Isaiah 7:14
Identity and Function within the Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah

by

Joel Edmund Anderson

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

in the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria

2008

Declaration

I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

_____

Joel Edmund Anderson

Table of Contents

Chapter Two:
Isaiah 7:14 in its Immediate Context

Chapter Three:
The Problem of Chronology in II Kings 16-20

Chapter Four:
Isaiah 36-39 vs. II Kings 18-20: Priority and Historical Reliability

Chapter Five:
The Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah: Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39

Chapter Six:
Conclusions: Coming to a True Understanding of Immanuel

Appendixes

Abstract

Title: Isaiah 7:14: Identity and Function within the Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah

Student: Joel Edmund Anderson

Supervisor: Professor PM Venter

Department: Old Testament Studies

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

This thesis seeks to show that the traditional Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 equating Immanuel with Hezekiah is correct by demonstrating how it helps us understand the literary bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah. The traditional interpretation of the early Church Fathers, along with the tendency within modern biblical scholarship to both divide literary and historical concerns and hold to an unhealthy suspicion of the biblical text, has long prevented a clear understanding of this verse.

The most viable interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 is that the עַלְמָה was either Ahaz's wife or concubine and that Immanuel was Hezekiah. The prevailing objection to this view, that the chronology of II Kings 16-20 does not allow for it, is baseless because the chronology itself is deeply flawed: Hezekiah could not have been in his sixth year when Samaria fell (727 BCE) and in his fourteenth year when Sennacherib invaded Judah (701 BCE). We attribute these chronological errors to two probable scribal errors. Once resolved, we see that the identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah remains a historical possibility.

This identification is further solidified when we look at the bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah, specifically chapters 7-12 and 36-39. This thesis asserts that chapters 36-39 were written shortly after the death of Hezekiah, when Manasseh was restoring pagan worship in Judah. In reaction to such actions, scribes faithful to YHWH collected the prophecies of Isaiah, wrote their account of Sennacherib's invasion and of other events during Hezekiah's reign, and fashioned them into Proto-Isaiah, making numerous intertextual connections between Isaiah's earlier prophecies and their account of Hezekiah's reign. Their aim was to show Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH and Hezekiah as the righteous and faithful king about whom Isaiah prophesied during Ahaz's reign. The devastation wrought by Sennacherib was a consequence of Ahaz's lack of faith in YHWH and Jerusalem's deliverance came about as a result of Hezekiah's demonstration of faith in YHWH. Thus the sections of Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 serve as literary bookends that shape the entire structure of Proto-Isaiah by highlighting the similar circumstances, yet completely contrary characters, of Ahaz and Hezekiah.

Key Terms

Biblical Criticism: The study of biblical writings that seeks to make discerning judgments about these writings. The most notable criticisms are form, source, redaction, canon, and narrative.

Falsification Principle: The practice by some scholars in which the historical reliability of a text is assumed unless there are good reasons to consider them unreliable.

Inner-biblical Exegesis: The process in which ancient Israelite scribes received previous authoritative texts and creatively reinterpreted and reapplied them in light of their present situation in order to preserve and pass on what they believed to be God's revealed Word to his people.

Intertextuality: The phenomenon of a text quoting, alluding to, or echoing an earlier text, and thus whose meaning is shaped by that earlier text.

Signifier: The actual word that acts as an identifier of something.

Signified: The actual concept that comes to mind when we hear the signifying word.

Textual Variant: An alternative reading within a biblical text.

Traditio: The reinterpretation and reapplication of received authoritative biblical texts that seek to preserve God's revealed word for the scribe's present situation.

Traditum: Earlier authoritative biblical texts that are creatively reinterpreted and reapplied by scribal exegetes to their present situation.

Verification Principle: The practice by some scholars in which they determine the historical reliability of a text by seeing if certain historical claims are verified by other texts or evidence.

Chapter One

Misconceptions and Issues Regarding Isaiah 7:14

I. Introduction: Justin Martyr and *Dialogues with Trypho*

Perhaps no other biblical passage has produced as much debate between Christians and Jews over the past 2,000 years as Isaiah 7:14, a verse that lies at the very heart of the Jewish-Christian debate regarding the identity and nature of Jesus Christ. From the traditional Christian perspective, this verse is seen as the scriptural foundation for the belief that the prophet Isaiah predicted the virgin birth of Christ over 700 years before it actually happened. From the Jewish perspective, though, this is not the case.

One of the earliest debates recorded concerning Isaiah 7:14 comes from Justin Martyr (110-165 CE). In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr debated with a certain Jewish man named Trypho over the identity of the Immanuel child and the meaning of the Isaiah 7:14 as a whole. While Trypho said that he and his fellow Jews had always understood Isaiah 7:14 as referring to Hezekiah,[1] Justin Martyr unequivocally denied this as a possibility,[2] and in turn stated that Christ "was born of a virgin, and that His birth of a virgin had been predicted by Isaiah."[3] When Trypho then contended that a virgin birth was a completely pagan idea, as in the myths of Bacchus, Hercules, and Perseus, Justin

[1] Justin to Trypho: "But since you and your teachers venture to affirm that in the prophecy of Isaiah it is not said, 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive,' but, 'Behold the young woman shall conceive and bear a son;' and [since] you explain the prophecy as if [it referred] to Hezekiah, who was your king, I shall endeavor to discuss shortly this point in opposition to you, and to show that reference is made to Him who is acknowledged by us as Christ." "Thus, for instance, they [i.e. Jewish teachers] have taught you that this Scripture which we are now discussing refers to Hezekiah, in which, as I promised, I shall show they are wrong." *Dialogue with Trypho* (*ANF* 1:216, 233).

[2] "And Trypho answered, "The Scripture has not, 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,' but, 'Behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son,' and so on, as you quoted. But the whole prophecy refers to Hezekiah, and it is proved that it was fulfilled in him, according to the terms of this prophecy." *Dialogue with Trypho* (*ANF* 1: 232).

[3] *Dialogue with Trypho (ANF* 1:231).

countered by claiming that the devil simply made these myths up in order to confuse people about Christ. He then went on to say, "These Scriptures are equally explicit in saying that those reputed to know the writings of the Scriptures, and who hear the prophecies, [i.e. Jews] have no understanding."[4] Ever since that time, Christians have largely followed Justin Martyr's lead and have seen the traditional Jewish explanation that Isaiah 7:14 originally referred to Hezekiah as a sinister attempt to obscure the plain prediction of the virgin birth of Christ. Yet when one analyzes the typical Christian understanding of Isaiah 7:14, one finds it characterized by three things: (a) no knowledge about the historical setting found in Isaiah 7, (b) a presupposition that Isaiah 7:14 is a *prediction* about the virgin birth of Jesus, and (c) a belief that Jews do not recognize Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy about the virgin birth of Jesus because they do not want to admit that Jesus is the messiah. The problem with this view, of course, is it is completely *a-historical* in its reading of Isaiah 7:14 and that it incorrectly equates *prophecy* with *prediction*. Furthermore, by dismissing the Jewish explanation out of hand as a deception, it shuts down any possibility of honest exegetical dialogue over Isaiah 7:14.

A fundamental question must be asked at the outset of this study: What if Trypho, instead of trying to "obscure" what was to Justin Martyr the obvious meaning of Isaiah 7:14, was honestly relating what he and his fellow Jews had always been taught about Isaiah 7:14? If this is the case, we must consider that perhaps Justin Martyr was at fault for not considering the original context of the verse, and that his assumption that "prophecy" meant "prediction" caused him to misunderstand Matthew's use of Isaiah 7:14 and to ignorantly dismiss any consideration of the original context of the many Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament as being "Jewish deceptions".

[4] *Dialogue with Trypho* (*ANF* 1:234).

When it comes to the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14, modern scholars are faced with the challenge of correcting the exegetical mistakes of Justin Martyr and the early Church Fathers. This involves (a) reading Isaiah 7:14 in its original Old Testament context, (b) articulating the true nature of biblical prophecy, and (c) understanding the way in which New Testament writers used the Old Testament. When it comes to this last point, we must realize that the New Testament writers did not view the Old Testament as simply a collection of predictions about Jesus (although there are many prophecies concerning the Davidic messiah). Instead, they saw the entire Old Testament story as the framework in which to understand the message and mission of Jesus. Consequently, it is imperative that one is familiar with that narrative if one is to fully understand what the gospel writers were saying about Jesus. Since Matthew claims that the birth of Jesus was a fulfillment of a prophecy found in the *Jewish scriptures,* we must take the original context of Isaiah 7:14 seriously and try to understand the connections between its original context and its reinterpretation in the first century BCE. It is a two step process: first, understanding the Old Testament context of a passage alluded to in the New Testament, and second, wrestling with how that original Old Testament context affects the meaning of the that particular New Testament passage. The focus of this thesis will be on the first step. It is the goal of this thesis to clearly articulate the Old Testament narrative framework from which Matthew was working. In other words, this thesis will (a) wrestle with the exegetical issues surrounding Isaiah 7:14 in regards to its original historical and literary contexts found in Proto-Isaiah (Isaiah 1-39), and (b) propose an exegetical explanation of Isaiah 7:14 that is not only faithful to its original context of Proto-Isaiah, but hopefully will also provide the foundation for further inquiry into Matthew's use of Isaiah 7:14.

Yet what do we mean by "original context"? In truth we must understand that there are a number of different "contexts": (a) the time when the Proto-Isaiah scroll was originally written and circulated, (b) the time when the book of Isaiah came into its final form in the Hebrew Scriptures, (c) the time of when the Septuagint was translated and read, and (d) the time of the first century BCE, when Matthew made reference to Isaiah 7:14. For the purposes of this thesis, we will focus our attention on how the original Jewish audience of Proto-Isaiah would have understood and interpreted Isaiah 7:14, the "pre-Christian" understanding of Isaiah 7:14, if you will. Our main argument is essentially this: although obviously later edited in exilic/post-exilic times to fit together with Isaiah 40-66, Proto-Isaiah, consisting of Isaiah 1-39, was originally put together during the reign of Manasseh, after the deaths of Hezekiah and Isaiah, in order to not only vindicate Isaiah's vocation as a prophet of YHWH, but also to vindicate Hezekiah's actions and decisions during Sennacherib's invasion.[5] The way in which Proto-Isaiah does this is by focusing its narrative sections on the two major international crises during Ahaz and Hezekiah's reigns: the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis under Ahaz (742-727 BCE) and the invasion of Sennacherib under Hezekiah (704-701 BCE). These two sections in Proto-Isaiah (chapters 7-12 and chapters 36-39) are set up as "literary bookends" that serve to highlight the reason for the beginning of Assyrian oppression (i.e. Ahaz's unfaithfulness to YHWH) and the reason for Assyria's humiliating defeat outside the walls of Jerusalem (i.e. Hezekiah's faithfulness to YHWH). What links these two sections together is the figure of the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14. This thesis will argue that the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy of Hezekiah's birth and subsequent reign as king. This prophecy, borne out of a national crisis that was brought

[5] The particulars of this historical reconstruction will be discussed later on in this thesis.

about because of Ahaz's unfaithfulness to YHWH, is fulfilled during another national crisis, the invasion of Sennacherib, because of Hezekiah's faithfulness to YHWH. Hence, what we see in these "literary bookends" of Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 is a theme of prophecy and fulfillment that seeks to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet and Hezekiah as the righteous Immanuel-king whose faithfulness to YHWH was the key in YHWH's salvation of Jerusalem. In the course of this thesis it will become abundantly clear that such a view affirms the traditional Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, as seen in the testimony of Trypho and later rabbinic sources, which viewed Immanuel as Hezekiah, thus showing a remarkable consistency of interpretation from the time of Isaiah to the time of Jesus.

II. Two Fundamental Problems

1. The Traditional Church Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14

Unfortunately, the 2,000 year old debate over Isaiah 7:14 has muddied the exegetical waters and has made it almost impossible to come to a clear understanding of Isaiah 7:14. The first problem is that not only has the traditional Church interpretation of Matthew's use of Isaiah 7:14 obscured any understanding of the original context of Isaiah 7:14 itself, it also calls into question the traditional understanding of Matthew 1:23. In other words, we must wonder if the traditional Church interpretation of Matthew 1:23 accurately reflects what Matthew himself was trying to convey when he related Isaiah 7:14 to Christ. The fact that the early Church Fathers seemed to play so fast and loose with the original context of Isaiah 7:14 should raise a number of exegetical red flags for modern scholars. Indeed it seems that the decidedly *a-historical* way in which the early Church Fathers interpreted Isaiah 7:14 has promoted considerable misunderstandings

regarding what Matthew was trying to convey when he quoted Isaiah 7:14. Adam Kamesar has written about the curious philogical arguments made by the early Church Fathers.[6] One can see such a-historical arguments for Isaiah 7:14 by simply perusing the works of various early Church Fathers This thesis will not focus on the early Church Fathers' interpretation of Matthew 1:23 or Matthew's use of Isaiah 7:14. It will focus on the more foundational issues of the historical and literary contexts of Isaiah 7:14.

2. The Historical and Literary Context of Isaiah 7:14

The second problem surrounding Isaiah 7:14, often restricted to scholarly debate, is an issue of which most Christian laymen are completely ignorant: the question of the original historical and literary context of Isaiah 7:14. This verse must be seen in light of the larger prophecy that Isaiah uttered in response to King Ahaz's display of unfaithfulness to YHWH during the time of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis (circa 745-730 BCE).[7] Given the historical setting put forth in Isaiah, the questions related to this problem are as follows: (a) Who is the Immanuel child?; (b) How does this prophecy relate to the historical situation of mid-eighth century BCE Judah?; (c) How does this prophecy fit in with the literary structure of Isaiah, or more specifically, Proto-Isaiah?

[6] Adam Kamesar, "The Virgin of Isaiah 7:14: The Philological Argument from the Second to the Fifth Century," *JTS* 41 (1990): 51-75.

[7] This type of exegetical approach is a rather modern hermeneutical development. We must not assume that those who read the Hebrew Scriptures throughout Jewish history were completely ignorant of that history. It is clear that the early Church Fathers did not place much importance on the historical setting to many Old Testament verses. Unfortunately, this a-historical reading of Old Testament texts continued throughout Church history. It was not until the time of the Renaissance and Reformation and the emergence of modern biblical studies that people started to once again take into consideration the historical context of any given Old Testament passage. Yet we should not assume that the traditional Jewish interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures is resembles traditional Christian interpretation in this manner. The very fact that Trypho insisted that the Jews had always understood the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 to be Hezekiah shows that they understood their Scriptures within their historical context.

Unfortunately, answers to these questions are about as numerous as the scholars who have wrestled with them. The reason for this is that there are so many exegetical problems related to the biblical accounts of the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah[8] that biblical scholars find themselves walking in a virtual minefield whenever they attempt to come to any kind of conclusion about the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. The first exegetical landmine regards the identity of the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 and its relationship to the greater prophecy of Isaiah 7-12. Related to this is the 2,000 year old controversy concerning the word עַלְמָה, as well as a number of other variants found in Isaiah 7:14. The second exegetical landmine relates to the chronological difficulties in II Kings 16-20 concerning the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. The third exegetical landmine concerns the relationship between Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20, and the question of priority—who borrowed from whom? Was this material originally in II Kings or Isaiah, or was it originally from an earlier source from which II Kings and Isaiah borrowed? The fourth exegetical landmine relates to the literary coherence and historical reliability of Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39. If the historical events described in Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 are deemed historically unreliable, then not only does that cast a long shadow of doubt over the trustworthiness of the author of Proto-Isaiah, it also calls into question a fundamental tenant of this thesis, namely that the events of 701 BCE are portrayed in Isaiah as a fulfillment of Isaiah 7-12. The fifth and final exegetical landmine deals with questions concerning the overall literary structure of Proto-Isaiah and the puzzle of Isaiah's growth.

In light of all these exegetical landmines, one is impelled to ask, "What is the reason for so much confusion regarding these passages?" The answer to that question is

[8] These passages are Isaiah 7-12, Isaiah 36-39, II Kings 16-20, and II Chronicles 28-32.

that there are two fundamental flaws in the exegetical practices of modern historical-critical biblical studies. First, there is an unhealthy and overzealous suspicion of the historical reliability of the biblical texts; and second, there is a tendency in modern biblical scholarship to divide "historical concerns" from "literary concerns." These two flaws in modern biblical scholarship are the root cause of the exegetical difficulties surrounding Isaiah 7:14. Yet before we elaborate on these two flaws, we must first give a brief overview of the way in which modern biblical studies has evolved.

III. An Overview of the Evolution of Modern Biblical Methodologies

In his book, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*, John Barton looks at the various methods of biblical study today.[9] After analyzing each method, Barton observes, "The reason why biblical scholars have so often become disillusioned with each of the methods they have committed themselves to is that they have asked too much of them, have become obsessed with correct method and with the desire to produce novel interpretations of the text."[10] In other words, Barton's ultimate critique of all the past methods in biblical studies is not with the methods themselves, but with the belief various scholars have had that it is possible to find a "right method" that will hold the key to reading and understanding each and every biblical text. Simply put, each method provides valuable insights, but no single method can answer everything about a biblical text. The wise biblical scholar, therefore, will not hold tightly on to just one single method, but rather will gain whatever insights he can with any critical method that sheds

[9] John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).
[10] Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 244-245.

exegetical light on a given text. For the history of biblical studies has shown that to hold too tightly to one single critical method almost always results in faulty exegesis.

We see this tendency in the way scholars use form and source criticism. Despite the valuable insights that these criticisms have given on the historical background of many biblical texts, scholars often mistake the means for the end. They neglect the basic goal of exegesis, namely to bring out the meaning of the text as presented in the Bible, and get side-tracked in speculation about the various sources and forms of that text.[11]

Given this shortcoming of form and source criticism, the rise of redaction criticism was an attempt to get back to looking at the text as a whole. It attempted to explain how the redactor fashioned together the ancient sources into his own present work. While this method no doubt provides numerous insights on the formation of ancient biblical literature, it soon became apparent that it cannot, in and of itself, fully exegete a text, for explaining *how* a text is put together is not the same thing as explaining what the *meaning and message* of a text is.

The next step beyond redaction criticism, therefore, is that of canon criticism. Canon criticism, attempting not only to take seriously the final form of the text, but also its place within the canonized scriptures, argues that the meaning of a text has to be understood within the larger literary corpus of the biblical canon. Although the question of "Which canon?" is a thorn in the side of canon criticism, it nevertheless realizes that meaning is something more than simply identifying oral forms, original sources, historical settings, and the connecting stitches of a redactor's needle. For the canon critic, although form, source, and redaction criticism are essential to understand the historical context of

[11] V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 50. "One of the deficiencies of the form-critical approach is that it can tend to overlook the significance of the larger discourse unit."

text, its meaning still comes from reading the text that is before us, attempting to understand it as a whole literary unit, and attempting to understand it within the overall context of the canon of which it is a part. In other words, canon criticism reminds us that the goal of biblical exegesis is to understand the meaning of the text that is before us, the work of literature in its final form.

This leads us to yet one more facet of biblical studies: narrative criticism. The reason why narrative criticism will have to be applied in this study is the simple fact that what we are dealing with is, in fact, *literature*. With its emphasis on reading the biblical text as a work of literature, narrative criticism has begun to demonstrate that much of the meaning within any given biblical text lies within the literary artistry of the text itself. Narrative criticism holds that the writer/final redactor of any given biblical text simply did not cut and paste various sources together. He arranged his narrative in a certain way; and the placement of certain events within the text, as well as how certain things are described and quoted, have a tremendous impact on the overall meaning of any given biblical text. They are, so to speak, literary brushstrokes that paint a theological portrait of Israel's history. The danger of narrative criticism, of course, is that if gone unchecked, it could very easily divorce itself from any historical concerns at all.

With this overview of the main exegetical methods within biblical studies, we come back to the main argument of Barton: there is no single method that can ever answer everything about a given biblical text. He correctly states, "…much harm has been done in biblical studies by insisting that there is, somewhere, a 'correct' method which, if only we could find it, would unlock the mysteries of the text."[12] It is precisely because the Bible is so multi-layered and multi-faceted that so many different critical

[12] Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 5.

methods are needed for proper exegesis. Yet not only do different texts require different methods, but often times they require a *variety* of methods working together to give a full exegetical picture of a given text. Unfortunately, as Barton observes, this is precisely what many modern biblical scholars have failed to realize. In light of this, we can now look more closely at the shortcomings of modern historical-critical exegesis.

IV. The Shortcomings of Historical-Critical Methods

Earlier we asked the question, "What is the reason for so much confusion surrounding the narratives of Ahaz and Hezekiah?" We stated that within modern biblical scholarship there is both an overzealous suspicion of the historical reliability of the biblical texts and a tendency to divide "historical concerns" from "literary concerns." These two flaws are often intertwined in modern exegetical work. In terms of the exegetical landmines in Isaiah, the traditional historical-critical answer as to why there is so much confusion has been to assert that the final redactors of these texts are the ones responsible for the confusion and that their work is historically unreliable. Whether it was because these redactors were working long after the actual historical events themselves, or whether they had purposely placed own theological agendas over and against the actual facts of those historical events themselves, or whether both are true, historical-critical scholars claim that the confusion surrounding the narratives of Ahaz and Hezekiah has its roots in the decidedly *un*historical work of the final redactors of these texts. Therefore, they claim the "true" history lies somewhere behind the text.

Yet there is a distinct problem with this view. Although this has been the popular view in past years, one must question it at a fundamental level. Is it really possible that

the writers of Isaiah and II Kings were simply biased and incompetent redactors who had no clue regarding the actual historical events during the time of Ahaz and Hezekiah? After all, what we have in both Isaiah and II Kings are texts that certainly give the impression to be about real historical events. What basis, therefore, do scholars have to throw out the historical claims of these texts other than the fact that they do not understand the text as it stands? The answer is that there really is no other basis. Therefore, although it may sound rather odd, we should be very suspicious of modern scholarship's suspicion of the biblical text.

The second problem with modern biblical scholarship flows out of the first problem: its tendency to drive a wedge between historical-critical analysis and literary analysis. This unnatural division has had a devastating effect on biblical studies. Since many scholars today do not trust the biblical texts as presented in their final form, they tend to view the biblical texts, not as coherent literary works that faithfully reflect a theological understanding of historical events, but rather as haphazardly redacted works of literary propaganda that betray the biases, ideologies, and theological agenda of later writers who had no real concern for actual history. Therefore, modern biblical scholarship has essentially divided into two camps. First, there are the traditional historical-critical scholars who hold the prevailing belief that these texts must be thoroughly dissected in order to find out, in the phrase made famous by Leopold von Ranke, "*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*" ("the way it really was"). They dismiss the *final* form of the text because of perceived theological and political agendas, and attempt to "dig up" what they believe to be the *older* sources and forms in order to uncover the "original meaning." Secondly, there are the literary scholars who hold the prevailing belief that the historical claims of a

given text are simply irrelevant, and what really matters is discovering the meaning of a text based on literary structures alone. Yet both camps prove themselves to be woefully inadequate when it comes to proper biblical exegesis. They are both guilty of the very thing Barton warns against: holding on to the naïve belief that one single method holds the key to exegesis.

Now it goes without saying that a critical eye is absolutely necessary in biblical exegesis; yet this thesis holds that modern biblical scholars tend to maintain an unhealthy suspicion of the biblical texts, and subsequently are overzealous in their attempts to dissect biblical texts in the belief that somehow such dissection is necessary in order to put forth a reconstructed version of "objective and neutral" biblical history. The modus operandi of modern historical-critical biblical scholars has been to smash the picture presented in biblical texts on the basis that they cannot be trusted because they are theologically biased works of propaganda. Then, given the shattered pieces on the floor, scholars isolate a handful of what they believe to be "original pieces" and then attempt to reconstruct and reconfigure these shattered pieces into a hypothetical picture of the past, without ever first considering the possibility that the original picture, as presented to us in the final form of the text, is both historically reliable and literarily stylized.

This attempt to completely divorce historical concerns from literary/theological concerns has brought about a kind of biblical scholarship that, ironically, is not biblical at all. Instead of exegetical illumination of the biblical text, what is put forth is rather hypothetical speculations on what the biblical texts simply do not tell us. In actuality, this unnatural division makes it almost impossible for true exegesis to be done, for every biblical text is not only a witness in some way to the history it describes, but is also a

work of literary and theological artistry that attempts to give meaning and understanding to that history. This division can be likened to a divorce between two parents in which the child suffers. Historical analysis accuses literary analysis of simply twisting the historical facts to suit its own theological agenda; literary analysis counters with the accusation that history is too distant to be knowable. Because these two parents refuse to work together in relationship to nurture their exegetical child, he will find himself lost, with a distorted understanding of the biblical world in which he finds himself.

Now it goes without saying that historical-critical methods have proven to be very profitable for biblical studies. There are, after all, legitimate historical-critical problems in many biblical texts that must be wrestled with. By the same token, recent advances in the literary analysis of the Bible have also helped resurrect an appreciation of the literary artistry of the various biblical authors. The problem is that whenever these two lenses of biblical analysis are used in isolation from each other, and when there is such an obvious unhealthy suspicion of the historical reliability and testimony of the biblical texts, the plain meaning of the text is often obscured, and one's exegetical vision lacks perception and depth. Each biblical account, therefore, must be read with one eye on the historical concerns surrounding the text and one eye on the literary/theological concerns of the text, and there must be a clear-headed understanding of the testimony of the biblical texts themselves. Simply put, not only are two eyes better than one, but sufficient light must shine on what is being analyzed.

Unfortunately, because the various historical-critical and literary methods have given us such a flat and fragmented vision of biblical history and literature, it is no wonder why Isaiah 7:14 cannot be clearly seen and understood by modern biblical

scholars. Not only has the influence of the early Church Fathers continued to cloud some scholars' ability to look at Isaiah 7:14 in its original context, but modern unhealthy suspicion of the historical reliability of biblical texts, along with the tendency to divorce historical and literary concerns from each other, has convinced many scholars that biblical exegesis is best done in the dark, using only one lens instead of both.

New light needs to be shed and a new prescription is needed to give us a clearer vision of Isaiah 7:14. This will first require the honest recognition that the *pre-critical* interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 by the early Church Fathers, when compared to modern exegetical criteria, is fundamentally unsound. Secondly, this will involve using the various historical and literary methods as compliments to one another. In doing so, this thesis will demonstrate just how useful a holistic/synchronic reading of Isaiah 7:14 can be. True biblical exegesis can only be done when there is a marriage between *historical* analysis and *literary* analysis. This thesis, therefore, will respect the biblical texts in their final forms and try to exegete them as historically reliable and literary coherent/artistic works. It will attempt to put together the various puzzle pieces that historical-critical methods have separated and let the actual literary and historical contexts given to us in Proto-Isaiah and II Kings determine the meaning of these various sections. If one is able to come to Isaiah 7:14 without being influenced by the interpretation of the early Church Fathers and with eyes for both historical and literary concerns, not only will one be able to see Isaiah 7:14 in a clearer light, but the various other exegetical difficulties in Proto-Isaiah will be begin to be answered as well.

V. Provan, Long, and Longman: The Historical Reliability of the Bible

Modern biblical scholars have been all too content to allow a divorce between historical-critical concerns and literary concerns to stand. The result of such a divorce has been a host of historical-critical scholarly work that not only displays literary incompetence but also a complete disregard for the intelligence of the biblical writers. The writers it is assumed, not only had no regard for real history, but also lacked the skill and competence to write a coherent text. On the other hand, although recent literary scholars have helped point out the artistry and literary competency of the writers of the biblical text, there still is the assumption that these very gifted writers nevertheless displayed no regard for history and made very little effort, if at all, to present anything that could be remotely called "real history."[13] In both cases there is displayed, by historical-critical and literary scholars alike, the assumption that biblical texts are completely unreliable in regards to history. Despite this awareness within biblical studies over recent years that biblical texts are works of ancient *literature*, a true marriage between historical and literary concerns has yet to happen on a wide scale.

Ever since the Enlightenment, and in particular the rise of modern historical-critical methods in biblical studies, much of what was once accepted as "historically true" concerning the ancient history of Israel has come under intense skepticism that many biblical scholars today who ascribe to the historical-critical method claim that the "ancient Israel" described in the Hebrew Bible is nothing more than an ideological fantasy, put forth by Deuteronomistic writers of the exilic or post-exilic period, that is completely unreliable when it comes to trying to objectively understand the true facts

[13] V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, 153. "The problem with some modern literary approaches to the Bible is that they tend to dismiss historical questions as either uninteresting or illegitimate."

about the history of ancient Israel. At the same time, though, at the other end of the spectrum, along with the recent rise of literary and narrative criticism of the Hebrew Bible, many so-called literary critics also disregard the very relevance of history in the Hebrew Bible, preferring to instead focus solely on the literary structures they find in the text itself. Ironically, it seems that both those who solely cling to a traditional historical-critical approach to the Hebrew Bible, as well as those who devote themselves to a purely literary approach to the Hebrew Bible, both come to the same conclusion about the historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible—there is none. The overwhelming bias is that if a particular text reads like a good story, the less likely it is to be history.

This skepticism against the historical reliability of the Bible has turned modern biblical exegesis into a quagmire of speculation and doubt about the biblical texts. Indeed, any discussion these days concerning the history of ancient Israel is bound to evoke controversy and debate. In their recent book, *A Biblical History of Israel*, Iain Provan, V. Phillips Long, and Tremper Longman III provide a lengthy discussion of this very issue.[14] They begin by addressing the supposed "death" of biblical history and challenging scholars like K.W. Whitelam, J.A. Soggin, J.M. Miller, and J. Hayes who have in some way or another declared that large portions of what is put forth in the Old Testament as "history" are really not history at all, but rather later creative projections of

[14] Provan wrote two articles that began to outline his views that are further developed in *A Biblical History of Israel*. In response to the objections to his first article, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical," Provan wrote a second article entitled "In the Stable with the Dwarves." His title is a reference to the dwarves in C.S. Lewis' last book in the Narnia Chronicles who, because they were initially fooled by a donkey who dressed up as Aslan, refused to come out of their dark stable to see the renewed Narnia that the real Aslan had made. Lest the connection not be readily seen, many biblical scholars, Provan states, are like the dwarves of Lewis' tale. They are "against historical humbug, whether found in the Bible or among the Bible's interpreters," and display a "principled suspicion toward the Hebrew Bible" that prevents them from any objective and honest assessment of the Hebrew Bible. Iain Provan, "In the Stable with the Dwares," in *Congress Volume: Oslo1988*. (ed. A. Lemaire and M. Saebo; Boston: Brill, 2000), 282.

history by writers in the exilic or post-exilic period.[15] Simply put, what we find in modern biblical studies are two presuppositions: (a) since the biblical texts represent a "biased and ideological point of view," they are disqualified from presenting "objective historical facts," and (b) evidence of literary shaping and artistry points toward a much later date of composition and therefore is too far from the actual events themselves to be considered historically reliable. To such assumptions, Provan, Long, and Longman ask a fundamental question, "Given that Hebrew narrative is artistically constructed and ideologically shaped, is it somehow less worthy of consideration as source material for modern historiographers than other sorts of data from the past?"[16] The implied answer is "no." Whitelam denies anything put forth in the Old Testament is actually historically reliable; Soggin chooses the reigns of David and Solomon as his starting point for actual historical reliability; Miller and Hayes target the period of the Judges as a tentative starting point for actual biblical history. Yet all of these scholars, as Provan, Long, and Longman point out, are completely arbitrary in their decisions. Soggin dismisses earlier biblical material as unhistorical because "they contain stories of heroes and heroines that redactors living many centuries after the events have transmitted."[17] If this is so, though, then why are later biblical stories that involve heroes and heroines considered to be historically reliable? As Provan, Long, and Longman state:

> "If the earlier traditions are problematic because redactors exercised their creative bent freely or capriciously in the choice and restructuring of the material that came down to them, then why…are the later traditions not equally problematic, or do we just 'know' in some undefined way that they are not? If the narrative art of

[15] "The horizon of the final redactors is chiefly the exilic and postexilic period, and the problems with which they are concerned chiefly reflect the consequences of the exile in Babylon and the end of both political independence and the Davidic dynasty in Israel." Iain Provan, V. Phillips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 10.

[16] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 6.

[17] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 14.

> redactors is a serious problem for historians with regard to the earlier traditions, then why is that art not a problem in regard to the later traditions as well?"[18]

Miller and Hayes, while acknowledging an overarching editorial scheme to Genesis-Judges, still choose to regard Judges as historically reliable, and Genesis-Joshua as not. To this rationale, Provan, Long, and Longman ask, "What basis exists, then, for the greater confidence displayed in the Judges material over against the Genesis-Joshua material?"[19] Again, the obvious answer to this question is, "There is no basis."

After questioning modern biblical scholars like Whitelam, Soggin, Miller, and Hayes, Provan, Long, and Longman then give a brief history of historiography. According to them, the basic understanding of the purpose of history up to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could be encapsulated in the words of Dionysius of Halicarnassus: "History is philosophy teaching by examples."[20] In other words, history was seen as art "with close links to the ancient art of rhetoric. History's purpose was to delight the reader and to teach morals through examples."[21] It wasn't until the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the Enlightenment and the rise of modern science, that it came to be believed that if the past itself could be subject to scientific analysis, then it would reveal truths about human existence.[22] It was during this time that men like Leopold von Ranke began to study the "sources" of biblical texts, in hopes to find out *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*—"the way it really was." Since that time, history has been seen more as a scientific endeavor to dig up historical facts embedded within stories, and less as "philosophy teaching by examples." Stories of the past could no

[18] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 14.
[19] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 16.
[20] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 20.
[21] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 20.
[22] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 20.

longer be trusted on the basis that they were unreliable and ideological fictions; they had to be picked apart to find "the truth" of history, also known as, the facts. As Provan, Long, and Longman state:

> "History and tradition were no longer assumed to be closely related to each other. Rather, history was assumed to lie *behind* tradition and to be more or less *distorted* by it. The point, then, was not to listen to tradition and to be guided by it in what it said about the past, but if possible, to see through tradition to the history that might (or indeed might not) exist behind it. The onus now fell on tradition to verify itself, rather than on the historian to falsify it."[23]

The result of all this has been that modern historical-critical biblical studies have ironically degenerated into more and more *uncritical* skepticism of biblical history. As Provan, Long, and Longman show, many of today's biblical scholars dismiss various parts of the biblical tradition, "not so much through argument as through intellectual intimidation."[24] There is no coherent reason or evidence for their findings, but only their own biased ideology that assumes that if it is in the Bible, then it cannot be historical.

Given these presuppositions by many modern biblical scholars, namely that the biblical texts are unhistorical because (a) they are the testimony of writers with their own theological agendas, and (b) those writers wrote their works at a time much later than the actual events, Provan, Long, and Longman make the argument that (a) everything we know about the past comes primarily through the testimony of others and that (b) mere distance from the events does not necessarily mean that the writer of a particular biblical text has sacrificed presenting actual history for the sake of a fictional account fueled by his own ideological agenda.

Provan, Long, and Longman make their first point by arguing that the only way one can know *anything* about the past is because of the testimony of other people, and

[23] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 24.
[24] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 33.

that testimony will inevitably be biased in some way, for every person who tells about the past is doing so from his own particular perspective and point of view. Even though testimony inevitably "has its ideology or theology…its presuppositions and its point of view…its narrative structure...its narrative art…[and] its rhetoric,"[25] that does not mean it is, by *de facto*, historically unreliable.

In his book, *The Art of Biblical History*, V. Phillips Long correctly sees that, "the individual historian's basic intellectual and spiritual commitments ('how he or she sees the world') exercise an inevitable, even 'dominating,' influence over which historical reconstructions will appear plausible to that historian."[26] Consequently, the modern scholar, heavily influenced by Enlightenment thinking, brings to the biblical text a suspicion of the supernatural intervening in the world. He therefore plays down the historical reliability of the biblical text on the basis that since it is a "theological document" it cannot be historically true. This thinking, of course, is very biased and naïve. Long is correct when he states that this "naïve application of modern western logic and judgment to the interpretation of ancient Near Eastern sources, including biblical literature, has [often] led us into error."[27] Nevertheless, writes Long, "While the historical-critical method (as traditionally practiced) systematically and insistently excludes the notion of divine intervention, the method itself, if applied in the context of a theistic set of background beliefs, need not exclude talk of divine intervention."[28]

The fact is that not only does *every writer*, whether ancient or modern, who writes about history has a distinct point of view, but *every writing of history* is a product of

[25] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 37.
[26] Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, 120.
[27] Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, 33.
[28] Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, 134.

someone who has chosen particular bits and pieces to highlight and to use in order to make a particular point. Simply put, every historical account written throughout history is written from a distinct point of view. It is therefore "biased" in some way. No account of history is ever "just the facts." If we are to throw out the historical claims of Bible simply on the charge that the writers of the Bible were "biased" and had some sort of theological point of view, then we would have to throw out all writing of history, for everyone is biased to a degree, and everyone picks and chooses certain bits and pieces of history to help shape their particular point of view and understanding of that history. Because testimony is nothing more than an interpretation of certain historical events, interpretation is inevitable. Consequently, according to Provan, Long, and Longman, "What is commonly referred to as *'knowledge of the past'* is more accurately described as *'faith in the testimony,'* in the interpretations of the past, offered by other people."[29] Therefore, when modern biblical scholars who are working out of a nineteenth-century scientific approach to biblical history declare that "science" has proven certain events in the Bible did not happen, and that they now "objectively know" what really happened, these scholars are caught in a delusion. What they have essentially done is discounted the testimony of the Bible in favor of the testimony of archeological finds, earlier scholars, and their own imagination. In the words of Provan, Long, and Longman:

> "The hope of notable nineteenth-century historians and their successors—that by embracing an empirical and critical approach to historical knowledge they might achieve a purely objective reconstruction of the past, whether in the Rankean or the positivist manner—has thus turned out to be an impossible dream."[30]

Simply put, an "objective" view of history is impossible, for all facts and data must be interpreted; and the ones doing the interpreting are human beings, who have their own

[29] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 33.
[30] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 42.

fundamental philosophical outlooks of life, their own biases, and their own points of view. "Philosophy and tradition necessarily set the parameters for all thinking about the world with which human being engage."[31] To think that one can "do history" without philosophy and tradition is fool's errand. The question is not whether or not one can "do history" without philosophy and tradition, but rather *which* philosophy and tradition will one work from when one evaluates history. To blindly accept the scientific model of the nineteenth-century is to accept a method that is deeply flawed and has been misused to promote a denial of virtually all biblical history simply because it is found in the Bible. The fact is that modern scholars who have done this very thing, although they try to pass themselves off as "critical scholars," are really no such thing. As Provan, Long, and Longman state, "The 'scientific' historian will not write history, but rather a fantasy spun out of his own theorizing imagination."[32]

We must remember that all testimony about historical events is inevitably biased to a certain degree, with a particular theological or ideological worldview. History is past; we cannot relive it to see for ourselves. Hence, we must rely on the testimony and stories of others. In the case of the historical events recorded in the Bible, we must, as *biblical* scholars, attempt to understand and exegete the ways in which the *biblical writers themselves* interpreted and presented those events, and not try to reconstruct that history according to our own imaginations, no matter how tempting it may be for us to pass off our own biases and agendas as "objective, critical, and scientific." Granted, we must be intellectually honest and do everything we can to insure that the testimony before us is historically reliable, whether that means considering archeological evidence or other

[31] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 43.
[32] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 46.

Ancient Near Eastern texts that record the same event; but it would be intellectually foolish to simply discount biblical testimony, simply because it was biblical.

> "The fact is that we either respect and appropriate the testimony of the past, allowing it to challenge us even while thinking hard about it, or we are doomed—even while thinking that we alone have 'objectivity' and can start afresh on the historical quest—to create individualistic fantasies about the past out of the desperate poverty of our own very limited experience and imagination."[33]

The second point Provan, Long, and Longman makes is that mere distance from the actual events does not mean that a given biblical text is necessarily unhistorical. Mere chronological distance from the actual events is ultimately irrelevant when it comes to historical reliability: "It remains the case, nevertheless, that one simply could never argue logically from the mere *distance* of a text from the events it describes directly to its *usefulness* as historiography or otherwise."[34] Often times, a writer's close proximity to a given event might actually cloud his judgment, thereby making it harder to be objective. Consequently, as Peter Ackroyd points out, "the historian who writes at some distance from the events may be in a better position to give a true appraisal than the one who is so involved as to see only a part of what makes up the whole."[35] James Axtell further notes that it is the task of the historian to present "the larger patterns, structures and meanings behind particular events and facts which contemporaries were not able to see."[36] It is therefore puzzling to scholars such as Provan when the historical reliability of the biblical text is dismissed out of hand, simply because it has been determined that a good deal of it was not actually written during the time it presents.

---

[33] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 74.
[34] Iain W Provan, "Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on theHistory of Israel," *JBL* 114:4 (1995): 22.
[35] Peter R. Ackroyd, "Historians and Prophets." *SEA* 33 (1968): 21.
[36] James Axtell, "History as Imagination," *The Historian: A Journey of History* 49 (1987): 457.

Lest it be misunderstood, Provan, Long, and Longman do not argue for a blind acceptance of the historical reliability of the Bible. They readily acknowledge that there are a vast number of historical questions and problems within the biblical text that must be wrestled with. What they argue for is that we read and respect biblical texts as ancient testimony to historical events, in the same way we read and respect the testimony of any other ancient text that purports to tell us about historical events. No one doubts that much in the Hebrew Bible is problematic; what is being questioned here is simply the cavalier way in which the Hebrew Bible is dismissed when scholars cannot "verify" biblical events with non-biblical sources. In fact, this notion of "verification" is ultimately untenable, for "verification lies in the eye of the beholder."[37] Does an archeological artifact "prove" a text is historically true? Does another account "prove" a text is historically true? Provan's answer is a resounding "No": "One person's sufficiency of data is another's insufficiency, or even another's forgery."[38] Instead of practicing this verification principle, Provan suggests that scholars practice a "falsification principle":

> "Why should not ancient historical texts rather be given the benefit of the doubt in regard to their statements about the past unless good reasons exist to consider them unreliable in these statements and with due regard (of course) to their literary and ideological features? In short, why should we adopt a verification rather than a falsification principle? Why should the onus be on the texts to 'prove' themselves valuable in respect of history, rather than on those who question their value to 'prove' them false?"[39]

In other words, Provan simply argues that historians should apply the same "falsification principle" that is used to evaluate so many other ancient texts to the Hebrew Bible as well, for the fact is that those who employ this "verification principle" do so selectively. If this "verification principle" was consistently applied, Provan points out

[37] Provan, "Stable," 13.
[38] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 55.
[39] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 55.

that we would know very little indeed about history. "The more consistently the method is applied, the more it collapses in upon itself, until the point is reached where it is realized that nothing can be truly known at all."[40] Simply put, the Hebrew Bible cannot be disqualified as a potential historical text simply because it is "the Bible."

VI. Provan, Long, and Longman: The Bible as Literature

Although Provan, Long, and Longman go to great lengths to argue for the necessity of honestly treating the Bible as a historical text, they also point out that the Bible is also literature. In fact, there has been an increasing interest in literary approaches to the Bible over the past few years. Provan, Long, and Longman argue that "historians, though constrained by such 'facts' as can be discovered, do exercise judgment and creativity in several respects. First, they exercise judgment in weighing the available evidence and in catching a 'vision of the past.' They then must make creative choices in seeking to present this vision to their target audiences."[41] The fundamental question in the realm of biblical studies today, of course, is how will today's scholars be able to work within both spheres of "the Bible as history" and "the Bible as literature"? Provan, Long, and Longman state that the verdict is still out on this issue. Will literary approaches to the Bible "devolve into dehistoricized, purely literary readings that treat the Bible…as little more than an elaborate novel" or will they "lead to sharpened perceptions of the full range of the Bible's testimony, including its historical testimony?"[42] Although Provan, Long, and Longman correctly state that at the very least many scholars are already in the process driving a wedge between literary and historical studies, the fact is that no matter

[40] Provan, "Stable," 15.
[41] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 76.
[42] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 80.

how artistic and literary various biblical texts are, they "were not composed as 'pure' literature (i.e., art for art's sake), but as 'applied' literature (history, liturgy, laws, preaching, and the like)."[43] They were written as reflections on the history of Israel that attempted to teach and exhort its readers about how to live as the people of God. Because of this realization, it becomes obvious that such an attempted divorce between historical and literary concerns cannot be allowed to take place, for "literary understanding is a necessary condition of historical understanding, and both literary and historical understanding are necessary conditions of biblical interpretation."[44] Robert Alter echoes this sentiment when he says, "In all biblical narrative and in a good deal of biblical poetry as well, the domain in which literary invention and religious imagination are joined is history, for all these narratives, with the possible exceptions of Job and possibly Jonah, purport to be true accounts of things that have occurred in historical time."[45] As was previously stated in the early part of this introductory chapter, and as is echoed here, to divorce historical concerns and literary concerns in one's study of the Bible is to guarantee that one's biblical exegesis will be extremely faulty and wanting.

VII. Michael Fishbane: Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel

Another scholar whose view must be considered is Michael Fishbane. No other biblical scholar has so thoroughly and thoughtfully analyzed the phenomenon of biblical interpretation within the Hebrew Bible itself as Michael Fishbane. While Provan and Long address the issues of the historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible and the literary composition of the Hebrew Bible, Fishbane, in his book *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient*

[43] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 81.
[44] Provan, Long, and Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 81.
[45] Robert Alter, "Introduction" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 17.

Israel, focuses on the very process of scribal exegesis in ancient Israel that inherited certain authoritative texts and then refashioned them to emphasize certain theological truths, thus eventually producing the Hebrew Bible that we have today. If Provan and Long argue that the Hebrew Bible should be regarded as historically reliable at its foundational roots unless proven to be otherwise, Fishbane describes the exegetical process that took those foundational stories within the history of Israel and refashioned them to speak to later generations until they came into their final form.

In his attempt to describe this exegetical practice within ancient Israel, Fishbane uses three interchangeable terms: aggadic exegesis, inner-biblical exegesis, and scribal exegesis. Closely related to these is the concept of intertextuality. Fishbane employs all of these terms while referring to the process in which ancient Israelite scribes received previous authoritative texts (what he calls *traditum*), then creatively reinterpreted and reapplied them in light of their present situation in order to preserve and pass on what they believed to be God's revealed Word to his people (what he calls *traditio*). The reason why latter biblical authors reworked their received, authorized *traditums* into their own new *traditios* is quite simple: they were attempting to recontextualize and reapply the authorized *traditums* to speak to their present historical situations. Since the *traditums* revealed God's Word, and since the latter biblical writers found themselves in very different situations than the ones in which the *traditums* originally spoke to, they were impelled to re-think and re-interpret those *traditums*; for if they did not do so, those *traditums* would become irrelevant. Consequently, as Fishbane points out, the "dominant thrust" of the *traditios* of the later biblical writers "is their proclamation that they have fulfilled or superseded the ancient Israelite *traditum*. Theirs is an innovative *traditio*,

continuous with the Hebrew Bible, but decidedly something new."[46] Ironically, "the older *traditum* is dependent upon the *traditio* for its ongoing life."[47] The result of such scribal exegesis throughout the history of Israel can be found in our Hebrew Bibles today. The various narratives, prophecy, poetry and laws found in the Hebrew Bible are the end products of hundreds of years of such on-going scribal exegesis, and therefore are a combination of original texts (*traditum*) and amended reinterpretations and reapplication of those original authoritative texts (*traditio*).

Fishbane disagrees with most scholars over the importance of glosses. In contrast to the fact that "modern textual analysis has been principally concerned to establish the 'original' text, which is deemed 'authentic', and to weed out the scribal addenda and annotations, which are considered secondary and therefore 'inauthentic,'"[48] Fishbane holds that scribal glosses should *not* be cast aside; they should be seen as shedding light on the text itself. He argues that "scribal exegesis derives from the *traditum*, articulates and underscores its content, and ultimately shares in its composition. From this perspective, the *traditio* of scribal exegesis simply brings obscure or problematic dimensions of the *traditum* to the level of textuality. It neither alters nor rivals the centrality and authority of the textual artifact."[49]

This idea of authority is central to both Fishbane's explanation of scribal exegesis, as well as this thesis' understanding of the historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible. Fishbane views the various scribal reinterpretations (*traditios*) that were reworked within

[46] Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 10.
[47] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 15.
[48] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 42.
[49] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 87.

the *traditum* itself as being "subservient to its authority."[50] Simply put, the authority of a given *traditum* lives on within the lives of the believing community precisely because of the work of the scribal exegetes who reapplied it to their present situation by virtue of their *traditio*, which in turn becomes the authoritative *traditum* for the next generation.

In light of this, Fishbane articulates the various ways in which scribal *traditio* "reactualizes" the received authoritative *traditum*. First, it can emphasize a radical newness of the *traditio* and the obsolescence of the *traditum*, thus envisaging "new religio-cultural realities in the New (post-exilic) Age."[51] Second, it can emphasize a fundamental continuity between the older *traditum* and contemporary *traditio*, where the *traditio* "is regarded as a reactualization of the *traditum*, and not its replacement; the *traditum* does not serve as the backdrop and foil for a discontinuous *traditio*, but is rather the screen upon which national hope and renewal is contextualized, even imagined."[52] An example of this would be Deutero-Isaiah setting the restoration against the backdrop of the exodus, and describing the restoration as a "new exodus."And third, it can emphasize the reformation of historical memories themselves. Fishbane points to the Chronicler as such an example, where the Chronicler has "taken over older historical traditions and reformulated them in light of contemporary emphases, values, and ideals."[53] However they are used, though, Fishbane emphasizes that those involved in scribal exegesis "are not concerned to reproduce the *traditum*, but to reactualize it in a new setting and a new way. Their aim is not to present the *traditum*, but rather to represent it—and this is

[50] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 88.
[51] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 412.
[52] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 413.
[53] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 413.

traditio."[54] In other words, the *traditio* of a latter biblical author is a reinterpretation of the inherited *traditum* that at the same time has both continuity and discontinuity with the original text to which it refers and re-interprets. The scribal exegetes, Fishbane states,

> "…presumably knew himself to be a latecomer on the stage of Israelite culture—for he is the recipient of tradition before he is the maker or transmitter of it. Being such a latecomer means, first of all, that one's creative freedom is conditioned, since it is a freedom to live within the ideologies of the theological *traditum* and its literary fund, to shape it and to redirect it, to utilize and to grow with it."[55]

Simply put, Fishbane argues that even though later biblical writers (scribal exegetes) had the freedom to creatively revise and reapply their inherited authoritative texts, that did not mean that they had the freedom to make the texts say whatever they wanted the text to say. Quite the contrary was true. The *traditums* provided "the imaginative matrix for evaluating the present, for conceiving of the future, [and] for organizing reality,"[56] and therefore any reinterpretation and reapplication of such *traditums*, by virtue of the scribal *traditio*, was rooted within and shaped by the original understanding of the *traditum*.

Fishbane's explanation of scribal exegesis in ancient Israel is vitally important to understand because it challenges the assumption of many biblical scholars that not only do scribal glosses and reinterpretations somehow obscure the meaning of the biblical text, but that it is even possible to get back to the "original text" at all. In contrast to this modern view, Fishbane argues that not only is the work of scribal exegetes crucial in our understanding of the biblical text, but that the *traditum* and *traditio* are so entwined and inextricable, that to attempt to tear the two apart would inevitably mean the destruction of the text itself. Scholars who attempt to do so simply are no longer doing biblical exegesis, for they destroy the very text they are supposed to exegete.

---

[54] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 416-417.
[55] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 435.
[56] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 435.

VIII. The Bible: History, Literature, and Prophecy

Provan, Long, Longman, and Fishbane provide a solid foundation upon which this thesis can build. Not only do Provan, Long, and Longman make a convincing case for the general historical reliability of the biblical text, they also articulate the vital role literary analysis has within biblical studies. Fishbane, demonstrating how the phenomenon of scribal exegesis must be seen as an integral part of the development of the Hebrew Bible, argues that the literary shaping and theological perspectives of later scribal exegetes must be accepted as part of the authoritative text. This thesis thus seeks to build off of the views of these scholars. As we come to Isaiah 7:14, we must remember that the book of Isaiah is not only a theological and literary work, but a historical work as well. Therefore, biblical exegesis cannot neglect the literary artistry of a text, disregard the theological perspectives of a text, or ignore the historical concerns surrounding that text. V. Phillips Long echoes this sentiment when he argues that one must seriously consider three impulses found in the writing of any biblical text: "The *historical* impulse implies constraint by the subject, the *theological* impulse implies point of view, and the *literary* impulse implies aesthetic choices."[57] We need to acknowledge the fact that the writer of any given biblical text was not simply "doing theology," or "writing literature," completely devoid of historical concerns. Rather, he was interpreting *historical events* through the *theological lens* of ancient Judaism, and presenting those views in a *literary* genre, be it narrative, poetry, or prophecy. Consequently, if one is to try to truly exegete a given biblical text, one must take all three impulses into consideration. To do anything less would mean that one's exegesis would be severely lacking. It should be quite obvious

[57] Long, *The Art of Biblical History*, 71.

that although the biblical writers of the historical narratives were not writing history in the way in which we in the 21st Century understand it (they were not attempting to objectively give "just the facts"), they were still writing history. They simply couched their presentations of the history of Israel within various literary genres. Hence, books like Isaiah are presented as *both* history *and* literature, or more precisely, a history *within* the genre of literature.

That being said, there is one more aspect to understanding a book like Isaiah. While it is no doubt a historical work, a literary work, and a theological work, we must keep in mind that within the Hebrew Bible it is presented, first and foremost, as a *prophetic* work. The book of Isaiah, along with I and II Kings, I and II Samuel, and a host of other books, is classified under the heading *Prophets*. This classification is something that cannot be overlooked, for it has a tremendous impact on how we are to understand the function of the book of Isaiah. In fact, as this thesis has already shown, it was precisely a misunderstanding of what prophecy is that led to early Church Fathers like Justin Martyr to misinterpret Isaiah 7:14. Therefore, we must ask a fundamental question: what does it mean to say that the book of Isaiah is a *prophetic* work?

In their book, *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*, Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart point out that although most people mistakenly think that prophecy essentially dealt with far-off predictions about either the messiah or the New Covenant age, that less than 2% of Old Testament prophecy is messianic, less than 5% of Old Testament prophecy describes the New Covenant age, and less than 1% deals with events yet to come.[58] By contrast, the main function of the prophets was to speak for God to their own

[58] Gordon D. Fee and Douglass Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 166.

contemporaries.[59] The judgment and salvation about which they prophesied took place "in the immediate future of Israel, not in our own future."[60] Desmond Tutu echoes this when he says, "[The prophets] were not glorified crystal ball gazers whose chief activity was to predict the future. They were fundamentally God's spokespersons."[61] By extension we need to see that this is equally true of not only the original prophets themselves, but also of those scribal exegetes who later compiled and shaped the prophetic books that we have in our Hebrew Bibles today. Just as the original prophets uttered their prophecies to their original audiences and spoke God's word to the "here and now" of their contemporaries, so too did the scribal exegetes who put the prophetic books into their final form strive to speak to the "here and now" of *their* contemporaries. As stated by Fishbane earlier, the scribal *traditio*, while remaining under the authority of and remaining faithful to, their inherited *traditum*, was able to further speak God's word to its contemporary culture. Simply put, if a prophet spoke a prophecy of judgment against an unfaithful king of Judah, that original prophecy would have been heard by the original audience. Whether or not that prophecy was truly of God, though, would only be determined when and if that prophecy was fulfilled. Yet when it was, a later scribal exegete, when fashioning together the prophecies of that earlier prophet, would strive to show that the prophecy had indeed been fulfilled. His *traditio* would not only vindicate the early prophet as a true prophet of YHWH, but it would also serve as a "prophetic history lesson" for his contemporaries. Granted, the scribal exegete's interpretation of that earlier event and prophecy was just

[59] Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible,* 166.
[60] Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible,*181.
[61] Desmond Tutu, forward to *The Hebrew Prophets: Visionaries of the Ancient World,* by Lawrence Boadt (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), 7.

that: an interpretation. Yet it would have been understood to be a *prophetic* interpretation working under and deriving its authority from the authority of the earlier prophet.

We must attempt, therefore, to exegete Proto-Isaiah, or more precisely Isaiah 7:14 and its surrounding context, in light of its prophetic purpose: to provide a prophetic interpretation of certain historical events that both vindicates Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH and teaches its readers about YHWH's purposes within those historical events. Since much of the prophetic writing in the Bible is in the genre of narrative, it is inevitable that literary story-telling techniques are used in relating those historical events. Therefore we should understand the biblical narratives found in the *Prophets* as being prophetic interpretations of historical events presented in the form of literary narratives. At the same time, since there is a considerable amount of prophetic material in the *Prophets* that comes to us in the form of poetry, we should expect to find poetic techniques and language throughout these sections. We should also remember that these poetic sections in the *Prophets* are still prophetic declarations concerning historical events presented in the form of poetry. Consequently, any "gloss" one might identify should not be seen as something that obscures what really happened, but rather as something that helps the reader interpret and understand that history in clearer focus.

IX. An Understanding of the Historical Reliability of Biblical Texts

The task set before biblical scholars today is to ascertain the original meaning of a given text as it has come to us, now in its final form. This entails attempting to explain how the original readers of the final form of the text would have understood it in their own time. This necessitates not only an understanding of the literary and theological structures that scribal exegetes used in the transmission and reactualization of the

received *traditum* into the *traditio* that is preserved for us today, but also an appreciation of the prophetic voice of the narratives found within the prophetic books. This does not mean, though, that such an appreciation for the literary and theological shaping of a given biblical text requires a naïve assumption that it is so far removed from the historical event it claims to be relating that it cannot be considered historically reliable at all. Without convincing evidence to prove otherwise, dismissing biblical texts as historically unreliable, simply because they (a) are far removed from the events themselves, (b) display obvious markings of literary shaping, and (c) put forth a clear theological understanding of that history, is exegetically unsound and intellectually dishonest.

Provan argues that all texts are "biased" in some fashion, therefore a text cannot be deemed historically unreliable simply because it is pushing for a certain understanding of that historical event. Therefore, the only intellectually honest thing to do would be to adopt a "falsification principle," in which a text which claims to be a report on historical events is presumed to be reliable unless it is proven false. Long further points out that the Bible is not simply a theological document; it is both a literary document as well as a historical document. Proper exegesis, therefore, requires (a) an understanding of the literary artistry of a biblical text, (b) an understanding of the theological outlook of the biblical writer, (c) an understanding of the historical audience who originally interpreted the text, and in the case of the relevant texts to this thesis, (d) an understanding that these texts provide a prophetic interpretation of actual historical events.

This does not mean that every single detail in a biblical historical text is actually "historically factual"—there must be an appreciation for the literary artistry and creativity of the biblical author. We do not have to believe, for example, that Hezekiah's prayer in

Isaiah 38:10-20 is a word for word account of what Hezekiah prayed at that specific time, or that the Rabshakeh uttered those exact words in Isaiah 36-37, or that Isaiah's prophecies in chapters 7-12 are chronologically accurate, word for word accounts. What this does mean is that, unless faced with historical evidence to the contrary, we can be confident that the historical events put forth in the biblical texts are, at their historical roots, historically reliable. We can reasonably assume that when faced with Sennacherib's threat outside Jerusalem in 701 BCE, Hezekiah offered many prayers to YHWH for deliverance, and that somehow Jerusalem did, in fact, not fall to Sennacherib. We can reasonably assume that during that siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE that threats and taunts were hurled at Hezekiah and those living in Jerusalem by certain officials in the Assyrian army. We can reasonably assume that Isaiah confronted Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, that Ahaz's actions during that crisis were seen as displaying unfaithfulness to YHWH, and that what is recorded in Isaiah 7-12 contains the core of Isaiah's prophecies at that time. How these historical events were interpreted and understood undoubtedly varied over the course of time in ancient Israel; yet although these events were interpreted and understood in various ways throughout the life of ancient Israel, they remained actual historical events at their core.

Having said all of this, it must be acknowledged that in the process of copying, reinterpreting, and reapplying the various *traditums* into later *traditios*, scribal errors undoubtedly crept into the text from time to time. Therefore, it is the challenge of the biblical scholar, when faced with a given peculiarity in the text, to determine whether such a peculiarity is either a genuine scribal error or rather the intentional work of the scribal exegete to highlight a certain theological perspective or literary structure. Such a

determination is admittedly speculative at best, and its veracity can only be determined in light of the overall exegesis of the given passage. In other words, if a scholar claims a certain part of the text is a scribal error, not only must there be textual evidence that lends itself to the belief of a genuine scribal error, but it also must "make sense" within the overall interpretation of that given text. Although it can never be definitively "proven" to be a scribal error, there must be enough evidence to support the *probability* that it is so.

The issue of historical reliability is essential to this thesis, but so is the issue of literary competence, for this thesis asserts that the biblical accounts surrounding king Ahaz and Hezekiah are, in fact, put forth as not only *artistic literary narratives*, but also as *prophetic* interpretations of *actual historical accounts*. The two cannot easily be separated, nor should they be, for what we find in the Hebrew Bible is, in fact, a *prophetic* marriage of both literature and history. Robert Alter calls this phenomenon "fictionalized history" or "historicized fiction." By making such a characterization, though, he does not mean to downplay or deny the historicity of the Hebrew Bible:

> "In giving such weight to fictionality, I do not mean to discount the historical impulse that informs the Hebrew Bible. The God of Israel, as so often has been observed, is above all the God of history: the working out of his purposes in history is a process that compels the attention of the Hebrew imagination, which is thus led to the most vital interest in the concrete and differential character of historical events. The point is that fiction was the principal means which the biblical authors had at their disposal for realizing history."[62]

Whether we call it "fictionalized history" or "historicized fiction,"[63] we must remember that the biblical texts relevant to this thesis were also considered prophetic. What we find in the Hebrew Bible is that such prophetic biblical narratives truly are "one flesh"—both

[62] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (United States of America: HarperCollins Publishers, 1981), 32.

[63] V. Philips Long, while agreeing with Alter, believes that a term like "artistry" should be preferred over the term "fiction," and that we should "reserve the term fiction for the nonfactual genre of that name." Long, *Biblical History*, 63.

history and literature—and that to separate them would, in fact, bring about their death. Therefore, in the course of this exegetical study, we will attempt to always be mindful of this marriage of literature and history within these prophetic texts. The underlying presupposition of this study is two-fold: (1) the biblical accounts will be given the benefit of the doubt when it comes to historical reliability, unless there is a reasonable and logical reason to question them, and (2) the biblical accounts are literary narratives that were purposely shaped by scribal exegetes who attempted to give a coherent prophetic theological understanding to actual historical events.

X. The Main Arguments of this Thesis

With that said, it must be stated up front what this thesis' position is on each one of the exegetical issues stated above. Since each issue must be dealt with in turn, one must be willing to suspend final judgment until each issue is dealt with and presented within the overall argument of this thesis.

X.1. Isaiah 7:14 is a Prophecy about Hezekiah

As for the first exegetical landmine, this thesis will argue that the traditional Jewish understanding that equates Hezekiah with Immanuel is correct. It will argue that the immediate context of not only Isaiah 7, but also of the literary unit of Isaiah 7-12, points toward this identification.

