

GOLD AND SILVER FOR A KINGDOM

THE JUDAEAN ECONOMY IN THE IRON AGE II: POSSIBLE SOURCES FOR KING HEZEKIAH'S WEALTH

by

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Figure 1: Mural depicting Hezekiah, Debre Sina Church, Gorgora, Ethiopia¹

¹ Photo: Author, October 2009.

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I declare that **GOLD AND SILVER FOR A KINGDOM. THE JUDAEAN ECONOMY IN THE IRON AGE II: POSSIBLE SOURCES FOR KING HEZEKIAH'S WEALTH** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

SIGNATURE

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DATE

SUMMARY

The question leading this study is whether or not the contents of Hezekiah's storehouses and treasuries (2 Ki 20:13, 2 Chr 32:25-28 and Is 39:2) defy or reflect the reality of the Judaeen domestic economy in the late 8th – early 7th century BCE. I have adopted a multidisciplinary and holistic approach, considering the literary, political, economic, religious, and socio-cultural dimensions of Hezekiah's reign. The study concludes that revenue from agriculture could not have been Hezekiah's only source of income. Local goods and taxes were insufficient in volume and value to account for the *extent* of Hezekiah's wealth. While the religious reforms and cult centralisation introduced by Hezekiah would have generated considerable income, alternative sources must have been available to the king. Tolls, taxes, and customs imposed on the international trade traversing the Levant contributed significantly. Examination of the available archaeological evidence reflects a prosperous economy, one that favoured a powerful minority.

Key terms:

Ancient Israel; archaeology; Assyria; Biblical Archaeology; cult centralisation; economy; Hezekiah; Iron Age II; Judaeen agriculture; Judah; Phoenicians; religious reforms; Sargon II; Sennacherib; storehouses; Tiglath-Pileser III; treasury; tribute.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold (2 Ki 18:14²).

This seemingly insignificant detail has, as Becking (2007:269) rightly points out, prompted very few theologians and historians to reflect on the immensity of Hezekiah's payment; it is simply taken for granted. Even more surprising is the fact that so few scholars even question Hezekiah's ability to meet this extraordinarily high tribute payment, or question where the financial resources originated.

Three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold would have been a substantial quantity of precious metals even in the late 8th – early 7th century BCE³. Judah was a tiny, land-locked country that lacked natural resources, and would best be categorised as having a subsistence agrarian economy.

Perhaps the description of Hezekiah's tribute was an exaggeration.

In his book, *An ancient Israelite historian: Studies in the Chronicler, his time, place and writing*, Kalimi (2005:35) makes the following observation:

... it does not mean that the book [1-2 Chronicles] is completely clear from imaginary characters. As a matter of fact, there are some fictitious descriptions.

...followed shortly by:

² The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) has been quoted throughout this study.

³ Before Common Era (BCE) and Common Era (CE) are used throughout this study.

The amount of gold collected by David (1 Chr 22:14; 29:4-7-“additions”) defies the reality of the Israelite economy in the monarchic period (Kalimi 2005:35).

Neither the Chronicler nor Isaiah confirms the details of the tribute payment. They do, however, emphasise how exceedingly wealthy Hezekiah was. The authors of Kings, Chronicles, and Isaiah all focus on the king's religious reformation, but considering the nature of the Bible, this is not surprising.

If Judah under Hezekiah was truly prosperous enough to pay the high tribute, where did Hezekiah's wealth originate? While Hezekiah's religious reforms would have resulted in substantial quantities of tithes and taxes being delivered directly to Jerusalem, the evidence of this study points to the tolls and customs imposed on the transit trade traversing the region as the primary source of Hezekiah's immense wealth, with a considerable amount generated from his religious reforms.

Perhaps Hezekiah's actions were not entirely motivated by a zealous desire for religious reformation.

1.2 OVERVIEW

Hezekiah, the thirteenth king of Judah, is forever immortalised by the biblical accolade in 2 Kings 18:5: 'No king of Judah after him could be compared with him – nor any of those before him'.

While the biblical authors acknowledge the fact that Hezekiah subdued the Philistines, extended Judah's borders down to Gaza, and even took on the mighty Assyrian king and his army in a bid for political independence, it was only the comprehensive and uncompromising cultic reforms, introduced in an effort to eradicate the polytheistic practices followed under his father, King Ahaz, and a return to the requirements of the Covenant as set down in Deuteronomy (12:26-26:19), for which Hezekiah receives the biblical writers' unqualified approval and recognition.

The Bible also informs us that Hezekiah fortified all the Judaeen cities, including Jerusalem (2 Chr 32:5), secured her water source (2 Ki 20:20) and stocked her armoury (2 Chr 32:5). He built barns, stalls, and sheepfolds to store the bountiful tithes of agricultural products and livestock (2 Chr 32:28). Were these projects instituted by a king preparing to challenge the might of the Assyrian Empire, the dominant superpower at the time whose fearsome tactics included prolonged sieges? The biblical texts certainly give us that impression. Importantly, they clearly portray a country commanding a prosperous and opulent economy.

The Chronicler clearly states that Hezekiah built treasuries (2 Chr 32:27). These then must have been in addition to those that already existed. In 1 Kings 7:51 we read about Hezekiah's predecessor, Solomon, stocking the Temple treasury that, in addition to the palace treasury, was later plundered by the Egyptian pharaoh Shishak, during the reign of Rehoboam (931/930-913 BCE) (1 Ki 14:26; Comay 2002:284). The Judaeen kings, Asa and Jehoash, both plundered the Temple and palace treasuries to pay the Syrian kings, Ben-Hadad and Hazael (1 Ki 15:18, 2 Ki 12:18). What compelled the biblical authors to mention the *additional* treasuries and storehouses? Did they simply wish to emphasise YHWH's⁴ obvious favouring of Hezekiah, or could it be that additional storage space was genuinely required to house all Hezekiah's riches?

1.3 PROBLEMS SURROUNDING HEZEKIAH'S REIGN

The convergence of the biblical narratives found in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles and Isaiah, and the discovery of the Lachish reliefs, has contributed to making the Iron Age II, and particularly the reign of Hezekiah, undoubtedly the best researched and most written about period in the history of 'ancient Israel'.⁵ The truth surrounding Hezekiah's reign, however, remains obscured by a number of glaring discrepancies and contradictions. These include: the unresolved questions of chronology; the 'fourteenth year' (2 Ki 18:13; Is 36:1); the possibility of a second Assyrian invasion of Judah; the biblical naming of Tirhakah (also

⁴ The Tetragrammaton 'YHWH' is proposed for the name of the God of Israel. The vocalisation is unknown, although 'Yahweh' is now generally accepted.

⁵ The use of this term will be elucidated under 1.5.2.

spelled Taharqa) as pharaoh (2 Ki 19:9); the phenomenon of the *Imlk* jar handles, which bear the *Imlk* stamp, meaning '[belonging] to the king', and either a two-winged sun-disk or a winged scarab in spite of the Deuteronomic image ban; the uncharacteristic leniency with which the Assyrian king dealt with the rebellious Hezekiah; and quite relevant to this study, the king's ability to meet Sennacherib's exorbitant tribute demands, as well as the bursting treasuries and storehouses, despite the annual tribute payments to Assyria and other massive governmental expenditure. The biblical narrators' idealised portrait and overglorification of Hezekiah and his reign, as well as the theological, ideological, and occasionally propagandistic intentions of the authors, compound these problems when interpreting and reconstructing Hezekiah's reign (Miller & Hayes 1986:221-222).

Data constraints and an almost complete lack of epigraphic sources are undoubtedly partly responsible for the scholarly neglect of the Judaeen economy and the economic history of ancient Israel. The Bible, traditionally our oldest and 'primary' source of textual information on the history of ancient Israel, is a religious document with the political history and theological ideology of the ancient Israelites its main focus. The Bible was not intended to communicate information on the economy of the country, nor was it meant to be subject to economic analysis (Buchholz 1988:393). Answers to questions surrounding issues such as the systems of exchange, the organisation of trade, the role of the elite in commerce and production, the role and social status of traders, price fluctuations, to mention but a few, continue to elude researchers (Hopkins 1996:122).

1.4 AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS OF THIS STUDY

Despite the above-mentioned hindrances, this study aims to achieve a more comprehensive view of Hezekiah's reign, in particular its economic background, by employing a multidisciplinary and holistic approach. The hypothesis that '*the biblical texts (2 Ki 20:13, 2 Chr 32:25-28 and Is 39:2) reflect the reality of the Judaeen economy in the late 8th – 7th century BCE*' is addressed by answering the following questions:

- Could the Judaeian agrarian economy have been the source of Hezekiah's incredible wealth, for which it was necessary to build storehouses and additional treasuries, even though the country was a vassal of the mighty Assyrian Empire at the time?
- Were alternative sources of revenue available to Hezekiah?
- Does the archaeological evidence reflect a healthy Judaeian economy?

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the aims of this study, I have employed a multidisciplinary and holistic approach over the course of this research.

1.5.1 A multidisciplinary and holistic approach to Hezekiah's reign

The term 'holistic' is derived from the Greek word '*holos*' meaning 'whole, all, entire, total' (*OED*). The principles underlying holism, a term coined by the South African politician, Gen. J. C. Smuts (1879-1950) (*OED*), were summarised by Aristotle in his work *Metaphysics*: '*the whole is more than the sum of its parts*' (10f-1045).

In the past, the histories of ancient Israel were invariably focused on the politics or the religion of the country. Today, however, it is acknowledged that all aspects of human life must be identified in order to achieve a balanced and comprehensive view of history. With this in mind, this study will examine the literary, political, economic, religious and socio-cultural dimensions of Hezekiah's reign in an attempt to address Hezekiah's reign as a totality. A more comprehensive, all encompassing rather than one-sided view is the intended outcome. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that an entirely accurate picture of the actual events that occurred will continue to elude us.

It should also be emphasised that, while the economic aspect is a main focus of this study, a detailed analysis of the intricacies of the Judaeian economy during the late 8th – early 7th century BCE lies beyond the scope of this research. Economies are extremely complex and a reconstruction of the Judaeian

economy, or any economy for that matter, is dependent on the availability of reliable statistical or quantifiable data. We have neither and the chances that we ever will are remote.

William G. Dever, following in the footsteps of his teacher and mentor W. F. Albright, has for over thirty years promulgated the advantages of a *multidisciplinary*⁶ approach to studying the history of ancient Israel. Expertise and insights from numerous disciplines are essential if a satisfactory socio-economic history, as well as a political and ideological history, of ancient Israel is to be reconstructed. History and archaeology are the two main disciplines employed in this study.

Dever (2002:28) also appeals for an *interdisciplinary* approach to further studies centred on ancient Israel. Theologians and philologists have reconstructed their histories of ancient Israel largely—and traditionally—based on the evidence gleaned from the biblical texts. Meanwhile, archaeologists began constructing their own somewhat different and less theologically oriented history based on the evidence from numerous excavated sites and, more recently, archaeological surveys. Increasingly, however, and recognising the benefits to be gained, philologists and archaeologists are responding to the call for meaningful interdisciplinary dialogue, with studies now affording both the texts and the artefacts equal emphasis.

1.5.2 The ‘historical minimalists’ – a threat to biblical scholarship?

We have come a long way since the first archaeologists, driven by their urge to ‘prove’ the veracity of the Bible at all costs, began excavating in Palestine. Still, there are a number of scholars who continue to take the Bible at face value, purporting that everything in it is historically accurate. Most scholars are more cautious, relying on archaeology for additional information. Dever (2006a:¶8) believes one of the threats facing contemporary biblical scholarship is that posed

⁶ Dever (1990:28) points out that the history of ancient Israel is no longer the sole ‘property’ of archaeologists. Geologists, geomorphologists, climatologists, economic geographers, economists, palaeobotanists, palaeozoologists, and metallurgists, to mention but a few, will be found participating in excavations in Israel.

by the ‘historical minimalists’, a group of prominent and predominantly European scholars. They include, amongst others, T. Thompson, N.P. Lemche, P. Davies, and K. Whitelam.⁷

According to Dever (2006a:¶8), these scholars view the Bible as little more than a ‘social construct’ with hardly any or absolutely no historical value. They consider the biblical texts as we know them today, the product of post-Exilic Judaism, far from contemporaneous with the events they describe and, therefore, unable to provide authentic ‘historical’ information on events that occurred during the period of the Monarchy (Dever 1995:429). Davies (1995:19) countered these accusations by the ‘maximalists’, claiming that he considers himself one of a group of scholars intent on ‘minimizing the extent to which the biblical account is taken as regular history’. With this in mind, a critical stance to the literary sources has been adopted during the course of this research, while still acknowledging that they can—and do—offer some ‘historical’ information. In addition, Hoffmeier & Millard (2001:xi) believe these scholars tend to misuse or ignore the explanatory potential of archaeological data.

The term ‘ancient Israel’ is an extremely complex and hotly debated issue, particularly in our contemporary world (Grabbe 1997:12). Minimalist Davies (1995:11) considers it a scholarly construct that encompasses or ‘amalgamates’ the biblical or literary with the historical (‘inhabitants of the northern Palestinian highlands during part of the Iron Age’) Israel. In this study, this highly controversial term is used to refer to the biblical/literary, historical, and geographical Israel. Its use, however, is in no way intended to oversimplify or solve this issue, but possibly to show that the ‘ancient Israelites’ were not fictitious creations or the product of the imaginations of biblical historians.

1.6 SOURCES

Careful assessment of the different sources was employed during the course of this study. The primary sources of information include textual (biblical as well as

⁷ Refer to the article, *Debate: Minimalists on Parade: An academic conference in Rome* by an unnamed *reporteur* in *BAR* 31:01 that highlighted the position of scholars who question the Bible as a source of historical information (Anon. 2005).

extra-biblical) and archaeological evidence. Equal emphasis has been given to each. A substantial number of secondary sources have also been consulted, particularly for information on the archaeological evidence. The primary sources on which secondary source material was based were consulted wherever possible.

1.6.1 Primary literary sources

The primary literary sources relevant to this study include the biblical books, 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah; the Assyrian sources; and the Siloam Inscription, which is our only substantial, non-biblical, literary source of Judaeen origin from this period. The Assyrian sources, written in Akkadian using cuneiform signs, are made up of the royal annals and the Nimrud Letters. These are discussed in some detail in the following chapter. Several collections and translations of these texts are available to students without Akkadian. Sennacherib's inscriptions were first transliterated and translated by Luckenbill (1924; 1969). In the course of this research, those by Pritchard (1969), Frahm (1997), Gallagher (1999), Hallo & Younger (2000), and Mayer (2003) were consulted. Iconographic work in bas-relief was another medium employed by the Assyrians to communicate their royal ideology. Although not epigraphic, the Lachish Siege relief panels are a primary source of information that graphically confirms the biblical tradition of the conquest of Lachish.

1.6.2 Secondary literary sources

A list of some of the more important works consulted for the discussions of the different dimensions follows.

For the discussion on the literary dimension, B. Doyle's translation of *Ancient Israelite and early Jewish literature* by Vriezen & Van der Woude (2005) and *Harper's Bible Commentary* (1988) proved invaluable.

Ahaz's submission to Tiglath-Pileser III in 734 BCE brought Judah within the ambits of the mighty Assyrian Empire. A thorough study of the Neo-Assyrian

Empire, particularly the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon II, Shalmaneser III, and naturally Sennacherib, was necessary to appreciate the implications of this development. The following were consulted: Luckenbill (1924), *Ancient records of Assyria and Babylonia*; Olmstead (1951), *History of Assyria*; Kuhrt (1995), *The ancient Near East*; works by Grayson (2000); Wiseman (1973); and Postgate (1974; 1992). Works consulted on the political history of the Northern and Southern Kingdom included Ahlström (1993), *The history of ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic period to Alexander's conquest*; Miller & Hayes (1986), *A history of ancient Israel and Judah*; Olmstead (1931), *History of Palestine and Syria*; and Isserlin (2001), *The Israelites*.

On the economy of ancient Israel, Silver (1983) *Prophets and market: The political economy of ancient Israel*, as well as articles by Elat (1978; 1979a; 1979b; 1991), Holladay (1995; 2006; 2009b) and Thompson (2003; 2007) proved invaluable. My discussion on the economic implications of the Temple as an institution benefited from *The Temple and the economic life of ancient Israel* by Stevens (2006).

The archaeological excavations at Tel Lachish (Tell ed-Duweir), the site of biblical Lachish, yielded results that have facilitated the dating of finds and strata throughout Judah, and resulted in a plethora of both primary and secondary information surrounding these events. The results of the renewed excavations at Lachish have been published by Ussishkin (2004) in his five-volume work, *The renewed archaeological excavations at Lachish*. An archaeological synthesis by Mazar (1992), *Archaeology of the land of the Bible* is now somewhat out-dated, but still provides extremely useful for information on the archaeology of ancient Israel. The *New encyclopaedia of archaeological excavations in the Holy Land*, edited by Stern (1993), as well as his (2001), *Archaeology of the land of the Bible: The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian periods (732-332 B.C.E.)* proved extremely valuable. For information on the *Imlk* jars, Grena's (2004) exhaustive study, *LMLK -- A mystery belonging to the king* covers every conceivable aspect pertaining to them. The author appears to have consulted every available publication relative to these jar handles, which include Vaughn (1999), *Theology, history, and archaeology in the Chronicler's account of Hezekiah*, as well as

works – to mention but a few – by Barkay, Deutsch, Aharoni, Mazar and Ussishkin.

Hezekiah, according to the Bible, was one of the two Judaeen kings to introduce religious reforms. The religious dimension of Hezekiah's reign therefore receives considerable attention. Scholarship is now agreed that the Assyrians were religiously tolerant and that they did not impose their religion on their vassal states. Works by McKay (1973), *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians*; Miller (2000), *The religion of ancient Israel*; Ahlström (1982); and Gottwald (1985) were consulted.

Numerous articles in journals and books provided information on the current theories and trends supported by the professionals. These were consulted as well as the websites of excavation projects currently underway in Palestine. Where necessary, the directors were contacted for additional information.

1.6.3 Archaeological evidence

Artefacts are an invaluable primary source of information and this study draws heavily on the results from archaeological excavations in Jerusalem, at regional and administrative centres, rural towns, villages, fortresses, and isolated farms throughout Palestine. Surveys and chance finds have also contributed.

Archaeology, or the science of material culture, involves the recovery, study, and interpretation of the material remains of the past. Whereas the Bible is the product of the upper social levels, the archaeological evidence has the potential to illuminate all levels, but particularly the lower echelons. The biblical narrators were extremely selective about what they recorded; archaeology is sometimes capable of supplementing the information they either lacked or failed to include.

Archaeological data will not enable us to prove the veracity of the Bible, but they will help us to interpret it, illuminate the context of the biblical passages, and provide valuable information necessary for the reconstruction of the social and cultural history of ancient Israel. The results of archaeology have shown that

there are instances where the Bible and archaeology do converge, suggesting that a historical 'core' to the Bible does exist, as this study of Hezekiah shows.

Whereas the Bible is a closed *corpus*, the number of artefacts brought to light does—and certainly will—continue to increase. Artefacts, an unlimited supply of which lies buried in Palestine just waiting to be excavated, are a primary source of historical information (Halpern 1997:313). As Dever (1997b:301) correctly points out, any new primary data that will illuminate the history of ancient Israel will have to 'come out of the ground'.

Artefacts are not self-explanatory; they are mute and, unless supported by contemporary literary sources, require interpretation by the archaeologist, who is often inspired by the biblical texts. The subjectivity of the archaeologist will ultimately influence the interpretation and evaluation of the source material, as well as the historian's final reconstruction of the course of events (Ahlström 1991:117).

In the same way that a responsible reconstruction of the historical events that surround Hezekiah cannot be based purely on the biblical texts, so neither can it be based solely on the archaeological record: archaeology too has its limitations (Craffert 1992:6).

Unfortunately, however, in spite of the fact that the archaeological data continue to accumulate, some results never see the light of day. With others, a decade or more can easily elapse from the time a discovery was made to the time the results are published. Even though the interpretation and synthesis of information is extremely time-consuming, archaeologists are notoriously slow to publish (Gottwald 1985:304; Mazar 1992:30-31). The recent appearance of official websites, such as the *Tel Dor Excavation Project* and *Ramat Raḥel Excavation*, are significant steps towards rectifying this situation and making results available to the public and academic world.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The extant literary sources relevant to this study are discussed in *Chapter Two*. The Assyrian sources corroborate, to a certain extent, the biblical texts, thereby challenging some scholars who question the ‘historical’ value of the Bible. As authorial intention determined what information was included, it is important to establish the reason(s) the texts were written.

