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Israel and Judah:

33. Isaiah and the Death of Ahaz

by David Sielaff, December 2018

Read the accompanying [Newsletter for December 2018](#)

Israel and Judah: 33

Isaiah
and the
Death of Ahaz

THE SITUATION: Ahaz of Judah, one of the most evil kings of Judah, continues his 16-year reign. Ahaz and Judah have survived the onslaught of the armies of Syria and Israel, but the Kingdom of Judah is badly damaged. The Assyrians enter the picture as noted in the last episode “[Israel and Judah: 32. Jotham and Ahaz of Judah](#).” Yet YHWH has chosen Ahaz to receive a most important prophecy. True to form, he rejects wanting to learn about the prophecy and then offends YHWH even more.

Keep in mind how evil Ahaz truly was. He sacrificed his own sons (plural) to gain favor with some insignificant pagan god.

“It was he who fumed incense in the ravine of the son of Hinnom and **caused his sons** [plural] **to be consumed by fire**, according to the abhorrences of the nations whom Yahweh had evicted before the sons of Israel. He sacrificed and fumed incense on the high-places, on the hills and under every flourishing tree.”

• **2 Chronicles 28:3–4**

This was not a symbolic ritual sacrifice where the sons of Ahaz walked through two lines of flame, as some have interpreted 2 Kings 16:3: “... **he even caused his son to pass through fire.**” He murdered his own sons and dedicated them to a pagan god. Each of these sons of Ahaz was a son of David, any of which could have been a future king of Judah.^a We will learn that another good king, Hezekiah, will be anointed to the throne after Ahaz.

This article will focus on the reign of Ahaz of Judah. However, the general spiritual condition of the people of the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah began before the reign of Ahaz and got worse after the reign of Ahab. Therefore, let me remind you again in a table below about the subjects of the Book of Isaiah and in the Books of Hosea and Micah, two Minor Prophets, as introduced in the first verse of each book. In *italics* is the object of each book, then the kings who reigned when the prophecies were given. Remember, written prophecies were only a small fraction of the amount of teaching and ministry each prophet performed.

^a The scriptures are silent as to Hezekiah being Ahaz’s firstborn son. Ahaz murdered at least two sons, perhaps his firstborn.

Isaiah 1:1 <i>JUDAH AND JERUSALEM</i> in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz , and Hezekiah of Judah	Hosea 1:1 <i>JUDAH</i> in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz , and Hezekiah of Judah and Jeroboam of Israel	Micah 1:1 <i>SAMARIA AND JERUSALEM</i> in the days of Jotham, Ahaz , and Hezekiah of Judah
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Isaiah wrote to Judah and Jerusalem with some mention of Israel, which was being dismantled by the Assyrians during Hezekiah's reign. Hosea, the first of the Minor Prophets wrote to both Israel and Judah (see Dr. Martin's article, "[The Book of Hosea](#)"). The prophecies of Micah dealt with the capital city of Jerusalem in Judah, and the capital city of Samaria in Israel any time before the Assyrians destroyed that city (see "[The Book of Micah](#)"). Both cities were punished for their leaders' sins and influenced the people to evil.

Background to Isaiah and Ahaz

In the saga of Isaiah and King Ahaz of Judah great events were taking place, told below in Isaiah chapters 7, 8 and part of chapter 14, 2 Kings chapter 16 and 2 Chronicles chapter 28.

Prior to Isaiah chapter 7, Isaiah spoke and wrote powerfully and in detail about the punishments YHWH would impose on Israel and Judah for their recurrent disobedience and idolatry. Isaiah reminded the people of Israel about what they knew or should have known about their Covenant agreement with YHWH.

In Leviticus chapter 26 YHWH told the people through Moses about severe punishments for disobeying their Covenant with Him. Israel was warned again about those punishments before Moses' death prior to Israel entering the land promised to them as partial fulfillment of YHWH's blessings of Israel's Covenant with God. His promise of blessing was conditional on obedience to His Law beginning at Sinai. Disobedience brought punishments. Continual and increased disobedience brought in a fivefold severity of punishments.

After the 40-year wilderness experience was behind them (during which many instances of gross disobedience and rebellions occurred), Moses updated the people of Israel on YHWH's expectations for obedience. After all, laws in Leviticus for a nomadic life in the wilderness differed greatly from laws required in a mixed society of farms, pastures, towns and cities. The laws in Deuteronomy were updated to the new conditions of life, yet the goal was the same, to help the people obey the conditions of their Covenant with YHWH. Moses also reminded them again about the scale of fivefold increasing punishments if they repeatedly violated the Covenant laws and provisions. Those updated punishments begin in Deuteronomy 28:15–68.

Moses died and the conquest of the land under Joshua took place. The time of the Judges followed and ended with the introduction of the monarchy under King Saul. A powerful unified monarchy began under David and Solomon, and then the kingdom split into north and south kingdoms. The people and kings of the northern Kingdom of Israel were always evil with only one or two marginally "good" kings. The kings of Judah seemed to alternate between good and evil. Now we arrive at the time of Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Assyrians. The latter will be used as God's tool of punishment for both Judah and Israel. The increasing punishments will now begin.

Dr. Martin details the five-fold scenario of increasing punishments in his article "[Introduction to Isaiah](#)"; see particularly the section titled "***Fivefold Punishment Theme.***" Israel and Judah's gross disobedience during the period of the divided kingdoms to the time of Isaiah led toward the final stages of punishment. This involved mass dying and eventual exile from the land for survivors of the northern Kingdom of Israel, and decades later the exile of the people of the southern Kingdom of Judah from the land God promised them, placed them, and now will punish them. YHWH gave them every chance to change and repent.

