



LEVEL 7
7.5
LESSON 5

Imperial Academy Bible Lessons



A Great Judean Reformation

A Great Judean Reformation

After it split with the northern kingdom of Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah had a few bright spots in its history. When a righteous king ruled, the nation had safety, prosperity and blessings. But when the king was evil, the nation suffered invasion, poverty and curses.

All the kings of Israel were evil. Each followed in the same sins of King Jeroboam, rejecting the throne of David, rejecting God's law, and rejecting God. They rejected the warnings from God's prophets and worshiped pagan gods. For protection, they relied on themselves and on foreign armies.

Because of sin, both Israel and Judah diminished in power. Meanwhile, one Gentile empire grew stronger and stronger: Assyria.

In 745 B.C., Assyria grew into an overwhelming force, led by King Tiglath-Pileser III. Over the course of 20 years, the Assyrian army swept through the Middle East, conquering nation after nation and subjugating them to either heavy tribute or complete destruction. By the end of his reign, Tiglath-Pileser's empire had dominated nearly the entire Middle East. Nations were given two options: complete destruction or paying heavy tribute.

Israel was not spared from Assyria's bloody conquests. Tiglath-Pileser's army invaded around 732 B.C.

Israel had a history with God. He had brought their ancestors out of Egyptian slavery, crushed Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, fed them with manna, saved them from attackers, weakened their enemies with hornets, felled the walls of Jericho, defeated 31 kings in Canaan, raised up 12 judges to rescue them, and responded to them every time they and their leaders repented. He even made the sun stand still because He "fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:12-14). Their

own history showed them that God would have saved them, but they rejected their history.

So the kingdom of Israel suffered under the domination of Assyria. Tiglath-Pileser's army conquered and took captive thousands of Israelites during its initial invasion.

Israel's king still did not turn to God. He agreed to pay Assyria an annual tribute. Israel thought that it had purchased security. But its enormous payments to Assyria only weakened the nation further financially and militarily.

Yet Israel continued down the path of sin and rebellion. Prophet after prophet had been warning Israel for nearly 200 years since the reign of its very first king, Jeroboam. It would receive one final warning—not from a prophet but from a king.

RIGHTEOUSNESS REIGNS

These were the darkest days in the kingdom of Israel but some of the brightest in the kingdom of Judah.

For 16 years, Judah had suffered under the leadership of an evil king, Ahaz. His father, Jotham, had been one of the more righteous kings, who followed his parents' training to worship, obey and trust the true God. But Ahaz believed he knew better than his father. He willingly paid tribute to Assyria and even stole silver, gold and other treasures from God's temple to do it. He instituted idol worship and other pagan practices as a way of life throughout Judah. He shut the doors to the temple, forbidding anyone from entering (2 Chronicles 28:24). He even sacrificed his own children to pagan gods to further prove his allegiance to Assyria. Ahaz was one of Judah's most evil kings, and the nation suffered because of his reign.

Then his son Hezekiah ascended to the throne.

Hezekiah, only 25, eagerly reformed the nation to



King Tiglath-Pileser III, as depicted on a palace relief

turn the people back to God. God summarizes his life and accomplishments this way: “And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did” (2 Kings 18:3). He is regarded as the greatest king after King David, and his reign marks one of the brightest spots in Judah’s turbulent history.

Read verses 4-8 and list on the lines below some of Hezekiah’s accomplishments:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

God was well pleased with Hezekiah’s leadership and prospered everything he did! (verse 7).

One of the first changes King Hezekiah made was reopening God’s temple. Hezekiah knew that shutting the temple doors was a grave sin that caused the nation to fall farther away from God.

But restoring temple worship meant more than just unsealing the doors. The king understood that reformation had to start with him and the priesthood. Before the weighty task of purifying this place of

worship to God could begin, God’s government had to be purified.

