acts by Hezekiah.

Domestic Policy

Very little is known about the economic policy of Hezekiah. In general, it may be said that he tried to bring about the rehabilitation of Judah, and to restore the prosperity of Uzziah's time. The chronicler tells us that Hezekiah became very rich, implying that this reflected the prosperity of the country generally.[21] "And Hezekiah prospered in all his works."[22] No doubt the foundation for this prosperity was laid in the early years of his reign. "He built up trade and agriculture, and erected storehouses for the preservation of surplus products."[23] This is about the limit of our knowledge of Hezekiah's economic policies.

The worship and honor of Yahweh in Judah, as we have seen, was at very low ebb when Hezekiah ascended the throne, due to a large extent to Ahaz' debauch. But almost immediately the pendulum began to swing, and a reaction set in.[24] The preaching of Isaiah was beginning to have its effect. The people began worshiping Yahweh more than they had for some years. But the long years of idolatry had left their mark, and the process of turning the people back to the true God was necessarily

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19. Ibid., II, p. 365, n. 2.
20. II Chron. 28:17.
21. II Chron. 32:27-30.
22. II Chron. 32:30.
23. Price, loc. cit.
24. Kent, op. cit., pp. 149-150.

slow. Beyond a doubt Hezekiah, under the guidance of Isaiah, did all in his power to further this re-education of his people. He may have already had a general goal in mind: a great rededication of Judah to Yahweh. However, it seems that in the early years of his reign he had to go slowly. Isaiah, cautious statesman that he was, probably would have seen that this was a thing that could not be hurried. Therefore, it seems likely that temple was not reopened immediately after Hezekiah's accession.[25] But there can be hardly any doubt that the great reform described in II Chronicles 29-31 did not take place until some years after his accession.[26]

This great religious reaction was no doubt also aided by the preaching of the prophet Micah. Jeremiah 26:18, 19 indicates that Micah's words were successful in bringing about a general repentance of the people of Judah. This repentance probably was Hezekiah's great reform.

It may have been at this time that in order to further this return to Yahweh, Hezekiah had some of the proverbs of Solomon copied and preserved for posterity.[27]

The stage was now set for Hezekiah to shoulder the entire responsibility of the kingdom. He had fared well under the tutelage of Isaiah; it remained to be seen whether he could do as well in his own right.

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25. See page 64 and page 66.
26. See page 64. Cambridge Ancient History, III, p. 388.
27. Proverbs 25:1.

III. Reform, Trial, Temptation

Reform

Hezekiah lost no time in taking over the reins of the government. The long preparation for religious reform had now been completed, and the time was now ripe for direct action. Possibly the preaching of Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea had united the scattered remnant of the true followers of Yahweh among the influential in the court in Jerusalem so that they were able to persuade Hezekiah that he should proceed with his plans for reform at this time.[1]

Hezekiah acted with great energy. On the first day of the month he commanded that the temple, which had been closed by Ahaz, be reopened and repaired.[2] He called together all the priests and Levites, who had been inactive for so long in the worship of Yahweh, and personally addressed them. Said he:

> Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our

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1. Johann Fischer, Das Buch Isaias, pp. 16ff.
2. II Chron. 28:24; 29:3. See page 66.

> wives are in captivity for this. Now it is mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him and burn incense.[3]

This speech had an immediate effect. Evidently the years of preparation had been thorough, and Hezekiah's personal magnetism was great. He knew how to influence an audience.

The Levites and priests sanctified themselves and began to clean up the temple. After such a long period of disuse, we can well imagine that it was quite filthy. They carried out the debris that they found in the temple and threw it into the brook Kidron. It took them sixteen days to purify the temple, and when it was finished they reported to Hezekiah.[4]

Early in the morning, evidently the next day, which would have been the 17th day of the month, Hezekiah appeared in the temple to worship the Lord. He commanded that the priests offer a sin offering for all Israel, and seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats were sacrificed, according to the Law of Moses, their blood being sprinkled

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3. II Chron. 29:5-11. Josephus, Antiquities, IX, xiii, 1, gives this speech thus: "You are not ignorant how, by the sins of my father who transgressed that sacred honor which is due to God you have had experience of many and great miseries, while you were corrupted in your mind by him, and were induced to worship those which he supposed to be gods; I exhort you, therefore, who have learned by sad experience how dangerous a thing impiety is, to put that immediately out of your memory, and to purify yourselves from your former pollutions, and to open the temple to these priests and Levites who are here convened, and to cleanse it with the accustomed sacrifices, and to recover all the ancient honor which our fathers paid it; for by this means we may render God favourable, and he will remit the anger he hath had to us."

4. II Chron. 29:12-19.

on the altar.[5] This is an indication that Hezekiah meant this reform to be very thorough, for he offered not only the sacrifices required of a ruler who had sinned, but also those required for the sin of the priests and the whole of Israel.[6] After the offerings for the reconciliation of Israel with Yahweh, the burnt-offering was offered to the accompaniment of songs and music from the Levites.[7] The king led the people in worship.[8] The congregation presented a great number of sacrifices to Yahweh: 70 bullocks, 100 rams, 200 lambs, 600 oxen, and 3,000 sheep.[9] There were so many that the priests could not handle them all, so the Levites helped them. There were more Levites than priests who were ceremonially undefiled.[10] And Hezekiah and the people rejoiced over "that which God had prepared for the people (by the purification of the temple and the restoration of Jahve-worship)."[11]

The success of this religious revival encouraged Hezekiah. Evidently it had been thus far limited to Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Now he determined to spread it over his entire kingdom and also among the remnants of conquered Israel to the North. He thus inaugurated the policy of the kings of Judah to extend their sphere of influence over the whole Hebrew nation.[12] Therefore, at the beginning of the following Nisan his messengers went from place to place, not only in Judah, but all over Israel, "from Beersheba to Dan," inviting the people to

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5. Lev. 4.
6. Lev. 4; II Chron. 29:21.
7. II Chron. 29:25-28.
8. II Chron. 29:29.
9. II Chron. 29:32,33.
10. II Chron. 29:34.
11. II Chron. 29:36. C. F. Keil, The Books of Chronicles, p. 454.
12. Max Vogelstein, Biblical Chronology, Part I, p. 3, n. 11. See page 66.

come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.[13] We can well imagine the excitement these messengers must have caused. Here was something that had not been done since the days of Solomon, more than 200 years before. Here was an invitation for Israel and Judah to reunite, to worship together as brethren in the temple of Yahweh. The messengers met with varied reactions. No doubt most of the people of Israel "laughed them to scorn, and mocked them."[14] But many from the North, especially from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun came to Jerusalem.[15]

Meanwhile, preparations were being rushed in Jerusalem. The priests and Levites were purifying themselves and seeing to it that all was ready. They had to be finished by Nisan 14, for that was the Levitical day of the Passover.[16] But their task was too great. All the preparations were not completed, and especially were the priests slow in preparing themselves, even as they had lagged in sanctifying themselves for the temple reform some months previous. The messengers also could not complete their task in time, and the people did not assemble in Jerusalem in the first month. So they decided to postpone the celebration until the next month.[17]

A large congregation assembled in Jerusalem and in the second month, Moved by religious fervor, they pulled down and destroyed all the altars that Ahaz had put in Jerusalem, and threw them into the Kidron.[18] The Passover was killed on the fourteenth day. There were many in the congre-

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13. II Chron. 30:1,5-9.
14. II Chron. 30:10.
15. II Chron. 30:11.
16. Ex. 12:6.
17. II Chron. 30:3.
18. II Chron. 30:13,14.

gation who were not ceremonially pure and therefore could not kill the Passover, so the Levites had charge of all the killing.[19] Here is another indication of the thoroughness of the reform. In spite of the fact that many of the people from both Judah and Israel were ceremonially unclean, yet they ate the Passover; for Hezekiah had prayed to Yahweh for them, and the Lord heard his prayer.[20] There was no empty ritualism here!

The celebration lasted seven days and then was extended another seven. Hezekiah gave the congregation 1,000 bullocks and 7,000 sheep, and his nobles donated 1,000 bullocks and 10,000 sheep for sacrifice and for feasting.[21]

When the feasting was over, the people took their new religious fervor with them to their homes and all over Judah and Israel they broke down and destroyed the places of idol-worship.[22]

To show that he meant this religious revival to last, Hezekiah reinstituted the temple worship and revived the priests and Levites by reestablishing their income. He commanded the people to make contributions for their support. This was so well received that by the beginning of the third month so much stuff had been collected in Jerusalem that Hezekiah had to call a special conference to decide where to store it. They determined to prepare special storehouses in the temple area for this purpose. All things were set in order: the necessary overseers of the priests and Levites were appointed, the courses of the priests

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19. II Chron. 30:15-18.
20. II Chron. 30:18-20.
21. II Chron. 30:24.
22. II Chron. 31:1.

were set up, and all those of the house of Aaron were sought out and pressed into service. "Sought out" is the correct expression because many of the "Sons of Aaron" had not exercised their priestly functions for a long time, and had taken up other pursuits.[23]

In order to constantly remind the people of their newly-revived covenant with Yahweh, Hezekiah at this time also instituted a new era. Time was henceforth measured from this great reform. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter V.

"And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with his heart, and prospered."[24]

Trial

The future new looked pretty bright to Hezekiah. He had been successful in his first great project as a king in his own right. His people were with him, and he was at the height of his power.