Recap from Isaiah Chapter 7

First read again relevant verses in Isaiah chapter 7, verses 2–4, 7, and 9 that deal with Ahaz and what was to happen in the near future. Syria and Israel would attack Judah and devastate Judah. Ahaz was fearful, and the entire kingdom was terrified:

² “And it was told to the house of David, saying: ‘Syria has been guided [joined] to Ephraim’; and his [Ahaz] heart swayed [was fearful], and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wildwood sway [with fear] 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 [Ahaz], ‘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’

⁷ ... Thus says my Lord Yahweh: ‘This shall not be confirmed, And it shall not come to pass.’

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.”

In verse 2 “**The House of David**” refers to a “father” of Ahaz, his distant progenitor King David along with all the descendants up to Ahaz himself. The king of Judah found himself confronted by the combined armies of Syria and Israel. Ephraim and Samaria are additional names for the northern Kingdom of Israel. Judah’s armies suffered a crushing defeat (2 Kings 16:5; 2 Chronicles 28:5–7) and Jerusalem was surrounded and under siege by both armies, with many people of Judah taken captive. God comforted Ahaz, told him the worst would not happen, but Ahaz remained fearful. Avraham Gileadi explains what occurs in this meeting:

“Isaiah confronts Judah’s king, Ahaz, at Gihon (7:3), coronation site of the heirs to the throne of King David (cf. 1 Kgs 1:38–39). The location of this encounter seems intended to put Ahaz in mind of the Lord’s covenant with David and his ruling heirs which promises protection for Israel. Under the terms of that covenant, if the king maintains loyalty to the Lord, the Lord promises to protect the king and his people ...

Ahaz but repudiating the terms of the Davidic covenant, stands to lose the Lord’s protection of his people through his unfaithfulness if he does not repent. Ahaz manifests rebellion against the Lord when he rejects the Lord’s promise to protect him and his people against a military attack by Aram [Syria] and Ephraim.”

• *Gileadi, The Literary Message of Isaiah, 60^b*

In spite of YHWH’s message through Isaiah and in spite of the great fears of Ahaz, the king’s foolish actions seem to be beyond understanding. As you read to the end of the reign of Ahaz, remember that the narratives of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles focus on different issues. With the texts side by side you can read the full account of what happened. The name of Isaiah’s son Shear-jashub (which means “a remnant will return”) in Isaiah 7:9, previews what will occur to the people of the Kingdom of Judah.

Beginning in Isaiah 7:10 YHWH next offers proof for Ahaz to make a choice of signs to prove YHWH’s sincerity and power to fulfill His words. God does this not just for Ahaz, but also for all to learn, including you and me. The meeting of Ahaz, Isaiah, and Shear-jashub continues:

TEXT: Isaiah Gives Ahaz the Immanuel Prophecy from YHWH

Isaiah 7:10–25

¹⁰ Then Yahweh spoke again to Ahaz, saying: ¹¹ “**Ask for yourself a sign from Yahweh your Elohim. Deepen it toward the unseen** [*sheol*, the grave], **Or elevate it toward that above.**”

¹² Yet Ahaz said: “**I shall not ask, nor shall I probe Yahweh.**”

¹³ Then he [Isaiah] said,

“**Hear now, house of David! Is it too little a thing for you to tire men, That you should also tire my Elohim?**”

^b Avraham Gileadi, *The Literary Message of Isaiah* (NY: Hebraeus Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Therefore Yahweh Himself shall give a sign to you: Behold, the damsel shall be pregnant and bear a son, And you will call his name Immanuel; ¹⁵ Clotted cream and honey shall he eat before he knows to reject evil and to choose good.

¹⁶ For ere [before] the lad shall know to reject evil and to choose good, Forsaken shall be the ground before whose two kings you irritated. ¹⁷ Yahweh shall bring [1] upon you, and [2] upon your people, and [3] upon your father's house, days such as have not come since the day Ephraim withdrew from Judah — the king of Assyria!

¹⁸ It will come to be in that day, Yahweh shall whistle for the gadfly which is at the end of the waterways of Egypt, and for the bee which is in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹ They will come and settle, all of them, in the steep wadis and in the rifts of crags and in all the thorn trees and in all the thorn hedges.

²⁰ In that day Yahweh shall shave with a razor that is hired, with those across the Stream, with the king of Assyria; the head and the hair of the feet and even the beard shall it sweep off.

²¹ It will come to be in that day that a man shall keep alive a heifer of the herd and two ewes of the flock. ²² And it will come to be [in that day] that from a vast yield of milk he shall eat clotted cream, for everyone who is left within the land shall eat clotted cream and honey.

²³ And it will come to be in that day: It shall be that every place where there are a thousand vines worth a thousand silver pieces shall become a place for buckthorn and for spines.

²⁴ One shall come there with arrows and with bow, for the entire land shall become buckthorn and spines, ²⁵ and all the mountains which should be hoed with a hoe, you shall not enter there for fear of buckthorn and spines. And it will become a place for sending forth of kine [cattle] and for tramping down by flocklings.”

[end text]

Isaiah 7:10. This verse directly follows on topic from Isaiah 7:1–9 (see Isaiah and Judah: 32, indicated above), which dealt with YHWH's promise that the assault on Judah by troops of Syria under King Rezin and of Israel under King Pekah will go away, as will the two enemy kings. Ahaz was told by YHWH, “**Do not fear, and let not your heart be timid**” (Isaiah 7:4). When God Almighty tells you not to fear, it should give you some peace, but apparently it did not have that effect on Ahaz. Verse 10 begins one of the major prophecies of the entire Bible, the Immanuel Prophecy. This first part of the prophecy goes from verse 14 to verse 25.

The theology of this important prophecy by YHWH through Isaiah is clearly explained by Dr. Martin's article, “[Isaiah, Part 3.](#)” The prophecy begins in Isaiah chapter 7 and continues through chapter 12. Read my short Commentary, “[Isaiah and Ahaz](#)” for additional historical background about Ahaz. Several different topics are presented in this prophecy: the coming of a child named Immanuel, the King of Assyria removing the threat of Syria and Israel, the prophecy of the coming Messiah, destruction of a latter day Assyrian, and the restoration of Judah.

