

Read the Bible in A Year: Chronological

Readings for June 21-27, 2020

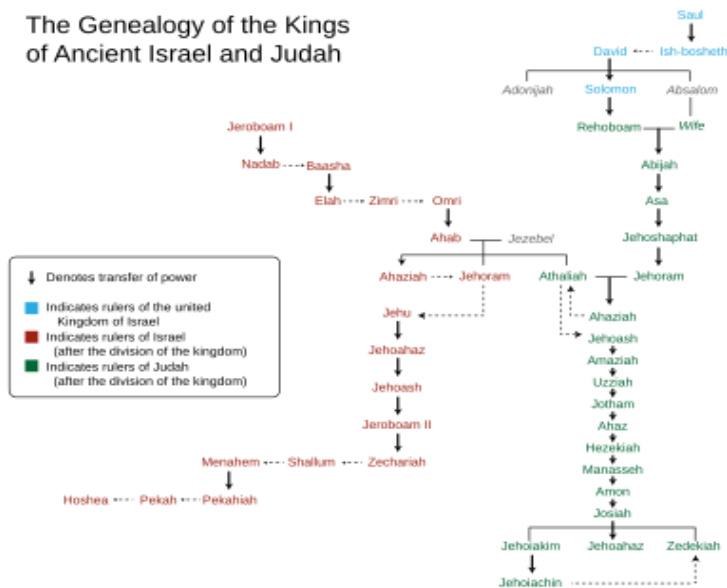
2 Kings 14:28-29; 15:6-38; 16:1-18; 17:1-4; 18:1-8
 2 Chronicles 26:22-23; 27:1-9; 28:1-25; 29:1-2
 Amos (whole book); Micah 1:1-16; Hosea (whole book);
 Isaiah 6:1-12:16

This week's readings narrative of the history of Israel and Judah from 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. The 2 Kings reading will be in italic type and the 2 Chronicles reading will be in regular type. Sometimes the readings will seem repetitive as the same account is retold in a different place.

This week, we also begin to hear from the prophets who spoke to the people during these times in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. I will set these apart for you...



The Genealogy of the Kings of Ancient Israel and Judah



We begin with the words of the prophet, Amos. Amos was active around 760-755 BCE, during the reigns of King Jeroboam II in Israel and King Uzziah in Judah. Amos was from the southern kingdom of Judah, but he preached primarily in the northern Kingdom of Israel. During this time, Israel was experiencing a period of relative peace and prosperity, but they were also neglecting the laws of God. Amos spoke to the increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, issues of injustice, God's power, and divine judgment.

The Book of Amos

Amos begins with declaring God's judgement against the enemy nations of Israel and Judah

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel two years before the earthquake.

He said: The LORD roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds languish, the top of Carmel withers.

Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron. So I will send fire against the house of Hazael, and it will devour the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. I will break the gate bar of Damascus; from the Valley of Aven I will cut off the one enthroned, and from Beth Eden the one who holds the scepter. The people of Aram will go into captivity to Kir, says the LORD.

Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they carried away into exile an entire deportation, to deliver them up to Edom. So I will send fire against the wall of Gaza, and it will devour its fortresses. From Ashdod I will cut off the one enthroned and from Ashkelon the one who holds the scepter. I will turn My hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines will perish, says the Lord GOD.

Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they delivered up an entire deportation to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of kinship. So I will send fire against the wall of Tyre, and it will devour its fortresses.

Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and repressed all pity; his anger tore with no ceasing, and his wrath persisted with no end. So I will send fire against Teman, and it will devour the fortresses of Bozrah.

Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of the Ammonites, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead, in order to enlarge their border. So I will kindle a fire against the wall of Rabbah, and it will devour its fortresses, with a war cry on the day of battle, with a tempest on the day of the whirlwind. Their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, says the LORD.

Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom. So I will send fire against Moab, and it will

devour the fortresses of Kerioth; Moab will die in uproar, with a war cry and the alarm of the trumpet. I will cut off the ruler from its midst, and will slay all its princes with him, says the LORD.

Judgment against enemies is all good, but Amos then dares to declare God's judgment against Judah and then he really goes after Israel...

Judgment Against Judah

Thus, says the LORD: For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have rejected the law of the LORD, and have not kept His commandments. The lies which their fathers followed have led them astray. So I will send fire against Judah, and it will devour the fortresses of Jerusalem.

Judgment Against Israel

Thus, says the LORD: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals. They trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the oppressed out of the way. A man and his father go in to the same woman, profaning My holy name. They recline by every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their gods they drink the wine from those who have been fined.

Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars. He was strong as the oaks, yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots below. It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. I raised up some of your sons as prophets, and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is it not so, O children of Israel? says the LORD. But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, "Do not prophesy."

Indeed, I will slow you down, as a wagon is slowed that is full of sheaves. Flight will perish from the swift, the strong will not retain his strength, nor will the warrior save his life. The Bowman will not stand firm, the swift-footed will not escape, nor will the horseman save his life. He that is courageous among the warriors will flee away naked on that day, says the LORD.

First Pronouncement of Punishment Against Israel

Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying: You alone have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Do two people walk together, if they have not agreed? Does a lion roar in the forest, if it has no prey? Does a young lion cry out from its den, if it has not caught something? Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground, if there was no snare for it? Does a trap spring up from the ground, if it has not caught something? If the trumpet blasts in the city, are not the people frightened? If there is disaster against a city, is it not the LORD who has done it? Surely the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing His purpose to His servants the prophets. The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?

Proclaim to the fortresses in Ashdod, and the fortresses in the land of Egypt, and say: "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see the great disorders within her, and the oppression in her midst." They do not know how to do right, says the LORD, storing up violence and destruction in their fortresses.

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD: An enemy will surround your land; he will tear down your defenses, and your fortresses will be plundered.

Thus says the LORD: As the shepherd rescues out of the mouth of the lion a pair of legs or a piece of an ear, so will the children of Israel be rescued, those who live in Samaria, with the corner of a bed or a piece of a couch.

