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# CRITICAL NOTES

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## THE ADDED YEARS OF HEZEKIAH'S LIFE

An Inquiry into the Significance of this Period for  
Isaiah Criticism

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### FOREWORD.

THE interpretation of the book of Isaiah presented in the following pages is an attempt to bring into somewhat of a system views, some of which have been tentatively held by the author for a number of years in his teaching, but the proper correlation of which had not been satisfactorily worked out. In common doubtless with many other students of Old Testament times, he has felt keenly a few of the objections which have been urged against the unity of the book, and yet has turned with increasing disappointment from critical hypotheses which have resulted in the disintegration of one of the noblest specimens of sacred literature. The historical background which is proposed for the separate discourses may be plausible enough in each case, but a feeling of helplessness results as we try repeatedly to shift the scene from age to age in a continuous exposition. To those who have had this experience, and who believe that here we have no collection of oracles from different centuries and various unknown writers, a new endeavor to solve some of the problems may not seem superfluous. No claim is

made that a solution has been found which is free from difficulties. Some have been anticipated and dealt with in the discussion. Others probably exist which have escaped the attention of the author. Those who come to the subject with opinions already formed as to the exact age when certain religious ideas made their appearance in prophetic teaching will naturally object to some of the conclusions. No consideration is asked for the views here presented beyond a sympathetic study of the messages of Isaiah in the light of the events and experiences which it is contended are the historical background out of which they arose. If they shall become more luminous, and cumbered with fewer difficulties, it will be felt that some advance has been made toward a better understanding of the book and an easier defense of its unity.

Frequent reference has been made for the history of the time to the standard work of Rogers, *A History of Babylonia and Assyria*, in two volumes, sixth edition, revised and enlarged (1915). For brevity these have been indicated simply by the initial, together with volume and page, thus, R II 352. Those who care to look further into the inscriptions will find them in the two series of small volumes entitled *Records of the Past*. The translation of the Taylor Prism, by Rogers, may be consulted in Vol. VI of the New Series, pp. 80-101; that of the Bellino Cylinder, by Talbot, in the First Series, Vol. I, pp. 23-32; while the Cylinder of Cyrus, so far as its broken condition permitted, has been translated by Sayce in Vol. V of the New Series, pp. 164-168.

On a subject with such voluminous literature as the study of Isaiah, it is perhaps impossible to say whether much originality has been attained. The writer is, however, responsible for the opinions advanced, and he has not intentionally borrowed from anyone without giving proper credit.

#### I. THE CHRONOLOGICAL DIFFICULTY.

It is not the purpose of this opening chapter to set forth any intricate solution of the chronological puzzle presented by the dates of Hezekiah's reign. The aim is

rather to propose one which is plausible and natural, and which at the same time gives new meaning to certain events of the king's life, and also furnishes a true historical background for the period we are to study.

Two dates have come to be regarded as practically fixed by Assyrian records. One is the fall of Samaria, which took place in 722 B. C., and the other Sennacherib's invasion of Palestine, which belongs to the year 701. Now the first of these is, in 2 Ki 18:10, said to have happened in the sixth year of Hezekiah, while the second is in v.13 of the same chapter assigned to his fourteenth year. This is not, however, the greatest difficulty. We may pass it by for the present, as several more or less reasonable explanations have been offered. A more serious one grows out of the fact that we seem compelled to place the invasion which desolated Judah toward the very end of Hezekiah's twenty-nine years reign. It is difficult to harmonize this with the picture given us in the Scripture narratives. The impression produced by the reading of these is that the king's reign ended prosperously and was attended by much that gave it peculiar glory. But while we do not forget that the deliverance of Jerusalem was a glorious event and one of the outstanding episodes of all Judah's history, yet the country was left in ruins.

This circumstance has led some scholars to follow another chronological clue and seek a more satisfactory ending for the period. It is pointed out that the coalition of Syria and Ephraim against Judah (Isa. 7:1, 2), which Assyrian events would require to be placed about 735 B. C., must have come at the very beginning of Ahaz' reign (2 Ki. 15:37 with 16:5). This is understood to be the absolute beginning of the sixteen years assigned to him, and not the beginning of his sole rule after a regency with his father Jotham. This would make Hezekiah come to the throne about 720 or 719 B. C., and, of course, extend his rule to 691 or 690. But this sets aside the specific statement of 2 Ki. 18:9, 10, that he was already in his sixth year when Samaria fell, and therefore must have come to the throne about 727 B. C. It also makes the

account in Chronicles of his early efforts to enlist the people of northern Israel in a movement toward religious reform (2 Ch. 30:1ff) seem less probable, as it would have been a hazardous undertaking after Samaria became an Assyrian province.

