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Take Your Son Shear-Jashub to Meet Ahaz

7: 3-9

Take your son Shear-Jashub to meet Ahaz DIG: Why did ADONAI command this seemingly unimportant boy to accompany his father on this critical confrontation? Is this the place for a boy to be? How did Shear-Jashub become an object lesson for King Ahaz? What was Isaiah's purpose here in going to see King Ahaz? What was the LORD trying to accomplish? What did two smoldering stubs of firewood represent? But in what way had Ahaz already taken a step that would prove his undoing? What was God trying to accomplish in His words through Isaiah? Who was He responding to? Did Elohim get through to king Ahaz? What happened as a result?

REFLECT: Is there anything that God wants you to change so that you will be able to see what He is trying to teach you? How open are you to change? Have you been willing to change things in the past? Do you resist it, or embrace it? Make a list of things you have changed in the past year. If you really thought the LORD wanted you to change something big in your life, could you do it? What situation are you facing that frightens you now? What forces are involved? On a scale of 1 to 10, how trusting of God are you in that situation? What makes it difficult for you to trust the LORD in such fearful times? When have you found that following *your* solution to a problem, rather than His, only made the problem worse? If Ahaz did not trust YHVH, he had no future. Have you ever made any decisions in your life on your own strength that affected your future negatively? How did you turn it around? How can you use your experience to help others? Where does your security lay?

At this point a message is given to **Ahaz**. **He** was evidently investigating **Jerusalem's** water supply in preparation for the coming siege when **Isaiah** met **him**. This is a turning point for both **Ahaz** personally, and **Judah** nationally.



Then the LORD said to Isaiah His prophet, “Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman’s Field” (7:3). Isaiah, accompanied by his son, is directed by God to meet Ahaz outside the City. The Washerman’s Field, or Fuller’s Field, was on the western side of Tziyon, where there is still an Upper Pool (Second Chronicles 32:30). The Upper Pool was a reservoir that held water from the Gihon Spring, close to Yerushalayim. The fullers, or the cleaners and thickeners of woolen fabrics, carried on their occupation near this pool. The road, which ran past this Washerman’s Field, was the one that leads from the western gate to Joppa. This was the same exact location where, thirty-three years later, Sennacherib’s field commander would hurl insults at King Hezekiah’s Jewish delegation (36:2).

King Ahaz was there, on the west side of Yerushalayim, outside of the gates preparing for the coming of a second siege by checking the water sources and supplies. For until the time of Hezekiah (22:1-4), the City of David received its water supply over ground from the upper Gihon pool and was therefore more vulnerable. Without water, the City could not hope to endure a siege for more than a few days. It was there that the LORD instructed Isaiah to go and meet Ahaz.

And in addition, Isaiah is told to bring his son Shear-Jashub, whose name means *a remnant will return*. It is a name with two possible meanings: the noun comes first for emphasis, but does it mean *only a remnant . . .* or *a guaranteed remnant . . .* ? Was the name of the boy a threat of doom or a promise of survival? Isaiah was so sure it was both, unbelief that would destroy his people and trust that would save them, that he made both names a reality by bringing his son as an object lesson for the mighty king of Judah. If

Ahaz got the significance of the message, **he** surely paid no attention to it.

One of the emphases which ties the Book of **Immanuel** together is the use of children, with **Shear-Jashub** in 7:3; **Immanuel** in 7:14 and 8:9; **Maher-shalal-hash-baz** in 8:3; **Isaiah's** children in 8:18; and **the royal child** in 9:5. The point is that if **God's** people would change and see **His** light, then **the child Immanuel** could deliver **them** from **their** enemies.

Isaiah and **his son Shear-Jashub** met **King Ahaz** on the west side of **Jerusalem**, outside of the gates preparing for the coming of a second siege by checking the water sources and supplies. **The prophet** was trying to comfort **the king** by telling **him**, "**Be careful, keep calm, and don't be afraid or lose heart**" (7:4a). This was a warning to **the king** not to take any action that would separate **himself** from **the LORD**. **He** needed to **be calm**, and in reality, **Isaiah** was telling **him** *to do nothing*.

