

The Reform of Hezekiah

Assyrian Kings:

Ashur-dan III Ashur-nirari V
(771-754) (753-746)

Tiglath-pileser III (745-727)

Shalmaneser V

(726-722)

Sargon II (721-705)

Sennacherib (704-681)

Esarhaddon

(680-669)

Babylonian Kings:

Nabonassar (747-734)

Pulu (Pul, Tiglath-pileser III)
(728-727)

Merodach-baladin
(721-710, again 703)

Belibni
(702-700)

Ashur-nadin-shumi (699-694)
son of Sennacherib

Nergel-ushezib
(693)

Mushezib-marduk
(692-689)

Egyptian Kings:

Dynasty 22, 23, & 24 many concurrent Pharaohs - before 716

Dynasty 25 (Nubian): Piankhi (747-716)

Shabako (716-702)

Shabito (702-690)

Tirhakah (690-664)

North Israelite Kings:

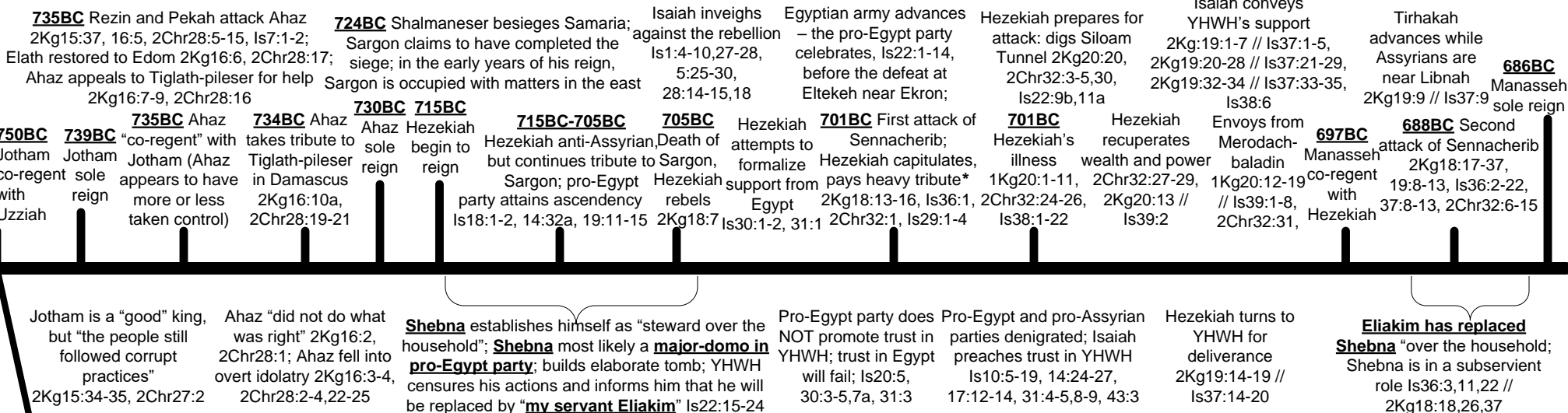
Zechariah (752) Menahem Pekahiah Pekah Hoshea
Jeroboam II (781-753) Shallum (752) (752-741) (741-739) (739-731) (731-724)

South Israelite Kings:

Jotham (739-730) Ahaz (730-715)
(co-regent with (co-regent with
Uzziah (767-739) Uzziah from 750) Jotham from 735)

Hezekiah (715-686)

Manasseh (686-643)
(co-regent with
Hezekiah from 697)



Uzziah enters the first room of the Temple; becomes leprous; Jotham assumes government 2Kg15:5, 2Chr26:16-21

Ahaz requires Uriah the Priest to build an altar after a pattern observed in Damascus; puts it in the place of the "bronze altar"; personally offers sacrifices 2Kg16:10-16

Both **Isaiah** and **Micah** denounce moral and ethical sins during Jotham's reign: see Is2:6-8, 3:1-26, 5:1-14, 18-30; Mc1:5-9, 2:1-3, 3:1-7, 9-11, 6:9-16, 7:2-6

The Immanuel Cycle: Isaiah chapters 7 through 12 contain a complicated series of Messianic prophecies. The recipient of the prophecies is the newly crowned Ahaz with the "hope" of moving him to a position of "faith". The refusal of Ahaz to cooperate with Isaiah and seek a sign from YHWH, is the direct impetus for **the sign of "Immanuel"**.