In view of the difficulties which beset this theory, another solution is here proposed. In the interest of clearness, it will first be briefly stated and afterwards defended. It is that Hezekiah's sickness took place after the invasion of 701 B. C., as it is recorded in all the narratives. That after three years more he associated with himself as king his son Manasseh, then a boy of twelve, intending as soon as he could safely do so to give over political affairs into other hands, and devote himself for the period of his added years to the religious welfare of his people. Thus would the years after 698 B. C. be accredited to Manasseh's long reign of fifty-five, which any other scheme for setting forward the close of Hezekiah's reign would be compelled correspondingly to shorten.

Perhaps the first objection raised to this view would be that, according to the commonly received opinion, Manasseh was not born until some time after his father's illness. But the idea, of course, is only an inference from the supposition that he began to reign at the time of Hezekiah's death. It is true that Josephus (*Ant.* X, II. 1) makes much of the idea that Hezekiah's grief in his sickness was not on account of his reluctance to give up life, but because he had no son, and that God through the prophet promised both to restore him and to give him an heir to the throne. Of all this there is nothing in the Scripture narratives. The only passages that have any particular bearing on the question are *Isa.* 39:7, where the reference seems to be to descendants at a remote period of the future to which the prediction refers; and *Isa.* 38:19, which accords much better with the contrary view: "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: The father to the sons (*bānīm*) shall make known thy truth."

We may now examine the reasons assigned for placing

the sickness of Hezekiah and the embassy of Merodach-baladan before the invasion of Sennacherib. All of them appear to be inconclusive. One is that Hezekiah could not have shown such treasures as he did to the ambassadors (Isa. 39:2), after the desolation of his country and the payment of a heavy tribute to Sennacherib. It was no doubt a great strain upon his resources to raise such an amount on demand. Rogers (*History of Babylonia and Assyria*, II, 371 n. 1) estimates this at \$5,650,000 in our money. To pay it he was obliged to take all the silver in the house of Jehovah and in the treasures of the king's house, and also cut off gold from the doors and door-posts of the temple (2 Ki. 18:15, 16). But how long the treasury was allowed to remain thus depleted is another question. There is no reason to think the city was impoverished. It had not been through a protracted siege, probably only a blockade for a brief period. It would have been deemed necessary to take immediate steps, after the withdrawal of Sennacherib from the land, to replenish the treasury, if for no other reason, to aid in the rehabilitation of the wasted country districts. Menahem of Israel had raised a thousand talents in an emergency to buy the aid of Pul of Assyria by taking a fixed sum from all the wealthy men of his realm (2 Ki. 15:19, 20). Jehoiakim of Judah at a later time raised the amount demanded by Pharaoh-Necho by exacting it of the people according to their property valuation (2 Ki. 23:35). If such drastic measures as this were not resorted to in the present instance, a people who have been known as a race of money lenders would not have been at a loss to devise means for supplying funds for the emergency. It is worth while to observe also that the treasures shown by Hezekiah did not consist altogether of gold and silver, but of costly articles of various kinds, and of warlike equipment (Isa. 39:2). Besides it is stated in 2 Ch. 32:23 that much had come in from other peoples in the way of gifts of honor after the deliverance of the city from Sennacherib. This argument does not therefore appear to be of great weight.

Others are of even less consequence. For example, it is

said that no mention is made in Hezekiah's psalm (Isa. 38:9-20) of the deliverance of the city, and that this would be unaccountable, if that deliverance was past. But the psalm was on a single definite subject. It was intended to celebrate his recovery from what seemed a fatal illness, and there was no occasion to refer to that which had in all probability been commemorated in other psalms of the period.

Then it is said further that the promise made to Hezekiah at the time of his prayer for recovery from his illness, that he and the city of Jerusalem should be delivered out of the hand of the king of Assyria (Isa. 38:6), proves this deliverance to have been yet in the future. But what was of more pressing concern to the inhabitants of the city than their future safety? From a human standpoint it was altogether probable that Sennacherib would return to the west land at no distant date and make another attempt on Jerusalem. The promise made to Hezekiah is therefore taken naturally to mean that, for the period to which his life was extended, he and his city should be safe from further aggression.