King Ahaz, however, had in mind *to do plenty*. **He** was going to play the clever politician by entering into a covenant with Assyria as **his** security against his two previous allies (**Second Kings 16:7-9**). This is exactly what **Isaiah** was warning **Ahaz** not to do! It was as if **Ha'Shem** was saying to **the king of Judah**, "Do not trust the noisy Assyrians, but trust in the quiet confidence of the **God** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." There was going to be a contrast between the quiet and the noise. This contrast is consistent throughout the book as a motif in reference to the remnant of **Y'hudah**.

Isaiah saw the situation differently than **Ahaz**. With a stinging metaphor, **Isaiah** showed **Ahaz** **he** had nothing to fear. **King Rezin of Syria and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, king of Isra'el**, might display flaming **anger**, but **they** were merely **two smoldering stubs of firewood** (7:4b). **Their** lives would soon end. Like **firewood**, **they** would be burned up and gone in no time. Both men died two years later in 732 B.C. **They** had done all the damage to **Judah** that **they** were going to do. **They** would not be allowed to do any more. **They** had ravaged **Judah**, but **they** would not be allowed to take **Yerushalayim**.

If only **Ahaz** could be persuaded to stop playing politics. Assyria would crush the northern kingdoms and **ADONAI** would preserve **Judah** – as **He** ultimately did (**37:36-37**). But if **Ahaz** continued to rely on what **he** thought was **his** own political insight and yoke **himself** with Assyria, **he** will have bitten off way more than **he** could chew!

The conspiracy itself is found in the next two verses. From a strictly human point of view **Ahaz** had a right to be terrified. **Syria and Pekah, son of the king of Isra'el, have plotted your ruin**, saying: **Let us invade Judah. Let us tear it apart and divide it**

among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it (7:5-6). Syria and Isra'el, whose capital was in Ephraim, threatened to invade Y'hudah, split it between the two conquering nations, and set up a puppet king. In fact, Tabeel did set up a dynasty of sorts later. We read in Ezra 4:7 that a couple of centuries later the descendants of Tabeel were enemies of the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

As I stated earlier, Isaiah likes to play with words. Here, he takes the name Tabeel, rewords one vowel pattern and changes the meaning of his name. In Hebrew, *ta-va-ale* means *God is good*. So by changing one basic vowel, *ta-va-ul*, his name changes to *good for nothing*. So this House of Tabeel was *good for nothing*.

Nonetheless, God's message through His prophet was very clear. In effect He was saying, "Do not panic. Trust in Me." Similar words were spoken to Joshua when he faced the impossible task of succeeding Moshe and conquering the land of Canaan: **Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you (Deuteronomy 31:6)**. In all of this the question is clear. Is salvation by faith or works? Will Ahaz be saved politically by trust in God or by his supposedly astute political insight? This is no less true for our political leaders today than it was then. But it is just as true on a personal level. Salvation by works is just as doomed today as it was then. Only faith/trust/belief in Messiah saves.

Previously, Pekah, the ruler of the northern kingdom of Isra'el, or Ephraim, had threatened to invade Judah along with his ally Syria (Isaiah 7:6). Here, the LORD responds to that threat. The two northern kings had arrogantly announced their plan; now the King, ADONAI Elohim, would announce His plan.

YHVH was trying to change Ahaz's perspective. If there was no one who sits enthroned about the circle of the earth (40:22a), then we are at the mercy of evil men (40:27). But if there is such a Protector, then we need not fear what such men can do to us (see my commentary on Isaiah, [to see link click Hh - But Those Who Hope in the LORD Will Renew Their Strength](#)). The two northern invaders' concerns were merely local, but God's scope is the entire universe. If Ahaz could believe that, his perspective would change radically and the house of David would truly be established.

