

Hezekiah's Illness (701 BC)

2 Kings 20:1–11	Isaiah 38:1–8, 21–22	2 Chronicles 32:24
<p>1 In those days Hezekiah became deathly ill, and Isaiah the son of Amoz the prophet came to him and said to him, “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Command your house, for you <i>are about to die</i>; you will not recover.’”</p> <p>2 Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to Yahweh, saying,</p> <p>3 “O Yahweh, please remember how I went about before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and <i>remember</i> the good that I have done in your eyes.” Then Hezekiah wept bitterly.</p> <p>4 Isaiah had not gone out from the middle of the city when the word of Yahweh came to him, saying,</p> <p>5 “Return; you must say to Hezekiah, the leader of my people, ‘Thus says Yahweh the God of David your ancestor, “I have heard your prayer and I have seen your tears. Look, I <i>am about to</i> heal you. On the third day you shall go up <i>to</i> the temple of Yahweh.</p> <p>6 I will add to your days fifteen years, and from the hand of the king of Assyria I will deliver you and this city. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.” ’”</p> <p>7 Then Isaiah said, “Bring a lump of figs,”</p> <p>so they took and put it on the skin sores, and he lived.</p> <p>8 Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “What is the sign that Yahweh will heal me that I shall go up on the third day <i>to</i> the temple of Yahweh?”</p> <p>9 Isaiah said, “This <i>is</i> the sign for you from Yahweh that Yahweh will do the thing that he has promised: Shall the shadow advance ten steps or shall it return ten steps?”</p> <p>10 Hezekiah answered, “It is easy for the shadow to lengthen ten steps. No, but let the shadow return backwards ten steps.”</p> <p>11 Isaiah the prophet called to Yahweh,</p> <p>and he brought back the shadow on the steps where it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz, backwards ten steps.</p>	<p>1 In those days, Hezekiah became sick to death, and Isaiah son of Amoz, the prophet, came to him and said to him, “Thus says Yahweh: ‘Order your house, for you <i>are about to die</i>, and you shall not recover.’”</p> <p>2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to Yahweh,</p> <p>3 and he said,</p> <p>“O Yahweh, please remember how I have walked before your presence in faithfulness with a whole heart, and I have done the good in your eyes!” And Hezekiah wept <i>with</i> great weeping.</p> <p>4 Then the word of Yahweh came to Isaiah, saying,</p> <p>5 “Go and say to Hezekiah,</p> <p>‘Thus says Yahweh, the God of David your ancestor: “I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Look, I am</p> <p>going to add fifteen years to your days.</p> <p>6 And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.’”</p> <p>21 And Isaiah said, “Let them take a lump of figs, and let them rub <i>it</i> on the boil so that he may recover.”</p> <p>22 And Hezekiah said, “What <i>is the</i> sign that I shall go up <i>to</i> the temple of Yahweh?”</p> <p>7 And this <i>is</i> the sign to you from Yahweh, that Yahweh will do this thing that he has spoken:</p> <p>8 Look! I will cause <i>the</i> shadow of the steps, which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz with the sun, to turn backwards ten steps.”</p> <p>And the sun turned back ten steps on the steps which it had gone down.</p>	<p>24 In those days Hezekiah fell ill unto death,</p> <p>and he prayed to Yahweh.</p> <p>And he answered him</p> <p>and gave him a sign.</p>

Hezekiah's Prayer (701 BC)

Isaiah 38:9–20

9 A writing of Hezekiah, king of Judah, when he was sick and had recovered from his sickness:

- 10 I was the one who said, "I must go in the quiet of my days;
I am summoned through the gates of Sheol *for* the rest of my years."
- 11 I said, "I shall not see Yah! Yah in the land of the living!
I shall no more look at humankind among *the* inhabitants of *the* world.
- 12 My dwelling place is pulled up and removed from me like the tent of my shepherd;
I have rolled up my life like *a* weaver.
He cuts me off from *the* thrum;
from day to night you bring me to an end.
- 13 I lie down until morning;
like *a* lion, so he breaks all my bones;
from day to night you bring me to an end.
- 14 Like a horse or a crane, so I chirp;
I moan like *a* dove.
My eyes are weak toward the height.
Lord, I have oppression; lend me support!
- 15 What can I say? For he has spoken to me,
and he himself has done *it*.
I will walk slowly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.
- 16 Lord, they live by them, and the life of my spirit belongs to all among them.
And restore me to health and keep me alive!
- 17 Look! Bitterness was bitter to me for peace.
And you were the one who loved my life from *the* pit of destruction,
for you have cast all my sins behind your back.
- 18 For Sheol cannot praise you; death *cannot* praise you.
Those who go down *to the* pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.
- 19 *The* living, *the* living one praises you like me today;
a father will make your faithfulness known to children.
- 20 Yahweh, save me, and we will play my music *on* stringed instruments
all the days of our lives at the temple of Yahweh."