Hezekiah called all the Levites and priests into the temple courtyard. He reminded them of the nation’s recent history and the disasters it had suffered. He reminded them that God had specific duties for the priesthood to carry out, and they and the nation faced grave consequences when those duties were not carried out.

Inspired by the king, the priests gathered their sons and began purifying themselves first, as he had commanded (2 Chronicles 29:15).

In addition to the initiatives surrounding the temple, Hezekiah also began restoring proper holy day observance. He exhorted the priests and Levites to work quickly; Hezekiah wanted the temple ready for the spring holy days, and Passover was only two weeks away.

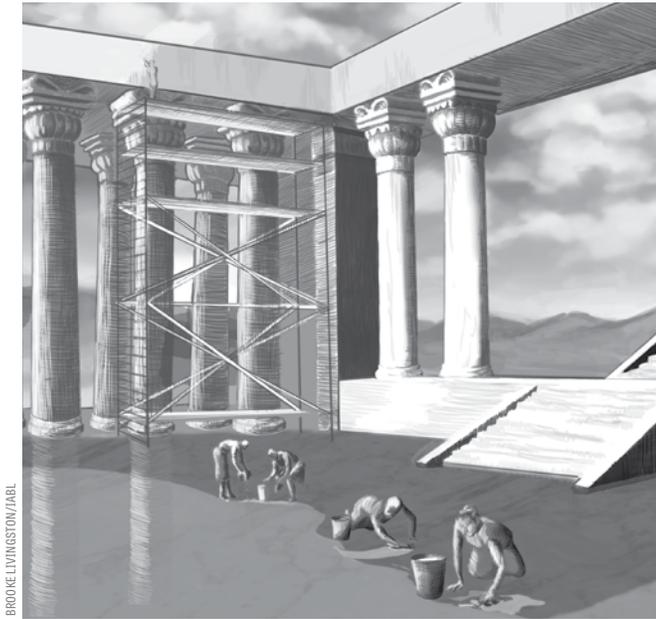
After cleansing themselves, the Levitical priests began the task of cleaning and restoring the temple (verse 16). They first began outside, rebuilding the altar of sacrifice, restoring the gates, removing overgrown vegetation, and otherwise cleaning the temple for eight days until it was cleansed.

A specific selection of priestly families was then chosen to go inside the temple. Ahaz had sold and destroyed many of the temple vessels. The priests took inventory and restored the missing vessels. Other priests swept and polished the stones, gold and silver. It took another eight days to completely restore the temple’s interior.

There was still more work to do within the nation itself, however. Hezekiah knew that many sacrifices would need to be offered to atone for the sins of the people before they could keep the holy days.

Because of the amount of work required, Hezekiah and the priests decided to delay the observance of the Passover. God had made accommodation for a second Passover to be kept one month later for those who were prevented from keeping the first Passover (Numbers 9:9-14).

Jerusalem and the whole kingdom was abuzz with what was taking place at the temple. Hezekiah had arranged for music to accompany the sacrifices, using music prepared by King David nearly 300 years earlier (2 Chronicles 29:25-30). The nation of Judah was getting back on track!



The Levites clean and restore the temple.

One by one, Jews offered their sacrifices to God. This restoration brought true joy to those who dedicated themselves to restoring the temple and true worship of the true God (verse 36).

A FINAL WARNING

As Hezekiah was working to turn Judah to God, the kingdom to the north was in its final days. Hezekiah understood that although the kingdom of Israel was sinning against God, it was still part of His chosen people. He reached out to them in an effort to turn them back to God.

“Send a proclamation throughout all Israel,” Hezekiah told his officers. “Inspire our northern brothers to repent toward God, to come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover.”

The king wrote a decree, and postmen carried letters throughout Judah and Israel, delivering it to any Israelite tribe that had not already gone into captivity.

Read King Hezekiah’s Passover decree (2 Chronicles 30:6-9) and write verses 8-9 below:

Hezekiah implored the people to humble themselves and reenter God’s temple so God could bless them once again!

