INTRODUCTION

I. CHIASTIC SECTION IN WHICH ISRAEL MUST CHOOSE, “WHOM SHALL WE TRUST, YHWH OR THE NATIONS; THIS STRUCTURE BREAKS DOWN AS FOLLOWS:

A. God or Assyria? 7-12
B. God or the nations? 13-35
C. God or Assyria? 36-39

“WHOM SHALL WE TRUST, YHWH OR ASSYRIA?”: PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE SYRIAN AND EPHRAMITIC THREAT, 7:12–CF 2 KGS 16:1-20

II. 7:1-25: DELIVERANCE FOR THE HOUSE OF DAVID, DISASTER FOR JUDAH

A. Scholars often describe 1-17, if not the entire chapter, as part of a larger pericope (6:1-8:18) known as a Denkschrift, or memoirs (Hayes/Irvine, 115), of speeches delivered during the Syrio-Ephraimitic crisis.

1. As the argument goes this “was to demonstrate that the opposition that Isaiah’s message had met during the crisis had been foreseen by Yahweh and announced to the prophet as early as the death year of Uzziah (6:9-10). The memoirs were . . . Isaiah’s attempt at self-vindication in the face of his failed ministry” (Hayes/Irvine, 116)

2. This interpretation is problematic:

a. Chs 6 and 8 are autobiographical, but 7 is 3d person narrative.

b. Some account for this by emending the 3d person references to 1st person forms, but there is no textual evidence to support this change.

c. 7:1-17 does not adequately portray the hardening of the heart predicted in 6:9-10, for the prediction predicts that “this people,” i.e., the general population, and not the Davidic house which opposed the work of the prophet.

B. This pericope is an independent unit which chronologically follows chapter 6
C. **Structure:**

1. Summary of the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis, 1

2. Commissioning of Isaiah with a speech for Ahaz with narrative introduction, 2-9

3. Dispute between prophet and king resulting in the Immanuel prophecy, 10-17

4. Four predictions indicating when the prophecy would be fulfilled, 18-25.

D. **Background:** These verses are to be dated to the Syrian-Israelite invasion of Judah in 735-734

1. The kings of Syria and Ephraim wanted to make Ahaz more pliant in their revolt against Assyria, vv. 5-6, cf. 2 Kgs 15:29-16:20; Chron 28:1-27

2. In all 3 accounts Rezin/Syria are always mentioned before Pekah

3. 2 Kgs 16:5 parallels Isaiah 7:1ff., but this text emphasizes the attack against Jerusalem

4. Taken together, this texts provides a "summary of the entire episode, giving the dénouement toward which Isaiah's message to the king point. Its function is not to emphasize that Ahaz had no reason to fear Rezin and Pekah, but rather to affirm that the prophet predictions about the failure of the campaign had come true." (Hayes/Irwin, 119)

E. **Omen Wisdom Statement:**

1. Isa 7:9b: If you do not believe, then surely you will not be established. (AR)

2. Sittenkanon: If he is honest (and) even though loss is imputed to him, then good will follow. (103:32; cf. 105:58)

3. Isaiah 7 combines several aspects of omen terminology and actions and recasts them in prophetic language.
a. Verse 9a refers to Judah's enemy (due to its connections with Syria, cf. v. 8).

b. 9b employs the omen-wisdom structure.

c. Significantly, the verbs in both the protasis and apodosis are from the same verbal root (יָמָּה), one of the characteristics of omen-wisdom.

d. In verse 10 God commanded Ahaz to ask a sign (יָמָּה).

e. When Ahaz refused, Yhwh gave a sign anyway—"The אֶשְׁרָיִים almah is pregnant and bearing a son" (v. 14).

f. This language reminds of the Mesopotamian birth omen literature, but is different in that birth omens focus on malformations, especially of (domesticated) animals, etc.; while this sign indicates that before the sign-child would know to choose the good and refuse the evil Syria and Israel would vanish (v. 16), portending evil for Ahaz (v. 16).

g. No malformations are contemplated.

h. The Sittenkanon expresses similar concepts in a more positive way. Honesty, even in the face of loss, brings good.

i. While there is a thematic gap between "honesty" and "belief," both have to do with philosophical-moral outlooks.

j. Similarly, while "being established" and having "good" to follow are not exactly the same, they reflect external blessings received as a result of the philosophical outlook.

F. Grammar of Isaiah 7:14
1. **Text:**

לֶאַכֶּנַּנְּךָ שָמַיִם יֵאָכְלוֹנָה לֵבָּנָה אַחֲזַּת הַיָּמִים נִפְגַּם Büro.

lākēn yittēn ʿādōnāy hū ʿālāk ʿōt hinnēh hāʾalmāḥ hārāh wāyōlēdeṭ bēn wāqārāṭ šōmō ʿimmānū ʿēl

2. **Syntax:**

a. ʿālāk, yittēn: verb, 3rd m.s., qal Impf., “He will give”

b. hinnēh: interjectory particle, which, following a noun, emphasizes that noun in some fashion (HALOT); it can also call attention to a following noun or phrase. Here the particle describes the noun it follows, ʿālāk ʿōt “sign,” by defining exactly what that “sign,” i.e., hāʾalmāḥ hārāh wāyōlēdeṭ.

Note for now that the following examples show that hinnēh-Clause + Adjective/Participle requires the participle to be rendered in the future sense.²

(1) הָנָה אֵנָכַי מַח בָּקָרָה...תִּקְבֹּרָה

(a) hinnēh ʿānōḵī mēṭ bōqiḥrī ... tiqḇōrē ʿnî

(b) *When I have died, you shall bury me in my grave...*

Gen. 50:5

(2) הָנָה אֵנָכַי בָּאֶרֶם אֲשִׂרָה קֵקֵרָה הָמִים

(a) hinnēh ʿānaḥnū bāʾēm bāʾērēṣ ʿet-tiqwaṭ ūḥūt haššānî hazzeḥ tiqṣōrī

(b) *When we come..., you shall tie the thread...*

Josh 2:18

c. hāʾalmāḥ : noun, f.s., “A young girl of marriageable age,”

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¹For a thorough discussion of all facets of these issues see: Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12* (CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 279ff.