But in the midst of this success came trouble. Hezekiah fell "sick unto death."[25] The prophet Isaiah delivered to him the word of Yahweh: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."[26] Hezekiah prayed to his God with tears, and Isaiah received an answer to this prayer from the Lord as he was leaving the palace.[27] He returned and told Hezekiah: "Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have

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23. II Chron. 31:2-19.
24. II Chron. 31:20,21.
25. II Kings 20:1.
26. II Kings 20:2.
27. II Kings 20:3,4.

heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day shalt thou go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake."[28] Hezekiah asked for a sign to prove that Isaiah was speaking the truth, and Isaiah made the shadow cast by the sun on the sundial of Ahaz to go back ten degrees. Upon the application of figs to his boil, Hezekiah recovered.[29] To show his gratitude to Yahweh, he composed a psalm.[30]

This is the narrative of Hezekiah's illness as given in II Kings 20 and Isaiah 38. It is obvious that its location in this particular spot in the book of Kings cannot give us a clew as to when it happened. Immediately preceding is the narrative of Sennacherib's invasion, which took place in 701, only a few years before Hezekiah's death. Isaiah's message declares that Hezekiah would live 15 years after this sickness. Hezekiah died in 698/97, and therefore this sickness must have occurred in 712 or earlier. The expression "I will add unto thy days fifteen years," does not necessarily mean that Hezekiah lived 15 years and no more after his sickness; it only indicates that this sickness came on him at least 15 years before his death. We have thus narrowed down the time when this illness could have occurred to 712 or before. However, we can with reasonable accuracy fix the date still more closely. II Kings

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28. II Kings 20:5,6.
29. II Kings 20:7-11. In the Ras Shamra Tablets, which are mostly poems of the mythological gods and heroes of Canaan, are directions for the treating of sick horses. These mention the use of a poultice of figs. Finnegan, op. cit., p. 147.
30. Isaiah 38:9-20.

20:6 intimates that there was danger from Assyria at this time. About 712/11, certain cities of Philistia led by Ashdod revolted against Assyria. Sargon sent his Tartan to put them down, and he succeeded without difficulty.[31] In the year 712, therefore, there would have been a threat of war with Assyria. We can, then, date Hezekiah's sickness approximately in 712 B.C.[32]

The sign for which Hezekiah asked also presents a problem. The sundial of Ahaz was probably a circular elevation with an obelisk on top, which cast a shadow on the highest step at noon, and in the morning and evening on one or the other sides of the lowest steps, thus measuring the hours. Each step probably represented an hour.[33] There are various interpretations of the meaning of the words "he brought the shadow ten degrees backward."[34] Price suggests that it was an eclipse, stating that there was one on Sept. 13, 713 B.C.[35] But the writer has not been able to verify Price's statement. There is also Rimmer's rather sensational explanation. Rimmer claims to have found that the earth had lost 24 hours of time in relation to the sun. The so called "long day" of Joshua

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31. Isaiah 20:1. Robert William Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament, p. 328.
32. Price, op. cit., p. 312.
33. Franz Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, II, p. 42.
34. II Kings 20:11.
35. Price, op. cit., p.314. T. Nicklin, "When Did Hezekiah Reign?", Expository Times, 53 (April 1942), 243, says : "Those who have observed the phenonena of a major solar eclipse are aware that as the eclipse proceeds the shadow on a dial is first advanced, then thrown back, and finally restored to a normal mean. The intervention of clouds could determine which, if any, of these movements might be observable. On the 14th day of March in 711 B.C. an eclipse of unusual magnitude occurred. It would be visible at Jerusalem at 2 hours, 18 minutes P.M."

accounts for 23 hours and 20 minutes of this, and the turning back of the sun on Ahaz' dial accounts for the other 40 minutes. However, Rimmer does not indicate his authority for this idea.[36] The most likely explanation of this passage is that given by Delitzsch. The miracle did not consist in a turning back of the earth on its axis. Such a phenomenon would be astronomically traceable today. There can be no doubt that it was a miracle that did not suspend the ordinary processes of nature. Most likely the miracle was a refraction by natural processes. The expression in Isaiah 38:8, "the sun turned back" refers to the sun on the dial and not to the sun in the sky. This explanation detracts in no way from the fact that the whole incident was a miracle through supernatural intervention. For how could Isaiah have been able to cause the shadow to move at all, even though by natural origins, and at a given time?[37]

Temptation

It will be remembered that Merodach-baladan had successfully rebelled against Sargon in 721 and that during the time that Sargon was fighting on the borders of his empire, Merodach-baladan was ruling in Babylon.[38] In spite of this initial success, his lot had not been easy, and Sargon knew it. Merodach-baladan's army consisted of Elamites, half-nomad Arameans, and his own Chaldeans. As long as Assyria threatened, self-preservation would hold them together. But as soon as Sargon let Babylon alone, they began to quarrel. The Elamites and Arameans want-

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36. Harry Rimmer, The Harmony of Science and Scripture, I, pp. 294-296.
37. Delitzsch, op. cit., II, p. 43.
38. See page 16.

ed a share in the wealth of Babylon. They would not permit Merodach-baladan to have it all. But Merodach-baladan could not give anything to them; he could not allow them to plunder for fear of ruining the land and arousing the ire of the Babylonians. Nor could he take much for himself and his men without making his allies angry. Though he no doubt desired peace, he was at last forced to allow them to plunder some of the cities of Babylon and Chaldea. This caused the people, led by the powerful priests, to talk of returning to the yoke of Assyria. At least the Assyrian king would not permit law-abiding citizens to be robbed![39]

Therefore, in order to make sure of his throne, Merodach-baladan decided that he must get rid of Assyria. A war would reunite his army, and there was always the chance of winning. He knew it would be foolhardy to attempt to fight Assyria alone, so he conceived of a grandiose plan. He would incite a great rebellion in the Assyrian empire. This would be no small uprising in some corner; the East and the West would rise together.

As part of putting this scheme into operation, he sent an embassy to Hezekiah, whose recent illness offered him a pretext for the visit.[40] There is nothing in the account in II Kings to prevent us from inferring that he also sent embassies to the other nations of the West. Indeed, the ensuing events seem to indicate this.[41]

All this played right into the hands of the kinglets of Egypt. Ever

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39. Rogers, History, II, pp. 336-339.
40. II Kings 20:12. Robinson, op. cit., p. 20.
41. Several of the Philistine cities revolted.

since Sargon had defeated her in 720, Egyptian agents had been attempting to cause trouble in Palestine. Now with this aid from the East, Egypt was able to stir up a rebellion among the Philistine cities.[42]

The proposals of the embassy evidently pleased Hezekiah. He was beginning to chafe under the burden of the yearly tribute to Assyria, and rebellion in the East was very pleasant news to him. "Hezekiah hearkened unto them" so much that he opened the doors of his treasury to the ambassadors, showing them all his wealth.[43] No doubt the visitors from Babylon were duly impressed as well as surprised to find such a wealthy monarch here in the West. Hezekiah's favorable attitude toward this proposed rebellion gave a new impetus to the long-slumbering pro-Egyptian party in Jerusalem. Now the king seemed to be on their side, and they began making propaganda for Judah's entry into the rebellion. It began to appear that Judah would be plunged into a disasterous war. All of Isaiah's counseling seemed to be going by the board; the king was now being advised by the extremists.

Into this crisis stepped the prophet of Yahweh, Isaiah. In a forceful way he set forth the folly of trusting in Egypt for help. For a period of three years he appeared in the streets of Jerusalem, naked, thus dramatizing the fact that Egypt and Ethiopia stood naked before the arms of Assyria. Judah should not trust such weak allies.[44] This living sermon evidently had a profound effect on the populace and on Hezekiah.

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42. Breasted, op. cit., p. 550. Kent, op. cit., p. 157. Price, op. cit., p. 316. Robinson, op. cit., p. 20.
43. II Kings 20:12,13. Urquhart, op. cit., VI, p. 198.
44. Isaiah 20:1-6.

The prophet went to the king and told him that in the future Babylon would conquer Jerusalem and would carry Judah captive.[45] The wavering king listened to the words of his old adviser and decided not to join the rebellion. He was convinced that the best course for Judah was neutrality. Said he: "Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken....For there shall be peace and truth in my days."[46]

It was just in time that Isaiah turned the tide against the war party and managed to keep Judah neutral. In the very year that he so sensationally began to dramatize Egypt's weakness, Sargon went his Tartan, his commander-in-chief, against Ashdod, the leader of the rebelling Philistine cities, and took it.[47] Sargon tells us that he did not even have to collect his main army to put down this revolt but accomplished it with his own personal guard.[48] His report also intimates that Judah was at the point of rebelling.[49] Thus, the western half of Merodach-baladan's great rebellion was destroyed. The next year, in 710, Sargon attacked Babylon itself, and the weakened Merodach-baladan was forced to flee back into his marshes at the head of the Persian Gulf.[50] The year following Sargon caused himself to be proclaimed "governor" or "viceroy" of Babylon. Thus he would not have to return to Babylon every year to be proclaimed king by the priests, a well-established Babylonian custom.[51] In 708, he finished the job of defeating Merodach-baladan, driving him from his marshes into Elam.[52]

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45. II Kings 20:14-18.
46. Isaiah 39:8; II Kings 20:19.
47. Isaiah 20:1.
48. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 328.
49. Ibid., p. 330. Kent, op. cit., p. 157.
50. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 325.
51. Rogers, History, II, pp. 341ff.
52. Ibid., p. 342.