Verse 11. “**Ask for yourself a sign from Yahweh.**” Ahaz was given a unique opportunity to ask for any sign from YHWH his Creator with wide limits as to what he could ask, from the depth of the grave to the heights above.

Verse 12. The answer by Ahaz was curt and surprisingly arrogant. He refused to ask saying he did not want to “probe” [test or try] YHWH. So God imposed a “sign” on Ahaz. We should ask, what was Ahaz thinking? Did he not want YHWH's help? Direct divine intervention can be very useful in a tough situation! Did he not believe Isaiah or YHWH? Did Ahaz not want to obligate himself to YHWH because of his past sins?

Verse 13. Isaiah said, “**Is it too little a thing for you to tire men, That you should also tire my Elohim?**” Isaiah has a great sense of humor, saying in effect, “Ahaz, you are a pain in the ___!” In reality, it is always dangerous to mock YHWH, which Ahaz was doing.

Verse 14. God will give Ahaz a sign that will impress the king and all mankind. A son will be the sign. I wonder, what if Ahaz had selected a sign of his own. Further, what if Ahaz had accepted and praised the sign given by YHWH? Would that sign have occurred in the life of Ahaz? The sign predicted came 700+ years later in the person of Jesus.

Verse 15. Clotted cream may mean a type of sour cream or a yogurt processed from milk. The phrase **“before he knows to reject evil and to choose good”** is interesting. This may give us a clue when Jesus began to become aware of who He was — the Messiah of God, the Creator who became flesh — **“God with us.”**

Verse 16. Ahaz irritated Rezin and Pekah by not joining their alliance against Assyria.

Verse 17. Bad days are coming for Ahaz, the people, and **“upon your father’s house.”** The last point may mean that several of the sons of Ahaz and their households will suffer and die in the predicted wars with Syria and Ephraim (the northern Kingdom of Israel). Hezekiah, the successor of Ahaz, may have been a younger son. We know Hezekiah **“was twenty-five years old when he became king”** (2 Kings 18:2).

Verse 18. The “gadfly” was the current Pharaoh of Egypt. Not a flattering description considering his supposed power. The “bee” is Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. From verse 18 down through verse 25 indicate devastation to the people and the land of both kingdoms of Israel.

Three timeframes are involved with this Immanuel Prophecy: [1] The time of Ahaz and Isaiah, [2] the time of the birth of Immanuel, and [3] the time of the fulfillment of the prophecies to occur in our future is indicated by the repeated phrase, beginning in this verse with the phrase **“in that day.”** Again, I want to encourage all to read Dr. Martin’s article **“Isaiah, Part 3”** for thoughtful insights into this Immanuel Prophecy.

Verse 19. This verse seems to indicate by the words **“They will come and settle ...”** indicating both Egypt and Assyria are making military moves. Egypt perhaps is mobilizing their army to protect its borders (from their point of view) against the Assyrian threat. Assyria will also move into secure places.

Verse 20. Horrible things are described here. These are not cosmetic changes. Beheading and torture are described with the intent to terrorize Assyria’s enemies into submission.

Verses 21–22. For a period after the Assyrians sweep through the land there will not be enough people left to tend to the animals and the food will need to be preserved.

Verses 23–25. The word “buckthorn” is a type of Mediterranean thorn bush. It appears the land will be overgrown due to lack of care and scrub plants take over the area.

TEXT: Isaiah Continues the Immanuel Prophecy from YHWH

Isaiah 8:1–22

¹ Then Yahweh said to me,

“Take for yourself a large parchment roll [a blank scroll], and write on it with a stylus of a mortal: To hasten-loot-hurry-plunder [in Hebrew, Maher-shalal-hash-baz]; ² and call to witness for Me, faithful witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah.”

³ Then I came near to the prophetess, and she became pregnant and bore a son. And Yahweh said to me:

“Call his name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz; ⁴ for ere the lad shall know to call: Abi, and, Ami, the estate [wealth] of Damascus and the loot [spoils] of Samaria shall be carried off before the king of Assyria.”

⁵ Then Yahweh yet again spoke to me, saying:

⁶ **“Because this people has rejected the waters of Shiloah that flow so gently, and has given elation to Rezin and Remaliah’s son, ⁷ now therefore, behold, Yahweh is bringing up over them the waters of the Stream, staunch and abundant, the king of Assyria and all his glory:**

It will ascend over all its channels And go over all its banks; ⁸ It will pass on into Judah, Overflow and pass along until it touches the neck; And there will be a stretching out of its wings, Filling the width of your land, O Immanuel!

⁹ **Know, peoples, and be dismayed, And give ear, all far places of the earth! Belt yourselves, and be dismayed! Belt yourselves, and be dismayed! ¹⁰ Counsel with counsel, yet it shall be annulled! Speak a word, yet it shall not be confirmed; For with-us-is-EI [Immanuel].”**

¹¹ For thus Yahweh said to me as with a steadfast hand, that He might discipline me from walking in the way of this people, saying:

¹² “You shall not say ‘holy’ to all that this people says is holy, And its fear you shall not fear nor be terrified. ¹³ Yahweh of hosts, Him shall you sanctify, And He shall be your fear, and He, your terror.

¹⁴ And if you are expectant toward Him, He will be a Sanctuary And not a Stone of tripping or a Rock of stumbling,

Yet **for the two houses of Israel**, a Snare, And a Trap for the dweller of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ Many will stumble among them, And they will fall and be broken, And they will be trapped and seized.”

¹⁶ Tie up the testimony, and seal the law among my disciples. ¹⁷ I also will tarry for Yahweh, Who conceals His face from the house of Jacob, and I will be expectant toward Him.

¹⁸ Behold, I and the boys whom Yahweh has given to me are for signs and for miracles in the house of Israel from Yahweh of hosts Who tabernacles in Mount Zion.