²Here and following, significant Hebrew script is italicized while its transliterated counterpart is bolded.
+ prefixed article.

d. \( h_r^\text{h} \), hårāh: adjective, f.s., absolute, “pregnant”; used in conjunction with \( h_n^\text{h} \), hinnāh is used predicatively (does not have the article) with \( h_m^\text{h} \), hā'almāh, producing something like, “The \( h_l^\text{h} \), c'almāh has conceived/is pregnant.”

e. \( h_r^\text{h} \), wøyölé'dēt: verb, qal, active participle, f.s. with prefix ʽ, wū , “and is bearing”; used in combination with \( h_r^\text{h} \), hårāh. This construction, known as “hendiadys” (cf. Lambdin, 173; Waltke-O’Connor, p. 70), produces the translation “is pregnant and bearing,” or the like for the \( h_r^\text{h} \) hårāh wøyölé’dēt. The entire phrase, \( h_r^\text{h} \) hårāh wøyölé’dēt, renders a literal translation of “The \( h_l^\text{h} \), c'almāh [who] has conceived/is pregnant and bearing,” or the like.

f. \( h_r^\text{h} \), wəqārā’t: verb, 2nd or 3rd f.s. with waw conversive, translated, “and you/she will call.” Translating the term 2nd f.s. rules out Ahaz as the one naming the child since Ahaz is a male, which would require the 2nd m.s, not the 2nd f.s. The 2nd f.s. might be allowed if Isaiah were addressing the nation, i.e., “you [the nation] will call,” but there is no evidence that the nation is addressed or under contemplation. Translating the verb as the 3rd f.s. indicates the child’s mother, i.e., “she [the mother of Immanuel, \( h_l^\text{h} \), hā’almāh ] will name him Immanuel.” This is the most likely translation.

3. Commentary:

a. \( h_r^\text{h} \), hinnāh hā'almāh hårāh wøyölé’dēt, is a clause consisting of an adjective (\( h_r^\text{h} \) hårāh) and a participle (\( h_r^\text{h} \) wøyölé’dēt).

(1) The last two words of the clause, \( h_r^\text{h} \) hårāh wøyölé’dēt, form (a) a verbal hendiadys (cf. Lambdin, 173; Waltke-O’Connor, p. 70) and (b) used predicatively (cf.
Lambdin, 23, 26) in connection with הַלְּבִיתָה הָאִלָּם.

(2) The hendiadys requires that הָאִלָּם הָאִירָב qualify đáלַת, producing “who is pregnant and bearing,” while the predicative use of the two terms in conjunction with הָלְבִיתָה demands the translation “the virgin is pregnant and...”

(3) This syntax plus the syntax of נַעֲנַה + participle (see above), demands that the clause be translated something like, “The הָלְבִיתָה הָאִלָּם who is pregnant bears a son [then] you shall call his name Immanuel.”

b. There are two other passages that have a near identical interpretation. The are:

(1) הָאִירָב הָנְנָא הַחָלְצַה הַנָּה הָלְבִיתָה בָּהָוָא הָשָרְמ

(a) wayyô’mer lâ’ñ mal’ak yhwh(’ādônây) hinnâk hâráb wayôlådt bën wqârâ’ō šêmô yismâ’êl kî-šâma’ yhwh(’ādônây) ’el-’onyêk

(b) The angel of the LORD also said to her: “You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery,” Gen 16:11

(c) The verse contains נַעֲנַה, hinnâh + 2nd f.s. suffix., transliterated literally, “Behold you.” הָאִירָב hâráb, is the same adjective f.s., as in Isaiah 7:14, producing the translation, “You are pregnant.”

(d) wayôlådt is not the active participle as in Isaiah 7:14, but a verb qal waw conv perfect 2nd f.s., translated, “you will bear.”
(e) So the two terms should be translated something like, “You are pregnant and will bear a son.”

(2) Judges 13:5 contains the identical construction:

(a) hinnāḵ hārāḥ wâyōlaḏt, Judges

(b) hinnāḵ hārāḥ wâyōlaḏt, Genesis

(c) hinnēḥ „, hārāḥ wâyōleḏet

c. The major difference between Isaiah 7:14 and Genesis 16:11 and Judges 13:5 is in the structure of the verbal forms in the text.

(1) Isaiah has:

(a) Particle + noun + adjective + participle.

i) The adjective is in the predicate position with the noun.

ii) The adjective also forms a hendiadys with the following participle, producing the translation, “The Almah is pregnant and bearing a son,” “The Almah who is pregnant and about to bear a son,” or the like.

(2) Genesis 16:11 and Judges 13:5 have near identical construction Particle + 2nd f.s. suffix attached + adjective + conv impf 2nd f.s., translated something like, “You are pregnant and will bear,” or the like.

(3) In both Genesis and Judges the women are already pregnant and the birth will occur at the end of the pregnancy.

(a) The major difference between these and the Isaiah passage is the participle makes the birth seem more immanent. “The Almah is pregnant and about to...
bear” as opposed to “You are pregnant and will bear.”

(b) The birth date of the child *Immanuel* seems to be closer in time than that of either Ishmael (Genesis) or Samson (Judges).

G. **NT Usage:** Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23

1. \( \text{לָלַֽכְךָ 오ֹרְפִּ֣י הָנֹּ֧גַר לָבְּשׁ אָ֛תָּה הַנֶּ֥גֶר הַשָּׂאָ֖לַּה} \text{WTT Isaiah 7:14} \]
   \( \\text{ורָלִֽכְךָ בַּכָּא יְהוָ֣ה שָׁמֶ֖מָּה אָֽלָּלְּךָ} \)

2. \( \text{ἰδιὰ τοῦτο δώσει κύριος αὐτός ἵνα σημεῖον ἴδοι ἢ} \text{BGT Isaiah 7:14} \]
   \( \\text{παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν καὶ καλέσετι τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἑμμανουὴλ} \)

3. \( \text{ἀποδέχεσθαι υἱόν καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ} \text{BGT Matthew 1:23} \]
   \( \\text{καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἑμμανουὴλ, ὃ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον μεθὸς ἢμῶν ὁ θεὸς} \)

4. \( \text{"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and} \text{NRS Matthew 1:23} \]
   \( \\text{they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."} \)

III. **8:1-20: REFUSING THE WATERS OF SHILOAH**

A. These verses consist of 4 speeches that relate to the Syro-Ephraimitic crisis (Hayes/Irvine, 141).

1. Symbolic report—“Spoil speeds, prey hastens,” 1-4

2. Announcement of disaster against Judah, coupled with a promise of deliverance to the Davidic house, 5-8a, 8b-10


4. Prophetic confession of confidence and admonition to abide by Isaiah’s word, 16-18, 19-20.

B. These combine to restate the position of ch. 7—“the Syro-Ephraimitic alliance will fail, Judah . . . will suffer harsh punishment, Yahweh will protect the Davidides
C. These speeches were addressed to a wide audience, not just royal family.

