

Isaiah Chapter 39, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes¹

¹Slotki summarizes **chapter 39**: “A Babylonian embassy with gifts is received by Hezekiah. Isaiah announce to him the sack by Babylon of all that he and his royal ancestors had accumulated and the subjection of his children to the kings of that country. The corresponding passage, with variations, is **2 Kings 20:12-19**.” (P. 182)

Alexander states that “This chapter contains an account of the Babylonian embassy to Hezekiah, and of his indiscreet and ostentatious conduct, which became the occasion of a threatening message by the hands of Isaiah, predicting the Babylonian conquest and captivity, but with a tacit promise of exemption to the King himself, and to the country, while he lived, which he received with humble acquiescence and thankful acknowledgment.

“The chapter is evidently a direct continuation of the narrative before it, nor is there any real ground, internal or external, for suspecting its authenticity, or genuineness.” (P. 88)

Motyer entitles **39:1-8** “The moment of decision.”

Oswalt entitles this same section “Babylonian Seduction.”

He comments that “Instead of trusting God, there is every indication that Hezekiah is trusting the nations, as represented by Babylon...There is [also] good reason to believe that the events described in **chapters 38-39** took place before those of **chapters 36-37**...Therefore, we must ask why the author has reversed the chronological order...

“He is answering a fundamental question: If God could be trusted and would deliver from Assyria, why would there be defeat by Babylon? The answer is not that a certain king paraded his riches before a group of Babylonian envoys. It is in fact that trust must become a way of life and not merely a magic talisman to be rubbed at critical moments.” (P. 693)

Watts comments on **chapter 39** that “This story [taken from **2 Kings**] fits the [**Book of Isaiah's**] purposes admirably...’When he heard that he was ill and then was strong again’ relates it to a time shortly after his illness, perhaps the sme time as is depicted in **chapter 22**.

“Yet the story does not develop as a formal visit to a sick friend. Isaiah’s response reflects suspicion that a great deal more was taking place...A visit from a major leader of rebellion in the east to one who was potentially a leader for rebellion in the west would make political sense...

“The illness referred to is not that of 701 B.C.E., told about in the previous chapter...Hezekiah’s Divine reprieve is temporary. His descendants will not be so privileged.

(continued...)

בַּעֲתָהּ הָיָה שָׁלַח מֶרֶדַךְ בֶּלְאֲדָן 39:1²

בֶּן־בֶּלְאֲדָן מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל

סִפְרִים וּמִנְחָה אֶל־חֲזַקְיָהוּ

וַיִּשְׁמַע כִּי חָלָה וַיִּחְזַק:

¹(...continued)

“Merodach-Baladan was a cunning chieftain of the Yakin tribe from a territory east of the mouth of the Euphrates river. He conquered and ruled Babylon from 722-711 B.C.E. and reconquered it for two years from 705-703 B.C.E...He is the terrible king of Babylon pictured in **chapter 14**. News of his fall in 711 B.C.E. is presented in **chapter 21**...In each of these chapters Merodach-Baladan is a basic symbol of the incalculant rebel who never gives up, exactly the model the [**Book of Isaiah**] is urging Israel and Judah not to emulate. This story with its reference to Merodach-Baladan and to Babylon, which the author / composer of the [**Book of Isaiah**] found in **2 Kings 18-20**, had a tremendous on the [**Book of Isaiah**].

“The comment about Hezekiah’s descendants (**verse 7**) refers to Johoiachin’s removal to Babylon in 598 B.C.E. with his household and to his services in behalf of the Babylonian emperor Amel-Marduk, who is known in the **Old Testament** as Evil-Merodach. The comment sets the stage for references to Babylonian captivity in the following act and for the fall of Babylon in **chapter 47**...

“The story tells how Hezekiah gained ‘peace and security’ for himself at the expense of his ‘house’ both in the sense of riches and strength and the sense of family and progeny. Hezekiah’s rebellion put his dynasty, his family, and his descendants at risk. Both he and they would lose by it...Hezekiah would not experience deportation, but his descendants would be exiled to Babylon.” (Pp. 64-65)

²Motyer entitles **verses 1-2** “The envoys.”