Hezekiah's Accomplishments (716t–687t BC)

2 Chronicles 32:27–30

- 27 And Hezekiah had very much wealth and honor, and he made storehouses for himself for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, small shields, and all *sorts of* desirable objects;
28 and storage buildings for the yield of grain, new wine, and olive oil; and animal stalls for all *kinds of* animals, and animals and herds for animal stalls.
29 And he made cities for himself, and livestock of sheep and abundant cattle, for God had given to him very abundant possessions.
30 And this same Hezekiah blocked off the flow of the waters of the upper Gihon, and directed them down the west *side* of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

Hezekiah's Problem With Pride (701 BC)

2 Kings 20:12–19

Isaiah 39

2 Chronicles 32:25–26, 31

12 At that time, Merodak-Baladan the son of Baladan king of Babylon sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been ill.

1 At that time, Merodach-Baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and recovered.

25 But Hezekiah did not reciprocate according to the benefit *placed* upon him, because his heart became proud. So wrath was upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

<p>13 Hezekiah heard about them and showed them all of the house of his treasure, both the silver and the gold, the spices, the good olive oil, the room of his weapons, and all that could be found in his treasuries. There was nothing that he did not show them in his palace and in all of his kingdom.</p> <p>14 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, “What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?” Hezekiah said, “From a far land; they have come from Babylon.”</p> <p>15 Then he asked, “What did they see in your palace?” And Hezekiah said, “All that is in my palace they have seen; there is nothing that I did not show them in my treasuries.”</p> <p>16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of Yahweh!</p> <p>17 ‘Look, days <i>are</i> coming when all that is in your palace will be carried off; <i>even</i> all that your ancestors have stored up until this day, to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says Yahweh.</p> <p>18 ‘Your sons who went out from you, whom you brought forth, will be taken, and they shall be eunuchs in the temple of the king of Babylon.’”</p> <p>19 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of Yahweh which you have spoken <i>is</i> good,” and he thought, “Is it not that peace and security shall be in my days?”</p>	<p>2 And Hezekiah rejoiced over them and showed them his house of aromatic gum, the silver, gold, spices, good oil, all the house of his weapons, and all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing that Hezekiah had not shown them in his house or in all his dominion.</p> <p>3 And Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, “What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?” And Hezekiah answered, “They came to me from a distant country, from Babylon.”</p> <p>4 And he said, “What have they seen in your house?” And Hezekiah answered, “They have seen all that <i>is</i> in my house. There is nothing that I have not shown them in my storehouses.”</p> <p>5 And Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of Yahweh of hosts:</p> <p>6 ‘Look! days <i>are</i> coming, and all that <i>is</i> in your house and that which your ancestors have stored up to this day shall be carried off <i>to</i> Babylon. Nothing shall be left,’ says Yahweh.</p> <p>7 ‘And some of your sons who go out from you, whom you fathered, shall be taken, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’”</p> <p>8 And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The word of Yahweh that you have spoken <i>is</i> good,” for he thought, “Surely there will be peace and security in my days.”</p>	<p>31 And thus <i>in the matter of</i> the envoys of the commanders of Babylon who had been sent to him to seek the sign that had happened in the land, God forsook him, to test him <i>and</i> to know all <i>that was</i> in his heart.</p> <p>26 But Hezekiah humbled himself with respect to the arrogance of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of Yahweh did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.</p>
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Manasseh, Hezekiah’s Son, Becomes Coregent With Hezekiah (697t BC)

2 Kings 21:1

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. The name of his mother was Hephzibah.

2 Chronicles 33:1

33:1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem.