God has always wanted to bless His people. He repeatedly sent them warnings from prophets, and now from a king. But it is up to each person to heed the warning, to humble himself, and to submit to His rule. That is what Hezekiah was hoping Israel would do.

As Hezekiah’s messengers passed through the lands of Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulun, Isaachar and Asher, they were met with rejection and opposition. Most people scoffed at the appeal to heed another king and go to a different kingdom to keep the Passover, a ceremony they had not observed for nearly 300 years. However, a few within each tribe did humble themselves and responded to Hezekiah’s call from Jerusalem.

Only a few years away from complete conquest and violent destruction, most of the people in the kingdom of Israel failed to heed this final warning God delivered through His king.

THE HOLY DAYS

In Judah, the much-anticipated holy days finally arrived. “And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation” (2 Chronicles 30:13). Most of the visitors came to the holy days at Jerusalem without understanding how to properly observe them. But once the priests and Levites provided the instruction, the people participated “with great gladness” (verse 21).

God had given specific requirements for the taking of the Passover (Exodus 12:48; Numbers 9:10). Yet some of those coming from Israel were unaware that they were violating these commands. One of Hezekiah’s aides brought this to his attention.

Read 2 Chronicles 30:18-19 to see Hezekiah's faith-filled, inspiring response.

God knew the people's heart. And after Hezekiah interceded for them in prayer, God "healed the people" (verse 20). This gave Hezekiah and those gathered for the holy days even more cause for rejoicing! God was deeply involved in what was happening in this spectacular reinstatement of the holy days.

Throughout seven days of Unleavened Bread the people feasted, rejoiced with song, gave offerings, repented of their sins, and received "good knowledge of the Lord" from the Levites (verses 22). It was a glorious time in the nation, brought on by attitudes of obedience to God. The people enjoyed the festival so much, they kept another seven days! This truly was one of the most special periods in Judah's history.

"So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem" (verse 26). God draws attention to this time period as a vivid illustration that committed obedience to Him brings great rejoicing!

"Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven" (verse 27). Just a few months earlier, the kingdom of Judah had been on the brink of collapse. Yet everything changed when a leader and those who followed him chose committed obedience to God.

WAR ON IDOLATRY

As the nation continued to get back on track, Hezekiah commissioned men to destroy all idols, altars, temples, groves and other pagan worship centers established by his father. His men even crossed the border into the northern kingdom and demolished places of worship there (2 Chronicles 31:1).

In Jerusalem, the idol smashers targeted one of the most famous objects of antiquity—the bronze serpent. God had commanded Moses to make this to stop the plague of serpents killing the Israelites during their journey through the wilderness (Numbers 21:5-9; 2 Kings 18:4). God had never intended this object to be worshiped, but during the reign of Ahaz, the people burned incense to the bronze snake as an idol. Because this 700-year-old artifact was being used sinfully, Hezekiah destroyed it.

You may have a hobby or other interest in your life that is not inherently wrong or sinful. But if you allow it to become so important that it takes your focus off God, you have made it into an idol. Even that idol should be crushed, just as Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent.

As he was warring against pagan worship, King Hezekiah also reinstated aspects of true worship, including God's law of tithing. He had restored the priests and Levites to their God-ordained roles. God had commanded the Israelites to offer



Many Israelites respond to Hezekiah's invitation to keep Passover in Jerusalem.

to Him and to support the Levites through tithing (Numbers 18:20-26). Hezekiah issued another decree to reinstitute tithing, and the Jews responded obediently, giving God His 10 percent to support the temple service and the priesthood.

Because of their willingness to obey and to give, God greatly blessed the nation. In the very first year of Hezekiah's reign, Judah experienced one of its most productive farming seasons ever. So much abundance came into Jerusalem that there were "heaps" of excess at the temple (2 Chronicles 31:8-10). Hezekiah dealt very carefully with the extra tithes, establishing an administration of Levites to keep inventory and make sure God's tithes were organized properly.