But it is said finally, that at the time following the invasion of Sennacherib Merodach-baladan was no longer king of Babylon. It is necessary therefore to give some consideration to this contention. The facts seem to be these. Merodach-baladan had been already twice king of Babylon. He had ruled over the city, together with all southern Babylonia, for twelve years during the reign of Sargon II, from 721 to 709 B. C., and had held his own against all the power of Assyria (R. II, 316ff, 336ff). He had himself made king again in 702 B. C., and was dislodged after a reign of nine months by Sennacherib (R. II, 356ff). A man by the name of Bel-ibni, of little force and ability apparently, but wholly subservient to Sennacherib, was placed on the throne. He is in the several lists put down as king for the next three years (R. I, 514, 533, 535), but according to McCurdy (*History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, II, p. 275), this mock kingship "was intended merely as a compromise and makeshift till the time should come for the formal annexation of

the whole country." While Sennacherib was engaged in his campaign in Palestine in 701 B. C. rebellion broke out again in Babylon. Bel-ibni was forced into a position hostile to Assyria, while Merodach-baladan joined in the revolt (R. II, 373f). If we may trust his former record, he was the chief figure in the rebellion, and the one to whom the populace would turn as the only man capable of carrying the struggle to a successful issue. With the Babylonians then hostile to the rule of Sennacherib, refusing ever to acknowledge him as king because of his ignoring their time-honored customs as to the manner of his assuming the royal prerogative (R. II, 355f); and with Bel-ibni helpless against public sentiment, while Merodach-baladan was apparently the brains and organizer of the revolt, there does not seem to be any serious objection to his being styled king of Babylon, a position he had held during the greater part of the time from the beginning of Sargon's reign until that very day. Moreover, one of the accounts (2 Ch. 32:31) does not mention him by name, but simply speaks of "the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon." We may suppose that Hezekiah's sickness followed soon after the deliverance of Jerusalem. The general note of time, "in those days," found in all the accounts is sufficiently explained by the fact that in all the narratives the disastrous ending of Sennacherib's campaign had been made to include the circumstances of his death at the hands of his sons twenty years later. The news of these events would soon reach Babylonia, for according to Rogers (II, 373) "news traveled far and fast in the ancient orient." Nothing would be of more importance to Merodach-baladan, knowing the certainty that Sennacherib would soon give his attention to the uprising in Babylon, than seeking to stir up more trouble for him in the west land. Therefore, hearing of Hezekiah's successful resistance, and of his sickness and recovery, the opportunity offered itself, under the guise of congratulations on his recovery and interest in the reported wonder connected with it, of finding what chance there was of stirring up a new revolt in Palestine.



If now this order of events is adopted, the simplest explanation of the reference of Sennacherib's campaign to the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (2 Ki. 18:13—Isa. 36:1) is that it was incorporated in the text from the marginal note of some scribe. Reasoning from the fact that the king lived fifteen years after this event, he concluded that it must have happened fifteen years before the end of his twenty-nine years' reign, and therefore in his fourteenth year.

Having thus shown that the recovery of Hezekiah and the embassy of Merodach-baladan may have come after the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, the order in which they are recorded in all the narratives, we may proceed to inquire whether there are any positive evidences that Hezekiah associated Manasseh with himself in the rule and devoted himself mainly to religious affairs.

In the first place, it was not uncommon for a ruler to make his successor king during his own lifetime. David had made Solomon king while he yet lived (1 Ki. 1:32ff). Jehoshaphat, between whose reign and that of Hezekiah there are remarkable similarities, had done the same with Jehoram (2 Ki. 8:16), whose rule was almost as disastrous for Judah as that of Manasseh. It would have been perfectly natural for Hezekiah, after the stormy period through which he had passed, to desire that his later years should be spent in more peaceful occupations. We have a hint of this in his psalm (Isa. 38:10), where the most probable translation is, "I said, In the tranquillity (*dōmî*, 'cessation,' 'quiet') of my days I shall go into the gates of Sheol." On his restoration and the assurance that he should be safe from the king of Assyria, more than ever would he feel free to give himself to that which was most upon his heart. We may suppose that he continued in his sole rule for three years after the departure of Sennacherib, until the land had in a measure recovered from the ravages of war (Isa. 37:30), and then made Manasseh joint ruler with himself. This from a mere question of policy would have some things to commend it. It would serve to allay the suspicions of Sennacherib that Hezekiah

might again stir up trouble among his western dependencies. Apparently he regarded him as the ringleader in the former revolt (R. II, 365). The knowledge that he was giving himself to the religious interests of his people would be reassuring.

