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The Book of Woes

28:1 to 35:10

The key issue in these chapters is whether **Judah**, especially **her** leaders, will rely on **Egypt** or on **the LORD** in the face of the ever-increasing Assyrian threat. **Chapters 30** and **31** are entirely devoted to this issue, with **31:1** providing the most pointed and succinct statement of it. **Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots, and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Isra'el, or seek help from ADONAI.**

This is the eighth major segment in the book of **Isaiah**. The crisis itself will be told to us in **Chapters 36** and **39**, in the ninth segment of the book. But the eighth segment is concerned with the prophecies called forth because of that particular crisis. What was the crisis? In **Isaiah, Chapters 7** through **12** we talked about the Book of Immanuel. There, Ahaz chose not to trust **God**, but to seek help from the Assyrians. The Assyrians did come and destroy the two kingdoms of **Syria** and **Isra'el**, but then they continued south into **Judah**. Sennacherib then destroyed **forty-six Jewish cities**. Therefore, under Ahaz the nation of **Judah** became subservient to the Assyrian Empire. This continued for fourteen years with **Hezekiah**, the son of King Ahaz.

In **the fourteenth year of Hezekiah** a crisis developed, because there were two opposing political forces in his government. There was the pro-**Egyptian** party, and the pro-Assyrian party. The pro-Assyrian party was led by **Isaiah** the prophet. **He** told **Hezekiah** that **Judah** should not rebel against the Assyrians because this was part of **God's** divine judgment against **Judah** because of **his** father Ahaz. On the other hand, there were those who were anti-**Isaiah** and Assyria and they wished to join up with **the Egyptians** in a revolution against the Assyrian Empire. *Finally, **Hezekiah** sided with the pro-Egypt party and against **Isaiah**. This is one of the few lapses in judgment that **Hezekiah** would make.* To **the prophet**, the thought that someone would commit himself to fickle **Egypt** instead of to **God**, who had proven **Himself** again and again, was simply unbelievable. But **Hezekiah** took **his** army and heads north to join up with **the Egyptians** against the Assyrians. Instead of **Egypt** helping **Judah**, **she** was devastated. Thus, **God**, through **the prophet Isaiah**, announces the six **woes** in this section.



Isaiah not only deals with **the near historical covenant** between **Judah** and **Egypt** that leads to the devastation of **Judah**, but he also points us to **the far eschatological covenant** between **Isra'el** and the antichrist that begins the Great Tribulation, with similar devastation to the people of **Isra'el**, and the people of the entire world. Hence, in these chapters **Isaiah** is speaking of two covenants. One covenant is with the antichrist, which **he** will start with in **Chapter 28** and **29**, and will bring about worldwide devastation. Then, in **Chapters 30** and **31** he will primarily deal with the covenant with **Egypt** and the devastation of **Judah**. Consequently, we have two covenants, and two devastations. The crisis of **the fourteenth year of Hezekiah** is what brings it about. As **Isaiah** is given these prophecies, the covenant with **Egypt** is being made. **Isaiah** warns of the coming judgment, which will be the total devastation of the Land by the Assyrians. When we come to **Chapters 36** through **39** the devastation will occur with several of these prophecies being fulfilled.

In Chapters 13 to 35 Isaiah sought to answer these questions: Can God deliver Isra'el from those who would harm her? Can He be trusted? Or is He just one more god, added to all the others? Is ADONAI Lord over all the nations? But here in the Book of Woes, the specific question that he answers is, "Is God's counsel and His wisdom superior to human leaders?" and the answer is a resounding, Yes!