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Telephone: 503 292 4352

• Internet: www.askelm.com •

E-Mail: askoffice@askelm.com

Israel and Judah: 32. Jotham and Ahaz of Judah

by David Sielaff, October 2018

Read the October 1, 2018 Commentary, "[Tiglathpileser](#)"

Then read the accompanying [Newsletter for October 2018](#)

Israel and Judah: 32

Jotham and
Ahaz of
Judah

THE SITUATION: King Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah has died. Uzziah's reign was peaceful and he was a good king, except he made the serious mistake of entering the Temple. YHWH punished Uzziah with leprosy. His son Jotham now reigns as a good king. Judah is a prosperous kingdom, with Jotham as its powerful king, peace with its neighbors continues during most of his 16-year reign. Jotham's death gives way to one of the most evil kings, Ahaz of Judah, who also rules 16 years.

We enter the period in the history of Israel and Judah when we possess the writings of the prophets coming down to us in the Scriptures. These writings show us the intimate interaction YHWH had with His people Israel and the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

YHWH was just as involved and interactive with His people before the writings of the Major and Minor prophets were written and collected, but the writings of Elijah and Elisha and the other earlier prophets were not written and preserved for us to benefit from,^a as the apostle Paul tells us:

“For whatever was written before, was written for this teaching of ours, that through the endurance [patience] and the consolation [comfort] of the scriptures we may have expectation [hope].”

• **Romans 15:4**

We have been examining the texts of Second Kings and Second Chronicles, but now additional information can be introduced from Isaiah 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1; and Micah 1:1 which were written about the same time period as certain kings of Israel and Judah.

^a Of course, the writings of Moses had prophecies within them (“[Mosaic Prophecies for the End-Time](#)”), as did the Psalms of David and most all the historical writings. One of the three sections of the Old Testament was called by Jesus and the apostle Paul “**the prophets**” (Matthew 5:17, 7:12, 11:13, 22:40; Luke 16:16, 24:44; John 1:45; Acts 13:15, 24:14, 28:23; and Romans 3:21). This group of books included Joshua-Judges and the Book of Kingdoms (1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings) along with the Major and Minor Prophets according to our Bibles today. See “[The Geographical Design of the Holy Scriptures](#)” and the graphic “[Diagram: the Symmetry of the Bible](#).”

- Isaiah focuses on the Kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem (Isaiah 1:1).
- Hosea focuses on the Kingdom of Israel (Hosea 1:1).
- Amos focuses on Israel (Amos 1:1).
- Micah focuses on the two capital cities of Samaria and Jerusalem (Micah 1:1).

These four introductory verses tell the time period when the prophecies are given. They deal with subjects that interact with and give background to the narratives.^b

Isaiah 1:1	Hosea 1:1	Amos 1:1	Micah 1:1
<p>¹ The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz</p> <p>which he perceived concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.^c</p>	<p>¹ The word of Yahweh which came to Hosea, son of Beeri,</p> <p>in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel.</p>	<p>¹ The words of Amos, who came to be among the herdsmen of Tekoa, which he perceived concerning Israel</p> <p>in the days of Uzziah king of Judah,</p> <p>and in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.^d</p>	<p>¹ The word of Yahweh which came to Micah the Morashite</p> <p>in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he perceived concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.</p>

Here are four roughly contemporaneous prophets receiving messages from God (some over several decades) during the reigns of 1, 3, or 4 kings of Judah. Each prophet spoke and then wrote to different recipients and audiences, with their prophecies fulfilled at different eras, with some prophecies having complete fulfillment thousands of years from when the prophecy was given. Some feel that the books of Joel and Jonah were also written during this period.

These four opening verses have formulaic elements that are recognizable one to the other. This is intentional. In three of the introductory verses Uzziah is mentioned, Jotham is mentioned in three, Ahaz is in three, and Hezekiah is in three. Hosea has lengthy criticism of the people of the kingdom of Israel from Hosea 2:2 through 6:3. Uzziah is the only king of Judah mentioned in Amos. There is no criticism of him, but the people of Judah do receive severe criticism:

“Thus says Yahweh: ‘Due to three transgressions of Judah, And due to four, I shall not turn it back, Because [1] they rejected the law of Yahweh, And [2] His statutes they do not keep. And [3] their lies are leading them astray, After [4] which their fathers walked. I will send fire upon Judah, And it will devour the citadels of Jerusalem.’”

• **Amos 2:4–5**

^b In “[Israel and Judah: 31. Prophets, Writings, and Kings](#)” I show the first verses of only Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos. I include Micah here because his prophecies relate to the narratives in [this](#) article.

^c There are other times when Isaiah dates prophecies and visions, Isaiah 6:1: “**In the year of king Uzziah's death, I saw Yahweh sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His skirts were filling the temple.**” Isaiah 14:28 gives a date that is very precise to Isaiah’s audience even though the chronologies of the period are difficult to work out: “**LOAD [burden] OF PHILISTIA In the year of the death of king Ahaz came this load: ...**”

^d This earthquake occurred in the time of King Uzziah. A similar great earthquake will occur when YHWH puts His feet on the Mount of Olives as described in Zechariah 14:3–5. It will be Christ and not God the Father who will put His feet on that place. Christ has been granted permission to use the name of YHWH, Christ being YHWH’s representative and He was given the name YHWH, which is above every other name. See Philippians 2:9. For the larger context of the “day of YHWH’s wrath,” read all of Isaiah chapter 24, especially verse 18, which gives another perspective on this great end time earthquake.

