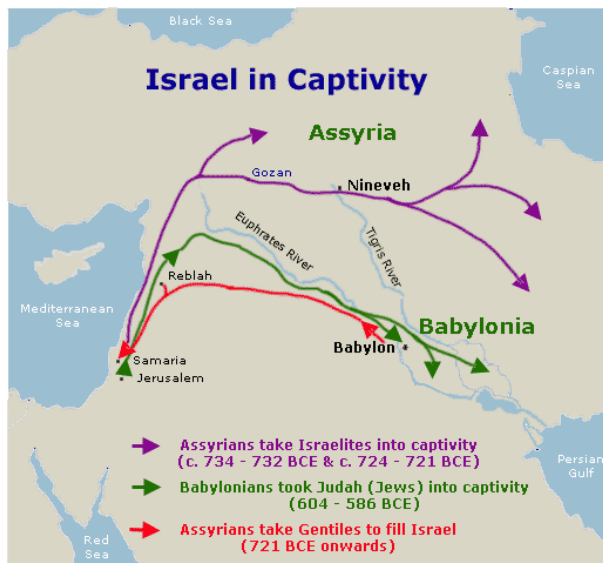


Read the Bible in A Year: Chronological

Readings for July 26-August 1, 2020

We continue the events in Israel and Judah during this time in their history. If you recall, the people of Israel had been exiled to Assyria (see the purple lines on the map below), and the King of Assyria had repopulated the cities of Israel (Samaria) with gentiles from other lands (see red line below). Hezekiah had become king over Judah and had instituted several reforms to try to bring the people back to God. But Babylon threatened the security of Judah. Hezekiah had invited an envoy from Babylon to the temple and had revealed all the treasure of the nation to them. Isaiah the prophet, warned Hezekiah that he had brought destruction upon the head of Judah by this act.



Isaiah (and those students of his who wrote under his name) continues to prophecy during this period. Many of the later chapters in the book of Isaiah are attributed to this time we will be heading into in our readings in which Judah falls to Babylon and the people are taken into exile.

Isaiah 56-66

Salvation for Others

This is what the LORD says:

“Maintain justice and do what is right,
for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed.
Blessed is the one who does this—the person who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps their hands from doing any evil.”

Let no foreigner who is bound to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.”
And let no eunuch complain, “I am only a dry tree.”

For this is what the LORD says:

“To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me
and hold fast to my covenant—to them I will give within my temple and its walls
a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name that will endure forever.
And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to minister to him,
to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants,
all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—
these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar;
for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”
The Sovereign LORD declares—he who gathers the exiles of Israel:
“I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.”

God’s Accusation Against the Wicked

Come, all you beasts of the field, come and devour, all you beasts of the forest!
Israel’s watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge;
they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark;
they lie around and dream, they love to sleep.
They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough.
They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, they seek their own gain.
“Come,” each one cries, “let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer!
And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better.”

The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart;
the devout are taken away, and no one understands
that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.
Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

“But you—come here, you children of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes!
Who are you mocking? At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue?
Are you not a brood of rebels, the offspring of liars?
You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree;
you sacrifice your children in the ravines and under the overhanging crags.
The idols among the smooth stones of the ravines are your portion; indeed, they are your lot.
Yes, to them you have poured out drink offerings and offered grain offerings.
In view of all this, should I relent?
You have made your bed on a high and lofty hill; there you went up to offer your sacrifices.
Behind your doors and your doorposts you have put your pagan symbols.
Forsaking me, you uncovered your bed, you climbed into it and opened it wide;
you made a pact with those whose beds you love, and you looked with lust on their naked bodies.
You went to Molek with olive oil and increased your perfumes.
You sent your ambassadors far away; you descended to the very realm of the dead!
You wearied yourself by such going about, but you would not say, ‘It is hopeless.’
You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint.

“Whom have you so dreaded and feared that you have not been true to me,
and have neither remembered me nor taken this to heart?
Is it not because I have long been silent that you do not fear me?
I will expose your righteousness and your works, and they will not benefit you.
When you cry out for help, let your collection of idols save you!
The wind will carry all of them off, a mere breath will blow them away.
But whoever takes refuge in me will inherit the land and possess my holy mountain.”

Comfort for the Contrite

And it will be said:

“Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people.”
For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy:
“I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.
I will not accuse them forever, nor will I always be angry,
for then they would faint away because of me— the very people I have created.
I was enraged by their sinful greed; I punished them, and hid my face in anger,
yet they kept on in their willful ways.
I have seen their ways, but I will heal them;
I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel’s mourners, creating praise on their lips.
“Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the LORD. “And I will heal them.”
But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.
“There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”

True Fasting

“Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet.
Declare to my people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.
For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God.
They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.
‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’
“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.
Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists.
You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.
Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves?
Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes?
Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?
“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke,

to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Then your light will break forth like the dawn and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,
then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.
Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,
then you will find your joy in the LORD,
and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Sin, Confession and Redemption

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.
But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.
For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt.
Your lips have spoken falsely, and your tongue mutters wicked things.
No one calls for justice; no one pleads a case with integrity.
They rely on empty arguments, they utter lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil.
They hatch the eggs of vipers and spin a spider’s web.
Whoever eats their eggs will die, and when one is broken, an adder is hatched.
Their cobwebs are useless for clothing; they cannot cover themselves with what they make.
Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands.
Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood.
They pursue evil schemes; acts of violence mark their ways.
The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths.
They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks along them will know peace.