Although only a petty state and minor player in the political arena, Judah cannot be considered in isolation of her ancient Near Eastern⁸ context. *Chapter Three* sets the scene by providing ‘a picture’ of the political developments that took place in and around Judah prior to Hezekiah’s ascension to the throne. A short biography of Hezekiah is provided and his reign is briefly discussed.

Each of the items or commodities found in Hezekiah’s treasuries and storehouses, and those detailed on the Assyrian tribute list, are discussed in *Chapter Four*. The purpose of this chapter is to establish the origin of the different elite commodities.

The different aspects of the Judaeen economy are the focus of *Chapter Five*. It is generally believed that the subsistence-level agro-pastoralism of the early Iron Age had largely been replaced by intensified agriculture and, some claim, crop specialisation by the late 8th century BCE. That the Judaeen agricultural economy could have been the sole source of Hezekiah’s wealth seems unlikely, particularly as De Geus (1986:214) suggests the 8th century BCE prophets should be seen against the background of a *deteriorating economy* [my italics]. The goal of this chapter is to determine what alternative sources of income were available to Hezekiah if the Judaeen agriculture was incapable of supporting his expenditure.

⁸ The ancient Near East (ANE) traditionally refers to the geographical area which extended from Asia Minor (Anatolia/Turkey) in the North, to Nubia (Sudan) in the South, the Eastern Mediterranean (southern Syria and Palestine) in the West and Mesopotamia, Sinai Peninsula and Arabia in the East. It was inhabited by numerous groups such as the Sumerians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Medes, the Hittites, the Israelites, the Canaanites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Elamites, the Egyptians, the Persians, and others (Hoerth, Mattingly & Yamauchi 1994).

Religion played a dominant role in the lives of the ancient Israelites and to a large extent determined the course of their history. *Chapter Six* deals with Hezekiah's religious reforms and his move to centralise worship in Jerusalem. The diverse ramifications of these reforms suggest that piety and righteousness were not the only reasons for this reformation. They served a purpose, indeed several purposes, one of which was economic.

Two goals are set for *Chapter Seven*. The first is to establish whether or not the archaeological data reflect a healthy Judaeian economy, and the second is to examine the archaeological evidence to determine whether or not the overall population benefited from this wealth. Hezekiah's reign in the late 8th – early 7th centuries BCE falls within the Iron Age II (ca. 1000-586 BCE), which has been subdivided into the Iron Age IIA (ca. 1000-925 BCE) and Iron Age IIBC (ca. 925-586 BCE). Both are archaeologically well documented as a result of the excavations undertaken at Lachish (Mazar 1992:30).

And finally, in *Chapter Eight*, the information gained from the discussions in each chapter has been drawn together to establish whether or not the goals set for this study have been achieved.

C

CHAPTER TWO

LITERARY SOURCES RELATING TO HEZEKIAH'S REIGN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The significance of the literary sources, both biblical and Assyrian, warrants a detailed discussion and is the first step towards achieving the goal set for this study—an holistic view of Hezekiah's reign. The questions *when* and *by whom* the texts were written determines to a large extent *why* the texts were written in the first place. These are all important factors when challenging the historical reliability of the information they contain, particularly as the Assyrian sources confirm the biblical description of Hezekiah's wealth. However, no attempt has been made to provide a detailed analysis of the biblical literature or the history of their composition.

2.2 THE TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is in fact a collection of once-separate literary units and the product of a complex literary process that lasted some three thousand years (Gottwald 1985:82). The authors of the texts, many of which arose in response to some communal need or crisis, are largely unknown. Indeed, very few of these biblical books in their present form are the work of one single author: the majority indicate composite authorship (Isserlin 2001:10). The Bible is also a unique collection of various types of literature, such as hymns, prayers, poetry, proverbs, and prophetic sayings (Isserlin 2001:10). Only a limited number of these can, after critical interpretation, be used as a source of reliable historical information. Our knowledge of the internal politics and structures of the two Israelite kingdoms, Israel and Judah, can be accredited to information found in the biblical texts. Several facts, however, should be taken into consideration when using the Bible as a primary source for history-writing for, as Dever

(1990:6-7) points out, it contains 'no historiography in the modern sense'.

Questions surrounding the original dating and authorship of the biblical texts have been, and continue to be, the subject of intense scholarship (Isserlin 2001:11). Many of these books are based directly or indirectly on oral traditions that date back to the 12th century BCE and were only written down later (Gottwald 1985:93). Textual studies have shown that the biblical texts have been subject to stages of development and numerous editorial changes with the majority of the texts receiving their final state during the exilic or post-exilic periods, i.e. 6th through the 2nd centuries BCE (Gottwald 1985:15). Inconsistencies, either intentional or as a result of human error, are bound to have crept into the text during this process of collecting and editing of the independent texts. To compound matters further, it is now generally accepted that these texts are far from contemporaneous to the events they purport to narrate, but tend to reflect more the concerns, circumstances, and ideology of people living during the Persian and Hellenistic Periods (Isserlin 2001:11).

The fact that it was necessary for Hezekiah to institutionalise reforms highlights the pluralism of the Israelite religion at this time. A clear distinction, however, cannot be drawn between the 'official' religion of the establishment and the 'popular' or 'folk' religion of the masses. The Bible, the generally assumed 'official expression of "official Yahwistic religion"', so Smith (2002:163), is more concerned with the political and religious history of so-called ancient Israel⁹ and does not reflect society at large. The men who produced these texts were members of the upper echelons of society: priests, intellectuals sometimes attached to the court writing, prophets, and scribes (Dever 1997b:304; Gottwald 1985:568). Even the prophets who championed the cause of the poor and underprivileged were cult officials with little or no knowledge of the everyday life of the masses (Dever 1990:7). This small circle of educated elite produced texts that largely reflected what they would have had the Israelites believe and practice, rather than what they actually did (Heger 1999:316).

⁹ Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:3) use the name 'Israel' as 'the name of the northern kingdom and as a collective noun for the community of all Israelites'.

The biblical texts were written with the purpose of communicating the writers' personal ideology and conveying a religious message. It was not their intention to provide information on the political, let alone economic or social history of ancient Israel. The theological bias of the later editors would also have influenced their choice of material to include (McNutt 1999:146). For example, the Deuteronomist and Chronicler¹⁰ both interpreted and altered older and contemporary sources in order to produce a new history to help their contemporary society to make sense of their past, to understand their present situations, and also to visualise a future (King & Stager 2001:3). Halpern (1997:331) draws an interesting analogy between both primary sources: 'the biblical text, like the artefact, encodes intention'.

Hezekiah is mentioned by name 112 times in the Old Testament and twice in the New Testament. He is the focus of *2 Kings* 18-20, which is paralleled almost entirely in *Isaiah* 36-39, and of *2 Chronicles* 29-32. He is also mentioned in *1 Chronicles*, *Jeremiah*, *Hosea*, *Micah*, and *Proverbs* (Miller & Hayes 1986:347). The Deuteronomist and the Chronicler, the assumed authors of the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, deal very differently with Hezekiah and his reign. The original social context of those responsible for writing and editing the biblical books provides some explanation for these differences. The biblical books, *2 Kings*, *2 Chronicles*, and *Isaiah* are discussed individually in this study.

2.2.1 2 Kings

2.2.1.1 The Deuteronomistic History

The Second Book of *Kings* is an integral part of an editorial unit commonly referred to as the Deuteronomistic History (hereafter DH), a term introduced by the German scholar Martin Noth in 1943 (Bosman 1988:63). It includes the Books of *Deuteronomy*, *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings*, and is characterised by special phraseology, structure, and ideas (Avioz 2005:14). The DH traces the history of ancient Israel from the conquest in Canaan through to

¹⁰ These are the names given to the assumed authors of the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicistic History, be that individuals or a number of scholars belonging to a school of thought (Gottwald 1985:138).

the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the beginning of the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE (Dever 2001:100).

Noth consistently referred to only one Deuteronomist as both author and historian responsible for the entire DH, and rejected the notion or reference to 'redactor(s)' (Van Seters 2006:369). Most scholars, however, believe an original, pre-exilic edition, based on traditions and written sources varying in age and style, constituted the basis of the original edition of the DH, and that after two – some claim three – redactions it attained its final form during the exile (Bosman 1988:72-73; Rosenbaum 1979:25; Vriezen & Van de Woude 2005:299). The original edition of the DH might well be the 'book of the law' referred to in 2 Kings 22:8 (Nicholson 1967:7).

Royal and temple record keeping was an essential bureaucratic function maintained in many societies in the ancient Near East. Their records covered a variety of historiographic genres such as king lists, annals and chronicles, and royal inscriptions (Wiseman 1993:40). As kingship was only instituted in ancient Israel when Saul was anointed king around 1050 BCE, information pre-dating 1050 BCE could not have been preserved in court records. 1 and 2 Kings contain information from a variety of origins, much of which was recorded in written texts no longer available to us. Explicit reference is made to the *Book of the Acts of Solomon* (see for example, 1 Ki 14:41), the *Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah* (see for example, 1 Ki 14:29), and the *Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel* (see for example, 1 Ki 14:19). The formation of these books is difficult to reconstruct (Weinfeld 1979:41).

The various sources were collected together and placed in an historical framework by the Deuteronomistic writers (Vriezen & Van der Woude 2005:299). Some scholars suggest the Books of Kings were edited for the first time during Hezekiah's reign and that the account glorifying Josiah was added at a later date (Smith 2004:61). Provan (1988:90) goes a step further, claiming that the original version of Kings ended with 2 Kings 18, and that the drastic change in attitude towards the *bamôt*, which up until then had been acknowledged places of worship, is attributable to a second author responsible for 2 Kings 19-25 as well

as numerous redactional additions, such as 1 Kings 14:23 (Provan 1988:171). Up until the time of Hezekiah, no king or priest had taken exception to worship at the *bamôt* (Greenberg 1979:80). Provan (1988:171) argues that the first author was more concerned with centralising the worship at the Temple in Jerusalem, while the second was determined to eliminate idolatry.

2.2.1.2 *The Deuteronomic theology*

According to the Deuteronomic theology that dominates the Old Testament, the prosperity and even survival of Israel depended on correct religious observances as laid down in the Law of Moses, whereas turning away from YHWH would guarantee disaster or exile (Coogan 2006:266; Kuhrt 1995:441). This was especially true of the law to worship YHWH exclusively, and only at the place designated by YHWH himself.

The origin of the Deuteronomist, as well as the message behind the text, continue to occupy scholars, especially as the DH reflects the concerns of the peoples of the exilic and post-exilic Persian and Hellenistic periods. Some see the text written from a Judaeen perspective determined to attribute the Exile to Israel's disobedience (Bosman 1988:72; Gottwald 1985:139). Kuhrt (1995:463) supports this opinion, claiming the writer(s) of Kings interpreted 'the history of Israel and Judah as the inevitable outcome of YHWH's people straying from his commandments'. Becking (2003:63) believes the authors' objective was 'to help a distressed people to cope with the reality of exile, lost independence and a torn-down temple'. Others prefer to see Kings written from a more positive and optimistic perspective. Robinson (1976:10) is of the opinion that Kings was written 'in confidence and hope' and was 'a call for repentance and for faith in God'.

On the other hand, prophetic religious circles in the Northern Kingdom might well have been responsible for the preservation and transmission of the Deuteronomic vision (Gottwald 1985:388; Nicholson 1967:122; Silver 1983:194). Niditch (1997:80), basing her argument on Von Rad (1953:66), believes 'the sympathetic and supportive attitude to the Levitical priests suggests the Levites

were responsible for this work'. Forbidden to participate in agricultural undertakings, the Levites were dependent on the tithe, or tenth, taken from agricultural products and livestock brought to the sanctuaries. It served as a food bank for them, so that with the introduction of reforms and the resultant removal of the 'high places', the Levites might have found themselves without a source of livelihood. A very plausible explanation would be that the refugees, fleeing the destruction of, and deportation by, the Assyrian army in Israel between 732 and 701 BCE, brought their ideas to Judah where they then gained support (Nicholson 1967:123).

2.2.1.3 *The YHWH-alone movement*

Numerous scholars support the idea that the final composition of the DH was the work of *the YHWH-alone movement*, a name coined by the historian, Morton Smith in 1971 for a group of people who, in the monarchic era, advocated the exclusive worship of YHWH. While Smith (1971:37-38) believes this idea arose after the death of Queen Athaliah of Judah (ca. 836 BCE), Day (2000:229) claims that support of this 'minority monolatrous movement' goes way back in time, perhaps even to Moses. The fact that Amos and Hosea, two 8th century BCE prophets active in the Northern Kingdom, vehemently opposed the widespread worship of idols has prompted some scholars to seek the origin of this movement there. After the demise of the Northern Kingdom in 720 BCE, the members of the YHWH-alone movement fled south to Judah where they continued to spread their ideas (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:248).

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:248) are convinced that the emphasis on the righteousness and sinfulness of the earlier kings of Judah found in the Books of Kings reflect the ideology of this movement. Although principally a religious movement, their ideas were political as well as religious, and they harboured territorial aspirations. This is clearly evident from Hezekiah's invitation to celebrate the Passover, which was also extended to the people living in the areas to the north under Assyrian hegemony. By destroying all the cult places throughout the country and centralizing Yahwistic worship in Jerusalem, they aspired to unify all Israel and restore the Davidic dynasty 'with one king ruling

from Jerusalem' (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:249). Dever (2001:100) refers to the followers of this movement as 'nationalist ultra-orthodox reformers', who in the late 7th century BCE produced the final composition of the DH in an effort to provide theological legitimacy for their party.

2.2.1.4 *Hezekiah and 2 Kings*

The Books of Kings, according to Robinson (1976:1), were never meant to be two separate books. During the process of translation, the longer Greek version of the original Hebrew necessitated the use of two scrolls. As their title suggests, they present the history of the kings of Israel and Judah. 2 Kings is about the decline and fall of Israel and Judah, and deals with the monarchs of the two kingdoms after the death of King Ahab. It tells of deportations to Assyria after the fall of Israel in 720 BCE, and deportations to Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Political and economic concerns are secondary to religious concerns. Each king is appraised in light of their loyalty and obedience to the Law of Moses. Opposition to the Canaanite religious practices and support for the centralisation of worship in Jerusalem were essential; these were the norms the author applied retrospectively for the entire history, which accounts for the unstinted praise afforded the reformers, Hezekiah and Josiah (Bosman 1988:72; Gottwald 1985:299). Hezekiah's actions, whether or not they were ultimately politically, economically, or religiously motivated, apparently matched the intentions of the narrators of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, gaining their approval and praise.

The authors' of both 2 Kings and Isaiah emphasis is on the imminent Assyrian threat to the capital city, its miraculous delivery, and YHWH upholding his promises. King Hezekiah is presented as relying heavily upon the prophet Isaiah who, in spite of the fact that the king ultimately does not heed his advice, plays a leading role during the crisis with Assyria. Robinson (1976:12) goes so far as to suggest the story of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:13 - 20:19 might originally have been a separate narrative.

The incident with Merodach-baladan II (2 Ki 20:12) and the Babylonian envoy (2

Ki 20:13-15) is probably anachronistic. This visit could not have taken place after Hezekiah had sent his tribute to Nineveh, for if it had, Hezekiah would not have had anything to show the Babylonians. Miller & Hayes (1986:349) consider the references to Babylonia a means to prepare the reader for the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile in Babylonia.

2.2.2 2 Chronicles

2.2.2.1 The Chronistic History

The Books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are often grouped together and referred to as the Chronistic History. Most scholars, however, support the idea of a separate composition for Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (Boshoff 2005:5; Kalimi 2005:145). Kalimi (2005:145) considers Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah 'two distinct pieces composed by different authors, the latter having been written prior to the former'.

The Books of Chronicles are apparently later reworkings of the Books of Kings. These books, according to Vaughn (1999:16), were written during the post-exilic period, probably sometime during the 4th century BCE, some 150 years after the DH was completed and, importantly, 400 years after Hezekiah's reign. The books are the work of one or more members of a priestly school, commonly referred to as 'the Chronicler'. The history presented begins with Adam and ends in the Chronicler's own time with a message from Cyrus, king of Persia. The inclusion of Cyrus' decree is, however, considered an addition by a later scribe (Kalimi 2005:145). The DH obviously constituted the Chronicler's primary source of information. Other biblical sources, such as the Pentateuch for his genealogies, and extra-biblical sources, such as court records (which are no longer extant) for the names of the Levites involved in the purification of the Temple (2 Chr 29:12-14) were also used (Van Dyk 1988:85). Kalimi (2005:25) feels the Chronicler:

... adapted, supplemented, and omitted from them according to his own ideological-theological outlook, applying his literary and historiographical methods, as well as his linguistic and stylistic tastes.

No consensus has been reached on the exact nature and purpose of the Chronicler's writings. As Heger (1999:316) states: 'the Chronicles' redactors adapted their narratives to the circumstances of their period, to conform to their ideas and doctrines, and their assumptions of how "it ought to have been." This they did by adding a few words, for which they sometimes even provided explanatory phrases, and even including events not found in Kings (Heger 1999:554). As a result, Chronicles is generally not highly rated amongst scholars in terms of genuine and accurate historiography (Gottwald 1985:302). Nevertheless, some of the details provided by the Chronicler, not found elsewhere in the Bible, have been confirmed by extra-biblical texts and archaeological evidence (Coogan 2006:448).

No internal evidence enables us to determine the social or historical context of the Chronicler or the circumstances that caused him to produce the texts (Coogan 2006:448). A number of central ideas have been suggested as the main themes underlying Chronicles: the history of the Judaeen monarchy, the God-fearing kings of Judah as the only legitimate rulers, and the cult and the Temple in Jerusalem as the true place of YHWHistic worship. The almost exclusive focus and emphasis on Judah, as well as concerns relating to Judah, eliminate all ambiguity as to the origin of the Chronicler (Van Dyk 1988:77; Kuhrt 1995:463).

Some scholars see a theological purpose underlying the Chronicler's message, which would also explain some of the chronological inaccuracies. Stevens (2006:22), for instance, claims that 'the Chronicler's work is heavily influenced by a theological agenda to elevate the status of King David and provide an etiology for temple operations in his own day'. Van Dyk (1988:98) claims that because 'the cult and the cultic community in Jerusalem, the position of the Levites, the Law, Davidic kingship, the dogma of retribution, the actions of the prophets in the different eras of history and God's intervention in history' have all received such particular emphasis, it is difficult to establish the Chronicler's purpose and theology. Vaughn (1999:179-181) sees Chronicles as an attempt by the author to explain Israel's history for his contemporary community, and to support the post-exilic Levitical priesthood and Temple in Jerusalem during the Persian Period. In a similar vein, Boshoff (2005:13) opines: the Chronicler believed an

understanding of history would convince the post-exilic Judaeen community of the value of their own heritage. Faced with the overwhelming richness of the Persian and Hellenistic cultures, the Chronicler attempted to instil a pride in being Jewish.

Kalimi (2005:37) sums it up rather nicely. In his (2005:37) opinion, 1-2 Chronicles are 'an impressive attempt to organise material into a single, comprehensive and systematic work', and the Chronicler is 'a creative artist, a historian who selected his material from earlier books, reorganizing and editing it in the order, context, and form he found appropriate' (Kalimi 2005:39).

2.2.2.2 The royal Zion theology of the Southern Kingdom

The royal Zion or national theology, which originated during the monarchy when David moved the Ark and made Jerusalem the religious centre of the nation, was a major driving force of the Southern Kingdom (Miller 2000:88). This is clearly evident in the biblical accounts that deal with Hezekiah. According to this theology,

- Jerusalem was YHWH's chosen earthly abode and was therefore the chief city of YHWH's people,
- YHWH chose David and David's descendants to rule from Jerusalem for eternity, overcoming all foes (Ps 2:4-11),
- the Temple, YHWH's abode, was inviolable,
- YHWH's divine presence ensured Jerusalem's inviolability,
- each Davidic king was YHWH's appointed son (2 Sm 7:14), a channel of YHWH's blessings and a guaranteed source of life and fertility for YHWH's people (2 Sm 23:2-4; Ps 72), and
- faithfulness of the king and YHWH's chosen people guaranteed YHWH's presence and protection, which in turn guaranteed the king's safety and economic prosperity (Miller & Hayes 1986:203).

