

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: he didn't do this *rah* as in the case with earlier kings. 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 any 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 to show 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 thus 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 which 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 which here 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 as 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 (and despairingly) 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 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, worshipping *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:

“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].

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

“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].

“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].

“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 with 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...assumed by Israel by reason of having lost its mooring in 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, *jarah* 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.

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, kahas, 18) 'anaph, me'od, sur, 19) mitsvah, 20) ma'as, hanah, shasah, 21) qarrah, sur, 22) 'adamah, 24) yarash, 28) yarah, yare', 29) 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 just as important, 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, 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, no king being like him afterwards 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, 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 saying 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 comply 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: Apparent 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 the 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 the latter saying that they rely (*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 being used, this verse being 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 use 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.

Vs 31: The Rabshakeh ask for making peace "with me," again that royal *davar* being the same as 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 rapid fire with several 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.

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 it about that he’s assassinated.

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 of 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, frequently found in 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, it now being his turn. The taunt just delivered is followed by two rhetorical questions as to where are now 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 let on any potential weakness 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 though certainly addressed such as 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 vss. 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. 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’anan* (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 is like that 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 to Hezekiah about his deliverance, 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’anan*, 29) *’oth*, 30) *yasaph*, *peleytah*, 31) *she’eryth*, *qun’ah*, *tsava’*, 33) *derek*, 34) *ganan*, *yashah*

Chapter Twenty

Vss 1-6 parallel Is 38.1.-8 pretty much 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 differ in that they have 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, he turns away, faces the wall and prays (*palal*, cf 19.14) to the Lord. This is natural, of course, and all the more poignant by reason of Isaiah not offering any comforting 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 100% 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 go 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 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 things 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 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*