¹⁹ And when they say to you, “**Inquire of the mediums and the wizards who chirp and who coo,**” ask, “**Should not a people inquire of its Elohim? What [or why] do they inquire of the dead about the living?**”

²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they are not speaking according to this word, for which there is no bribe, ²¹ Then each one will pass through it, hard pressed and famished, And it will come to be when he is famishing, he will be wrathful, And he will maledict [curse, revile] his king and his Elohim. Then he [Ahaz] will face upward to the heavens above, ²² And look to the earth beneath, And behold, distress and darkness, Faintness of constraint and expulsion into gloom! [end text]

Isaiah 8:1. Isaiah was instructed to write down the information given to him because it was important for others besides Isaiah to know. YHWH wanted Isaiah and further generations to be able to refer to the writing. It also meant that the writing was to be read aloud to an audience. The name of Isaiah’s son had prophetic significance and its meaning is translated into English. Later it is merely transliterated in verse 3. The name of one son means “a remnant shall return” (Isaiah 7:3), and another son to be born was named “to hasten-loot-hurry-plunder” referring to the plunder to be taken from the Kingdom of Israel.

Verse 2. One witness is **Uriah** (sometimes spelled Urijah) who was likely the high priest. (He will later oversee construction of a pagan altar in the Temple court.) The second witness was Zechariah who is otherwise unknown, but obviously a high official. Isaiah was to write this part of the prophecy so witnesses could testify to its fulfillment in their time with great specificity.

Verses 3 and 4. We are told that Isaiah’s wife is a prophetess of YHWH. The next event to take place was for a son to be conceived and born as God commanded. The timeframe is unclear as to how long before the child was born after the prophecy was given, whether 9 months later or years later, we do not know exactly, but it was still before Ahaz made an alliance with Tiglath-pileser and before Assyria destroyed the Kingdom of Israel. We are now told that the name of Isaiah’s son, “to hasten-loot-hurry-plunder,” refers to the riches of Israel that will be taken to Assyria.

Abi means father, Ami means mother in Hebrew. Of course, “**the loot of Samaria**” refers to the plundered valuables taken from Judah by Samaria. It was how soldiers were paid for the risk of their military service.

Verse 6. Shiloah refers to the waters of the Siloam channel in the time of Isaiah and Ahaz. King Rezin of Syria was elated and desired to possess them.

The waters began from the Gihon Spring under the Temple built by Solomon at the north part of the City of David. It flowed underground originally through a tunnel at the east of the city toward the south. During the reign of King Hezekiah an alternate tunnel from the Gihon was carved under the center of the City of David through the limestone bedrock ending at the Pool of Siloam south of the City of David. There were several names to this water system, two being Shiloah but also Shelah.

The words “... **this people has rejected the waters of Shiloah**” is a reference to YHWH from whom all waters flow to give life. Notice this passage in Jeremiah, written almost 100 years after Isaiah received the Immanuel Prophecy.

“**Has any nation changed its elohim (even though they are not elohim)? Yet My people, they have**

changed My glory for what does not benefit. Be appalled over this, you heavens, And be horrified, be utterly drained,

averring [answering] is Yahweh; For My people have committed two evils: Me they have forsaken, the Fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot contain water.”

• *Jeremiah 2:11–13*

YHWH identifies Himself with **“the fountain of living waters.”** The people of Judah had forsaken Him. This is just as foolish as Ahaz and the people of Judah forsaking the physical life-giving water from the Gihon flowing into the Pool of Siloam. Jeremiah mentions this rejection of YHWH later.

“A glorious throne, exalted from the first, is the place of our sanctuary. O Expectation [Hope] of Israel, O Yahweh, May all who forsake You be ashamed. May those who withdraw from Me be written in the earth; For they have forsaken the Fountain of living waters, even Yahweh.”

• *Jeremiah 17:12–13*

YHWH’s throne on earth **is** within the sanctuary, which is the true source of **both the spiritual and physical fountain of living waters.** God’s sanctuary is over the Gihon Spring, the physical fountain of living waters. Those who forsake Him also have forsaken that bounty for the City of David, Jerusalem.

“It was the Spring Gate [of the Gihon Spring] that Shallun son of Col-hozeh, chief of the Mizpah tract, repaired; he himself rebuilt it, roofed it and installed its doors, its latches and its bars; and he rebuilt the wall of the Shelah reservoir of the king’s garden and as far as the stairs descending from the city of David.”

• *Nehemiah 3:15*

The Shelah (another way of phrasing Shiloah) reservoir is adjacent to the Gihon Spring. Note how these all link together and refer to the water system beginning at the Gihon Spring and ending at the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7, 11):

“... this people has rejected the waters of Shiloah” (Isaiah 8:6)

“... Me they have forsaken, the Fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 2:13)

“... they have forsaken the Fountain of living waters, even Yahweh” (Jeremiah 17:13)

The waters began underneath the Temple of God on top of the hill on the north end of the City of David, from the Gihon Spring, flowed through the water course of Shiloah and ended at the Pool of Siloam (John 9:7, 11).

Jesus said out of Himself shall flow **“living water”** (John 4:10–11, 7:38) which is reflected in Revelation 7:17 where in His presence living water flows. Of course, in these New Testament passages the active agent is Immanuel, **“God with us”** acting on behalf of God the Father who is YHWH.

The people as well as Ahaz rejected YHWH, who was figuratively represented by **“the waters of Shiloah.”** This rejection gave joy to Rezin and Ramaliah’s son who may have respected YHWH more than Ahaz did. **“Ramaliah’s son”** refers to the father of King Pekah of Israel, who seized the throne:

“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.”

• *2 Kings 16:5*

Verse 7. “The waters of the Stream” is a different symbol of waters referring now to the Euphrates River that Assyrian troops must cross to attack Syria.

Verse 8. This is a prediction that the Assyrians will range far and wide in their conquests, even up to the borders of their vassal, Judah. It says the land is **“your land, O Immanuel.”**

Verse 9. “Belt yourselves” is more familiar from the King James translation of **“gird yourselves”** as in **“gird your loins.”** People have very good reasons to fear the worst.