2.2.2.3 *Hezekiah and 2 Chronicles*

The Chronicler makes every effort to present Hezekiah as dynamic, confident, God-fearing and also confidence-inspiring. Details such as Hezekiah 'rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth' in fear and despair, found in 2 Kings (19:2), are purposefully omitted. Instead, the Chronicler tells how Hezekiah purified and restored the Temple (2 Chr 29:3-36), how he re-established the Passover (2 Chr 30:1-27), and how he set about preparing for the imminent attack by the Assyrians. Similarly, while 2 Kings (18:4) only briefly mentions the significant religious reforms undertaken by Hezekiah, these reforms constitute the primary focus of the Chronicler's rendition of Hezekiah's reign. His economic build-up and political activities are only of secondary interest (Miller & Hayes 1986:349). Cross (1973, in Rosenbaum 1979:25) attributes the Deuteronomist's abbreviated rendition and minimal treatment of Hezekiah's reforms to the fact that the original Deuteronomist was a contemporary of the later reformer, King Josiah. Josiah is therefore afforded the lengthier account. Although 2 Kings 18:4 is paralleled in 2 Chronicles 31:1, the Chronicler fails to mention the brazen serpent, Nehushtan, referred to in 2 Kings.

2.2.3 **Isaiah**

The Book of Isaiah, traditionally attributed to the Judaeen prophet by the same name, is one of fifteen books of the prophetic corpus, which covers a large portion of the Bible. Modern historical criticism has divided Isaiah into three identifiable sections with only the first (Is 1-39) attributed to the prophet Isaiah, who was active in Judah in the latter half of the 8th century BCE. The second section (Is 40-55) is ascribed to a different author and was written almost 2 centuries later in the 6th century BCE (Mays 1988:531). The third section (Is 56-66) was probably written in Jerusalem sometime after the Babylonian Exile (Comay 2002:151). Even though few facts in Isaiah are actually datable, it still constitutes a valuable source of broad historical information on the Judaeen monarchy, and also the socio-economic life of that period (Gottwald 1985:304).

2.2.3.1 *Isaiah, the prophet*

Virtually nothing is known of the prophet Isaiah, apart from the fact that he was the son of Amoz (not to be confused with the prophet Amos), was married to a woman whom he refers to as 'the prophetess' (Is 8:3), and had two sons, Shear-Jashub (Is 7:3) and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Is 8:3). Isaiah received his calling during King Uzziah's final regnal year (Is 6.1) and his career went on to span the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Is 1:1), viz. ca. 740 to 700 BCE (Gottwald 1985:377). During this turbulent period in the history of the ancient Near East, Isaiah prophesied and witnessed the fall of the Northern Kingdom, as well as the subjection of Judah (Kuhrt 1995:464).

The prophets were frequently at odds with the governing powers for, although they foretold events of the future, they were commissioned with the task of speaking on YHWH's behalf and functioning mainly as society's conscience. 'Demands of the covenant, faithfulness to God, and prescriptions for ethical behaviour among people' permeate their messages (Niditch 1997:95). Isaiah was, despite his obviously close association with the Judaeen kings and his part in their administrations, highly critical of the aristocracy and ruling class. Some scholars postulate that Isaiah was a property-owning member of the noble class in Jerusalem (Niditch 1997:95; Strydom & Wessels 2000:156). Kuhrt (1995:465) sees Isaiah as neither a member of the official cult, nor part of the court establishment.

Isaiah criticised the religious hypocrisy of the people (Is 1:10), the celebrations of the new moons (Is 1:13), the worship of sacred trees (Is 1:29), and the practice of sorcery (Is 2:6). He lashed out at the ostentation and decadence at court and accused the ruling establishment of social injustices.¹¹ Although Hezekiah is not mentioned by name, as monarch during this time he certainly was implied (Olmstead 1951:195; Strydom & Wessels 2000:205-219).

While the biblical narrative enables us to draw up a substantial list of injustices, many of them economic, precise details are lacking. Apparently the various

¹¹ For the social dimension of Isaiah's preaching see Isaiah 1:1- 2:4; 3:16-4:1; 5:1-30; and 10:1-4.

parties involved were fully aware of exactly what was going on so that enumeration of the details would have been superfluous (Chaney 1993:251). The list of accusations that Isaiah and Micah,¹² another Judaeen prophet active during Hezekiah's reign, levelled at the ruling class of both Israel and Judah included:

- the lack of moral and ethical behaviour towards one another (Is 1:23; Mi 3:10),
- exploitation of the underprivileged through lack of justice (Is 10:2; Mi 2:1),
- bribery and corruption in the judicial system (Mi 3:11; Is 1:23),
- confiscating, using force if necessary, the land and property of the underprivileged (Is 5:8; Mi 2:2),
- unjust taxes and levies, taking of pledges (Mi 2:8),
- corruption in the world of business and trade (Is 1:22; Mi 3:11),
- debt-slavery (Is 10:2; Mi 2:9),
- abuse of widows and orphans (Is 1:17, 23; Mi 2:9), and
- self-indulgence and comfort at the expense of the needy (Is 3:14; Mi 6:12) (Strydom & Wessels 2000:205-219).

The prophets considered the Israelites fundamentally sinful people who disobeyed the laws of YHWH. In their opinion, immediate action was required if punishment/disaster was to be avoided and, to affect changes, force was necessary. It was imperative that the prophets had access to those in charge and with the power to make changes. There is also reason to believe that some of the criticisms levelled at the king were warranted. Isaiah accused the court and the ruling class of abusing the poor and underprivileged, for confiscating their land and possessions. The Bible refers to major building projects undertaken by Hezekiah. One of them was Hezekiah's Broad Wall. The results of the excavations there have shown that several small and poorly built 8th century BCE houses had to give way for the construction of the wall (see 7.5.2.1). This might be just one of the causes for Isaiah's criticisms.

¹² Micah was from the Judaeen town of Moresheth situated in the Shephelah (Comay 2002:239). For the social dimension of his preaching see Micah 2:1-4:4 and 7:1-7, and also http://faculty.pepperdine.edu/cheard/teaching/rel101/PG3D_8th_Century_Prophets.pdf.

Whereas Ahaz followed a cautious foreign policy of submission (Høgenhaven 1990:351), which ultimately ensured his seat on the Judaeen throne, Hezekiah was more aggressive and pro-Egyptian, determined to rid Judah of Assyrian tyranny. Isaiah cautioned both father and son, advocating they place their faith in YHWH and trust in divine intervention rather than turning to the Assyrians or, in Hezekiah's case, attempting to forge alliances with Egypt and the Babylonians under Merodach-baladan II (ca. 721-709 BCE). Isaiah was not anti-Assyrian on principle; he advocated neutrality and trust in YHWH rather than forging alliances with any of the major world powers (Olmstead 1931:466; Wiseman 1993:288). As far as he was concerned, trust in YHWH would guarantee salvation; Assyria was simply YHWH's instrument ('rod of my anger' [Is 10:5]) to teach the Israelites obedience. Isaiah opposed Hezekiah's pro-Egyptian tendencies, referring to Egypt as a 'bruised reed' (Is 36:6). Høgenhaven (1990:354) sees Isaiah belonging to a pro-Assyrian party, which lost ground to a more aggressive, pro-Egyptian party during the reign of Hezekiah. In Isaiah 22:15ff, the prophet lashes out at Shebna, the Aramaean chamberlain of the palace and the leader of the pro-Egyptian party. His prophecy that Shebna would be demoted and replaced by Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, was soon fulfilled (Olmstead 1931:469). Isaiah expressed his disapproval of Hezekiah's entanglement with Egypt by going naked and barefoot for three years (Is 20:3) (Olmstead 1931:469).

2.2.3.2 *Hezekiah and Isaiah*

The information in Isaiah 36-39 is almost identical to that found in 2 Kings 18-20, the only differences being the omission of Hezekiah's reforms (2 Ki 18:4) and the indemnity paid to Sennacherib (2 Ki 18:14). A prayer of thanksgiving by Hezekiah is included instead (Is 28:9-20) (Miller & Hayes 1986:348). This clearly contradicts 2 Chronicles 32:25, which states Hezekiah 'made no return for the benefit which he had received'.

The information in Isaiah on the Judaeen kings, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah, follows the scheme 'bad king followed by good king'. As Hezekiah and Josiah are portrayed as 'good' kings, and in order to achieve his objective, the writer omitted any unsavoury information about Hezekiah and Josiah. Readers

are left with idealised portraits of both kings. Isaiah's preaching revolved around Mount Zion, the fate of Jerusalem/Judah, and the house of David. He did not support the conviction that Jerusalem was inviolable (Is 8:5-10) (Vriezen & Van der Woude 2005:325).

Gottwald (1985:369) considers the narrative of the miraculous delivery of Jerusalem an effort on the part of the biblical narrator to reconcile and explain the leniency with which Sennacherib dealt with Hezekiah (Is 37:2).

2.3 EXTRA-BIBLICAL INSCRIPTIONS

Literary works produced in ancient Israel during this time were probably not limited to biblical texts only. As parchment or papyrus, the mediums on which they were probably written, does not fare well in the climatic conditions peculiar to Israel, they have left no archaeological evidence (Barkay 1992:302). A limited number of inscriptions dating to the late 8th – early 7th centuries BCE have come to light during archaeological excavations in biblical Judah. Although these cannot be considered literature in the narrow sense of the word, their cultural, historical and sometimes religious significance should be acknowledged (Vriezen & Van der Woude 2005:8).

Excavations in Israel have yielded no royal monumental inscriptions similar to those found in Assyria and Egypt. Neither do the archaeologists anticipate finding a royal archive similar to the one found in Ebla. There is no consensus as to how widespread literacy was by the time Hezekiah took the throne. The number of inscriptions, although modest, found in Palestine, and the fact that few seals date prior to the 8th century BCE, suggest that it was on the increase and no longer limited to a number of professional scribes and a few members of the upper class and royalty (King 1989:12). It is, however, unlikely that large numbers of the population could read or write (King & Stager 2001:312).

Inscriptions have been found on ostraca,¹³ sheets of silver, weights, ceramic vessels, fragments of papyrus, and carved into stone. Various related

¹³ Inscribed pottery sherds.

inscriptions are discussed below.

2.3.1 The Siloam or Hezekiah's Tunnel inscription

Lapidary inscriptions include personal seals and plaques, such as the Siloam Inscription:

[... when] (the tunnel) was driven through. And this was the way in which it was cut through: While [...] (were) still [...] axe(s), each man toward his fellow, and while there were still three cubits to be cut through, [there was heard] the voice of a man calling to his fellow, for there was *an overlap* in the rock on the right [and on the left]. And when the tunnel was driven through, the quarrymen hewed (the rock), each man toward his fellow, axe against axe; and the water flowed from the spring toward the reservoir for 1,200 cubits, and the height of the rock above the head(s) of the quarrymen was 100 cubit (*ANET:321*).

This inscription commemorates the successful completion of the Siloam Tunnel that brought water into Jerusalem from the Gihon spring, Jerusalem's major source of water, which was located outside the city's fortifications. Although the inscription does not mention his name, the construction of the tunnel has been accredited to Hezekiah, with biblical confirmation found in 2 Kings 20:20, Isaiah 22:11 and 2 Chronicles 32:2-4, 30. This major lapidary inscription, now slightly damaged and housed in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, was originally situated approximately 6 m from the southern outlet of the tunnel and, based on palaeographic analysis, dates to the late 8th century BCE (Younger 1994:545).



Figure 2: The Siloam Inscription (Shiloh 1993:711)

Monarchs in the ancient Near East commemorated military campaigns and building activity by erecting royal lapidary inscriptions. The kings of Israel and Judah presumably erected similar inscriptions. The Siloam Inscription could only have been produced by one of the workers involved in the construction of the tunnel. This inscription, however, lacks the characteristic naming of the king responsible for the deed, and a date when this mammoth undertaking was completed, for it to be seriously considered a royal inscription commissioned by the king. In addition, it is unlikely that a royal inscription would have been situated within a tunnel where nobody was likely to see or read it (Parker 2000:362).

2.3.2 The Royal Steward inscription

In 1890 the French archaeologist, Charles Clermont-Ganneau, discovered an inscription in a tomb in the Kidron Valley, which Avigad deciphered in 1953. Inscribed in standard Hebrew on a limestone panel, and situated above a door that provided access to the rock-hewn tomb, the inscription told that the tomb belonged to a royal steward and his slave-wife. Scholars believe the tomb belonged to Hezekiah's Royal Steward, Shebna, whom Isaiah (22:15ff) criticised for building himself a lavish tomb before his death (Mitchell 1988b:65). If this is indeed the tomb of Hezekiah's steward, then it would provide artefactual evidence that people profited financially from connections to the crown.

2.3.3 A pre-exilic sepulchral inscription from the City of David

An interesting stone plaque fragment (10 x 12 cm) surfaced outside the city walls on top of a terraced Israelite quarter during the 1978 excavations in the City of David (Shiloh 1979:169). Based on palaeographic comparisons with the Siloam Inscription and the Silwan village funerary inscription, this inscription has been dated to Hezekiah's reign in the 8th century BCE. The fragment was incised with a chisel and then probably affixed to a governmental or state structure that served as public storage (Shiloh 1979:170). Of the few words identifiable in the fragmentary inscription, the first, meaning 'to heap up' or 'accumulate', is

regarded as the key word (Shiloh 1979:170). This gives substance to the opinion that the structure to which the plaque was affixed was used for storage.

2.3.4 Inscriptions on ceramic vessels

The importance literacy played in the Judaeen economy is evidenced by the widespread distribution of the *Imlk* jar handles bearing seal impressions (King & Stager 2001:212). The *Imlk* jars are discussed in more detail under 5.6.3 and 7.5.3. Cooking pot handles, incised with marks either before or after firing, are peculiar to the Kingdom of Judah in the late Iron Age. These 'potters' marks' were clearly meant to convey a message, such as the function, contents, the owner or maker of the vessel (Barkay 2003:60). Eleven dedicatory inscriptions dating to the 8th century BCE were found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud, a remote caravanserai in the Negev desert (King 1989:12).

2.4 THE ASSYRIAN SOURCES

The royal Assyrian annals are our main source of extra-biblical information on the period of Israelite history under discussion. These are supplemented by information from royal inscriptions, chronicles, administrative texts, treaties, oaths and archives of royal correspondence (Kuhrt 1995:496). According to Kuhrt (1995:459), the Assyrian sources 'provide the richest and, chronologically and historically, most useful information for the states with which they [the Assyrians] came into contact'. Apart from the Moabite Stone and the stele fragment from Tel Dan, the Assyrian records provide the only extra-biblical references to Israel and Judah (Kuhrt 1995:462).

The royal Assyrian annals and inscriptions are primarily concerned with external affairs, with extensive detail paid to the recording of the tributes of vassals and subjugated peoples (Postgate 1974:1). The royal scribes, entrusted with the task of inscribing the royal annals and inscriptions, recorded primarily the glorious deeds of their kings. The Assyrian sources are not noted for their historical accuracy. The further removed they were from the events they record the more exaggerated they became, particularly when it comes to the numbers. While it is

generally accepted that the earliest editions of the annals are more accurate, Levine (1973) has shown in his article, *The second campaign of Sennacherib*, that this is not always the case.

2.4.1 The Royal Annals

Royal Assyrian annals first made their appearance during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BCE). Written in Akkadian on clay tablets, barrels and cylinders often buried in the foundations of buildings, or inscribed on stone wall reliefs and stelae, they documented in detailed, chronological sequence the building projects and military campaigns undertaken by the king (Van de Mieroop 2007:180). Kings went into battle firmly believing they were fulfilling a commission from their national deity, Ashur. The annals, inscribed after the battles to inform Ashur of the outcome of the task entrusted to them, were extremely biased and hugely propagandistic (Wiseman 1993:40).

The Assyrian annals are dated according to these military campaigns. Establishing the exact chronology of events has, at times, proved difficult. The number of texts produced increased with each new Assyrian king, so that an extensive corpus is available to us today. Although seemingly (and understandably) Assyrian-biased, they greatly augment the biblical texts (Miller & Hayes 1986:221). Numerous but fragmentary inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III's reign have been found. Of the three Assyrian kings who ruled Assyria during Hezekiah's reign, literally nothing is available on Shalmaneser V (727-722 BCE) (Kuhrt 1995:497). While there are numerous records depicting Sargon II and Sennacherib's reigns, Sennacherib's is the best documented (*ARAB* II:115).

Several accounts¹⁴ of Sennacherib's third campaign against Palestine in 701 BCE have been found. They vary in length and detail. A few of those relating to Judah are discussed here in the order in which they are believed to have been inscribed.

¹⁴ Becking (2007:275) lists various inscriptions.

2.4.1.1 *The Rassam Cylinder*

The Rassam Cylinder (see Appendix A) was dated to the month of Iyar in 700 BCE (Cogan 2000:302). Housed in the British Museum, it provides accounts of Sennacherib's first three military campaigns, and inventories in detail the booty taken by the Assyrians and the tribute paid by the Judaeans after Sennacherib withdrew from Judah in 701 BCE. The fullest account of Sennacherib's third military campaign against Palestine is found inscribed on the Taylor and Chicago (or Oriental) Prisms (see Appendix B). These two annals were inscribed, after the sixth campaign, in 691 and 698 BCE (Gallagher 1999:10). Two pairs of bulls, Bulls 3 and 4, were discovered by Layard in Sennacherib's palace. They bear almost identical texts. As the bulls were slightly damaged, the texts have been combined to obtain one text. Together they provide a version of the first six campaigns that is slightly shorter than that found on the annals. They date to 694 BCE at the earliest (Gallagher 1999:12). The Nebû Yunus Slab inscription bears a short inscription pertaining to Hezekiah and dates from 691-689 BCE (Reade 1975:195).

2.4.1.2 *The Taylor Prism*

The famous Taylor Prism, a hexagonal prism of baked clay, was discovered among the ruins at Nebû Yunus, or ancient Nineveh, by Colonel Taylor in 1830. It is housed in the British Museum in London and dates to around 691 BCE (Mitchell 1988b:66). The details of Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701 BCE confirm the biblical account in 2 Kings 18:13-15 and Isaiah 36:2-37:37. The Chicago (or Oriental) Prism bears the same, but more perfect copy of the text. The prism was purchased in Baghdad in 1919 and is now housed in the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. It stands 38 cm high and is 14 cm wide (Oriental Institute 2006: https://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/MUS/HIGH/OIM_A2793.html). The most detailed rendition of the campaign in 701 BCE was inscribed towards the end of the third campaign and is found on Sennacherib's Letter to God Ashur (K6205) (Frahm 1997:229-232).

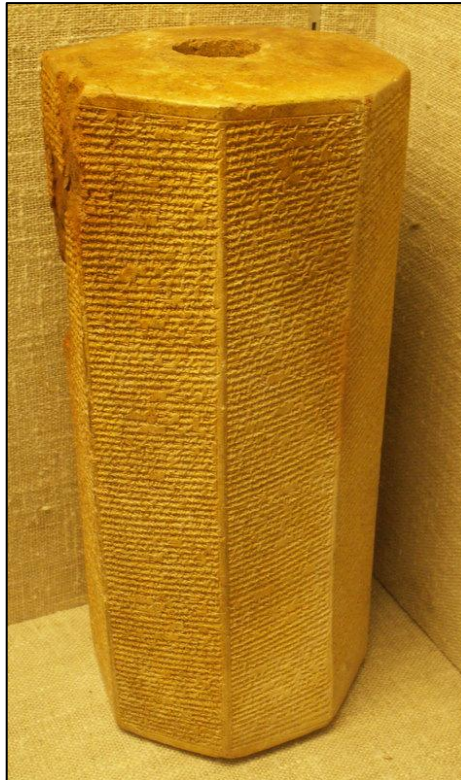


Figure 3: Terracotta foundation document, Lachish Room, British Museum. Account of the siege is given in column iii, lines 38-81¹⁵

2.4.2 The Nimrud Letters

Several thousand letters written in Akkadian have been excavated in ancient Assyria. Found mainly in the palaces of Nineveh, these letters constitute an additional and unique source of information on the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Kuhrt 1995:501). They represent the royal correspondence between the king (Sargon II, Esarhaddon, and Aššur-bān-apli) and his high officials at the capital, governors, members of the court, royal advisors, military commanders, and temple personnel.

During excavations undertaken by Max Mallowan at Nimrud, the biblical Calah/Kalhu (Gen 10:11), in 1952, an archive of letters, known as the Nimrud Letters, was discovered in a wing of the Northwest Palace. Most of the letters were written by administrators and governors and addressed to the kings Tiglath-

¹⁵ Photo: Author, London, July 2007.