Isaiah had again saved the little kingdom of Judah. King Hezekiah had overcome the temptation to revolt, but it is doubtful whether he would have succeeded without the prophet's help.[53]

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53. II Chron. 32:31.

IV. The Supreme Test

The Rebellion

Sargon II of Assyria met his end in 705, fighting against the Cimmerians (the Latin Cimbri), a wandering horde that threatened to destroy Mesopotamian civilization and finally settled in Cappadocia.[1] He left an empire that was much stronger than the one he had inherited. The borders were secure, Babylon was pacified, and there was peace from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Olmstead calls him "the greatest of Assyrian rulers."[2]

Sennacherib, Sargon's son, ascended the throne immediately. He "had need to be greater than his father, as the burden of administration is heavier than the load of conquest, but, in spite of the boasting of his high-sounding inscriptions, he must be judged to be far inferior to Sargon in ability."[3] He made his first mistake in his dealings with Babylon. Sennacherib did not want to be proclaimed "governor" of Babylon by its priests as his father had done. He saw that Babylon was superior in culture to Assyria and might become too powerful if not ground under a strong heel. There was danger in compromising with Babylon. Accordingly, he assumed the title of king of Babylon without the usual ritual by the priests, without observing the time-honored customs. This could not fail to injure the pride of the Baby-

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1. Rogers, History, II, pp. 346f.
2. A. T. Olmstead, History of Assyria, p. 267.
3. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 332.

lonians, and they refused to accept him as king.[4] A rebellion broke out, and the Babylonians set up a certain Marduk-zakir-shumu as their king. But he remained only one month, when the resourceful Merodach-baladan drove him from his seat and seized the rule.[5] Knowing that Sennacherib would not stand for this without a fight, he at once began preparing for war and managed to persuade certain Arabs under the Assyrian yoke in the desert to join in his rebellion.[6]

The death of Sargon was also the signal for increased agitation for rebellion in the West. In 712/11 the twenty-fifth or Ethiopian Dynasty had been founded in Egypt and had at least nominally united the country. The Egyptian-backed rebellion of 712/11 had failed, and now that the powerful Sargon had died and there was trouble in the East, Egypt began again to make more intensive efforts to foment a rebellion in Palestine. We cannot tell whether Hezekiah was really inclined toward joining an open rebellion at this time, but he had given the war party in his court plenty of opportunity for propaganda. Patriotism and nationalism were the order of the day, and in spite of all the efforts of the venerable Isaiah, this enthusiasm could not be stopped.[7] Says Rogers:

> Indeed the king had himself done much to foster not only this very spirit, now become dangerous, but also to quicken a consciousness of security which could not fail to collapse in the presence of such armies as Assyria was able to put in the field. Hezekiah had been victorious over the Philistines, and that probably very early in his reign; why should he not also conquer the Assyrians? would be the simple reasoning of those who had not directly experienced

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4. Rogers, History, II, pp. 353-356.
5. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, pp. 332-333.
6. Cambridge Ancient History, III, p. 63.
7. Rogers, History, II, pp. 361-362.

> the Assyrian advance in war. He had built an aqueduct by which an abundant supply of flowing water was brought within the city walls. What that meant for the city is almost incalculable by occidentals. Jerusalem had never had flowing water within its walls. It could therefore easily be taken by siege in the dry season. Hezekiah had supplied this primary need, and by so doing had added immeasurably to the defensibility of the city. There is no doubt that this was a war measure, and that it would be so understood and interpreted by the people is even more clear. How easy was the task of the anti-Assyrian party with such arguments as these--victory over the Philistines, and a new aqueduct--to break down the opposition led by Isaiah, and supported by his unpopular associates. All that Isaiah actually accomplished was the postponement of the break with Assyria; without him it would inevitably have come sooner.[8]

Isaiah indeed had made strenuous efforts to prevent an alliance with Egypt. But this time in spite of all that Isaiah could do Hezekiah sent an embassy to Egypt to make an alliance.[9] A break with Assyria could no longer be prevented. "Even if Hezekiah had wanted to take his advice, he couldn't help it, for the whole country was carried away with patriotism, and nothing could stand in its way."[10]

Thus, Hezekiah became the leader of a bold and daring rebellion against the Assyrian empire.[11] Together with the kings of Sidon and Ashkelon, he cut off tribute.[12] It seems that Hezekiah was the leader of the rebellion in the South, while Luli, king of Sidon, was the chief in the North.[13] Padi, king of Ekron, refused to join the rebellion, but popular opinion was against him. His people seized him, and de-

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8. Ibid., II, pp. 362-363.
9. Isaiah 30:1-7: 31:1-9.
10. Rogers, History, II, p. 362.
11. Ibid., II, p. 364.
12. Price, op. cit., pp. 317-318. Isaiah was pessimistic about the safety of the rebelling Philistines. Isaiah 14:29-31.
13. Kent, op. cit., p. 159.

livered him in chains to Hezekiah, who imprisoned him.[14] The rebels were joined by various other small states until the entire West was aflame. We have no evidence that Merodach-baladan had actively fomented this rebellion, but his example plus the machinations of Egypt had overtipped the balance. The rebellion against Assyria was greeted in Jerusalem with riotous celebration, but Isaiah regarded it otherwise.[15] The die was cast.

It was two years before Sennacherib could turn his attention to the rebellious West. The threat of Merodach-baladan was closer to home and therefore more dangerous. Turning his armies eastward, he easily defeated the Chaldean, who fled. A minion of Sennacherib was made king of Babylon.[16] Sennacherib also had to secure his eastern border before going west. This he did the next year.[17] Hezekiah and his allies could not expect help in the East.

Sennacherib Invades the Westland

There is more than the usual amount of source material on Sennacherib's famous invasion of the West available to the student. These materials tell the story from two points of view. Sennacherib records his exploits in three inscriptions: the Taylor Prism, the Nebi Yunus Inscription, and the inscription under the Lachish-relief.[18] The Hebrew viewpoint is presented in II Kings 18, 19 and in Isaiah 36, 37.

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14. Price, op. cit., p. 318.
15. Ibid. Isaiah 22: 1-14.
16. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 333. Luckenbill, op. cit., II, secs. 234, 235, 257-276.
17. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, loc. cit. Luckenbill, op. cit., II, secs. 236-238, 277-282.
18. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, pp. 240-345.

The latter is almost identical with the account in II Kings, and therefore in this discussion we shall refer to II Kings only. Three different views have been held by Biblical scholars concerning the relationship of the Biblical and Assyrian narratives.[19]

1. "One view which was first expressed by the late Prof. Schrader of Berlin, is that the inscription of Sennacherib, while differing from the Biblical account in some particulars, really confirms it at nearly every point."[20] Sennacherib claims to have devastated Hezekiah's territory and to have collected a heavy tribute, just as II Kings declares. He nowhere says that he conquered Jerusalem. Since Assyrian monarchs never record their defeats, no mention is made of the destruction of the Assyrian army. This silence of Sennacherib on the capture of Jerusalem seems to confirm the destruction of his army, as recorded in II Kings 19. There is also a similarity in the amount of tribute paid by Hezekiah. Both sources state that he paid 30 talents of gold. There is a difference in the amount of silver, which will be discussed below.[21]

2. The second view, the chief exponent of which is Prof. Meinhold of Bonn, states that II Kings 18, 19 give two different accounts.[22] The first narrative ends with the submission of Hezekiah to the Rabshakeh.[23] The other account deals with the advance of Tirhakah and the destruction of Sennacherib's army.[24] The first of these is confirmed by Assyrian

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19. Barton, op. cit., p. 473.
20. Schrader, Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament, 1872, pp. 168ff. Cited in Barton, loc. cit.
21. Ibid.
22. Meinhold, Die Jesaiaerzaehlungen, Jes. 36-39, 1898. Cited in Barton, loc. cit.
23. II Kings 19:8.
24. II Kings 19:9-37.

records, while the second is unhistorical, because Sennacherib makes no mention of his defeat and because Tirhakah was not on the Egyptian throne until 688 B.C.[25]

3. The third view is held by Winckler, Prasek, Fullerton, and Rogers.[26] They believe that Sennacherib invaded Judah twice. II Kings 18:13-19:8 is the account of the first invasion in 701, and II Kings 19:9-36 refers to the second, which occurred after the accession of Tirhakah, ca. 690.[27]

It is the opinion of the writer that Schrader's identification of the essential resemblances in the two sources is correct, and the following reconstruction is made on this basis. The second of these views seems to the writer to be entirely unfounded, because it finds no support from the available source material. It is possible to interpret the facts as in this paper, without disregarding any of the sources. The third view will be discussed below.