Hear and testify against the house of Jacob, says the Lord GOD, the God of Hosts: Surely on the day I punish the transgressions of Israel, I will also punish the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground. I will destroy the winter house as well as the summer house, and the houses of ivory will perish; the great houses will come to an end, says the LORD.

Second Pronouncement of Punishment Against Israel

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor and crush the needy, who say to their husbands, "Bring us something to drink!" The Lord GOD has sworn by His holiness: Indeed, the days are coming upon you when they will take you away with hooks, the last one of you with fishhooks. You will go out through breached walls, everyone straight ahead of her; you will be exiled to Harmon, says the LORD. Come to Bethel and transgress, to Gilgal and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning and your tithes every three days. Burn leavened bread as a thank offering; announce your voluntary offerings loudly, for so you love to do, O children of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

Though I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities and lack of food in all your places, *yet you did not return to Me, says the LORD.* I also withheld the rain from you when there were still three months to the harvest. I would send rain on one town and send no rain on another town. One field would receive rain, but another field without rain would wither. So, two or three towns wandered to one town to drink water, but they were not satisfied; *yet you did not return to Me, says the LORD.* I struck you with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured your many gardens and vineyards, your fig trees and olive trees; *yet you did not return to Me, says the LORD.* Pestilence like that of Egypt I sent against you. By the sword I killed your young men; your horses were taken captive. The stench of your camps I brought up into your nostrils; *yet you did not return to Me, says the LORD.* I destroyed some of you, as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a firebrand plucked out of the fire; *yet you did not return to Me, says the LORD.*

Therefore, thus will I do to you, O Israel, and because I will do this to prepare to meet your God, O Israel! The One who forms the mountains and creates the wind, who reveals His thoughts to man, who turns the darkness into dawn and strides on the heights of the earth—the LORD, the God of Hosts, is His name.

Third Pronouncement of Punishment Against Israel

Hear this word which I take up as a dirge against you, O house of Israel: Fallen, no more to rise is maiden Israel; forsaken on her land, with no one to raise her up.

For thus says the Lord GOD: The city that went out with a thousand will be left with a hundred, and the one that went out with a hundred will be left with ten for the house of Israel. Indeed, thus says the LORD to

the house of Israel: Seek Me and live! But do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba; for Gilgal will surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall be no more. Seek the LORD and live, or He will break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it. You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness down to the ground!

The One who made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns the deep darkness into dawn and darkens the day into night, who summons the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth— the LORD is His name, the One who flashes destruction against the strong, so that destruction comes against the fortress. They hate the one who prosecutes at the gate and abhor the one who speaks with integrity.

Therefore, because you trample on the poor and take from him a levy of wheat, though you have built houses of hewn stone, you will not dwell in them; though you have planted pleasant vineyards, you will not drink their wine. For I know your transgressions are many and your sins are grievous, you who oppress the just, who take a bribe and subvert the needy at the gate. Therefore, the prudent are silent at such a time, for it is an evil time.

Seek good and not evil, so that you may live; then the LORD, the God of Hosts, will truly be with you, as you claim. Hate evil and love good and establish justice at the gate. It may then be that the LORD God of Hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Hosts, the Lord: Wailing will be in all the squares, and in all the streets they will say, "Alas! Alas! They shall call the farmer to mourning, and to wailing those skilled in lamentation. In all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through you, says the LORD.

The Day of the LORD Is Darkness

("The Day of the Lord" is how people would refer to the day of judgement- most people would like to believe that it will be a terrible day for their enemies and a day of victory for themselves...but Amos had something different to say about that...)

Woe to you that desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light, as if someone fled away from a lion, but a bear attacked him, or got into the house and rested his hand on the wall, but a snake bit him. Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Will it not be deep darkness, with no brightness in it?

I hate, I despise your festivals, and I am not pleased by your solemn assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings or your grain offerings, I will not accept them, nor will I regard the offerings of your fattened animals. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps. But let justice roll down like water, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings those forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? But you will carry away Sukuth your king and Kaiwan your star-images, your gods that you made for yourselves, as I drive you away into exile beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is the God of Hosts.

Woe to the Complacent

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those confident on the mount of Samaria, nobles of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes! Cross over to Kalneh and see, and go from there to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines—are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory? You who brush off the day of disaster, but bring on a session of

lawlessness; who lie upon beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, eating lambs from the flock and calves from the stall; who sing to the sound of the harp and invent musical instruments for themselves like David; who drink from bowls of wine and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the destruction of Joseph. Therefore now they will go at the head of the captives into exile, and the revelry of those who are lounging will vanish.

The Lord GOD hath sworn by Himself, an oracle of the LORD the God of Hosts: I abhor the pride of Jacob and hate his palaces, so I will deliver up the city with all that is in it. If there remain ten people in one house, they will die. And when a relative or one who prepares the bodies picks them up to carry them out of the house, and says to someone in the recesses of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" and he says, "No," he will say, "Hush!"—not to pronounce the name of the LORD. But indeed, the LORD gives a command, and He will shatter the great house to bits, and the small house to pieces. Can horses run on a rocky crag? Can one plow the sea with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood, you who rejoice in Lo Debar, who say, "Is it not by our own strength that we captured Karnaim?" Watch: I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, says the LORD, the God of Hosts, and they will oppress you from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi Arabah.

Visions Given to Amos by the Lord Concerning Israel

Plague of Locusts: This is what the Lord GOD showed me: He was forming a plague of locusts when the latter growth was beginning to sprout up, the latter growth after the king's reaping. When they had finished devouring the foliage of the land, I said, "O Lord GOD, please forgive. How can Jacob survive? For he is small." The LORD relented concerning this: "It shall not be," said the LORD.