But there are other evidences that Hezekiah was deeply interested in religious matters, and felt that to the neglect of Jehovah worship were traceable calamities that had already come upon his people. According to the Chronicler's account he had begun his reign by reorganizing the temple services and reinstating the passover. His appeals to his own people and to those of northern Israel for co-operation were based upon the assertion that religious neglect and unfaithfulness were the real causes of their misfortunes (2 Ch. 29:6-9; 30:7-9). There would now be the added conviction that the later disasters were also caused by sin against Jehovah. It may be that some of Hezekiah's ideas of religion at this time were a little shallow, as were Josiah's at a later period. They seem to have been concerned chiefly with formal worship. Some things in his psalm indicate his cherished desire for the rest of his life. It is possible that we have in the difficult expression, "I shall go softly" (Isa. 38:15), a reference to this. The word '*eddaddeh*, from *dadhah*, is found elsewhere only in Ps. 42:4 (Heb. 5). There the idea seems to be that of "leading in solemn procession" to the house of God. If it is the same here, the reference would be to the part he desired to take in the processions connected with the temple worship. However this may be, we have in v. 20 a clear declaration of his purpose: "Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of Jehovah."

If the ideas here advocated are correct, they add new significance to the events of the period we are studying. Their bearing upon the larger questions of Isaiah criticism may be deferred for the present. But now we cannot fail to note the additional light thrown on some things connected with the king's illness and the coming of the ambassadors from Babylon. The prayer of Heze-

kiah, when told by the prophet that he must die, has always seemed a strange utterance. George Matheson in his *Representative Men of the Bible* (II, 256) discourses upon the paradoxical fact of a man facing death, and yet pleading as the reason why he should be spared his own rectitude. Usually in such extremity men are oppressed with a sense of their own unworthiness. Paradoxical it truly is, if this incident had only a personal bearing. But remembering Hezekiah's deep interest in the religious welfare of the people, his efforts in the past for their reformation, and his ardent desire for the future, the plea seems natural. It was that Jehovah would remember the good he had done and spare him yet to devote himself to his cherished purpose. Also Isaiah's displeasure in the matter of the ambassadors gains new significance, if this incident happened after the deliverance of the city from Sennacherib. Always counseling trust in Jehovah for the salvation of the state, as against shrewd political maneuvering and alliances, it is easy to see how he must have felt on this occasion. That the king, so soon after his godless politicians had brought Jerusalem to the verge of destruction by alliances against Assyria, should again receive with such consideration ambassadors of another power, and withal from the sworn enemy of Sennacherib their overlord, was a proceeding fraught with the greatest danger, and was worthy of the severest rebuke. This order of events also deprives of force the contention that Isaiah could not have spoken of a future danger from Babylon when the immediate danger was an Assyrian invasion. The Assyrian crisis was now in the past. Hezekiah's strange answer to the prophet's prediction, "Good is the word of Jehovah" (Isa. 39:8), is probably to be taken as the words of a man who now saw the real significance of his act, and meekly accepted God's sentence as just, while he humbly clung to the assurance that the evil had been postponed beyond his own days. This transaction with the ambassadors is elsewhere spoken of as the outstanding sin of Hezekiah's life and is ascribed to pride (2 Ch. 32:25, 26, 31). Per-

haps as he showed the ambassadors his resources and the fortifications of the city, and recounted his own part in its defense, he was led to glory in these things, and forgot the oft repeated doctrine of Isaiah, that in quietness and confidence is strength (Ch. 30:15), and that the fear of Jehovah is treasure (33:6). If so, we are assured that he humbled himself (2 Ch. 32:26), and we may think of him as facing the added years of his life with no less interest in public worship, but with a deeper appreciation of the religious needs of his people.

We may now, before we go on to consider this period of the king's life, give a brief survey of the situation at its beginning. It has probably been observed that we do not here accept the theory, supported by some scholars, of a second invasion by Sennacherib a number of years afterward directed against Egypt, during which he made another attempt to compel the surrender of Jerusalem, and at which time occurred the great deliverance, a plague overtaking his army in the neighborhood of Pelusium. The theory seems to rest on rather slender historical evidence, and besides would require us to believe that the Scripture narrators have woven together two campaigns widely separated in time and circumstances. Placing then the salvation of the city in 701 B. C., what was the outlook? There is some doubt as to the precise situation on account of uncertainty as to the date to which Isa. 22:1-14 is to be referred. By some it is placed immediately after the withdrawal of Sennacherib's army; but by the majority of scholars, perhaps, it is placed earlier during one of the investments of the city. In any case it is a somber prophecy and presents a serious difficulty to the interpreter, to account for the sudden change in tone from Isaiah's confident predictions in the supreme crisis of the city. But this difficulty is greatly relieved when we consider that the change was not one affecting the prophet's faith in Jehovah and the ultimate triumph of his purposes, but only reveals his grievous disappointment over the unresponsiveness of the people. Perhaps we should not be far wrong in assuming that, after the