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold."[28] Bent on redeeming and vindicating the prestige of Assyria, Sennacherib came west in 701, striking first at the Phoenician cities in the North.[29] It seems that the allies could not unite their forces, each trying to meet Sennacherib alone and each in turn being defeated.[30] Because he could

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25. Barton, op. cit., pp. 473-474.
26. Winckler, Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen, 1892, pp. 27-50; Prasek, Sanheribs Feldzuege gegen Juda, 1903; Fullerton, in Bibliotheca Sacra, LXIII (1906), 557-634; Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament, 1912, pp. 332-340. Cited in Barton, op. cit., p. 474.
27. Ibid.
28. George Gordon Byron, "The Destruction of Sennacherib."
29. Rogers, History, II, p. 365.
30. Kent, op. cit., p. 159.

not take Tyre without a naval force, Sennacherib contented himself with ravaging its tributary cities. King Luli of Sidon fled to Cyprus, and Sennacherib took the city without a siege. He organized it and the surrounding cities into a new province, placing Ethobal on the throne.[31] His very presence in the West filled the country with terror, and various kings who had joined the allies hastened to submit and pay tribute without a battle: "Menahem (Minchimmu) of Samsimuruna, the location of which is unknown; Abdili'ti of Arvad, Urumilki of Byblos; Mitinti of Ashdod, Budu-ilu of Beth Ammon, Kammusunadab of Moab, and Malik- rammu of Edom."[32]

In Judah there was naturally great consternation at this defeat in the North. There was nothing to prevent the victorious Assyrians from advancing on Jerusalem. Momentarily the people of Jerusalem expected to see the troops appear over the hills to the North. Isaiah describes this to us:

> He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, and the hill of Jerusalem.[33]

And the prophet speaks a word of comfort to the people:

> Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet

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31. Luckenbill, op. cit., II, sec. 239.
32. Rogers, History, II, pp. 366-367.
33. Isaiah 10:28-32. Olmstead, op. cit., p. 301.

> a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction. And the Lord of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off your shoulder, and his yoke from off your neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the annointing....Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.[34]

However, when Sennacherib resumed his march, he did not strike out for Jerusalem, but instead followed the seacoast south. Entering Philistia, he took Ashkelon, deporting its usurper-king Zidqa. Its surrounding cities also fell before his mighty hosts: Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Benebarqa (the Beni-berak of Josh. 19:45), and Azuru. No other defections took place.[35] Next, Sennacherib advanced on Ekron, which was filled with fear.[36] And well might the Ekronites have feared, for they had even rebelled against their king in their effort to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Now they felt the wrath of the outraged Assyrian king. The leaders of the revolt were impaled around the city, and many of the townspeople were deported. Sennacherib demanded and received Padi, the king who had been loyal to the Assyrians, from the new terrified Hezekiah and set him again on his erstwhile throne.[37]

Sennacherib now turned to Lachish, a great fortress-city on the border of Hezekiah's kingdom. He gives a very vivid picture of his operations thereon a relief in Nineveh. While he was besieging the city,

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34. Isaiah 10:24-27,33,34. Olmstead, loc. cit.
35. Rogers, History, II, p. 367.
36. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 342. Luckenbill, op. cit., II, sec. 240.
37. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, loc. cit. Luckenbill, II, loc. cit.

an operation which evidently took some time, he sent detachments of his army up and down Judah to ravage the country. They seem to have met little opposition, and Sennacherib tells us that he took 46 fortified cities. Their inhabitants, amounting to 200,150 people, were required to swear allegiance to the Assyrian, but were not deported. Their cities were divided between Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza.[38] Evidently Hezekiah had withdrawn his army into Jerusalem, and left the country defenseless. It may be at this time that the Arab mercenaries fled, whom Hezekiah had employed to strengthen his army.[39]

Hezekiah was at last driven to sue for peace terms and sent to Sennacherib at Lachish, who demanded and got 30 talents of gold and 300 talents of silver, which Rogers estimates as $5,650,000.[40] Sennacherib claims to have received 800 talents of silver from Hezekiah, and not 300 as II Kings 18:14 says.[41] These two figures are believed to be actually identical, the discrepancy lying in the different systems of measurement of silver in the two countries.[42] Hezekiah paid the tribute by stripping the doors and pillars of the temple.[43] This was the third time the temple had been spoiled. Joash had given Haz-

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38. Rogers, History, II, p. 370. It is possible that Isaiah 1:4-9 refers to this devastation by Sennacherib.
39. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 344. Luckenbill, II, loc. cit. II Kings 18:13.
40. Rogers, History, II, loc. cit. II Kings 18:14-16. This is where the Hebrew historian begins his detailed account.
41. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, loc. cit. Luckenbill, II, loc. cit.
42. Basil T. A. Evetts, New Light on the Bible, p. 347. Cited in Urquhart, op. cit., VI, pp. 150, 151.
43. II Kings 18:16.

ael of Damascus "the hallowed things" of the temple; Ahaz had given Tiglath-pileser III some of the furnishings; and now Hezekiah goes into the temple building itself in order to meet the demands of a foreign king.[44]

However, in spite of this tribute, Hezekiah knew that Sennacherib was not satisfied, for the siege of Lachish continued. Inside Jerusalem the preparations for a siege were rushed. The wells and springs outside the city walls were stopped, the walls were strengthened, and the city was in every way put on a war footing.[45]

The defenders of the city did not have long to wait. Sennacherib sent his Tartan, his Rabsaris, and a Rabshakeh with a large host to surround the city. A Tartan was a military officer or general; the Rabsaris was the chief of Sennacherib's eunuchs; and the Rabshakeh was also a high military official.[46] Evidently, Sennacherib at this time had not given orders to besiege the city. The reasons for this are uncertain; perhaps he did not think that the risk and expenditure of time and men would be justified by the capture of Jerusalem.[47] At any rate, though he says that he shut Hezekiah up "like a bird in a cage," yet Sennacherib never says that he besieged Jerusalem.[48] He states: "Intrenchments I fortified against him, (and) whosoever came out of the city I turned back."[49] It seems that the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem, but at a distance. The city was blockaded, not besieged. There was room between the city walls and the Assyrian army for negotiations.[50]

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44. II Kings 12:18; 16:8. Robinson, op. cit., p. 80.
45. II Chron. 32:2-9; Isaiah 23:9,10. Rogers, History, II, p. 372.
46. Robinson, loc. cit.
47. Price, op. cit., p. 323.
48. Rogers, History, II, p. 371
49. Ibid., p. 372, n. 1.
50. Ibid.

Interestingly enough, Sennacherib's records in no way contradict the Hebrew historian in reporting this detail.

After surrounding the city, the Rabshakeh demanded a parley with the Hebrews, and Hezekiah sent three of his high officers, Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah to speak with him.[51] They met by the upper pool, which has been identified as the pool Birket Mamilla, less than a quarter mile from the city walls.[52] The Rabshakeh began taunting the Hebrews, ridiculing their trust in Egypt. He claimed that Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, had sent the king of Assyria against Judah.[53] Hezekiah's delegation was non-plussed by the boasting speech of the arrogant Assyrian, for they knew that he could make good his threats. They asked him to speak in Aramaic, the language of diplomacy, rather than in Hebrew, for they feared the effect of his words on the people gathered on the wall. But the Rabshakeh would not listen and shouted in Hebrew to the defenders on the wall. He urged them to lay down their arms and surrender and not to listen to Hezekiah nor put their trust in Yahweh. The gods of no other nation had ever been able to withstand the Assyrians. Why should they trust in Yahweh? Better to surrender and live in exile than be slaughtered. But the people on the wall remained obedient to their king and made no answer. With rent clothes the delegation returned and reported to Hezekiah. When the king heard it, he too rent his clothes and sent them to Isaiah.[54] Now was Isaiah vindicated; he had predicted defeat by the Assyrians, but his advice had been cast

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51. II Kings 18:18.
52. II Kings 18:17. Robinson, loc. cit.
53. II Kings 18:19-25. This is a favorite trick of conquerors. When Cyrus took Babylon, he claimed to be the champion of the city's gods. Robinson, op. cit., p. 82.
54. II Kings 18:26-19:2.

aside. In the face of defeat the king sends to him, and the Lord through him speaks a comforting prophecy.[55]

Since the main Assyrian army was occupied first at Lachish and later at Libnah, the Rabshakeh could not at this time make good his threats, so he returned to Sennacherib.[56] And now news came to Sennacherib that Tirhakah of Ethiopia with an Egyptian army was coming to the aid of the allies.[57] He states that the people of Ekron had called the Egyptians.[58] If that was so, here was the answer to that summons, too late to help Ekron, but still able to aid Judah. Tirhakah most likely was a commander-in-chief to his brother Shabaka, founder of the 25th (Ethiopian) dynasty in Egypt. We know that he could have been this, for he had been associated with his brother since 712.[59] With this great army advancing on him, Sennacherib sent another demand for surrender to Hezekiah by messenger, using the same arguments as the Rabshakeh had used before the walls.[60] When Hezekiah received it, he went into the temple and prayed. An answer came to him through Isaiah, who predicted the final punishment of the Assyrians.[61] The Lord will defend the city, and the Assyrian would not enter it. As a sign for the fulfillment of these things, Isaiah said that in three years the people would again be eating the food which they had sown. Evidently the Assyrians had destroyed the crops before harvest, and their presence in the land had prevented

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55. II Kings 19:3-7.
56. II Kings 19:8.
57. II Kings 19:9.
58. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, loc. cit. Luckenbill, II, loc. cit.
59. Cambridge Ancient History, III, p. 279. Breasted, op. cit., p. 552.
60. II Kings 19:9-13.
61. II Kings 19:20-28.

the sowing of a new crop. Therefore, it would be three years before Judah would again have a normal food supply.[62]

Meanwhile Sennacherib could not wait for an answer from Hezekiah, for the Egyptian army, which had been joined by a contingent from Melukhkha, was moving rapidly northward. They met at Eltekeh, and Sennacherib claims the usual victory. No doubt he had slightly the better of it, though it must have been a most costly victory. He captured an Egyptian prince and the son of a general of Melukhkha. Eltekeh and Timnath were taken.[63] Egypt had thus fulfilled her obligation to her allies and stopped Sennacherib short of her own border. Sennacherib did not follow up his victory.[64]

