



Week 10: HEZEKIAH  
Trusted. Obedient. Prophetic.  
Winter 2023 w/Wednesday Night Crew

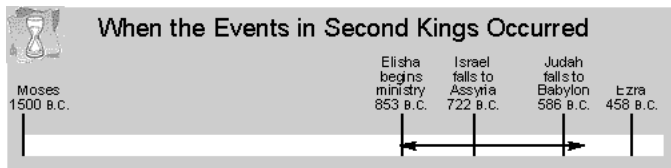
SL#2 PRAYER

SL#3

**Hezekiah relied on the LORD God of Israel; not one of the kings of Judah as like him, either before him or after him. He remained faithful to the LORD and did not turn from following him but kept the commands the LORD had commanded Moses”**

2 Kings 18:5-6 CSB

2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah 36-39



**Hezekiah’s name:**

**HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH** Hezekiah, King of Judah. The 13<sup>th</sup> king of Judah. The name Hezekiah (חִזְקִיָּיָהוּ, *chizqiyyah*) derives from the combination of the verbal root “to strengthen” (חָזַק, *chazaq*) and the shortened form (יָהוּ, *yah*) of the divine name Yahweh (יְהוָה, *yhwh*), meaning “**the Lord strengthens.**” King of the southern kingdom of Judah for 29 years (727–699 BC) during which time the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians, and Judah itself was invaded by the Assyrians. Remembered for his religious reforms (2 Kgs 18:4; 2 Chr 29:3–36), for breaking allegiance with Assyria in favor of an alliance with Egypt (2 Kgs 18:13–16; Isa 30; 31; 36:6–9), and for his illness and miraculous recovery (2 Kgs 20; 2 Chr 32; Isa 38).

SL#4

Years	Amount of Time	Event
740		Hezekiah was born [mom Abi, daughter of Zechariah]
	16 years	Ahaz reigns
728-715	13 years	Co regency with Ahaz [from 12 years old to 25] It is also probable that when Ahaz died in 715 b.c., Hezekiah was free to cleanse the temple and celebrate the great Passover described in 2 Chronicles 29:3 to 30:27. <u>He would not have been able to do that while his father was alive. Nor would he have been able to destroy high places and altars in Ephraim and Manasseh before Hoshea was defeated and Samaria taken into exile in 722 b.c.</u>



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		<p>Thus, Hezekiah counted 715 as the true first year of his reign even though he had reigned as king with his father for six years.  <small>Stanley M. Horton, <a href="#">Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary</a>, Logion Press Commentary Series (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2000), 156.</small></p>
715-686	29 years	<p>Sole regency at 25 years old.  <b>[Primogeniture</b> is when the oldest son inherits all or more of his parents' stuff than any of his siblings. When a king dies, his eldest typically son inherits the throne by the rules of primogeniture.]</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Assumes an aggressive war with the Philistines &amp; became a feudal overlord of their cities.</li> <li>* Inherited the “Assyrian menace” from his father who in effect mortgaged the resources of Judah to them.</li> <li>* Beginning in 715, from the beginning of his reign, he faced a series of Assyrian invasions that dominated his reign.</li> <li>* He began devoting significant time, energy, &amp; resources to strengthening and protecting Judah &amp; her people.</li> </ul>
<p><b>SL#5 Hezekiah’s first order of business was to reestablish God is the king of Judah-a functioning theocracy &amp; the human king submits to Him.</b></p>		
SL#5		<p>His 1st year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Purified the temple--Reinstituted worship at the temple that had been closed during the reign of his father, Ahaz [evil king]</li> <li>* This included the destruction of the bronze serpent of Moses which had become an object of idolatry. Num 21:9</li> <li>* Called the priests &amp; Levites back into service</li> <li>* Had them begin offering sacrifices &amp; singing psalms</li> <li>* He removed the high places, which even good kings failed to do.</li> <li>* Called the people of Judah to celebrate the Lord’s Passover-which had not been kept for decades.</li> <li>* He even sent messengers to Israel to invite them to participate</li> <li>* 7 days of worship went into another week.</li> <li>* People went home &amp; destroyed the idols &amp; shrines that had infested the land. [His influence inspired them to take action.]</li> <li>* H’s emphasis on worship set the tone for his reign &amp; restored Judah to a place where God could &amp; did bless the land.</li> </ul>



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<p>SL#6</p> <p>Hezekiah's national fortifications to protect the people of Judah</p>		<p>The pool &amp; tunnel were likely built anticipating the Assyrian attack, which occurred in 701. 2 Kings 20:20, 2 Chron 32:30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Warren's Shaft</li> <li>*the Siloam Channel</li> <li>*Hezekiah's Tunnel [or the Siloam Tunnel]</li> <li>*the inscription was discovered by accident in 1880 by a boy wading in the pool.</li> <li>*Retook the cities his father had forfeited to the Philistines, even dispossessing the Philistines of all their cities except 2-Gaza &amp; Gath.</li> <li>*He made every attempt to build up his country that he might eventually throw off the Assyrian yoke his father had saddled the county with by allying with them. 2 Kings 16:7-9</li> <li>*Built up the country morally &amp; spiritually.</li> <li>*Fortified the country by building up the national economy &amp; the military.</li> <li>*Agriculture &amp; trade expanded by the establishment of warehouses &amp; stock yards in strategic places. 2 Chron 23:27-29</li> <li>*A national system of defenses was inaugurated 32:5-7</li> <li>*Jerusalem was given an adequate water supply in the event of a siege 32:30</li> </ul>
<p>SL#7 Challenge #1 Terminal Illness &amp; Miraculous Healing:</p>		
<p>701</p>	<p>14 years into his sole regency</p>	<p>2 Chron 32:24; 2 Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 38</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Hezekiah's terminal illness involving a skin infection &amp; Isaiah relayed to him he would die. Hezekiah is 39 years old, has no heir, &amp; the country is still in a perilous state from the Assyrians.</li> <li>• Pleaded to God for more time in prayer, is miraculously healed &amp; received 15 more years.</li> <li>• as confirmation of the healing to come within 3 days, the Lord causes the shadow on the steps to go back 10 steps. 2 Kings 20:10-11</li> <li>• As a result, Hezekiah lived to beg God to intervene when the Assyrians attacked a few years later.</li> </ul> <p>After his healing, he wrote this poem: <a href="#">Isaiah 38:10-20</a></p>



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		<p><sup>10</sup> I thought, I must depart in the prime of my life; I have been relegated to the gates of the underworld for the rest of my life.</p> <p><sup>11</sup> I thought, I won't see the LORD. The LORD is in the land of the living. I won't look upon humans again or be with the inhabitants of the world.</p> <p><sup>12</sup> My lifetime is plucked up and taken from me like a shepherd's tent. My life is shriveled like woven cloth; God cuts me off from the loom. Between daybreak and nightfall you carry out your verdict against me.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> I cried out until morning: "Like a lion God crushes all my bones. Between daybreak and nightfall you carry out your verdict against me.</p> <p><sup>14</sup> Like a swallow I chirp; I moan like a dove. My eyes have grown weary looking to heaven. Lord, I'm overwhelmed; support me!"</p> <p><sup>15</sup> What can I say? God has spoken to me; he himself has acted. I will wander my whole life with a bitter spirit.</p> <p><sup>16</sup> The LORD Most High is the one who gives life to every heart, who gives life to the spirit!</p> <p><sup>17</sup> Look, he indeed exchanged my bitterness for wholeness.</p> <p>You yourself have spared my whole being from the pit of destruction, because you have cast all my sins behind your back.</p> <p><sup>18</sup> The underworld can't thank you, nor can death praise you;</p>
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698		<p>those who go down to the pit can't hope for your faithfulness.</p> <p><sup>19</sup>The living, the living can thank you, as I do today. Parents will tell children about your faithfulness.</p> <p><sup>20</sup>The LORD has truly saved me, and we will make music at the LORD'S house all the days of our lives. <sup>1</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He also became a father to Manasseh. He did not have an heir before. Manasseh would go on to be one of the most evil kings in Judah's history, but it should be noted that he repented before he died. The damage on a national scale had already been done, but even after reigning 55 years, God could change his heart and forgive his heinous sins.</li> </ul>
SL#8 Challenge #2 Folly with the Babylonian emissary visit		
		<p>2Chron32:27-31; 2 Kings 20-12-19, Isaiah 39</p> <p>*Suspect he became proud after the miraculous healing, maybe his growing wealth, maybe the status of being the receiver of a miracle. Not sure. Definite lack of wisdom according to Isaiah.</p> <p>* Prince Merodach-baladan, son of the king of Babylon, Baladan, Babylonian ambassadors visited him to congratulate him on his recovery &amp; without God's wisdom or counsel from the prophet, he showed them all the kingdom's treasures. At this time Babylon is a distant and insignificant power.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>*"Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah and told him that one day all that he and his predecessors had accumulated would be carried away to Babylon—but not in his time. The king's response has often been criticized. He said, "The word of the Lord which you</p>

<sup>1</sup> [Common English Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Common English Bible, 2011), Is 38:10–20.

<sup>2</sup> Jack W. Hayford, Thomas Nelson Publishers, [Hayford's Bible Handbook](#) (Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; London; Vancouver: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995).