Fire: This is what the Lord GOD showed me: The Lord GOD was calling for a judgment by fire. It was consuming the great deep and was devouring the fields. I said, "O Lord GOD, please stop. How can Jacob survive? For he is small." The LORD relented concerning this: "This also shall not be," said the Lord GOD.

Plumb Line: This is what He showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall made using a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. The LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "See, I am putting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel. I will forgive them no more. The high places of Isaac will be destroyed, the sanctuaries of Israel will be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

Basket of Fruit: This is what the Lord GOD showed me: a basket of summer fruit. ² He said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the LORD said to me, "The end has come upon My people Israel. I will forgive them no more. The songs of the temple shall become wailings on that day," says the Lord GOD. "The corpses shall be many, cast down everywhere. Hush!"

The Priest Tries to Banish Amos

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam (II) king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you at the very center of the house of Israel. The country cannot endure all his words. For this is what Amos said: 'Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely be exiled away

from its land.” So Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee back to the land of Judah. Earn your sustenance there, and prophesy there. But do not prophesy any more at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary and a royal temple.” But Amos answered Amaziah: “I am no prophet, and I am no prophet’s disciple. Rather, I am a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees. But the LORD took me away from the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’ Now therefore hear the word of the LORD: You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.’ Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘Your wife will be a prostitute in the city, your sons and daughters will fall by the sword, and your land will be divided by measuring line; you yourself will die in an unclean land; and Israel will surely go into exile away from its land.’ ”

Though he has been warned, Amos continues to preach and prophecy in Israel...

Hear this, you who trample on the needy to make the poor of the land fail, saying, “When will the New Moon be over, so that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may open the wheat sales, making the ephah too small, and the shekel too heavy, cheating with dishonest scales, that we may buy the poor for silver, the needy for a pair of sandals, and sell the refuse as wheat?”

The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely, I will never forget any of their deeds. Will not the land tremble because of this, and everyone mourn who lives on it? It will all rise up like the Nile, and be tossed around, then sink like the Nile of Egypt. On that day, says the Lord GOD, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in mid-daylight; I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into dirges; I will put sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only child, and its end like a bitter day. The time is coming, says the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They will wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they will run back and forth to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find it. On that day the beautiful maidens and the young men will faint with thirst. Those who swear by Ashimah of Samaria, and say, “By the life of your god, O Dan,” and, “By the life of the way of Beersheba”— they shall fall and never rise again.

I saw the Lord standing upon the altar, and He said: Strike the capitals so that the thresholds shake; break them off onto the heads of all of them. Those who remain I will slay with the sword. Not one of them will get away; not one fugitive will survive. Though they dig down to Sheol, from there My hand will capture them; though they climb up to the heavens, from there I will bring them down, though they hide on the top of Carmel, from there I will search and catch them; though they hide from My sight on the bottom of the sea, from there will I command the serpent to bite them; and though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there will I command the sword to slay them. I will set My eyes upon them for evil and not for good.

The Lord GOD of Hosts, He who touches the earth and it melts, and all who live on it mourn; it all rises up like the Nile, and subsides like the river of Egypt; who builds His chambers in the heavens, and founds His vault over the earth; who summons the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the surface of the earth— the LORD is His name. Are you not like the Ethiopians to Me, O children of Israel? says the LORD. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, but also the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir?

The eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth, though I will not completely destroy the house of Jacob, says the LORD. See, I am giving the command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, as one sifts with a sieve, and not a pebble falls to

the ground. All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, "Never will disaster reach or overtake us."

Though God has promised destruction to his sinful people, God also promises restoration to come...

On that day will I raise up the hut of David that is fallen; I will close up its breached walls, raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the nations called by My name, says the LORD who will do this. Indeed, the days are coming, says the LORD, when the plowman will overtake the one who is reaping, and the treader of grapes the one who is sowing the seed; the mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills will flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and no more will they be uprooted out of their land which I have given them. The LORD your God has spoken.

The narrative picks back up with the death of Jeroboam II, King of Israel- and his son, Zechariah taking the reign, and then a succession of kings is listed for Israel without a lot of detail. Notice, however, the very short terms these kings serve, and the repeated phrase: he did evil in the sight of the Lord.

Now the rest of the deeds of Jeroboam, all that he did and his power, how he fought, and how he recovered for Israel Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Jeroboam slept with his fathers, with the kings of Israel. Zechariah his son reigned in his place.

Zechariah, King of Israel: *In the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of Jeroboam became king of Israel in Samaria for six months. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done. He did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, struck him at Ibleam, and killed him. Then Shallum reigned in his place. Now the rest of the deeds of Zechariah are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel. This was the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, "Your sons will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation." And it was so.*

Shallum, King of Israel: *Shallum son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah. He reigned for a month in Samaria. Then Menahem son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, entered Samaria, and struck Shallum son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him. Then Menahem reigned in his place. Now the rest of the deeds of Shallum and the conspiracy he made are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel. Then Menahem struck Tiphseh and all who were in it, and the territories around Tirzah. Because they did not open up the city to him, he attacked it. Then he split open all its pregnant woman.*

Menahem, King of Israel: *In the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi became king over Israel for ten years in Samaria. He did evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not turn aside all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. Pul the king of Assyria came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that he might help him strengthen his control of the kingdom. Menahem exacted the money from Israel, from all the very wealthy men, fifty shekels of silver each, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria left and did not stay there in*

the land. The rest of the deeds of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? And Menahem slept with his fathers, and Pekahiah his son reigned in his place.

Pekahiah, King of Israel: *In the fiftieth year of Uzziah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem became king over Israel in Samaria for two years. He did evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. But Pekah son of Remaliah, his officer, conspired against him and struck him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob, Arieah, and fifty men of the Gileadites with him. He killed him and reigned in his place. Now the rest of the deeds of Pekahiah and all that he did are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel.*

Pekah, King of Israel: *In the fifty-second year of Uzziah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria for twenty years. He did evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maakah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali, and then exiled them to Assyria.*

And then, in Judah, after a long reign, King Uzziah dies and his son, Jotham, reigns in his place

Now the rest of the deeds of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? So Azariah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the City of David. Jotham his son reigned in his place.

