

Chapter Eleven

Vs. 1: The conjunctive *v-* beginning a new chapter translated as “now” continues the theme of intrigue, manipulation of power and, of course, killings with which we’re so familiar. Athaliah comes on the scene although she’s mentioned for the first time in 8.26, “granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel.” She’s the daughter of Ahab though possibly not of Jezebel, a footnote of the NIV referring to 2Chron 18.1. Regardless, Athaliah is a worthy postlude, if you will, to Jezebel...in her very image and likeness. Having gotten word that her son Ahaziah was dead, Athaliah went on a rampage to destroy the royal family of Judah. The verb is ‘*avad* with *qum* (cf. 10.19 and 8.2 respectively). *Qum* as “arose” reveals an immediacy and determination on Athaliah’s part to carry out her murderous plan.

Vs. 2: Jehosheba, King Jerom’s daughter, steals away the son of Ahaziah (Joash), *ganav* being the verb and found in a similar verse, 2Chron 22.11. She hides him along with his nurse in a bedchamber or *cheder* (cf. 9.2). There the two remained for an incredibly long six years, this *cheder* being in “the house of the Lord” while Athaliah held sway.

Vs. 3: After six years had passed with an ever present threat of death hanging over Joash’s head who, of course, was older, the priest Jehoiada secretly revealed the boy’s presence to captains of the Carites or mercenary bodyguards. He put them under oath, *karath* being the verb often applied to the cutting (literally) of a covenant, this being made more solemn because of the “house of the Lord.” “And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and people that they should be the Lord’s people” [vs. 17].

Vs. 5: Jehoiada commands the captains of this mercenary group to carry out “one thing” or one *davar*, namely, to guard the king’s house...not only that but to stand by with weapons drawn. Their duty was to begin and end on the Sabbath, this further solemnizing the oath.

Vs. 12: Jehoiada brings out the king’s son and crowns him after which he gives him the testimony or *hedoth* (found next in 17.15) which is something along the lines described in 1Sam 10.25: “And he (Samuel) wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord.” Actually this is the first mention of the term thus far with regard to the anointing of kings. As for the familiar anointing, it takes afterwards followed by those present exclaiming “Long live the king.”

Vs. 13: Athaliah was in another part of the royal palace unaware of what had been going on, she most likely too engrossed in fomenting some kind of revenge or the like. She went over to check out the commotion, intuiting full well the reality and was determined to put an abrupt halt to it. The first word out of Athaliah’s mouth was treason which she exclaimed twice, *qesher* also meaning conspiracy. “His servants arose and made a conspiracy and slew Joash in the house of Millo” [12.20].

Vs. 15 Again the priest Jehoiada takes the lead by ordering the captains in charge of the Carites to slay Athaliah and her followers but not in the “house of the Lord.” She was put to death outside, the final humiliation being led through the so-called horses’ entrance.

Vs. 17: With Athaliah finally out of the way, Jehoiada makes a fourfold covenant (*karath*, cf. vs. 3), if you will: he as priest, the Lord, king and the people. Hopefully this bond which has been implicit all along but never made explicit just might put an end to the curse leveled against King David by the prophet Nathan for having slain Uriah for the purpose of taking his wife.

Vs. 18: The people are described as part of the land, *‘erets*, of being rooted there both now and forever. This unique moment is followed by the people tearing down the house of Baal, this phrase being set up against the “house of the Lord.” Not only did they tear it down but its altars, images and slew Mattan the priest. Guards were posted as a precaution against any supporter of Athaliah who might try to counter this move.

Vs. 19: The new king Joash (he isn’t mentioned by name going all the way back to vs. 2) is brought to the house of the kings which made the people rejoice.

Vs. 20: This chapter concludes with the significant remark (insofar as it meant peace for a change) that after the death of Athaliah, all was quiet or *shaqat* also meaning to lay down. “The earth feared and was still” [Ps 76.8].

1) ‘avad, qum, 2) ganav, cheder, 3) karath, 12) hedoth, 14) qesher, 17) karath, 18) ‘erets, 20) shaqat,

Chapter Twelve

Vs. 1 of Chapter Twelve is one verse ahead of the **RSV**; i.e., 11.21 is 12.1. The **RSV** verse numbering is followed here.

Vs. 2: Jehash begins to reign in Jerusalem, he having done what was right in the eyes of the Lord, *yashar* (cf. 101.5). *Yashar* isn’t spelled out as in the last reference, 10.5. Perhaps it has a lot to do with not allowing worship of alien gods such as Baal or at least issuing prohibitions against it. Other than that, his behavior is secondary to the overall book. Jehash was under the tutelage of the priest Jehoiada, *arah* being the verb also as to lay foundations, to cast and to stretch out the hand. “Then Elisha said ‘Shoot;’ and he shot” [13.17].

Vs. 3: The dreaded “nevertheless” or *raq* (also as only, besides) means only one thing, that the high places (*bamah*) remained and people continued to sacrifice and burn incense upon them. “But the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places” [14.4]. Sespite the deaths of Jezebel and her copycat Athaliah who more specifically were allied with Baal, the seemingly inescapable worship of alien gods again raised its head.

Vs. 4: From this verse through vs. 16 we have the story of refurbishing the temple which had fallen into some disrepair most likely due to the strife between the two split kingdoms of Judah and Israel. “Money of the holy things” or *keseeph* (cf. 7.8 but not noted there) and plural of *qodesh* or silver, this word signifying that which is set apart. “Jehoash king of Judah took all the votive gifts that Jehoshaphat...had dedicated...and sent these to Hazael, king of Syria” [vs. 18]. Each priest is assessed for a certain amount of money and brings it in accord with the prompting of his heart (*lev*, cf. 10.30), the verb being *halah* (cf. 2.1) with the preposition *hal*, literally as to go up upon.

Vs. 5: The noun for acquaintances of the priests is *makar*, the only biblical reference which according to a footnote in the RSV isn't clear. Perhaps it's derived from the verbal root of the same spelling meaning to buy or to sell, thus tying in with the raising of funds mentioned here.

Vs. 6: The reign of King Jehoash is given as twenty-three years during which the priests had not made repairs to the temple. The precise reason isn't given, but Jehoash put a stop of taking funds from the priests' acquaintances which in vs. 8 is specified as coming from the people.

Vs. 9: The priest Jehoiada who had been the real power behind the throne for all this time sets up a chest by the altar into which money was donated, this being used to pay off workers repairing the temple.

Vs. 16: A distinction with regard to the money at hand, that is, for guilt offerings and that for sin offerings, *'asham* and *chata'th*. The former also means trespass as in Ps 68.21: “But God will shatter the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways” [Ps 68.21]. The latter is the common word for sin as in 1031 but not noted there.

Vs. 17: The rest of Chapter Twelve deals with an attack by the Syrian king Hazael, the story about the temple's reconstruction seemingly left in limbo until King Josiah in Chapter Twenty-Two. A distinction between two attitudes: “went up” and “set his face to go up” or *halah* and *sum* (cf. vs. 4 and 11.18 but not noted there). The latter intimates a more determined frame of mind to take the capitol, Jerusalem.

Vs. 18: King Jehoash seeks to appease Hazael by diverting the votive gifts or *qodesh* (cf. vs. 4) of his two predecessors along with gold in the house of the Lord. It worked, for Hazael called off his attack.

Vs. 20: The servants of King Joash conspired (*qashar*: cf. 10.9 but not noted there) against him and slew him. However, first they arose or *qum* to do this, the verb suggesting determination to carry out their plan as in 11.1.

2) *yashar*, *yarah*, 3) *bamah*, 4) *keseeph*, *qodesh*, *halah*, *lev*, 5) *makar*, 16) *'asham*, *chata'th*, 17) *halah*, *sum*, 18) *qodesh*, 20) *qum*, *qashar*

Chapter Thirteen

Vs. 2: This chapter deals with the reigns of two kings of Israel, Jehoahaz and Jehoash, the former having done evil (*rah*, cf. 8.27) in the sight or eyes of the Lord. This phrase occurs last in 8.27 with regard to King Ahaziah. Not only that, he went after (literally put as in the Hebrew) the sins of Jeroboam who caused Israel to sin (cf. 1Kg 12.26+). The worse part about Ahaziah is that he failed to depart (*sur*, cf. 10.31) from such wicked behavior.

Vs. 3 The inherited evil, if you will, of King Ahaziah rouses the Lord's anger, *charah* fundamentally as to be very hot. The preposition *b-* is prefaced to Israel, "in Israel" which heightens the ferocity of divine anger. "Still the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of his great wrath by which his anger was kindled against Judah" [23.26]. As for the noun anger or *'aph*, it refers to the nostrils, of heavy breathing as a sign of fierce anger. "I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth" [19.28]. Such violent anger is carried out by handing over Israel to King Hazael and Ben-hadad (his son) of Syria.

Vs. 4: A paradox, if you will. Although King Jehoahaz had done evil in the Lord's eyes, he beseeches the Lord, *chalah* (cf. 1Kg 13.6) being found in 1.2 with its alternate meaning to be sick. Here it's used with *peney* or "face," the Lord's face. The Lord in turn listened at once because he saw how Hazael of Syria was oppressing Israel, *lachs* (cf. 6.32 but not noted there). So despite repeated, dire failures to listen to the Lord, divine assistance shines through.

Vs. 5: Jehoahaz's *chalah* in the previous verse results in the Lord giving Israel a savior, the participle *yashah* (verbal root of Jesus) being used (cf. 6.26 but not noted there). No details are given, but Israel escapes from under the hand of Syria as it's put literally. A footnote in the NIV identifies this savior as possibly the Assyrian ruler Adadnirai III.

Vs. 6: This verse begins with the participle *'ak* or "nevertheless" to show the contrast between the Lord having delivered Israel and the "sins of the house of Jeroboam," he being responsible for the nation turning away (*sur*, vs. 2) from the Lord. This *sur* is intensified by the common verb *halak*, walking in Jeroboam's sin (literally as 'he walked'). To top this off, the Asherah remained in Samaria (cf. 17.16). Despite the frequency of this alteration between worship of the Lord and local divinities, it's amazing how the nation of Israel was able to hold together.

Vs. 7: A vivid description of the tiny remnant of Jehoahaz's army, dust at threshing.