Alexander translates **verse 1**: “*In that time, Merodach Baladan, son of Baladan, King of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, and he heard that he was sick and was recovered.*”

He comments that “What the ambassadors reported to the King on their return, is of no importance to the history...It is not improbable that Merodach Baladan was meditating a revolt, and sent this embassy to gain Hezekiah’s cooperation. The congratulation on his recovery may have been a secondary object, or perhaps a mere pretext. In **2 Chronicles 32:31**, a further design is mentioned, namely, to inquire of the

wonder that was done in the land, whether this be understood to mean the destruction of Sennacherib’s army, or the miraculous recession of the shadow.” (Pp. 88-89)

At that³ time⁴ Merodach-Baladan,⁵

³An unpointed Hebrew text has **הַהוּא**, literally “the that,” apparently masculine singular. But the noun **עַתָּה** is mostly treated as feminine, and so the Masoretes have pointed “the that” **הַהוּאָה**, as if it were a feminine “that.”

⁴Slotki states that the time was “about 705-04 B.C.E. or, according to others, about 714 B.C.E. In any case, the incident must have occurred before Hezekiah’s rebellion against Assyria.” (P. 182)

Motyer holds that the phrase “at that time” refers “not to a date but to an occasion charged with some special significance.” (P. 295)

And we wonder, Is this Motyer’s way of avoiding the problem of exact dating of the biblical story? We think “at that time” is referring to the time of Hezekiah’s sickness and healing.

Motyer says, “If we take 687 B.C.E. as a precise date for the death of Hezekiah and the fifteen years of **Isaiah 38:5** as an exact figure, the ambassadors came in 702 B.C.E. At this time Merodach-Baladan knew that Sennacherib’s counter-offensive could not be long delayed and, with characteristic opportunism, he sought to prompt a diversionary [political uprising] in western Palestine.” (P. 296)

Oswalt comments that the phrase *At that time* “gives us no help in determining the calendrical date of these events. Fortunately, the Assyrian records give a good deal of information about Merodach-baladan that helps to establish a general time frame. We are told that he held the throne of Babylon in defiance of Sargon from 721 until 710 B.C.E., when the latter finally ousted him. Then again in Sennacherib’s reign, from about 705 to 703 B.C.E., he captured the Babylonian throne a second time. But even after his defeat in 703, he seems to have continued to foment revolt from bases in Elam across the Persian Gulf...The Babylonian monarch was undoubtedly eager to support rebellion wherever it occurred in the Assyrian empire, knowing that every additional revolt would lessen some of the pressure on himself.” (Pp. 693-94)

Watts states that “‘At that time’ sets the story-time by the passage that precedes it. Both the **[Book of Isaiah]** and **2 Kings 20** tell these stories in the same order, which creates a historical problem since the dates of Merodach-Baladan’s power in Babylon do not coincide with this time period. The story is told here, not because of chronology, but because it is thematically appropriate. The mention of Merodach-Baladan, King of Babylon from 722-711 B.C.E. and 705-703 B.C.E. and a major rebel against Assyrian authority in the east, suggests some communication concerning collaboration against Assyria.” (P. 65)

son of Baladan, King of Babylon,
sent forth letters⁶ and a gift to Hezekiah;
and⁷ he had heard that he was sick and grew strong / recovered.⁸

⁵Where our Hebrew text has מֶרֶדְחַק בַּלְאֲדָן, **merodhak bal)adhan 2 Kings 20:12** has בְּרֹאֲדָן בַּלְאֲדָן, **bero)dhak bal)adhan**. The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) of **Isaiah 39:1** is Μαρωδαχ υἱὸς τοῦ Λααδαν, Marodach, son of the Laadan. Its translation of **2 Kings 20:12** is Μαρωδαχβαλαδαν υἱὸς Βαλαδαν, Marodachbaladan son of Baladan. Watts notes that “The Akkadian name is Marduk-apla-iddin(a). Where our Hebrew text spells בַּלְאֲדָן, **bal)adhan** 1QIs^a spells בַּלְאֲדִינ, **bal)adhiyn**.

From **Wikipedia** (1/6/2018) we quote: “Merodak Baladan was a Chaldean prince who usurped the Babylonian throne in 721 B.C.E. and reigned in 722-710 B.C.E., and 703-702 B.C.E. Marduk-apla iddina II was known as one of the kings who maintained Babylonian independence in the face of Assyrian military supremacy for more than a decade.