Now the remainder of the acts of Uzziah, from beginning to end, Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz, has written *them*. So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the burial field belonging to the kings because they said, "He is a leper." And Jotham his son ruled in his place.

In the year that King Uzziah of Judah died, God called a man named Isaiah to prophecy for him. This call came in the form of a vision...

The Book of Isaiah 6:1-13

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings. With two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. One cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." The posts of the door moved at the voice of him who cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts."

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar in his hand. And he laid it on my mouth, and said, "This has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged." Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Then I said, “Here am I. Send me.”

He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn and be healed.”

Then I said, “Lord, how long?”

And He answered: “Until the cities are laid waste without inhabitants, and the houses without man, and the land is utterly desolate, and the LORD has removed men far away, and there is a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be burned, as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down, so the holy seed is its stump.”

Back to the narrative- Uzziah has died and his son, Jotham has become king...

In the second year of Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. He did what was right in the sight of the LORD. He did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. Only he did not remove the high places. The people continued sacrificing and making offerings on the high places. He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD. Now the rest of the deeds of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah. Jotham slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place.

Jotham was twenty-five years old when he began as king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. The name of his mother was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. And he did what was correct in the eyes of the LORD just as his father Uzziah had done. However, he did not enter the temple of the LORD. But the people continued acting corruptly. And he built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD, and he built much on the wall of Ophel. And he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and on the wooded heights he built citadels and towers. He made war with the king of the Ammonites and prevailed against them. That year the Ammonites gave to him one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand kors of wheat, and ten thousand kors of barley. The Ammonites paid him the same amount in the second and third years as well. So Jotham was strengthened because he established his ways before the LORD his God. And the remainder of the acts of Jotham, all his wars and ways, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he was king for sixteen years in Jerusalem. And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David. And Ahaz his son reigned in his place.

We are now introduced to another prophet- Micah. Micah was from Judah and was called to prophecy in the kingdom of Judah, primarily in and around Jerusalem during this time...

Micah 1:1-16

The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah—the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

Hear, you peoples, all of you, listen, earth and all who live in it, that the Sovereign LORD may bear witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

Judgment Against Samaria (capital of Israel) and Jerusalem (capital of Judah)

Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling place; he comes down and treads on the heights of the earth. The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.

The Word of the Lord: All this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the people of Israel. What is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's high place? Is it not Jerusalem? Therefore, I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations. All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used.

Micah's Response

Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl. For Samaria's plague is incurable; it has spread to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself.

Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all. In Beth Ophrah roll in the dust. Pass by naked and in shame, you who live in Shaphir. Those who live in Zaanan will not come out. Beth Ezel is in mourning; it no longer protects you. Those who live in Maroth writhe in pain, waiting for relief, because disaster has come from the LORD, even to the gate of Jerusalem. You who live in Lachish, harness fast horses to the chariot. You are where the sin of Daughter Zion began, for the transgressions of Israel were found in you. Therefore, you will give parting gifts to Moresheth Gath. The town of Akzib will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel. I will bring a conqueror against you who live in Mareshah. The nobles of Israel will flee to Adullam. Shave your head in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourself as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile.

We return to the narrative- with Azah becoming king of Judah...

In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God like David his father. He walked in the way of the kings of Israel and even made his son pass through the fire according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the children of Israel. He sacrificed and made offerings on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to battle, and they besieged Ahaz but could not subdue him. At that time Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram and expelled the Judeans from Elath. The Edomites came to Elath and live there to this day. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. Come up and save

me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me.” Then Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king’s house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria listened to him. The king of Assyria went up to Damascus, captured it, exiled the people to Kir, and killed Rezin.

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he was king in Jerusalem for sixteen years. And he did not do what was correct in the eyes of the LORD as David his father. And he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and he cast images for Baal worship. And he made sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, and he burned his sons in the fire according to the detestable acts of the nations that the LORD had displaced before the sons of Israel. He even made sacrifices and offered incense on the high places of the hills and under every green tree.

So the LORD his God gave him into the hand of the king of Aram. They struck *Ahaz* and took captive many prisoners and brought them to Damascus. He was even given into the hand of the king of Israel, and he attacked *Ahaz* with a great slaughter. And Pekah the son of Remaliah killed one hundred and twenty thousand in Judah in one day, and they were all strong men, but they abandoned the LORD God of their fathers. And Zikri, a mighty warrior from Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the son of the king, and Azrikam the official of the palace, and Elkanah second to the king. And the sons of Israel took captive two hundred thousand of their kin, women, sons, and daughters. They also took much plunder and brought the plunder to Samaria.

And there was a prophet there whose name was Oded, and he went out to the army as it approached Samaria and said to them, “See that the anger of the LORD God of your fathers is against Judah, and He gave them into your hand, and you all have killed them in a rage that has reached even to heaven. And now you are planning to subdue for yourselves the people of Judah and Jerusalem as male and female slaves. Do you all not surely have among you guilt before the LORD your God? And now listen to me. Return the captives whom you have taken captive from your relatives because the burning wrath of the LORD is on you all.” And some men who were heads of the people of Ephraim rose up before those coming from the war: Azariah the son of Jehohanan, Berekiah the son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai. And they said, “You will not bring the captives here, for guilt from the LORD will be on us, and you plan to add to our sin and guilt. Our guilt is great, and there is *already* a burning anger against Israel.” So the soldiers left the captives and spoil before the officials and all the assembly. Then the men who were designated by name took the captives *and* clothed those who were naked from the plunder. So they clothed them, gave them sandals, offered them food and drink, anointed them with oil, and led them on donkeys, even all those who stumbled. They brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, which was near their kinsmen. Then the *officials* returned to Samaria.

The Book of Isaiah 7:11; 12:1-6; 17:1-14

And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. It was said to the house of David, “Aram is allied with Ephraim.” Then his heart trembled and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood tremble with the wind.