Pileser III and Sargon II. They refer to Assyrian military activity in Babylonia and on the northern frontier, to royal building projects, to events in the Levant, and to relations with King Midas of Phrygia (Eisenbrauns 1996-2009: <http://www.eisenbrauns.com/item/SAGNIMRUD>). As it was not customary to date correspondence at the time the Nimrud letters were written, establishing the exact chronology of the letters remains somewhat problematic (Dalley 2004:388).

2.5 CONCLUSION

According to the biblical as well as the Assyrian sources, Hezekiah was fabulously wealthy. While the biblical text accredits Hezekiah's wealth to YHWH's favour, the Assyrian sources give no indication of where this wealth originated. It should be remembered that ideological and propagandistic objectives underlay both sources. These texts were meant to honour either the king or the deity in whose name the texts were commissioned and to serve the political and/or religious elite that produced them: the people in power and with power (Janse van Rensburg 2004:576-577).

Judging from the prophetic writings and accusations, the majority of the Judaeans did not fare as well as their king, but were exploited by the members of the upper ruling classes.

C

CHAPTER THREE

SETTING THE SCENE: THE POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO HEZEKIAH'S REIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Ancient Israel's unique geographical location in the Levant largely determined the history of the country. Although only a minor player in the political arena of the ancient Near East, this small country was frequently caught up in the turmoil of empires, such as Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt, vying for control of the eastern Mediterranean seaboard and its trade-routes.

Assyria's aggressive expansionism during the late 8th century BCE constituted a major political problem for the smaller states in the ancient Near East, so that once again, ancient Israel fell victim to her geographical location (Høgenhaven 1990:351). Even before Ahaz sacrificed Judah's autonomy and submitted to the mighty Assyrian Empire in ca. 734 BCE, the country would have felt the Assyrian presence, so that a study of Judah has to be conducted in the context of its vassalage to the great Neo-Assyrian Empire.

The major powers were not the only countries that influenced ancient Israel. Judah's neighbours must also be taken into consideration, for they too impacted on the political, social, economic, and religious life of its people. The goal of this chapter is to set the scene and provide the political background to Hezekiah and his reign based on information obtained from biblical as well as extra-biblical sources.

3.2 JUDAH'S NEIGHBOURS

3.2.1 Assyria, 'the sons of Ashur' (Gn 10:22)

After a period of decline, beginning around 780 BCE and caused by warring

neighbours and internal strife, the mighty Assyrians were back on the international scene under the leadership of Tiglath-Pileser III, a usurper, who reigned from ca. 746-728 BCE (Olmstead 1951:175). This vigorous king restored domestic law and order, implemented changes in the military organisation and provincial administration, and tirelessly campaigned to extend and consolidate the borders of the Assyrian Empire.

In 734 BCE Tiglath-Pileser III, or Pul as he is referred to in the Bible (2 Ki 15:19), campaigned in the west and gained control over Syro-Palestine,¹⁶ including the Mediterranean coast south of Tyre to the Philistine cities and the Brook of Egypt, thereby establishing a border with Egypt (Elat 1978:20).

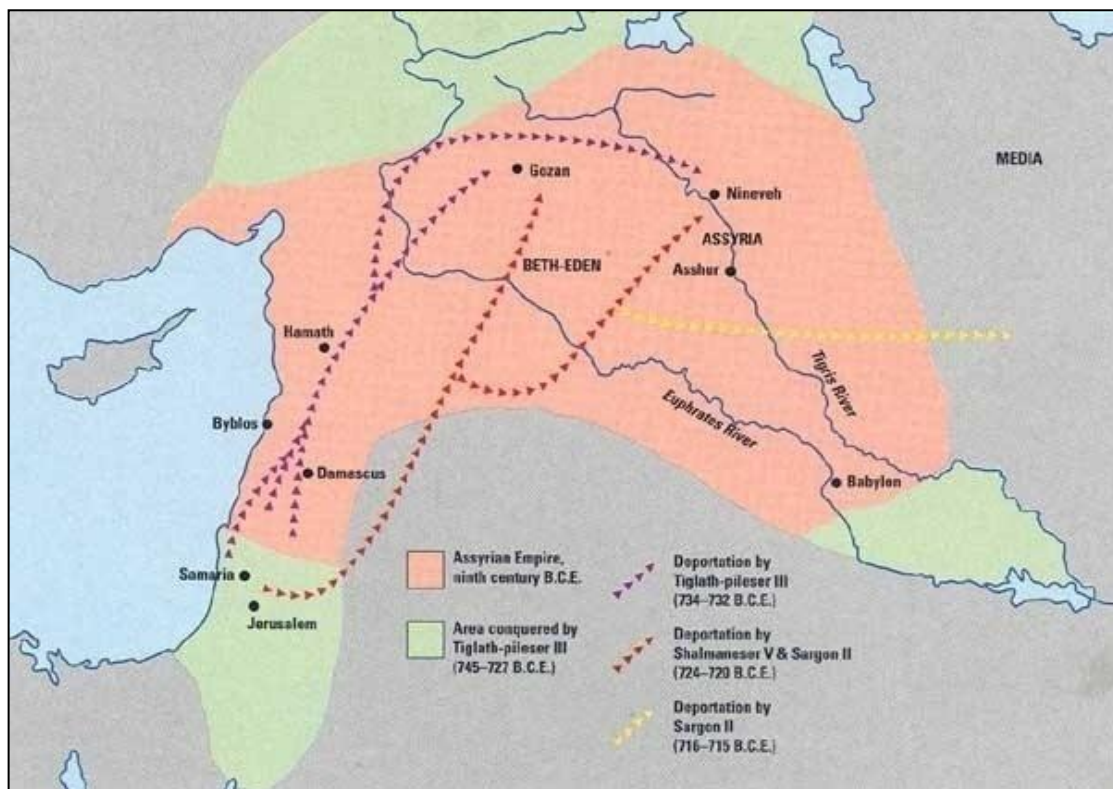


Figure 4: Assyrian Empire (Younger 2003b)

¹⁶ This term is used to refer to 'the countries bordering the Mediterranean between the Sinai Peninsula and the Nur Dağları (Amanus Mountains), to which the names Palestine and Syria are often loosely applied. ... The interior of Syria and its extension beyond the Euphrates have in the past always been separated ethnographically, and sometimes politically, from the coastal cities of the Levant, the associations of which were with Cilicia and the trade routes of Palestine' (Lloyd 2009:¶2).

Shalmaneser V succeeded his father Tiglath-Pileser III sometime around 727/6 BCE. His rule was brief, approximately four years. He died suddenly in 722 BCE. The circumstances surrounding his death are unknown, but he may have died during the siege of Samaria, which he initiated after King Hosea rebelled in 724 BCE. Shalmaneser V's successor was Sargon II (722-705 BCE).

Sargon II vigorously pursued Tiglath-Pileser III's expansionistic policy for the next seventeen years. His reign is exceptionally well documented, and he takes credit for the capture of Samaria in 720 BCE. In 712 BCE Sargon II sent his army to deal with an anti-Assyrian rebellion in Ashdod (Is 20:1). At Raphia (Rapihu) the Assyrians defeated the king of Gaza, who received military support from the Egyptians. By 709 BCE Sargon had established suzerainty over the island of Crete (*Yadnana*), which furthered Assyrian dominance over trade in the Mediterranean (Miller & Hayes 1986:319). In 707 BCE Sargon II defeated the Babylonian king, Merodach-baladan II, finally regaining control of the area that he had lost ten years before, and proclaimed himself king of Babylonia.

In 705 BCE the unprecedented happened: an Assyrian monarch, Sargon II, was killed in battle fighting an obscure ruler in Anatolia (the land of Tabal) (Gallagher 1999:269). His son, Sin-ahhe-erib or Sennacherib (705-681 BCE) ascended the Assyrian throne (Tadmor 1966:95). The news of Sargon's death and the resultant change in monarch was viewed by the vassals as an opportunity to rid themselves of Assyrian rule, and a wave of rebellion spread through the empire. Merodach-baladan II, the deposed Babylonian king, sought to reclaim his throne with support from Elam as well as peoples from Mesopotamia and some Arabian tribes. It was not long before the states in Transjordan and Palestine followed suit and rebelled.

Sennacherib chose to deal with the Babylonians first and then advance against Judah. In 2 Kings 18:14 Hezekiah admits to having offended the Assyrian monarch. We have no way of knowing what exactly Hezekiah was referring to, but the biblical narrative lists numerous reasons for war. The Rabshakeh (*rab shaqê*, meaning literally 'chief cupbearer') sent by Sennacherib simply says Hezekiah 'rebelled' (2 Ki 18:20). According to the Assyrian annals, Hezekiah had

‘imprisoned’ pro-Assyrian Padi, king of Ekron, and it was Assyrian policy to protect their protégés and allies. On the other hand, the Ekronites might have handed over their king while Hezekiah was still compliant to Assyrian. We also know that Hezekiah made overtures to Assyria’s enemies, Egypt and Babylon, and that he attacked the Philistines (2 Ki 18:8), Assyrian vassals at that time. Actions such as conspiring with an enemy against Assyria or encroaching upon territories under Assyrian rule were considered acts of aggression against Assyria and retaliation was immediately forthcoming (Oded 1992:45). Perhaps Hezekiah had decided to stand his ground and withhold tribute? This too would have guaranteed a reaction from the Assyrian monarch, for as Oded (1992:95) explains, once an indigenous ruler had been subdued or accepted Assyrian sovereignty, any attempt to later throw off the Assyrian yoke was regarded as rebellion and considered an act of contempt of Assyrian supreme authority.

Whatever the reason, and probably anticipating backing from the Ethiopian Shebitku, pharaoh of the 25th Dynasty (Is 30:31; 36:6-9), Hezekiah felt confident enough to become embroiled with Sidon, Philistia, Ammon, Moab and Edom in a revolt against Assyria (Kelle 2007:49). Sennacherib responded vehemently, annihilating 46 towns and villages en-route, and targeting Lachish, which was strategically important and the second most important city in Judah (King & Stager 2001:215). The anticipated support from Egypt was forthcoming, but the Egyptian pharaoh only reached Rapiku on the Mediterranean Coast. The biblical writers name Tirhakah as the Egyptian pharaoh at the time, a detail which led to a debate¹⁷ amongst scholars that has lasted for over a century. Tirhakah only succeeded his brother Shebitku to throne in about 690 BCE, becoming the third pharaoh of Egypt’s 25th (Ethiopian or Nubian) Dynasty. He could, however, have commanded his brother’s army against Sennacherib in 701 BCE (Tetley 2005:155).

¹⁷ The Second Invasion Hypothesis is referred to here. Whether or not Sennacherib undertook a second campaign against Palestine would have no bearing on the results of this dissertation. It will therefore not be included in the discussion.

3.2.2 Babylonia, ‘the land of the Chaldeans’ (Jr 24:5)

Marduk-apla-idinna II, the biblical Merodach-baladan II (2 Ki 20:12; Is 39:1), was a member of one of the Chaldean tribes, the Yakim. These Semitic-speaking people of Arabian origin had entered the Mesopotamian plain and settled on the coast of the Persian Gulf (Grayson 1980b:94). After uniting several Babylonian tribes and gaining the support of the Elamite king, Merodach-baladan II claimed the Babylonian crown in 721 BCE, upsetting the peace that Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 BCE) had worked hard to maintain (Ahlström 1993:691; Grayson 1980a:105; Olmstead 1951:284). Pre-occupied in the west and south-west, Sargon II was unable to react. A revolt in the west by the Assyrian province of Ashdod, supported by Egypt, Gaza, Ekron, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and possibly Judah, demanded his attention in 712 BCE, but by 710 BCE Sargon II was back fighting the Elamites at Der. Although it is still unclear who left this battlefield as victor, the Elamites under Shutruk-Nahhunte II withdrew their support of Merodach-baladan II. His territory reduced and his drive depleted by the Assyrian army, Merodach-baladan II was forced to seek refuge in the jungle-like marshes of the Persian Gulf, and then later in Elam. Sargon II acceded to the Babylonian throne and established a dual monarchy (Grayson 1980a:105).

The death of a monarch and a change in ruler regularly signalled an opportunity to revolt, so when Sennacherib ascended the Assyrian throne in 705 BCE, Merodach-baladan II recognised this as an opportunity to instigate trouble, with the objective of reclaiming the Babylonian throne. Together with the Chaldeans, the Elamites and some Aramaeans of Babylonia, he formed a coalition against Sennacherib. An invitation to join the coalition was also extended to Ammon, Moab and Edom in the west, while Egypt in the south sent offers of support to the Babylonians (Ahlström 1993:695). It was surely in the hope of recruiting additional military support from Hezekiah that Merodach-baladan II sent an envoy to Hezekiah in Jerusalem (2 Ki 20:12-15; 2 Chr 32:31; Is 39:1-3). This visit probably took place sometime around 705 BCE, which contradicts the biblical rendition of events that present this occurring after Sennacherib’s attempted conquest of Jerusalem in 701 BCE.

The 'letters' referred to in 2 Kings 20:12 suggest that a treaty between Judah and Babylonia might even have been signed (Ahlström 1993:695). Perhaps somewhat flattered, Hezekiah offers the members of the Babylonian envoy a tour of his kingdom, proudly showing them his accumulated treasures and armoury. This act of indiscretion was probably to prove to the Babylonians that Judah was well prepared, should Merodach-baladan II (2 Ki 20:12) instigate rebellion. Nevertheless, Isaiah condemned Hezekiah's behaviour and subsequently predicted that the possessions of the king and his sons would be carried into exile in Babylon (Is 20:16-19).

3.2.3 Egypt, the land of the Nile

Egypt had traditionally played the role of the dominant power in the Levant. When Assyria began to extend her borders and influence westward, she created an imbalance in power that greatly influenced the political and economic life of the Eastern Mediterranean Seaboard until well into the 7th century BCE (Miller & Hayes 1986:220).

While the Nubians of the 25th Dynasty, with their support mainly in Upper Egypt, were occupied establishing their dominion over Lower Egypt and the Delta, as well as in the eastern Mediterranean, Tiglath-Pileser III extended Assyrian hegemony right down to the Egyptian border (Miller & Hayes 1986:319). When Tiglath-Pileser III headed north again sometime around 734 BCE, he had gained control of the Egyptian border and shrewdly created a buffer zone between Assyria's arch-enemy, Egypt and the Assyrian Empire; the Arabian tribes had been subdued; Edom, the Philistine city-states, and Judah were Assyrian vassals; and an Assyrian garrison was stationed on the Brook of Egypt, or *naḥal Mušur* (Ahlström 1993:633; Dubovský 2006b:167; Miller & Hayes 1986:322).

In 716 BCE Sargon II received tribute from 'Shilkanni king of Egypt' and an Assyrian military outpost was established by settling deportees in the region of the city of the Brook of Egypt and placing them under the supervision of the sheikh of the city of Laban (Miller & Hayes 1986:351).

According to the so-called 'Display Inscription'¹⁸ of Sargon II, the 25th (Ethiopian or Nubian) Dynasty entered into the power struggle for control of the commerce on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and for influence over the *Khor*¹⁹ in 711 BCE, totally upsetting the relative peace that had reigned there since 735 BCE (Aubin 2002:76; Dalley 2004:390). The Egyptians joined forces with the king of Gaza, Hanno, but were defeated by the Assyrians at Rapihu (Raphia). The city was razed, Hanno was captured by the Assyrians, and the Egyptian Pharaoh paid tribute (Albenda 1980:226).

3.2.4 Israel, the Northern Kingdom

In 734 BCE, in an attempt to force King Ahaz of Judah to join their anti-Assyrian coalition, the armies of Damascus (Aramaeans) and Samaria (Israelites) invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem (2 Ki 16:5; Is 7:1-9). 2 Chronicles 28:6 tells of a decisive victory for Pekah over the Judaeans with 120,000 dead in one day, despite the fact that the combined Aramaean-Israelite army was unable to take the capital city (2 Ki 16:5) (Olmstead 1951:196). Tiglath-Pileser III intervened, with the result that Israel was left a puppet-state, dramatically reduced in size and consisting literally of only the area around the capital city, Samaria, in the central hill country of Mt. Ephraim, under pro-Assyrian Hoshea (732-724 BCE). Much of the territory that had once belonged to Israel, but had been taken over by Syria, became the Assyrian provinces of Gilead, Megiddo,²⁰ Karnaim, and Dor (Miller & Hayes 1986:332).

In 724 BCE, in reaction to Israel's plotting with Egypt and attempting to throw off the Assyrian yoke, Shalmaneser V attacked, occupied the Northern Kingdom, and besieged the powerful city of Samaria (Kuhrt 1995:469). Hoshea was taken prisoner and in 720 BCE, after a three year siege, the city of Samaria fell to the Assyrians. This marked the end of the Northern Kingdom as a political and national entity. Sargon II took credit for the capture of Samaria. Over 27,290

¹⁸ The Display Inscription stood on wall slabs of Salons IV, VII, VIII and X of the Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad (*ARAB* II:25). It details the first 15 years of his reign.

¹⁹ The ancient Egyptian name for the region of the Fertile Crescent, the territory encompassing the ancient kingdoms of Judah and Israel, Philistine land, Phoenician lands, Syria, Dead Sea occupied by the minor kingdom of Ammon, Moab and Edom (Aubin 2002:16).

²⁰ Megiddo was the capital of Galilee and the Jezreel Valley (Stern 1994:131).

Israelites were deported to Assyria (ARAB II:2, 26, 46). The deportees, according to 2 Kings 17:6, were settled in 'Halah on the Habor, a river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes'. The Northern Kingdom was incorporated into the Assyrian Empire as the province Samerina, with Samaria the province's administrative capital (Ahlström 1993:670). The biblical authors, however, fail to disclose the name of the Assyrian king responsible for this deed. It might well have been Shalmaneser V, for in 2 Kings 17:3 we are told that Shalmaneser V had discovered that King Hoshea was playing '*a double game*'. Judah now became the sole successor of the 'pan-Israelite nationality' (Ofer 1992:121).

3.2.5 Philistia, 'the land of the Philistines' (Ex 13:17)

In 734 BCE, while Aram/Damascus and Israel harassed Judah from the north, 2 Chronicles 28:17-18 tells that Philistia, with assistance from Edom, invaded Judah and reasserted sovereignty over bordering territories (cities of the lowlands, of the south of Judah, Beth-Shemesh, Aijalon, and the towns surrounding Gederath, Soco, Timnah, and Gimzo).

Ahaz's plea for assistance in the face of this seemingly hopeless situation came most opportunely for the Assyrian king. While it appears Israel and Aram were trying to force Ahaz to join an anti-Assyrian coalition, Oded (1972) believes Tiglath-Pileser III moved against Damascus and Samaria as a result of their anti-Assyrian and expansionistic moves against Judah (Dubovský 2006b:155-156).

Complete control of the lucrative maritime trade and seaports along the Levantine seaboard, as well as the trade with Egypt, became Tiglath-Pileser III's ambition after he extended Assyrian control over the Phoenician cities (Byblos, Arvad, Sidon and Tyre) in 738 BCE (Tadmor 1966:87). The important overland trade-route between Philistia and Egypt was also essential for the transport of goods between Asia and Egypt. Whatever the reason, Tiglath-Pileser III responded swiftly, and between the years 734-732 BCE he campaigned in the West 'against Philistia', ultimately gaining control of the Western Mediterranean seaboard. The king of Gaza, Hanun (Hanno) had initially fled to Egypt seeking help from the king of Bubastis, a city in the eastern part of the Delta, but returned

and was permitted to retain his throne as an Assyrian vassal (Tadmor 1966:88). The city was turned into an Assyrian port and custom station (Miller & Hayes 1986:330). Tiglath-Pileser III also successfully imposed Assyrian vassalage on Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron, established a military garrison at the Brook of Egypt in Wadi el'Arish, and dealt with the Arabian tribes led by Queen Samsi (Dubovský 2006b:155). At the Brook of Egypt, Tiglath-Pileser III erected a stele/statue of gold marking the southernmost limit of the Assyrian Empire in 734 BCE (Tadmor 1966:88; 1994:177).