X. 2. A Revised Chronology of II Kings 16-20

As for the second exegetical landmine—the chronological objections put forth by many scholars regarding the identification of Hezekiah with Immanuel—this thesis will argue that the chronological difficulties found in II Kings 16-20 and Isaiah 36-39 can be

traced back to probable scribal errors in the text, and that the correction of these errors helps resolve various other exegetical problems.

X. 3. The Primacy of Isaiah 36-39 over II Kings 18-20

As for the third exegetical landmine, this thesis will argue that although it is certainly possible that both II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39 both borrowed from an earlier source, it seems more probable that II Kings borrowed from Proto-Isaiah, and that the events recorded in Isaiah 36-39 are a vital part of the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah, whereas there is no clear discernable literary structure within II Kings.

X. 4. The Historical Reliability and Literary Coherence of Isaiah 36-39

As for the fourth exegetical landmine, this thesis will argue that the depiction of the historical events in Isaiah 36-39 is not only historically reliable, but also a single coherent literary unit, and not the product of a careless redactor who threw various sources together.

X. 5. The Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah and the Historical Impetus for its Writing

As for the fifth exegetical landmine, this thesis will argue that Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39 form two literary "bookends" to Proto-Isaiah that highlight a number of features regarding the prophetic interpretation of the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. The ultimate purpose of Proto-Isaiah was to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH and vindicate Hezekiah as a righteous and faithful king. The twin issues regarding the credibility of Isaiah and Hezekiah would have been hotly debated issues shortly after Sennacherib's invasion and Hezekiah's subsequent death. The antagonistic stance Manasseh took against Isaiah and against YHWH, the God of Israel, points to the

probability of a major theological/political crisis within early seventh century Judah: how should the events of Sennacherib's invasion be interpreted? Was it a victory and vindication for Hezekiah and Isaiah, who remained faithful to YHWH alone, or was it a devastating defeat for Hezekiah and Isaiah, who had gotten rid of the foreign gods in Jerusalem, and had thus incurred their wrath? This thesis holds that in light of such theological/political turmoil early on in Manasseh's reign, the priests and scribes who were faithful to YHWH and who had supported Hezekiah and Isaiah assembled Isaiah's prophecies and recorded the major events during his lifetime in order to present a counter-argument to the theological/political message that was being put forth by Manasseh. This work became what we now call Proto-Isaiah.

It must be pointed out, though, that this proposed historical reconstruction of the events surrounding the writing of Isaiah 36-39 and the compilation of Proto-Isaiah is borne out of an honest exegetical analysis of the literary bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah. Given the clear, discernable bookend structure, centered upon the connection between Immanuel and Hezekiah, this thesis is arguing for, the question, "To what historical situation would such a message most likely have been addressed?" finds its most logical answer in the time shortly after Hezekiah's death, when Manasseh had begun to attempt to reverse Hezekiah's reforms and antagonize the true worshippers of YHWH in Judah.

XI. Looking Forward: The Chapters of this Thesis

Now that the basic exegetical questions have been put forward and the basic argument has been stated, it is now time to preview the content of the following chapters.

XI. 1. Chapter Two: The Exegetical Issues Surrounding Isaiah 7:14

In chapter two we will analyze the historical and modern arguments regarding the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 and focus on the basic four variants found within Isaiah 7:14. We will first analyze the various exegetical issues surrounding Isaiah 7:14 by surveying the various arguments that have been made throughout the past two centuries. Once we point out both the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments, we will then argue that the Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 is none other than Hezekiah. Both the immediate context of Isaiah 7, as well as the overall context of Isaiah 7-12 supports this view.

X.2. Chapter Three: The Chronological Problems of II Kings 16-20

Chapter three will tackle the chronological problems that arise in II Kings 16-20. In order to argue that the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 is Hezekiah, one must first deal with the obvious chronological difficulties in II Kings surrounding the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. There is no point in arguing that Hezekiah was the prophesied Immanuel child if at the most basic historical level it was found to be an impossibility. This chapter will include a detailed explanation of the problem, an analysis of how various scholars have attempted to resolve the various chronological problems surrounding the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, and a proposed solution to that problem. In the course of this chapter we will also address the issue of the parallel accounts found in Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20 and come to the conclusion that Isaiah 36-39 is, in fact, the original account, and that the writer of II Kings borrowed his material from Isaiah. Ultimately, this thesis will argue that the key to resolving the chronological problems of II Kings 16-20 is to identify the scribal errors that are obviously in the text. The resolution of these problems will show that the birth of Hezekiah does indeed fall within the time frame of the Syro-

Ephraimite Crisis, and therefore there is a distinct possibility that Hezekiah would have been the initial referent to the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14.

X. 3. Chapter Four: Historical Reliability/Literary Coherence of Isaiah 36-39

Chapter four will focus on the question of the historical reliability and literary coherence of Isaiah 36-39. This thesis will first argue that the writer of II Kings took his material in II Kings 18-20 from Isaiah 36-39, and that Isaiah 36-39 contains the original account. Secondly, this thesis will argue that Proto-Isaiah's account of the life of Hezekiah, most particularly the invasion of Sennacherib, Hezekiah's illness, and the visit of the envoys from Babylon, must not only be taken as a historically reliable text, but also as a literary coherent and artistic text within Proto-Isaiah.

X. 4. Chapter Five: The Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah

Chapter five will focus on the literary connections between Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39, and the greater overall context and literary structure of Proto-Isaiah. It will be argued that these two sections have been set up as literary "bookends" that highlight the similar circumstances, yet completely contrary characters, of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Not only will chapter five further establish the probability that Hezekiah is the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14, it will also establish the overarching literary structure of Proto-Isaiah.

X. 5. Appendixes: Chronological Charts, Parallel Texts, Thematic Strands of Emphasis

There are three appendixes at the end of this thesis. Appendix A compliments chapter three and contains chronological charts that show the chronological problems within II Kings 16-20 as well as the proposed revisions put forth in this thesis. Appendix B compliments chapter four and contains a chart showing the parallel texts of Isaiah 36-

37 and II Kings 18-19 and highlighting the textual differences between the two texts. Appendix C compliments chapter five and contains an extensive chart that shows the three thematic strands of emphasis and how they unfold throughout the entirety of Proto-Isaiah.

Chapter Two

Isaiah 7:14 and its Immediate Context

I. Introduction

The fundamental rule of biblical exegesis is that context determines meaning. When it comes to Isaiah 7:14, its proper interpretation depends on more than the lexical meanings of certain words. It must be derived from considering essentially five contexts: (a) the pericope of 7:13-25, (b) the *immediate literary context* of chapters 7-12, known by most scholars as "The Book of Immanuel," (c) the *greater literary context* of chapters 1-39 (i.e. Proto-Isaiah), (d) the *historical context* in which Isaiah 7 is set, that of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, and (e) the *historical context* in which Proto-Isaiah was compiled and which serves as the basis to speculate on the *occasion* and *purpose* of Proto-Isaiah.

In the course of this thesis, we will address all five contexts mentioned above. In this chapter, though, we will focus on the immediate context of Isaiah 7:14. Yet before we do so, we must do two things. We must first review the past scholarship on Isaiah 7:14 and take note of both the insights and shortcomings scholars have made in their attempts to exegete this verse and its surrounding context. We must then analyze the specific textual variants found in Isaiah 7:14. Then and only then can we look at Isaiah 7:14 within the context of both the immediate prophecy of 7:13-25 as well as the greater "Immanuel section" of chapters 7-12. In the course of this chapter, it will be argued that when read within the immediate literary context of Isaiah 7-12, Isaiah 7:14 is first and foremost a prophecy about the birth of a royal son of Ahaz who would become king and whose reign would witness the humiliation of Assyria. In the subsequent chapters it will

be argued, based on historical analysis and the analysis of the greater literary context of Proto-Isaiah, that Immanuel was understood to be Hezekiah.

II. Past Scholarship of Isaiah 7:14

The scholarship surrounding the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 is legion. Nevertheless, despite the vast amount of variation in interpretation, we find the same basic elements in most exegetical work. Quite obviously the essential question regarding Isaiah 7:14 is, "To whom was Isaiah originally referring at the time?" By and large, there are four proposals scholars have made concerning the identification of the Immanuel child and his mother, the עַלְמָה of 7:14:

(a) she was Ahaz's wife or concubine, thus making the child a prince, possibly Hezekiah;[64]

(b) she was Isaiah's wife, the prophetess mentioned in chapter 8, thus making the child Isaiah's son born in chapter 8;[65]

(c) עַלְמָה is a general term that referred to all pregnant women at the time, thus making the child a reference to all babies born at that time who would be young children by the time the Syro-Ephraimite threat would be gone;[66]

(d) she is Mary, the mother of Jesus, and therefore Immanuel is Jesus.

Despite these different conclusions, there is a general consensus among scholars regarding a number of exegetical issues surrounding Isaiah 7:14. J. Alec Moyter, for example, correctly points out that according to the immediate context of 7:13-25:

(a) Immanuel's birth was to take place in conjunction with the events of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis;

[64] John D. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (WBC; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1985), 98-101; John J. Scullion, "An Approach to the Understanding of Isaiah 7:10-17," *JBL* 87 (1968): 288-300.

[65] Herbert M. Wolf, *"A Solution to the Immanuel Prophecy in Isaiah 7:14-8:22,"JBL* 91 (1972,): 449-456; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 212-213; J. Alec Moyter, "Context and Content in the Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14,"*TB* 21 (1970): 124.

[66] William McKane, "The Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14-25," *VT* 17 (1967): 208-219.

(b) he would be born at a time when the Davidic dynasty was 'disestablished;'

(c) because he is called Immanuel, the situation was not devoid of hope.[67]

Like many scholars, Moyter denotes Isaiah 6-12 as "The Book of Immanuel," and argues that the visionary chapters of 6 and 12 act as its prologue and epilogue.[68] Within this section, Moyter also notes a correlation between the Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 and the messianic figure of Isaiah 9 and 11. Based on this parallelism between chapter 7 and chapters 9 and 11, we can reasonably conclude that the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7 is the same child mentioned in both Isaiah 9 and 11. Moyter shows this parallelism within these chapters in the following chart. He notes that the initial prophecy focused on Judah while the later prophecy focused on Ephraim (Israel):[69]

The Moment of Decision	(7:1-17) The Lord's warning comes to Judah. On the king's decision hangs the future of the dynasty.	(9:8-10:4) The Lord's word comes to Ephraim. A wealth of imminent divine anger awaits disobedience.
The Judgment	(7:18-8:8) The Assyrian Invasion: Damascus and Samaria are despoiled; Judah overwhelmed as by an all but fatal flood.	(10:5-15) The Assyrian Invasion: Samaria has fallen; Judah is under threat; the punishment of Assyria is certain.
The Remnant	(8:9-22) The foes of God's people are doomed, but His people are secure. It is not, however, an unconditional security: those who reject His word are without hope.	(10:16-34) The destruction of the king of Assyria; the salvation of a remnant of Israel; the dramatic deliverance of Zion.
The Glorious Hope	(9:1-7) The birth and reign of the Davidic prince brings victory, joy and peace to His people, and His reign ever extends.	(11:1-16) The perfection of the Davidic Prince, and His reign over the Gentiles And over a re-gathered Israel and Judah.

Fredrick Moriarty also reflects the general scholarly consensus on the historical setting surrounding Isaiah 7:14. He notes that there was a considerable amount of unrest in the western states of Syria. Although Moriarty notes this unrest had begun in the reign

[67] Moyter, "Context and Content," 122.
[68] Moyter, "Context and Content," 123.
[69] Moyter, "Context and Content," 122-123.

of Jeroboam, who had died in 746 BCE,[70] he, like many other scholars, sets the events of Isaiah 7 in 734 BCE. Moriarty correctly notes that Immanuel appears between the two sons of Isaiah and "initiates a series of oracles whose climax is found in chapter 11 with its description of the qualities and responsibilities of the ideal Messianic King."[71] This messianic picture in chapter 11 has "strong eschatological overtones" and looks forward to "the rejuvenation of the House of David." [72]

Walter Kaiser provides further insightful commentary regarding Isaiah 7:14 and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. He points out that although this crisis climaxed in 734 BCE with the Assyria's destruction of Damascus, Judah's problems with Aram and Israel had been brewing before that. Kaiser cannot say how much earlier such trouble was brewing or how much earlier Isaiah uttered his prophecy to Ahaz, but he speculates that since the trouble began during Jotham's reign (II Kings 15:37), such a crisis could have well happened at the very beginning of Ahaz's reign, when he was still an unproven king. In fact, Kaiser speculates that "…the events that precipitated Isaiah's warnings may have come as early as 748 or 739 BCE, just prior to Tiglath-pileser's 738 BCE foray into this territory. One fact remains: this scrap did not begin with Ahaz; it had its roots in the last days of Ahaz's predecessor, King Jotham."[73] Scholars assume too quickly that Isaiah 7:13-25 was uttered shortly before Tiglath-pileser destroyed Damascus in 734 BCE, yet as Kaiser points out, since Judah was suffering aggression by Aram and Israel ever since the latter years of Jotham, Isaiah 7:13-25 could have easily been uttered as early as the beginning of Ahaz's reign (circa 742-740 BCE). As will be argued later on, this has a

[70]Fredrick L. Moriarty, "The Emmanuel Prophecies," *CBQ* 19 (1957): 228.
[71] Moriarty, "The Emmanuel Prophecies," 230.
[72] Moriarty, "The Emmanuel Prophecies," 231.
[73] Walter Kaiser, "The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single-Meaning Hermeneutic," *EJ* 6 (Fall 1988): 66.

considerable impact on one's assessment of the chronological problems regarding the identification of Hezekiah with Immanuel.

II. 1. The View that Immanuel is Jesus

Although most scholars agree with Moyter and Kaiser's explanation of the historical and literary contexts of Isaiah 7:14, the question regarding the identity of Immanuel still receives different answers. In his commentary on Isaiah 1-12, Old Testament scholar Otto Kaiser points out that "the whole context [of Isaiah 7] demands an event which is shortly to come about."[74] Surprisingly though, there are a number of Old Testament scholars who seemingly do not share his sentiment, and choose rather to bypass any serious consideration of either the historical or literary context of Isaiah 7:14 in favor of the traditional Christian assumption that this verse is a prediction of the virgin birth of Jesus. One scholar who does this is J. Alec Moyter. Although he correctly sees that "it is impossible to separate this Immanuel from the Davidic king whose birth delivers his people (9:4-7),"[75] he nevertheless states, "Isaiah foresaw the birth of the divine son of David [i.e. Jesus] and also laid the foundation for the understanding of the unique nature of his birth [i.e. virgin birth]."[76] In contrast to Otto Kaiser's comment above, Moyter states, "It is impossible to confine the Immanuel prophecy to any long-forgotten 'fulfillment' in the time of Ahaz."[77] In other words, we cannot find the meaning of Isaiah 7:14 in it original context alone. Moriarty goes one step further and claims that Isaiah 7:14 transcends the historical situation, points ahead to the eschatological future, and finds fulfillment in Christ.

---

[74] Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 101.
[75] J. Alec Moyter, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 86.
[76] Moyter, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 86.
[77] Moyter, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 123.

Other scholars who share this assumption are Charles Lee Feinberg, J. Barton Payne, and Walter C. Kaiser. One of the reasons why Feinberg believes Isaiah 7:14 is about Christ is that he believes "we have no record of its actual fulfillment in any contemporary event [i.e. the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis]."[78] One of the reasons Payne gives as to why Isaiah 7:14 is a prediction about Christ is that since the New Testament clearly regards Isaiah 9 and 11 as predictive prophecies about Jesus, and since Isaiah 7 is intricately tied to Isaiah 9 and 11, it too must be regarded as predictive.

Since these scholars insist that Isaiah 7:14 first and foremost as a prediction about Jesus, this obviously raises a fundamental problem. If it is solely a prediction about Jesus, how would it have been understood by Ahaz, the original hearers of Isaiah's prophecy, or the original audience of Proto-Isaiah? Moyter answers this question by saying, "…the very circumstances of the communication of the prophecy required the possibility that some of its features would be misunderstood, but the narration of the 'whole story' made the final position clear and unequivocal."[79] Moriarty seemingly dismisses this question of original context outright. He notes that the attempt of many scholars to identify Immanuel with a contemporary figure of that time "usually proceeds from the principle that prophetic oracles must be determined by circumstances proper to the author's own time."[80] Payne goes so far as to criticize another scholar who argued that Isaiah 7:14 has to be understood in relation to its historical context: "His real problem is clearly his presupposition that Isaiah's prophecy had to [have meaning] for its own day."[81] Walter

[78] Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Virgin Birth in the Old Testament and Isaiah 7:14," *BSac* 119 (1962): 252.

[79] Moyter, "Context and Content," 119-120.

[80] Moriarty, "The Immanuel Prophecies," 232.

[81] In his discussion he mentions Dewey Beegle and his article "Virgin or Young Woman?" and criticizes Beegle on the point that Beegle insisted that the prophecy must have had an immediate

Kaiser, on the other hand, even though he argues that Isaiah 7:14 is, in fact, a prediction of the birth of Christ, at least attempts to argue for an immediate application as well: "Ahaz is granted evidence of this sign in his own day, even though the full impact of all that God has in mind will not be realized until the Messiah himself is born in a unique manner in fulfillment of this passage."[82]

The problem with the views of these scholars is two-fold. First, by ignoring the literary genre of Isaiah 7 in favor of a strictly christological scheme, they end up defining Old Testament prophecy as nothing more than predictions about Christ. As was discussed in chapter one, the prophets were not soothsayers and fortune tellers. They spoke God's revealed word to their current situations; and although many of their prophecies dealt with the future consequences of the actions of Israel, those future consequences more than often came to pass in the *near* future, not the *distant* future. Scholars who unquestionably assume that Isaiah 7:14 was a prediction about some distant future event base their assumption on an essentially unbiblical understanding of prophecy.

Secondly, because they start with this assumption that Isaiah 7:14 is a prediction about the birth of Jesus, they fail to seriously consider the historical context of Isaiah 7-12, the literary context of Isaiah 7-12, or how Isaiah 7:14 fits into the greater context of Proto-Isaiah. Their consideration of these original contexts is superficial at best. Lest it be misunderstood, these scholars are essentially arguing that God inspired Isaiah to utter his prophecy, knowing full well that it would be either misunderstood, or not understood at all, by the people to whom it was originally addressed, and that only 740 years later would that prophecy make sense. Simply put, if there was no kind of fulfillment of this

application. J. Barton Payne, "Right Questions about Isaiah 7:14," in *Living and Active Word of God* (ed. Morris Inch; Winona Lake: Eisenbraus, 1983), 76.

[82] Walter Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 160.

prophecy at all during the time of Ahaz, the original historical and literary context of Isaiah 7-12 is ultimately irrelevant. Yet if one throws out any serious consideration of the original historical and literary contexts of a given text, then all exegetical controls go out the window. Indeed, it is frightening to find that scholars like Moriarty and Payne see attempts to understand verses in their historical context as a *flaw* in exegetical work. If we are to accept their claim that there are some prophecies that transcend their historical context, on what basis then do we determine which Old Testament prophecies transcend their historical situations and which do not?

If we are to believe these scholars and their proposals that Isaiah 7:14 is simply a prediction of the birth of Jesus, we must assume that there was over a 700 year gap between the judgment of Damascus and Samaria (7:18-8:8; 10:5-15) and the birth of the Davidic prince (9:1-7; 11:1-16), and we must completely ignore the obvious literary and historical connections between 8:9-22 and 10:16-34 and chapters 36-39. Yet not only does nothing in chapters 7-12 give any remote suggestion of such an extended time span as 700 years, but the connections between chapters 7-11 and chapters 36-39 are too obvious to ignore the implications.

These scholars have simply put the cart before the horse. In their rush to defend the traditional Christian understanding of Isaiah 7:14, these scholars have short-changed Isaiah, devalued the Old Testament as having any value in and of itself, and potentially misunderstood Matthew's use of that verse in his infancy narrative. Old Testament prophecy is not just a collection of misunderstood and ambiguous predictions that only can be made sense of by the New Testament. We must understand Old Testament prophecy as God speaking his Word to His people throughout their history, within their

own historical contexts. Since it is given *within* history *to* specific people in history, God's prophetic Word must be understood within the context of that history. Granted the New Testament claims that God has brought his work to fulfillment in Christ and cites numerous prophecies from the Old Testament to show that, but to interpret the New Testament language of "fulfillment" in the way that these scholars have done, in fact, to misinterpret it. Their definition of prophecy is essentially that it is fortune-telling. They are putting Old Testament prophecy on the same level with the prophecies of Nostradamus or the very fortune-tellers of Canaan that YHWH commanded the Hebrews to kill once they settled the land. Their definition of prophecy simply does not reflect the biblical understanding of prophecy at all. If we believe that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is God's revelation to his people so that they could understand and know him and his ways, then it simply would not make sense for Isaiah to utter a prophecy that would not be understandable to his audience. To argue otherwise simply leads to incomprehension and exegetical confusion. That is why so much of the exegetical work on Isaiah 7:14 has proven to be so unconvincing and suspect. Whenever one puts the cart before the horse, one will soon find that not only will the cart not move, but the horse will soon have a splitting headache from constantly hitting his head against the cart.

II. 2. The View that Immanuel is a General Term

A second view put forth by a handful of scholars is that the "Immanuel child" is not meant to be understood as specific child, but rather that it was meant to be understood in general terms. William McKane attempts to argue that Isaiah was prophesying that, given the imminent demise of Israel and Aram, there would be many women in Judah who were pregnant at that time who would name their child "Immanuel" as a way to

"mark this experience of deliverance and liberation."[83] Otto Kaiser, though, correctly points out that such a prophecy by Isaiah *after* Ahaz's clear display of unfaithfulness to YHWH would seem problematic. "If things had turned out thus, Ahaz would have been able to regard it as a complete confirmation of his own foreign policy."[84] Fredrick Moriarty also questions such an interpretation on the grounds that it does not fit the context: "Granting that this interpretation is grammatically possible there is nothing in the context which even remotely suggests that Isaiah had such a collectivity in mind."[85] It is by far the least popular view regarding Immanuel among scholars and has never gained any real traction in scholarly debate.

II. 3. The View that Immanuel is Isaiah's Son

Another view, put forth by Herbert Wolf and R.E. Clements, is that Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy about the birth of Isaiah's son. Wolf believes that son is Maher-shalal-hash-baz. He asserts that "the designation of Isaiah's sons as 'signs' in 8:18 strongly implies that Immanuel was one of those signs."[86] The bulk of his argument is that the "large tablet" of 8:1 was a written marriage covenant between Isaiah and his bride to be, the prophetess, and the witnesses mentioned in 8:2 (Uriah and Zechariah) were witnesses to the marriage. Hence, the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled when Isaiah married the prophetess who then gave birth to Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Wolf asserts that the child's mother named him "Immanuel," meaning "God with us," thus emphasizing the positive aspect to Isaiah's prophecy; whereas Isaiah gave the child a name that meant "Speeding to the spoil, hurrying to the plunder," thus emphasizing the negative aspect to

[83] McKane, "The Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14-25," 214.
[84] Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 103.
[85] Moriarty, "The Emmanuel Prophecies," 231.
[86] Wolf, *The Immanuel Prophecy*, 450.

his prophecy.[87] Immanuel "denoted the promise that God would be there to defeat Samaria and Damascus," and Maher-shalal-hash-baz "meant that Assyria would soon carry off the wealth of those two nations—before turning to devastate Judah."[88]

Wolf claims this interpretation clarifies two traditional problems with Isaiah 7:14: (a) the meaning of עַלְמָה and (b) the Hebrew phrase הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת. Wolf argues that עַלְמָה does mean "virgin" at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, but that does not mean she was a virgin at childbirth. Wolf also argues that the phrase הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת denotes she was not pregnant at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, for he had not yet married her in Isaiah 7:14.[89]

Wolf's interpretation is worthy of consideration, yet fails to answer a number of questions. Payne, for instance, argues that there is nothing in the text to suggest that Isaiah had a second wife. He further points out that the significance of Immanuel and Maher-shalal-hash-baz is considerably different. Wolf also does not address the issue that so many other scholars have seen: that of how the Immanuel child of 7:14 seems to have royal connotations and is clearly connected to 9:6-7 and 11:1-11. Secondly, even though it is a possibility that the "large tablet" of 8:1 was a type of marriage covenant, it is by no means clear. Even if it was, and even if Maher-shalal-hash-baz was born to the prophetess after Isaiah married her, Wolf's attempt to make the connection between Maher-shalal-hash-baz and Immanuel is not strong. There is no evidence that Isaiah's first wife who bore him Shear-jashub had died and that the "prophetess" was a second wife. Even if this was the case, John Walton points out that if the woman in Isaiah 7:14 is already pregnant, then it couldn't be the same woman in Isaiah 8:3, for she is just

[87] Wolf, *The Immanuel Prophecy*, 455.
[88] Wolf, *The Immanuel Prophecy*, 455.
[89] Wolf, *The Immanuel Prophecy*, 455-456.

conceiving. Walton also argues that the age of being able to say "daddy" or "mommy" comes before the age of being able to reject evil and choose good.[90] Although Wolf's interpretation seems at first to hold water, one quickly sees that it is based on a number of assumptions that have little or no evidence within Isaiah.

R.E. Clements, though claiming that Immanuel is Isaiah's son, believes the Immanuel child is Shear-jashub, not Maher-shalal-hash-baz.[91] His overall argument, though, is highly questionable. On one hand, he acknowledges a connection between Immanuel and Hezekiah within the Book of Isaiah. On the other hand, though, he attributes this connection to the work of later editors, and in turn argues that originally, before the editors changed Isaiah's prophecy, Immanuel was a reference to Isaiah's son, Shear-jashub.

Like most scholars, Clements sees a connection between the Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 and the child in 9:5-6 and 11:1-11. In Clements' view, even though Isaiah 9:1-6 clearly is an accession oracle that "serves to announce the coming of a royal successor to Ahaz who, unlike this faithless king, will bring greatness to his people and the overthrow of the yoke of the foreign oppressor,"[92] and thus is clearly a reference to Hezekiah, Clements denies that this proves that the Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 is a royal child. Clements rather asserts that a later editor "made significant additions to Isaiah 7" that were "designed to point [out] the contrast between Ahaz and his successor."[93] The result is that what was originally an oracle condemning Ahaz's lack of faith was transformed by

[90] John H. Walton, "Isaiah 7:14: What's in a Name?" *JETS* 30 (Summer 1997): 296.
[91] R.E. Clements, "The Immanuel Prophecy of Isaiah 7:10-17 and Its Messianic Interpretation" in *Die Hebraische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte* (ed. R. Rendtorff; Germany: Neukircher Verlag, 1990), 237.
[92] Clements, "The Immanuel Prophecy," 233.
[93] Clements, "The Immanuel Prophecy," 234.

a later editor to also make it a prophecy that foretells Ahaz's faithful successor, namely Hezekiah. This editor, Clements surmises, "stood very close to the authors of the narratives of Isaiah 36-39"[94] and therefore reworked Isaiah 7:1-17 and introduced Isaiah 9:1-6 in order to portray Hezekiah "in the most favorable possible light."[95] As Clements says, "It is then this desire to emphasize the contrast between the actions of Ahaz and Hezekiah which has brought about such a major editorial reworking of Isaiah 7:1-17."[96] And again, "…once an editor felt the need to defend the reputation of the Davidic dynasty by drawing attention to the contrast between Ahaz's lack of faith and Hezekiah's victorious faith, the whole character of the Immanuel prophecy was changed."[97]

Even though Clements correctly sees that in its present form Isaiah 7:1-17 points toward the birth of Hezekiah and that the Immanuel prophecy, along with Isaiah 9:1-6 and 11:1-11, serves to not only highlight the contrasts between Ahaz and Hezekiah, but to also look forward to Hezekiah's actions in 701 BCE as recorded in Isaiah 36-39, his claim that Isaiah 7:1-17 was originally about Shear-jashub and that a later editor revised the prophecy to make it look like it was about Hezekiah is suspect. In light of Provan's falsification principle, what is the reason for Clements to doubt the legitimacy and historical reliability of the prophecy as it now stands? Before one can convincingly argue for a reconstruction of a particular biblical passage, one must first show why that passage, as presented to us in the canon of scripture, cannot be accepted as historically reliable. Clements fails to do so. His argument fails because he is attempting to do the impossible: reconstruct a convincing alternative version of the historical setting of Isaiah 7:1-17

[94] Clements, "The Immanuel Prophecy," 236.
[95] Clements, "The Immanuel Prophecy," 236.
[96] Clements, "The Immanuel Prophecy," 236.
[97] Clements, "The Immanuel Prophecy," 237.

without any historical evidence. The window to that historical setting is given to us in the text of Isaiah 7:1-17, and unless it can be proven that what it relates to us is absolutely impossible to have happened, then we are in no position to discount its version of events. Clements' ultimate shortcoming is not that he fails to look at the historical and literary contexts of Isaiah 7:14—he certainly does. His shortcoming is rather that, after doing so, he chooses to discard the obvious context in favor of his own hypothetical reconstruction of the historical events of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and literary setting of Proto-Isaiah.

II. 4. The View that Immanuel is Hezekiah

The traditional Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, as attested to in Justin's *Dialogues with Trypho* as well as a number of Talmudic sources,[98] that the Immanuel child is Hezekiah, has been by and large rejected by most biblical scholars for one reason: the chronology found in II Kings 16-20 seems to suggest that Hezekiah was already a young child by the time Isaiah uttered his prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. Therefore, Isaiah could have hardly prophesied about the coming birth of Hezekiah because Hezekiah would have already been born. Moriarty echoes the view of most scholars when he claims that Hezekiah could not be Immanuel because he ascended to the throne in 715 BCE and was twenty-five years old, thus placing his birth around 740 BCE, six years before 734 BCE, the year most scholars peg as being the year of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. Clements also discounts the possibility that Immanuel could have been Hezekiah on the grounds that it would be a chronological impossibility.[99]

[98] See Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin, Folios 94a, 99a.
[99] Clements, "The Immanuel Prophecy of Isaiah 7:10-17," 232.

There are two problems with the scholarly rejection of this view. First, when one looks at the chronology in II Kings, one finds that there is a ten year gap within the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah that is not accounted for. This problem will be discussed in the following chapter, but for now it is enough to point out that such scholarly rejection of this view on the basis of an admittedly suspect chronology in II Kings is, ironically, suspect in and of itself. Secondly, despite the apparent chronological problem, the immediate surrounding context of 7:14 certainly seems to point toward Hezekiah. As we have already seen, even though Clements clearly acknowledges the fact that Isaiah 7-12 presents Hezekiah as the Immanuel child, he discounts this as a later scribal revision. He is not the only scholar, though, who acknowledges the Hezekiah-Immanuel connection but then seeks for a way to discount it. Antti Laato, for example, claims Isaiah 7:14 was a prophecy about a king from the Davidic house who, unlike Ahaz, would "fulfill Yahweh's command of fidelity."[100] He notes that not only does both the LXX and IQIsa acknowledge that Immanuel is Hezekiah (Ahaz names the child), but that Rabbinical literature interprets Isaiah 7:14-17 and 9:1-6 in terms of Hezekiah but Isaiah 11:1-9 in terms of the Messiah.[101] Yet, Laato, while admitting Isaiah 7:14 points to Hezekiah and has messianic overtones,[102] argues that the Isaiah 7:13-25 was revised by later editors

[100] Antti Laato, "Immanuel—Who is With Us?—Hezekiah or Messiah?" in *Wunschet Jerusalem Frieden* (ed. M. Augustin; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988) 315.

[101] Laato, "Immanuel—Who is With Us?" 318.

[102] We must remember that when we say "messianic," we do not automatically assume a New Testament understanding of "messiah" (i.e. Jesus, the second member of the Trinity). Strictly speaking, if a prophecy in the Old Testament refers to a future Davidic king, it is by its very nature, a "messianic" prophecy, for kings were called "messiahs," in the sense that they were anointed kings. Again, how these passages are used and understood in the New Testament is an entirely separate issue. In the Old Testament context, there is no distinction between a prophecy about a "messiah" and a prophecy about a Davidic king.

who hoped for the fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy[103] through a new royal dynastic line during the years of Sennacherib's invasion. When it became clear that all wickedness was not wiped out of Judah, that Judah did not become a refuge for the faithful remnant, and that Immanuel did not rise as king, Laato claims that "the year 701 was thus a disappointment for Isaiah. A realm of peace in Israel through Immanuel, which Isaiah so eagerly expected, never came."[104] Consequently, he speculates that Isaiah's disciples preserved Isaiah's "Immanuel program" and reinterpreted the prophecies to look forward to a future coming Davidic king.

The problem with Laato's argument is the same as that of Clements. By trying to "look behind" the text that we have, Laato is simply offering a reconstruction of historical events for which we have no evidence. Just as Clements claims that Isaiah 7:14 was originally a prophecy about Shear-jashub that was later revised into a prophecy about Hezekiah, Laato claims that Isaiah 7:14 was originally a prophecy about an entirely new royal line that was later revised into a prophecy about Hezekiah, whereas the prophecy in Isaiah 11 continued to look forward to a future Messiah.

Walter Kaiser also identifies Immanuel with Hezekiah, yet does not try to get around this by claiming it was the work of later editors. Rather, he argues the immediate referent is Hezekiah and the future referent is Jesus and claims this resolves two problems: (1) Hezekiah was not born of a virgin, and (2) the chronology in II Kings seemingly prevents Hezekiah from being Immanuel. He answers the first objection by stating that in cases of near and distant fulfillments of prophecy that "rarely does the near

[103] By capitalizing "Immanuel" we are not suggesting that this is automatically a reference to either God or Jesus. The capitalization of "Immanuel" is simply because in Isaiah 7:14 "Immanuel" is the name given to the child, and hence is a proper name.
[104] Laato, "Immanuel—Who is With Us?" 317.

event meet most, much less all, the details and expectations that the ultimate event completes."[105] Yet one must question both the question and Kaiser's answer. Too many scholars disagree with Kaiser for anyone to believe that עַלְמָה clearly means virgin. If we take the original context seriously, we must conclude that Isaiah 7:14 is not referring to a virgin. She might have been a virgin at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, but she definitely would not have been a virgin by the time of Immanuel's birth. Furthermore, Kaiser's answer seems to contradict his own rejection of the *sensus plenioir* argument.[106] Kaiser says there is only one meaning to Isaiah 7:14, but then argues that there are two meanings to it. Nevertheless, Kaiser correctly points out that the chronology in II Kings shows a ten-year gap within the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Therefore, to discount Hezekiah as Immanuel, simply based on a perceived chronological impossibility, overstates the case. It is drawing a conclusion based on problematic data.

II. 5. Concluding Thoughts Regarding Past Scholarship

Given this overview of the work of many scholars on Isaiah 7:14, there are a number of observations and conclusions that can be made. First of all, as can be seen in the work of Moyter, Moriarty, Feinberg, Payne and Kaiser, there is an recurring trend among many scholars to be in such a rush to relate Isaiah 7:14 to Jesus that they inevitably neglect any serious exegetical work on Isaiah 7:14 within its original Old Testament contexts, both historical and literary. The underlying assumption of these scholars is that the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is *first and foremost* a far off prediction of the

[105] Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 161.
[106] In "The Promise of Isaiah 7:14," he states the problem that lies at the heart of Isaiah 7:14 is the question regarding how it was originally interpreted in Ahaz's day and how it relates to Matthew's use of the text. Kaiser then discusses sensus plenior, and concludes that such a multi-tiered reading of a given text is improper. He concludes his discussion of sensus plenior by saying that there must be a single meaning to Isaiah 7:14. We must attempt to understand Isaiah 7:14 within its stated historical context.

miraculous virgin birth of Jesus; therefore they display no genuine interest in understanding Isaiah 7:14 within the historical and literary settings of Isaiah itself.

Secondly, as can be seen in the work of Clements and Laato, many scholars see that the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 is intimately tied to the royal themes found within Isaiah in general, and Isaiah 9:6-7 and 11:1-11 in particular. While scholars like John Scullion and John Walton believe Immanuel is a son of Ahaz, but not necessarily Hezekiah,[107] Clements and Laato believe that in its final form the Immanuel prophecy does indeed point to Hezekiah, yet that Isaiah 7:14 was altered by later editors to make it look like it pointed to Hezekiah. What we see, therefore, with these scholars is a clear acknowledgement of the royal Davidic connection to Isaiah 7:14, but a refusal to clearly identify Immanuel with Hezekiah in its original context.

Thirdly, we also note that the fundamental objection scholars have with identifying Immanuel with Hezekiah is that the chronology of II Kings seemingly does not allow such an identification to be made—Hezekiah would have been anywhere between five to fifteen years old at the time of Isaiah's prophecy. Because of this objection, Moyter, Moriarty, Feinberg, Payne and Kaiser justify their arguments that Isaiah 7:14 is first and foremost a prediction of Jesus Christ, whereas Clements, Laato, Scullion, and Walton, though they acknowledge that the text points to Hezekiah, seek alternative interpretations of Isaiah 7:14.

Lastly, most scholars who attempt to exegete Isaiah 7:14 do, in fact, seem to have a good grasp of bits and pieces of the overall picture of Isaiah 7:14. Scholars who, in their rush to apply Isaiah 7:14 to Jesus seem to overlook the Old Testament context of Isaiah

[107] Scullion, "An Approach to the Understanding of Isaiah 7:10-17," 288-300; Walton, "Isaiah 7:14: What's in a Name?" 289-306.

7:14, are not necessarily wrong in their claim that "what was spoken by the prophet" was, to use the New Testament term, "fulfilled" in Jesus Christ. Their exegesis falters because not only do they misunderstand just what "fulfilled" means, but they also hold an overly-simplistic view of prophecy. This over-simplification has caused many scholars to downplay the importance of understanding the original historical and literary contexts found within many Old Testament prophecies, particularly Isaiah 7:14.[108]

Scholars who disregard Hezekiah as a valid candidate for the identity of Immanuel clearly see a chronological problem in II Kings. Their exegesis falters because they automatically assume that the chronological error lies in Isaiah and not in II Kings. Scholars who claim that later editors revised Isaiah 7:14 and essentially changed its original meaning clearly see that later editors shaped and formed Isaiah into its current form. Their exegesis falters because they assume, with no evidence to substantiate their assumptions, that the later editors intentionally mischaracterized historical events to suit their own theological agendas.

The common flaw that many scholars share in their exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 is their considerable lack of faith in the text itself. Their exegesis is not so much trying to get at the meaning of the final form of the text, but rather trying to reconstruct that meaning to suit their particular preconceived notions; yet many of the assumptions and arguments made by many scholars have no textual or historical evidence. This is the very exegetical

[108] When Matthew uses the term "fulfilled," he does not mean that the Old Testament verse in question was a *prediction* that looked forward to "coming true" with the arrival of the expected "god-man" messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, he was attempting to show that the ultimate covenant-salvation that was promised as far back as Genesis 3, when God promised that he would crush the serpent's head by means of the offspring of the woman, and reaffirmed in the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David, was finally brought about in the person and ministry of Jesus. Because Matthew believes that Jesus is the climax and fulfillment of God's salvation that was promised throughout the Old Testament, he is free to use any Old Testament episode he wishes to help show a typological connection between the referred episode and Jesus himself. Simply put, the context of the Old Testament episode in question helps shed light on how the New Testament use of a given verse is to be understood.

trend that Provan and Long take issue with: an unhealthy suspicion of the veracity of the text before us without any substantial reason to support it. Granted, the historical narrative sections of Isaiah, as well as II Kings, are not what we in the 21st century would consider to be "historical documents."[109] Yet the problem with the scholars discussed above is that they seem to think that because the ancient writers did not write history the way we do today that they were not attempting to write real history at all. But this kind of thinking not only makes any kind of biblical historical exegesis impossible, it negates the possibility of doing any kind of history and understanding any ancient historical document at all. If we are to discount the historical veracity of the biblical texts simply because we have labeled them as "historically-based theological documents," then we will have to discount all ancient historical texts because all of them are "historically-based theological documents," in that in the recounting of their history they attempt to praise and glorify their particular national gods. Granted, there are numerous difficulties surrounding the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 and its context. A certain amount of reconstruction of the historical context is needed to help try and understand such a problematic text. But when a scholar's historical reconstruction involves obliterating the historical context given within the text itself, it cannot be said that that scholar has accepted the text. Such a scholar is doing much more than just reconstructing a historical context in which to understand the text; he is, in fact, re-writing history, without any regard for the historical testimony of the ancient writers themselves.

[109] They are, as most scholars agree, historically-based theological documents. In addition, given their placement in the Hebrew canon, we must also remember they are prophetic works.

III. Textual Variants of Isaiah 7:14 in the MT, DSS, and LXX

When one looks at Isaiah 7:14 itself, one finds that there are four significant textual variants that have a tremendous amount of bearing on its interpretation, not only within its original context, but also on how it eventually comes to be interpreted, both in the New Testament and in the Church Fathers. One is able to see these variants when one compares the Masoretic Text (BHS), the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QIs[a]), and the Septuagint (Rahlfs):

MT: *BHS*	לָכֵן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אוֹת הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּ אֵל
DSS: *4QIs[a]*	לכן יתן יהוה הוה לכמה אות הנה העלמה הרה וילדת בן וקרא שמו עמנואל
LXX: *Rahlfs*	διὰ τοῦτο δώσει κύριος αὐτὸς ὑμῖν σημεῖον ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Εμμανουηλ

As one can see, aside from the fact that the MT names God as אֲדֹנָי whereas the DSS uses the name יהוה, the two texts agree in virtually every other detail. The questions and variants arise, though, when comparing the MT and DSS with the LXX. There are essentially four variants found within this verse:

(a) the meaning of the word עַלְמָה,

(b) the function of the word הָרָה in the phrase הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן,

(c) the identity of the person who is naming the Immanuel child, and

(d) the Immanuel child himself.

III. 1. The Meaning of the Word עַלְמָה

The first variant is one that has been the topic of endless exegetical debates between Jews and Christians for the past 2,000 years. It involves the question as to how

to translate the word עַלְמָה, as in the MT and DSS, and παρθένος, as in the LXX (and later in the NT). Simply put, what does the word עַלְמָה mean, and to whom does the עַלְמָה refer? Many scholars claim the word עַלְמָה clearly means "virgin" (a woman who has had no sexual intercourse), and therefore Isaiah 7:14 is describing a miraculous birth. Moyter states that the examination of biblical usage shows that עַלְמָה is the "only Hebrew word which *without qualification* means an unmarried woman—however marriageable she may be."[110] Payne does not think that the question, "Does עַלְמָה mean virgin?" is a right question to ask because in his opinion it obviously does: "It does, no doubt about that."[111] Kaiser claims that עַלְמָה does in fact mean virgin, and that the use of παρθένος in the LXX supports this translation because, he argues, παρθένος "has the specific meaning of 'virgin.'"[112] He also argues that there is no clear context, either in Hebrew or Ugarit, that suggests that עַלְמָה is used in reference to a married woman. Payne argues that עַלְמָה is a direct reference to the virgin Mary. He states, "If Isaiah did not mean Mary, and if there is no other known virgin mother, then Matthew erred, for it simply is not right to use a verse that is not about a virgin birth to substantiate a virgin birth."[113] What we see here is an unquestioned assumption that not only does עַלְמָה mean "virgin," but that it is direct predictive reference to Mary.[114]

---

[110] Moyter, "The Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14," 125.
[111] Payne, "Right Questions about Isaiah 7:14," 78.
[112] Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 160.
[113] Payne, "Right Questions About Isaiah 7:14," 76-77.
[114] Feinberg's argument is different than those of the above scholars. He first argues that, based on the "solemnity with which the Prophet speaks of the predicted birth, not as a usual and natural event, but as something which excites his own astonishment," that the sign in Isaiah 7:13-14 must be a reference to a miraculous birth. He then argues that the עַלְמָה is a reference to Mary, the virgin mother of Christ, who "is present to the inward perception of the Prophet." Yet Feinberg offers no textual evidence for his position and simply dismisses any attempts by other scholars to identify the עַלְמָה with either Ahaz's wife, Isaiah's

The problem with the claims of these scholars is that they are patently false and show no real understanding of how language works. A brief discussion of De Sassure's semantics will serve to clarify the fundamental problem with how these scholars have chosen to go about arguing for the meaning of the word עַלְמָה. De Saussure showed that every linguistic sign is made up of a *signifier* and a *signified*. For our purposes, the word עַלְמָה is the *signifier*—the actual word that acts as an identifier of something. It is a pointer, if you will. The *signified*, therefore, corresponds to the actual concept or thing that comes to mind when we hear or read the word עַלְמָה. It is essentially the thing to which the signifier is pointing. Now there is no inherent connection between any *signifier* and its corresponding *signified*, other than the arbitrary connection of meaning that a particular society has agreed upon based upon its particular needs. Because of this, one cannot treat language as a mere classification system. Furthermore, when it comes to translating from one language to another, one would be wrong to assume that one specific word in "language A" is directly related to one specific word in "language B." There might be considerable overlap between the two languages respective words for a common object, but since the actual *meaning* attached to those respective words is determined by that particular society, we should expect to see differing nuances of meaning within each language. De Saussure gives the example of the word *boeuf* in both English and French. In English we have different words for the meat itself (beef) and the animal that is the source of that meat (cow); whereas in French, the word *boeuf* is used for both things, and the context in which that word is written or spoken determines the meaning of the word.

---

wife, or some other woman at that time on the grounds that none of those would have been a miraculous occurrence. This is nothing more than circular reasoning. All he has going for him is his belief that it was miraculous. Essentially, his logic is this: "It must be miraculous because Isaiah is excited about it, and therefore it must be miraculous." Feinberg, "The Virgin Birth," 254-55.

De Saussure's findings are extremely relevant to our understanding of the word עַלְמָה. Any given linguistic sign, made up of both *signifier* and *signified*, derives its meaning from its surrounding society as well as the context and semantic field in which it is found. When we look at the use and meaning of the word עַלְמָה within the Hebrew Bible, we cannot come to such a study with the assumption that it will have a direct correlation with the word "virgin" in the English language. As John Walton has pointed out, עַלְמָה has a tremendous overlapping of semantic ranges; therefore, the argument that the word clearly means "virgin" is overly simplistic and superficial.

When one consults Brown-Driver-Briggs, one finds that עַלְמָה denotes a "young woman" who is sexually ripe, either a maid or newly married.[115] Kaiser points out that עַלְמָה, much like its Ugaritic equivalent *`glmt*, "does not simply correspond to the word 'virgin', but signifies a young woman without regard to whether she is married or single."[116] Moriarty echoes this sentiment, "She who conceives and bears the mysterious child is הָעַלְמָה, a term which does not necessarily imply virginity but which certainly does not exclude it."[117] The *basic* meaning, if you will, focuses on a young woman; the *nuances* to that basic meaning, though, are brought out within each separate context found in the Hebrew Bible. This word is found nine times in the Hebrew Bible.[118]

[115] Brown, F., S. Driver and C. Briggs. "עַלְמָה." Page 761 in *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson , 1996.
[116] Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 101.
[117] Moriarty, *The Immanuel Prophecies*, 230.
[118] For a detailed summary of each occurrence, see Richard Niessen, "The Virginity of the 'almah in Isaiah 7:14," *BSac*, 137 (Ap-Je 1980): 133-150.

Verse	*MT (BHS)*	*LXX (Rahlfs)*
I Chronicles 15:20	וּזְכַרְיָה וְעַזִיאֵל וּשְׁמִירָמוֹת וִיחִיאֵל וְעֻנִּי וֶאֱלִיאָב וּמַעֲשֵׂיָהוּ וּבְנָיָהוּ בִּנְבָלִים עַל־עֲלָמוֹת	Ζαχαριας καὶ Οζιηλ Σεμιραμωθ Ιιηλ Ωνι Ελιαβ Μασαιας Βαναιας ἐν νάβλαις ἐπὶ αλαιμωθ
Psalm 46:1	לַמְנַצֵּחַ לִבְנֵי־קֹרַח עַל־עֲלָמוֹת שִׁיר	(45:1) εἰς τὸ τέλος ὑπὲρ τῶν υἱῶν Κορε ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων ψαλμός
Genesis 24:43	הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי נִצָּב עַל־עֵין הַמָּיִם וְהָיָה הָעַלְמָה הַיֹּצֵאת לִשְׁאֹב	καὶ ἔσται ἡ παρθένος ᾗ ἂν ἐγὼ εἴπω πότισόν με μικρὸν ὕδωρ ἐκ τῆς ὑδρίας σου
Exodus 2:8	וַתֹּאמֶר־לָהּ בַּת־פַּרְעֹה לֵכִי וַתֵּלֶךְ הָעַלְמָה וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־אֵם הַיָּלֶד	ἡ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ ἡ θυγάτηρ Φαραω πορεύου ἐλθοῦσα δὲ ἡ νεᾶνις ἐκάλεσεν τὴν μητέρα τοῦ παιδίου
Psalm 68:25 (68:26—MT)	קִדְּמוּ שָׁרִים אַחַר נֹגְנִים בְּתוֹךְ עֲלָמוֹת תֻּפֵּפוֹת	(67:26) προέφθασαν ἄρχοντες ἐχόμενοι ψαλλόντων ἐν μέσῳ νεανίδων τυμπανιστριῶν
Proverbs 30:19	דֶּרֶךְ הַנֶּשֶׁר	בַּשָּׁמָיִם דֶּרֶךְ נָחָשׁ עֲלֵי צוּר דֶּרֶךְ־אֳנִיָּה בְלֶב־יָם וְדֶרֶךְ גֶּבֶר בְּעַלְמָה	ἴχνη ἀετοῦ πετομένου καὶ ὁδοὺς ὄφεως ἐπὶ πέτρας καὶ τρίβους νηὸς ποντοπορούσης καὶ ὁδοὺς ἀνδρὸς ἐν νεότητι
Solomon 1:3	לְרֵיחַ שְׁמָנֶיךָ טוֹבִים שֶׁמֶן שִׁמְךָ עַל־כֵּן עֲלָמוֹת אֲהֵבוּךָ תִּוְרָנִי	καὶ ὀσμὴ μύρων σου ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ ἀρώματα μύρον ἐκκενωθὲν ὄνομά σου διὰ τοῦτο νεάνιδες ἠγάπησάν σε
Solomon 6:8	שִׁשִּׁים הֵמָּה מְלָכוֹת וּשְׁמֹנִים פִּילַגְשִׁים וַעֲלָמוֹת אֵין מִסְפָּר	ἑξήκοντά εἰσιν βασίλισσαι καὶ ὀγδοήκοντα παλλακαί καὶ νεάνιδες ὧν οὐκ ἔστιν ἀριθμός
Isaiah 7:14	הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּ אֵל	ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Εμμανουηλ

Richard Niessen, in his article "The Virginity of the עַלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14," provides a detailed analysis of these nine instances. He notes that twice the term is used in reference to a musical instrument (I Chronicles 15:20; Psalm 46:1). These two instances, therefore, are not relevant to our study. Another time it is used to refer to young women playing timbrels in a musical procession (Psalm 68:25). Niessen speculates that if this psalm was part of "the procession of the Messiah into His sanctuary," then the young women playing the timbrels in the procession would "certainly not [be] harlots or

impure women, but are chaste servants of God; hence they would be virgins." He then notes that in Semitic custom, "single women generally participated in bridal processions and other festive occasions."[119] His conclusion, therefore, is that in Psalm 68 עֲלָמוֹת is in fact referring to virgins. Yet Niessen's conclusion is highly suspect for a number of reasons. First, it is based on what ultimately amounts to a guess regarding the psalm's use and historical setting in ancient Israel. Second, a messianic procession in ancient Israel would be nothing more than a procession of the king. One might agree that the king would not want harlots and impure women leading his procession, but why would God-honoring married women be shunned from such processions? In Niessen's argument, women can be either harlots or virgins; in the real world, most women are neither. Niessen's reasoning on this point not only is based on mere speculation, but it also betrays a misunderstanding put forth by many early Church Fathers that incorrectly equates virginity with holiness. In short, Niessen's argument regarding Psalm 68 is unconvincing.

Two other times the plural form of עַלְמָה is used in the Song of Solomon, presumably in reference to other unmarried young women (1:3; 6:8). In these two instances, Niessen's arguments are questionable as well, particularly his observation that in 6:8 three types of women are mentioned, queens, concubines, and עֲלָמוֹת. Niessen sees the עֲלָמוֹת here as serving as a contrast to queens, who are married, and concubines, who were essentially common-law wives, and therefore must be referring to virgins. Although it is true that "Solomon" calls his bride his "perfect one" (6:9), to assume that she is to be

[119] Niessen, "The Virginity of the עַלְמָה," 6.

considered one of the עֲלָמוֹת is to assume too much. The fact is that עֲלָמוֹת might not be serving as a contrast to queens and concubines, but rather as a generalized term to include all other women, and therefore "Solomon" is saying that although the bride is but one of all the women in the world, nevertheless she is his "undefiled one." Simply put, there is nothing convincing in either 1:3 or 6:8 that would demand a reading of עַלְמָה as referring to a virgin.

The other four instances of עַלְמָה are found in the singular. When one looks specifically at the three instances besides Isaiah 7:14 (Genesis 24:43, Exodus 2:8, Proverbs 30:19), it becomes apparent that there are no major difference in the meaning of the word. In Genesis 24:43, Abraham's servant is telling Rebekah's brother Laban that he prayed to YHWH that the עַלְמָה who offered him a drink might be the future wife of Isaac. Yet in Genesis 24:14, when the servant actually prays this to YHWH, he uses the word נַעֲרָה (girl), thereby showing that as far as the writer of Genesis was concerned, these two words were interchangeable. Therefore in this context, Rebekah's virginity is simply assumed; עַלְמָה must be seen simply as a general term to describe a young woman and not a direct comment on her virginity. In Exodus 2:8, עַלְמָה is used to describe Moses' sister as she is sent to find a Hebrew woman (her mother) to take care of Moses. Like Genesis 24:43, the word is not a comment on Miriam's virginity. In fact, Miriam's virginity has nothing to do with the story at all. It is simply describing the fact that she was a young girl. Proverbs 30:19 contains a four-part parallel of something the writer finds too wonderful to understand, "the way of a man with an עַלְמָה being one of them. It seems very likely, as Niessen points out, that it is describing "the courtship…of youthful

love between a young man and his young girlfriend."[120] Therefore, even though her virginity is not the point of the proverb, it can be realistically presumed. What we can conclude about these instances of עַלְמָה in the singular is that the girl's virginity plays no significant role in the context of each passage; therefore it cannot be assumed that the linguistic sign עַלְמָה is emphasizing or commenting on her virginity.

In addition to these nine instances, the Hebrew Bible also contains masculine and abstract forms of עַלְמָה that, when analyzed, further show that its general semantic field points more toward youth itself, and not necessarily to virginity. Walton points out that in I Samuel 17:56 and 20:22 we the find masculine form of הָעֶלֶם, describing both David and Jonathan's servant. He observes, "In neither of these cases is the sexual chastity of the individual a viable issue."[121] Walton also notes that the abstraction of עַלְמָה is found in Job 20:11 (עֲלוּמוֹ), Job 33:25 and Psalm 89:45 (עֲלוּמָיו), and Isaiah 54:4 (עֲלוּמַיִךְ). He argues that if עַלְמָה clearly meant "virgin" then the abstraction of that noun should mean "virginity." What we find in Isaiah 54:4, though, is that it is used in reference to a rejected barren wife—clearly not a virgin.[122] He concludes his discussion on עַלְמָה by saying that "virgin" simply is not "a viable lexical choice for describing the basic meaning of the word"[123] and answers those who claim עַלְמָה means "virgin" by saying, "Someone could show me a thousand passages where 'fiancé' was used to refer to a virgin, but that would not change the meaning."[124]

---

[120] Niessen, "The Virginity of the עַלְמָה," 140.
[121] Walton, "Isaiah 7:14: What's in a Name?," 292.
[122] Walton, "Isaiah 7:14: What's in a Name?," 292.
[123] Walton, "Isaiah 7:14: What's in a Name?," 292.
[124] Walton, "Isaiah 7:14: What's in a Name?," 292.

The ambiguity of עַלְמָה can be further demonstrated by quickly looking at two other Hebrew words used in connection with young women: נַעֲרָה, and בְּתוּלָה. The word נַעֲרָה is defined in Brown-Driver-Briggs simply as a "girl" or "damsel."[125] Many times it is used to describe a marriageable girl;[126] sometimes it is used in conjunction with בְּתוּלָה to denote the virginity of the girl;[127] it can be used to denote a betrothed girl,[128] a young widow,[129] a concubine,[130] a prostitute,[131] or just a general "girl."[132]

The word בְּתוּלָה on the other hand specifically stresses actual virginity. Sometimes בְּתוּלָה is used to denote a virgin living in her father's house;[133] sometimes it is used along with נַעֲרָה to stress the virginity of a young woman;[134] sometimes it is used as a description of the purified Israel (in contrast to the times when Israel is called a harlot)[135] or another purified nation like Egypt, Sidon, or Babel;[136] and sometimes it simply is used as a general term to denote virgins.[137] What we find, therefore, in the Hebrew is that the only word that seems to consistently denote actual virginity is בְּתוּלָה. When the writers of the Hebrew Bible wanted to stress the virginity of a נַעֲרָה, they used it in connection with בְּתוּלָה. Therefore, we can tentatively say that whenever virginity

[125] BDB, 655.
[126] Gen 24:14, 28, 55-57; 34:3,12; Deut 22:15-16, 19-21, 24, 26; 1 Kgs 1:3, 4; Esth 2:4, 7-9; 12-13
[127] Judg 21:12; Deut 22:23, 28; 1 Kgs 1:2; Esth 2:2, 3
[128] Deut 22:25, 27
[129] Ruth 2:6 , 4:12
[130] Judg 19:3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9
[131] Amos 2:7
[132] Gen 24:61; Exod 2:5;1Sam 25:42; Prov 9:3, 27:27, 31:15; Esth 2:9; 4:4, 16; Ruth 2:5, 8, 22-23; 3:2
[133] Gen 24:16; Exod 22:15; Lev 21:3, 14; Deut 22:19; Judg 19:24; 2 Sam13:2; Job 31:1; Isa 62:5; Jer 2:32, 31:13
[134] Deut 22:23, 28; Judg 21:12; 1 Kgs 1:2; Esth 2:3
[135] Jer 8:13; 31:4, 21; Amos 5:2; 2 Kgs 19:21; Isa 37:22; Lam 1:15; 2:13; Jer 14:17
[136] Isa 23:12; 47:1; Jer 46:11
[137] Exod 22:16; 2 Sam 13:18; Esth 2:2, 17, 19; Pss 45:15; 78:63; 148: 12; Lam 1:4, 18; 2:10, 21; 5:11; Ezek 44:22; Amos 8:13; Isa 23:4; Zech 9:17

was to be emphasized, the writers of the Hebrew Bible consistently used בְּתוּלָה, not עַלְמָה. This is not to say that עַלְמָה could *never* indicate virginity, but only that those who claim it *always* does are not basing their assertions on the biblical evidence.

One additional consideration must be made though. Some have appealed to the LXX in hopes that perhaps the Greek translation of עַלְמָה might shed light on how it was originally understood. If παρθένος, the Greek word used in the LXX in Isaiah 7:14, is unambiguous in its meaning, then that could be an indication as to how one should understand עַלְמָה. Yet when one examines how the LXX translates not only עַלְמָה, but also בְּתוּלָה and נַעֲרָה, one sees that no such clarity is forthcoming. There are essentially two words in Greek that are used interchangeably in the LXX with the three Hebrew words in question: παρθένος and νεᾶνις. In the vast majority of cases, the LXX translates בְּתוּלָה as παρθένος. Yet παρθένος is also used to translate עַלְמָה twice (Isa. 7:14, Gen. 24:43), as well as נַעֲרָה on a few occasions (Gen. 24:14, 16, 55). In fact, in Genesis 24 alone, παρθένος is used to translate *all three Hebrew words*, all of which refer to Rebekah. Furthermore, although νεᾶνις is not used to translate בְּתוּלָה, it is used to translate עַלְמָה (Ex. 2:8; Prov. 30:19) as well as נַעֲרָה (Deut. 22; Ruth 2:5; I Kings 1:4; II Kings 5:4). The interesting thing about νεᾶνις in the instances where it translates נַעֲרָה is that it is used to describe a number of different women: the young girl Miriam, an engaged woman, a newly married woman, Ruth (who was a widow at the time), Abishag the Shunammite, as well as a captive Israelite girl. In other words, it can mean *anything*. Therefore, when one considers the fact that Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion all translate עַלְמָה as

νεᾶνις,[138] one has to realize that one simply cannot force the idea of virginity onto the LXX's use of παρθένος in Isaiah 7:14. One has to agree with the TDNT that, "on purely lexical grounds it is impossible to say whether the translator is expressing true virginity when he uses παρθένος in Isaiah 7:14."[139] The only way one could reasonably assume that the word עַלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14 implied the girl's virginity would be from the overall context of the passage, and that simply cannot be done. It can neither be determined on lexical grounds alone, nor within the immediate context.

The ironic thing about this Christian-Jewish debate over this particular variant, though, is that the controversy simply does not come into view when dealing with the original Old Testament context of Isaiah. When reading Isaiah on its own terms, one thing is certain. No biblical scholar has ever suggested that either the עַלְמָה or πάρθενος in Isaiah was referring at that time to an actual virgin that miraculously conceived and gave birth in the mid-eighth century BCE. Even though scholars might disagree over the identity of the עַלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14, and even though the woman might have been a virgin at the time of the prophecy, it is universally agreed that she got pregnant through the normal means of sex, and, just like every other woman in history, gave birth to a child. Although it is the view of this thesis that the עַלְמָה of Isaiah 7:14 is Ahaz's wife, it is acknowledged that the case for this cannot be made on the definition of עַלְמָה alone; one must consider its surrounding context to determine the identity of the עַלְמָה.

As one can see, not only is עַלְמָה a Hebrew word that simply describes a young woman, without specific reference to her virginity, but παρθένος is equally ambiguous,

[138] Botterweck 2001, 11:160.
[139] Kittel 1985, 833.

and is used to translate a variety of Hebrew words. Some scholars seek to strain the meaning of עַלְמָה by saying that the word "*without qualification* means an unmarried woman—however marriageable she may be,"[140] and therefore, since unmarried young women were virgins in Hebrew society, that an עַלְמָה was for all practical purposes, a virgin. Those who say this simply overlook the fact that in Isaiah 7:14, the עַלְמָה could very well been married and already pregnant at the time of Isaiah's prophecy. Language by nature is very flexible and cannot be confined to strict dictionary definition. In today's society, "girl" could mean a little child, or a term a boyfriend calls his girlfriend, (i.e. "she's my girl"), or just a general term used when talking about full grown women. Therefore, it is best to stay with what is obvious. An עַלְמָה referred to a young woman, nothing more. It is the semantic fields attached to these word forms that make different meanings possible, depending on the literary context in which it is used. Her virginity, or lack thereof, can only be implied or determined by the surrounding context.[141]

[140] Moyter, "Context and Content," *TB* 21 (1970): 118-125.