Then the LORD said to Isaiah: Go out now to meet Ahaz, you, and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller’s field, and say to him, Take heed, and be quiet. Do not fear nor be fainthearted because of the two tails of these smoking firebrands,

because of the fierce anger of Rezin with Aram and of the son of Remaliah, because Aram, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have taken evil counsel against you, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and trouble it, and let us make a breach there for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeel.

Thus says the Lord GOD: It shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass. For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. Now within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken so that it is not a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.

The Sign of Immanuel: Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying: Ask for a sign from the LORD your God. Make it either as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, nor will I tempt the LORD.

Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David. Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Curds and honey he shall eat at the time that he knows enough to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread shall be forsaken of both her kings. The LORD shall bring upon you, and upon your people, and upon your father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even the king of Assyria. In that day the LORD shall whistle for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. They shall come, and all of them shall rest in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and on all thorns, and on all bushes. In that same day the Lord shall shave with a hired razor, from regions beyond the River, with the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the legs, and it shall also remove the beard. In that day a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep, and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he shall eat curds; for everyone who is left in the land shall eat curds and honey. In that day every place where there were a thousand vines, worth a thousand *shekels* of silver, shall become briars and thorns. With arrows and with bows shall men come there because all the land shall become briars and thorns. On all hills that used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns. But it shall be for pasturing oxen and for sheep to tread.

Moreover, the LORD said to me, Take for yourself a large book and write in it with a man's pen: "Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey." I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberekiah. So, I went in to the prophetess (his wife), and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. For before the child knows how to cry "My father" and "My mother," the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.

The LORD spoke to me again, saying: Because this people refuses the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices in Rezin and the son of Remaliah, now therefore the Lord certainly is about to bring upon them the strong and plentiful waters of the River, even the king of Assyria and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks. And he shall pass through Judah, he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck, and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

Be broken, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces. And give ear, all you from far countries. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, but it shall come to nothing; speak the word, but it shall not stand for God is with us.

For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: You should not say, "It is a conspiracy," concerning all that this people calls a conspiracy, neither fear their threats nor be afraid of them. Sanctify the LORD of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. He shall become a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, and a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Many among them shall stumble and fall and be broken and be snared and be taken.

Bind up the testimony; seal the law among My disciples. I will wait on the LORD, who hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will eagerly look for Him. See, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of Hosts who dwells in Mount Zion. When they say to you, "Seek after the mediums and the wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek after their God? *Should they consult the dead for the living?* To the law and to the testimony; if they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. They shall pass through the land hard-pressed and hungry; when they are hungry, they shall be furious and curse their king and their God as they look upward. Then they shall look to the earth and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish. And they shall be driven away into darkness.

Though the prophecy is bleak, there is hope...

The Coming King: Nevertheless, there shall be no more gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time He contemptuously treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light has shined. You have multiplied the nation and increased the joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the bar of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor as in the day of Midian's defeat. For all the sandals of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and to establish it with justice and with righteousness, from now until forever. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this.

But before that day can come, Israel will know the destruction that will come from their failure to faithfulness before God...

The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it falls upon Israel. All the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in the pride and stoutness of heart, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars." Therefore, the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together. The Arameans shall be before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open jaws. For all this His anger is not turned away, and His hand is stretched out still. For the people do not turn to Him who struck them, nor do they seek the LORD of Hosts. Therefore

the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and bulrush, in one day. The elder and honorable man, he is the head; and the prophet that teaches lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed. Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, nor shall He have mercy on their fatherless and widows; for every one of them is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this His anger is not turned away, and His hand is stretched out still.

For wickedness burns as a fire; it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall ignite in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like rising smoke. Through the wrath of the LORD of Hosts is the land burned up, and the people shall be as fuel for the fire; no man shall spare his brother. They shall snatch on the right hand, but still be hungry; and they shall eat on the left hand, and shall not be satisfied; every man shall eat the flesh of his own arm. Manasseh consumes Ephraim, and Ephraim, Manasseh, and they together shall be against Judah. For all this His anger is not turned away, and His hand is stretched out still.

Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees and who write unjust judgments which they have prescribed to turn aside the needy from justice and to take away the right from the poor of My people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless! And what will you do in the day of punishment and in the desolation which shall come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth? Nothing remains but to bow down among the prisoners, and they shall fall among the slain. For all this His anger is not turned away, and His hand is stretched out still.

Though God will use Assyria to bring judgement against Israel, his wrath will then turn to Assyria...

Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him a command, to seize the plunder, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. However he does not so intend, nor does he plan so in his heart; but his purpose is to destroy and to cut off many nations. For he says, "Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Kalno as Carchemish? Is not Hamath as Arpad? Is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols whose graven images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, shall I not, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?"

When the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *He will say*, "I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his high looks." For he says: "By the strength of my hand and by my wisdom, I have done it, for I am prudent; and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. And my hand has found as a nest the riches of the people, and as one gathers eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth and there was no one who moved the wing or opened the mouth or peeped." Shall the axe boast itself against him who hews with it? Or shall the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? *That is* as if the rod wields itself against those who lift it up, or as if the staff should lift itself up as if it were not wood. Therefore, the Lord, GOD of Hosts, shall send leanness among his stout ones, and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. The light of Israel shall be a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day, and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body; and it shall be as when a sick man faints. The rest of the trees of his forest shall be so few that a child may write them down.

And when God brings His judgement on Assyria, a remnant of Israel will return...

In that day the remnant of Israel and those who have escaped of the house of Jacob shall never again depend on him who struck them, but shall depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, are as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return; the destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord GOD of Hosts shall make a complete destruction, as decreed, in the midst of all the land.

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD of Hosts: O My people who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian. He shall strike you with a rod and shall lift up his staff against you, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and My anger will be directed to their destruction. The LORD of Hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and as His rod was over the sea, so shall He lift it up after the manner of Egypt. In that day his burden shall be taken away from off your shoulder, and his yoke from off your neck; and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing oil.

