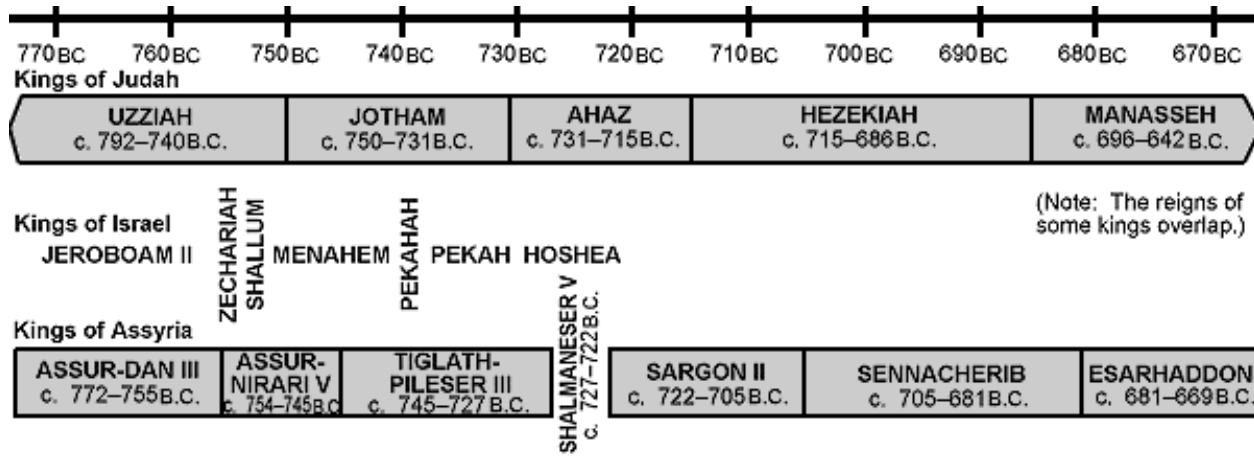


## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### TIMELINE OF ISAIAH'S MINISTRY



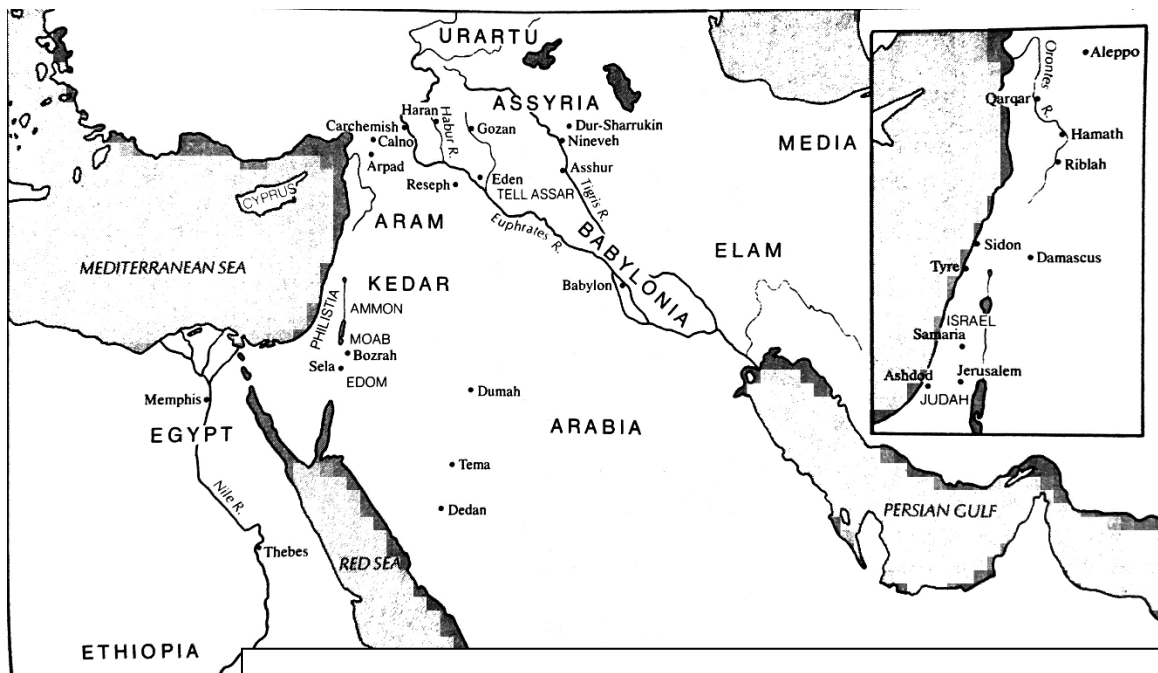
Key Historical Moments – “in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah”:

- 740 BC - King Uzziah died
- 722 BC - Northern Kingdom (Israel) defeated by Assyria
- 716/715 BC - Hezekiah begins to reign in Judah
- 701 BC - Sennacherib's Invasion of Judah
- 686 BC - End of Hezekiah's reign

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Three different historical situations sit in the background of the book:

- During Isaiah's lifetime (740-701 B.C.)
- Period of Judah's Exile (605-539 B.C.)
- Return from Exile and beyond (539-500 B.C. and ?)



John Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah, chapters 1-39. (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament). (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1986) xii-xiii.

Ethiopia. I besieged Eltekeh (and) Timnah (*Ta-am-na-a*), conquered (them) and carried their spoils away. I assaulted Ekron and killed the officials and patricians who had committed the crime and hung their bodies on poles surrounding the city. The (common) citizens who were guilty of minor crimes, I considered prisoners of war. The rest of them, those who were not accused of crimes and misbehavior, I released. I made Padi, their king, come from Jerusalem (*Ur-sa-li-im-mu*) and set him as their lord on the throne, imposing upon him the tribute (due) to me (as) overlord.

As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and to the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered (them) by means of well-stamped (earth)-ramps, and battering-rams brought (thus) near (to the walls) (combined with) the attack by foot soldiers, (using) mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out (of them) 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered (them) booty. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthwork in order to molest those who were leaving his city's gate. His towns which I had plundered, I took away from his country and gave them (over) to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Sillibel, king of Gaza. Thus I reduced his country, but I still increased the tribute and the *katru*-presents (due) to me (as his) overlord which I imposed (later) upon him beyond the former tribute, to be delivered annually. Hezekiah himself, whom the terror-inspiring splendor of my lordship had overwhelmed and whose irregular<sup>4</sup> and elite troops which he had brought into Jerusalem, his royal residence, in order to strengthen (it), had deserted him, did send me, later, to Nineveh, my lordly city, together with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, antimony,<sup>5</sup> large cuts of red stone, couches (inlaid) with ivory, *nimedu*-chairs (inlaid) with ivory, elephant-hides, ebony-wood, box-wood (and) all kinds of valuable treasures, his (own) daughters, concubines, male and female musicians, in order to deliver the tribute and to do obeisance as slave he sent his (personal) messenger.

land) in the midst of the sea, and sought refuge (there). But even in this land, he met infamous death before the awe-inspiring splendor of the "Weapon" of my lord Ashur. I installed Ethba'al (*Tuba'lu*) upon his royal throne and imposed upon him the tribute (due to) me (as his) overlord. I laid waste the large district of Judah (*la-u-di*) and made the overbearing and proud Hezekiah (*Ha-za-qi-a-a-a*), its king, bow in submission.

(3) From the Nebi Yunus Slab, published by Rawlinson, Vol. 1, Pl. 43. Translation: Luckenbill, *op.cit.*, p. 86, and AR, II, §347.

(13-15)

I deprived Luli, king of Sidon, of his kingdom. I installed Ethba'al (*Tuba'lu*) upon his throne and I imposed upon him the tribute (due to) me (as his) overlord. I laid waste the large district of Judah and put the straps (*abiāni*) of my (yoke) upon Hezekiah, its king.

(4) Epigraph from a relief showing the conquest of Lachish. cf. A. Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures: The Palace of Sennacherib* (The Hague, 1912-13), Pls. 74-76. Translation: Luckenbill, *op.cit.*, p. 156.

Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria, sat upon a *nimedu*-throne and passed in review the booty (taken) from Lachish (*La-ki-su*).