But time was running out on the Assyrian. The very night in which Isaiah had prophesied the destruction of Sennacherib "the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand."[65] With the remainder of his men, Sennacherib beat a hasty retreat all the way back to Nineveh. Of course, his records say nothing of this.[66]

As mentioned above, several scholars do not accept this reconstruction of Sennacherib's invasion. Differing from the majority of scholars, they believe that Sennacherib made two invasions to the West, the one in 701, and the other after 689.[67] This second, they say, campaign is recorded in II Kings 19:9ff. Sennacherib, hearing in Nineveh that Tir-

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62. II Kings 19:29-34. Robinson, op. cit., p. 86.
63. Rogers, History, II, pp. 368-369.
64. Price, op. cit., p. 322.
65. II Kings 19:35.
66. II Kings 19:36.
67. See page 39. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 337.

hakah of Ethiopia was about to attack him, sent letters to Hezekiah demanding his surrender. On Isaiah's advice Hezekiah refused. According to the curious legend in Herodotus, pestilence fell on the Assyrian army while it was encamped at Pelusium on the borders of Egypt, forcing Sennacherib to retreat to Nineveh, where he was slain soon after.[68]

This theory is based on the following evidence:

1) The passage in Herodotus seems to present an explanation of the miracle recorded in II Kings 19:35.[69] 2) Tirhakah was not king of Ethiopia until after ca. 688. Therefore, he could not have attacked Sennacherib in 701. 3) There exists an undated inscription from Sennacherib which tells of an expedition to Arabia. No doubt Sennacherib would not attack Tirhakah without securing his flanks also from the Arabs, as well as from Hezekiah. At least this inscription indicates the presence of Sennacherib in the West at a later date.[70] 4) II Kings 19:35-37 indicates that Sennacherib's death occurred not long after his invasion. Since Sennacherib died in 681, this points to an invasion a few years before. This is also confirmed by Josephus.[71]

According th the chronology followed in this paper, Hezekiah died in 698/97, and consequently was not on the throne during the time of this hypothetical second invasion. However, this cannot be used as an argument against this theory, for that would be arguing in a circle. But if we can refute this theory on other grounds, one more objection to the

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68. Ibid., p. 338. Herodotus, Bk. II, 141. Cited in Barton, op. cit., p. 475.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., p. 474.
71. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, pp. 338-339. Josephus, Antiquities, I, i, 5.

chronology of Chapter V would be removed, and the reconstruction of Sennacherib's invasion given above would be vindicated. Let us then examine point by point the evidence listed above for this hypothesis.

1) The passage in Herodotus which is supposed to explain the miracle of II Kings 19:35 reads as follows:

> And after this the next king [of Egypt] was a priest of Hephaistos, called Sethos. He held the warrior class of the Egyptians in contempt as though he had no need of them. He did them dishonor and deprived them of the arable lands which had been granted them by previous kings, twelve acres to each soldier. And afterward Sennacherib, King of the Arabians and Assyrians, marched a great army into Egypt. Then the soldiers of Egypt would not help him; wherefore the priest went into the inner sanctuary to the image of the god and bewailed the things which he was in danger of suffering. As he wept he fell asleep, and there appeared to him in a vision the god standing over him to encourage him, saying that, when he went forth to meet the Arabian army he would suffer no harm, for he himself would send him helpers. Trusting to this dream he collected those Egyptians who were willing to follow him and marched to Pelusium, where the entrance to his country was. None of the warriors followed him, but traders, artisans, and market men. There, as the two armies lay opposite to each other, there came in the night a multitude of field mice, which ate up all the quivers and bowstrings of the enemy, and the thongs of their shields. In consequence, on the next day they fled, and, being deprived of their arms, many of them fell. And there stands now in the temple of Hephaistos a stone statue of this king holding a mouse in his hand, bearing an inscription which says: "Let any who look on me reverence the gods."[72]

According to George Adam Smith, this account declares that Sennacherib's army was destroyed by the bubonic plague, which is carried by mice and rats.[73] However, the question can be raised as to whether this is a

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72. Herodotus, Bk. II, 141. Cited in Barton, loc. cit.
73. George Adam Smith, Historical Geography of the Holy Land, pp. 158ff.

reasonable deduction, for Herodotus makes no mention of a plague. II Kings 19:35 merely says "that the angel of the Lord...smote...the Assyrians..." and leaves the mode of this destruction to the imagination. Furthermore, Urquhart, quoting from Pinches, points out that this passage is very unreliable. The king named by Herodotus ruled as early as 1350 B.C.[74]

2) As far as known today, Tirhakah did not become king of Egypt until after 688. But it has already been shown that it was fully possible for Tirhakah to be in Palestine in 701.[75] It may even be that he was one of the kinglets in the Delta in 701, for Sennacherib speaks of the "kings of Egypt" as those who sent the Egyptian army against him.[76]

3) The so-called "Short Text" of Sennacherib which is supposed to establish Sennacherib's presence in the West reads:

> [.....Telhunu], queen of the Arabs, in the midst of the desert,....x thousand camels I took from her hand. She, with Hazael,.....the terror of my battle overcame them, they left their tents,...to the...of the city of Adummatu they fled for their lives.....and Adummatu, which are situated in the desert,....of thirst, wherein there are no feeding nor drinking places.....[77]

This campaign is later mentioned by Esarhaddon.[78] It will be noted that this fragment refers to a campaign against Queen Telhunu of Arabia, and no mention whatsoever is made of Judah. Further, the dating of this fragment is doubtful.[79] Therefore, this inscription is valueless as evidence for this theory.

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74. Pinches, The Old Testament, pp. 378-382. Cited in Urquhart, op.cit., VI, p. 173.
75. See page 45.
76. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 342.
77. Luckenbill, op. cit., II, sec. 358.
78. Rogers, Cuneiform Parallels, p. 354.
79. Barton, op. cit., p. 474.

4) The fact that the account of Sennacherib's death in II Kings 19:37 follows the account of his campaign in the West does not prove that in point of time the former happened shortly after the latter. There are several instances in which the record of II Kings is not in chronological order.[80] The Assyrian record indicates that Sennacherib came west in 701, and we have no record of any of his doing during the last eight years of his reign.[81] Josephus' statement that Sennacherib lived in Nineveh a short time and then was assasinated is based on the Babylonian historian Berossus. Since we have no access to the latter's works, it is unwarranted to conclude from this that the invasion was near Sennacherib's death.[82]

In view of these considerations, the writer feels justified in concluding that Sennacherib invaded the West only once. "There is at present no evidence that any later campaign by Sennacherib involved a second attack on Jerusalem."[83]

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We know nothing of the last few years of Hezekiah's reign, which ended in 698/97. "And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried

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80. For example, see page 27.
81. Urquhart, op. cit., VI, p. 146. Barton, loc. cit.
82. Urquhart, op. cit., VI, pp. 171-172. Josephus, Antiquities, X,i, 5, reads: "Now when Sennacherib was returning from his Egyptian war to Jerusalem, he found his army under Rabshakeh his general in danger [by a plague], for God had sent a pestilential distemper upon his army; and on the first night of the siege, a hundred fourscore and five thousand, with their captains and generals, were destroyed. So the king was in a great dread and in a terrible agony at this calamity; and being in great fear for his whole army, he fled with the rest of his forces to his own kingdom, and to his city of Nineveh; and when he had abode there a little while, he was treacherously assaulted, and died by the hands of his elder sons, Adrammelch and Seraser, and was slain in his own temple, which was called Araske."
83. Cambridge Ancient History, III, p. 391.

him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead."[84]

84. II Chron. 32:33.

V. Chronology of Hezekiah's Reign

Introduction

Of all the many perplexities that present themselves to the student of the chronology of the Old Testament, the problem of the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah is one of the most baffling. That the chronology of the Divided Kingdom is full of difficulties has long been recognized by Bible scholars. Jerome (340?-420) had this to say:

> Relege omnes et veteris et novi Testamenti libros, et tantam annorum reperies dissonantiam, et numerorum inter Judam et Israel, id est, inter regnum utrumque confusum, ut hujuscemodi haerere quaestionibus, non tam studiosi, quam otiosi hominis esse videatur.[1]

The translation of the Assyrian records in 1850-75 necessitated the downward revising of Israelite dating. The early systems practically disregarded the synchronisms in the Bible, considering them the work of later redactors and consequently without merit. This has been shown to be decidedly an extreme attitude. In 1922, F. X. Kugler attacked this idea.[2] In 1927, Julius Lewy published a short, but significant work, in which he emphasized the importance of the Biblical synchronisms.[3] In 1929, Begrich's elaborate work appeared, in which

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1. Hieronymi, Traditio catholica, ed. by J. P. Migne, Paris, 1864, Vol. I, Ep. 72, Ad Vitam; Patrolgia Latina, Vol XXII, col. 676. Cited by Thiele, op. cit., p. 139.

2. F. X. Kugler, Vom Moses Bis Paulus, Muenster, 1922. Cited in W. F. Albright, "Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research, no. 100 (December, 1945), p. 17.