[141] The debate over the meaning of עַלְמָה stems from the influence of the early Church Fathers who argued that Isaiah 7:14 was a prediction of the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus. Underlying this view is a belief that if one were to admit that עַלְמָה did not mean "virgin," then that would "prove" Matthew was wrong when he said Isaiah 7:14 was fulfilled in Christ. The problem with this view is it allows preconceived notions of inerrancy and inspiration as well as the interpretation of the early Church Fathers to predetermine the meaning of the word עַלְמָה and the overall meaning of Isaiah 7:14. This view says, "We already know Isaiah 7:14 is a prediction about the virgin birth of Jesus. No amount of evidence will change our mind because we have already determined that the very inerrancy and inspiration of the Bible is contingent upon the belief that Isaiah 7:14 is a prediction of the virgin birth of Jesus." Such a view cannot go unchallenged. It is absolutely clear that עַלְמָה is a sexually ambiguous term. To say otherwise is intellectually dishonest. Instead of forcing the meaning of "virgin" on the word עַלְמָה so it fits in with the view that Isaiah 7:14 is a prediction about the virgin birth of Jesus, we should reevaluate our inherited preconceptions about Isaiah 7:14 and rethink our understanding of inspiration and inerrancy. Admitting that עַלְמָה does not mean "virgin" may cause us to reevaluate our understanding of Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23, but it does not mean that we must throw belief in the Bible's inspiration and inerrancy out the window.

III. 2. The Proper Understanding of הָרָה

The second variant in Isaiah 7:14, closely related to the debate regarding עֶלְמָה, involves the Hebrew word הָרָה in the phrase הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן. The question essentially is whether it should be understood as an adjective describing the *present state* of the עַלְמָה or else as a verb describing what the עַלְמָה will do in the future. The former view is put forth in both BDB and Koehler-Baumgartner,[142] yet as one can see, the form of the word and the vocalization used in BHS, makes it possible to understand it as either a verb (feminine) or an adjective. On its own, it is impossible to determine which way the word הָרָה should be understood.

When one looks at the various English translations, one finds that opinion is divided. The English Standard Version, King James Version, New American Standard Version, New International Version all translate it as a *future verb* (i.e. "will conceive"), whereas the New Jerusalem Bible, New Revised Standard Version, and the Jewish translation all translate it as a *present adjective* (i.e. "is pregnant"). When one looks at the LXX, one finds that in the LXX phrase used to translate הָרָה (ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει) the word ἕξει can be either a future tense verb of ἔχω, or a dative singular feminine form of the noun ἕξις. As with הָרָה, ἕξει is equally ambiguous on its own and requires one to look at the other instances in the MT when the word הָרָה is used, and then see how the LXX translates it in each case. The following chart will provide the relevant information:

[142] BDB, 248.

Verse	MT	LXX
Genesis 16:11	הִנָּךְ הָרָה וְיֹלַדְתְּ בֵּן וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל	ἰδοὺ σὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχεις καὶ τέξῃ υἱὸν καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ισμαηλ
Genesis 38:24	וְגַם הִנֵּה הָרָה לִזְנוּנִים	ἰδοὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχει ἐκ πορνείας
Exodus 21:22	וְנָגְפוּ אִשָּׁה הָרָה	πατάξωσιν γυναῖκα ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσαν
Judges 13:5, 7	וְיֹאמֶר לִי הִנָּךְ הָרָה וְיֹלַדְתְּ בֵּן	καὶ εἶπέν μοι ἰδοὺ σὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχεις καὶ τέξῃ υἱόν
I Samuel 4:19	וְכַלָּתוֹ אֵשֶׁת־פִּינְחָס הָרָה לָלַת	καὶ νύμφη αὐτοῦ γυνὴ Φινεες συνειληφυῖα τοῦ τεκεῖν
II Samuel 11:5	וַתֹּאמֶר הָרָה אָנֹכִי	καὶ εἶπεν ἐγώ εἰμι ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχω
Isaiah 7:14	הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בן	ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν
Isaiah 26:17	כְּמוֹ הָרָה תַּקְרִיב לָלֶדֶת תָּחִיל תִּזְעַק בַּחֲבָלֶיהָ	ὡς ἡ ὠδίνουσα ἐγγίζει τοῦ τεκεῖν καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ ὠδῖνι αὐτῆς ἐκέκραξεν

As one can see, there is a slight difference as to how the LXX translators translated these verses from the original Hebrew. In the two instances that are identical in the Hebrew to Isaiah 7:14 (Genesis 16:11, and Judges 13:5, 7), the LXX translators have ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχεις (second person present) instead of ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει as found in Isaiah 7:14. The Genesis 38:24 passage uses the third person present verb, ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχει, whereas Exodus 21:22 uses a present participle (ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσαν), and II Samuel 11:5 uses the 1st person present (ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχω). I Samuel 4:19 and Isaiah 26:17 use an entirely different construction in the Greek altogether. In the relevant passages though, one can see in every case, except for Isaiah 7:14, that the LXX translators clearly used the *present tense* of the verb ἔχω. Yet in Isaiah 7:14 it is either a third declension a *future tense* of ἔχω or a noun form of ἕξις. The fact that nowhere else in the LXX is the actual phrase ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει used is highly problematic as to the future interpretation of this verse by the Church Fathers, and for us as well. Did the LXX translators want the conception in Isaiah

7:14 to be read as a future event, or a present fact? When taken out of context, the phrase alone does not give any indication either way. One has to read it in context of the entire passage and in relation to the other instances in the LXX where a similar phrase is used. Yet as was mentioned before, when one looks at the context of Isaiah 7 it does not matter whether the young woman was pregnant at that time, or would become pregnant in the near future. A plain reading of the text would suggest that the conception was seen as the result of the normal human function of sex. In other words, even if ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει should be translated as "will become pregnant," it was not seen as a miraculous virgin birth. Furthermore, when one looks at the similar phrases found elsewhere in the LXX, and finds that they all are rendered as a present condition of being pregnant, one has to seriously consider that Isaiah 7:14 was meant to be read as a present reality of being pregnant as well.[143]

III. 3. The Naming of the Child

A third variant to consider is the fact that both the MT and 4QIs[a] say that it is the young woman who would name the child, whereas the LXX says that an unidentified "you" would name the child. The question, therefore, becomes, "Whom did the LXX translator have in mind when he said 'you will call his name Immanuel'?" The answer should be quite obvious. The only person Isaiah is addressing in the entire chapter is King Ahaz. Therefore, for whatever reason the LXX translator had to change the "she" to

[143] Now those who read Isaiah 7:14 from the New Testament backwards, apart from its original Old Testament historical and literary contexts, will understand this in terms of virginity and the immaculate birth of Jesus. The issue for such a reading, though, must be, "Does the Old Testament in any way present the basic ideas for those found in the New Testament, or at least as the New Testament is interpreted in some dogmatic sense?" This is question, though, goes beyond the bounds of this thesis. For now, though, we can say that although the general ambiguity of the words עַלְמָה and הָרָה make the commonly understood New Testament interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 possible, it is not absolutely clear that such an interpretation must be understood in a solely biological sense.

a "you," it can be safely assumed that the clear referent is King Ahaz himself. So why would King Ahaz name the child? The obvious answer would be that the LXX translator saw him as the father of the child. There certainly are times in the Old Testament where the mother names the child, as well as times when the father names the child. In any case, it is a parent. So, according to the LXX, if Isaiah said "you," and the only "you" Isaiah speaks to in chapter seven is Ahaz, and it is either the father or mother who names their children, it is quite obvious that the LXX translator saw Ahaz as the father of the child Immanuel. This fact immediately brings up the possibility that Hezekiah, or at least one of Ahaz's sons, was considered to be the Immanuel child. The chronological problems surrounding the possibility of Hezekiah being the prophesied Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 will be taken up and discussed in chapter three. For now, though, it must be acknowledged that within its immediate context, the LXX's version of Isaiah 7:14 seems to indicate that Ahaz is the father of the Immanuel child.

III. 4. The Significance of the Name עִמָּנוּ־אֵל

The fourth and final variant found in these versions concerns the name "Immanuel" itself. In both the MT and 4QIs[a], עִמָּנוּ־אֵל would clearly be read as "God is with us." It is more than just a name, and the Hebrew reader would see the significance and meaning of the name. What we find in the LXX though, is simply a transcribed Greek word from the Hebrew—Εμμανουηλ. The reason why this is significant to note is that, regardless of the Hebrew text the LXX translator used, be it the MT, 4QIs[a], or some other pre-masoretic text, the intended meaning of the Hebrew name "Immanuel" is lost in the Greek. "Immanuel" becomes a name, and nothing more. This fact comes into play as well when it comes to the New Testament interpretation of this verse. Matthew clearly

saw the need to articulate the significance of the name Εμμανουηλ when he added "which is translated, 'God is with us.'" Whatever Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible he and his readers were familiar with, its translation of Isaiah 7:14 was not able to convey the significance of the name "Immanuel" when Matthew applied it to Jesus. That is why he needed to add his own translational note. The very fact that Matthew chose to elaborate on the significance of the name "Immanuel" and not on the meaning of the word παρθένος should alert the reader that Matthew's focus was on the former, not the latter.

When one considers these textual variants together, one sees that they reveal a very significant change in perspective from the MT/4QIs[a] to the LXX, which will have possible indications for understanding how Matthew's use of Isaiah 7:14. The four textual variants can be summed up as follows:

Masoretic Text/4QIs[a]	**Septuagint**
עַלְמָה	παρθένος
The עַלְמָה *is* pregnant (present fact)	The παρθένος *will become* pregnant (future) or The παρθένος *has use of the womb* (noun)
She (the עַלְמָה) will name the son	*You* (the father Ahaz) will name the son
עִמָּנוּ-אֵל (The meaning, "God is with us," clear to the Hebrew reader)	Εμμανουηλ (Greek readers would simply see this as a name, nothing more)

When read in the Masoretic Text, the meaning of the verse, without reading into the passage Christian interpretation, is quite straightforward. In response to Ahaz's lack of faith, Isaiah prophesies that YHWH will give Ahaz a sign nonetheless: the "sign" YHWH will give concerns the pregnancy of a young woman present at this encounter between Ahaz and Isaiah, possibly Ahaz's wife. Whether the sign was (a) she would

become pregnant, (b) she, being already pregnant, would give birth to a son, or (c) she would become pregnant *and* would give birth to a son, is impossible to say. The grammatical information is too ambiguous and the surrounding context does not give much help on this issue. Whatever the case may be, Isaiah prophesies that she will give birth to a son, and *she* will name him "Immanuel"—"God is with us."

The immediate context of Isaiah 7:13-25 gives further indication that this "sign" was linked in some way to the future destruction of both Aram and Ephraim by Assyria by the time Immanuel would have learned to "refuse the evil and choose the good." In any case, at this point, if there is any indication regarding the identity of the Immanuel child in 7:14 at all, the indication would point to Immanuel being the son of Ahaz, possibly Hezekiah, with the mother being either the wife or a concubine of Ahaz. This is precisely the position of this thesis, yet what we have looked at thus far is simply the first piece of the puzzle. There is more to understanding any given verse than just studying the individual words in that particular verse. Isaiah 7:14 lies within the immediate context of the larger prophetic oracle of 7:13-25, which in turn is part of the larger literary unit of Isaiah 7-12. We must now turn to the larger passages of Isaiah 7:14 (both of 7:13-25 and chapters 7-12) in order to determine whether or not our preliminary understanding of Isaiah 7:14 fits into the larger literary context.

IV. Isaiah 7:14 within the Larger Context of 7:13-25

As stated at the very beginning of this thesis, scholars agree that the confrontation between Isaiah and Ahaz in Isaiah 7, during which Isaiah uttered the prophetic oracle in which Isaiah 7:14 is found, took place at some point during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, presumably around 735-732 BCE. The historical setting and chronological issues will be

dealt with in chapter three; but at present we will summarize the events in the narrative of Isaiah 7:1-12 that lead to the prophetic oracle of 7:13-25.[144]

We are told in 7:1 that at some point in Ahaz's reign King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel threatened to attack Jerusalem, but were unable to do so. Nevertheless, this threat was so great that we are told that Ahaz and his people were terrified (7:2). It was at this time that Isaiah, along with his son Shear-jashub, whose name means "A remnant shall return," confronted Ahaz and encouraged him not to be afraid of the threat, but rather to put his trust in YHWH. Isaiah prophesied that although Rezin and Pekah wanted to capture Jerusalem and set up the "son of Tabeel" as king, that it would not happen, and that within sixty-five years the kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) would be no more (7:3-9). Isaiah then encouraged Ahaz to ask YHWH for any sign he wished, be it "deep as Sheol or high as heaven," but Ahaz declined to do so, thus demonstrating his lack of faith in YHWH (7:10-12). Therefore, it must be seen that Isaiah's prophetic oracle of 7:13-25 was a direct response to Ahaz's demonstration of his unfaithfulness to YHWH.

Isaiah begins his oracle of 7:13-25 with a verse of sheer frustration: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also?"[145] Then, after prophesying about the sign of the Immanuel child in 7:14, Isaiah goes on to say in 7:15-17 that:

> (a) Immanuel will "eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good" (7:15);

[144] The reason for this demarcation of Isaiah 7:13-25 as a separate oracle is two-fold: first, it not only is it a reaction of Ahaz's lack of faith in 7:1-12, but it also focuses on the birth of Immanuel. Second, Isaiah 8:1 begins a new unit, in that there is a brief narrative of Isaiah writing on a tablet and then conceiving a child with his wife (8:1-4), followed by an oracle focusing on that child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

[145] All Bible quotations taken from the NRSV.

(b) the land of both the enemy kings of whom Ahaz is in dread (i.e. Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel) will be deserted before Immanuel even "knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good" (7:16); and

(c) YHWH will bring upon Ahaz, his people, and his ancestral house the king of Assyria (7:17).

Then in 7:18-20, Isaiah not only prophesies that "on that day" "the fly" of Egypt and "the bee" of Assyria will come and settle in Judah, but also that "on that day" YHWH himself will use the king of Assyria (metaphorically called "a hired razor") to completely "shave" Judah. In 7:21-22 Isaiah prophesies that "on that day" everyone that is left will eat curds and honey. Then in 7:23-25 Isaiah prophesies that "on that day" the land that once was so fruitful would be a place of "briars and thorns" where cattle and sheep roam free.

There are a number of exegetical questions regarding this passage aside from those found in 7:14 that scholars have debated throughout the years. First of all, there is the question regarding "the sign" that Isaiah prophesies YHWH will give to Ahaz: should it be understood to be miraculous? Second, there is the question regarding the meaning of eating curds and honey: is it a sign of abundance or of poverty? Related to this is the question, "Is this prophecy one of judgment or of salvation?"

It must be stated that the first of these two questions is one that is born largely out of the failure to separate Old Testament concerns with New Testament concerns, and is a clear example of what happens when one reads Christological significance into an Old Testament verse without first attempting to understand that given verse on its own terms, within its original context. This question cannot be fully discussed here, for our primary concern is the Old Testament context of Isaiah 7:14. Yet we can nevertheless make a number of comments at this present time. The basic argument put forth by many of the

early Church Fathers[146] and continued by Christians throughout the past 2,000 years is that a "sign" simply had to be a miraculous event. This is simply wrong. A simple flip through a concordance will show that when one looks at all the other instances in the Old Testament that involves some sort of "sign," the vast majority of them are not miraculous at all. Some of the more well known signs in the Old Testament are the following: the rainbow in Genesis 9:12; circumcision in Genesis 17:11; Passover in Exodus 13:9; Sabbath in Exodus 31:13; Torah in Deuteronomy 11:18; the pile of stones in the Jordan River in Joshua 4:6; the death of Eli's sons in I Samuel 2:34; Ezekiel's prophetic action in Ezekiel 4:3; Isaiah's walking naked in the streets of Jerusalem for three years in Isaiah 20:3; and the return from exile in Isaiah 66:19. Granted, there are a few rare instances where the sign given is miraculous, but for the Church Fathers to claim that whenever a "sign" is mentioned, *it must be a miraculous event*, is to gravely distort its meaning. In the case of Isaiah 7:14, although the sign Isaiah initially offered Ahaz to ask for left the door open for Ahaz to ask for a miraculous sign, there is nothing in the account of the sign Isaiah actually gives in 7:14 that would indicate it was miraculous.

The second exegetical question that needs to be touched upon is the question as to whether or not a diet of curds and honey is to be taken as a sign of abundance or poverty, and by extension, whether or not this prophecy as a whole is to be taken as a sign of judgment or salvation. Opinion among scholars is divided. Some claim that this prophecy

[146] Church Fathers who have argued that the sign had to be a miraculous event: Ireneaus: "For what great thing or what sign should have been in this, that a young woman conceiving by a man should bring forth--a thing which happens to all women that produce offspring?" ("Against Heresies," ANF: vol. 1: 453); Tertullian: ""Now a sign from God would not have been a sign unless it had been some novel and prodigious thing. Nothing of the nature of a sign can possibly come out of what is a daily occurrence, the pregnancy and child-bearing of a young woman." ("Against Marcion," ANF: vol. 3:331-332); John Chrysostom: "If she that was to give birth was not a virgin, but this happened in the way of marriage, what sort of sign would that be? For that which is a sign must be of course be beyond the course of common events, it must be strange and extraordinary; else how could it be a sign?" ("Homilies on St. Matthew," NPFP: vol. 10:32).

was initially one of salvation, and that the verses that clearly indicate judgment are later glosses. Others claim that this diet of curds and honey is the diet of an impoverished people who will be overrun by Assyria. When one looks at 7:13-25 as a whole, though, one sees elements of both salvation and judgment. On one hand, immediately after 7:15, a verse in which we are told that Immanuel will "eat curds and honey *by the time* he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good," we are told in 7:16 that "*before* the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good" that the lands of Rezin and Pekah, the two chief threats to Ahaz, will be deserted. The implication, therefore, is that by the time the Immanuel child "knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good" that his eating curds and honey will coincide with the destruction of Rezin and Pekah. This certainly equates eating curds and honey with some very good news. On the other hand, though, the mention in 7:22 that "everyone that is left in the land will eat curds and honey" is found in the middle of what is clearly a prophecy of the coming Assyrian destruction of Judah (7:18-25).

Given the fact that not only does "eating curds and honey" seem to be given two different meanings, but that Isaiah 7:13-25 itself clearly contains elements of salvation and judgment, we must live in that very tension that the text in its final form provides and attempt to interpret its meaning accordingly. Therefore, a preliminary understanding of the prophecy of 7:13-25 that was uttered in response to the situation found in 7:1-12 could be stated thus: this child, Immanuel is the "living sign" that YHWH will do as He has promised. Despite Ahaz's lack of faith, YHWH will still destroy the kingdoms of Aram and Israel by the time the child Immanuel knows how to reject the evil and choose the good; but because of Ahaz's lack of faith, YHWH will also allow Assyria to come

and wreak havoc in Judah. Nevertheless, Isaiah prophesies that YHWH will re-gather the believing remnant after His judgment has passed. Therefore, in both judgment and salvation, the House of David will know that "God is with us."

Given the fact that Isaiah is presented as having uttered this prophecy within the historical context of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, and the fact that this prophecy speaks to the events regarding the subsequent domination of Assyria of both Israel and Judah in the latter part of eighth century BCE, it is only logical to assume that the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 was a reference to someone at that time. Once again, all indications within the immediate prophecy itself point toward Hezekiah as the prophesied Immanuel child. It would have been in his lifetime that all of these particulars of the prophecy would have come to pass. In addition to this initial prophecy of Isaiah 7:13-25, though, there still is the surrounding context of Isaiah 7-12 to consider. What we will now see is that this initial prophecy of Isaiah 7:13-25, of which 7:14 is a vital part, is extended and amplified in the larger context of Isaiah 7-12. Once the greater context of Isaiah 7-12 is clearly spelled out, it will become obvious that the most likely candidate for Immanuel is, in fact, Hezekiah.

V. Isaiah 7:13-25 within the Larger Context of Isaiah 7-12

When one looks at the place of Isaiah 7-12 within the entirety of Proto-Isaiah, one quickly sees that the major themes found within Isaiah 7-12 have their roots and are introduced in Isaiah 1-6, a section generally agreed upon to serve as the general introduction to Proto-Isaiah as a whole. Isaiah 1:1, by placing Isaiah within the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, gives us an indication that we are to view Proto-Isaiah (1-39) as a unit unto itself, for clearly the setting of chapters 1-39 is pre-exilic,

chapters 7-12 being set in the days of Ahaz, and chapters 36-39 being set in the days of Hezekiah. Chapters 1-5 serve as a general prologue to the entirety of Proto-Isaiah and set forth the dual themes of (a) impending judgment of Jerusalem and (b) the salvation of the surviving remnant.

After this initial prologue, chapter 6 contains the account of Isaiah's vision in the Temple, and of his prophetic commissioning to preach to the people, knowing that they will not listen, until there is complete devastation. He is told that the devastated land will be like a stump. But then there is the curious verse at the end of chapter 6 that helps launch into the three main themes found in chapters 7-12: "Even if a tenth part remain in it [Judah], it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump" (6:13). What we find here in this one verse are essentially three themes: judgment, salvation, and the holy seed: after YHWH's judgment has fallen upon Judah and Jerusalem, Isaiah prophesies that there will still be the certain hope of salvation brought about by means of the holy seed. These are the three themes we see being developed throughout chapters 7-12, the very chapters that are situated within the historical context of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis.

When one looks at Isaiah 7-12 as a whole, one sees that Isaiah seems to be pointing out that YHWH's upcoming actions within both Israel and Judah are symbolized in the three children of 7:1-8:4. Along with these children are basically three themes that run throughout these chapters: (1) the theme of the salvation of the *returning remnant* is seen in Isaiah's son, Shear-jashub ("a remnant shall return"), who emphasizes God's faithfulness to the covenant; (2) the theme of *impending judgment* is seen in Maher-shalal-hash-baz ("swift is the booty, speedy is the prey"), who emphasizes God's

judgment upon His unfaithful people; and (3) the theme of a child-king—the holy seed of 6:13, Immanuel of 7:14, the royal child of 9:6-7, and the shoot of Jesse of 11:1-2—who will be born in the midst of God's *judgment*, who will then set up God's kingdom for the *returning remnant*, and who will rule the remnant, and the nations, with justice and peace. As one will see, the first two themes are bound up in the figure of Immanuel. At this time, a brief overview of each section within Isaiah 7-12, beginning with chapter eight (given the fact that chapter seven has already been analyzed), is necessary in order to show how these three themes are woven throughout Isaiah 7-12 as a whole.

Isaiah 8:1-22

After the initial narrative section of 7:1-12 and the following Immanuel prophecy of 7:13-25, which lays out the basic three themes mentioned above, 8:1-22 contains another narrative/prophecy section that clearly focuses on the judgment of YHWH by means of the king of Assyria. Isaiah 8:1-4 tells about the birth of Isaiah's son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, whose name means "hasten for spoil, hurry for plunder," and further prophesies that before Maher-shalal-hash-baz is able to say "My father" or "My mother," that the wealth of both Damascus (the capital of Aram, of which Rezin was king) and Samaria (the capital of Israel, of which Pekah was king) would be taken away by the king of Assyria. In other words, Isaiah prophesies the destruction of Aram and Israel, just like he previously did in 7:15-17. Isaiah 8:5-10 then elaborates on what will happen concerning the king of Assyria. Isaiah, as he previously said in 7:18-25, prophesies that the king of Assyria will overflow into Judah like a mighty flood, reaching up to the neck, and outstretch its wings over Immanuel's land. Nevertheless, in 8:9-10, Isaiah prophesies that, despite this threatening flood of Assyria, that "it shall be brought to naught" and "it

will not stand, for *God is with us*." This phrase, "God is with us" is the very thing the name Immanuel means; in fact, in the Hebrew there is no difference between 7:14, 8:8 and here in 8:10. The overall thrust of 8:1-10 is clear: Assyria will destroy Aram and Israel, and Assyria will threaten to destroy Judah during the reign of Immanuel as well, but will not succeed because, according to the meaning of Immanuel's name, God is still with Judah. The child Immanuel, therefore, is both a sign of YHWH's judgment that would fall on both Israel and Judah,[147] as well as a sign of hope,[148] for the judgment will not bring a complete end to the people of YHWH. These themes of judgment, salvation, and Immanuel's reign can all be seen as relating to the historical situations of both Ahaz and Hezekiah, with the judgment of YHWH falling upon Judah because of Ahaz's unfaithfulness, and the salvation of YHWH coming to Jerusalem because of the faithfulness of Hezekiah, the prophesied Immanuel: (a) during Ahaz's reign, Aram and Israel were indeed destroyed by Assyria; (b) because of Ahaz's lack of faith in YHWH, YHWH's judgment came upon Judah and for the rest of Ahaz's reign and throughout Hezekiah's reign Assyria came to dominate Judah as well; (c) yet during the reign of Hezekiah, Jerusalem was saved from Sennacherib's armies in 701 BCE because of Hezekiah's demonstration of faith in YHWH.

Isaiah 8:11-22, directly flowing out of 8:1-10, continues with (a) YHWH exhorting Isaiah to fear Him alone, and not to be taken in by the conspiracy theories of "this people" (8:11-13), (b) the declaration that YHWH will be both a sanctuary and a stumbling stone for both houses of Israel (8:14-15), (c) Isaiah's declaration that he and

[147] Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12*, 103; Moyter, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 86.
[148] Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 213; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), 68.

his children (who are signs for Israel), will wait for YHWH (8:16-18), and (d) the declaration that any people who encourages the consultation of any god other than YHWH will "see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, and will ultimately be thrust into darkness" (8:19-22).

Isaiah 9:1-7

In the midst of the thick darkness described in 8:22, Isaiah 9:1-7 (8:23-9:6 in MT) prophesies hope and salvation, seemingly for the lands of the northern kingdom of Israel, for it mentions Zebulun and Naphtali, lands in Galilee. Isaiah 9:2 prophesies that a light will dawn for these people (presumably Zebulun and Naphtali—Galilee) who lived in darkness. Isaiah 9:3-5 then states that "you" (presumably YHWH) will "multiply the nation," "increase its joy," "break the rod of their oppressor," and "burn the boots and bloody garments of the warriors" (presumably the oppressors). To what could this be a reference? Given the historical setting in which we find this prophecy, one must consider the possibility that this is a prophecy that expresses the hope that YHWH will indeed bring salvation and possibly reconciliation to both Judah and Israel, who both have been oppressed by Assyria.

Yet who would YHWH use to bring this salvation and reconciliation about? The answer lies in Isaiah 9:6-7, which celebrates the birth of a royal son from the house of David who will eventually become king. By his description of the child, Isaiah leaves no doubt that this child is a royal heir in the House of David—he is the anointed one, the messiah-king. This royal son, Isaiah says, will be called "wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace." Isaiah further prophesies that this child's authority as king will grow, and that there will be endless peace for the throne and

kingdom of David. He ends this section with the phrase, קִנְאַת יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה־זֹּאת, ("The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this.")

The traditional Christian interpretation of these verses is that they are a prediction of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. Yet what we find in the traditional Jewish interpretation of these verses is that they are about Hezekiah.[149] In the Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 94a, Hezekiah is referred to as "the one who has eight names," these names coming from Isaiah 9:6-7: פֶּלֶא (Wonderful), יוֹעֵץ (Counselor), גִּבּוֹר (Mighty), אֵל (Judge), עַד (Everlasting), אֲבִי (Father), שַׂר (Prince), and שָׁלוֹם (Peace).[150] Now, one might question whether or not the child here in Isaiah 9 really refers to Hezekiah. After all, Hezekiah did *not* establish David's everlasting kingdom, and Hezekiah is *not* the "Everlasting Father," or "Almighty God." Yet the Jewish interpretation of these names is that they do not describe the child himself (i.e. Hezekiah), but that they point to God Himself. I. W. Slotki interprets the Hebrew words in question as, "Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty, the Everlasting Father, the Ruler of Peace," and explains that "The child will bear these significant names in order to recall to the people the message which they [the names] embodied."[151] The point is that the child of Isaiah 9:6-7 is the same Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14, as well as the child of Isaiah 11:1-11.

Nevertheless, many Christians will question this interpretation on the grounds that Hezekiah's reign did not bring peace without end. A possible answer to such an objection involves challenging the traditional Christian understanding of "fulfilled prophecy." It

[149] "The verse has been given a Christological interpretation by the Church, but modern non-Jewish exegetes agree that a contemporary person is intended. The Talmud and later Jewish commentators understood the allusion to be the son of Ahaz, viz. Hezekiah." I.W. Slotki, *Isaiah* (The Soncino Books of the Bible; Soncino Press Ltd, 1987), 44.

[150] Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 94a.

[151] Slotki, *Isaiah*, 44.

goes without saying that it was extremely important that the New Testament writers emphasized Jesus' Davidic descent. The hope that one day YHWH would raise up a Messiah from the royal line of David who would set up His everlasting kingdom runs all throughout the Old Testament. The writers of the Old Testament saw YHWH at work within the actions of kings like David (making Jerusalem his capital), Solomon (building the Temple), Hezekiah (tearing down pagan altars, and being faithful to YHWH in the face of Assyria), and Josiah (his reforms). The actions of those kings brought about the salvation of God *in part*, and the Old Testament prophets prophesied about God's future Messiah who would "fulfill" what God began with these messiahs. In other words, *through* these messiahs, the prophets saw *the* Messiah. So even though Hezekiah was not seen as "Almighty God," the events of chapters 36-37, when he trusted YHWH, and Judah was spared, gave a glimpse of a future salvation yet to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, one still has to see Hezekiah as the *initial* referent here.

What we see in this passage, therefore, is the prophetic hope that YHWH would one day bring salvation to both Judah and Israel by the hand of a Davidic king. Most scholars see an obvious connection between the royal child of 9:6-7 with the Immanuel child of 7:14. And although it can be argued that Hezekiah could not possibly be the prophesied Immanuel, nor the royal child of 9:6-7 because this "eternal peace" of YHWH did not come during his reign, one only has to look forward to the accounts of Hezekiah's reign found not only in Isaiah 36-39, but also II Kings 18-20 and II Chronicles 29-32, where Hezekiah is presented as being a righteous king who brought about major religious reform, who reached out to the tribes of the shattered northern kingdom of Israel in an

attempt to bring about reconciliation, whose reputation was known among the nations, and who was king in Jerusalem when Sennacherib and his army was defeated by YHWH.

Isaiah 9:8-10:4

The scene shifts in 9:8 from focusing on the future salvation brought about by YHWH by the hand of the royal child Immanuel to a stark and straightforward prophecy of judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel. In addition to being "devoured" by the Arameans and Philistines (9:12), this passage tells of internal strife within Israel, where "Manasseh devoured Ephraim, and Ephraim [devoured] Manasseh, and together they were against Judah" (9:21). This prophecy clearly is related to the destruction of Israel, not only ultimately by Assyria in 722 BCE, but also incrementally by its neighbors, as well as from within.

Isaiah 10:5-19

Immediately after the prophecy of judgment on Israel, 10:5-19 presents another prophecy of judgment, but this time it falls upon Assyria. In 10:5-6 we are told that YHWH Himself was the one who sent Assyria against Israel and Judah. Interestingly we find that YHWH has commanded Assyria "to take spoil and seize plunder," a phrase hauntingly similar to the name of Isaiah's son Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Clearly this child's name is symbolic of Assyria's plundering of both Israel and Judah. Yet in 10:7-11 we get a glimpse of the haughtiness and arrogance of Assyria, who does not realize that it is being used by YHWH to bring about YHWH's purposes. Because of Assyria's arrogance, Isaiah prophesies in 10:12-19 that, after YHWH has used Assyria for his purposes, that YHWH will eventually destroy Assyria for its arrogance as well. YHWH mocks Assyria for its pride, and compares Assyria to an ax that tries to magnify itself

over the one who wields it. Because of Assyria's pride, Isaiah prophesies that YHWH will "send wasting sickness among his [Assyria's] stout warriors," and that "The light of Israel will become a fire, and his holy one a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and briars in one day" (10:16-17). Isaiah further prophesies that Assyria's "forest and fruitful land" will be destroyed by YHWH and that "remnant of trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down" (10:18-19). This prophecy of judgment against Assyria can clearly be related to the destruction of Sennacherib's armies outside the walls of Jerusalem in 701 BCE, during the reign of Hezekiah. The description of Assyria's demise here in 10:5-19 is strangely similar to Isaiah 37:36, when we are told that the angel of YHWH struck down 185,000 Assyrians. If one understands from Josephus that it was believed that some sort of plague had hit the Assyrian camp that caused them to lift their siege of Jerusalem and return home, it becomes very probable that the "wasting disease" prophesied in the middle of this passage of chapters 7-12, of which "Immanuel" is a central part, is none other than a prophesy of the striking down of 185,000 Assyrians. This further strengthens the idea that the "Immanuel" of 7:14 and of chapters 7-12 has, as its initial referent, King Hezekiah, and looks forward to the events of chapters 36-37.

Isaiah 10:20-34

After the prophecy concerning the judgment of Assyria, Isaiah 10:20-34 prophesies the future restoration of a remnant from the house of Jacob. In 10:20 we read that the remnant "will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on YHWH, the Holy One of Israel." In 10:21-22 we read "A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. 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." This repeated reference to a "remnant" recalls Isaiah's first son, Shear-jashub, and when taken within the context of everything we have seen thus far in Isaiah 7-10, the message is clear: (a) because of Israel and Judah's unfaithfulness, exemplified by the unfaithfulness of Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, YHWH's righteous judgment will fall upon them both; (b) the instrument of YHWH's righteous judgment will be, ironically, another sinful and arrogant nation, Assyria, whom YHWH will exercise judgment upon once He has used Assyria to punish Israel and Judah; and (c) after "destruction is decreed"—after Israel and Judah have both suffered YHWH's judgment, and after Assyria is also punished for its arrogance—what will be left will be a remnant who will return to YHWH in truth.

Isaiah 10:24-34 continues with this theme yet reassures those in Zion not to be afraid of their oppressors, the Assyrians, for their burden will soon be lifted from their shoulders. Verses 33-34 employ the imagery of a forest, and of YHWH cutting down the tallest trees, which clearly represent the haughty and prideful. This forest imagery harkens back to Isaiah 6:13, which gives the same picture of trees being felled. And, just like in 6:13, the next section, 11:1-10, focuses on new life coming forth from destruction.

Isaiah 11:1-16

This famous section has continually been related to both the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 and the royal child of Isaiah 9:1-7. In this section, though, we find a description of a shoot coming forth from the stump of Jesse—an obvious metaphor describing the coming glory of a new Davidic king in the midst of YHWH's judgment. Isaiah prophesies that YHWH's spirit will rest upon this "shoot," and it will be a spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and the fear of YHWH

(11:1-2). He is described as being a ruler who will judge with righteousness, who will strike down the wicked, and who will be known for his faithfulness (11:3-5). Isaiah 11:6-9 portrays an idyllic picture of the future of God's entire creation, when "the earth will be full of the knowledge of YHWH as the waters cover the sea" (11:9). The mention of the "little child" leading (11:6), the "nursing child" (11:8), and the "weaned child" (11:8) all fit well into the greater context of Isaiah 7-12, in which children play such a prominent role within the prophetic oracles. Isaiah 11:10 continues by saying, "On that day the root of Jesse will stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling will be made glorious." The rest of 11:11-16 further prophesies about: (a) the restored remnant that has been scattered among the nations, particularly Assyria and Egypt, (b) Immanuel's assembling of the outcasts of Israel, (c) the end of hostilities between Israel and Judah, and (d) the subjugation of the Philistines, Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites. After the entirety of this collection of prophecies in chapters 7-11, Isaiah 12:1-6 simply serves as a final praise to YHWH for his salvation, and is a proper conclusion to the entire section of Isaiah 7-12.

The pressing question concerning Isaiah 11 of course is, "Who is the 'shoot of Jesse'?" Although clearly a seen as a Davidic messianic king, there is a certain amount of uncertainty as to who this person is. Most commentators rightly see this ultimately as a description of an idyllic future messianic age ruled by the Messiah. Yet we must also consider how this chapter might relate to Hezekiah and fit into the consistent historical picture we have seen developing throughout Isaiah 7-12. We are told that a shoot will rise up from the stump of Jesse: perhaps this could be seen as referring to Hezekiah's attempt to regain Judah's independence and glory after the humiliating reign of his father Ahaz.

We are told that this "shoot" would be a faithful ruler who would judge in righteousness and who would strike down the wicked. All of these descriptions could be seen as relating to Hezekiah throughout his reign and during Sennacherib's invasion. We are told that the "shoot" would bring about the restoration of the remnant, gather the outcasts of Israel, end hostilities between Israel and Judah, and subjugate the surrounding peoples. The overall biblical testimony found in Isaiah, II Kings, and II Chronicles all contain passages in which all of these things are attributed to Hezekiah in some way. The only thing that seemingly does not fit well into the historical situation during Hezekiah's reign is the idyllic picture of 11:6-9; yet when we consider Fee and Stuart's explanation of the prophetic perspective of chronological events,[152] this should not surprise us. Isaiah 11 simply is a prophecy about certain events during Hezekiah's reign, set against the background of the great eschatological future. Thus, Hezekiah's actions were viewed as glimpses of that future eschatological salvation of God.

VI. Final Comments

This analysis of Isaiah 7:14, its immediate context of Isaiah 7:13-25, and its larger context of Isaiah 7-12 has shown a number of things. First, the narrative and prophecies found in Isaiah 7-12 are firmly set within the historical setting of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and prophesy about the events that subsequently took place during the latter part of Judah in the eighth century BCE. Second, it has shown that Isaiah 7:14 is intimately connected to the other material found, first in 7:13-25, and also throughout Isaiah 7-12. Third, the three major themes found throughout Isaiah 7-12 are ones of (a) immediate

[152] "It should be noted, of course, that some of the prophecies of the near future were set against the background of the great, eschatological future, and sometimes they seem to blend. The Bible regularly sees God's acts in temporal history in light of his overall plan for all of human history. Thus the temporal is to be seen in light of the eternal plan." Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all Its Worth*, 182.

judgment of both Israel and Judah, (b) future salvation for the faithful remnant, and (c) the royal child-king being the one through whom YHWH will work to accomplish this. Given all of this: the historical context, the literary unity of Isaiah 7-12, and the three major themes found within Isaiah 7-12, the most logical candidate for the identity of the Immanuel child of 7:14 is none other than Hezekiah, for he was clearly the son of Ahaz who came to the throne and reigned during a time in Judah's history in which all of the events prophesied about in Isaiah 7-12 took place. We know this because of what is recorded in both II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39. This thesis will eventually argue that the larger literary structure of Proto-Isaiah shows that Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 are set up a "literary bookends" that highlight Isaiah's prophecies in chapters 7-12 concerning Hezekiah and the fulfillment of those prophecies in chapters 36-39. Simply put, the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah confirms the identification of the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 with the figure of Hezekiah. Nevertheless, there are admittedly some legitimate objections to identifying Hezekiah with the Immanuel child, most notably the chronological difficulties we encounter in II Kings. It is to these chronological difficulties that we will now turn in chapter three.

Chapter Three

The Problem of Chronology in II Kings 16-20

I. Introduction

As can now be seen from chapter two, regardless of what the proposed interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 is, there are a number of problems with each one. Yet while there are a host of exegetical objections to the views that either Immanuel was one of Isaiah's sons or that Immanuel referred to any child born in Judah at that time, the predominant objection to the view that Immanuel was a reference to Hezekiah is that the chronology put forth in II Kings seemingly does not allow for it. Scholars claim Hezekiah would have been between 6-11 years old at the time of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy of 7:13-25 and therefore could not be the Immanuel child in Isaiah 7:14. And so, even though virtually every scholar agrees that there are royal Davidic connotations within Isaiah 7:14 and that in its final form there are definite thematic connections between chapters 7, 9, and 11, the view that Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy about Hezekiah is widely rejected on the grounds that the chronology of II Kings simply does not allow for it.

Yet what often goes seemingly unnoticed is the fact that the chronology found in II Kings is extremely problematic. Christopher Seitz notes this when he says, "…there appears to be confusion in the Books of Kings over the precise length of reign for Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz. Interpretation of Isaiah 7:1-9:7 fall squarely in this period and so does the problem of identifying the Immanuel child."[153] This is extremely important to note because it shows the reason scholars give as to why Immanuel could not be Hezekiah is,

[153] Christopher Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 62.

in and of itself, riddled with problems. We must seriously question scholars who acknowledge that virtually everything about Immanuel found in Isaiah 7-12 points to Hezekiah, yet then rejects it based on a highly problematic chronology found in II Kings.

Trying to analyze and reconstruct the historical events found within the Old Testament can be a tricky, and some would argue fruitless, endeavor. After all, it is the job of the biblical exegete to attempt to understand the point of view and meaning of a text as it is presented to us, not to try and reconstruct a different historical scenario than that of the biblical witness. Nevertheless, it is imperative that this thesis attempt to answer the "chronological problem" that is time and time again thrown up by scholars to dispute the legitimacy of identifying Immanuel with Hezekiah. Given the fact that the only real objection to identifying Immanuel with Hezekiah is that the chronology put forth in II Kings 16-20 seemingly does not allow such an identification, and given the obvious fact that there are severe chronological difficulties within II Kings itself, this chapter will analyze these diachronic concerns and argue that it is historically *possible* that Hezekiah was not yet born at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, was born shortly after the prophecy, and therefore was very likely the prophesied Immanuel of 7:14. If it can be shown that such an identification is historically *possible*—that Isaiah very well could have uttered his prophecy of 7:13-25 shortly before Hezekiah was born—then legs will be cut out from underneath the major argument against the identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah. The diachronic argument and historical possibility, together with the synchronic argument and literary reading of Isaiah 7:14 within Proto-Isaiah, will further strengthen the view that in its original historical and literary contexts, Isaiah 7:14 was first and foremost a prophecy about the birth of Hezekiah.

In this chapter we will look at the chronological problems in II Kings surrounding the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah and argue that if these problems can be resolved, one is then able to reconstruct a revised chronology that allows for the possibility that Isaiah uttered his prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 before the birth of Hezekiah. The first thing that needs to be done, though, is to make sure that we have a good grasp of the relevant biblical texts that tell us about Ahaz and Hezekiah. The biblical texts that give us significant information about Ahaz are Isaiah 7, II Kings 16, and II Chronicles 28, with the main focus in Ahaz's reign being the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. The biblical texts that give us significant information about Hezekiah are Isaiah 36-39, II Kings 18-20, and II Chronicles 29-32. Although the main focus in Hezekiah's reign is clearly Sennacherib's invasion, there is also the mention of the fall of Samaria, Hezekiah's attempt to reach out to the northern tribes to come and join Judah for Passover, Hezekiah's sickness, and the visit from the envoys of Babylon. There are also a number of Assyrian texts that tells us a little about both kings. These texts will be alluded to in the process of our analysis, but a few remarks must be made concerning the issue of using these sources (as well as our biblical sources) as a basis for our knowledge of history.

As was mentioned in chapter one, we must remember that neither the Assyrian records, nor the relevant biblical texts themselves, are written as "objective histories" in our modern sense of the term. For that matter, though, there really is no such thing as "objective history." All history writing, be it Israelite, Assyrian, French or American, is written *from* a certain point of view and *for* a certain purpose. As Provan, Long, and Longman state, "There is no account of the past anywhere that is not ideological in

nature, and therefore in principle to be trusted more than other accounts."[154] Because of this fact, it is ultimately foolish to assume that attaining "objective history" is possible, for there is no such thing. What we have are ancient texts that are attempting to interpret and make sense of certain events and facts in history. The Assyrian texts are primarily royal annals that are, "more concerned about the *image* of the king and his activity as a warrior than about merely recording the facts of his reign…"[155] The biblical narratives, on the other hand, are stories about certain events in the history of Israel that attempt to prophetically explain who God is and how God's hand was at work throughout the history of Israel.

Given the fact that Isaiah, II Kings, and II Chronicles, all came into their final form either during or after the exile, it is obvious that the exilic/post-exilic lens through which these stories were told inevitably shaped their theological perspective on these very stories. The overwhelming question, "Why did we end up in exile?" undoubtedly shaped their theological perspective on their history to the point that we can see that the final forms of these works act as an answer to that question. But to claim that an exilic/post-exilic historical narrative regarding past events in the history of Israel is by *de facto* unreliable is to overstate the case. As Provan, Long, and Longman have pointed out, mere chronological distance from a historical event does not automatically mean a less historically reliable text. In fact, "No good reason at all exists to believe that those claiming to be eyewitnesses are not (like the later reporters of events) interpreters of those events, nor is there any reason to assume on principle that their testimony is going to be more or less trustworthy. There is, indeed, no reason to believe that earlier accounts

[154] Provan, Long, Longman. *A Biblical History of Israel*, 68.
[155] Provan, Long, Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 67.

are generally more reliable than later accounts."[156] In fact, often times it takes time to fully understand and appreciate the importance, implications, and magnitude of certain historical events. The passage of time more often than not brings a *clearer* perspective on the general messiness of history.

II. Overview of the Relevant Texts Regarding Ahaz and Hezekiah

Although there is general consensus on the overall picture of Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, getting a firm grasp on the historical "facts" of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis is quite a tricky business. Not only do we have Isaiah's version of this crisis, but we also have accounts of it in II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28—and they all differ in some way or another. It is generally understood that the reason for this is that each "author" shaped his account in some way to reflect his understanding of God's purpose and to fit in with the overall message to in his book. It would be a futile endeavor to attempt to reconstruct the actual events of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, for all we have are interpretations of those events. We should rather attempt to understand and exegete Isaiah's account of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. Nevertheless, in order to understand Isaiah's account of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, it is extremely helpful to consider both II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28 in order to get a general sense of how the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis was understood within the collective memory of the Hebrew Scriptures. Our aim, therefore, is not so much to attempt a historical reconstruction of the events of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, as it is to come to a general biblical understanding of that event by recognizing the basic points upon which Isaiah, II Kings, and II Chronicles all agree.

[156] Provan, Long, Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 57.

The general historical picture surrounding Isaiah 7:14 is fairly well-agreed upon: Isaiah uttered his prophecy about the Immanuel child at some point during the reign of King Ahaz of Judah, at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, when Judah was being threatened by King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel, presumably around 740-734 BCE, who were trying to oust Ahaz and set up "the son of Tabeel" as king in Ahaz's place The biblical passages that tell us about the reign of King Ahaz are that of Isaiah 7-12, which combines a brief narrative of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis with an extended prophecy that lasts through chapter 12, and the two narrative sections of II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28. When one looks at these three passages, one is able to make some initial observations regarding not only the events surrounding the reign of King Ahaz, but also the events surrounding the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. On the surface, the overall picture of Ahaz in these two other accounts is fairly consistent with Isaiah. Ahaz is presented as a king whose faithlessness to YHWH opened the door to Assyrian oppression.

Although Isaiah does not elaborate on many details regarding the reign of Ahaz, both II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28 do.[157] They state that he became king at twenty, reigned for sixteen years, and did not do what was right in the eyes of YHWH. The particular sins of Ahaz mentioned in both II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28 are: (a) making his sons pass through the fire, (b) sacrificing and making offerings on the high places and hills and under every green tree, (c) appealing to Tiglath-pileser of Assyria for help when threatened by Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel, as well as the Edomites, (d) taking silver and gold from both the house of YHWH and the house of the king, and giving it as tribute to Assyria, and (d) worshipping the gods of Damascus in some way.

[157] II Kings 16:1-18; II Chronicles 28:1-27

II Kings gives more detail concerning this last point by saying that when Ahaz went to meet Tiglath-pileser in Damascus after Tiglath-pileser had conquered Damascus and had killed Rezin, he was so impressed with the great altar in Damascus that he had ordered Uriah the high priest to construct a similar altar in the temple of YHWH, and to move the bronze altar of YHWH off to the side. II Chronicles contains some additional details as well. There is the mention of captives being taken by both Rezin and Pekah, and the surprisingly kind treatment that Israel showed to its Judean captives. We are told that Zichri, a great warrior of Ephraim (Israel) killed Ahaz's son Maaseiah, Azrikam the commander of the palace, and Elkanah, the one next in authority to Ahaz. We are also told that instead of strengthening Ahaz, Tiglath-pileser ended up oppressing him. Finally, we are told that Ahaz was not buried in the tombs of the kings of Israel.

Instead of giving us details surrounding the reign of Ahaz, Isaiah focuses on what apparently was for him the single most defining moment of the reign of Ahaz: the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. This is not to say that II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28 do not condemn Ahaz for his actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, for they certainly do. The point is that in Isaiah, the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis is the focus, not Ahaz's other sins.[158] For Isaiah, Ahaz's faithless actions at that time provoked YHWH's judgment at the hands of Assyria; at the same time, though, in the midst of that prophetic judgment, Isaiah points toward a sign of hope: the birth of Immanuel, the one through whom YHWH would act to judge Assyria, and who would help establish YHWH's salvation for the surviving remnant of YHWH's judgment that was brought on by Ahaz.

[158] This focus in Isaiah on Ahaz's actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis clearly reflects the theological perspective of the later scribal exegetes who put the book of Isaiah in its final form. The perspective, ideology, and circumstances of these later scribal exegetes of the exilic/post-exilic period will be discussed in more detail in the later chapters. For now we will simply acknowledge that for whatever reason the writer of Isaiah clearly has chosen to focus on Ahaz's actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis.

In any case, we are told that Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel planned to attack Jerusalem, but were not successful.[159] Their intention was to get rid of Ahaz and to set up "the son of Tabeel" as king in Jerusalem,[160] presumably to be a puppet ruler who would do their bidding. The most obvious difference between Isaiah 7 and II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28 is the confrontation between Ahaz and Isaiah. This confrontation is clearly the sole focus in Isaiah 7. The specific sins of Ahaz mentioned in II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28 are set aside in Isaiah 7 so that one can focus on the root cause of all the sins of Ahaz: his failure to put his faith in YHWH. In the face of the threat from the Syro-Ephraimite alliance, the prophet Isaiah went to Ahaz with a message from YHWH that both enemy kingdoms would be shortly destroyed, and that Ahaz should trust YHWH's message, or else the royal house of David would not stand either. Yet Ahaz, true to his form, refused to trust YHWH. [161] According to Isaiah, it was precisely Ahaz's decision not to put his faith in YHWH during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis that opened the door to a far more powerful and oppressive overlord, the king of Assyria.[162]

Without reconstructing every fact surrounding the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, we can be confident about a few historical points that all three accounts agree upon: (1) Ahaz was threatened by Pekah and Rezin; (2) Pekah and Rezin were unsuccessful; (3) Ahaz received help from Assyria, who crushed both Aram and Israel. In addition to these three points, we can also say that Ahaz is consistently portrayed in the Hebrew Bible as: (4) a completely godless king who displayed no faith in YHWH, and (5) the one responsible for bringing upon Judah the horrible oppression of Assyria.

[159] Isaiah 7:1
[160] Isaiah 7:6
[161] Isaiah 7:4-12
[162] Isaiah 7:17-18

The story of Hezekiah's reign is also recorded in three separate biblical accounts: Isaiah 36-39, II Kings 18-20, and II Chronicles 29-32. II Kings 18:1-2 tells us that Hezekiah (a) became king of Judah at the age of twenty-five, (b) became king during the third year of Hoshea, who was king of the northern kingdom of Israel, and (c) reigned in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. Although II Chronicles 29:1 also tells us that Hezekiah became king of Judah at the age of twenty-five and that he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem, it does not relate the reign of Hezekiah to the corresponding reign of Hoshea in Israel. In contrast to both II Kings and II Chronicles, Isaiah does not give any specifics regarding the early years of Hezekiah's reign. Isaiah 36:1 does, though, along with II Kings 18:13, tell us that King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah during the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. Although II Chronicles 32 also tells us about Sennacherib's invasion, it does not attempt to give the date of the invasion.By far, the most significant difference between these three accounts of Hezekiah's reign is II Chronicles 29-31, which tells about the temple reform of Hezekiah and his attempt to reach out to the northern tribes of Israel to come and celebrate Passover together in Jerusalem. Neither Isaiah nor II Kings include this story in their accounts. Nevertheless, beginning with Sennacherib's invasion, all three accounts follow the same general outline.

The Sennacherib account is found in Isaiah 36-37, II Kings 18-19, and II Chronicles 32:1-23. Isaiah's narrative, beginning in Hezekiah's "fourteenth year" with the invasion of Sennacherib, does not relate the reasons for Sennacherib's actions, but rather chooses to jump right to the siege of Jerusalem and the Rabshakeh's taunting speech, which occupies the bulk of chapter 36. Chapter 37 is comprised of essentially five scenes: (1) Hezekiah's reaction to the Rabshakeh, his appeal to Isaiah, and Isaiah's

initial prophecy (37:1-7), (2) the king of Assyria's message to Hezekiah (37:8-13), (3) Hezekiah's prayer to YHWH in the temple (37:14-20), (4) Isaiah's prophecy against Sennacherib (37:21-35), and (5) the destruction of Sennacherib (37:36-38).

But for two sections, II Kings 18-19 is almost identical to Isaiah 36-37. II Kings 18:1-12, which is not found in Isaiah, tells that Hezekiah became king at the age of twenty-five, in the third year of Hoshea of Israel, and that he reigned for twenty-nine years. We are also told that Hezekiah "did what was right in the eyes of YHWH": he removed the high places, broke down the pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and even broke into pieces the bronze serpent of Moses because it was being worshipped by the people (18:1-4). According to II Kings, there was no one like Hezekiah among all the kings of Judah, either before or after him (18:5-6). In addition, we are told that Hezekiah attacked the Philistines and rebelled against the king of Assyria (18:7-8). After 18:9-12, in which the fall of Samaria is recorded, II Kings 18 begins to correlate with Isaiah 36.

The second section in II Kings 18-19 that is not found in Isaiah 36-39 is that of 18:14-16, which relates Hezekiah's attempted appeasement of the king of Assyria by admitting that he had done wrong in rebelling against Assyria, and by stripping the gold off the doors and doorposts of the temple of YHWH and using them as payment for the king of Assyria. Aside from these three verses though, II Kings 18:13-19:37 is virtually identical to Isaiah 36-37. II Chronicles 32:1-23 can be best considered as a condensed version of Isaiah 36-37 and II Kings 18-19, with the only difference found in verses 1-8, which include Hezekiah's preparations to withstand a siege by Sennacherib and his encouragement of the people of Jerusalem that YHWH would fight for them.

After the Sennacherib account, all three passages continue with the account of Hezekiah's illness, which can be found in Isaiah 38, II Kings 20:1-11, and II Chronicles 32:24-26.[163] In comparing Isaiah 38 and II Kings 20:1-11, one finds a curious textual issue: although Isaiah 38:1-6 corresponds to II Kings 20:1-6 and Isaiah 38:7-8 corresponds to II Kings 20:9-11, the verses in Isaiah 38 that correspond to II Kings 20:7-8 are not found until 38:21-22 and seem dreadfully out of place. It seems obvious, therefore, that Isaiah 38:21-22 should be placed between 38:6 and 38:7. When this is done, Isaiah 38:1-8, with verses 21-22 in their proper place, and II Kings 20:1-11 once again are virtually identical in their report: (1) Hezekiah becomes sick unto death, is told that he will not recover, and then weeps and prays to YHWH; (2) Isaiah is sent by YHWH to Hezekiah to tell him that YHWH had heard his prayer and would not only add fifteen years to Hezekiah's life, but also deliver him from the hand of Assyria; (3) Isaiah orders that a lump of figs be placed on Hezekiah's boil so he could recover; and (4) when Hezekiah asks for a sign for him to go up to the house of YHWH, Isaiah prophesies that the shadow cast by the dial of Ahaz would turn back ten steps. The story regarding the visit of envoys from Babylon can be found in Isaiah 39 and II Kings 20:12-19. In both accounts, envoys from Merodach-baladan of Babylon come to visit Hezekiah, because he had heard that Hezekiah was sick but had recovered. Hezekiah welcomes them and displays all of his riches. There was nothing that Hezekiah did not show them. When Isaiah finds out about what Hezekiah had done, Isaiah prophecies that Babylon would come one day and take away everything, even the royal sons of Judah, and bring them to Babylon. Hezekiah then expresses thanks that it would not happen during his reign.

[163] II Chronicles 32:24-32 really cannot be as easily separated, for the Chronicler has essentially blended together the story of Hezekiah's illness with the visit of the envoys from Babylon.

II Chronicles 32:24-31 essentially overlaps the account of Hezekiah's illness with the account concerning envoys from Babylon. We are first told that Hezekiah was sick to the point of death, that he prayed to YHWH, that YHWH answered and gave him a sign, but that Hezekiah was proud and did not respond accordingly. Because of this, wrath came upon Hezekiah and Judah and Jerusalem. Yet Hezekiah then humbled himself and both he and Jerusalem was spared of YHWH's wrath during the days of Hezekiah. Then, after a brief mention of Hezekiah's great riches, we are told that envoys from Babylon came to inquire about "the sign" that had been done in the land. The Chronicler tells us that God left Hezekiah to himself in order to test him. Presumably this "test" relates back to 32:25-26, to the failure of Hezekiah to respond accordingly and his subsequent humbling of himself so that destruction would not come upon Judah during his days.

III. Chronological Problems in II Kings 16-20

Scholars have discounted the identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah because the chronology of II Kings seems to make such an identification impossible. It is imperative, therefore, that we analyze the relevant biblical texts regarding the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah and point out that the chronology itself in II Kings 16-20 as it stands is historically impossible. The follow data from II Kings is relevant to our task:

Hezekiah	***Ahaz***	***Pekah***	***Hoshea***
1. Began reign when 25 years old (18:2)	1. Began reign when 20 years old (16:2)	1. Began reign in the 52nd year of Uzziah (15:27)	1. Killed Pekah; began reign in the 20th year of Jotham (15:30)
2. Reigned 29 years (18:2)	2. Reigned 16 years (16:2)	2. Reigned 20 years (15:27)	2. Reigned 9 years (17:1)
3. 4th year was 7th year of Hoshea (18:9)	3. 1st year was 17th year of Pekah (16:1)	3. 2nd year was 1st year of Jotham (15:32)	3. 3rd year was 1st year of Hezekiah (18:1)
4. His 6th year was 9th year of Hoshea (18:10)	4.His 12th year was 1st year of Hoshea (17:1)	4. His 17th year was 1st year of Ahaz (16:1)	4. During 7th year, Shalmaneser sieged Samaria (18:9)
5. Sennacherib invaded Judah in his 14th year (18:13)			5. Samaria fell in Hoshea's 9th year (18:10)
6. "In those days…" Hezekiah became ill (20:1-11)			
7. "At that time…" Hezekiah and envoys of Merodach-baladan (20:12-19)			

The problem with the chronology of II Kings is the numbers do not add up. If we anchor our timeline to the historical dates of 721 BCE as the fall of Samaria and 701 BCE as the invasion of Sennacherib, we see numerous problems, the most glaring of which lies in the fact that Hezekiah could not have been in his sixth year as king when Samaria fell in 721 BCE, yet in only his fourteenth year as king when Sennacherib invaded in 701 BCE. If we assume that at least one of these dates are correct, we must construct and analyze two different possible timelines, each one using either 721 BCE or 701 BCE as its starting point.[164]

[164] These days can be verified and considered trustworthy, for these events are also mentioned in the Assyrian annals, and therefore can be dated with a great amount of certainty.

IV. Note on the Lunar and Solar Calendars

In light of the fact that there seems to be such chronological incompatibility in II Kings, many have suggested that the answer to this problem lies in the fact that we need to take into account that ancient Israel used the lunar calendar (354 day per year) whereas our modern solar calendars are comprised of 365 days per year. Given this difference, many have warned against attempting to reconstruct the history of ancient Israel in terms of modern dating. Although it is true that, as seen in the books of Enoch and Jubilees, the switch from the lunar calendar to the solar calendar was a serious theological issue, when it comes to plotting out the chronology set forth in I and II Kings, the differences between the lunar and solar calendars pose no real problem.

The Hebrew lunar calendar contains twelve months of 30 days; yet since the lunar cycle consists of 29 ½ days, the Hebrew lunar year ends up being 354 days per year. In order to keep the lunar calendar coordinated with the cycles of the seasons, a thirteenth month known as "Second Adar" was added to the lunar calendar after the final month of the year known as "Adar" seven out of every nineteen years. Because of the addition of this thirteenth month, the days lost by the lunar calendar to the solar calendar are made up every two to three years. The end result of this recalibration on the part of the lunar calendar is that nineteen lunar years would equal nineteen solar years. In fact, after every three years the lunar recalibration would make the difference between the solar year and lunar year miniscule. Furthermore, even without the addition of "Second Adar," the yearly difference between the lunar and solar calendars would be only eleven days. This would mean a difference of 33 days every three years, 66 days every six years, 132 days every twelve years, 265 days every 24 years, and 363 days every 33 years. Simply put, it

would take 33 solar years to account for one year's worth of difference between the lunar and solar calendars. Yet the fact is that there *is* a "Second Adar" in the lunar calendar that serves to recalibrate the lunar calendar with the solar calendar every two to three years. Therefore, when we are told that Samaria fell during Hezekiah's sixth year, and when we know that the fall of Samaria happened roughly in 721 BCE of the solar calendar, we can say with a fair amount of certainty that Hezekiah became king of Judah around 727 BCE, regardless if it is according to the lunar or solar calendar. Six years in the solar calendar equals 2190 days; six years in the lunar calendar equals roughly 2180 days, depending on which years received the thirteenth month of "Second Adar."

One final note must be mentioned regarding attempting to make sense of the chronology of II Kings. Because the smallest chronological unit mentioned in II Kings is that of years, and not that of months or days, we must realize that our reconstruction of the dates of certain events will inevitably be somewhat fuzzy. Using the above example, even though we are told that the fall of Samaria happened "in Hezekiah's sixth year," we do not know if it happened *early* in his sixth year or *late* in his sixth year. We are also told later that Hezekiah ruled for 29 years. Again, we simply do not know if he ruled for a full 29 years, partially into his 29th year, or only just into his 29th year. Hence, when we are then told that Manasseh ruled for 55 years, the total number of years he and Hezekiah together reigned could be anywhere between 84 years (if they both reigned a full 29 and 55 years respectively) and a little over 82 years (if they both reigned just into their 29th and 55th years respectively). The fact of the inevitable ambiguity of reckoning kingly reigns in terms of only years, and not months or days, coupled with the possibility of times of co-regency, means that absolute precision in reconstructing the specific events

within the chronology of II Kings is an impossibility. Our reconstructions must allow for various possibilities regarding the "when" of specific events within the reigns of the various Judean and Israelite kings. Because of this, one can easily see that those scholars who object to the identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah on the basis of perceived chronological difficulties are overstating their case. The fact is, when one studies the chronology of II Kings closely, one must come to the conclusion that it is entirely *possible* that Isaiah's prophecy of Isaiah 7:13-25 was uttered to Ahaz *before* the birth of Hezekiah. One can obviously argue that the material was presented after the birth of Hezekiah, but the point here is that neither position can be substantiated by the material in II Kings *alone*; it is simply too problematic. It is only when one analyzes each possibility against the other information about Hezekiah in the Bible that one possibility becomes more convincing than the other. This thesis asserts that the chronological *possibility* that Isaiah 7:13-25 was uttered *before* the birth of Hezekiah, along with the previously discussed royal imagery and themes surrounding the Immanuel child in Isaiah 7-12, along with the overall literary structure of Proto-Isaiah that will be discussed in chapter four, helps make a convincing argument that Isaiah 7:14 should be seen as a prophecy about the birth of Hezekiah.