So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us.
We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows.
Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like people without eyes.
At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead.
We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves.
We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away.

For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us.

Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities:
rebellion and treachery against the LORD, turning our backs on our God,
inciting revolt and oppression, uttering lies our hearts have conceived.

So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance;
truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter.

Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.

The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.

He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene;
so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him.

He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head;
he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.

According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes;
he will repay the islands their due.

From the west, people will fear the name of the LORD,
and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory.

For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD drives along.

“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.

“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD.

“My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you,
and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips,
on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever,”
says the LORD.

The Glory of Zion

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

“Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you,
your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip.

Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy;
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come.

Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah.

And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.

All Kedar’s flocks will be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you;
they will be accepted as offerings on my altar, and I will adorn my glorious temple.

Who are these that fly along like clouds like doves to their nests?

Surely the islands look to me; in the lead are the ships of Tarshish,
bringing your children from afar, with their silver and gold,
to the honor of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,

for he has endowed you with splendor.

Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you.

Though in anger I struck you, in favor I will show you compassion.
Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night,
so that people may bring you the wealth of the nations—their kings led in triumphal procession.
For the nation or kingdom that will not serve you will perish; it will be utterly ruined.
The glory of Lebanon will come to you, the juniper, the fir and the cypress together,
to adorn my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place for my feet.
The children of your oppressors will come bowing before you;
all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the LORD,
Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Although you have been forsaken and hated, with no one traveling through,
I will make you the everlasting pride and the joy of all generations.
You will drink the milk of nations and be nursed at royal breasts.
Then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.
Instead of bronze I will bring you gold, and silver in place of iron.
Instead of wood I will bring you bronze, and iron in place of stones.
I will make peace your governor and well-being your ruler.
No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders,
but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.
The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,
for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.
Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more;
the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end.
Then all your people will be righteous and they will possess the land forever.
They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendor.
The least of you will become a thousand, the smallest a mighty nation.
I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly.”

The Year of the LORD's Favor

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.
They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.
Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.
And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God.
You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast.

Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion,
and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance.
And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing.
In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples.
All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed.”

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow,
so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.

Zion's New Name

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet,
till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.
The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory;
you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.
You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate.
But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah;
for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married.
As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you;
as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night.
You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest,
and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.

The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm:
“Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies,
and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled;
but those who harvest it will eat it and praise the LORD,
and those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary.”

Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people.
Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations.

The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth:
“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your Savior comes!
See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.’”
They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD;
and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.

God's Day of Vengeance and Redemption

Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson?
Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength?

“It is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save.”

Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress?

“I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me.

I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath;
their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing.

It was for me the day of vengeance; the year for me to redeem had come.
I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support;
so my own arm achieved salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me.

I trampled the nations in my anger;
in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground.”

Praise and Prayer

I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised,
according to all the LORD has done for us—
yes, the many good things he has done for Israel,
according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

He said, “Surely they are my people, children who will be true to me”; and so he became their Savior.

In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them.

In his love and mercy he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.

So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.

Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people—
where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock?

Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them,
who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand,
who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown,
who led them through the depths?

Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble;
like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the LORD.

This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.
Look down from heaven and see, from your lofty throne, holy and glorious.
Where are your zeal and your might? Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us.
But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us;
you, LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

Why, LORD, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you?
Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your inheritance.

For a little while your people possessed your holy place,
but now our enemies have trampled down your sanctuary.
We are yours from of old; but you have not ruled over them,
they have not been called by your name.

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,
that the mountains would tremble before you!
As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil,
come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you!
For when you did awesome things that we did not expect,
you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.
Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.
You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways.
But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry.

How then can we be saved?
All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins.

Yet you, LORD, are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.
Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our sins forever.
Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people.
Your sacred cities have become a wasteland; even Zion is a wasteland, Jerusalem a desolation.
Our holy and glorious temple, where our ancestors praised you, has been burned with fire,
and all that we treasured lies in ruins.
After all this, LORD, will you hold yourself back?
Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure?

Judgment and Salvation

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me.
To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’”

All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people,
who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—
a people who continually provoke me to my very face,
offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick;
who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil;
who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of impure meat;
who say, ‘Keep away; don’t come near me, for I am too sacred for you!’
Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day.

“See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full;
I will pay it back into their laps—both your sins and the sins of your ancestors,”
says the LORD.

“Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied me on the hills,
I will measure into their laps the full payment for their former deeds.”