D. Verse 18:

1. Isaiah designated himself and his children as "signs and portents in Israel from Yhwh of hosts."

2. The sign value in this passage is elusive.

   a. It does not say how Isaiah and his children are signs and portents, only that they are.

   b. Further, this passage is unique in that it designates Isaiah and his children as signs and portents (לֵאמוֹת יְהוָה, lē’otōt yē’emōtām) and there is no symbolic action performed.

   c. Gray and other scholars assert that signs and portents refer to the names of the individuals—Isaiah, "Yhwh saves"; Shear—jashub, "a remnant shall return"; Mahershalal—hash—baz, "the spoil speeds, the prey hastes."³

   d. Nevertheless, the text does not explicitly connect the designation with anything.

   e. The passage does not provide sufficient information as to why Isaiah and his children were designated "signs and portents."

3. In context this passage does make striking use of the omen motif by drawing a contrast between divination and prophecy.

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a. Invoking language reminiscent of the Šumma Izbu and Šumma Ālu, the prophet exhorts the people to observe him and his children as signs (18), while exhorting them to refrain from divination (19), and turn to the law (20a).

b. (19) And when they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? (20) To the teaching and to the testimony!

E. NT Usage:

1. *Isa 8:8, 10; Matt 1:23*

   a. **NRS Isaiah 8:8** it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel . . . 10 Take counsel together, but it shall be brought to naught; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

   b. **NRS Matthew 1:23** "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

2. *Isaiah 8:14; Rom 9:23; 1 Pet 2:8*

   a. **NRS Isaiah 8:14** He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over-- a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

   b. **NRS Romans 9:33** as it is written, "See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

   c. **NRS 1 Peter 2:8** and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

3. *Isaiah 8:17; Heb 2:13*
NRS Isaiah 8:17 I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.

NRS Hebrews 2:13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me."

IV. 8:21-9:7: AHAZ AND THE THRONE OF DAVID

A. Problem areas:

1. “The translation is in doubt at many points, particularly in 9:1 where the Hebrew syntax and meaning of the verbs is unclear” (Hayes/Irvine, 170).

2. Compositional unity: “While most commentators agree on a sharp break between verses 21-22 and 9:1, there is less consensus as to whether 9:1 and verses 2-7 belong together as parts of a single original speech” (Hayes/Irvine, 170).

3. Identity of the royal child in 9:6–proposals include future messianic figure and/or newly born prince into the Davidic family.

B. Some have dated this section during the coup of Pekah in 736/5 and Ahaz’s move toward independence from the Northern Kingdom (Hayes/Irvine, 171).

C. Structure:

1. Description of Pekah’s coup in Israel, 8:21-22

2. Description of bright future of Judah/Jerusalem, 9:1aa

3. Celebration of recently asserted independence from Israel, 9:1ab-7

D. Verses 20b-9:1 apparently employs a conditional sentence to reenforce the exhortation.

1. If they who have no dawn will not speak according to this word, (21) then they will pass through it distressed and hungry, and when they are hungry, then they will be enraged and they will curse their king and their god, and turn their faces forward. (22) And unto the earth they will look, but distress and darkness, gloom, anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness. (9:1) But there will be no gloom for
2. This passage contains several textual difficulties.

   a. The one pertinent to this study is the problem of what to do with the word יָשָׁן, יָשָׁן, 'āšer, in v. 20.

   b. Some have contended that the term cannot serve as the beginning of the apodosis, asserting that the passage should be translated either "Surely according to this word will those speak who have no dawn," or "will they speak when they have no dawn."\(^4\)

   c. This is only partially correct.

   d. The passage makes a contrast between divination and law, and uses omen terminology by stating that Isaiah and his children are signs for the law.

   e. This argues for interpreting the verse as a conditional sentence.

   f. The passage uses various types of omen terminology to make its point.

   g. Therefore, 'āšer is the beginning of the relative clause, but the sentence begins conditionally with the protasis ("if") beginning in v. 20b and the apodosis ("then") beginning in v. 21.

   h. This produces the structure protasis (20b) + relative clause (20c) + apodosis (21).

   i. Isaiah is saying, If those who have no dawn (i.e., the diviners) do not speak according to this word, then they will be punished.

   j. The passage is an indictment against diviners.

   k. If they will not agree with Isaiah and his children (the signs), but consult divination rather than the law, then the result will be distress, hunger, anger, cursing, and thick darkness.

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\(^4\)BDB, 84a.
V. 9:1-7: THE RIGHTEOUS REIGN OF THE COMING KING

A. Royal titles used.

B. *NT Usage:* Isa 9:1-2; Matt 4:15-16

1. *NRS Isaiah 9:1* But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. 2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined.

2. *NRS Matthew 4:15* "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles-- 16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

VI. 9:8-10:4: A WORD AGAINST JACOB

A. Divides into 2 parts:

1. **9:8-21:** Rehearse a series of events that have befallen Israel

2. **10:1-4:** Describe the current situation.

B. Israel’s punishment is described as incomplete and includes (2 Kgs 15:23-24):

1. The earthquake, 9:8-10

2. Encroachment of Syrians and Philistines, 9:11-12a

3. Destruction of the house of Jehu, 9:13-17a

4. Civil war and internal strife in Shallum-Menahem-Pekah conflicts, 9:18-21a

5. Pekah’s activity in the anti-Assyrian rebellion, 10:1-2

C. *Structurally* this is ordered via a refrain that occurs in 9:12b, 17b, 21b, and 10:4b
1. Earthquake and enemies, 9:8-12
2. Internal turmoil and strife, 9:13-19
3. Civil hostilities and warfare, 9:18-21
4. Coming judgment, 10:1-4

VII. **10:5-27c: ASSYRIA, THE ROD OF YHWH’S ANGER**

A. **Background:** (Hayes/Irvine, 194ff)

1. By 735 it was obvious that a confrontation between Assyria and the western coalition was inevitable.
2. Isaiah’s earlier speeches (5:26-30; 7:18,20; 8:7-8a) had described this in general terms

B. Contrastingly, this section elaborates the role of Assyria:

1. Yhwh’s description of Assyria’s function, 5-7, 13-14
2. Hypothetical speech describing Assyria’s view, 8-11
3. Isaiah’s promise of Assyria’s eventual destruction, 15-19
4. Isaiah’s prediction of an Israelite surviving remnant, 20-23
5. Yhwh’s oracle of encouragement to Zion, 24-25
6. Isaiah’s assurance of redemption from Assyria, 26-27c

C. **NT Usage:** Isa 10:22-23; Rom 9:27-28

1. **NRS Isaiah 10:22** For though your people Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. 23 For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in all the earth.