Vs. 8: The death of King Jehoahaz, his deeds typically recorded in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

Vs. 10: The reign of King Jehoash who unfortunately was true with many kings did evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 2) in the eyes of the Lord. No details are given except following in the footsteps of King Jeroboam who has become the template of *rah* in Israel.

Vs. 14: A shift in this tragic yet boring account of kingly wrongdoing occurs when Elisha falls ill, this verse being introduced with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now.” Upon receiving word of his illness, King Joash (cf. 12.20) rushes to his side exclaiming the exact words of Elisha when Elijah ascended into heaven, “the chariots of Israel and its horsemen” [2.12]!

Vs. 15: By exclaiming the same words of Elisha concerning his master in the last verse, King Joash hoped that he’d witness some similar dramatic event. Without anything further as to Elisha’s condition, he bade Joash to shoot an arrow as far as he could, this symbolizing victory over Syria.

Vs. 16: “The Lord’s arrow of victory” is what Elisha called it when Joash shot his arrow, *teshuhah* (cf. 5.1), the verbal root being *yashah* as in vs. 5. The next step was for Joash to trample the arrows on the ground which he did three times. If he had continued, it would mean total victory over Syria.

Vs. 20: This verse begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “so” with regard to the death of Elisha, intimating that nothing dramatic transpired as King Joash had hoped. However, a miracle did happen when a man killed by a marauding band of Moabites was cast into the grave of Elisha. He came back to life. Apparently Elisha had been put into the ground with the grave still not covered. Perhaps those burying him kept it like this for a few days just in case Elisha might rise on his own.

Vs. 23: Most likely this is the most telling verse of Second Kings, summing up the Lord’s relationship with his people, both mercifully and justly. Despite inroads made by King Hazael of Syria, the Lord retained his graciousness and compassion as well as turning toward his people. The verbs are *chanan*, *racham* and *panah*. The first implies being inclined favorably, the second deep emotion as coming from one’s belly and the third to have regard. References are Ps 102.13 with the first and second found in 1.13 and 5.12 but not noted there. While the first two are quite concrete, in many ways the third is the most important, for to have the Lord turning constantly toward his people means a continuous contact with them.

The three verses just mentioned hinge upon *lemahan*, “because of” which refers to the covenant the Lord made with the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This is reminiscent of the Lord dealing with Moses prior to his leading Israel from Egypt: “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob” [Ex 2.24]. However, vs. 23 ends with a caveat. The Lord wasn’t to destroy Israel nor cast them from his presence (literally, ‘from upon his face’) *had-hatah*, until now. In other words, *had-hatah* is the time for this dismissal.

Vs. 25: Chapter Thirteen ends with the fulfillment of Elisha’s prophecy to King Joash, the shooting and trampling of arrows. That is to say, Joash defeated King Benhadad (Hazael’s successor) three times. Although wonderful in itself, it wasn’t enough to eliminate the threat completely.

2) rah, sur, 3) charah, ‘aph, 4) chalah, lachats, 5) yashah, 6) sur, halak, 10) rah, 16) teshuhah, 23) chanan, racham, panah

Chapter Fourteen

Vs. 3: In contrast with the all too familiar “he also did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” last applicable to King Joash in 13.11 we have the refreshing opposite in King Joahaz of Judah. He “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, *yashar* (cf. King Jehash in 12.2). Nevertheless, the small word *raq* or “yet” also applicable to Jehash, Joash was not like King David which this verse calls his father. In other words, David is the template by which all future kings are to be judged. Instead, Joash fails the test and follows in the footsteps of his father also by the same name. Thus in one verse we have two fathers, David as the archetype and Joash (also in this archetype) as biological father.

Vs. 4: The heart of the matter is that the high places (*bamah*, cf. 12.3) remained in place, a constant thorn in the side of true worship of the Lord and destined to continue for some years to come.

Vs. 5: Once royal power is in hand (the verb *chazaq*; cf. 4.8 being used), King Joash kills the servants who had assassinated his father (cf. 12.20). However, he spared their children which speaks highly of the king, this being in accord with what Moses had prescribed in Dt 24.16: “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.”

Vs. 8: The beginning of conflict between Israel and Judah, the two kings being Jehoash (also as Joash) and Amaziah. The latter sent word (literally ‘saying’) to the former in a kind of parable. By reason of Joash’s victory over the Edomites, he had a false sense of superiority which is why Amaziah bids him to stay home and enjoy his glory. In other words, why risk the defeat and fall of Judah?

Vs. 12: As one would predict, Jehoash failed to listen and was roundly defeated.

Vs. 24: the preceding verses are taken up with a conspiracy and brief description of Amaziah’s reign followed by the yet again familiar observation of having done what was evil or *rah* (cf. 13.10) in the Lord’s eyes and for added measure, mention of not departing from the sins of Jeroboam.

Vs. 25: The prophet Jonah (his name is ascribed later to the book bearing his name) had a hand in Amaziah restoring the border of Israel, this in accord with the *davar* of the Lord.

Vs. 25: The Lord sees yet again the affliction endured by Israel (*hany*) as in Ps 9.13: “Behold what I suffer from those who hate me.” In other words, the nation lacked help, *hazar*. “You have been the helper of the fatherless” [Ps 10.14].

Vs. 26: Just as typically Israel falls into despair, the Lord steps in and saves the nation, *yashah* (cf. 13.5). The agent here is Jeroboam, son of Joash. Recounting all this intrigue, wars and the like can be a challenge of reading the text from the vantage point of *lectio divina*. Still, the overall theme of Samuel's warning about a king instead of having the Lord as ruler and Nathan's prophecy against David run through it all and will continue to do so.

3) *yashar*, *raq*, 4) *bamah*, 5) *chazaq*, 24) *rah*, 25) *hany*, 26) *yashah*

Chapter Fifteen

Vs.: 3: The reign of King Azariah is summed up as he having done "right in the eyes of the Lord," *yashar* (cf. 14.3), this during an extraordinarily long reign of fifty-two years. Then as we expect, Azariah failed to remove the high places (*bamah*, cf. 14.4). So through all the ups and downs of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah we have this constant struggle for the hearts and minds of the Israel and Judah which is important to acknowledge. Most people seemed content with the arrangement (if you could call it that) because they could alternate between two forms of worship without little qualms of conscience. The danger is that such an alteration, coupled with royal intrigue, weakens their resolve to make a proper choice. So if a book like Second Kings contains a record of depressing material from the vantage point of *lectio divina*, being aware of this recurring theme deserves attention because it affects all classes of people. Throughout the book we have summaries of each king's reign, whether he had done good or evil in the Lord's eyes. Surely this too must have affected which way the tide was going at a given time, either for the Lord or for worship of Baal and the like.

Vs. 5: The Lord smites King Azariah, *nagah* fundamentally as to touch as the dead man with regard to the body of Elisha in 13.21 though the verb isn't mentioned there. In the verse at hand this divine *nagah* results in leprosy which stayed with Azariah, forcing him to live in a house apart from the palace.

Vs. 9: Zechariah rules over both Israel and Samaria for a brief six months after which he is assassinated. Even this short reign has deserved the ignominious observation of having done evil or *rah* in the Lord's eyes. Certainly he made the most of it.

Vs. 12: A promises made by the Lord to King Jehu about his sons occupying Israel's throne to the fourth generation and not beyond (cf. 10.30).

Vs. 16: King Menahem of Israel not only sacks Tappuah but rips open all the women who are pregnant, this being reminiscent of Hazael in 8.12: "and dash in pieces their little ones and rip up their women with child."

Vs. 18: King Menahem is reported as having done evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 9) in the Lord's eyes as well as not departing from the sins of Jeroboam which, in turn, caused Israel to sin. Certainly the just mentioned disembowelment was a major contributing factor.

Vs. 24: The litany both sad and boring continues. This time it's King Pekahiah who reigned a short two years yet earned the observation of having done *rah* (cf. vs. 18) in the Lord's eyes. As with King Menahem, he didn't depart from the sins of Jeroboam which, in turn, caused Israel to sin.

Vs. 28: King Pekah ruled Israel for twenty years and as with King Pekahiah, did *rah* (cf. vs. 24) in the Lord's eyes and didn't depart from the sins of Jeroboam which, in turn, caused Israel to sin.

Vs. 33: The reign of King Jotham of Judah reigns for twenty years and for a change of pace in the narrative, did what was right or *yashar* (cf. vs. 3) in the Lord's eyes. However, the high places (*bamah*, cf. vs. 3) remained in place. So sandwiched in between Kings Azariah and Jotham and their doing *yashar*, we have several kings who had done *rah*. Both are observations of their reigns, if you will, and aren't spelled out. They formed part of a living oral tradition among the people upon whom their collective deeds had a profound impact. Thus *rah* become a catch-word around which memories are formed, retained and passed on to the next generation.

3) *yashar*, *bamah*, 5) *nagah*, 9) *rah*, 18) *rah*, 24) *rah*, 28) *rah*, 33) *yashar*

Chapter Sixteen

Vs. 2: King Ahaz does not do what was right (*yashar*, cf. 15.33) in the Lord's eyes, a slightly different way of saying that he had done evil or *rah*, the pattern set by so many of his predecessors. Also he's compared with David who here as Joash in 14.3 is called father...father of all subsequent kings. Thus the Lord and King David are pretty much put on the same plane for kingly behavior.

Vs. 3: Ahaz "walked in the ways of the kings of Israel," unfortunate phraseology in that it has become typical of far too monarchs who again, were unlike King David. What stands out most flagrantly is that Ahaz offered his own son which reads literally and horribly "made his son to pass through (*b-* or 'in') the fire." Apparently this practice was fairly common among those nations which the Lord had driven out before the Israelite invasion of Canaan. The verb is *yarash* which also means to inherit. "The nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel." Also it's in violation of Lev 18.21: "You shall not give any of your children to devote them by fire to Molech (an Ammonite deity) and so profane the name of your God."

This practice is an abomination or *tohevah*, the only other reference in Second Kings being 21.2 which is in accord with the verse at hand: "according to the abominable

practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.”

Furthermore—and by comparison this is mild—King Ahaz sacrificed and offered incense on the high places, *bamah* (cf. 15.3).

Vs. 7: Ahaz beseeches the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser for help against King Rezin of Syria who complied by invading Damascus and killing Rezin.