V. Possible Answers to the Chronological Problems in II Kings

Once one recognizes the inherent chronological problems within II Kings itself, and once one realizes that the differences between the lunar and solar calendars cannot possibly account for the vast chronological discrepancies in II Kings 16-20, one must come to this basic conclusion: no matter how one slices it, there must be some errors within the text. Hezekiah simply could not have been in his sixth year in 721 BCE *and* in

his fourteenth year in 701 BCE. We must assume then that one of those dates is wrong. The only question is, "Which one?" The answer to this question is vital for this thesis because, given the sum of chronological information found within II Kings 16-20, it will help make a well-reasoned argument as to when Hezekiah was born, which in turn will help make the argument that II Kings does indeed allow for the possibility of an Immanuel-Hezekiah connection within Isaiah. The place to start, then, is to look at each of the certain dates: 721 BCE and 701 BCE.[165]

V. 1. Scenario I: 721 BCE as Hezekiah's Sixth Year as King

The first option we will try out is that of the fall of Samaria in 721 BCE. In II Kings 18:10 we are told that the fall of Samaria happened during Hezekiah's sixth year. If we use this as a fixed date within the chronology of II Kings, we are able to see a host of problems, as shown in the timeline found at the end of this chapter. The problem with this scenario is if the fall of Samaria happened in Hezekiah's sixth year, the invasion of Sennacherib would have happened in Hezekiah's 26th year, not his fourteenth, for Hezekiah's fourteenth year would have been 713 BCE.[166] Secondly, if Hoshea's reign was 730-721 BCE, then according to II Kings 18:1-2, and 9-10, Hezekiah's reign would roughly be 727-698 BCE, and he would have been born in 752 BCE.[167] If he was born in 752 BCE and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis happened throughout the 730's, then Hezekiah

[165] In Appendix A, one can find the accompanying charts that illustrate S*cenario 1, Scenario 2, Further Problems with the Chronology of II Kings 16-20,* and *The Proposed Revisions to II Kings 16-20.*

[166] Scholars who have noted this: J. Barton Payne in "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," *BSac* 126 (1969): 40-52; H. H. Rowley, "Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion," in *Men of God* (ed. H.H. Rowley. London: Thomas Nelson: 1963): 98-132; A.K. Jenkins in "Hezekiah's Fourteenth Year," *VT* 26:3 (1976): 284-298

[167] Scholars who have noted this: John McHugh in "The Date of Hezekiah's Birth," *VT* 14:4 (1964): 446-453;

would seem to have been close to 20 years old at the time of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, and therefore could not be the child about whom Isaiah was talking.

V. 2. Scenario II: 701 BCE as Hezekiah's Fourteenth Year as King

Our second option would be to assume that II Kings 18:13 and Isaiah 36:1 give the correct date when they say that Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE happened in Hezekiah's fourteenth year. If Sennacherib invaded in 701 BCE during Hezekiah's 14th year, this would make Hezekiah's reign roughly 715-686 BCE, and he would have been born around 740 BCE. These dates, though, run into more problems than the first scenario. First of all, if one dated Hezekiah's reign from 715-686 BCE and then computed the reigns of the rest of the kings of Judah up to the time of the Babylonian exile, one would have the fall of Jerusalem take place in 574 BCE. Yet we know for certain that the fall of Jerusalem happened in 587 BCE. Therefore, Hezekiah's death had to have been in 698 BCE. Secondly, if Hezekiah's reign started in 715 BCE, then there is absolutely no way II Kings 18:9-10 could be true, for Hezekiah simply was not king of Judah at any point in the 720's BCE. Thirdly, this timeline would have Hezekiah's birth in 740 BCE, still seemingly too early to make the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy apply to Hezekiah. Finally, if Hezekiah began his reign in 715 BCE, and if we are to believe II Kings 17:1 when it tells us that Hoshea became king of Israel in Ahaz's twelfth year, this would make Hoshea's reign from 730-721 BCE and Ahaz's reign from 742-726 BCE, leaving almost a full ten year gap between the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. In other words, if II Kings 18:13 and Isaiah 36:1 are correct, then there was no king reigning in Judah from 726-715 BCE. Although there are problems with both scenarios, the chronological problems in scenario II are too substantial for it to be seriously considered.

Therefore for the time being, leaving aside the problem regarding 701 BCE in scenario I, we will tentatively conclude that scenario I is more reliable.

V. 3. Further Problems with the Chronology of II Kings

In addition to this problem concerning Hezekiah's reign itself, there are further problems regarding the biblical data concerning the kings of Judah and Israel who reigned just before Ahaz and Hezekiah. First, according to the given timeline in II Kings, Ahaz would have fathered Hezekiah at the age of ten in 752 BCE. Secondly, if one considers the information given about Pekah in II Kings 15:27, 30, 32, and 16:1, one runs into the problem of Pekah's reign. If we are to believe II Kings 15:27, 32, and 16:1, that would mean Pekah reigned in Israel from 759-739 BCE; but II Kings 15:30 tells us that Hoshea killed Pekah and became king in Pekah's place. If Hoshea reigned from 730-721 BCE, how could Pekah have been killed by Hoshea in both 739 BCE and 730 BCE? Once again, there is an almost ten year discrepancy in the chronology. Thirdly, II Kings 15:30 also tells us that Hoshea's murder of Pekah happened in the 20th year of Jotham's reign, but then three verses later, in 15:33, it states that Jotham reigned for only 16 years. Things are further complicated when one considers the fact that, according to the chronology of the kings of Judah, Jotham seems to have reigned from 758-742 BCE.[168]

Quite obviously, either something is dreadfully wrong with the chronological data in II Kings, or else the author of II Kings is doing something very different with the chronologies of the kings than just providing a straight chronology. Given this fact, it is extremely puzzling why so many scholars seem to so casually dismiss the possibility of

[168] It is almost impossible to come to any kind of conclusive answer regarding Jotham's reign, due to the fact that we are told he reigned in Uzziah's place because of Uzziah's leprosy. There are elements of co-regency that can only be speculated upon.

Hezekiah being the prophesied Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 on the grounds that the chronology of II Kings does not allow for it. Using that kind of reasoning, one could use the same argument to say that the chronology of II Kings does not allow for *any significant event* in the life of Hezekiah, for no matter how one may work the dates, the numbers simply do not add up. Various scholars, though, have wrestled extensively with the different chronological problems found within II Kings. It is to these attempts to make sense of the chronological data we now turn.

VI. Making Sense of the Chronology of II Kings

When examining the attempts by various scholars to figure out the chronology of II Kings, one quickly sees that scholars have vied for either 727 BCE or 715 BCE as the starting date for Hezekiah's reign. Scholars like H.H. Rowley and Oded Borowski date Hezekiah's reign from 727 BCE to 698 BCE, whereas scholars like Edwin Thiele, W.F. Albright, John Bright, Barton Payne, and John McHugh date Hezekiah's reign from 715 BCE to 686 BCE, or in McHugh's case, 699 BCE. Leslie McFall, unlike these other scholars, attempts to date the beginning Hezekiah's reign at 728 BCE and the end of his reign at 686 BCE. As will be seen shortly, each scholar has his own reasons and rationale for coming to his particular conclusion, and each scholar attempts to resolve the chronological problems in II Kings that have been just discussed. As will now be shown, though, many of these proposed solutions end up creating more problems than they answer. Provan comments on such proposed solutions when he states, "One wonders whether some of the attempts to resolve the enormous problems connected with the chronology of the MT Kings…would have been quite so tortuous if the scholars concerned had paused to ask how the various numbers concerned were *meant* to be

taken."[169] Provan, pointing to the alternating reigns of the last four kings of Judah (3 months/11 years/3 months/11 years) believes that numbers surrounding the chronologies of the kings of Israel and Judah have been stylistically structured for a literary purpose, and should not, therefore, be forced to fit into an exact historical chronology.[170] Although his comments are warranted in some specific cases, no one has as of yet shown the literary significance of either Hezekiah's sixth year or fourteenth year.

VI. 1. The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings: Edwin Thiele

Edwin Thiele, in his book entitled *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*,[171] put forth an extensive study of the chronologies of all the kings of both Israel and Judah, beginning with Rehoboam of Judah and Jeroboam of Israel. Thiele readily saw the many chronological difficulties in I and II Kings, and believed that he was able to come up with a way to make sense of these chronological conundrums. He claimed that these chronological errors could be explained if one understood three characteristics about the divided kingdom: (1) Israel and Judah used different systems for counting the length of the reigns of their kings (Judah counted the first year of a new king as the next year after the final year of the preceding king; Israel counted the first year of a new king as the same year as the final year of the preceding king); (2) Israel and Judah used different calendars; and (3) both Israel and Judah experienced numerous co-regencies.[172]

In his attempt to properly date the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, Thiele admits the troubling fact that no absolute dates are actually given in the Old Testament.

---

[169] Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBC; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995), 19.
[170] Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBC; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995), 19.
[171] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).
[172] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 21.

Therefore, the place to begin this task would be to see if one were able to establish any fixed date(s), based on the other chronologies of other nations around that time. Fortunately, both for Thiele and for us, there are such dates. For example, it is able to be deduced from Assyrian chronology that the battle of Qarqar took place in 853 BCE, and it was in this year that king Ahab of Israel died. Based on this fixed date, Thiele impressively dates the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah from the time when the united monarchy was divided between Rehoboam and Jeroboam in 931 BCE to the accession of Jehu of Judah in 841 BCE.

When one looks at mid-eighth century B.C. Israel and Judah, the time period that concerns this study, one is able to note a number of other fixed dates relating to the history of ancient Israel: (a) 586 BCE is the date of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple; (b) 701 BCE is the date of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah; and (c) 721 BCE is the date of the fall of Samaria and the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel. Given these fixed dates, Thiele argues that one should be able to accurately calculate the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah from Jehu's accession in 841 BCE, the fall of Samaria in 721 BCE (although Thiele places the fall of Samaria at 723/722 BCE), and to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Before we look at Thiele's rationale for his calculations, though, it would be best to first look at his proposed dates for the kings that are immediately relevant to this thesis:[173]

[173] For the sake of simplicity, the dates where Thiele records a reign beginning or ending in an over-lapping year (i.e. Josiah's accession: 641/640 BCE), I will simply record the later year (i.e. Josiah's accession: 640 BCE.)

Kings of Israel		Kings of Judah	
		Uzziah	(791-767 BCE) *co-regent* (767-750 BCE) *sole reign* (750-739 BCE) *co-regent*
Menahem Pekahiah Pekah	(752-741 BCE) *rival reign* (741-739 BCE) *rival reign* (752-739 BCE) *rival reign* (739-731 BCE) *sole reign*	Jotham	(750-739 BCE) *co-regent* (739-735 BCE) *sole reign* (735-731 BCE) *co-regent*
Hoshea	(731-722 BCE)	Ahaz	(735-731 BCE) *co-regent* (731-715 BCE) *sole reign*
		Hezekiah	(715-696 BCE) *sole reign* (696-686 BCE) *co-regent*
		Manasseh	(696-686 BCE) *co-regent* (686-642 BCE) *sole reign*
		Amon	(642-640 BCE)
		Josiah	(640-609 BCE)
		Jehoahaz	(609 BCE)
		Jehoiakim	(609-598 BCE)
		Jehoiachin	(598-597 BCE)
		Zedekiah	(597-586 BCE)

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the entirety of Thiele's arguments regarding (a) Pekah and Menahem's supposed rival reigns of the northern kingdom of Judah, and (b) the co-regencies of Uzziah and Jotham. What concerns us is Thiele's proposed dates for the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. It is to this we will now turn.

In his attempt to put forth the chronology of the later kings of Israel and Judah, Thiele begins his reconstruction with the fixed date of 701 BCE, the date of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah: "The date of 701 for the attack of Sennacherib in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah is a key point in my chronological pattern for the Hebrew rulers."[174] Therefore, Thiele's specific theory places Hezekiah's accession to the throne of Judah in 715 BCE and his death in 686 BCE. Although Thiele does not mention the proposed date of Hezekiah's birth, his proposed dates for Hezekiah's reign would place

[174] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 174.

Hezekiah's birth at 740 BCE. Yet this dating, as previously stated, brings up a number of problems concerning the chronological data given to us in II Kings. Not only does this seemingly conflict with the reigns of Judah's subsequent kings and place the fall of Jerusalem at around 575 BCE, but it conflicts with II Kings 18:1, 9-10, which tells us that (a) Hezekiah accession took place during Hoshea's third year (18:1), (b) in Hezekiah's fourth year, which was Hoshea's seventh year as king of Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria besieged Samaria (18:9), and (c) in Hezekiah's sixth year, which was Hoshea's ninth year, Samaria was taken by the king of Assyria (18:10).

In reference to II Kings 18:1, 9-10, Thiele argues that later editors, because they did not understand the dual dating for Hoshea's predecessor Pekah and his rival reign of Israel with Menahem and Pekahiah, not only thrust the accession of Pekah twelve years ahead, but also thrust the beginning of Hoshea's reign twelve years ahead, thus making Hoshea's reign 720-711 BCE. But this, as we know, is an impossibility, for Samaria fell in 721 BCE, not 711 BCE.[175] Simply put, Thiele argues, "There was no overlap between Hoshea and Hezekiah. Hoshea was dead and the kingdom of Israel was no longer in existence when Hezekiah took the throne."[176] To bolster his argument, Thiele makes a number of points. He first points to II Chronicles 29-30. II Chronicles 29 tells us about how, in his first year as king, Hezekiah cleansed of the temple that his father Ahaz defiled (II Chronicles 29:3-11); II Chronicles 30 tells us about how Hezekiah wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh and invited the Israelites to keep Passover in Jerusalem.[177] Using these chapters as evidence, Thiele argues that this appeal to tribes in the northern kingdom would have been unthinkable if Israel would have still been in existence.

[175] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 174-175.
[176] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 175.
[177] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 169.

"While the northern kingdom was still in existence, it would not, of course, have been possible for the envoys of Judah to pass through the territory of Israel; so we have here a clear indication that it was no longer in existence."[178] II Chronicles 30:6-9 particularly, Thiele argues, suggests that the northern kingdom had already been destroyed by Assyria.[179]

Secondly, Thiele points to II Kings 20 and Isaiah 38-39, the accounts which tell of Hezekiah's illness and miraculous recovery and the visit of Merodach-Baladan of Babylon. Thiele argues that these events are given in strict chronological order, and therefore Hezekiah's illness, recovery, and YHWH's adding fifteen years to his life must have happened shortly after 701 BCE. Merodach-Baladan's visit, Thiele argues, was in response to hearing of Hezekiah's successful stand against Sennacherib.[180]

In regards to the chronological problem of the subsequent kings of Judah, particularly that of having the fall of Jerusalem happen in 575 BCE, Thiele readily acknowledges this problem. What he puts forth as a solution to this problem, though, is speculative at best: that Manasseh was co-regent with Hezekiah from 696-686 BCE.[181]

Thiele's proposed chronology ultimately fails to convince us regarding the proposed dates of Hezekiah. First, Thiele simply asks too much for us to believe that the later editors of II Kings had such a poor understanding of their history that they wrongfully made Hezekiah and Hoshea's reigns coincide at three different points. Let's

[178] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 169.
[179] "Hezekiah's admonitions were expressly addressed to a nation that was in deep distress and desolation and whose people had already gone into captivity, for the ones who would now receive his letters were spoken of as those who had escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. Their forbearers had been made objects of horror. If they now turned to the Lord and came to the sanctuary at Jerusalem, their brothers might obtain mercy from the ones who had taken them captive." Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 170.
[180] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 64, 176.
[181] Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 174.

assume, for the sake of argument that this supposed "error" was made during the exilic period, roughly 200 years after fall of Samaria. That would be the equivalent of saying that a historian writing a book on the history of the United States made the mistake of dating the presidency of Rutherford B. Hays (1877-1881) during the time of the Civil War (1861-1865). Everyone, even schoolchildren, knows Abraham Lincoln was president during the Civil War. It was such a major event in United States history that people simply know the major figures associated with it. Similarly, the fall of Samaria was such a major event in the history of both Israel and Judah that it is unbelievable to think that historians of Judah and Israel would have mistakenly placed Hezekiah on the throne of Judah during that time if he was not, in fact, on the throne of Judah.

Some might object to such an analogy on the grounds that we cannot compare contemporary history writing to ancient "history writing" because the latter kind of writing never intended to present "history," but was rather trying to teach theological truths using historical references and information. Such an objection lies at the heart of the fundamental issue discussed in chapter one concerning "biblical history." It is the view of this thesis that those who claim that the biblical writers were *only* concerned with teaching theological truths and *never* intended to present history are simply overstating their case. Teaching theological truths and presenting history are not mutually exclusive. To say that the biblical writers were not concerned with presenting "history" is to flatly ignore the fact that they obviously take the time to place certain historical events within specific years of various kings. They might get specific dates wrong from time to time, but unless there is solid historical evidence to doubt that Hezekiah was king during both the fall of Samaria and Sennacherib's invasion, we must respect the biblical writers

enough assume that they could properly identify which kings were ruling during the major historical events of their nation. To further use the previous analogy, people, having heard various stories about the Civil War, might mistakenly think that it happened during the years 1860-1863 or 1863-1866, or that Abraham Lincoln was president for three, six, or eight years, but one would be hard pressed to find any American who mistakenly thought Rutherford B. Hays freed the slaves during the Civil War. It is simply too unbelievable to assume that biblical writers, writing a mere 150-200 years after the events in question, would either intentionally or unintentionally associate the wrong king with such major events as the fall of Samaria or Sennacherib's invasion.

Secondly, Thiele overstates his case when he argues that Hezekiah could not have invited the northern tribes to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem if the northern kingdom was still in existence. The fact is, although the northern kingdom was still in existence in 727 BCE, it was a severely crippled kingdom. Provan points out that, in II Kings 15:29-31 and II Chronicles 5:26, Assyria annexed much of Israel's northern and eastern territory and deported a large portion of the population to Assyria during the reign of Pekah.[182] We know from the annals of Tiglath-Pileser that he boasted of overthrowing Pekah as king of Israel and replacing him with Hoshea.[183] Given these facts, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that II Chronicles 30:6-9 is referring to Tiglath-Pileser's overthrowing of Pekah. If we consider that Hezekiah came to the throne in Judah in 727 BCE, he would have been all too aware of the devastation Tiglath-Pileser brought upon Aram and Israel. His actions during his first year as king of Judah would be the actions of a king who was not only concerned with restoring and purifying the temple in Jerusalem,

[182] Provan, Long, Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, 270.
[183] James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, 1969), 283-284.

but also with restoring and uniting the kingdom in some form in the true worship of YHWH.

As far as Hoshea's power was concerned, the mere fact he was essentially a puppet king of Tiglath-Pileser should give us an indication that he might not have had as much power as we would expect most kings to have. We must remember that these were the last days of the northern kingdom; we would be wrong to assume that after Pekah was assassinated by Hoshea (at Tiglath-Pileser's bidding) that the northern kingdom enjoyed peace and stability during Hoshea's nine year reign. He might not have had the ability to completely prevent Hezekiah's envoys from coming into Israel and extending the invitation to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, despite Hoshea's inability to stop this from happening, the mere fact that we are told in II Chronicles 30:10-11 that most of those in Manasseh and Ephraim "laughed them to scorn and mocked them" shows that for the most part Hezekiah's invitations were, in fact, rejected, and that those in the northern kingdom, despite the devastation wrought by Tiglath-Pileser, still refused to return to YHWH. Perhaps this is the very thing about which Isaiah 9:8-21 prophesied. Their rejection of Hezekiah's offers in II Chronicles 30:8-9, therefore, would have been seen by Isaiah, as well as the writers of II Kings and II Chronicles, as the reason that led to Samaria's fall in 721 BCE.

Thirdly, Thiele is wrong to assume the accounts of Hezekiah's illness/miraculous recovery and the visit of Merodach-Baladan's envoys are in chronological order. He takes no consideration of the possibility that the final redactor of Isaiah placed these two accounts at the end of Proto-Isaiah to serve as a literary bridge to Deutero-Isaiah, which begins with the calling out of the Jews from the Babylonian Exile. Simply put, Thiele is

wrong to assume that II Kings is presenting history as we understand it today. This, though, is not contradicting what was stated earlier. We must, as biblical scholars, strive to balance the three-fold nature of books like II Kings. It is history, literature, and prophecy all rolled into one. Now, if II Kings 20 and Isaiah 39 said, "A year after Sennacherib withdrew from Jerusalem, envoys from Merodach-Baladan came to visit Hezekiah," we would certainly have to agree with Thiele's assumption that these events did, in fact, happen after Sennacherib's invasion. But the fact is that no definitive historical context is given, other than "In those days…." Therefore, when one considers both the overall chronological schema put forth in II Kings and the literary structure of Isaiah, one can clearly see that the placement of this story is based on the literary concerns of Isaiah. This idea, closely related to the issue of priority of either Proto-Isaiah or II Kings, will be developed more fully later on. At this point, though, all that needs to be emphasized is that the story about the envoys from Merodach-baladan, both in II Kings 20 and Isaiah 39, is not definitively associated with any specific historical date. The historical ambiguity of "in those days" calls into question anyone who might attempt to place this story in the year immediately after Sennacherib's invasion.

The final point to make regarding Thiele's reconstructed chronology concerns his speculation that Manasseh was co-regent with Hezekiah from 698-686 BCE. There are a many reasons why this should be doubted. First, the biblical text itself never gives any indication or mention of co-regency between Hezekiah and Manasseh. Second, if Hezekiah was miraculously healed by Isaiah shortly after Sennacherib's failed invasion, it would seem rather strange to claim that Hezekiah would name Manasseh co-regent in case of his untimely death. Isaiah just healed Hezekiah and had prophesied that he would

live for another fifteen years. In light of that, not to mention YHWH's miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, it would have been an outrageous act of unfaithfulness, eerily similar to that of Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, if Hezekiah chose to doubt that Isaiah really healed him and then turned around to name Manasseh his co-regent. Third, according to the biblical texts, both II Kings 20 and Isaiah 39, the reason why Merodach-Baladan sent his envoys to Hezekiah was *not* because he was impressed at how Hezekiah stood up to Sennacherib, but rather because he had heard of his miraculous healing. Thiele's argument that Merodach-Baladan's envoys came in response to the fallout of Sennacherib's invasion simply is not faithful to the biblical text. All this goes to show that although Thiele's work has been considered the definitive work on the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah, it is not without some serious problems. To date Hezekiah's reign from 715-686 BCE not only ignores the biblical texts that say he was king of Judah during Hoshea's reign and during the fall of Samaria, but it does severe damage to the dates of the subsequent kings of Judah as well. In short, it creates more problems that it claims to solve.

VI. 2. Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Co-Regency?: Leslie McFall

Another scholar who takes issue with Thiele's work is Leslie McFall. In response to Thiele's work, McFall claimed that Thiele overlooked Hezekiah's co-regency with Ahaz and misunderstood the two chronological pieces of information in 2 Kings 17:1. First, he claimed that the editor of 2 Kings 17-18 assumed that "Hoshea's accession began in the 12th year of Ahaz's reign and that Hoshea's nine-year reign is to be calculated from that point."[184] Second, he assumed that the "12th year of Ahaz's reign"

[184] Leslie McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?," *BSac* (Oct-Dec 1989): 395.

meant the 12th year of his sole reign (720 BCE.). This would mean that the fall of Samaria would have happened in 710 BCE, hence another chronological error. McFall suggests, rather, that 2 Kings 15:30, which states that Hoshea killed Pekah and ruled in his place in the 20th year of Jotham of Judah, marks the accession of Hoshea, whereas 2 Kings 17:1, which states that Hoshea became king in the 12th year of Ahaz,[185] marks his termination. With this alteration, McFall suggests the following dates for the kings of Israel and Judah.

Israel	***Judah***
Pekah: 751-731 BCE (Sole ruler of Israel)	Jotham:750-739 BCE (Co-regent: Uzziah) 739-734 BCE (Sole-ruler of Judah) 734-731 BCE (Co-regent: Ahaz)
Hoshea 731-722 BCE (Sole ruler of Israel)	Ahaz: 734-731 BCE (Co-regent: Jotham) 731-728 BCE (Sole ruler of Judah) 728-715 BCE (Co-regent: Hezekiah)
	Hezekiah: 728-715 BCE (Co-regent: Ahaz) 715-686 BCE (Sole ruler of Judah)

What this chart shows is the following: (a) Jotham reigned for twenty years, had two different periods of co-regency (750-739 BCE with Uzziah and 734-731 BCE with Ahaz), and was only sole ruler of Judah from 739-734 BCE; (b) Ahaz also reigned for twenty years, also had two different periods of co-regency (734-731 BCE with Jotham and 728-715 BCE with Hezekiah), and was only sole ruler of Judah from 731-728 BCE; (c) Hezekiah reigned for forty-three years, was co-regent with Ahaz from 728-715 BCE, and was sole ruler from 715-686 BCE.

Concerning Hezekiah's reign, McFall notes the three synchronisms mentioned earlier: (a) 2 Kings 18:1; (b) 2 Kings 18: 9-10; and (c) 2 Kings 18:10. Whereas Thiele believed these dates to be the work of a later reviser who had a very poor knowledge of

[185] McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook?" 396.

the history of Judah,[186] McFall points out that Thiele never once entertained the possibility of Hezekiah being a co-regent with Ahaz for any length of time. Therefore, when II Kings 18 tells us that Hezekiah was the king of Judah during the last years of the northern kingdom, McFall argues that it was a reference to his first years a co-regent with Ahaz. Yet when II Kings 18:13 tells us that Sennacherib invaded Judah during Hezekiah's fourteenth year, he argues that date was based on Hezekiah's years as the sole ruler of Judah. Nevertheless, when one steps back and looks at the implications McFall's argument has on the portrait of Hezekiah as a whole, one sees a number of problems. McFall's chronology of Hezekiah includes the following: (a) Hezekiah would have been born in 739 BCE, when Ahaz was either fifteen or eleven; (b) Hezekiah would have become co-regent with Ahaz in 728 BCE at the age of eleven; (c) Hezekiah would have died in 686 BCE at the age of 54, having ruled for forty-three years, sole ruler of Judah for 29 years, co-regent with Ahaz for fourteen years.

In addition to many of the same problems we found with Thiele, McFall's chronology adds yet another problem: the biblical text says nothing about Hezekiah reigning for 43 years. If anything, the years given in the text *include* co-regent years with the sole years. We must assume, therefore, that Hezekiah's *total* years as king total 29 years, not 43 years. As with Thiele's liberal use of co-regencies in his chronology, we must wonder why II Kings does not inform us of the extensive instances of co-regency that both Thiele and McFall claim. Simply put, it is just too hard to believe that Jotham's sole reign was only five years, Ahaz's sole reign was only three years, and that Ahaz and Hezekiah shared the throne as co-regents for an astounding 13 years.

[186] "To Thiele, it was clear that the false synchronisms were not the product of an official court recorder living contemporaneously with the kings involved, but that they came from a much later period when the exact historical details of the period were forgotten." McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook?" 401.

VI. 3. The Date of Hezekiah's Birth: John McHugh

The next scholar, John McHugh, has tried to determine the date of Hezekiah's birth in order to prove that Isaiah 7:14 was indeed a prophecy about Hezekiah. He begins his article with a brief discussion of Isaiah 7:14, and states that one "very attractive interpretation" of this prophecy is that it is referring to the wife of Ahaz, and that "the boy Immanuel is certainly the son of Ahaz"—i.e. Hezekiah. Hughes further speculates that Isaiah 9:1-6 then could be taken as "an oracle on the birth of Hezekiah," yet along with numerous other scholars, McHugh points to the difficulties with this interpretation based on the chronological data presented in II Kings 15-18. Nevertheless, he believes that it is possible to make the chronology work in order to have Immanuel be Hezekiah.

After suggesting that the dates regarding the reigns of Ahaz, Pekah, and Hoshea were the result of faulty scribal revision,[187] McHugh suggests that Hezekiah ascended the throne in Jerusalem around 715 BCE, based on II Kings 18:13 that states Sennacherib's invasion (which was 701 BCE) took place in Hezekiah's 14th year. Therefore, Hezekiah's reign was 715-686 BCE, and Ahaz's reign was 731-715 BCE. Yet McHugh argues that Hezekiah could not have been 25 years old at his ascension, but rather was 15 years old, and therefore must have been born around 730 BCE.

[187] He suggests "in the 17th year of Pekah" (II Kings 16:1) should be "in the 7th year of Pekah" and "in the 12th year of Ahaz" (II Kings 17:1) should be "in the 2nd year of Ahaz" and claims a copyist who knew about the Isaiah 7 prophecy intentionally changed "7th" to "17th." Stating it would be "absurd" to believe that Pekah declared war on Jotham during his 7th year only to carry out the attack almost ten years later against Ahaz, McHugh suggests the copyist of "The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah" made this change to "tidy up" the chronology of the kings of Judah. He further speculates that a copyist of "The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel" might have seen that Hoshea became king in the 2nd year of Ahaz, but would have thought that was impossible because the archives of Judah had Ahaz becoming king in the 7th year of Pekah. Therefore, Ahaz's 2nd year would be Pekah's 9th year; if Pekah reigned for 20 years, then Hoshea could not have ascended the throne in Ahaz's 2nd year. Therefore, the copyist of "The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel" changed "2nd" to "12th" to "tidy up" the chronology for the kings of the northern kingdom. Essentially, McHugh's argument is that the final redactor of II Kings based his work on faulty copies of both "The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah" and "The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel." John McHugh, "The Date of Hezekiah's Birth," *VT* 17:2 (1967): 446-453.

With these changes, McHugh states that "This chronological pattern seems to account for the present text of II Kings, and to remove the chronological difficulties against the identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah."[188] Yet his reconstruction leaves much to be desired. Not only must one recognize that McHugh's attempted revision fails to put together a believable historical picture, one must also question any proposal that alters so much of the biblical data. In order to accept McHugh's argument, one must: (a) ignore the chronological problem of having Hezekiah's reign extending to 686 BCE, (b) believe that the final redactor of II Kings just happened to be using faulty copies from both Israel *and* Judah, and (c) completely ignore the claim in II Kings 18:9-10 that Hezekiah was king during the fall of Samaria, which we know to be 721 BCE. Furthermore, one must be convinced of the rationale McHugh uses to change Hezekiah's age from 25 to 15 at his ascension. Although this thesis will provide such rationale later on, McHugh offers no such thing. In short, McHugh's attempt to make the chronology work so that it is possible to equate Hezekiah with "Immanuel" in Isaiah 7:14 simply is not convincing.

VI. 4. The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah: J. Barton Payne

The final scholar we will look at who has wrestled with the chronology surrounding Hezekiah's reign is J. Barton Payne. In his article, Payne outlines the three most common proposed dates for Ahaz's reign: (a) 743-728 BCE, (b) 735-719 BCE, and (c) 731-715 BCE. While stating that the first option seems the most attractive, Payne still

[188] McHugh, "Hezekiah's Birth," 452.

lists six criticisms against it,[189] and admits that on a purely historical-critical level he cannot account for all six criticisms. Given this realization of the limits of historical-critical methods, Payne suggests, "A more fruitful approach to the whole problem would appear to lie in the investigation of Isaiah's overall literary structure."[190] For example, he notes, along with other scholars, that the accounts of Hezekiah's illness (Isaiah 38) and the visit from the emissaries of Merodach-baladan (Isaiah 39) could not have happened during the events of Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BCE.[191] He cites two basic reasons. First, YHWH extended Hezekiah's life for fifteen more years (therefore this "illness" must have been closer to 713 BCE); and second, Merodach-baladan was on the throne in Babylon from 720-709 BCE. Payne states that despite his later uprising at the beginning of Sennacherib's reign, it was more likely that this visit happened earlier.

As one can see, Payne was not so much interested in trying to prove the correct dates for the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, as he was pointing out the need for proper consideration of literary concerns within the text. "Prudence would… seem to dictate a

[189] Payne's criticisms: (1) If Ahaz came to the throne in 743 BCE, that would mean both his father Jotham and his grandfather Uzziah would have still been alive. Yet we know that Uzziah's reign was from 800-748 BCE, and so he would have been dead by 743 BCE. As for Jotham, Payne puts for the possibility of co-regency, inspired by the events of Tiglath-pileser's attack upon the states of western Syria. Jotham might have named Ahaz co-regent, in light of a possible impending defeat. (2) Payne states that Manasseh began his reign in 697 BCE; this would make Hezekiah's reign 727-698 BCE, and would leave a one year gap in which Judah would not have had a king. He suggests this might be answered in the "chaos that surrounded Ahaz's last days (II Chron. 28-23)." Yet another possibility is that Manasseh's date is wrong. (3) No mention of contact between Hezekiah and Hoshea. (4) Hezekiah's appeal to the Ephraimite "remnant that are escaped out of the hands of the king of Assyria" (II Chron. 30:1,6) does not fit if Hezekiah made this appeal early in his reign. If he began his reign in 727 BCE, the fall of Samaria had not happened yet, and therefore there would be no "remnant" yet. (5) Low ages for paternity. Payne says this is not an impossibility. (6) A final weakness is that if Hezekiah's reign was around 726-697 BCE, Sennacherib's invasion could not have been in his fourteenth year. J. Barton Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah." *BSac* 126 (January-March 1969): 42-44.

[190] Payne, "The Reign of Ahaz to Hezekiah," 46.

[191] Scholars who have noted this: P.R. Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function," in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala* (ed. W.C. Delsman et al.; Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 3-21; Richard Hess, "Hezekiah and Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18-20," in *Zion, City of our God* (ed. Richard Hess and Gordon Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 23-42.

more careful re-examination into Isaiah's possible literary intent in this passage…before abandoning [the view that Ahaz reigned from 743-728 BCE] and proceeding to rewrite eighth-century chronology on the basis of this single statement."[192] In light of past historical-critical attempts to reconcile the problematic chronology of II Kings, Payne's realization of the limits to the historical-critical method rings true. Resolving these chronological problems on purely historical-critical grounds has proved to be a failure. Instead of clarifying the troubling chronological issues surrounding the reign of Hezekiah, historical-critical scholars have managed to turn these confusing chronological problems into frustrating conundrums devoid of any hope of answers. As said in chapter one, proper biblical exegesis needs to come to the text in its final form with one eye toward historical concerns and the other eye toward literary concerns. Both are necessary to see the biblical text clearly.

VII. Proposed Revisions to the Chronologies of Ahaz and Hezekiah

It is abundantly clear that there is something wrong with the chronology of II Kings, particularly regarding the dates of Hezekiah's reign. At the very least, one can say with certainty that the "history" surrounding the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah is ambiguous and unclear. The question, therefore becomes, "How can this problem be best resolved?" Most scholars have favored II Kings 18:13 as correct, and have thus chosen to explain away or dismiss II Kings 18:1, 9-10. Yet to do this not only creates even more problems, it indirectly calls into the question the "historical reliability" of the Bible. Other scholars have based their revised chronologies on supposed co-regencies of various

[192] Payne, "The Reign of Ahaz to Hezekiah," 52.

kings. Yet this also runs into serious problems, and imposes on the biblical texts extended periods of co-regency that the texts themselves give no indication of whatsoever.

This thesis asserts that the answer to the chronological problems of II Kings lies not only with historical-critical methods and literary analysis, but also with the realization that there are scribal errors in the text. If any scholar is to revise what he sees as a textual error, that scholar must attempt to make sure that his revision not only helps clarify the historical context of the text in question, but that his revision also helps accentuate the perceived literary structure of that given text. Granted, one should, if at all possible, try to accept the text as it is presented to us; one must consider the possibility that the chronological numbers in II Kings are there for more than just chronological reasons, and that they have been stylized in a literary fashion for a certain literary reasons. The case of the last four kings of Judah may be an example of this. Yet in the case of the sixth year and fourteenth year of Hezekiah, no clear literary reason for these numbers has yet been put forth. Given that as the case, we must entertain the possibility that at least one of these numbers is a historical error; and when that historical error has direct implications for correctly understanding a text as controversial as Isaiah 7:14, one is obligated to try to correct the historical error. Let it be repeated: the fundamental argument against identifying Hezekiah as the promised Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 is based on what is clearly a flawed chronology in II Kings. Since (a) it is clearly flawed, and since (b) the biblical writer of I and II Kings was not simply "writing literature," but was also giving a *prophetic* interpretation of *historical events*, one is obligated to at least look at this issue more closely to see whether or not there is a simple resolution to this problem. The biblical writers of II Kings and Isaiah probably did not have access to the Assyrian annals

to double-check their chronologies, and therefore the chronological errors in the account of Hezekiah's reign went unnoticed. And, as far as understanding the theological and prophetic teachings found in II Kings and Isaiah goes, it is not essential or even necessary to "get the chronology *exactly* right." It was enough to know that Hezekiah was king during the fall of Samaria and during Sennacherib's invasion and to learn from the theological and prophetic teachings the biblical writers put forth in their works. For the modern historian, though, the chronological error is a problem just begging to be figured out. And indeed, when scholars hold up this flawed chronology to dismiss what is by all other accounts a clear identification of Hezekiah with Immanuel in Isaiah 7, it is imperative that one tries to figure out this thorny chronological problem.

The question of how the chronology of Hezekiah fits into the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah will be addressed in the next few chapters. At present, though, we will address the apparent historical-critical error in II Kings and put forth a well-reasoned revision to that error that clarifies the chronological confusion of Hezekiah's reign in II Kings, and opens the door for the chronological possibility that Isaiah 7:14 was in fact a prophecy concerning the birth of Hezekiah.

The solution that this thesis will put forth contains the least amount of maneuvering and alteration of all the other proposed solutions put forth by other scholars. This thesis asserts that the cause for all the confusion surrounding the chronology of Hezekiah can be traced back to two scribal errors. The first is found in Isaiah 36:1 and II Kings 18:13. H.H. Rowley suggests that the text that says, "It was in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah" (וַיְהִי בְּאַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ) should read, "in the twenty-fourth year," (בְּאַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרִים), on the grounds that a scribal error was made that rendered

the final ם- as a ה-.[193] Some might object to this on the grounds that this correction would place Sennacherib's campaign in 703 B.C., and not in 701 B.C. Rowley, though, points out that Hezekiah's rebellion and Sennacherib's campaign did not necessarily have to happen in the same year. After all, "some time must have been spent in forcing Ekron to join in the revolt, and at that time Sennacherib's hands were full in other directions,"[194] namely in confronting Merodach-Baladan of Babylon. Simply put, it takes time to start a revolt, and it takes even more time to send armies to attempt to put down a revolt. Rowley speculates that Hezekiah could have very well seen that Sennacherib was occupied with putting down the Babylonian threat, and therefore seized the opportunity to revolt and prepare defenses before Sennacherib could deal with it. He concludes, "There is nothing in the least improbable, therefore, in dating the revolt in 703 B.C., which would be in the twenty-fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, if he ascended to the throne six years before the fall of Samaria. Hence, it seems to me to be much easier to alter a single feature in a duplicated passage than to reject the repeated synchronisms."[195] Rowley's suggestion is very believable. One could argue though, that it is unnecessary. It is good enough to know that "around that time" (703-701 BCE) Hezekiah's confrontation with Sennacherib came to a head.[196]

The second scribal error is found in II Kings 18:2, which tells us that Hezekiah was twenty-five years old (בֶּן־עֶשְׂרִים וְחָמֵשׁ שָׁנָה) when he began to reign. In contrast to

[193] H.H. Rowley, "Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion," in *Men of God* (ed. H.H. Rowley; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons: 1963), 113.
[194] Rowley, "Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion," 113.
[195] Rowley, "Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion," 114-115.
[196] Although this thesis agrees with Rowley's suggestion of a scribal error in Isaiah 36:1/II Kings 18:13, it will, in the next chapter, take issue with Rowley's suggestion that the writer of Isaiah borrowed the Sennacherib account from II Kings.

the first scribal error, this error involves rendering the final ה- as a final ם-. Therefore, instead of being twenty-five years old at the start of his reign, Hezekiah would have been fifteen years old. This would place his year of birth around 742 BCE, the year that Ahaz probably ascended the throne. The result of considering these two scribal errors can be illustrated in "Option B" found in the chart in the appendix entitled *Proposed Revisions to the Chronology of Ahaz and Hezekiah*.

This revision, based on two very believable scribal errors, would not only do justice to II Kings 18:1, 9-10, and 13, it would place the year of Hezekiah's birth at 742 BCE, the year Ahaz ascended the throne at twenty years of age. One might still object to this possibility on the grounds that even if Hezekiah was born in 742 BCE, the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis did not happen until around 735 BCE, and therefore Hezekiah would have been seven years old at the time of Isaiah's prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. This objection, though, fails to consider the larger picture that both II Kings 15 and Isaiah 7 gives regarding this time in the history of Judah. Although scholars correctly point out that the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis essentially ended roughly in 732 BCE, when King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria destroyed Aram and severely crippled Israel (which later was destroyed when Samaria fell in 721 BCE), they make two faulty assumptions: (a) that the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis lasted only from 735-732 BCE and (b) that Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy had to have been made shortly before 732 BCE, perhaps 735-733 BCE.

First of all, what most scholars fail to consider, though, is II Kings 15:37, which tells us that Rezin and Pekah had been harassing Judah ever since the later years of Ahaz's father, king Jotham. This would date the beginning of their harassment some time shortly before 742 BCE, before Jotham died, and before Ahaz became king. Therefore, according

to the biblical texts, the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis must have been an ongoing crisis for at least ten years or so. The point here is that the alliance between Ephraim and Aram, and their subsequent attacks on Judah, did not all happen with one march to Jerusalem in 735 BCE. II Kings 16:6 records other conquests by Rezin, and II Chronicles 28:5-15 records further raids by Rezin and Pekah, and also gives a detailed account of what Israel did with the captives it took from Judah. In other words, the *threat* and many *warning signs* preceded the final showdown of 735 BCE, and these threats could have easily been going on in the years leading up to 735 BCE.

Secondly, if the proposed chronology is accepted, this would more than adequately paint a believable picture of the historical setting of Isaiah 7. Given the fact that Isaiah 7:6 tells us that Rezin and Pekah were planning to take Jerusalem and set up the son of Tabeel as its ruler, it would be logical to assume that this threat happened very early in Ahaz's reign, probably at the beginning, before Ahaz was firmly established as the king of Judah. It is much easier to oust a young, inexperienced ruler at the beginning of his reign, than it is when he is more firmly entrenched in his position. Therefore, this thesis proposes that it was this threat at the beginning of Ahaz's reign in 742 BCE that Isaiah was addressing in Isaiah 7. Consequently, the prophetic oracles of Isaiah 7-12 should be dated, not in 735 BCE, but right around 742 BCE and shortly afterwards. We must remember that Isaiah 7:2 states that the House of David (i.e. Ahaz and his royal court) were terrified, and "trembled as trees of the forest sway before a wind," when they heard that Ephraim had allied itself with Aram, *not* when Rezin and Pekah made their march on Jerusalem. Therefore, if this is the case, then Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy of 7:14 would have been made right around the time Hezekiah would have been born, thus

making it a strong possibility that Hezekiah was the prophesied Immanuel child to whom Isaiah was referring in 7:14. After all, Isaiah prophesied that by the time the "Immanuel" child was old enough to reject evil and chose the good (i.e. grow into a young boy), that this threat from Rezin and Pekah would be gone (Isaiah 7:15-16). If this prophecy was made shortly before Hezekiah's birth, and if Hezekiah was born around 742 BCE, then he would have been around 10 years old when Tiglath-Pileser crushed Rezin, crippled Israel, and when Hoshea killed Pekah and became king in his place. Indeed, the threat of both Rezin and Pekah would have been done away with by the time Hezekiah was old enough to "reject evil" and "chose the good."

In light of all the failed attempts made to make sense of the confusing chronological data in II Kings, the proposal made in this chapter that the problems can be traced back to two scribal errors in II Kings 18:2 and II Kings 18:13/Isaiah 36:1 is both logically coherent and historically believable. First, not only does it require the least amount of textual maneuvering, but the possibility of these scribal errors is very understandable, given the close resemblance of the two words. Without the vowel points that were later added to the text by the Masoretes, the two words look virtually identical: עשׂרם, עשׂרה. Secondly, the proposed revision to the chronology remains faithful to the overall historical picture that II Kings puts forth regarding the reign of Hezekiah, namely that Hezekiah became the king of Judah during the last years of the northern kingdom of Israel and was still the king of Judah in 701 BCE, at the time of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. Thirdly, the proposed revision gives a more than adequate explanation for the Syro-Ephraimite threat to the throne of Ahaz: Rezin and Pekah, who had already been harassing Judah during Jotham's reign, attempted to seize control of Judah as soon as

Jotham died and before Ahaz could firmly establish his kingship. Finally, the proposed chronological revision is also able to place the birth of Hezekiah around the year 742 BCE, the exact time when Ahaz, the newly crowned king of Judah, not only would have been faced with the very real threat of Rezin and Pekah, but would also have been challenged by Isaiah to put his trust in YHWH.

By contrast, all other attempts to solve the chronological puzzle of II Kings involve highly suspicious manipulations of the texts and flat out rejections of the historical reliability of various parts of the biblical record. Furthermore, instead of being able to account for the various other factors that come into play when dealing with the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, these other attempts have simply created more chronological problems than they have solved. Now that both the immediate context of Isaiah 7 and the greater context of Isaiah 7-12 has been analyzed, and the chronological problems of II Kings have been addressed, we now turn our attention to Isaiah 36-39 to address further issues of the historical reliability of the Sennacherib accounts, the primacy of either Proto-Isaiah or II Kings, and the literary coherence and structure of Proto-Isaiah.

Chapter Four

Isaiah 36-39 vs. II Kings 18-20: Priority and Historical Reliability

I. Introduction

The driving argument in this thesis is that Isaiah 7:14 is first and foremost a prophecy about the birth of Hezekiah and certain historical events that were to unfold during his reign. In chapter two we analyzed the traditional exegetical arguments concerning the variants within Isaiah 7:14 and concluded that, when read within the immediate context of Isaiah 7:13-25 and the larger context of Isaiah 7-12, the most likely candidate for the Immanuel child was a royal child of Ahaz, probably Hezekiah. While there is no *conclusive* proof within the contexts of 7:13-25 and chapters 7-12 that clearly points to Hezekiah being the Immanuel child, there are certainly enough indications that point to such an identification as being probable. After all, the prophecy not only spoke of events that were to happen within the child's lifetime (i.e. the fall of Aram and Ephraim), but it also spoke of the child himself becoming a king. The only candidate that would fit these qualifications would be Hezekiah.

The traditional objection to identifying Immanuel with Hezekiah, of course, was the chronological inconsistencies found in II Kings 18-20 surrounding Hezekiah's reign. This issue was dealt with in chapter three. It was demonstrated that, given the clear chronological error(s) within II Kings, a plausible reconstruction of the timeline within II Kings could be made to allow for the possibility that Isaiah could have uttered his Immanuel prophecy around 742 BCE, early on in the reign of King Ahaz, shortly before

the birth of Hezekiah. In fact, it was demonstrated that such a reconstruction was the most probable reconstruction of the all the options available.

Yet even though the arguments put forth in the previous two chapters advance the ultimate argument that the prophesied Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 is Hezekiah, more work must be done to solidify such a claim. This thesis asserts that the ultimate proof of such a claim lies, not just within the immediate context of Isaiah 7-12 or a reconstructed timeline of the chronology in II Kings 18-20, but rather in the fact that the overall literary structure of Proto-Isaiah is dependent upon the proper identification of Immanuel as Hezekiah. In other words, the identification of Immanuel as Hezekiah is the key to unlocking the bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah. The ultimate argument of this thesis is that Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39 function within Proto-Isaiah as literary bookends that provide a structure and context to Proto-Isaiah as a whole. Isaiah 7-12 gives us the prophecy of Immanuel and Isaiah 36-39 gives us the fulfillment of that Immanuel prophecy. As we will see in chapter five, the literary connections and parallels between these two literary bookends abound. Yet before we address these synchronic issues, we must first address certain diachronic concerns.

Isaiah 36-39 has proven to be extremely problematic in recent scholarship and has long been the subject of scholarly dispute. There are questions regarding its relationship to II Kings 18-20, its date, occasion, and purpose, its place and function within the book of Isaiah, as well as its historical reliability. It becomes necessary, therefore, to touch upon these issues. This chapter will focus on Isaiah 36-39 to lay the groundwork for the ultimate argument in chapter five that Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39 act as “bookends” within the larger literary structure of Proto-Isaiah that highlight the prophecy (chapters 7-

12) and fulfillment of that prophecy (chapters 36-39). As with the previous chapter, there is a considerable amount of debate regarding not only the relationship between Isaiah 36-39 and its parallel text found in II Kings 18-20, but also the historical reliability of these texts as a whole. Therefore we must wrestle with these questions and achieve a certain amount of clarity before we move on.

Although the argument of this thesis is essentially a literary one, one must also consider the various historical-critical issues surrounding the accounts of Hezekiah's reign simply because literary issues and historical issues are inextricably connected to each other. This is what was stressed in chapter one: there is no single method that can answer all relevant exegetical questions; one must use a variety of methods if one is to come to a full exegetical understanding of any given text. When it comes to Isaiah 36-39, this thesis asserts that the writer of Isaiah 36-39 sought to relate the actual historical events related to Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE with the purpose of arguing that these events were a fulfillment of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy of chapters 7-12. This view resulted in the current "bookend structure" within Proto-Isaiah of chapters 7-12 and chapters 36-39. Simply put, the historical events in Isaiah 36-39 inspired the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah. For this reason, it is necessary to address the diachronic issues surrounding Isaiah 36-39, II Kings 18-20, and to a certain extent II Chronicles 29-32. These accounts tell about Hezekiah's religious reforms,[197] the invasion of Sennacherib,[198] Hezekiah's illness and recovery,[199] and the visit of envoys from Merodach-Baladan of Babylon to Hezekiah.[200] It is to these biblical accounts we now turn.

[197] II Chronicles 29-31
[198] Isaiah 36-37; II Kings 18-19; II Chronicles 32:1-23
[199] Isaiah 38; II Kings 20:1-11; II Chronicles 32:24-26
[200] Isaiah 39; II Kings 20:12-19; II Chronicles 32:27-33

II. Isaiah 36-39 and its Parallels in II Kings 18-20 and II Chronicles 29-32

In chapter three a brief overview of these chapters was given to help address the chronological problems found within II Kings 18-20. In this chapter we must once again turn to these chapters to address the issues of priority, possible sources, literary structure, and historical reliability. To see how these texts relate to each other we must consider the following chart of the three parallel accounts in the Bible of Hezekiah's reign.

Isaiah 36-39	***II Kings 18-20***	***II Chronicles 29-32***
	18:1-8: Hezekiah restores the worship of YHWH	*29:1-36*: Hezekiah cleanses the Temple; restores worship
	18:9-12: Account of the siege and destruction of Samaria in Hezekiah's 4th and 6th years respectively	*30:1-27*: Hezekiah's attempt to invite Israel to Passover
		31:1-21: Hezekiah organizes the priests
	18: (13)14-16: Sennacherib's invasion and Hezekiah's capitulation	*32:1-8*: Hezekiah prepares for Sennacherib's invasion
36:1-22: Sennacherib's 1st taunt by the hand of the Rabshakeh	*18:17-37*: Sennacherib's 1st taunt by the hand of the Rabshakeh	*32:9-15*: Sennacherib's 1st taunt by the hand of his servants
37:1-7: Isaiah reassures Hezekiah: Sennacherib will not defeat you	*19:1-7*: Isaiah reassures Hezekiah: Sennacherib will not defeat you	
37:8-13: Sennacherib's 2nd taunt by the hand of messengers	*19:8-13*: Sennacherib's 2nd taunt by the hand of messengers	*32:16-19*: Sennacherib's 2nd taunt by letter
37:14-20: Hezekiah's prayer in the Temple	*19:14-19*: Hezekiah's prayer in the Temple	
37:21-35: Isaiah's 2nd reassurance to Hezekiah: Sennacherib will not defeat you	*19:20-34*: Isaiah's 2nd reassurance to Hezekiah: Sennacherib will not defeat you	
37:36-38: Sennacherib's army destroyed by an angel of YHWH	*19:35-37*: Sennacherib's army destroyed by an angel of YHWH	*32:20-23*: Sennacherib's army destroyed by an angel of YHWH
38:1-8, 21-22: Hezekiah's illness and healing	*20:1-11*: Hezekiah's illness and healing	*32:24-26*: Hezekiah's illness
38:9-20: Hezekiah's prayer		
39:1-8: Envoys from the king of Babylon	*20:12-19*: Envoys from the king of Babylon	*32:27-31*: Envoys from the princes of Babylon
	20:20-21: Hezekiah's death	*32:32-33*: Hezekiah's death

As one can see from the chart, the bulk of Isaiah 36-39 (with the exception of Hezekiah's prayer in 38:9-20) is identical to II Kings 18:13, 17-20:19. In addition, II Kings also contains an account of Hezekiah's death that is missing in Isaiah. These twin accounts cover the particulars of Sennacherib's invasion, Hezekiah's illness and healing, and the visit from the envoys of Merodach-baladan of Babylon. Just as Isaiah has included Hezekiah's prayer of 38:9-20, II Kings has included three minor accounts unique to his Hezekiah narrative: (a) a brief account of Hezekiah's reforms (18:1-8), (b) information on the destruction of Samaria (18:9-12), and (c) additional information about Hezekiah's attempt to pay off Sennacherib (18:13-16). As one can see, the II Chronicles account of Hezekiah's reign covers the same major events in Hezekiah's reign (Sennacherib's invasion, Hezekiah's illness, and the visit by envoys from Babylon), but clearly is an entirely different written account. In fact, it is generally acknowledged that the account in II Chronicles is the latest of the three accounts, probably written by priests during or after the exile.[201] Regardless, II Chronicles 29-32 includes detailed accounts of (a) Hezekiah's religious reforms, (b) Hezekiah's attempt to invite those from Israel to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem, (c) Hezekiah's organization of the priests, and (d) Hezekiah's preparations for Sennacherib's invasion.

Given the later date of II Chronicles, our primary interest is the parallel accounts of Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20. When comparing these accounts, a number of issues must be dealt with. First, there is the question of priority: does one account hold priority over the other, or do both accounts borrow from an earlier source? Second, there is the question of the literary unity of both accounts. Third, there is the question of the date of

[201] "Though scholars share no precise agreement as to his date, it seems quite certain that the Chronicler could not have compiled his work much before 400 B.C." William Sanford La Sor, David Allen Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 633.

composition of Isaiah 36-39 and the purpose of Proto-Isaiah as a whole. Finally, there is the question of the historical reliability of the Sennacherib account in Isaiah 36-39. Scholars have been attempting to answer these difficult questions for some time. We will now examine the past scholarship regarding these four exegetical issues.

III. Overview of the Current Scholarship Regarding Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20

Truth be told, it is virtually impossible to analyze and discuss the four major exegetical issues regarding Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20 in isolation from each other. Each individual issue is closely tied to the other three issues.[202] For the sake of clarity, we will first outline the prevailing scholarly views regarding these four issues and then analyze each view accordingly. When it comes to the issue of priority, there are three views: (a) II Kings 18-20 holds priority over Isaiah 36-39, (b) Isaiah 36-39 holds priority over II Kings 18-20, and (c) both accounts borrowed from an earlier source and therefore neither one borrowed from the other.[203] When it comes to the literary unity of Isaiah 36-39, the prevailing scholarly opinion, stemming from the view that Isaiah 36-39 got its material from II Kings 18-20, holds that the text in II Kings 18-20 (and subsequently Isaiah 36-39) is a heavily (and somewhat sloppy) redacted conglomeration of two earlier sources. The result of this view is that the text in II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39 does *not* contain a clear literary unity. There are other scholars, though, who hold to the view that Isaiah 36-39 is a highly artistic literary account that holds together as a literary unity.

[202] For example, one who holds that Isaiah 36-39 was composed after II Kings 18-20 will also probably claim that the date of composition of Isaiah 36-39 was during the exile. This would, in turn, lead to the view that Isaiah 36-39 should not be seen as part of Proto-Isaiah, or at best an appendix of sorts, and therefore not only would any connections between Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 would be considered the work of exilic redactors, but the historical reliability of Isaiah 36-39 would be called into question.

[203] Various scholars who hold these three views are discussed in the following discussion.

There have also been a number of proposals regarding the date of composition of Isaiah 36-39. Such views range from dating Isaiah 36-39 during the time of the exile, to dating it during the time of Josiah, to dating it shortly after the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah, sometime during the reign of Manasseh. Finally, when it comes to the question of historical reliability, scholars tend to go in one of two directions. Some see Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20 as fictional accounts of Hezekiah's reign written by exilic redactors who intentionally re-wrote history to suit their theological agenda in which they wanted to show Hezekiah as a righteous king who, because he was faithful to YHWH, was rewarded for his faithfulness. Others hold, while there is no doubt that both accounts (a) are highly stylized from a literary point of view and (b) clearly have a theological point of view, that Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20 provide a relatively trustworthy account of the events during Hezekiah's reign. Not only is each exegetical issue fascinating in and of itself, but taken together, these four issues greatly affect how one views (a) the general *historical picture* put forth in Proto-Isaiah, (b) the overall *literary structure* of Proto-Isaiah, and, as is the focus of this thesis, (c) the *identity and function* of the Immanuel child in 7:14 within Proto-Isaiah. For this reason alone, we are impelled to clearly analyze and critique the exegetical issues surrounding Isaiah 36-39 so that we can further understand Isaiah 7:14.

III. 1. The Priority of II Kings 18-20 over Isaiah 36-39

The one who first suggested that II Kings 18-20 held priority over Isaiah 36-39 was Wilhelm Gesenius. He argued that Isaiah 36-39 was drawn from II Kings and that while II Kings 18:13-20:19 fit in with the overall structure of II Kings, its parallel account in Isaiah 36-39 did not fit in with the overall structure of Isaiah. Therefore II

Kings 18-20 was assumed to have priority over Isaiah 36-39. Christopher Seitz summarizes Gesenius' reasons for this as follows:

> "Essentially, Isaiah is a text that has smoothed out difficulties in Kings, by means of shortening, consistency of rendering, and generally tidying up. In a classic argument, the 'difficult text' has priority, except where clumsy transpositions signal that an original sense has been disturbed. To this, Gesenius added his own logical observations: (1) the narratives conform to the style and larger plan of Kings, not Isaiah; (2) the Book of Isaiah continued to develop after Kings was completed, thus making the direction of dependence from Kings to Isaiah, not the reverse; (3) Isaiah 36-39 is analogous to Jeremiah 52."[204]

This has become the dominant view among biblical scholars. Raymond F. Person, Jr., for example, speaking of Isaiah 36-39, states, "Since these chapters were copied from II Kings 18-20, Isaiah 36-39 are assumed to have a literary unity with the exception of the addition of Isaiah 38:9-20, which has no parallel in Kings and is generally assumed to have been added when the Kings passage was inserted into its Isaianic context."[205] Peter R. Ackroyd's belief that II Kings holds priority over Isaiah can be seen when he states, "Narrative and archival material concerning Hezekiah appears in II Kings 18-20, the main part of which is found also, in a partially deviant text, in Isaiah 36-39."[206] H.H. Rowley also acknowledges this common assumption when he states, "Much of this narrative [II Kings 18-19] stands also in Isaiah 36-37, and it is generally believed that it was taken by the compiler of the book of Isaiah from the account in Kings."[207] In addition to these three scholars there are many more who share this assumption.[208]

---

[204] Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 49.

[205] Raymond F. Person, Jr. "II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39: A Text Critical Case Study in the Redaction History of the Book of Isaiah," in *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, (1999), 374.

[206] Ackroyd, *The Biblical Interpretation of the Reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah*, 247.

[207] Rowley, *Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion*, 100.

[208] Nadav Na'aman, in his article "Updating the Messages," identifies even more scholars who have articulated this view of the priority of II Kings: (a) August H. Konkel, "The Sources of the Story of Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah," *VT* 43 (1993), 462-482; (b) Hugh G.M. Williamson, "Hezekiah and the Temple," in *Text, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (ed. M.V. Fox et al; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 47-52; (c) Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to*

III. 2. II Kings 18-20: Sources, Literary Structure, and Historical Reliability

The assumption that II Kings 18-20 holds priority over Isaiah 36-39 has led scholars to view these parallel texts in different ways. In terms of II Kings 18-20, scholars have tended to take up two issues. The first issue is that of the apparent redaction of sources within II Kings 18-20; the second issue is that of the historical reliability of II Kings 18-20. Scholars believe that the material in II Kings 18-20, particularly 18:13-20:21, is really a redacted account comprised from three different sources: 18:13-16 (Account A), 18:17-19:9a, 36-37 (Account B1), and II Kings 19:9b-35 (Account B2).[209] Account A is generally regarded as the historically reliable account, whereas accounts B1 and B2 are considered to be theologically-charged, highly legendary accounts that are not historically reliable. How scholars eventually came to these conclusions is rather interesting. Once scholars determined that II Kings 18-20 held priority over Isaiah 36-39, they were faced with a problem: II Kings 18:14-16. Although II Kings 18:13 and Isaiah 36:1 corresponded with each other, and although II Kings 18:17ff and Isaiah 36:2ff corresponded with each other, II Kings 18:14-16 stood entirely on its own. For some reason, scholars surmise, the writer of Isaiah chose not to copy those verses.[210] According

---

Prophetic Literature (FOTL, 16; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 477-483; (d) Raymond F. Person, *The Kings-Isaiah and Kings Jeremiah Recensions* (BZAW 252; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1997), 5-79.

[209] Virtually every scholar who has addressed the material in II Kings 18-20 has covered this view. A brief list of scholars is as follows: Mark W. Chavalas, "An Historian's Approach to Understanding the Accounts of Sennacherib's Invasion of Judah." *FH*, 27 (Sum 1995), 5-22. Mordechai Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem: Once or Twice?" *BAR* 27:1 (Jan-Feb 2001), 40-45, 69. A.K. Jenkins, "Hezekiah's Fourteenth Year." *VT* 26:3, (1976), 284-298. Richard S. Hess, "Hezekiah and Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18-20," in *Zion, City of Our God*, (ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999, 23-41. Nadav Na'aman, "Updating the Messages: Hezekiah's Second Prophetic Story and the Community of Babylonian Deportees," in *Like a Bird in a Cage*, (ed. Lester L. Grabbe: New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 201-219. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*. Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson,1967. Christopher Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

[210] "Because v. 13 has a parallel in Isa. 36:1, the suggestion has been made that v. 13 was originally connected to v. 17, and that vv. 14-16 are an insertion which was not in the manuscript copied by Isaiah." Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 70.

to Gesenius, the reason was that II Kings 18:14-16 provided a problematic and difficult reading, and therefore the writer of Isaiah attempted to smooth out the difficulty. In any case, II Kings 18:13-16 was deemed to be the most historical of the material in II Kings 18-19 because it seemed to coincide with what we are told about Sennacherib's invasion as recorded in the Assyrian annals. "Both sources are agreed upon the capture of the Judaean countryside, the capitulation of Hezekiah without an assault on the city, and, in general, on the terms of the tribute."[211] Because II Kings 18:13-16 is "verified" by the Assyrian annals, scholars have taken it to be the historically reliable account, as opposed to the narrative that follows it.

When it comes to "Account B" though, further problems arise, for II Kings 18:17-19:37 apparently "makes no reference to the events in A, and, in fact, takes no cognizance whatever of the reported capitulation."[212] Given this apparent problem, scholars felt that they had to make sense of it. This brought about "a decided interest in strictly historical matters, in isolation from literary developments within Isaiah, to be sure, but also in isolation from literary developments in Kings outside the narrower unit 18:13-19:37."[213] Simply put, upon seeing this "problem" within II Kings, scholars have tried to figure out "what really happened" during Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BCE.