Chronological Notes

- 1) Many commentators argue that Isaiah 38–39 are out of place chronologically and should precede Isaiah 36–37.¹ The principle pieces of evidence offered are:
 - A) God’s promise to Hezekiah in Isaiah 38:6 appears to indicate that the threat from the king of Assyria lay in the present/future and not in the past.
 - B) If Hezekiah gave Sennacherib tribute money (2 Kgs 18:14–16), what did he have left to show the messengers from Merodach-Baladan (Isa 39:2; 2 Kgs 20:13)?
 - C) At the time following the invasion of Sennacherib, Merodach-Baladan was no longer king of Babylon.
- 2) I think Benjamin Downer has ably argued against this majority view:²
 - A) Concerning Isaiah 38:6—“But what was of more pressing concern to the inhabitants of the city than their future safety? From a human standpoint it was altogether probable that Sennacherib would return to the west land at no distant date and make another attempt on Jerusalem. The promise made to Hezekiah is therefore taken naturally to mean that, for the period to which his life was extended, he and his city should be safe from further aggression” (Downer, p. 255).
 - B) Concerning the tribute—“But how long the treasury was allowed to remain thus depleted is another question. There is no reason to think the city was impoverished. It had not been through a protracted siege, probably only a blockade for a brief period. It would have been deemed necessary to take immediate steps, after the withdrawal of Sennacherib from the land, to replenish the treasury, if for no other reason, to aid in the rehabilitation of the wasted country districts. Menahem of Israel had raised a thousand talents in an emergency to buy the aid of Pul of Assyria by taking a fixed sum from all the wealthy men of his realm (2 Kgs 15:19–20). Jehoiakim of Judah at a later time raised the amount demanded by Pharaoh-Necho by exacting it of the people according to their property valuation (2 Kgs 23:35). It is worth while to observe also that the treasures shown by Hezekiah did not consist altogether of gold and silver, but of costly articles of various kinds, and of warlike equipment (Isa 39:2). Besides it is stated in 2 Chr 32:23 that much had come in from other peoples in the way of gifts of honor after the deliverance of the city from Sennacherib” (Downer, p. 254).³
 - C) Concerning Merodach-Baladan—“Merodach-baladan had been already twice king of Babylon. He had ruled over the city, together with all southern Babylonia, for twelve years during the reign of Sargon II, from 721 to 709 B.C., and had held his own against all the power of Assyria (Rogers, *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, II, 316ff, 336ff). He had himself made king again in 702 B.C., and was dislodged after a reign of nine months by Sennacherib (R. II, 356ff). A man by the name of Bel-ibni, of little force and ability apparently, but wholly subservient to Sennacherib, was placed on the throne. He is in the several lists put down as king for the next three years (R. I, 514, 533, 535), but according to McCurdy (*History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, II, p. 275), this mock kingship ‘was intended merely as a compromise and makeshift till the time should come for the formal annexation of the whole country.’ While Sennacherib was engaged in his campaign in Palestine in 701 B.C., rebellion broke out again in Babylon. Bel-ibni was forced into a position hostile to Assyria, while Merodach-baladan joined in the revolt (R. II, 373f). If we may trust his former record, he was the chief figure in the rebellion, and the one to whom the populace would turn as the only man capable of carrying the struggle to a successful issue. With the Babylonians then hostile to the rule of Sennacherib, refusing ever to acknowledge him as king because of his ignoring their time-honored customs as to the manner of his assuming the royal prerogative (R. II, 355f); and with Bel-ibni helpless against public sentiment, while Merodach-baladan was apparently the brains and organizer of the revolt, there does not seem to be any serious objection to his being styled king of Babylon, a position he had held during the greater part of the time from the beginning of Sargon’s reign until that very day. Moreover, one of the accounts (2 Chr 32:31) does not mention him by name, but simply speaks of ‘the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon.’ We may suppose that Hezekiah’s sickness followed soon after the deliverance of Jerusalem. The general note of time, ‘in those days,’ found in all the accounts is sufficiently explained by the fact that in all the narratives the disastrous ending of Sennacherib’s campaign had been made to include the circumstances of his death at the hands of his sons twenty years later. The news of these events would soon reach

¹ John N. Oswalt, “The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39,” *NICOT*, 674; Gary V. Smith, “Isaiah 1–39,” *NAC*, 635–636; J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 289.

² Benjamin R. Downer, “The Added Years of Hezekiah’s Life,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 80.318 (Apr 1923): 251–271.

³ I would add that the tribute Hezekiah paid to Sennacherib prior to the siege of Jerusalem may well have been recovered in whole or in part after God’s destruction of Sennacherib’s forces in a single night.

Babylonia, for according to Rogers (II, 373) 'news traveled far and fast in the ancient orient.' Nothing would be of more importance to Merodach-baladan, knowing the certainty that Sennacherib would soon give his attention to the uprising in Babylon, than seeking to stir up more trouble for him in the west land. Therefore, hearing of Hezekiah's successful resistance, and of his sickness and recovery, the opportunity offered itself, under the guise of congratulations on his recovery and interest in the reported wonder connected with it, of finding what chance there was of stirring up a new revolt in Palestine" (Downer, 255–56).⁴

⁴ For those who argue that Hezekiah's illness took place during Merodach-baladan's first rule during Sargon's reign, it should be noted that a straightforward calculation from the end of Hezekiah's life in 687t bc yields the following: 687t + added 15 years of life = 702t or 701 bc. Thus we have an upper bound on the dating of Isaiah 38–39 of 702/701 bc.