Vs. 10: To show his gratitude, Ahaz traveled to Damascus to thank in person Tiglath-Pileser and by chance saw an altar which struck his fancy. It must have reminded him of those on which he sacrificed incense on the high places, etc. Then Ahaz sent Uriah the priest both a model and pattern (*demuth* and *tavnyth*) of the altar, that is, while he was still in Damascus. In other words, he was so smitten by it that at once he dispatched messengers with all the pertinent information. Two examples of these words: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” [Gn 1.26]. “They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass” [Ps 106.20]. With regard to the verse at hand, we have for emphasis “in all its details.”

Vs. 11: Amazingly, Uriah finished this altar before King Ahaz arrived home which means he was under extreme pressure to meet a short deadline. Then again, Ahaz may have tarried a bit longer, not minding being in Damascus as long as he got his precious altar.

Vs. 12: As soon as he arrived in Jerusalem—and he was thinking of the altar constantly en route—King Ahaz inspected it and made all kinds of offerings on it, taking delight in every aspect of the ceremonies. No details are given as to what they consisted of but probably borrowed from what he had witnessed in Damascus. In fact, he may have spent considerable time there practicing such rituals so as to perform them in Jerusalem.

Vs. 14: Ahaz removed the bronze altar “before the Lord,” this before-ness indicative that blatantly he insulted the Lord with the Assyrian ersatz altar before such divine eyes.

Vs. 15: Ahaz bids Uriah to carry out offerings morning and evening while retaining the bronze altar as an instrument for him “to inquire by.” The verb here is *baqar* fundamentally as to cleave open. “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord and to inquire in his temple” [Ps 27.4].

Maintaining two forms of worship is not unusual in the sense as it reflects the tendency noted throughout Second Kings to worship both the Lord and alien divinities. In other words, Ahaz had no problem with it. Many of the people had been accustomed to do the same and may even have welcomed their king acknowledging this long-standing practice. Obviously Uriah the priest was instrumental in both forms of worship and didn’t bat an eye moving from one altar with its sacrifices and then to the other.

Vss. 17 through the end of Chapter Sixteen contain details about modifying the bronze altar “because of the king of Assyria” [vs. 18]. In other words, King Ahaz wants to remain in good graces with Tiglath-Pileser so as to cement an alliance between the two countries against any future threat coming from Hazael of Syria. It can be assumed that

this was received well among the people, a guarantee of peace. Nothing is said of the death of Ahaz nor are the usual words about doing evil mentioned. However, 2Chron 28.27 remarks ominously and without the typical “he did evil in the sight of the Lord” that “they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel.”

2) *yashar*, 3) *yarash*, *tohevah*, *bamah*, 10) *demuth*, *tavnyth*, 15) *baqar*

Chapter Seventeen

Vs. 2: The reign of King Hoshea of Israel lasted nine years during which he did evil or *rah* (cf. 15.28) in the Lord’s eyes but with a major distinction. As the text reads, “not as the kings of Israel who were before him.” Given the depressing accounts thus far, this observation should spark interest as to how it will play out.

Conflict and treachery broke out when King Hoshea plotted with Egypt against Assyria which resulted in the king of Assyria taking him captive and casting him into prison. Hoshea’s treachery didn’t end in his death. Perhaps the king of Assyria wanted him as surety for a future power play. This takes place in the larger context of when he “carried the Israelites away to Assyria” [vs. 6] which intimates a mass deportation.

Vs. 7: The conjunctive *v-* beginning this verse reads “and this was so” which sets the stage for a whole series of condemnations which follow like a laundry list concerning worship of alien gods, this going all the way through vs. 18. Also each verse begins with the same conjunctive which shows the fast paced action of the censures involved. The repercussions don’t end there, of course, but continue through the rest of this chapter until the ascension of King Hezekiah who at last introduces a sustained period of reform.

The people had sinned, *chata’* (fundamentally as to miss the mark as in target practice) being the only occurrence in Second Kings although the noun certainly appears frequently. This missing the mark is all the more poignant because it’s in connection with the Lord who brought the people from Egypt and from under Pharaoh’s hand. Now, however, Israel was not in their land and under a leader not unlike Pharaoh.

Also the people feared other gods, *yare’* (cf. 4.1) being used exclusively in conjunction with worship of the Lord.

Vs. 8: This verse continues as part of the previous one where Israel is guilty of walking in the customs of nations which the Lord had driven, *chuqah* fundamentally as statute. “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes” [vs. 13]. Although not specified, such *chuqah* seem allied with religious observances and related to alien gods. Then are added customs adopted by the kings of Israel although *chuqah* isn’t present but assumed. To find this, all one has to do is go back in Second Kings for the list of those responsible.

Vs. 9: *Chapha'* or to do secretly in the sense to act perfidiously and is the only use of this verb in the Bible, that is *davar* against the Lord which is the preposition *hal-* or upon. *Davar*, of course, means word as well as deed. Here it means both, things that are not right and *ken* which also can be an adverb such as “rightly” (cf. 7.9 but not noted there). This is manifest not only in the *bamah* as noted several times before (cf. 16.3) but from towns to watchtowers to fortified cities. The last two are significant in that these *bamah* acted as protective places against anyone wanting to tear them down.

Vs. 10: Asherim or fertility gods are added and are worshiped out in the open or on hills and under trees. “And he broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with the bones of men” [23.14].

Vs. 11: The usual practice of burning incense in the *bamah* as with King Ahaz in 16.4 which means the towns, watchtowers and fortified cities. As in 16.3, reference is made to following the practice of those nations which the Lord had driven out, again with regard to King Ahaz.

Davar as “things” is used with the adjective *rah* (cf. vs. 2), wicked...wicked in both word and in deed.

Vs. 12: a continuation of the previous verse, as if the author of Second Kings can't cram in enough of the wicked practices done by Israel and her kings. He adds idols or *gilulym* meaning fundamentally logs or blocks of wood. “And has made Judah also to sin with his idols” [21.11].

Vs. 13: *Hud* is the verb to warn (cf. vs. 15) which also means to testify applied to both Israel and Judah, the preface *b-* (in) prefaced to each which makes this warning-testimony all the more forceful. The agents by which the Lord does this is his prophets and seers, perhaps referring to the “sons of the prophets” with whom Elijah and Elisha had been associated.

Vs. 14: Despite the desperate appeals by prophets and seers, the people remained stubborn which is rendered literally as “hardened their necks,” the verb being *qashah* (cf. 2.10) which intimates rigid posture and inflexibility. As so often the case, the people are likened to their fathers, they inheriting this, if you will. “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn” [Dt 10.16].

Vs. 15: This lengthy verse lays it on thick starting with the people despising the Lord's statutes and covenant, *ma'as* also as to reject or to condemn (cf. vs. 20), this being echoed in Ps 78.10: “They did not keep God's covenant but refused to walk according to his law.” *Ma'as* also has as its object warnings sent to the people, the verb *hud* being used (cf. vs. 13) and the noun derived from it, *hedoth* (cf. 11.12).

Hevel and *haval*, the verb from which it's derived fundamentally pertains to anything that is vain. Put succinctly, worshiping *hevel* results in becoming *haval*. “Men of low estate are but a breath, men of high estate are a delusion.” “Put no confidence in extortion, set no vain hopes on robbery” [Ps 62.9 and 10 respectively]. This becoming false results from following nations round about Israel meaning that Israel is in the center and

lost her sense of stability, moving away from it. If she were faithful to this center, the nations would gravitate to Israel.

Vs. 16: *Hazav* (cf. 2.2) as to forsake pertains to the divine commandments (*mitsvah*, cf. vs. 13 but not noted there) makes better sense in light of the idea of Israel losing her sense of center mentioned in the previous verse. In place of this center Israel inserts molten images of two calves, Asherah, worshiped the heavenly host and served Baal. References to these are accordingly:

1) “So the king (Jeroboam) took counsel and made two calves of gold...Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt” [1Kg 12.28].

2) “The Lord will smite Israel...because they have made their Asherim, provoking the Lord to anger” [1Kg 14.15].

3) “Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins of the house of Jeroboam which he made Israel to sin, but walked in them; and the Asherah also remained in Samaria”[13.6].

4) “And beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them, thing which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven” [Dt 4.19].

5) “He (King Ahaziah) served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done” [1Kg 22.53].

Vs. 17: The offering of sons and daughters is rendered literally as “made their sons and daughters pass through the fire” as King Ahaz in 16.3.

Divinization and sorcery or the verb *qasam* with the noun *qesem* and the verb *nachash* (the noun serpent is derived from it). All three are found in [Dt 18.10]: “There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering (another ‘pass through fire’ reference), anyone who practices divinization, a soothsayer or an augur or a sorcerer.”

The Israelites sold themselves as slaves to do evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 2), that is, freely submitted to being put in bondage. This provoked the Lord to anger, *kahas* also as to take offense (cf. vs. 11 but not noted there).

Vs. 18: *Anaph* is the verb to be angry with the adverb *me’od* implying excessiveness which is enhanced even more by the preposition *b-*, “in Israel.” The Lord next removed them (*sur*, cf. 13.6) from his sight or literally “from upon his face.” However, the tribe of Judah was left meaning it had to depend all the more upon the Lord.

Vs. 19: After the glowing words concerning the tribe of Judah, it too didn’t keep the Lord’s commandments or *mitsvah* (cf. vs. 16). Instead, everyone walked in those customs taken from the nations and assumed by Israel by reason of having lost its mooring from the center noted above.

Vs. 20: Not only did the Lord reject (*ma’as*, cf. vs. 15) Israel but each and every descendant of the nation. Such rejection results in afflicting (*hanah*) them and giving them

into the hands of spoilers (the participle *shasah*). For references: “They crush your people, O Lord, and afflict your heritage” [Ps 94.5]. “This is the portion of those who plunder us” [Is 17.14]. Both are followed by the Lord casting them from his sight, literally as “from his face,” one of the most thorough-going verses in the Bible with regard to divine rejection.

Vs. 21: The verb *qarah* (cf. 2.12) or to tear, rend, with regard to Israel from the house of David followed by Israel committing great sins after the example of King Jeroboam and not departing or turning aside from them (*sur*, cf. vs. 18). Mention of this as in other places means that the people weren’t forced to commit sin but gradually succumbed to it as an attractive option set forth by their leaders.