“Sargon of Assyria repressed the allies of Marduk-apla-iddina II in Elam, Aram and Israel and eventually drove (about 710 B.C.E.) him from Babylon. After the death of Sargon, Marduk-apla-iddina II briefly recaptured the throne from a native Babylonian nobleman. He reigned nine months (703-702 B.C.E.). He returned from Elam and ignited rebellion in Babylonia. He was able to enter Babylon and be declared king again. Nine months later he was defeated near Kish by the Assyrians, but managed to flee to Elam. He died in exile a couple of years later.”

⁶Whereas a number of English translations have the singular “letter,” the Hebrew and the Greek both have the plural, סְפָרִים and ἐπιστολάς, “letters.” At **Isaiah 37:14** the Hebrew text has the plural סְפָרִים, “letters,” but the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has the singular τὸ βιβλίον, “the book / scroll / writing.”

The Greek translation is lengthier than the Hebrew, having ἐπιστολάς καὶ πρέσβεις καὶ δῶρα, “letters and elders / officials and gifts.”

Oswalt comments that the plural “letters,” stresses “Merodach-baladan’s personal involvement, while the sending of such letters implies the necessity of envoys to carry them.” (P. 694)

⁷Our Hebrew text has וַיִּשְׁמַע, “and he heard,” which seems out of place. The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἤκουσεν γὰρ, “for he heard,” and our English translations all follow the Greek, except for **New International**, which has “because he heard,” which is how the Hebrew text of **2 Kings 20:12** reads, כִּי שָׁמַע.

(continued...)

39:2⁹ וַיִּשְׂמַח עֲלֵיהֶם חִזְקִיָּהוּ

וַיֵּרְאֵם אֶת־בַּיִת (נִכְתָּהוּ) [נִכְתָּו]

אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף וְאֶת־הַזָּהָב

וְאֶת־הַבְּשָׂמִים וְאֶת־הַשֶּׁמֶן הַטֹּיֵב

וְאֶת כָּל־בַּיִת כִּלְיוֹ

וְאֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא בְּאֶצְרָתוֹ

לֹא־הָיָה דָבָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָרְאָם חִזְקִיָּהוּ

בְּבֵיתוֹ וּבְכָל־מַמְשַׁלְתּוֹ:

⁷(...continued)

Slotki comments that “Some commentators suggest that the real motive was to secure Hezekiah’s help in the protracted struggle Merodach had carried on against Sennacherib for the Babylonian throne.” (P. 182)

⁸Where Isaiah 39:1 ends the sentence with כִּי חָלָה וַיַּחֲזֶק, “because he was sick and grew strong / recovered,” **2 Kings 20:12** ends the sentence with כִּי חָלָה חִזְקִיָּהוּ, “because he was sick–Hezekiah.” Watts notes that **2 Kings 20:12** “says nothing of his recovery and implies that the visit is one to the sick-bed.” (P. 63)

⁹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 2**: “*And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them his house of rarities, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the good oil (or ointment), and all his house of arms, and all that was found in his treasuries; there was not a thing which Hezekiah did not show them, in his house and in all his dominion...*”

“The context seems to show that it was not so much the company or manners of the men that he was pleased with, as the honor done him by the King of Babylon in sending them. The practice of exhibiting the curiosities and riches of a palace to distinguished visitors, [is illustrated by] the parallel case of Croesus and Solon, as recorded by Herodotus [we think of Solomon’s treatment of the Queen of Sheba].” (P. 89)

And Hezekiah rejoiced¹⁰ over them;¹¹

¹⁰Where our Hebrew text has **וַיִּשְׂמַח**, “and he rejoiced,” **2 Kings 20:13** has **וַיִּשְׁמַע**, “and he heard.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has **καὶ ἐχάρη ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς** **Ἐζεκιᾶς χαρὰν μεγάλην**, “and he rejoiced over them, Ezekias (did, with) a great rejoicing.”

