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In That Day the LORD Will Whistle

7: 18-25

In that day the LORD will whistle DIG: What images does Isaiah use here to show what Assyria will do to Judah? Which one is the most graphic to you? Why does Ahaz refuse to listen to Isaiah? Who causes this attack to take place? What did shaving the head and hair on the face signify? What does the phrase: In that day mean? Why was the abundance of milk not a good sign? What would the Land be good for? Almost two decades later, what kind of a decision did another king of Judah make? How was it different?

REFLECT: Where have you seen the sovereignty of God in your life? When was the last time you refused to listen to the LORD, only to face a crisis? What did you learn from that experience? How can you try to help others not make the same mistake? Can you remember the last time you were humiliated? When was the last time you were down-and-out because of some bad decisions you made? Did you ever have a second chance to turn the situation around? How did you handle it? Why?

These verses answer the question, “How will the coming days be **unlike any since** the division of the nation (7:17)?” The answer is a grim one. **In that day the LORD will whistle**, or signal, for the armies of **Judah’s** enemies to blanket **the Land** like swarms of bees or **flies**. **The Judeans** will be disgraced in defeat. The countryside will be so depopulated that there will be no one to eat the produce of the few remaining animals or to cultivate the once fertile hills. **The Land** will return to wilderness. Had **Ahaz** been able to believe that **ADONAI** is indeed present with **His people**, it need not have been so. But because he trusted something less than **God**, that object of trust now becomes the instrument of the very devastation he dreaded.²⁹

God governs this world of ours. **He** shapes the destinies of nations, controls the course of empires, and determines the limits of dynasties. Individually, **the LORD has established His throne in heaven and His kingdom rules over all (Psalm 103:19)**. Consequently, **ADONAI** used the nations of the world to discipline **Isra’el**. That was **Isaiah’s** message before **the Assyrian** invasion, and about one hundred years later it would be **Jeremiah’s** message to **Judah** before the Babylonian captivity (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to**

see link click [Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule](#)). Both were ignored, with dire consequences.

Earlier, **Isaiah** had depicted **the LORD** whistling **for those at the ends of the earth**. Saying, **here they come, swiftly and speedily** to devastate the land of **Judah (5:26)**! Now **He** specifies which nations those were. They were **Assyria** from the north, and **Egypt** from the south. Throughout its history, **Isra'el** has been caught between the civilizations of the Nile and the Mesopotamian valleys, each wanting to obtain **her** for their own advancement.



Because the nations of the world are controlled by the sovereignty of **ADONAI**, here **He** calls for them. **In that day** of judgment for **Ahaz** and the southern kingdom of **Judah**, **the LORD** would **whistle for flies from the distant streams of Egypt**. The annual flooding of the Nile River brought swarms of **flies** and the word **streams** in Hebrew is a technical word for **Egypt's** irrigation canals. In other words, **Egyptian** soldiers were seen as numerous and bothersome as **flies**. **And He** would also **whistle for bees from Assyria (7:18)**, which was well known for its beekeeping expertise. In other words, **the Assyrian** soldiers were as vicious as **bees**. Both the **flies** and the **bees** are **metaphors for the swiftness of movement of the Egyptian and Assyrian hosts**. **The Egyptians and the Assyrians** will battle each other, but the battleground will be **Judah**.

They will all come and settle. The Hebrew verb *naha*, which is used sixty-three times in the TaNaKh, always has the meaning given here, which is *to settle or swarm*. Their armies would be like flood waters, settling wherever they wanted. This would be frightening news to **the Jews**. **Isaiah** was saying that **Judah** would be swarming with **Egyptians** and **Assyrians**. They would be everywhere, even in the hardest to find places. **The Land of Judah** offers many such places; **in the steep ravines and in the crevices in the rocks, on all the thornbushes and at all the water holes (7:19)**. But it will be impossible to escape from the invaders. Thinking that **God** would never allow **His** people or **His Temple** to be violated (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Cc - False Religion is Worthless](#)), **the**

Jews living in **Judea** would indeed be **shaken as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind** when the invasion came (7:2).

Isaiah stresses again that the invasion by **Assyria** will not be **her** own decision. **She** will merely be a tool in the hands of the sovereign **LORD**. This concept was basic to Jewish survival. If they believed, as was commonly thought at the time, that when one country conquered another it meant that the gods of the victors had defeated the gods of the conquered people, then they were doomed because their **God** was so small. However, if they could believe **the LORD of heaven's angelic armies (CJB)** when **He** said: **Whoever touches you touches the apple of My eye (Zechariah 2:8)**, then **they** could survive any attack that would come.

In that day, which would shortly come to pass, **the LORD** told king **Ahaz** that he would **use a razor hired from beyond the Euphrates River** as judgment for **Judah's** unbelief. **With a change in metaphor, Assyria is compared to a razor.** More than likely, this is an ironic comment on **Ahaz's** alliance with **Assyria**. **He** had entered into a covenant with **Assyria**, who would first, like **a razor**, viciously attack the northern kingdom of **Isra'el** and Syria. But little did he know that shortly afterward that same cutting **razor**, in the hands of **ADONAI**, would turn on **him** and **his** kingdom of **Judah**.