He has come against Aiath, he has passed through Migron; at Mikdash he has laid up his carriages. They are gone over the pass, they have taken up their lodging at Geba. Ramah is afraid, Gibeah of Saul has fled. Lift up your voice, O daughter of Gallim. Listen, Laishah and poor Anathoth. Madmenah has fled, the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. Yet today he shall remain at Nob; he shakes his fist against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

See, the Lord, the LORD of Hosts, shall lop the bough with terror; and the tall ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. He shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by the Mighty One.

And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. He shall delight in the fear of the LORD, and he shall not judge by what his eyes see, nor reprove by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and reprove with fairness for the meek of the earth. He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his loins, and faithfulness the belt about his waist.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the peoples. For him shall the nations seek. And his rest shall be glorious. In that day the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, who shall be left, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. He shall set up a banner for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the

adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. But they shall swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines towards the west; they shall plunder the sons of the east together; they shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them. The LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and with His mighty wind He shall shake His hand over the River, and shall strike it into seven streams, and make men walk over dry-shod. There shall be a highway for the remnant of His people, who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel when he came up from the land of Egypt.

The oracle of Damascus. See, Damascus will cease from being a city; it shall be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and no one shall make them afraid. The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Aram; they shall be as the glory of the sons of Israel, says the LORD of Hosts.

In that day the glory of Jacob shall decrease, and the fatness of his flesh shall grow lean. It shall be as when the harvestman gathers the corn and reaps the ears with his arm, and it shall be as he who gathers ears in the Valley of Rephaim. Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in its outmost fruitful branches, says the LORD God of Israel.

On that day a man shall look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect for the Holy One of Israel. He shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, nor shall he respect what his fingers have made, either the groves or the images. In that day his strong cities shall be as a forsaken bough and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the sons of Israel; and there shall be a desolation. Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not been mindful of the rock of your strength, therefore you plant pleasant plants and set them with vine slips of a strange god; in the day that you plant it, you carefully fence it in, and in the morning you make your seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be a heap of ruin in the day of grief and desperate pain. Woe to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the noise of the seas, and the rushing of many peoples who make a rumble like the rumbling of mighty waters! The nations rumble like the rumbling of many waters; but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like rolling dust before the whirlwind. At evening time, sudden terror! And before the morning, they are no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us, and the lot of those who rob us.

And in that day, you shall say: O LORD, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, Your anger has turned away, and You comforted me. Certainly God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation. Therefore with joy you shall draw water out of the wells of salvation. In that day you shall say: Praise the LORD, call upon His name, declare His deeds among the peoples, make them remember that His name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, for He has done excellent things; let this be known in all the earth. Cry out and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion. For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst.

Judah is under attack from Edom and King Ahaz reaches out to Assyria for help...

At that time King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help. The Edomites continually came and struck Judah and carried off captives. Even the Philistines made raids on the cities of the lowlands of the Shephelah and the Negev of Judah. And they captured Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soko and its villages, Timnah and its villages, and Gimzo and its villages; and they settled there. For the LORD humbled

Judah because of Ahaz king of Judah, for he allowed depravity to spread in Judah and continually transgressed against the LORD. So Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came against him, but he brought him distress and not strength.

Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria and saw an altar that was in Damascus. King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a pattern of the altar and model of it, according to the manner of its construction. Uriah the priest built an altar according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. Thus Uriah the priest worked until King Ahaz came from Damascus. When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, the king approached the altar and made offerings on it. He offered his burnt offering and his grain offering, poured out his libations, and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings upon the altar. And the bronze altar that was before the LORD he moved from the front of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD. He put it on the north side of the new altar.

Then King Ahaz commanded Uriah the priest, "Upon the great altar offer the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt offering, and his grain offering with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their libations. Sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice, and the bronze altar will be for me to inquire by." So Uriah the priest did everything that King Ahaz commanded.

King Ahaz cut off the bases of the stands and removed the basin from them. He took down the sea from off the bronze oxen that were under it and put it on stone pavement. The structure for the Sabbath that they had built in the house and the king's outer entrance he removed from the house of the LORD for the king of Assyria.

And at the time that he was oppressed he increased in unfaithfulness against the LORD. So he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had devastated him, for he said, "Because the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so that they might help me." But they were his downfall *in Judah* and the downfall for all of Israel. And Ahaz gathered the vessels from the house of God, and he cut up the vessels. Then he shut the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made altars in every corner of Jerusalem. Then in every city in Judah he made high places to make offerings to other gods. So he provoked the LORD God of his fathers.

Though Ahaz took a portion from the house of the LORD and palace of the king and the officials, and he gave it to the king of Assyria (and to the worship of the Assyrian cult), but the king did not help Ahaz.

The end of the reign of Ahaz...

In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to everything that David his father had done. He removed the high places, broke down the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and crushed the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the children of Israel had made offerings to it. They called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel. Afterwards, there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah or among those who were before him. He clung to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. The LORD was with him. Wherever he went, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. He struck the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he was king in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years. The name of his mother was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was correct in the eyes of the LORD just as his father David had done.

And in the Kingdom of Israel...

Then Hoshea son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah and struck and killed him. Then he reigned in his place in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah. The rest of the deeds of Pekah and all that he did are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel.

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king in Samaria over Israel for nine years. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, only not as the kings of Israel who were before him.

Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him. Hoshea became his servant and gave him gifts. But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, for he had sent messengers to So, the king of Egypt, and offered up no gift to the king of Assyria as he had done year by year. So, the king of Assyria detained him, and then put him in prison.

So, at this point- in Judah, Hezekiah is king and is “doing what is correct in the eyes of the Lord,” though Judah remains under the constant threat of Assyria. In Israel, King Hosheah tried to play games between Egypt and Assyria as far as paying tribute- and the king of Assyria has put the king of Israel in prison.