Slotki’s translation has “And Hezekiah was glad of them,” and he states that Hezekiah was glad “on account both of the compliment paid to him by Merodach and the opportunity it afforded him of carrying out his own designs against Assyria.” (P. 183)

Motyer translates the phrase by “*Hezekiah received the envoys gladly.*” He comments that Hezekiah’s being glad “is understandable, but to take them on a tour of his treasures and armaments goes beyond the response that a mere convalescent gift requires. It could only mean that the envoys had come with a concealed agenda: would Hezekiah join a rebellion? And Hezekiah was only too ready to agree. His about-face in relation to all that went before in **chapter 38** could not be more complete. Faith and commitment lie in ruins.” (P. 296)

Do you agree with Motyer’s evaluation of Hezekiah’s response to the envoys from Babylon? Is the text depicting Hezekiah’s faith and commitment “lying in ruins”? Or is this Motyer’s over-statement?

Watts comments that “The message was welcome and undoubtedly encouraged Hezekiah to accelerate his moves toward rearmament and independence. He wanted to impress his potential ally with his readiness to go to war. He showed his treasure and his armory—everything...Merodach Baladan’s resistance would probably keep Sennacherib busy in Mesopotamia for a long time. That second front would be of great benefit to Judah as it worked to build up its own capacity to withstand the inevitable Assyrian assault to come.” (Pp. 65-66)

¹¹Where our Hebrew text has simply “he showed them his treasure-house,” 1QIs^a and some Hebrew manuscripts have “he showed them all his treasure-house,” as does **2 Kings 20:13**.

Motyer states “That Hezekiah received the envoys gladly is understandable, but to take them on a tour of his treasures and armaments goes beyond the response that a mere convalescent gift requires. It could only mean that the envoys had come with a concealed agenda: would Hezekiah join in a rebellion? And Hezekiah was only too ready to agree. His about-face in relation to all that went before in **chapter 38** could not be more complete. Faith and commitment lie in ruins.” (P. 296)

Do you agree with Motyer? Is there anything in the text indicating that “faith and commitment lie in ruins”?

(continued...)

and he showed them (the) house of his treasure,¹²
the silver and the gold
and the balsam-spices and the good oil,
and all (the) house of his weapons,¹³
and all that was found in his store-houses.

There was not a thing which Hezekiah didn't show them
in his house and in all his kingdom.

39:3¹⁴ וַיִּבְאֵן יִשְׁעֵיהֶן תְּנֻבִיא אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ

¹¹(...continued)

Oswalt states that Hezekiah's rejoicing "is completely understandable from a human point of view...Whether in 712 or 703 B.C.E., Hezekiah would have been very glad to have the support of Babylon as he contemplated the impending arrival of the Assyrian army to put down either of the West Semitic revolts...However, this kind of reliance upon, and delight in, human power and glory is exactly what the first half of the **Book of Isaiah** is warning against." (P. 694)

¹²Oswalt states that Hezekiah's showing the Babylonian envoys his treasure-house "indicates that the visit was not merely a courtesy call, but was in fact related to diplomatic business. Here was a ready-made opportunity for Hezekiah to glorify God before the pagan Babylonians, to tell of His greatness and of His grace. Instead, he succumbed to the temptation to glorify himself and to prove to the Chaldeans that he was a worthy partner for any sort of coalition they might have in mind...

"An unsavory picture comes to mind of Hezekiah scuttling about showing off his tawdry wealth before the politely approving gaze of the Babylonians, who had in fact seen wealth many times the value of the Judean's little horde in their own homeland." (P. 695)

¹³Where our Hebrew text has כָּל-בַּיִת כְּלָיו, "all (the) house of his weapons," **2 Kings 20:13** has simply בַּיִת כְּלָיו, "(the) house of his weapons."

Alexander states that בַּיִת כְּלָיו "is not a house of *jewels* or *vessels*, but of *arms*, i.e. an arsenal." (P. 89)

¹⁴Motyer entitles **verses 3-8** "The word of the Lord."

He comments, "What a wretched response from Hezekiah (**verse 8**; compare **Isaiah 38:2**)!" (P. 297)

Alexander translates **verse 3**: "Then came Isaiah the prophet to the King Hezekiah, and said to him, What said these men, and whence came they unto thee?"

(continued...)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה אָמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה
 וּמֵאֵין יָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ
 וַיֹּאמֶר תִּזְקִיֶהוּ מֵאֶרֶץ רְחוֹקָה בָּאוּ אֵלַי
 מִבָּבֶל:

And Isaiah the prophet came to the King Hezekiah,
 and he said to him, What did these men say?
 And from where do / will they come to you?
 And Hezekiah said, From a land far away they came to me,¹⁵
 from Babylon.¹⁶

¹⁴(...continued)

And Hezekiah said, From a far country came they unto me, from Babylon...