Beginning with Stade, scholars eventually accepted the theory that II Kings 18:13-19:37 was a combination of three different sources: II Kings 18:13-16 (Account A), II Kings 18:17-19:9a, 36-37 (Account B1), and II Kings 19:9b-35 (Account B2). Stade was the first scholar who suggested that II Kings 18:13-19:37 be divided up into two separate accounts. Despite the fact that II Kings 18:17-19:37 is presented in the text

[211] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 72.
[212] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 73.
[213] Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny,* 49.

as a unity, Stade believed that there was evidence of a redactor's seam in 19:9: the expression וַיָּשָׁב ("he returned"). This expression, it was argued, seemed to function as a logical beginning for B2. Based on this perceived seam, the main Sennacherib narrative was thought to be a compilation of two sources, 18:17-19:9a and 19:9b-37. It was argued that these two accounts shared a close parallelism in both structure and content. It seemed highly unlikely to scholars that a single account would repeat itself to the extent found in the Sennacherib account.[214] The only significant revision has been that of Brevard Childs, who has claimed the two accounts should be divided as follows: 18:17-19:9a, 36-37 and 19:9b-35.[215] Childs argues that 19:36-37 provides the proper ending of B1. Therefore, the last few verses in "Account B1" (II Kings 19:8-9a, 36-37) look like this:

> [8]The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. [9]When the king heard concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia, "See, he has set out to fight against you," [36]Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. [37]As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

There are two nagging problems with this division, though. First, Childs points out that at the very point of this alleged seam at II Kings 19:9 there is a textual variant. II Kings reads וַיָּשָׁב ("he returned"), Isaiah 37:9 reads וַיִּשְׁמַע ("he heard"). What further complicates matters is that in 4QIs[a] both variants are retained to where it reads "he heard and he returned."[216] Secondly, II Kings 19:36 is needed by both accounts B1 and B2. "B1 needs both a destination for Sennacherib's return in 9b as well as a setting for his death in v. 37. B2 requires not only Yahweh's successful defense of the city (predicted in v. 32),

[214] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 73.
[215] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 73.
[216] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 75.

but also the return of the Assyrian king to his own land (predicted in v. 33)."[217] To resolve this latter problem, Childs makes reference to Duhm[218] who argued that II Kings 19:33 was a secondary addition to the original text. His reasoning was that not only is the phrase נְאֻם־יְהוָה ("an oracle of YHWH") "unexpected for an oracle in Kings which continues," but that verse 33 is a composite of 19:28b and 32a, and stands in tension with the complete destruction of the Assyrians described in 19:35.[219]

Childs' ultimate conclusions regarding Accounts B1 and B2 differ slightly with many scholars who claim that both accounts are legendary. When it comes to B1, Childs seems to lean toward the view that at its core, the material in B1 "reflects ancient tradition with a genuinely historical setting."[220] Nevertheless he also acknowledges that "newer elements have entered into the account and have been formed into a unified story which bears the stamp of the Dtr. author."[221] When it comes to B2, though, Childs claims that the account "has revealed the characteristics of this legendary source…" that contains a clear effort to portray Hezekiah as a type of faithful king.[222] He further concludes that given this understanding of B2 that we should be warned "against a simple-minded historical reading of the text."[223]

This scholarly division of II Kings 18:17-19:37 has had an astounding effect on the quest to find out "what really happened" during Sennacherib's invasion. The general understanding of these three sources among scholars has been that II Kings 18:13-16 contains the historically reliable account of Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BCE, namely

[217] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 75.
[218] B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*3, (Gottingen, 1914), 247.
[219] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 75.
[220] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 93.
[221] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 93.
[222] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 103.
[223] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 103.

because it seems to agree with Sennacherib's own annals; II Kings 18:17-19:9a, 36-37 and 19:9b-35, though, are considered to be legendary redactions from the exilic period. Therefore, "what really happened" in 701 BCE is that after Sennacherib invaded Judah in response to Hezekiah's rebellion and devastated most of Hezekiah's kingdom, Hezekiah paid tribute to Sennacherib in order to avert the destruction of Jerusalem. Sennacherib accepted Hezekiah's tribute and left Hezekiah on the throne in Jerusalem. Consequently, there was no glorious and miraculous sparing of Jerusalem by YHWH in 701 BCE. Hezekiah actually survived by the skin of his teeth, and Isaiah, far from supporting Hezekiah, actually had condemned Hezekiah's rebellion. This, quite obviously, has led to further skepticism of the biblical portrait of Hezekiah as a whole. Today, not only is the biblical account of the invasion of Sennacherib doubted by scholars, but the very picture the Bible gives us of Hezekiah himself has come under fire. This thesis, as will shortly be discussed in further detail, asserts that such overzealous skepticism has proven to be extremely detrimental to biblical scholarship.

III. 3. Isaiah 36-39: Literary Structure, Date, and Purpose

With the issues of priority and historical reliability already addressed within scholars' treatment of II Kings 18-20, the dominant questions regarding Isaiah 36-39 have tended to be in relation to its date of redaction and its function within Isaiah as a whole. In his work, *Zion's Final Destiny*, Christopher Seitz gives a detailed analysis of the various theories regarding the role of Isaiah 36-39 within the development of the book of Isaiah.[224] Although there are many variations on this issue, essentially, since scholars generally believe that Isaiah 36-39 borrowed from II Kings 18-20, they have tended to

[224] Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

push the redaction of Isaiah 36-39 to sometime long after the time of Isaiah and the first 35 chapters of Proto-Isaiah. Some, like R.E. Clements, claim that, whereas II Kings 18-20 was written during the reign of Josiah, the redaction of that material into Isaiah 36-39 happened after the composition of Isaiah 40-55 and inserted into its present position to act as a transitional bridge between First and Second Isaiah.[225] Other scholars, like John Hayes and Stuart Irvine, hold that virtually all of Isaiah 1-39 goes back to the prophet Isaiah himself.[226]

Nevertheless, it is clear, as John Walton and P.R. Ackroyd both have pointed out, that Isaiah 38-39 is out of chronological order. These chapters have been put in their present position in order to look forward to the events of the Babylonian exile and the following chapters of Isaiah 40-66.[227] It is perhaps this clear evidence of redaction that has caused many scholars to argue that the material in chapters 36-39 is the product of a much later time than the events they record. Any connections between chapters 36-39 and chapters 1-35, therefore, are viewed by many scholars as rather artificial attempts by later redactors driven by their own theological agendas.

IV. The Shortcomings of the Prevailing Current Scholarship

The views and opinions discussed above can be seen in virtually every scholarly work on both Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that these views are not unanimously held among scholars. There are dissenting voices, and

[225] R.E Clements, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah." *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 53.
[226] John Hayes and Stuart Irvine. *Isaiah the Eighth-Century Prophet*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987).
[227] Peter R. Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function." in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala* (ed. W.C. Delsman et al; Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 3-21; John H. Walton, "New Observations on the Date of Isaiah," *JETS* 28 (June 1985): 129-132.

with good reason. As we will now see, these assumptions that are so prevalent in modern scholarship are in reality highly questionable and deeply flawed. Simply put, there are major chinks in the armor of the prevailing scholarship regarding Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20. Not only is it *not* so obvious that II Kings 18-20 holds priority over Isaiah 36-39, but it is also abundantly clear that the reasoning used to uphold the conventional belief that (a) the material in question is a compilation of three sources and that (b) the vast majority of this material is unhistorical and legendary, is highly speculative at best, with very little real evidence to support its arguments.

What one quickly realizes when analyzing these issues is that there is an element of cause and effect at work. The ultimate cause of the debates surrounding the biblical account of Sennacherib's invasion is the assumption that II Kings 18-20 has priority over Isaiah 36-39. The effect of this assumption was twofold: (a) the literary position of Isaiah 36-39 was called into question; and (b) the textual question of II Kings 18:13-16 brought up the question of the literary unity of II Kings 18-19, as well as the historical question concerning what really happened in 701 BCE. This led to the division of II Kings 18:13-19:37 into two separate accounts, which in turn led scholars to postulate that II Kings 18:13-16 was the true historical account, and accounts B1 and B2 were simply later redacted legends of Hezekiah. This dismissal of the historical reliability of 18:17-19:37, in turn, has led to scholars questioning the historical reliability of everything in the biblical accounts of Hezekiah's reign. Over time these *assumptions* are actually put forth as *evidence* to support the prevailing views of (a) the priority of II Kings 18-20, and (b) the historical *un*reliability of "accounts B1 and B2." In reality, though, what we have is a house built on sand. Brevard Childs is undoubtedly correct when he observes that "every

hypothetical reconstruction rests upon unproven assumptions to prevent the degree of historical probability needed to form a consensus."[228]

We therefore must question these assumptions made by modern biblical scholarship regarding these biblical accounts of Hezekiah's reign, particularly that of the invasion of Sennacherib. Although the main goal of this thesis is not to *prove* the historical reliability of the biblical accounts regarding the invasion of Sennacherib, it nevertheless asserts that at its core these biblical accounts should be regarded as historically reliable and that the accepted views of modern biblical scholarship regarding the biblical accounts of Sennacherib's invasion are deeply flawed. Simply put, what one believes about the historical reliability regarding biblical accounts of Hezekiah's reign will affect how one will understand the relationship between Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39, as well as the overall structure of Proto-Isaiah itself. While there has undoubtedly been creative literary shaping of the text by later scribal exegetes, to dismiss the majority of biblical accounts as mere fanciful projections by later theologically-biased redactors is very simplistic, naïve, and in actuality, uncritical.

Although this thesis readily admits that its argument for the literary bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah can be made on purely literary grounds, without any consideration of the text's historical reliability, it does not believe such an unhistorical argument would do justice to the integrity of the biblical text. Redaction and scribal exegesis does not mean that the redactors were either ignorant of the historical facts or deliberately trying to obscure them. Rather, it means they were attempting to highlight and explain how YHWH's purpose and covenant with Israel had played out within their history. In other words, what we have in Isaiah 36-39 is the product of later "inner-

[228] Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 12.

biblical" exegesis by scribes of the exilic period who took the core historical events and records from the time of Hezekiah, reflected on the theological significance of those events, and re-shaped and edited them in order to bring about a theological reflection and understanding of those critical events of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the invasion of Sennacherib. Although they obviously re-fashioned, perhaps considerably, these chapters during or after the exile, this thesis asserts that the core story and perspective had its roots in the actual historical events.

An example of the kind of modern biblical scholarship that this thesis is criticizing can be found in the work of R.E. Clements. In his work he clearly shows that he shares these assumptions of most modern scholars: (a) the priority of II Kings, (b) the legendary unhistorical status of II Kings 18:17-19:37, and (c) the late date of Isaiah 36-39 and the impact that has on understanding the book of Isaiah. Before we explore alternative views regarding the Sennacherib account in II Kings and Isaiah, we will first critique the work of Clements in order to show just how much this modern scholarly position is based on shifting sand.

V. R.E. Clements: *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem*

In his book, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem*, Clements developed the prevailing scholarly assumptions regarding II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39 into a further argument regarding what he considers to be the origin of the theological belief of Zion's inviolability. Although Clements does not specifically comment on the question of priority of either II Kings 18-20 or Isaiah 36-39, his position regarding the dating of this material is that it was composed during the reign of Josiah and therefore could not be considered to be related to the original work of Isaiah. Yet from the very beginning of his

work, Clements makes his position regarding II Kings 18:17-19:37/Isaiah 36-37 clear: it is "a late legendary version of what happened in 701, of which a more accurate historical picture is afforded by the Assyrian annals and the report of Hezekiah's surrender in II Kings 18:13-16."[229] The question Clements attempts to answer, therefore, is, given the assumption that II Kings 18:17-19:37/Isaiah 36-37 is an unhistorical legend, how did this story of Jerusalem's miraculous deliverance come about? Simply put, Clements' answer to this question is as follows: the material in II Kings 18:17-20:21/Isaiah 36-39 was composed during the reign of Josiah with the purpose of inspiring and encouraging the Judeans at that time to throw off the yoke of Assyria. At that time Assyria's stranglehold on the area seemed to be at an end, and this gave rise to the hopeful prospect that the kingdom of Judah would once again rise again in power and independence.

In order to prove his overall argument, Clements attempts to establish a number of fundamental points concerning: (a) what he believes Isaiah's attitude toward Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria was during the years 705-701 BCE, (b) what he believes Isaiah had to say to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in 701 BCE, and (c) what he believes Isaiah's message was concerning Assyria as a conquering power.[230] He attempts to make his arguments by taking his readers through various passages found within Proto-Isaiah that prophesy about Assyria then arguing that significant portions of these prophecies are, in fact, not original to the prophet Isaiah himself, but rather are redactions inserted into the text by later redactors during the reign of Josiah.

Clements first comments on Isaiah 30:1-5 and 31:1-3, passages in which Isaiah clearly condemns the attempt of the "rebellious children" of YHWH (i.e. those in Judah)

[229] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem*, 14.
[230] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem*, 29.

to make and alliance with Egypt. He dates these passages to 705 BCE and claims them as evidence that Isaiah thoroughly condemned and disapproved of Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria. Although Clements calls these prophecies a "clear condemnation of Hezekiah's plan to rebel against Assyria,"[231] the question must be asked, "Is it really that clear that Isaiah here is condemning Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria, or is he condemning those in Judah, perhaps even Hezekiah's decision, to appeal to Egypt for help in the rebellion?" Clements rejects this as a possibility when he says, "it cannot be said that it is to be understood simply as a rejection by the prophet of a treaty alliance with a foreign power on the grounds that all such alliances are signs of a want of faith in God."[232] Why not? Clements' reason is that although this condemnation of alliances with foreign powers is "undoubtedly a major theme with the prophet," these prophecies clearly state that the result of such an alliance would spell disaster for Judah and Egypt. [233]

Clements' logic here, though, is not convincing. When one reads these passages it is abundantly clear that Isaiah is condemning the decision to appeal to Egypt for help; it is not so clear that he is condemning the decision to rebel against Assyria. Those are two very different decisions, and Clements is wrongly asserting that they are one and the same. The passages clearly prophesy that such an alliance will bring about "shame and disgrace" (30:5) and that both the helper and those who are helped "will fall" (31:3). And indeed, Sennacherib's invasion did, in fact, devastate a major portion of Judah, and the help from Egypt proved to be ineffective. But there is simply nothing in the passages that clearly condemns the rebellion itself. Clements is forcing an interpretation of these passages that simply is not clearly stated. In fact, Clements further forces his argument

[231] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem,* 31.
[232] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem,* 31.
[233] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem,* 31.

when he cites Isaiah 31:4 as evidence that Isaiah condemned Hezekiah's decision to rebel against Assyria. It states:

> "For thus the LORD said to me,
> As a lion or a young lion growls over its prey, and—
> when a band of shepherds is called out against it—
> is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise,
> so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight
> upon Mount Zion and upon its hill."

Clements claims that the phrase "to fight upon Mount Zion" indicates that YHWH's action is directed *against* Jerusalem. Yet he completely ignores 31:5-9 which say:

> "Like birds hovering overhead, so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem;
> he will protect and deliver it, he will spare and rescue it.
> Turn back to him whom you have deeply betrayed, O people of Israel.
> For on that day all of you shall throw away your idols of silver and idols of gold,
> which your hands have sinfully made for you.
> Then the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of mortals;
> and a sword, not of humans, shall devour him;
> he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor.
> His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic,"
> says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

These verses clearly prophesy that YHWH will protect Jerusalem and will turn back Assyria. Yet Clements conveniently ignores the immediate context in which 31:4 is found; and he completely ignores 32:1-8, which quite clearly *contrasts* the plans of the king who will "reign in righteousness" (32:1) with the "fools" who speak folly and "villains" who devise wicked devices. When these verses are considered within their context, Clements' argument that 30:1-5 and 31:1-4 contain blanket condemnations of Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria simply fails to convince. Rather, the impression one gets is that chapters 30-32 contain condemnations of some in Judah whose specific plans for the rebellion contrasted with those of Hezekiah.

Clements then puts forth Isaiah 22:1-4 as a prophecy in which Isaiah "severely castigates the citizens of Jerusalem for their behavior after the deliverance of the city in 701."[234] He further asserts that this prophecy was added after 587 BCE. What Clements concludes regarding this prophecy is that "it is very clear from this passage that nothing at all is implied about a remarkable and unexpected defeat of the Assyrian army which had been facing Jerusalem."[235] He also alludes to Isaiah 1:4-8 and claims that this prophecy, like 22:1-4, is a prophecy from 701 BCE, "confidently ascribed to Isaiah [that] offers no support at all to the belief that Jerusalem had been the scene of a quite unexpected defeat of the Assyrians."[236]

Once again, though, Clements' arguments not only fail to convince, but also are self-contradictory. First of all, he fails to notice that he claims 22:1-4 "was added after 587" then turns around and claims that 22:1-4, along with 1:4-8, are both prophecies from 701 BCE that are "confidently ascribed to Isaiah." Second of all, one must question his assertion that 22:1-4 is a prophecy addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem *after* Sennacherib's withdrawal in 701 BCE. While no one expects that the chapters in the book of Isaiah are in exact chronological order, one has to wonder why the author (or even final redactors) of Isaiah would put a prophecy that condemns Jerusalem's joyous reaction after Sennacherib's withdrawal in chapter 22, a full 14-15 chapters *before* the Sennacherib account is found. Given the fact that a mere one chapter lies between 22:1-4 and chapter 20, a chapter that tells about Sargon's attack on Ashdod, it seems to be much more logical to assume that the focus of 22:1-4 is on the Ashdod campaign of 714 BCE. Thirdly, Clements once again overstates his case when he so confidently ascribes 1:4-8

[234] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem*, 33.
[235] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem*, 34.
[236] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem*, 35.

specifically to 701 BCE. As will be argued later, part of this thesis' argument regarding the "bookend" structure of Proto-Isaiah is that chapters 1-6 form a type of prologue to Isaiah, and therefore is meant to act as almost a "thesis statement" that gives an over-arching picture of Judah's dilemma during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. To isolate specific passages as originated from specific years (i.e. 701 BCE) is to completely ignore the literary structure of this portion of Isaiah; Clements assumes too much and makes the passages say more than they were intended. Fourthly, when faced with the hopeful verse of 1:9 that says, **"**If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah," Clements once again dismisses it as a later addition that was inserted sometime after 587 BCE. His reasoning is that since it is *hopeful* in tone it just could not possibly have anything to do with a prophecy that contains *threatening* language. In Clements' view, Isaiah simply could not possibly give threatening prophecies *as well as* give hope for the future.

One final example we will look at from Clements' argument is that of Isaiah 10:5-19. While Clements acknowledges that this passage, along with others throughout Isaiah, does in fact give a "very clear and decided declaration" that there would be a time when Assyria would be punished by YHWH, his treatment of 10:5-19 is rather curious. He first discounts verses 10-12 as separate glosses that were added at a later time in Isaiah's ministry. The "original" prophecy of Isaiah was actually 10:5-9, 13-15. This prophecy, Clements claims, is "a foundation for the belief that Isaiah had foretold that a time would come when the king of Assyria would be defeated and punished, but not that Isaiah connected this in any way with the time or circumstances of Hezekiah's revolt against

Sennacherib, which we know Isaiah condemned." [237] In other words, yes, Isaiah prophesied that YHWH would punish Assyria someday, but no, Isaiah condemned Hezekiah's revolt against Assyria. Yet what about 10:16-19, which prophesies that YHWH will "send a wasting sickness" among the Assyrian warriors? Doesn't that seem to possibly point forward to the events of 701 BCE and therefore seem to approve of Hezekiah's rebellion? Clements says no; rather these verses as well come from later editors from the time of Josiah's reign.

Clements' conclusions, therefore, can be summed up in this way: (a) Isaiah completely condemned Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria; (b) Isaiah condemned the people of Jerusalem for celebrating Sennacherib's withdrawal, and instead claimed it was a disaster; and (c) although Isaiah prophesied that YHWH would one day punish Assyria, he was definitely not referring to 701 BCE. Clements' conclusions are quite troubling when one considers the fact that the picture put forth in both Isaiah and II Kings is the exact opposite of everything Clements argues. Yet this does not seem to faze Clements at all. By simply cutting and pasting various prophecies throughout Proto-Isaiah and by dismissing every verse that seems to point to YHWH punishing Assyria and protecting Jerusalem in 701 BCE, Clements has succeeded in reconstructing an account of Hezekiah's reign that runs completely contradictory to the biblical testimony. What is perhaps even more astounding than this is that when claiming that those passages in Isaiah that seem to support the idea of YHWH's miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 BCE are really the work of redactors working in Josiah's reign, Clements makes the additional claim that "these passages were never intended to be addressed, even retrospectively, to the events that had taken place in 701 BCE. They merely affirm, from

[237] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem*, 39.

the vantage point of the weakening of Assyrian control of Judah in Josiah's reign, that the final overthrow of that power which Isaiah had announced was now imminent."[238] Lest it be misunderstood, what Clements is claiming is that certain redactors in Josiah's reign looked forward to Assyria's downfall, but intentionally made it look like their redactions were actually from the mouth of Isaiah before the year 701 BCE. What is more, according to Clements, even though these Josianic redactors did this, they didn't really intend for people to think that their redactions that they put in the mouth of Isaiah were actually pre-701 BCE.

The ultimate problem with Clements' argument is not so much that his conclusions run in direct contradiction to the biblical testimony of Isaiah, II Kings and II Chronicles (although they most certainly do), but that his argument begins and ends with assumptions. What he puts forth as evidence is not really evidence at all, but rather fragments of scripture ripped out of the context in which they are presented to us. Clements claims Isaiah completely condemned Hezekiah's actions and points to verses that (a) are *not* clear in any condemnation of Hezekiah and (b) are not convincingly argued to have originated in the years 705-501 BCE. So how can he claim these verses support his argument? Because he is interpreting them in the light of his assumption that Isaiah condemned Hezekiah.

Furthermore, Clements claims that the events of 701 BCE were not seen as glorious in any way, and that in reality it was a humiliating and devastating defeat for Hezekiah who escaped by the skin of his teeth. To support this claim, Clements points to verses that prophesy destruction and doom. Yet when confronted with verses that clearly prophesy that YHWH would turn back and humiliate the Assyrian forces and that clearly

[238] Clements, *The Deliverance of Jerusalem*, 51.

point forward to the events in Isaiah 36-37, Clements casually dismisses them as later additions by redactors during Josiah's reign. How does he know this? Because he has already pre-determined that the events of 701 BCE were not glorious, and that therefore the verses in question had to have been the work of later redactors who were trying to "re-write history" as a means of inspiring Josiah to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Therefore, instead of letting the passages within their context determine his reading of the text and his understanding of the historical events in question, Clements is letting his assumptions and presuppositions of what he feels must have happened in history determine his reading of the text.

Now granted, all reading of all historical texts, be they biblical or not, are determined in some way or another by certain assumptions one has about the reliability and validity of those texts. This takes us back to the foundational argument by Provan and Long that was discussed in our first chapter. Clements clearly feels that the biblical accounts concerning Sennacherib's invasion, as well as many other passages within Proto-Isaiah, are, historically-speaking, untrustworthy. But does he have valid reasons for doubting the historical validity of these texts to the extent that he does? This thesis asserts that, if he has valid reasons, he certainly has not articulated them well. The fundamental problem with the Clements' arguments and Childs' explanations surrounding the biblical accounts of Sennacherib's invasion is that they have rejected any confidence in the *biblical text that we have* and have chosen instead to reconstruct what they believe must have happened *without any real substantial evidence to support their reconstruction*.

We use Clements' work as a mere example of a serious problem within modern biblical studies, for he is not alone in his assumptions and reconstructions of biblical

history. Now it is obvious that within biblical studies scholars must speculate on certain issues. Yet if the goal of biblical exegesis is to try to understand the intended meaning of the biblical text, the honest biblical scholar must question the methods and assumptions of anyone whose reconstruction of a biblical event or a biblical text diverge so sharply from the testimony presented to us in the biblical text itself. Instead of attempting to rationalize our own revisions of the text according to our own assumptions of what must have happened in history, we should attempt to understand and exegete the biblical text on its own terms, the way in which it is presented to us, taking into full consideration historical factors, and possibly using a certain amount of reconstruction to help us more fully understand the message that is presented within the literary structure of the text.

Now this thesis is not advocating what Childs calls "a simple-minded historical reading of the text."[239] There are very difficult exegetical problems surrounding the Sennacherib accounts and they cannot be easily dismissed. Yet when it is obvious that the scholarly attempts to make sense of a difficult text are, in fact, ten times more difficult and confusing than the text itself, we must take a step back and reevaluate the scholarly assumptions upon which such arguments are based. We must ask four questions: (a) Is it so obvious that II Kings 18-20 holds priority over Isaiah 36-39? (b) Is it so obvious that the Sennacherib account found in both II Kings 18-19 and Isaiah 36-37 is really a compilation of two to three separate sources? (c) Is it so obvious that "Accounts B1 and B2" in II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39 are really later legendary additions? and (d) Is it so obvious that the material in Isaiah 36-39 was written either during the time of Josiah or later during the exile? It is to these questions we will now turn.

[239] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 103.

VI. A Question of Priority: Isaiah 36-39 or II Kings 18-20

As has already been mentioned, the general scholarly consensus is that the redactor of Isaiah borrowed the material in II Kings 18-20 and put it into his own work, thus comprising Isaiah 36-39. We must now ask whether or not such a view is worthy of the virtually universal scholarly consensus it has received. It was Gesenius who first argued for this on the basis that II Kings 18:13-19:37 seemed to be "an integral part of the books, whereas Isaiah 36-37 appear to be an appendage."[240] According to Gesenius, the narrative just seemed to fit better into II Kings, a work that was almost entirely narrative. Such a long narrative found within a book like Isaiah that consists of mostly prophetic oracles seemed rather odd to Gesenius, and thus he concluded that Isaiah borrowed from II Kings. However, in response to Gesenius' argument, K.A.D. Smelik has made a compelling case for the primacy of the Isaiah text. While admitting that at first glance such a long narrative within Isaiah does seem rather odd, he makes the argument that II Kings 18:17-20:19 does not really fit into the context of II Kings either. He points out that Isaiah is the only prophet from among books of the Latter Prophets who appears in a narrative in Kings.[241] In other words, it is extremely odd that we find in II Kings such a long narrative in which Isaiah plays such an important role for the simple reason that there is nothing else like this anywhere else in the book of Kings. On the other hand, though, Smelik points out that in the book of Isaiah there are a number of narrative sections that focus on the prophet Isaiah, and even points out that there is a close parallel to Isaiah 7.[242]

[240] K.A.D. Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy: The Purpose of Isaiah 36 and 37" in *Crises and Perspectives* (ed. J. de Moor, et al. ; Leiden: E J Brill, 1986), 71.
[241] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 72.
[242] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 72.

It must be pointed out, though, that not only is there a narrative section in Isaiah 7, but there is also one in Isaiah 20, set during the time of the Ashdod campaign, where Isaiah goes naked through the streets of Jerusalem for three years. Given this fact, we must consider the significance of having the major narrative sections in Isaiah being set (a) during the very beginning of Assyria's dominance over Judah, (b) during Assyria's major military actions of the Ashdod campaign that had tremendous implications for Judah, and (c) during the most significant threat to Jerusalem in 701 BCE. Given the placement of these earlier narratives in Isaiah—the beginning of Assyrian dominance and a major military campaign in the middle of Assyria's dominance in the region—it should not be surprising at all to find a third narrative that tells of a major defeat of Assyria by the hand of YHWH.

Furthermore, note the connection of the first and third narratives to the prophetic role of Isaiah. Immediately after the prophetic call of Isaiah in Isaiah 6, we have a narrative of Isaiah's first recorded prophetic action—his appeal to Ahaz to put his faith in YHWH during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, and Ahaz's subsequent lack of faith in YHWH. Proto-Isaiah thus ends with yet another narrative, one of Isaiah's last recorded prophetic action—his advising Hezekiah to put his faith in YHWH during the time of Sennacherib's invasion. By contrast, when one looks at the narrative of Sennacherib's invasion within II Kings, it seems to be unusually long compared to other narratives of other kings found in the book of Kings. It seems much more likely that II Kings 18:1-12 contain material more in line with the other material found throughout the book of Kings, whereas 18:14-16, copied from another unknown source, or possibly written by the redactor himself, was interwoven with Isaiah's narrative into the larger narrative unit of

18:13-20:19, only to be concluded with the standard conclusion found in the book of Kings in 20:20-21. Under the weight of this evidence, Gesenius' suggestion that the narrative seems to fit better within II Kings seems to crumble.

The argument that the writer of the book of Kings borrowed this material from Proto-Isaiah is further strengthened by following the general rules of textual criticism, which state that it is more likely that a later text adds to an original text rather than subtracts from it. Yes, it is also possible to argue the most difficult reading is usually the earlier reading, and that II Kings 18-20 is more difficult than Isaiah 36-39, but we must ask, "What is it that makes it more difficult? Is it a corruption in the text, or rather scholarly ignorance and misunderstanding of the literary artistry of the writers/scribal exegetes? A simple glance at the parallel Sennacherib accounts in Isaiah 36-37 and II Kings 18-19 will show that the latter is true. Although the literary structure and artistry will be discussed later, one must compare these two accounts on purely textual grounds.

Upon looking at the parallel texts of Isaiah 36-37 and II Kings 18-19, one can see that these "parallel" accounts are not completely identical.[243] First, II Kings 18:1-12, a section clearly in the mold of how other kings throughout II Kings are summarized, is unique to II Kings. In it, we are told about the fall of Samaria during the early part of Hezekiah's reign. As scholars have pointed out, there is a clear shaping of this material along the Deutronomist's view of the history of Israel: bad kings break covenant with YHWH and good kings keep covenant with YHWH. Secondly, II Kings 18:14-16, a brief section that one can argue was inserted between what was originally Isaiah 36:1 and 36:2, is also unique to II Kings. It tells about Hezekiah's payment of tribute to the king of

[243] One can view the chart comparing these two accounts in Appendix C. Sections highlighted in blue represent text unique to II Kings. Those highlighted in red are unique to Isaiah.

Assyria in an attempt to spare Jerusalem from destruction at the hands of Sennacherib. Finally, although the bulk of the narratives are virtually identical, there still are a number of variants found in the II Kings narrative that can best be described as minor elaborations on the Isaiah narrative. Virtually every instance where there is a small variation, we see that the text in II Kings expands and elaborates on the Isaiah text.[244]

One can reasonably deduce from these facts that the writer of II Kings got his material of 18:1-12 and 18:14-16 from an original source, probably that of the Annals of the Kings of Judah, and then incorporated the material he borrowed from Isaiah 36-39 into his narrative about Hezekiah. The reason for this could very well be that the story of Hezekiah was already so important within Jewish history that the writer felt it was important to give extra attention to Hezekiah within the book of Kings. Yet if Isaiah had copied from the book of Kings, one has to wonder why he (a) chose not to include II Kings 18:1-12, and (b) why he chose to use 18:13, exclude II Kings 18:14-16, and then pick up the story again at 18:17. Simply put, given Hezekiah's status in Jewish history, it would make sense for the writer of the book of Kings to add the Hezekiah material from Proto-Isaiah; yet it would not make sense for the writer of Proto-Isaiah to omit part of the Hezekiah narrative in II Kings.

Given this brief argument that points toward the priority of Isaiah 36-39 over II Kings 18-20, it also must be readily admitted that there is a third alternative. It is quite possible that both the writer of Isaiah and the writer of II Kings borrowed the Sennacherib account from an earlier unnamed source that is completely lost to us.

[244] For example, one could see why, in II Kings 18:36, the writer would elaborate on Isaiah 36:21, and clarify that the "they" in Isaiah 36:21 is a reference to "the people" as a whole, and not just Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah; but it would not make sense why the writer of Isaiah would take a clear reference to "the people" in II Kings 18:36 and make it more ambiguous in Isaiah 36:21.

Perhaps this "original account" was comprised of what is found in II Kings 18:13-20:21, and the writer of Isaiah chose to exclude the material that is now II Kings 14-16; perhaps this "original account" was comprised of what is found in Isaiah 36-39, and the writer of II Kings chose to add the material that is now II Kings 18:14-16 and to clarify a number of things throughout the account. The fact is that we simply cannot know for certain. Based on the information we do have, though, we can say for certain that the argument that II Kings 18-20 holds priority over Isaiah 36-39 is by no means a strong argument. To base so much scholarly work on such a weak argument is highly questionable.

Although it is possible that the writers of both II Kings and Isaiah gleaned their material from the same earlier source, this thesis is still inclined to take the position that Isaiah 36-39 holds priority over II Kings 18-20 for essentially two reasons. First, we simply do not have the earlier source. The earlier source hypothesis is an argument from silence. There simply is no way to either verify or falsify the claim that there was an earlier source. It is a possibly that only gains credibility if both of the other two possible explanations fail to convince. This brings us to the second reason. Not only on purely textual grounds does it seem that II Kings 18-20 expanded the material found in Isaiah 36-39, but from a literary point of view, the material in question fits much better into the literary structure of Isaiah, not II Kings. It is this literary argument we will now make as we ask the second of our three questions: "Is it so obvious that the Sennacherib account found in both II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39 is really a compilation of two to three separate sources?"

VII. The Literary Unity of Isaiah 36-39

The argument that has been put forth by scholars like Stade and Childs concerning how the Sennacherib account in Isaiah and II Kings are a compilation of two accounts (B1 and B2) has already been outlined. Although Childs speculated that these two accounts both got their material from a common source[245] Smelik suggests that when read from a literary point of view, Isaiah 36-37 does not so much point toward two separate accounts that have been redacted together, but rather to a highly stylized account that uses repetition as a literary device. "Repetition," Smelik argues, "is a common phenomenon in biblical narrative," and that such repetition "need not indicate a combination of earlier sources."[246] Smelik makes his argument by pointing to a number of examples of three-fold repetition in the Sennacherib account.

The first example can be found in the three Assyrian messages found within the account: (a) the Rabshakeh's first speech, (b) the Rabshakeh's second speech, and (c) Sennacherib's letter. According to Stade, Sennacherib's letter is simply a duplicate of the Rabshakeh's two speeches, and therefore is assigned to account B2. Smelik, though, points out the three-fold nature of the Assyrian taunts. In the Rabshakeh's first speech, he tries to convince Hezekiah that he has no one to rely on; in the Rabshakeh's second speech, he tries to separate the people of Judah from their king; and in Sennacherib's letter, he tries to separate Hezekiah from YHWH, and ends up blaspheming by calling YHWH a deceiver.[247] Smelik's point is simple: "these three messages are not duplicates:

[245] Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 98.
[246] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 76.
[247] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 81.

each has its own function in the narrative and together they enhance the suspense in the narrative: will the Assyrian king taunt the Living God with impunity?"[248]

The second example can be seen in Isaiah's three oracles found in 37:6-7, 37:22-29, and 37:33-35. Each oracle is vital to understanding the overall structure of the Sennacherib narrative. Smelik first discusses the first oracle in 37:6-7, in which YHWH says that he will "put a spirit" in Sennacherib, and that Sennacherib will "hear something to hear," return to his land, and then fall by sword. This oracle is quite ambiguous and presents a number of questions the reader must wait to get answers for. It does not take long, though, for the reader to understand what kind of "spirit" YHWH will put in Sennacherib. This "spirit" is not so much a spirit of panic as it is a spirit of pride.[249] We know this, Smelik argues, because of what comes next in 37:8-9: a three-fold repetition of the phrase "he heard," the last of which Stade ironically characterized as a "seam" between accounts B1 and B2. In 37:8 we find that the Rabshakeh "heard" that Sennacherib had left Lachish to fight against Libnah. Why did Sennacherib do this? We learn in 37:9 that Sennacherib had "heard" that King Tirhakah had come out to fight against him. We are further told that *when* Sennacherib "heard" about this move by King Tirhakah, he sent messengers to Hezekiah with a letter in which he further threatens Hezekiah with the third message (as discussed above). Now Stade and Childs, by assuming that there is a "seam" in 37:9b, would have us think that in the B1 account, when Sennacherib "heard" about the Egyptian threat, he was filled with a spirit of panic and "returned" to his own land, only to be killed later on (37:37-38). This would seem quite an odd move on the part of Sennacherib, given the fact that the Rabshakeh had

[248] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 81.
[249] Smelik "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 83.

mocked Egypt's ability to help Hezekiah earlier in 36:6, 9. Simply put, the proposed reading of B1 does not make sense. On the other hand, if taken as a literary unity, the picture becomes quite clear. Smelik argues, "Instead of withdrawing, Sennacherib continues to taunt the Living God. It is not the Egyptian ally who will silence the Assyrian king, but the Lord Himself, as appears only at the very end of the narrative. By supposing that in the first account the new of Tirhakah's arrival ended Sennacherib's attack, Stade actually walked into the trap the author has set for the reader."[250] By the end of the narrative, we see precisely how this first oracle has been fulfilled. YHWH was able to use the very Egyptian alliance which Isaiah had earlier condemned by using it to ignite a spirit of pride and arrogance on Sennacherib's part, which caused him to further taunt YHWH, which ultimately led to his humiliation and death.[251]

In the second oracle found in 37:22-29, we find YHWH's condemnation of Sennacherib's arrogance (so clearly displayed by the Rabshakeh's two speeches and Sennacherib's mocking letter to Hezekiah), and the prophecy that YHWH will turn Sennacherib back on the way by which he came. Not only does this second oracle build off of the first oracle and Sennacherib's blasphemous taunting letter to Hezekiah, but it looks forward to Sennacherib's humiliating failure. The third oracle found in 37:33-35, elaborates on the second oracle by specifically saying that Sennacherib's army would not even shoot an arrow into Jerusalem, let alone enter it, and that he would return on the way by which he came. The reason for this would not be because of some spectacular military defense by Hezekiah or Tirhakah or any other human king. We are told in this third oracle that YHWH Himself would defend Jerusalem.

[250] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 77.
[251] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 84.

All three of these oracles find their fulfillment in Isaiah 37:36-38. These final verses of the Sennacherib narrative "allude to the three oracles together. Therefore it is impossible to divide these verses into two strands without serious exegetical loss."[252] Smelik's literary reading of the Sennacherib account in Isaiah is a convincing argument that it should be regarded as a single literary unity, and not as two separate accounts that have been redacted together. His exegesis of the narrative makes sense at every point in the narrative. By contrast, the arguments of scholars like Gesenius, Stade, Childs, and Clements appear to be convoluted, confusing, and ultimately incomprehensible.

VIII. The Occasion and Purpose of Isaiah 36-39

The next issue to deal with is the place of chapters 36-39 within the overall structure of Proto-Isaiah. This goes hand in hand with the question of the date and purpose of Isaiah 36-39. We must remember the Sennacherib account of Isaiah 36-37 is not the only narrative that is shared by Isaiah and II Kings. There is also the account of Hezekiah's illness (Isaiah 38/II Kings 20:1-11) and the account of the visit from the envoys of Merodach-baladan of Babylon (Isaiah 39/II Kings 20:12-19). Not only does YHWH's deliverance of Jerusalem (chapters 36-37) seem to wrap up so many themes found in Isaiah, but the twin episodes of Hezekiah's illness and the visit from the envoys of Babylon, which are clearly out of chronological order,[253] act, as so many scholars have already noted, as an "editorial bridge" between Proto and Deutero-Isaiah.[254] Therefore,

[252] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 84-85.

[253] It does not make chronological sense to have Isaiah tell Hezekiah that Jerusalem will be delivered from the hand of the king of Assyria (38:6) when it had just taken place in chapter 37.

[254] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 72; John H. Walton, "New Observations on the Date of Isaiah," JETS, 130: "Speaking hypothetically, if chapters 40-66 had not originally been part of the oracles of Isaiah, that truncated First Isaiah would have had no reason to have the chronological reversal. The reversal only becomes meaningful when chapter 39 introduces chapters 40-66."

the sheer placement of chapters 36-39 within Isaiah, Smelik argues, points to the fact that these chapters are a key element in the literary structure of Isaiah.[255] In other words, one can see why Proto-Isaiah would be concluded with the narrative about the envoys from Babylon; they foreshadow the Babylonian exile that chapter 40 is addressing. Yet there is no logical reason as to why the book of Kings, a narrative that chronologically takes us through the reigns of the kings of both Israel and Judah, would place an episode like the visit from the envoys of Babylon so clearly out of chronological order.

In addition to Smelik's arguments for the primacy of Isaiah, there are also a number of other elements to be considered, such as the dating of each book. While it is true that no one is able to put forth a specific date for the composition of either books of Kings or Isaiah, the general dating for the book of Kings is believed to be anywhere between 561 BCE, the last date mentioned in II Kings (when Jehoaichin was released from captivity), and 538 BCE, the date when Cyrus the Great made the declaration that the Jews were free to return to their homeland.[256] Furthermore, Jewish tradition holds that Jeremiah was the writer of the book of Kings.[257] Many scholars, seeing the similarities between the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Samuel, and speculating these works were compiled into a single text, the Deuteronomic history, have speculated on the possibility that the Deuteronomist was, in fact, Jeremiah. That being said, it is also acknowledged that the book of Kings underwent revision during the exilic period.

---

[255] Smelik, "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy," 72-74.

[256] Walton observes the majority of modern scholarship has generally accepted the fact that the author of Kings was the "Deuteronomist," and that the general consensus has been that the "Deuteronomist history" went through two to three stages. David Freedman proposes the three stages as being during the times of Hezekiah, Josiah, and the early exilic period. Frank Cross proposes two stages: the time of the late Kingdom and the time of the Exile. Walton then points out that Childs, Montgomery, Gray, Fohrer and Eissfeldt have all come to this general conclusion. "New Observations on the Date of Isaiah," 131.

[257] "Jeremiah wrote the book that bears his name, the Book of Kings, and Lamenatations." Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Baba Bathra, Folio 15a.

The book of Isaiah, though, tends to be a bit more complex. On one hand, there is virtually universal agreement concerning the division of Isaiah into at least two parts: Proto-Isaiah (chapters 1-39) and Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40-66).[258] The reason for this is because whereas chapter 39 ends with the reign of Hezekiah and looks ahead to a future Babylonian captivity, chapter 40 begins with a prophetic call to come out of the Babylonian captivity. Given the fact that the last certain event in Hezekiah's reign was Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE, and the end of the exile came about with Cyrus' decree in 538 BCE, it is rightfully seen as impossible that one person could have written the entirety of the book of Isaiah. Most scholars attribute the bulk of Proto-Isaiah to the original prophet Isaiah who lived during the eighth century BCE, and Deutero-Isaiah to later exilic and post-exilic writers. As with the book of Kings, the book of Isaiah is seen to have also passed through a number of redactions.

Beyond these general dates, though, not much more can be definitely said concerning the dates of composition of the book of Kings and the book of Isaiah. Given this fact, it is extremely odd that so many scholars have quickly assumed that the book of Kings was composed before the book of Isaiah. If anything, the evidence points in the opposite direction. First, it is generally acknowledged that the bulk of Isaiah 1-39 has its roots in the original prophet Isaiah himself, writing before the exile. Isaiah 1:1 itself begins with the opening, "The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." Furthermore, we know from Isaiah 6 that YHWH called Isaiah to be a prophet in the year King Uzziah died. This would have been somewhere around 750 BCE. We also know that Isaiah 36-39 recounts the events of Hezekiah's reign: Sennacherib's invasion,

[258] Some scholars made a further division with Trito-Isaiah (chapters 56-66).

Hezekiah's illness and recovery, and the visit of the envoys from Merodach-baladan. Yet starting in Isaiah 40 we see YHWH calling for the exiles to come out of exile. Hence, there is a gap from roughly 701 BCE to 537 BCE between Isaiah 39 and 40—there is no mention of Manasseh, or Josiah, or the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. Since the return from exile happened in the late sixth century BCE, most scholars rightly agree that Isaiah 40-66 were not written by the historical Isaiah of the eighth century BCE, but rather by later exilic redactors, possibly his disciples who prophesied and wrote in his name. In any case, the opening verse of Isaiah that mentions Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah is a clear indication that the material in chapters 1-39 should be seen as a unit. Therefore, although it is true that the book of Isaiah as a whole was not fully compiled and redacted until exilic or post-exilic times, the content found in chapters 1-39 should be considered as having originated in the eighth century BCE. Even scholars who might dispute this must admit that this is the *clear intended impression* given to us by the scribal exegetes who finalized the book of Isaiah, based on the twin facts that Isaiah 1:1 mentions Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, and that Isaiah 6 begins with a mention of Uzziah and Isaiah 39 ends with Hezekiah.

The book of Kings, on the other hand, records the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah right up to the time of the Babylonian exile of 587 BCE. Furthermore, throughout the book of Kings there is a familiar refrain that tells the reader that if he cares to know more about any particular king that they are written in either the Annals of the Kings of Israel or the Annals of the Kings of Judah. Quite obviously, the book of Kings was written after the fact—the writer of Kings used these annals in the composition of his own narratives. This places the composition of the book of Kings either during or after

the exile—long after the composition of Proto-Isaiah. While there is no doubt that the books of Kings and Isaiah underwent redaction during the exile, one thing is clear: the scribal exegetes of the book of Isaiah took an already existing Proto-Isaiah (*traditium*) and shaped it into the present final form of Isaiah 1-39 (*traditio*) to fit in with what was written in the exilic work of Deutero-Isaiah. The redactor of the book of Kings, on the other hand, composed his work by taking sections from the Annals of the Kings of Israel and Judah and redacting them within his own exilic composition. Therefore, if we know that he used earlier pre-exilic works, and that Proto-Isaiah was also pre-exilic, it is reasonable to assume that the writer of Kings could very well have borrowed chapters 36-39 from Proto-Isaiah as well.

We also must take into consideration the fact that the writer of Chronicles makes reference to the book of Isaiah. When summing up his narrative about Hezekiah, the writer of II Chronicles states in 32:32 that the other events in Hezekiah's reign "are recorded in the visions of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel." Two points can be made here. First, this "book of the kings of Judah and Israel" is not a reference to the book of Kings, but rather to the source that both the writer of the book of Kings and the writer of the book of Chronicles referred to when writing their respective works. What this shows is that since Isaiah in some form (i.e. Proto-Isaiah) was circulated in the exilic community along with the royal annals of Judah, it was most likely composed before the exile. In fact, most scholars agree to this. Second, we must acknowledge that the fact that the Sennacherib account in II Chronicles shares the same basic storyline as Isaiah 36-37 is further indication that the pre-exilic Proto-Isaiah already contained the account of Sennacherib's invasion found in Isaiah 36-37.

Hence, the material in Isaiah 36-39, though probably *shaped* by the exilic community to act as a literary bridge to Isaiah 40-66, was nevertheless *already present* in Proto-Isaiah text; it was not added to the Proto-Isaiah text by the exilic community.

Furthermore, since this shows that the writer of II Chronicles borrowed from the book of [Proto]-Isaiah, it is not that much of a stretch to assume that that it could have been used in a similar fashion by the exilic or post-exilic writer of the book of Kings. If one accepts the proposal that Isaiah 1-39 was primarily written in the eighth century BCE by the prophet Isaiah himself and that the book of Kings was written in either the exilic or post-exilic period, one can logically allow the possibility that the writer of Kings had Isaiah 1-39 in some form at his disposal as he compiled his own work.

This leaves one final question: when was Isaiah 36-39 most likely written? Most scholars hold that Isaiah 36-39 was added to Proto-Isaiah during the exile, being actually written, if we are to believe Clements, during the time of Josiah. Yet this view is suspect for at least two reasons. First, although it is true that some literary shaping of Proto-Isaiah had taken place during the exile, it is not clear that chapters 36-39 were not already a part of Proto-Isaiah by the time of the exile. Secondly, not only is there no credible historical evidence for Clements' claim that the material now in Isaiah 36-39 was written during Josiah's reign, but the literary evidence Clements offers is nothing more than passages ripped from their context within Isaiah. Nevertheless, both of these reasons are based on the assumption that the Sennacherib account in Isaiah 36-37/II Kings 18-19 is historically untrustworthy and therefore must have been written at a later time when later scribal exegetes could essentially "re-write history" to suit their own agendas. After all, they claim, the Sennacherib campaign was a disaster for Hezekiah.

A different view of this issue can be seen in the work of Christopher Seitz. In his book, *Zion's Final Destiny*, Seitz thoroughly reviews and analyzes the work of many scholars who have wrestled with the issue of the occasion, purpose, place and function of Isaiah 36-39. In the course of his analysis, Seitz puts forth his views regarding the questions surrounding Isaiah 36-39 and their form and function within the book of Isaiah. His views can be summarized as follows:

> (a) The events described in Isaiah 36-39 have their historical roots within the reign of Hezekiah[259]
>
> (b) The initial recording and formation of these chapters might have very well happened during the reign of Manasseh, shortly after the reign of Hezekiah, during the later years of the prophet Isaiah himself[260]
>
> (c) The purpose of these chapters was to bring to a close the recording of the prophetic career of Isaiah by highlighting the fulfillment of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecies and thus vindicating Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH[261]
>
> (d) Both Proto-Isaiah and II Kings used an earlier common source[262]
>
> (e) Later scribal exegetes of the exilic/post-exilic period re-shaped and edited Proto-Isaiah's concluding chapters of 36-39 to look forward to Isaiah 40-66.[263]

---

[259] Christopher Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 95. "It is most likely that behind this narrative lies an extended oral legend, going back to the miraculous event of 701 themselves. Sennacherib failed to take the city and was forced to return by the way he came, as Isaiah had maintained."

[260] Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*. "I see no reason to date the narrative in its present form much later than the death of Sennacherib (681), with which it comes to a stunning close" (117). "Hezekiah 36-37…is not a secondary embellishment from the post-exilic period, but is of a piece with 8:23-9:6, 11:1-10, and 32:1-8. In sum, a strong possibility exists that the initial editorial work on Isaiah traditions came not during the period of Josiah (who is never mentioned in the book), but during the reign of Hezekiah, at the end of Isaiah's own lifetime" (61).

[261] Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 147. "It is not Zion's inviolability that is at issue in the Hezekiah-Isaiah narrative traditions, but rather the singular example of divine grace and royal obedience that confirms Isaiah's earlier Zion proclamation and leads to Zion's wondrous deliverance."

[262] Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 141. "In my analysis of the question of priority, I preferred a third alternative: that an original narrative (now preserved in Isaiah 36-37) was composed for *both* contexts, the DtrH and a Proto-Isaiah collection."

[263] Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 208. "I have tried to demonstrate the pivotal role the Hezekiah-Isaiah narratives play in the growth of the Book of Isaiah, bringing First Isaiah traditions to their culmination, while at the same time raising theological issues only subsequently worked through in the context of Second Isaiah chapters."

There are three fundamental reasons why Seitz's overall argument concerning the unity of Isaiah 1-39 is more convincing than the prevailing scholarly opinion. First, the way in which *history* is presented in Isaiah indicates that Isaiah 36-39 is to be viewed as a part of Proto-Isaiah. The setting of Isaiah 36-39 is clearly during the lifetimes of Isaiah and Hezekiah, whereas the setting of Isaiah 40-66 is clearly that of post-exilic Judah. Second, the *literary structure* of Proto-Isaiah demands the inclusion of chapters 36-39. This chapter will clearly show that the Immanuel prophecies of Isaiah 7-12 simply cannot be understood correctly without reading them within the context of Isaiah 1-39, for chapters 36-39 essentially "answer the questions" presented in Isaiah 7-12.

Third, Seitz's *historical reconstruction* of the events that brought about the writing of Isaiah 36-39 is simply more believable than the reconstructions of scholars like Clements for one simple reason. If this thesis successfully shows that chapters 7-12 and 36-39 must be read in relationship to each other as "literary bookends" in Proto-Isaiah, the fundamental question that should serve as a guide in determining the historical setting in which Isaiah 36-39 was written and Proto-Isaiah was initially put together is this: "What historical circumstance would most likely bring about the writing of Isaiah 36-39?" Clements has argued that Isaiah 36-39 (or more properly II Kings 18-20) was written essentially as "pep talk" to inspire Josiah to rebel against Assyria, nearly one hundred years after the actual events had happened. Yet not only is such a historical reconstruction completely speculative, it fails to articulate the function of the chapters within II Kings.

On the other hand, this thesis proposes a much more likely historical scenario for the composition of Isaiah 36-39: the time shortly after Sennacherib's invasion and

Hezekiah's death, and somewhat early on during the reign of Manasseh. There is no doubt that Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in 701 BCE was a monumental event in the history of the Judean people. Both the biblical accounts as well as Sennacherib's own annals testify that Sennacherib wreaked havoc throughout the Judean countryside: he had devastated 46 towns in Judah and had holed Hezekiah up in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Hezekiah somehow survived and Jerusalem did not fall. If one was able to travel back in time and witness the fallout from Sennacherib's invasion, one would probably find that opinion divided over what had happened in Judah. Yes, there was the survival of Jerusalem, but there was also major devastation throughout Judah. By no means would this have been considered a clear cut cause of rejoicing. Such an event would have undoubtedly gotten mixed reviews by those who lived through it. There were obviously some in Judah, as can be seen reflected in the actions of Manasseh, who not only viewed Isaiah as a trouble-maker,[264] but who also saw Hezekiah as a foolish king who had brought disaster on Judah by getting rid of the high places and by provoking Sennacherib. They would have looked at the destruction throughout Judah and concluded that it was *because of* Hezekiah's adherence to only YHWH (and his subsequent demolition of the other gods that his father Ahaz had worshipped) that this "disaster" happened. Given this view, it should come as no surprise to find that after Hezekiah's death, Manasseh and his

[264]According to JewishEncyclopedia.com, we learn from the Talmud (Yeb. 49b) that Manasseh had Isaiah killed for apparent contradictions between his prophecies and passages like Exodus 33:20, 26, and Deuteronomy 4:7. According to this version, Isaiah uttered the name of YHWH and then disappeared into a cedar tree, which was then ordered to be sawn in two by Manasseh, thus killing Isaiah. In Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin x), we are simply told that Isaiah had hid himself in a cedar tree, but that he was found by Manasseh because the edge of his garment was sticking out of the tree. Manasseh then had the tree sawn in half. Although these stories might be somewhat fanciful, there might be a certain core of historical truth to them. Given Manasseh's whole-hearted devotion to pagan worship, his apparent antagonistic attitude toward his father's religious actions, and Isaiah's obvious age at that time, it is not beyond belief to think that, along with instituting various idolatrous practices, Manasseh had the old prophet of YHWH killed as a means of appeasing the pagan gods that his father Hezekiah had offended by his religious reforms. See Emil G. Hirsch, Thomas Kelly Cheyne, Isidore Singer, and Isaac Broyde, "Isaiah," n.p. [cited 10 May 2008]. Online: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=261&letter=I&search=isaiah#1.

followers sought to re-establish the worship of the very gods Hezekiah had gotten rid of. Yet there were obviously others in Judah, as can be seen reflected in Proto-Isaiah, who saw Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH and Hezekiah as a righteous king who had been vindicated by YHWH for his whole-hearted devotion to the one true God of Israel. Furthermore, they clearly interpreted Sennacherib's failure and YHWH's faithfulness to Jerusalem as a fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, in chapters 7-12. It is the latter's interpretation of 701 BCE that we see reflected in Proto-Isaiah and shaped within the "literary bookends" of Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39.

The question stemming from these events would undoubtedly become, "Which interpretation of these historical events would win out in the collective memory of Israel?" This thesis asserts that honest consideration of this question opens the door to dating the composition of Isaiah 36-39 shortly after the death of Hezekiah and shortly into the reign of Manasseh. Since these events happened in 701 BCE and since Hezekiah probably died shortly after (circa 698 BCE), it should not be completely surprising to find out that his son Manasseh turned to other gods—he obviously was one of those who viewed Sennacherib's invasion as a disaster for Judah. His idolatry, therefore, could be seen as an attempt to win the favor of the gods again. Yet we must not think that everyone in Judah, let alone everyone in the royal house, shared Manasseh's view. Many would have seen his actions as sinful and idolatrous.

In light of Manasseh's idolatrous policies, therefore, we can surmise that either the disciples of Isaiah or scribal exegetes faithful to YHWH composed Isaiah 36-39 sometime during Manasseh's reign to counter the view put forth by Manasseh's government that Sennacherib's invasion happened because Hezekiah foolishly destroyed

the idols of the other gods in Judah and foolishly trusted in YHWH, the god of Isaiah, alone. By contrast, the "Isaianic" scribes faithful to YHWH wanted to: (a) to vindicate Isaiah's prophetic career, (a) to vindicate Hezekiah as a faithful and righteous king, and (c) to vindicate YHWH as the true Redeemer God who was faithful to Judah and who would continue to be faithful to Judah.

This proposed scenario regarding the composition of both Isaiah 36-37 and Proto-Isaiah as a whole seems much more plausible than either a Josianic or exilic scenario, both of which are too simplistic in their reasoning. Neither view allows any room for debate on the interpretation of the historical events surrounding Sennacherib's invasion. Both assume *everyone* viewed Sennacherib's invasion as a complete disaster for Judah and that Isaiah 36-37/II Kings 18-19 are nothing more than later re-writings of history by theologically-motivated and highly biased redactors. Neither acknowledges that such a major event would invoke drastically different interpretations as soon the dust had settled and people started asking, "What happened?" Simply put, neither view is realistic. By contrast, dating the composition of Isaiah 36-37 and the formulation of Proto-Isaiah shortly after Hezekiah's death, early on in Manasseh's reign, seems infinitely more plausible. The battle over the interpretation of such a major event as Sennacherib's invasion would have begun shortly after the event had taken place, not almost two hundred years later. In contrast to Clements, this historical reconstruction, while still somewhat speculative, is able to explain the literary function of Isaiah 36-39 within the context of Proto-Isaiah: it is both *historically* plausible and *literarily* coherent. Such an argument not only provides a very credible historical setting in which the formation of Proto-Isaiah possibly came about, it also provides a literary structure that makes sense of

many of the difficult exegetical problems previously surrounding Isaiah 7:14 itself, Isaiah 7-12 as a unit, and Proto-Isaiah as a unified whole.

IX. The Historical Reliability of the Biblical Accounts of Sennacherib's Invasion

One final question lingers: "Even if the material in Isaiah 36-37 was written during Manasseh's reign to combat his policies and vindicate Isaiah and Hezekiah, can these chapters really be considered to be historically reliable?" There are many factors related to this question, and admittedly, the question of historical reliability of Isaiah 36-37 is not necessarily vital to the argument of this thesis. It is possible to argue for the bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah without ever addressing the question of historical reliability. Nevertheless, since this thesis has so strenuously argued that true exegesis includes a consideration of *both* literary *and* historical concerns, it would be duplicitous if this issue of historical reliability was side-stepped simply because it was rather messy.

When it comes to the question of the historical reliability of Isaiah 36-37, there are essentially three reasons why scholars consider these chapters to be unhistorical and legendary. First, as already discussed earlier, scholars point to the correlation between II Kings 18:13-16 and the Assyrian annals as proof of its historical reliability. Since II Kings 18:13-16 corresponds much more closely to the Assyrian annals and II Kings 18:17ff. (and consequently Isaiah 36-39) does not, 18:13-16 is considered the historically reliable account of Sennacherib's invasion of 701 BCE, whereas II Kings 18:17-20:19/Isaiah 36-39 should be considered later legendary projections into history by

exilic/post-exilic redactors. Seitz has pointed out that virtually every scholar, with the exception of Provan and Hardmeier, holds this position.[265]

A second reason as to why so many scholars discount the historical reliability of these chapters is because II Kings 19:36-37/Isaiah 37:37-38 credits the salvation of Jerusalem to YHWH sending his angel to destroy 185,000 Assyrian soldiers outside the walls of Jerusalem. Because this would be considered a "miracle," most scholars immediately dismiss it as a later legendary account which simply could not be historical. In fact, if truth be told, it is these very verses that have sparked the doubt in scholars' minds regarding the historical reliability of these chapters.

A third reason as to why so many scholars have doubted the historical reliability of these chapters lies in the fact that they simply do not believe that the Bible's portrayal of Hezekiah is true. They believe that since the book of Kings and the book of Isaiah underwent their final redactions during the exilic/post-exilic period, they (a) cannot possibly reflect history accurately, and (b) they betray the theological bias of exilic redactors. Simply put, the reason why modern scholars doubt the historical credibility of these biblical accounts (as well as others) is that they are considered to be the later work of biased redactors who were pushing their own theological agenda.

Since these seem to be the basic reasons why scholars doubt the historical reliability of Isaiah 36-39, we must examine these reasons and try to determine whether or not they are legitimate. We must also clarify exactly what is meant by the term "historical reliability." In terms of the first reason—that II Kings 18:13-16 is more historically reliable than the rest of the Sennacherib narrative because it corresponds to the Assyrian annals—there is an underlying prejudice in favor of the Assyrian annals and

[265] Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 51.

against the biblical text. The scholarly assumption that the biblical texts are theologically biased whereas the Assyrian records are straightforward and objective, and thus the only part of the biblical text that can be trusted is that which correlates to the Assyrian account, is utterly wrong-minded. As Provan points out, *both* accounts are ideological accounts of the past; *both* accounts are trying to interpret certain events from their particular point of view; *both* accounts have an "agenda," if you will. To blindly accept the Assyrian account as the "objective" account is highly questionable.

If we realize that the purpose of the biblical texts is to try to show YHWH's hand at work within the history of Israel, to show how Israel and Judah are accountable to YHWH, and to exalt YHWH as the one true God, then we must also realize that the purpose of the Assyrian annals is "to exalt the reputation of the king concerned, to glorify the gods of Assyria, especially Ashur, and to encourage loyalty and submission among his subjects."[266] Allan Millard further adds, "these compositions had to display the king's accomplishments in the most glorious terms: he had to appear as a successful viceroy of the gods of Assyria, upholding their honor and power, obeying their commands, and so achieving victory over their common enemies."[267] This is precisely what we see when we look at Sennacherib's version of the events of 701 BCE:

> "As for Hezekiah the Judahite who had not submitted to my yoke, I surrounded 46 of his strong walled towns, and innumerable small places around them, and conquered them by means of earth ramps and siege engines, attack by infantrymen, mining, breaching, and scaling. 200,150 people of all ranks, men and women, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle and sheep without number I brought out and counted as spoil. He himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I put watch-posts around him, and made it impossible for anyone to go out of his city. The cities which I had despoiled I cut off from his territory and gave to Mitinti king of Ashdod, Padi king of Ekron, and Sil-Bel king of Gaza, so reducing his realm. I added to their previous annual tax a tribute

[266] Provan, "In the Stable," 31.
[267] Allan Millard, "Sennacherib's Attack on Hezekiah," *TB* 36 (1985): 65.

> befitting my lordship, and imposed it on them. Now the fear of my lordly splendor overwhelmed that Hezekiah. The warriors and select troops he had brought in to strengthen his royal city, Jerusalem, did not fight. He had brought after me to Nineveh, my royal city, 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, best antimony, great blocks of red stone, ivory-decorated beds, ivory-decorated chairs, elephant hide, tusks, ebony, box-wood, valuable treasures of every sort, and his daughters, women of his palace, men and women singers. He sent his messenger to pay tribute and do obeisance."[268]

As scholars have long noticed, while there are indeed many points of similarity between this and II Kings 18:13-16, this account does not seem to correspond to the rest of the biblical account. They assume therefore that "Account B" must be legendary because it, not only does not correspond to Sennacherib's account, but puts Hezekiah in a positive light and praises YHWH for delivering Jerusalem. Yet one must wonder why scholars do not question Sennacherib's version on the same grounds: it puts Sennacherib in a positive light and praises the gods of Assyria.