This is what the LORD says:

“As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes
and people say, ‘Don’t destroy it, there is still a blessing in it,’
so will I do in behalf of my servants; I will not destroy them all.
I will bring forth descendants from Jacob,
and from Judah those who will possess my mountains;
my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live.
Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds,
for my people who seek me.

But as for you who forsake the LORD and forget my holy mountain,
who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny,
I will destine you for the sword, and all of you will fall in the slaughter;
for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen.
You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me.”

Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

“My servants will eat, but you will go hungry;
my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty;
my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame.
My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts,
but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit.
You will leave your name for my chosen ones to use in their curses;
the Sovereign LORD will put you to death, but to his servants he will give another name.
Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the one true God;
whoever takes an oath in the land will swear by the one true God.
For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.”

New Heavens and a New Earth

“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth.
The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.
I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.
Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.

They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat.
For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.
They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them.
Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
and dust will be the serpent's food.
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,"
says the LORD.

Judgment and Hope

This is what the LORD says:

"Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.
Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?
Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?"
declares the LORD.

"These are the ones I look on with favor:
those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.
But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a person,
and whoever offers a lamb is like one who breaks a dog's neck;
whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood,
and whoever burns memorial incense is like one who worships an idol.
They have chosen their own ways, and they delight in their abominations;
so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring on them what they dread.
For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened.
They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me."

Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word:
"Your own people who hate you, and exclude you because of my name, have said,
'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy!'
Yet they will be put to shame. Hear that uproar from the city,
hear that noise from the temple!
It is the sound of the LORD repaying his enemies all they deserve.

Before she goes into labor, she gives birth;
before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son.
Who has ever heard of such things? Who has ever seen things like this?
Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment?
Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children.
Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery?" says the LORD.
"Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery?" says your God.
"Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her;
rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her.

For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts;
you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance.”

For this is what the LORD says:

“I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream;
you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees.
As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.”

When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass;
the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes.
See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind;
he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.
For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment on all people,
and many will be those slain by the LORD.

“Those who consecrate and purify themselves to go into the gardens,
following one who is among those who eat the flesh of pigs, rats and other unclean things—
they will meet their end together with the one they follow,” declares the LORD.

“And I, because of what they have planned and done, am about to come
and gather the people of all nations and languages, and they will come and see my glory.
I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations—

to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece,
and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory.

They will proclaim my glory among the nations.

And they will bring all your people, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem
as an offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels,”
says the LORD.

“They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings,
to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels.

And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites,”
says the LORD.

“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD,
“so will your name and descendants endure.

From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another,
all mankind will come and bow down before me,”
says the LORD.

“And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me;
the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched,
and they will be loathsome to all mankind.”

We return to the narrative account of what happened in Judah, beginning with the death of King Hezekiah. As usual, the readings will come from 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, sometimes repeating the same account. I will provide the readings from 2 Kings in regular text and that from 2 Chronicles in italics to help you keep them separate as they tell, together, a more complete story.

The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah, all his power, how he made a pool and a conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son reigned in his place.

And the remainder of the acts of Hezekiah and his kind acts, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz, in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. So Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David. And all those from Judah and those living in Jerusalem paid him honor at his death. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the children of Israel. He went back and rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed. He erected altars for Baal, made an Asherah pole as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. He made his son pass through the fire, was conjuring and seeking omens, and dealt with mediums and soothsayers. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger. He put a carved image of Asherah that he had made in the house of which the LORD said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever. I will not make the feet of Israel to wander homeless from the land that I gave to their fathers, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them." But they did not listen. Manasseh led them to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he was king in Jerusalem for fifty-five years. But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD previously cast out before the sons of Israel. And he turned again to build the high places that his father Hezekiah had torn down, and he set up altars to the Baals, and made Asherah poles, and worshipped the starry assembly of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of the LORD where the LORD said, "In Jerusalem My name will be perpetual." And he built altars for the starry assembly of heaven in the two courtyards of the house of the LORD. He even made his sons pass through the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom; and he had conjurers, and practitioners of divination and sorcery, and necromancers, and mediums. So he did a great amount of evil in the eyes of the LORD, so that God was provoked.

And he set the carved image of a statue that he made and put in the house of God where God said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in Jerusalem where I have chosen from among all the tribes of Israel, there I have set My name perpetually. And I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the ground that I have designated to your fathers, if only they will keep on doing everything that I have commanded them, the whole law, statutes, and judgments from the hand of Moses." So Manasseh made Judah and those living in Jerusalem to wander and to perform more evil than the nations that the LORD destroyed from before Israel.

The LORD spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, things more evil than all that the Amorites did, and has also caused Judah to sin with his idols, therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel: I am bringing evil on Jerusalem and Judah, such evil that the ears of whoever hears about it will tingle. I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the level of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes out a bowl, wiping it and turning it upside down. I will disregard the remnant of My inheritance and give them into the hand of their enemies. They shall become plunder and spoil for all their enemies, because they have done evil in My sight and have provoked Me to anger, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day."

Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other; besides his sin he caused Judah to sin by doing evil in the sight of the LORD. Now the rest of the deeds of Manasseh, all that he did, and his sin that he committed, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?

The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they did not pay attention. So the LORD brought on them the officials of the army of the king of Assyria. They captured Manasseh with hooks, and they bound him in bronze chains and led him to Babylon. And when he was distressed, he entreated the face of the LORD his God, and he greatly humbled himself before the God of his fathers. And he prayed to God, and He was moved and responded to his plea and returned him to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.

After this he built an outer wall for the City of David, west of Gihon, in the valley and toward the entrance of the Fish Gate, where it went around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. Then he positioned military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah. And he removed the foreign gods and statues from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he built on the hill of the house of the LORD and Jerusalem, and he cast them outside the city. He also restored the altar of the LORD, and he sacrificed fellowship and thanksgiving offerings, and he ordered Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. However, the people continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

And the remainder of the acts of Manasseh and his prayer to God and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel are written in the annals of the kings of Israel. And his prayer and how God received his entreaty, and all his sin and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and where he set up the Asherah poles and images before he humbled himself, indeed they are written in the sayings of Hozai.

Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza. Amon his son reigned in his place.

So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his palace, and Amon his son reigned in his place.

Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king. He reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth, daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. He did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. He walked in all the ways that his father walked, served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them. He abandoned the LORD God of his fathers, and he did not walk in the way of the LORD. The servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his house. But the people of the land struck all those who conspired against King Amon, and the people of the land made

Josiah his son king in his place. Now the rest of the deeds of Amon that he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? And he was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza, and Josiah his son reigned in his place.

And Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he was king for two years in Jerusalem. And he did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD as his father Manasseh had done. And Amon sacrificed to and served all the idols that Manasseh his father had made. He did not humble himself before the LORD as his father humbled himself. But he increased his guilt all the more. And his servants plotted against him, and they killed him in his palace. Then the people of the land struck down all those who conspired against King Amon. The people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.

Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah from Bozkath. He did what was right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the ways of David his father. He did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

And Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he was king for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was correct in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the ways of David his father and did not turn either to the right or left.

And in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still a young boy, he began to seek out the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to cleanse Judah and Jerusalem from high places, Asherah poles, idols, and carved and cast images. So they tore down the altars for the Baals, and he cut down the incense altars that were above them and smashed the Asherah poles and carved and cast images. And he crushed them to dust and scattered them before the graves of those who sacrificed to them. Then he burned the bones of the priests on their altars and so cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. In the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins all around, he broke down the altars, beat Asherah poles and the images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

It is during this time that another prophet, Jeremiah, began to speak God's message of warning and hope to the people of Judah.

Jeremiah 1-6

The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, to the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; and before you were born I sanctified you, and I ordained you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly, I cannot speak, for I am a youth." But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am a youth.' For you shall go everywhere that I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces. For I am with you to deliver you," says the LORD. Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to

me, “Now, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant.”

Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And, I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well. For I will hasten My word to perform it.” The word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north.” Then the LORD said to me: Out of the north, calamity will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. For I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north,” says the LORD. “And they will come, and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls all around, and against all the cities of Judah. I will utter My judgments against them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods and have worshipped the works of their own hands. You therefore gird up your loins and arise and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed at their faces, lest I confound you before them. For indeed, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar and bronze walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the officials, against the priests, and against the people of the land. They will fight against you, but they will not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you.

God Pleads with His People to Repent

Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying...

Thus, says the LORD: I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel is holy to the LORD, and the first fruits of His harvest. All who eat of it will become guilty; disaster will come upon them,” says the LORD.

Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus says the LORD: What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they have gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity and have become vain? They did not say, “Where is the LORD who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through and where no man lived?” And I brought you into a plentiful country to eat its fruit and its goodness. But when you entered, you defiled My land and made My heritage an abomination. The priests did not say, “Where is the LORD?” And those who handle the law did not know Me; the shepherds also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal and walked after things that do not profit.

Therefore, I will yet contend with you, says the LORD, and with your sons’ sons I will contend. For pass over the coastlands of Cyprus and see, and send to Kedar and consider diligently, and see if there is such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, though they are not gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be astonished at this, O heavens, and be horribly afraid, be very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Is Israel a servant? Is he a homeborn slave? Why has he been plundered? The young lions roared at him and roared loudly, and they made his land a waste; his cities have been destroyed, without inhabitant. Also the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes have shaved the crown of your head. Have you not brought this on yourself, in that you have forsaken the LORD your God when He led you in the way? And now what are you doing in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of the Nile? Or what are you doing in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the River? Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will reprove you.

Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter for you to have forsaken the LORD your God, and the fear of Me is not in you, says the Lord GOD of Hosts.