Vs. 23: Another example of Israel being removed from his sight or literally “from upon his face” This same upon-ness applies to ‘*adamah* (cf. 5.17) or the physical land on which Israel dwells; that is to say, being exiled to Assyria (cf. 1Kg 14.15) until “this day” or when Second Kings was written.

Vs. 24: The king of Assyria resettles the Israelites in Samaria with the unintended result that it was more to be a possession or *yarash* (cf. 16.3) which also means to inherit.

Vs. 25: Despite having been sent into exile, Israel continued not to fear the Lord resulting in him sending lions to kill them. Even the king of Assyria marvels at this, for being ignorant of the god of the land into which they were exiles.

Vs. 28: The king of Assyria dispatches a priest carried off a priest from Samaria to Bethel to teach the Israelites the fear of the Lord, *yarah* and *yare’* (cf. 12.2 and vs. 7 respectively). A footnote in the NIV says that this priest probably was of the religion established by King Jeroboam. With regard to Bethel, cf. 1Kg 12.29: “And he (Jeroboam) set one (calf of gold) in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.”

Vs. 29: The conjunctive *v-* beginning this verse translates as “but” and shows the continued persistence of worship concerning native gods by “every nation” by making shrines (*beyth*, house). They were on the *bamah* (cf. vs. 9) or high places made by the Samaritans.

Vss. 30-31: A list of places which people made for worship of their own gods.

Vs. 32: Along with worship of these gods the people continued to fear the Lord and appointed their own priests, this reflecting that continuous tension between two forms of worship.

Vs. 34: From this verse to the end of Chapter Seventeen is a stark reminder of Israel’s obligation to worship the Lord and his warning not to acknowledge alien deities pretty much citing Dt 5.9: “You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.” The adjective *qana’* or jealousy (also applicable to envy) is significant in that reveals Israel’s basic inability to recognize it.

Vs. 41: Another mention of the phrase “to this day” as in vs. 23 to show the persistence of the two forms of worship Israel is struggling with and will continue to

struggle with. That is to say, worship of graven images and the Lord. By now one wonders if this ever will be resolved one way or another.

2) rah, 7) chata', yare', 8) chuqah, 9) chapha', ken, bamah, 11) rah, 12) gilulyim, 13) hud, 14) qashah, 15) ma'as, hud, hedoth, hevel, haval, 16) hazav, mitsvah, 17) qasam, qesem, nachash, rah, kahash, 18) 'anaph, me'od, sur, 19) mitsvah, 20) ma'as, hanah, shasah, 21) qarah, sur, 22) 'adamah, 24) yarash, 28) yarah, yare', 29) beyth, bamah

Chapter Eighteen

Vs. 1: This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated.

Vs. 3: King Hezekiah did right or *yashar* (cf. 16.2) and more importantly, did as his father David had done; i.e., both did *yashar*. Surely Hezekiah and those few kings fortunate enough to be remembered as such had paid close attention to records, both aural and written, about their illustrious predecessor and thus were determined to follow in his footsteps.

Vs. 4: King Hezekiah removed the *bamah* (cf. 17.29) or high places, broke its pillars (*matsvah*: cf. 17.10 but not noted there) and cut down the Asherah (cf. 17.16). Even more dramatically, he broke into pieces the bronze serpent which Moses had made (cf. Num 21.6-9), *nechsheth* and *nachash*. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made" [Gn 3.1]. Unfortunately over time this symbol had become an idol called Nehushtan, a derogatory name found only here. Breaking this bronze serpent must have been difficult for Hezekiah, having been a symbol in Israel for so long. However, he felt it was now or never.

Vs. 5: Despite the noble efforts of some of King Hezekiah's predecessors, the alien forms of worship remained in place (cf. 12.3, 14.4, 15.4, 35 and 17.9), but this time it was different. Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, *batach*. "Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: 'On what do you rest this confidence of yours'" [vs. 18]? As for his comparison with King David, Hezekiah stands right there with him: there was none like him before nor will there be after. While it reveals his outstanding character, this talk about being incomparable has a foreboding note about it.

Vs. 6: Hezekiah held fast to the Lord, *davaq* (cf. 5.27) meaning to cling as with glue. Along with *davaq* it's noted that he didn't depart (*sur*, cf. 17.21) from the Lord as well, a way of saying that he kept (*shamar*, cf. 10.31) the divine commandments given by Moses. In other words, we have three strong words to show the unique character of this king.

Vs. 7: The relationship between the Lord and King Hezekiah is put simply and beautifully as "the Lord was with him," this phrase prefaced with the conjunctive *v-* as "and." Then the text says he prospered, *sakal* also as to be prudent as well as to instruct but here in the context of *yatsa'*, the common verb for going forth which intimates

engaging in battle. A reference for *sakal* is Ps 32.8: “I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go.” This *yatsa’* is borne out by Hezekiah on two fronts: rebelling against Assyria and having waged successful battle against the Philistines.

Vs. 9: From here to the end of Chapter Eighteen the text shows the effect of King Hezekiah’s rebellion, King Shalmaneser of Assyria coming into Samaria and taking its inhabitants captive.

Vs. 12: The Israelites who have been taken captive stand in sharp contrast to the noble character of King Hezekiah in that they failed to listen to the Lord’s voice or *qol* (cf. 11.13 but noted there), this noun being prefaced with the preposition *b-*, “in the voice of the Lord.” It takes the form of transgressing (*havar*: the common verb to cross over) the covenant established by Moses which is in sharp contrast to King Hezekiah as noted in vs. 6.

In the verse at hand Moses is called “servant of the Lord” implying that Hezekiah was similar...King David being intimidated as well. This verse concludes with the people neither listening nor obeying, the latter as *hasah*, the common verb to do or to make.

Vs. 14: King Sennacherib of Assyria invades Judah, and when he had captured numerous cities, Hezekiah takes a conciliatory posture. He says that he has done wrong, *chata’* (cf. 17.7) being the common verb to sin and fundamentally to miss the mark. He asks Sennacherib to withdraw (literally, ‘return from upon me’) and complies with any demands which turns out to be giving a substantial ransom. The worse part about all this is that Hezekiah was forced to strip the Lord’s temple of gold.

Vs. 19: Apparently King Sennacherib isn’t satisfied. He sends a huge army against Jerusalem, taunting an emissary of King Hezekiah as to the confidence he retains, *bitachun* and the verb from which it ‘s derived, *batach* (cf. vs. 5). The noun has two other biblical references, Ec 9.4 and Is 36.4, the latter cited here because it’s the same as the verse at hand: “On what do you rest this confidence of yours?” This is the first of three rhetorical questions.

Vs. 20: The second rhetorical question/taunt from the Assyrian king is directed at Hezekiah, thinking that by uttering mere words (*davar*) he’ll have a strategy and power (*hetsah* and *gevurah*) for waging war: “Blessed is the man who walks not in t he counsel of the wicked” [Ps 1.1] and “Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam and all that he did and his might” [14.28].

The third rhetorical question/taunt is with regard to seeking reliance (*batach*, cf. vs. 20) which to King Sennacherib is a form of rebellion, *marad* being the verb (cf. vs. 7 but not noted there).

Vs. 21: The reliance on which King Hezekiah rests is Egypt, a broken reed and staff, *qaneh* and *mishheneth*: “As a reed is shaken in the water” [1Kg 14.15] and “Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff upon the face of the child” [4.31].

Vs. 22: King Sennacherib now puts forth his best ploy, namely, to drive a wedge between King Hezekiah and the people. It’s based upon Israel relying (*batach*, cf. vs. 20)

upon the Lord. This is mistakenly associated with the high places (*bamah*, cf. vs. 4), for Hezekiah had removed them in favor of worshiping the Lord in Jerusalem.

Vs. 23: King Sennacherib proposes a wager, the verb *harav* also as to pledge. This verse is echoed in Is 36.8: “Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria.” It consists of those now under siege to have two thousand horses provided they can match them with riders, hence warriors.

Vs. 25: The Assyrian king asks another rhetorical question/taunt, namely, that he has come to destroy Jerusalem at the Lord’s behest.

Vs. 26: Eliakim, Shebna and Joah requested that the Assyrians speak with them in Aramaic, not the language of Judah, so the people on the city wall won’t understand their conversation. The Rabshakeh or Assyrian princes/emissaries responded with contempt, wanting everyone with Jerusalem to hear the *davar* of their king loud and clear. When speaking as they do in the next few verses, they do so using the third person singular, for the royal *davar* is as good as their own. They claim that their own king, Hezekiah, has been deceiving them all along, the verb *nasa’* (cf. 5.1) fundamentally meaning to lift or raise up. He won’t be able to deliver his own people, *natsal* also as to snatch and found in the next verse, 30. All along he has been making the people rely upon (*batach*, vs. 22) the Lord which won’t work for them now on the point of being annihilated.

Vs. 31: The Rabshakeh ask for making peace “with me,” again that royal *davar* being present in their own voices. *Berakah* (cf. 5.15) is the noun for peace which more commonly means blessing. They continue to woo both the three representatives on the wall (Eliakim, Shebna and Joah) along with anyone else listening with all sorts of benefits which perhaps is why *berakah* is used here.

Vs. 33: The Rabshakeh come off with several rapid fire rhetorical questions about how the gods of other nations weren’t able to rescue their adherents from the king of Assyria’s might. Those within the city certainly were aware of this which had the potential of setting off a rebellion against King Hezekiah.

Vs. 36: Hezekiah seemed to have anticipated all this talk, both seductive and threatening. For that reason he had commanded the people to remain silent, *charash* also as to plow, be deaf. “These things you have done and I have been silent” [Ps 50.21].

Vs. 37: This chapter concludes with Eliakim, Shebna (secretary; not Shebna as in vs. 31) and Joah approaching King Hezekiah about what the Rabshakeh had said, he apparently not having been on the wall but letting representatives speak for him. At the same time the Rabshakeh didn’t demand that Hezekiah make his appearance. It could have been a ploy on his part, staying out of sight so as to make the Assyrians wonder what was going on beyond those walls.

And so Chapter Eighteen ends in dramatic form with the three coming into King Hezekiah’s presence with their clothes torn. It was a clear sign without speaking that they had something bad to report. That reports consisted of the *davar* from the Rabshakeh which, as noted above, is the same as if the King of Assyria had spoken them.