The scholar must look at *both* accounts and, while fully realizing that *both* accounts are told from different ideological perspectives and agendas, attempt to come to some sort of conclusion about the historical event in question. So what common ground does the full biblical account and Sennacherib's version share? Both agree that: (a) Sennacherib invaded and took many fortified cities in Judah; (b) Sennacherib did at one point besiege Jerusalem and Hezekiah seemed completely helpless; (c) the Egyptian army at some point appeared and was dealt with; and (d) Hezekiah eventually paid tribute to Sennacherib. And although the literary structure of Isaiah 36-39 has already been discussed, thereby showing the literary quality and unity of Isaiah 36-37, we must acknowledge the fact that nothing in the larger biblical account contradicts any of these four points. The only glaring difference between the biblical account and Sennacherib's

[268] "Sennacherib's Account of His Campaign in Judah," (ANET, 288).

version is, not surprisingly, the conclusion to the matter: the biblical account claims an "angel of YHWH" destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, Sennacherib withdrew, and Jerusalem was spared; Sennacherib's version makes no mention of this. Yet for that matter, it is very interesting to note that Sennacherib conveniently never tells of the outcome of his siege of Jerusalem. All he mentions is that Hezekiah sent him tribute *once he had returned to Nineveh.* In Nineveh, in the Lachish Room, he celebrated the siege and capture of Lachish; in fact Millard points out that the Lachish Room "stands as the focus of the whole section of the palace."[269] Yet, despite the fact that Jerusalem was the capital, there is surprisingly no celebration over its capture or any mention of the siege of Jerusalem. He does not even mention that he had chosen to spare Jerusalem.

When one considers these factors, one must admit that we have very good reason to be suspicious of Sennacherib's version of events. Why did Hezekiah send him tribute, not outside Jerusalem, not at Lachish, but only later, after Sennacherib had returned to Nineveh?[270] Why did Sennacherib highlight the siege at Lachish and conveniently push Jerusalem to the background? Why, if Hezekiah was the rebel ruler and instigator of the revolt, did Sennacherib choose to leave him on the throne, only requiring tribute? Finally, when one compares Sennacherib's account of his siege of Jerusalem, one must agree with Millard when he says, "…the note of triumph with which the reports of Assyrian campaigns normally end is absent from this one. True, the list of Hezekiah's tribute has a note of success, yet it is muted in comparison with the ending of every other one of Sennacherib's campaigns in which he proclaims what he has done."[271] Laato adds that the list of tribute sent by Hezekiah was meant "give the impression that [Sennacherib's]

[269] Millard, "Sennacherib's Attack on Hezekiah," 68.
[270] Millard, "Sennacherib's Attack on Hezekiah," 71.
[271] Millard, "Sennacherib's Attack on Hezekiah," 71-72.

campaign in Judah had been successfully concluded, even though Hezekiah, the main rebel, was not dethroned."[272] Therefore, it seems that Sennacherib's account is "less straightforward than it may appear when read in isolation."[273] There are too many inconsistencies in his account to allow us to naively believe he is being "objective."

The second reason why scholars discount Isaiah 36-37 as legendary centers on the claim that an angel of YHWH killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. Yet not only is it questionable to dismiss the entire account because of one verse, such an action displays a shocking amount of literary ignorance. It does not allow any room for metaphor, symbolism, or creative license in the story. Now, it is very reasonable to ask the question "Was there a literal angel who struck down 185,000 Assyrians?" For that matter, it is very reasonable to ask other questions like, "Did the Rabshakeh really say those exact words in the speech accredited to him?" "Did Hezekiah really say that exact prayer?" "Did Isaiah really utter that prophecy, word for word?" The obvious answer to all of these questions is, "Of course not." But that does not mean that something quite unusual did not happened that caused the Assyrian army to abandon the siege of Jerusalem, and that was interpreted by the people of Judah as an act of YHWH; that does not mean that the Rabshakeh didn't taunt Hezekiah in some way outside the walls of Jerusalem; that does not mean that Hezekiah didn't offer up a prayer to YHWH for deliverance; and that does not mean Isaiah did not prophesy that YHWH would save Jerusalem. In terms of Sennacherib's abandonment of the siege of Jerusalem, one thing is clear—*something* happened that caused him to do so. The writer of Isaiah interpreted this "something" as an act of God, and couched it in the terms we have in the account. Both Herodotus and

[272] Antti Laato, "Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib," *VT* 45:2 (1995): 218.

[273] Millard, "Sennacherib's Attack on Hezekiah," 72.

Josephus suggest that it was some sort of plague, and indeed that may very well be the case, we simply do not know. In any case, whatever happened, we know that Jerusalem was spared and Hezekiah stayed on the throne. We also know that the biblical testimony presents this event as the glorious deliverance of Jerusalem by YHWH, while Sennacherib's account glosses over and sidesteps the siege of Jerusalem every chance he gets. Must we believe that there was a literal angel who killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers? No. Does this mean we must dismiss the entire account as legendary and unhistorical? No. All it means is that we need to have common sense and be able to recognize literary artistry and metaphor when it appears in a text that relates historical events.

Finally, there is the objection that we cannot believe the biblical portrait of Hezekiah because these stories were written at a much later time, during the exilic period. Yet this objection has already been addressed both back in chapter one as well as earlier in this chapter. Provan, Long, and Longman have already put forth a persuasive argument that mere distance from an event does not automatically mean that the text in question is historically unreliable. We know, for example, that the book of Isaiah probably came into its final form during exilic and post-exilic times. We also can safely assume that the material in Proto-Isaiah had undergone redaction and literary styling during exilic and post-exilic times as the later scribal exegetes shaped the entire book of Isaiah into the form and structure that we have today. Yet we must be very cautious when we attempt to make the argument that large sections in Proto-Isaiah were essentially made up out of whole cloth by later redactors and therefore have no historical basis to them.

X. A Proposed Understanding of Sennacherib's Invasion

In contrast to the general view of Sennacherib's invasion among modern biblical scholars, Iain Provan has put forth a view of the event that fully respects the biblical accounts. According to Provan, once one reads and analyzes all the relevant material, the following outline of events seems very probable. First, Hezekiah was probably one of the "moving forces"[274] who, in an attempt to prepare for an expected invasion, made a pre-emptive strike against king Sillibel of the Philistines, and also captured and imprisoned king Padi of Ekron. Second, in light of Sennacherib's taking of forty-six cities, Hezekiah then offered renewed tribute to Sennacherib in hopes that he would withdraw his forces (II Kings 18:13-16). Yet Sennacherib, viewing Hezekiah as the main instigator of the revolt, sent an army from Lachish to Jerusalem and attempted to persuade Hezekiah to fully surrender (II Kings 18:17ff.). Thirdly, all accounts agree that an Assyrian army ended up besieging Jerusalem, that at some point an Egyptian army appeared on the scene, and that Sennacherib defeated this army at Eltekah.[275] It is at this point, Provan speculates, that Hezekiah released Padi of Ekron in order to buy more time. In any case, for some reason Sennacherib never took Jerusalem, "nor even to have received tribute from Hezekiah in the immediate aftermath of the siege. He tells us only that after his return to Nineveh…Hezekiah sent tribute."[276] Not only does Provan's view clearly take the biblical testimony seriously, it is entirely historically plausible.[277]

[274] Provan, "In the Stable," 31.
[275] Provan, "In the Stable," 32.
[276] Provan, "In the Stable," 33.
[277] The only other thing we might suggest to reconsider is the payment of tribute Hezekiah made to Sennacherib recorded in II Kings 18:13-16. Most scholars suggest these verses are the authentic account, whereas Provan attempts to fit these verses into the rest of the narrative. Yet is it not possible that II Kings 18:13-16 is a summary of the entire invasion of Sennacherib that the writer of II Kings got from an earlier work, possibly the royal annals of Judah? He then borrowed from the account found in Proto-Isaiah and attached it to the end of his account as an elaboration of his original brief summary. Therefore, the tribute

Contrary to many modern scholars who try to caricature the biblical accounts of Sennacherib's invasions as a legendary "pie in the sky" account that inaccurately portrays Hezekiah as an ideal king who could do no wrong, a clear reading of the biblical accounts gives no such impression. In fact, the biblical accounts give a very honest and straightforward account of Sennacherib's invasion. First, there are a number of passages in Isaiah that clearly condemn rebellion and reliance on Egypt, both of which Hezekiah seemed to have done at some point in his reign.[278] Second, the biblical accounts themselves tell how Sennacherib captured all of Judah's fortified cities and how many deserted Hezekiah as well. They clearly do not shy away from the negatives during Hezekiah's reign. Third, the episode concerning the envoys from Babylon highlights a major blunder on Hezekiah's part as well. Nevertheless, the biblical accounts tell us that in 701 BCE, when Sennacherib was on the verge of destroying Jerusalem, Hezekiah, despite his past flaws, nevertheless displayed great faith in YHWH, and that Jerusalem was indeed spared, although at the same time much of Judah was devastated.

---

mentioned in II Kings 18:14-16 is not some sort of initial payment Hezekiah attempted to make *before* Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem, but rather the same tribute Sennacherib mentions was paid to him back in Nineveh. Such a scenario is not that improbable. In light of Hezekiah's rebellion, Sennacherib invaded Judah, overtook 46 of Hezekiah's cities, and devastated much of Hezekiah's kingdom. He also laid siege to Jerusalem and it looked as if Hezekiah would face certain destruction. For some reason—unexplained in Sennacherib's annals and described as the actions of an angel of YHWH in the biblical accounts—Sennacherib failed to take Jerusalem and went back to Nineveh. At this point, although the deliverance of Jerusalem was seen by Hezekiah and the people of Judah as a protective act of YHWH, Hezekiah well knew that much of his land had been overrun by Sennacherib. Therefore, in order to try to avoid any future re-invasion, Hezekiah sent tribute to Sennacherib in Nineveh. This tribute allowed Sennacherib to "save face" and it insured that Judah would not suffer through another full out military assault by Sennacherib. One last speculative note—given the unusual nature of II Kings 18:14-16, a few scholars have suggested that these verses are referring to Hezekiah's actions during Sargon's campaign in 711 BCE. We know that Hezekiah took part in the rebellion, and we know that he was allowed to stay on his throne. A possible reason for this might be that he paid tribute to Sargon. One could further speculate that, in light of that, Hezekiah once again tried to pay off the Assyrian king (in this case, Sennacherib). If that was the case, then it would be understandable why Sennacherib would have besieged Jerusalem; he knew of Hezekiah's past rebellion, and decided that Hezekiah was a king that needed to be severely dealt with.

[278] Isaiah 30:1-3; 31:1-3; 36:2, 9

XI. Final Thoughts on Isaiah 36-39 and the Occasion for Proto-Isaiah

The essential problem with historical-critical biblical scholarship that too often scholars simply cannot fathom the possibility that the biblical writers, or any writer for that matter, could use literary artistry and techniques and still present a historically reliable account of the past. This divorce between literary concerns and history simply destroys any meaningful exegesis and understanding of the text. The task of the exegete is to come to a clearer understanding of Israelite history *through* the biblical texts, not *despite* them. Scholarly pre-occupations with fanciful reconstructions of biblical history during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah have nearly rendered any true biblical exegesis of texts like Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39 impossible. What we have shown in this chapter is that the generally accepted opinion that rejects the *historical reliability* of the biblical accounts of Sennacherib's invasion is not only ill-founded and highly questionable, but it ultimately obscures any clear exegetical understanding and vision of the *literary structure* of Proto-Isaiah. We have analyzed the details of the literary structure of Isaiah 36-39, have addressed the issue of priority, and have concluded it is more likely that Isaiah 36-39 hold priority over II Kings 18-20. We have also argued that Isaiah 36-37 should be accepted as containing historically reliable information, though admittedly having gone through later literary shaping. In the next chapter we will analyze the overall "bookend" structure that can be seen in Proto-Isaiah. It will be argued that Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 have been set up as the two "bookends" to Proto-Isaiah. We know this by looking at the numerous literary and thematic connections between these two sections. The reason why these two sections have been structured this way is because of two historical factors. The prophecies in Isaiah 7-12 were born out of the historical circumstances of the Syro-

Ephraimite Crisis, were focused on the birth of Hezekiah, the Immanuel child, and prophesied about YHWH's future chastening of Judah by the hand of Assyria as well as YHWH's future chastening of Assyria and redeeming of the remnant of his people in Jerusalem. The narratives found in Isaiah 36-39 were born out of the historical circumstances of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah, as well as two other events of Hezekiah's reign: his illness and the visit from the envoys from Babylon. These narratives focus on the reign of Hezekiah, the Immanuel child who grew up to be king, and they show how the prophecies of Isaiah in chapters 7-12 were fulfilled.

With all this in mind, the natural question is, "What historical circumstance would have occasioned the writing of chapters 36-39 and the formation of Proto-Isaiah itself?" This chapter has shown the general scholarly view that the exilic author of Deutero-Isaiah incorporated II Kings 18-20 into his redaction of Proto-Isaiah and expansion of the book of Isaiah to be highly questionable and problematic. Furthermore, this chapter has also questioned the general scholarly assumption that the material in Isaiah 36-39 was originally composed around the time of Josiah. It is the opinion of this thesis, given the clear literary unity of Isaiah 1-39 (as will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter), that chapters 36-39 were originally composed to form the conclusion of Proto-Isaiah, and that the most likely occasion for the compilation of Proto-Isaiah was relatively early on during Manasseh's reign, when he instituted policies that sought to undo the reforms that Hezekiah had put in place. Such actions, coming on the heels of an enormous national crisis (i.e. Sennacherib's invasion), would have sparked controversy between the new royal court and the temple priests and scribes loyal to YHWH. Proto-Isaiah, complete

with chapters 36-39, sought to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet, Hezekiah as a faithful and righteous king, and YHWH Himself as the one true God.

Scholars rightly note that Isaiah 36-39 attempts to put Hezekiah forth as an ideal king; yet they are mistaken when they assume that such an idealization came long after the events themselves and therefore is historically unreliable. The most likely time such questions over Hezekiah's reputation would have been debated would have been during the years shortly after Sennacherib's invasion, when king Manasseh, by instituting his new political and religious policies, essentially declared Hezekiah's policies a failure and Hezekiah a foolish king. Given this situation, those loyal to YHWH, who viewed Hezekiah as a righteous and faithful king, would have attempted to vindicate not only Hezekiah, but also Isaiah and YHWH Himself, by putting forth their interpretation of national events over the last fifty years of Judah's history. In that sense, what we have in both Isaiah 36-39 and Isaiah 7-12 is not "history" per se, but rather *theological interpretations* of historical events. Nevertheless, they are about real events in history, and not simply later projections that have no basis in history. The scribal exegetes who compiled Proto-Isaiah were not interested in abstract theological concepts. They were concerned with showing how the God of Israel had indeed worked in the life and times of their beloved king and their revered prophet. Therefore, their admittedly "literary work" of Proto-Isaiah was intimately tied to historical events and spoke to, what was for them, a hotly-debated current controversy as to how to interpret those historical events.

Chapter Five

The Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah: Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39

I. Introduction

Thus far in this thesis we have covered a vast range of issues that all have bearing on our central argument that the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah sets up chapters 7-12 and 36-39 as two "bookends" that highlight Isaiah's "Immanuel prophecies" during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the fulfillment of those prophecies during the invasion of Sennacherib in the time of Hezekiah's reign. At the heart of this "bookend structure" we find the central figure of Immanuel (understood as Hezekiah) whose birth was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 and during whose reign the greater prophecies of Isaiah 7-12 (as well as elsewhere in Proto-Isaiah) came to fulfillment.

Making such an argument, though, is a very difficult and laborious undertaking, for both Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39 are fraught with exegetical difficulties and scholarly controversy. There are the controversies surrounding the specifics of Isaiah 7:14 and its immediate context of 7:13-25, as well as chapters 7-12 (chapter 2); there is the controversy surrounding the chronology of II Kings (chapter 3); and there are the controversies of the priority of either II Kings or Isaiah, the literary unity of Isaiah 36-39, and the historical reliability of Isaiah 36-39 (chapter 4). Now that we have analyzed, discussed, and come to our conclusions concerning these issues, we now are able to turn our attention to analyzing the "bookend structure" of Proto-Isaiah that lies at the very heart of the argument of this thesis.

II. The Structure of Proto-Isaiah

It has long been noted that Isaiah 36-39 plays a significant role within the structure of Isaiah. It not only serves as a conclusion to Proto-Isaiah, but it also acts as a springboard that takes the reader forward to the later part of the exilic period, to Isaiah 40 in which God calls his people out of the very exile about which Isaiah prophesies in Isaiah 39. Yet because of the general consensus among scholars regarding the priority of II Kings 18-20 over Isaiah 36-39, the "historical" debate has tended to focus on the II Kings account, whereas the Isaiah account has traditionally been regulated to questions of literary structure and its place and function within Isaiah as a whole. In other words, since Isaiah 36-39 has been generally regarded as a later legendary and unhistorical account of Sennacherib's invasion, many scholars dismiss the notion that Isaiah 36-39 actually was ever a part of Proto-Isaiah. In light of this, many scholars have divided Proto-Isaiah as consisting of chapters 1-33 or chapters 1-35, with chapters 36-39 being attributed to the work of Deutero-Isaiah, who borrowed from II Kings and placed chapters 36-39 in their present place to function as a "bridge" between Proto-Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah. Unfortunately, this view has led to an inability to see, not only the historical significance of Isaiah 36-39 itself, but also how the very literary structure of Proto-Isaiah, consisting of chapters 1-39, reveals a clear theological/political interpretation of the both Ahaz's unfaithfulness during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and Hezekiah's faithfulness during Sennacherib's invasion, namely that (a) Hezekiah was the prophesied Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14, (b) the Assyrian oppression was the consequence of Ahaz's unfaithful actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, and (c) Sennacherib's failure to take Jerusalem and Hezekiah's faithfulness to YHWH was prophesied by Isaiah.

In order to understand the structure of Proto-Isaiah, one must recognize that in its original context Isaiah 7:14 was a prophecy that (a) centered on the birth of Hezekiah, (b) warned of YHWH's impending judgment on Israel and Judah, and (c) announced YHWH's salvation of the remnant who survived his judgment. This prophecy, therefore, found its *immediate* fulfillment within the reign of Hezekiah: Israel was destroyed by Assyria; Judah was oppressed by Assyria and, during Sennacherib's invasion, was "flooded up to the neck" with the Assyrian armies. Yet YHWH saved the faithful remnant in Jerusalem from total destruction precisely because Hezekiah put his faith in YHWH in a time of national crisis. Therefore, because of these historical events of both the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the invasion of Sennacherib, the writer of Proto-Isaiah chose to arrange his work around these defining moments in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Ahaz's faithless actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis brought about a prophecy of YHWH's judgment by the means of Assyria; yet along with that prophecy of judgment came a promise of YHWH's salvation of a remnant by the means of a faithful royal son, which was seen as being fulfilled during the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE, in the faithful actions of Hezekiah, Ahaz's son.

By showing that the prophecies of Isaiah had indeed been fulfilled during Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE, Proto-Isaiah not only vindicated the prophetic career of Isaiah, but it also insured its own retention and survival—the work of the true prophets of YHWH was preserved, whereas the work of false prophets was discarded. In light of the prophet's vindication and Proto-Isaiah's retention, later scribal exegetes built upon Isaiah's work and expanded its prophetic influence to the surviving remnant that returned to Judah after the Babylonian Exile.

Yet this bookend pattern of prophecy-and-fulfillment found in Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 leaves open the question of Isaiah 1-6 and its place within Proto-Isaiah. To this question, we must present a number of clarifications. First, one might assume, since this thesis is arguing that Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 act as "literary bookends" within Proto-Isaiah, this thesis is also arguing that chapters 1-6 were later insertions to the text, possibly at the time when chapters 40-66 were added. After all, the term "bookends" indicates that one bookend stands at the beginning of a work and the other stands at the end of a work. Yet this is not what this thesis is arguing. Rather, the argument of this thesis regarding the structure and composition of Proto-Isaiah is that (a) the various prophecies and oracles within Proto-Isaiah were recorded in some fashion or another during the lifetime of the prophet Isaiah, and (b) shortly after Hezekiah's death, when conflict arose over how to interpret the events of Sennacherib's invasion and Manasseh began to re-institute pagan worship, and, if there is any amount of credibility to Jewish tradition, when Manasseh had Isaiah killed, the disciples of Isaiah and/or scribes who were devoted to the sole worship of YHWH collected Isaiah's oracles (of which chapters 1-6 were a part) and stitched them together within what was essentially a "Book of Isaiah" that served to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH, vindicate Hezekiah as a righteous king who was faithful to YHWH, and place the blame for Judah's recent hardships on the unfaithful and idolatrous practices most typified by the actions of Hezekiah's father Ahaz. As Christopher Seitz has mentioned, "It comes as no surprise that as the Isaiah traditions developed and took form, the contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah was yet furthered strengthened. Jerusalem's deliverance in 701 BC was a powerful confirmation of the prophet's Immanuel promises."[279]

[279] *Isaiah 1-39*, 71.

This interpretation of the events during Isaiah's lifetime eventually won the day in the life of ancient Israel. Hezekiah went down in history as a righteous king and Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH. Later on during the exile, later scribes and prophets sought to speak to their exilic and post-exilic audience by building on the prophetic vision of Isaiah. Deutero-Isaiah, therefore was essentially born out of the original book of Isaiah, now known as "Proto-Isaiah." While there is no doubt these later scribal exegetes probably edited certain sections of Proto-Isaiah as they added Deutero-Isaiah on to the original,[280] the extent to which they did this can only be a matter of speculation. Therefore, unless there is some compelling evidence to doubt the historical and literary unity of chapters 1-39, this thesis holds that we should not only view these chapters as a literary whole, but that the historical impetus for the composition of these chapters was most likely to have been early on during Manasseh's reign, when there would have undoubtedly been controversy and debate over the interpretation and meaning of the events from the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis up through Sennacherib's invasion.

This leads us to our second point concerning Isaiah 1-6: although there is general consensus that chapters 1-12 form a distinct unit within Proto-Isaiah, there has still been different opinions as to how those chapters function together as a unit. Christopher Seitz makes the argument that chapters 1-4 "certainly set the tone for what follows" in chapters 5-12.[281] In saying this, Seitz clearly sees the "song of the vineyard" in chapter 5 and Isaiah's call in chapter 6 as being intimately connected to chapters 7-12. John Oswalt,

[280] For example, the placement of chapters 38-39 after 36-37, even though we can be fairly certain that Hezekiah's illness and the visit of the envoys from Babylon happened before Sennacherib's invasion, can be easily explained by the realization that later scribal exegetes wanted to have Proto-Isaiah end with the envoys from Babylon, so it could act as a bridge to Isaiah 40 and the call to come out from the Babylonian exile.

[281] *Isaiah 1-39*, 30.

though, divides things in the following manner: chapters 1-5 act as the introduction to the entire book of Proto-Isaiah, chapter 6 tells about Isaiah's call to servanthood, and chapters 7-12 illustrate the dilemma of whom to trust, God or Assyria.[282] Brevard Childs also sees chapter 6 as a lynchpin that both points backwards to chapter 5 and forward to chapter 7.[283] This thesis tends to agree with the structural outlines of Oswalt and Childs. The mention of the "vineyard" in Isaiah 1:8 finds parallels in 3:14 and 5:1-10, but then virtually disappears from the rest of Isaiah. For that reason alone, one can argue that chapters 1-5 should be seen as a smaller literary unit within chapters 1-12. With that in mind, one can also view chapter 6 as the bridge between the prologue of chapters 1-5 and the historical narrative of Isaiah's confrontation with Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. After introducing the prophet Isaiah, chapter 6 not only links itself to the destroyed vineyard of chapter 5 with its imagery of desolation and a fallen stump (6:11-13), but also links itself to the Immanuel child (and also the royal child of 9:1-5 and 11:1-11) with its imagery of the "holy seed" being in the stump of the fallen tree (6:13).

What this brief discussion has tried to show is that although this thesis is arguing that Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 act as "literary bookends" within Proto-Isaiah, it is not suggesting that Isaiah 1-6 is secondary or superfluous material. It is extremely crucial, in that it not only lays out the major themes and strands of emphasis within Proto-Isaiah, but it introduces the prophet Isaiah himself. But as far as the overall literary structure of Proto-Isaiah as a whole is concerned, it is the two historical episodes of Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and Hezekiah and Sennacherib's invasion that serve as its literary framework. Without these two historical episodes, the themes and imagery introduced in

[282] *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39.*
[283] *Isaiah*, 62.

chapters 1-6 and found throughout Proto-Isaiah would remain ambiguous and *ahistorical*. In that sense, Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 not only act as literary bookends to Proto-Isaiah, but they also provide the historical framework in which to interpret the themes and strands of emphasis found throughout Proto-Isaiah.

What we find in Proto-Isaiah, therefore, is this overall structure: (a) *Chapters 1-5* act as a prologue to Proto-Isaiah. The very first verse, by claiming that Isaiah's ministry took place during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, impels us to view chapters 36-39 as part of Proto-Isaiah, for they took place during Hezekiah's reign. These chapters not only mark out the historical time period in which Proto-Isaiah is to be interpreted, but they also act to set out the general themes and motifs that will run throughout Proto-Isaiah; (b) *Chapter 6* functions as both an introduction to the prophet Isaiah and as a lynchpin between the prologue of chapters 1-5 and the narrative/prophecy regarding the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis; (c) *Chapters 7-12* act as the first bookend to the main body of Proto-Isaiah by providing the narrative and subsequent prophecy surrounding Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. These chapters, in effect, provide a historical "fleshing out" of the general themes put forth in the prelude of chapters 1-6; (d) *Chapters 13-19* contain the first set of various oracles, primarily concerning surrounding nations, in which the themes and motifs introduced in chapters 1-6 and "fleshed out" in chapters 7-12 are further developed; (e) *Chapter 20* gives a short narrative account of Isaiah's actions during the Ashdod campaign of 714 BCE; (f) *Chapters 21-35* contain a second set of various oracles, primarily focusing on Jersualem, in which the same themes and motifs are further developed; (g) *Chapters 36-39* act as the second bookend within the body of Proto-Isaiah in which the various themes and motifs are brought to their

conclusion in the narrative concerning Hezekiah reign and the invasion of Sennacherib. Scholars have differed as to how to classify and organize chapters 13-35, but one thing is obvious: within Proto-Isaiah there are three narrative sections: Isaiah 7-12 contains narrative and prophecy directly related to that narrative; Isaiah 20 contains a narrative regarding Isaiah's actions during the Ashdod campaign; and Isaiah 36-39 contains a narrative surrounding Hezekiah's reign, primarily focusing on the invasion of Sennacherib.

In this chapter we will analyze the literary "bookend structure" within the main body of Proto-Isaiah that was used to vindicate Isaiah's prophetic career by highlighting Isaiah's Immanuel prophecies in Isaiah 7-12 and the fulfillment of those prophecies in Isaiah 36-39. It has been long noted by numerous scholars that there are various items within these two sections that can be seen as directly contrasting the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Ironically though, despite general agreement among scholars, there is rarely any full discussion of the contrasts between these two kings. It is the view of this thesis that these contrasts between Ahaz and Hezekiah are not simply random and isolated features within the texts, but that they are a major part of the very structure of Proto-Isaiah. Furthermore, it is this bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah that highlights the contrast of these two kings that both the writer of Kings and Chronicles pick up on and work into their own accounts as well.

III. Intertextuality within the Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah

A literary analysis of the bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah shows far more than just a simple contrast between a bad king and a good king, although that becomes very clear within the text. What it shows is a much wider matrix of meaning that involves the

idea of prophecy-fulfillment centered on the promised royal son Immanuel, Hezekiah. Indeed, what is involved in this literary structuring is an element of intertextuality and inner-biblical exegesis. This was touched upon with our discussion of Michael Fishbane in chapter one. Our premise here is that Isaiah 36-39 was composed with clear intertextual echoes to Isaiah 7-12[284]: various phrases, places, and themes found within Isaiah 36-39 find direct correlation and cohesiveness with the events and prophecies in Isaiah 7-12, the end result being that the ultimate interpretation of these two passages in Isaiah is dependent upon seeing each one's relationship to the other.

Yet one might ask, "How can we be sure that there is intentional intertextuality on the part of any given writer?" In his book, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul,* Richard Hays offers a brief checklist of items that help us assess whether or not a biblical writer is intentionally making intertextual connections within his work. Although his work deals with Old Testament reinterpretation in Paul, the tests he proposes to guide intertextual analysis are equally applicable to the later Old Testament writers who drew upon earlier Old Testament works. According to Hays, and to a number of other scholars as well, the probable intention of the author and understanding of the original audience is of primary importance in any definition of biblical intertextuality.[285] He writes, "Claims about intertextual meaning effects are strongest when it can be credibly demonstrated that they occur within the literary structure of the text and that they can plausibly be ascribed

[284] The potential date of composition of Isaiah 36-39 was discussed in chapter 4, "The Occasion and Purpose of Isaiah 36-39," pages 35-45.

[285] "Responsible exegesis involves not only a responsibility towards the possible intentions of 'an original author' or 'editor', but also a willingness to include meanings that were not intended but which arise in the dialogue with later texts." Kirsten Nielsen, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible," in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* (ed. A. Lemaire and M. Saebo; Boston: Brill, 2000), 31.

to the intention of the author and the competence of the original readers."[286] Granting the inherent subjectivity in such an assessment, as in most historical-critical assessments, when suggesting an intertextual connection within a given biblical text, the scholar must be able to make a plausible case that either when the author said *X* that he was intentionally making a reference to *Y*, or when the original audience read *X* that they understood it to be referring to *Y*. If so, then that impels us to consider that connection when trying to determine the meaning of the text. This leads to the question, "What are the indicators that show there is a legitimate connection between two texts?"

The most obvious indicator of intertextuality is when there is an explicit citation of a *traditum* within the *traditio*. Yet Fishbane points out that "the vast majority of cases of aggadic exegesis in the Hebrew Bible involve *implicit* or virtual citations."[287] Given this fact, there must be definitive indicators that aid the scholar in making the judgment as to whether or not a proposed case of intertextuality could have been intended by the author and/or understood by the original audience. Such indicators are provided by Hays in the form of seven tests: (1) *Availability*: Was the proposed source of the echo available to the author and/or original readers? (2) *Volume*: Is there a large degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns? In other words, if there is no direct citation of a previous work, one should look for a "grouping" or "pattern" of catch words or images that the text shares with a prior text.[288] Furthermore, one should ask if there is a similar storyline or pattern of events that the text shares with a prior text. (3) *Recurrence*: How

[286] Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 28.

[287] Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 285.

[288] "Of particular aid and importance in this judgment is the dense occurrence in one text of terms, often thoroughly reorganized and transposed, and found elsewhere in a natural, uncomplicated form." Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 291.

often does the author cite or allude to the same scriptural passage? (4) *Thematic Coherence*: How well does the echo fit into the line of argument being developed? (5) *Historical Plausibility*: Could the author have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could the original readers have understood it? (6) *History of Interpretation*: Have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes? (7) *Satisfaction*: Does the proposed reading make sense? Does it illuminate the surrounding discourse? If one is guided by these seven tests, one will be able to differentiate between legitimate cases of intertextuality and those that are somewhat problematic. When these tests are used in our analysis of the bookend structure of Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39, it becomes abundantly clear that this intertextual phenomenon was intentional, and it further strengthens Seitz's argument that Isaiah 36-39 was written shortly after the time of Hezekiah and Isaiah and thus formed the conclusion to Proto-Isaiah.

IV. Recurring Themes and Motifs throughout Proto-Isaiah

Yet there is more to Proto-Isaiah than just a highlighted "bookend" structure. The primary function of any two bookends is obviously to hold together various books. In the case of chapters 7-12 and 36-39, these literary bookends hold together a number of significant themes and motifs that run throughout Proto-Isaiah. These themes and motifs that are found throughout the many prophecies and oracles in Proto-Isaiah are given a distinct structure and focus by the two bookends of chapters 7-12 and 36-39; in other words, these two bookends provide the literary structure and highlight the historical backdrop in which to understand and interpret the totality of the oracles, themes, and motifs that are woven together in Proto-Isaiah. Scholars might disagree over whether or not certain passages in Proto-Isaiah are historically reliable and whether or not certain

passages in Proto-Isaiah are simply later additions and glosses, yet one thing is certain: the *intended* historical setting presented in Proto-Isaiah is that of the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Therefore, any literary analysis of Proto-Isaiah must be done with the understanding that Proto-Isaiah is presented as *having taken place* during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, roughly 742-698 BCE. Furthermore, if our historical reconstruction of the events that led to the compilation of Proto-Isaiah is found plausible, we can be certain that Proto-Isaiah would have spoken to the theological-political controversies that would have undoubtedly arisen when Manasseh attempted to reverse the policies of his father Hezekiah. Once we acknowledge the obvious fact that it begins with a narrative concerning Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and concludes with a narrative concerning Hezekiah and the events of Sennacherib's invasion, it should come as no surprise to find that there are a number of themes and motifs that are developed throughout Proto-Isaiah and come to a certain resolution within chapters 36-39.

So what are these recurring motifs and themes? Although there are various ways to address these motifs and themes, this thesis will choose to present them in the following manner. Essentially there are three strands of focus throughout Proto-Isaiah. The first strand focuses on the *sinful state* of humanity. Sometimes Jerusalem is highlighted, sometimes other nations are highlighted. Within this strand of focus we find the following recurring language: (a) condemnation of idol worship; (b) lack of knowledge and wisdom; (c) blindness and deafness; (d) haughtiness and pride; and (e) the rejection of YHWH's counsel and the acceptance of poor counsel; the result of all this ends up in (f) the oppression of the poor. The second strand in Proto-Isaiah focuses on the *judgment of YHWH* upon sinful nations whose sinful state from the first strand is

condemned. Within this strand we find YHWH's judgment described in the following recurring language: (a) YHWH's hand stretching out in judgment; (b) foreign oppression and trampling; (c) burning fire; (d) the bringing down of those who are haughty and arrogant; and (e) spoil and plunder; the result of all this is ends up in (f) devastation to the point where only a remnant is left. The third strand in Proto-Isaiah focuses on the *exaltation of YHWH* and the *salvation of his people*. Within this strand we find the following recurring language: (a) YHWH's hand stretching out for salvation; (b) true knowledge and wisdom; (c) the opening of blind eyes and deaf ears; (d) faithfulness, righteousness and justice; and (e) the heeding of the counsel of YHWH; the result of all this is (f) the refined remnant of YHWH's people acting as a signal to the nations and the nations coming to a true worship of YHWH. These three strands of emphasis in Proto-Isaiah—the sinful state of humanity, the judgment of YHWH, and the exaltation of YHWH and the salvation of his people—are woven throughout virtually every prophetic oracle within Proto-Isaiah and are emphasized by means of this recurring language just highlighted above. We see this in every major section in Proto-Isaiah.

V. The Narrative Artistry of the Three Strands of Emphasis

The way the recurring themes and motifs of these three strands of emphasis are woven throughout Proto-Isaiah is extremely complex. Therefore, before we look at how these strands and recurring motifs and themes actually work their way through Proto-Isaiah, we must first explain the "narrative artistry" of these strands, motifs, and themes: (A) how the themes and motifs within each strand relate to each other, and (B) how the themes and motifs in one strand relate to the themes and motifs in the other strands.

We will first look at the strand that emphasizes the *sinful state* of either Israel or mankind in general. It is quite clear in Isaiah that the ultimate root of the sinful state of both Israel and mankind is idolatry (a).[289] The reason for this is because it is the willful rejection of the true God, YHWH, and the purposeful embracing of worshipping images made of wood and stone and carved in the images of various beasts. As is so ruthlessly articulated in Deutero-Isaiah, idol worship is both the ultimate rebellion and the ultimate stupidity (44:9-20). Therefore, people who worship idols do not have true knowledge and wisdom of YHWH (b).[290] Their blindness and deafness are a result of their worshipping of idols that cannot see or hear—they become like the thing they worship (c).[291] Ironically though, idol worship fills the idol worshipper with haughtiness and pride (d).[292] Because of such arrogance, the leaders of the idol-worshipping nation reject the counsel of YHWH and rely on their own counsel, which is inevitably foolish, due to the fact that they are spiritually blind and deaf, with no sense, knowledge, or understanding (e).[293] The final result of all this is seen in political corruption and the oppression of the poor. Instead of ruling in righteousness and justice, idolatrous leaders who do not have the knowledge of YHWH, who are blind, deaf, and arrogant, and who do not seek the counsel of YHWH, become corrupt and end up oppressing the poor (f).[294]

Isaiah's condemnation of the idolatrous state of Israel and mankind in general contains clear echoes of the creation account in Genesis, specifically 1:26-27, where God

[289] References to idol worship can be seen not only when idols are expressly mentioned, but also with the mentioning of craftsmen, trees, gardens, and orchards; for not only is it craftsmen who fashion the idols, but these shrines were often associated with sacred gardens and orchards. [See 1:22, 25, 29-30; 2:6-8; 7:2; 16:7-10, 12; 19:3]

[290] See 1:18; 5:13, 21; 6:5, 9-10; 27:11; 29:14

[291] See 1:15; 6:9-10; 28:23; 29:9-11; 30:10; 33:15

[292] See 3:16; 9:8; 10:8-14; 13:3; 14:13-14; 16:6; 28:1

[293] See 5:12, 19, 21, 24; 7:12; 19:3, 11-14; 26:10; 28:7-13; 29:15; 30:1-2, 9, 12; 31:1

[294] See 1:2, 10, 17, 21, 23; 3:9-12, 14-15; 5:7-8, 23; 9:14-16; 10:1-2; 24:5, 16; 28:14; 32:6-7; 33:15

makes man in his image. This language in Genesis is foundational to some of the most basic beliefs put forth in the Old Testament. Simply put, it is "idol language" that, by application, contributes to the commandment in Exodus 20:3-6 that forbids the worship of idols. Genesis 1:26-27 emphasizes that man is created and fashioned *in the image of God*; therefore man should not bow down and worship other gods that are nothing more than idols of gold, silver, or wood that were created and fashioned by a man's own hand. In other words, man should worship the one who created him, not something that he himself has created. This is not only seen as rebellious against the true God, but also incredibly stupid. In addition to this, Genesis 1:26-27 contains a second emphasis: since mankind is created in the image of God, he is, in a sense, "God's idol" within God's creation. In other words, mankind is the visual representation of God in the world and therefore is to reflect God's image—His righteousness, justice, mercy and love—throughout His creation. The problem in Isaiah is obviously this was not happening: not only were the surrounding pagan nations obviously given over to idol worship, but YHWH's own people and the Davidic king Ahaz himself had turned away from worshipping only YHWH and had followed after idols. We must remember, though, that it is not only Judah that is condemned for its idol worship. Within Proto-Isaiah there are many nations who are condemned for idol worship as well—the northern kingdom of Israel, Assyria, Moab, Babylon, and Egypt all draw the wrath of YHWH. Given this fact, we must note a further connection to Genesis within these various passages in Proto-Isaiah. In many places where English translations have either "mankind" or "people," the actual word in the Hebrew is אָדָם, Adam. It obviously means "mankind," but we cannot overlook the intertextual connection these passages have with Genesis 1:26-27.

With this in mind, the challenge found in Isaiah for Israel and the other nations (mankind) is this: Will you worship the true God, YHWH, and in turn *be* and *reflect* the image of God in the world by caring for His creation and practicing righteousness and justice, or will you worship idols, the perverted work of your own hands, and in turn *be* and *reflect* this distorted image of false gods in the world by oppressing the poor and practicing corruption and bloodshed? Simply put, idol worship leads to the marring of the image of God among mankind and within God's creation. The ultimate concern in Proto-Isaiah, therefore, revolves around the image of God, the worship of false idols, and the failure of Israel and mankind as a whole to reflect the image of God within the world.

With this first strand within Proto-Isaiah put into its proper light, we can now elaborate upon the second strand—that of the *judgment of YHWH* upon Israel and mankind for their failure to reflect his image in the world. Ultimately the judgment of YHWH can be seen in the imagery of YHWH stretching forth His hand against the sinful and idolatrous nation (a).[295] This judgment ultimately comes in the form of foreign oppression and is described in a variety of ways: there is the recurring motif of trampling and devouring, obviously by a foreign army (b);[296] there is the recurring motif of burning fire, signifying both the destruction wrought by a foreign army as well as the anger of YHWH (c);[297] this judgment by the hand of YHWH through the means of foreign oppression has the ultimate purpose to bring down those corrupt leaders who are haughty and arrogant (d);[298] and there is also the recurring mention of spoil and plunder (e).[299]

[295] See 1:25; 5:25; 9:11, 17, 20; 10:4; 14:27; 23:11; 25:10-11; 26:11; 29:23; 30:30-32

[296] See 1:7, 12, 20; 5:5, 26-29; 6:11-12; 7:17, 25; 8:7-8; 9:4, 11, 19-20; 10:5-6, 13; 13:4-5, 17-18; 14:19, 22; 22:3, 15-19; 25:10; 26:6; 28:3; 29:1-3; 31:4; 33:1

[297] See 1:7,31; 5:24; 6:6; 7:4; 9:4, 17-18; 10:16-18; 13:13; 18:4; 26:11; 27:4, 9; 29:6; 30:27, 30,33; 31:8-9; 33:11-12, 14; 34:9-10

[298] See 2:9, 12-17; 3:3, 17-26; 5:15; 6:13; 8:9; 10:10, 12, 33-34; 13:11, 19-22; 14:4-12, 15-20, 24-27; 18:5; 19:1; 21:9; 24:4; 25:12; 26:5; 27:4; 28:3; 29:4-5

Finally, we are told that the result of YHWH's judgment will be so severe that only a small remnant of that given nation, be it Israel, Assyria, or Egypt, will be left over (f).[300]

Within this second strand of emphasis in Proto-Isaiah we are able to note a number of connections to the first strand of emphasis. First, just as the craftsman subjects gold and silver to *fire* in order to form an idol with his *hands*, YHWH is seen as a craftsman who reaches out his *hand* and subjects the idol-worshipping nation to *fire* as well. Ironically, as will be seen in the third strand of emphasis, this burning fire of *judgment* by the hand of YHWH is also a *refining* fire that will purify, refashion, and reform the surviving remnant into His true image once again (Genesis 1:26-27). Because of sin and idol worship, "impurities" had crept into mankind (אָדָם) and had prevented him from properly reflecting the image of the true God in the world; consequently, we find in Proto-Isaiah the picture of YHWH refining mankind (אָדָם), both Israel and the nations, so that אָדָם can properly reflect the image of God once again.

Secondly, when it comes to YHWH's judgment upon Judah, there is a sense of poetic justice in that Judah ends up being oppressed and trampled by the very foreign nations whose idols they followed after. Thirdly, the bringing down of the haughtiness of אָדָם, regardless of the nation specifically addressed within Proto-Isaiah, can be seen in the tearing down of foreign idols and the cutting down of the forests from which wood is provided to carve idols. When YHWH brings down a nation because of its idol worship, the physical expression of that nation's demise will undoubtedly be found in the tearing down of that nation's idols and the destruction of those forests and gardens that were so

[299] See 8:1-4; 10:6, 13;11:14; 13:16; 23:12; 24:3; 33:4, 23
[300] See 1:9; 6:13; 7:22; 10:20-23; 13:16; 14:22; 15:9; 16:14; 17:3; 18:6; 21:17

integral in that nation's idol worship. Fourthly, the language of spoil and plunder has an ironic twist to it—the corrupt leaders who spoil and plunder the poor will be the spoil and plunder of foreign armies. This is such a key motif in Proto-Isaiah that we find that Isaiah named his own son Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Finally, similar to the language of fire and YHWH's hand, the recurring motif of a remnant has a dual purpose. It not only highlights YHWH's judgment and devastation by emphasizing the small number of survivors, but it also, as will be seen in the third strand of emphasis, highlights YHWH's salvation—this remnant will be the purified remnant who will worship YHWH as the true God.

The third strand of emphasis in Proto-Isaiah is the *exaltation of YHWH* and the *salvation of his people*. And, like the previous two strands of emphasis, this one as well holds its recurring themes and motifs together very neatly. YHWH's salvation of His people is depicted as YHWH stretching out His hand once again to refine and redeem those very people who suffered under His judgment (a).[301] When YHWH's judgment is complete, when אֱדֹם is brought low and YHWH is exalted as the one true God, there will be a tremendous reversal of that earlier sinful state of both Judah and mankind. Because they will worship the true God, YHWH, His people will display true knowledge and wisdom (b);[302] because they will worship the living God, and because they become like the thing they worship, His people will no longer be blind and deaf, for they will receive back their sight and hearing (c);[303] this recovery of knowledge, wisdom, sight and hearing will make it possible for God's people to be faithful to him and exercise righteousness

[301] See 11:11, 15; 34:16-17
[302] See 11:2; 29:24; 32:4; 33:6
[303] See 11:3; 29:18; 30:19-21, 30; 32:3; 33:17; 34:1; 35:5

and justice within His creation (d);[304] and this faithfulness will be displayed in God's people listening to his counsel (e).[305] The ultimate result of YHWH's refinement of Israel into being true worshippers of YHWH who reflect His image to the world by means of practicing righteousness and justice will be that the formerly idolatrous nations, like Assyria and Egypt, will one day come to the true worship of YHWH, and in this, all of mankind will recover the image of God (f).[306] In other words, all of אָדָם will be completely redeemed and will again reflect God's image.

As should be obvious, this third strand of emphasis is intimately connected with the previous two strands of emphasis. First, as was already mentioned, there is the connection between YHWH's *hand* and the craftsman's *hand*. Both are fashioning an image in *fire*, and that fire not only burns away impurities, it refines precious material. Secondly, there is the obvious reversal of a number of the effects of the sinful idol worship from the first strand: those with no knowledge and no wisdom will attain true knowledge and wisdom; those who are blind and deaf will have their eyes and ears opened; and those leaders who once rejected YHWH's counsel will be replaced with leaders who now heed it. Thirdly, those leaders who corrupted justice and oppressed the poor will be replaced with leaders who now practice righteousness and justice and who care for the poor. Fourthly, it is precisely the oppressed poor from the first strand who eventually become the refined remnant of the third strand who stand as a signal to the nations to come and worship the true God, YHWH.

[304] See 1:26-27; 2:18, 20; 9:6; 11:4-5; 16:3-5; 17:7-8; 26:2, 7-9; 27:9; 28:6; 30:18, 22; 31:7; 32:1-2, 16-19; 33:5-6, 15

[305] See 11:2; 16:3; 23:8-9; 25:1; 28:29

[306] See 2:2-4; 4:2-4, 5-6; 6:13; 7:3; 9:2; 10:20-23; 11:1-10, 11-16; 12:1-6; 14:1-2; 19:18-24; 23:18; 25:4-5, 6-9; 26:15, 19; 27:2-5, 13; 28:5; 29:19-21; 30:25-26, 29; 33:20-24; 35:1-4, 8-10

As has now been clearly shown, these three strands of emphasis in Proto-Isaiah, along with the recurring motifs and themes upon which they are supported, hearken back to the most fundamental of biblical concepts: man being made in the image of God. Thus the primary focus in Proto-Isaiah is on the idolatry, judgment and refinement of Judah in order to more properly reflect the image of God to the world. The secondary focus comes in the form of looking forward to that time when surrounding nations like Assyria and Egypt, when they see the image of God reflected in the refined remnant of Judah, will come to a true knowledge of YHWH and will join in the worship of YHWH. Nevertheless, there is one more key element in all of this that has not yet been addressed—the image and role of the Davidic king.

In his book, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, John H. Walton compares and contrasts the ancient Israelite concept of kingship with those of the surrounding nations and cultures in the ancient Near East. While noting similar ideas about the king's divine sonship and responsibilities, Walton nevertheless emphasizes some key differences between how kingship was viewed in Israel and how it was view elsewhere in the ancient Near East. For example, in the ANE there often was the concept that kingship "was the creation of the gods given as a boon to humans."[307] This is quite obviously different than what we find in the Old Testament, where YHWH begrudgingly allows Israel to have a king (I Samuel 8). Walton also points out that there is a clearly negative view of kingship presented in Deuteronomy 18.[308] And while Walton is correct when he says, "Archetypal humanity bears the image of God rather than this being

[307] John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*. Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2006, 280.
[308] Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought,* 281.

distinctive of the king,"[309] we cannot escape the fact that even though the Old Testament goes to great lengths to show that the Davidic king was clearly human and clearly capable of a multitude of sins, he was nevertheless the representation of YHWH to YHWH's people.[310] Yes, Genesis 1:26-27 teaches that humankind, אָדָם is made in the image of God, but it is also clear with passages like Psalm 2 and II Samuel 7 that YHWH incorporated this concept of kingship into His covenant with His people.

Unlike the other kings of the ANE, who were often seen as divine in and of themselves, the Davidic king was clearly only human. Nevertheless, he was to be YHWH's representative to His people; he was to reflect the image of God to His people through a faithful reign characterized by righteousness and justice. In a sense, we can say that the Davidic king was the figurehead of YHWH's people—he was to encapsulate and reflect everything that YHWH's people should be. Simply put, he was to reflect the *image of God* to not only YHWH's people, but to the other nations as well. If he faithfully worshipped YHWH and exercised YHWH's righteousness and justice to YHWH's people, the Davidic king would essentially be reflecting the image of God to YHWH's people and leading them in living faithfully to YHWH. This in turn would mean that the people of YHWH as a whole would end up reflecting the image of God to the surrounding nations, which would, hopefully, result in the nations renouncing their idols and coming to Jerusalem to worship YHWH, the true creator God.

With that said, it becomes quite obvious why, both in Proto-Isaiah as well as elsewhere throughout the entire Old Testament, the prophets are so critical of the various leaders throughout the history of Israel and Judah. It was not simply a matter of them

[309] Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought*, 281.
[310] In Psalm 2:7 the Davidic king is called YHWH's son; and in II Samuel 7:13-14 YHWH tells David that his son, the Davidic king, will be a son to YHWH.

being "bad" kings. The entire witness of the Old Testament emphasizes both the roots and the results of that "badness." When the leaders of Israel and Judah in general, and the Davidic kings in particular, turned away from the faithful worship of YHWH and to the adulterated worship of foreign gods and idols, they essentially compromised their kingly vocation and marred the very representation and image of YHWH that they were supposed to reflect and live out among the people of YHWH—and that, as we have already seen, had disastrous consequences. It was the idolatrous kings who time and time again led Israel and Judah into idolatry. The prophets are unambiguous and intentional on this point: they blame for Israel and Judah's idolatry and sinfulness rests solely on the idolatrous kings and leaders who led Israel and Judah down that path.[311]

The reason why it is so important to understand this is because it is the underlying concept that shapes the entire narrative structure in Proto-Isaiah. The three strands discussed above find their historical foundations in the two narrative bookends about king Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis (chapters 7-12) and king Hezekiah and the invasion of Sennacherib (chapters 36-39).[312] The first bookend (chapters 7-12) focuses on the unfaithful and idolatrous Davidic king, Ahaz, who by all biblical accounts was one of the most sinful kings in the history of Judah, whose actions were seen as leading Judah into idolatry and sin, and whose unfaithfulness to YHWH during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis brought about the judgment of YHWH and opened the door to Assyrian oppression. The second bookend (chapters 36-39) focuses on the faithful Davidic king, Hezekiah, who by

[311] Throughout the Old Testament, kings are found guilty of committing the "sin of Jeroboam," meaning they led Israel and Judah into idolatry. See I Kings 14:16; 15:29-30, 34; 16:18-19, 26, 31; 22:52; II Kings 3:3; 10:29-31; 13:2, 6, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:22.

[312] Properly speaking, the bulk of chapters 7-12 is prophetic oracles and not narrative per se, but these prophecies are clearly attached to the narrative in chapter 7. Similarly, chapters 38-39 are not about Sennacherib's invasion, but about two other events during the reign of Hezekiah. Still, these two events are clearly a part of the greater narrative section of Hezekiah's reign.

all biblical accounts was considered to be one of the best kings in the history of Judah, whose actions were seen as leading Judah back to the true worship of YHWH, and whose faithfulness to YHWH in Judah's darkest hour was the reason why YHWH spared Jerusalem and decimated the Assyrian forces. Simply put, these three strands of emphasis have their genesis in the narrative of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, where we see an unfaithful Davidic king refusing to reflect the image of God, and their conclusion in the narrative of the invasion of Sennacherib, where we see another Davidic king—the very one about whom Isaiah prophesied during the time of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis—whose faithful worship and reliance upon YHWH not only show him fulfilling his kingly vocation by reflecting the image of God, but also is the reason for YHWH sparing Jerusalem. In between these two narratives, these three strands of emphasis are woven throughout the prophetic oracles of Proto-Isaiah.[313] In other words, the literary parallels between chapters 7-12 and 36-39 *set up* these two passages as literary bookends to Proto-Isaiah; the recurring themes and motifs throughout Proto-Isaiah *reinforce* and *strengthen* this bookend structure in Proto-Isaiah.

VI. The Literary Parallels between Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39

We are now ready to analyze the specific literary parallels in Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39.[314] Not only do we see the how the three strands of emphasis come to their fitting conclusion in chapters 36-39, but we also are able to draw a number of different connections between Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39. When analyzing the two sections of Isaiah 7-

[313] A chart covering these themes and motifs throughout Proto-Isaiah can be found in Appendix B.

[314] In a very slight variation of this view, P.R. Ackroyd has argued that Isaiah 36-39 bears a general resemblance to Isaiah 1-12, and a more specific resemblance to Isaiah 6:1-9:6. See: P.R. Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function," in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift fur Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. J.P.M. van der Ploeg, O.P. zur Vollendung des siebsigsten Lebensjahres am 4, Juli 1979* (ed. W.C. Delsman et al.; Germany:Neukirchener Verlag, 1982).

12 and 36-39, many scholars have already noted that there is a general contrast of the two kings, Ahaz and Hezekiah.[315] We notice that (a) both accounts involve kings of Judah faced with the defining crisis in their respective reigns—Ahaz was faced with the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, whereas Hezekiah was faced with the invasion of Sennacherib; (b) both accounts involve each king's reaction to, and relationship with, Isaiah the prophet—Ahaz refused to obey Isaiah's advice, and thus was antagonistic, whereas Hezekiah sought out Isaiah and trusted him; and (c) both king's actions have consequences that involve Assyria—Ahaz's faithless actions usher in Assyrian oppression, whereas Hezekiah's faithful actions bring about a miraculous deliverance from Assyrian oppression. On this general level, many scholars have rightfully acknowledged the contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah. Yet the literary connections between the two passages go much deeper than that. Time and time again there are recurring statements, places, and phrases that further link Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39.

We first must note how each narrative account begins: with an announcement of *foreign oppression*. Isaiah 7:1 tells us that in the days of Ahaz, Rezin and Pekah had wanted to attack Jerusalem but were unable to do so; Isaiah 36:1 tells us that in the "twenty-fourth" year of Hezekiah, Sennacherib invaded Judah and captured the fortified cities.[316] Both accounts begin ominously, with a very real threat to Jerusalem and to the Davidic house. We must further note, though, that Isaiah 36:1 is not the first time in Isaiah where the Assyrian threat is mentioned. The first mention in Isaiah of coming

[315] John Goldingay notes, "As the situation parallels that in chapter 7, so Hezekiah's response begins to contrast with Ahaz's. Hezekiah is modeling how to cope with a crisis." *NICB: Isaiah*, 207.

[316] Ackroyd points out that aside from 1:1, 6:1, and 14:28, the only two other historical notes are here in 7:1 and 36:1. See: Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39."

Assyria oppression is found in 7:17-20, *immediately after Isaiah condemns Ahaz for his lack of faith in YHWH, and prophesies about the Immanuel child.*

The reason why this is significant should be obvious. This theme of Assyrian oppression is first introduced during Isaiah's confrontation with Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. We are further told in 8:7-8 that the king of Assyria "and all his glory" will "sweep into Judah like a flood" and "reach up to the neck" of Immanuel's land. These prophecies in chapters 7-8 regarding the coming Assyrian oppression clearly foreshadow the events of 701 BCE when Sennacherib invaded Hezekiah's land. Granted, Assyria seized control of the area long before 701 BCE—both history and the greater part of Proto-Isaiah serve as a witness to this fact.[317] Yet any honest reading of Proto-Isaiah would have to conclude that the depiction of Sennacherib invading Judah, capturing Judah's fortified cities, and coming against Hezekiah in Jerusalem most closely resembles the metaphorical language of a coming Assyrian flood sweeping into Judah and reaching up to the neck of Immanuel's land. In other words, if the reader of Proto-Isaiah got to 7:17-18 and 8:7-8 and asked, "When will this prophecy be fulfilled?" that reader would conclude, upon reading Isaiah 36-37, that it was fulfilled during Hezekiah's confrontation with Sennacherib in 701 BCE. The prophecy of 7:17-18 was uttered immediately after the Immanuel prophecy and the prophecy of 8:7-8 describes a coming Assyrian flood into Judah, which is called Immanuel's land. Not only do the events of Isaiah 36-37 fit the prophecy of 8:7-8, but when one considers the fact that the king of Judah in 701 BCE was Hezekiah, that the land in 8:8 is called Immanuel's land, and that

[317] II Chronicles 28:20-21 clearly blames Ahaz for opening the door to Assyrian oppression by appealing to Tiglath-pileser for help during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis. Thus we can conclude that the overall biblical view is that Assyrian oppression and domination over Judah began shortly after Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser, roughly around 734 BCE.

the initial prophecy of the coming Assyrian oppression is found in 7:17-18, immediately after the prophecy about Immanuel's birth, one must admit that all indications point to the identification of the Immanuel child in 7:14 as being that of Hezekiah.

In light of the threats in both 7:1 and 36:1, a second point must be noticed: there is the repeated mention of "*the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field*" in both 7:3 and 36:2. What we find is that the very place where Isaiah first confronts Ahaz with a challenge for him to not fear the threat and to instead put his faith in YHWH, is the exact place where the Rabshakeh first confronts Hezekiah, mocking his faith in YHWH and attempting to cause fear throughout Jerusalem by saying that it was YHWH who told Sennacherib to destroy Jerusalem.[318] The ultimate test of faith in both accounts begins in the same place: "the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field." Once again, the key event Isaiah records about Hezekiah's reign finds a clear connection with the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis.

A third connection between Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 is that of a *sign*. In Isaiah 7, after Isaiah offers Ahaz a chance to ask for any kind of sign from YHWH and after Ahaz refuses to ask for any sign at all (7:11-12), Isaiah proceeds to give the "Immanuel" sign (7:14 ff). This sign essentially is a prophecy about the destruction of not only Aram and Israel by Assyria, but also of Assyrian oppression of Judah within Immanuel's lifetime. Yet in addition to this, we see that there is a positive, salvific aspect to the Immanuel sign

[318] Ackroyd notes this similarity as well and says that although "in neither case does this play any further part in the narrative, arguably it is connected with the siege situation in both instances. It provides an incidental point of cross-reference." See: Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39," 17. Goldingay also has noted this connection: "That eastern side of the city symbolizes Hezekiah's achievements in seeking to ensure his city's security. There the Assyrian stands to confront the king, at the very spot where Isaiah had confronted Ahaz, which reminds both the king and the story's audience of the confrontation in chapter 7." *NIBC: Isaiah*, 203. John Hayes and Stuart Irvine have also made this connection. *Isaiah: The Eighth-Century Prophet*, 124. Christopher Seitz notes, "The Rabshakeh is dispatched by Sennacherib from Lachish; the Assyrian envoy confronts the envoy of Hezekiah at the scene of an earlier moment of decision for Hezekiah's predecessor Ahaz." *Zion's Final Destiny*, 55.

as well. In both 9:1-7 and 11:1-5 we have the celebration of a royal *child* being born who will rule righteously and bring to an end the yoke and trampling of the oppressor (9:1-7) and a *shoot* from the stump of Jesse (clearly Davidic and royal in nature) who will rule righteously and "kill the wicked" with the "breath of his mouth" (11:1-5). Many scholars[319] see some sort of connection between the Immanuel of 7:14, the royal child of 9:5, and the shoot from the stump of Jesse in 11:1. Therefore, when considering the significance of the sign of the Immanuel child, we must acknowledge both aspects of the sign: punishment and destruction during Immanuel's lifetime, yet also YHWH's salvation by the means of Immanuel's rule.

When turning to Isaiah 36-39, we find both parallel and prophetic fulfillment to the Immanuel sign in 7:14 and its related prophecies of 9:1-7 and 11:1-5. In Isaiah 37, in response to Hezekiah's prayer to YHWH, Isaiah prophesies that Assyria would be turned back, and gives a sign that within three years Jerusalem would be sowing, reaping, planting vineyards and eating their fruit (37:30-32). What we have here is sign, obviously given during the high point of Assyrian oppression, of the end of that very oppression and of Jerusalem's future flourishing. Thus this sign can clearly be paralleled with, and seen as the fulfillment of, the Immanuel sign back in 7-12. Related to this is another sign mentioned in Isaiah 38 where, in response to Isaiah's prophecy that Hezekiah would

[319] When discussing the particulars of the child of 9:5, John N. Oswalt says, "All of this points to a remarkable congruence with the Immanuel prophecy. Somehow a virgin-born child would demonstrate that God is with us (7:14). Now he says "to us a child is born" (Isaiah including himself with his people in their deliverance as he did in their sin [6:1]) and this child has those traits which manifest the presence of God in our midst. Surely this child (also described in 11:1-5) is presented as the ultimate fulfillment of the Immanuel sign." *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, 247. Christopher Seitz also notes, "Just as it is impossible to read the Immanuel texts in isolation from the royal oracle of 9:2-7, so too the royal oracle at 11:1-9 tends to affect our comprehensive vision of kingship as found in chapters 1-12." *Isaiah 1-39*, 75. Brevard Child also notes, "This unfolding presentation of the entrance of God's rule in the midst of terrifying disasters culminates the history of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis [i.e. Immanuel of 7:14] with the messianic promise of chapter 9 and anticipates its ultimate expansion in chapter 11. *Isaiah*, 81.

recover from his illness (38:4-6), Hezekiah asks for a sign that would tell him when he should go up to the House of YHWH (38:21-22). The sign that YHWH gives is that the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz would go backwards ten steps (38:7-8). It is interesting to note that the sign given here involves a miraculous occurrence involving something Ahaz has made.[320] To sum up: in Isaiah 7-12, after Ahaz refused to ask for a miraculous sign, he was given another sign. This sign (a) involved a child, (b) prophesied coming Assyrian oppression that would occur by the time the child knew to choose the good and refuse the bad, and (c) looked forward to a time when YHWH would do away with that oppression through that very Immanuel child. Consequently, in Isaiah 36-37, not only does Hezekiah (a) come face to face with that Assyrian oppression, but because of his faith in YHWH, (b) YHWH turns back the Assyrian army and does away with Assyrian oppression. And then, in Isaiah 38-39, when Hezekiah asks for a sign in response to his miraculous healing,[321] that sign is itself a miraculous sign that literally "turns back the clock" of Ahaz. Once again, we see not only a clear parallel between chapters 7-12 and 36-39, but more importantly a clear indication that what was prophesied in Isaiah 7-12 is presented as having been fulfilled in Isaiah 36-39.