The predicted judgment did not come for over 150+ years when Judah was dissolved as a kingdom and Jerusalem destroyed by Babylon. The judgment on the kingdom of Israel begins in Amos 2:6 and goes on until chapter 5:17.^e

The first verse of Micah has the formulaic elements in it like the other three, but Micah 1:2–3 have other distinctive elements to them:

“The word of Yahweh which came to Micah the Morashite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he perceived concerning Samaria and Jerusalem:

‘Hear, you peoples, all of them! Attend, earth and its fullness! My Lord Yahweh is coming among you as a Witness — My Lord, from His holy temple. For behold, Yahweh will go forth from His place, And He will descend and tread on the high-places of the land. ...’”

• **Micah 1:1–3**

YHWH will perform the judgment He is proclaiming. This prophecy specific to the cities of **“Samaria and Jerusalem”** continues, but six things are significant in these first three verses of Micah above:

1. The prophecies of Micah are given during the reigns of three kings of Judah.
2. The messages focus on two capital cities, Samaria and Judah, of the Israelite people.^f
3. YHWH made clear the audiences for the prophecies included all Gentile nations and peoples.
4. He will require the nations to witness YHWH’s prophetic fulfillments against the two cities.^g
5. These prophecies come directly from YHWH’s Temple in heaven.
6. YHWH will personally leave His Temple from heaven for judgment to occur on the two cities.

In point 4, Micah 1:2 says the witnesses of YHWH’s prophetic judgments against the two cities of Samaria and Jerusalem will be the Gentile nations of the world at that time.

Micah and the other prophets during this period focus on the people of Israel and Judah, what they were doing and what they were thinking in relation to God and their covenant with Him. It occurs only a few times in these books where the prophecies have narratives of historical events. Isaiah has some history that adds specific information to corresponding portions in Second Kings and Second Chronicles. The largest segment in Isaiah has to do with King Hezekiah, his life being threatened by YHWH, and the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians and the miraculous conclusion to that crisis.

Problems with Prophecy

Like Isaiah, Hosea, and Amos, God’s prophecies through Micah are problematic for all students of prophecy. The problems are that we lack information: (1) to link the prophetic fulfillments to historical events, (2) to distinguish how (and if) those fulfilled prophecies had a second fulfillment in the time of Christ and His apostles, and (3) to identify prophecies to be fulfilled in the time before Christ’s return, future to us today.

To put the problem another way, some prophecies may have:

- one part fulfilled near the time the prophecy was given,

^e All the prophecies of Amos were given **“in the days of Uzziah”** although their primary focus is to the kingdom of Israel. Remember the vision of Amos and his confrontation with the pagan priest at Bethel in the kingdom of Israel (Amos 7:7–17).

^f Often the two capital cities represent the kingdoms, for example Micah 7:9 the capital cities represent the kingdoms and even their rulers at the time the prophecy is given.

^g I find it interesting that YHWH did not require Gentiles to worship Him at that time. They were free to worship their own gods. Micah 4:5:

“Though all the peoples shall walk, each man in the name of his elohim, Yet we [Israel] shall walk in the Name of Yahweh our Elohim, for the eon and further.”

- another part fulfilled in the time of Christ,
- a third part to be fulfilled before Christ returns.

Furthermore, prophetic fulfillment of any given prophecy may be one of the three, two of the three, or all three of the possible times periods of fulfillment. Remember, “**It is the glory of Elohim to conceal a matter, And the glory of kings to investigate a matter**” (Proverbs 25:2). As children of God we are much more than kings. God has certainly concealed the matters of prophecy, and it is to our glory to investigate them.

The first prophecy of Micah 1:1–7 occurred in the future close to the time when Micah received the prophecy. It is unlikely to be a dual prophecy in Christ’s time or for our future because the city of Samaria was made a pile of rubble and has not been rebuilt since the Assyrians destroyed it in the 8th century BC.^h Jerusalem still exists today and is occupied by Jews and other peoples.

However, there are prophecies in Micah about Jerusalem and Judah that likely have future fulfillment because they coordinate with similar prophecies in Isaiah. Dr. Martin considered that several of the prophecies of the “twin prophets” Isaiah and Micah were for our future.ⁱ By calling them “twin prophets” he meant that their two prophetic books should be analyzed together to get a more complete view of the prophetic mosaic of future events for Judah, Jerusalem, and so far as Micah is concerned, for Samaria.

TEXT: REVIEW, Jotham Takes Over from His Leprous Father, King Uzziah of Judah

2 Kings 15:5–7

⁵ Yahweh touched the king, and he remained leprous until the day of his death. He dwelt in another house divested of his duties, while Jotham the king’s son was [1] over the royal house, [2] judging the people of the land.

⁶ As for the rest of the affairs of Azariah and all that he did, are they not written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Judah?

⁷ ... his son Jotham reigned in his stead. ...

2 Chronicles 26:20–23

²⁰ When Azariah the head priest and all the priests turned toward him, behold, he [Uzziah] was leprous on his forehead; so they hustled him from there; and he too pressed on to go forth, for Yahweh had touched him.

²¹ King Uzziah remained leprous until the day of his death. He dwelt in another house divested of his duties, being leprous, for he was severed from the House of Yahweh, while his son Jotham was [1] over the royal house, [2] judging the people of the land.

²² As for the rest of the affairs of Uzziah, first and last, Isaiah son of Amoz, the prophet, has written.

²³ ... his son Jotham reigned in his stead. **[end text]**

These verses must be reviewed to give context for Jotham’s sole reign after Uzziah’s death.

2 Chronicles 26:20. Besides being the name of the King of Judah (used most often in Second Kings), in this verse Azariah was also the name of the head priest of YHWH’s Temple in two verses, 2 Chronicles 26:17 and 20. The King of Judah had a second name, Uzziah, used most often in Second Chronicles. Yes, it can be confusing if the texts are not read carefully.