He comments that “The prophet was not sent for by the King, as in **Isaiah 37:2**; but he was no doubt sent by God, and came in his official character. The older writers [before the mid-nineteenth century] seem to regard as the occasion of his visit the vainglory which the King had displayed in his entertainment of the strangers. The moderns lay the chief stress on the political negotiations which had passed between them, and which could not be regarded by the prophet, but with strong disapprobation. The statement in **Chronicles** is that God left him to try him, to know all in his heart (**2 Chronicles 32:31**).” (P. 90)

Oswalt comments that “As in other cases in the monarchy, the prophet arrived unbidden (**2 Samuel 12:1**; **1 Kings 13:1**; **18:16-17**, etc.). Whatever an Israelite King’s pretensions might be, he always had to operate with the knowledge that, at any point, a prophet who belonged to neither the royal nor the priestly establishments might stand up to rebuke him in the name of One Who calls all human beings, King and commoner alike, to account.” (P. 695)

Watts states that “Isaiah was suspicious...Isaiah’s questions imply disapproval of this diplomacy. Hezekiah’s reply confirms his worst fears.” (P. 66)

¹⁵Where our Hebrew text has אֵלַי, “(they came) to me,” this phrase is not found in **2 Kings 20:14**, making Hezekiah’s statement much less egotistical.

¹⁶Slotki comments that “Hezekiah answered the second of Isaiah’s questions but evaded the first, apparently conscious of the prophet’s objection to any coquetting [] with the Babylonian king. A rabbinic tradition classes Hezekiah among three persons,

(continued...)

39:4¹⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר מָה רָאוּ בְּבֵיתְךָ

וַיֹּאמֶר חִזְקִיָּהוּ אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵיתִי רָאוּ

לֹא-הָיָה דָבָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הִרְאִיתִים בְּאוֹצְרוֹתַי:

And he said,¹⁸ What did they see in your house?

And Hezekiah said, They saw everything in my house;
there was not a thing which I did not show them in my store-houses.

39:5¹⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ אֶל-חִזְקִיָּהוּ

¹⁶(...continued)

the others being Cain and Balaam, whom God tested and found wanting. When the prophet came and asked him, *What said these men? And from whence came they unto thee?* he should have replied, 'Thou art a prophet of the Lord to Whom all secrets are known, why then dost thou ask of me?' Instead he made a show of his greatness: *they are come from a far country unto me*, he boasted; 'they have traveled all that distance to pay honor to me and court my friendship.' On account of his arrogance and lack of faith in Providence, he was punished and the prophet forthwith delivered to him the ominous message." (P. 183)

¹⁷Alexander translates **verse 4**: "And he said, *What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah said, All that is in my house have they seen; there is not a thing that I have not showed them in my treasures.*"

He comments that "Some...say that Hezekiah, finding evasion and concealment impossible, now frankly tells the truth. But the frankness of the answer here recorded rather shows that there was no attempt at concealment from the first. It was not as Calvin well observes, until the prophet questioned him, that Hezekiah became aware of the error which he had committed." (P. 90)

¹⁸Where our Hebrew text has וַיֹּאמֶר, "And he said," the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ εἶπεν Ησαίας, "and he said, Isaiah (did)."

¹⁹Slotki comments that **verses 5-7** contain "Isaiah's announcement of Hezekiah's punishment." (P. 183)

Watts states that in **verses 5-7**, "The 'word from Yahweh' 'makes the punishment fit the crime.' 'All his house' and all his inheritance would in time be 'transported to Babylon.' Some of his descendants would become servants in 'the palace of the King of Babylon.' This is a remarkable prediction of the Babylonian captivity, especially the events of 598 B.C.E. when Jehoiachin and his family were

(continued...)