3) yashar, 4) bamah, matsvah, nechsheth, nachash, 5) batach, 6) davaq, sur, shamar, 7) sakal, yatsa', 12) qol, havar, hasah, 14) chata', 20) bitachun, batach, hetsah, gevurah, batach, marad, 21) qaneh, mishheneth, 22) batach, bamah, 23) harav, 29) nasa', natsal, 30) batach, 31) berakah, 36) charash

Chapter Nineteen

This chapter bears a close parallel with Chapter Thirty-Seven of Isaiah. Because of this, a modified excerpt from *Expansions on the Book of Isaiah* dealing with that chapter is incorporated here. That document is posted on this homepage.

Vs. 1: This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated literally as “and as” which shows the close connection between the dramatic, unresolved ending of the previous chapter with the action that necessarily follows. The three men and senior priests who approached King Hezekiah with rent clothes spontaneously compelled him to do the same. Not only that, he put on sackcloth and at once headed for the “house (temple) of the Lord.” Given the dire situation Jerusalem was undergoing at the time, the temple must have been jam-packed with people beseeching the Lord. Chances are that Hezekiah sneaked in a side door so as not to be seen so as not to be threatened.

Vs. 3: Hezekiah’s next move was to send three of his officials and senior priests to the prophet Isaiah clothed in sackcloth. They are to bring his attention to the situation at hand—doubtless he was well informed—that it’s a day of distress, rebuke and disgrace or *tsarah* (cf. 5.1), *tokechah* and *ne’atsah*, all being found in Is 37.3: “This day is a day of distress, of rebuke and of disgrace; children have come to birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth.”

Vs. 4: The three officials and priests use a kind of taunt against Isaiah borne out of a collective distress, associating the Lord as “your God,” that is, Isaiah’s God, who is causing all these problems. Hopefully this will spring Isaiah into action. They continue, telling him that perhaps the Lord heard the *davar* of the Assyrian Rabshakeh when sent to mock (*charaph*; alternately as to gather, pluck off) the Lord. “Whom have you mocked and reviled” vs. 22]? Then they will rebuke the *davar* which the Lord has heard, *yakach* also as to argue, prove. “He shall judge between the nations and shall decide for many peoples” [Is 2.4].

According to King Hezekiah, the only recourse left for the people is to raise prayers or *tephilah* (entreaty, supplication) for the remnant (*she’eryth*) that’s left which, of course, applies to them.

Vs. 5: The three representatives and senior priests of King Hezekiah approach Isaiah although vss. 3-4 seem to consist of words they had communicated to him. Perhaps the words now being addressed to the prophet consist of another meeting or another time.

Vs. 6: As one would expect, Isaiah tells Hezekiah's delegation not to be afraid of the *davar* from the king of Assyria used to revile me...first person singular being used which refers to the Lord. The king's representatives seem to take for granted that there was no boarder line between the Lord and a prophet when it comes to a *davar*. After all, they were familiar with Elijah and later, Elisha plus numerous others associated with them. The verb is *gadaph* which also applies to blaspheming.

Vs. 7: Isaiah continues as mouthpiece of the Lord when saying that he will put a spirit (*ruach*, cf. 2.16) in the king of Assyria. This *ruach*, in turn, will assume the guise of a rumor (*shemuhah*, literally, that which is heard) and force him to hasten home. Once there, the Lord will bring about his assassination.

Vs. 8: This verse begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated and concerns a battle waged by the king of Assyria against Libnah. Word reached him that another king, the one of Ethiopia, also decided to wage war. Obviously this was unexpected which prompted the Assyrian king to try a ploy on Hezekiah without him knowing what was transpiring on a larger scale. If Hezekiah discovered this, he'd be emboldened and either decide to attack or wait out the siege, hoping for the best. Messengers brought news to Hezekiah telling him not to rely upon God who is deceiving him about being rescued, the verb *nasa'* (cf. 18.29) being used.

Vs. 11: The Assyrians had destroyed each and every nation which resisted, *charam* meaning to be consecrated or devoted to the Lord for destruction, often associated with Joshua while invading Canaan. "And all the cities of those kings and all their kings, Joshua took...utterly destroying them" [Jos 11.12]. In sense, by using *charam* the messengers were reminding King Hezekiah of what befell Israel's enemies. Now it was his turn. The taunt just delivered is followed by two rhetorical questions as to what happened to those peoples who had resisted Assyria, a list Hezekiah must have been very familiar with.

Vs. 14: Although vss. 11-13 have the content of what the messengers brought to Jerusalem, it appears that Hezekiah was not present on the city wall to hear it, again perhaps being absent deliberately to confuse the Assyrians. In other words, he didn't want to get into a shouting match but keep them guessing as to where he might be. Upon receiving the letter and having read it, Hezekiah at once went to the house of Lord and spread it out before the Lord, *paras* (cf. 8.15 but not noted there) also as to disperse or break into pieces. It was though he wanted the Lord to read it for himself and then take action.

After pausing for a while to allow both the Lord and himself to absorb the message's contents, King Hezekiah prays to the Lord, *palal* meaning to intercede (cf. 6.17).

Vs. 15: Hezekiah acknowledges that the Lord is enthroned upon the cherubim and so forth.

Vs. 16: After a brief acknowledgment (brief in that it's desperate) of divine sovereignty, Hezekiah ask the Lord to open his ear and hear as well as open his eyes to see, that is, the *davar* of King Sennacherib. Actually his name hadn't been uttered since 18.13

but referred to as the king of Assyria. Hezekiah sums up the letter before the Lord in terms of it mocking him, *charaph* (cf. vs. 4), that the Assyrians had dealt ruthlessly with anyone opposing them.

Vs. 17: In addition to destroying all who resisted them, the Assyrians burned their gods. Hezekiah acknowledges that this was a good thing since they were the work of human hands even though the Assyrian gods were the same. It was not unlike your enemy to wipe out your other enemy and thus reduce the playing field.

Vs. 19: Hezekiah beseeches the Lord to save the people, *yashah* (cf. 14.26) being the verb and that all nations know (*yadah*, cf. 4.9) the Lord, this being far better than knowing how the Assyrians had laid waste to every land they invaded.

Vs. 20: Isaiah got wind of Hezekiah having gone to the temple and sent for him at once. He begins with the customary prophetic words, “Thus says (*amar*, cf. 3.15) the Lord.” Isaiah now takes the place of the Lord and says that Hezekiah’s prayer was heard and proceeds to utter (*davar*) a word or *davar* about King Sennacherib, this lasting through vs. 28.

Vs. 21: Assyria does the following three against the virgin daughter of Zion also known as the daughter of Jerusalem: despises, scorns and wags her head. Note that Assyria is called “she,” the feminine perhaps intimating inherent weakness. As for the verbs *bazah*, *hagah* and *nuah* which are found in the Isaiah excerpt along with other in the succeeding verses below.

Vs. 22: King Sennacherib had both mocked and reviled the Lord, *charaph* and *gadaph*), two words which sound similar. The preposition for “against” is *‘el-* which usually translates as “to.”

Vs. 23: Reference to messengers (servants in Isaiah) are the Rabshakeh who spoke with Eliakim, Shebna and the senior priests. They are the ones who mocked (*charaph*,) the Lord on behalf of Sennacherib. It is as though this king’s conquest of Lebanon and Egypt recounted in vs.s. 24-25 were a sufficient threat not so much against Jerusalem but against the Lord although in Isaiah’s eyes the two are practically interchangeable.

Vs. 25: A rhetorical question directed against Sennacherib, asking him about having “determined” against him which reads literally “have you not heard from afar?” The Lord has planned (*hasah*, the common verb for to do, to make) a long time ago what he is bringing to pass or *yatsar* which fundamentally means to fashion something. This *yatsar* pertains to the ruin of cities and their inhabitants reduced to nothing as recounted in vs.s. 26-27.

In vs. 27: The verb *yadah* or to know occurs after sitting down, going out and coming in. Perhaps the first refers to Sennacherib’s plotting not just against Israel but against the other nations whereas the other two intimate his military ventures against them. *Ragaz* is the verb for raged with the preposition *‘el* or literally “to me.”

Vs. 28: A continuation of the *ragaz* of the Assyrian king (again, *‘el* or ‘to me’) along with his arrogance or *sha’an* (fundamentally means a tumult). This commotion, if you

will, on Sennacherib's part ascends literally "in" (*b-*) the Lord's ears. The image of putting a hook in his nose and bit in his mouth brings to mind the complete control of a cow and horse or similar animal.

Vs. 29: the Lord turns attention to King Hezekiah, giving him a sign or '*oth* which has the preposition *l-* prefaced to it, literally "to you." The '*oth* is extended over three years of prosperity which under the current circumstances seems impossible.

Vs. 30: The unlikely prosperity of the previous verse extends to the surviving remnant of Judah, this phrase reading literally as "and adds (*yasaph*) deliverance" or *peleytah*.

Vs. 31: A remnant as pertaining to Jerusalem, the noun *she'eryth* (cf. vs. 4) being used which differs from *peleytah* of the previous verse, that is, deliverance. In addition to this *she'eryth* will be a "band of survivors" or *peleytah* which has just been noted. *Qin'ah* is the noun for zeal which also means jealousy and pertains here to the Lord of hosts, hosts (*tsava'*) being a military term pertinent to the situation at hand.

Vs. 32: Although the Lord is very clear that he will deliver Hezekiah, in vs. 33 he speaks in terms of "Therefore thus says the Lord" in order to reassure him. *Laken* and *koh* (therefore and thus) are similar and used for emphasis in this verse.

Vs. 33: The way or *derek* which refers to the king of Assyria coming and then going or leaving without taking Jerusalem.

Vs. 34: *Ganan* is the verb for defend and implies a covering over. Bound up with this divine covering is Jerusalem's salvation, *yashah* (cf. vs. 19) being the verb used. It comes as no surprise to King Hezekiah that the Lord refers to his favorite king, David, he and Hezekiah being the two monarchs closets to each other in both spirit and leadership qualities.

Vs. 35: The angel of the Lord slew what seems to be the bulk of Sennacherib's army though spared the king who promptly left his siege of Jerusalem and hastened home to Nineveh. We have no reaction from the king, Hezekiah nor the inhabitants of Jerusalem who possibly didn't see the angel taking divine vengeance upon the Assyrians. However, they must have heard the screams of the dying soldiers who couldn't escape the angel's sword. Some time later word got back to the Israelites that Sennacherib's sons slew their father while worshiping in the temple of his god. This must have been especially pleasing, Israel's arch-enemy being slain in the temple of a pagan god which stands in sharp contrast with the temple in Jerusalem.