2 Kings 15:5 and 2 Chronicles 26:20–21. We are told that Uzziah’s son Jotham took over extensive and important duties during Uzziah’s illness until he died. Functions [1] and [2] in verses 5 and 21 are separate functions of a ruler. The texts seem to merge them as a single idea, but running the royal household is an internal function while judging the people is a function operating outside the royal house. Apparently, Jotham did not abuse unusual privilege and authority put upon him by Uzziah’s illness; and God honored Jotham with

^h The story of the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and the 3-year Assyrian siege of the capital of Samaria occurs in 2 Kings chapter 17, as we will read in later accounts of Israel and Judah.

ⁱ Dr. Martin discusses this at length in his article “[The Book of Micah](#).”

a successful reign as a “good” king.

2 Kings 15:6 and 2 Chronicles 26:22. The “**annals of the days of the kings of Judah**” (verse 6) at least this portion, was written by Isaiah (verse 22). See also 2 Chronicles 32:32.

With this in the background, I want to address the narratives of the reign of Jotham, son of Uzziah, over his 16 years of sole reign, told in few words in both Kings and Chronicles:

TEXT: The Reign of Jotham of Judah, Beginning and End

2 Kings 15:32–38

³² In the second year of **Pekah** son of Remaliah king of Israel, **Jotham** son of Azariah king of Judah became king.

³³ He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned **in Jerusalem** sixteen years; his mother’s name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok.

³⁴ **He did what was upright** in the eyes of Yahweh. He performed according to **all** that his father Azariah had done.

³⁵ But they did not take away the high-places. **The people** were continually [1] **sacrificing** and [2] **fuming incense on the high-places**.

It was he who rebuilt the Upper Gateway of the House of Yahweh.

³⁶ As for the rest of the affairs of Jotham and all that he did, are they not written on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Judah?

³⁷ In those days **Yahweh started** to send **Rezin** king of Syria and **Pekah** son of Remaliah against Judah.

³⁸ Then **Jotham** lay down with his fathers. He was entombed with his fathers in the city of his father

2 Chronicles 27:1–9

¹ **Jotham**

was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned **in Jerusalem** sixteen years; his mother’s name was Jerushah daughter of Zadok.

² **He did what was upright** in the eyes of Yahweh, according to **all** that his father *Uzziah* had done; *but he did not invade the temple of Yahweh;*

yet **the people** *still acted corruptly*.

³ It was he who rebuilt the Upper Gateway of the House of Yahweh, and he **greatly built up on the wall of Ophel**.

⁴ He also built cities in the hill country of Judah, and in the plowland he built **fortified-places and towers**.

⁵ He fought against the king of the sons of Ammon and conquered them; the sons of Ammon gave him that year a hundred talents of silver and 10,000 cors of wheat and another 10,000 of barley. This was what the sons of Ammon rendered to him, also in the second year and the third.

⁶ **Jotham** showed himself steadfast, for he established his ways before Yahweh his Elohim.

⁷ As for the rest of the affairs of Jotham and **all his wars** and his ways, behold, they are written on the scroll of the kings of *Israel and Judah*.

⁸ He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years.

⁹ Then **Jotham** lay down with his fathers. *They* entombed *him* in the city of

David, and his son **Ahaz** reigned in his stead.

David, and his son **Ahaz** reigned in his stead.

[end text]

Only 7 verses in 2 Kings 15:32–38 and 9 verses in 2 Chronicles 27:1–9 tell the narrative of Jotham’s pivotal reign. Many of those verses were formulaic and do not give much information.

2 Kings 15:32–33 and 2 Chronicles 27:1. Pekah the king of Israel is mentioned as a time reference. He was the second to the last king of Israel, and he will be an enemy of the kingdom of Judah during Jotham’s reign and an even greater enemy to Judah during the reign of Jotham’s heir Ahaz.

It appears that Jotham was age 41 when he died; it seemed he had a natural death. It is interesting that both texts specified that Jotham “**reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years.**” The prepositional phrase “**in Jerusalem**” seems to be an unnecessary odd fact that need not have been stated. It was obvious to everyone, the place from which the kings of Judah ruled. After all Jerusalem was the capital of Judah since King David. Possession of the citadel of Jerusalem was the seat of power, the heart of the kingdom. Does this mean that Jotham reigned from somewhere else before or after his 16 years, perhaps traveling around Judah supervising Uzziah’s many building projects and being the eyes and ears for his leprous father who necessarily stayed in Jerusalem?

Details such as this may be important to help solve chronological puzzles. But as things are now, more information is required.

Jotham’s reign of 16 years likely indicated the period when he reigned alone, or so Dr. Martin understood it to mean, which is what the texts say. Many scholars believe there were several co-regencies of a king and his son in both kingdoms of Israel and Judah, with the co-regency of Uzziah and Jotham seeming to have the strongest evidence. These complicate the chronologies considerably because it is unknown if the years of a particular king’s reign began with his co-regency or with his sole reign. Whatever the case, the biblical texts tell us Jotham was an experienced ruler who successfully faced several major challenges.^j

2 Kings 15:35 and 2 Chronicles 27:2. “**But they did not take away the high-places**” refers to both kings Uzziah (Azariah) and Jotham, but the people did not demand they do so, nor did the Levitical priests. In spite of the fact that the two kings of Judah were “good,” they did not or were unwilling to go against the desires of the people who “**were continually sacrificing and fuming incense on the high-places,**” and “**acted corruptly.**” This meant that they performed acts of idolatry continually.