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		<p>have spoken is good!... Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?" <i>But in view of the constant threat from Assyria, word that the nation would one day fall to a world power that did not yet exist must have seemed good news indeed!"</i></p> <p><b>*was this an ask for financial or military support?</b> However, during this time, Hezekiah was preoccupied with Assyrian commander Shalmaneser V's invasion of Judah—inconvenient timing to receive Merodach-Baladan's request for aid (Cogan and Tadmor, <i>II Kings</i>, 261; see also Blenkinsopp, "Hezekiah," 115–16; Oates, <i>Babylon</i>, 116; Walton, "New Observations," 129–30; Hobbs, <i>2 Kings</i>, 288–89; Sweeney, <i>I &amp; II Kings</i>, 423–24).</p> <p><b>* OR Second Chronicles 32:31 does not include mention of the king, but suggests the emissaries were sent to check on astronomical events related to "the sign"</b> (see 2 Chr 32:24; 2 Kgs 20:10–11; Cogan and Tadmor, <i>II Kings</i>, 260; Klein, <i>2 Chronicles</i>, 469).<sup>3</sup></p>
<p><b>SL#9 Challenge #3 Assyrian King Sennacherib attacks Judah</b></p>		
<p>701</p>		<p>Then in 701, the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's full reign, Sennacherib destroyed all the cities of Judah except Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:13). Jerusalem was trapped by the surrounding Assyrian armies until God delivered it.  <small>Stanley M. Horton, <a href="#">Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary</a>, Logion Press Commentary Series (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2000), 109.</small></p> <p>The Assyrians attacked Judah in Hezekiah's fourteenth year. The border fortress-cities the king had constructed fell, and Jerusalem was endangered. An Assyrian emissary appeared outside Jerusalem's walls and called for the city's surrender. The emissary ridiculed Hezekiah's military weakness, <u>says that it appears that Judah is relying on Egypt &amp; scoffed at Hezekiah's reliance on Judah's God.</u> The gods of other nations had proven powerless before the might of Assyria; so would the Lord.</p> <p>→ Hezekiah had already charged his leaders to not answer a word.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hezekiah goes to the temple with the letter &amp; places it before the Lord in prayer</li> <li>• Receives counsel/prophetic word from Isaiah that God will save the city &amp; send the Assyrians home without launching a single arrow into Jerusalem.</li> <li>• That night the angel of the Lord kills 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in their sleep.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Lowell K. Handy, "[Merodach-Baladan, Son of Baladan](#)," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The king returns to Assyria &amp; is murdered by 2 of his sons in his sleep. <i>(2 Chron. 32:1–23; 2 Kings 18:9–19:37; Isa. 36; 37).</i> [Hezekiah already begun courting Egypt for assistance by this time?-YES] 12“Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. 13The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread,” Isaiah’s warning against alliance with Assyria, <u>and his warning to Hezekiah not to break that alliance once made</u>, were both considered treason, or “conspiracy,” by the war party in Judah. The verbs here are plural and are addressed to Isaiah and those disciples who would listen to him. They are not to fear or dread what the unbelievers fear, which was the conspiracy of Pekah and Rezin. That was not the real danger for Jerusalem. They must regard the Lord as holy, and have the same kind of fear and respect that recognizes His awesome power and that confesses and forsakes sin. <small>Stanley M. Horton, <a href="#">Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary</a>, Logion Press Commentary Series (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2000), 108–109.</small></li> </ul> <p>4This is what the Lord says to me: “I will remain quiet and will look on from my dwelling place, like shimmering heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.” Isaiah then hears the Lord’s word to him. The time for action had not yet come. God has His timing, and it is a mistake to get ahead of God. The Lord will “remain quiet” and do nothing but “look on” from His dwelling place, the temple, when there is “shimmering [or dazzling] heat in the sunshine,” when there is a dewy mist “in the heat of harvest.” <u>In other words, the Lord will offer no support to plans of rebellion against Assyria, though He knows what is going on and is still in ultimate control. Hezekiah learned this the hard way when he rejected Isaiah’s prophetic warnings and made an alliance with the Cushite king of Egypt.</u> <small>Stanley M. Horton, <a href="#">Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary</a>, Logion Press Commentary Series (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2000), 169.</small></p> <p>1An oracle concerning Egypt: See, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them. <b>Before Assyria came against Judah in 701 b.c. King Hezekiah was looking to Egypt for help.</b> Egypt once made slaves of God’s people and was often their enemy. Egyptians worshiped many gods and believed the sun god was greater than any other god. They also worshiped the pharaoh. Yet this prophecy about Egypt declares that God’s power will make Egypt fear Judah (19:1–17). God will be worshiped in Egypt (19:18–22). Egypt and Assyria will unite in worship with Israel; God will make them a blessing. The Lord is coming on a light, swift cloud to Egypt, causing Egypt’s idols (“nothings”) to tremble and the people of Egypt to lose courage. This was a warning in Isaiah’s day for Hezekiah and the people of Judah not to listen to Egyptian encouragement to rebel against Assyria. 3Then the Lord said, “Just as my servant Isaiah has gone</p>
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		<p>stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush, 4so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared—to Egypt’s shame. The Lord calls Isaiah “my servant” because of his obedience and faithfulness and because God was using him to give prophecies that declared His power, glory, and eternal plan. <b>Isaiah’s going about “stripped and barefoot” would be a warning and a sign concerning Egypt and Cush.</b> These countries were united at this time (since 715 b.c.), and they believed they could withstand Assyria. <b>Later, in 701 b.c., the Ethiopian pharaoh Shebitku sent an army against Sennacherib, but it was defeated at Eltekeh, thirty-two miles west-northwest of Jerusalem. Isaiah gave them an object lesson in advance about what would happen to them.</b> The Assyrians would take captives from Egypt and Cush stripped and barefoot into exile. This humiliation, especially with their “buttocks bared” (which would be visible as they bent over), would bring them great shame. <u>Hezekiah was tempted to trust in Egypt but apparently listened to Isaiah at this particular time and did not join in the Philistine rebellion.</u></p> <p><small>Stanley M. Horton, <a href="#">Isaiah: A Logion Press Commentary</a>, Logion Press Commentary Series (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2000), 170–171.</small></p>
698		Manasseh is born
687-686		Hezekiah & Manasseh Co Regents
686		Hezekiah dies naturally, Manasseh begins reigning at age 12
686-642		Manasseh’s 55 year reign

**SL#10** What we can learn from Hezekiah:→ **Living & serving in one crisis after another-**

- What response does crisis provoke from us?
- Does our response to crisis reveal anything about what we believe...
  - About God’s character?
  - His abilities?
  - What we believe of others?
  - What we believe about ourselves?
  - Motives?
- When your cup gets bumped, what spills out? Whether its bumped by crisis, surprise, success.]

**SL#11** What we can learn from Hezekiah:→ **One person who loves God can make a big difference.**

- Hezekiah is the first king to be compared favorably with David. 2 Kings 18:3





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- Not just impacted personally, but depending on position & influence, on nations.
- You have no control of who comes before you & what they did. You may or may not have influence on those who come after, but they ultimately are responsible for their choices, you are responsible for your influence. ***What are you doing with the time that YOU have?*** Are you intentionally influencing?

SL#12 What we can learn from Hezekiah:

- **Keep the main thing the main thing.** How does someone spend their time & what does that reveal about their priorities?
  - Hezekiah was devoted to God, used his time to create an environment of love & obedience for God, and he did that imperfectly.

SL#13 What we can learn from Hezekiah:

- **Set supportive, wise counsel around you.** Hezekiah received supportive counsel. [Isaiah]

SL#14 What we can learn from Hezekiah:

- **Hezekiah believed in the power of prayer, practiced it, & expected God to answer.**

What can we put into practice today?

NOTES:

- 25 years old when he became king
  - he wasn't voted in, it wasn't a popularity contest
  - His dad, Ahaz, reigned for 16 years. Long enough for people to be comfortable with how things were being done.
  - His 1<sup>st</sup> year:
    - Purified the temple--Reinstituted worship at the temple that had been closed during the reign of his father, Ahaz [evil king]



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- This included the destruction of the bronze serpent of Moses which had become an object of idolatry. Num 21:9
- Called the priests & Levites back into service
- Had them begin offering sacrifices & singing psalms
- He removed the high places, which even good kings failed to do.
- Called the people of Judah to celebrate the Lord's Passover-which had not been kept for decades.
  - He even sent messengers to Israel to invite them to participate
  - 7 days of worship went into another week.
  - People went home & destroyed the idols & shrines that had infested the land. [His influence inspired them to take action.]
- H's emphasis on worship set the tone for his reign & restored Judah to a place where God could & did bless the land.
- Accomplishments:
  - Retook the cities his father had forfeited to the Philistines, even dispossessing the Philistines of all their cities except 2-Gaza & Gath.
  - He made every attempt to build up his country that he might eventually throw off the Assyrian yoke his father had saddled the county with by allying with them. 2 Kings 16:7-9
  - Built up the country morally & spiritually.
  - Fortified the country by building up the national economy & the military.
  - Agriculture & trade expanded by the establishment of warehouses & stock yards in strategic places. 2 Chron 23:27-29
  - A national system of defenses was inaugurated 32:5-7
  - Jerusalem was given an adequate water supply in the event of a siege 32:30
  -
- Faced 3 specific challenges. They are NOT presented in chronological order in scripture.
  - **Challenge 1: Terminal Illness & Miraculous Healing:**
  - 2 Chron 32:24; 2 Kings 20:1-11; Isaiah 38
    - 701 BC Hezekiah's illness & Isaiah relayed to him he would die.
    - Pleaded to God for more time & received 15 more years.
    - Received the confirmation of the shadow retreating 10 steps.
    - As a result, Hezekiah lived to beg God to intervene when the Assyrians attacked a few years later.



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- He also became a father to Manasseh. He did not have an heir before. Manasseh would go on to be one of the most evil kings in Judah's history, but it should be noted that he repented before he died. The damage on a national scale had already been done, but even after reigning XX years, God could change his heart and forgive his heinous sins.
  - **Challenge 2: Folly with the Babylonian Visit** 2 Chron 32:27-31; 2 Kings 20-12-19, Isaiah 39
    - Became proud after the miraculous healing, maybe his growing wealth, maybe the status of being the receiver of a miracle. Not sure. Definite lack of wisdom according to Isaiah.
    - Babylonian ambassadors visited him to congratulate him on his recovery & without God's wisdom or counsel from the prophet, he showed them all the kingdom's treasures.
    - "Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah and told him that one day all that he and his predecessors had accumulated would be carried away to Babylon—but not in his time. The king's response has often been criticized. He said, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good!... Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?" *But in view of the constant threat from Assyria, word that the nation would one day fall to a world power that did not yet exist must have seemed good news indeed!*"
  - **Challenge 3: Assyrian Attack King Sennacherib-**
    - *Hezekiah had already charged them to not answer a word.*
    - *Hezekiah goes to the temple with the letter & places it before the Lord in prayer*
    - *Receives counsel/prophetic word from Isaiah*
    - *(2 Chron. 32:1-23; 2 Kings 18:9-19:37; Isa. 36; 37).* The Assyrians attacked Judah in Hezekiah's fourteenth year. The border fortress-cities the king had constructed fell, and Jerusalem was endangered. An Assyrian emissary appeared outside Jerusalem's walls and called for the city's surrender. The emissary ridiculed Hezekiah's military weakness and scoffed at Hezekiah's reliance on Judah's God. The gods of other nations had proven powerless before the might of Assyria; so would the Lord.
  - 2 Chron 32:1-23; 2 Kings 18:9-19:37; Isaiah 36, 37
- .....