Read verses 20-21 and explain in your own words why Hezekiah had such a successful start to his reign.

ASSYRIA

At this time, Hezekiah made the bold decision to stop paying tribute to Assyria. Judah was overflowing with blessings. Hezekiah thought it was wrong to give those blessings to an evil Gentile empire. He chose to trust in God rather than rely on the Assyrians being satisfied with tribute to spare them from captivity (2 Kings 18:5, 7).

Meanwhile, even as Judah overflowed with prosperity, Israel was collapsing. How and why Assyria conquered the kingdom of Israel was covered in Lesson 3.

The majority of those in Israel had rejected the ample opportunities God had given them to repent. They had rejected God's final warning. Even over the several years it took for Assyria to conquer them, they refused to return to Jerusalem for the Passover and the true worship of the true God. The Assyrian Empire completely destroyed the kingdom of Israel, killing many and scattering the rest throughout unfamiliar territory. (Where the "lost" 10 tribes of Israel in the northern kingdom went is covered in Lesson 4 and *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.)

Across the border, Hezekiah and all of Judah

witnessed what happens when you fail to obey God and heed His warnings. Yet after years of protection and prosperity, even Hezekiah began to draw back from diligent obedience to God.

Hezekiah gradually stopped praising God for blessing the nation, and his relationship with God grew weaker. God saw that this was affecting the whole nation. He first inflicted Judah with mild tests and trials, such as a lack of rain in due season. But that did not move the people or the king to repent.

God sent stronger correction: Assyria, the rod of His anger.

PREPARING FOR SIEGE

The Assyrian Empire again began to sweep toward the kingdom of Judah, conquering other kingdoms in its path. Hezekiah and his people knew that this cruel empire had already destroyed their sinning brethren in the kingdom of Israel, and now its army was in their land.

As Jews from the surrounding lands poured into Jerusalem for protection, Hezekiah called together his officers to prepare for a siege. One of the most critical deliberations was over the city's most important resource: the Gihon Spring. The spring was (and still is) the only freshwater source within 5 miles. Yet it was outside the city's walls. The Assyrians could easily advance all the way to the city walls, which meant they could control the spring.

Fortifying this water source against the Assyrians was imperative for the Jews' immediate survival. But it would require one of the most incredible feats of engineering in human history.

Hezekiah commissioned workmen to divert the water from the spring to within the city's walls. In order to make this happen, two groups of men—one starting at the Gihon Spring, the other starting inside the city at the Pool of Siloam—carved a tunnel in the bedrock beneath the city with picks, hammers, chisels and shovels (2 Chronicles 32:2-4, 30; 2 Kings 20:20).

"[T]he tunneling [was finished]. And this was the matter of the tunneling: While [the hewers yielded] the ax, each man toward his fellow, and while there were still three cubits to be he[wn, there was hear]d a man's voice calling to his fellow, for there was a crack[?] in the rock on the right and [on the lef]t. And at the end of the tunneling the hewers hacked each man toward his

fellow, ax upon ax. And there flowed the waters from the spring toward the reservoir for two hundre[d and] a thousand cubits. And a hu[nd]red cubits was the height of the rock above the head[s] of the hewers.”

This is the incredible account recorded by the workmen themselves in an artifact known as the Siloam Inscription, located in the middle of the 1,750-foot tunnel they carved through solid rock. More than 2,700 years later, water still flows through Hezekiah’s Tunnel today.

FACING DEATH

Jerusalem was now better prepared for the approaching Assyrian siege, but it was still under threat. Hezekiah put his trust in an alliance with Egypt (2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 30-31). This alliance with a nation rather than God was another sign of Hezekiah’s poor judgment at this time.

En route to Jerusalem, Assyria had already conquered 45 cities in Judah in less than a year. Now it besieged one of Judah’s most important cities, Lachish. Only 38 miles from the capital, Lachish was an important trading center for the nation. Next to Jerusalem, it was the best-fortified city in the kingdom of Judah. If any Jewish city could slow or halt Assyria’s advances, it was Lachish.