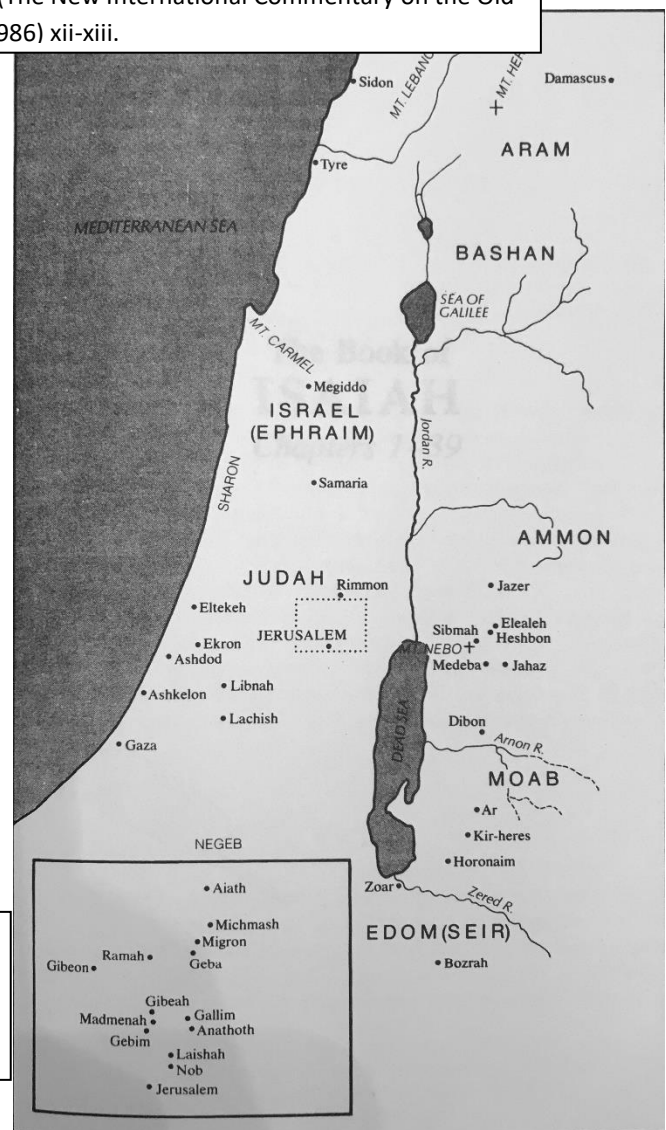
(b) The Death of Sennacherib<sup>1</sup>

To illustrate the still mysterious circumstances of the death of Sennacherib, a passage of the annals of Ashurbanipal (Rassam Cylinder, published by Rawlinson, v, Pls. 1-10) is translated here. Translation: Luckenbill, *op.cit.*; AR, II, §§795, 796.

(iv 65-82)

I tore out the tongues of those whose slanderous mouths had uttered blasphemies against my god Ashur and had plotted against me, his god-fearing prince; I defeated them (completely). The others, I smashed alive with the very same statues of protective deities with which they had smashed my own grandfather Sennacherib—now (finally) as a (belated) burial sacri-

James Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). 288





# ASSYRIAN CAMPAIGNS AGAINST ISRAEL AND JUDAH

- City
- ▲ Mountain
- Shalmaneser III campaign (841 BC)
- Adad-nirari III campaign (797 BC)
- Tiglath-pileser III campaign (734 BC)
- Tiglath-pileser III campaign (733 BC)
- Tiglath-pileser III campaign (732 BC)
- Shalmaneser V/Sargon II campaign (725 BC)
- Sargon II campaign (712 BC)
- Sennacherib campaign (701 BC)

0 15 30 Miles  
0 15 30 Kilometers



**22.21 The Book of Isaiah****a introductory messages of condemnation, pleading, and future restoration (1:1–12:6)**

- begins: message calling for repentance (1:1–31)
- condemnation of empty religious practices (1:12–15), social injustice, wickedness
- Yahweh's eyes hidden; he won't hear their prayers; their hands are full of blood (1:15)
- themes: devouring beasts, Sabbath observance, briers and thorns, unacceptable sacrifices, drunkenness, punishment by burning, darkness transformed to light
- "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb . . . the cow and the bear shall feed together . . . and the lion shall eat straw like the ox . . . they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain" (11:6–9)