3. Jules Lewy, Die Chronologie der Koenige von Israel und Juda, Giessen, 1927. Cited in Albright, loc. cit., who thinks that Lewy goes too far.

he takes into account all the variant readings.[4] Other recent works on the subject are those of Mowinckel, Thiele, and Vogelstein.[5]

The chronology of Hezekiah's reign offers two difficulties, one related to the other. II Kings 18:9,10 presents Hezekiah as ruling contemporaneously with the siege and fall of Samaria, which is said to have occurred in his sixth year.[6] Since the fall of Samaria took place in 722/21, he must have been in his sixth year on the throne at that date. This would place his accession in 728/27. But II Kings 18:13 states that Sennacherib invaded Judah in Hezekiah's fourteenth year. As this invasion occurred in 701 B.C., Hezekiah's reign then began in 716/15.[7] Here is a discrepancy of 13 years in the date of Hezekiah's accession. Obviously, this date is of vital importance, for on it hinges the entire chronology of the Hebrew kingdom before and after Hezekiah's time.

The second problem in Hezekiah's chronology follows from the first. The dates of the reigns of Hezekiah's predecessors, Jotham and Ahaz, must fit into the picture. The same is true for the corresponding kings of Israel, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea. Thiele calls these dif-

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4. Joachim Begrich, Die Chronologie der Koenige von Israel und Juda und die Quellen des Rahmens der Koenigsbuecher, Tuebingen, 1929. Cited in Albright, loc. cit., who thinks that he attaches too much importance to the variants.

5. Sigmund Mowinckel, "Die Chronologie der israelitischen und juedischen Koenige," Acta Orientalia, X, 161-277; Edwin R. Thiele, The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," Journal of Near Eastern Studies, III (July, 1944), 137-186; Max Vogelstein, Biblical Chronology, Part I, Cincinnati, 1944. Cited in Albright, loc. cit. The chronology of this chapter is based on the latter two works.

6. II Kings 18:10.

7. Thiele, op. cit., p. 174. D. D. Luckenbill, Annals of Sennacherib, Chicago, 1924, p. 10ff. Cited in Thiele, op. cit., p. 164.

ficulties "the most baffling problems of Hebrew chronology."[8]

The Work of Edwin R. Thiele

A great step was made toward the solving of the difficulties of the entire chronology of the Divided Kingdom when in 1944, Thiele published his work.[9] Since the chronology of this chapter leans heavily upon his system, it will not be amiss if we examine some of his basic assumptions and methods.

Thiele argues very convincingly that the chronological data of the Old Testament is not inherently unsound, but on the contrary, that, if they are understood correctly, they will prove their essential accuracy and value. The main argument against this proposition had been the seeming hopelessness of ever building an exact chronology on them. Thiele replies:

> But are we as yet certain that these figures are basically unsound? The fact that up to the present this problem has not been solved is no evidence that it never will be solved or that the obstacle that has thus far prevented a solution is the unsoundness of the data involved....And until we possess final and positive proof that the Old Testament chronological data are definitely false and unreliable, is it not the course of wisdom for us to give them the benefit of the doubt and proceed on the assumption that there may be in these figures something of value which is not fully realized, to endeavor to ascertain, if we can, just what lies back of these seemingly discordant figures, and thus, perchance, to open up avenues of knowledge now closed to us?[10]

It is not necessary to offer in this paper a detailed presentation of Thiele's method in working out the chronology of the Divided Kingdom. However, a few of his conclusions are pertinent to this discussion.

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8. Ibid., p. 163.
9. See note 5, page 53.
10. Ibid., p. 140.

1. At the time of Hezekiah, both Israel and Judah used the accession-year, or "postdating" system of reckoning the years of its kings.[11] In this Vogelstein concurs, and gives the following concise definition of postdating: "The first official year of a king begins with the New Year's Day, following the death of his predecessor. The time from that death to the New Year--just like a grace note or appoggiatura in music--does not count chronologically."[12] We, therefore, use '0' as symbol....Example: Hezekiah 29 - Manasseh 0. This system was also used by Assyria.[13]

2. There were coregencies in both Judah and Israel, the years of the king being usually counted from the beginning of the coregency.[14]

3. The civil or regnal year for Israel began with Nisan 1, while the civil or regnal year for Judah began with Tishri 1.[15]

These conclusions were reached by trial and error, and the best argument for their correctness is that they work. Thiele's system presents a chronological scheme for Judah and Israel that establishes the accuracy of most of the Biblical synchronisms and fits with the known chronology of the surrounding nations.[16] A striking example of the success of Thiele's system is the case of the Israelite king Menahem. Most students of chronology simply dismiss the fact that II Kings records the length of his reign as ten years and credit him with only a few years, as their particular systems may demand.[17]

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11. Ibid., p. 143.
12. Vogelstein, op. cit., p. 5, nn. 16, 17.
13. Thiele, op. cit., p. 143, n. 15.
14. Ibid., p. 144.
15. Ibid., p. 143.
16. Ibid., p. 144.
17. II Kings 15:17. Robinson, op. cit., p. 14, gives Menahem only two or three years.

However, in his solution of the chronology of Hezekiah's reign, Thiele ran into difficulty. He was forced to conclude that certain of the Biblical synchronisms are inaccurate and thus present a distorted picture of this period.[18] With the principles mentioned above, this was his only choice.

Vogelstein's Contribution

The work of Max Vogelstein offers an explanation of the 13-year discrepancy in the chronology of Hezekiah's reign. He does this by postulating that sometime in Hezekiah's reign a new system of measuring time came into use; in other words, that a new era began with Hezekiah. He further argues that this era began in 715/14, and was inaugurated during Hezekiah's great religious reform.[19] By this device he is able to resolve the difficulty of the date of Hezekiah's accession, and can give a satisfactory explanation of all the troublesome synchronisms. With this principle he also presents a chronological system for the remainder of the history of Judah, down to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586, which does not do violence to any of the Biblical data.[20]

The arguments and proof which Vogelstein offers for his theory will be discussed below.

A Chronological Theory for Hezekiah's Reign

Neither of the two systems mentioned above are able to present a satisfactory explanation of every synchronism in the Old Testamant

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18. Thiele, op. cit., p. 176.
19. Vogelstein, op. cit., pp. 3ff.
20. Ibid., pp. 6-16.

chronology of the Divided Kingdom. Thiele's system upholds all the passages but a few dealing with Hezekiah. Vogelstein explains every passage from Hezekiah onward, but rejects some prior to Hezekiah. The chronological system here presented will combine the principles of these two reconstructions, and thus every Scriptural synchronism pertaining to the reign of Hezekiah can be explained. The writer concurs in Thiele's contention that the Biblical synchronisms should not be rejected unless proven worthless. Or to state this positively, all the Biblical chronological data are correct if rightly understood. This system will also be based on Thiele's other principles, i.e., that there were coregencies in Israel and Judah, that both Israel and Judah were at this time using the postdating or accession-year system of reckoning, and that the regnal year began with Nisan in Israel, and with Tishri in Judah. To solve the problem of II Kings 18:13, Vogelstein's postulate of a calendar reform will be used.

According to II Kings 18:10, as has been stated above, the fall of Samaria occurred in the sixth year of Hezekiah, thus making his accession-year 728/27. There can be no doubt that this synchronism is correct, even if all the synchronisms of the books of Kings and Chronicles are regarded skeptically. There is absolutely no "reason to doubt the correctness of this particular equation."[21] The fall of Samaria was such an important event in the history of the Hebrew nation that it would be surprising and unlikely for the ancient chronicler to err in reporting its date. No doubt for many years thereafter it was common knowledge

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21. Ibid., p. 2.

that Samaria was captured in the sixth year of Hezekiah. If any date in ancient chronology is reliable, this one ought to be.[22] Therefore, we conclude that Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah in 728/27, his first official year being 727/26.

II Kings 16:7-10 and II Chron. 28:16-21 record the dealings of Ahaz of Judah with Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria. This Old Testament account is confirmed by the Assyrian records, the eponym canon establishing the beginning of these contacts as 734.[23] Therefore, Ahaz must have been king of Judah in 734, or he could not have paid tribute to this great Assyrian king. Now, Ahaz' predecessor, Jotham, ruled 16 years.[24] If Ahaz began ruling in 735/34, then the first year of Jotham must have been 750/49. This year must synchronize with the second year of Pekah, king of Israel.[25]

Ahaz ruled 16 years.[26] If he ascended the throne in 735/34, his 16th year would have been 719/18, which would also have been Hezekiah's accession year. But on the basis of II Kings 18:10 we have already established 728/27 as the date for his accession. There are three possibilities for the solution of this problem. (1) Ahaz ascended the throne prior to 735/34. This is impossible because Azariah, the grandfather

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22. Ibid. Vogelstein's words are striking: "The capture of Samaria was so terrifying and impressive an event that we would be surprised not to find it noted in the annals of the Southern Kingdom. For generations, probably, people were unable to forget that this blow had fallen in the 6th year of Hezekiah--even without looking at the official records."

23. Luckenbill, op. cit., I, secs. 773,777, 779, 801, 816. Thiele, op. cit., p. 167.

24. II Kings 15:33.

25. II Kings 15:32.

26. II Kings 16:2.

of Ahaz, died in 740, and Jotham reigned for a time alone.[27] (2) There was a coregency in Judah, with Ahaz associating his son with him on the throne in 728/27. This possibility is unacceptable because the relative ages of Ahaz and Hezekiah would prohibit it. Ahaz was 20 years old at his accession, and Hezekiah was 25.[28] Obviously, Hezekiah could not have been 25 years old in 728/27, since his father would then have been only 11 years old at his birth. Moreover, it is extremely unlikely that Ahaz would have associated his son with him on the throne, in view of their diametrically opposed religious policies and in view of what we know of their opposite personal characters.