שִׁמַע דְּבַר־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

And Isaiah said to Hezekiah,

Hear YHWH of Armies²⁰ word:

39:6²¹ הִנֵּה יָמַיִם בָּאִים

¹⁹(...continued)

taken away by Nebuchadnezzar with everything else of value from Jerusalem's palace." (P. 66)

Oswalt states that in **verses 5-6**, "With deadly calm Isaiah announces that one day all those treasures would belong to Babylon." (P. 696)

Alexander translates **verse 5**: "*And Isaiah said to Hezekiah, Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts.*"

He comments that "This form of expression gives to what follows the solemnity and authority of a Divine decree. The parallel passage (**2 Kings 20:16**) omits צְבָאוֹת, 'hosts.'" (P. 90)

²⁰Where our Hebrew text reads יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, "YHWH of Armies," and the Greek translates / transliterates by κυρίου σαββαωθ, "Lord Sabaoth," **2 Kings 20:16** has only יְהוָה, YHWH.

²¹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6**: "*Behold days (are) coming, when all that (is) in thy house, and that which thy fathers have hoarded until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; there shall not be left a thing (literally a word), saith Jehovah.*"

He comments that "As the Babylonians had seen all, they should one day take all; as nothing had been withheld from them now, so nothing should be withheld from them hereafter..."

"This passage affords a striking instance of the gradual development of prophecy. The general threatening of expatriation had been uttered seven hundred years before by Moses (**Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:64-67; 30:3**). Five hundred years later, Ahijah had declared that Israel would be rooted up and scattered beyond the river (**1 Kings 14:15**). Within a hundred years, they had been threatened by Amos with captivity beyond Damascus (**Amos 5:27**). Isaiah himself had obscurely intimated a future connection between the fortunes of Israel and Babylon (**Isaiah 14:1; 21:10**)..."

"But here, for the first time, the Babylonish exile is explicitly foretold, unless the similar prediction of the contemporary prophet Micah (**4:10**) be considered earlier. The fulfilment of the prophecy began in the deportation of Manasseh (**2 Chronicles 33:11**),

(continued...)

וְנִשְׂאָה כָּל־אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵיתְךָ
וְאֲשֶׁר אֶצְרֹךְ אֲבֹתֶיךָ
עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
בְּבָבֶל
לְאִיּוֹתֵר דְּבַר
אֲמַר יְהוָה:

Look–days (are) coming,
and everything which (is) in your house will be lifted up / taken--²²
and that which your fathers stored-up until this day--
(to) Babylon!²³

²¹(...continued)

but was described as something still prospective by Jeremiah (20:5), in whose days, and in the reign of Zedekiah, it was at length fully accomplished (2 Chronicles 36:18)...

“Hezekiah’s fault was not the cause but the occasion of the punishment which fell upon the people...As Calvin says, the punishment of Hezekiah’s individual fault was included in the punishment of Israel for political offences.” (Pp. 90-91)

²²Where our Hebrew text has the singular niph'al verb phrase, וְנִשְׂאָה, “and it will be lifted up / taken,” 1QIs^a has the plural form of this verb, וְנִשְׂאוּ, “and they will be lifted up / taken.”

²³Watts notes that the Hebrew text’s בְּבָבֶל, *babhel*, “Babylon,” is the “accusative of direction. 2 Kings 20:17 makes this explicit, with its בְּבָבֶלָהּ, “to Babylon” (with the *he*-directional. Compare Jeremiah 20:6,

וְאַתָּה פִּשְׁחֹר וְכָל יֹשְׁבֵי בֵיתְךָ
תִּלְכּוּ בַּשָּׂבִי
וּבְבָבֶל תָּבוֹא
וְשֵׁם תִּמְוֹת

(continued...)

Not a thing will be left remaining,
said YHWH!

39:7²⁴ וּמִבְּנֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ מִמֶּנִּי

אֲשֶׁר תּוֹלִיד

יִקְחוּ וְהָיוּ סְרִיסִים

²³(...continued)

וְשָׁם תִּקְבְּר

אֶתְּהָ וְכָל-אֶהְבִּיךָ

אֲשֶׁר-נִבֵּאתָ לָהֶם בַּשֶּׁקֶר:

And you, Pashchur, and all those inhabiting your house,
you (plural) will walk / go into captivity!

And (to) Babylon you (singular) will come,
and there you (singular) will die,

and there you (singular) will be buried—
you (singular) and all your lovers—

because you (singular) prophesied to them with the falsehood!

Also see **Jeremiah 24:1** and **28:3**.

