

Two Assyrian Campaigns against Hezekiah and Later Eighth Century Biblical Chronology

1. Two Assyrian Campaigns against Hezekiah

The most controversial period for the royal chronology of Israel and Judah is the later 8th century BC. Much of the problem appears to center on 2 Kgs 18,13's dating of a massive invasion of Judah by Sennacherib to Hezekiah's 14th year. As extremely widely accepted, this massive invasion is clearly identifiable with Sennacherib's known such invasion in 701. But dating Hezekiah's 14th year to 701 conflicts with other biblical data and has been very widely rejected in recent studies. With the help of recent shifts in viewpoint concerning 2 Kgs 18,14-16, the Azekah text, and the fall of Samaria, it appears possible to reconstruct the historical situation hidden behind this apparent biblical error as follows.

2 Kgs 18,13-19,37, together with the parallel account in Isa 36-37, and Assyrian sources for the 701 campaign both tell of a massive invasion of Judah by Sennacherib which included an Assyrian approach to, but not assault on, Jerusalem⁽¹⁾. Any possibility of distinguishing between these invasions appears eliminated, for the bulk of the biblical material, by the good agreement of Assyrian and biblical sources — when read between the lines of competing claims of victory — is on a *limited* Assyrian setback. Thus, as emphasized by e.g. Millard, Assyrian records indicate that Sennacherib let Hezekiah off very easily, especially in view of his marked hostility towards "the Judean", and leave the end of the 701 campaign strangely obscure — *except* for tribute eventually sent by Hezekiah to Nineveh. In spite of 2 Kgs 19,35's historically impossible 185,000 Assyrian dead, prophecies in this chapter likewise point to only a limited Assyrian setback (a

difference in viewpoint that strongly supports the authenticity of these prophecies): vv. 28 and 32-34 promise concerning this campaign only that Sennacherib will fail to complete his conquest of Judah, while vv. 29-31 depict an impoverished Judean remnant, confirmed by archaeology⁽²⁾.

The clearly indicated and extremely widely accepted setting of at least the bulk of 2 Kgs 18,13-19,37 in 701 does raise a number of well-known issues. One problem arises from 2 Kgs 19,9's reference to a military force led by "Tirhakah, king of Cush", i.e. Taharqa, who did not become king until 690. However, the absence of any additional good argument for a post-701 Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah⁽³⁾ strongly suggests explaining Taharqa's title in 2 Kgs 19,9 by prolepsis. This explanation — i.e. Taharqa's command in Palestine in 701 as a *prince* — is strongly supported by a combination of 2 Kgs 19,9 with Kawa stelae IV,7-10; V,13-17 and other evidence: taken together, these stelae indicate that Taharqa led a military force north to Thebes under his predecessor Shebitku and then proceeded to the Delta with that king. This can very plausibly be connected with a Nubian intervention in 2 Kgs 19,9 / 701 — especially since Shebitku is given 12 years by Eusebius and chose an unusually martial titulary, whereas his predecessor Shabako is attested in friendly relations with Sargon II and probably with Sennacherib⁽⁴⁾.

⁽²⁾ See for the pertinent archaeological evidence e.g. N. NA'AMAN, "Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah and the Date of the *Imlk* Stamps", VT 29 (1979) 70-74, especially 73-74; id., "Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria", Tel Aviv 21 (1994) 113-115.

⁽³⁾ Compare and contrast periodical article indices under the following title keywords: Second Palestinian Campaign.

⁽⁴⁾ See K.A. KITCHEN, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100 - 650 B.C.)* (Warminster 1972) 155-161. A widely accepted upper limit of 713/712 for the start of Shabako's reign over all Egypt for c.14 years or a bit longer (with no evidence for a coregency) hardly seems consistent with Shebitku's accession by 702/701. However, the possibility of taking a clearly Egyptian "*pir'u* king of Egypt" appealed for help against Assyria in 713/712 to be an east Delta *surrogate* for Shabako (temporarily back in Nubia) vitiates any use of this appeal to set an upper limit for Shabako's conquest of the Delta. Further applying such surrogacy to 2 Kgs 17,4's So (as vassal of Piye) vitiates the process of elimination widely used to identify So with Sais — thereby avoiding the need to emend away a common biblical formula ("to PN king of GN") and hypothesize otherwise unknown Saite resistance to Assyrian rule in Asia.

Note: the translation of biblical texts in this article follows the *NEB* unless specified otherwise.

⁽¹⁾ For references on 2 Kgs 18,13-19,37 and Isa 36-37, see recently M.A. SWEENEY, *Isaiah 1-39: with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids 1995) 459-460, 487-488. For Assyrian records of the 701 campaign, see conveniently ANET 287-288; ARAB II, §§283-284a.

Other difficulties, arising from the beginning of 2 Kgs 18,13–19,37, appear to be more pregnant for biblical history.

As currently very widely accepted, 2 Kgs 18,13's dating of Sennacherib's massive invasion (v. 13b) to year 14 of Hezekiah (v. 13a) appears untenable because other biblical evidence bearing on the dating of this regnal year clearly places it prior to 701 (so e.g. 2 Kgs 16,2.5-9; 18,10; Isa 14,28-32)(⁶).

2 Kgs 18,14-16 is widely thought to tally with events in 701, but actually fits very poorly with these events, as recently emphasized by Seitz(⁷), since it reports a *smaller* amount of Judaeen tribute sent to Lachish *during* the Assyrian campaign. This surrender on terms also appears to contradict 2 Kgs 18,17–19,37, which relates a continuing conflict ending with an Assyrian setback.

These discrepancies can both be resolved by setting 2 Kgs 18,14-16 during an Assyrian campaign in year 14 of Hezekiah that actually *preceded* the massive invasion in 2 Kgs 18,13b; 18,17–19,37 / 701 (but had already been confused with it by the time 2 Kgs 18,13 was written)(⁸). Such a sequence fits very well with the lesser tribute and (to all appearances) less extensive invasion in 2 Kgs 18,14-16. An obvious objection is that a pre-701 Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah would clearly have been the work of Sargon II rather than Sennacherib, who did not campaign in the west before 701. However confusion on this point is hardly unthinkable for a *limited* invasion.

Strong support for such confusion arises from recent recognition that the definitive conquest of Samaria in 2 Kgs 17,6 — implicitly assigned to Shalmaneser V by vv. 3-6 (cf. also v. 5 with 2 Kgs 18,9)

(⁶) See recently e.g. H. TADMOR, "The Chronology of the First Temple Period: A Presentation and Evaluation of the Sources", *History of Ancient Israel* (J.A. SOGGIN) (Philadelphia 1984) 381; J.H. HAYES – S.A. IRVINE, *Isaiah, The Eighth Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville 1987) 375-376; B. BECKING, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (Leiden – New York 1992) 52-54; G. GALIL, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (SHCANE 9; Leiden – New York 1996) 98-104. Contrast recently N. NA'AMAN, "Historical and Chronological Notes on the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Eighth Century B.C.", VT 36 (1986) 84-85; id., "Kings of Assyria", 236-239. See further below with nn. 34-35.

(⁷) C.R. SEITZ, "Account A and the Annals of Sennacherib: A Reassessment", JSOT 58 (1993) 50-52.

(⁸) See further on this apparent confusion the end of §1. See e.g. C.R. SEITZ, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39* (Minneapolis 1991) 51-56 for the strong case in favor of separating the introductory 2 Kgs 18,13 from vv. 14-16.

— was really the work of Sargon II(⁹). On this basis, reference by 2 Kgs 17,3; 18,9 to Shalmaneser instead of Sargon in connection with the fall of Samaria provides a remarkable parallel for the proposed reference by 2 Kgs 18,13 to Sennacherib in error for Sargon in connection with 2 Kgs 18,14-16's campaign. This evident aversion to mentioning Sargon II would seem to be related to Isa 14,20's hoped-for *proscription* of a tyrant who is generally identified as Sargon II(¹⁰).

Strong corroboration of this approach is provided by the Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah described in the fragmentary Azekah text, which is now widely and very plausibly assigned to Sargon II(¹¹). Before attempting to correlate biblical and Assyrian sources on a Judaeen campaign by Sargon II, consider several additional biblical texts which appear connected to a limited Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah preceding the massive invasion in 2 Kgs 18,13b; 18,17–19,37 / 701.

2 Kgs 20,1-11 (and Isa 38) date a near-fatal illness suffered by Hezekiah to his 14th year (cf. v. 6 with 2 Kgs 18,2) and around the time of an Assyrian invasion (v. 1, cf. v. 6). This illness was followed in 2 Kgs 20,12-19 (and Isa 39) by Hezekiah's reception of gift-bearing messengers from a "king of Babylon" clearly identifiable as

(⁹) So LAATO, Na'aman, Galil. For the Assyrian sources on Sargon II's capture of Samaria in 720, followed by large-scale deportations and the reorganization of Samaria as a province, see H. TADMOR, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study", JCS 12 (1958) 33-39; conveniently ANET 284-285. For 2 Kgs 17-18's false attribution of this definitive conquest/deportation to Shalmaneser V, see N. NA'AMAN "The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria", Bib 71 (1990) 219; G. GALIL, "The Last Years of the Kingdom of Israel and the Fall of Samaria", CBQ 57 (1995) 61-62; similarly A. LAATO, "New Viewpoints on the Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah", ZAW 98 (1986) 217. See further §3 below.

(¹⁰) See e.g. SWEENEY, *Isaiah 1-39*, 232-233 with references for Isa 14,4b-21 celebrating the death of Sargon II in 705.

(¹¹) G. GALIL, e.g. in "A New Look at the 'Azekah Inscription'", RB 102 (1995) 327-328 very plausibly sets the Azekah text in 712 (see further below following n. 26), as also found attractive by e.g. M. COGAN – H. TADMOR, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 11; New York 1988) 262, n. 6. BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 54 with n. 30 sets this text in 715. While Na'aman has set this text in 701 since 1974, the arguments given then for this setting have mostly been withdrawn. In 1994, Na'aman relied *solely* on the argument that "such a major campaign" against Judah is not substantiated except in 701 (NA'AMAN, "Kings of Assyria", 245). However, "such a major campaign" is not substantiated by the Azekah text, either!

Marduk-apla-iddina II (vv. 12-13). As widely accepted, the latter episode can hardly be set in (or after) 701, since this king fled from Babylon for the last time in 703⁽¹¹⁾.