The third possibility is that Ahaz began counting his reign at some time prior to his actual accession, in 735/34. Since from 735/34 to 728/27 is eight years, inclusive, Ahaz must have counted 743/42 as his first official year. This theory allows our previously established date of 728/27 for Hezekiah's accession to stand, and still accounts for the Biblical statement that Ahaz ruled 16 years.

Since Samaria fell in 722/21, in the ninth year of Hoshea of Israel, his accession must have taken place in 731/30.[29] This date, incidentally, synchronizes with the datum given in II Kings 15:30, which states that Hoshea became king in the 20th year of Jotham; and Hoshea's third year coincides with Hezekiah's accession year, according to II Kings 18:1. Interestingly enough, the 12th year of Ahaz, counting from 743/42, also coincides with this accession year of

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27. Thiele, op. cit., p. 155. II Chron. 27:1-9.
28. II Kings 16:2; II Kings 18:2.
29. II Kings 17:6; 18:10. Thiele, op. cit., p. 166.

Hoshea.[30] This, than, is a theory whereby we are able to account for all the passages in II Kings (and II Chronicles) for this period, a fact that indicates the accuracy of the early chroniclers.

The question now is: Are we justified in postulating the pre-dating of Ahaz' reign from a date previous to his actual accession? As was stated above, it is fundamental to this entire reconstruction that we follow Thiele's chronology down to the reigns of Azariah in Judah and Pekah in Israel. In order to account for the difficulties in the chronology of Pekah's reign, Thiele postulates very plausibly that Pekah began dating his reign in 752, twelve years before his actual accession in 740/39. This accounts for the statement in II Kings 15:32 that Jotham began to reign (as a coregent) in the second year of Pekah. This is also an explanation of the length of Pekah's reign, 20 years according to II Kings 15:27. Also, Ahaz' accession in 735/34 coincides with the 17th year of Pekah.[31] In justifying this pre-dating of Pekah's reign, Thiele surmises that Pekah, who was a person of importance at Pekahiah's court, and possible also at that of Menahem, decided to count to himself all the years that the house of Menahem ruled. No doubt Pekah had even during the reign of Menahem decided to overthrow this ruling house and only bided his time until 740/39. For at least half a century before this the kings of Israel and Judah had counted their reigns from the beginning of their coregen-

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30. II Kings 17:1. It is interesting to note that the marginal note to II Kings 15:30 in the Authorized Version equates this accession year of Hoshea with the 4th year of Ahaz; this is correct, counting from Ahaz' accession in 735/34.

31. II Kings 16:1.

cies. Therefore, there was a precedent for Pekah's action.[32]

This pre-dating of Pekah furnishes a parallel to the pre-dating of Ahaz. If at his accession in 735/34 Ahaz found his rival to the North counting his reign from some years before his accession, Ahaz may have felt constrained to do the same. He probably did not make public his plan for pre-dating his reign until after he was on the throne. The only synchronism we have that is based on his pre-dating is Ahaz 12 = Hoshea 0.[33] There are no synchronisms with Ahaz prior to 735/34 thus seemingly indicating that Ahaz kept his plan quiet until after his accession.

Further if our date of 743/42 for the beginning of Ahaz' pre-dating is correct, we find that in that year Ahaz was 12 years old. A Jewish lad at the age of twelve became a "son of the law," and was considered gadol. He was regarded as an adult, able to concern himself with the work of adulthood.[34] It was also in keeping with Ahaz' character to pre-date his reign. The accounts in Kings, Chronicles, and Isaiah show him to have been exceedingly vain, arrogant, and presumptuous, just the type to ascribe to himself all the years of the coregency of his grandfather Azariah and his father Jotham since he was twelve years old.[35] This furnishes a plausible reason why Ahaz would copy Pekah in adopting this unusual system of reckoning. His twelfth birthday and recognition as an adult afforded him a convenient

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32. Thiele, op. cit., p. 169.
33. II Kings 17:1.
34. Cf. Luke 2:42,49. Thiele, op. cit., p. 179.
35. e.g., Isaiah 7:10-16. Price, op. cit., pp. 300-302. Rogers, op. cit., II, p. 288.

starting-point for his pre-dating. Doubtless he would have liked to ascribe to himself more years, at least as many as Pekah; but he could not do that, for if he did, he would have been counting himself as being king when he was a mere boy, less than 12 years old. It may be stated here that Thiele justifies the coregency of Manasseh at the age of twelve with his father Hezekiah, which is required for his chronology, on similar grounds.[36]

Thiele rejects the postulating of the theory that Ahaz was even a coregent before his accession, especially before the death of Azariah, on the ground that it is not likely that Ahaz would have been associated with the government while his father and grandfather were both alive.[37] While the writer agrees that this is unlikely, yet it could plausibly have been the case. In the last years of his reign Azariah may have been very feeble. If he became a leper in 750/49, the date we begin Jotham's coregency, his disease would be pretty far advanced by 743 and/or later, and it may be that Jotham associated his son Ahaz with him in government, even though Ahaz was very young at the time. Azariah was to all intents and purposes retired: "he dwelt in a several house," and Jotham was the real king from 750/49 onward.[38] As such he would have had the power to associate his son Ahaz with him, even though Azariah was still alive. The fact that Ahaz evidently matured at an early age lends credence to this theory, which at least plausibly meets Thiele's argument. It is still a theory, however, and not necessary for the establishment of our main hypothesis, namely, that

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36. Thiele, op. cit., pl 179.
37. Ibid., pp. 165, 168, 172, 174.
38. II Kings 15:5.

Ahaz pre-dated his reign from 743/42.

According to II Kings 15:30 Jotham reigned 20 years, rather than 16, as is stated in three other places.[39] There are two ways to harmonize this with Ahaz' reign. One is to postulate a coregency of Jotham during the last four years of his reign with the first four regnal years of Ahaz. This would be in keeping with Ahaz' domineering personality, for during these years Jotham was pushed entirely into the background. As has been stated, our reconstruction for this period fulfills the synchronism of II Kings 15:30: Hoshea 0 = Jotham 20. Another explanation of this passage is that given in the margin of the Authorized Version and explained by Price.[40] This passage is a carry-over method of reckoning. Jotham was dead, but the chronicler gives the date of Hoshea's accession in terms of the regnal years of Jotham, as if he were alive. It is unfortunate that we have no other evidence to support either of these two explanations, but in view of the fact that our reconstruction tallies so well with the Masoretic text, thereby showing its accuracy, the writer believes that there is some such explanation for this passage.

We have now accounted for all the pertinent chronological data prior to II Kings 18:13, which as stated above, declares that Sennacherib invaded Judah in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. To explain this passage, we are indebted to Vogelstein, who postulates that a new era, a new method of measuring time was introduced by Hezekiah at his religious reform in 715/14. As evidence for this hypothesis he adduces

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39. II Kings 15:33; II Chron. 27:1,8.
40. Price, op. cit., p. 439.

the following:

1. II Chron. 29:3 states that Hezekiah began his reform with the cleansing of the temple in the first month of his first year. Part of the program of this reform was a propaganda campaign in the North. "And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel....So they established a decree to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan."[41] The king's messengers went from place to place, and quite a few of the people "of Ashur and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem."[42] Later, these Israelites helped destroy the places of idol worship, not only in Judah, but also in Ephraim and Manasseh.[43] It is hardly plausible to suppose that Hoshea, king of Israel before 722/21, would suddenly decide to permit his people to worship at Jerusalem, something which had not been done since the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam I. That would have been selling out to the king of Judah. In fact, it is not likely that Hoshea would even permit the messengers of Hezekiah to enter his land. Hoshea himself is not even mentioned in the text. Therefore, the "first year" of II Chron. 29:3 must have been after 722/21. The likely year for it would be 715/14, fourteen years before Sennacherib's invasion.[44] This conclusion is verified by II Chron. 30:6, which states

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41. II Chron. 30:1,5.
42. II Chron. 30:6,10,11.
43. II Chron. 31:1.
44. II Kings 18:13.

that Hezekiah's messengers addressed the people of the North as those who had "escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria."

2. There are many parallels for this calendar reform in Biblical chronology, as well as in the chronology of other ancient states.[45] One of these was Josiah's temple reform, which was also a calendar reform.[46]

3. The best argument for Vogelstein's theory is that it accounts for all the seemingly contradictory passages in II Kings 18, thereby eliminating the 13-year discrepancy between vv 9, 10, and 13. In addition, the Assyrian data fit perfectly.[47]

Let us then proceed with the reconstruction of the remainder of Hezekiah's reign. It will be remembered that Judah had been reckoning the regnal years of the king from Tishri to Tishri.[48] The indications are, however, that at some time the New Year's day was shifted from the fall to the spring, that is, to Nisan.[49] It is logical to suppose that this shift was made during Hezekiah's reform. The Nisan-to-Nisan year had been, and was, in use in the Northern Kingdom, and this shift may have been a part of Hezekiah's policy to extend his sphere of influence over the remnant of conquered Israel.[50] Economic considerations may also have suggested the change, as Assyria, the dominant world power,

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45. E.g., Tyre, Greece, Rome. Vogelstein, op. cit., p. 3, n. 10.
46. II Kings 22, 23.
47. Ibid., p. 1.
48. See page 55.
49. Ibid., p. 4. Thiele believes that no change was ever made; but since he cannot satisfactorily reconstruct Hezekiah's reign, it is permissible to depart from this principle, which though it had served admirably for the chronology prior to Hezekiah, now proves itself to be inadequate.
50. Ibid., p. 6. See page 23.