Into this climate steps the prophet, Hosea. Hosea conducted his prophetic ministry in the northern areas of the Northern Kingdom (Israel), in the years around 750-725 BCE. He is known as a “prophet of doom” though there is a promise of restoration in his words, too.

The Book of Hosea

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Hosea’s Wife and Children

When the LORD first spoke by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: “Go, take for yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry, departing from the LORD.” So, he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim as a wife. She conceived and bore him a son. The LORD said to him: “Call his name Jezreel, for in a little while, I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel and will bring to an end the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day, I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.” Then Gomer conceived again and bore a daughter. And the LORD said to Hosea: “Call her name Lo-Ruhamah, for I will no longer have mercy upon the house of Israel but will utterly sweep them away. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, or by sword, or by battle, or by horses, or by horsemen.”

When Gomer had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived, and bore a son.

(God commands Hosea to marry a wife “of harlotry...” and uses this marriage as a metaphor for the unfaithfulness of Israel to God)

Then the LORD said: “Call his name Lo-Ammi, for you are not My people, and I am not your God. Yet the number of the children of Israel will be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there it will be said to them, ‘You are the children of the living God.’ Then will the Judahites and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel. Say to your brothers, Ammi, and to your sisters, Ruhamah. Plead with your mother, plead— for she is not My wife, and am I not her husband— that she put away her harlotry from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts, lest I strip her naked and leave her as in the day that she was born, and turn her into a wilderness, and turn her into a dry land, and kill her with thirst. I will not have mercy upon her children for they are children of harlotry. For their mother has played the whore. She that conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will pursue my lovers, who provide my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’ Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, so that she will not find her paths. She will pursue her lovers, but she will not reach them; and she will seek them but will not find them. Then she will say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.’ But she did not know that it was I who provided her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and multiplied her silver and gold that they used for Baal. Therefore, I will take back My grain in its time and My wine in its season, and I will recover My wool and My flax, given to cover her nakedness. Therefore, I will uncover her shame in the sight of her lovers, and no one will deliver her from My hand. I will also bring to an end all her joy, her *annual* feasts, her New Moons, and her Sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies. I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, of which she has said, ‘These are my rewards that my lovers have given me.’ I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field will eat them. I will punish her for the days of the Baals, when she burned incense to them and adorned herself with her earrings and her jewelry, and pursued her lovers, but forgot Me,” declares the LORD.

(God continues to use this metaphor to describe how he will redeem His people...)

“Therefore, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there, I will give her vineyards to her, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope. She will respond there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.”

“On that day,” declares the LORD, “you will call Me, ‘My husband, and will no longer call Me, ‘My Baal.’ I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they will no longer be remembered by their name. On that day, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground. I will break the bow and the sword and the battle from the earth and will make them to lie down safely. I will take you for My wife forever. I will take you for My wife in righteousness and in justice, in mercy and in compassion. I will take you for My wife in faithfulness, and you will know the LORD.”

“On that day I will answer,” declares the LORD; “I will answer the heavens, and they will answer the earth. The earth will answer the grain, the wine, and the oil; and they will answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth. I will have mercy upon Lo-Ruhamah, and I will say to Lo-Ammi, ‘You are My people,’ and they will say, ‘You are my God.’”

Hosea Redeems His Wife- and uses this to teach Israel... Then the LORD said to me, “Go, again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just as the LORD loves the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love raisin cakes.” So, I purchased her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and for a homer of barley, and a half homer of barley. Then I said to her, “You will remain with me many days. You will not play the whore, and you will not belong to *another* man. And also I *will be* with you.” For the children of Israel will remain many days without a king and without a prince, without a sacrifice and without a standing stone, and without an ephod and teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come in fear to the LORD and to His goodness in the latter days.

God Accuses Israel... Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a dispute with the inhabitants of the land: There is no truth or mercy, and no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, and killing, and stealing and adultery break out, and bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore, the land dries up, and everyone who lives in it withers with the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky; even the fish of the sea disappear. Yet let no one contend, and let none reprove another, for your people are like those that contend with a priest. You will stumble in the day, and the prophet also will stumble with you in the night, and I will destroy your mother. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from being My priest. And because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children. As they increased, so they sinned against Me. I will change their glory into shame. They feed upon the sin of My people, and they are greedy for their iniquity. It will be like people, like priest. I will punish them for their ways and reward them for their deeds. They will eat, but not be satisfied; they will play the whore, but not multiply, because they have forsaken the LORD by devoting themselves to harlotry; wine and new wine take away understanding.

The Idolatry of Israel... My people seek counsel from their wood, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has led them astray, and they have played the whore in defiance of their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills under oak, poplar, and elm because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore, nor your daughters-in-law when they commit adultery. For the men separate themselves with whores, and they sacrifice with cult prostitutes. A people without understanding will come to ruin. Though you play the whore, O Israel, do not let Judah offend. Do not come to Gilgal, or go up to Beth Aven, and do not swear, “As the LORD lives.” Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn. Now will the LORD feed them like a lamb in a wide pasture? Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone. Their drink has soured, they have played the whore continually. Her rulers dearly love shame. A wind has wrapped her in its wings, and they will be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

Judgment Against Israel and Judah... Hear this, O priests! Pay attention, O house of Israel! Listen, O house of the king! For the judgment is for you, because you have been a snare at Mizpah and a net spread over Tabor, and a pit dug deep in Shittim; but I will discipline them all. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from Me; for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore. Israel is defiled. Their deeds do not allow them to return to their God; for a spirit of

harlotry is in their midst, and they do not know the LORD. The pride of Israel testifies against him. Israel and Ephraim stumble in their iniquity. Judah also stumbles with them. With their flocks and their herds, they will go to seek the LORD, but they will not find Him. He has withdrawn from them. They have dealt faithlessly with the LORD, for they have given birth to illegitimate children. Now the New Moon will devour them along with their portion.