For long ago I have broken your yoke and burst your bonds; and you said, "I will not serve." For upon every high hill and under every green tree you wander, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a wholly faithful seed. How then have you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine to Me? For though you wash yourself with lye, and take much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord GOD.

How can you say, "I am not polluted, I have not gone after the Baals"? See your way in the valley. Know what you have done. You are a swift young camel entangling her ways, a wild donkey used to the wilderness that sniffs the wind in her passion. In the time of her heat, who can turn her away? All those who seek her will not weary themselves; in her month they shall find her. Withhold your foot from being unshod and your throat from thirst. But you said, "There is no hope. No! For I have loved strangers, and after them I will go."

As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed.

They, their kings, their officials, and their priests, and their prophets say to a tree, "You are my father." And to a stone, "You gave birth to me." For they have turned their back to Me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they will say, "Arise and save us." But where are your gods that you have made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble; for according to the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah.

Why will you plead with Me? You all have transgressed against Me, says the LORD. In vain I have smitten your children; they received no correction. Your own sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion.

O generation, consider the word of the LORD: Have I been a wilderness to Israel? A land of darkness? Why do My people say, "We *are free* to roam. We will come no more to You"? Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me for days without number. You prepare your way very well to seek love. Therefore you have also taught the wicked women your ways. Also in your skirts is found the blood of the souls of the innocent poor. I have not found it by breaking in, but in spite of all these things. Yet you say, "Because I am innocent, surely His anger shall turn away from me." Now I will plead with you, because you say, "I have not sinned." Why do you go about so much to change your way? You also shall be ashamed of Egypt, as you were ashamed of Assyria. Indeed, you shall go forth from him with your hands upon your head; for the LORD has rejected those in whom you trust, and you shall not prosper in them.

The Unfaithfulness of God's People

If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man's, shall he return to her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, says the LORD. Lift up your eyes to the high places and see! Where have you not been ravished? In the roads you have sat for them as the Arabian in the wilderness. And you have polluted the land with your harlotry and with your wickedness. Therefore, the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain. And you had a harlot's forehead; you refused to be ashamed. Shall you not from this time cry to Me, "My Father, You are the guide of my youth? Shall He reserve His anger forever? Shall He keep it to the end?" Indeed, you have spoken and done evil things as you could.

A Call to Repentance

The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: Have you seen that which backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there has played the harlot. I said after she had done all these things, "Turn to Me." But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. I saw that for all the adulteries of backsliding Israel, I had put her away and given her a bill of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. Through the lightness of her harlotry she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with trees. Yet for all this, her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, says the LORD.

God Invites Repentance

The LORD said to me: Backsliding Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say:

Return, backsliding Israel, says the LORD,
and I will not cause My anger to fall on you.
For I am merciful, says the LORD,
and I will not keep anger forever.
Only acknowledge your iniquity,
that you have transgressed against the LORD your God
and have scattered your ways to the strangers
under every green tree,
and you have not obeyed My voice,
says the LORD.

Return, O backsliding sons, says the LORD. For I am married to you. And I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. It shall come to pass when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days, says the LORD, they will say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the LORD." And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they call for it, nor will it be made any more. At that time they will call Jerusalem, the Throne of the LORD, and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor will they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil hearts. In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given to your fathers for an inheritance.

But I said: How can I put you among My sons and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful heritage of the nations? And I said: You shall call Me, My Father, and shall not turn away from Me. Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so you have dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, says the LORD.

A voice was heard upon the high places, the weeping and the supplications of the sons of Israel, because they have perverted their way, they have forgotten the LORD their God.

Return, O backsliding sons, and I will heal your backslidings.

“We come to You;
for You are the LORD our God.
Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills,
and from the multitude of mountains.
Truly, in the LORD our God
is the salvation of Israel.
For shame has devoured the labor
of our fathers from our youth,
their flocks and their herds,
their sons and their daughters.
We lie down in our shame,
and our humiliation covers us.
For we have sinned against the LORD our God,
we and our fathers,
from our youth even to this day,
and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”

Judah Threatened with Invasion

If you will return, O Israel, says the LORD, return to Me. And if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved. You shall swear, “As the LORD lives,” in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory.

For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your deeds.

Declare in Judah and publish in Jerusalem and say: Blow the trumpet in the land. Cry aloud and say, “Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities.” Set up the standard toward Zion. Seek refuge, do not delay. For I will bring disaster from the north, and a great destruction. The lion has come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the nations is on his way. He has gone forth from his place to make your land desolate. And your cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant. For this gird yourself with sackcloth, lament and howl. For the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.

It shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD, that the heart of the king will fail and the heart of the officials; and the priests will be astonished and the prophets will wonder.

Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'You shall have peace,' whereas the sword reaches the throat."

At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of My people, not to fan or to cleanse, even a full wind from those places, will come to Me. Now also I will pronounce judgments against them.

Look! He shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles. Woe to us, for we are ruined!