3) *tsarah*, *tokechah*, *ne'atsah*, 4) *charaph*, *yakach*, *tephilah*, *she'eryth*, 6) *gadaph*, 7) *ruach*, *shemuhah*, 8) *nasa'*, 11) *charam*, 14) *paras*, *palal*, 16) *charaph*, 19) *yashah*, *yadah*, 20) '*amar*, 21) *bazah*, *hagah*, *nuah*, 23) *charaph*, *gadaph*, 25) *hasah*, *yatsar*, 27) *yadah*, *ragaz*, 28) *sha'anah*, 29) '*oth*, 30) *yasaph*, *peleytah*, 31) *she'eryth*, *qun'ah*, *tsava'*, 33) *derek*, 34) *ganan*, *yashah*

Chapter Twenty

Vs.s 1-6 parallel Is 38.1.-8 in the same way as parts of the previous chapter do with regard to Chapter Thirty-Seven of Isaiah.

Vs. 1: “In those days” signal the beginning of a story or new episode in the reign of King Hezekiah now that the threat of King Sennacherib has subsided. In a way this phrase parallels the conjunctive *v-* but differs in that it has more force in grabbing our attention. Our attention now is primed to reading an account of King Hezekiah’s new adventures.

Isaiah got wind of Hezekiah’s illness and comes for a visit, not mincing words with him which only a prophet could do to a king. As soon as Hezekiah heard “Thus says (*amar*) the Lord,” he knew in advance what Isaiah was to say wasn’t good. “Set your house” is the command put literally, *tsava’* also as to command or order (cf. 17.35 but not noted there).

Vs. 2: Now that Isaiah has confirmed Hezekiah’s premonition, the king turns away, faces the wall and prays (*palal*, cf. 19.14) to the Lord. This is natural, of course, all the more poignant by reason of Isaiah not offering consoling words. Perhaps he foresaw the king’s selfishness revealed later when taking comfort in not being alive to endure the Babylonian invasion.

Vs. 3: Hezekiah tells the Lord to remember the past. He has a good argument in light of 18.3, especially being likened to King David, the gold standard for Israel’s kings: “And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord according to all that David his father had done.”

Hezekiah’s claim to the Lord’s favor is that he had walked in faithfulness and with a whole heart, *emeth* and a *lev* (cf. 12.4) which was *shalem*, basically as peaceful. He also throws in that he has done good literally “in your eyes,” all of which was one hundred percent true. References to all three are: “In truth and with a perfect heart” [Is 38.3].

Vs. 3 concludes with a new sentence, short and to the point, which reads literally as “And Hezekiah wept great.”

Vs. 4: Isaiah watched, it seems, more or less detached or with no emotion after which he leaves Hezekiah. Then the *davar* of the Lord came to him, ordering him to return to the king with “Thus says (*amar*, cf. vs. 1) the Lord” as in vs. 1 only here the Lord throws in David “your father” by way of encouragement. In sum, the Lord heard the *palal* of King Hezekiah in vs. 2 who will go to the Lord’s house in three days.

Vs. 6: After saying that he’ll add fifteen years to his life (surely Hezekiah noted the day on which this was promised and marked each subsequent anniversary), the Lord promises to deliver (*natsal*, cf. 18.29) Jerusalem from the king of Assyria. Yet once more David is mentioned as the reason for doing this. While Chapter Nineteen concludes with the assassination of Sennacherib after his aborted siege of Jerusalem, his son Esarhaddon

took his place. That means that most likely he'll seek to finish what his father had begun and made not bones about it, word of this having reached King Hezekiah.

Vs. 8: King Hezekiah asks Isaiah for a sign ('*oth*, cf. 19.29) from the Lord, that is, that he will heal him.

Vs. 9: Isaiah gives Hezekiah an option with regard to the '*oth* just mentioned: either the sun's shadow goes forward ten steps or back the same distance. The response is obvious. Hezekiah chose the more difficult option, the sun going backward ten steps. Isaiah then cried out to the Lord for this to be done and so it was, *qara'* (cf. 8.1) being the verb which here implies that Hezekiah had a selfish streak and wasn't afraid to ask for something showy.

Vs. 12: The king of Babylon sent envoys with gifts to Hezekiah, having learned of his illness and remarkable recovery. Hezekiah was quite enthusiastic about these visitors, too much so for the likes of his palace officials. Perhaps he wanted to make a favorable impression and get Babylon on his side in case of threat from Assyria, the recent invasion by Sennacherib fresh in his mind. The words of vs. 13 put it well, "There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them."

Vs. 14: Of course, Isaiah heard about this (who didn't?) and approached the king who happily and naively said that he showed the Babylonian emissaries everything. One can just imagine these emissaries tagging along with Hezekiah, everything in his land laid bare to their eyes while taking mental notes of everything. At the end of each day they had a genuine cache of information to bring home while thinking that their host was the biggest of all fools. Indeed, they couldn't wait to inform their king who concurred that Hezekiah would be a push-over.

Vs. 16: When Isaiah learned of all this from Hezekiah himself, he comes out with his predictable "Hear the *davar* of the Lord" which made the king cringe at once, finally coming to his senses as to what he had done. No need to expand on this *davar*. It's easy to surmise what Isaiah said. As for Hezekiah's response? It smacked of undisguised greed and self-centeredness which goes counter to all the positive thing said about him earlier, especially being on the same plane as King David. And so Hezekiah responds by saying that the *davar* of the Lord is good, thinking that he'll have peace and security, *shalom* and '*emeth* (cf. 9.22 and vs. 3 respectively). Actually Isaiah didn't specify the time of the Babylonian invasion, just that it would happen, Hezekiah all the while thinking of the fifteen years of life promised by the Lord.

Vs. 21: Hezekiah's son Manasseh succeeds the throne. Chances are that Hezekiah didn't inform him of what Isaiah had prophesied. Given his nonchalant feeling as to the future, it didn't even enter his mind.

1) *tsava'*, '*amar*, 2) *palal*, 3) '*emeth*, *lev*, *shalem*, 4) '*amar*, 6) *natsal*, 8) '*oth*, 9) *qara'*, 19) *shalom*, '*emeth*

Chapter Twenty-One

Vs. 1: Manasseh becomes king and unlike his father Hezekiah (and true of so many of his predecessors), he did evil or *rah* (cf. 17.17) in the Lord's eyes. This sets the stage for a litany of familiar, albeit depressing (and boring) observations noted earlier with regard to other kings.

More specifically, Manasseh followed the abominable practices (*tohevah*, cf. 16.3) of those nations which the Lord had driven out, reference to Joshua who led the Israelites into the land of Canaan. In other words, Manasseh undid what his father had strived so vigorously to achieve, this being a pattern which alternates between following native deities and worship of the Lord. One wonders where the people in general stood among all these fluctuations. It seems they liked having two options and didn't mind switching from one to the other provided they had their options open and weren't coerced. Furthermore, Manasseh imitated one of Israel's worse kings, Ahab, by having made an Asherah (cf. 17.16) along with altars dedicated to Baal.

Vs. 4: Another offensive gesture was the erection of altars within the Jerusalem temple, the words being ascribed to it which makes this all the more abominable, "In Jerusalem will I put my name." Reference is to Solomon's prayer of dedication in Chapter Eight of First Kings.

Vs. 6: What tops off Manasseh's apostasy is the offering of his son, this in conjunction with consulting various mediums. Here the verb *kahas* (cf. 17.17) is used, provoke to anger with regard to the Lord.

Vs. 7: As for the Asherah mentioned in vs. 3, Manasseh installs an image of this deity in the Lord's house which means it has taken over completely, this in clear violation of the Lord saying to both David and Solomon that he will put his name there forever.

Vs. 8: With regard to the temple being for the Lord's name, he says that the feet of Israel won't wander from the land he gave them.

Vs. 9: Manasseh seduced the people more than the nations had done, the verb being *tahah* which means to wander or stray. "Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" [2Chron 33.9].

Vs. 10: The Lord speaks (*davar*) through his prophets whom he calls servants while not mentioning anyone in specific. However, we can assume that Isaiah is included, he having been mentioned earlier with regard to King Hezekiah. Also these prophets could be heirs of the "sons of prophets" associated with Elijah and Elisha.

Vs. 12: The Lord will bring evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 1) upon Jerusalem and Judah that will make their ears tingle, *tsalal* having three other biblical references, one of which is 1Sam 3.11: "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone that hears it will tingle."

Vs. 13: The Lord uses imagery of measurement as in construction which in reality turn out to be instruments of destruction: the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of Ahab's house. For good measure he throws in wiping Jerusalem as though it were as dish.

Vs. 14: The Lord means business when he speaks of casting out any remnant or *she'eryth* (cf. 19.31) of his heritage, this term and others like it usually representative of a faithful few. Once cast off, they will be annihilated totally by their enemies, thereby leaving nothing behind.

Vs. 15: Another mention of *rah* (cf. vs. 12) or evil, this time with regard to Israel's fathers when they left Egypt, Second Kings simply being an extension of that as noted so often.

Vs. 19: Amon succeeds his father Manasseh and following a familiar pattern, did *rah* (cf. vs. 15) in the Lord's eyes. Such *rah* is compared to Manasseh and with the now customary list of abominable practices. However, his reign is cut short (two years), his servants having assassinated him.

Vs. 24: The people were outraged at Amon's assassination and made his son Josiah take his place. Perhaps the motive behind this was Assyria's influence in local affairs including worship of their gods. Obviously they didn't know how Josiah would turn out, but they seemed to have grown weary of such gods. This means that despite the Lord having wiped out a remnant, a few managed to survive who in time rallied the people to take action. It turned out to be a good choice, for Josiah "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" [22.2].

1) rah, 2) tohevah, 6) kahash, 9) tahah, 12) rah, tsalal, 14) she'eryth, 15) rah, 19) rah

Chapter Twenty-Two

Vs. 1: This chapter begins on a high note after the low one of the previous chapter, part of that alternation between the two poles as noted earlier. At least the thirty-one year long reign of King Josiah was a good stretch of time, he being eight years old when coming to the throne. That means officials loyal to him were there both to guide and to train him. Perhaps some were leaders of the people who slew his father Manasseh. As for Josiah and what he heard of his father, nothing is said. However, later in life he must have received plenty of reports about his abominations. Then again, those in charge of caring for him could have hidden the facts or altered them so that he never knew what actually had transpired. Even when training the young king with the best of intentions, one never knew how in the end he would pan out.