first days of excitement following the deliverance, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were much the same they had been before. The disciples of Isaiah, of whom Hezekiah was one, had received a great uplift for their faith through the evidences of Jehovah's workings in their recent history. Others perhaps saw in them only the ordinary fortunes that come to men and nations. Many were bearing grievous losses and burdens as a result of the cruelties and desolation of war. Two things may have had a sobering effect upon the people and pointed to better things. One was the apparently hopeless illness of the king and the wonder connected with his restoration (Isa. 38:7, 88). The other was Hezekiah's own penitence and that of his people after his lapse in the matter of the ambassadors from Babylon (2 Ch. 32:26). These things gave promise that the efforts of Isaiah and Hezekiah for the religious awakening of the people during the years that followed might not go unrewarded. Jehovah had been gracious, he had promised relief from Assyria. Might he not do marvels for them if they should turn to him? In view of what we know to have followed in the days of Manasseh, when the doom of the nation was finally sealed (2 Ki. 21:10-15; 24:3, 4), the period was one presenting tremendous issues. It was truly the day of grace for Judah.

## II. GLIMPSES INTO AN UNEXPLORED PERIOD.

There is something fascinating about an inquiry into the state of things in Judah and Jerusalem during the fifteen years following Sennacherib's invasion. What were Isaiah and Hezekiah doing? Hezekiah is the only man who ever knew the precise time of his death, and yet was free to act for so long a time in the light of that sobering knowledge. What great ideas and undertakings must have engaged his thoughts and those of the prophet whose whole soul had been occupied for nearly forty years with the fortunes of his people? When there is added to this human interest in the actors the possibility, not to say probability, that there were conditions exist-

ing and events happening in the world of that day which would throw great light on portions of the book of Isaiah, the question becomes one of absorbing interest.

Hitherto but little attention has been given to this period for several reasons. Almost no external history is recorded of Manasseh's reign. The narratives are occupied with the religious decline and debasing idolatry which were the outstanding features of his time. Naturally there has been little inspiration to look for great and significant things in a reign of such unrelieved darkness. We are not told at what time of Manasseh's rule his persecution of the Jehovah worshippers occurred. The common opinion seems to have been that it followed close upon his accession; perhaps because of the tradition that Isaiah suffered martyrdom at this time, and the belief that Hezekiah was dead. But this could hardly have been, since he was only a boy of twelve when he began to reign, and the sins of the time are not charged to his counselors but to himself. We are given to understand that it was his own deliberate policy which ended Judah's day of salvation and made it henceforth a doomed nation (2 Ki. 24:3, 4). Again those who have extended Hezekiah's rule down to 690 B. C. or later have been interested in these years chiefly for the light which they might throw upon the circumstances of his own reign. Yet, while our positive information as to the period is meager, it is not difficult to draw some conclusions as to its general character which have a high degree of probability, and which will prepare the way for the discussion that is to follow.

(I) We may conclude that the seductions of idolatry, which later won over Manasseh and involved himself and his country in ruin, were even now becoming a live issue and a threatening danger to Judah. It would be interesting to inquire into the practise of the Assyrian monarchs with reference to the religion of conquered states. Shalmaneser III says of the cities of a certain prince encountered by him on one of his western campaigns, "My gods I brought into his temples, I made a

feast in his palaces" (R. II, 226). Sennacherib says of a region devastated by him (Bellino Cylinder, 1, 20): "That district I settled again. One ox, ten sheep, ten goats (these twenty beasts being the best of every kind), I appointed (*as a sacrifice*) to the gods of Assyria, my Lords, in every township." To this the translator of the inscription, H. F. Talbot, appends the note, "Into the conquered country he introduced the Assyrian worship, and, of course, made due provision for the support of the priests, and sacrifices to the gods." Rogers states in connection with Tiglathpileser's capture of Gaza, "The worship of the god Ashur was introduced along with that of the other gods native to the place" (II, 287). The effect of this policy had already been felt in northern Israel at the fall of Samaria. McCurdy writes (*H. P. & M.*, I, p. 69): "The old religion became extinct in Samaria, because the priests had been deported after the destruction of the city, doubtless with a view of preventing the revival of patriotic feeling among the remaining inhabitants." The mingling of various forms of worship, combined with a superstitious fear of Jehovah, "the god of the land," among the colonists from various foreign regions, is described in 2 Ki. 17:29-33. The country of Judah had been overrun by Sennacherib, and the cities he had spoiled, as he tells us, were cut off from Hezekiah's territory and given to the kings of Ashdod, Ekron and Gaza (Taylor Prism III, 23-26). What effect this had upon the religion of the country districts it is easy to imagine. McCurdy says (*H. P. & M.*, I, p. 341) that "even the vassalage of one nation to another brought with it at least an outward acknowledgment of the gods of the suzerain."