Since v. 13's leisurely display of wealth to these messengers and vv. 17-18's strictly long-term prophecy in response to this display⁽¹²⁾ hardly fit with an impending invasion, it appears that 2 Kgs 20's gift-bearing embassy occurred in the wake of its invasion — especially since this sequence is presumably implied by 2 Chr 32,22-23's many explicitly post-invasion diplomatic gifts to Hezekiah. But setting 2 Kgs 20,12-19 in the wake of the invasion in 2 Kgs 18,13b; 18,17-19,37 / 701 (or later) appears contradicted by Hezekiah's extensive display of wealth to this embassy in v. 13 (contrast 2 Kgs 18,13b; 19,29-31 and Sennacherib's own claims of destruction, as well as archaeological confirmation [n.2 above] of a Judaeen disaster in 701). This dating also appears very unlikely due to: (1) the continued plotting which the Babylonian embassy presumably implies (contrast Hezekiah's shipment of tribute to Nineveh shortly after the 701 campaign), and (2) Hezekiah's to all appearances extremely complacent response in v. 19 to Isaiah's clear condemnation of this display in vv. 17-18⁽¹³⁾. On the other hand,

⁽¹¹⁾ Contrast e.g. NA'AMAN, "Kings of Assyria", 244, which fudges this difficulty by dating these messengers to "about 704/703", described as the "eve" of Sennacherib's invasion.

⁽¹²⁾ 2 Kgs 20,17-18 is couched in terms of sons "who will be born to" Hezekiah (cf. also v. 19). This passage is generally taken to be an obviously inauthentic echo of an early 6th century Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem (so e.g. COGAN – TADMOR, *II Kings*, 262-263; P.R. ACKROYD, "An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile: A Study of 2 Kings 20, Isaiah 38-39", *SJT* 27 [1974] 341-342). However this understanding is not supported by a textual comparison with 2 Kgs 24-25, suggesting a basis for 2 Kgs 20,17-18 in earlier material that was *not* reworked for the sake of better accord with early 6th century events. In view of 2 Kgs 20,14-19's surprisingly negative portrayal of Hezekiah, this earlier material seems best understood as essentially historical in origin (see further n. 23 below). On this basis, 2 Kgs 20,17's emphasis on Hezekiah's extensive display corroborates v. 13's like emphasis.

⁽¹³⁾ Contrast 2 Kgs 19,1's royal repentance. Hezekiah's repentance in 2 Kgs 19,1 could theoretically be edifying legend, but fits extremely well with his otherwise seemingly hopeless position in 701. In recent years, Hezekiah's response to Isaiah in 2 Kgs 20,19 has widely been thought appropriate. However this view fails to reckon with Hezekiah's *ongoing* culpability in 2 Kgs 20,17-18's extremely negative prophecy against his house — as clearly indicated by the correspondence between vv. 13,15,17 and clarified by Isaiah's well-known strong hostility to 2 Kgs 20,12-13's policy of reliance on foreign

the aftermath of a limited pre-2 Kgs 18,17-19,37 / before 701 campaign is very consistent with Hezekiah's prosperity, lack of repentance and ongoing plotting in 2 Kgs 20.

In a similar vein, 2 Chr 32,2-5 indicates that Hezekiah began a much-needed strengthening of Jerusalem's defenses *during* an Assyrian invasion. This appears incredible during the invasion in 2 Kgs 18,17-19,37 / 701 (or any post-701 invasion), since: 1) Jerusalem appears to have been well fortified at this time (cf. Sennacherib's blockade in 701; 2 Kgs 18,27's readiness for a long siege)⁽¹⁴⁾. 2) In view of the great extent of this building activity, as revealed by archaeology⁽¹⁵⁾, it must have been completed *after* the invasion during which it was started; but Judah was ruined and apparently submissive after the campaign in 2 Kgs 18,17-19,37 / 701 (above with nn. 2-3). On the other hand, the limited preparation possible with such a late start provides a good background for the surrender on terms in 2 Kgs 18,14-16. This contrast is particularly important because 2 Chr 32,2-3's strangely late start appears to be confirmed by a striking parallel with Isa 22,8⁽¹⁶⁾.

As fairly often noted, Isa 22,1-14's invasion of Judah also conflicts with 2 Kgs 18,13b; 18,17-19,37 regarding e.g. vv. 12-14's utter lack of repentance (contrast 2 Kgs 19,1-2), v. 13's fatalistic revelry and feasting (contrast 2 Kgs 18,27), and the seeming focus of its invasion (cf. v. 7: "fairest valleys", v. 8: "covering of Judah" [literal translation]) on the lowlands (Shephelah) of western Judaea (contrast 2 Kgs 18,13b,17)⁽¹⁷⁾. On the other hand, this seeming focus

alliances (contrast untenably ACKROYD, "Babylonian Exile", 341; SEITZ, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 158). Under such circumstances, Hezekiah should have expressed repentance and changed his policy — which does *not* occur in 2 Kgs 20,19. See further n. 23 below.

⁽¹⁴⁾ A historical basis for 2 Kgs 18,27 is strongly supported (with e.g. B.S. CHILDS, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* [SBT 2.ser.3; London 1967] 86, cf. 80-82) by a parallel with similarly improvisational Assyrian efforts to induce the surrender of Babylon c.730.

⁽¹⁵⁾ See e.g. N. AVIGAD, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville 1980) 55-57.

⁽¹⁶⁾ See e.g. CHILDS, *Assyrian Crisis*, 106, 110 for this late start (and other connections between 2 Chr 32,2-5 and Isa 22,8-11) confirming a historical basis for 2 Chr 32,2-5 (as well as the pertinence of Isa 22,1-14 to an Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah). See also below following n. 36.

⁽¹⁷⁾ See likewise on this conflict e.g. H.L. GINSBERG, "Reflexes of Sargon in Isaiah after 715 B.C.E.", *JAOS* 88 (1968) 48-49; J.N. OSWALT, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids 1986) 407-408.

on the Shephelah is very consistent geographically with 2 Kgs 18,14-16 and politically with Hezekiah's prosperity, lack of repentance and ongoing plotting, apparently following 2 Kgs 20's campaign (above with nn.12-13). Likewise, the exceptionally harsh prophecy against stubbornly unrepentant high officials in Isa 22,14 is very plausibly connected politically to Hezekiah's extremely complacent reaction in 2 Kgs 20,19 (n. 13 above) to an equally harsh prophecy against the royal family.

Moreover, Isa 22,1-14 is widely and very plausibly dated to around the time of (presumably: slightly before) Isa 22,15-23(24), based on the extremely harsh and personal denunciations of unrepentant Judaeans officials in both sections, the threat of exile to Mesopotamia (very widely accepted referent of "great wide land") in v. 18, and the repetition in vv. 15-16 of expressions used in vv. 1.14⁽¹⁸⁾.

As often accepted, dating Isa 22,15-23(24) to the time of the events reflected in 2 Kgs 18,17-19,37 (or later) appears impossible because Eliakim is named in 2 Kgs 18,18,37 as the one who is "over the house" (cf. e.g. 2 Kgs 15,5: i.e. chief minister), but is only promised this post in Isa 22,20-21, when Shebna was "over the house" (v. 15)⁽¹⁹⁾. This dating also appears highly unlikely because Shebna repents in 2 Kgs 18,37-19,2 but decidedly not in Isa 22,15-19. On the other hand, dating Isa 22,15-24 significantly earlier than the Judaeans military disaster in 2 Kgs 18,17-19,37 / 701 would allow dating the seeming addition in v. 25 early enough to accommodate its extremely natural explanation as criticism of Eliakim's leading role in the 701 rebellion, couched in terms of the disaster that Isaiah expected as a result of this policy⁽²⁰⁾.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Cf. also vv. 8-11 with 2 Chr 32,2-5 and vv. 15.20 with 2 Kgs 19,2 for Isa 22 as a whole apparently clearly dating from the time of Isaiah. See likewise e.g. GINSBERG, "Reflexes", 49, n. 16; OSWALT, *Book of Isaiah*, 417.

⁽¹⁹⁾ See e.g. J.T. WILLIS, "Historical Issues in Isaiah 22,15-25", *Bib* 74 (1993) 68-69 with n. 29 for this often-expressed view. See further e.g. OSWALT, *Book of Isaiah*, 418 on Shebna's titles.

⁽²⁰⁾ "On that day" everything "hanging" on Eliakim will be "destroyed", highly likely means at the time of a Judaeans military disaster. Isa 22,24's statement that "they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house" is usually combined with v. 25 and used to explain Eliakim's prophesied downfall by nepotism. However v. 25 very plausibly stands alone (with e.g. OSWALT, *Book of Isaiah*, 417) and there is no intrinsic reason to read nepotism into v. 24 — which can readily be taken as a positive reference to the extensive responsibilities prophesied for Eliakim (cf. SERTZ, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 112-

Further support for linking Isa 22,15-24 to the pre-2 Kgs 18,17-19,37 / pre-701 campaign worked out thus far is provided by several points of contact between these verses and 2 Kgs 20⁽²¹⁾. Cf.: (1) the exceptionally harsh, personal prophecy against the chief minister in Isa 22,15-19 with the equally harsh prophecy against the royal family in 2 Kgs 20,17-18; (2) the surprising prominence of the chief minister rather than the king in Isa 22,15-19 (dated c. vv. 1-14's invasion) with the invasion / near-fatal royal illness in 2 Kgs 20,1-11; (3) the remarkably exalted position promised to Eliakim, including power over "the key of the house of David" (Isa 22,22), with the compounding of Hezekiah's illness by his lack of sons (2 Kgs 20,18)⁽²²⁾.

Additional material in 2 Chr 32 likewise supports confusion of the campaign reflected in 2 Kgs 18,13b; 18,17-19,37 with an earlier (i.e. pre-701) and much less destructive Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah: vv. 22-23 state that Hezekiah was "held in high honour by all the nations" and received many (diplomatic) gifts in the wake of vv. 9-21's invasion (which transparently reprises that of 2 Kgs 18,17-19,37), and vv. 24-25 state that Hezekiah's heart was "proud" following a serious illness⁽²³⁾.

113). The seeming intrusion of Eliakim's family into matters of state in v. 24 can be very satisfactorily explained (with H.L. GINSBERG, "Gleanings in First Isaiah", *Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* [New York 1953] 254) by his membership in the Judaeans royal family — as supported by the royal imagery in vv. 22-23, the extremely powerful position promised him in vv. 21-24, and membership in this family of two out of three other Eliakims attested in the bible (see e.g. 2 Kgs 23,34; Matt 1,13).

⁽²¹⁾ Cf. HAYES – IRVINE, *Eighth Century Prophet*, 383-386.

⁽²²⁾ 2 Kgs 20,18 warns of punishment for the sons "who will be born to" Hezekiah, hardly meaning that older sons would be spared.

⁽²³⁾ Note in connection with n. 13 above: 2 Chr 32,31's evident approval of Hezekiah's behavior in the 2 Kgs 20,12-19 affair is widely thought (following ACKROYD, "Babylonian Exile", 337-338) to justify his behavior in 2 Kgs 20,19. But since 2 Kgs 20,13's extensive post-illness display is presumably connected with 2 Chr 32,25's post-illness pride, which is clearly criticized by the Chronicler, his approval in v. 31 must refer to post-pride repentance (i.e. to v. 26). Since 2 Kgs 20,19's response is unrepentant (pace ACKROYD, "Chronicler", 10-11), this repentance appears to follow the events reflected in 2 Kgs 20,12-19. This sequence would also allow the otherwise surprising inclusion of v. 31 in the close of 2 Chr 32 to be well explained as a *spin* on some event that could seem (i.e. in 2 Kgs 20,12-19) to contradict the Chronicler's highly positive summation of Hezekiah's reign.