*Sennacherib's message*

**36** Assyria's King Sennacherib marched against all of Judah's fortified cities and captured them in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah. <sup>2</sup> Assyria's king sent his field commander from Lachish, together



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with a large army, to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. He stood at the water channel of the Upper Pool, which is on the road to the field where clothes are washed. <sup>3</sup>Hilkiah's son Eliakim, who was the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Asaph's son Joah the recorder went out to them.

<sup>4</sup>Then the field commander said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Assyria's Great King says this: Why do you feel so confident? <sup>5</sup>Do you think that empty words are the same as good strategy and the strength to fight? Who are you trusting that you now rebel against me? <sup>6</sup>It appears that you are trusting in a staff—Egypt—that's nothing but a broken reed! It will stab the hand of anyone who leans on it! That's all that Pharaoh, Egypt's king, is to anyone who trusts in him. <sup>7</sup>Now suppose you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God.' Isn't he the one whose shrines and altars Hezekiah removed, telling Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship only at this altar'?

<sup>8</sup>"So now, make a wager with my master, Assyria's king. I'll give you two thousand horses if you can supply the riders! <sup>9</sup>How will you drive back even the least important official among my master's servants when you are relying on Egypt for chariots and riders? <sup>10</sup>What's more, do you think I've marched against this place to destroy it without the LORD's support? It was the LORD who told me, 'March against this land and destroy it!'"

<sup>11</sup>Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, because we understand it. Don't speak with us in Hebrew, because the people on the wall will hear it."

<sup>12</sup>The field commander said to them, "Did my master send me to speak these words just to you and your master and not also to the men on the wall? They are the ones who will have to eat their dung and drink their urine along with you. <sup>13</sup>Then the field commander stood up and shouted in Hebrew at the top of his voice: "Listen to the message of the great king, Assyria's king. <sup>14</sup>The king says this: Don't let Hezekiah lie to you. He won't be able to rescue you. <sup>15</sup>Don't let Hezekiah persuade you to trust the LORD by saying, 'The LORD will certainly rescue us. This city won't be handed over to Assyria's king.'

<sup>16</sup>"Don't listen to Hezekiah, because this is what Assyria's king says: Surrender to me and come out. Then each of you will eat from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own well <sup>17</sup>until I come to take you to a land just like your land. It will be a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. <sup>18</sup>Don't let Hezekiah fool you by saying, 'The LORD will rescue us.' Did any of the other gods of the nations save their lands from the power of Assyria's king? <sup>19</sup>Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Did they rescue Samaria from my power? <sup>20</sup>Which one of the gods from those countries has rescued their land from my power? Will the LORD save Jerusalem from my power?"

<sup>21</sup>But they kept quiet and didn't answer him with a single word, because King Hezekiah's command was, "Don't answer him!" <sup>22</sup>Hilkiah's son Eliakim, who was the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Asaph's son Joah the recorder came to Hezekiah with ripped clothes. They told him what the field commander had said.

*Hezekiah and Isaiah*

**37** When King Hezekiah heard this, he ripped his clothes, covered himself with mourning clothes, and went to the LORD's temple. <sup>2</sup>He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and



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the senior priests to the prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son. They were all wearing mourning clothes. <sup>3</sup>They said to him, "Hezekiah says this: Today is a day of distress, punishment, and humiliation. It's as if children are ready to be born, but there's no strength to see it through. <sup>4</sup>Perhaps the LORD your God heard all the words of the field commander who was sent by his master, Assyria's king. He insulted the living God! Perhaps he will punish him for the words that the LORD your God has heard. Offer up a prayer for those few people who still survive."

<sup>5</sup>When King Hezekiah's servants got to Isaiah, <sup>6</sup>Isaiah said to them, "Say this to your master: The LORD says this: Don't be afraid at the words you heard, which the officers of Assyria's king have used to insult me. <sup>7</sup>I'm about to mislead him, so when he hears a rumor, he'll go back to his own country. Then I'll have him cut down by the sword in his own land."

<sup>8</sup>The field commander heard that the Assyrian king had left Lachish. So he went back to the king and found him attacking Libnah. <sup>9</sup>Then the Assyrian king learned that Cush's King Tirhakah was on his way to fight against him. So he sent messengers to Hezekiah again: <sup>10</sup>"Say this to Judah's King Hezekiah: Don't let the God you trust deceive you by saying, 'Jerusalem won't fall to the Assyrian king.' <sup>11</sup>You yourself have heard what Assyrian kings do to other countries, wiping them out. Is it likely that you will be saved? <sup>12</sup>Did the gods of the nations that my ancestors destroyed save them, the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, or the people of Eden in Telassar? <sup>13</sup>Where now is Hamath's king, Arpad's king, or the kings of Lair, Sepharvaim, Hena, or Ivvah?"

### *Hezekiah prays*

<sup>14</sup>Hezekiah took the letters from the messengers and read them. Then he went to the temple and spread them out before the LORD. <sup>15</sup>Hezekiah prayed to the LORD:

<sup>16</sup>"LORD of heavenly forces, God of Israel: you sit enthroned on the winged creatures. You alone are God over all the earth's kingdoms. You made both heaven and earth. <sup>17</sup>LORD, turn your ear this way and hear! LORD, open your eyes and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words. He sent them to insult the living God! <sup>18</sup>It's true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have destroyed all the nations and their lands. <sup>19</sup>The Assyrians burned the gods of those nations with fire because they aren't real gods. They are only man-made creations of wood and stone. That's how the Assyrians could destroy them. <sup>20</sup>So now, LORD our God please save us from Sennacherib's power! Then all the earth's kingdoms will know that you alone are LORD."

<sup>21</sup>Then Isaiah, Amoz's son, sent a message to Hezekiah: The LORD God of Israel says this: Since you prayed to me about Assyria's King Sennacherib, <sup>22</sup>this is the message that the LORD has spoken against him:

The young woman, Daughter Zion,  
despises you and mocks you;  
Daughter Jerusalem shakes her head  
behind your back.

<sup>23</sup>Whom did you insult and ridicule?  
Against whom  
did you raise your voice  
and look on with disdain?



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It was against the holy one of Israel!

<sup>24</sup>With your servants,  
you've insulted the Lord;  
you said, "I, with my many chariots,  
have gone up  
to the highest mountains,  
to the farthest reaches of Lebanon.

I have cut down its tallest cedars,  
the best of its pine trees.

I have reached  
its most remote lodging place,  
its best forest.

<sup>25</sup>I have dug wells,  
have drunk water in foreign lands.

With my own feet,  
I dried up all of Egypt's streams."

<sup>26</sup>Haven't you heard?

I set this up long ago;  
I planned it in the distant past!

Now I have made it happen,  
making fortified cities  
collapse into piles of rubble.

<sup>27</sup>Their citizens have lost their power;  
they are frightened and dismayed.

They've become like plants in a field,  
tender green shoots,  
the grass on rooftops,  
blasted by the east wind.

<sup>28</sup>I know where you are,  
how you go out and come in,  
and how you rage against me.

<sup>29</sup>Because you rage against me  
and because your pride  
has reached my ears,  
I will put my hook in your nose  
and my bit in your mouth.

I will make you go back  
the same way you came.

<sup>30</sup>Now this will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: This year you will eat what grows by itself. Next year you will eat what grows from that. But in the third year, plant seed and harvest it; plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>31</sup>The survivors of Judah's family who have escaped will put down roots and bear fruit



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above. <sup>32</sup>Those who remain will go out from Jerusalem, and those who survive will go out from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of heavenly forces will do this.

<sup>33</sup>Therefore, the LORD says this about Assyria's king: He won't enter this city. He won't shoot a single arrow here. He won't come near the city with a shield. He won't build a ramp to besiege it. <sup>34</sup>He'll go back by the same way he came. He won't enter this city, declares the LORD. <sup>35</sup>I will defend this city and save it for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.

<sup>36</sup>The LORD's messenger went out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand soldiers in the Assyrian camp. When people got up the next morning, there were dead bodies everywhere. <sup>37</sup>So Assyria's King Sennacherib left and went back to Nineveh, where he stayed. <sup>38</sup>Later, while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with a sword. Then they escaped to the land of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon ruled after him.

*Hezekiah's illness*

**38** At about that time Hezekiah became deathly sick. The prophet Isaiah, Amoz's son, came to him and said: "The LORD God says this: Put your affairs in order because you are about to die. You won't survive this."

<sup>2</sup>Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD: <sup>3</sup>"Please, LORD, remember how I've walked before you in truth and sincerity. I've done what you consider to be good." Then Hezekiah cried and cried.

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD's word came to Isaiah: <sup>5</sup>"Go and say to Hezekiah: The LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says this: I have heard your prayer and have seen your tears. I will add fifteen years to your life. <sup>6</sup>I will rescue you and this city from the power of the Assyrian king. I will defend this city. <sup>7</sup>This will be your sign from the LORD that he will do what he promised: <sup>8</sup>once the shadow cast by the sun descends on the steps of Ahaz, I will make it back up ten steps." And the sun went back ten of the steps that it had already descended.

<sup>9</sup>A composition by Judah's King Hezekiah when he was sick and then recovered from his sickness:

<sup>10</sup>I thought, I must depart  
in the prime of my life;  
I have been relegated to the gates  
of the underworld  
for the rest of my life.

<sup>11</sup>I thought, I won't see the LORD.  
The LORD is in the land of the living.  
I won't look upon humans again  
or be with the inhabitants  
of the world.

<sup>12</sup>My lifetime is plucked up  
and taken from me  
like a shepherd's tent.  
My life is shriveled like woven cloth;



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God cuts me off from the loom.  
Between daybreak and nightfall  
you carry out your verdict against me.

<sup>13</sup> I cried out until morning:  
“Like a lion God crushes all my bones.

Between daybreak and nightfall  
you carry out your verdict against me.

<sup>14</sup> Like a swallow I chirp;  
I moan like a dove.

My eyes have grown weary  
looking to heaven.  
Lord, I’m overwhelmed; support me!”

<sup>15</sup> What can I say?  
God has spoken to me;  
he himself has acted.

I will wander my whole life  
with a bitter spirit.

<sup>16</sup> The LORD Most High is  
the one who gives life to every heart,  
who gives life to the spirit!

<sup>17</sup> Look, he indeed exchanged my  
bitterness for wholeness.

You yourself have spared  
my whole being  
from the pit of destruction,  
because you have cast all my sins  
behind your back.