Ahaz probably tried to keep his alliance with **the Assyrian** king Tiglath-pileser a secret. Therefore, **Isaiah** shocked the king of **Judah** when **he** confronted **him** with the knowledge of the secret pact with **the king of Assyria**. As a true prophet of **God**, the secrets of **the Almighty** were his also. Humanly speaking, nothing could be hidden from **him** that **the LORD** wanted revealed. So it was with the alliance with **the razor from beyond the River**.

Isaiah informs king **Ahaz** that **God** would use that **razor** to figuratively **shave your head and the hair on your legs**, literally feet, **and to take off your beards also (7:20)**. After **the Assyrians** defeated **the Egyptians**, they will **shave Judah herself**. That was the twist. The very one that **Ahaz** hired to **shave Isra'el** and Syria, will end up shaving **Judah** on the **head**, the beard and the **hair** on the face. In the Near East shaving one's **hair** and beard was a sign of humiliation or deep distress (**Job 1:20; Isaiah 15:2; Jeremiah 47:5 and 48:37; Ezekiel 7:18; Amos 8:10; Micah 1:16**). So the contrast between **head and** feet, the visible and hidden body **hair**, express the totality of the humiliation, the indignities heaped on a subject people.

*Humanly speaking, **Judah** will have no honor left. In a similar fate, French women who were known to have consorted with German soldiers during World War II had their heads shaved and were shamed in a public display of disloyalty.*

Isaiah describes **the deplorable condition of the Land after the invader had left his mark upon it. In that day, a man will keep alive a young cow and two goats (7:21).** This represents a time of judgment on the nation of **Judah**. The phrase, **in that day**, is often used to refer to the time of extreme judgment in the Great Tribulation just before **the Messiah** returns (as in **4:2**). But sometimes as we see here, it refers to **the near historical** judgment *at the end of a particular time period*. Here it refers to the judgment to come on the nation of Judah very soon.

And because of the abundance of the milk they give, he will have curds to eat. All who remain alive in the Land will eat curds and honey (7:22). Agricultural activity ceased, primitive conditions returned, and the survivors of the storm and strife were living precariously on the produce of their flocks. The abundance of milk was a troubling factor, not a good one. With so many animals dying, a farmer's **young cow and two goats** would have no young to nurse; therefore, **the milk** (and **curds** from it) would be plentiful for the people. **Honey** would also be abundant because wild flowers would grow in the deserted fields and bee swarms would be more common. All this would fulfill the sign given to **Ahaz** by **Isaiah (7:15)** that he **will eat curds and honey**. Although **Ahaz**, through **his** human wisdom and political maneuvering, had plunged the nation into despair, **God** was still with **His people**. The survivors, although few, would be provided for.

In that day, in every place where there were a thousand vines worth a thousand silver shekels, there will be only briars and thorns (7:23). In addition, the farmers would have no crops because the farmland was destroyed. The vineyards would be ruined along with the farmland and only **briars and thorns**, would grow.

Judah would revert to wilderness. **Men will go there with bow and arrow, for the Land will be covered with briars and thorns (7:24).** To go there without any protection would be to invite attack from wild animals. The only thing **the Land** would be good for was hunting. Because it was **covered with briars and thorns** no farming was possible.

As for all the hills once cultivated by the hoe, you will no longer go there for fear of the briars and thorns; they will become places where cattle are turned loose and where sheep run (7:25). **The land** would only be good for grazing **cattle and sheep**. In **7:23-25** the devastation of the crops is seen. The farmers would have no crops because of the ruined farmland. That which was productive becomes only useful for hunting wild game or grazing by **cattle** and **sheep**, but not for planting. The vineyards would be ruined along with the cultivated **land**, and only **briars and thorns**, mentioned three times here, would grow.

There is a fascinating sequel to this story that will be fulfilled almost two decades later. Go back and read **7:3** again. A specific spot is mentioned where the confrontation took place between **Isaiah the prophet**, and **Ahaz** the king. At that one spot **Ahaz** was given the option. Trust in **God** or trust in **Assyria**. **Ahaz** made the wrong choice and ended up under **the Assyrian** yoke. Later **he** dies and **his son, Hezekiah**, becomes king. **Hezekiah** was still laboring under **the Assyrian** yoke for which **his father** was responsible. Against **Isaiah's** advice and prophecies, **Hezekiah** rebelled against **the Assyrians**, and **the Assyrians** raided **the Land**. Forty-six cities were destroyed by **the Assyrian** invasion. Then only **Jerusalem** was left. Sennacherib **sent his field commander with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem**. Then **the commander stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field (36:2)**. At the very place where **Ahaz** made the fatal choice of putting **Judah** under **the Assyrian** yoke, the **field commander** of **the Assyrian** army confronted **Hezekiah**. But **the son** made the right decision that **his father** did not make. **Hezekiah** made the decision to trust **ADONAI**, and **He** delivered **Hezekiah** and **Jerusalem**, just like **He** had wanted to do if **Ahaz** had acted in faith (**Chapters 36** and **37**).