The next rebellion against the Assyrians erupted in 720 BCE. This time Hanun of Gaza joined an anti-Assyrian alliance with Hamath, Samaria, Arpad, Damascus, and Tyre. Hanun received military support from the Egyptians.²¹ Sargon II responded promptly and the two armies met near Raphia (*Rapihu*). The Egyptians under Sib'e, the *turtan*, were defeated, and Hanno was seized and taken to Assyria in chains. The city of Raphia was razed and its inhabitants, as well as the rebel leaders, were deported (*ARAB* II:3; Stern 2001:228).

In 716 BCE Sargon II was forced to return to Philistia to re-assert Assyrian domination (Tadmor 1966:91). In 713 BCE Ashdod's King Azuri was deported after being accused of treachery. No sooner was his brother Ahimiti enthroned, than he too was overthrown by an anti-Assyrian element and replaced by an enterprising and ambitious commoner, the Philistine Yamani. In 712 BCE Sargon II dispatched his commander in chief, the *turtānu* (Hoffmeier 2003:242). Yamani fled to Musru (Egypt), where his request for assistance remained unanswered. Yamani then sought assistance from the king of Meluḥḥa.²² Anxious not to provoke the Assyrians, the king of Ethiopia bound, shackled, and extradited Yamani to Assyria. Ashdod and Gath were captured. A basalt victory-stela²³ was erected commemorating the Assyrian victory, and an Assyrian governor installed to rule the newly-created Assyrian province (Tadmor 1966:94-95).

²¹ Tadmor (1966:91) claims the Assyrian documents probably refer to Tefnakht or Sais of the 24th Dynasty, while Stern (2001:228) believes the Egyptians were led by the Nubian 25th Dynasty.

²² The king of Meluḥḥa was believed to be Shabako (Miller & Hayes 1986:353), but Frame (1999, in Hoffmeier 2003:227; Younger 2003a:243-244) recently identified him as Shabataka (Shebitku).

²³ Excavated in 1963 (Freedman 1963:138).

From the Taylor Prism (*ARAB* II:143; Cogan 2000:303) we learn that ‘the officials, nobles, and people of Ekron’ handed their pro-Assyrian King Padi over to Hezekiah. Hezekiah, according to Gottwald (1985:368), had joined them in their revolt against Assyria in 713-712 BCE. However, we have no proof that Hezekiah actually joined this revolt.

The death of Sargon II in 705 BCE heralded another opportunity for rebellion. Revolts broke out in Ashkelon and Ekron.

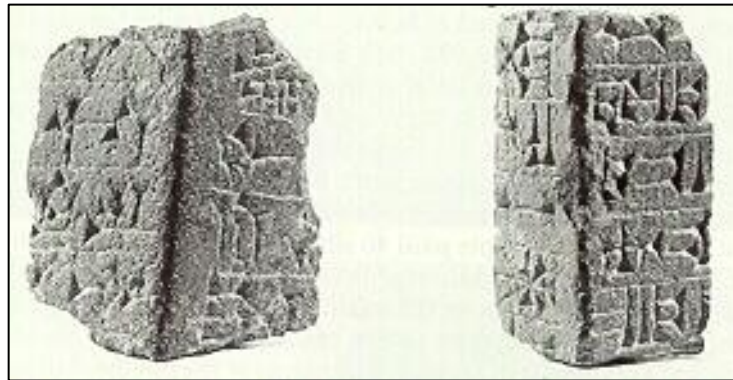


Figure 5: Fragments of an Assyrian victory stela found at Ashdod (Klein 2002²⁴)

3.2.6 Phoenicia, the country of purple cloth²⁵

Limited to a narrow strip of land between the mountains and the eastern Mediterranean, the inhabitants of a chain of city-states turned to the sea for their livelihood, becoming the major traders and the centre for trade in the Levant and Mediterranean for many centuries. The Phoenicians,²⁶ so-called by the Greeks, were descendants of the Canaanites, their culture dating back to the third millennium and beyond (Ward 1994:183-184). By the 11th century BCE they had established an extensive colonial network with trading posts on numerous islands in the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea, as well as at strategic locations on the Mediterranean coast, for example, Carthage, Spain, and Morocco.

Commercial and trade relations between the ancient Israelites and the

²⁴ <http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/images/sargash2.jpg>.

²⁵ This is only one of the numerous interpretations of the name ‘Phoenicia’ (Aubet 1987:7).

²⁶ The etymology of this Greek term is still unclear (Aubet 1987:8).

Phoenicians are documented back to the time of David (1 Chr 14:1), but could well have existed earlier. They continued under Solomon (ca. 960-922 BCE), who established a lucrative commercial undertaking with the Phoenician king, Hiram of Tyre. After the demise of the United Monarchy, the Northern Kingdom and Phoenicia appear to have continued their joint maritime ventures (Stieglitz 1984:139). Both kingdoms enjoyed mutually beneficial trade relations with Phoenicia (Isserlin 2001:186).

During the 8th century BCE the Assyrian Empire continued to expand and the number of Levantine vassal states continued to increase. The concomitant increase in the demand for goods by the vassal states to meet tribute payments caused the Phoenicians to expand both their land and sea trade in the West (Sherratt & Sherratt 1993:366). Their naval expertise and control of the maritime trade within the Mediterranean Sea stood them in good stead as they went in search of huge quantities of raw materials from which they manufactured luxury goods. The Phoenician cities were not only major trading centres for metals and luxury items, but also centres of industry and specialised crafts, such as ivory and metal working, purple-dyed textiles, and furniture frequently inlaid with ivory (Aubet 1987:38; Lafrenz 2003:6). Lacking natural resources except wood from Lebanon, the Phoenician craftsmen specialised in finishing processes on the materials they imported from distant countries (Ap-Thomas 1973:274). These they traded with the Assyrian vassals, thereby amassing considerable wealth that greatly contributed to their maintaining independence in the face of Assyria's expansionism.

As Assyria under Tiglath-Pileser III extended her activities in the West, the Phoenician cities, Tyre and Sidon, paid tribute to the Assyrians in a move to maintain their political and economic independence. Even though the Phoenicians paid regular tribute, as the Assyrian annals testify, regular trade relations also existed between the two (Aubet 1987:72). The 150 gold talents paid to Tiglath-Pileser III by King Metenna of Tyre is not only the largest amount of gold mentioned in a tribute list, but is also testimony to the Phoenician city's immense wealth (ARAB I:288; Elat 1991:24). It appears the Assyrians were determined to exploit and benefit from this source of wealth. In order to do so,

they had to compromise. They had to permit the Phoenicians to maintain their independence and to refrain from hindering Tyrian trade (Elat 1991:25, 27).

3.2.7 Transjordan: Ammon, Moab and Edom

Tiglath-Pileser III's campaign in Palestine in 734-732 BCE marked the end of Aram-Damascus and Israel. The two countries had long dominated political events in the area. Judging from the numerous Assyrian documents that record envoys from Ammon, Moab, and Edom obediently paying tribute to the Assyrian monarchs, it appears these countries had joined the ranks of Assyrian vassals paying annual tribute (Oded 1970:182).

Na'aman (1991:92), however, does not believe Edom participated in the alliance. He states: 'the Transjordanian kingdoms are mentioned alongside Judah and other vassal kingdoms in the list of tribute payers of 734/3 BCE, which did not participate in the alliance'. He considers 2 Chronicles 28:17, 'The Edomites again invaded, defeated Judah, and carried off captives', a reworking of the account of 2 Kings 16:6, 'At that time, the king of Edom recovered Elath for Edom: he drove the Judaeans out of Elath, and the Edomites occupied it and have been there ever since' and, so Na'aman (1991:92), 'cannot be considered as evidence for the participation of Edom in the rebellion and the anti-Judaeen expedition'.

In order to ensure the safety of the royal caravans transporting goods back to the Assyrian heartland, the Assyrians erected a line of fortresses and store cities at strategic points along the 'King's Highway', the Transjordanian trade route. These simultaneously provided the eastern borders of Ammon, Moab and Edom with some protection from the marauding Arabian tribes from the desert to the east. With Aram-Damascus and Israel no longer a threat, these tribes regarded this as an opportunity to make territorial advances on Transjordan (Oded 1970:184). This line of fortification also guaranteed efficient communications between the vassal territories and Assyria proper, essential to ensuring and maintaining the security and stability of the empire (Oded 1970:182). Although Edom appears to have participated in the abortive rebellion by Ashdod in 713

BCE, the states in the Transjordan generally benefited and developed under Assyrian vassalage, which was an incentive in itself to remain loyal to the Assyrian Empire (Stern 2001:259). Archaeological evidence appears to confirm this, for excavations at Bozrah (modern Buseirah) and Tawilan, both important urban centres in Edom, have shown that primary development took place during the 8th and 7th centuries BCE (Hoglund 1994:339).

3.3 JUDAH AND KING HEZEKIAH

3.3.1 The dating of Hezekiah's reign – an unresolved issue

On 15/16 March 597 BCE Jerusalem surrendered to the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar II (624-562 BCE) (Miller & Hayes 1986:226). This is the only definite (and first secured) date that we have in the history of Israel and Judah. Although the Bible provides sufficient information with which we technically *should* be able to draw up an accurate chronology of the two kingdoms, difficulties arise due to the fact that the available information 'simply does not "add up."' Inconsistencies in the biblical and Assyrian records have enabled a wide range of possibilities, so that the dating of the kings must be considered approximate (Miller & Hayes 1986:226). The question whether Hezekiah ruled Judah from *ca.* 727-698 BCE (cf. for example, Mazar 1992:405; Miller & Hayes 1986:221) or *ca.* 716-687 BCE (cf. for example, Bright 1981:269; Comay 2002:134) has long preoccupied scholars and is most likely to remain unresolved. However, as the exact dating of Hezekiah's reign has little or no influence on the outcome of this study, I do not dwell on this issue.²⁷

3.3.2 Judah and the Assyrian Empire

3.3.2.1 *The administration of the Assyrian Empire*

The Assyrian monarch's determination to gain control over Syro-Palestine was largely influenced by economic and trade factors, a view supported by Byrne

²⁷ For an overview of the problem of the chronology of Hezekiah's reign see Vaughn (1999:8-12).

(2003:11) and Blakely & Hardin (2002:41).²⁸ The Assyrian heartland witnessed an increase in urbanism, the appearance of huge royal cities, and the construction of royal palaces, all contributing to an increased demand for luxury goods and exotica. This made access to the Mediterranean coast, as well as the Phoenician ports and their extensive trading network, extremely attractive (Miller & Hayes 1986:219). Tiglath-Pileser III coveted the exotic and luxury goods that the countries in the west had access to and consequently could provide as tribute (Byrne 2003:21). To ensure the constant and uninterrupted flow of trade back to Assyria proper, it became essential that the countries traversed by the trade-routes be brought under Assyrian domination. Tiglath-Pileser III accomplished this in 734 BCE.

Van de Mieroop (2007:250) believes the Assyrian monarchs had no real desire to extend the boundaries of their empire. They would have preferred to have the local ruler remain in power, pay their annual tribute, and remain obedient to Assyria. Under this system, Assyria would have no need to become involved in the internal affairs of the subjugated territories (Postgate 1992:255).

The Assyrian kings maintained a sharp distinction between the territory directly administered by Assyria (Assyria proper and the territories—mainly in the east—incorporated into the empire) and those areas that remained autonomous because they had shown themselves willing to submit to Assyrian domination (Postgate 1992:251, 263). While the former paid various taxes, the latter rendered tribute (Bedford 2001:7).

Miller & Hayes (1986:320) and Van de Mieroop (2007:250) have identified three different political arrangements Assyria adopted with the countries in the west. It is here that Miller & Hayes have drawn a distinction between a satellite²⁹ and a vassal state. These distinctions and the terminology used to refer to them are modern constructs: they were unknown to the Assyrians.

²⁸ Blakely & Hardin (2002:41) refer to works by Tadmor (1966; 1986-1989), Oded (1974; 1992), Otzen (1978; 1979), Irvine (1990) and Knauf (1992).

²⁹ Satellite state is a modern political term that was coined during the Cold War to refer to the Central and Eastern European countries that were politically, economically, and militarily bound to the then powerful Soviet Union (Ismay 1955).

- The first arrangement involved the voluntary submission to Assyrian authority by the local ruler, who was left in charge but obliged to pay a tribute. These states, according to Miller & Hayes (1986:320), were satellite or puppet states. Postgate (1992:252) refers to them as 'client kingdoms' of the Assyrian Empire. As long as these states continued to acknowledge Assyrian hegemony and meet their annual financial obligations, the Assyrians exercised minimal interference in the social, religious, and administrative concerns of the country.
- The second arrangement, to cover countries conquered by Assyria, involved replacing the deposed ruler with another local ruler, but one who was pro-Assyrian. A treaty was signed, binding the subdued country by oath to Assyria. This state, ruled by its Assyrian-approved puppet, became a vassal, with Assyria involving itself only in political affairs that might affect the empire.
- In the third instance, a conquered country or rebellious state became a province, incorporated into the Assyrian Empire proper and governed by a military governor and hierarchy of officials directly responsible to the central government (Miller & Hayes 1986:320). One of the most important functions of these provincial administrations was the collection of tax and tribute for the central government. They also conscripted and supplied soldiers and civil labourers (Bedford 2001:10).

Assyrian rule was extremely flexible; if a local ruler proved unfaithful he was quickly replaced by one more trustworthy, or if necessary, replaced by a governor and the state incorporated into the Assyrian Empire as a province (Miller & Hayes 1986:320).

Assyrian kings adhered to the age-old tradition of entering into an agreement with the local rulers of subjugated states. Oaths were sworn in the presence of both their god Ashur and the local god on divinely determined auspicious days (Kuhrt 1995:515; Postgate 1992:255). Oded (1992:94-97) believes that any action on the part of a ruler, indigenous or not, that hinted at 'disobedience', was seen as a violation of that sworn oath and resulted in immediate and heavy-

handed Assyrian punitive action. This could entail permanent removal of the ruler, deportation, and death. Regular payment of tribute was seen as acknowledgement of Assyrian supremacy, while withholding tribute was tantamount to rebellion (Oded 1992:94-97). Loyal vassals, those countries that paid their tribute regularly, could expect immediate Assyrian support should the necessity arise (Saggs 1973:161).

Oded (1992:67-68) argues that the Assyrians regarded an offence against a loyal vassal a legitimate reason for war, and that the Assyrian monarch considered it a divine mission to aid loyal kings. The recurring rebellions on the Mediterranean coast and in Palestine forced the Assyrian monarchs to return to re-assert their control over the area and to protect their political and economic interests. It was for these reasons that Sennacherib marched west in 701 BCE and less due to an obligation to provide military support to Assyria's loyal protégé, Padi of Ekron (Oded 1992:66-67). A rebellion unsettled the stability of the empire; military retaliation reasserted Assyrian control. Hezekiah was brought back in line after the siege of Jerusalem. Numerous inscriptions record the Assyrian monarchs responding to an appeal for help from a distressed vassal, but it was a pretext for war. While war is a costly undertaking, the Assyrians profited as a result. The booty collected after taking a besieged city or after a battle, and tributes extracted once a country had been brought under Assyrian vassalage, provided a handsome income (Liverani 1992:155).

3.3.2.2 The difference between tribute and booty

While agriculture constituted the backbone of the Assyrian economy, the country lacked precious metals and luxury goods (Postgate 1974:206). The forced acquisition of these goods was a primary reason for the Assyrian monarchs to undertake military expeditions beyond the frontiers of their empire. It was during the reign of Assur-Nâsir-Pal II (883-859 BCE) that detailed lists of the booty and tribute acquired by the Assyrian monarchs first appeared in the royal annals (Yamada 2000:225).

After Tiglath-Pileser III acceded to the Assyrian throne, a change occurred in the

recording of the booty and tribute lists. Instead of enumerating each and every item, the scribes only recorded the gold, silver, and most valuable goods received by their masters. Elat (in Heltzer 1978:72) ascribes this development to the 'steady increase in payments and booty received in the royal house, reflecting the general economic growth of the Assyrian Empire as well as that of the neighbouring countries'. We can assume the lists of goods sent to Sargon II and Sennacherib by Judah were considerably longer than what actually appears in the Assyrian inscriptions.

It is necessary to differentiate between booty and tribute, and observe when the aforementioned were taken or paid (Liverani 1992:155). The Assyrians acquired booty (*šallatu*, *šalālu*) by plundering conquered cities, pillaging the battleground after confrontation on open fields, and pursuing a fleeing enemy for anything of monetary value, such as domestic animals and prisoners. After a battle, weapons, tents, horses, and chariots were taken by the Assyrians (Yamada 2000:226). The contents of the royal treasuries, palace furnishings, and members of the royal family, as well as women of the harem of the conquered cities, were all highly prized booty (Liverani 1992:155). Lachish would have been plundered for *booty* after the Assyrians breached the city wall, and then Judah under Hezekiah paid *tribute* to Sennacherib. The Lachish reliefs depict Sennacherib's scribe recording the booty taken.

The exact meaning of the Akkadian words (for example, *mandattu*, *nāmurtu*) translated into 'tribute' is still uncertain (Dalley 2004:388). Tribute payments were imposed on the rulers of cities or countries either annually or on the spot, and were received by the Assyrian monarch, or his representative, at the Assyrian capital or at a particular place during a campaign (Yamada 2000:236). Punitive spot tributes were rendered during the course of a battle or immediately afterwards, and signalled a ruler's willingness to accept Assyrian domination. The local ruler immediately rendered a 'tribute of surrender' or paid 'a gift of subjugation'. 'Audience gifts' were another form of tribute, freely given without any preceding confrontation, as a sign of loyalty (Yamada 2000:237). It can be expected that the monetary value of 'tribute of surrender' exceeded that of 'subjugation gifts' (Yamada 2000:238).

Tribute received by the Assyrian monarchs usually consisted of highly valuable goods, such as precious and basic metals; luxury goods that were stored in the royal treasuries of the vassal kings and which constituted the main items of international trade in the ancient Near East; horses for the Assyrian cavalry; chariot units (chariots with their horses); and weapons (Elat 1991:21-22). Although of comparatively low monetary value, domestic animals frequently constituted part of the annual tributes paid by states in stock-raising regions, as is evident from the inscription on the Iran Stele (III A, lines 26-30), which reads:

... the city rulers of Namri, of Singibutu (and) of all the eastern mountains
– horses, mules, Bactrian camels, cattle (and) sheep I [Tiglath-Pileser III]
imposed up them (as tribute) to be received annually in Assyria (Tadmor 1994:109).

Easily transported in large herds or perhaps entrusted to shepherds (Postgate 1974:207), the value of these animals lay more in the by-products they could provide, such as wool, skins, and milk, than in their meat (Jankowska 1947:272).

The tributes, annual and otherwise, received from vassal states were a welcome boost to the king's coffers, representing the one-way traffic of free goods to the Assyrian capitals, and constituted an important source of luxury goods destined for the king, his palaces, and royal cities (Postgate 1992:259). The cult and temple only benefited indirectly (Postgate 1992:254). The tribute payments also helped finance the military campaigns and the Assyrian administration.

3.3.2.3 *How Judah was drawn into the ambits of the Assyrian Empire*

Contrary to the above unresolved chronology dispute (regarding Hezekiah's reign), the details surrounding Judah's status within the Assyrian Empire when Hezekiah took over the regency is of the utmost importance to this study. Was Judah 'a satellite state, not a vassal' as claimed by Miller & Hayes (1986:346) and Isserlin (2001:88)—who appears to have based his opinion on Miller & Hayes, for his wording is very similar: 'With Judah (and also Ammon, Edom and Moab) reduced to satellite status ...'? Is there a difference between the two or did most authors use the term 'vassal' indiscriminately, without considering the

implications of what Assyrian vassalage entailed? Crucial to this study is the question whether or not the one-off payment for assistance in the Syro-Ephraimite crisis resulted in enduring financial obligations for Judah as implied by the statement found on the Taylor Prism: '*In addition to the former annual tribute, I imposed on them more gifts owed to my rule*' [my italics] (Mayer 2003:189).

A survey of the different scholarly opinions is called for. Ahlström (1993:637) states: 'The southern front against Egypt was protected by the vassal states in Palestine including Gaza, Ashkelon, Judah, Israel, Ammon, Moab, Edom and the Arab guardianship close to the Egyptian border'. Bright (1981:276) refers to Judah as 'a satellite of Assyria', but goes on to say that 'Ahaz signed away his liberty and made Judah a vassal state'. Bratcher (2006:¶24) states: 'Ahaz and Judah were now vassals of the Assyrian Empire'. Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:243) add: 'But with the rise of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BCE) and Ahaz's decision to become his vassal ...'. Saggs (1973:161) too considered Judah a vassal: 'by the reign of Ahaz, Judah was an accepted vassal of Assyria'. In his study, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians*, McKay (1973:5) argues that Assyrian gods were introduced because of Judah's 'condition of vassal status', and Gottwald (1985:368) states: 'Ahaz continued as a compliant vassal of Assyria'. Postgate (1992:252) uses the term 'client' 'on the firm insistence of Moses Finley to avoid feudal connotations'.