During most of the 210+ years of the divided north and south kingdoms, the people of Judah were usually able to freely travel to the kingdom of Israel and vice versa, unless they were openly at war. The people of the northern kingdom were idolaters from their beginning under Jeroboam I, who split Solomon’s united kingdom in two parts (albeit with YHWH’s permission and assistance). The people of Judah eagerly took on the idolatry of their brothers and sisters in the northern kingdom so completely that good kings of Judah such as Uzziah, Jotham (and later Hezekiah and Joash) could not completely suppress the idolatrous inclinations of the people they ruled. This idolatry was a major complaint and YHWH’s prophets spoke often against it.

Jotham “**did what was upright in the eyes of Yahweh**” (2 Kgs 15:34). Even so, since Jotham failed to demolish the “high places,” his people continued their religious apostasy (2 Kgs 15:35) with the same wording used for Amaziah’s reign in 2 Kings 14:4 and Uzziah’s in 15:4.

2 Chronicles 27:3–4, and 6. These three verses show that Jotham continued the building projects of Uzziah, his father. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote about the energetic and capable leader:

“This king [Jotham] was not defective in any virtue, but was religious toward God, and righteous toward men, and careful of the good of the city (for whatever part needed to be repaired or adorned he magnificently repaired and adorned them.) He also took care of the foundations of

^j There is an extremely difficult chronology problem related to 2 Kings 15:33, 2 Chronicles 27:1 and verse 8 where it says Jotham “**reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.**” In 2 Kings 15:30 it says that Hoshea assassinated Pekah “**... and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Azariah.**” How is this possible? Did Jotham reign 16 years or 20 years? This problem is unsolvable at this time, although one solution has been proposed. After Hoshea murdered Pekah, there was no king in Israel for a number of years.

the cloisters in the temple, and repaired the walls that had fallen down, and built very great towers, and such as were almost impregnable; and if anything else in his kingdom had been neglected, he took great care of it.”

• *Antiquities of the Jews 9:236–237*

“Jotham showed himself steadfast,” which meant that his kingdom was strong and mighty because “he established his ways before Yahweh his Elohim.” The kingdom prospered in safety in spite of the plans of Judah’s enemies.^k

2 Kings 15:37 and 2 Chronicles 27:7. These verses are not sequential, but they should be linked. Together they give a better understanding of what was happening at the time.

First, 2 Chronicles 27:7, “the affairs of Jotham and all his wars ...” This verse indicates that Jotham fought several wars in addition to his victorious campaign against the Ammonites.¹

Second, 2 Kings 15:37, “In those days Yahweh started to send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah [king of Israel] son of Remaliah against Judah.” The attacks began because YHWH wanted them to occur. While Jotham was a “good” king, the people were not faithful to YHWH and were to be punished if they continued their evil ways. The attacks did not occur as a judgment against Jotham. The coming war (that God knew about, verse 37) gives a reason for the construction projects of Jotham’s father Uzziah and Jotham’s projects in 2 Chronicles 27:3–4.

2 Chronicles 27:7. This verse refers to an unknown writing by Isaiah about the history of the kings of Israel different than the Book of Kings and the prophetic Book of Isaiah. However, this verse does indicate that Isaiah had firsthand knowledge of contemporary events, as we are told in Isaiah 1:1.

2 Chronicles 27:8. This verse exists only in Hebrew manuscripts and not in any Greek manuscripts. It repeats part of 2 Kings 15:33 and 2 Chronicles 27:1.

The First Deportation of Israelites from the Kingdom of Israel

The Assyrians created a vast empire, expanding at every opportunity. What they could not control through trade, they sent emissaries to other kingdoms inviting and then threatening them with military force to become vassals who paid tribute whenever the king of Assyria commanded payment. Those who did not comply were attacked and destroyed. The Assyrian military was the most efficient of its day. Vassals supplied auxiliary troops when required.

If tribute was properly paid in quantity and quality, the Assyrians allowed their vassal states varying degrees of self-rule. Non-payment of tribute was eventually an act of war. The Assyrian administration of their empire was remarkably efficient and was continued as an administrative system by the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek empires in recognizable form in the Near East for almost 1,000 years.

^k Similar words of praise, prosperity, and power were used about Jotham’s father King Uzziah in 2 Chronicles 26:5:

“He came to seek after Elohim in the days of Zechariah who gave him understanding in the fear of Elohim; and during the days he sought after Yahweh, the One, Elohim, prospered him.”

We are told in First Chronicles that two kings, Jotham of Judah and Jeroboam of Israel (contemporaries, but Jotham was probably assisting his leprous father Uzziah rule at the time) each compiled genealogies of their subjects and conducted a census of their respective armies. Note what the genealogy of the tribe of Reuben in 1 Chronicles 5:17–18 tells us:

“All of them had their genealogies registered in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel. Reuben’s sons, the Gadite and the half tribe of Manasseh [all three in the kingdom of Israel]: Out of their able sons, they had 44,760 men marching forth in the militia host, who bore shield and sword, positioned the bow, and were experienced at war.”

Jeroboam II conducted his census to prepare for fighting the Syrians and Assyrians and perhaps Judah. Jotham conducted his census to prepare against war with Israel and surrounding Gentile peoples.

¹ The Ammonites earlier gave tribute to Jotham’s father Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:8), but later rebelled or caused offense by raiding Judah or some other cause of war. Jotham attacked and forced the Ammonites to submit and pay heavy tribute for three years.

The first deportation or exile of Israelites occurred during the reign of Menahem of Israel.^m The Assyrians deported many other nations and peoples as well. For example, “... **the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir ...**” (2 Kings 16:9).

Israelites living east of the Jordan River mostly comprised the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. YHWH used the Assyrians to punish the northern kingdom of Israel for their sins and evil acts. Assyria first attacked Israel east of the Jordan River. They first captured and deported Israelites a decade or so before Pekah became king, in the days of King Menahem of Israel (two kings before Pekah).