<sup>18</sup> The underworld can’t thank you,  
nor can death praise you;  
those who go down to the pit  
can’t hope for your faithfulness.

<sup>19</sup> The living, the living can thank you,  
as I do today.  
Parents will tell children  
about your faithfulness.

<sup>20</sup> The LORD has truly saved me,  
and we will make music  
at the LORD’s house  
all the days of our lives.

<sup>21</sup> Then Isaiah said, “Prepare a salve made from figs, put it on the swelling, and he’ll get better.”





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<sup>22</sup> Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “What’s the sign that I’ll be able to go up to the LORD’s temple?”

*The Babylonian king’s messengers*

**39** At that time, Babylon’s King Merodach-baladan, Baladan’s son, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been ill and had recovered. <sup>2</sup> Hezekiah was pleased, and he showed them his treasury—the silver and the gold, the spices and fine oil—and everything in his armory, all that was found in his storerooms. There wasn’t a thing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah didn’t show them.

<sup>3</sup> Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, “What did these men say? Where did they come from?”

Hezekiah replied, “They came to me from a distant land, from Babylon.”

<sup>4</sup> So Isaiah said, “What did they see in your house?”

Hezekiah said, “They saw everything in my house. There was nothing in my storerooms that I didn’t show them.”

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD of heavenly forces: <sup>6</sup> Days are coming when all that is in your house, which your ancestors have stored up until this day, will be carried to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. <sup>7</sup> Some of your sons, your own descendants whom you fathered, will be taken to become eunuchs in the king of Babylon’s palace.”

<sup>8</sup> Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The LORD’s word that you delivered is good,” since he thought, That means there will be peace and security in my lifetime.

*Comfort for God’s people*

**40** Comfort, comfort my people! says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak compassionately to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her that her  
compulsory service has ended,  
that her penalty has been paid,  
that she has received  
from the LORD’s hand  
double for all her sins!

<sup>3</sup> A voice is crying out:  
“Clear the LORD’s way in the desert!  
Make a level highway in the wilderness  
for our God!

<sup>4</sup> Every valley will be raised up,  
and every mountain and hill  
will be flattened.  
Uneven ground will become level,  
and rough terrain a valley plain.



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<sup>5</sup>The LORD’s glory will appear,  
and all humanity will see it together;  
the LORD’s mouth  
has commanded it.”

<sup>6</sup>A voice was saying:  
“Call out!”  
And another said,  
“What should I call out?”  
All flesh is grass;  
all its loyalty is  
like the flowers of the field.

<sup>7</sup>The grass dries up  
and the flower withers<sup>4</sup>

*Scripture references:*

*2 Kings 18–20; 2 Chronicles 29–32;*

*Isaiah 36–39*



*Dates:*

*Ruled Judah 715–686 B.C.*

*Name:*

*Hezekiah [HEZ-uh-KI-uh; “Yahweh is my strength”]*

*Greatest Accomplishment:*

*He preserved Judah when Assyria conquered and deported the people of Israel.*



**Hezekiah’s Role in Scripture** Page 128

**HEZEKIAH’S ROLE IN SCRIPTURE**

When Hezekiah became king, the great Assyrian Empire was forcing its way into the Middle East. Syria had fallen and the massive Assyrian army was a threat to Israel and Judah. Hezekiah refused to submit to Assyria. To prepare for the invasion, he defeated the Philistines and built fortress cities along

<sup>4</sup> [Common English Bible](#) (Nashville, TN: Common English Bible, 2011), Is 36:1–40:7.



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his borders. In Hezekiah's fourth year, the Assyrians invaded the northern kingdom Israel and defeated them after a three-year struggle. In Hezekiah's fourteenth year, Assyria attacked Judah. While the border fortresses were taken, the Lord answered Hezekiah's prayer and miraculously intervened to throw back the Assyrians. This was a pivotal event in the history of Judah, and the story is told and retold in Scripture. The nation was preserved, and the people were given a powerful example of the efficacy of prayer offered by a ruler in right relationship with God.

Exploring Hezekiah's Relationships Page 128

### EXPLORING HEZEKIAH'S RELATIONSHIPS

**Hezekiah's relationship with God.** Hezekiah's relationship with God was by far the most significant relationship to the writers of sacred history. They focused on Hezekiah's true devotion to God, and related three spiritual challenges faced by the godly king. The three challenges were not recorded in the text in the order they occurred, but in the order of their significance. We take them in chronological order, below.

*Hezekiah's focus on worship (2 Chron. 29–31).* Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king. In the first year he reinstated worship at the temple that had been closed during the reign of evil King Ahaz, his father. Hezekiah called the priests and Levites back into service and set them to offering sacrifices and singing psalms. With the temple purified, Hezekiah called all the people of Judah to celebrate the Lord's Passover, that important annual religious festival that had not been kept for decades. Hezekiah even sent messengers into Israel to invite Jews from the northern kingdom to participate. The joy was so great that the seven-day worship festival was extended another week. The people went home and destroyed the idols and shrines that had infested the land.

Hezekiah's emphasis on worship set the tone for his reign, and restored Judah to a place where God could and did bless the land.

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*Hezekiah's first challenge (2 Chron. 32:24; 2 Kings 20:1–11; Isa. 38).* In 701 B.C. the king became seriously ill, and the prophet Isaiah announced that he would die. The king pleaded with God for added years: "Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in your sight" (2 Kings 20:3). God answered Hezekiah's tearful appeal and gave him fifteen more years. Thus Hezekiah lived to beg God to intervene when the Assyrians attacked a few years later.

*Hezekiah's second challenge (2 Chron. 32:27–31; 2 Kings 20:12–19; Isa. 39).* After the miraculous healing, Hezekiah became proud. The text does not tell us why, but we can speculate that not only Hezekiah's growing wealth but also his status as the recipient of a miracle fed the king's pride. When ambassadors from Babylon visited Hezekiah to congratulate him on his recovery, the king showed off all the kingdom's treasures—without consulting God or one of His prophets.

Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah and told him that one day all that he and his predecessors had accumulated would be carried away to Babylon—but not in his time. The king's response has often been criticized. He said, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good!... Will there not be peace and truth at least



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in my days?" But in view of the constant threat from Assyria, word that the nation would one day fall to a world power that did not yet exist must have seemed good news indeed!

*Hezekiah's third challenge (2 Chron. 32:1–23; 2 Kings 18:9–19:37; Isa. 36; 37).* The Assyrians attacked Judah in Hezekiah's fourteenth year. The border fortress-cities the king had constructed fell, and Jerusalem was endangered. An Assyrian emissary appeared outside Jerusalem's walls and called for the city's surrender. The emissary ridiculed Hezekiah's military weakness and scoffed at Hezekiah's reliance on Judah's God. The gods of other nations had proven powerless before the might of Assyria; so would the Lord.



Hezekiah turned to God in prayer when he received an Assyrian demand that he surrender his nation and accept deportation.



Hezekiah took the matter to the Lord. In his prayer Hezekiah affirmed God as the maker of heaven and earth and begged God to act. Surely the Lord would not permit the Assyrians to hold Him in such contempt.

Hezekiah's prayer was answered. The prophet Isaiah reported God's promise to save the city and send the Assyrian king home without having launched a single arrow into Jerusalem. That night 185,000 Assyrian soldiers died in their sleep, and the Assyrian king returned home, where he was assassinated by two of his sons. (For an extended treatment of this event, see the companion volume in this series, *Every Miracle and Wonder in the Bible.*)

Exploring Hezekiah's Relationships Page 130

***Hezekiah's relationship with prophets.*** The accounts of Hezekiah's reign frequently mention the prophet Isaiah. Hezekiah clearly listened to, depended on, and trusted the prophet's utterances.

***Hezekiah's relationship with his people.*** Hezekiah's driving motive was to reestablish worship of the Lord in Judah. His enthusiasm was contagious, and after the people celebrated the Passover, the people themselves purged the land of idols and idolatry. Hezekiah's success in motivating his people to turn to the Lord was almost unique in the nation's history.

Hezekiah: An Example for Today Page 130

### HEZEKIAH: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY

Hezekiah was a godly person whose zeal for worship led to a national revival. The priority he placed on worship was evident from his first year as king. His personal blessings and the deliverance of his nation were both rooted in Hezekiah's passion for worshiping God. We have much to learn from Hezekiah.



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- Hezekiah motivates us to make worship a priority in our own lives. Both private and corporate worship have an essential role in any transforming relationship with the Lord.
- Hezekiah encourages us to expect God to answer prayer. God answered Hezekiah's prayers for his nation and for personal well being in wonderful ways.
- Hezekiah reminds us that God's blessings are rooted in His grace, not our goodness. Hezekiah's pride that God would answer *his* prayers was misplaced, and that was his primary fault.
- Hezekiah shows us the significance of being always responsive to God's Word. As Hezekiah was committed to follow the precepts of Scripture and the words of God's prophets, so are we to be committed to doing God's Word today.

AHAZ Page 215

AHAZ [Ay-haz: "he grasped"]

1. 950 B.C. Great grandson of King Saul. 1 Chronicles 8:35, 36; 9:42.
2. 742–725 B.C. Son of the godly Hezekiah, this evil eleventh king of Judah burned a son as a human sacrifice. 2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28; Isaiah 7.

**HEZEKIAH.** 1. King of Judah, 2 Kin. 16:20; 18:1, 2; 1 Chr. 3:13; 2 Chr. 29:1; Matt. 1:9. Religious zeal of, 2 Chr. 29; 30; 31. Purges the nation of idolatry, 2 Kin. 18:4; 2 Chr. 31:1; 33:3. Restores the true forms of worship, 2 Chr. 31:2–21. His piety, 2 Kin. 18:3, 5, 6; 2 Chr. 29:2; 31:20, 21; 32:32; Jer. 26:19. Military operations of, 2 Kin. 18:19; 1 Chr. 4:39–43; 2 Chr. 32; Isa. 37:37. Sickness and restoration of, 2 Kin. 20:1–11; 2 Chr. 32:24; Isa. 38:1–8. His psalm of thanksgiving, Isa. 38:9–22. His lack of wisdom in showing his resources to commissioners of Babylon, 2 Kin. 20:12–19; 2 Chr. 32:25, 26, 31; Isa. 39. Prospered of God, 2 Kin. 18:7; 2 Chr. 32:27–30. Conducts the brook Gihon into Jerusalem, 2 Kin. 18:17; 20:20; 2 Chr. 32:4, 30; 33:14; Neh. 2:13–15; 3:13, 16; Isa. 7:3; 22:9–11; 36:2. Scribes of, Prov. 25:1. Death and burial of, 2 Kin. 20:21; 2 Chr. 32:33. Prophecies concerning, 2 Kin. 19:20–34; 20:5, 6, 16–18; Isa. 38:5–8; 39:5–7; Jer. 26:18, 19. 2. Son of Neariah, 1 Chr. 3:23. 3. One of the exiles, Ezra 2:16; Neh. 7:21; called Hizkijah, Neh. 10:17.