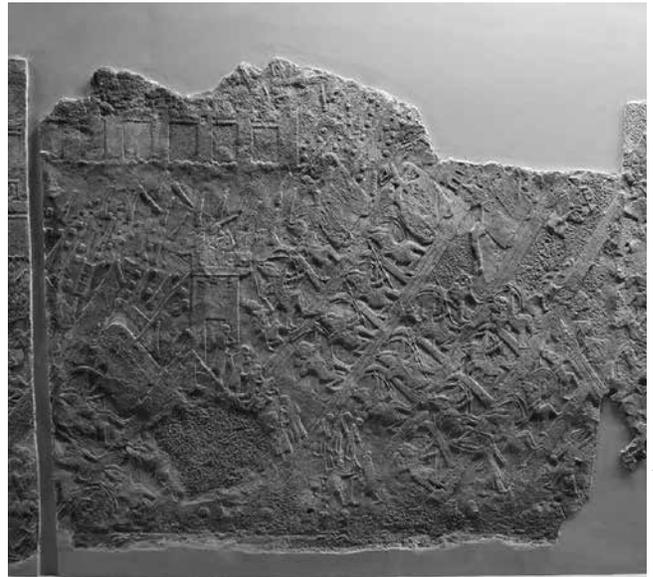
Hezekiah desperately wanted the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, to spare further cities, especially Lachish. He asked what he could do to appease him, and Sennacherib demanded 22,500 pounds of silver and 2,250 pounds of gold. Like his father before him, Hezekiah sent men into the temple: They stripped its gold and silver, and took it to Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:14-16). It was a shameful, faithless action, but at least it would save Lachish and Jerusalem.

But it did not.

Rather than appeasing the Gentile king, Hezekiah’s desperate tribute emboldened him. He warred against Lachish—and took it. Meanwhile, he dispatched his top commander, Rabshakeh, to Jerusalem with a great army and a terrifying threat (verse 17; Isaiah 36:2).

Princes Eliakim, Shebna and Joah went outside Jerusalem’s gates and met Rabshakeh.

“Tell your king that all he puts his trust in will fail!” Rabshakeh proclaimed. “Do not trust in Egypt to defend you. Do not trust in your God to defend you. He is the one who sent my master Sennacherib to destroy



Lachish wall relief

you. Surrender and he will have mercy on you.”

The princes asked Rabshakeh to speak to them in Aramaic, rather than Hebrew (2 Kings 18:26). They feared that his words would demoralize the Jewish soldiers atop the city walls. But Sennacherib responded by raising his voice and saying in Hebrew:

“Has Sennacherib only sent me to speak to you, princes? Did he not send me also to warn those whom he will trap inside this city, so hungry and thirsty that they will consume their own waste? People of Judah, do not trust in Hezekiah or your God. Is your God so different from the gods of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, Ivah or even your neighbor kingdom in Samaria? Do you really think He can withstand Assyria?”

God was using Assyria to correct Judah for its sins, but He took note of Rabshakeh’s blasphemous declaration against Him.

The people were surely shaken by Rabshakeh’s threat. Yet they “held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king’s commandment was, saying, Answer him not” (verse 36).

Distressed by the terrorizing threat of Rabshakeh, the princes returned within the gates, their royal garments ripped in anguish for what was about to happen to them, their families and the thousands inside the city.

Awaiting their report, the king had been contemplating what was about to happen and all that he had done in the face of this threat. He remembered the joy and songs of praise that had filled these same



GARY DORNING/TABL

Hezekiah knows only God can deliver the nation.

streets. Now they were filled with dread, panic and faithlessness. The magnificent temple of God that he himself had commanded to be restored stood in their midst, marred by the command he had given to strip it. In those early years, he had been close to the great God of Israel. Now he was distant.