While the Chronicler appears to have confused this eventual repentance

This juxtaposition is obviously related to the juxtaposition in 2 Kgs 18–19 / 2 Kgs 20 of Sennacherib's very destructive invasion of Judah / Hezekiah's reception of diplomatic gifts and display of extensive wealth following a serious illness in the same year as this invasion. One difference is that the gifts to Hezekiah in 2 Chr 32 are explicitly dated to after the Assyrian invasion. As already noted, this provides further support for the post-invasion dating of Marduk-apla-iddina II's gift-bearing messengers that appears to be indicated by 2 Kgs 20,13.19 and contradicts associating 2 Kgs 20 with the campaign in 2 Kgs 18,17–19,37 / 701 (see above with n. 12).

Another difference from 2 Kgs 18–20 is that the destructiveness of the Assyrian invasion and Hezekiah's repentance, which conflict with 2 Chr 32,23.25's strong diplomatic position and pride, seem to be missing: 2 Chr 32,1 states only that Sennacherib thought "he could" conquer the cities of Judah and vv. 9–21 omit any reference to a remnant or sackcloth. Actually, these elements have been separated out in what appears to be a clear doublet of vv. 9–21: the *sequel* to Hezekiah's to all appearances *already post-invasion* pride in v. 25⁽²⁴⁾ is a strikingly 2 Kgs 18,17–19,37-like episode involving "wrath ... upon Judah and Jerusalem" averted by repentance for Hezekiah and "the people of Jerusalem" *only* (2 Chr 32,25–26).

In spite of its confusion, this sequence supports the preceding analysis of 2 Kgs 18–20 by again placing a lesser Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah, reflected in 2 Kgs 20, before (a doublet of) the very destructive invasion reflected in 2 Kgs 18,17–19,37. Since the latter is clearly datable to 701, this understanding places v. 23's strong diplomatic position of Hezekiah in the period preceding the Judaeans' disaster of 701, when a strong position for Hezekiah is substantiated

with Hezekiah's repentance in 2 Kgs 19,1 (see below at n. 24), an underlying reference in 2 Chr 32,26.31 to an earlier episode of royal repentance, dated not long after 2 Kgs 20,17–18's extremely strong prophecy against (in effect) Jerusalem, is strongly supported by clear evidence (Jer 26,18–19 citing Mic 3,12) for just such a sequence (which can plausibly be related to a campaign reflected in 2 Kgs 20; Isa 22, etc. via the parallel between Mic 3,9 and Isa 22,8–11). Dating the political repentance indicated by 2 Chr 32,26 prior to 701 would provide an excellent setting for the evident sacking (or demotion) of Shebna sometime between Isa 22,15–24 and the campaign in 2 Kgs 18,17–19,37 / 701 (cf. above including n. 19).

⁽²⁴⁾ Cf. his explicitly post-invasion high honour in v. 23 and apparently post-invasion great display / extreme complacency in 2 Kgs 20,13.19 (on which, see above with nn. 12–13).

for the period immediately preceding the 701 invasion by Sennacherib, and after which such strength appears impossible⁽²⁵⁾.

A strong diplomatic position of Hezekiah following the campaign reflected in 2 Kgs 20 also helps considerably in explaining confusion between distinct campaigns reflected in 2 Kgs 18,14–16 / 2 Kgs 20 etc. and 2 Kgs 18,17–19,37 etc., as such strength would naturally have been connected to 2 Kgs 19,35's exaggerated Assyrian setback rather than 2 Kgs 18,14–16's Judaeans' surrender (taken in isolation).

2. Dating the Assyrian Campaign in Year 14 of Hezekiah to 712

Assyrian evidence provides only one clearly datable episode that can plausibly be connected with an Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah prior to 701. This episode involves Assyrian suppression in 712 of a plot organized by Ashdod, in which Judah was implicated⁽²⁶⁾. While the limited records clearly pertaining to the 712 campaign mention only Ashdod as a target, the Assyrian conflict with Hezekiah reported by the extremely fragmentary Azekah text is increasingly widely (n. 10 above) and very plausibly thought to be part of the same campaign. This setting is partly based on difficulties for the only known alternative, a setting in 701: (1) The spelling used for Hezekiah in the Azekah text never occurs in known records of Sennacherib and that used for Assur never occurs in his known historical records⁽²⁷⁾. (2) This text's implicit reference to Ashdod as a province⁽²⁸⁾ disagrees with known accounts of the 701

⁽²⁵⁾ A very strong diplomatic position of Hezekiah at *some* point appears highly likely due to his generally accepted defeat of Philistines (so e.g. J. GRAY, *I and II Kings: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia 1970] 671; COGAN – TADMOR, *II Kings*, 217, 221; NA'AMAN, "Kings of Assyria", 237) "as far as Gaza and its boundaries" (2 Kgs 18,8). Since this appears to go far beyond the situation in 701 (when Ashkelon was an independent kingdom occupying territory as far north as Joppa), it should probably be set under Sargon II (cf. below including n. 39).

⁽²⁶⁾ See for the Ashdod affair TADMOR, "Sargon II", 79–84, 92–93 (dating its fall to 712, as now generally accepted outside biblical studies); conveniently ANET 286–287. NB that only summary, short annalistic and a few very fragmentary detailed accounts of this campaign are available.

⁽²⁷⁾ See GALIL, "Azekah Inscription", 324–325, 328 with references. Contrast NA'AMAN, "Kings of Assyria", 246.

⁽²⁸⁾ Line 5' apparently describes Azekah as "located between my [la]nd [ašrija] and the land of Judah". See GALIL, "Azekah Inscription", 322–323. Contrast unconvincingly on *ašrija* (admittedly using a more common translation) NA'AMAN, "Kings of Assyria", 246.

campaign, which depict Ashdod as a kingdom. In contrast, this situation agrees with that initially created by the Ashdod campaign, as presumably described by the original Azekah text in an Ashdod section placed *before* the Judaeans section⁽²⁹⁾. Stylistic evidence strongly supports setting the Azekah text in 712, as this text is "especially close" to a text set in 714 and "very similar" to a text set in 710⁽³⁰⁾.

The Azekah text's detailed account of border operations in the Shephelah is very consistent with the limited, Shephelah-oriented campaign against Judah that seems indicated by 2 Kgs 18,14-16 (when separated from 2 Kgs 18,13b; 18,17-19,37) and Isa 22,1-14. The personal involvement of the Assyrian king provides another point of agreement between 2 Kgs 18,14-16 and the Azekah text, in which such involvement appears guaranteed by the detailed nature of this text⁽³¹⁾, but poses a stumbling-block for the setting of either text in 712: according to the generally relied-on Eponym Chronicle, Sargon II stayed "in the land" (Assyria) in 712⁽³²⁾. Moreover, Isa 20,1 ascribes the capture of Ashdod to a subordinate of Sargon II. However if 2 Kgs 18,14-16 is indeed set in 712, as occasionally suggested⁽³³⁾, Sargon II could very well simply have been at the great Judaeans fortress of Lachish (v. 14), commanding the assault on the most important rebel state, when his officer captured Ashdod. More importantly, Sargon II's claim to have led the Ashdod campaign in person — a common Assyrian royal conceit — appears to be confirmed (an overlooked and seemingly crucial point) by the make-up of the invasion force, which consisted solely of the Assyrian *royal guard*. Sargon II's account can be harmonized with the Eponym Chronicle evidence by supposing that the Ashdod campaign remained outside the scope of this text due to the *limited*

⁽²⁹⁾ Cf. the geographical sequence in Sennacherib's records of the 701 campaign and see GALIL, "Azekah Inscription", 327-328.

⁽³⁰⁾ See respectively N. NA'AMAN, "Sennacherib's 'Letter to God' on his Campaign to Judah", *BASOR* 214 (1974) 29; TADMOR, "Sargon II", 99.

⁽³¹⁾ See e.g. NA'AMAN, "Sennacherib's Campaign", 61; GALIL, "Azekah Inscription", 324 for the level of detail in the original Azekah text.

⁽³²⁾ See e.g. A.R. MILLARD, *Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire 910-612 BC* (Helsinki 1994) 47, 60 for the 712 Eponym Chronicle entry.

⁽³³⁾ See e.g. the references given by H.H. ROWLEY, "Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion", *BJRL* 44 (1961/62) 413-414, n. 8; also C. STEDL, "Textkritische Bemerkungen zu den Synchronismen der Könige von Israel und Juda", *VT* 12 (1962) 115-116; A.S. VAN DER WOUDE, *Micha* (Nijkerk 1977) 16.

mobilization involved: "In a sudden rage, I did not (wait to) assemble the full might of my army or to prepare the camp(ing equipment), but started out towards Ashdod (only) with those of my warriors who, even in friendly areas, never leave my side".

Many chronological considerations and historical parallels support dating the Assyrian campaign in year 14 of Hezekiah to 712⁽³⁴⁾. Chronologically, this dating agrees perfectly with chronographic reckoning back from the death of Josiah in 609⁽³⁵⁾.

⁽³⁴⁾ For arguments against such a high dating of Hezekiah (i.e. from c.725), see e.g. E.R. THIELE, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids 1983) 168-171; A.F. RAINEY, review of BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, *JSS* 39 (1994) 324. Most objections are easily met. E.g.: Hezekiah's early access to the northern kingdom and his messengers' mention of deportations by Assyrian 'kings' (2 Chr 30,1.6.10-11, cf. 29,3 for dating) can be satisfactorily related to 2 Kgs 15,29; 17,2 and (hypothetically) 17,3 (alternatively, 2 Chr 30,6's 'kings' could be conventional [cf. 2 Chr 32,4]). A recent objection (NA'AMAN, "Kings of Assyria", 238) that the high dating places Hezekiah's death (unreported by Sennacherib) before the reported death of Lulli of Sidon ignores Lulli's failure (unlike Hezekiah) to submit to Sennacherib after the 701 campaign. For a further objection, arising from earlier biblical chronology, see §5 below.

The high dating of Hezekiah does entail almost incredibly short generations from Jotham to Hezekiah. However: (1) This tight situation arises strictly from a straightforward reading of 2 Kgs 15,27.30.32-33; 18,1-2. (2) 2 Chr 28,7 tells of the death during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis (i.e. c.734) of a "king's son" who can extremely naturally be taken as a son of Ahaz (cf. 2 Kgs 15,5). This situation (i.e. Hezekiah's brother being of military age c.734), and the equally tight situation created by Hezekiah's accession c.725 at the age of 25 (2 Kgs 18,2), corroborate each other.

⁽³⁵⁾ See GALIL, *Chronology*, 103-104. Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon and Josiah are given respectively 29, 55, 2 and 31 years, while the death of Josiah is generally (following H. TADMOR, "Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah", *JNES* 15 [1966] 228) and extremely plausibly dated to the summer of 609. Assuming rounding off of Judaeans regnal year totals (next paragraph), plus postdating and no coregencies in Judah during this period (in both cases because the alternative would force [on the basis of rounding off] a [see n. 8 above] impossibly low post-720 dating of 2 Kgs 18,10's fall of Samaria), these data date year 14 of Hezekiah to 609 + 31 + 2 + 55 + (29-14) = 712.