2. **NRS Romans 9:27** And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the
number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved; for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively."

VIII. 10:27d-12:6: AN ENSIGN FOR THE NATIONS.

A. Concludes material relating to the Syro-Ephraimite crisis–chs. 7-12; cf. 2 Kgs 16:1-6.

B. A single speech delivered on eve of Jerusalem’s siege by Rezin and Pekah

C. Isaiah predicts:

1. Failure of forthcoming attack

2. Looks forward to coming prosperity

3. Yhwh will protect Zion.

4. “The rhetorical aim of the promise is clear. The prophet is encouraging Ahaz and the residents of Jerusalem to hold out against the coalition forces, standing ‘firm’ in their international neutralist policy . . . , trusting in the age-old claims of the Zion and Davidic traditions” (Hayes/Irvine, 206)

D. Structure:

1. Description of Syro-Ephraimite march against Jerusalem, 10:27d-32.

2. Prediction of attack’s failure, 10:33-34


   a. Davidic house will survive, 11:1

   b. Description of Davidic king, 11:2-9

   c. Prediction of future prestige of Davidic regime, 11:10

   d. Prediction of future reconstitution of Davidic kingdom, 11:11-16

   e. Future thanksgiving of those delivered, 12:1-6
E. **NT Usage:** Isa 11:10; Rom 15:12

1. **NRS Isaiah 11:10** ¶ On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

2. **NRS Romans 15:12** and again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope."

**"WHOM SHALL WE TRUST, YHWH OR THE NATIONS?": PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE NATIONS, 13-35**

IX. **PROPHECIES OF JUDGMENT AGAINST THE NATIONS, 13-23:**

A. **Historical setting:**

1. Thought by most that this chapter begins a new section of oracles against non-Israelite kingdoms, making it a topical arrangement rather than chronological one.

2. Hayes/Irvine (221) reject this idea, arguing instead: (1) much of the material refers to Judah; (2) no clear pattern exists for this section; (3) chronological explanations make good sense.

3. Under Merodach-baladan and his successors, during Isaiah's lifetime, Babylon reemerged as a leader in the region, forcing Assyria to recapture the city four times — 708, 703, 700, 689.

4. **Setting:** “When Tiglath-pileser ascended the Assyrian throne in the late spring of 745, Nabu-nasir (747-734) was ruling as king in Babylon, the old cultural capital of Mesopotamia. Throughout Nazbu-nasir’s rule, the city of Babylon remained loyal to Assyria in spite of the problems Tiglath-pileser had in southern Mesopotamia. In 734, when Tiglath-pileser was engaged in the west, Nabu-nadin-zeri succeeded his father, Nabu-nasir, to the throne of Babylon. In his second year, the new king was killed in a rebellion that extended far beyond the city. Nabu-shuma-ukin, a district official and leader of the rebellion, ascended the throne in Babylon but was removed from the kingship after a reign of one month and two days. The countercoup was led by an Aramean, Nabu-mukin-zeri, who seized the
throne for himself. (Note the parallels of these events to those reported in II Kings 15:8-16, 23-26.) Shortly after his defeat of Damascu in 732, Tiglath-pileser moved to put down the rebellion of Aramean/Chaldean groups in southern Mesopotamia, including Babylon. In 729, Tiglath-pileser captured Nabu-mukin-zeri and took the radical step of becoming himself king of Babylon. . . . Over four centuries had passed since an Assyrian monarch had laid claim to the Babylonian throne” (Hayes/Irvine, 221-2).

5. Taken together these chapters (esp., 13-35) portray the rising tide of warfare as western, smaller kingdoms united against Assyria.

6. Ultimately, for Judah, it reached its climax in chapters 36-39.

B. **Judgment on Babylon, 13:1-22:**

1. **Setting:**

   a. Belongs to time of Tiglath-pileser’s efforts to subdue rebellion in the city of Babylon.

   b. This speech probably dated belongs immediately after Tiglath-pileser’s wars in the west (734-732), i.e., 731-729.

2. Isaiah attributes the fall of Babylon to Yhwh’s power, indicating that Assyria was Yhwh’s agent, thus showing that God controlled international events.

3. **Structure:**

   a. Superscription, 1
   b. Divine command to summon warriors, 2-3
   c. Yhwh and his troops, 4-5
   d. Call to wail for approach Day of Yhwh, 6-8
   e. Description of Yhwh’s day and destruction of Babylon, 9-22

C. **Death of a king and Yhwh’s purpose, 14:1-27:**

1. **Historical Situation:** Tiglath-pileser’s fighting against Babylon in 729-727 seems best date.
The *ABC* (72-73) assert that Tiglath-pileser fought captured the ruler of Babylon, Nabu-mukin-zeri “ascended the throne in Babylon” in the second year and “died in the month Tebet.”

These accomplishments are “radical acts with international significance,” (Hayes/Irvine, 228).

Once this was accomplished, he had to turn his attention west once more to deal with the Syrian-Israel coalition (cf. ch. 7).

In the process Tiglath-pileser died, and though we do not know how he died in 728/7, Shalmaneser V inherited the throne and was left with putting down the uprising in the west, that had occurred while Tiglath-pileser had been dealing with Babylon.

2. **Structure:**
   a. Optimistic section about Israel’s future, 1-2
   b. Taunt of the king of Babylon, 3-20b
   c. Wish for extermination of king’s descendants, 20c
   d. Admonition to slaughter the king’s sons, 21
   e. Oracles describing destruction of Babylonian/royal family, 22-23
   f. Divine oath that Assyria will be destroyed, 24-25
   g. Prophetic interpretation of Yhwh’s decree, 26-27

D. **Rejoice not, O Philistia, 14:28-32:**

1. Death of the Assyrian king produced rebellion that was tempered by the death of Ahaz.

2. For Isaiah, however, God still had plans for Assyria.

3. **Structure:**
   a. Dating of the oracle, 28
   b. Warning to Philistia not to rejoice, 29
   c. Reasons why Philistia should not rejoice, 30
   d. Exhortation to Philistia to do opposite what they are now doing, 31
   e. Prophetic response to Philistine emissaries–God protects, 32

E. **An Oracle on Moab, 15:1-16:14:**
1. **Historical situation:**

   a. These verses indicate “that Moab was part of the renewed anti-Assyrian coalition in the west in 728/7,” (Hayes/Irvine, 239).

   b. “In his oracle on Damascus, Isaiah indicates that not only was Ephraim involved in rebellion (17:3), but also Moab seems to have suffered before the other two. Isaiah 17:2 declares ‘the cities [or citadels] of Aroer [in Moab] are deserted’ but implies that Damascus and Ephraim are yet to be attacked. If Moab was attacked first, this would explain the appearance of the oracle on Moab in Isaiah 15-16 before the speech on Damascus/Israel in chapter 17” (Hayes/Irvine, 240).