began the year in the spring.[51]

The year in which the calendar reform took place must have been unusually long; in fact, it must have contained 18 months and two New Year's days, one in Tishri, and one in Nisan, the following spring. Hezekiah's reform began in the fall, "the first month" of II Chron. 29:3, with the cleansing of the temple. All the events of II Chron. 29 occurred at this time. The "first year" of II Chron. 29:3 then denotes the six-month period between the two eras, the old and the new, which served as a connecting link, and did not count in the chronology.[52] Vogelstein likens this preludial period to an anacrusis in poetry.[53] Six months later, in Nisan of the next year, which was also year 1 of the new era, Hezekiah sent messengers to Israel to invite the remnant of the Northern Kingdom to the Passover, which was to be celebrated in Jerusalem on Nisan 14, according to the Law of Moses.[54] But the preparations for the Passover could not be completed in time, so the Passover was celebrated in the second month, Iyar.[55]

This reconstruction does not agree in detail with Vogelstein, who conceives of both the temple reform and the celebration of the Passover as all scheduled for the Nisan of the new era; and then owing to the lack of preparation, the Passover was shifted to the second month. He believes there are some inaccuracies in the account of the chronicler,

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51. Ibid., p. 6, n. 20.
52. Like the "year of accession" in a postdating system. See page 55.
53. Ibid., p. 5.
54. Ex. 12:6. Vogelstein's conjecture, op. cit., p. 4, that this may have been the first time that Nisan had been the first month of the year for the Hebrews (Ex. 12:1) is unnecessary and unfounded.
55. II Chron. 30:3.

who, Vogelstein believes, could not become accustomed to the fact that the Passover was celebrated in the second month.[56] This contention seems to the writer to be unfounded, as the passages in question can be given the interpretation outlined above.

We can now complete the reconstruction of Hezekiah's chronology. Hezekiah's sickness occurred sometime between 714 and 711, 15 (or more) years before his death in 698/97, after a reign of 29 years. Merodach-baladan's delegation visited him soon after his sickness.[57]

The problem of the relative ages of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah must be considered. Jotham was 25 years old when he began to reign, that is, at the beginning of his coregency, 750/49.[58] Hezekiah was 25 years old when he began to rule, 728/27.[60] Obviously, this would mean that Ahaz was 28 years old when his son Hezekiah was 25! This is impossible. If we make Ahaz 20 years old in 743/42 when he began dating his reign, we make Jotham only 33 years old when his son Ahaz was 20, also rather unlikely. This difficulty is resolved if we consider the statement in II Kings 18:2, that Hezekiah was 25 years old when he began to reign, as reckoned from the beginning of his new era, i.e., 714/13, when Hezekiah began counting time over again. This would make him 12 years old when he acceded to the throne in 728/27. That this is not unlikely is shown by the fact that Hezekiah's son Manasseh also began to reign when he was twelve.[61] Ahaz was thus 16

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56. Vogelstein, loc. cit.
57. II Kings 29:6; 18:2; 21:12ff. See page 30, and Appendix B.
58. II Kings 15:33.
59. II Kings 16:2.
60. II Kings 18:2.
61. II Kings 21:1.

years old when Hezekiah was born, a rather early age for a man to become a father, but not an impossible one.[62] Evidently, the effect of the sub-tropical climate of Judah emphasized Ahaz' natural precocity, and he matured early. This is also indicated by his pre-dating of his reign from the age of twelve. Moreover, one hears occasionally even in our land of Western culture of boys who have attained fatherhood at the age of 16. Therefore, Hezekiah was 41 years old at his death and 29 at the birth of Manasseh. Jotham was 21 when Ahaz was born and died at 45. Ahaz died at 27, another possible indication of his precocity.[63]

Thiele begins the pre-dating of Pekah's reign in 752, while we begin it one year later, in 751. Consequently, our dates for Jotham's corogency, Ahaz' accession, and Hoshea's accession are one year later than Thiele's. We are justified in doing this because there is no absolute proof as to precisely when Pekah began dating his reign.[64] If we follow Thiele and begin Pekah in 752 our reconstruction would call for 729/28 instead of 728/27 for Hezekiah's accession. This would bring Hezekiah's death in 700/699 (29 years later), one year too early to synchronize with the beginning of Manasseh's reign according to Vogelstein's reconstruction. One way to account for this would be to reckon Hezekiah's 29 years from the first year of his new era, i.e., 714/13. This would give us 685/84 for the last year of Hezekiah, just

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62. According to Thiele's system, Amaziah was 16 at the birth of his son Azariah. Albright, op. cit., p. 21, n. 21.

63. Vogelstein, op. cit., p. 6, n. 19, uses this explanation as a proof that Hezekiah instituted a calendar reform, but his figures for Ahaz are different because he uses a different system to account for Ahaz' reign.

64. Thiele, op. cit., pp. 169, 170.

two years later than Thiele's closing year for Hezekiah, 687/86.[65] We could then postulate a coregency of 11 years for Manasseh instead of 10 as Thiele does, and complete the chronology of Judah according to his reconstruction. The other possibility is the procedure followed. By moving up the dating of Pekah's reign we get the extra year required to dovetail our chronology with Vogelstein's. There are two reasons for this. (1) It is the simpler of the two solutions. (2) The first procedure would leave no record of the time between 728/27 and 714/13; the chroniclers would seem to have simply forgotten those years. One possible objection to this latter procedure is that it mutilates the text of II Kings 18:2 and other passages which give identical information. We are reckoning Hezekiah's age according to one calendar system, and the length of his reign which is given a few words later according to another system. In answer, we may say that the determining of the various calenderal systems in use in the Divided Kingdom is one of the fundamental tasks of the scholar who would construct a reasonable and accurate chronology of this period. The scribe who wrote II Kings had before him the chronology of Hezekiah according to both the old and new ways of reckoning, and he made free use of both of them.[66]

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This then is the completed reconstruction of Hezekiah's chronology. It is hoped that the dates herein presented will aid in solving the historical problems of his reign. Whether or not this reconstruction will stand only time will tell. As yet it is only a hypothesis, and as such

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65. Ibid., p. 178.
66. Ibid., p. 140. Cf. II Kings 18:1,9,10 and 13; also Vogelstein, op. cit., p. 3, n. 10.

will stand until proven true or false. Until then it will have served its purpose.

Appendix A. List of Synchronisms

Menahem 10	= Azariah 39	II Kings	15:17
Pekah 2	= Jotham 1	"	15:32
Pekahiah 0/1	= Azariah 50	"	15:23
Pekah 0/1	= Azariah 52	"	15:27
Pekah 17	= Ahaz 0/1	"	16:1
Hoshea 0/1	= Jotham 20	"	15:30
Hoshea 0	= Ahaz 12 (4 AV margin)	"	17:1
Hoshea 3	= Hezekiah 0	"	18:1
Hoshea 7	= Hezekiah 4	"	18:9
Hoshea 9	= Hezekiah 6	"	18:10; 17:6

Ages of the Kings in Question, as Recorded

Jotham	25	II Kings	15:33	II Chron.	27:1
Ahaz	20	"	16:2	"	28:1
Hezekiah	25	"	18:2	"	29:1

Appendix B. Chart of the Chronology Hezekiah

752 751 750 749 748 747 746 745 744 743 742 741 740 739 738 737 736 735 734 733

Years of Tiglath-pileser III

12 Philistia 13 Damasc.

JUDAH

Ahaz - yrs. accredited - 16

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

2nd of Pekah (II Kings 15:32)

Jotham - coregent
16 yrs. including coregency

ac. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

Jotham inactive

Azariah
yrs. from coregency

40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52

Jotham - sole reign

Ahaz
(17th of Pekah) (II Kings

ac. 1 2

ac. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10/ac. 1 2/ac. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Menahem - 10 yrs. 39th of Azariah (II Kings 15:17)

Shallum - 1 mo. 39th of Azariah (II Kings 15:14)

Pekahiah - 2 yrs.
(50th of Azariah)
(II Kings 15:23)

Pekah
52nd of Azariah (II Kings 15:27)

ISRAEL

Pekah yrs. accredited - 20

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

733 732 731 730 729 728 727 726 725 724 723 722 721 720 719 718 717 716 715 714

13 14 15
Damascus Damascus

11 12 13 14 15 16

active

18 19 20

(II Kings 16:1)

2 3 4 5 6 7 ac. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Hezekiah - 29 yrs.
3rd of Hoshea (II Kings 18:1)

Siege of Samaria
(4th of Hezekiah)
(7th of Hoshea)
(II Kings 18:9)

Fall of Samaria
(6th of Hezekiah)
(9th of Hoshea)
(II Kings 18:10)
(II Kings 17:6)

Last year of old calendar

"anacrustic" year

Ne
Er

1

9 10 11 12 13

7 8 9 ac. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Hoshea - 9 yrs.
12th of Ahaz (II Kings 17:1)
20th of Jotham (II Kings 15:30)

END of Northern Kingdom

18 19 20

706 705 704 703 702 701

Years of Sennacherib ac 1 2 3 4

9 10 11 12 13 14

22 23 24 25 26

714	713	712	711	710	709	708	707
"stic" New Era							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21

701	700	699	698	697	696	695	694
4	5						
• Siege of Jerusalem 14th of Hezekiah (II Kings 18:13)							
			Manasseh - 55 yrs.				
14	15	16		1	2	3	4
27	28	29/ac					

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