Alliances had not saved his people. Money had not saved his people. The lesson was now painfully and inescapably clear. Judah had only one hope all along: the one true God.

SPREAD IT BEFORE THE LORD

Now the princes reported to the king the dire words of Rabshakeh. Hezekiah nodded and dismissed them. In grave silence, he humbled himself, tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and walked to the temple (2 Kings 19:1). “And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz” (verse 2).

It had been a long time since the king had called on God’s prophet for counsel. But all that time, Isaiah had never stopped praying for the king and for the nation.

“This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy; for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth,” read Hezekiah’s

letter. “It may be the LORD your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master has sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the LORD your God hath heard: wherefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that are left” (verses 3-4).

Isaiah finished reading the letter. He was close to God, and God moved him to respond to the messengers.

“Tell Hezekiah to not fear the message from Assyria,” Isaiah said. “They have blasphemed God: He will send a blast upon them. And King Sennacherib himself will die by the sword in his own land” (verses 6-7).

In one sense, the words of the prophet seemed to change nothing. The city was still surrounded. Tens of thousands of Assyrian soldiers awaited the command to storm Jerusalem. Hundreds of thousands of spears, swords, daggers, slings, arrows and firebrands were at the ready for wounding and slaying the people of the city.

But in another very real sense, the words of the prophet changed everything.

The princes left Isaiah and hurried to inform Hezekiah. Meanwhile Rabshakeh’s messengers reported to Sennacherib that the Jews had not opened the city. This angered Sennacherib who wanted Jerusalem not only to complete his dominance of Judah but to give him control over much of the Middle East, strengthening him against the other kingdoms with which he was constantly at war, especially Babylon. He wanted his conquest of this city to take as little time and resources as possible, but the Jewish king had found a new resolve that would prolong the struggle. He sent an angry, mocking letter to Hezekiah, criticizing his God and saying that after he defeated Egypt, he would make Jerusalem and everyone inside it his next victim.

Hezekiah was now quick to turn to God. He reentered the temple, holding Sennacherib’s letter in his hand. He bowed down and “spread it before the Lord” (verse 14), then began a heartfelt prayer to God.

Write out Hezekiah’s prayer on the lines below (verses 15-19).

king of Assyria” (2 Kings 20:6). Sennacherib did, in fact, “return to his own land” (2 Kings 19:7, 36). And he was eventually killed by his sons while worshiping in a temple (verse 37).

Because Hezekiah repented, sought God’s government, took his problems to God and relied on Him, everything changed. The same God wants to fight *your* battles today. He knows your struggles. He sees your enemies. And He says to you that if you will turn to Him, obey Him, and believe Him, *He will defend you.*

MIRACULOUS HEALING

During this same time, Hezekiah became extremely ill. This severe sickness was probably caused by the intense stress he was suffering in the face of Assyria. God sent the Prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah with a dire warning: “Thus says the LORD, Set your house in order; for you shall die, and not live” (2 Kings 20:1).

Hezekiah, learning many lessons in faith at this time, immediately turned to God in prayer. He fervently asked God to forgive him of his sins and to heal him from his sickness.

“And it came to pass, [before] Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: behold, I will heal you ...” (verses 4-5).

God heard that humble, passionate prayer just as He will hear yours.

God told Hezekiah that He would give him 15 more years to live. This would also give him time to marry and have a child, an heir for the throne of David.

Hezekiah knew that God always follows through on His promises, but he was a bit hesitant to believe God had so quickly changed His mind. “Can God give me a sign that He will do this?” he asked (verse 8).

Isaiah’s answer is one of the greatest descriptions of God’s power in the Bible. “The God of Israel is the one true Creator God,” he said. “By His power He set the Earth and the sun in their courses, which you see every day as the shadow of your sundial moves forward. And by His power He can *move it backward.*”

Hezekiah looked at Isaiah. He realized what he was saying. He asked for a solar-system altering miracle: “[L]et the shadow return backward 10 degrees.”