*See Sennacherib's account in **DOTT** pages 64-69, and **ANE** volume I pages 199-201.

Assessment: **[Hezekiah]** did what was right in the eyes of [YHWH], according to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places and broke the pillars and cut down the Asherah. ... For he held fast to [YHWH]. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that [YHWH] commanded Moses. And [YHWH] was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. (2Kg18:3-4a, 6-7a ESV see also 2Chr29:2)

Cleansing the Temple: In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of [YHWH] and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east and said to them, "Hear me, Levites! Now consecrate yourselves, and consecrate the house of [YHWH], the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the Holy Place. (2Chr29:3-5 ESV)

The Shebna/Eliakim prophecy: "In that day, declares [YHWH] of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way, and it will be cut down and fall, and the load that was on it will be cut off, for [YHWH] has spoken." (Is22:25 ESV) This may foreshadow the apostasy of Manasseh, his reversion to pro-Assyrian policy, and the undoing of Hezekiah's reform.

Restoring the Temple Service: Then Hezekiah said, "You have now consecrated yourselves to [YHWH]. Come near; bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of [YHWH]." ... And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, each according to his service, the priests and the Levites ... (2Chr29:31a, 31:2a ESV)

Assessment: **[Manasseh]** did what was evil in the sight of [YHWH], according to the despicable practices of the nations whom [YHWH] drove out before the people of Israel. ... he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, ... and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. ... And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. (2Kg21:2-3, 6a ESV see also 2Chr33:2-9, Jr15:4)

Hezekiah's Passover: Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of [YHWH] at Jerusalem to keep the Passover ... And the people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness ... (2Chr30:1, 21a ESV)

Shebna & Eliakim: History

Isaiah 22:1-14 set the context: in **701BC**, Jerusalem was under siege and Egyptian army advanced to Elteckah (see Bright page 286). This was taken as a sign of deliverance by Egypt from Assyria, so the people rejoiced: What do you mean that you have gone up, all of you, to the housetops, you who are full of shoutings, tumultuous city, exultant town? (Isaiah 22:1b-2a ESV)

Then **verse 15 addresses Shebna**. Clearly, he is related to this rejoicing. Most likely, he was a major-domo of the pro-Egypt party. The advance of the Egyptian army is taken as vindication of their trust in Egypt.

Who is Shebna?

Thus says the Lord [YHWH] of hosts, Come, go to this **steward**, to Shebna, who is **over the household** ... (Isaiah 22:15 ESV)

Shebna had worked his way into the number two position under the king. But he abused his position: What have you to do here, and whom have you here, that you have cut out here a tomb for yourself, you who cut out a tomb on the height and carve a **dwelling for yourself in the rock?** (Isaiah 22:16 ESV)

He used his position for his personal benefit rather than to fulfill his responsibility as a leader.

Who is Eliakim?

In that day I will call **my servant Eliakim** the **son of Hilkiah**, and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. **And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.** (Isaiah 22:20-21 ESV)

There is no background information on Eliakim or his father Hilkiah. He is designated "**my servant**" indicating him to be a **True worshipper of YHWH**. He will replace Shebna and prove a worthy leader in the upcoming crisis.

The Crisis: is the second attack of Sennacherib in 688BC. Eliakim has replaced Shebna as "**steward over the household**" with Shebna reduced to a subordinate role: As soon as **King Hezekiah** heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of [YHWH]. And he sent **Eliakim, who was over the household**, and Shebna the secretary ... (Isaiah 37:1-2a ESV // 2 Kings 19:1-2a)

There is no further information, but presumably, Eliakim dispatched his responsibilities with honour.