Immediately following the word Babylon, 1QIs^a has the phrase וַיְבִיאוּ, “they will bring and...” The Aramaic Targum has a similar additional phrase, וַיִּתּוּבֵל, “and they will be carried to Babylon.”

²⁴Alexander translates **verse 7**: “*And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon.*”

He comments that ‘The future form of expression in the first clause has respect to the fact that Hezekiah had as yet no children (See...**Isaiah 38:2**.)’ (P. 91)

But is the verb יֵצְאוּ imperfect / future? [] The next phrase, אֲשֶׁר תּוֹלִיד, “whom you shall give birth to” is certainly imperfect / future.

Oswalt comments that “Not only will Hezekiah’s treasure belong to the Babylonians but so also will some of his descendants. (‘Sons’ here can refer to grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It is not restricted to the first generation.) (P. 697)

בְּהִיכַל מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל:

And some of your children who will go forth from you,²⁵

to whom you will give birth,

they will be taken and they will be eunuchs,²⁶

in (the) temple of Babylon's King!²⁷

39:8²⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר חֶזְקִיָּהוּ אֶל־יְשַׁעְיָהוּ

²⁵Where our Hebrew text has מִמֶּנִּי, “from you,” 1QIs^a has מִמְעֵיכָה, “from your internal organs.”

²⁶Alexander notes that the plural noun סַרְיִסִיִּים, **sariysiym** is strictly understood by the [Greek translation, **Rahifs**], (*spadontas*), and the Latin Vulgate (*eunuchi*), but explained by the Aramaic Targum to mean ‘nobles.’” (P. 91)

²⁷Alexander states that “The fulfilment of this prophecy is recorded in **2 Kings 24:12-16** and **Daniel 1:1-7**.” (P. 92)

²⁸Alexander translates **verse 8**: “*And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. And he said, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.*”

He comments that “While the King acquiesces in the threatening prophecy as righteous and deserved, he gratefully acknowledges the mercy with which it is tempered ...It was not more clearly Hezekiah’s duty to submit without a murmur to God’s threatening, than it was to accept with gratitude the exemption promised to himself.” (P. 92)

Oswalt states that “Commentators are divided over the proper interpretation of this verse. Does it portray Hezekiah in a favorable light or an unfavorable light? The majority seem to take it as a positive statement...”

“While it may be that Hezekiah is humbly thankful for God’s grace in not bringing the deserved punishment upon him immediately, it is hard to avoid the implication that the real reason for his saying that God’s word is good is merely the very human relief that he is not going to be destroyed. Whether his descendants are to be consumed does not seem to affect him...”

“To be sure, Hezekiah was the demonstration that God can be trusted. But he is also the demonstration that our trust can no more be in good human beings than in bad ones. Our trust is in God alone.’ (P. 697)

(continued...)

טוֹב דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ

וַיֹּאמֶר

כִּי יִהְיֶה שְׁלוֹם וְאַמֶּת בְּיָמָי:

And Hezekiah said to Isaiah,

Good--YHWH's word which you spoke!²⁹

And he said,

²⁸(...continued)

Watts holds that "Hezekiah's piety is demonstrated in his acceptance of Yahweh's word...

"On reading this a century and a half later, the exiles' response must have been bitter: 'That is all right for him to say. But what about us?' The effect of that resignation without regard to those who were to follow him is heightened by the last line: 'if only there be peace and security in my days.'" (P. 66)

²⁹Slotki comments that what Hezekiah means is: "God is merciful in that He is postponing the calamity until after my death. Hezekiah acknowledges his error and submits to God's will, but sees in the deferment of the punishment evidence of His mercy to him." (P. 184)

Because there will be peace and true faithfulness³⁰ in my days!³¹

³⁰Slotki suggests that here the Hebrew noun אֱמֶת, which we translate by “true faithfulness,” may mean either “steadfastness” or perhaps “security.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) translates אֱמֶת by δικαιοσύνη, “righteousness.” Watts translates “security,” holding that it means “that which is firm, true, has integrity.” (P. 66)

Alexander states that “the best interpretation seems to be...its primary etymological sense of permanence, stability, in which the ideas of fidelity and truth may be included, as effects necessarily imply their cause.” (P. 93)

Motyer comments, “What a wretched response from Hezekiah!” (P. 297)

What do you think? Do you agree with Motyer? Or do you see Hezekiah as a human being, who longs for a lifetime of peace and true faithfulness—even though he realizes that some time in the future his nation will be led captive to Babylon? Does the text depict him as a “wretched” individual? Or does it not depict him as a King of Israel, who is torn by competing challenges, who is a man of faith, but also a very human person, who in his position has to deal with political realities? Does the text make the kind of blanket assertions concerning him that Motyer does?