2. **Structure:**

   a. Description of the plight of the Moabites, 15:1-9
   b. Introduction to Moabite petition for asylum, 16:1-2
   c. The petition, 16:3-5
   d. The response, 16:6-14

F. **Old Coalitions Never Die, 17:1-14:**

1. **Historical situation:**

   a. Assyria experienced widespread troubles in the west in the 720s

   (1) Records (*ARAB* I §§ 802-3) indicate trouble in Tabal and Tyre

   (2) Chs. 15-17 indicate trouble in Damascus, Israel, and Moab, and perhaps Philistia

2. The text itself indicates several things:

   a. Widespread revolt in 728/7
   b. Phoenician army was defeated by the Assyrians
   c. Luli held out during entire reign of Shalmaneser
   d. Hoshea, king of Israel capitulated early in the campaign (cf. 2 Kgs 17:3)
3. **Structure:**
   a. Introductory oracle of destruction against Damascus and Ephraim, 1-3
   b. 1st description of the coming day of judgment, 4-6
   c. 2nd description of the day, 7-8
   d. 3rd description of the day, 9-11
   e. Conclusion, indicating that God will protect, 12-14

G. *Ambassadors from Ethiopia, 18:1-7:*

1. **Historical situation:**
   a. During second half of 8th century the 25th Ethiopian dynasty exerted increasing pressure on and control of the Delta.
   b. “The Ethiopians apparently sent special ambassadors along the Mediterranean seaboard . . . to explore local conditions and sentiments concerning the indecisive conflict with Assyrians,” (Hayes/Irvine, 253)
   c. “The Ethiopians were . . . attempting to preserve and secure friendly relations along the coast. However, their actions could only be understood as having anti-Assyrian objectives. Kingdoms struggling against Assyria no doubt looked on the Ethiopian initiatives as signals that they could expect military assistance in the future” (Hayes/Irvine, 254)

2. **Structure:**
   a. Introduction: woe statement on Ethiopians, 1-2a
   b. Order for messengers to go to Assyria and proclaim message, 2b-3
   c. Reasons for Isaiah’s positions, 4-6
   d. Conclusion: Zion to receive gifts from Assyria, 7

H. *Assyrian, Egyptian, and Israelite hope, 19:1-25:*
1. **Historical situation:**

   a. Sargon’s suppression of the Syro-Palestinian Anti-Assyrian coalition in 720 constitute the background for this chapter

   b. The Nimrud Prism (Gadd, 179-82; *TUAT* I 382; cf. 2 Kgs 17:1ff) Sargon reports the defeat of the Samarians:
      
      (1) 27,280 Israelites were exiled to Assyria
      (2) People from other lands brought in
      (3) Egypt and Arabia conquered

   c. Such events were significant for three reasons:
      
      (1) They had been prophesied of by Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah
      (2) Created idea that a new age was dawning
      (3) Deal with the Egyptian side of "Who do you trust?"

2. **Structure:**

   a. Yhwh comes to Egypt, 1
   b. Divine oracle–chaos in Egypt, 2-10
   c. Prophetic denunciation of Egypt’s wisdom, 11-15
   d. Five prophetic predictions, 16-26

I. **Prophetic demonstration, 20:1-6:**

1. **Historical situation:**

   a. This chapter gives an account of Isaiah’s radical actions in an attempt to stop Judean support for Ashdod’s anti-Assyrian policies.

   b. Other western states probably encouraged Ashdod’s actions

   c. When Assyria finally took action Judah was included

2. The chapter is a *prophetic narrative* reporting Isaiah’s specific actions, but
contains no direct statements from Isaiah

a. Isaiah’s actions were demonstratively against Judah’s participation in Ashdod’s rebellion.

b. His “walking naked” was to illustrate how captives would be led away.

c. Evidently, he was successful:

(1) Hezekiah did not join the revolt
(2) The promised help from Egypt did not materialize

3. **Structure:**

a. Divine oracle explaining Isaiah’s actions, 2

b. A summary of those actions, 3-6

4. This is a third-person report of what is ordinarily designated a symbolic action.

a. **Verses 3-6** are an interpretation of Isaiah's action spoken by God (about the prophet, rather than to him); it is the walking about like a prisoner of war which "portends" exile.

b. Some scholars have seen an element of magic in this particular activity of Isaiah, but the illustrative and interpretative features should not be overlooked either.

c. The phrase **sign and portent** is a hendiadys which serves to link inseparably the symbolic act with the future event.

(1) The activity lends another dimension above and beyond the

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proclaimed message.

(2) Saying that Egypt and Ethiopia were going into captivity both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt (4b), makes quite a statement.

(3) But the statement is emphasized or given deeper meaning when it is preceded by three years of Isaiah's demonstrative activity portraying that event.

(4) The designation applies to him only insofar as it connects him with the symbolic act—he is the one who did it.

(5) By walking naked and barefoot he was the sign (שטן הָעַט) which portended (הָשָׁמֵר môpēt) the captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia.

(6) Thus the symbolic act is closely linked with the prophet and his message regarding the future.

d. Second, the transition from demonstrative activity to the interpretation illustrates this (3b-4a)—As my servant Isaiah has . . . so shall the king of Assyria.

(1) The narrative employs the other side of the protasis/apodosis structure, found in the if/then clauses of omen material.

(2) Since the sign-action has been completed, the if/then structure is converted to an "as/so" (ka'[a]šer/kēn) structure.