**HEZEKIAH, KING** (hez-i-kī'a; "Jehovah is strength").

The twelfth sovereign (excluding Athaliah), of the separate kingdom of Judah. His co-regency lasted from 728 to 715 B.C. and his sole regency from 715 to 686 B.C. He was the son of Ahaz and Abi of Abijah, born 736 B.C. (2 Kings 18:1–2; 2 Chron. 29:1).

**Reformer.** As a godly king his first act was to purge, repair, and reopen the Temple, which had been neglected and polluted during the idolatrous reign of his weak father, Ahaz. His task consisted of rooting out Canaanite fertility cults and other pagan contaminations. Hezekiah's reformation was so thorough that he did not even spare "the high places." These centers of contaminated worship on hilltops "he removed ... and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the asherah" (2 Kings 18:3–7; 2 Chron. 29). **A still more decisive act was the destruction of the bronze serpent of Moses (cf. Num. 21:9),** which had



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become an idolatrous object. His great reformation was followed by the celebration of the Passover (chap. 30), to which not only all Judah was summoned but also the remnant of the ten tribes.

**Warrior.**

*War with Philistines.* Early in his reign (c. 714 B.C.) Hezekiah assumed an aggressive war against the Philistines. He not only retook the cities that his father had forfeited (2 Chron. 28:18–19) but even dispossessed the Philistines of their own cities except Gaza (2 Kings 18:8) and Gath (Josephus *Ant.* 9.13.3). Accordingly, he came to rule as a sort of feudal overlord of the Philistine cities, and Ashdod under its Greek prince was induced to lead them in the revolt against Assyria.

*Early Relations with Assyria.* Hezekiah inherited the Assyrian menace from his father, who mortgaged the Judean kingdom to “the giant of the Semites.” From 715 B.C., the beginning of his own independent rule, Hezekiah faced a series of Assyrian invasions that dominated his reign. As a wise and godly ruler, he made every attempt to build up his country that he might eventually throw off the Assyrian yoke his father had saddled upon it by alliance (2 Kings 16:7–9). The purport of his reform was to fortify the moral and spiritual defenses of his country. He also built up the national economy and the military. Agriculture and trade expanded by the establishment of warehouses and stock yards at strategic places (2 Chron. 32:27–29). A national system of defenses was inaugurated (32:5–7), and Jerusalem was given an adequate water supply in the event of siege (32:30). Ample warning was granted Judah of the Assyrian peril. In Hezekiah’s fourth co-regnal year (724 B.C.)—undoubtedly his regency is meant—Shalmaneser V had begun, and by the beginning of 721 B.C. Sargon II had completed, the siege of Samaria (2 Kings 18:9–11). In the ensuing interval the Assyrian menace moved ever nearer. In 711 B.C. Sargon claimed the credit of a campaign against Ashdod. The Assyrian record (Isa. 20:1) clearly outlines that it was the Assyrian commander-in-chief “tartan” (Assyrian *turtannu*, “second in rank”) who actually conducted the campaign. See W. F. Albright, *O. T. Commentary*, Philadelphia (1948), p. 161.

*Sennacherib and Hezekiah.* Early in the reign of Sennacherib, Hezekiah revolted against Assyria. The Assyrian preoccupation in lower Mesopotamia with the irrepressible Chaldeans of the sea lands under Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, coupled with Hezekiah’s consciousness of his own prosperity, were prime factors in the revolt. It was the same Merodach-baladan who, pretending to congratulate Hezekiah upon his recovery from a serious illness, tried with lavish gifts to win over Judah into a coalition that was being secretly formed against Assyria (Isa. 39:1–8). This Merodach-baladan was twice ruler of Babylon (722–710 B.C., 703–702 B.C.), and his embassy to Judah was apparently dispatched in the latter part of the earlier period of his reign. Hezekiah manifested egotistical folly in showing Merodach-baladan’s emissaries all his treasures. Isaiah, foreseeing the future strengthening of the Chaldeans, severely rebuked Hezekiah for his foolishness. In 701 B.C. the Assyrian emperor launched his great western campaign as a punitive measure against Hezekiah and other Palestinian-Syrian rebels. This important campaign is not only vividly described in the biblical record but is also contained in the annals of Sennacherib, which were recorded on clay cylinders, or prisms. The edition of these annals is found on the so-called Taylor Prism of the British Museum, with a copy on a prism of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. In detail Sennacherib depicts his third campaign, which included the siege of Jerusalem. After the subjugation of Philistine coastal towns and Philistine strongholds, together with Moabite, Edomite, and other cities, he refers to a victorious battle near Altaku (Eltekeh), where Palestinian forces were reinforced by Egyptian bowmen and chariotry. Then Sennacherib makes a



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lengthy reference to his attack on Hezekiah's realm. "As for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not submit to me, all 46 of his strong walled cities as well as the small cities in their neighborhood ... I besieged and took. 200,150 people, great and small, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, cattle and sheep without number I brought away from them and counted as spoil. Himself, like a caged bird, I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city. Earth works I threw up against him—the one coming out of his city gate I turned back to his misery. The cities of his which I had despoiled I cut off from his land and to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sili-bel, king of Gaza, I gave them." Sennacherib goes on to tell that the "terrifying splendor" of his majesty overcame Hezekiah. This Assyrian monarch boasts placing Hezekiah under a large tribute, carrying away gems, antimony, jewels, couches of ivory, elephant hides, maple, boxwood, and all kinds of valuable treasures as well as his daughters, his harem, and his musicians. The account of Sennacherib's western campaign recorded on the Taylor Prism is evidently the same as that described in 2 Kings 18:13–19:37; 2 Chron. 32:1–12; and Isa. 36:1–37:37. There are numerous striking points of agreement, as well as some difficulties. For example, when Sennacherib invaded Palestine he is said to have captured many of the fortified Judean cities (2 Kings 18:13) and to have threatened Jerusalem with a great army dispatched from Lachish under "Tartan and Rab-saris and Rabshakeh" (v. 17). A sculpture recovered at Nineveh shows Sennacherib sitting upon his chair throne at Lachish and receiving rich spoils while prisoners are tortured. These details fit well into the biblical account. Moreover, it is now known from the monuments that Tartan (Assyrian *turtannu*, "second in rank"), Rabshakeh (Assyrian *rab-shaqu*, "chief officer"), and Rab-saris (Assyrian *rabu-sha-reshi*, originally "chief eunuch") were titles of high Assyrian officials and not personal names at all (Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?* New Haven [1941], p. 43f.). Hezekiah's tribute is placed at thirty talents of gold in both sources but at only three hundred talents of silver in 18:14, as compared with eight hundred that the Assyrian king mentions. E. Schrader reconciles the two differences on the basis of the Babylonian light and Palestinian heavy talent, whereas George Barton suggests a textual corruption (*Archaeology and the Bible*, 7th ed. [1937], p. 473).

*Sickness and Death.* The Assyrians, despite their boasts, were not able to take Jerusalem. Toward the end of his reign Hezekiah became dangerously ill (2 Kings 20:1; 2 Chron. 32:24; Isa. 38:1). His kingdom was still in a perilous state from the Assyrian menace. Having no heir at the time, Hezekiah prayed that his life might be spared. He was granted a fifteen-year extension of life and died a natural death peacefully (686 B.C.).

### **Builder.**

*Siloam Tunnel.* Hezekiah is famous for the steps he took to supply fresh water within the city walls of Jerusalem. "He made the pool and the conduit, and brought water into the city" (2 Kings 20:20). In Chronicles it is appended that "it was Hezekiah who stopped the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them to the west side of the city of David" (2 Chron. 32:30). The intermittent spring of Gihon, Jerusalem's most ancient water supply, was located below the steep eastern hill (Ophel) in the deep Kidron Valley. It was thus exposed to enemy attack. Hezekiah completely covered over this ancient spring and diverted it through a conduit 1,777 feet long and hewn out of solid rock into a reservoir within the city walls. Tunnels at Megiddo and Gezer are similar to this amazing engineering feat of Hezekiah's workmen.





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*Siloam Reservoir.* In addition to the tunnel, Hezekiah built a larger reservoir, called the Pool of Siloam. The pool measures about 20 × 30 feet. In Jesus' day the blind man who was healed was directed to go and wash in this pool (John 9:7–11).

*The Siloam Inscription.* Hezekiah's tunnel was made famous by its remarkable inscription, discovered accidentally in 1880 by a boy wading in the pool. The six-line memorial, beautifully cut on the wall of the conduit in classical Heb. characters about nineteen feet from the Siloam end of the aqueduct, has paleographic value on a par with the Moabite Stone. The inscription is translated: "The boring through is completed. Now this is the story of the boring through. While the workmen were still lifting pick to pick each toward his neighbor and while three cubits remained to be cut through, each heard the voice of the other who called his neighbor, since there was a crevice in the rock on the right side. And on the day of the boring through the stone cutters struck, each to meet his fellow pick to pick; and there flowed the waters to the pool for 1200 cubits and 100 cubits was the height of the rock above the heads of the stone cutters."

BIBLIOGRAPHY: J. Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past* (1946), pp. 170–82; K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (1966), pp. 82–84; J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (1969), pp. 287–88; E. R. Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (1983), pp. 35–38, 120, 135–36, 168–69, 174–77.

**HEZEKIAH'S TUNNEL** A tunnel carved beneath the City of David that runs from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam and is attributed to King Hezekiah.