³¹Watts explains **chapter 39** as follows: “Merodach-Baladan’s message to Hezekiah is a story that was heard on at least three levels...

First, it was read as a story joined to other prophet-king stories. It undoubtedly reflected a judgment on Hezekiah for failure to consult Yahweh about his foreign policy...

On a second level, it was incorporated into the Deuteronomistic History [**Joshua-2 Kings**, specifically **2 Kings 18-20**] with the other Isaiah / Hezekiah stories as illustrations of God’s judgment on the kingdom of Judah. The Deuteronomistic History is a work completed in the Babylonian period (after 605 B.C.E.) and would already have been very interested in relating the story to the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar...

“On a third level, the [**Book of Isaiah**] has placed this story with the others in **chapters 36-39**...Hezekiah has become so engrossed in his dream of freedom that he reacted with naive, almost childish, joy to the idea of a new adventure suggested by Merodach-Baladan’s letters. His failure to assess carefully the situation compromised his throne, his palace, the temple, all his possessions, his capital city, and even the future generations of his own family. All this he surrendered for the impossible dream of freedom and independence. It was fantasy because it was not based on God’s strategy and God’s leading...

“Hezekiah was satisfied to have things go well for the moment: the temporary relief of Jerusalem (**chapter 37**), fifteen additional years of life (**chapter 38**), and

(continued...)

³¹(...continued)

peaceful security for his moment in time (**chapter 39**)...He lacked the longer view and the patient character to work for it...

His piety was the prayer of the moment. The [**Book of Isaiah**] calls for a faith that relates to the ongoing purposes of God which have a glorious past and an assured future. Hezekiah's piety was not of that sort." (Pp. 66-67)

Kaiser summarizes **chapter 39**, stating that "This narrative is taken with only very slight changes from **2 Kings 20:12-19**, and together with the stories about the prophet in the three preceding chapters was a later interpolation into the **Book of Isaiah**...

"The plundering of the royal treasury of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and the deportation of the Davidic kings to Babylon are traced back to an episode in the life of Hezekiah...The substance of the narrative is derived firstly from the historical recollection that an embassy from the Babylonian king Merodach-baladan, the Marduk-aplu-idinna of the cuneiform texts, once came to Jerusalem with presents...

"What is prophesied in the story had certainly already taken place: Jerusalem had already been plundered by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.E. and the Davidic line had already been deported to Babylon...

"[The narrative relates how] an embassy comes from Babylon with a letter and gifts, in order—so the narrative now relates—to congratulate the king who had just been healed. At this the King of the small state of Jerusalem must have felt honored and must have been pleased, and in order to make some impression upon the ambassadors of one who (in the imagination of the narrator and his community!) was a mighty King, he takes him to his treasury, in order to show him his gold and silver, his spices and perfume, or, without listing everything, to show him all he possessed!" (Pp. 408-411)

Alexander states at the close of his commentary on **chapters 36-39** that "It may safely be inferred, as a legitimate, if not an unavoidable deduction, that [these chapters] form a continuous unbroken narrative by one and the same writer; that this writer may as well have been Isaiah as any other person, if we regard internal evidence, and can have been no other, if we regard the immemorial tradition of the Hebrew Canon; and that these four chapters, far from having been inserted here at random or through ignorance, are in their proper place, as a connecting link between the Earlier and Later Prophecies, the threatening in **chapter 39:6** being really the theme or text of the long prophetic discourse, with which the remainder of the book is occupied." (P. 93)

Oswalt closes his commentary on **Isaiah 1-39** with the statement that "While **chapters 7-39** provide the groundwork for the solution to the problem raised in **chapters 1-5**, the problem still remains: how can sinful, rebellious Israel become holy,

(continued...)

³¹(...continued)
submissive Israel? Trust God? Yes, but how? **Chapters 40-66** exist to provide the answer to that question.