(3) The narrative also resembles the Sittenkanon since it is similar to an omen that discusses a person walking around naked:

(4) (18) If he used to go around naked in his dreams a[nd . . .],

(19) then this man's worries do not approach him.7

7Kraus, "Sittenkanon," p. 97, lines 18-19.
(5) Isaiah walked around naked as a sign portending disaster, whereas this individual walked around in his dreams and therefore had no worries

J. **Oracle against the Sealand, 21:1-17:**

1. **Historical situation:**
   a. 714ff Sargon battled on several fronts—Anatolia (north-west), Urartu (north), Syrio-Palestine (west), Aramean and Chaldean tribes (Mesopotamia).
   b. 713/12 Merodach-baladan of Babylon took the offensive against Sargon.
   c. This speech was probably against an area in lower Mesopotamia since “Babylon . . . had enticed Judah to participate in anti-Assyrian action over Isaiah’s protests only shortly before” (Hayes/Irvine, 274).

2. **Structure:**
   a. Description of the attack on the south, 1b
   b. Prophetic vision of the event, 2-5
   c. Yhwh’s oracle, 6-7
   d. Watchman’s report, 8-9; cf. Ezek 3:17; Hab 2:1; Rev 14:8; 18:2
   e. Conclusion, 10
   f. Oracles on Dumah, Arabia, and Kedar, 11-17
      (1) Don't know identify of "Dumah" — means "silence" — possibly a word play with "Edom" based on sounds
      (2) Arabia/Kedar — various Arabic tribes.
      (3) Tema — an oasis in N. Arabia

K. **Judah uncovered, 22:1-14:**

1. **Historical situation:**
a. Probably occasioned by celebration following departure of Assyrian army in 711.

b. Action was taken against Judah, but it escaped major damage

c. Hezekiah’s sickness (ca. 713-712) would have occurred about the time he was planning his anti-Assyrian revolt.

d. During this sickness, Shebna probably assumed control of the state (cf. 22:15), since Hezekiah had no children at this time.

(1) Shebna is described in 22:15 as “the one over the household.”

(2) Shebna and his associates who participated in the revolt against Assyria, cf. ch. 20

(3) The Siloam tunnel was excavated during Shebna’s leadership–Hezekiah not mentioned in inscription

(4) After Hezekiah’s recovery, and probably due to the revolt against Assyria, Shebna was demoted from “master of the household” to secretary, cf. 36:3

2. Structure:

a. Denunciation of celebration of survival, 1-4
b. Description of past day of Yhwh, 5-8a
c. 2nd description of past day of Yhwh, 8b-11
d. 3rd description of past day of Yhwh, 12-13
e. The verdict of Yhwh, 14

3. NT Usage: Isa 22:13; 1 Cor 15:32 and Isa 22:22; Rev 3:7-8

a. NRS Isaiah 22:13 but instead there was joy and festivity, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating meat and drinking wine. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

b. NRS 1 Corinthians 15:32 If with merely human hopes I fought with wild animals at Ephesus, what would I have gained by it? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."
c. **ESV Isa 22:22:** And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

d. **ESV Rev 3:7-8:** And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of wthe holy one, xthe true one, ywho has the key of David, zwho opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. 8 I know your works. Behold, I have set before you aan open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

L. **Two condemned officials, 22:15-25:**

1. Follows events of previous verses

2. Judah’s leaders were to blame, especially Shebna

3. Eliakim, the replacement of Shebna, as “the one over the household” was no improvement.

4. **Structure:**

   a. Prophet’s report of commissioning, 15
   b. Condemnation of Shebna, 16-19

   (1) Tomb Possibly identified at Silwan in Kidron

   (2) "This is [the grave of Sehban] Yahu who is master of the household"

   (3) See article and picture

   c. Condemnation of Eliakim, 20-25

M. **Demise of Tyre, 23:1-18:**

1. Tyre’s significance illustrated in two ways:

   a. Important role in Mediterranean maritime commerce
b. Role played in international developments ca. 709

2. Throughout its history Tyre had strong commercial relationship with Egypt.

3. When in 709 the leaders of Cyprus and Phrygia capitulated to Sargon, Tyre’s influence was greatly reduced.

4. “Tyre stood to lose its commercial power in the eastern Mediterranean” (Hayes/Irvine, 289)

5. Isaiah celebrates this loss of importance attributing the events to Yhwh.

6. Three ways of understanding the 70 years
   a. Symbolic understanding of period of decline and revival
   b. 70 years of Babylonian captivity, cf. Jeremaih 25:11
   c. 70 years of Assyrian domination, 701-630 BC

7. Structure:
   a. Taunting song over the end of Tyrian sea power, 1-6
   b. Yhwh planned it, 7-12, 14
   c. Predictions of Tyre’s recovery, 15-18

X. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUDGMENT AND PROMISE, 24-27

A. Historical situation:

1. Assuming the speeches are arranged, for the most part, chronologically, these chapters “should belong to a period following 709” (Hayes/Irvine, 295).
   a. “The content, as well as the literary chronological context . . ., suggests that these chapters belong to the period of Judah’s revolt against the Assyrians in 705 and following—that is, to the period of general revolt throughout the empire at the time of Sargon’s death” (Hayes/Irvine, 295).
   b. Whereas Isaiah seems to have opposed earlier revolts (cf. 22:1ff), he seems to have supported this one, proclaiming that the
Assyrians would be destroyed (10:16-27; 14:24-27; 33:1).

c. Even so, he argued that Judah must exercise patience and allow Assyria to carry out its mission (10:5-6; 29).

d. “But in 705, Isaiah saw the inauguration of ‘plans formed long ago, plans faithful and sure” (25:1)” (Hayes/Irvine, 296).

2. These chapters refer to a destruction of a portion of the city (cf. 24:10; 25:2-3; 26:5; 27:10), which evidently referred to “. . . the fortified citadel in Jerusalem garrisoned with troops, probably from various countries, charged with military supervision of Jerusalem and Judah” (Hayes/Irvine, 296).

3. This citadel was probably constructed following Judah’s participation in the Ashdod revolt of 712/11.

4. Certain events seem already to have taken place:

   a. Assyrian citadel destroyed
   b. Widespread revolt throughout the empire, 24:14-16
   c. Move to expand held by Hezekiah was already under way, 26:15
   d. We are not sure whether the religious reforms referred to in 27:9 are referred to in the past or in progress (cf. 2 Kgs 18:4a)

B. **Literary features:** The chapters have a liturgical character, indicating they came to be used on festive occasions

C. **Structure:**

   1. Yhwh destroys the present world order, 24:1-13
   2. Shouting is proclaimed to the ends of the earth, 24:14-16
   3. A proclamation of judgment, 24:17-23
   5. Affirmation of future good times, 25:6-12
   6. A song of triumph, 26:1-6
   7. A prayer of trust, 26:7-19
   8. An oracle of assurance, 26:20-27:1
9. A new song of the vineyard, 27:2-6
10. The time of guilt is past, 27:7-11
11. The Great Israel to come, 27:12-13

D. **NT Usage:** Isa 25:8; 1 Cor 15:54 and Rev 21:4; Isa 27:9; Rom 11:27b

1. **NRS Isaiah 25:8** he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

   a. **NRS 1 Corinthians 15:54** When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

   b. **ESV Rev 21:4:** He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

2. **NRS Isaiah 27:9** Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be expiated, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: when he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones crushed to pieces, no sacred poles or incense altars will remain standing.