A fourth connection can be seen in Isaiah's appeal to both kings. In 7:4, Isaiah urges Ahaz with the words: אַל־תִּירָ֣א וְלִבָּבְךָ֗ אַל־יֵרַךְ֙ ("do not be afraid and do not let your heart be faint"). In 10:24, again there is the appeal אַל־תִּירְאִ֤י עַמִּי֙ יֹשֵׁ֣ב צִיּ֔וֹן מֵאַשּׁ֖וּר

[320] Ackroyd also sees this recurrence of a "sign" as confirmation that these two sections should be viewed in light of each other. See Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39," 17. Stuart and Irvine also notes that "The scene here [in chapter 7] bears resemblance to the legendary account of Hezekiah's healing in Isaiah 38." *Isaiah: The Eighth-century Prophet*, 131.

[321] "Unlike Hezekiah, who had rightfully requested from Isaiah a sign confirming a divine promise, Ahaz had refused a sign verifying the truth of Yahweh's pledge to the Davidic house." Stuart and Irvine, *Isaiah: The Eighth-century Prophet*, 133.

("do not be afraid, O my people who live in Zion, of Assyria…"). In 37:6, when faced with Sennacherib's threats, Isaiah tells Hezekiah not to be afraid of the words of the king of Assyria: אַל־תִּירָאְ מִפְּנֵי הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ אֲשֶׁר גִּדְּפוּ נַעֲרֵי מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר אוֹתִי.[322] The difference, of course, is that Ahaz's fear of Aram and Israel drove him to reject YHWH and to instead appeal to Assyria, whereas Hezekiah, when faced with the possibility of utter destruction by Assyria, appealed to YHWH for help.

The fifth connection is closely related to the previous point. Not only does Isaiah appeal to both Ahaz and Hezekiah to not fear, there also is the essential challenge of faith. In 7:9 Isaiah challenges Ahaz by saying, *"If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all"* (אִם לֹא תַאֲמִינוּ כִּי לֹא תֵאָמֵנוּ). Clearly this is precisely what happened with Ahaz. He did not stand firm in faith to YHWH and was soon oppressed by Assyria. Turning to chapters 36-37, we find that this issue of faith once more takes front and center. The very first words out of the Rabshakeh's mouth are in 36:4, *"On what do you base this confidence* (הַבְּטָחוֹן) *of yours?"* Later on in his speech the Rabshakeh mocks their reliance on YHWH and appeals to the people of Jerusalem not to let Hezekiah make them trust in YHWH (36:14-15). Eventually Sennacherib himself writes a letter to Hezekiah and tells him not to trust in YHWH (37:10). The key verb used in these verses is בָּטַח, which is mostly translated as "to trust," but also as "to have confidence" or "to rely." This word is also very similar to אמן, which is used in Isaiah 7:9. Even though the exact word is not found in these two passages, the question and challenge of trusting or having faith in YHWH is clearly seen in both Isaiah 7-12 and 36-37.

[322] Goldingay has also noticed the echoes of 7:4, 8:12, and 10:24 here in 37:6. *NICB: Isaiah*, 208.

A sixth connection can be seen in the repetition of the phrase "*the zeal of YHWH will do this*" (קִנְאַת יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה־זֹּאת).[323] The first instance of this phrase is found in 9:7, when after announcing the birth of the royal child, celebrating the people's freedom from oppression, and describing the royal child's righteous reign, Isaiah announces that "The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this." As we have seen earlier, the identity of the child in 9:6-7, as well as the Immanuel child in 7:14 and the shoot in 11:1, has been a point of scholarly debate for some time. The main argument of this thesis is that the bookend structure of chapters 7-12 and 36-39 helps point us toward properly identifying this mysterious child in chapters 7-12 with Hezekiah. As with so many other points already made thus far, the strategic placement of the phrase, "the zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this" helps us identify the Immanuel child in 7-12 with Hezekiah, for the second instance of this phrase is found in 37:32, when in response to Hezekiah's appeal to YHWH, and after giving the sign that of vineyards within three years, and relating it to the remnant of Jerusalem, Isaiah once again says "The zeal of YHWH of hosts will do this." As one can see, both passages involve a prophecy involving freedom from oppression and both passages conclude with the same statement. We can therefore assume that the royal child in 9:6-7 is to be identified with Hezekiah in 36-37.

Related to the first point, the seventh example involves the constant references to *Assyria*, specifically the prophecies regarding Assyria's defeat and the fulfillment of those prophecies in chapters 36-37. Not only is Assyrian oppression prophesied, but so is Assyria's defeat. Consider the following references in Isaiah 7-12: first, it is prophesied that YHWH would bring Assyria against Judah (7:17-20); second, Assyria is compared to

[323] Acrkroyd also has noticed the recurrence of this phrase in 9:6 and 37:32. See Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39," 18-19.

the mighty flood waters of the River that comes up to the neck and fills the land of Immanuel (8:7-8); third, although Assyria is called YHWH's "rod of my anger" (10:5), it is also prophesied that YHWH would one day break the "rod" of Assyria (9:4), that one day the house of Jacob would no more lean on the one who struck them (10:20), and that they need not fear the Assyrians "when they beat you with a rod…" (10:24). All of these prophecies of Assyria's demise find their fulfillment in Isaiah 36-37. Clearly by that time Assyria had indeed wielded a rod of oppression over Judah ever since the days of Ahaz; clearly Sennacherib had captured the fortified cities of Judah, Hezekiah's land, and had made his way to Jerusalem, much like flood waters having come up to the neck; and finally, as we find in 37:36, we are told that because the angel of YHWH struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers that Sennacherib pulled up camp and went back to Nineveh, thus fulfilling what was prophesied in 9:4. Related to this last point, it cannot be overlooked that in 10:16 Isaiah prophesies that YHWH would "send a wasting disease among his [the king of Assyria] stout warriors." Seitz notes that "the references to a 'wasting sickness among his stout warriors' at 10:16 and the sick man who 'wastes away' at 10:18 certainly appear related to the punishment finally visited on the Assyrian forces outside Jerusalem in 701 BC."[324] All of these prophecies about not only Assyria's oppression, but most notably YHWH's breaking of Assyrian oppression, find specific fulfillment in chapters 36-37.

An eighth connection concerning the portrait of Assyria in these bookend passages has to do with Assyria's *arrogance and boasting* as being the reason YHWH will cut them down after he has used them to chastise Judah. In 10:7-14 we find an elaborate description of Assyria's arrogance that can be fully seen also throughout the

[324] *Isaiah 1-39*, 94.

Sennacherib account of chapters 36-37. In 10:7-14, after YHWH says that, although he will use Assyria to punish Jerusalem, he will also deal with Assyria because it is not intending to solely do YHWH's work, but rather to destroy many nations, we are given a speech from the mouth of Isaiah, as if it is coming from the king of Assyria. When this speech is paralleled to the speeches in Isaiah 36-37, the connections are striking:

Isaiah 36-37	Isaiah 10:7-14
37:18-19 אָמְנָם יְהוָה הֶחֱרִיבוּ מַלְכֵי אַשּׁוּר אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרָצוֹת וְאֶת־אַרְצָם וְנָתַן אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם בָּאֵשׁ כִּי לֹא אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה כִּי אִם־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי־אָדָם עֵץ וָאֶבֶן וַיְאַבְּדוּם	**10:7** וְהוּא לֹא־כֵן יְדַמֶּה וּלְבָבוֹ לֹא־כֵן יַחְשֹׁב כִּי לְהַשְׁמִיד בִּלְבָבוֹ וּלְהַכְרִית גּוֹיִם לֹא מְעָט
37:11 הִנֵּה אַתָּה שָׁמַעְתָּ אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ מַלְכֵי אַשּׁוּר לְכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת לְהַחֲרִימָם וְאַתָּה תִּנָּצֵל	**10:8** הֲלֹא שָׂרַי יַחְדָּו מְלָכִים
36:19-20 אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵי חֲמָת וְאַרְפָּד אַיֵּה אֱלֹהֵי סְפַרְוָיִם וְכִי־הִצִּילוּ אֶת־שֹׁמְרוֹן מִיָּדִי מִי בְכָל־אֱלֹהֵי הָאֲרָצוֹת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר־הִצִּילוּ אֶת־אַרְצָם מִיָּדִי כִּי־יַצִּיל יְהוָה אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם מִיָּדִי **37:12-13** הַהִצִּילוּ אוֹתָם אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁחִיתוּ אֲבוֹתַי אֶת־גּוֹזָן וְאֶת־חָרָן וּבְנֵי־עֶדֶן אֲשֶׁר בִּתְלַשָּׂר אַיֵּה מֶלֶךְ־חֲמָת וּמֶלֶךְ אַרְפָּד וּמֶלֶךְ לָעִיר סְפַרְוַיִם הֵנַע וְרֶצֶף וְעִוָּה **36:18** פֶּן־יַסִּית אֶתְכֶם חִזְקִיָּהוּ לֵאמֹר יְהוָה יַצִּילֵנוּ הַהִצִּילוּ אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם אִישׁ אֶת־אַרְצוֹ מִיַּד מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר	**10:9-11** הֲלֹא כְּכַרְכְּמִישׁ כַּלְנוֹ אִם־לֹא כְּאַרְפַּד חֲמָת אִם־לֹא כְּדַמֶּשֶׂק שֹׁמְרוֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר מָצְאָה יָדִי לְמַמְלְכֹת הָאֱלִיל וּפְסִילֵיהֶם מִירוּשָׁלַם וּמִשֹּׁמְרוֹן הֲלֹא כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְשֹׁמְרוֹן וְלֶאֱלִילֶיהָ כֵּן אֶעֱשֶׂה לִירוּשָׁלַם וְלַעֲצַבֶּיהָ

37:20 וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ מִיָּדוֹ וְיֵדְעוּ כָּל־מַמְלְכוֹת הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבַדֶּךָ	
37:23 אֶת־מִי חֵרַפְתָּ וְגִדַּפְתָּ וְעַל־מִי הֲרִימוֹתָה קוֹל וַתִּשָּׂא מָרוֹם עֵינֶיךָ אֶל־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל	**10:12** וְהָיָה כִּי־יְבַצַּע אֲדֹנָי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂהוּ בְּהַר צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלִָם אֶפְקֹד עַל־פְּרִי־גֹדֶל לְבַב מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר וְעַל־תִּפְאֶרֶת רוּם עֵינָיו
37:24-25 בְּיַד עֲבָדֶיךָ חֵרַפְתָּ אֲדֹנָי וַתֹּאמֶר בְּרֹב רִכְבִּי אֲנִי עָלִיתִי מְרוֹם הָרִים יַרְכְּתֵי לְבָנוֹן וְאֶכְרֹת קוֹמַת אֲרָזָיו מִבְחַר בְּרֹשָׁיו וְאָבוֹא מְרוֹם קִצּוֹ יַעַר כַּרְמְלוֹ אֲנִי קָרְתִּי וְשָׁתִיתִי מָיִם וְאַחֲרִב בְּכַף־פְּעָמַי כֹּל יְאֹרֵי מָצוֹר	**10:13-14** כִּי אָמַר בְּכֹחַ יָדִי עָשִׂיתִי וּבְחָכְמָתִי כִּי נְבֹנוֹתִי וְאָסִיר גְּבוּלֹת עַמִּים וַעֲתוּדוֹתֵיהֶם שֹׁסֵתִי וְאוֹרִיד כַּאבִּיר יוֹשְׁבִים וַתִּמְצָא כַקֵּן יָדִי לְחֵיל הָעַמִּים וְכֶאֱסֹף בֵּיצִים עֲזֻבוֹת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ אֲנִי אָסָפְתִּי וְלֹא הָיָה נֹדֵד כָּנָף וּפֹצֶה פֶּה וּמְצַפְצֵף

Isaiah 10:7-14	Isaiah 36-37
10:7 But this is not what he intends, nor does he have this in mind; *but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.*	**37:18** "Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have *laid waste* all the *nations* and their lands, 19 and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods, but the work of human hands-- wood and stone-- and so *they were destroyed.*
10:8 "Are not my commanders all *kings*?"	**37:11** "See, you have heard what the *kings of Assyria* have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered?"
10:9 "Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not *Hamath* like *Arpad*? Is not *Samaria* like Damascus? 10 As *my hand* has reached to the *kingdoms of the idols* whose images were greater than those of *Jerusalem and Samaria,* 11 shall I not do to *Jerusalem* and her *idols* what I have done to *Samaria* and her *images*?"	**36:19** "Where are the gods of *Hamath* and *Arpad*? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered *Samaria out of my hand*? 20 Who among all the *gods* of these countries have saved their countries *out of my hand,* that the LORD should save Jerusalem *out of my hand*?'"

	37:12 "Have the *gods of the nations* delivered them, the *nations* that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of *Hamath*, the king of *Arpad*, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?" **36:18** Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, The LORD will save us. Has any of the *gods of the nations* saved their land *out of the hand of the king of Assyria*? **37:20** So now, O LORD our God, *save us from his hand*, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD."
10:12 When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the *arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride.*	**37: 23** Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and *haughtily* lifted your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel!
10:13 "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I have removed the boundaries of peoples, and have plundered their treasures; like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones. 14 My hand has found, like a nest, the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing, or opened its mouth, or chirped."	**37:24** "By your servants you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, 'With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I came to its remotest height, its densest forest. 25 I dug wells and drank waters, I dried up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.'"

As one can see, at numerous points this prophecy about Assyria in 10:7-14 finds parallels with the Sennacherib account in 36-37: (a) Assyria laying waste to the nations; (b) the military conquests of the kings of Assyria; (c) Jerusalem and Samaria are mentioned; (d) the gods/idols of the nations are compared to the gods/idols of Jerusalem and Samaria; (e) there is the repeated reference to the "hand" of Assyria, as well as the repeated mocking question, "Do you think your gods/God will deliver/save you?"; (f) the specific accusation YHWH levels at Assyria has to do with is haughtiness; and (g) there is the repeated boasting and aggrandizement of the king of Assyria. These parallels are not isolated coincidences, but rather reflect the conscious decision of the writer/scribal

redactor to connect the prophecy of Isaiah during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis to its fulfillment during the events of 701 BCE. And if this is the case, if the writer/scribal redactor is going to these lengths to connect these two passages and historical events, it becomes that much more logical to connect the royal son, Immanuel, the shoot of Jesse found within Isaiah 7-12 during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis with the one who was the king of Judah in Isaiah 36-39 during Sennacherib's invasion, namely Hezekiah.

A ninth connection can be found in the references to *Egypt*. Throughout Proto-Isaiah the two most referenced foreign nations are that of Assyria and Egypt.[325] Interestingly, the first time both Assyria and Egypt are mentioned in Isaiah is in the Immanuel prophecy: Assyria is first mentioned in 7:17 and Egypt is first mentioned in 7:18. From the very outset, Immanuel, Assyria, and Egypt seemed to be joined at the hip in Isaiah. Interestingly, throughout Proto-Isaiah whenever the salvation of Jerusalem is mentioned, there is the idea that in some way both Egypt and Assyria will come to Jerusalem to worship YHWH.[326] Clearly, these two nations play a big role in Isaiah.

In chapter 7 we have the prophesied picture of Egypt coming into Judah and then Assyria laying waste to Judah. Also, just as there are numerous prophecies leveled against Assyria, there are also prophecies that speak of Egypt's humiliation and defeat. Most of Isaiah 19 is about the foolishness of Egypt and their destruction. We are even told in 19:4 that a "harsh king" will rule over them. We find in Isaiah 20 a specific prophesy leveled against Egypt, about how Assyria would take some of them into exile. Finally, in chapters 30-31 we find Isaiah condemning the leaders in Jerusalem for

[325] Assyrian references: Isaiah 7:17-18, 20; 8:4, 7; 10:5, 12; 11:11, 16; 19:23-25; 20:1, 4, 6; 23:13; 27:13; chapters 36-37. Egypt references: 7:18; 10:26; 11:11, 15-16; 19:1, 12-15, 18-25; 20:3-5; 23:5; 27:12-13; 30:2-3; 31:1; 36:6, 9; 37:25.

[326] See 11:11, 15-16; 19:22-25; 27:12-13

appealing to Egypt for help against Assyria. We are specifically told in chapter 31 that these leaders in Jerusalem are placing their trust in Egypt's horses and chariots.

All of these references and prophecies regarding Egypt seem to come to a head in chapters 36-37, in the account of the invasion of Sennacherib. In 36:4-9 we find a direct allusion to 31:1-3: the Rabshakeh mocks the leaders of Jerusalem for appealing to Egypt for chariots and horsemen.[327] Then in 37:9 and 25 we find mention of king Tirhakah of Ethiopia (i.e. Egypt) coming to fight against Sennacherib and of his defeat. This defeat of Egypt seems to fulfill not only the general pattern of prophecy found in Isaiah 7, but also the actual prophecy of destruction in Isaiah 19.

A tenth connection can be found in 11:10, which says, "*the root of Jesse* will stand as a *standard to the nations*; the nations will seek him out, and his resting-place will be glorious." What we find in chapter 39 is that envoys from Babylon came to Hezekiah and that he showed them his treasure house. Related to this is II Chronicles 32:23, that tells us after Sennacherib's defeat, that Hezekiah was "exalted in the eyes of all the nations from that time on," and II Chronicles 32:27-29, that tells us, "There was for Hezekiah riches and very much glory." What we see alluded to in Isaiah 39 and elaborated upon in II Chronicles 32 reflect what can be described as Hezekiah's reputation and stature in the collective memory of the Jews. Hezekiah, clearly from "the root of Jesse," was seen as a king who was indeed a "standard to the nations," whom the nations sought out, and who had "very much glory."

[327] Brevard Childs notes that in the Rabshakeh's speech (II Kings 18:17-35), there are a number of "quite audible echoes of the oracles of the prophet Isaiah. One could naturally argue that the reference to the worthlessness of the Egyptians as allies (Isaiah 30:2f.) and the futility of Judah in trusting on horses (Isaiah 31:3) was so obvious as to preclude a dependency on Isaiah." See Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, 84.

An eleventh connection is in the conclusion of each section. Isaiah 12 is *a concluding chapter of praise to YHWH* for the salvation he will bring about through all of what chapters 7-11 have prophesied. Time and time again we find phrases like, "Surely God is my salvation" (v. 2), "YHWH God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation" (v. 2), and "Give thanks to YHWH, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations" (v. 4). In Hezekiah's prayer of thanksgiving to YHWH for saving him from his illness (38:20), we find him saying, "YHWH will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our lives, at the house of YHWH."

A twelfth connection can be seen the references to the *remnant*. The theme of the remnant figures very prominent within Isaiah 7-12. First, it is introduced in the figure of Isaiah's son, Shear-jashub, whom he takes to confront Ahaz in 7:3. Shear-jashub's name means "a remnant will return," (שְׁאָר יָשׁוּב). Secondly, later on in the chapter, after the declaration that Immanuel will eat "curds and honey" (חֶמְאָה וּדְבַשׁ) in 7:15, and after prophesying the coming destruction by Assyria, Isaiah states in 7:22 that "all those who are left over in the land" (כָּל־הַנּוֹתָר בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ) will eat "curds and honey" (חֶמְאָה וּדְבַשׁ). Although the actual word for "left over" is not the same as שְׁאָר, they are nonetheless synonyms. What this seems to be saying is that Immanuel will share in the diet of the remnant of Jerusalem. Thirdly, in 10:19-22, "the remnant" is mentioned five times within four verses. In these verses Isaiah prophesies that "the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no longer lean on the one who struck them, but will lean on YHWH, the Holy One of Israel, in truth" (10:20), that "a remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God" (10:21), and that although the people of Israel were like the sand of the sea, "only a remnant of them will return" (10:22). Ironically, the

surviving remnant of Israel in chapter 10 is in direct contrast with the "remnant" of Assyria that will be left after YHWH destroys it (10:19). Fourthly, "the remnant" is once again mentioned in 11:11, where YHWH declares that he will stretch out his hand a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people from the surrounding nations: Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the coastlands of the sea. Finally, in 11:16, there is the prophecy that there will be a highway from Assyria for "the remnant that is left of his people."

What we see with the treatment of the remnant in Isaiah 7-12 is the incorporation of both prophesied destruction of the people of YHWH (both Israel/Samaria and Judah/Jerusalem), as well as the promise of salvation for those who "survive" judgment and are "left over" from Assyria's aggression. And, as anyone who is familiar with the history of Israel would know, from the time when Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser to the time Sennacherib invaded Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem in 701 BCE, Assyria, in fact, destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and oppressed the southern kingdom of Judah. This culminated in his invasion of 701 BCE, where the very existence of Judah and the Davidic line were in jeopardy.

It should not be surprising, therefore, to find in Isaiah 37 a number of references to "the remnant."[328] The first reference in 37:4, has Hezekiah sending messengers to Isaiah for help. He instructs them to ask Isaiah to "Lift up a prayer on behalf of the remnant that is found!" Who is this "remnant" to which Hezekiah is referring? It is none other than those Jews in Jerusalem who quite literally are the only ones left from YHWH's people, both from Israel and Judah, who have not yet been conquered by

[328] Goldingay has also pointed out that "The image of Jerusalem as Judah reduced to a remnant recalls 1:8-9." *NICB: Isaiah*, 207.

Assyria. The second reference in 37:31-32 is found in Isaiah's prophetic answer to Hezekiah's prayer to YHWH. Isaiah prophesies that "the escaped remnant of the House of Judah" will once again take root, and that there will be a "remnant" that will go out from Jerusalem. It should be noted that in this prophecy that YHWH will save Jerusalem from Assyria, this specific mention of "the remnant" should alert the reader back to what was prophesied in Isaiah 7-12, and help the reader see that the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the hand of Assyria in chapter 37 is meant to be seen as a fulfillment of the "remnant prophecies" in Isaiah 7-12. Simply put, "the remnant" in Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 37 is not a reference to the remnant that will eventually come out of the Babylonian exile, but rather to the remnant of the people of YHWH that survives the Assyrian destruction and oppression that came about because of Ahaz's faithless actions during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis.[329]

A thirteenth connection can be seen in the recurring *agricultural imagery* throughout Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39. As with the theme of the remnant, this imagery is also introduced in chapters 1-6, and comes to a head in 6:11-13, when in response to Isaiah's question concerning how long he would have to prophesy to the deaf and blind people of Judah, YHWH responds by saying,

> "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate; until YHWH sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land. Even if a tenth part remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

[329] Seitz further points out that this mention of "the remnant" in both chapter 37 and earlier in chapter 7 "points up the contrast between Hezekiah and Ahaz." *Zion's Final Destiny,* 89. He also points to other connections already presented in this thesis, namely "the sign," "the conduit of the upper field," and the phrase, "the zeal of YHWH of hosts will accomplish this," and asks the question, "Would it be too much to suggest that Isaiah's promise of a remnant, scattered throughout 1-35 and now interwoven with post-587 material, finds its culmination here, in the sign given to Hezekiah?" (90).

With this declaration from YHWH, Isaiah begins his prophetic ministry, and, beginning in chapters 7-12, we find, right along with prophecies of destruction, a constant reference to destruction of crops, trees, etc.

Initially we find the House of David, in light of the threat of Aram and Israel, described as "the trembling trees of the forest in the face of a wind" (7:2). Given this introductory metaphor that equates the royal house of David, and by extension Judah itself, with trees, it should come as no surprise to find this metaphor extended along with Isaiah's prophecy of destruction: (a) in 7:23-25 three times Isaiah prophesies that the land will be filled with "thorns and briars;" (b) in 9:17-20, when describing the wickedness of Israel, Isaiah says that the wickedness "burned like a fire, consuming briars and thorns; it kindled the thickets of the forest, and they swirled upward in a column of smoke; (c) in 10:15-18, after Assyria is equated with both an ax and a saw that attempts to vault itself over the one who uses it, YHWH says He, the light of Israel, will become a flame and will "burn and devour" Assyria's briars and thorns in one day (v. 17), and will destroy Assyria's "forest and fruitful land" (v. 18);[330] (d) in 10:33-34 there is the description of YHWH lopping off boughs, cutting down tall trees, hacking down the thickets of the forest with an ax, and felling the majestic trees of Lebanon; yet (e) in the midst of the prophecies of destruction, and the agricultural imagery with it, we find in 11:1 and 10 the equation of the coming Davidic king with "a shoot coming from the stump of Jesse," and "the root of Jesse," point toward the promise of salvation: amid the agricultural devastation, there is a sign of new growth, in the form of the royal child Immanuel.

[330] As previously mentioned, unlike the surviving remnant of Israel, the "remnant of trees" of Assyria will be so few that a child can write them down.

Turning to Isaiah 36-39 we find more agricultural imagery. First, in 36:16-17, we find the Rabshakeh offering the people of Jerusalem, in exchange for their surrender, the opportunity for each man to "eat from his own vine…and fig tree…and drink from his own well," and to eventually be taken to "a land like your own land—a land of grain and fresh wine; a land of bread and vineyards." In essence, the Rabshakeh is offering to take the people of Jerusalem to the Assyrian version of the Promised Land. Secondly, in 37:24-25, in YHWH's condemnation of Assyria's pride, YHWH portrays Assyria as cutting down the cedars and cypresses of Lebanon. Finally, in 37:30-32, when YHWH gives a sign to Hezekiah that Sennacherib would not succeed, the sign involves sowing, reaping, planting vineyards, and eating of their fruit.

The fourteenth and final connection we find centers on the idea of *planning* and taking *counsel*. The Hebrew words to note here are עֵצָה (the noun that can mean either "plan" or "counsel") and יָעַץ (the verb that can mean either "to plan" or "to counsel"). We have already noted that the main issue at stake in Isaiah 7 is whether Ahaz would heed YHWH's counsel or whether he would trust in his own counsel and appeal to Assyria for help. Ahaz's subsequent rejection of YHWH's counsel ends up highlighting a divide between YHWH's plans and the plans of men, not only Ahaz himself, but later leaders in Jerusalem, as well as plans of other nations. In light of Ahaz's rejection of YHWH's counsel, YHWH immediately proceeds to spell out His "new" plan in the Immanuel prophecies found in chapters 7-12. Because of Ahaz's unfaithfulness, YHWH was going to bring in Assyria to oppress Judah. Yet Isaiah also prophesied that YHWH would bring His judgment upon Assyria because of Assyria's arrogance and boasting, and that He would deliver His people from Assyria's yoke. What is interesting is that

YHWH's plan actually incorporated the plans of Ahaz, whose plan was to appeal to Assyria for help. Ironically, by appealing to Assyria for help, Ahaz actually ended up furthering YHWH's plan.

This concept—namely YHWH's plan going forward despite men's attempts to plan otherwise—plays itself out throughout Proto-Isaiah. In 14:24-27, in the midst of an oracle against Babylon (chapters 13-14), we find immediately after Isaiah prophesying that YHWH will "break Assyria *in my land*," the emphasis that this is what YHWH had planned all along. The answer to the question, "Who will annul it [i.e. YHWH's plan]?" is obvious—no one can. Regardless of what any nation plans, YHWH's plan will come to fruition. We find a similar prophecy against Egypt in chapter 19. In this oracle Isaiah mocks Egypt for relying on the counsel of their foolish sages and then proceeds to reveal YHWH's plan against Egypt (19:12, 17), which includes both Egypt's humiliation and defeat, as well as its eventual turning to the worship of YHWH. Once again, we find YHWH's plan essentially overriding the plans of Egypt. In 22:11 we find a condemnation of those in Jerusalem who, in the midst of war preparations, did not have regard for the one [i.e. YHWH] who "planned it long ago." In 23:8-9, in the midst of the oracle against Tyre, we find the declaration that YHWH was the one who "planned" Tyre's destruction. Then in chapter 25, a chapter seemingly focusing on Jerusalem, we find Isaiah praising YHWH for the plans of old that YHWH has brought about (25:1). Those plans involve the devastation and destruction that YHWH has brought upon Jerusalem.

The most interesting references to plans and counseling, though, can be found in chapters 29-31, which clearly condemn certain unnamed leaders in Jerusalem who refuse to trust in YHWH. In 29:15 we find Isaiah condemning those who try to hide their plans

from YHWH, and in 30:1-2 we get a better idea regarding what those plans consist of: appealing to Egypt for help, presumably against Assyria. Similar to the situation with Ahaz during the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, there is the picture of leaders in Jerusalem rebelling against YHWH, not heeding his counsel, and choosing rather to place their trust in Egypt; and similarly the result of such behavior is the same—humiliation and devastation for Judah, yet eventual refinement and faithfulness for the people of YHWH. We find this spelled out both in chapter 30 as well as chapter 31.

Yet as was mentioned earlier, we would be wrong to assume that that this condemnation in chapters 29-31 of the leaders of Jerusalem is a condemnation of King Hezekiah. Just as in chapters 7-12, where the faithless actions of both Ahaz and the other leaders in the House of David were contrasted with those of the Immanuel child (7:14) who would sit on David's throne and establish justice and righteousness (9:5-6) and who would sprout up from the stump of Jesse and have the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge and fear of YHWH (11:1-5), we find the actions of the faithless leaders in Jerusalem contrasted with the righteous king in chapters 32-33. It is quite clear in chapters 32 that the king who reigns in righteousness will bring about the opening of eyes and ears (32:3) and good judgment (32:4). It is also clear that this king is contrasted with the corrupt fools mentioned in 32:5-7. Verse 8 declares**,** "But those who are noble *plan* (יָעַץ) noble things, and by noble things they *stand*." This verse contains striking similarities to the challenge Isaiah issued to Ahaz back in 7:9, when he told Ahaz that if he did not stand firm in faith to YHWH (i.e. heed YHWH's counsel) that he would not stand at all.

This contrast is once again emphasized in chapter 33, where we have a picture of the "sinners in Zion" being terrified of the consuming fire (33:13-14), followed by a picture of the one "walking in righteousness" who will be "faithful" (33:15-16). Then Isaiah states in 33:17, "Then your eyes will see the king in his beauty." This is followed in verses 18-24 with a picture of Jerusalem at peace, with YHWH as its judge and ruler and king. We should not assume that the king mentioned in 33:17 is necessarily YHWH himself, even though YHWH is called "king" in 33:22. We need to see that the king in 33:17 is a reference to Hezekiah. This makes complete sense, given the overall picture the biblical witness gives concerning him. Hezekiah is constantly depicted as the faithful and righteous king whose faith in YHWH brought about an end to the Assyrian assault in 701 BCE. He was the Davidic king who faithfully reflected the image of God to His people and to the nations.

It is important to note not only how this idea of "plans and counsels" works throughout Proto-Isaiah, but more precisely how chapters 29-33 present a similar situation to what we find in chapter 7, for both situations deal with a coming threat and the issue of faithfulness to YHWH. The plan of YHWH that unfolds in response to Ahaz's rejection of YHWH's counsel centers on the figure of Immanuel and emphasizes both judgment upon Judah as well as the eventual salvation of Judah and judgment upon Assyria. Here in chapters 29-33 the stage is once again set in similar fashion: there is a coming Assyrian threat (ironically the very one prophesied about in YHWH's plan in chapters 7-12) and there is the challenge of faithfulness to YHWH one again. Here in chapters 29-33, though, we have a picture of the righteous king Hezekiah at odds with the other sinful leaders of Jerusalem who want to follow the example of Ahaz by appealing

to another nation for help. This faithfulness to YHWH on the part of Hezekiah points the reader forward to the concluding section of Proto-Isaiah, that of chapters 36-39. The obvious question is this: "Will Hezekiah's faithfulness to YHWH pay off?" Or perhaps more specifically, "Will YHWH's plans come to full fruition?" Chapters 34-35 prophesy that they will indeed; yet it is in chapters 36-39 where these plans are realized in the historical reality of Sennacherib's invasion.

Ironically, it does not seem that Hezekiah's strategy will work. That is certainly what the Rabshakeh is determined to prove in 36:5, when he says, "*Do you think that mere words are strategy and might for war* (עֵצָה וּגְבוּרָה לַמִּלְחָמָה)?" Yet what the Rabshakeh is unaware is that he is mocking the very "counsel and might" that Isaiah prophesied YHWH would bestow upon the Immanuel child in 11:2: *"The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might* (רוּחַ עֵצָה וּגְבוּרָה), *the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD."* What we find here, therefore, is that Immanuel child of 11:2 is none other than Hezekiah, and that Assyria's boastful mocking of Hezekiah, Isaiah's prophesied Immanuel, the anointed king of Israel, not only results in YHWH's sparing of Jerusalem and His routing of the Assyrian armies, but that these very actions had been prophesied by Isaiah long before.[331] And in case these actions did not make it obvious enough that YHWH's plans that were articulated as far back as chapters 7-12 had been fulfilled, the writer of Proto-Isaiah inserted 37:26 as a part of Isaiah's prophecy against Assyria. In this verse YHWH says to Sennacherib, "Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of

[331] John Goldingay notes that it is in 36:18-20, where the Rabshakeh shifts from questioning the competence of Hezekiah to questioning the competence of YHWH, that "the commander makes his comprehensive, fatal mistake." This move, "is equivalent to the one that lies behind Isaiah's direct assessment of Assyria in 10:5-11." *NICB: Isaiah*, 206.

old what now I bring to pass….” Because of Sennacherib’s boasting, YHWH was going to exact His judgment on Assyria outside of the walls of Jerusalem.

What all of these literary connections attempt to bring out in these two bookend sections of Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39 that describe two major events in the reigns of both Ahaz and Hezekiah is that despite the unfaithfulness of Ahaz that ushered in years of Assyrian oppression, there was nevertheless a prophetic promise of salvation through his royal son, Hezekiah. The very mention of an “Immanuel” child (7:14), a “child born for us” (9:6-7), “the shoot from the stump of Jesse” (11:1) who righteously rules God’s people (11:2-9), and “the root of Jesse” who stands as a signal to the nations (11:10-12) and who brings harmony between Judah and Ephraim (11:13-14)—all of these imply a Davidic/Messianic king who (a) survives/rises up from a severe chastening/destruction by YHWH, (b) re-establishes a just and righteous kingdom, (c) is exalted in the eyes of the nations, and (d) brings harmony between Judah and Israel. All of these traits are fulfilled in some way or another in the person of Hezekiah: he was a Davidic/Messianic king who: (a) survived the Assyrian oppression that was brought on by YHWH because of his father’s unfaithful actions, (b) goes down in history as being a just and righteous king (II Kings 18:1-12; II Chronicles 28-32), (c) was exalted by the nations (II Chronicles 32:23, 27-29), and (d) appealed to the remnant from the destruction of Samaria to come and observe Passover in Jerusalem (II Chronicles 28-32).

VII. Similar Parallels in II Kings 16-20

It should now be obvious that the contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah in Proto-Isaiah is much more elaborate and fundamental to the narrative structure within Proto-Isaiah than most scholars have realized. This contrast can be seen in the bookend units of

chapters 7-12 and 36-39 and is strengthened by not only specific literary connections between the two sections, but also by the numerous recurring themes and motifs that run all throughout Proto-Isaiah. Yet, in addition to everything found within Proto-Isaiah that has been discussed thus far, there is yet another contributing factor that enhances the argument of this thesis: the fact that a similar contrasting picture of Ahaz and Hezekiah is found in II Kings 16-20.

Regardless whether one concludes that Proto-Isaiah has priority over II Kings, and that the writer of II Kings borrowed his material in II Kings 18-20 from Isaiah 36-39, or vice versa, one thing is certain: there is a close connection between these two sections. Consequently, it should not be surprising at all to find a similar kind of contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah in II Kings as well. When one looks at these verses that are in II Kings but omitted in Isaiah, one can clearly see that the writer of II Kings used these verses to contrast Hezekiah with what we are told about Ahaz in II Kings 16:1-20 in terms of specific political actions:

Ahaz: (II Kings 16:1-20)	***Hezekiah (II Kings 18:1-16)***
16:2 וְלֹא־עָשָׂה הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו כְּדָוִד אָבִיו	**18:3** וַיַּעַשׂ הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה דָּוִד אָבִיו
16:4 וַיִּזְבַּח וַיְקַטֵּר בַּבָּמוֹת וְעַל־הַגְּבָעוֹת וְתַחַת כָּל־עֵץ רַעֲנָן	**18:4** הוּא הֵסִיר אֶת־הַבָּמוֹת וְשִׁבַּר אֶת־הַמַּצֵּבֹת וְכָרַת אֶת־הָאֲשֵׁרָה
16:5 אָז יַעֲלֶה רְצִין מֶלֶךְ־אֲרָם וּפֶקַח בֶּן־ רְמַלְיָהוּ מֶלֶךְ־יִשְׂרָאֵל יְרוּשָׁלַם וַיִּצֻּרוּ וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לְהִלָּחֵם עַל־אָחָז לַמִּלְחָמָה	**18:13** וּבְאַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּה עָלָה סַנְחֵרִיב מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר עַל כָּל־עָרֵי יְהוּדָה הַבְּצֻרוֹת וַיִּתְפְּשֵׂם
16:7 וַיִּשְׁלַח אָחָז מַלְאָכִים אֶל־תִּגְלַת פִּלְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר לֵאמֹר עַבְדְּךָ וּבִנְךָ אָנִי	**18:7** וַיִּמְרֹד בְּמֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר וְלֹא עֲבָדוֹ

18:15 וַיִּתֵּן חִזְקִיָּה אֶת־כָּל־הַכֶּסֶף הִנִּמְצָא בֵּית־יְהוָה וּבְאֹצְרוֹת בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ	**16:8** וַיִּקַּח אָחָז אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף וְאֶת־הַזָּהָב הַנִּמְצָא בֵּית יְהוָה בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁלַח וּבְאֹצְרוֹת לְמֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר שֹׁחַד
18:9 עָלָה שַׁלְמַנְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר עַל־שֹׁמְרוֹן וַיָּצַר עָלֶיהָ	**16:9** וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר אֶל־דַּמֶּשֶׂק וַיִּתְפְּשֶׂהָ
18:4 וְכִתֵּת נְחַשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה כִּי עַד־הַיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה הָיוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מְקַטְּרִים לוֹ וַיִּקְרָא־לוֹ נְחֻשְׁתָּן	**16:10** וַיֵּלֶךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ אָחָז לִקְרַאת תִּגְלַת פִּלְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַמִּזְבַּח דַּמֶּשֶׂק אֲשֶׁר בְּדַמֶּשֶׂק **16:14** וְאֵת הַמִּזְבַּח הַנְּחֹשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּקְרֵב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי הַבַּיִת

Ahaz: (II Kings 16:1-20)	*Hezekiah (II Kings 18:1-16)*
16:2 Ahaz *did not* do what was right in the eyes of YHWH, like his father David	**18:3** Hezekiah *did* what was right in the eyes of YHWH, like his father David
16:3-4 He made pagan sacrifices on the *high places* and on the *hills* and under every fresh tree	**18:4** He removed the *high places*, broke down the *pillars*, and cut down the *sacred pole*
16:5 He was *threatened by Aram and Israel*, but not completely overrun	**Ch. 18-20** He is *threatened by Assyria*
16:7-8 He *appealed to Assyria for help*, and sent him the *treasure of the Temple*	**18:7, 14-15** He *rebelled against Assyria* and he eventually sends the *treasure of the Temple to Assyria to try to get them to leave*
16:9 Assyria *captured Damascus*	**18:9-12** Assyria *captures Samaria*, then turns toward Judah
16:10-16 Ahaz was so impressed with the *pagan altar* in Damascus that had one *built to replace the bronze altar in the Jerusalem Temple*	**18:4** Hezekiah *destroys the bronze serpent of Moses*, because the people were worshipping it

As one can see, the account of Hezekiah's bout with Assyria is told in such a way that the reader clearly sees the stark contrast of Hezekiah's faithfulness to YHWH to Ahaz's unfaithfulness to YHWH. At *every* major point in II Kings 18:1-16, Hezekiah's situation mirrors Ahaz's actions of II Kings 16. Hezekiah has to deal with the threat of

Assyria, and the writer of II Kings gives the distinct impression that the threat of Assyria was brought on by Ahaz's original appeal to them for help, and thusly he lays the blame squarely on Ahaz. In addition, even the mention of Hezekiah breaking the bronze serpent of Moses seems to contrast the story of Ahaz's building of the pagan altar in the Temple, and putting it alongside the original bronze one. Ahaz brings pagan idol worship into the Temple itself, whereas Hezekiah would rather destroy something used by YHWH in the past, than see it degraded and worshipped as a pagan idol. These contrasts clearly drive home the point that Hezekiah was faithful to YHWH, whereas Ahaz was unfaithful, and was guilty of bringing about this Assyrian threat upon Judah.[332]

Yet it must also be pointed out that no such parallels can be seen between what II Kings 16 relates about Ahaz's reign and the information found in II Kings 18-20. The contrasting parallels in II Kings between Ahaz and Hezekiah are found in those passages unique to II Kings, and not in the parallel passages of II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39. Indeed, the information in II Kings 18-20 does not seem to relate in any substantial way to the literary structure that highlights the contrasting reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. What this indicates is that although both II Kings and Isaiah share a common historical viewpoint that sees Ahaz and Hezekiah as polar opposite kings and have highlighted this contrast between the two kings in different ways, it is clear that the material found in II Kings 18-20/Isaiah 36-39 is much more important to the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah than it is to the literary structure of II Kings. What this means is that although it is certainly *possible* that the material in II Kings 18-20/Isaiah 36-39 came from an earlier

[332] One additional note about II Kings 18:2 is that the writer mentions who Hezekiah's mother is: Abi, the daughter of Zechariah. It is very possible that since the writer of *Isaiah* was already using *II Kings* 18-20 in his own work in describing Sennacherib's invasion, that he took that little fact about Hezekiah's mother as a cue to relate the circumstances of Hezekiah's conception and birth during the events of *Isaiah* 7, and used those events to contrast Ahaz and Hezekiah in yet another way.

source that both the authors of II Kings and Proto-Isaiah borrowed from, its vital role within the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah points to the *probability* that it was originally written as a part of Proto-Isaiah and was later added to the exilic work of II Kings.

VIII. Final Thoughts on the Bookend Structure of Proto-Isaiah

In this chapter we have analyzed not only the bookend structure of Proto-Isaiah, but along with that, the three strands of emphasis that run throughout the entirety of Proto-Isaiah. In doing so we have argued that chapters 36-39 form an integral and essential part of the literary structure and integrity of Proto-Isaiah. Simply put, without chapters 36-39, Proto-Isaiah would be an incomplete and incomprehensible work. The three strands of emphasis (the sinful state of Israel/Judah, YHWH's judgment, and YHWH's salvation) that are introduced in chapters 1-6 and run throughout Proto-Isaiah are crystallized within the two bookend narrative sections of chapters 7-12 and 36-39. The key figure in both of these bookends, of course, is that of Hezekiah. The Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7-12, uttered during a time of national crisis as a response to the unfaithfulness of king Ahaz, focused on the yet-to-be-born son of Ahaz. This son would become the next king and would demonstrate faithfulness to YHWH. Nevertheless, Judah would suffer as a result of Ahaz's unfaithful actions. Isaiah prophesied that Assyrian oppression would reach up to the neck of Judah, but because of Immanuel's faithfulness and righteousness, YHWH would save Jerusalem and eventually crush the Assyrian threat. What we find in chapters 36-39, therefore, is the fulfillment of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy. During another moment of national crisis, in which Assyrian oppression seemed at its worst, YHWH crushed the Assyrian threat and was faithful to his promise to save Jerusalem because of Hezekiah's faithfulness and righteousness.

Given this intimate connection to the literary integrity of Proto-Isaiah, it becomes very difficult to think that Proto-Isaiah ever existed without chapters 36-39. If this interpretation of those national events had not been there from the beginning, one must ask why then would have Isaiah's prophecies been preserved in the first place? He would have surely been considered to be a false prophet, his prophecies would have been disregarded, and Hezekiah would have gone down in history as a foolish king. But the fact is the exact opposite point of view is recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Why? We must conclude that the *literary* structure of Proto-Isaiah reflects a *prophetic* interpretation of real *historical* events that sought to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH, Hezekiah as the faithful Immanuel, and YHWH Himself as the one true God of Israel who brings both judgment for the unfaithful and salvation for the righteous. Therefore it is the assertion of this thesis that this proposal regarding (a) the literary unity of Proto-Isaiah, (b) the historical reliability of both Isaiah 7-12 and 36-39, (c) the occasion and purpose for the writing of Proto-Isaiah, and most importantly (d) the central identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah, is more coherent and more plausible than the previous proposals put forth by scholars to date.

Chapter Six

Conclusions: Coming to a True Old Testament Understanding of Immanuel

I. Introduction

British poet John Donne penned the famous line, "No man is an island entire of itself." That insight is not simply applicable to human beings, but to the exegetical task as well. No single exegetical task or proposal is an island unto itself either: it is inevitably connected to some other exegetical question, task, or issue. Not only will it inevitably *influence* other exegetical issues, but it will also *be influenced by* other exegetical issues. Exegetical meaning not only demands adherence to literary and historical context, but one's findings will also have an impact on the overall context of scholarly debate. The exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 proves this to be true on a variety of levels. In the course of this thesis, we have seen how the exegesis of one verse, Isaiah 7:14, affects how one understands Isaiah 7-12, Isaiah 36-39, and Proto-Isaiah as a whole. We have also seen how the exegesis of this verse opens the door to various issues concerning historical reliability, literary artistry, scribal redaction, exegesis and errors, textual priority, the purpose and meaning of prophecy, and the historical circumstances that occasioned the writing of Proto-Isaiah. If nothing else, one thing is certainly clear: the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14 is anything but simple. It is a highly complex process that forces one to delve into numerous pools of muddy exegetical waters. Nevertheless, since this is the task of the exegete, it must be done.

This thesis has attempted to clear up some of the "muddy waters" surrounding, not only the exegesis of Isaiah 7:14, but also Proto-Isaiah as a whole. It has made a multi-

faceted argument that has serious implications for how one wrestles with many exegetical issues regarding Proto-Isaiah. At its heart, this thesis has attempted to show that Isaiah 7:14 is not an island unto itself. Its proper exegesis demands context, context, and more context.

II. A Review of the Findings in this Thesis

We began in chapter one with a discussion of a number of misconceptions and exegetical landmines surrounding a proper understanding of Isaiah 7:14. We noted two fundamental problems with understanding Isaiah 7:14: (a) the decidedly a-historical way in which traditional Church teaching has interpreted Isaiah 7:14, and (b) the admittedly ambiguous nature of Isaiah 7:14 itself. When attempting to understand Isaiah 7:14 in its original context, we noted that there are five exegetical landmines that confront any scholar who exegetes Isaiah 7:14: (a) the identity of the Immanuel child and how he relates to the greater prophecy on chapters 7-12, (b) the chronological difficulties in II Kings 16-20 concerning the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, (c) the relationship between Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20, and the question of priority, (d) the literary coherence and historical reliability of Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39, (e) the overall literary structure of Proto-Isaiah and the puzzle of Isaiah's growth.

We then discussed the evolution of modern biblical methodologies and the two basic shortcomings of these historical-critical methods: (a) an overzealous suspicion of the historical reliability of biblical texts, and (b) a tendency to divide historical concerns from literary concerns. In this discussion, we appealed to scholars Iain Provan, V. Phillips Long, and Tremper Longman to argue for the general acceptance of the historical reliability of the biblical texts and for acknowledgement of the literary artistry of the

biblical texts as well. After another discussion focusing on Michael Fishbane's explanation of biblical interpretation in ancient Israel, we emphasized the need to read the Bible as *history*, *literature*, and *prophecy*. In terms of Proto-Isaiah, we noted that the texts in question ought to be read as (a) testimonies to actual historical events, (b) highly stylized literary works, and (c) prophetic works that attempt to put forth a theological interpretation of historical events through a literary genre.

In chapter two we focused on Isaiah 7:14 in its immediate context of chapters 7-12. We first overviewed past scholarship and noted that there were generally four proposals concerning the identity of the Immanuel child: (a) Jesus, (b) a generalized term referring to any child born during the time of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, (c) Isaiah's son, or (d) Hezekiah. We then looked at the textual variants in Isaiah 7:14 and concluded that although the verse itself is, in and of itself, ambiguous, when seen in the context of chapters 7-12, it seems to point to the Immanuel child being a son of Ahaz. In fact, once one takes into consideration the passages in chapters 7-12 that identify the child with a royal child who would one day rule, it becomes quite probable that the Immanuel child is to be further identified with Hezekiah.

In chapter three we analyzed the primary objection to the identification of Immanuel with Hezekiah: the chronological problem found in II Kings 16-20. We noted that the chronology derived from II Kings 16-20 is too problematic to be considered reliable in its current form. Simply put, the chronology as it is found in II Kings 16-20 is historically impossible. There is no way Hezekiah could have been in his sixth year as king in 721 BCE and in his fourteenth year as king in 701 BCE. When faced with this chronological error, we argued that a plausible chronology for Hezekiah's reign could be

constructed by suggesting revisions to two possible scribal errors: (a) Isaiah 36:1/II Kings 18:13 should read "Hezekiah's twenty-fourth year" instead of "fourteenth year" and (b) II Kings 18:2 should read that Hezekiah became king at the age of fifteen, and not twenty-five. These two revisions would place Hezekiah's birth around 742 BCE, and this would mean that Hezekiah would have been born in the midst of the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis, well-within the time period when Isaiah would have uttered his Immanuel prophecy. Thus, the argument that Hezekiah could *not* have been the prophesied Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14 on the basis of the chronology of II Kings 16-20 was shown to be unconvincing. One cannot make II Kings 16-20 the basis for rejecting an Immanuel-Hezekiah connection because not only is the chronology itself faulty, but there is a plausible historical-critical reconstruction of the timeline of Hezekiah's life and reign. The aim of this chapter was not so much to argue for a definite historical-critical reconstruction *for* the time of Hezekiah's birth, but rather to show that the current historical-critical argument *against* the proposal that equates Hezekiah with Immanuel is not convincing on historical-critical grounds.

In chapter four we looked at the exegetical issues surrounding Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20. After reviewing the general scholarly consensus regarding Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18-20 we concluded the following: (a) it was more probable that II Kings 18-20 borrowed its material from Isaiah 36-39, (b) Isaiah 36-39 consists of a single unified literary unit, (c) Isaiah 36-39 reflects a generally historically reliable interpretation of various events during Hezekiah's reign, most notably Sennacherib's invasion, and (d) the more believable occasion for the writing of Isaiah 36-39 and the compilation of Proto-Isaiah was that of the theological/political controversy brought on by Manasseh who, in

light of the fallout from Sennacherib's invasion, attempted to undo Hezekiah's reforms and, in turn, promoted the worship of pagan idols in Judah. This action would have caused the worshippers of YHWH who were loyal to Hezekiah and who regarded Isaiah as YHWH's prophet to compile Proto-Isaiah as a way to argue against Manasseh's actions and to vindicate Isaiah as a true prophet, Hezekiah as a righteous and faithful king, and YHWH as the true God of Israel.

Finally, in chapter five, we argued that there is a clearly discernable "bookend structure" to the main body of Proto-Isaiah that serves to highlight the identification of the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7-12 with King Hezekiah in Isaiah 36-39. What we essentially find is that there are a host of intertextual connections between Isaiah 36-39 and Isaiah 7-12. Now the question concerning this proposed "bookend structure" is, "Can these intertextual connections be considered intentional by the "original author" and would they have been obvious to the "original audience"? We noted that Richard Hays proposed seven tests that would help answer that question. The seven tests are (a) Availability, (b) Volume, (c) Recurrence, (d) Thematic Coherence, (e) Historical Plausibility, (f) History of Interpretation, and (g) Satisfaction. If our proposed argument regarding the "bookend structure" of Proto-Isaiah is to be deemed credible, it must pass these seven tests.

We then noted that there are essentially three thematic strands of emphasis that run throughout Proto-Isaiah: the sinful state of humanity, the judgment of YHWH, and the exaltation of YHWH and the salvation of his people. Within these three strands of emphasis are numerous recurring motifs that are outlined and discussed in the rest of chapter five. It is in the discussion of these recurring themes and motifs that one can

discern clear intertextual connections between Isaiah 36-39 and Isaiah 7-12 that reinforce the proposal of this thesis that there is a clear and intended bookend structure in Proto-Isaiah that highlights an Immanuel-Hezekiah connection. In summary fashion, the literary parallels/intertextual connections noted in chapter five are:

A. An announcement of *foreign oppression*
B. The repetition of the location: "*the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the fuller's field*"
C. The emphasis of a *sign from YHWH*
D. Isaiah's appeal to both Ahaz and Hezekiah to *not be afraid*
E. The challenge to both Ahaz and Hezekiah to remain *faithful*
F. The repetition of the phrase "*the zeal of YHWH will do this*"
G. The repeated emphasis on *Assyrian oppression*
H. The repeated emphasis on *Assyria's arrogance and boasting*
I. The repeated references to *Egypt*
J. The picture of a Davidic king receiving glory from the nations
K. A *concluding chapter of praise* in both bookend sections
L. The repeated references to *the remnant*
M. The recurring *agricultural imagery* in both bookend sections
N. The repeated references to *planning* and *counsel*

After this lengthy discussion of the intertextual connections between Isaiah 7-12 and Isaiah 36-39, we also pointed out in chapter five that similar contrasting parallels between Ahaz and Hezekiah could be seen between II Kings 16:1-20 and 18:1-16. The point we attempted to make with this brief look at II Kings 16 and 18 was twofold: (a) the biblical contrast between Ahaz and Hezekiah was not unique only to Isaiah, and thus Isaiah's contrasting pictures of Ahaz and Hezekiah can be seen as consistent with other biblical testimonies, and (b) the contrasting picture between Ahaz and Hezekiah in II Kings is confined to those sections in II Kings *that are unique to II Kings*, thus reinforcing the argument that the material found in Isaiah 36-39 and II Kings 18:13, 17-20:21 is original to Isaiah, only to later be inserted into II Kings.

III. The Significance of this Thesis to Old Testament Studies

This thesis has had essentially two goals. Its first goal has been to show that in its original context within Proto-Isaiah, Isaiah 7:14 was understood to be a prophecy about the birth of Hezekiah and what events would unfold in Judah within Hezekiah's lifetime. The way in which this first goal has been argued leads us to the second goal of this thesis: to show the clear shortcomings scholars encounter when they fail to incorporate a holistic exegetical approach that includes *both* historical-critical *and* literary methods working together, and instead limit themselves to an *either/or* approach of exegesis. Simply put, solid biblical exegesis requires historical competency, literary competency, and a reasonable amount of faith in the biblical text itself. Being historically competent means, as has been argued by Provan, Long, and Longman, that scholars take seriously the historical claims within the biblical text. Being literarily competent means that, as has been argued specifically by Long and Seitz, scholars attempt to read any given biblical text as a coherent whole, and not simply as a collection of random and poorly-stitched together sources that have no discernable purpose. Furthermore, both competencies demand that the exegete exercise a certain amount of faith that the biblical writers were competent themselves, and able to recount historical events and interpret them through literary means. If the modern scholar does not exercise a reasonable amount of faith in the testimony found in the biblical texts he is attempting to exegete, then his exegesis can hardly be called "biblical."In fact, it cannot really even be called "exegesis."

The findings of this thesis have demonstrated that it is possible to view Proto-Isaiah not only as a reliable window into the major crises of eighth-century Judah BCE, but also as a competent and purposed literary work whose aim was to provide a prophetic

interpretation of these major historical crises during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah. This thesis has shown that it is possible to critically analyze Proto-Isaiah's accounts of both the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the invasion of Sennacherib using historical-critical methods and still be able to treat these biblical texts as reliable testimony to real historical events. The long-standing scholarly consensus that demonstrates an overzealous and unhealthy suspicion of the reliability of the biblical texts *simply because they are biblical and "religious"* must be shown for what it is: a naïve bias based on a faulty caricature of what the biblical text truly is. At the same time this thesis has also shown that it is possible to critically analyze the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah and still respect the text enough to interpret it as a coherent literary work. The long-standing scholarly consensus that views biblical texts simply as poorly redacted collections of past sources that have no literary integrity and only serve the theological agendas of much later exilic communities must be shown for what it is: evidence of the failure of many historical-critical scholars to be able to read and appreciate the Bible as literature and to identify the obvious literary structures and patterns that any competent literature major would immediately recognize.

In terms of specific exegetical contributions, this thesis has aided studies of Proto-Isaiah on numerous fronts. First, it has further solidified the traditional Jewish claim that the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7:14 is to be identified with Hezekiah. Second, by addressing the chronological objection to such an identification, this thesis has not only successfully refuted that objection, but has also put forth an extremely plausible historical reconstruction that not only places Isaiah's utterance of the Immanuel prophecy shortly before the birth of Hezekiah, around 742 BCE, but also helps give a clearer historical chronology of that time period. Third, this thesis has contributed to the growing view that

the material in Isaiah 36-39 holds priority over its parallel sections in II Kings 18-20 by showing that the material in question is extremely vital to the literary structure of Proto-Isaiah, but appears to hold no literary significance to the structure of II Kings. Fourth, this thesis has suggested a very intriguing proposal concerning the historical occasion for the compilation of Proto-Isaiah: the aftermath of Sennacherib's invasion, when Manasseh had begun to reinstitute the worship of foreign gods. Finally, this thesis has proposed a comprehensive and detailed literary analysis of the two bookend sections in Proto-Isaiah that not only provide the structural foundation for Proto-Isaiah, but also the prophetic interpretation of the two major national crises for the kingdom of Judah in the latter half of the eighth-century BCE.

IV. Further Implications this Thesis has for New Testament Studies

When one considers all the evidence proposed in this thesis, it becomes quite clear that, in the form that has been handed down to us, Proto-Isaiah portrays the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7-12 as none other than King Hezekiah. Such an identification is not only *historically* plausible and *literarily* coherent, but it helps clarify the *prophetic intent* of Proto-Isaiah. Simply put, given the findings in this thesis, one can see why Proto-Isaiah was preserved in the life of ancient Israel and later added to during and after the exile in the form of Deutero-Isaiah. The work of Proto-Isaiah vindicated Isaiah as a true prophet of YHWH. What he had prophesied had come to pass: the destruction of Aram and Israel, the birth of Hezekiah, and his subsequent "showdown" with Assyria, where, because of Hezekiah's faithfulness to YHWH, Assyria suffered a mysterious defeat outside of the walls of Jerusalem. For this reason, Proto-Isaiah was preserved and later used as a sort of "grid" through which the exilic and post-exilic community

interpreted the events of their own day and looked forward to a future ultimate restoration of the people of YHWH.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, to see how influential the book of Isaiah was to not only the post-exilic community, but also to other communities, particularly the Qumran community and early Christian community. For in the pages of Proto-Isaiah these communities came to eventually look *through* the immediate prophecies and events surrounding Hezekiah (i.e. the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis and the invasion of Sennacherib), *to* a future Messiah that would fulfill the salvation of YHWH that had been slowly filling up throughout Israel's history. Simply put, because these prophecies had revealed the way YHWH had saved his people *in Hezekiah's day*, later communities looked to these same prophecies to form their expectations as to how YHWH would once again save his people *in the future*.

This appreciation and interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 in its original context, therefore, has tremendous implications for not only the way in which Christians have traditionally understood numerous issues within Christian theology, but also for the 2,000 year old debate between Christians and Jews concerning Isaiah 7:14 and the concept of "fulfilled prophecy." In regards to this 2,000 year old debate, the findings of this thesis open up the possibility of a certain amount of reconciliation between the traditional Christian and Jewish interpretations.

This thesis began with a brief look at one of the earliest recorded debates between Christians and Jews over Isaiah 7:14, Justin Martyr's *Dialogues with Trypho*. When one looks at this debate closely, one can see that the breakdown in the argument between Justin Martyr and Trypho the Jew was that the two men were talking past each other and

answering different questions regarding Isaiah 7:14. Trypho's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 was essentially a *historical* one: the prophecy was to be understood in the context of Isaiah's life and times and therefore Trypho and his fellow Jews had always understood Immanuel to be Hezekiah. Justin Martyr's interpretation of Isaiah 7:14, on the other hand, was essentially an *a-historical* one: he determined that since Matthew claimed Isaiah 7:14 was "fulfilled" with the conception and birth of Jesus, it must have been a *prediction* of Jesus' conception and birth, and therefore had no relation to the historical circumstances in which it was uttered. Simply put, Trypho could not see how Isaiah 7:14 could be about Jesus because it was, in his mind, clearly about Hezekiah; yet Justin Martyr could not see how Isaiah 7:14 could have been about Hezekiah because Matthew had related Isaiah 7:14 to Jesus.

On historical and literary grounds, this thesis has essentially sided with Trypho. Isaiah 7:14 is clearly about Hezekiah, and the events prophesied in Isaiah 7-12 are to be seen as reaching their immediate fulfillment during the reign of Hezekiah, as recorded in Isaiah 36-39. Any Christian understanding of Isaiah 7:14 must begin here, with the recognition of its immediate interpretation within its original context. On this point Christians and Jews can agree. The point at which Christians and Jews must simply agree to disagree regarding Isaiah 7:14, though, is obviously over how the verse relates to Jesus. The fundamental problem with Justin Martyr's argument (and the subsequent traditional Christian interpretation of Isaiah 7:14) was *not* in his insistence that Isaiah 7:14 related to Jesus' conception and birth, but rather was his misunderstanding as to *how Matthew was relating Isaiah 7:14 to Jesus*. Simply put, we must see that when Matthew said Isaiah 7:14 was "fulfilled" in the conception and birth of Jesus Christ, he was *not*

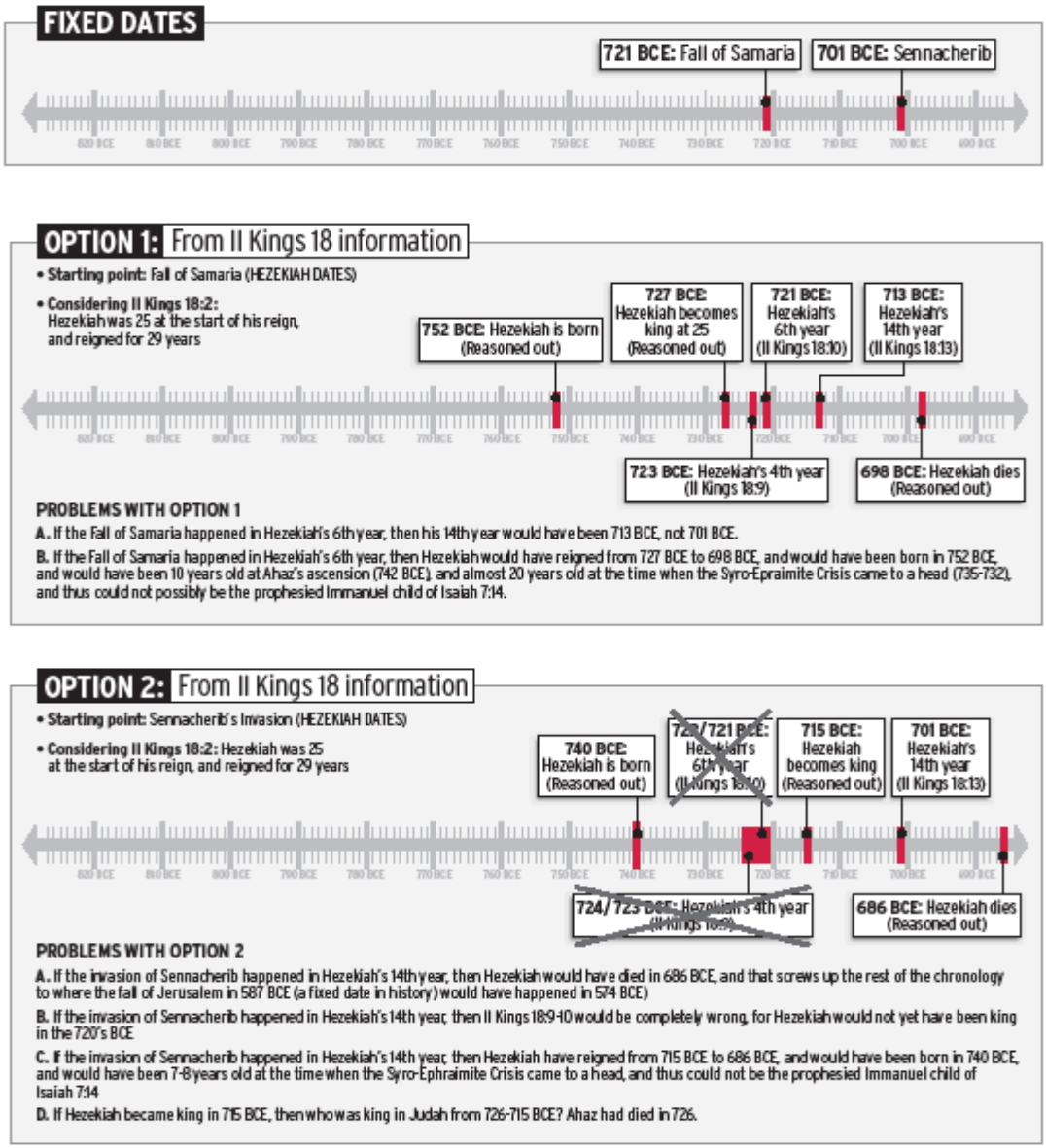
saying that Isaiah 7:14 was an a-historical prediction that only "came true" 740 years after Isaiah issued the prophecy.