Fortunately Josiah did what was right or *yashar* in the Lord's eyes, the last time this adjective being applied to a king was Hezekiah (cf. 18.3). Those elders who raised him thus

breathed a collective sigh of relief. *Yashar* is supplemented by the fact that he used David as model, not turning to the right hand nor left implying impartiality. This also applies to David's successor, Solomon, in his renowned ability to pass judgement. Again, it's to the credit of those entrusted with Josiah's upbringing who taught him this.

Vs. 3: Eighteen years into a thirty-one year reign is a little over half way through; after all Josiah was eight when having assumed the throne. At this time a royal secretary approached the high priest in order to determine the amount of money collected from the people for the temple's restoration.

King Manasseh had installed a graven image of Asherah in the temple (cf. 21.7) which meant that it was defiled completely. Although the money would be used outwardly for repairs, more directly it's for purifying the temple. As for the building itself, there was an interval time between its removal and having been left vacant until now. This time gap could have been intentional, King Josiah wanting it to stand there and accuse the people of the vile practices that had transpired within its sacred walls. It loomed over the city, huge and vacant, a visible sign of shame and in dire need of purification.

Vs. 7: King Josiah has faith in those responsible for rebuilding the temple and therefore asks for no formal records of funds spent. *'Emunah* is used, faithfulness to describe them just as in 12.15 though this noun isn't noted there. This shows the king's good nature, but unfortunately his trust was misplaced.

Vs. 9: The high priest Hilkiah told the royal secretary that he had discovered the book of the law or *torah* (cf. 10.31) in the house of the Lord. It must have been cast aside as rubbish when Manasseh turned the temple into an abomination. Nevertheless, despite its condition, it was always there, this in and by itself considered a miracle.

Vs. 9: Now for the bad news. Shaphan, the royal secretary, reported that the workmen restoring the temple had confiscated the money. As for the good news which comes second and intended by Shaphan to console the king, he informs him about the discovery of a book but doesn't mention it's the *torah*, perhaps to surprise and delight Josiah.

Vs. 11: It seems that while Shaphan was reading the *torah*, King Josiah recognized it immediately and was dismayed and demonstrated this by tearing his clothes.

Vs. 13: Josiah orders the high priest and royal secretary along with a few other officials to inquire of the Lord, *darash* (cf. 8.8) which fundamentally means to tread, the idea suggestive of walking up and down to discover something new. He stresses the urgency of this *darash* with regard to the book's *davar* by mentioning its import not only for himself but for the people and all Judah.

Josiah surmises that the *torah* left in the temple as rubbish but as had acted as a guardian while the abomination of Asherah was there, signaling that the Lord had been angry, the noun *chemah* (cf. 5.12) being used. The source of such wrath lay with "our fathers" who failed to obey the book's *davar*, that meaning, of course, Josiah's father. So

here was the newly discovered *torah* which had maintained hidden vigil deep within the temple and now has come to light as a silent witness to condemn.

Vs. 14: The delegation from King Josiah went to a prophetess names Huldah, she having a certain renown when it comes to matters of *darash* noted in vs. 13. In true prophetic form she begins with “Thus says the Lord” which is intended for “the man” who sent them, that is, the king, not especially flattering words.

Vs. 16: Again Huldah uses “Thus says the Lord” and gets down to business as far as the *darash* at hand is concerned. The Lord will bring down evil or that now familiar *rah* (cf. 21.19) upon this place or *maqom* which can apply to both Jerusalem as well as the temple, this foreseeing Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest. *Maqom* is used in a somewhat disparaging way two more times as noted below. Thus *rah* will be in conformity with the *davar* which King Josiah had read and which caused him to rend his clothes.

Vs. 17: This verse contains a familiar litany of woes: the people having forsaken the Lord and having burned incense to foreign gods. This time the divine *chemah* (cf. vs. 13) won’t be quenched, *kavah*. “Night and day it shall not be quenched” [Is 34.10].

Vs. 18: Huldah has a second “Thus says the Lord” in store for King Josiah with regard to the *davar* he had heard from the *torah*.

Vs. 19: The heart (*lev*, cf. 20.3) of Josiah is penitent or *rak* which means tender. “When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother” [Prov 4.3]. Also he humbled himself, *kanah* fundamentally as to bow down or to submit. “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves...then I will hear from heaven” [2Chron 7.14].

King Josiah is credited by the Lord with having paid attention to him when he spoke against “this place,” *maqom* used in a somewhat disparaging tone as in vs. 16 and that the people will become a desolation and curse. *Shamah* connotes astonishment. “Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has wrought desolations in the earth” [Ps 46.8]. *Qelalah* connotes diminishment. “He loved to curse; let curses come on him” [Ps 109.17]!

Vs. 20: Even though the Lord will bring evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 16) on “this place” (third mention of *maqom* in a disparaging way), he will allow King Josiah to die in peace (*shalom*, cf. 20.19). However, Josiah will bring to the grave the disconcerting words of the Lord against the people over which he had ruled. The danger for him is not to take this as a failure.

3) yashar, 7) ‘emunah, 9) torah, 13) darash, chemah, 16) rah, maqom, 17) chemah, 19) lev, rak, kanah, maqom, shamah, qelalah, 20) rah, maqom, shalom

Chapter Twenty-Three

Vs. 1: This chapter begins with the familiar conjunctive *v-* translated as “then,” jumping back, if you will, to when King Josiah was still alive; i.e., the concluding verses of the preceding chapter speak of his death.

Josiah takes action by restoring the Jerusalem temple for worship of the Lord after his father Manasseh had defiled it with the image of Asherah. After all, the temple had stood there as a condemnation not just against Manasseh but against those who had supported them, crying out, if you will, in its need to be restored.

Vs. 2: King Josiah goes up to the Lord’s house along with priests and prophets where he read to them the *davar* from the book of the covenant miraculously found in the temple. Perhaps the prophetess Huldah accompanied this noble assemblage. On the other hand, she could have been reluctant to go for her prophecy of the coming *rah* as in vs. 22.16. Although only she and Josiah were privy to that information, the king went ahead with his reforms. Perhaps the Lord might intervene and prove Huldah wrong. As for the discovery of the *torah*, this was the first time that everyone knew of it and became a cause for great celebration.

Vs. 3: King Josiah takes up position by the pillar, the verb being *hamad* (cf. 5.15) and the noun derived from it as *hamud*. This same pillar is mentioned in 11.14, one of the two bronze ones on the temple’s portico. There he made a covenant (the verb *karath*, cf. 11.17) meaning to cut and cutting implies offering sacrifice. While sacrifices played a role, more importantly the covenant consists in a public declaration of three parts:

1) Walk (*halak*, cf. 13.6) after the Lord.

2) Keep (*shamar*, cf. 18.6) the Lord’s commandments, testimonies and statutes (*mitsvah*, *hedoth* and *chuqah* 17.19, 17.15 and 17.8 respectively. Josiah will do this with his whole heart and soul, *lev* and *nephesh* (cf. 22.19 and 4.30 respectively).

3) Perform (*qum*, cf. 12.20), this verb fundamentally as to rise and suggests continuous action. Such rising, if you will, pertains to the potential of the *davar* of the covenant to rise within the people as leaven within bread.

After King Josiah did the above three, the entire congregation joins in, the verb *hamad* as in vs. 3 which means to stand; i.e., they took a stand.

Vs. 4: Now for the dramatic part which some people had been anticipating while others were dreading. King Josiah commands the high priest Hilkiah and others to bring from the temple the vessels made for Baal and Asherah (compare with the Asherah themselves in vs. 6) as well as those made for the host of heaven. *Heykal* is used for temple, not *beyth* or house, which signifies something akin to a nave between the entrance and holy of holies. “And cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the Lord which Solomon king of Israel had made” [24.13].

Josiah has all these abominations on display for a while so that everyone could take a long, hard look at them. For some in the crowd they were a source of shame as they recalled their part in worshiping them. The next step was to burn them...a kind of burned offering to the Lord but outside his temple, in the field of the Kidron valley. For added

measure, Josiah orders the ashes brought to Bethel, the place where worship of the golden calf had begun at the initiative of King Jeroboam (cf. 1Kg 12.28).

Vs. 5: *Shavath* is the verb for deposed which fundamentally means to rest and refers to when King Josiah let go the idolatrous priests: “And he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun” [vs. 11]. As for the priests or *kemarym*, there are two other biblical references, Hos 10.5 and Zep 1.4, the latter being cited here: “I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the names of the idolatrous priests.” This shows Josiah’s disposition, for any other king would have put these apostates to the sword.

Vs. 6: Now for some more drama. King Josiah brings out the Asherah themselves compared with the vessels in vs. 4 and burns them in the Kidron, casting the dust upon graves of common people (literally, ‘sons of the people’). This isn’t a defilement of those buried there but a defilement of Asherah by those who had been faithful to the Lord. Even in death they would serve to defile this abomination.

Vs. 7: Josiah tears down the houses of the male prostitutes or *qadesh*; from the same verbal root meaning to be holy but here in the sense of being set apart. “And there were also male cult prostitutes in the land” [1Kg 14.24]. Note that their houses (*beyth*, cf. 17.29) were in the *beyth* of the Lord. Also within both women had hangings for the Asherah, the participle ‘*arag*’ being used. “It shall have a binding of woven work” [Ex 28.32].

Vs. 8: Josiah uses priests from all over Judah to defile the high places (*bamah*, cf. 18.22), the verb being *tame*’ found next in vs. 13. Perhaps some of these priests had participated in worship of alien gods while others had remained faithful to the Lord. Anyway, the king was relentless in cleaning up the terrible mess left by his father.

Vs. 9: At the same time, while priests of the *bamah* didn’t approach the altar of the Lord at Jerusalem, they could eat unleavened bread with their brethren. In other words, Josiah didn’t banish them completely. If it weren’t for the impending invasion by Nebuchadnezzar, this would become a problem later on. They would seek to restore worship of abominable idols, etc.