3. **NRS Romans 11:27** "And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

**XI. WOES AGAINST ISRAEL AND ASSYRIA, 28-33**

A. **Historical situation:**

1. Reflect the last days of Ephraim in which rebellion broke out 728/7 and not completely suppressed until Sargon in 720

2. Between these dates Shalmaneser was continually involved with this western revolt, but could not put it to rest.

B. Drunkards of Ephraim and Foolish leaders of Jerusalem, 28:1-29

1. **Historical situation:**
The text presupposes “. . . a situation in which the country is again moving toward rebellion against Assyria. Since there is no reference in this chapter to any appeal to Egypt for help (see chapters 30-31), and an early stage in the planning would seem to be the most likely setting” (Hayes/Irvine, 322).

“probably the months following Hoshea’s initial submission to Shalmaneser (probably in 727) but prior to Ephraim’s sending of ambassadors to Egypt to secure aid (726). Late in 727 or early in 726 would seem to be the historical horizons” (Hayes/Irvine, 322-3).

2. **Structure:**
   a. Denunciation of the leaders of Samaria, 1-13
   b. Denunciation to leaders in Jerusalem sympathetic to Samaria, 14-22
   c. Yhwh will not punish forever, 23-29

C. **NT Usage:** Isa 28:11-12; 1 Cor 14:21; Isa 28:16; Rom 9:33; 10:11; 1 Pet 2:6

1. **NRS Isaiah 28:11** Truly, with stammering lip and with alien tongue he will speak to this people, to whom he has said, "This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose"; yet they would not hear.

2. **NRS 1 Corinthians 14:21** In the law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people; yet even then they will not listen to me," says the Lord.

3. **NRS Isaiah 28:16** therefore thus says the Lord GOD, See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: "One who trusts will not panic."

4. **NRS Romans 9:33** as it is written, "See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

5. **NRS Romans 10:11** The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame."

6. **NRS 1 Peter 2:6** For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
D. Zion threatened, yet saved, 29:1-24

1. Continued prophetic attack of those who advocated revolting against Assyria

2. Prophet asserted that Zion would be defended by Yhwh

3. **Structure:**
   a. Jerusalem: threatened, attacked, and saved, 1-8
   b. Address to the Jerusalemites, 9-12
   c. Condemnation of superficial loyalty, 13-14
   d. Denunciation of political intrigue, 15-16
   e. Future reverses the present, 17-24

4. **NT Usage:** Isa 29:10; Rom 11:8; Isa 29:13-14; Matt 15:8-9; Mk 7:6-7; 1 Cor 1:19

   a. **NRS Isaiah 29:10** For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep; he has closed your eyes, you prophets, and covered your heads, you seers.

   b. **NRS Romans 11:8** as it is written, "God gave them a sluggish spirit, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."

   c. **NRS Isaiah 29:13** The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote;[^14] so I will again do amazing things with this people, shocking and amazing. The wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the discernment of the discerning shall be hidden.

   d. **NRS Matthew 15:8** 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.'

   e. **NRS Mark 7:6** He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you
hypocrites, as it is written, ’This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; ’ in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’

f. NRS 1 Corinthians 1:19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

E. Woe to those who look to Egypt, 30:1-33

1. **Historical situation:**

   a. In 732 Hoshea led revolt which removed Pekah, 2 Kgs 15:30
   
   b. Tiglath-pileser had already conquered many cities in the area, 2 Kgs 15:29
   
   c. Hoshea was recognized as king, but tribute was imposed on Israel by Assyria, (ANET,284)
   
   d. By 728 Hoshea became involved in anti-Assyrian policies, sending to Egypt for help (cf. 2 Kgs 17:4)
   
   e. Allowing such ambassadors to pass through Judah meant that the southern kingdom was offering some kind of help.
   
   f. This oracle addresses this situation.

2. **Structure:**

   a. Woe denunciation of Israelite appeal to Egypt, 1-5
   
   b. Oracle on the beasts of the Negeb, 6-7
   
   c. A prediction of defeat for Israel’s plans, 8-18
   
   d. A prediction of Zion’s salvation and Assyria’s destruction, 19-33

F. Egypt is not divine, but human, 31:1-9

1. Presupposes same historical situation as previous chapter

2. **Structure:**

   a. Woe denunciation of Israelite appeal to Egypt, 1-3; cf. Deut 17:16
G. A righteous king should reign, 32:1-20

1. **Historical situation:**
   a. Belongs to period of Israel’s revolt against Shalmaneser; the 9th year of Hoshea, 2 Kgs 17:1
   b. Hoshea was not as evil as previous kings, 2 Kgs 17:2
   c. At first Hoshea became Shalmaneser’s vassal, 2 Kgs 17:3
   d. Hoshea became involved in some kind of rebellion against Shalmaneser, (ca. 726) 2 Kgs 17:4a
   e. Hoshea was arrested and put in prison, 2 Kgs 17:4b
   f. Sometime after this Shalmaneser invaded the land, placing Samaria under siege for three years, 2 Kgs 17:5
   g. These verses probably belong “to the period after Hoshea’s arrest but before the fall, and probably the siege, of Samaria” (Hayes/Irvine, 353).

2. **Structure:**
   a. Depiction of the righteous rule of a king, 1-8
   b. Call for women of Samaria to lament, 9-13
   c. Proclamation of good time to come, 14-20

H. Yhwh is for us, 33:1-24

1. **Literary composition:**
   a. Parallels in structure and content some of the psalms
   b. Contains petition, distress, confession, divine oracles, cultic images and terms.
c. Hayes/Irvine (361) “... prose that this text is a unity, composed by the prophet as a text for use in some major festival in which Israelites from the north, fleeing the Assyrian devastation of the countryside, were integrated and welcomed into the worshiping community of the Jerusalem temple and into the residency of the city.”