But really there is no need to appeal to this custom of Assyrian kings in order to prove that there must have been at his time serious danger of a return to idolatry among the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah. The sudden changes from Jehovah worship to idolatry, or the reverse, between the reigns of father and son from Uzziah to Manasseh, show clearly that it was not purely a personal matter of the character of the ruler, but a

question of party. The heathen party was never dead at this period, but only waiting an opportunity to bring about a reaction against strict Jehovah worship. Isaiah earlier in his ministry had lamented the fact that customs from the east were invading the realm and that the land was full of idols (Isa. 2:6,8). If chapter I of his prophecy is to be assigned to the time of Sennacherib's invasion, as it is by most critics, we have positive evidence that, after the reforms of Hezekiah, the idolatrous worship connected with the terebinths and gardens was still in existence (Isa. 1:29). The truth seems to be that the reaction from the reform measures, which came in like a flood later in Manasseh's reign, was already beginning to show itself. If it be thought that the marvelous deliverance of the city and the fulfillment of Isaiah's predictions would have counteracted such tendencies, we need only consider the case of the fulfillment of Jeremiah's predictions at the downfall of the city. Clearly as he maintained that their calamity was Jehovah's chastisement for their sin in turning from him, the remnant that escaped to Egypt attributed it to neglect of the worship of the queen of heaven (Jer. 44:15-19). The spiritually minded remnant were uplifted and strengthened in faith by the salvation of the city, but those with idolatrous tendencies may quite possibly have been confirmed in their former beliefs.

It may be thought strange that we should assume Hezekiah, in the face of such conditions, to have relinquished his kingly authority, by which he might have carried out aggressive measures for reform, and to have adopted purely spiritual measures. But the reaction against his earlier course in forcibly putting down idolatry (2 Ki. 18:4) may have made this advisable. There is some evidence of the existence of popular feeling against the king because of his destruction of the high places. Sennacherib's general in his parley with the officers of Hezekiah shrewdly alluded to the taking away of the high places and altars throughout the country districts and the centralization of worship in Jerusalem (Isa. 36:7). The intention of this was apparently to bring the king



into disfavor with those of his subjects who had worshipped at these shrines. One of the reasons for the collapse of the cause of Nabonidus, the last king of the Chaldeans, and the acceptance of Cyrus by the inhabitants of Babylon, was the discontent, fostered by the priests, over his neglect of religious ceremonies and his bringing the gods of other cities to the capital (Pinches, *The O. T. in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, pp. 412-414). And while the object of Nabonidus was wholly different from that of Hezekiah, perhaps no more than to bring the idols to Babylon for protection, it only shows what a powerful weapon popular prejudice against the religious policy of a ruler can be made. So we may think of the king as resorting to the less drastic but more effectual means of building up the true worship and quickening the faith of his people. The movement toward Assyrian and Babylonian forms of worship, which reached its full tide some years later in Manasseh's reign, had set in, and the best efforts of the king and the prophet Isaiah were directed toward counteracting this baneful influence.

(II) There is now another well-founded conclusion which we may draw with reference to conditions existing during this period. It is altogether probable that a wide dispersion of captives from northern Israel and Judah to many lands had already taken place, and that many at this time or a little later had found a hard lot in and around Babylon. It has almost come to be regarded as settled by modern critics that no wide dispersion of Israel existed until the Greek period. And so passages like Isa. 11:11, which speak of a re-gathering from many countries, have been explained on the one hand by conservative scholars as prophetic of a scattering not yet accomplished; and by others as proof positive of a late date for the passages in question. If we mean organized communities, living among the different nations and exerting a potent influence upon social life, these were, perhaps, a later development. We may, however, have to push even this phase of the dispersion back to an earlier date. Aramaic papyri recently discovered