Staring intently at the sun dial’s shadow, Hezekiah’s

eyes filled with tears as he watched it shift backward. God had altered *the relationship of the sun to the Earth* just for him!

Never forget *who this great God truly is.*

ANOTHER TEST

Word spread that Jerusalem and King Hezekiah had withstood Assyria and that Hezekiah had been healed. Other nations sent gifts and treasures to Jerusalem. But within this time of success was a danger, and Hezekiah fell victim to it: He became proud and self-confident.

Among the well-wishers were officers from the king of the Babylonian Empire, “for he had heard that [Hezekiah] had been sick, and was recovered” (Isaiah 39:1; 2 Kings 20:12; 2 Chronicles 32:31).

The Babylonian Empire was comparable in greatness to the Assyrian Empire. Hezekiah felt honored, and he personally took the officers on a tour throughout the city, even showing them the great treasures inside the storehouses of the temple. Isaiah 39:2 specifies, “there was nothing in his house, nor all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.”

This was a grave mistake. Because he did not stay close to God, he became vain. And because he became vain, he revealed the wealth and some of the inner workings of his kingdom to an incredibly powerful future *enemy.*

Later, God gave the Prophet Isaiah a message to take to Hezekiah.

“And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. Behold, the days come, that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, says the LORD” (2 Kings 20:16-17). What a chilling message and strong correction!

This destruction would not come within Hezekiah’s lifetime, but it would nonetheless come. Just as the kingdom of Israel sinned and was destroyed for it, so too would be the kingdom of Judah.

The Bible does not clearly state that Hezekiah repented and turned back to God before his death, but he was buried in the tombs of the righteous kings, and 2 Chronicles 32:33 states that “the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death.” This indicates that he learned from his mistakes, repented of his sins, and turned back to God.

From the life of King Hezekiah, we learn the joy that comes from obeying God’s commandments, observing His holy days properly, fighting idolatry, and—even after sinning and repenting—turning to God and realizing that He will fight our battles.

No matter what you are facing, God has power beyond the solar system to help you. The God who created the sun and the Earth and who worked powerfully in the life of Hezekiah is the same yesterday,

today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The next time you see the sun casting a shadow upon the ground, remember who it is that is your God and how much He will do to help *you*.

‘LET THE STONES SPEAK’

The Hezekiah bulla is the only seal impression belonging to an Israelite or Judean king ever to have been found in controlled scientific excavations. It was found by Dr. Eilat Mazar just 10 feet away from where she found the Isaiah bulla, in the same assemblage of soil, dating to the same time period (late eighth century B.C.). The Hezekiah bulla was unearthed in 2009 but wasn’t decoded and confirmed until a few years later. Its inscription reads: “Belonging to Hezekiah, [son of] Ahaz, King of Judah.”

This bulla proves the existence of a major biblical king as well as his father, and its symbols are also significant.

Several other seals belonging to King Hezekiah have appeared in the antiquities market. The origins of these artifacts are less clear than the 2009 Hezekiah bulla, yet their symbols are significant. Some of them bear the image of a scarab beetle

with proud, upturned wings, rolling a sun disk, the Egyptian symbol of the creator-god Khepri. The Prophet Isaiah warned against the Egyptian influence creeping into Judah before the Assyrian invasion (e.g. Isaiah 30-31). Hezekiah sealing royal documents with images of Khepri would be an example of this. (A number of royal seals found on pottery jar handles also depict a winged scarab.)

Yet the 2009 Hezekiah bulla design indicates that something changed. Dr. Mazar speculated that it must have been made directly after Assyria’s invasion and Hezekiah’s healing. Rather than a scarab or other pagan religious symbol, it depicts a sun with downturned wings, indicating protection. The ankh motifs at the sides of the bulla are still essentially Egyptian in nature but are universally understood to symbolize life. This indicates God healing him and adding years to his life.