Rounding off of Judaeans regnal year totals is very widely accepted (contrast *ibid.*, 375, based on assuming antedating [*ibid.*, 372]). This convention can be straightforwardly derived (cf. J. McHUGH, "The Date of Hezekiah's Birth", *VT* 14 [1964] 451) from a combination of 2 Kgs 17,1 (Hoshea acceded in year 12 of Ahaz), 2 Kgs 18,1 (Hezekiah acceded in year 3 of Hoshea), 2 Kgs 16,2 (Ahaz ruled 16 years) and 2 Chr 29,3 (Hezekiah reversed his father's religious policy [presumably after that king's death] shortly before Passover of his 1st year). 2 Chr 29's religious reform is commonly questioned, e.g. by

Two strong arguments for a c.712 dating of year 14 of Hezekiah could very well also point precisely to 712: (1) While the fall of Samaria — equated by 2 Kgs 18,10 with year 6 of Hezekiah — is usually dated to 722 or 723, 720 appears highly preferable (see section 3 below, following Galil). (2) As very widely accepted, Isa 14,28-32 appears to date the death of Hezekiah's predecessor Ahaz to around that of Tiglath-Pileser III, who died around the end of the Julian year 727 (see further n. 98 below).

Historically, in addition to an apparent limited Assyrian campaign against Judah (Azekah text evidence), the Ashdod affair presents further important points of contact with 2 Kgs 20 and Isa 22⁽³⁶⁾: (1) cf. the otherwise peculiarly late start of Hezekiah's defensive preparations in Isa 22,8-11 (and 2 Chr 32,2-5) with Sargon II's quick response to conspiracy in 712; (2) cf. 2 Kgs 20,12-13's apparently *post*-invasion intrigue involving Marduk-apla-iddina II with this Babylonian king's presumable involvement in anti-Assyrian conspiracies between an offensive which he launched in 712 (clearly against Assyria) and his overthrow by Assyria in 710⁽³⁷⁾. Very strong

M. DELCOR, "Le récit de la célébration de la Pâque au temps d'Ezéchias d'après 2 Chr 30 et ses problèmes", *Studien zu Opfer und Kult im Alten Testament* (Hrsg. A. SCHENKER) (Tübingen 1992) 100-106 (concerning historicity); M. COGAN, "The Chronicler's Use of Chronology as Illuminated by Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions", *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (ed. J.H. TIGAY) (Philadelphia 1985) 198-203 (concerning dating). But it seems extremely unlikely that its often-chronological irregularities and makeshifts have been invented (cf. e.g. R.H. LOWERY, *Reforming Kings: Cults and Society in First Temple Judah* [JSOTSS 120; Sheffield 1991] 162-167; contrast unconvincingly e.g. DELCOR, "Pâque", 105-106). Cogan dismisses 2 Chr 29,3's dating of the start of Hezekiah's reform (the 1st day of Nisan [= the 1st month] in his 1st year) as idealizing antedating (COGAN, "Use of Chronology", 203, n. 21). But this ignores the use of such symbolism in life as well as literature!

For a second argument that Judean regnal years were rounded off, cf. 2 Kgs 18,2,13a; 20,1,6.

⁽³⁶⁾ See HAYES – IRVINE, *Eighth Century Prophet*, 267-287, 383-386. Also e.g.: GINSBERG, "Reflexes", 47-49 with n. 4; OSWALT, *Book of Isaiah*, 407-408 (for Isa 22,1-14); the references cited by WILLIS, "Historical Issues", 68-69, n. 28 (for Isa 22,15-23[24]); the references cited by NA'AMAN, "Kings of Assyria", 244 (for 2 Kgs 20).

⁽³⁷⁾ For Marduk-apla-iddina II's offensive in 712, see Babylonian Chronicle i.1.43-44 (A.K. GRAYSON, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* [TCS 5; Locust Valley 1975] 75). Cf. i.41-42; ii.1-5 for this offensive clearly targeted at Assyria. For sources on Marduk-apla-iddina's overthrow in 710, see TADMOR, "Sargon II", 96.

support for Babylonian plotting with the *west* around this time is provided by the extremely weak role played by Nubia and Egypt during and after the Ashdod affair⁽³⁸⁾. The ability of Babylonia to launch an offensive against Assyria in 712 and not be overcome until 710 also fits very well with Hezekiah's apparently strong *post*-invasion position in 2 Kgs 20,12-13 (and 2 Chr 32,23)⁽³⁹⁾.

As noted by Hayes and Irvine, dating Isa 22 to 712 finds further support from its contiguity to chapters 20-21: a) Isa 20 explicitly refers to the Ashdod affair (v. 1); b) Isa 21, which has a wide variety of links to Isa 22⁽⁴⁰⁾, prophesies against Babylon (vv. 1-10). If dated to the Assyrian period, this presumably reflects Babylonian participation in anti-Assyrian plotting with Judah⁽⁴¹⁾, as all but certain c.712.

Dating Isa 21,1-10 to the Assyrian period is often rejected, based on v. 2's reference to "Elam" and "Medes" fighting (to all appearances) *against* Babylon — i.e. (on such a dating) serving as a euphemism for an Assyrian attack⁽⁴²⁾. However the use of such a euphemism c.712-710 is paralleled remarkably closely by Isa 22's reference to only "Elam" and "Kir" (v. 6) as participants in what is *clearly* (cf. vv. 8-11 with 2 Chr 32,2-5; also n.16 above) an Assyrian attack on Hezekiah (section 2 so far: to all appearances in 712). Since good numbers of foreigners, apparently including Iranians, appear to have served in the Assyrian royal guard⁽⁴³⁾, the mobilization of only the royal guard in 712 could help greatly in explaining this extremely surprising (but apparently clear) euphemism.

Dating Isa 21,1-10 to c.712-710, as increasingly widely

⁽³⁸⁾ After failing (along with Egypt) to intervene in 712, Nubia eventually extradited the Ashdodite rebel leader Yamani to Assyria (see n. 26 above).

⁽³⁹⁾ This background largely vitiates an objection to §1's reconstruction, that Hezekiah's strong diplomatic position in 2 Chr 32,23 seems unlikely to have followed 2 Kgs 18,14-16's surrender on terms.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ See e.g. OSWALT, *Book of Isaiah*, 406; C.R. SEITZ, *Isaiah 1-39* (IBC; Louisville 1993) 158.

⁽⁴¹⁾ Cf. e.g. Isa 14,28-32 and, in light of Sargon II's reference to Judean involvement in the Ashdod affair, Isa 20,1-6.

⁽⁴²⁾ So e.g. J. DAY, review of A.A. MACINTOSH, *Isaiah xxi: A Palimpsest*, *JTS* 34 (1983) 214. Contrast unconvincingly e.g. SWEENEY, *Isaiah 1-39*, 281.

⁽⁴³⁾ See e.g. J.E. READE, "The Neo-Assyrian Court and Army: Evidence from the Sculptures", *Iraq* 34 (1972) 107; S. STOHLMANN, "The Judean Exile after 701 B.C.E.", *Scripture in Context II: More Essays on the Comparative Method* (eds. W.W. HALLO et al.) (Winona Lake 1983) 163-164.

accepted⁽⁴¹⁾, has the important advantage of explaining vv. 3-4's otherwise problematic trembling over the fall of Babylon⁽⁴²⁾ by its implications for late 8th century Judah — i.e. by Isaiah's recognition (in spite of his aversion to foreign alliances!) of the giant step which this would represent towards Assyrian fulfillment of Yahweh's terrible plan for Judah (cf. v. 10's reference to threshing). This explanation is strongly supported by Isa 20's apparent confirmation of the fearful significance of the fall of Babylon to Isaiah: taken straightforwardly, this text indicates that Isaiah walked around naked for "three years", starting in the year of Ashdod's fall — i.e. from 712 to 710 (reckoning inclusively) — before the explanation was given by Yahweh that this behavior symbolized the coming overthrow of Levantine and Nilotic opposition to Assyria. This nakedness also provides Isa 22 with a further connection to 712 as Isa 22,6.8.14 all refer to uncovering.

3. Dating the Fall of Samaria to 720 / Year 6 of Hezekiah

In recent years, the fall of Samaria has been the most intensively discussed subject in later 8th century biblical history and chronology. The proposal of most interest here is Galil's identification of the biblical fall of Samaria, i.e. the conquest recounted by 2 Kgs 17,6; 18,10 (and dated to year 6 of Hezekiah by 2 Kgs 18,10), with its known fall to Sargon II in 720⁽⁴³⁾. This fits perfectly chronologically with both the death of Josiah in 609 and the apparent dating of year 14 of Hezekiah to 712.

Preferring this identification to a hypothetical capture of Samaria in 722 or 723 is further supported by the following considerations.

It seems extremely unlikely that the crushing of a subsequent revolt in 720 would have merited the great pride which Sargon II later, after many great victories, took in his conquest of Samaria, as

⁽⁴¹⁾ See e.g. HAYES – IRVINE, *Eighth Century Prophet*, 274-276; SEITZ, *Isaiah 1-39*, 157-159. Cf. SWEENEY, *Isaiah 1-39*, 279-283. Contrast e.g. DAY, review of MACINTOSH, *Palimpsest*, 212-215.

⁽⁴²⁾ This trembling fits very poorly with the usual dating of Isa 21,1-10 to the 6th century, when Babylon was a much-hated foe. [Use of Hab 3,16 as a parallel (e.g. by DAY, review of MACINTOSH *Palimpsest*, 213-214) fails because Hab 3 (unlike Isa 21,1-10) otherwise celebrates as Yahweh's victory the events which it describes].

⁽⁴³⁾ See GALIL, "Last Years", 61-62. So also — apart from the synchronism with Hezekiah — LAATO, "New Viewpoints", 217-219; NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 218-222.

indicated by its "central position in Sargon's inscriptions composed in his later years"⁽⁴⁷⁾.

2 Kgs 17,4-6 and 18,9-11 know nothing of a double capture of the Israelite capital. While the possibility that 2 Kgs 17,4-6 has telescoped together two distinct Assyrian captures of Samaria is supported by 2 Kgs 17,3-6's implicit conflation of two distinct Assyrian kings⁽⁴⁸⁾, a seemingly clearly *much* less important earlier campaign by Shalmaneser is noted separately (2 Kgs 17,3)⁽⁴⁹⁾.

It seems especially unlikely that the end of Israelite history in 720 (after which Samaria appears in Assyrian sources as a province and the scene of large-scale deportations) would have been ignored by biblical writers in favor of a temporary capture of the capital a few years earlier.