2. **Structure:**

a. Prophetic denunciation of Assyria, 1
b. Petition of the Israelites, 2
c. Confession of faith by the Israelites, 3-6
d. Description of distress, 7-9
e. Divine oracle, 10-14a
f. Inquiry of the Israelites, 14b
g. Response to the inquiry, 15-16
h. Prophetic description of the Israelites’ new condition, 17-20
i. Oath of therefugees, 21-24

XII. **A SECOND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUDGMENT AND PROMISE, 34-35**

A. **Historic background:**

1. “On the basis of the eschatological or apocalyptic outlook of these chapters, numerous commentators deny that these chapters were originally spoken or written by Isaiah and assign them to the late exilic or postexilic period” (Willis, 321).

2. However, just as good a case can be made for assigning these chapters to the same period as 28-33.

B. **Structure:**

1. Description of God’s wrath on Assyria and allies, 34:1-8
2. Dismal conditions produced by the destruction produced by this wrath, 34:9-17
3. Restoration of the penitent Judeans, ch. 35.
“WHOM SHALL WE TRUST, YHWH OR ASSYRIA?”: THE HISTORICAL TRANSITION FROM ASSYRIAN THREAT TO BABYLONIAN EXILE, 36-39

XIII. SIEGE OF JERUSALEM, 36-39 (cf Willis, 326ff.)

A. **Literary problems:** in the accounts of Sennacherib’s invasion (Isaiah 36-39, 2 Kgs 19-20, and 2 Chron 32

1. Details in each of the three accounts that are not in other two.

2. Isaiah 36-39 do not seem to be in chronological order

3. Dating of Sennacherib’s initial invasion a problem as Willis’ summary indicates:

   . . . Isaiah 36:1 Dates Sennacherib’S invasion in “the fourteenth yer of King Hezekiah” (cf.2 Kings 18:13). Sennacherib’s annals show that this invastion took place in 701 B.C. The date of Hezekiah’s accession to the throne is therefore 715 B.C. On the other hand, 2 Kings 18:10 says Samaria fell to the Assyrians in the sixth year of Hezekiah. But as the fall of Samaria occurred in 721 B.C., this would date the beginning of Hezekiah’s reign in 727 B.C. Some scholars conjecture that Hezekiah began serving as coregent with his father Ahaz about 729 B.C. and became sole king in 715 B.C. (So S. J. Schultz, “Hezekiah,” *WBE*, vol. 1, p. 791). Others suggest a conjectural emendation of 2 Kings 18:13 and Isaiah 36:1 to read “the twenty-fourth year of King Hezekiah” (703 B.C.), arguing that Hezekiah took the throne of Judah in 727 B.C. and that Sennacherib began his advance on the Palestinian area about 703 B.C. (so H. H. Rowley, “Hezekiah’s Reform and Rebellion,” *BJRL* 44 [1961], p. 410; Young, *Isaiah*, vol. 2, p. 542). It seems wise to admit that there is a problem in the biblical text and to await additional information before making a concrete decision” (327-8).

4. Isaiah 37:9 states “Tirhakah was “king of Ethiopia” during this time, which would make him 10 years old, since he did not become king until 689.

   a. Some think this is an anachronism

   b. Others that it is evidence for two invasions by Senn, one in 701 and the other in 689.
   a. Isaiah 36-37 may contain two accounts of the same event
   b. Senn may have invaded Judah on two occasions, 701 and 689
   c. The text describes only one invasion, but two sieges

B. Theological Issues:

1. Trust– Egypt, Hezekiah, the Lord, Assyria?
2. This subject permeates the pericope and serves as a springboard for 40-66–Trust Yhwh in/through Exile, or Babylonian?


1. Assyrians overrun fortified cities of Judah, 36:1
2. Large army under “Rabshakeh” sent to Jerusalem to persuade surrender, 36:2-10
3. The Rabshakeh” attempts to convince Judeans to surrender, 36:11-22
4. Hezekiah asks for Yhwh’s help, 37:1-7

D. Tirahakah’s March Against Sennacherib, 37:8-9b: whereupon “Sennacherib retreats to Libnah (probably Tell es-Safi in the Judean Shephelah at the mouth of the Vale of Elah), about ten miles north of Lachis, and sends for the Rabshakeh and his troops at Jerusalem to come to his aid immediately. The Rabshakeh does so, and the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem is lifted temporarily” (Willis, 335).

E. Second Assyrian Siege—Jerusalem Delivered, 37:9c-38:

1. Realizing his mistake, Senn sends a large army to Jerusalem to renew the siege, 9c-13
2. Hezekiah prays to Yhwh to deliver the city, 14-20
3. Isaiah sends word that Assyrians will not take the city; God’s death angel
destroys the Assyrian army, 21-35

4. Senn returns to Assyria; 20 years later his own sons kill him, 36-38

F. Hezekiah Spared, 38:1-6, 21-22, 7-8:

1. “Since Hezekiah reigned twenty-nine years (cf. 2 Kings 18:2; 2 Chron. 29:1) and the Lord lengthened his life by fifteen years (2 Kings 20:6; Isa. 38:5), the events recorded here must have occurred in the fourteenth year of his reign (701 B.C.), undoubtedly a few months before the Assyrian attack,” (Willis, 340).

2. Common sense shows that events in this chapter are not in chronological order since Hezekiah would not have asked for a “sign” (vs. 22), after a sign had been given (vss. 7-8) and he already thanked God (vss. 10-20).

3. The correct order is in 2 Kgs 20:1-11

4. His illness was Yhwh’s punishment for infidelity, but his repentance and prayer added 15 years.

G. Hezekiah’s Praise of God, 38:9-20: the king reflects on his brush with death (10-14) and thanks God for saving him (15-20).

H. Announcement of Babylonian Exile, ch. 39:

1. Judah, through her own experience, as well as watching the sister kingdom to the north, should have known that trust in God rather than anything else was what was demanded.

2. Yet, when Merodach-baladan’s ambassadors arrive, Hezekiah shows them his military wealth and power and makes an alliance with Babylon instead of trusting in God.

3. The result is that Senn invades Judah is given a foretaste of what will come in the future.

4. This sets the stage for the rest of the book for 40-55

a. Ch. 39 announces the exile
b. Chs 40-55 “the prophet declares that when this punishment turns God’s people back to him he will overthrow their captors and restore them to their land, just as he devastated Assyria earlier and redeemed his faithful ones” (Willis, 347).