“But they offended the Elohim of their fathers and prostituted after the elohim of the peoples of the land, whom Elohim had exterminated before them.

So the Elohim of Israel roused the spirit of Pulⁿ king of Assyria, the spirit of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and he deported them, that is, the Reubenite, the Gadite, and the half tribe of Manasseh; he brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara and the stream Gozan unto this day.”

• 1 Chronicles 5:25–26

Because of Israel’s offenses YHWH used Assyria as His tool to punish Israel, as Isaiah tells us:

“Woe, Assyria! club of My anger! And a rod is he in the day of My indignation! Against a polluted nation shall I send him, And against a people of My rage shall I commission him, To loot loot and to plunder plunder, And to make it a tramping ground like the clay of the streets.”

• Isaiah 10:5–6

This exile is also recorded in the genealogy of the tribe of Reuben earlier in First Chronicles. One of the important leaders of the tribe of Reuben at that time is singled out by name, Beerah, as part of this first group of Israelites taken prisoner and deported to lands in Assyria. We do not know why he is singled out for mention.

“Micah [not the prophet] his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son, Beerah his son whom Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria carried away into exile; he was a prince of the Reubenite.”

• 1 Chronicles 5:6

After the Assyrians left with their captives, King Pul required Menahem to pay a large tribute:

“He [Menahem] did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh; and he did not withdraw from all the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, with which he caused Israel to sin.

In his days King Pul of Assyria invaded the land [of Israel]; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, so that his hands might be with him to hold the kingdom fast in his own hand. Menahem took forth the silver from Israel, from all the masters of ability, to give to the king of Assyria fifty shekels of silver from each one. So the king of Assyria turned back and did not stay there in the land.”

• 2 Kings 15:18–20

More deportations were to come as Prof. Wiseman notes. The dates are problematic.

“Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria (745–727), mentions a number of kings of Israel in his inscriptions. Among tribute exacted from Israel (*Bit-Humri*) was that from Menahem of Samaria in 738 as also recorded in 2 Kgs 15:19f., and from Pekah (*Paqaha*) whom he deposed in favour of his

^m The last six kings of Israel were Zechariah (son of Jeroboam II), Shallum, **Menahem**, Pekahiah (son of Menahem), **Pekah**, and Hoshea. After that, the kingdom of Israel was no more. Those Israelites from the tribes who were not deported (a minority) were incorporated into the kingdom of Judah in the time of Hezekiah.

ⁿ King Tiglath-pileser III is also called “Pul” in 2 Kings 15:14–22, 16:7, 18 and 2 Chronicles 28:20. Pul was Tiglath-pileser’s Babylonian throne name. W.W. Hallo and K.L. Younger, *Context of Scripture* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2000), 285, note 21.

own nominee Hoshea (*Ausi*) who also paid tribute to him in 731 BC.”

• Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings*, 34^o

The Great Alliance Forms Against Assyria, Led by Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel

Pekah was probably in the military at the time of Israel’s defeat. Rezin and Pekah participated in an alliance to oppose Assyrian aggression from the northeast and sought the aid of Judah and several other kingdoms to join their coalition to oppose the expansionist attacks by Assyria. Jotham refused to join the alliance and Rezin and Pekah began to attack Judah. If they could not gain Judah’s support, they would attack Judah, seize her resources, wealth, and even capture people to help fight the greater evil of Assyria.

The kingdom of Judah had at least 65 years of continuous relative peace and prosperity with Uzziah’s strong rule of 52 years followed by Jotham’s “upright” reign of 16 years (2 Kings 15:37 and 2 Chronicles 27:1, 7). With YHWH’s help Jotham successfully opposed attacks by Rezin and Pekah against Judah. Only during the reign of Ahaz (Jotham’s son) did the Syro-Israelite alliance defeat Judah on the battlefield.

Jotham was a faithful servant of YHWH who “**did what was upright in the eyes of Yahweh**” (2 Kings 15:34 and Chronicles 27:2), even though the people continued their evil and deserved punishment, as you can read from contemporary descriptions in the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah, and in the accounts in Chronicles.

War was profitable in ancient times ... at least for the winner.^p Menehem impoverished his kingdom to pay ransom (a bribe) to Assyria to deport a defeated and prostrate Israel. Actually, such an arrangement was good for both sides. Menahem continued as king of Israel, with the support of Tiglath-pileser, and the kingdom of Assyria received a massive amount of loot and Israelite treasure, one of many impositions of tribute during Assyria’s domination of the Middle East at this time. Assyrian warriors were happy, Assyrian nobles were happy, and most Assyrian kings used the treasure (loot) to strengthen their army even more and begin great construction projects in Assyrian cities. It was what great kings did in ancient times.

REVIEW: Who Was Pekah, King of Israel?

King Pekah of Israel is mentioned here in 2 Kings 15:37. Pekah’s reign is summarized in 2 Kings 15:27–29 and discussed in “[Israel and Judah: 31. Prophets, Writings, and Kings](#),” but there is more information elsewhere in Scripture about Pekah, the next to the last king of Israel.

Pekah’s 20-year reign lasted during the rule of three Judean kings: (1) the last year of Uzziah, (2) the entire reign of King Jotham, and (3) lasted through the first few years of King Ahaz. He began to reign:

“In the fifty-second year of Azariah [Uzziah] king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria for twenty years. He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh; he did not withdraw from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, with which he caused Israel to sin.”

• 2 Kings 15:27–28

Within two years after Pekah began his reign, Jotham became king of Judah. Jotham reigned 16 years, Pekah for 20 years. Another invasion of Israel took place in the days of Pekah.