Two widely accepted but unconvincing arguments against dating the biblical fall of Samaria to 720 depend on identifying the Assyrian king involved as Shalmaneser V (726-722)⁽⁵⁰⁾: (1) This ruler's devastation of *šam/bara'in* (Babylonian Chronicle 1.i.28) is very

⁽⁴⁷⁾ See NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 208 for the preceding argument. Cf. *ibid.* for the following argument.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ See likewise e.g. BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 392 (compare and contrast below including nn. 53-56).

⁽⁴⁹⁾ While 2 Kgs 17,3's campaign by Shalmaneser has often been considered a doublet of v. 5, this lacks textual justification (see e.g. NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 213; HAYES – KUAN, "Final Years", 160, n. 17; BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 50) and produces highly questionable results (see e.g. GALIL, "Last Years", 52-53). A campaign against Israel early in the reign of Shalmaneser V fits very well with known Assyrian campaigns in Phoenicia at this time (Josephus, *Ant.*, 9.283-287; cf. the second paragraph of n. 52 below) — undermining any attempt (e.g. by GALIL, "Last Years", 62-63) to reject 2 Kgs 17,3 as its author's invention.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Supplemental arguments for Shalmaneser V's capture of Samaria arise from the limited booty reported for 720 and Sargon II's usual suggestion that his conquest came in response to a new anti-Assyrian conspiracy (implying in turn that Shalmaneser had himself finished what he started in 2 Kgs 18,9 and [implicitly] 2 Kgs 17,5). However, the first of these objections can be met by noting the expenses of the long revolt and the second seems over-rigid. Moreover, one broken text (written soon after the events of 720) quite likely originally stated explicitly (with NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 209-210 and many other writers) that the Samaritan conspiracy had begun under Sargon II's predecessor (although note BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 29, n. 29). The best alternative (with HAYES – KUAN, "Final Years", 171-178) seems to be a statement that the Samaritans "came to an agreement" with an (Israelite) king. However this wording is implausible and the existence of such a necessarily post-Hoshean king is unlikely on negative biblical and Assyrian evidence.

widely set in 723 or 722, referred to a Babylonian rendering of an Aramaean form of the Hebrew for Samaria, שֶׁמֶרֶן (cf. Ezra 4,10: שֶׁמֶרֶן), and understood as a reference to the biblical fall of Samaria⁽⁵¹⁾. With Na'aman and many earlier writers, however, this devastation appears clearly datable to the accession year of Shalmaneser V (mentioned in i.27-28), i.e. the winter of 726⁽⁵²⁾. (2) 2 Kgs 18,9 states

Sargon II's failure to recognize any successor of Hoshea can theoretically be explained (ibid., 174; cf. 165-166, 169) by Shalmaneser V's prior provincialization of Samaria (which would also help justify [together with attendant deportations] the still widely accepted equation of 2 Kgs 17-18's definitive fall of Samaria with its temporary conquest by Shalmaneser). But this seems extremely unlikely due to Sargon II's great pride (see above with n. 47) over his Samarian victory.

(⁵¹) So TADMOR, "Sargon II", 39-40, recently followed in general by e.g. HAYES – KUAN, "Final Years", 158-159; BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 24.

(⁵²) See NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 210-211. This precise dating follows (pace e.g. HAYES – KUAN, "Final Years", 158-159; BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 24; GALIL, "Last Years", 59 point [1]) from simply understanding the entry in Babylonian Chronicle I.i.24-28 as the record of a single year — an understanding clearly required for Babylonian Chronicle I entries with essentially the same format covering accession years of kings of Babylon in 722 (see i.29-32, noting that New Year's Day in Babylonia was reckoned as the last day of the old year) and 694 (see ii.36-45 and cf. the date in ii.46). [See GRAYSON, *Chronicles*, 73, 78 for these entries and J.A. BRINKMAN, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia*, 1158-722 B.C. (ANOr 43; Rome 1968) 241, n. 1517 concerning the Babylonian new year]. The claim that i.28's reference to *šam/bara'in* was originally an "undated notice" (BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 24) is very weak, as i.6-8; iii.16-18 (GRAYSON, *Chronicles*, 71, 80) explicitly note undated material.

The apparently unavoidable dating of *šam/bara'in*'s destruction to the winter of 726 does raise a historical problem (cf. e.g. HAYES – KUAN, "Final Years", 160-161; BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 24-25): the city (*uni*) of Samaria was clearly not destroyed at this time and even devastation (with feasibly loose Babylonian usage) of the land of Samaria (with NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 211 based on 2 Kgs 17:3) is likely incommensurate with 2 Kgs 17,3's seemingly limited first campaign against Israel by Shalmaneser V. However reading *šam/bara'in* as a form of Samaria is much less certain than usually thought: such a form remains unparalleled in either Aramaic or Akkadian and a philologically impeccable alternative is available, Sibraim between Damascus and Hamath (see e.g. W.F. ALBRIGHT, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* [Baltimore any edition] 220, n. 116). A campaign in the winter of 726 against Sibraim (or Samaria) fits excellently (a point ignored by GALIL, "Last Years", 59 point [6] in the context of Samaria) with the likely dating (so e.g. COGAN – TADMOR, *II Kings*, 198-199; NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 215) of Shalmaneser V's swiftly successful first invasion of Phoenicia (Josephus, *Ant.*, 9.283-285) to just this time (presumably [with e.g.

that "Shalmaneser" began a siege of Samaria which 2 Kgs 17,5-6 suggests was started and ended by one and the same king — presumably Shalmaneser, who is mentioned in v. 3⁽⁵³⁾). However it is hardly possible (unless the above suggestion [or the above statement and presumption] is rejected) to avoid conflation of two Assyrian kings in 2 Kgs 17,5-6 (on any chronology): These verses suggest just as strongly that the king who started the siege of Samaria was responsible for the main round of Assyrian deportations from Samaria. But Sargon II is well-substantiated in this role, whereas such a role for Shalmaneser V is purely speculative — and appears highly unlikely in view of the very important role played by Samaria in the resistance to Assyria in 720⁽⁵⁴⁾. The likelihood that 2 Kgs 17,5-6 has conflated two distinct Assyrian kings is strongly reinforced by a comparison with 2 Kgs 18,9-11, which provides the only explicit reference to Shalmaneser after the early reign of Hoshea⁽⁵⁵⁾ and does *not* imply that he completed the siege of Samaria. Very plausibly to the contrary, it states only that "they took it"⁽⁵⁶⁾.

On the preceding basis, Shalmaneser's invasion of Israel in year 4 of Hezekiah (so explicitly 2 Kgs 18,9) would be dated to 722, consistent with the death of Shalmaneser V around the end of this Julian year. The lengthy ensuing siege of Samaria (probably an oversimplification) would then be dated to 722-720, fitting very well with Assyrian difficulties during this period⁽⁵⁷⁾.

HAYES – KUAN, "Final Years", 159-161] as the continuation of plausibly-indicated campaigning in this region during the latest reign of Tiglath-Pileser III). Babylonian reference to Shalmaneser V's destruction of the obscure Sibraim can be simply explained by his status as king of Babylon (and evident failure to achieve any more notable feat during this winter campaign).

(⁵³) See similarly e.g. HAYES – KUAN, "Final Years", 165, n. 26 (arguing just from 2 Kgs 17,3-6).

(⁵⁴) For the roles played by Sargon II, Shalmaneser V and Samaria, see respectively Laato, Galil and Na'aman (n. 8 above), Hayes and Kuan (n. 50 above), and above with n. 47.

(⁵⁵) Cf. n. 49 above on 2 Kgs 17,3.

(⁵⁶) Cf. BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 52 on 2 Kgs 18,10's "they". With e.g. HAYES – KUAN, "Final Years", 166, n. 27; BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 51-53; GALIL, "Last Years", 59 point (5), 62 against NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 222, there is no reason to consider 2 Kgs 18,9-12 an inferior source to 2 Kgs 17,3-6. See also above with nn. 8-9 on Sargon II's absence from 2 Kgs 17,6; 18,10.

(⁵⁷) See similarly GALIL, "Last Years", 60-61. Cf. LAATO, "New Viewpoints", 217. Compare and contrast NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 221, n. 45; BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 56.

4. Dating the Reign of Hoshea to 729-720

A possible problem for dating the biblical fall of Samaria to 720 arises from its dating in Israelite terms to the 9th year of Hoshea (2 Kgs 17,6; 18,10)⁽⁵⁸⁾. A dating of this regnal year to 720 is universally considered too late due to Assyrian evidence bearing on Hoshea's accession-date. However this supposedly decisive argument⁽⁵⁹⁾ appears to be a baseless relic of earlier views: Originally it seemed natural to date the overthrow of Hoshea's predecessor, Pekah, to the later part of the highly successful Syro-Palestinian campaign carried out by Pekah's foe, Tiglath-Pileser III, between 734 and 732. This dating appeared to be confirmed by two annalistic texts of Tiglath-Pileser (Summ. 4; Summ. 13), which refer to this campaign just before the death of Pekah. Moreover one of these texts has tribute from Hoshea sent to Tiglath-Pileser on campaign (Summ. 4:17'-19'), which was naturally taken as a reference to the same campaign. However these texts are now both understood to be summary inscriptions⁽⁶⁰⁾. And it is now generally accepted, on the basis of a collation published by Borger and Tadmor in 1982, that Summ. 9:r.11 (in a broken passage which this text's geographic sequence rather clearly refers to Hoshea) places reception of the above tribute at "Sarrabanu" in *southern Babylonia*⁽⁶¹⁾.

This roundabout sending of tribute to Assyria by way of Babylonia can best be explained (with most scholars)⁽⁶²⁾ as a non-routine measure associated with Hoshea's takeover. Since *some* connection between Tiglath-Pileser's Syro-Palestinian campaign and Hoshea's takeover is still very widely thought desirable⁽⁶³⁾, and Tiglath-Pileser personally

⁽⁵⁸⁾ This dating is frequently criticized (e.g. by NA'AMAN, "Historical Background", 211; implicitly H. TADMOR, *Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III* [Jerusalem 1994] 277) due to Hoshea's capture (2 Kgs 17,4) before the start of the siege of Samaria (2 Kgs 17,5: in year 7 of Hoshea). However his evident (n. 50 above) lack of a successor makes it very likely that Hoshea's regnal years were simply recognized in absentia down to the fall of Samaria.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ So emphatically GALIL, "Last Years", 63 with n. 38. See also e.g. TADMOR, "Sargon II", 37; BECKING, *Fall of Samaria*, 56.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 198-199. See also NA'AMAN, "Chronological Notes", 71-74; HAYES - KUAN, "Final Years", 154-156.

⁽⁶¹⁾ See R. BORGER - H. TADMOR, "Zwei Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft aufgrund der Inschriften Tiglatpilesers III", ZAW 94 (1982) 244-249.

⁽⁶²⁾ So e.g. BORGER - TADMOR, "Zwei Beiträge", 249; NA'AMAN, "Chronological Notes", 73-74; HAYES - KUAN, "Final Years", 155. Contrast TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 277-278.