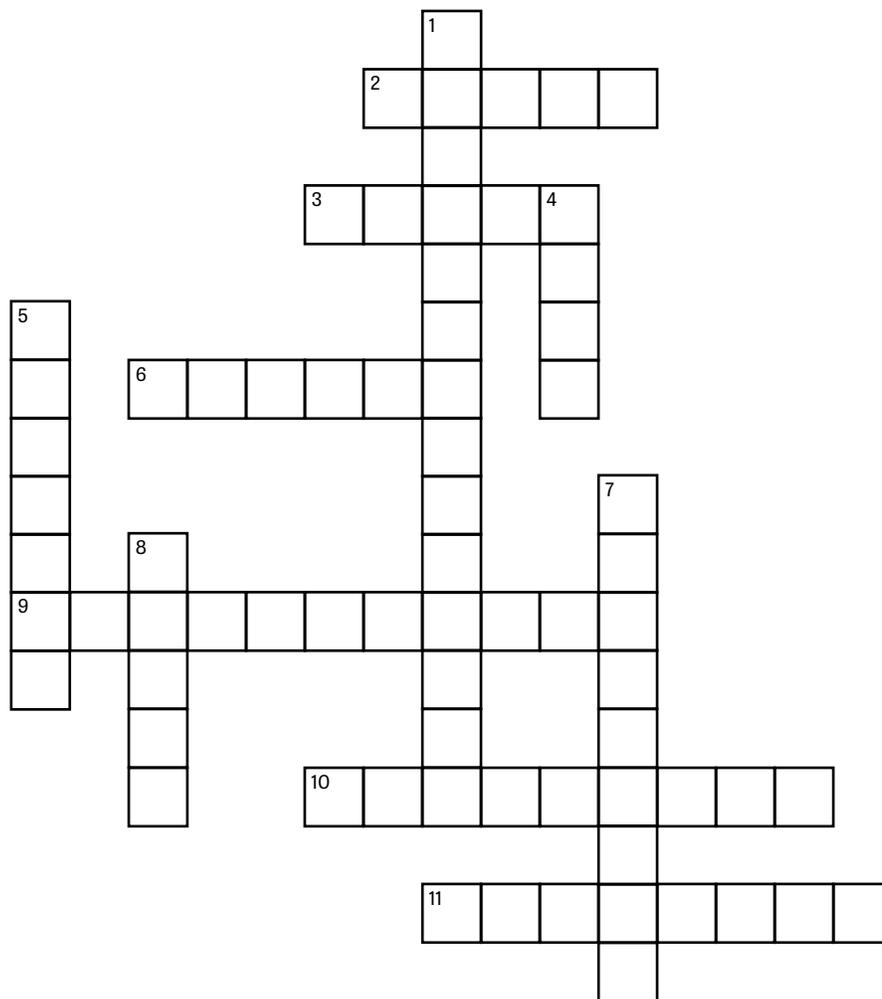
The Hezekiah bulla

SEE ALSO

- Psalm 84:11: “God is a sun and shield”
- Psalm 91:4: “He shall cover you with His feathers, And under His wings you shall take refuge ...” (New King James Version).
- Ezekiel 16:8 “I spread My wing over you ...” (NKJV).
- Malachi 4:2: “The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings ...” (NKJV).

The winged sun may also carry additional meaning—hearkening to the miracle performed at the time of Hezekiah’s healing, when the sun moved and the shadow on the sundial of Ahaz turned backward 10 degrees (2 Kings 20:9-11). The lines extending from the sun—terminating in circular dots may actually be a depiction of this sundial.

Judean Reformation Crossword



ACROSS

- 2. Spring in Jerusalem
- 3. Seal impression
- 6. Prophet of God
- 9. Demanded tribute from Hezekiah
- 10. Jewish capital city
- 11. Righteous king of Judah

DOWN

- 1. Assyrian king in 745 B.C.
- 4. Willingly stole from the temple
- 5. Jewish town conquered by Assyria
- 7. Assyrian general
- 8. Smote the Assyrians