Verse 10. No human counsel will be useful. All human words and plans will fail, especially if God's will is not sought and heeded.

Verse 11. Isaiah was a patriot and wanted to support his people Judah. God warns Isaiah not to be persuaded by their words, all of which will fail.

Verse 12. YHWH reminds Isaiah that He no longer considers the people to be holy before YHWH, no longer set apart from the nations. The time to truly fear YHWH is at hand. He says to Isaiah, do not appeal to promises to Jacob, Moses, or David regarding the holiness of YHWH's chosen people. The time has come for them to fear God's judgment.

Verse 13. YHWH will still save those who respect and properly fear Him.

Verse 14. The phrase **"for the two houses of Israel"** refers to the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Both will be caught in the trap and punished by their God.

Verse 15. Stumbling, falling, breaking, trapping, and being seized is the lot for the people of the two kingdoms.

Verse 16. The speaker of this verse is debatable. Is YHWH giving the command to Isaiah regarding this part of the Immanuel prophecy? Or, is Isaiah the speaker, indicating what must be done. If Isaiah, note that he has disciples that he taught.

Verse 17. Isaiah affirms that he will obey YHWH's command. It seems that YHWH was upset with something Isaiah did. This verse does not seem to apply to Ahaz.

Verse 18. A tabernacle is a temporary dwelling. Mount Zion is in the City of David above the Gihon Spring.

Verse 19. The people of Judah and Jerusalem are so profane, so insulting to God, they feel the need to consult mediums and wizards as if the spirits that speak through them will tell the will of YHWH. Ridiculous, but such is the nature of superstition and paganism. They even seek information from the dead. Spirits reply, portraying themselves as the spirits of the dead, but they are not. They are lying or false spirits speaking through false prophets (1 Kings 22:22–23; 2 Chronicles 18:21–22).

Such things will occur even in the future to us today (Revelation 16:13). In 1 John 4:1 the apostle John tells us, **"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are of God, for many false prophets have come out into the world"** (1 John 4:1).

Verse 20. Isaiah proclaims that God's word given to Moses and the writings up to his time are sufficient to provide all the information to rescue the people and Kingdom of Judah, if the people will only listen and obey. The phrase **"... for which there is no bribe"** refers to the fact that the mediums and wizards work for pay from those seeking information from the "other world." YHWH does not require such payment. He desires mercy, not sacrifice.

Hosea gave YHWH's prophecies during the same period as Isaiah, **"in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel"** (Hosea 1:1). His entire book is an indictment against both the people of Israel and Judah. Hosea told what God wanted:

"For I desire kindness and not sacrifice, And knowledge of Elohim rather than ascent offerings. Yet they, like a human, trespass against the covenant; There they are treacherous against Me."

• **Hosea 6:6–7**

This is exactly what Isaiah is saying, **"... to the law and the testimony!"**

Verses 21–22. Punishment is coming with famine, anger will be directed to the king and even toward God. People will look to heaven for relief. The phrase **"expulsion into gloom"** means exiled from the land of promise where conditions will be even worse. This is the future for the two houses of Israel and Judah.

In spite of YHWH's specific prophecy direct to Ahaz through Isaiah, the king of Judah went ahead and made a treaty with Assyria against YHWH's warning not to do so. Now back to the narrative of Kings and Chronicles about the affairs of Ahaz of Judah, Rezin of Syria, Pekah of Israel and Assyria. Below I repeat 2 Kings 16:5–7 and 2 Chronicles 28:16 for continuity and context.

TEXT: Ahaz of Judah Allies with Assyria**2 Kings 16:5–9**

⁵ Then Rezin king of Syria with Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to the battle against Jerusalem. They besieged on Ahaz; but they did not prevail in fighting.

⁶ In that season Rezin king of Syria restored Elath to Edom and eased the Jews away from Elath. Then the Edomites entered Elath; and they have been dwelling there until this day.

⁷ So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying,

“I am your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the palm of the king of Syria and from the palm of the king of Israel who are arising against me.”

⁸ And Ahaz took the silver and the gold that was found in the House of Yahweh and in the treasuries of the king’s house and

sent it to the king of Assyria as a bribe.

⁹ The king of Assyria hearkened to him [Ahaz]. The king of Assyria

[1] marched up to Damascus and

[2] took possession of it.

[3] He deported its inhabitants to Kir and

[4] put Rezin to death.

2 Chronicles 28:16–22

← **NOTE:** Besides being king of Syria, Rezin was also the overlord of other Aramaic cities each with their own king.

¹⁶ At that time, king Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria to help him.

[**NOTE:** 2 Chronicles 28:21 is re-sequenced to correspond with 2 Kings 16:8.]

²¹ For Ahaz took portions of treasures from the House of Yahweh, from the house of the king, and from the chief officials and gave them to the king of Assyria; but it was no help to him.

[**NOTE:** 2 Chronicles 28:20 is re-sequenced to correspond with 2 Kings 16:9.]

²⁰ Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria set out against him [Rezin], but he distressed him and did not aid him.

[**NOTE:** Return to verse 17–19.]

¹⁷ Again the Edomites came and smote Judah and captured captives, ¹⁸ while the Philistines ransacked the cities of the low foothills and the Negeb of Judah; they seized Beth-shemesh and Aijalon and Gederoth, and Soco with its outskirts, and Timnah with its outskirts, and Gimzo with its outskirts; and they settled there.

¹⁹ Thus Yahweh caused Judah to submit [to Tiglath-pileser] on account of Ahaz king of Judah, for he caused unrestraint in Judah and offended Yahweh by his offense.

[**NOTE:** Return to verse 22 (verses 20–21 are above).]