**b oracles to nations: humiliation of proud king of Babylon (13:1–27:13)**

- fall of proud Babylon (first, middle, and last units)
- lofty beginning of unit's key figure, king of Babylon: proud, boastful, respected and feared, wicked, smites (*nkh*), oppresses (*ngs*), slays peoples, exalts himself above stars, bright morning star (14:1–20)
- humbling of king of Babylon: humiliated, brought low; kings shocked to see him, rise up (*qum*) and taunt him; he has no offspring

**c collection of woes: don't trust in earthly powers! (28:1–35:10)**

- Egypt's help is empty; it will not profit; shame will be the result of trusting Egypt; they are people, not gods; trust Yahweh!
- folly of idols (30:22; 31:7) and of vessel advising potter (29:16)
- highway in desert; flowers, glory of Yahweh being seen; coming with reward; strengthening the weak (35:1–10)

**d CENTER: historical narratives showing Yahweh's supremacy over all earthly and divine powers (36:1–39:8)****c' Yahweh's supremacy over idols: don't trust in idols! (40:1–48:22)**

- idols are worthless and empty; Yahweh is Israel's true help; idols will not profit; shame from trusting idols; trust Yahweh!
- repudiation of idols; folly of vessel advising potter (45:9)
- highway in desert; flowers, glory of Yahweh being seen; coming with reward; strengthening the weak (40:1–31)

**b' servant messages: exaltation of the humble servant (49:1–54:17)**

- restoration of humbled Jerusalem (first, middle, and last units)
- humble beginning of unit's key figure, Yahweh's servant: humble, quiet, not esteemed, righteous, smitten (*nkh*), oppressed (*ngs*), slain for his people, remains lowly, hidden in dark obscurity
- exaltation of servant: exalted, raised up; kings shocked to see him, shut mouths, rise up (*qum*) and bow before him; his offspring

**a' concluding messages of condemnation, pleading, and future restoration (55:1–66:24)**

- begins: message calling for repentance (55:1–56:1)
- condemnation of empty religious practices (58:1–14; 66:3), social injustice, wickedness
- Yahweh's face hidden; he won't hear their prayers; their hands are bloody (59:1–3)
- themes: devouring beasts, Sabbath observance, briers and thorns, unacceptable sacrifices, drunkenness, punishment by burning, darkness transformed to light
- "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox . . . they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain" (65:25)

David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis – Malachi*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999). p.234

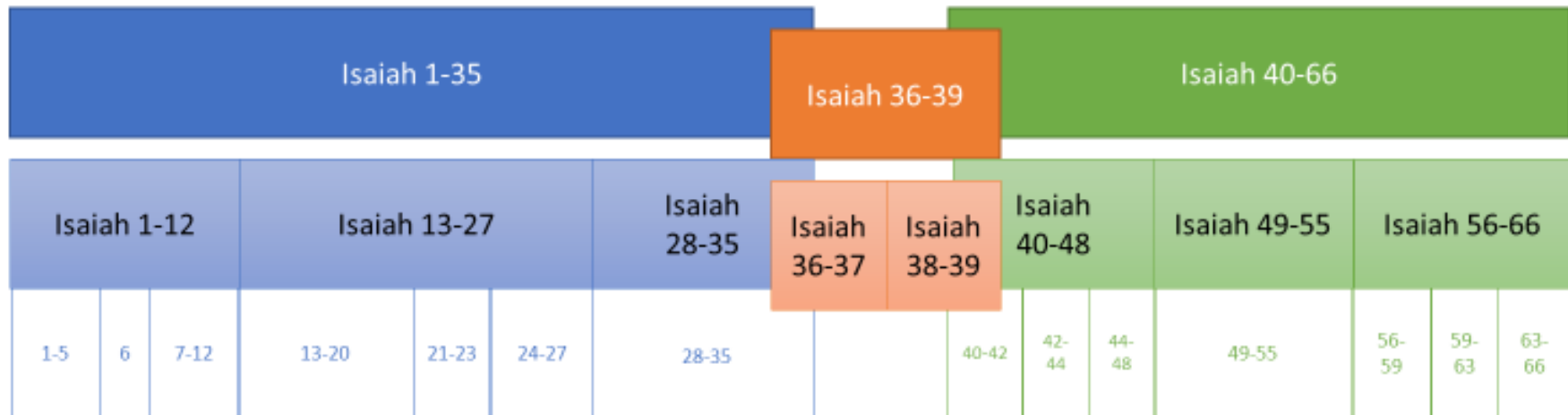
## IMPORTANT PASSAGES

Some of the more "exciting"<sup>1</sup> passages in Isaiah:

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| • 1:2 – 2:5    | • 33:1 – 35:10  |
| • 4:2 – 4:6    | • 40:1 – 55:13  |
| • 6:1 – 13     | • 56:1 – 8      |
| • 7:1 – 9:7    | • 57:14 – 21    |
| • 11:1 – 12:6  | • 59:21 – 61:10 |
| • 13:1 – 14:20 | • 63:7 – 64:12  |
| • 24:1 – 27:13 | • 65:17 – 66:2  |
| • 28:14 – 22   | • 66:14 – 2     |
| • 29:9 – 24    |                 |

<sup>1</sup> Meaning they are some of the more theologically rich or prophetically significant passages in the whole Bible.

## OUTLINE OF THE STUDY



### Introduction (1-2 weeks)

- The Historical Situation

### Isaiah 1-12 - Immanuel (18 weeks)

- 1:1-5:30 Introduction
- 6:1-13 Isaiah's Call
- 7:1-9:7 Darkness and Light in Judah
- 9:8 - 11:16 Darkness and Light in Israel
- 12:1-6 Praise and Testimony

### Isaiah 13-27 - Sovereign Over History (12 weeks)

- 13:1 - 20:6 - Isaiah's World
- 21:1 - 23:18 Future History
- 24:1 - 27:13 The End of History

### Isaiah 28-37 - Sovereign over Egypt and Assyria (10 weeks)

### Isaiah 38-55 - Servant of the Lord (21 weeks)

- 38:1 - 39:8 Hezekiah's Fatal Choice
- 40:1 - 42:17 Consolation of the world
- 42:18 - 44:23 Israel's Plight (Political and Spiritual)
- 44:24 - 48:22 The Persian Solution (Political)
- 49:1 - 55:13 The Servant Solution (Spiritual)

### Isaiah 56-66 - Conquering King (13 weeks)

- 56:1 - 59:13 The ideal and the actual
- 59:14 - 63:6 The Anointed Conqueror
- 63:7 - 66:24 Prayer and Response

Outline derived from J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*. (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993). TOC



## USEFUL RESOURCES

### Primary commentaries I'll be relying on during this study:

- J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 1993, 544p
- John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39 (NICOT)*, 1986, 740p
- John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66 (NICOT)*, 1998, 755p

### Other resources I'll be referencing:

- Alec Motyer, *Isaiah By the Day: A New Devotional Translation*, 2011
- Andrew Davis, *Christ-Centered Exposition Comments: Exalting Jesus in Isaiah*, 2017, 432p
- Robert Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets*, 2002, 511p
- Childs, Brevard S. *Isaiah: A Commentary*. 2001 (Liberal-leaning)
- E.J. Young, *Isaiah (NICOT)*, 1969
- Goldingay, John. *Isaiah*. Understanding the Bible Commentary Series., 2012. (Liberal Leaning)
- John Calvin. *Commentary on Isaiah Vol I-IV*, trans. 1850
- Thomas Scott. *Scott's Bible*, 1832
- John Oswalt Video Lectures on Isaiah - <http://biblicalelearning.org/isaiah-oswalt/>
- Allen Ross Studies on Isaiah - <https://bible.org/series/book-isaiah>
- Jason DeRouchie – Audio Lectures on the Messianic passages in Isaiah - <http://jasonderouchie.com/isaiah-celebrating-the-servant-savior/>
- Ray Ortlund – Audio Sermon Series on Isaiah - <https://feedingonchrist.org/ray-ortlunds-sermon-series-on-isaiah/>
- The CSB Study Bible Notes
- The Zonvervan NIV Study Bible Notes

## HOMEWORK FOR NEXT LESSON

Read the following passages:

- **Isaiah 1:1-31**
- **Deuteronomy 28-30** – The Blessings and Curses of the Covenant
- **Deuteronomy 32** – The Song of Moses
- **Leviticus 26** – Blessings for Obedience, Punishment for Disobedience

Consider:

- What are the common images and themes describing blessing and judgment in the Deuteronomy and Leviticus passages?
- What threads of hope are woven into those passages?
- What parallels do you see between those passages and what you read in Isaiah 1?