⁽⁶³⁾ Cf. e.g. HAYES - KUAN, "Final Years", 156; TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 277-278.

campaigned in southern Babylonia in 731, Hoshea's tribute is universally dated to this year. However Tiglath-Pileser also campaigned in this region personally in 729⁽⁶⁴⁾, which appears *equally* possible for the sending of tribute to Sarrabanu⁽⁶⁵⁾: according to Tadmor⁽⁶⁶⁾, Sarrabanu was "taken in 731-729, after a prolonged siege"! Nor is there any real argument for linking Pekah's demise to the 734-732 campaign: the broken context of the apparent reference of Summ. 13:18' to the elimination of Pekah appears (in view of an Assyrian parallel) to confirm 2 Kgs 15,30's depiction of his death as a purely Israelite affair⁽⁶⁷⁾, and he could extremely plausibly have survived the Assyrian onslaught due to the outbreak of a very serious Babylonian revolt towards the end of the 734-732 campaign⁽⁶⁸⁾. Indeed such survival appears to be *indicated* by Summ. 13:17'-18' (so already G. Smith; recently Na'aman)⁽⁶⁹⁾: these lines refer to "campaigns" against Israel that "spared Samaria" in an *aside referring to an earlier period*, followed immediately in the main narrative by an apparent reference to the assassination of Pekah (so e.g. both Na'aman and Tadmor)⁽⁷⁰⁾.

Dating Hoshea's tribute (apparently connected with his takeover) to 729 would highly likely date his accession to this year as well⁽⁷¹⁾.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Babylonian Chronicle I.i.19-23 (GRAYSON, *Chronicles*, 72)

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Contrast explicitly HAYES - KUAN, "Final Years", 156.

⁽⁶⁶⁾ TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 161, note to line 15

⁽⁶⁷⁾ See *ibid.*, 202-203.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ See e.g. J.A. BRINKMAN, *Prelude to Empire: Babylonian Society and Politics, 747-626 B.C.* (Philadelphia 1984) 42-43 for this revolt.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ See G. SMITH, "On a New Fragment of the Assyrian Canon Belonging to the Reign of Tiglath-Pileser and Shalmaneser", *TSBA* 2 (1873) 323; NA'AMAN, "Chronological Notes", 72.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ See NA'AMAN, "Chronological Notes", 72; TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 202-203.

⁽⁷¹⁾ Theoretically, the receipt of Hoshea's initial tribute could be dated early in 729, with his accession late in 730. However, biblical data clearly entail a short interregnum between Pekah and Hoshea: cf. 2 Kgs 15,27.30.32 (see below following n. 96: implying that Pekah died, in the same Judaeen regnal year as Hoshea's accession, between the Judaeen and Israelite royal new years) with 2 Kgs 16,2; 17,1; 18,1 in light of 2 Chr 29,3 (cf. McHUGH, "Hezekiah's Birth", 451; n. 35 above: implying that Hoshea acceded between the Israelite and Judaeen royal new years). Since there is no evidence for internal opposition to Hoshea at the start of his reign, this delay on his part in taking the throne should presumably be understood as prudent deference to Tiglath-Pileser III — agreeing excellently with the latter's claim to have "installed Hoshea [as king]" (Summ. 4:17'-18'). This scenario greatly minimizes the chance that an Assyrian new year passed between Hoshea's accession and the receipt of his initial tribute at Sarrabanu.

An accession-date of 729 for Hoshea would date his 9th year, very attractively, to the *known* fall of Samaria in 720 (so already Smith)⁽⁷²⁾ — if the chronographic data for Hoshea are based on postdating. Such usage *does* appear to be indicated (assuming no changes in chronographic conventions during this period) by a combination of data involving Hoshea (whose reign for 9 years [2 Kgs 17,1] presumably ended with the fall of Samaria in his 9th year) and Menahem (who acceded in year 39 of Uzziah and ruled 10 years, but died in year 50 of Uzziah [2 Kgs 15,17.23]): The evidence involving Hoshea implies that Israelite regnal year totals from this period have been rounded off (as very widely accepted). This makes Menahem's 10th year his last, implying that it overlapped with year 50 of Uzziah. This is only possible (in view of the year 39 datum) if Menahem used postdating⁽⁷³⁾.

In short: rather than impeaching sections 2-3's argument for dating the biblical fall of Samaria to 720, 2 Kgs 17,6; 18,10's Israelite synchronisms fit extremely well with this dating.

5. Dating the Death of Menahem to 743 and Later 8th Century Biblical Chronology

The high dating of Hezekiah's accession (c.727-725) can be criticized for entailing (on the basis of biblical data) a triple overlap among Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz⁽⁷⁴⁾. Lowering the date of Pekah's replacement by Hoshea (cf. 2 Kgs 15,30; 17,1: in year 20 of Jotham / year 12 of Ahaz) from c.731 to 729 minimizes this difficulty by dating Ahaz's accession to 741 or 740 (rather than slightly earlier). But since Menahem died in year 50 of Uzziah and Uzziah reigned for 52 years (2 Kgs 15,2.23), the fit remains too tight (cf. Fig.1 below) unless Menahem's death can be dated to 743⁽⁷⁵⁾. This conflicts with a currently accepted upper limit of 738⁽⁷⁶⁾.

⁽⁷²⁾ SMITH, 'New Fragment', 323-324.

⁽⁷³⁾ See McHUGH, 'Hezekiah's Birth', 448.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ So e.g. E.R. THIELE, 'Pekah to Hezekiah', VT 16 (1966) 102. This objection can be avoided by rejecting (e.g.) 2 Kgs 15,32 and making Jotham a predeceased coregent of Uzziah.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ An earlier date would also fit in this regard, but Menahem's synchronism with Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kgs 15,19) cannot precede the latter's first western campaign in 743.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ See recently on this upper limit (too low for the MT of 2 Kgs 15,1) TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 274; also NA'AMAN, 'Chronological Notes', 81-82

As with Hoshea, however, evidence was published a few decades ago that confirms the very real possibility of the necessary redating of Menahem. Previously, debate had centered on the setting of two Assyrian tribute-lists, Ann. 13*:10-14*:2 — which contained the only known report of tribute from Menahem in an annalistic text (Ann. 13*:10) — and Ann. 21:4'-9'⁽⁷⁷⁾. The Ann. 13*-14* list is immediately followed by the start of an account of Tiglath-Pileser's 737 campaign and immediately preceded by an account of the aftermath of a campaign against Azriyau (continued from Ann. 19*). The Azriyau campaign is very widely (following Tadmor) and very plausibly dated to 738, based on: (1) its immediately pre-737 position, and (2) resettlement in the course of this campaign of Ulluba (Ann. 19*:12) and Unqi (Ann. 13*:4-5), the conquests of which are highlighted by the Eponym Chronicle entries for 739 and 738, respectively⁽⁷⁸⁾. On this basis, the Ann. 13*-14* list per se appears to be set in 738 (*pace* Thiele⁽⁷⁹⁾: 743).

However the assumption of a like dating for the entire *contents* of this list can no longer be relied on, due to evidence from an annalistic Iran stele published in 1972-73⁽⁸⁰⁾. This text concludes, following a break, with a geographical summary of Tiglath-Pileser's conquests, an account of a still on-going 737 campaign, and a

with references. The MT of 2 Kgs 15,1 has been rejected (e.g. by GALIL, *Chronology*, 60, n. 47) based on its supposed contradiction by 1 Chr 5,17's statement that the Transjordanian genealogies given by vv. 3-16 were written down "in the days of Jotham king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel" [literal translation]. However a synchronism between Jeroboam II and Jotham would contradict the latter's synchronisms with Pekah in 2 Kgs 15,30.32 (which are hardly calculated in view of their [see below following n. 96] *seeming* slight numerical discordance) and the supposed synchronism in 1 Chr 5,17 can be avoided by referring this verse to two distinct censuses (as is very consistent with its language and summary nature). A post-Jeroboam II Transjordanian census dated under Jotham agrees with his supremacy over the Ammonites in 2 Chr 27,5. Since Pekah was apparently based in Gilead (2 Kgs 15,25), this strong position of Jotham surely entails his simultaneous role as suzerain (or ally) of Pekah — agreeing excellently with 2 Kgs 15,32's surprising dating of Jotham's accession in terms of Pekah's regnal years as (see below at nn. 92-94) *counter-king*.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ See TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 54-59 for Ann. 21+25; *ibid.*, 66-71 for Ann. 13*-14*.

⁽⁷⁸⁾ See *ibid.*, 274-276 with references.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Contrast THIELE, *Mysterious Numbers*, 139-162.

⁽⁸⁰⁾ See TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 92-110, 260-264.

tribute-list (including Menahem) which is clearly⁽⁸¹⁾ a composite involving tribute from more than one year (Stele III A 1-30). This evidence makes a composite list in Ann. 13* -14* very attractive by providing: (1) a clear parallel, set just one year later, for the use of a composite tribute-list in an annalistic text, and (2) a parallel (the stele's geographic summary) for a composite record immediately preceding an account of the 737 campaign.

Ann. 21:4'-9', together with a description of tribute which continues through Ann. 25:2', further supports this possibility by supplying what appears to be a distinct tribute-list restricted to tribute received during the 738 campaign. A setting of Ann. 21+25 in 738 / at the time of the Azriyau episode appears highly likely (see likewise Tadmor)⁽⁸²⁾ due to the *total* conquest of Unqi in Ann. 25:3'-12', as also indicated by the Eponym Chronicle entry for 738 and presumably by Ann. 13*:4-5's resettlement of Unqi for the Azriyau episode. But the broken tribute-list in Ann. 21:4'-9' (not [now] naming Menahem or Samaria) was considerably shorter (even originally) than the list in Ann. 13*:10-14*:2, treats Rezin separately and in much more detail, is specified as dealing with tribute received in Arpad, and was apparently followed immediately (after a description of the tribute in question) by a reference to another campaign in the same year (rather than by a year-break)⁽⁸³⁾. All of these factors support a distinction between the Ann. 21+25 list as an original record of tribute received in 738 and the Ann. 13*-14* list (which includes all extant tributaries from the Ann. 21+25 list) as a composite.

Even more surprising than the composite nature of the Iran stele list (set in 737) is its probable reflection, in part, of an *earlier* situation than the Ann. 13*-14* list (set in 738)⁽⁸⁴⁾. This further substantiates the existence of chronological laxness in tribute-lists attached to annalistic texts (as required for a 743 dating of Menahem's death). On the other hand, this situation indicates that the Ann. 13*-14* list (including Menahem) *has* been updated. However this updating involved (as far as known) only replacement of a vassal by his successor as vassal and addition of a new vassal

⁽⁸¹⁾ See *ibid.*, 263.

⁽⁸²⁾ See *ibid.*, 219-220.

⁽⁸³⁾ See *ibid.*, 54-59, 265, Plate XXIV. Ann. 21:4'-9' has one lacuna that *might* (cf. *ibid.*, 265) have originally contained Menahem's name and country.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ See e.g. *ibid.*, 266-268 for this probable understanding.