“In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abelbeth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he deported them to Assyria.”

• 2 Kings 15:29

There were two invasions by Tiglath-pileser leading the Assyrian army into the kingdom of Israel, one during the reign of Menahem of Israel, another some 10 years later during the reign of Pekah. In both cases Tiglath-

^o Donald J. Wiseman, *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 9, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 34. In the same Assyrian inscriptions where Israel is mentioned, King Rezin (of Syria and Damascus) is also mentioned, and so are Jotham and Ahaz, just as the biblical texts tell us.

^p King Jotham and the kingdom of Judah profited by the victory over the Ammonites in 2 Chronicles 27:5 above.

pileser took the people from defeated cities and deported them to various places in the Assyrian Empire.

TEXT: The Reign of Ahaz of Judah Begins

2 Kings 16:1–4

¹ In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham king of Judah became king.

² Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Yet he did not do what was upright in the eyes of Yahweh his Elohim like his father David.

³ He walked in the way of the kings of Israel; he even

caused **his son** to **pass through fire**, according to the abhorrences of the nations whom Yahweh had evicted before the sons of Israel.

⁴ He sacrificed and fumed incense on the high-places, on the hills and under every flourishing tree.

2 Chronicles 28:1–4

¹ Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Yet he did not do what was upright in the eyes of Yahweh like his father David.

² He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; he even *made molten images for the Baalim*.

³ *It was he who fumed incense in the ravine of the son of Hinnom and caused his sons to be consumed by fire*, according to the abhorrences of the nations whom Yahweh had evicted before the sons of Israel.

⁴ He sacrificed and fumed incense on the high-places, on the hills and under every flourishing tree.

[end text]

2 Kings 16:1. Ahaz was crowned king of Judah peacefully as rightful heir of King David.

2 Kings 16:2 and 2 Chronicles 28:1. Ahaz was age 20 who reigned 16 years and lived to be 36 years old. He was an evil king in spite of the good examples of his father and grandfather. The son of Ahaz, Hezekiah, will be a good king of Judah.

2 Chronicles 28:2. Ahaz made several images, at least one for each of the multiple gods he worshipped. He did not just worship Baal, but many other gods as well.

2 Kings 16:3 and 2 Chronicles 28:3. The text in 2 Kings has “**son (singular) to pass through the fire.**” The 2 Chronicles text has “**sons (plural) to be consumed by fire.**” Practices such as this were the reason YHWH evicted the nations from the land promised to the tribes of Israel. When Israel and Judah did the same as those nations, YHWH justly evicted them from the land as well.

The human sacrifices of his sons (surely over a period of time) were committed at a known place in Jerusalem, the Valley of Hinnom, with the traditional site being in a steep ravine just west of the southern tip of the City of David. The descendants of Ahaz will also commit such ritual murder in the future (see 2 Chronicles 33:6). In Greek the place is called Gehenna, one of the three major terms incorrectly translated into English as “Hell.”

2 Kings 16:4 and 2 Chronicles 28:4. Ahaz also performed ordinary sacrifices of animals and burned incense (to cover the smell of the blood and gore). Ahaz will undergo severe punishments for his actions, and so will his people who willingly followed the lead of their king.⁹ Remember, the people were more sinful and evil than Uzziah or Jotham, and they approved of the actions of Ahaz.

TEXT: Ahaz and Judah Attacked by Rezin and Pekah

2 Kings 16:5

2 Chronicles 28:5–7

⁵ So Yahweh his Elohim gave him into the hand of

⁹ They followed Ahaz and not the examples of good kings such as Uzziah and Jotham (2 Kings 15:4, 34–35 and 2 Chronicles 17:2).

⁵ Then **Rezin** king of Syria with

Pekah

son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to the battle against Jerusalem. They besieged Ahaz; but they did not prevail in fighting.

the king of Syria; they smote him and captured a great many captives from him, and brought them to Damascus.

And also into the hand of the king of Israel was he given who smote him with a great smiting. ⁶ **Pekah** son of Remaliah, king of Israel,

killed in Judah 120,000 in one day, all sons of valor, because they had forsaken Yahweh Elohim of their fathers.

⁷ Zichri, a master of war from Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam governor of the royal house, and Elkanah, the second to the king.

[end text]

2 Kings 16:5 and 2 Chronicles 28:5. Rezin and the army of Syria attacked and decisively defeated the army of Judah. “**They smote him**” in 2 Chronicles 28:5 seems to indicate injury or death to Ahaz, but it is referring to the army of Judah. “**A great many captives**” were seized and deported to Damascus in Syria. We do not know where that battle took place, whether east or west of the Jordan River, but nothing is said about their route. 2 Kings 16:5 suggests that Rezin and Pekah appeared for battle against Jerusalem, but were unsuccessful in capturing the city.

After a time besieging the city, the Syrians returned to Syria (probably through Israel) taking their captives to Damascus. It is likely to suppose those captives were made slaves. Some men possibly were enlisted or forced into a Syrian auxiliary unit to fight against Assyria in the future against a growing threat to both Israel and Syria.

2 Kings 16:5 and 2 Chronicles 28:6. The attack by Israel’s army against Judah is told. A battle was fought. It was separate from the battle between Syria and Judah. Pekah and the Israelite army killed as it says, “**120,000 in one day, all sons of valor.**” Both Rezin and Pekah were used by God to punish the people of Judah as it says, “**because they had forsaken Yahweh Elohim of their fathers.**”

Ahaz, safe in the temple/palace-citadel fortress complex of the City of David (Mt. Zion) in Jerusalem, survived the attacks by Syria and Israel. “**They besieged Ahaz; but they did not prevail in fighting.**” This indicates that they went home, both the Syrian army and the Israelite army. Ahaz survived and Jerusalem survived.