### Biblical Relevance

King Hezekiah reigned over the southern kingdom of Judah during the eighth century BC. According to 2 Kings, one of his great achievements was building "the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city" (2 Kgs 20:20 NIV). Second Chronicles 32:30 records, "It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon Spring and channeled the water down to the west side of the City of David" (NIV). King Hezekiah likely built such a tunnel in preparation for the Assyrian attack against Judah led by King Sennacherib in 701 BC. In preparation for the impending siege on Jerusalem, Hezekiah and his advisors blocked the water from the spring outside the city so the Assyrian army could not exploit it. They then built another wall outside the previous one for better reinforcements (2 Chr 32:1–5). Isaiah 22:9–11 seems to allude to this action, noting how Jerusalem stored up water in the lower pool and built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. The deuterocanonical book of Ecclesiasticus (or Sirach; Ben Sira) 48:17 also mentions Hezekiah's water project (Sirach 48:17).

### Discovery and Exploration

Edward Robinson discovered and explored the tunnel in 1837. The tunnel begins at the Gihon Spring on the eastern side of the City of David—the oldest settled portion of Jerusalem—and winds underground for a total of about 1,750 feet (733 meters) to the pool of Siloam on the southwest side of the city. There are actually three water systems that connect to the Gihon Spring:

1. Warren's Shaft



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2. the Siloam Channel (also known as the Second Aqueduct)
3. Hezekiah's Tunnel (or the Siloam Tunnel)

**The Siloam Inscription**

In 1880, archaeologists discovered a partial inscription located about 20 feet from the southern end of the tunnel, near the pool of Siloam. The inscription consists of about 100 words written in ancient Hebrew and discusses the completion of the tunnel. It indicates that the tunnel was carved from both ends simultaneously, describing how workmen, approaching each other from opposite sides, called to each other and swung their axes toward each other, saw a “crack” in the rock, and finally broke through the rock to open the tunnel. The word often translated as “crack” (רָדַד, *zdh*) is uncommon in ancient Hebrew and is therefore difficult to translate. Although it has often considered to mean “crack,” “fissure,” or “joint” (Lancaster and Long, “Where They Met,” 23–24), its translation could affect the understanding of how the tunnel was built.

Since 1882, most scholars have believed that the workers met near the middle of the tunnel where the winding route becomes most dramatic (Lancaster and Long, “Where They Met,” 16). Evidence of multiple starts and stops along the route likely indicate that workers attempted to locate each other, while the markings on the wall locate where they were finally successful. However, Faust suggests the Siloam inscription marks the actual site where the workers met (Faust, “A Note on Hezekiah’s Tunnel,” 3–11). If this theory is correct, the tunnel would likely have been primarily carved from one end, with the other team waiting until a natural “crack” was located, affirming they could meet each other and save time.

**Dating**

The dating of the tunnel known today as Hezekiah’s Tunnel is debated. In their article “Built by Hezekiah?” Rogerson and Davies argue that the tunnel could not have been built during Hezekiah’s reign (Rogerson and Davies, “Built by Hezekiah?” 138–149). They instead suggest it was built during the Hasomonean period, several centuries later. Their arguments include:

- Evidence unearthed near the city wall indicates that there were no significant settlements there during Hezekiah’s day, suggesting the wall was extended much later. If this is the case, the Siloam pool would not have been within the city wall at that time, making the tunnel unnecessary.
- The biblical references (as well as Ben Sira) do not clearly refer to or name the tunnel Hezekiah created. The word often translated “tunnel” (הַתְּעָלָה, *hatte'alah*) might instead refer to Warren’s Shaft or the Siloam Channel.
- The Siloam Inscription does not mention Hezekiah, and its dating is inconclusive, leaving open the possibility of a later date for the tunnel than the eighth century.

More recently, carbon-14 dating indicates the tunnel dates to around the time of the eighth century (Frumkin, Shimron, and Rosenbaum, “Radiometric Dating,” 169–71). While many take this as support that the tunnel was built during Hezekiah’s time, Sneh, Weinberger, and Shalev believe it allows for the possibility of construction during Manasseh’s reign in the late seventh century (Sneh, Weinberger, and Shalev, “The Why, How, and When,” 57–65). They point out it would have taken at least four years to



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cut the tunnel—an improbable task for Hezekiah under threat of an Assyrian invasion. Instead, they believe he likely cut the Siloam Channel in his day and the tunnel itself was carved later to meet increasing water needs in an expanding Jerusalem.

### Construction Method

Scholars have proposed several theories for construction method used to create the tunnel. Gill, who dates the tunnel to Hezekiah's time, suggests that the workers followed a natural karst system beneath the City of David (Gill, "How They Met," 20–33, 64). Karstic crevices are spaces in rock formed through water dissolution. If indeed the word *zdh* can be translated "crack" or something similar, Gill believes it may best explain how the workers were able to follow a basic path and meet each other in the middle.

However, Shanks believes the tunnel was built according to acoustic communication (Shanks, "Soundproof," 50–57, 78). In this model, the workers probably began tunneling and were directed toward each other by hammer taps from the surface. This may also explain why there were several false-starts near the meeting point, where the bedrock was likely too thick to hear the taps effectively.

Having investigated the karstic theory and the tunnel itself, Reich and Shukron argue there is only enough evidence to conclude the project likely had a detailed plan that included several mistakes and adjustments along the way (Reich and Shukron, "Reconsidering Karstic Theory," 75–80).

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CHRIS MCKNIGHT

**HEZEKIAH, ANCESTOR OF EXILES** (חִזְקִיָּה, *chizqiyyah*). Named in connection with a clan of exiles who returned to Judah with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:16; Neh 7:21). In both Ezra 2 and Neh 7, the name appears in the phrase—"sons of Ater to Hezekiah" (בְּנֵי־אֶטֶר לְחִזְקִיָּה, *benei-ater lichizqiyyah*). The Hebrew preposition לְ (*l*) in this context could indicate possession (e.g., "belonging to Hezekiah"), or it could mark an explanatory gloss on the name "Ater" (e.g., "Ater, that is Hezekiah"). With the first interpretation, the clan of Ater was somehow associated with Hezekiah, perhaps even Hezekiah, king of Judah. The second interpretation equates Hezekiah and Ater as two names for the same clan. The list of leaders of the postexilic community who signed the written agreement to keep the law during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah list Ater and Hezekiah in sequence (אֶטֶר חִזְקִיָּה, *ater chizqiyyah*), where they are typically construed as separate names (Neh 10:17). The distinction arises only from the



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loss of the preposition, a single letter in the Hebrew text. Therefore, one family signature, not two, may have been intended at Neh 10:17 with both names originally designated the clan of Ater of Hezekiah. The Greek text of 1 Esdras 5:15 also links the names with the genitive, reading “sons of Ater of Hezekiah” (υιοὶ Ατηρ Εζεκιου, *huioi Atēr Ezekiou*).

**HEZEKIAH, ANCESTOR OF ZEPHANIAH** (חִזְקִיָּיָהוּ, *chizqiyyahu*). Listed as an ancestor of the prophet Zephaniah (Zeph 1:1). Zephaniah’s ancestry is traced back four generations to Hezekiah. Listing a person’s ancestors past their immediate parentage is usually done to demonstrate a link to a notable ancestor, so the mention of Hezekiah here is sometimes thought to be a reference to Hezekiah, king of Judah. For more information, see this article: Zephaniah the Prophet.

**HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH** Hezekiah, King of Judah. The 13th king of Judah. The name Hezekiah (חִזְקִיָּיָהוּ, *chizqiyyah*) derives from the combination of the verbal root “to strengthen” (חָזַק, *chazaq*) and the shortened form (יָהּ, *yah*) of the divine name Yahweh (יְהוָה, *yhwh*), meaning “the Lord strengthens.” King of the southern kingdom of Judah for 29 years (727–699 BC) during which time the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians, and Judah itself was invaded by the Assyrians. Remembered for his religious reforms (2 Kgs 18:4; 2 Chr 29:3–36), for breaking allegiance with Assyria in favor of an alliance with Egypt (2 Kgs 18:13–16; Isa 30; 31; 36:6–9), and for his illness and miraculous recovery (2 Kgs 20; 2 Chr 32; Isa 38).

### Overview of the Biblical Account

There are three accounts of Hezekiah’s reign in the Bible: 2 Kgs 18–20; 2 Chr 29–32; and Isa 36–39.

#### *Hezekiah in Kings and Isaiah*

The accounts in Kings and Isaiah of Hezekiah’s reign focus on the Assyrian threat against Judah. Sennacherib’s army takes some of Judah’s fortified cities. Hezekiah, looking to avoid further damage, sends Sennacherib gold and silver as tribute (2 Kgs 18:13–16). However, Assyria continues its campaign and besieges Jerusalem. Scholars debate whether Assyria attacked once or twice. The Assyrian commander Rabshakeh taunts Hezekiah, saying that he cannot rely on help from Egypt or God (2 Kgs 18:19–25). Rabshakeh addresses the people of Jerusalem directly in an attempt to frighten them, mocking God by saying that just as the gods of other nations did not deliver them, Israel’s God will not deliver Jerusalem (2 Kgs 18:28–35).

Hezekiah reacts to this threat by mourning and seeking God through the prophet Isaiah (2 Kgs 19:1–2). Isaiah responds that God will make Sennacherib return home and die there. Eventually, the angel of Yahweh comes and kills 185,000 people in the Assyrian camp (2 Kgs 19:35). Sennacherib returns home and is assassinated (2 Kgs 19:37).

During the Assyrian threat, Hezekiah became terminally ill. He again sought God and was given 15 more years (2 Kgs 20:1–7). God’s promise to extend Hezekiah’s life was accompanied with the sign of the sun going back “ten steps” (2 Kgs 20:8–11) (ESV). After Hezekiah’s illness, he was visited by envoys



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from Babylon. Hezekiah shows them all of Jerusalem's treasures. Isaiah rebukes him for this and prophesies the Babylonian exile (2 Kgs 20:14–19).

### *Hezekiah in Chronicles*

The account in Chronicles gives more attention to Hezekiah's religious reforms, devoting three chapters to them. The chronicler spends only one chapter reporting the Assyrian conflict and Hezekiah's illness. Rather, the author is more concerned with proper temple worship throughout 1 and 2 Chronicles, and so emphasizes Hezekiah's reforms. Hezekiah instructs the Levites to cleanse the temple (2 Chr 29:3–19) and gathers Jerusalem's leaders to restore proper worship (2 Chr 29:20–36).

The chronicler also portrays Hezekiah as an agent of restoration and redemption for remaining members of the exiled northern tribes. Hezekiah sends letters to the northern tribes inviting them to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (2 Chr 30:1–12). People respond and celebrate in unity and joy (2 Chr 30:25–27).