Both Saggs (1973) and McKay (1973) base their claim that Judah was a tribute-paying vassal on the biblical statement in 2 Kings 16:7: 'I am your slave and your son'. McKay (1973:73) points out that the term *abdeḫā* suggests vassal status. He refers to McCarthy (1965) who claims that the father-son language, which is often found in the Bible, is characteristic of Israelite treaty terminology. In her article, *Recent evidence from Assyrian sources for Judaeon history from Uzziah to Manasseh*, Dalley (2004) has provided fascinating evidence that has nothing to do with vassaldom, but would justify Ahaz's use of the word 'son'. This form of address, according to Cogan & Tadmor (1988:191), indicates 'familial dependency': no ruler of a vassal state would have even considered addressing the Assyrian monarch in this manner. Two Assyrian queens, Yaba, Queen of

Tiglath-Pileser III, and Atalia, Queen of Sargon II, found buried together in the same sarcophagus in a tomb located in the North-West Palace of Kalhu (Nimrud), have been identified as two Hebrew princesses. Dalley (2004) argues that these two queens would have been related to Ahaz and Hezekiah, which would explain why Ahaz employed the above-mentioned form of address, why the Assyrians treated Hezekiah so leniently, and why the Rabshakeh was fluent in Hebrew.

Judah, according to Miller & Hayes (1986:346), became a satellite state, not a vassal of the Assyrian Empire, and was still a satellite state when Hezekiah ascended the Judaeian throne. They base this claim on the following: Ahaz remained on his throne, no treaty with oath-taking was entered into, and there is no evidence of Assyria becoming involved in Judaeian affairs. The question remains, whether or not Judah was still subject to annual tribute payments? Also, was Judah expected to supply human resources for the Assyrian war machine, as claimed by Lowery (1991:130)?

The Bible makes only one reference to the tribute Ahaz paid in 734 BCE, referring to it simply as 'a present' (2 Ki 16:9). According to 2 Kings 16:8-9, Ahaz stripped the Temple of all its silver and gold, as well as all the gold and silver in the palace treasury, and sent it to Tiglath-Pileser III for Assyrian assistance against Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel (2 Ki 16:8-9). There is no mention of further 'annual' payments or any indication that these might have taken place. The royal Assyrian inscriptions also refer to only one payment made by '*laukhazi [Jehoahaz] matu lauda-a'* (Jehoahaz,³⁰ king of Judah)³¹ (Tadmor 1994:171).

The Nimrud Letters ND 2765 and ND 2608, however, provide evidence that Judah did both, i.e. paid tribute and supplied human resources. Both letters are believed to have been inscribed during Sargon II's reign. The former, inscribed sometime around 716 BCE, records Judah paying tribute, mainly in horses,

³⁰ Ahaz's full name as recorded on Tiglath-Pileser III's inscription (*ANET*:282).

³¹ Tablet Summary Inscription 7-K3751 was probably found at Nimrud (Tadmor 1994:155).

along with Egypt, Gaza,³² Moab, and Ammon (Postgate 1974:117; Dalley 2004:388). The Edomites, Ashdodites, and Ekronites are also mentioned (Tadmor 1966:92). The latter, inscribed around 715 BCE, mentions Judaeans in connection with an Assyrian campaign in Urartu (Dalley 2004:388). So ultimately, whether one considers Judah a satellite or a vassal of the Assyrian Empire, Judah was still burdened with economic obligations to Assyria. Therefore, as the majority of scholars use the term *vassal*, it is also used throughout this study.

3.3.3 Hezekiah, son of Ahaz and Abijah

The following is a portrayal of Hezekiah and his reign based on the information contained in the three biblical sources taking in consideration the limitations mentioned above (see 1.3). The exact sequence of events, however, is confused due to the biblical authors' contradictory renditions.

Hezekiah was born the son of King Ahaz of Judah and Abijah, who, according to 2 Chronicles 29:1, was the daughter of Zechariah. The possibility exists that Hezekiah might have been the grandson of the Israelite king by the same name, King Zechariah, who ruled the Northern Kingdom for only one year, from 753-752 BCE (Miller & Hayes 1986:342).

When he was twenty-five years old, Hezekiah succeeded his father to the Judaeian throne and became the 13th king of Judah. He was to rule for twenty-nine years. He immediately set about reversing the religious policy of his idolatrous father. He reopened the Temple, which implies his father had closed it, ordered repairs to be undertaken, and then, together with Levites, purified it and restored proper YHWHistic worship. After offering generous sacrifices (2 Chr 29:21), a Passover festival was held at the Temple in Jerusalem to which all from 'Dan to Beersheba' were invited. Hezekiah then introduced his sweeping cultic reforms and centralised the cult in Jerusalem. He reorganised the various divisions of the priests and Levites, as well as his administration, and ensured that taxes and tithes were paid.

³² Tribute payments received as a result of Sargon II's campaign to the west in 720 BCE when he marched against Gaza and defeated Egypt on the border to Philistia (Halla 1960:53).

According to Chronicles, Hezekiah then turned his attention to improving the defence and fortification of Jerusalem to withstand a siege and to the reorganisation of the army. In a military campaign against the Philistines, Hezekiah regained the territory right down to Gaza (2 Ki 18:8) that the Philistines had taken following the Syro-Ephraimitic War (Blakely & Hardin 2002:52). This action alone would have brought him into conflict with Assyria, for Gaza was an Assyrian vassal brought under Assyrian hegemony by Tiglath-Pileser III in 734 BCE and again by Sargon II in 720 BCE (Tadmor 1966:91).

Although a minor player in the political arena of the ancient Near East, Hezekiah was a shrewd and calculating one, well aware of the risks involved if he challenged the Assyrian Empire that dominated the area. Determined to reassert Judaeen independence, Hezekiah began planning, making preparations and taking precautions, one of which was the accumulation of gold and silver reserves. While these reserves would serve to remunerate the soldiers if the rebellion was a success, it would also serve to 'buy' his freedom and his throne if it failed. This tactic of 'buying' an Assyrian monarch's recognition of their rule had worked well for the usurper kings, Metenna of Tyre, Hulli of Tabal, and Hoshea of Israel (Na'aman 2005:72). The Assyrians were notoriously cruel and brutal, particularly in the face of resistance and rebellion, and Hezekiah obviously had no intention of being flayed, impaled, or tortured and burnt alive, as was the fate of Yau-bi'di, the king of Damascus (Hawkins 2000:417).

Hezekiah's overture toward the Egyptians for assistance in the event of war with Assyria met with Isaiah's disapproval (Is 36:6), as did his actions during the course of a visit to Judah by the Babylonian ambassadors (2 Ki 20:17; Is 39:6). At some stage Hezekiah's life was almost cut short by a serious illness, but with help from YHWH and treatment by Isaiah, he survived. In response to Hezekiah's efforts to regain national sovereignty, Assyria attacked Judah, devastated 46 towns, and then withdrew before taking Jerusalem, but not without receiving substantial compensation (2 Ki 18:13-16; *ARAB* II:121, 136). Having learnt his lesson, Hezekiah lived out YHWH's grace of fifteen additional years in peace and prosperity as a docile vassal and in a country greatly reduced in size after Sennacherib ceded extensive tracks of fertile Judaeen countryside to the

city-states of Philistia.

From a biblical perspective, Hezekiah and his reign were so successful and prosperous that storehouses had to be built to store all this wealth and excess supplies. Reading between the lines we gain a very different, more realistic, and not-so-complimentary, portrayal of this king. Apart from double-crossing the Assyrians and ignoring the advice of the prophet Isaiah, Hezekiah did *not* put his entire trust in YHWH, nor did he attribute his success to his patron deity. On the contrary, he was boastful (2 Ki 20:13), conceited (2 Chr 32:25), quick to despair (2 Ki 19:1), and required concrete evidence of YHWH's favour (2 Ki 20:8), attributes one would not expect to find in a king so applauded by the biblical narrators for his piety, devotion, and religious zeal.

3.3.4 Fortifying Jerusalem and organising the army

Apart from organising the army, the Bible makes no mention of any measures taken to defend, fortify, or assist the towns or villages in the remainder of Judah. The safety and defence of Jerusalem, the city of YHWH's abode, seems to have been Hezekiah's priority or the only concern of the biblical narrators. The Chronicler provides no details as to how Hezekiah went about organising the army. We are only told that Hezekiah 'appointed generals to command the people' (2 Chr 32:6).

3.4 CONCLUSION

The historic overview of each of Judah's neighbouring countries presented above has been provided to help contextualise Judah under Hezekiah in the late 8th – early 7th century BCE. Although this discussion provides no information directly concerning the Judaeian economy, numerous observations can be made, such as how and to what extent events in the political arena invariably affect a country's economy. This emphasises the need for the different perspectives discussed and implied in this holistic study.

The arrival of the Assyrians, the new world power, in the Levant as of the mid-8th

century BCE bore consequences for the two Israelite kingdoms and marked a turning point in the economic and demographic growth of both countries. An overall and general decline in the population and the economy has been observed in the Northern Kingdom after 722 BCE. This can be partly attributed to the large numbers deported to other parts of the Assyrian Empire, which Sargon II boasts about in his inscriptions. A significant number of people would have fled south, challenging and taxing the fragile infrastructure of the Southern Kingdom and creating considerable socio-economic problems.

At least three waves of refugees would have descended on Judah. Foresighted Israelites with the necessary economic resources would have relocated to Judah before Shalmaneser V and Sargon II arrived on the scene. Seeing the writing on the wall, the more educated (cult personnel) and upper echelons of society with the financial means to do so would have left earlier, in search of political and economic stability around 732/1 BCE, that is, when Pekah was murdered and Hoshea ascended the Israelite throne and submitted to the Assyrians. Another wave of refugees would have arrived after Shalmaneser V invaded the Northern Kingdom, and a third wave would have fled to escape deportation after the fall of Samaria. It can be expected that most of these refugees would have arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs (Herr 1997:155).

We have no way of knowing what percentage of the population consisted of Northerners, but the numbers were probably significant and many would have been in desperate need of shelter, food, and employment. There was probably also considerable tension in the over-populated Judaeen capital. The archaeological and epigraphic sources provide some idea of how Hezekiah went about solving some of these logistical problems, through providing employment by undertaking building projects and feeding the refugees with the stores deposited as tithes and taxes in the Jerusalem. In spite of this, Hezekiah still found the financial resources to stock his treasuries and armouries and to render annual tribute to the Assyrians. The following chapter takes a closer look at the various commodities accumulated by the Judaeen king.

CHAPTER FOUR

HEZEKIAH'S WEALTH AND TRIBUTE PAYMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The biblical passages found in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah relating to Hezekiah make one thing perfectly clear: Hezekiah was a prolific spender and very much in need of all those 'riches' bestowed upon him by YHWH (2 Chr 32:27).

In 734 BCE Hezekiah's father, King Ahaz, stripped the Temple of all its silver and gold, as well as all the gold and silver in the palace treasury, and sent it to Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Ki 16:8-9). Some 30 years later, in 701 BCE, Hezekiah is in the enviable financial position to deliver 30 talents (or 900 kg) of gold and 800 talents (or 24,000 kg) of silver³³ to Sennacherib. In essence, this payment reflects the crown's accumulation of one talent of gold and 26.5 talents of silver per year, which does not seem so exceptional. However, if one considers that Hezekiah managed to accumulate this quantity of gold and silver in addition to maintaining the Judaeen administration, undertaking huge building and fortification projects, repairing the Temple and reforming the cult, making a substantial donation of livestock for the festivities during the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, equipping an army, campaigning against the Philistines and extending Judah's borders down to Gaza, stocking the state's treasury and armoury, perhaps even offering the Egyptians a bribe in return for support in the event of war against the Assyrians, and as an Assyrian vassal rendering an annual tribute (Holladay 2009b:209), things look a little different. Indeed, everything considered, this was an exceptional accomplishment for a monarch of a tiny, land-locked state with limited natural resources. Besides small amounts of

³³ The gold and silver paid to Assyria were worth US \$16,871,504 on April 21st, 2004 (Holladay 2006:321).

copper and iron, which occur mainly in the Arabah and Sinai, Palestine boasts no natural resources in gold, silver, lead, or precious stones (Stern 1979:252).

The biblical narrators tell us why Hezekiah's state coffers were well-stocked—the king's faith in and obedience to YHWH was reason enough—but they offer no explanation where the goods were coming from or how Hezekiah managed to finance them. The goal of Chapters Four and Five is to do just that. This chapter involves an in-depth study of the various items found in Hezekiah's storehouses and treasuries, as well as those rendered as tribute to Sennacherib. Determining the provenance of each is important, for, as will be seen, none of these commodities originated in Judah. They were all imported, their places of origin remote. How could Hezekiah afford all of this? Chapter Five continues the discussion and deals with the Judaeian agrarian economy. Was the Judaeian agriculture in any position to make such a substantial contribution to the economy? I believe not. The extent of Hezekiah's wealth was too considerable. To prove my point, the various aspects and related issues of the Judaeian agrarian economy have been elucidated. Revenue in the form of taxes and tolls imposed on the lucrative overland trade traversing the Levant provide a more feasible explanation (Holladay 2009b).

4.2 THE CONTENTS OF HEZEKIAH'S TREASURIES AND STOREHOUSES, AND THEIR PROVENANCE

The circumstances surrounding the verses informing us of Hezekiah's wealth differ, but the descriptions of the contents of the treasuries and storehouses are very similar.

The Deuteronomist and Isaiah relate how Hezekiah, perhaps flattered by expressions of concern received from the Babylonian king, Merodach-baladan II, flaunts the contents of his palace treasury, armoury and storehouses, as proof of his wealth, status, and preparedness for war.³⁴ If indeed rebellion was being

³⁴ Both 2 Kings (20:10) and Isaiah (39:2) record the visit of the Babylonian envoy as taking place after the war against Sennacherib (2 Ki 18:13 and Is 36:1). This is a chronological inaccuracy: Merodach-baladan II ruled from 721-710 BCE and then for about nine months in 703/2 BCE (Wiseman 1993:288). Sennacherib defeated Merodach-baladan II at Kish during his first

contemplated, then the stocked armoury would certainly suggest Hezekiah was involved in a military build-up. The passages in Isaiah and 2 Kings are almost identical: either Isaiah is based on the text in Kings or the authors of Kings and Isaiah both had access to the same source of information. The passages read:

Hezekiah ... showed the ambassadors his entire treasury, the silver, gold, spices, precious oils, his armoury too, and everything to be seen in his storehouses (2 Ki 20:13; Is 39:2).

The Chronicler's description is dictated by his wish to emphasise his conviction that Hezekiah's wealth is the physical expression of YHWH's blessings. Hezekiah, like David (1 Chr 29:2) and Solomon before him (2 Chr 9:10-28), was rewarded materially for placing his trust in YHWH (*NJB*:583n). Although the Chronicler is quite clear on *who* is responsible for Hezekiah's good fortune, the author provides no indication where these goods came from or how Hezekiah managed to finance their procurement:

Hezekiah enjoyed immense riches and honour. He built himself treasuries for gold, silver, precious stones, spices, jewels and every kind of desirable object, as well as storehouses for his returns of grain, new wine and olive oil, and stalls for all kinds of cattle and pens for the flocks. He also provided himself with donkeys in addition to his immense wealth of flocks and herds, since God had made him immensely wealthy (2 Chr 32:27-29).

In addition to highly valued exotica, the biblical authors mention agricultural products and domesticated animals. The flocks and herds would have included mainly sheep and goats, perhaps some cattle and oxen, horses, asses, and even camels.³⁵ Their value in the Mediterranean world should not be underestimated. Livestock represented a type of bank and could, when necessary, be bartered. Donkeys are mentioned separately, testifying to their particular status and value. Besides the animals, the grain, wine, and olive oil

campaign in ca. 703 BCE forcing him to flee to the marshland. Soon afterwards in ca. 700 BCE Merodach-baladan II made another attempt to regain the Babylonian throne, but was dealt a decisive blow during Sennacherib's fourth campaign (*ARAB* II:121-122). The Babylonian delegation must have visited Hezekiah before Sennacherib attacked in 701 BCE for three reasons: the Chaldean king was trying to recruit support for an anti-Assyrian coalition and Hezekiah was planning a revolt which took place in 701 BCE; Hezekiah would have been in no position to offer support after 701 BCE; and after payment of the tribute there would have been nothing to show the Babylonians.

³⁵ A loaded camel is depicted on the Lachish Reliefs (Barnett 1985:15).

were locally-produced agricultural products. The remaining items were not Judaeen, as this discussion shows. The gold, silver, precious stones, and jewels all originated outside of Judah and could only have been acquired through international trade.

4.2.1 Silver and gold

There is no record of any silver or gold found in Palestine. Gold, according to the biblical texts, was obtained from Arabia, Sheba, and Ophir (1 Ki 9:28; 10:1; Job 28:16). Although Ophir is believed to lie somewhere in or near southern Arabia, its exact geographical location continues to elude scholars. It was a place or region accessible by boat from Ezion-geber, a port of the Red Sea (2 Ki 9:28; 10:11; 22:18). Solomon's 'ships of Tarshish' returned from Ophir after three years, laden with exotic cargo and the finest gold (1 Ki 10:11). The journey raises the possibility that Ophir might have been situated in Africa. All doubts that Ophir was perhaps a mythical place were eliminated when an 8th century BCE Judaeen ostrakon bearing the inscription 'Gold of Ophir for Beth Horon ... she(kels) 30' surfaced at Tel Qasile (Stieglitz 1984:141). Gold was available in substantial quantities in western and southern Arabia and mined in various places in eastern Egypt and Nubia, together with copper and later iron (Elat 1979b:539). Alluvial gold was also found in Egypt, where small nuggets were washed down by the waters of the Nile River.

The Rio Tinto mines in Spain were a valuable source of silver for the Phoenicians, who were already trading with the Iberians at the end of the 2nd millennium BCE (Boshoff 2000:27). Thompson (2007:xiv-xv), however, claims that Sardinia was Palestine's main source of silver in the Iron Age. Lead isotope analyses of 147 samples taken from 35 hoards of *hacksilver* dating from the 12th – 6th century BCE found in Cisjordan, which comprises the modern State of Israel and the Palestinian Territories, have shown that Sardinia was the main supplier of silver in the ancient Near East during this time (Thompson 2003:69, 89). Apart from the hoard found at Gezer A, which is questionably dated to the 9th – 6th century BCE, not one hoard dating to the 8th century BCE originated in Judah (Thompson 2003:84). The several hoards found at Tel Migne have been

conclusively dated to the 7th century BCE (Gitin & Golani 2001:41). A number of small weights obviously meant for weighing precious metals, incense, and spices have been found throughout Judah and dated to the late 8th century BCE. Their appearance suggests silver, as a medium of exchange, was already circulating at this time.

Artefacts of gold are rarely found in Palestine and silver, used to make jewellery and ornamental objects, corrodes badly in the limestone soil of Palestine. This might also account for the small number of silver objects excavated.

Underlying any economic system is a store of value, which can be stored without losing value and retrieved when necessary. Gold and, and to a lesser extent, silver, have long been considered a sign of wealth, collected and stored in palace treasuries by most rulers, and used as a medium of exchange (Aubet 1987:63). Hezekiah's gold and silver reserves are testimony to the economic value of these precious metals.

The increasing Assyrian imperialism in the Levant caused the rulers of countries to adopt measures to ensure their national security. Stocks of gold and silver (bullion) had to be increased to cover the costs of improving defences, purchasing or manufacturing weapons, paying soldiers, and hiring foreign mercenaries (Sherratt & Sherratt 1993:363). And, if necessary, the accumulated bullion could be used to meet tribute demands made by the invading Assyrians.

Based on Luckenbill's original interpretation of Sennacherib's prism, it was believed that Hezekiah employed Arab mercenaries, 'and the *Urbi* (Arabs) and his mercenary (choice, picked) troops which he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem' (ARAB II:121). Eph'al (1982:113) believes *urbi* is 'a designation for a specific kind of warrior'. Gallagher (1999:129) provides this alternative translation, 'ambushers and his select troops', Cogan (2000:303) suggests, 'his elite troops (and) his best soldiers' and Mayer (2003:189), 'the mercenaries and his elite troops'. Whatever the nature of these soldiers, the considerable quantity of silver Hezekiah had stored, and which he later paid to Sennacherib, might well have been set aside to pay these soldiers after they had helped to successfully

defend Jerusalem and defeat Sennacherib.