It must be stated though, that a re-interpretation of Isaiah 7:14 that differs from the traditional interpretation as set forth by the Church Fathers and held throughout most of Church history impels us to re-evaluate a number of issues, for the traditional Christian understanding of Isaiah 7:14 has had considerable influence on how Christians have viewed a host of other issues. These issues include: (a) the meaning of "fulfilled prophecy," (b) the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, (c) the nature of the divinity of Christ (i.e. what made Christ divine?), (d) the theological importance and meaning of the infancy narratives, (e) the doctrine of original sin, (f) the traditional view that sees virginity as a more holy state than even marriage, because sex is seen as base and sinful in and of itself, and (g) the general way in which, at least on the popular level, Christmas is a more celebrated holiday than Easter, thus betraying a popular bias that sees the virginal conception as more important than the resurrection. All of these issues are intimately connected to the way in which the Church has traditionally interpreted Isaiah 7:14. Therefore, if the findings of this thesis are convincing, these issues will need to be re-evaluated and discussed.

Appendix A

The Chronological Problems in II Kings 16-20

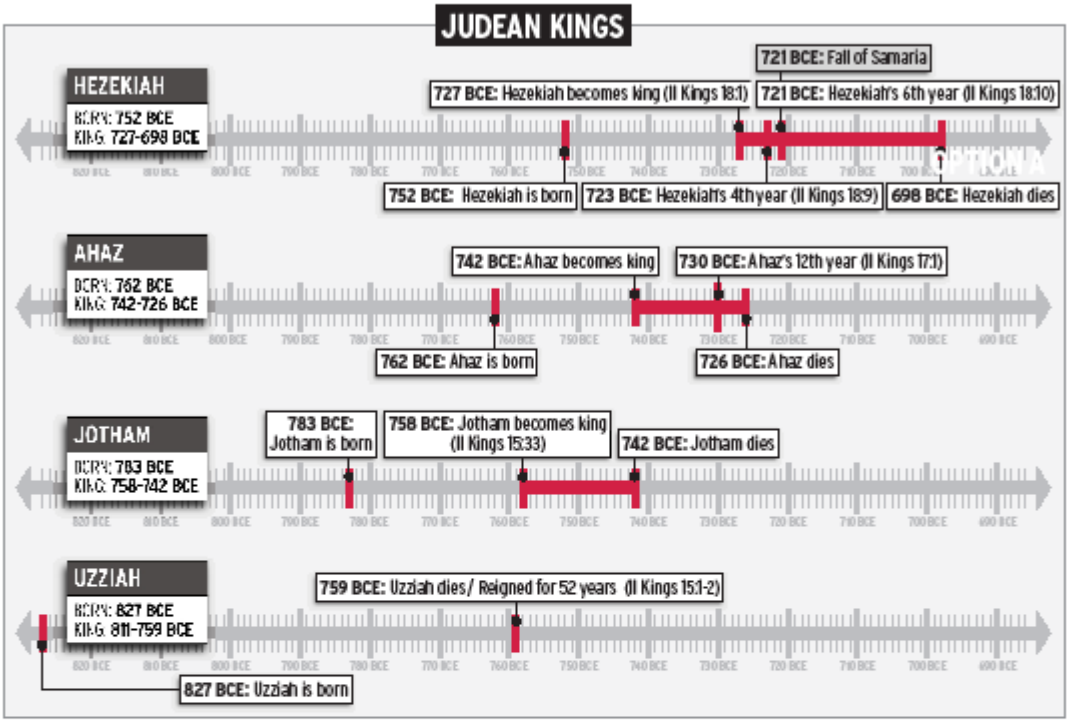
Complete Information found in II Kings 16-20

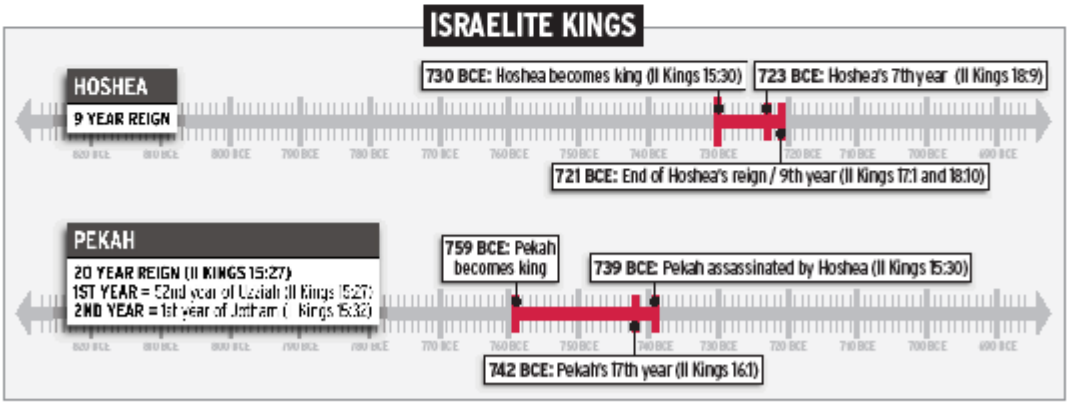


Further Problems with the Chronology in II Kings 16-20

When trying to reconcile Hezekiah's reigns with that of his father Ahaz, and two kings of the northern kingdom of Israel: Pekah and Hoshea

- Using 722/721 BCE as the fixed date of the fall of Samaria
- Using II Kings 18:2 to tell us Hezekiah was 25 when became king, and reigned for 29 years
- Using II Kings 16:2 to tell us that Ahaz was 20 when became king, and reigned for 16 years





PROBLEMS WITH ALL OF THIS

1. Was Ahaz really 10 years old when he fathered Hezekiah?
2. Who was reigning in Israel from 739-730 BCE? (Pekah must have reigned for almost 30 years)
3. How could Hoshea have murdered Pekah in 730 BCE if Pekah had died in 739 BCE?
4. How could Hoshea have murdered Pekah in 730 BCE if it took place in Jotham's 20th year, when Jotham only reigned for 16 years?

Proposed revisions to the chronology of Ahaz and Hezekiah

WHAT IS THE MAJOR CONCERN, THOUGH, IS PROBLEM #1

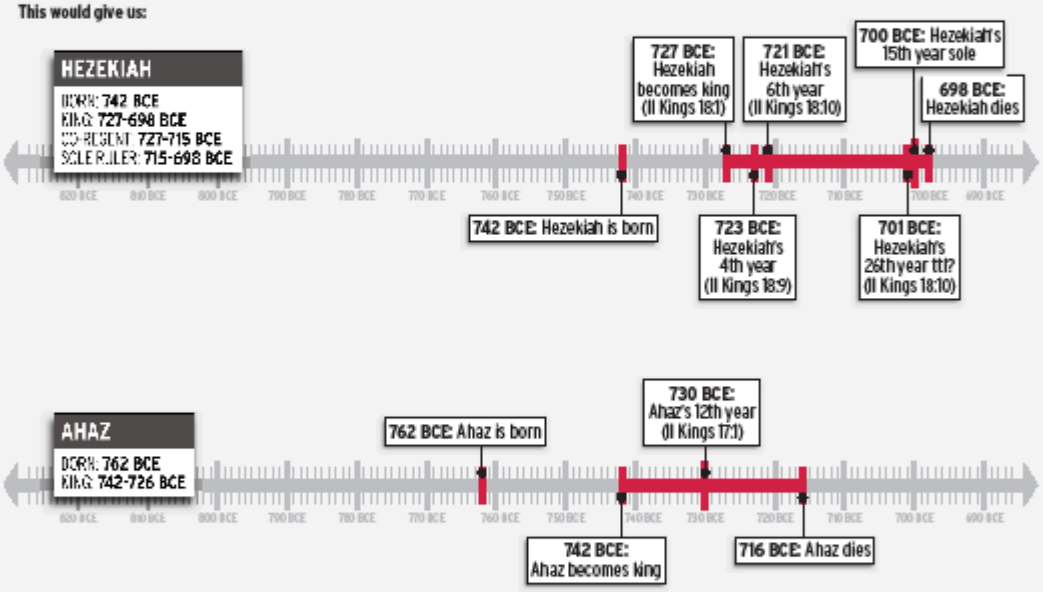
It is simply unbelievable that Ahaz would have fathered Hezekiah in 752 BCE at the age of ten. Furthermore, we still have the problem regarding the two major dates in the reign of Hezekiah: the Fall of Samaria (721 BCE) and the Invasion of Sennacherib (701 BCE). The biblical text clearly tells us that Hezekiah was the king of Judah during both of these events. If we are to believe this, then there is only one conclusion to be realized: there was a scribal error or two in the text.

Looking back at page one, it seems that the timeline that is probably more historically reliable is that of OPTION #1, for the sheer fact that there are fewer chronological problems with it. Using that at a starting point, what could be some possible scribal errors?

OPTION 1

1. Isaiah 36:1 counted Hezekiah's reign from when he became sole ruler (715 BCE), thus meaning there was co-regency between Ahaz and Hezekiah from 726-715 BCE.
2. Then, II Kings took Isaiah 36-39, incorporated it into his own work, but failed to adjust the "14th year" of Isaiah 36:1 to fit his own dating system, in which he included the dates of co-regency within a given king's length of reign.
3. In addition, II Kings 16:2 should have the length of Ahaz's reign as 26 years, not 16.
4. Finally, II Kings 18:1 should have Hezekiah at 15 years old when he became king, not 25.

This would give us:



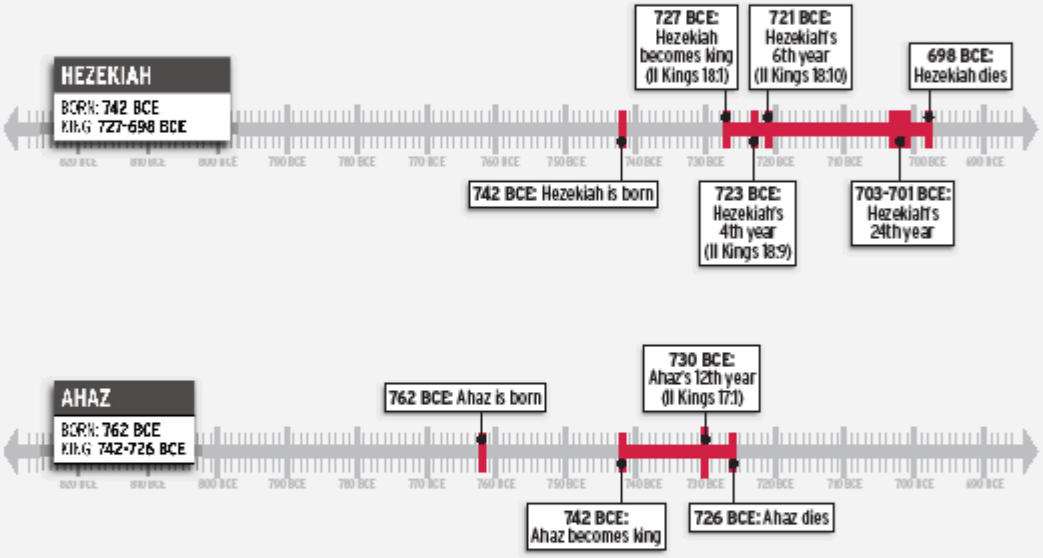
PROBLEM

This is an awfully lot of maneuvering to make the numbers work. Why would there be a co-regency with Ahaz and Hezekiah for almost 10 years? Besides, if there was co-regency, why does II Kings 18:9-10 only compare Hezekiah's reign with that of Hoshea, and not Ahaz's reign with Hoshea?

OPTION 2

1. Isaiah 36:1 contains a scribal error. It should read "In Hezekiah's 24th year" and not 14th year. This would mark the initial revolt of Hezekiah against Sennacherib at 703 BCE that would eventually lead to Sennacherib's invasion in 701 BCE This would be highly probable.
2. Then, II Kings took Isaiah 36-39 and incorporated it into his own work, without noticing or fixing the scribal error in Isaiah 36:1. This easily explains why the chronology of II Kings the way it stands is so messed up.
3. A second scribal error is found in II Kings 18:1. Hezekiah became king at 15, not 25. This would date his birth around 742 BCE.

This would give us:



THIS "OPTION B" WOULD ACCOUNT FOR THE TWO MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS DURING THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH, AND PROVIDE A VERY REASONABLE TIMELINE THAT MAKES SENSE.

One final note must be made that is extremely relevant to this thesis' argument that the Immanuel child prophesied about in Isaiah 7:14 is Hezekiah. Scholars correctly point out that the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis essentially ended with King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria destroyed Aram in 732 BCE, and later when Samaria fell in 721 BCE.

They make three faulty assumptions, though. First, that the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis lasted from 735-732 BCE. Second, that Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy had to have been made shortly before 732 BCE, perhaps 735-733 BCE. And third, that based on Isaiah 7:1, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel had actually set up the siege ramps around Jerusalem, and that Isaiah had delivered his Immanuel prophecy to Ahaz shortly before Rezin and Pekah arrived at Jerusalem.

What most scholars fail to consider is II Kings 15:37, which tells us that Rezin and Pekah had been harassing Judah ever since the later years of Ahaz's father, King Jotham of Judah. This would date the beginning of their harassment some time shortly before 742 BCE, before Jotham died, and before Ahaz became king. Therefore, given the fact that Isaiah 7:6 tells us that Rezin and Pekah were planning to take Jerusalem and set up the son of Tabeel as its ruler, it would be logical to assume that this threat happened very early in Ahaz's reign, probably at the beginning, and it was this threat at the beginning of Ahaz's reign in 742 BCE that Isaiah was addressing in Isaiah 7. Therefore, if this is the case, then Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy of 7:14 would have been made right around the time Hezekiah would have been born. Hence, it becomes very much a possibility that Hezekiah was the prophesied Immanuel child to which Isaiah was referring in 7:14.

Appendix B

Comparison of the "Parallel Texts" of Isaiah 36-37 and II Kings 18-19

Isaiah 36-37	***II Kings 18-19***
	18:1 In the third year of King Hoshea son of Elah of Israel, Hezekiah son of King Ahaz of Judah began to reign. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi daughter of Zechariah. 3 He did what was right in the sight of the LORD just as his ancestor David had done. 4 He removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole. He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it; it was called Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the LORD the God of Israel; so that there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah after him, or among those who were before him. 6 For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following him but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses. 7 The LORD was with him; wherever he went, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. 8 He attacked the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city. 9 In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea son of Elah of Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up against Samaria, besieged it, 10 and at the end of three years, took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of King Hoshea of Israel, Samaria was taken. 11 The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria, settled them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 12 because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant-- all that Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; they neither listened nor obeyed.
36:1 In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.	13In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. 14King Hezekiah of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear." The king of Assyria demanded of King Hezekiah of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. 16 At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the doorposts that King Hezekiah of Judah had overlaid and gave it to the king of Assyria.

2 The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 3 And there came out to him Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder. 4 The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? 5 Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? 6 See, you are relying on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. 7 But if you say to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'? 8 Come, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you 2,000 horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 9 How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10 Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it."

11 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 12 But the Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?" 13 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! 14 Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. 15 Do not let Hezekiah make you rely on the LORD by saying, The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' 16 Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make your peace with me and come out to me; then everyone of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, 17 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18 Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, The

17 The king of Assyria sent the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rabshakeh with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They went up and came to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 18 When they called for the king, there came out to them Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebnah the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder. 19 The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? 20 Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? 21 See, you are relying now on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. 22 But if you say to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'? 23 Come, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you 2,000 horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. 24 How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 25Moreover, is it without the LORD I have come up against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it."

26 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and Shebnah, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic language, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 27 But the Rabshakeh said to them, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine?" 28 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! 29 Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand. 30 Do not let Hezekiah make you rely on the LORD by saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' 31 Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree, and drink water from your own cistern, 32 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and honey, that you

LORD will save us. Has any of the gods of the nations saved their land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20 Who among all the gods of these countries have saved their countries out of my hand, that the LORD should save Jerusalem out of my hand?'"	may live and not die. Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, The LORD will deliver us. 33 Has any of the gods of the nations ever delivered its land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 34 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 35 Who among all the gods of the countries have delivered their countries out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?'"
21 But they were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him." 22 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.	36 But the people were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him." 37 Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.
37:1 When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that the LORD your God heard the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left."	19:1 When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that the LORD your God heard all the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left."
5 When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7 I myself will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'"	5 When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7 I myself will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'"
8 The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9 Now the king heard concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia, "He has set out to fight against you." When he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10 "Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered?12 Have the gods of the	8 The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9 When the king heard concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia, "See, he has set out to fight against you," he returned and sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying, 10 "Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the

nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?"	nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?"
14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying: 16 "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. 17 Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. 18 Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, 19 and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods, but the work of human hands-- wood and stone-- and so they were destroyed. 20 So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD."	14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: "O LORD the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. 16 Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. 17 Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, 18 and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods but the work of human hands-- wood and stone-- and so they were destroyed. 19 So now, O LORD our God, save us, I pray you, from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone."
21 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying: "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me about King Sennacherib of Assyria, 22 this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him: She despises you, she scorns you-- virgin daughter Zion; she tosses her head-- behind your back, daughter Jerusalem. 23 Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and haughtily lifted your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel! 24 By your servants you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, 'With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I came to its remotest height, its densest forest. 25 I dug wells and drank waters, I dried up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.' 26 Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins, 27 while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded; they have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown. 28 I know your rising up and your sitting down, your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. 29 Because you have raged against me and your arrogance has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth; I will turn you back on the way by which you came.	20 Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I have heard your prayer to me about King Sennacherib of Assyria. 21 This is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him: She despises you, she scorns you-- virgin daughter Zion; she tosses her head-- behind your back, daughter Jerusalem. 22 Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and haughtily lifted your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel! 23 By your messengers you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, 'With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I entered its farthest retreat, its densest forest. 24 I dug wells and drank foreign waters, I dried up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.' 25 Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins, 26 while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded; they have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown. 27 "But I know your rising and your sitting, your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. 28 Because you have raged against me and your arrogance has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth; I will turn you back on the way by which you came.

30 "And this shall be the sign for you: This year eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 31 The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; 32 for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. 33 "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the LORD. 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David." 36 Then the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. 37 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. 38 As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.	29 "And this shall be the sign for you: This year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that; then in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 30 The surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward; 31 for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go out, and from Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. 32 "Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. 33 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city, says the LORD. 34 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David." 35 That very night the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. 36 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. 37 As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

Appendix C

The Three Strands of Emphasis in Proto-Isaiah

	Sinful State	**Judgment of YHWH**	**Exaltation of YHWH**
Chapter 1	(1:3) Israel not knowing/understanding	(1:7-9) Destruction by fire Strangers devour land (1:30-31) Sinners destroyed (1:24-31) YHWH's hand is against Jerusalem	(1:17) Command to practice justice (1:24-31) City of righteousness Faithful Town Zion ransomed in justice; returns in righteousness
Chapter 2	(2:5-8) Condemnation of idol worship from the "east" (2:9-22) Adam's haughty eyes Adam exalts himself	(2:9-22) Adam brought low	(2:2-4) Nations will come to Jerusalem to be instructed in Torah; a time of peace
Chapter 3	(3:1-9)(3:13-15) Jerusalem's leaders oppress the poor	(3:16-17) Purging and refining fire (3:11-26) YHWH's judgment on the haughty/exalted "daughters of Zion"	(3:16-17) Purging and refining fire
Chapter 4		(4:2-4) YHWH's refining fire of judgment	(4:2-4) YHWH's refining fire of judgment (Exodus Echoes) (4:3) Refined remnant of YHWH's people
Chapter 5	(5:13) People's lack of knowledge (5:8-12)Leaders of Jerusalem oppress the poor (5:7) No R. or J., only bloodshed and corruption (5:19-25) The "wise" only in own eyes; doesn't really seek out the counsel of YHWH They turn away from righteousness and justice	(5:1-6) Jerusalem will be for burning and trampling (5:23) Tongue of fire burns up root and sprout (5:26-30) Coming Armies for war/Growling of the sea (5:23) YHWH's hand stretched out (5:15-16) Haughty eyes of Adam brought low	(5:15-16) YHWH exalted in Righteousness and Judgment
Chapter 6	(6:10) Isaiah's preaching will bring: hearing, but not real hearing; seeing, but not truly knowing	(6:11-12) Cities in ruins (6:11-12) Adam sent far away (Genesis echoes) (6:13) Burning terebinth (6:13) 1/10 remnant left	(6:13) Holy seed is the stump (of the burned terebinth oak (6:13) Remnant

	Sinful State	Judgment of YHWH	Exaltation of YHWH
Chapter 7	(7:1-2) Syro-Ephraim Crisis House of David trembles like a forest (7:12) Ahaz rejects YHWH's counsel	(7:12-17) Coming Assyrian oppression; mention of Egypt (7:23-25) Trampling, thorns and briers (7:22) Those left over will eat curds and honey	(7:9) Command: "Do not be afraid" "Stand firm" (7:14) Immanuel, defeat of Aram and Ephraim (7:3-9) Shear-jashub "A remnant will return"
Chapter 8	(8:16) Seal up the testimony	(8:19-22) Coming darkness; Jerusalen will curse their king (8:1-4) Maher-shalal-hash-baz (spoil; plunder); destruction of Damascus and Samaria (8:5-8) Flood of Assyria (8:11-15)Many in Jerusalem will fall (8:23/ 9:1) Galilee of the Nations/ Way of the Sea (Exodus Echoes)	(8:11-15) Prophet: YHWH is his fear
Chapter 9		(9:8-20)Judgment vs. Ephraim, Rezin, Aram (9:17) Fire devours thorn/brier (9:4-5) Trampling and fire (of Assyria)	(9:2-3) Those in darkness will see a great light --"You" increase the nation (9:4-5) Oppressive staff broken by YHWH (9:6-7) Birth: royal child --prince of peace --no end to David's throne --YHWH establishes it --Justice/Righteousness
Chapter 10	(10:1-4) Corrupt leaders oppress poor --widows are the spoil --orphans are the plunder (10:7-14) Assyria's boasting (YHWH has other plans)	(10:5-14) Assyria=YHWH's rod to spoil the spoiler, plunder plunderer, and to trample them (10:15-19)YHWH's judgment of Assyria: rod/staff; wasting disease; burning fire; Light of Israel= flame; burning Assyria's forest, only a remnant left (10:26-27) YHWH's rod over the sea (10:28-34) Exalted ones of Assyria cut down	(10:20-27) Remnant of Israel will lean on the Holy One of Israel --Annihilation and Righteousness --Do not be afraid
Chapter 11		**YHWH's EXALTATION** (11:1) A shoot from the stump of Jesse (11:2-5)A King: Spirit of YHWH; wisdom; understanding; with counsel and might; will judge with righteousness (11:6-9) --Wild beasts will sojourn with small boy --Land will be filled with the knowledge of YHWH (11:10-11) Root of Jesse = Signal to the nations --YHWH's 2nd hand to recover the remnant of his people that are left over from Assyria, Egypt, Shinar (11:12-16) Judah and Ephraim will plunder the "sons of the east"; A highway for the remnant from Assyria to Egypt	
Chapter 12		(12:1) YHWH's anger is turned back Holy One of Israel = Salvation	

	Sinful State	Judgment of YHWH	Exaltation of YHWH
Chapter 13	*Oracle vs. Babylon* (13:1) "Raise a standard"	(13:6, 9) Day of YHWH; birth pangs; apocalyptic imagery; evil upon *the world* (13:11) YHWH brings down the *exaltation* and *pride* of the tyrants (13:13-16) Destruction by Medes (vs. Babylon); its beauty/majesty overturned by YHWH…will be like Sodom and Gomorrah	(13:11-12) YHWH *refines adam* (Genesis echoes)
Chapter 14	*Continues Ch.13 Oracle* (14:28-32) In the year Ahaz died (727 BC) Tiglath-pileser dies; serpent has died, a flying asp/seraph is coming	(14:4-21) Taunt Song over Fallen Babylon; *staff and rod* = instruments of oppression (14:11) Past exalted kings in Sheol; the exaltation of Babylon brought down to Sheol (14:13-14) Babylon's boasting (14:15)Zaphon; Babylon's fall (14:22-23) YHWH will cut down Babylon, name and *remnant* (14:24-27) YHWH's *counsel* vs. Assyria; will be *trampled*; YHWH's *hand* (14:32) *Remnant* of Philistia killed; coming from *Zaphon*	(14:1-3) Compassion and Salvation for Israel (14:2) *Sojourners and peoples* will bring Israel back (echoes 13:17/44:28; 45:1,13)
Chapter 15	*Oracle vs. Moab*	(15:1-9) Devastation; ruin;howling (15:9) A *remnant* of the "adamah" A "lion" will come for the *remnant* of Moab	
Chapter 16	*Continues Ch. 15 Oracle*	(16:6-11) Moab's *exaltation and pride* is the reason for its destruction; gardens/vineyards and their devastation (16:12-14) Within 3 years the "glory" of Moab will be dishonored only a *remnant* will remain	(16:1)A lamb to the one who rules the land in Mt. Zion (16:2)Moab will come to Zion (16:3-5) YHWH to king of Israel; give *counsel*, grant *justice* to the outcasts of Moab; let the *sojourners* dwell with you; the oppressor has failed; *tramplings* have ended (16:5) A throne will be *established* in hesed; a *judge* will sit upon it in *truth* in the *tent of David;* he will seek *justice and righteousness*
Chapters 17-18	*Oracle vs. Damascus* (17:10-11)Currently they have forgotten God; will reap a "water harvest" (18:1) Land of "buzzing wings" (Egypt)	Damascus will be destroyed (17:3) Only a *remnant* will be left in Aram (732 BC) (17:4-6) The "glory" of Jacob will become lean; there will only be gleanings *left over* (17:12-14) The "roar and crashing" of many peoples; coming invasion --Devastation is the "portion of our *plunders*"	(17:7-14)Adam will *gaze upon his Maker—the Holy One of Israel*; no longer idolatrous altars (18:3) When a *standard* is on the hills, those in the world will *hear and see* (18:4-7) YHWH's *established place* is Mt. Zion --Destruction; then gifts from Egypt

	Sinful State	Judgment of YHWH	Exaltation of YHWH
Chapter 19	*Oracle vs. Egypt* (19:11-18) The "wise *counselors*" of Egypt give stupid *counsel* (19:12,17) YHWH has *counseled* vs. Egypt	(19:1-4) YHWH coming to Egypt in destruction (19:3) YHWH confusing Egypt's *counsel* (a "strong king" will rule over them) (19:5-10) Egypt will be dried up	(19:19-24) YHWH will be worshipped in Egypt; altar in Egypt is a *sign* and *witness* (19:20) YHWH sends a "messiah" to deliver them; Egypt will be struck and will turn to YHWH (19:23) A *highway* from Egypt to Assyria Israel=YHWH's inheritance Egypt= YHWH's people Assyria=YHWH's handiwork
Chapter 20	*Ashdod Campaign* (714 CE)	Tartan of Sargon captures Ashdod; Isaiah walks naked for 3 years = a *sign* for Egypt and Cush --Assyia will drive off the exiles of Egypt and Cush --Fear on the coast: "Egypt was our hope!"	
Chapter 21	(21:1-10) *Oracle vs. Negeb* (21:11-12) *Oracle vs. Dumah* (21:13-17) *Oracle vs. Arabia*	(21:9) Fallen is Babylon! (21:13-17) A *remnant* of bows in Kedar	
Chapter 22	*Oracle vs. "Valley of Vision"* [i.e. Jerusalem] (22:2) *Exultant town!*	(22:3-5)Jerusalem's rulers are taken captive;day of *trampling* (22:6-8) Advancing armies against Jerusalem [House of the Forest] (22:9-12) War preparations in Jerusalem (22:13-14) Jerusalem's iniquity atoned after they die (22:15-25) Condemnation of Shebna; upholding Eliakim	
Chapter 23	*Oracle vs. Tyre*	(23:9) YHWH will defile the majesty/glory of Tyre, and humiliate its honored ones (23:11) YHWH will stretch out *hand* against Tyre (23:13) Chaldeans, not Assyria, will destroy Tyre	(23:15-18) Tyre's "whore trade" will be holy to YHWH
Chapter 24	(24:5) The land is polluted because people have broken covenant (24:13) "City of Chaos"	(24:3) The "land" will be *completely plundered* (24:4) The *exalted* people of the land will languish (24:6) Result: burning; a few will be left	

	Sinful State	Judgment of YHWH	Exaltation of YHWH
Chapter 25	*Focusing on Jerusalem*	(25:1) YHWH has made the city "a heap" (25:9) Moab will be *trampled* and Moab's *pride* will be *brought low*	(25:4)YHWH: a "refuge" and "shelter" for the needy and distressed (25:8) YHWH will swallow up the luster of death; wipe away tears from faces (25:9) People will praise YHWH for his salvation
Chapter 26	*Continues chapter 25* (26:16-19) The people of Judah have not "produced salvation" for the land	(26:5) YHWH has brought down the *exalted town* (26:20-21) Command to YHWH's people: "Go hide until YHWH's indignation passes over"	(26:1-6) Jerusalem called a "strong city;" Salvation =walls; open the gates so that a *righteous nation* who keeps *faithfulness* can enter; peace; now, the feet that *trample* are the feet of the needy (26:7-15) YHWH's *judgments* are for the land; *righteousness* for the world to learn
Chapter 27	*Continues chapter 26*	(27:1) YHWH kills Leviathan (27:10-11) Picture of a deserted city	(27:2-5) YHWH protecting his "vineyard of delight" (27:6-13) Future: Jacob will take root; Israel will sprout; Jacob's iniquity atoned for (26:12-13) Regathering of people of YHWH's:Assyria to Egypt --All will come to Zion to worship YHWH
Chapter 28	*Condemnation of Ephraim* (28:14-15) Bad rulers in Jerusalem have a covenant with death	(28:1-3) The *majestic* wreath of drunken Ephraim will be *trampled down* (28:18-20) Result of "bad rulers" = "overflowing scourge" and "trampling"	(28:5) YHWH will be a "wreath of glory" for the *remnant* of his people; YHWH will be a *spirit of justice* to the one who "sits upon judgment" (28:9) Whom will he teach knowledge (28:16-17) The "stone" YHWH has *established* in Zion; Justice= line; Righteousness= leveling instrument (28:29) Praise of YHWH: he has done wondrously in *counsel*--great in *wisdom*
Chapter 29	*A Woe vs. Jerusalem* (29:9-12) Prophets don't see; "sealed scroll" can't be read (29:13-17) Condemns those who try to hide *counsel* too deep for YHWH	(29:1-4) Jerusalem (Ariel)=Burnt Offering (29:3) Siege walls against it (29:6-8) YHWH visiting in storm, fire, armies	(29:13-17) "On that day" the deaf will *hear the words of the scroll*; the blind will *see* out of gloom and darkness; the needy of *adam* will rejoice in the *Holy One of Israel* (29:20-21) the tyrant = gone --the scorner will come to an end (29:22-24) --those who wandered= will know *understanding* --those who murmur = will learn *insight*

	Sinful State	Judgment of YHWH	Exaltation of YHWH
Chapter 30	(30:1-5) Condemns "stubborn sons" who *make counsel*, but not YHWH's; who have gone down to Egypt (30:9-11) Deceptive sons don't heed YHWH's Torah; appeal to Egypt for help	(30:6-32)Beasts of the Negeb; flying serpent;Egypt's help is empty; call: write on scroll (30:12-17)Destruction;left like *signal on a hill* (30:27-28) YHWH's Spirit overflowing wadi to the neck (30:29-32) YHWH's majestic hand, arm: storm, fire	(30:18-21) Future Blessing: Grace shown; your *eyes* will *see* your teacher; *ears hear* a voice (30:22-26) Jerusalem will put away idols; will serve the *adamah*; YHWH will heal wounds
Chapter 31	*Condemnation of those in Jerusalem who appeal to Egypt for help* (31:1-3)They do not look to the Holy One of Israel	(31:2) YHWH's hand is stretched out for judgment (31:8) Assyria will fall by the sword, but not of man (31:9) YHWH's furnace is in Jerusalem	(31:4-9) YHWH will come down to Mount Zion to defend it
Chapter 32	(32:5-14)The corruption of scoundrels	(32:13) The adamah produces *thorns and briars* because of corruption	(32:1-4) A king *reigning in righteousness;* officials *ruling for justice* (31:1-4) Eyes that see won't close; ears that hear will listen Heart will understand for knowing (32:5-14) The noble one who *counsels* noble things (32:15-20) Future Salvation --YHWH's Spirit poured out; the desert = a garden; the orchard = forest; justice will settle in the desert;righteousness in the garden --The work of righteousness = peace; its service = security --The people of YHWH will dwell in peace and security
Chapter 33		(33:1) YHWH will "destroy the destroyer" (33:7-12) Sorrow; the land wastes away/YHWH *lifted up*; there will be burning (33:13-14) "Sinners" in Zion are in dread of *consuming fire*	(33:2-6) Praise to YHWH who shows grace/salvation;YHWH's *spoil* being gathered; YHWH is exalted; Zion filled with *righteousness* and *justice*;YHWH will be the *firmness*; a treasure of *salvation, wisdom, knowledge* (33:15-24) The one who walks in *righteousness* will dwell on high "Your *eyes will see* the king in his beauty;" YHWH is king; *plunder/ spoil* divided; "The lame: *plundered of plunder"*
Chapter 34	*Edom's Destruction*	(34:8-15) A "day of vengeance for YHWH"	(34:16-17) Read the scroll of YHWH; gathering of the elect
Chapter 35		**Exaltation of YHWH** (35:1-4) The desert in bloom; they will see the glory of YHWH (35:4) The day of vengeance of YHWH = salvation for his elect (35:5-6) Blind eyes seeing; deaf ears hearing (35:8-10) Highway of Holiness; the redeemed will walk upon it	

	Sinful State	Judgment of YHWH	Exaltation of YHWH
Chapter 36	(36:1-22) Assyria's boasting (36:6-7) Assyria claims Hezekiah's has sinned by relying on Egypt and tearing down YHWH's altars	(36:1-22) Assyria claims its attack is YHWH's will	(36:15) Hezekiah claims YHWH will deliver Jerusalem
Chapter 37	(37:8-13) Assyria's futher boasting against YHWH's power to save (37:21-29) YHWH accuses Assyria of pride	(37:3) A day of distress for Jerusalem (37:21-29; 33-35) YHWH judges Assyria for its arrogance (37:36-38) Destruction of Assyrian army; the murder of Sennacherib	(37:1-4) Hezekiah appeals to YHWH, consults Isaiah (37:5-6-7) Isaiah tells Hezekiah not to be afraid (37:14-20) Hezekiah's second prayer to YHWH (37:21-29; 33-34) Isaiah prophecies Assyria's failure (37:30-32) A remnant from Jerusalem will survive
Chapter 38	*Episode concerning Hezekiah's sickness*		(38:1-22) Hezekiah prays to YHWH concerning his sickness, and recovers; Hezekiah responds with praise
Chapter 39	*Episode concerning envoys from Babylon* (39:1-4) Hezekiah displays riches to Babylon envoys	(39:5-7) Isaiah prophecies about coming Babylonian Exile	(39:8) Hezekiah's days will be in peace

Bibliography

Ackroyd, Peter R. “The Biblical Interpretation of the Reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah.” Pages 247-59 in *In The Shelter of Elyon*. Edited by W.B. Barrick and J.R. Spencer. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984.

Ackroyd, Peter R. “Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function.” Pages 3-21 in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift fur Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. J.P.M. van der Ploeg, O.P. zur Vollendung des siebxigsten Lebensjahres am 4, Juli 1979*. Edited by W.C. Delsman et al. Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982.

Ackroyd, Peter R. "Isaiah I-XII: Presentation of a Prophet." Pages 16-48 in *Congress Volume, Vetus Testamentum Supplement Series* 29. Leiden: Brill, 1978.

Ackroyd, Peter R. "An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile: A Study of 2 Kings 20, Isaiah 38-39." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 27 (1974): 329-52.

Ackroyd, Peter R. “Historians and Prophets.” *Svensk exegetisk arsbok* 33 (1968): 22-37.

Adamthwaite, M.R., "Isaiah 7:16: Key to the Immanuel Prophecy." *Reformed Theological Review* 59 (2000): 65-83.

Ahlstrom, G.W., "Isaiah VI. 13." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 19 (1974): 169-172.

Aitken, K.T., “Hearing and Seeing: Metamorphoses of a Motif in Isaiah 1-39.” Pages 12 41 in *Among the Prophets: Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings*. Edited by P.R. Davies and D.J.A. Clines. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 144. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Albright, William. “The Date of Sennacherib’s Second Campaign against Hezekiah.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 130 (1953): 8-11.

Alexander, J.A. *The Prophecies of Isaiah*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1953.

Alter, Robert and Frank Kermode, eds. *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. United States: HarperCollins Publishers, 1981.

Amit, Yairah. *Reading Biblical Narratives*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

Anderson, Bernhard W. "`God with Us' –In Judgment and in Mercy: The Editorial Structure of Isaiah 5-10 (11)." Pages 230-245 in *Canon, Theology, and the Old Testament Interpretation*. Edited by G.M. Tucker, et al. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988a.

Anderson, G.W., "Isaiah XXIV-XXVII Reconsidered." *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 9 (1963): 118-26.

The Ante-Nicene Fathers. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 1885 1887. 10 vols. Repr. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1999.

Axtell, James. "History as Imagination." *The Historian: A Journey of History* 49 (1987): 457.

Bar-Efrat, Shimon. *Narrative Art in the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press,1997.

Barker, M., "Hezekiah's Boil." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 95 (2001): 31 42.

Barrett, J. Edward. "Can Scholars Take the Virgin Birth Seriously?" *Bible Review* 4:5 (October 1988): 10-15.

Barton, John. *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Bauckham, Richard. "Tamar's Ancestry and Rahab's Marriage: Two Problems in the Matthean Genealogy." *Novum Testamentum* 37 (1995): 313-329.

Bauer, David R. "The Kingship of Jesus in the Matthean Infancy Narrative: A Literary Analysis." *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 57 (1995): 306-323.

Beale, G.K., "Isaiah 6:9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry." *Vetus Testamentum* 41(1991): 257-78.

Berg, Evert van den. "Fact and Imagination in the History of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18 20." Pages 129-136 in *Unless Someone Guide Me…Festschrift for Karel A. Deurloo.* Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2000.

Berlin, Adele. *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983.

Beuken, W.A.M. "The Manifestation of Yahweh and the Commission of Isaiah: Isaiah 6 Read Against the Background of Isaiah 1," *Calvin Theological Journal* 39 (2004a): 72-87.

Beuken, W.A.M., "The Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-16): An Eschatological or a Now Event?" *Calvin Theological Journal* 39 (2004b): 88-108.

Beuken, W.A.M., "'Lebanon with its Majesty shall fall. A Shoot shall come forth from the Stump of Jesse' (Isa 10:34-11:1): Interfacing the Story of Assyria and the Image of Israel's Future in Isaiah 10-11." Pages 17-33 in *The New Things: Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy***.** Edited by F. Postma, et al. Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2002.

Blank, Sheldon H. "The Current Misinterpretation of Isaiah's She'ar Yashub." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67:3 (September 1948): 211-215.

Blenkinsopp, J. *Isaiah 1-39*. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Blenkinsopp, J. *Isaiah 40-55*. New York: Doubleday, 2002.

Blenkinsopp, J. *Isaiah 56-66*. New York: Doubleday, 2003.

Blenkinsopp, J, "Judah's Covenant with Death (Isaiah XXVIII 12-22)." *Vetus Testamentum* 50 (2000b): 472-83.

Boadt, Lawrence. "Re-Examining a Pre-exilic Redaction of Isaiah 1-39." Pages 169-90 *Imagery and Imagination in Biblical Literature*. Edited by L. Boadt and M.S. Smith. Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 2001.

Boadt, Lawrence. *The Hebrew Prophets: Visionaries of the Ancient World*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997.

Borowski, Oded. "Hezekiah's Reforms and the Revolt Against Assyria." *Biblical Archaeologist* 58:3 (1995): 148-55.

Boslooper, Thomas David. "Jesus' Virgin Birth and Non-Christian Parallels." *Religion in Life* 26:1 (Winter 1956-1957): 87-97.

Botterweck, G. Johannes, Helmer Ringren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. vol. 11. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Bright, John. *A History of Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000.

Brodie, Louis. "The Children and the Prince: The Structure, Nature and Date of Isaiah 6 12." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 9 (1979): 27-31.

Broshi, M. "The Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh." *Israel Exploration Journal* 4 (1974): 21-26.

Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Brown, Raymond E., S.S. *The Birth of the Messiah*. New York: Doubleday Publishers, 1993.

Brown, Raymond E., S.S. *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*. New York: Paulist Press, 1973.

Brown, Raymond, E., S.S. "The Problem of the Virginal Conception of Jesus." *Theological Studies* 33 (March 1972): 3-34.

Broyles, Craig. C. "Interpreting the Old Testament." Pages 13-62 in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*. Edited by Craig C. Broyles. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

Broyles, Craig C. "Traditions, Intertextuality, and Canon." Pages 157-176 in *Interpreting The Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis*. Edited by Craig C. Broyles. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001.

Brueggemann, Walter. "Unity and Dynamics in the Isaiah Tradition," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29 (1984): 89-107.

Calvin, John. *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1947.

Cantwell, L. "The Parentage of Jesus: Matthew 1:18-21." *Novum Testamentum* 24 (October 1982): 304-315.

Carlson, R.A., "The Anti-Assyrian Character of the Oracle in Is. IX 1-6." *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 130-35.

Carter, Warren. "Evoking Isaiah: Matthean Soteriology and an Intertextual Reading of Isaiah 7-9 and Matthew 1:23 and 4:15-16." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119:3 (2000): 503-520.

Chavalas, Mark W. "An Historian's Approach to Understanding the Accounts of Sennacherib's Invasion of Judah." *Fides et Historia* 27 (Summer 1995): 5-22.

Childs, Brevard S. *Isaiah*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001.

Childs, Brevard S. *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*. Studies in Biblical Theology, Second Series 3. Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1967.

Childs, Brevard S. *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

Chilton, Bruce D. *The Isaiah Targum.* Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc.,1999.

Clements, R.E., "A Light to the Nations: A Central Theme of the Book of Isaiah." Pages 57-69 in *Forming Prophetic Literature*. Edited by J.W. Watts and P.R. House. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 235. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

Clements, R.E., "The Prophecies of Isaiah to Hezekiah concerning Sennacherib: 2 Kings 19, 21 34/Isa. 37.22-35" Pages 65-78 in *Prophetie und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit im alten Israel*. Edited by R. Liwak and S. Wagner. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1991.

Clements, R.E. "The Immanuel Prophecy of Isa 7:10-17 and Its Messianic Interpretation." Pages 225-40 in *Die Hebraische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte*. Edited by R. Rendtorff . Germany: Neukircher Verlag, 1990).

Clements, R.E. "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah." *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 117-29.

Clements, R.E. "The Prophecies of Isaiah and the Fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C." *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (1980a): 421-36.

Clements, R.E. *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem: A Study of the Interpretation of Prophecy in the Old Testament*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 13. Sheffield: JSOT, 1980b.

Clements, R.E. *Isaiah 1-39: New Century Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1980.

Cogan, Mordechai. *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.* Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1974.

Cogan, Mordechai. "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem: Once or Twice?" *Biblical Archeology Review* 27:1 (January-February 2001): 40-45, 69.

Cogan, Mordecahi and Hayim Tadmor. *II Kings*. The Anchor Bible. Doubleday and Company, 1988.

Crook, Margaret.B., "A Suggested Occasion for Isaiah 9:2-7 and 11:1-9." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 68 (1949): 213-24.

Crouch, James E. "How Early Christians Viewed the Birth of Jesus." *Bible Review* 7:5 (October 1991): 34-38.

Day, John. "Shear-jashub (Isaiah VII 3) and 'The Remnant of Wrath' (Psalm LXXVI 11)." *Vetus Testamentum* 31 (1981): 76-78.

Demant, V.A. *Christian Sex in Ethics*. Great Britain: Hodder and Stuoghton, 1963.

Elat, M. "The Political Status of the Kingdom of Judah within the Assyrian Empire in the Seventh Century BCE." Pages 61-70 in *Investigations at Lachish*. Edited by Y. Aharoni. Tel Aviv: Gateway, 1975.

Eldridge, Victor J. "Typology—The Key to Understanding Matthew's Formula Quotations." *Colloquium* 15 (October 1982): 43-51.

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglass Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Feinberg, Charles Lee. "The Virgin Birth in the Old Testament and Isaiah 7:14." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 119 (July-September 1962): 251-258.

Feldman, Louis H. "Josephus's Portrait of Hezekiah." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111:4 (1992): 597-610.

Fewell, Danna Nolan. "Sennacherib's Defeat: Words at War in 2 Kings 18:13-19:37." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34 (1986): 79-90.

Finley, Thomas J., and George Payton. "A Discourse Analysis of Isaiah 7-12." *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 6:4 (1993): 317-335.

Fishbane, Michael. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Fishbane, Michael. "Types of Biblical Intertextuality." Pages 39-44 in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum Vol. LXXX*. Edited by A. Lemaire and M. Saebo. Boston: Brill, 2000.

Fishbane, Michael. *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts*. New York: Schocken Books, 1979.

Fitzmeyer, Joseph A. "The Virginal Conception of Jesus in the New Testament." *Theological Studies* 34 (1973): 541-575.

Fohrer, Georg, "The Origin, Composition and Tradition of Isaiah I-XXXIX." *Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society* 3 (1961-62): 3-38.

France, R. "Formula Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication." *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 233-251.

Freed, Edwin D. "The Women in Matthew's Genealogy." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29 (February 1987): 3-19.

Friedrich, Gerhard, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. vol. 7. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967.

Fuchs, Eric. *Sexual Desire and Love*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1983.

Fullerton, Kenneth. "The Invasion of Sennacherib." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 63 (1906): 577-634.

Gardella, Peter. *Innocent Ecstacy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Ginzberg, Louis. *The Legends of the Jews: Vol. IV*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1941.

Gitay, Yehoshua. "Prophetic Criticism: 'What are they doing?' The Case of Isaiah: a Methodological Assessment." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 96 (2001): 101-27.

Gitay, Yehoshua. *Isaiah and His Audience: The Structure and Meaning of Isaiah 1-12*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1991.

Gitay, Yehoshua. "Isaiah: The Impractical Prophet." *Bible Review* 4 (1988): 10-15.

Goldingay, John. "The Compound Name in Isaiah 9:5(6)." *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 61 (1999): 239-44.

Goldingay, John. *Isaiah*. New International Biblical Commentary. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2001.

Gottwald, Norman K. "Immanuel as the Prophet's Son." *Vetus Testamentum* 8 (1958): 36-47.

Grabbe, Lester L. "Of Mice and Dead Men: Herodotus 2.141 and Sennacherib's Campaign in 701 BCE." Pages 119-140 in *Like a Bird in a Cage*. Edited by Lester L. Grabbe. New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.

Graham, W.C. "Isaiah's Part in the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis." *AJSL* 50 (1934): 201-216.

Gros Louis, Kenneth R. R. "Different Ways of Looking at the Birth of Jesus." *Bible Review* 1:1 (February 1985): 33-40.

Gunn, David M., and Diane Nolan Fewell. *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Hagner, Donald A. *World Biblical Commentary: Matthew 1-13*. Dallas: Word Books, 1993.

Hamnershaimb, E. "The Immanuel Sign." *Studia Theologica* 3 (1949): 124-142.

Harrak, Amir. "Tales About Sennacherib: The Contribution of the Syriac Sources." Pages 16, 169 in *The World of the Aramaeans III, Studies in Language and Literature in Honour of Paul-Eugene Dion*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2001.

Harrington, Daniel J., S.J., and Anthony J. Saldarini. *Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets.* Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1999.

Hayes, John H., and Stuart A. Irvine. *Isaiah, the Eighth Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987.

Heil, John Paul. "The Narrative Roles of the Women in Matthew's Genealogy." *Biblica* 72: 4 (1991): 538-545.

Hess, Richard S. "Hezekiah and Sennacherib in 2 Kings 18—20." Pages 23-41 in *Zion, City of Our God*. Edited by R. Hess. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Hindson, Edward E. "Isaiah's Immanuel." *Grace Journal* 10:3 (Fall 1969): 3-15.

Hirsch, Emil and Thomas Kelly Cheyne, Isidore Singer, and Isaac Broyde. "Isaiah." No pages. Cited 10 May 2008. Online: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid.

Hogenhaven, Jesper. "The Prophet Isaiah and Judean Foreign Policy under Ahaz and Hezekiah." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 49 (October 1990): 351-354.

Horn, S.H. "Did Sennacherib Campaign Once or Twice against Hezekiah?" *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 4 (1966): 1-28.

Horsley, Richard A. *The Liberation of Christmas*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989.

Howard, David Jr. *An Introduction to the Old Testament Historical Books*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1993.

Hulen, Amos B. "The 'Dialogues with the Jews' as Sources for the Early Jewish Argument against Christianity." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51:1 (1932):58-70.

Hultgren, Arland J. "Matthew's Infancy Narrative and the Nativity of an Emerging Community." *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 19:1 (June 1997): 91-103.

Irvine, Stuart.A. "Problems of Text and Translation in Isaiah 10.13bb." Pages 133-144 in *History and Interpretation*. Edited by M.P. Graham, et al. Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993.

Irvine, Stuart A. *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephaimitic Crisis*. SBL Dissertation Series 123. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990.

Jenkins, A.K. "Hezekiah's Fourteenth Year: A New Interpretation of 2 Kings xviii 13-xix 37." *Vetus Testamentum* 26:3 (1976): 284-298.

Jenson, Joseph. "The Age of Immanuel." *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 41 (1979): 220-239.

Kaiser, Otto. *Isaiah 1-12*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972.

Kaiser, Otto. *Isaiah 13—39*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974.

Kaiser, Walter C. *The Messiah in the Old Testament*. Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994.

Kaiser, Walter C. "The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single-Meaning Hermeneutic." *Evangelical Journal* 6 (Fall 1988): 55-70.

Kamesar, Adam. "The Virgin of Isaiah 7:14: The Philological Argument from the Second to the Fifth Century." *Journal for Theological Studies* 41 (April 1990): 51-75.

Kittel, G., and G. Friedrich. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.

Konkel, August K. "The Sources of the Story of Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah." *Vetus Testamentum* 43:4 (1993): 462-482.

Kraeling, Emil G. "The Immanuel Prophecy." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 50:4 (131): 277-297.

Laato, Antti. "Assyrian Propaganda and the Falsification of History in the Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib." *Vetus Testamentum* 45:2 (1995): 198-226.

Laato, Antti. *Who is Immanuel? The Rise and the Foundering of Isaiah's Messianic Expectations*. Abo: Abo Academy Press, 1988a.

Laato, Antti, "Immanuel --Who is with us? -- Hezekiah or Messiah?" Pages 313-22 in *Wunschet Jerusalem Frieden.* Edited by M. Augustin. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988b.

Landes, George M. "The Canonical Approach to Introducing the Old Testament: Prodigy and Problems." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 16 (May 1980): 32-39.

La Sor, William Sanford, David Allen Hubbard and Frederic William Bush. *Old Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994.

Lindblom, Johannes. "A Study on the Immanuel Section in Isaiah: Isaiah 7:1-9:6." *Scripta Minora Regiae Societatis Humaniorum Litterarum Lundensis* 4 (1957 58): 15-28.

Linville, James. "Rethinking the 'Exilic' Book of Kings." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 75 (1997): 21-42.

Long, V. Phillips. *The Art of Biblical History*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.

Machinist, P. "Assyria and Its Image in First Isaiah." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983): 719-37.

Mayer, Walter. "Sennacherib's Campaign of 701 BCE: The Assyrian View." Pages 168 299 in *Like a Bird in a Cage*. Edited by Lester L. Grabbe. New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003.

McFall, Leslie. "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October-December 1989): 393-404.

McHugh, John. "The Date of Hezekiah's Birth." *Vetus Testamentum* 14:4 (October 1964): 446-453.

McKane, William. "The Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14-25." *Vetus Testamentum* 17:2 (1967): 208-19.

Menken, Maarten. "The Textual Form of the Quotation From Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23." *Novum Testamentum* 43:2 (2001): 144-160.

Millard, Alan, R. "Sennacherib's Attack on Hezekiah." *Tyndale Bulletin* 36 (1985): 61-77.

Moriarty, Fredrick L. "The Immanuel Prophecies." *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 19 (1957): 226-233.

Moyter, J. A. *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1993.

Moyter, J. A. "Context and Content in the Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14." *Tyndale Bulletin* 21(1970): 118-125.

Mulholland, M. Robert, Jr. "The Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke—of History, Theology and Literature." *Biblical Archeological Review* 7:2 (March-April 1981): 46-59.

Na'aman, Nadav. "The Debated Historicity of Hezekiah's Reform in the Light of Historical and Archeological Research." *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentcliche Wissenschaft* 107:2 (1995): 179-195.

The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886-1889. 14 vols. Repr. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956.

Nielsen, Kristen. "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible." Pages 17-31 in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum. Vol. LXXX*. Edited by A. Lemaire and M. Saebo. Boston: Brill, 2000.

Niessen, Richard. "The Virginity of the עַלְמָה in Isaiah 7:14." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (April-June 1980): 133-150.

Oded, B. "The Historical Background of the Syro-Ephraimitic War Reconsidered." *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 34 (1972): 153-65.

Orlinsky, H. "The Kings-Isaiah Recensions of the Hezekiah Story." *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1939-40): 33-49.

Oswalt, John N. *The Book of Isaiah 1-39*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986.

Oswalt, John N. "The Significance of the Almah Prophecy in the Context of Isaiah 7-12." *Criswell Theological Review* 6 (Spring 1993): 223-235.

Payne, J. Barton. The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 126 (January-March 1969): 40-52.

Payne, J. Barton. "Right Questions about Isaiah 7:14." Pages 75-84 in *Living and Active Word of God*. Edited by Morris Inch. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983.

Person, Raymond F. Jr. "II Kings 18-20 and Isaiah 36-39: A Text Critical Case Study in the Redaction History of the Book of Isaiah." *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 111 (1999): 373-79.

Pieper, A. "The Great Prophecy of the Virgin's Son in Its Historical Setting: Isaiah 7:10-16." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 91:3 (Summer 1994): 186-204.

Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Provan, Iain W., V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III. *A Biblical History of Israel*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

Provan, Iain W. "Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing on the History of Israel." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114:4 (1995): 585-606.

Provan, Iain W. "In the Stable with the Dwarves." Pages 281-320 in *Congress Volume: Oslo 1988*. Edited by A. Lemaire and M. Saebo. Boston: Brill, 2000.

Provan, Iain W. *1 and 2 Kings*. New International Biblical Commentary. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1995.

Rice, Gene. "The Interpretation of Isa 7:15-17." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977): 362-369.

Rice, Gene. "A Neglected Interpretation of the Immanuel Prophecy." *Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978): 220-27.

Richardson, H. Neil. "The Old Testament Background of Jesus as Begotten of God." *Bible Review* 2:3 (Fall 1986): 22-27.

Rinzema, J. *The Sexual Revolution*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1972.

Routledge, R., "Is There a Narrative Substructure Underlying the Book of Isaiah?" *Tyndale Bulletin* 55 (2004): 183-204.

Rowley, H. H. "Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion." Pages 98-132 in *Men of God*. Edited by H.H. Rowley. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963.

Rudman, D., "Is the Rabshakeh Also Among the Prophets? A Rhetorical Study." *Vetus Testamentum* 50 (2000): 100-110.

Sailhamer, John H. "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:1 (March 2001): 5-23.

Sanders, James A. "Intertextuality and Dialogue." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 29 (Spring 1999): 35-44.

Sanders, James A. "Canon as Dialogue." Pages 7-26 in *The Bible at Qumran: Text, Shape, and Interpretation*. Edited by Peter W. Flint. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

Schiffman, Lawrence H. and James C. Vanderkam, eds. *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Oxford: University Press, 2000.

Schoors, A., "The Immanuel of Isaiah 7:14." *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 18 (1987): 67-77.

Scullion, John J., "An Approach to the Understanding of Isaiah 7:10-17." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87 (1968): 288-300.

Seitz, Christopher R. "Account A and the Annals of Sennacherib: A Reassessment." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 58 (June 1993), 47-57.

Seitz, Christopher R. *Isaiah 1-39*. Interpretation Commentary Series. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993.

Seitz, Christopher R. *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Seitz, Christopher R. "How is the Prophet Isaiah Present in the Latter Half of the Book? The Logic of Chapters 40-66 within the Book of Isaiah." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115:2 (Summer 1996): 219-240.

Shea, William H. "The New Tirhakah Text and Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 35 (Autumn 1997): 181-187.

Sheppard, G.T., "The Anti-Assyrian Redaction and the Canonical Context of Isaiah 1-39." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 104 (1985): 193-216.

Slotki, I.W. *Isaiah*. Soncino Books of the Bible. Soncino Press, 1987.

Smelik, Klaas A D. "Distortion of Old Testament Prophecy: The Purpose of Isaiah 36 and 37." Pages 70-93 in *Crises and Perspectives.* Edited by J. de Moor, et al. Leiden: E J Brill, (1986).

Spong, John Shelby. *Born of a Woman*. San Fransisco: Harper Publishing, 1992.

Sternberg, Meir. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Sweeney, James P. "Modern and Ancient Controversies Over the Virgin Birth of Jesus." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160 (April-June 2003): 142-158.

Sweeney, Marvin A. *The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, Volume XVI: Isaiah 1-39*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.

Sweeney, Marvin A., "Jesse's New Root in Isaiah 11: a Josianic Reading of the Prophet Isaiah." Pages 103-118 in *A Gift of God in Due Season*. Edited by R. Weis, et al. 1996a.

Sweeney, Marvin A. *Forms of Old Testament Literature: Isaiah 1—39, with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996b.

Sweeney, Marvin A., "Sargon's Threat Against Jerusalem in Isaiah 10, 27-32." *Biblica* 75 (1995): 457-70.

Tadmor, Hayim. *II Kings*. Edited by Mordechai Cogan. The Anchor Bible. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1988.

Talmon, S. "A Case of Faulty Harmonization [Isaiah 37:18; 2 Kings 19:17]." *Vetus Testamentum* 5 (1955): 206-208.

Telushkin, Rabbi Joseph. *Biblical Literacy*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997.

Thompson, Michael E.W. "Isaiah's Sign of Immanuel." *Expository Times* 95 (1983): 67-71.

Thompson, Michael. E.W. "Isaiah's Ideal King." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 24 (1982a): 79-88.

Thompson, Michael. E.W. *Situation and Theology: Old Testament Interpretations of the Syro-Ephraimitic War*. Almond: Sheffield, 1982b.

Tomes, Roger. "The Reason for the Syro-Ephraimite War." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 59 (1993): 55-71.

Van Buren, Paul M. *According to the Scriptures*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.

Van Groningen, Gerard. *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990.

Van Horn, W.W., "The Use of Imagery in Isaiah 1-12." *Theological Educator* 44 (1991): 93-100.

Vasholz, R., "Isaiah and Ahaz." *Presbyterion* 13 (1987): 79-84.

Wadsworth, T., "Is There a Hebrew Word for Virgin?: *Bethulah* in the Old Testament." *Romische Quartalschrift fur christliche Altertumkunde und Kirchengeschichte* 23 (1980):161-71.

Walsh, Jerome T. *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2001.

Walton, John H. "Isaiah 7:14: What's in a Name?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30 (Summer 1987): 289-306.

Walton, John H. "New Observations on the Date of Isaiah." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (June 1985): 129-132.

Walton, John H. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Watts, John D. *Word Biblical Commentary: Isaiah 1-33*. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1985.

Watts, John D. *Word Biblical Commentary: Isaiah 34-66.* Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987.

Wegner, P.D., "A Re-examination of Isaiah ix 1-6" *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (1992): 103-12.

Wenham, Gordon J. "*Betûlah* 'Girl of Marriageable Age.'" *Vetus Testamentum* 26 (1976): 326-48.

Weren, Wim J. "The Five Women in Matthew's Genealogy." *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 59:2 (April 1997): 288-305.

Wieringen, Archibald L H M van. "Notes on Isaiah 36-37." *Biblische Notizen* 101 (1999): 32-35.

Wieringen, Archibald L H M van, "Notes on Isaiah 38-39." *Biblische Notizen* 102 (2000): 28-32.

Wildberger, H. *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

Willis, J., "Symbolic Names and Theological Themes in the Book of Isaiah." *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 23 (2001): 72-92.

Wolf, Herbert M. "A Solution to the Immanuel Prophecy in Isaiah 7:14-8:22." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972): 449-456.

Wright, N.T. "God's Way of Acting." *Christian Century* 115:35 (December 16, 1998): 1215-17.

Wright, N.T., and Marcus Borg. *The Meaning of Jesus*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1998.

Young, Edward J. "The Immanuel Prophecy: Isaiah 7:14-16." *Westminster Theological Journal* 15 (May 1953): 97-124.

Young, Edward J. "The Immanuel Prophecy: Isaiah 7:14-16." *Westminster Theological Journal* 16 (November 1953): 23-50.