O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you? For a voice declares from Dan, and publishes wickedness from Mount Ephraim: "Report it to the nations, now!" Indeed, proclaim against Jerusalem: "Besiegers come from a far country, and lift their voices against the cities of Judah. As watchmen of a field, they are against her all around, because she has been rebellious against Me, says the LORD. Your way and your deeds have procured these things to you. This is your wickedness. How bitter it is! How it touches your heart!"

Sorrow for a Doomed Nation

My soul, my soul!

I am pained at my very heart. My heart makes a noise in me.

I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul,
the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

Destruction upon destruction is proclaimed, for the whole land is devastated.

Suddenly are my tents devastated, and my curtains in a moment.

How long shall I see the standard and hear the sound of the trumpet?

"For My people are foolish, they have not known Me.

They are foolish children, and they have no understanding.

They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge."

I looked on the earth, and it was without form and void.

And to the heavens, and they had no light.

I looked on the mountains, and they trembled, and all the hills moved to and fro.

I looked, and there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens had fled.

I looked, and the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities were broken down
at the presence of the LORD, and by His fierce anger.

For thus says the LORD:

The whole land shall be desolate. Yet I will not make a full end.

For this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above be black,
because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not relent, nor will I turn back from it.

The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen.
They shall go into thickets and climb up upon the rocks.
Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell in it.

When you are devastated, what will you do?
Though you clothe yourself with crimson, though you deck yourself with ornaments of gold,
though you enlarge your eyes with paint, in vain you will make yourself fair.
Your lovers will despise you; they will seek your life.

For I have heard a voice as of a woman in labor,
and the anguish as of her who brings forth her first child,
the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewails herself, that spreads her hands, saying,
“Ah, woe is me, for my soul is wearied because of murderers.”

The Justice of God’s Judgment

Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, see now and know; seek in the open places if you can find a man, if there is any who executes justice, who seeks the truth, that I may pardon her. Though they say, “The LORD lives,” surely they swear falsely.

O LORD, are not Your eyes upon the truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved. You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. Therefore, I said, “Surely these are the poor. They are foolish; for they know not the way of the LORD or the judgment of their God. I will go to the great men and will speak to them, for they have known the way of the LORD and the judgment of their God.” But these have altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds. Therefore, a lion out of the forest will slay them, and a wolf from the deserts will destroy them; a leopard will watch over their cities. Everyone who goes out from there will be torn in pieces, because their transgressions are many and their backslidings have increased.

How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me and sworn by those who are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, then they committed adultery and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses. They were as fed horses in the morning; everyone neighed after his neighbor’s wife. Shall I not punish for these things? says the LORD, and shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Go up upon her walls and destroy, but make not a full end. Take away her battlements. For they are not the LORD’s. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against Me, says the LORD.

They have lied about the LORD, and said, “Not He. Neither shall evil come upon us, nor shall we see sword or famine.” And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them. Thus it shall be done to them!

Therefore thus says the LORD God of Hosts: Because you speak this word, indeed I will make My words in your mouth fire and this people wood, and it shall devour them. Truly, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, says the LORD. It is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language you do not know, nor do you understand what they say.

Their quiver is as an open sepulcher, they all are mighty men. They will eat up your harvest and your bread which your sons and your daughters should eat. They will eat up your flocks and your herds; they will eat up your vines and your fig trees; they will impoverish your fenced cities, in which you trusted, with the sword.

Nevertheless in those days, says the LORD, I will not make a full end of you. It shall come to pass when they say, "Why does the LORD our God do all these things to us?" then you shall answer them, "As you have forsaken Me and served strange gods in your land, so you will serve strangers in a land that is not yours."

Declare this in the house of Jacob and publish it in Judah, saying: Hear this now, O foolish people and without understanding, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear. Do you not fear Me? says the LORD. Will you not tremble at My presence? For I have placed the sand for the boundary of the sea by a perpetual decree so that it cannot pass over it. And though the waves toss themselves, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it. But this people has a revolting and a rebellious heart; they have revolted and gone aside. They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest." Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you.

For among My people are found wicked men. They lie in wait, as he who sets snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit. Therefore they have become great and rich. They are fat, they are sleek. Indeed, they excel in deeds of wickedness. They do not judge the cause of the fatherless, so that they may prosper; and the right of the needy they do not defend. Shall I not punish them for these things? says the LORD. Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

An appalling and horrible thing has been committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own authority; and My people love to have it so. Yet what will you do in the end?

Siege of Jerusalem

O sons of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee from the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth Hakkerem; for disaster appears out of the north, and great destruction. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman. The shepherds with their flocks will come to her. They will pitch their tents against her all around. They will pasture each in his place.

"Prepare war against her; arise and let us go up at noon." "Woe to us, for the day declines, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out." "Arise and let us go by night and let us destroy her palaces."

For thus says the LORD of Hosts: Hew down trees and build a mound against Jerusalem. This is the city to be punished. She is full of oppression in her midst. As a fountain casts out her waters, so she casts out her wickedness. Violence and devastation are heard in her; before Me continually are grief and wounds. Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from you; lest I make you desolate, a land not inhabited.