4.2.2 Spices and precious oils

The biblical narrators do not explicitly name the different spices, oils, and perfumes that were stored in Hezekiah's treasuries. These were popular and coveted items at the time in the ancient Near East, with which the people would have been quite familiar. Now, nearly three thousand years later, this assumed familiarity is no longer the case, so that inferences have to be drawn from the biblical texts. Exodus 30:23-24 mentions the following chief spices: 'flowing' myrrh, cinnamon, calamus (sweet flag), and cassia, and in Exodus 30:3 we find mention of stacte, onycha (a mollusk shell which gives off an aroma when burnt), galbanum (an aromatic gum resin), and frankincense.

Olive oil appears to be the only oil used by the ancient Israelites. It is often mentioned in conjunction with spices, suggesting that olive oil was infused with one or more of the precious spices to produce ointments such as the Holy Anointing Oil mentioned in Exodus 30:23. We have no proof that the ancients practiced distillation.

Spices and incense played an important role in the religious rituals of the Israelites. The biblical references testify to their use in the official cult (Ex 30:34-38), while the archaeological data evidences their use by, and popularity with, the masses, as well as their access to exclusive commodities. A fenestrated incense stand was excavated in a domestic shrine in an 8th century BCE house at Tel Ḥalif (Stratum VIB, Field IV) (Borowski 1995:151).

4.2.2.1 Cassia and cinnamon

Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) and cassia (*Cinnamomum cassia*), which is similar but inferior to and often confused with the true cinnamon, are obtained from the inner bark of a tree. The bark is dried and rolled into cylinders. Both are used as a spice and a perfume (King & Stager 2001:107).

The Arabs plied the Arabian Gulf and monopolised the trade in cassia and cinnamon, but concealed their true sources. There is no trace of cinnamon in Egypt. The bark of the *Cinnamosma fragrans* found in Eastern Africa and Madagascar is fragrant when burnt, and might have been mistakenly identified as cinnamon (Ravindran & Babu 2004:5). Cinnamon and cassia are only found in China, East India, Ceylon and the Malabar coast of India. They were probably shipped from Cochin China to South India and Ceylon and then on to the Persian Gulf. Merchant caravans then transported these spices across the desert to the Mediterranean, and on to markets in Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria (Janick 2002:118).

4.2.2.2 *Calamus*

Calamus, also known as 'sweet flag', was a coveted item of trade produced from an aromatic reed. The leaves and knotted stalk are dried and ground into a fragrant powder, which is also used for the most precious perfumes (*EDB*:210).

4.2.2.3 *Stacte*

This ingredient of the Holy Temple Incense is no longer known. It seems to have been some aromatic gum resin (perhaps from the storax tree), which dropped of its own accord and was considered to be the purest kind of myrrh (*EDB*:1250).

4.2.2.4 *Frankincense and myrrh*

The many uses the people of the Fertile Crescent and the Mediterranean found for frankincense and myrrh created a substantial market for these materials. The Arabs of the South Arabian Peninsula developed a well-organised system of distribution and monopolised the export of perfumes (Elat 1979b:533; Van Beek 1960:75). While several species of *Boswellia* trees produce the white sap from which frankincense of commercial value is made, the biblical frankincense (Heb. *lěbōnā*) is only obtained from the *Boswellia sacra* (Zarins 2000:471). Myrrh (Heb. *mōr*), usually mentioned together with frankincense, is also a resin, reddish in colour and a product of the *Commiphora myrrha*. *Boswellia sacra* and

Commiphora myrrha are native to only two parts of the world, south-western Arabia (Oman and Yemen) and northern Somalia/eastern Ethiopia (Van Beek 1960:71-72).



Figure 6: Different qualities of incense for sale at the *mercato* in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia³⁶

Frankincense, stacte (Heb. *nataf*), galbanum (Heb. *helbenah*), and onycha (Heb. *shehelet*) were the four ingredients of the Holy Incense that YHWH commanded Moses to burn on the altar in the Holy Place (Ex 30:34). In Talmudic times the names of another seven spices were added: myrrh, cassia (Heb. *kezi'ah*), spikenard (Heb. *shibboleth nerd*), saffron (Heb. *karkom*), costus (Heb. *kosht*), cinnamon (Heb. *kinnamon*), and aromatic bark (Heb. *kinashah*) (NEJ:388).

4.2.2.5 Galbanum

Galbanum (Heb. *helběnā*) is obtained from a large perennial herbaceous plant indigenous to Syria, Persia, and Afghanistan (EDB:478). As an ingredient in the Holy Incense, it functioned as a fixative and improved combustion. The acrid smoke it produces when burned acted as an insect repellent in the sanctuary and is probably one reason for its inclusion in the Holy Incense (EDB:478).

³⁶ Photo: Author, October 2009.

4.2.2.6 *Onycha*

Onycha was another ingredient of the Holy Incense, which when burned emitted a strong odour. As a spice it was derived from the rockrose or labdanum, but the biblical onycha was probably obtained from the operculum (or closing muscle) of a mollusc found in the Red Sea (Smith 2000:989).

4.2.3 Precious stones

The biblical authors took it for granted that their audiences were familiar with the precious stones, which they referred to as 'stones to be set, glistening stones, and of various colours' (2 Chr 29:2), and failed to mention them by name. About twenty different precious and semi-precious stones are mentioned in the Bible. Three main references are found with occasional references scattered throughout. The first, found in Exodus 28:17-20, lists the stones in the breastplate of the High Priest. These stones represented the twelve tribes of Israel: sardius, topaz, carbuncle,³⁷ emerald, sapphire, diamond, ligure, agate, amethyst, beryl, onyx, and jasper. A second list is found in the description of the head-covering of the king of Tyre: 'every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and the gold' (Ezk 28:13), and the third, found in Revelations 21:19-20, lists the names of twelve stones that adorned the foundations of the walls of the new Jerusalem: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolyte, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth (or amber), and amethyst. The stones ligure and bdellium can no longer be identified (Pierce 2006:7). It is to be expected that over time, and as a result of translation, the identification of the stones mentioned in the original biblical texts has been lost. It is also important to remember that the biblical authors used numerous names to refer to different stones, and stones considered precious in antiquity are not necessarily considered precious today (Hill 2000), as rarity and demand are determining criteria.

Nevertheless, cut and uncut precious stones remain even today an excellent

³⁷ Carbuncle is the antiquated name for ruby (Pierce 2006:37).

form of portable and transferable wealth. None of the stones mentioned in the Bible were indigenous to Palestine, and although the precise origins of many of the stones are no longer known, those we do know lay well beyond the borders and could only have been obtained through international trade. Precious stones were brought from South Arabia during the time of Solomon (1 Ki 10:2), while others came from Egypt, Sudan, and even as far away as India and Southeast Asia (Pierce 2006:50).

4.2.4 Cornelian

Sandu-stone (AS:34; ARAB II:121, 136) is generally accepted to be cornelian (Cogan 2000:303; Gallagher 1999:130). Cornelian, frequently spelt carnelian and derived from the Latin *cornum* meaning cornel-berry, is a reddish or reddish-brown variety of chalcedony (Moorey 1994:96). It was highly valued in the ancient Near East, prized for carving and engraving, and commonly used for making jewellery (Jensen 2000:224). The stone's hardness, sheen when polished, and colour contributed to its popularity. Only lapis lazuli ranked more highly for use for beads and amulets (Moorey 1994:97). According to the archaeological record, it was already used to make beads in Mesopotamia as early as 3200 BCE (Hill 2000). A few cornelian cylinder seals have also been found (Moorey 1994:98). Textual references indicate that cornelian was found in western Arabia, Oman, India, Anatolia, and the Egyptian desert (Moorey 1994:97). It reached the Levantine by way of the trade route through South Arabia (Holladay 2006:319).

4.2.5 Vessels

It was not uncommon for rulers to store vessels and containers made out of different metals in their treasuries. As Aubet (1987:60) points out, rulers hoarded metals in the form of vessels and containers as well as in the form of ingots. This makes it difficult to differentiate between stores for economic factors or as luxury goods. The presence of metal vessels, however, does not necessarily point to a centre of production (Jankowska 1947:262).

4.2.6 Armoury

The Judaeans were no strangers to war. Judah's location in the Levant made a well-stocked armoury a necessity. When the Judaeans were not fighting their neighbours to the north, then the two Israelite kingdoms joined forces to deal with a common enemy (King & Stager 2001:223).

Keeping an armoury well stocked and an army well equipped was costly, particularly so for a country lacking its own metal resources. Hezekiah's well-stocked armoury, therefore, was not only a sign of his wealth, but it was an indication that he was preparing for war.

The armoury, which Hezekiah proudly shows the Babylonian envoy, would have contained both offensive and defensive armaments, and most, if not all, would have been made of metal. Weapons of both bronze and iron were in use during the Iron Age II and, as iron is harder than bronze, iron weapons, particularly iron swords, were preferred (Isserlin 2001:195-198; King & Stager 2001:225).

Even though our sources of information on Israelite war and warfare are mainly those of their enemies, meant to extol their own successes and victories and not those of the Israelites, it is obvious that the Israelites frequently overcame incredible odds. The kings of Israel and Judah are 'not specifically noted for the fashioning of more advanced offensive weapons': their accomplishments lay in perfecting and strengthening their fortifications and optimising their weapons, so that at times they were probably equal to or even superior to those of their neighbouring countries and enemies (Yadin 1963:327). The detailed description of the military tactics the Assyrians were forced to employ to overcome the defences at Lachish emphasise their effectiveness.

The inscription on the Rassam Cylinder gives an idea of the weapons the Judaeans employed against the Assyrians:

... iron, chariots, shields, lances, armour, girdle daggers of iron, bows and arrows, spears, countless implements of war ... (*ARAB II*:136-137).

This information has been well collaborated by the finds from Lachish and Tel Ḥalif. The weapons excavated in Palestine need not necessarily have originated in Palestine. They might have been brought there as booty after a battle or left behind by an invading army.

Over 800 iron and even bone arrowheads, numerous sling stones, heavy throwing stones for hurling down on the enemy, and some 20 pieces of scale armour (mostly bronze, but some iron) were found at Lachish in the vicinity of the siege ramp (Feldman 2002:¶8; Mazar 1992:432).



Figure 7: Arrow- and lance-heads from Tel Ḥalif found amongst destruction attributed to Sennacherib in 701 BCE (Borowski 2005:32)

A similar assemblage of weapons (iron arrowheads, numerous rounded sling stones with a flint core measuring approximately 6 cm in diameter, which were hurled down at the enemy by means of a leather sling) have also been found in the layer of destruction ascribed to Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE at Tel Ḥalif (Borowski 2005:27; King & Stager 2001:229). The slingshots excavated at Tel Ḥalif were made of limestone with a flint core (Borowski 2005:27).

No archaeological evidence for the existence of arsenals or armouries, in which weapons were stored and provided from, has been found. Weapons, however, could also have been stored in the long pillared buildings found at Lachish and

Beersheba.

Chariots and horses are included in the Judaeen tribute paid to the Assyrians and, according to the biblical account, Egyptian chariots and horses engaged in battle against the Assyrians (2 Ki 18:24). The iconography of the Lachish reliefs provides additional evidence that chariots and horses were part of the Judaeen defence. A large chariot with high, eight-spoked wheels and a square body is depicted being drawn by Assyrian soldiers. It is perhaps the chariot belonging to the governor of the city and is the only depiction of a Judaeen chariot documented to date (Isserlin 2001:198; Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:261). Smaller chariots with six-spoked wheels are shown hurtling down on the attacking Assyrians. The only archaeological evidence for chariotry during this period is a cheek piece found at Lachish. The width of the city gate, the pillared buildings, the courtyard for exercising the horses, and the convenient proximity of the well for watering the horses, provide additional, though indirect, evidence to support the theory that Lachish was a military centre with a chariot unit. The Israelites had been involved in the international trade of horses and chariots ever since the days of Solomon (1 Ki 10:28-29; Isserlin 2001:188).

4.3 JUDAH'S ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION WITH ASSYRIA

Assyria lacked many essential raw materials, such as metals, stone, flax, and wood, and any evidence that Assyria obtained these commodities through regular trade is lacking. The discovery by K. Deller of the so-called EN KASKAL documents might correct this situation. Whereas it was previously believed that the Aramaeans and Phoenicians were largely responsible for Assyrian trade, Radner (1997a:105), who has studied these documents, claims no ethnic group dominated the trade in Neo-Assyria. Anybody from within the empire and beyond could become a trader, as long as the king trusted their loyalty and the person was capable. The Phoenicians were definitely responsible for the maritime trade. Perishable materials were probably used to record transactions, which would account for the lack of evidence documenting the trade conducted on behalf of the Assyrians (Elat 1991:22).

By the 9th century BCE the Assyrian monarchs were well aware of the financial benefits to be gained from the profitable Arabian trade (Holladay 2006:314). Tiglath-Pileser III's empire was set up in such a way as to benefit from the lucrative international trade routes passing through the Levant and the expanding maritime trade dominated by the Phoenicians. By establishing Assyrian hegemony over the area, the taxes and tribute payments represented a compulsory one-way flow of commodities into Assyria (Elat 1991:22). The Assyrians not only imposed custom duties on the maritime kingdoms along the Mediterranean coast, but they also claimed the right to confiscate the cargo of stranded ships (Elat 1991:27). The extensive network of well-maintained roads with a chain of resting posts and forts guaranteed not only swift communication between the outlying areas and the central administration—vital to maintaining imperial control. More importantly, it ensured the safety of the caravans and travellers transporting these high-value tributes and taxes back to Assyria (Aberbach 1997:134).

4.3.1 Annual tribute payments after 734 BCE

The tribute demanded of Hezekiah after the Assyrians withdrew from Judah in 701 BCE was not a one-off payment. The wording of Sennacherib's annals makes this clear: 'I diminished his land. To the former tribute, I imposed the payment of yearly gifts by them, as tax, and laid it upon him' (*ARAB* II:143). Failure to meet these payments would have been considered an act of rebellion.

Textual evidence proves that Judah made at least three payments to Assyria after Ahaz's payment in 734 BCE:

- The Nimrud Letter ND 2765 records the receipt of horses by Marduk-remanni, the governor of Kalhu during the reign of Sargon II (Dalley 2004:388).
- A small tablet dating to the time of Sargon II or Sennacherib records the receipt of ten *manus*³⁸ (or *minas* [XI 33:5-6]) (Dubovský 2006a:198) of silver from Judah (Mitchell 1988a:56).

³⁸ The Babylonian *manus* was the equivalent of 505 g (Mitchell 1988a:56).

- [1] talent of silver (XI 57:1) (Dubovský 2006a:198).

Table 1 illustrates that although the above-mentioned payments are considerably smaller, they were quite in line with the annual payments generally demanded by the Assyrian monarchs.

Table 1: Annual tribute payments

| Country / city / (King) | Recipient | Gold | kg | Silver | kg | Reference in <i>ARAB</i> |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------|-----|--------------------|----|--------------------------|
| Til-abnâ - Habini | ANP | | | 10 minas | 5 | I:164 |
| Gabbari - Haiânu | S III | | | 10 minas | 5 | I:217 |
| Kummuhu - Katazilu | S III | | | 20 minas | 10 | I:217 |
| Hatti (?) | S III | | | 1 talent | 30 | I:217 |
| Chiefs of Gambulu ³⁹ | S II | | | 1 talent + 30 mina | 45 | II:15 |
| Carchemish - Sangara | S III | 1 mina | 0.5 | 1 talent | 30 | I:217 |

Abbreviations in the table: ANP Assur-Nâsir-Pal II (883-859 BCE)
 S III Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE)
 S II Sargon II (721-705 BCE)

In the second year of his reign, Shalmaneser III advanced against the Hattinites. The Monolith Inscription, which details the military activities of the first six years of his reign, records the following:

I [Shalmaneser III] received 3 talents of gold, 100 talents of silver, 300 talents of copper, 300 talents of iron, 1,000 copper vessels, 1,000 brightly coloured garments (of wool) and linen, his daughter with her large dowry, 20 talents of purple wool, 500 cattle, 5,000 sheep. One talent of silver, 2 talents of purple wool, 200 cedar logs, I imposed upon him as his tribute. Yearly I received it in my city Assur (*ARAB* I:217).

The smaller annual tribute payments were ultimately expedient shows of goodwill by rulers of Assyrian dependencies and evidence that they continued to acknowledge Assyrian hegemony.

4.3.2 The goods taken as booty by Sennacherib

The Rassam Cylinder provides the most detailed list of booty taken by the

³⁹ The inscription reads: 'Eight chieftains of the Gambulu who dwell on the Uknû River' (*ARAB* II:15).

Assyrians as well as the tribute received from the Judaeans after Sennacherib withdrew from Judah. A slightly abbreviated version of the same text appears on Column III, lines 18 to 49 of the Chicago Prism (AS:29-34) and also on the Taylor Prism (see Appendix B). Lines 49-51 on the Rassam Cylinder, as translated by Gallagher (1999:129-130), read:

⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ (As for) Hezekiah, the Judaeon (who had not submitted to my yoke) I besieged and conquered forty-six of his fortified walled cities and countless small towns in their vicinity...

⁵¹ I brought out of their midst 200,150 people, small and big, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen and sheep, without number and I classified (them) as spoil ...

4.3.2.1 *People*

No consensus has been reached on the accuracy of the number of people taken captive by the Assyrians (Gallagher 1999:132).⁴⁰ Human booty was made up of both male and female, young and old. High ranking officials, members of the royal family, and particularly their women, were undoubtedly highly prized booty. As in the case of the Northern Kingdom, members of the royal family, their women, and also palace personnel were sent to Assyria as part of the tribute payment. By keeping members of the royal family almost as political hostages, the Assyrians hoped to ensure the vassal's loyalty to Assyria (Yamada 2000:260).

The Assyrians deported and resettled large numbers of conquered people. Not only was this an effective means of dealing with the huge numbers of people rendered homeless after the Assyrian campaigns, it was also an effective means of domination (Oded 1979:2). Deportation was a form of punishment, but it was also a means to restore and repopulate deserted areas and abandoned cities, a way to ensure pacifism, and an excellent source of artisans and badly needed human resources for the Assyrian army and their numerous building projects

⁴⁰ Gallagher (1999:132) provides an overview of the different scholarly opinions as well as population estimates. Mayer (2003:182) considers 200,150 to be the total number of prisoners *and* animals taken as booty.

(Oded 1979:43-67).

4.3.2.2 *Domestic animals*

Although of comparatively low monetary value, domestic animals frequently constituted part of the annual tribute paid by vassal states in stock-raising regions. After his campaign against Urartu in his 8th year, Sargon II's annals report,

From Ianzû, king of Nairî-land, I received tribute in Hubushkia, his strong city, – horses, cattle, sheep (ARAB II:9).

Livestock was also taken as booty after battles (Yamada 2000:263). Easily transported in large herds, particularly from areas situated not too far off from the Assyrian heartland, the value of these animals lay more in the by-products they could provide, such as wool, skins, and milk, than in their meat (Jankowska 1947:272). Grain and livestock would have been pillaged in order to feed the troops during the campaign and also on their journey back to Assyria. Subjugated people rendered grain as part of a system of taxation imposed on all Assyrians and would explain why grain did not feature in the Assyrian booty lists (Jankowska 1947:256).

Not only would the Assyrian army have to depend on the livestock and agricultural stores of the conquered peoples to feed themselves, but horses, oxen, and camels would have been necessary to replace those animals lost in battle and *en route*. The *gammalê* listed in Sennacherib's annals were probably dromedaries or Arabian camels. Dromedaries, *Camelus dromedarius*, native to the hot deserts and the steppes of Arabia, have one hump, long limbs, and short hair that provides protection from the heat. Bactrian camels, *Camelus bactrianus*, on the other hand, have two humps and longer hair that provides vital protection against the cold winters of their native homelands in central Asia, Bactria, Sogdia and the Gobi desert (Lendering 2004:¶3). Barnett (1985:18) claims that domestication of the camel took place during the 2nd millennium BCE.⁴¹ The

⁴¹ An 18th century BCE Syrian cylinder seal depicts a couple riding a Bactrian camel, and a

dromedaries, which are easily domesticated, were greatly valued by the Assyrians. They went to great lengths to acquire and breed large numbers of them for transport, for participation in and control of the trade coming from southern Arabia (Astour 1995:1417). These animals were prized for their ability to carry very heavy loads and for being able to endure long periods without water, making them ideal for transport in the ancient Near East.