War, Wrath, and Repentance... Blow the horn in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah. Cry aloud at Beth Aven, “*Look* behind you, O Benjamin!” Ephraim will become desolate in the day of punishment. Among the tribes of Israel, I make known that which is sure. The princes of Judah have become like those who remove a boundary marker. Upon them I will pour out My wrath like water. Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment because he eagerly followed after vanity. Therefore, I will be like pus to Ephraim and like rotteness to the house of Judah. When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah saw his wound, then Ephraim went to Assyria, and sent to King Jareb. Yet he cannot cure you or heal your wound. For I will be like a lion to Ephraim and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, Myself, will tear and go away. I will carry off, and no one will rescue. I will again return to My place until they acknowledge their offense and seek My face. In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.

A Call to Repentance... Come, let us return to the LORD, for He has torn, and He will heal us. He has struck, and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, that we may live before Him. Let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His appearance is as sure as the dawn. He will come to us like the rain; like the spring rains He will water the earth.

Impenitence of Israel and Judah... What shall I do to you, O Ephraim? What shall I do to you, O Judah? Your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away. Therefore, I have hewn them by the prophets. I have killed them by the words of My mouth, and My judgments go forth like light. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But like men they have transgressed the covenant. There they dealt faithlessly with Me. Gilead is a city of evildoers, polluted with blood. As robbers lie in wait for someone, *so* a company of priests murder on the way to Shechem. They commit a shameful deed. I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel. The harlotry of Ephraim is there; Israel is defiled. Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you, when I restore the fortunes of My people. When I would heal Israel, the iniquity of Ephraim is revealed, and the wickedness of Samaria. For they deal deceitfully; the thief breaks in; the robbers raid outside, but they did not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness. Now their own deeds surround them; they are before My face.

Corrupt and Disloyal Politics... They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. They are all adulterers, like an oven heated by a baker, who ceases stirring *the fire* after kneading the dough until it is leavened. On the day of our king the princes made *him* sick from the heat of wine. He stretched out his hand with scorners. For they are kindled like an oven. Their heart burns within them; their anger smolders all night; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire. They are all hot as an oven, and they devour their judges. All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls to Me. Ephraim mixes himself with the people. Ephraim is a cake not turned. Foreigners devour his strength, but he does not know it.

Gray hairs are here and there upon him, but he does not know it. The pride of Israel testifies against him, but they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek Him for all this. Ephraim is like a dove, silly and without sense; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. Wherever they go, I will spread My net over them; I will bring them down like the birds of the sky; I will discipline them according to the report to their congregation. Woe to them, for they have fled from Me! Destruction to them, for they have rebelled against Me! Though I would redeem them, yet they speak lies against Me. They do not cry to Me with their heart when they howl on their beds. They gather together for grain and wine, they rebel against Me. Though I trained and strengthened their arms, yet they devise mischief against Me. They return, *but* not to the Most High. They are like a loose bow. Their princes will fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue. This will be their derision in the land of Egypt.

The Apostasy of Israel...Set the trumpet to your mouth! *One* like an eagle is on the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed My covenant and rebelled against My law. Israel cries to Me, "My God, we know You." Israel has cast off the good; the enemy will pursue him. They set up kings, but not through Me; they made princes, but I did not know it. With their silver and gold, they made idols, so that they will be cut off. Your calf, O Samaria, is rejected! My anger is kindled against them. How long will they be incapable of innocence? For it is from Israel; a craftsman made it, and it is not God! The calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces. For they sow the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no head and will yield no flour. If it were to yield, foreigners would swallow it up. Israel is swallowed up. Now they are among the nations as a vessel in which there is no pleasure. For they have gone up to Assyria *like* a wild donkey alone by itself; Ephraim has hired lovers. Though they hire among the nations, I will now gather them. They will begin to diminish due to the burden of the king of princes. Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sin, they have become to him altars for sinning. I have written for him the great things of My law, but they were regarded as a strange thing. For the sacrifices of My offerings, they sacrifice flesh and eat it; but the LORD does not accept them. Now He will remember their iniquity and punish their sins. They will return to Egypt. Israel has forgotten his Maker and built temples, and Judah has multiplied fortified cities; so I will send a fire upon his cities, and it will devour his palaces.

The Punishment of Israel...Do not rejoice, O Israel! Do not exult like the peoples, for you have played the whore departing from your God. You have loved a prostitute's wages on every threshing floor. The threshing floor and the winepress will not feed them, and the new wine will fail in her. They will not dwell in the land of the LORD; but Ephraim will return to Egypt, and they will eat unclean things in Assyria. They will not offer wine offerings to the LORD, and their sacrifices will not please Him. Their sacrifices will be like the bread of mourners; all who eat of it will be defiled. For their bread will be only to satisfy their own hunger; it will not come into the house of the LORD.

What will you do on the appointed day, and on the day of the festival of the LORD? For indeed they are gone because of destruction. Egypt will gather them, and Memphis will bury them. Nettles will possess their pleasant things of silver, and thorns will be in their tents. The days of punishment have come; the days of recompense have come. Israel knows! The prophet is a fool; the man of the spirit is insane, because of your great iniquity and great hatred. The watchman of Ephraim is a prophet for my God; yet a fowler's snare is on all his ways, and hatred in the house

of his God. They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity, He will punish their sins.

Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they went to Baal Peor and consecrated themselves to *a thing of shame*, and they became an abomination like *the thing* they loved. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird; no birth, no pregnancy, no conception! Though they bring up their children, I will bereave them until none are left. Woe to them indeed, when I depart from them! Just as I saw Ephraim like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place, so now Ephraim will bring out his children for slaughter.

Give them, O LORD—what will You give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All their wickedness is in Gilgal, for there I hated them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds, I will drive them out of My house. I will love them no more. All their princes are rebels. Ephraim is stricken, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit. Even though they give birth, I will slay the beloved offspring of their womb. My God will reject them because they did not listen to Him, and they will be wanderers among the nations.