Thus, says the LORD of Hosts: They will thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine. Turn back your hand as a grape gatherer into the baskets.

To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? See, their ears are closed, and they cannot listen. Indeed, the word of the LORD is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in.

I will pour it out upon the children in the street and upon the assembly of young men together; for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him who is full of days. Their houses shall be turned to others, with their fields and wives together; for I will stretch out My hand upon the inhabitants of the land, says the LORD. For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness. And from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed also the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? They were not at all ashamed, nor could they blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them they shall be cast down, says the LORD.

Thus, says the LORD: Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths where the good way is and walk in it, and you shall find rest for your souls. But they said, "We will not walk in it." Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, "Listen to the sound of the trumpet." But they said, "We will not listen." Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth, I will bring calamity on this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not listened to My words, nor to My law, but rejected it. To what purpose does incense from Sheba come to Me, and the sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor are your sacrifices sweet to Me.

Therefore, thus says the LORD: See, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together will fall upon them. The neighbor and his friend will perish.

Thus, says the LORD: See, a people comes from the north country, and a great nation will be raised from the remote parts of the earth. They will lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel and have no mercy. Their voice roars like the sea, and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against you, O daughter of Zion.

"We have heard the report of it; our hands grow feeble. Anguish has taken hold of us, and pain as of a woman in labor. Do not go out into the field, nor walk on the road. For the sword of the enemy and terror is on every side." O daughter of my people, gird yourself with sackcloth and wallow in ashes. Mourn as for an only son, a most bitter lamentation; for the destroyer shall suddenly come upon us.

I have set you as an assayer and fortress among My people that you may know and try their way. They all are stubborn rebels walking about practicing slander. They are bronze and iron; they all are corrupters. The bellows blow fiercely, the lead is consumed by the fire; the founder melts in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away. Men will call them rejected silver because the LORD has rejected them.

For now, we return to the narrative account of what happened during the reign of King Josiah as he begins to institute reforms in Judah...

In the eighteenth year of King Josiah the king sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying, "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, and have him prepare the money that has been brought to the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have gathered from the people. Let them deliver it to the hand of the appointed workers of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workers who are in the house of the LORD to repair the damages to the house, that is, to the carpenters, the builders, and the masons to buy timber and cut stone to repair the house. But there need be no settling of accounts with them concerning the money that was given to their hand, because they are behaving honestly."

Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. Then Shaphan the scribe came to the king and brought the king a report. He said, "Your servants have emptied the money that was found in the house and have given it into the hand of the appointed workers of the house of the LORD." Shaphan the scribe informed the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." So Shaphan read it before the king.

When the king had heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah, a servant of the king, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, for the people, and for all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book by doing according to all that is written concerning us."

So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (she lived in Jerusalem in the second quarter), and they spoke with her. She said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: Tell the man that sent you to Me, Thus says the LORD: See, I will bring evil on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken Me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked Me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore My wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel with regard to the words you have heard: Because your heart was timid, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. Therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace. Your eyes will not see all the evil which I am about to bring upon this place."

In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. When they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the door, had collected from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and from all the remnant of Israel, and from all Judah and Benjamin, and from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they gave it to those appointed to do the work in the house of the LORD. And those who were doing the work on the house gave it to repair and restore the house. And they gave it to the craftsmen and builders to acquire quarried stones and timber for joists and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had ruined. So the men did the work faithfully. Their overseers were Jahath and Obadiah the Levites, of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, as supervisors. And other Levites, all skillful with musical instruments, were over those laborers and supervised all those doing the work in every type of service, and other Levites were scribes, officials, and gatekeepers.

When they brought out the money that had been given to the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD from Moses. Then Hilkiah said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. Shaphan brought the book to the king and reported, "Everything that has been designated to your servants, they are doing. They have given out the money that was in the house of the LORD and have allocated to those who are supervisors and those who are doing the work." Then Shaphan the scribe also declared to the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it to the king.

And it happened that when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his garments. Then the king ordered Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the attendant of the king: "Go and seek the LORD on my behalf and on the behalf of the remnant in Israel and Judah concerning what is written in the book that was found, for the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us is great because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do everything that is written in this book."

So Hilkiah and those with the king went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, son of Hasrah, who kept the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, and they spoke to her about this. And she said to them, "So says the LORD God of Israel: Speak to the man who sent you all to Me, Thus says the LORD: I am bringing disaster on this place and all who dwell in it, even all the curses that are written in the book that they read before the king of Judah. Because they have abandoned Me and offered sacrifices to other gods in order to provoke Me with everything they have made with their hands, so My rage will be poured out on this place, and it will not be quenched. And the king of Judah who sent you all to seek out the LORD, so you will speak to him: So says the LORD God of Israel: The words that you have heard, because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and those who dwell here, and you have brought yourself low before Me and torn your clothes and wept before Me, I have heard you, declares the LORD. I am bringing you to be with your fathers, and you will be brought to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the disaster that I am bringing on this place and on those who dwell here."