### **Extrabiblical References**

Sennacherib makes reference to his campaign against Hezekiah in his royal annals. He refers to his campaign throughout Judah as well as his siege of Jerusalem. Sennacherib does not refer to his defeat, however. He writes:

“As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered [them] by means of well-stamped [earth-] ramps, and battering-rams brought [thus] near [to the walls] [combined with] the attack by foot soldiers, [using] mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out [of them] 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered [them] booty. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage” (ANET, 288).

The writings of Nabonidus, a Babylonian king, confirm the biblical description of Sennacherib's death. Nabonidus describes Sennacherib's son as his own father's assassin (ANET, 309).

The Siloam Inscription, discovered in 1838, records the construction of a particular tunnel associated with other tunnels built by Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32:30). It is written in paleo-Hebrew script and most likely dates to the 8th century BC..

### **Dating Hezekiah's Reign**

Recent archaeological and extrabiblical discoveries raised questions regarding several previously agreed-upon aspects of Hezekiah's reign, primarily the date. The matter is further complicated by the difficulties in alignment of biblical kingships with other historical events as well as the possibility of coregencies.

There are two predominant methods for dating Hezekiah's reign.

### *Conquest of Samaria*

The first dating method uses the correlation that 2 Kgs 18:9–10 establishes between the fourth—sixth years of Hezekiah's reign and the beginning and end of Shalmaneser's conquest of Samaria. Exact



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dating depends on archaeological evidence found in Israeli and Assyrian records, with three possibilities.

**Dates of Conquest.** Scholars have proposed various dates for Samaria's fall:

- 723 BC (Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, 205; Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 163–72; Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*, 53–56)
- Late 722/early 721 BC (Cogan and Tadmor, *2 Kings*, 195–201; Hayes and Kuan, "The Final Years," 153–81; Hays and Hooker, *A New Chronology*, 59–70; Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology*, 151–58; Younger, "The Fall of Samaria," 461–82)
- 720 BC (Laato, "New Viewpoints," 216–19; Na'aman, "Conquest of Samaria," 206–25; Galil, "The Last Years," 52–65; Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 12–18)
- 719 BC (Tetley, *Reconstructed Chronology*, 153–57).

The historical evidence is complicated by many conflicting accounts of the fall of Samaria. Both Shalmaneser V and Sargon II claim to have conquered Samaria (for more on Sargon II, see Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 15–16 n.19). Sargon II's ascension to the throne after the death of Shalmaneser V took place close to the fall of Samaria. This has led some to reconcile the conflicting claims in multiple ways, including:

- Sargon II concluded the siege initiated by Shalmaneser V (Na'aman, "Conquest of Samaria, 206–25).
- The untimely death of Shalmaneser V allowed Sargon II to claim credit for his victory (Olmstead, *Days of Sargon*, 45–47; Reade, "Sargon's Campaigns," 95–104).
- There were two conquests of the city, one by each king (Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur," 22–40; Becking, *The Fall of Samaria*).
- There were four conquests of Samaria between 727–719 BC, only the last of which was conducted by Sargon II (Hayes and Kuan, "The Final Years," 153–81; Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 193–207).

**Extrabiblical Inscriptions.** No extrabiblical inscriptions mention that Samaria was destroyed, indicating it may have survived military defeat, possibly implying multiple campaigns against the city. In addition, the fall, deportation, and repopulation of Samaria that 2 Kgs 17:1–6 describes could have taken place over several years (Younger, "The Fall of Samaria," 479). Shalmaneser died in 722 BC, leaving his son Sargon to claim the throne. Second Kings 18:9 indicates that it was Shalmaneser who conquered Samaria. At the beginning of Sargon's reign, various vassal states rebelled, and he took military action to solidify his power. He spent two years reclaiming power over Babylon in the east before turning his attention west to Samaria. Thus, it is quite possible that Shalmaneser conquered Samaria in 722 BC before his death. His son would then have retaken the city in 720 BC during his consolidation of power. The biblical text, however, clearly dates Hezekiah's reign relative to Shalmaneser's campaign and not Sargon's. Therefore, the fall of Samaria in the Kings account could date to 722 BC, in which case Hezekiah's reign began in 727 BC and ended in 699 BC (for more on the historical evidence supporting this conclusion, see Younger, "The Fall of Samaria," 461–82).



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**Implications for Dating Hezekiah's Reign**

- If Samaria fell in 722 BC, then Hezekiah ascended the throne in 727 BC and reigned till 699 BC (Tadmor, "Chronology of the First Temple Period," 58; Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology*, 154; Hayes and Hooker, *A New Chronology*, 66–80).
- Some scholars, however, date the destruction of Samaria to 721~20 BC, necessitating a 725~24 BC ascension (Galil, *Chronology of the Kings*, 83–107; Begrich, *Die Chronologie der Könige von Israel und Juda*, 155–60).
- If Samaria fell in 719~18 BC, it would imply Hezekiah started to rule in 724 BC (Tetley, *Reconstructed Chronology*, 164).

*Campaign against Jerusalem*

The second method for dating Hezekiah's rule depends on the correct date of Assyria's campaign against Jerusalem. Scholars have relied on 2 Kgs 18:13 for dating Sennacherib's 701 BC campaign against Jerusalem to the 14th year of King Hezekiah. This information has been used to date the first year of Hezekiah's reign to 716/15 BC (Thiele, *Chronology of the Kings*, 164; Albright, "Chronology of the Divided Monarchy," 22; Na'aman, "Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria, 236–39; "Historical and Chronological Notes," 83–92).

**Agreement of Evidence.** Various proposals have attempted to reconcile the conflicting evidence. Lewy and Jenkins favor the later date, suggesting 2 Kgs 18:13 refers to Sargon's campaign in 714–712 BC that Kings incorrectly attributes to Sennacherib (Lewy, "Sanherib und Hizkia," 158–59; Jenkins, "Hezekiah's Fourteenth Year," 284–98). Others have proposed reading "24" years instead of "14" in 2 Kgs 18:13, suggesting that textual corruption left the relative dating incompatible with 2 Kgs 18:9–10 (Montgomery, *Book of Kings*, 513–18).

Most scholars reject one date for the sake of the other. Those who defend a late date must conclude that 2 Kgs 18:9–10 is in error, whereas those who advocate an early date must conclude 2 Kgs 18:13 is. Each argument attempts to account for the most data while explaining the appearance of any errors in the records (Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 11).

Two reasons support the higher likelihood of the early date. First, it accounts for most of the evidence in the textual witnesses. Dating Hezekiah's reign to 727–724 BC suggests that Hezekiah was king during both events attributed to his reign in 2 Kgs 18:9–13, with only the year itself being in error in 2 Kgs 18:13. Second, it seems highly unlikely that the editors of 2 Kings would attribute such a significant event (2 Kgs 17) to the reign of the incorrect ruler (Barnes, *Studies in the Chronology*, 83–84; Rowley, *Men of God*, 98–132). To accept the later date, 716–715 BC, as Hezekiah's inaugural year would require accepting that all details in 2 Kgs 18:9–12 are in error.

**Political Relationships**

Hezekiah was a vassal to the Assyrian Empire until ca. 705 BC, when he abandoned submission in favor of a treaty with Egypt, thereby asserting Judaeian independence.

*Assyrian Vassals*





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Judah was vital to neighboring empires because of its strategic location along important trade routes between Egypt and Mesopotamia. Judah likely complied with Assyrian dominance until early in Hezekiah's reign. Hebrew seals reveal Assyrian authority in the area as early as 785–733 BC during the reign of Azariah/Uzziah (Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 36). During the campaign of Tiglath-pileser III in the south, King Ahaz of Judah submitted to Assyrian authority (2 Kgs 16:7–8). Thus Judah remained independent after the Syro-Ephraimitic War, indicating their submission to Assyrian authority during the campaign (Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 36).

Extrabiblical evidence indicates Hezekiah remained loyal to Assyria early in his reign. The Nimrud inscription (dated to 717–716 BC) records Sargon boasting about subduing Judah, so Judah likely paid tribute during Hezekiah's early years (Cogan, *Raging Torrent*, 100–02; Na'aman, "Sargon II's Nimrud Inscription," 17–20; Crocker, "British Museum Excavations of Nimrud," 68–70; Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 38). Hezekiah likely did not abandon this loyalty until the death of Sargon II in 705 BC (Na'aman, "Ahaz's and Hezekiah's Policy," 5–30). Some suggest Hezekiah even aided Assyrian military interests in the region as a vassal state, and Dalley even suggests Judaeans formed part of Sennacherib's royal body guard (Miller and Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, 404–07; Dalley, "Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources," 91–92).

### *Hezekiah's Rebellion*

Sargon's death led to widespread rebellion among Assyria's vassal states, beginning with Babylon (Levine, "Sennacherib's Southern Front," 28–58). Hezekiah moved to establish a treaty with Egypt, joining several neighboring nations in rebelling against Assyrian dominance. The motive for Hezekiah's decision remains unclear (see Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah*, 263–74).

**Assyrian Invasion.** The Assyrian invasion is well-attested in both biblical and archaeological material. Most of the coverage of Hezekiah's reign in 2 Kings recounts Sennacherib's campaign into Judah. The destruction layers related to Sennacherib's march reveal much about his movement and tactics against the rebelling cities. Assyrian records attest to three geographical phases of Sennacherib's campaign from the summer of 702 BC to the summer of 701 BC: Phoenicia, Philistia, and Judah (Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 79).

Evidence of Sennacherib's military campaign includes the destruction layer of Lachish, along with relief depictions of the siege. Large quantities of arrowheads and burned wood at the site of a siege ramp indicate that Assyria built large siege ramps, which the Judaeans attempted to disrupt by throwing torches and firing arrows. An additional ramp was found inside the city, constructed by residents to reinforce the wall against battering rams. A cave serving as a mass grave for approximately 1,500 bodies outside the city testifies to the massacre when the city fell (Ussishkin, *The Conquest of Lachish*; Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 63; for more on the campaign, see Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 64–65; Vaughn, *Theology, History and Archeology*, 19–79).

After the fall of Lachish, a commander was dispatched to negotiate the surrender of Jerusalem. Sennacherib blockaded the city and ravaged the Judaeans countryside, but there is no evidence of a formal siege against Jerusalem (Young, *Hezekiah in History*). Hezekiah agreed to pay all of the gold in the temple (2 Kgs 18:16), which satisfied Sennacherib, who then returned to Nineveh (Mayer,



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“Sennacherib’s Campaign,” 181). Of the 354 Judaeen sites destroyed by Sennacherib, only 39 show evidence of rebuilding within the next 100 years (Stern, *Archeology of the Land of the Bible*, 142).