in Egypt show the existence of a flourishing colony of Jews in that country, worshipping their God in a temple with various kinds of offerings, far back in the fifth century B. C. (Goodspeed in *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, art. "papyrus," p. 2239). But at all events the scattering of Hebrew captives among many nations had become an accomplished fact long before the Babylonian exile. We see the means by which this was largely brought about in the practice of the Assyrian conquerors. This was an age of subjugation of smaller nations, of forcible deportation and colonization in foreign lands. Tiglathpileser IV was the first to adopt it on a large scale as a settled governmental policy, in order to make his empire more homogeneous and diminish the likelihood of rebellions (R. II, 270), and in this he was followed by Sargon II (R. II, 351) and later rulers. Some of these deportations of captive peoples were on a stupendous scale. Sennacherib on his return from his campaign against Babylonia in 702 B. C. brought back with him, besides immense booty, two hundred and eight thousand captives (R. II, 359). The harshness and barbarity with which subject peoples were torn from their homes to be colonized in other parts of the world is appalling. After a harrowing description of the way he desolated the land of Ellipi in the Median mountains "like a storm wind," Sennacherib continues (Taylor Prism II, 15-17): "The inhabitants, young, old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep without number I drove away." Isaiah's prophetic picture of streams of half-naked captives marched from Egypt and Ethiopia to Assyria is a witness to the gruesome truth of these early inscriptions (Isa. 20:4). Sometimes the inhabitants were carried away and distributed as spoil, as is stated in l. 13 of the Bellino Cylinder. In the same inscription (l. 43) Sennacherib speaks of bringing prisoners of war from various places to Nineveh to work at his building projects: "Men of Chaldaea, Aram, Manna, Kue, and Cilicia, who had not bowed down to my yoke, I brought away as captives, and I compelled them to make bricks." No doubt many of them were sold as

slaves, dealers following in the rear of armies for this purpose. A reference to this custom of trafficking in prisoners by Tyrian slave-dealers is found as early as Amos (ch. 1:9), and still more explicitly in Joel (ch. 3:4-6).

But more to our present purpose is the evidence that the kingdoms of Israel and Judah suffered the common lot of smaller nationalities so soon as their country came to be invaded by these Assyrian conquerors. Menahem's payment of tribute to Tiglathpileser saved his country for the time being from the ravages of war, but it was only for a few years. In the days of Pekah he came again and overran the northern districts of Israel and the land of Gilead, and carried the people captive to Assyria (2 Ki. 15:29; cf. 1 Ch. 5:26). Some ten years later occurred the siege and capture of Samaria and the deportation of many of the inhabitants to regions of Mesopotamia and the cities of the Medes (2 Ki. 17:5, 6). Sargon in his account gives the number carried into captivity as twenty-seven thousand two-hundred and ninety (R. II, 315), and the Scripture narrative states that their places were filled by colonists from Babylon and other cities (2 Ki., 17:24). As to the fortunes of Judah about twenty years afterwards, we have Sennacherib's own statement (Taylor Prism, III, 11-20) that in his campaign he took forty-six fortified cities and small towns without number, and brought out from these places, along with great spoil in cattle, two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty persons. Rogers, appealing to the Assyrian word used, understands that these people were not carried into captivity, but only marched out of their cities and compelled to give allegiance to Assyria (II, 370, n. 1). But if we refer Isa. I to the time of Sennacherib's invasion, as is done by most scholars, we have the statement of the prophet that the country was desolate and the cities burned with fire (v. 7). The destruction was so sweeping that only a "very small remnant" had been left, and but for the forbearance of Jehovah they would have been as Sodom (v. 9). What had become of the inhabitants of these cities? Moreover Sennacherib's statement includes

the two hundred thousand persons, along with the cattle of various kinds, in the capture which he "counted as spoil." On the view which we have adopted, that this is the campaign which ended so disastrously for the Assyrian conqueror, it may be said further that nothing would have served better to throw a glamour over its humiliating end than the return to Nineveh with such a multitude of captives.

To these direct historical statements as to the deportations of Israel and Judah may be added numerous confirmatory references in other passages of Scripture. Hosea had said, perhaps in the way of prediction, but with a clear vision of what awaited his people: "Israel is swallowed up: now are they among the nations as a vessel wherein none delighteth" (ch. 8:8). Again he said (9:17): "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him; and they shall be wanderers among the nations." As to the condition in Judah during the great crisis at the capital, we may recall the appeal of Hezekiah to Isaiah, that he lift up his prayer for the remnant that was left (Isa. 37:4), as well as the prediction of the prophet himself that "the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward" (v. 31). To this may be added the account in 2 Ch. 29: 8, 9, which makes Hezekiah in the beginning of his reign lament the fact that, because of former unfaithfulness, sons, daughters and wives of the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem were already in captivity. The scattering of the people in these days must have reached large proportions. Passages like Isa. 43:5, 6; 49:12, which are by critics assigned to the Babylonian exile, bear witness to a much wider dispersion than could have been the result of Nebuchadnezzar's deportations. In reality the Assyrian captivities were on a vaster scale than the Babylonian. Hence a later estimate of the two declares (Jer. 50:17): "Israel is a hunted (Heb. "scattered") sheep; the lions have driven him away: first, the king of Assyria devoured him; and now at last Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, hath broken his bones."