Then the king sent them away and they gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. The king went up to the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that was found in the house of the LORD. The king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD to follow the LORD, to keep His commandments, His testimonies, and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people agreed with the covenant.

The king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the threshold to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the implements that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven. Then he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel. Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. He brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD to the outside of Jerusalem, to the Kidron Valley. Then he burned it at the Kidron Valley, crushed it to dust, and threw its dust upon the graves of the people. He tore down the houses of the male cult prostitutes that were in the house of the LORD, where the women were weaving hangings for the Asherah. He brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah and defiled the high places where the priests had made offerings, from Geba to Beersheba. He broke

down the high places of the gates at the entry of the gates of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on the left at the gate of the city. However the priests of the high places did not go up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem. Instead they ate unleavened bread among their fellow priests. He defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so that no man would make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molek. He removed the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entry of the house of the LORD, by the hall of Nathan-Melek the eunuch, which was in the vestibule. The chariots of the sun he burned with fire. The altars that were on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD the king tore down and banished from there and threw their dust into the Kidron Valley. The high places east of Jerusalem, south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Molek the abomination of the Ammonites, the king defiled. He broke the standing stones, cut down the Asherah poles, and filled their sites with human bones. Moreover, the altar that was at Bethel and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he tore down. Then he burned the high place and crushed it to powder, and he burned the Asherah. As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mount. He took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar and defiled it, according to the word of the LORD that the man of God proclaimed, the one who announced these things.

Then he said, "What is this monument that I see?" The men of the city said to him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things that you have done against the altar of Bethel." He said, "Let him rest. No one shall disturb his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria.

Moreover, all the houses of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah removed. He did to them just as he had done in Bethel. He slaughtered on the altars all the priests of the high places who were there, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

Then the king sent for all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. Then the king went up to the house of the LORD with men from Judah and those living in Jerusalem, even the priests and Levites and all the people from the greatest to the least, and he read within their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that was found in the house of the LORD. Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant written in this book.

Then he appointed all who were in Jerusalem and Benjamin to carry this out, and those living in Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. So Josiah took away all the detestable things from the lands that belonged to the people of Israel and caused all who were found in Israel to serve their LORD God. And all his days they did not turn away from the LORD God of their fathers.

The king commanded all the people, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God as it is written in this Book of the Covenant." For such a Passover had not been kept from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.

Moreover, Josiah disposed of the mediums, the soothsayers, the teraphim, the idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he established the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. Now there

had been no king like him before or after, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses.

However, the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, by which His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. The LORD said, "I will also remove Judah from before Me, as I have removed Israel. I will reject this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there."

Now the rest of the deeds of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?

Josiah kept a Passover for the LORD in Jerusalem; they slaughtered the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month. He appointed priests for their duties and encouraged them in their service to the house of the LORD. And he said to the Levites who gave insight to all Israel and were consecrated to the LORD, "Set the holy ark in the house that Solomon, the son of David and king of Israel, built. You should not carry it on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel. Prepare yourselves according to your fathers' houses by your divisions, as instructed in the writing of David, king of Israel, and the document of Solomon his son. And stand in the Holy Place according to the divisions of the fathers' households of your brothers, the laypeople, and according to the Levites, by division of a father's household. Then slaughter the Passover lamb and consecrate yourselves and prepare for your brothers to do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

Josiah contributed to the laypeople, as Passover offerings for all who were present, lambs and young goats from the flock to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bulls; these were from the king's possession. His officials contributed willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the chief officers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings two thousand six hundred lambs and three hundred bulls. Konaniah, his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah, Jeiel, and Jozabad, officers of the Levites, gave to the Levites for the Passover offerings five thousand lambs and five hundred bulls.

When the service was prepared, the priests stood in their places and the Levites in their divisions, according to the king's command. And they slaughtered the Passover offerings, and the priests sprinkled the blood given to them while the Levites skinned animals. And they set aside the burnt offering to distribute according to each house of the fathers for the people to bring near to the LORD, as written in the Book of Moses. And they did the same with the bulls. And they cooked the Passover lamb with fire according to the rule, and they cooked the holy offerings in pots, jars, bowls, and quickly brought them to all the people. Afterward they prepared the offerings for them and the priests because the priests, the sons of Aaron, offered the burnt offering and fat portions until night. So the Levites prepared for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron.

The singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer. The gatekeepers were at each of the gates; they did not need to leave their service, for their brothers the Levites made preparations for them.

So all the service of the LORD was carried out that day to have the Passover, and to offer the burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD according to the command of King Josiah. And the sons of Israel who were present had the Passover at that time and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. And no Passover had been made like this in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. And none of the kings of Israel had performed a Passover like Josiah had done. And the priests and Levites and all Judah and Israel

were present along with those living in Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was performed.