2 Chronicles 28:7. One strong Israelite fighter killed two high officials of the court of Ahaz and one of the king’s sons (which is no more than what Ahab did by sacrificing his sons). It is not said if Ahaz’s son Maaseiah was heir to the throne when he died. God did not abandon His people of Judah. He sent a prophet whose words were heeded by the army of Israel.

Next I want to insert a passage from Isaiah.

TEXT: A Prophecy from YHWH by Isaiah for King Ahaz of Judah

Isaiah 7:1–9

¹ It came to be in the days of **Ahaz** son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that **Rezin** king of Syria, and **Pekah** son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to fight against it, yet they were not able to fight against it.

² And it was told to the house of David, saying: “**Syria has been guided to Ephraim**”; and his [Ahaz’s] heart swayed, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wildwood sway because of the wind.

³ Then Yahweh said to Isaiah:

“Go forth now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, to the end of the trench of the uppermost reservoir, to the highway of the field of the launderer.” ⁴ And you will say to him,

‘Keep calm and be quiet. Do not fear, and let not your heart be timid because of these two tails of smoking wooden pokers, that are by the hot anger of Rezin and Syria and Remaliah’s son, ⁵ **because Syria counsels evil against you, Ephraim and Remaliah’s son, saying,**

⁶ **“Let us go up into Judah and terrorize it, and let us rend it for ourselves. We shall raise a king to reign in its midst, the son of Tabeel.”**”^r

⁷ Thus says my Lord Yahweh:

“This shall not be confirmed, And it shall not come to pass.” ⁸ **For the head of Syria is Damascus, And the head of Damascus is Rezin, And in another sixty-five years Ephraim shall be undone as a people,** ⁹ **And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, And the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son. If you are not believing, then you are not faithful.”** [end text]

Isaiah 7:1. Ahaz knew what Rezin and Pekah were up to; the same thing was attempted while Jotham was king of Judah. The defenses of Jerusalem were earlier strengthened by Uzziah, the grandfather of Ahaz, and Jotham, the father of Ahaz (2 Chronicles 27:3–4). YHWH wanted Ahaz to depend on Him, not the defenses of his ancestors Uzziah and Jotham.

It could be that Isaiah was talking to Ahaz at the very time that the siege of Jerusalem was taking place, after great defeats of the army of Judah by a combined attack by Syrian and Israeli troops. Jerusalem was no longer the capital of the country, but a fortress while the enemy lurked outside.

Verse 2. The phrase **“told to the house of David”** meant that YHWH recognized Ahaz as recipient of YHWH’s promises to David regarding his descendants. The words of Isaiah seem to communicate to an audience, perhaps the entire court of Judah, including the wives of Ahaz, and all his children, which would include the future heir, Hezekiah. He warned about the threat of Syria conspiring with Israel against Judah. In these frightening times, Isaiah confronted a king (who would butcher his own sons) and tell him: don’t worry, YHWH will save you because of promises He made to David.

They were all terrified, Ahaz and **“his people.”** Their worst fears were now confirmed from YHWH’s long-time prophet.

Verse 3. YHWH told Isaiah he was to meet with Ahaz at a specific location, and Isaiah was to take along his son Shear-jashub, whose name means “a remnant will return.” I imagine Isaiah’s wife was not pleased. Isaiah did as he was told and Ahaz listened to the words of YHWH.

Verse 4. Isaiah gave Ahaz four commands: (1) keep calm, (2) be quiet, (3) do not fear, and (4) **“do not let your heart be timid.”**

Verse 5. Rezin and Pekah have **“hot anger”** toward Ahaz, but Ahaz was told not to fear the threats from Rezin and Pekah.

Verse 6. Ahaz was given a remarkable opportunity from God. He is being told the thoughts and words of his enemies. Rezin and Pekah were threatening to kill and depose Ahaz so they could place another king on the throne of Judah. Of course, YHWH had other intentions — it will not happen.

Verses 7 and 8. The plan will fail. Then Isaiah quotes YHWH saying that the “head” of the plan, Rezin, will not be able to confirm this plan for it to happen. Rezin was the king of Damascus but he was also lord of smaller nobles and kingdoms in the territory of Syria, which explains the thoughts that **“... the head of Syria is Damascus, And the head of Damascus is Rezin.”**

YHWH also told Ahaz that within 65 years the northern kingdom of Israel will no longer exist. Historically

^r “Tabeel” in *Faussett Bible Dictionary* (1888), (International Bible Translators, 1998). BibleWorks, v.10:

“A Syrian-like name. The scheme of Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel was to set up Tabeal’s son as a vassal king instead of Ahaz, in Judah. A party in Jerusalem (Isa. 7:5–6; 8:6, 9, 12) favored the project.”

that prediction came true some 50 years sooner than was stated, within 15 years. What does **“shall be undone as a people”** mean? Assyria dismantled the Kingdom of Israel. In several stages they deported large groups of Israelites away to lands all around Assyria and replaced them with foreign people groups. Most of the people placed in the northern area of Samaria became known as the Samaritans (2 Kings 17:24–29).

Verse 9. YHWH is challenging Ahaz to prove Him wrong, but YHWH added and Isaiah wrote down, **“if you are not believing, then you are not faithful.”** God is telling Ahaz to begin believing what he has been told or it will not happen. By his actions since becoming king, Ahaz thought little of YHWH as the creator and ruling God, and took actions to stop His worship in the Temple. Yet it seems that Ahaz at least believed this message given to him about God’s relief of this dire situation.