**One Campaign or Two?** Debate exists whether Sennacherib launched one or two campaigns against Judah (Noth, *History of Israel*, 265–69; Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 66–73; see also Goldberg, “Two Assyrian Campaigns,” 361–74; Begg, “Sennacherib’s Second Palestinian Campaign,” 685–86). The two-campaign model based on 2 Kgs 18:13–15 indicates Hezekiah repented and gave the temple gold to Sennacherib, who then sent his commander to threaten Jerusalem—a threat alleviated only by the Lord’s intervention in 2 Kgs 19. This view, therefore, proposes that Sennacherib came, received payment, left, and then returned and besieged Jerusalem.

The one-campaign model suggests that either Sennacherib took the money, then proceeded to lay siege; or that he took the money and left, with the 2 Kgs 19 account as a later reinterpretation attributing deliverance to the Lord. Scholars prefer the one-campaign model because it aligns with Sennacherib’s annals, which record only one military incursion (Shea, “Sennacherib’s Second Palestinian Campaign,” 401–18), as well as with the presence of only one destruction layer in the region (Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 68). The biblical material does not necessitate two campaigns. (For a complete survey of scholarship on Sennacherib’s campaign, see Grabbe, “Two Centuries of Sennacherib Study,” 20–36.)

### Critical Discussion of Hezekiah’s Kingdom

Judah’s power and size under Hezekiah’s reign is likewise debated. Recent archaeological discoveries such as the Siloam tunnel and the *Imk* jars provide insight into Jerusalem at the time.

#### *Jerusalem Expansion*

Although scholars debate when Jerusalem underwent expansion and fortification, several recent discoveries indicate this occurred during Hezekiah’s reign (see Simons, *Jerusalem in the Old Testament*, 226–29; Geva, “The Western Boundary of Jerusalem,” 84–85; see also Broshi, “Expansion of Jerusalem,” 21–23; Tushingham, “The Western Hill of Jerusalem,” 137–43; Bahat, “Was Jerusalem Really that Large,” 709–12). Pottery fragments from tombs in the valley of Hinnom indicate the expansion of an eighth-century settlement in the area (Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 44–45; Killebrew, “Biblical Jerusalem,” 337; Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 245–46). Significant residential expansions appeared during this period as well, with civilian expansions preceding military fortifications (as indicated by portions of the wall being constructed over the foundations of domestic dwellings) (Reich and Shukron, “The Urban Development of Jerusalem, 209–18; Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 55–56; Tatum, “Jerusalem in Conflict,” 296–97; see also Isa 22:10–11). Jerusalem’s population was 6,000–20,000 inhabitants during this time. The increase was likely due to economic and trade growth, as well as the influx of refugees from the Assyrian invasion to the north and the fall of Samaria (Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 48; Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 55; Broshi, “Expansion of Jerusalem,” 21–26). The military fortifications probably followed Hezekiah’s decision to break with Assyria in favor of a relationship with Egypt; he likely would have anticipated an Assyrian campaign to bring Jerusalem back under Assyrian control (Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 45–60; Younger, *Hezekiah in History*, 47).





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### *The Siloam Tunnel*

The Siloam tunnel connects Jerusalem with the Gihon Spring east of the city, which may have ensured a water supply in the event of a siege. (For alternative proposed functions, see Tatum, “Jerusalem in Conflict,” 297; Ussishkin, “The Water Systems of Jerusalem,” 301–03). The spring itself was flanked with guard towers (Reich and Shukron, “Light at the End of the Tunnel,” 22–23; “The System of Rock-Cut Tunnels,” 5–17). The tunnel channeled water to the pool of Siloam, allowing the city access to water while minimizing enemy accessibility to the city (Ussishkin, “The Water Systems of Jerusalem,” 289–307). An inscription attributes construction to the rule of Hezekiah (Ussishkin, “Original Length of the Siloam Tunnel,” 82–95). Second Kings 20:20 and 2 Chr 32:2–6, 30 likewise record its construction.

### *The Imk Jars*

Archaeologists discovered a series of jars in the 1860s, bearing the inscription *Imk*. The label means “for/of the King,” designating royal property. Found in several urban locations, including Jerusalem, Lachish, and Ramat Rachel, they may have been part of Hezekiah’s preparations for Sennacherib’s campaign (Fox, *In the Service of the King*, 219–20; Vaughn, *Theology, History and Archeology*, 166). Due to the large quantity of them found in the destruction layer of Sennacherib’s march, many scholars date them to the time of Hezekiah, though similar jars may have been used before and after his reign (Ussishkin, “The Destruction of Lachish,” 28–57; see also Maier and Shai, “Pre-LMLK Jars,” 108–23; Vaughn, *Theology, History and Archeology*, 138–40). The inscriptions on the jars occasionally include the name of an official, but this sheds no light on their function (Vaughn, *Theology, History, and Archeology*, 90–93). Though the function of the jars remains a matter of debate (see Mommsen, Perlman, and Yellin, “The Provenience of the *Imk* Jars,” 89–113; Fox, *In the Service of the King*, 223–25), scholarly opinion favors seeing them as evidence of Hezekiah’s preparation of supplies in areas that would be targeted during an Assyrian campaign (Na’aman, “Sennacherib’s Campaign,” 75; “Hezekiah’s Fortified Cities,” 12–14; Borowski, “Hezekiah’s Reforms,” 152–54). Other opinions are that they were used for storing produce, either for taxation or to support the increased population (Rainey, “Wine from the Royal Vineyards,” 177–87; Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 56–57).

### **Religious Reforms**

The Bible represents Hezekiah’s religious reforms as his most significant action. Hezekiah removed the high places and idols from Judah and kept the commandments of the Lord (2 Kgs 18:1–8, 22).

### *Critical Debate over Historicity*

There is considerable debate as to whether the reforms are historical. Those defending the historicity of the biblical account generally assume the proposed situations justify widespread reform (Rowley, *Men of God*, 98–132; Weinfeld, “Cult Centralization in Israel,” 202–12; McKay, *Religion in Judah*, 15–17; Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 132–42; Cogan and Tadmor, *2 Kings*, 218–20; Lowery, *The Reforming Kings*, 142–68). Challenging the historicity of the account requires that the reform accounts are actually representations of Josiah’s reforms projected onto Hezekiah’s reign (Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur geschichte Israels*, 25; Na’aman, “Debated Historicity of Hezekiah’s Reform,” 179–95; Edelman, “Hezekiah’s Alleged Cultic Centralization,” 395–434).



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**Potential Problems.** Issues surrounding the historicity of the reforms include:

- How extensive were the reforms?
- Where were they enforced?
- Which destruction layers correspond with Sennacherib?
- Which (if any) destruction layers would indicate Hezekiah's destruction of a high place?
- Why were the located religious sites decommissioned and subsequently destroyed?

Young, among others, believes the archaeological evidence is inconclusive (e.g., Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 91–121, especially 120–21).

**Archaeological Evidence.** A Yahwistic temple in Arad was initially claimed as evidence of Hezekiah's reforms. The temple was destroyed and the courtyard was filled in, covering the altar (Herzog, Aharoni, Rainey, and Moshkovitz, "Israelite Fortress," 1–34). A subsequent study, however, argued that the temple was not in use during Hezekiah's time, having been destroyed in 734 BC, prior to Hezekiah's rise to the throne (Herzog, "The Fortress Mound at Tel Arad," 3–109). This site does show evidence of the destruction of a religious center outside of Jerusalem, but because of the conflicting dates, the evidence is inconclusive.

Archaeologists who found a dismantled horned altar in Beer-sheba, in a storehouse destroyed during Sennacherib's campaign, initially presented it as evidence of Hezekiah's reforms (Aharoni, "Horned Altar of Beer-sheba," 2–6; "Excavations at Tel Beer-sheba," 154–56). Several aspects of this initial claim are questionable, including the dating of the altar, the dating of the destruction level, the identification of the biblical Beer-sheba with Tel Beer-sheba, and the original location of the altar (see Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 96–97). The dismantled altar of Beer-sheba may represent additional evidence of the destruction of cultic sites outside of Jerusalem, but the evidence is still inconclusive due to the debated nature of the artifacts.

### *Criticism of the Biblical Account*

Though archaeological evidence for religious reforms may be inconclusive, the biblical witness clearly attributes these events to Hezekiah's reign (2 Kgs 18:1–8, 22). Hezekiah's actions match the prescribed theological standard by which the authors of the Deuteronomistic History (Judges-Kings) judge the nation's leaders. The theological alignment of the reforms with the ideology of the text has caused some scholars to question the accuracy of the accounts (e.g., Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 101), though this is unnecessary if the ideology was birthed out of the reforms themselves.

The reforms may have served many functions. First, they could have been part of Hezekiah's declaration of independence from Assyrian dominance by overturning all installations promoting the worship of Assyrian deities (Rosenbaum, "Deuteronomistic Tradition," 37–38; Bright, *A History of Israel*, 282–84). However, scholars have questioned the imposition of an Assyrian religious system in Judah (Dalley, "Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources," 397; Cogan, "Judah under Assyrian Hegemony," 403–14).

Second, the reforms could have been part of Hezekiah's preparations for Assyrian invasion. Decommissioning external sanctuaries could have obtained their wealth for state purposes, protected



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it from the Assyrians (Handy, “Hezekiah’s Unlikely Reform,” 111–15), and prevented the cultic objects from being used as propaganda by the Assyrians (Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 110).

Third, the centralization of the worship of Yahweh could have been because of the influx of refugees from the northern kingdom. This would serve the purpose of establishing Jerusalem as a rival center to the northern Bethel and to create an ideal of a reunified kingdom around Jerusalem leadership (Silberman and Finkelstein, “Temple and Dynasty,” 348–57).

Hezekiah’s reforms are sometimes thought to provide a historical context for the birth of Deuteronomistic theology. The influx of northern refugees leading to the centralization of the worship of Yahweh would explain the preservation of northern traditions in the Deuteronomistic theology while uncompromisingly holding to the idealized centralization of the cult in Jerusalem. The Deuteronomistic school of thought is usually understood as having developed through Josiah’s reforms and into the exile. However, Josiah’s reforms could have started with Hezekiah, which would explain several textual features of the Deuteronomistic corpus (see Young, *Hezekiah in History*, 116–20).

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