We have, it is true, no positive statements in the historical narratives that any of these captives were taken to Babylon. Yet Babylonia was an integral part of the Assyrian empire, and since more than one Assyrian king during these years had found this country a perplexing governmental problem, the same principle of carrying away inhabitants and colonizing foreigners was applied here also. Sargon had carried some of the people to the newly conquered province of Samaria, and Sennacherib carried off great numbers. Their places were doubtless filled by people from other conquered nations, and since Palestine was so often invaded at this period, there is nothing improbable in the supposition that many of the Hebrew captives were settled in this land. It is quite significant that Sennacherib had been in Babylonia the year before his Palestinian campaign, and at that time had carried off the two hundred and eight thousand captives; and that after leaving Palestine, where he had taken over two hundred thousand prisoners from the cities of Judah, he turned his face toward Babylon again to put down a new revolt (R. II, 359f, 373f). It would be rather remarkable if some of them were not taken to this land for colonization after his new campaign of subjugation. Having shown the probability that captives from among the Israelites were at this period held in servitude in Babylon, we must leave the argument for the present. Other and more direct evidence, which it is not permitted to bring forward at this point of the discussion, will be introduced later. If it be difficult to think that Hezekiah would have received so cordially ambassadors from a land where his people were suffering bondage, we need only remember that at that time no disposition could have been made of the recent captives from Judah. Also that, if prisoners from earlier conquests were already there, Merodach-baladan's position as an opponent of Assyria would have encouraged the hope that the success of his cause might result in their release.

(III) Along with these conditions which existed with reference to Israel, there were during this period some matters of external history which need to be kept in

mind. These relate especially to the status and fortunes of the city of Babylon. There is perhaps a popular impression that, during this time when Assyria had become the dominant world power, Babylon was a place of little consequence. It had, as we have seen, been for twelve years, under Merodach-baladan, in open rebellion against Assyria, during the rule of one of the mightiest monarchs of the empire, Sargon II; and it was by no means impossible that the city and land should again become an independent kingdom. They had had an ancient and glorious history, and were still the center of learning and culture for the empire, even though the brute force of the new power had brought them into subjection. It was this feeling of superiority which was at the root of the difficulties Sennacherib had in governing this part of his realm. Rogers speaks of this "proud and ancient people who felt themselves to be the better, even though they were the weaker, portion of the empire," and of Assyria as "still a raw and uncouth country, leaning upon Babylonia for every sign of culture," and declares that "Tiglathpileser, Shalmaneser, and Sargon had done nothing to diminish the national feeling in Babylonia, but rather had contributed fuel to the flame" (II, 352ff). Sennacherib's change of policy, by which he ignored Babylonian pride and prestige, and sought to govern the people with a strong hand as he would any uncivilized province of his empire (R. II, 355ff), led to numerous revolts, in two of which Merodach-baladan was the chief actor. But of more importance for our present purpose was the final outcome of this policy. Baffled in his efforts at complete subjugation, Sennacherib at last resolved to rid himself of the problem and danger of a dual center of influence and power in his empire, and in 689 B. C. completely destroyed the city, breaking down its walls and burning it with fire. Rogers characterizes its destruction as "one of the wildest scenes of human folly in all history" (II, 381).

These things, according to our view, happened during the period when Isaiah and Hezekiah were laboring together at Jerusalem to awaken the faith and courage of

the remnant of Judah. If numbers of their own people had come to be in servitude in this far off city and land, the fact was not one of indifference to them, and anxiously must the prophet have watched the course of affairs at Babylon, and coming events must have cast long and ominous shadows to his prophetic vision. From what part of the home land they had come did not matter; they were Israelites, and all the prophets in their thoughts of a restoration looked for the regathering of a reunited Israel. Neither did it matter that there was among these captives in a foreign land no community life, in connection with which, as during the later Babylonian captivity, their spirit and institutions might be preserved. There was now no question of the extinction of their national life, as in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jerusalem was still standing, though having passed through the fire; and the power of Jehovah had been vouchsafed for her deliverance, and his promise assured to the remnant the divine protection. The ardent desire now of every patriot was for the release of his countrymen from foreign slavery, and the return to Jerusalem of more than her former glory. Their sorrow over their exiled brethren was the keener that no social and religious life in common was possible to them, perhaps not even the opportunity of communicating with relatives in the home land. It could not be that Jehovah was indifferent to the sufferings of his afflicted people; he would again have compassion upon them; and glorious would be the day when he should bind up the hurt of his people and heal the stroke of their wound.

(To be continued in July issue.)