God has more to say to Ahaz in verses to follow in chapter 7, but they have to do with the Immanuel prophecy (Isaiah 7:10–25). The most glorious prophecy was given to one of the most evil kings in the Bible. For a fascinating explanation of that prophecy, read [“Isaiah, Part 3”](#) by Dr. Ernest Martin.

Read what happened next from the single source of 2 Chronicles chapter 28.

TEXT: YHWH’s Rescue of Captives through Oded

2 Chronicles 28:8–15

⁸ The sons of Israel captured from their kinsmen 200,000 women, sons and daughters. They also plundered much loot from them and brought the loot to Samaria.

⁹ But a prophet of Yahweh was there; Oded was his name. He went forth, facing the military host that came back to Samaria, and he said to them,

“Behold, it was because of the fury of Yahweh Elohim of your fathers against Judah that He gave them into your hand, and you killed among them with an ire [anger, rage] that has towered up unto the heavens.

¹⁰ **And now you are thinking to subdue the sons of Judah and Jerusalem as men servants and maid servants for yourselves. But are there not with you yourselves guilty acts against Yahweh your Elohim?**

¹¹ **Now then, hearken to me and return the captives whom you captured from your kinsmen, for the anger of Yahweh is burning hot against you.”**

¹² At that Azariah son of Jehohanan, Berechiah son of Meshillemoth and Jehizkiah son of Shallum and Amasa son of Hadlai, men of the heads of the sons of Ephraim, rose up against those coming from the military host ¹³ and said to them,

“You must not bring the captives hither to us, since it is guilt before Yahweh on our part. You are thinking to add to our sins and our guilty acts, for abundant is the guilt we have, and burning hot is the anger of Yahweh against Israel.”

¹⁴ So the outfit [armed men] left the captives and the plunder before the chief officials and all the assembly. ¹⁵ Then the men who were specified by name rose up and aided the captives. From the loot

- [1] they clothed all the naked among them; they gave them clothes, and they gave them sandals;
- [2] they gave them to eat, and they gave them to drink;
- [3] they rubbed them with oil;
- [4] they conducted the unsteady, all of them, on donkeys; and
- [5] they brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, beside their kinsmen.

Then they returned to Samaria.

[end text]

2 Chronicles 28:8. Having killed 120,000 men (verse 6 above), the Israelites captured 200,000 women, boys, and girls, with the idea of enslaving them in Israel. Many of the captives were now widows or orphans,

the men having been killed in battle. Remember, YHWH caused this entire situation as punishment for the people of Judah and Ahaz. God is not a respecter of gender, persons, or age.

Verse 9. YHWH will now rescue the captives. The name Oded means *erecting, building or constructing*. He alone, with the authority and moral force of YHWH, faced down the military leaders and men of a victorious Israelite army that had just killed tens of thousands of their enemies. The Israelites took tens of thousands of captives and a great amount of plunder from Judah. Oded spoke to them saying God knows what they intend to do. He stood alone, “**facing the military host.**” I think he spoke softly in this manner:

“**A tender-hearted response turns away fury, Yet grievous speech kindles anger.
The tongue of the wise uses knowledge well, Yet the mouth of the stupid utters folly.
The eyes of Yahweh are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good ones.**”

• *Proverbs 15:1–3*

He told them that their victory was due to YHWH’s fury against Judah because of their sins. When they fought, it was with a bloodlust — and they knew it to be true. The victory had been too quick, too easy.

Verse 10. The Israelites thought to enslave their brethren of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi after killing so many of the men. Their goal was to totally suppress, incorporate, and unify Judah with Israel. God would not allow that to be done on their terms and Oded — softly but directly — threatened the Israelite leaders, the military, and the people by saying, no, you will not do this.

The anger of God toward Judah, with the army of Israel as His agent, would quickly shift to punish Israel if they continued to suppress the people of Judah.

Verse 11. Practically begging them, for their own sakes, to listen to Oded. The “fury of YHWH” has shifted to become “**the anger of YHWH**” which at that moment, says Oded, “**is burning hot against YOU.**” They saw how God brought them victory. He could just as easily bring judgment upon them.

Verses 12–13. The leaders of Israel confronted the army. (Pekah presumably was not present.) Each of these leaders were well known to the audience reading or hearing this when it was composed, which is why the leaders are named.

It is remarkable that the leaders admitted that they knew their own “**guilt before YHWH,**” and the guilt of the men of the army, such as worshipping other gods, idolatry, incense, religious sex rituals, and perhaps even their own participation in human sacrifice. They all knew right from wrong when it came to their responsibilities before YHWH. They were not ignorant concerning the teachings of Moses, the Judges, David and his descendants down to their day. They knew all of it even as they rejected it in practice. The leaders implored the men not to add to any potential punishment which would be as severe as they just dealt out to the people of Judah — their kinsmen.

Verse 14. Once the battle was won, plunder was the property of the possessing warriors, not their leaders. Loot and plunder were the payment for the life-and-death risks they took. This whole matter was extremely delicate. These were heavily armed men who recently killed without mercy. They quietly “**left the captives and the plunder**” to the brave officers. They simply released their captives, dropped the plunder, and walked home. The men could have turned around and started killing the captives with the idea, “If we cannot have the spoils, no one else will either.” Or, they could have turned against their leaders and easily kill them.

Verse 15. The sequential numbers in brackets are mine, of course. These points show how meticulous the Israelites were in following the instructions of Obed.

The named men from verse 12 began to hand out supplies to the captives for their trip home. They clothed any naked and if needed gave the captives clothing and footwear. They fed them and gave them something to drink. They rubbed their sores or wounds with oil. They “**conducted the unsteady**” or wounded back to Judah, and departed from them at Jericho within the territory of Judah, close to the Jordan River. The Israelite leaders went north, the captives of Judah returned home to pick up the pieces of their lives.