Prophecies

Shebna:

Behold, [YHWH] will hurl you away violently, O you strong man. He will seize firm hold on you and whirl you around and around, and **throw you like a ball into a wide land. There you shall die**, and there shall be your glorious chariots, you shame of your master's house. **I will thrust you from your office**, and you will be pulled down from your station. (Isaiah 22:17-19 ESV)

There is no confirmation of the fulfillment of Shebna's ultimate fate. Almost certainly, he went captive at some point and died in a foreign land.

Both Isaiah and Second Kings record that Shebna was replaced in his office by Eliakim.

Eliakim:

(A) And I will place on his shoulder **the key of the house of David**. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

(B) And **I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place**, and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house.

(C) And they will hang on him **the whole honor of his father's house**, the offspring and issue, every small vessel, from the cups to all the flagons.

(D) In that day, declares [YHWH] of hosts, **the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way**, and it will be cut down and fall, and the load that was on it will be cut off, for [YHWH] has spoken. (Isaiah 22:22-25 ESV)

There are clearly **four distinct parts to this prophecy**, marked A, B, C, and D above.

The key of the house of David: historically, this applied to Eliakim's position as "**steward over the household**". There may have been a physical "key" which locked and unlocked the various Royal Premises; however, there was also symbolic meaning in that the Steward would control access to the King by petitioners.

The phrase is, of course, also pregnant with Messianic implications.

A peg in a secure place: This relates to the dispatching of his duties as "**steward over the household**". Whereas Shebna had proven a worthless steward, more concerned with his own affairs than the effective dispatching of his duties as a leader; Eliakim would dispatch his duties with honour.

His father's house: Eliakim will be so successful that all his "**relatives**", "**offspring and issue**", will begin to "**hang off the secure peg**". The symbolism is a bit obscure, but most commentators take "small vessels", "cups", and "flagons" to represent even the most obscure of Eliakim's relatives – like when someone wins a lottery, long lost relatives and old friends appear abundantly out of nowhere.

The peg will give way: this part is somewhat obscure and there is no explicit confirmation of its fulfillment. For Eliakim's "**father's house**" the implications are clear: Eliakim simply cannot sustain the weight of supporting all his relatives. They will all come crashing down to reality.

But there may also be a symbolic meaning. Eliakim came to prominence during the crises of 688BC when YHWH defeated the army of Sennacherib. This action of YHWH could be seen as the final vindication of the reform of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a True Worshipper of God. **Hezekiah had done everything in his power to restore the true worship of YHWH**. Although Isaiah had many harsh words along the way, in the end Isaiah was aligned with Hezekiah against the Assyrian threat.

Hezekiah's reform was far reaching and thorough, but it **did NOT reach the hearts of the people**. Most "paid lip service" to it while Hezekiah was in power. **Most notably his son, Manasseh**. If Manasseh had shown his true colours during the period of co-regency, almost certainly Hezekiah would have replaced him as "crown prince". When Manasseh took the throne, he reversed all the good that Hezekiah had done, the "**secure peg**" established by Hezekiah "**gave way**", and all the good of his reform was "**cut off**" and "**fell**" to ground.

The fate of the nation was sealed, "for YHWH has spoken".

Messianic Implications

The House of David: O house of David! Thus says [YHWH]: "Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed, lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of your evil deeds." (Jeremiah 21:12 ESV)

On that day there shall be a fountain opened for **the house of David** and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. (Zechariah 13:1 ESV)

The Remnant: And **the surviving remnant** of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. For **out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant**, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. (2 Kings 19:30-31a ESV)

Thus says [YHWH], the God of Israel: Like these good figs, **so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah**, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. (Jeremiah 24:5 ESV)

... **saying through David** so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." ... So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God**, (Hebrews 4:7b,9 ESV)

The Keys: The words of the holy one, the true one, who has **the key of David**, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. ... Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. (Revelation 3:7b-8a ESV)

I will give you **the keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19 ESV)

The Door: I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. (John 10:9 ESV)

Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. (Luke 13:24 ESV)

Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door** but climbs in by another way, that man **is a thief and a robber**. (John 10:1 ESV)

... they declared all that **God** had done with them, and how he **had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles**. (Acts 14:27b ESV)