²² In the time of his distress, this king Ahaz continued to offend Yahweh. [end text]

2 Kings 16:5. This verse is repeated for context. It is from “[Israel and Judah: 32. Jotham and Ahaz of](#)

Judah,” see the header **TEXT: Ahaz and Judah Attacked by Rezin and Pekah**. Jerusalem was besieged but Ahaz and the garrison of the city prevented the Syrians and Israelite armies from taking the city.

2 Kings 16:6. Syria seized territories of Judah, particularly Elath and in return for payment or tribute, Syria gave that port city to Edom.

2 Kings 16:7 and 2 Chronicles 26:16. Ahaz submitted to become a vassal of Tiglath-pileser after the siege of Jerusalem ended and the Syrian and Israelite armies went home. By doing this, he enslaved himself and Judah to the will of the King of Assyria and pledged his loyalty and promise to do the bidding of Tiglath-pileser and send troops to fight with him if requested. The Assyrian king expected and received a bribe from Ahaz.

2 Kings 16:8 and 2 Chronicles 26:21 (out of sequence). Ahaz stripped the treasure from the remaining “intact” part of his kingdom, which was Jerusalem, and treasure from the Temple and sent it to Tiglath-pileser. Ahaz impoverished himself and his people, giving the remaining wealth in tribute. The Assyrian king probably intended to invade Syria anyway, but the wealth from Judah gave Assyria financial resources to pay its army. This certainly was **“a bribe.”**

2 Kings 16:9 and 2 Chronicles 26:20 (out of sequence). Tiglath-pileser used the request of Ahaz as an excuse to destroy the troublesome King Resin of Syria. In verse 9, the description of what Tiglath-pileser accomplished in Syria indicates the dismantling of the kingdom.

Verses 26:17–18. Meanwhile, the Edomites and Philistines attacked Judah. Their intent was to occupy the conquered territories. The text does not say if Assyria acted on behalf of Judah in these cases. Those lands were outside the Assyrian sphere of influence and helping their vassal was not in Assyria’s interest at that time. The Negeb refers to the Negev Desert in south Judah.

The Philistines were taking back and resettling cities seized by Judah under King Azariah/Uzziah, grandfather of Ahaz, as told in 2 Chronicles 26:6–7.

2 Chronicles 28:19 and 22. [Verse 22 is out of order, verses 20 and 21 are aligned with 2 Kings 16:8–9.] YHWH caused Judah’s problems as punishment to Ahaz for their offenses against Him. Even then Ahaz continued to go out of his way to offend YHWH.



The Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath, Wikipedia, November 2018

TEXT: Ahaz of Judah Meets with Tiglath-pileser of Assyria

2 Kings 16:10–20

¹⁰ When king Ahaz went to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria at Damascus, then he saw the altar that was in Damascus.

And king Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a likeness of the altar, a model of it for all its workmanship.

¹¹ Uriah the priest built the altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Uriah the priest was busy until king Ahaz set out from Damascus.

¹² When the king came from Damascus, and when the king saw the altar, then the king drew near to the

2 Chronicles 28:23–27

← **NOTE:** Carving of a Syrian man holding a model of a temple, from Syria 800–750 BC, the time of 2 Kings 16 and 2 Chronicles 28. The stone carving is Exhibit 1062 in the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem.



²³ He sacrificed to the elohim of Damascus which had smitten him, for he thought,

altar and offered up on it.

¹³ [1] He made his ascent offering and his approach present fume [burn]. [2] He libated his libation and [3] sprinkled the blood of the peace offerings that were his, against the altar.

¹⁴ As for the copper altar that had been before Yahweh, he now brought it near from the facade of the House — from between the new altar and the House of Yahweh — and put it on the flank of the new altar northward. ¹⁵ Then king Ahaz instructed Uriah the priest, saying,

“On the large new altar make the [1] morning ascent offering and [2] the evening approach present fume [burn], also [3] the king’s ascent offering and [4] his approach present, with [5] the ascent offering of all the people of the land, [6] their approach present and [7] their libations. All the blood of the ascent offering and all the blood of the sacrifice shall you sprinkle against it.

As for the copper altar, it shall be for me to make my quest.”

¹⁶ And Uriah the priest did according to all that king Ahaz had instructed him.

¹⁷ King Ahaz **cut away** the insets of the bases, and he took away the laver off them; and the sea he took down off the copper oxen that were beneath it, and put it on a stone pavement.

¹⁸ The **covert** of the sabbath that they had built at the House and the king’s entry outside he turned about the House of Yahweh because of the king of Assyria.

¹⁹ As for the rest of the affairs of Ahaz and all that he did, **are they not written** on the scroll of the annals of the days of the kings of Judah?

²⁰ Then Ahaz lay down with his fathers, and he was **entombed** with his fathers **in the city** of David;

his son Hezekiah reigned in his stead.

“Since the elohim of the kings of Syria are those helping them, I shall sacrifice to them, so that they may help me.”

But they became a stumbling block to him and to all Israel.

²⁴ Ahaz gathered together the furnishings of the House of Elohim, and he **cut away** the furnishings of the House of Elohim. **He locked the doors of the House of Yahweh** and made himself altars at every corner in Jerusalem.

²⁵ And in every city, each city of Judah, he made high places to fume incense to other elohim; thus he provoked Yahweh Elohim of his fathers to vexation.

²⁶ As for the rest of *his* affairs and all *his* ways, *first and last, behold, they are written* on the scroll of the kings of Judah *and Israel*.

²⁷ Then Ahaz lay down with his fathers, and *they entombed him in the city, in Jerusalem, for they did not bring him to the tombs of the kings of Israel;* his son Hezekiah reigned in his stead. **[end text]**

2 Kings 16:10. For some unknown reason Ahaz desired the altar of the gods of his defeated enemy Rezin. Why? What was so great about the altar? Why did the author of Second Kings focus on the king of Judah desiring the altar? (I personally would be more interested in the machinations of the international political situation at the time, but that’s just me.)