Ha'Shem announced through His prophet that the conspiracy of Syria and Isra'el against Judah was doomed to fail. ADONAI Elohim said that the attack would not take place, it would not happen (7:7). The emphasis here is that all Remaliah's son (God despised him so much that He would not even call him by his name, Pekah, as in 7:1) will ever be is king over Isra'el; he will be no more than that. In other words, He would never be king

over **Tziyon**.

The next two verses form a six-line poem. **For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damsacus is Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah's son. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all (7:8-9).** In lines **8ab** and **9ab** the country, **Syria** and **Ephraim** (or **the northern kingdom of Isra'el**) is traced to its capital, **Damascus** and **Samaria**, and its king, **Rezin** and **Remaliah's son**.

If **Ahaz** refused to believe in **Elohim** he had no future. In lines **8cd** and **9cd** three conclusions are drawn. **First, there was common sense.** Why are **you** afraid of these two seemingly powerful nations? If **you** trace them back to their leadership, who are you really afraid of, only **Rezin** and **Remaliah's son**, who were merely big fish in a small pond? **Secondly, there was implication.** If **Syria** and **Ephraim** could be traced back to **their** capitols, what about **Judah**? Its capital is **Jerusalem** with its King David, **the City of ADONAI** where he choose to dwell (**First Kings 11:13**); and after him, King Solomon sat on **the LORD's** throne (**Second Chronicles 29:23**); all backed by **God's** own words directly from the mouth of **His prophet**, "**It will not take place, it will not happen**" (**7:7**). Wasn't that enough? **Thirdly, there was warning.** **Ephraim** choose the non-existent security of military alliance with Assyria, but time would expose the foolishness of **her** decision.

Isaiah's prophecy came true. The Assyrian army fell upon the coalition and destroyed both of them. In 732 BC, Tiglath-pileser destroyed **Syria** and her capital **Damascus**. True to **Isaiah's** prophecy, Judah escaped the fate of **the northern kingdom of Isra'el**. In 722 BC, because of renewed rebellion, Tiglath-pileser's successor, Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC), marched into **the northern Kingdom**, overran **her** lands in Galilee and the Transjordan, and turned them into three Assyrian provinces.

Isaiah prophesied that **Isra'el** would not be a people **within 65 years**. This prophecy was given in 735 BC and **the northern Kingdom** fell in 722 BC. That was only 13 years later, not 65, so how could this prophecy be true? The answer lies somewhere else. Although Sargon II was the Assyrian king that defeated **the northern kingdom of Isra'el** militarily, it was actually Esarhaddon, a later Assyrian king, who took the Jews out of **Isra'el** (**Ezra 4:2**), and **brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria** in 670 BC (**Second Kings 17:22-24; Second Chronicles 33:11**). So 735 BC to 670 BC is exactly 65 years! This is the exactness of the

Book of **Immanuel**.

Elohim had purposed to accomplish what **He** had announced through the mouth of **His prophet**. The destruction of the two invaders from the north was going to happen regardless of what **Ahaz** believed or disbelieved. But as for **the king of Y'udah** personally, **Isaiah** challenged **him** to believe what **he** was telling **him**, "**If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all**" (7:9b). Once again **the prophet** plays with one letter, *ta-ahmenu* to *ta-ahmanu*; with one little shift of the vowel pattern is the difference between having **faith**, and **not** standing **at all**. An English equivalent would be something like: *If in **God** you do not confide, then in power you will not abide. If in **God** you do not believe, then a blessing you will not receive.* Only through trusting in the present and ultimate reality of **ADONAI Elohim** is any real security possible.

King Ahaz could have **faith** that **the LORD** would fulfill both predictions: that **Isra'el** would be shattered **sixty-five years** later and that in **his** day the northern confederacy (**Syria** and Israel) would not overpower **Judah**. If **he** did not believe both predictions, then **he** too would **not stand at all**. If **Ahaz** saw **Elohim**, then **he** would not see **Pekah** and **Rezin**; but if **he** looked to **Pekah** and **Rezin**, all **he** could see was Assyria as **his** false deliverer. The choice was **his** . . . **he** stood at the point of no return.