— not omission or blatant falsification, as would presumably have been necessary for updating in the case of Israel⁽⁸⁵⁾ and could very well have been considered undesirable.

Other biblical evidence probably bears directly on the dating of Menahem's reported tribute. 2 Kgs 15,19 tells of a voluntary payment from Menahem to Tiglath-Pileser, "so that he would support him in holding on to the kingdom"⁽⁸⁶⁾. This was associated with Tiglath-Pileser's personal (albeit transitory) presence in Israel (vv. 19-20). Since the Eponym Chronicle appears to indicate military paralysis in northern Syria in 743 (see just below), followed by north Syrian conflict with Assyria or Tiglath-Pileser's involvement elsewhere until 734 (the start of his Syro-Palestinian campaign, which postdates Menahem on both Assyrian and biblical evidence), a personal intervention by Tiglath-Pileser III in Menahem's favor appears best dated to 743. The key point concerning this year is that the principal Urartian defeat occurred in Kummukh, clearly to the north of Arpad. As a result, the Eponym Chronicle entry for 743 appears to be clearly readable as a double entry: "In Arpad. A defeat was inflicted on Urartu"⁽⁸⁷⁾. The contrast with entries for 742-740, each including "Against Arpad.", is widely taken to rule out this reading⁽⁸⁸⁾, but very plausibly simply reflects *temporary* paralysis of north Syrian resistance to Assyria following the great Assyrian victory over Urartu in 743.

To be sure, the tribute from Menahem reported in Assyrian sources could be later than that recounted by 2 Kgs 15,19-20 (a possibility mooted by Tadmor)⁽⁸⁹⁾. However a more economical solution is supported — especially in view of the lack of other Palestinian tributaries in this early period — by the evident backfire of Menahem's Assyrian policy: After describing the very onerous taxation required to pay for Tiglath-Pileser's help, 2 Kgs 15,19-20 is generally thought to conclude banally and cryptically: "Then (1)

⁽⁸⁵⁾ The anti-Assyrian Pekah was already a power in the Israelite government under Menahem's ephemeral successor, Pekahiah (2 Kgs 15,25).

⁽⁸⁶⁾ See e.g. COGAN — TADMOR, *II Kings*, 169-170, 172 for this clearly indicated understanding.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ So M.C. ASTOUR, "The Arena of Tiglath-Pileser III's Campaign against Sarduri II (743 B.C.)", *Assur* 2/3 (1979) 8; likewise MILLARD, *Eponyms*, 59 and most early writers. Contrast most recent writers, e.g. TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 232-233 including n. 7 (cf. just below).

⁽⁸⁸⁾ See e.g. H. TADMOR, "Azriyau of Yaudi", *ScrHe* 8 (1962) 254.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ See TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 276.

the king of Assyria withdrew and did not remain there in the country" (⁹⁰). However, translating γ as "but" (⁹¹) yields a straightforward account of a fiasco. This evident fiasco also fits very well with Menahem's *death* in 743 (as required to avoid a triple overlap among Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz), since it means that 2 Kgs 15,20's memorably onerous and so extremely plausibly *already* desperate taxation to pay off Tiglath-Pileser III bought Menahem little but ill-will from his kingdom.

This scenario for the latest reign of Menahem also allows a rather satisfactory resolution to the difficult problem of Pekah's reign for 20 years (2 Kgs 15,27). One common solution (inconsistent with Fig. 1) is antedating on Pekah's part (as a sheer fabrication) back to the death of Zechariah. But this begs the question of how such a fiction was perpetuated: Pekah was succeeded by his assassin Hoshea and survived by his Judaeen foe Ahaz. This fiction also has a very improbable corollary, the origin of Jotham's accession in year 2 of Pekah (2 Kgs 15,32) as a calculated synchronism. There is no evidence for the use of such a procedure by MT (⁹²) and such an origin appears especially unlikely for the Pekah / Jotham synchronisms due to their *seeming* slight numerical discordance with each other (⁹³). The principal alternative to antedating by Pekah is inclusion in his 20 years of a period as counter-king (*pace* 2 Kgs 15,27's clearly impossible and universally rejected: "in Samaria 20 years" [literal translation]). The existence of such a rival to Menahem fits extremely well with his *voluntary* payment of a very onerous bribe for military help. The only real objection to Pekah's counter-kingship arises from his service as an officer under Menahem's son Pekahiah (2 Kgs 15,25) prior to assassinating him. However a pseudo-reconciliation between Pekah and Pekahiah is very plausible if Menahem died shortly after Tiglath-Pileser III's intervention: Pekahiah would still have been heavily tainted by Menahem's unpopular taxation and Pekah (in addition to welcoming access to Pekahiah's person) would still have been weakened by whatever momentary help Menahem had derived from Tiglath-Pileser (⁹⁴).

(⁹⁰) See COGAN – TADMOR, *II Kings*, 170 for this translation.

(⁹¹) See BDB 252 (1e) for this usage.

(⁹²) E.R. THIELE, "The Azariah and Hezekiah Synchronisms", VT 16 (1966) 105-106 is vitiated by n. 71's interregnum (above).

(⁹³) See below following n. 96; cf. also n. 76 above.

(⁹⁴) Contrast on the problem of Pekah e.g. NA'AMAN, "Chronological Notes", 75-81.

Since Uzziah reigned for 52 years, the suggested dating to 743-729 of the interval from the death of Menahem (in year 50 of Uzziah) to the death of Pekah / accession of Hoshea (in year 20 of Jotham / year 12 of Ahaz) could very well avoid a triple overlap of Judaeen kings. However the chronology is tight enough for the feasibility of this solution to depend on the chronological conventions in use during this period. These appear to include, in both Israel and Judah, rounding off of regnal year totals for all rulers and postdating for non-coregents (⁹⁵). To avoid a triple overlap, antedating for Judaeen coregents is also required (cf. Fig. 1). With a Tishri (i.e. early fall) royal new year in Judah (which seems more likely than the alternative dating in Nisan, i.e. early spring), a brief coregency between Hezekiah and Ahaz would also be necessary (⁹⁶).

Such a coregency is unexceptional (indeed to be expected) in view of known 8th century Judaeen practice. And antedating by Judaeen coregents during this period follows from 2 Kgs 15,30,32, which separate the death of Pekah from the accession of Jotham (as universally accepted on chronological grounds, clearly during the lifetime of Uzziah) by 18 Israelite royal new years (based on rounding off for Pekah) and 19 or 20 Judaeen royal new years, depending on whether Jotham's regnal years were antedated or postdated. 18 var. 19 years for this interval requires only the accession of Jotham between the Israelite and Judaeen royal new years and the death of Pekah between the Judaeen and Israelite royal new years. But 18 var. 20 years is impossible.

The scheme of later 8th century biblical chronology arising from preceding considerations is precisely-defined (⁹⁷) and discards no biblical data apart from the seemingly unavoidable recognition of

(⁹⁵) See above preceding n. 73 for Israel and n. 35 above for Judah.

(⁹⁶) A Nisan royal new year in Judah would allow at most a half month for the events recounted by 2 Chr 34,8-32, which are generally accepted as having occurred in Josiah's 18th year prior to Passover (= mid-Nisan). A Tishri royal new year in Judah is required for consistent usage between 2 Kgs 18,2,13a; 20,1,6 and 2 Kgs 14,2,17,23, as this is only possible if 2 Kgs 14,17 and 20,6 were calculated using a civil new year (known to have begun in Nisan) *distinct* from the royal new year (see TADMOR, "First Temple Period", 373-374 for new years used in ancient Palestine). Fig. 1 is based on a Judaeen royal new year in Tishri (with a spring royal new year in Israel; for a c. 1/2 year offset very likely, cf. e.g. McHUGH, "Hezekiah's Birth", 451; text just below). If the correct date is Nisan, all events down to the accession of Hezekiah would move up by 1/2 year and no coregency would be indicated.

(⁹⁷) Cf. Fig. 1; above including n. 96.

conflation between two Assyrian campaigns in 2 Kgs 18,13–19,37 etc., conflation between two Assyrian kings in 2 Kgs 17,3–6 (cf. also v. 5 with 2 Kgs 18,9), and misunderstanding of Pekah's early counter-kingship in 2 Kgs 15,27^(*).

Combining a number of recent shifts in viewpoint leads towards a solution for later 8th century biblical chronology along the following lines.

(*) See respectively §1, above following n. 53, and above with nn. 92–94.

Note concerning the death of Ahaz: Isa 14,29–32, dated to “the year that king Ahaz died” (v. 28), warns Philistines not to rejoice over the broken “rod that chastised you” because their foe’s offspring would be of like nature (v. 29). As very widely accepted, this appears to date Isa 14,29–32 to soon after the death of an Assyrian king who had conquered Philistia — and is clearly identifiable as Tiglath-Pileser III on chronological and historical grounds. However the immediate cause of the Philistine embassy that evidently occasioned this oracle (v. 32) was very probably the death of the anti-Philistine / pro-Assyrian Ahaz himself. And the usual significance of a broken rod in Isaiah is not specifically the death of an overlord, but rather the end of foreign (i.e. Assyrian) domination (see J.T. WILLIS, “‘Rod’ and ‘Staff’ in Isaiah 1–39”, *OTEs* 3 [1990] 93–106). So if Ahaz actually died soon (but not immediately) after the death of Tiglath-Pileser III c. the end of the Julian year 727 — and Assyrian power in the west was being shaken at the same time — the concatenation of imagery in v. 29 would still be extremely appropriate. [For this dating of the death of Ahaz, cf. §§2–3 with above including n. 96. For Assyrian power shaken at this time, cf. e.g. Isa 14,28–32 itself; 2 Chr 30,1.10–11; seemingly Isa 9,3; and the probable outbreak of the principal western revolt against Shalmaneser V in 726 / early 725 (cf. e.g. COGAN – TADMOR, *II Kings*, 198–199; NA’AMAN, “Historical Background”, 213–216; HAYES – KUAN, “Final Years”, 161).]

Note concerning Jotham’s reign for 16 years (2 Kgs 15,33): In view of reference to his “20th year” (2 Kgs 15,30), and partial parallels involving Jehoiachin (Ezek 1,2) and Hoshea (cf. n. 58 above; above preceding n. 73), these 16 years very likely ended with his deposition by Assyria. This fits excellently with Fig.1’s dating to the spring/summer of 733. Evidence that Ahaz was already in charge of policy in 734 (TADMOR, *Tiglath-Pileser*, 268; probably 2 Kgs 16,5–18 and Isa 7) would then indicate his creeping deposition of Jotham.

Fig.1’s chronographic conventions agree with Thiele. Fig.1’s dates for Uzziah and his Israelite contemporaries from Jeroboam II on are 1 year higher than Thiele. This is consistent with Thiele’s scheme for the period prior to Jeroboam II and Uzziah, since Amaziah could (on Thiele’s scheme for this period) as well have died in the fall of 768 / winter of 767 as in Thiele’s assumed spring/summer of 767 (see e.g. THIELE, *Mysterious Numbers*, 110).