He already sacrificed anywhere he wanted in Judah (2 Kings 16:4), in violation of God’s command for sacrifices to take place only where YHWH chose, at the Temple in Jerusalem. Perhaps Ahaz imagined that he

could “control” the inferior pagan gods that helped Rezin defeat God’s chosen king of Judah, the son of David. The defeat of Judah was because of the sins of Ahaz!

We know from the photo of a stone carving (in the right column above) that ancient people made models of buildings (as architects do today) so rulers could understand how a proposed structure would look like.

“**Uriah the priest**” seems to be the same man referred to in Isaiah 8:1 who was a witness to the writing of the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah chapters 7–12.

Verse 11. Uriah set to work to build the altar to the specifications his king commanded.

“He betrayed his trust. As priest, he was bound to maintain and defend God’s institutions, and to oppose and witness against all innovations; and, for him to assist and serve the king in setting up an altar to confront the altar which by divine appointment he was consecrated to minister at, was such a piece of treachery and perfidiousness as may justly render him infamous to all posterity.”

• **Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, on 2 Kings 16:11**

Verse 12. Ahaz liked Uriah’s interpretation of the Damascus altar and began offering sacrifices upon it immediately upon his return.

Verses 13 and 23. Those sacrifices were to the gods of Damascus and not to the Creator YHWH. Three different actions were done by Ahaz to honor gods not capable of saving Damascus, yet Ahaz constructed a Damascus replica altar and worshipped to their gods anyway. His hatred of YHWH must have been very strong.

Verse 14. Ahaz moved the altar of YHWH and put it to the side by the north side of the sanctuary by the north wall. Ahaz put the Damascus replica altar immediately before the entrance to the Holy Place where the Solomonic altar had been.

Verse 15. The features of the altar of Solomon’s Temple were designed by YHWH who gave David the specifications in writing: **“All this, into which Yahweh gave me insight by His hand on me, is in writing, all the details of the pattern”** (2 Chronicles 28:19).

The sacrifices were the focus of the entire ritual. All sacrifices were offered at the one altar at the center of the sanctuary since Solomon: **“Then he made the copper altar, its length twenty cubits, its width twenty cubits, and ten cubits its rise”** (2 Chronicles 4:1). The altar was 20 by 20 cubits square (30 feet by 30 feet), 10 cubits high (15 feet), with four horns on each corner.

We might think, why does the shape and structure of the altar matter at all? Well, if it makes no difference, why does Ahaz want to change what has been functioning for hundreds of years?

The prophet Amos wrote and taught regarding the central pagan altar at Bethel and other locations in the northern Kingdom of Israel. The pagan altar in YHWH’s Temple would be torn down as YHWH’s altar was.

“Hear and testify in the house of Jacob, averring is my Lord Yahweh, the Elohim of hosts, That in the day I visit the transgressions of Israel on him, Then will I visit punishment on the altars of Bethel, And the horns of the altar will be hacked down, And they will fall to the earth.”

• **Amos 3:14–15**

2 Kings 16:15 ends with the phrase, **“As for the copper altar, it shall be for me to make my quest.”** The copper altar is the Solomonic altar (later repaired or restored by King Asa, 2 Chronicles 15:8). What is meant by the **“quest”**? Other translations translate it as **“to inquire by,”** meaning something Ahaz is searching to find. The Greek translation of the Old Testament has **“the bronze altar shall be for me in the morning.”** While this Greek translation can be justified from Hebrew, it makes little sense. If **“to inquire by”** is correct, then it may mean Ahaz intended to use the altar as an oracle to receive answers to questions asked of the pagan gods.

Verse 17. The copper “sea” was removed from the twelve oxen supporting it. This was used to store water that had spigots to wash the blood of the sacrifices from the meat and to clean the blood from the implements.

2 Chronicles 28:23. Ahaz thought **“the elohim of the kings of Syria”** helped Rezin and earlier Syrian kings to be victorious. He worshipped and sacrificed to those gods in the city captured by Tiglath-pileser, who likely

ordered Ahaz to go to Damascus). He foolishly thought “... **they may help me.**”

The phrase “... **they became a stumbling block to him and to all Israel**” tells us that the actions of Ahaz were known in Judah and in the northern Kingdom of Israel as well.

2 Kings 16:18. What is a “covert”? The meaning is uncertain, but most translations think it is a covered walkway, perhaps of polished stone. The meaning is unclear, but perhaps Ahaz dismantled this ornate walkway and sent it to the Assyrian king as a gift for him to erect in his palace, even perhaps in Nineveh where the prophet Jonah was preaching about the same time.^c

2 Chronicles 28:24–25. Why did Ahaz cut away the furnishings from the Temple? Perhaps he distributed these decorations to his various altars around Jerusalem. Ahaz also “**locked the doors of the House of Yahweh.**” He suspended the sacrifices. The locked doors prevented the priests from doing their work in the Holy Place.^d His son King Hezekiah will reverse these orders in 2 Chronicles chapter 29. It seems that YHWH’s Temple was “closed until further notice” as long as Ahaz was king. This also was a direct insult to YHWH.

2 Kings 16:19 and 2 Chronicles 28:26. Again, these formulaic statements tell us there was more to be known about King Ahaz, but these annals are not available to us.

2 Kings 16:20 and 2 Chronicles 28:27. These texts do not say they buried Ahaz in the tombs of King David. That was reserved only for the “good” kings and not the idolatrous ones. It is unknown how the religious authorities over many generations were able to enforce the rule or tradition that only good kings were buried in the sepulchers of David, but that seems to have been the case according to the texts.