Vss. 10 through 20 continue the list of vigorous actions King Josiah took to rectify the damage done by Manasseh with Topheth standing out because there child sacrifices were carried out (cf. 1Kg 11.5). Through all this Josiah must have felt he was doing good for the Lord as well as for the people he governed yet at the same time appalled at the damage that had been done. Solomon is included, that is, the *bamah* he had built for Ashtoreth, the abomination or *shiqush* of Moab (cf. vs. 24). In vs. 14 Josiah cut down the Asherim and filled their places with human bones, this to ensure that no altar or the like be erected.

While busying himself with removing bones and burning them in accord with the *davar* of the Lord, King Josiah saw a monument and inquired as to whom is buried there. It turned out to belong to “man of God” from Judah who had predicted Josiah’s actions against the altar at Bethel. Reference is to the anonymous prophet of Chapter Thirteen,

First Kings who railed against King Jeroboam. To top off his thorough-going cleansing, Josiah put to death priests of the high places. His completion of these actions is described simply as “Then he returned to Jerusalem” [vs. 20].

Vs. 21 begins with the conjunctive *v-*, indicative of a shift in the story where King Josiah turns attention to observance of the Passover. Apparently this most important of feasts hadn't been kept since the days of the judges including all the kings thus far. Here Passover is presented as a communal observance compared with the original family setting in which it had been kept, so that's what might be meant. For the entire nation to celebrate Passover requires a re-examination of rules, etc, which is no mean feat. Then most importantly, the people would have to comply.

Vs. 24: King Josiah resumes his program of reform by going after mediums, wizards and the like for the purpose of establishing the *davar* of the *torah* (cf. 22.9). *Qum* is the verb which as in vs. 3 suggests not a static observance but one that is ongoing. It would have been impossible for such *davar* to take effect in the people unless these remnants of other forms of worship were eliminated.

Vs. 25: There was no king like Josiah in his zeal for reform. He turned (*shuv*) to the Lord with his whole heart, soul and might or *lev, nephesh* and *me'od* (cf. 17.18). The first two are found in vs. 3 whereas the third is an adverb reading literally “in all his excessiveness.” Similarly, there was no king like Josiah after him. So he and King David (even excluding Solomon) had set the standard for being king. The best for anyone else was to at least approach their example.

Vs. 26: The small word ‘*ak* or “still” is significant in that despite King Josiah's reforms—the thoroughness and intensity with which he carried them out—amounted to little. That is to say, the Lord is fully intent on showing the fierceness of his anger, *charon* and ‘*aph* (cf. 13.3), the former also as heat or burning. “Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury” [Ps 2.5]. The reason for this had been known all along and finally is put out there because of the provocations of Manasseh, the verb *kahas* and noun of the same spelling as in Ps 10.14: “You see; yes, you note trouble and vexation.” The end result? The Lord will remove both Judah and cast off Jerusalem. Then he adds with some spite, “and the house of which I said, ‘My name shall be there.’”

Vs. 28: The revenge which the Lord is determined to see through is left unspecified though King Josiah must never have forgotten the words of Hilkiah the prophetess about bringing evil upon the nation (cf. 22.16). Even though Josiah carried out his reforms with vigor, this prophecy didn't deter him in the slightest. Such was the real greatness as well as tragedy of this king as noted in vs. 25.

Vs. 29: King Josiah met a sudden, unfortunate end at the hands of Pharaoh Neco which must have delighted some Israelites. The occasion could have been the pharaoh's passage through Megiddo en route to Assyria.

Vs. 31: Josiah's son Jehoahaz assumed kingship, and keeping true to the alteration between good and evil depicted throughout Second Kings, did evil (*rah*, cf. 22.20) in the

Lord's eyes. Not only that, he did it "according to all that his fathers had done," preferring them over the established archetype, King David. Chances are that common people weren't terribly aware of such *rah*. It became apparent to them if and when it made its way into ersatz religious observances intended either to replace or to supplement worship of the Lord. Pharaoh Neco put Jehoahaz in bonds and made Eliakim, Josiah's other son, changing his name to Jehoiakim. He, in turn, exacted taxes on Israel and true to form as with too many former kings, did *rah* (cf. vs. 32) in the Lord's eyes. Now the stage is set for the invasion by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

3) qum, hamad, hamud, karath, halak, shamar, mitsvah, hedoth, chuqah, lev, nephesh, qum, hamad, 4) heykal, 5) shavath, kemarym, 7) qadesh, beyth, 'arag, 8) tame', bamah, 13) shiqush, 24) qum, torah, 25) shuv, lev, me'od, 26) charon, 'aph, kahas, 32) rah, 37) rah

Chapter Twenty-Four

Vs. 1: This new chapter begins with the words "in his days" meaning during the time of Johoiakim, the latest king to have done "evil in the sight of the Lord" [23.37]. It sets the stage for vs. 27 of the last chapter concerning King Nebuchadnezzar, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight as I have removed Israel." As for Johoiakim, he became servant (*heved* also means slave, cf. 10.23) of the Babylonian king which, in turn, means that his people became slaves as well. Perhaps this was a way of buying protection against Egypt and other foes. For some reason or other—perhaps due to over taxation or the like—after a short three years Johoiakim turned and rebelled against him, *shuv* and *marad* (cf. 23.25 and 18.20 respectively) being pretty much the same.

Vs. 2: In addition to this insurrection, four other peoples banded together, this in accord with the *davar* of the Lord which he *davar* according not to just one prophet but an indefinite number of them. Two such references to this is Jer 35.11 and Ezk 23.22-23 which involve Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Vs. 3: The *davar* which was *davar* in the previous verse may also be called a command of the Lord, the noun *py* or mouth being used. This mouth which utters *davar* is to remove the people literally "from upon his (the Lord) face." It's as though the divine mouth will use its *davar* to effect this removal which assumes the form of blowing them away. The person primarily involved for causing such calamity is, of course, King Manasseh "in all he had done."

Vs. 4: Two mentions of innocent blood, the adjective *naqy* being used also as guiltless as with regard to Manasseh in 21.16 but not noted there. Such a double crime is unpardonable by the Lord, *salach* (cf. 5.18).

Vs. 7: After King Johoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin took over which coincides with the king of Egypt not invading the land because of the intervention of the Babylonians.

Vs. 9: Like father, like son: in other words, Jehoiachin did *rah* (cf. 23.37) in the Lord's eyes. This gave impetus for King Nebuchadnezzar to invade, besieging Jerusalem. He was indifferent to internal strife pertaining to religion but used it as a sign of weakness, an opportunity not to be missed. Jehoiachin seemed to give up without resistance, placing himself as well as his mother and governmental officials in the invaders' hands.

Vss. 13-17 describe how King Nebuchadnezzar carries off the population as well as anything his troops could grab with special mention of the golden vessels used in the temple. The Babylonians had excellent intelligence in this regard, knowing precisely where to go, for King Hezekiah was foolish enough to show the Babylonian emissaries everything in his kingdom (cf. 20.13). The only consolation anyone could take was that this had been foretold by the Lord who in the long run was the only one capable of rectifying the situation.

Despite this wholesale deportation, there's no mention that the Babylonians burned Jerusalem...that would come in the next chapter. King Nebuchadnezzar was interested only in those who could be of service to him, including craftsmen. However, he left behind unmolested the "poorest people of the land," *dalah* who are mentioned in the second, more thorough invasion: "But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vine dressers and plowmen" [25.12].

Vs. 19: Continuing in the familiar yet tiresome tradition established, Zedekiah became king and "did what was *rah* (cf. vs. 9) in the eyes of the Lord." The result? The Lord cast the people out from his presence, literally as "from upon his face" as in vs. 3. Now the stage is set for part two, Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians.

1) heved, shuv, marad, 4) naqy, salach, 9) rah, 14) dalah, 19) rah

Chapter Twenty-Five

Vs. 1: In response to King Zedekiah's rebellion, Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem with his entire army, *kal* or "all" indicative that he brought the full force of his entire resources against the city. One siege was bad enough. A second one will finish off Jerusalem once and for all.

After two years the famine became so severe that the people couldn't find strength to resist a breach in the city walls. King Zedekiah and some warriors decided it was time to make a break for it although the Hebrew text lacks "the king fled" in vs. 4. Where they were headed isn't given, perhaps for now as far from Jerusalem as possible after which they'd decide a destination. Egypt might be such one place.

Vs. 6: The Babylonians captured Zedekiah, brought him to Babylon, killed his sons before him and then put out his eyes.

Vs. 12: As with the first siege of Jerusalem, the Babylonians left some of the poorest (*dalah*, cf. 24.14) of the land to be vine dressers and plowmen. Perhaps some if not most of

these people were part of the first group. That means they were familiar with a subsistence mode of living and were able to adapt to a now familiar situation of getting a living as best as possible. For them this was a kind of boon. No one was left to lord it over them, meaning they could do pretty much as they pleased.

Vs. 13+: After having despoiled Jerusalem thoroughly—the Babylonians were determined the second time around to be a thorough go of it—some remaining officials were put to death after which King Nebuchadnezzar appointed a governor.

Vs. 25: Some rebelled against Gedaliah the new governor and killed him, after which they fled to Egypt for safety.

Vs. 27: After some years of exile, the new Babylonian king freed Jehoiachin, king of Judah who as 24.9 says, “did evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father had done.” On the other hand, the Babylonians had no interest in such matters, considering them to be incidental to a larger picture of military conquest they had in mind. They were more interested in stability favoring their geo-political ends. Nevertheless, Jehoiachin was cursed according to Jer 22.30: “Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days; for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah.”

Vs. 28: This contrasts sharply with the exceptional treatment Jehoiachin received at the hands of the Babylonians whose king spoke kindly to him (*tov*, the common adjective for ‘good’). Not only that, Jehoiachin was allowed to sit “above the kings” with him in Babylon, perhaps referring to rulers of other nations who had been taken captive. Eavesdropping on such table-talk would have been fascinating.

Vs. 29: Each day King Jehoiachin took his food with the Babylonian king and as the concluding verse of Second Kings notes (i.e., vs. 30), was given an allowance for rest of his life. So it turns out that a king who had done evil in the Lord’s eyes—so typical of what had been recorded throughout this book—makes out better than he had anticipated. This evil was mitigated somewhat insofar as it bode well for the captives in Babylon which, of course, is the larger picture. As a footnote in the RSV says, Second Kings ends “with a note of modest hope” because David’s dynasty wasn’t snuffed out.

12) *dalah*

+