1) As recently emphasized by Seitz, the usual setting of 2 Kgs 18,14–16 in 701 cannot be justified. This means that apparent contradictions between 2 Kgs 18,14–16 and 2 Kgs 18,17–19,37 (clearly set in 701) could very well reflect confusion between two distinct Assyrian campaigns against Hezekiah.

2) Confusion with a *pre*-701 campaign is supported by the lesser nature of 2 Kgs 18,14–16’s campaign, v. 13’s dating to year 14 of Hezekiah (now very widely thought to precede 701), and much material in 2 Kgs 20, 2 Chr 32 and Isa 22.

3) The only datable episode that can plausibly be connected with an Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah prior to 701 involves Assyrian suppression in 712 of a plot organized by Ashdod, in which Judah was implicated. This combination appears to be substantiated by the Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah reported in the Azekah text, which appears datable to 712 (so e.g. Galil). Dating the suggested initial Assyrian campaign against Hezekiah to 712 also produces an extremely attractive concatenation involving Isa 20–22, 2 Kgs 20 and events in Babylonia between 712 and 710 (Hayes and Irvine).

4) The presence of the Assyrian king at Lachish in 2 Kgs 18,14 is very consistent with his absence from Ashdod in Isa 20,1. While 2 Kgs 18,14 disagrees with the Eponym Chronicle entry for 712: “in the land” (= Assyria), Sargon II’s claim that he commanded the Ashdod campaign in person appears to be confirmed — an overlooked and seemingly crucial point — by the make-up of the invasion force, which consisted solely of the Assyrian *royal guard*. This limited mobilization presumably left the Ashdod campaign outside the scope of the Eponym Chronicle.

5) Dating year 14 of Hezekiah to 712 fits perfectly with evidence for subsequent Judaeon chronology as well as Galil’s recent identification of the biblical fall of Samaria in year 6 of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18,10) with its capture by Sargon II in 720 (so also — apart from the synchronism with Hezekiah — Laato; Na’aman).

6) An important new point is that the preceding identification makes 2 Kgs 17–18’s implication that Shalmaneser was the conqueror of Samaria an error for Sargon II. This provides an excellent parallel for 2 Kgs 18,13’s suggested reference to Sennacherib in error for Sargon II in connection with the campaign in 2 Kgs 18,14–16. This apparent pattern would seem to be related to Isa 14,20’s hoped-for *proscription* of a tyrant who is generally identified as Sargon II.

7) 2 Kgs 18,10's parallel dating of the fall of Samaria to year 9 of Hoshea is generally thought to date this fall prior to 720. However, this view is based on tribute from Hoshea, thought datable to 731, which can equally well be dated to 729.

8) Combining even 729 for Hoshea's accession with the generally accepted upper limit of 738 for the death of Menahem entails a triple overlap among Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz. Such an overlap hardly appears feasible. However, this limit is based on Menahem's appearance in a tribute-list set in 738 which could very well be composite, as is the case for a tribute-list set in 737 by the equally annalistic Iran stele.

9) Dating Menahem's death to 743 is supported by 2 Kgs 15,19-20's onerously expensive but transitory intervention by Tiglath-Pileser III in his favor: this presumably already desperate and so very plausibly quickly fatal fiasco is best dated to 743, since the Eponym Chronicle sequence: "In Arpad." (743, following Astour; Millard), "Against Arpad." (742-740) indicates that northern Syria was militarily paralyzed in this year.

10) The preceding dates avoid a triple overlap among Judaeans kings and allow construction of a precisely-defined later 8th century biblical chronology consistent with all reasonable data (Fig. 1).

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SUMMARY

The massive Assyrian invasion of Judah in 701 (reflected in 2 Kgs 18,13b; 18,17-19,37) has apparently been confused with an earlier, limited invasion in Hezekiah's 14th year (reflected in 2 Kgs 18,13a.14-16; 2-Kgs 20; 2 Chr 32; Isa 22). Historically, this earlier campaign can best be dated to 712, when Sargon II apparently led the Assyrian royal guard on a Palestinian campaign. Chronologically, this dating fits perfectly with e.g. recent dating of the definitive fall of Samaria (2 Kgs 18,9: in Hezekiah's 6th year) to 720. 2 Kgs 18,9's parallel dating to Hoshea's 9th year agrees with his apparent accession in 731 or 729. Dating Menahem's death to 743 (as required, following biblical data, to avoid a triple overlap among Uzziah, Jotham and Ahaz) agrees with Eponym Chronicle evidence for this dating of 2 Kgs 15,19-20's presumably already desperate fiasco, and is consistent with a plausibly composite 738 tribute-list naming Menahem. Combining these datings produces a workable later 8th century biblical chronology.

ISRAELITE REGNAL YEAR	JUDAEAN REGNAL YEAR	SEASON	EVENT(S)
754/spring 753 y.41 Jeroboam II / y.0 Zechariah	fall 755/754 y.38 Uzziah	spr/sum 754	death Jeroboam II / acc Zechariah
754/spring 753 y.0 Zechariah / y.0 Shallum	fall 754/753 y.39 Uzziah	fall 754/ win 753	reign Shallum / start interregnum
753/spring 752 y.0 Menahem	fall 754/753 y.39 Uzziah	spr/sum 753	end interregnum / acc Menahem
750/spring 749 y.0 Pekah			acc Pekah as counter-king
748/spring 747 y.2 Pekah	fall 749/748 y.1 Jotham	spr/sum 748	acc Jotham as coregent
743/spring 742 y.10 Menahem / y.0 Pekahiah	fall 743/742 y.50 Uzziah	fall 743/ win 742	death Menahem / acc Pekahiah
741/spring 740 y.2 Pekahiah	fall 741/740 y.52 Uzziah / y.1 Ahaz	fall 741/ win 740	death Pekahiah / 'acc' Pekah
	fall 741/740 y.52 Uzziah / y.1 Ahaz		death Uzziah / acc Ahaz as coregent
733/spring 732 y.17 Pekah	fall 734/733 y.16 Jotham	spr/sum 733	deposition of Jotham / 'acc' Ahaz
730/spring 729 y.20 Pekah	fall 730/729 y.20 Jotham / y.12 Ahaz	fall 730/ win 729	death Pekah / start interregnum
729/spring 728 y.0 Hoshea	fall 730/729 y.20 Jotham / y.12 Ahaz	spr/sum 729	end interregnum / acc Hoshea
726/spring 725 y.3 Hoshea	fall 726/725 y.16 Ahaz / y.1 Hezekiah	fall 726/ win 725	acc Hezekiah as coregent / death Ahaz
722/spring 721 y.7 Hoshea	fall 723/722 y.4 Hezekiah	spr/sum 722	start 'siege' of Samaria
720/spring 719 y.9 Hoshea	fall 721/720 y.6 Hezekiah	spr/sum 720	fall of Samaria
	fall 713/712 y.14 Hezekiah	spr/sum 712	Assyrian invasion
	fall 698/697 y.0 Manasseh	fall 698/ win 697	death Hezekiah / acc Manasseh
	fall 643/642 y.55 Manasseh / y.0 Amon		death Manasseh / acc Amon
	fall 641/640 y.2 Amon / y.0 Josiah		death Amon / acc Josiah
	fall 610/609 y.31 Josiah	spr/sum 609	death Josiah etc.

Note: y.0 = uncounted accession year.
'acc' = biblically recorded start of a coregent or counter-king's sole rule.

Fig. 2 - Reigns in Julian years and chronographic conventions for later 8th c. kings of Israel and Judah

Zechariah	754 – 754	Uzziah	793/2 – 741/0	Rounding up of regnal year totals
Shallum	754/3 – 754/3	Jotham	748 – 733	Postdating for non-coregents
Interregnum	754/3 – 753	Ahaz	741/0 – 726/5	Antedating for coregents
Menahem	753 – 743/2	Hezekiah	726/5 – 698	Fall royal new year in Judah
Pekahiah	743/2 – 741/0			Spring royal new year in Israel
Pekah	750/49 – 730/29			
Interregnum	730/29 – 729			
Hoshea	729 – 720			

ANIMADVERSIONES

Nursling, Advisor, Architect?

אָמֹן and the Role of Wisdom in Proverbs 8,22-31

This article will study Proverbs 8,22-31 and the perennial *crux interpretum* אָמֹן in verse 30. It will attempt to choose the primary meaning of the word from among the various possibilities afforded by the evidence and supported by various scholars, and will demonstrate conclusively that the principal connotation of אָמֹן in this passage is nursling, fledgling, novice, ward, or the like. It will also examine the possibility that the author alludes simultaneously to several roles in his portrait of Lady Wisdom.

The interpretation of אָמֹן in verse 30 has long been subject of debate, which continues unabated even among the most recent modern scholars⁽¹⁾. Three basic explanations are currently under consideration. These meanings correspond to those of the root אָמֵן in other biblical passages, Aramaic, and Phoenician inscriptions on the one hand and a like sounding Akkadian word on the other. Each is possible on linguistic grounds and able to draw on support from comparative evidence⁽²⁾.

1. The word has been read *ʾāmūn* (cf. Lam 4,5) and associated with אָמֵן or אָמֹן meaning nurse or child tender, so Wisdom is seen as God's young nursling, ward, and the like. Several scholars have pointed to Ma'at, the Egyptian goddess of justice and cosmic order (?), as a parallel to the child-like character of Wisdom in this chapter. This interpretation, with a variation, has been defended by Michael Fox⁽³⁾. Following the medieval grammarian Ibn Janah and exegete Moshe Kimhi, Fox parses the word not as a substantive but as an infinitive absolute meaning "being raised" or

(1) The various interpretations go back to apocryphal, early Christian and Rabbinic literature and the ancient Bible translations. For a survey of ancient and modern views see commentaries and dictionaries and especially the scholarly articles listed in the following notes. Cf. also R.N. WHYBRAY, *Wisdom in Proverbs* (Studies in Biblical Theology 45; London 1965) 95-104; G. VON RAD, *Wisdom in Israel* (London 1972) 145-157; L.G. PERDUE, "Cosmology and the Social Order in the Wisdom Tradition", *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, (eds. J.G. GAMMIE – L.G. PERDUE) (Winona Lake 1990) 457-478, esp. 463-468.

(2) Other interpretations take the root to mean "faithful" or "steady" and translate "confidant" (so NJPS) and the like. There have been as well several suggestions of emendations in the vocalizations. R.B.Y. SCOTT, "Wisdom in Creation: the *ʾāmōn* of Proverbs viii,30", VT 10 (1960) 213-214, suggests reading *ʾāmen men* meaning, supposedly "binding" or "uniting" and translating "then I was at his side like a living link", but this not only makes little sense but is based on an extremely rare word (Isa 25,1). The same may be said about P.A.H. DE BOER, "The Counsellor", VTS 3 (1955) 42-71, esp. 69-70, who suggests reading *ʾimmōn*, an invention of his, which he goes on to interpret as a diminutive "little mother" which means actually Queen Mother.

(3) M. Fox, "Amon Again", JBL 115 (1996) 699-702.