TEXT: The Year of Ahaz’s Death, YHWH Prophesies Doom on Philistia

Isaiah 14:28–32

²⁸ In the year of the death of king Ahaz came this load [burden]:

²⁹ “**Do not rejoice, Philistia, all of you, Because the club of your smiter is broken, For from the root of the serpent a viper shall come forth, And its fruit will be a flying, burning serpent.**”

³⁰ **The firstborn of the poor will graze, And the needy, they shall recline in serenity, Yet I will put your root to death with famine, And I shall kill your remnant.**

³¹ **Howl, gate; cry out, city! Be dissolved, Philistia, all of you! For a smoke comes from the north, And there is no solitary straggler in its appointed ranks.**

³² **What shall they answer the messengers of this nation? That Yahweh, He has founded Zion, And in it the humble of His people shall find refuge.**”

[end text]

Isaiah 14:28. YHWH is speaking (Isaiah 14:27). This prophecy was given “**In the year of the death of Ahaz.**”^e This was a year of transition for Judah of a leadership change from the death of Ahaz to the enthronement of Hezekiah his son (2 Kings 16:20 and 2 Chronicles 28:27 above).^f

Verse 29. Philistia was a league of several city states. The Philistine people were used as a club by YHWH to punish Judah. That club is now said to be broken and now ineffective by YHWH’s statement. As we will see in Hezekiah’s future, Philistia will be punished for their excesses. Then the Assyrians, on their way to Egypt, will subject and deplete the population of Philistia even further.

What did Isaiah mean by mentioning a “**burning flying serpent**”? First, it is translated “**firey flying serpent**”

^c Jonah ran from God’s will, was shipwrecked, was swallowed by a fish (and thrown out), then prophesied as YHWH commanded around this period of time before Assyria destroyed the Kingdom of Israel. Jonah fled so Assyria would not repent from his preaching. He tried to thwart God’s will. We can oppose God, but cannot thwart Him. Dr. Martin’s, “[Book of Jonah.](#)”

^d Not even the antichrist will lock the Temple so far as we know. He will merely suspend the sacrifices (Daniel 8:11–12). In verse 12 of Daniel 8 there is mention of the sanctuary being “**flung down**” or “**cast down**” (King James Version), but the meaning of that is uncertain. Does it mean the structure is torn down or that the reason for the sanctuary is removed?

^e The Book of Isaiah is not presented chronologically and the internal chronology within Isaiah is not certain.

^f In four verses immediately before, Isaiah 14:24–27, future judgment against Assyria is foretold, but we are not told when this prophecy was given, whether before or after the prophecy to Philistia.

in the King James Version. Did such a creature exist in the time of Isaiah, or was this a symbol of the Assyrians (never referred to as a serpent in Scripture or literature of other nations)? Assyria will be used to punish the Philistines, just as YHWH sent lions to punish the Samaritans brought into Samaria (the former Kingdom of Israel) 2 Kings 17:26–27. Dr. Martin understood that Scripture teaches that animals continued to be created after the flood and even today, mostly microscopic creatures, fewer insects, and only occasionally large animals. He wrote about this in his fascinating article “[Creation of Life in Contemporary Times](#).” Of course science will always consider newly cataloged species as simply unknown before their discovery (and they are likely correct most times), but God nonetheless sustains His creation and will do more creating in the future.

Verse 30. The Philistine people will be so poor they will eat like animals. Famine will prevail and the population of Philistia will greatly diminish.

Verse 31. Judgment is coming upon Philistia — “**Be dissolved, Philistia.**” Their federation of city states will be crushed by the Assyrians coming from the north. Some will resist and be wiped out, some will submit and survive under bad conditions, some will flee to Egypt (where Assyria will follow), and I imagine some will transport by sea to another land.

Verse 32. Who are “**the messengers of this nation**”? Are they people from Philistia proclaiming their distress, or are they supernatural “messengers”? Or, are those of “**this nation**” referring to messengers from Assyria in front of and representing an army of Assyrians as well as armies of many allied vassal kingdoms.

[Ancient Philistia](#) includes the current territories of the Gaza Strip and the southern coastal areas of the current nation of Israel. The cities of Gaza, Ashdod on the coast, and the inland cities Ashkelon, and Ekron, and Gath were the largest Philistine cities in the time of Ahaz.

Because the Philistine people are spread across several semi-independent city-states without a single unifying king, defending each of their cities is a difficult if not an impossible strategy. They must confront the Assyrian host in a pitched battle with all their military strength, outnumbered by the Assyrian host, the best trained and experienced in the world, masters of siege warfare and capturing cities. This verse is saying the Philistines have a choice: surrender and suffer oppression under the Assyrian boot, or fight and die. YHWH through Isaiah is saying the Philistines will be greatly diminished after Assyria comes for them.

Conclusion, Ahaz Is Dead, What Happens Next?

At the death of Ahaz the shadow of the Assyrian encroachment upon the peoples of the Middle East continues. We read the brief account of Syria being invaded, defeated, and shattered with the capture of its capital the great and ancient city of Damascus. For a moment the Kingdom of Syria ceased and many of its people exiled to other areas of the Assyrian kingdom. Damascus was later rebuilt and flourished.

The people of the Kingdom of Israel are under threat of an Assyrian invasion in the near future. No solace was given them from YHWH because Assyria was His tool to punish His Covenant people. The Kingdom of Judah is under pressure from the Edomites and the Philistines. They are barely less sinful and idolatrous than their brethren to the north. The prophets also predict their punishment. Exile was predicted for both Israelite kingdoms, but when the prophecy was given neither kingdom could fully understand the death and suffering of the reality of that prospect. We know what happened, for them at that time it was merely a possibility.

We will learn that the Assyrian policy of exiling and displacing peoples from their traditional lands was widespread and did not occur just to the Israelites. Nor was its main purpose simply to punish subject people. It was intended to bring security to the Assyrian Empire. Tiglath-pileser actually created much of the Assyrian imperial system of administering laws and commerce with Assyrian officials overseeing local rulers of subject peoples. Their system continued to be used by such as the Babylonian empire, Persian empire, Greek kingdoms, and even Roman civil administration within the eastern regions of their empire. All used the basic system of control begun by the Assyrians.

Next comes the total destruction of the Kingdom of Israel, and then King Hezekiah reigns in the Kingdom of Judah in the next episode of “Israel and Judah: 34.”