The Lachish Reliefs taken from Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh feature a camel, or rather dromedary, loaded with the movable property of the citizens of Lachish (Barnett 1985:15, Figure 1). Not only can dromedaries be used to plough, but their dung is an excellent fertilizer and they are a good source of milk, wool, and meat. Camels were introduced into Judah when Arabs were absorbed into the tribe of Simeon, as well as other tribes that inhabited areas bordering on the desert. The names of Simeon's sons, Mibśām and Mišmā (1 Chr 4:25) indicate Arabian origin. The presence of dromedary bones in Stratum III at Lachish, the layer of destruction caused by the Assyrians under Sennacherib, is further proof of their presence in the Judaeen economy (Elat 1979b:537).

Based on the epigraphical and archaeological evidence, horses and chariots appear to have constituted an integral part of the Judaeen non-personal army equipment—either that, or Judah was once again involved in international horse trading (see 3.3.2.3).

Horses were also highly valued by the Assyrians. Their value lay in the role they played in the Assyrian army rather than their use as a draught animal (Postgate 1974:208). Nowhere in the Mediterranean were horses used for traction in agriculture or transportation (Heltzer 1978:73). Nevertheless, and despite the biblical law forbidding the use of many horses (Dt 17:16), horses and chariots seemed to have played an important role in ancient Israel. Hebrew names were found amongst the personal names connected with the Assyrian chariotry and cavalry (Heltzer 1978:72). A cuneiform record attributed to Sargon II, and

'riding' camel features in 10th century BCE Aramaean art found at Tell Ḥalaf (Barnett 1985:16-18).

translated anew by Dalley (1985:36), reads: 'I formed a unit of 200 chariots from them [the Samaritans] as part of my royal army'. The Assyrians apparently recognised and made use of the Israelites' military expertise with horses (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:211). Even though, as Isserlin (2001:195) points out, the Judaeen countryside is less suited for horse rearing, Hezekiah seems to have imported or even traded in horses, like his ancestor Solomon. Horses could have been imported from Urartu in eastern Anatolia where, according to the Assyrian sources, they were bred for export (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:211). Elat (1979b:540) believes horses were imported from Cappadocia. Dalley (1985:43), basing her argument on the technical term *kusaya*, suggests Kush, or Nubia, was the homeland of the horses Solomon obtained from Egypt. The size of the 'Kushite' horses made them ideal chariotry horses (Dalley 1985:43). It might well be that Hezekiah too imported 'Kushite' horses through Egypt.

4.3.3 The goods Hezekiah paid to Sennacherib as tribute and their provenance

⁵⁶ ... (as well as) thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, choice antimony, large blocks of cornelian, beds (inlaid) with ivory, armchairs (inlaid) with ivory, elephant hides, ivory, ebony, boxwood, garments with multi-coloured trim, linen garments, blue-purple wool, red-purple wool,

⁵⁷ utensils of copper, iron, bronze and iron, chariots, shields, lances, coats of mail, swords on belts, bows and arrows, "*tillu*"-equipment,⁴² instruments of war without number

⁵⁸ along with his daughters, his palace-women, his male and female singers- and, in order to deliver the tribute and to carry out his servitude, he dispatched his messenger (Gallagher 1999:129-130).

Lines 56-58 on the Rassam Cylinder are abbreviated on the Chicago and Taylor Prisms. When these two prisms were inscribed, the scribe summarised and replaced the section between 'boxwood' (line 56) to 'along with his daughters'

⁴² Frahm (1997:105) has provided a new reading for '*tillu*'. He uses 'Wehrgehänge', which according to *Langenscheidts German-English dictionary*, is a 'sword belt'. Gallagher (1999:130) suggests it contained ammunition. Cogan (2000:303) circumscribes the term with 'countless trappings and implements of war'.

(line 58) with 'all kinds of valuable (heavy) treasures'.

Abbreviated renditions are also found on two bull inscriptions from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh. They record six campaigns, and the longer of the texts relating to Hezekiah reads:

With 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver and all kinds of treasure from his palace, he sent his daughters, his palace women, his male and female singers, to Nineveh, and he dispatched his messengers to pay tribute (*ARAB II:143*).

Elat (1991:21) points out that Assyrian tribute lists invariably followed a set pattern: precious and basic metals; luxury commodities that had been stored in the treasuries of the vassal kings and which were the chief items of international trade in the ancient Near East; horses, chariots and weapons. The inscription on the Rassam Cylinder follows this pattern and coincides with the commodities Hezekiah stored in his treasuries according to the Bible.

The only biblical reference to Hezekiah's tribute is found in 2 Kings 18:14. While the royal Assyrian annals are more detailed, both sources agree on the 30 talents of gold. The amount of silver might easily have been 'slightly' exaggerated by the Assyrian scribes or downplayed by the Deuteronomist. Both scenarios are equally imaginable and understandable as each party related the incident from their point of view. It is important to remember that the Assyrians applied different weight standards for the different metals: three for silver,⁴³ one for copper, and two for gold are known so far (Radner 1997b:130). Schoors (1998:85) suggests the biblical author only mention the amount of silver taken from the Temple and not the total amount recorded by Sennacherib's scribes. Mayer (2003:182) believes the biblical account only records the 300 talents taken from the royal treasuries. The remaining 500 talents, which the Assyrians added to the 300 talents, consisted of the silver taken from the Temple and/or was the estimated value in silver of the rest of the tribute.

Thompson (2007:xi) believes silver replaced gold and bronze as the most

⁴³ The king's mina, the mina of Carchemish, and the merchant's mina (Radner 1997b:130).

important metal in the Levant during 8th – 7th century BCE. It was more freely available (Dercksen 1999:4). The Phoenicians had responded to the Assyrians' shortage of silver from the late 9th to the late 8th centuries BCE, and begun large-scale commercial expansion in the west to meet these demands (Aubet 1987:64; Thompson 2007:xxi). Aubet (1987:63) states that during the silver shortage in Assyria, a mina of silver was loaned at an interest rate of 400 percent, but by the time of Sargon II, the king was able to boast that he had 'accumulated silver in his palace' and made the 'buying price of copper comparable with that of silver in Assyria' (Aubet 1987:84).

Table 2 compares Hezekiah's assets described in the three biblical sources to what was paid according to the inscriptions on the Rassam Cylinder and Taylor Prism. The detailed list of weapons on the Rassam Cylinder lends credence to the biblical passage that Hezekiah 'made weapons and shields in abundance' (2 Chr 32:5).

Table 2: Comparison of the biblical references and the Assyrian sources

| Biblical sources | | | Assyrian sources | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---|--|
| 2 Kings 18:14; 20:13 | 2 Chronicles 32:27 | Isaiah 39:2 | Rassam Cylinder (Cogan 2000:303) | Chicago & Taylor Prisms (AS:34) |
| 30 talents gold | gold | gold | 30 talents gold | 30 talents gold |
| 300 talents silver | silver | silver | 800 talents silver | 800 talents silver |
| spices | spices | spices | | |
| precious oil | | precious oil | | |
| | precious stones | | | |
| | | | blocks of cornelian | large <i>sandu</i> ⁴⁴ - stones |
| | | | antimony | antimony |
| | | | ivory in-laid beds | ivory in-laid couches |
| | | | ivory in-laid armchairs | ivory in-laid armchairs |
| | | | elephant hide | elephant hides |
| | | | ivory | ivory |
| | | | ebony-wood | ebony |
| | | | boxwood | boxwood |
| | | | multi-coloured garments | |
| | | | linen garments | |
| | | | wool dyed red-purple & blue-purple | |
| | desirable objects | | vessels of bronze, iron, copper (&) tin | all kinds of valuable treasures |
| house of his armour | | armoury | countless trappings & instruments of war ⁴⁵ | |
| | | | chariots | |
| | jewels/shields | | siege shields | |
| | | | lances | |
| | | | armour | |
| | | | girdle daggers | |
| | | | bow & arrows | |

⁴⁴ Instead of *sandu*-stone or cornelian, Frahm (1997:59) uses 'AN-ZA-GUL-ME' stone and Mayer (2003:188-190) 'AN.GUG'-stone in their translations.

⁴⁵ See footnote 42.

4.3.3.1 *Antimony*

The Akkadian word *guḥlu*, along with numerous others, has been taken to mean antimony (Moorey 1994:240). The base metal antimony is found in stibnite, which was known and used by the ancients in biblical times in medicine and as a cosmetic (United States Geological Survey⁴⁶). Ground to a fine powder, which was then mixed with water, it was used to enhance the eyes by darkening the brows and lashes, and for outlining the eyes (Pierce 2006:41). Either for its use as a cosmetic or because it was often confused with iron, due to its silvery white appearance, Sennacherib demanded antimony as tribute from Hezekiah (Wright 1955:69). Antimony was mined at Keban in Anatolia (Astour 1995:1405).

4.3.3.2 *Gems or precious stones*

Unfortunately, Sennacherib's annals do not provide the names of the precious stones that Hezekiah delivered. The various possibilities have been discussed under 4.2.3.

4.3.3.3 *Elephant hides and ivory*

Elephant hides and ivory were part of the tribute paid by the Judeans. Possible sources were India, Africa, or even Syria. The Syrian elephant only disappeared around the 8th to 7th century BCE (Miller 1986:29).

The rarity and difficulties involved in acquiring elephant hides and ivory (Akkadian *šinni-piri*, meaning literally, "tusk" or "tooth of the elephant") gave ivory a high economic value, but also a social value, as only royalty and the wealthy could have afforded to possess large quantities (Thomason 2005:123). Politically, it signified the symbolic control of the enemy ruler, which explains why it was included in the tribute lists and taken as booty (Thomason 2005:125). Tusks were essentially 'ingots' of ivory. Their economic value was derived from the goods for which they could be exchanged or whatever they could be made into (Thomason 2005:123).

⁴⁶ <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/antimony/>

The softness of ivory made it ideal for producing luxury items. Some of the finest Iron Age ivories were discovered at Nimrud. As stated in the Assyrian annals, ivory was used for the backs and sides of beds or couches, and chairs, as well as panelling for decorating walls (Liebowitz 1997:343).

4.3.3.4 *Timber*

Neither the boxwood, *taskarinnu* (GIŠ.TÚG), nor the ebony, *ēšu* (GIŠ⁴⁷.ESI), demanded by Sennacherib were indigenous to ancient Israel. Judah would have imported both, probably through the Phoenicians. The *Buxus longifolia* is native to Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean. The wood of the 'box' was highly valued by the Assyrians (Barnett 2002:124). The colour, durability, and texture made it ideal for interior work and fine furniture, particularly inlaid cabinet work. Light in colour, it was often combined with ebony or other darker woods (Moorey 1994:359).

Ebony is a black, fine-grained, heartwood that takes a fine polish. According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, it is native to India, Sri Lanka, and also parts of Africa. Extremely hard and heavy, it was used for fine carpentry, ornaments, and furniture. It too would have been shipped by Phoenician merchants from India and Africa to Tyre, and then traded throughout the Mediterranean world (Ezk 27:15, Slater 2000:366).

4.3.3.5 *Furniture inlaid with ivory*

Wooden furniture made out of exotic and rare materials, embellished with ivory plaques, bronze fittings, as well as semi-precious stones, was particularly sought after by the Assyrian monarchs. Substantial ivory collections made up of pieces from all over the Assyrian Empire were discovered by the archaeologists excavating at Nimrud (Thomason 2005:148). Ivory furniture was received as tribute from vassal states, but also taken as booty to embellish the vast palaces, as well as for everyday use by the Assyrians. Pieces of furniture, mostly thrones, are depicted being carried from Lachish by the Assyrians on Sennacherib's

⁴⁷ The Sumerian logogram GIŠ means 'wood' (Kuniholm 1994:¶15).

reliefs (Nakhai 1997:355).

Ivory inlaid furniture was probably produced in the Phoenician ivory workshops for which they were renowned (Yamada 2000:269). The ivory might well have been hippopotamus ivory, imported to Phoenicia from Egypt by the Phoenician traders. Hippopotamus ivory, which was still available in Syro-Palestine in the Late Bronze Age, was smaller and would have been ideal for this type of craftwork (Lafrenz 2003:31). A considerable amount of the ivory discovered in the ivory workshops at Ugarit, dating from the 14th century BCE, was hippopotamus ivory (Lafrenz 2003:26).

The Phoenicians produced coveted items from ivory for the wealthy throughout the ancient Near East. Hezekiah and the wealthy living in the capital would probably have embellished their homes with these exquisite goods. This might well be what the prophet Amos is referring to when he warns those 'that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches' (Am 6:4).

4.3.3.6 *Garments of wool and linen*

Wool obtained from sheep and goats would have been woven in domestic situations to produce garments for the majority of the Israelite population. Costly fine linen garments were only worn by royalty, the priests, and the wealthy (King & Stager 2001:150). Due to their perishability, few examples of fabrics have survived from ancient Palestine. On the other hand, loom weights, such as those found at Tel Halif, do appear in the archaeological record (see Figure 8). In the biblical references to these fibres, wool is usually mentioned together with either linen or flax (Lv 13:47; Ps 31:13). Although some linen was produced in Israel and Judah, where flax was cultivated for its fibre and for the production of linseed oil (King & Stager 2001:149), the finest linen came from Egypt. Flax grew along the Nile River from which the Egyptians produced high quality linen. In addition to garments made from locally produced Judaeian textiles, linen produced in Egypt probably arrived in Judah by way of Phoenicia, where some of it would have been dyed purple before transportation (Holladay 2006:319).

At Kuntillet 'Ajrud, which boasts a caravanserai and fortress sanctuary with cultic connections, about a hundred fragments of cloth have been found thanks to the dry conditions in the Northern Sinai. Contrary to the biblical prohibition that forbids the mixing of fabric of linen and wool (Lv 19:19; Dt 22:11), some fabric fragments were found having red-dyed woollen threads interwoven with light-blue linen threads (King & Stager 2001:151). The fragments date to the 8th century BCE and might be examples of the multi-coloured (and) linen garments, (TÚG) *lu-bul-ti birme*, paid as tribute.



Figure 8: Clay loom weights recovered from the destruction layer attributed to Sennacherib in 701 BCE at Tel H̄alif (Borowski 2005:32)

4.3.3.7 *Violet and purple wool*

Textiles of red purple (*argamannu*) and violet purple (*takiltu*) constituted part of the tribute paid to Sennacherib. It has been suggested that these textiles were actually coloured carpets (Jankowska 1947:258).

The famous purple dye of antiquity was obtained from two types of shell-fish living in the shallow waters along the Phoenician coast: the *Murex brandaris* and *Murex trunculus*. A gland, located behind the head of the molluscs that inhabit these shells, secretes a liquid that colours white violet. The dye is obtained by

either crushing the shell or by puncturing it and extracting the mollusc. The intensity of the colour ranges from pink to dark violet, depending on the length of time the fabric is exposed to the dye and then to the sun. The dye is fixed to the fabric by means of a mordant such as alum (Bier 1995:1575; Moscati 1968:83). Considerable archaeological evidence for a purple dyeing industry during the Persian and Hellenistic periods has been discovered at Tel Dor on the Mediterranean coast, and the discovery of further evidence for a similar industry during the Iron Age is anticipated (Stern 1994:195-200).

4.3.3.8 *Utensils of copper, iron, bronze, and iron*

A treasury well stocked with metal hoards ensured a country's economic self-sufficiency in the ancient world. Metals were necessary for the production of agricultural implements, tools, and weapons of war (Aubet 1987:60). Although, as Radner (1997b:138) states, the monarchs of the Neo-Assyrian Empire would have inherited 'a treasury well-stocked with gold, silver, copper and bronze',⁴⁸ from the kings of the 'economically successful Middle-Assyrian empire', their needs continued to grow as the empire expanded and as they built palaces, the contents of which reflected their wealth, status and successes. Keeping the Assyrian fighting machine well-equipped would have severely taxed their metal reserves.

Judah delivered to Sennacherib copper utensils, as well as ingots of copper, tin, bronze, and iron. As Assyria boasted no natural resources, all her metals had to be acquired from other countries (King & Stager 2001:170). The copper could have come from the mines in Cyprus and the iron from Syria, Asia Minor, and Gilead, which was a major iron-producing region (King & Stager 2001:167). Locating the ancient Near East's source of tin has proven problematic. Afghanistan and recently the Taurus mountains have been suggested as possible sources (King & Stager 2001:166). According to Ezekiel 27:12, the Phoenicians' Tarshish ships undertook regular voyages to Tarshish, which Kalimi

⁴⁸ Radner (1997b:137) describes the three methods employed by the Assyrians to acquire metals: through booty and tribute, and extending their boundaries to included sources; in return for gifts; through trade.

(2000:1276) suggests might be Tharsis, located in south-western Spain (Kalimi 2000:1276). The southwest Iberian Peninsula was noted for its tin, silver, iron, and lead deposits (Stieglitz 1984:140; Elat 1991:34). Thompson (2007:xiii; 2009:private communication) argues that 'Tarshish is at least Sardinia, and voyages to Tarshish may have involved trips to Southern France and Spain' (see 4.2.1).

In 1850 Layard discovered a small room in the Northwest palace at Nimrud, which he named 'The Room of the Bronzes'. It contained the king's stock of metal objects, amongst which the excavators found some 170 bronze cauldrons and bowls, cups, dipper juglets, dishes and other items, such as tripods, bells, and furniture fittings. Many of the vessels bore West Semitic names and are believed to have been part of the booty taken or tribute received by the Assyrian monarchs Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon II, or Sennacherib. On the underside of one bowl was engraved 'belonging to Ahîyô', which is definitely a Hebrew name (Barnett 1977:62-63). The contracted form of 'Ahîyô', 'Ahîyah', was the name of the Shilonite prophet (1 Ki 11:29) and also the name of the father of the 9th century BCE Israelite king, Baasha of the house of Issachar (1 Ki 15:27). We can therefore assume the bronze bowl found its way to Nimrud as tribute paid by either Judah or Israel. Either way, this artefact gives us some idea of what items the Assyrian records refer to and how they stored the goods taken as tribute.

4.3.3.9 *Weapons of war*

Sennacherib's demand for weapons and 'instruments of war' as part of the tribute payment would have been in addition to whatever armaments the soldiers of the Assyrian army gathered up as booty after storming Lachish and the other conquered Judaeian cities. Two purposes underlay Sennacherib's demand. Firstly, regular military campaigning meant the Assyrians were constantly in need of arms to replace those lost or damaged during battles. The scarcity of metals in Assyria meant metals were constantly reused and recycled. The few Assyrian weapons found dating to the Neo-Assyrian period were made from bronze and show clear signs of mending and reuse (Radner 1997b:135). Secondly, Sennacherib would have wanted to ensure the disarmament of Hezekiah's army.

The items listed include all the state-of-the-art weapons in use at the time: chariots, shields, lances, coats of mail, swords on belts, bows, arrows, and the “*tillu*”-equipment. The archaeological discoveries (Lachish, Tel Ḥalif) and mass-burials⁴⁹ confirm the fierce battle that raged at Lachish, and which is so well depicted on Sennacherib’s reliefs (Mazar 1992:433).

The majority of the countries lying to the south of Judah lacked resources in copper and iron. Metal ingots would probably have featured amongst the goods carried overland from the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor to the countries in the south (Jankowska 1947:265). Judah also lacked natural metal resources. If Hezekiah had been planning a revolt for which he was stockpiling weapons of war, as insinuated by the Chronicler, then overland trade would also have been the main source of the required metals.

4.4 HEZEKIAH’S TRIBUTE IN CONTEXT

The following table, Table 3, lists the tribute payments demanded by eight Assyrian monarchs over two centuries. The list is far from comprehensive, especially as it only lists tributes taken from the Assyrian annals that give absolute amounts. In the annals, silver usually appears before gold.

Judah, along with Mati’il of Arpad, paid the third largest amount of gold and the eighth largest amount of silver demanded during this period. The majority of the countries that rendered greater quantities of precious metal were situated at strategic locations to benefit from the trade passing through the area.

The following abbreviations for the Assyrian kings are used in the table below:

| | | |
|--------|---------------------|---------------|
| TU II | Tukulti-Urta II | (890-884 BCE) |
| ANP | Assur-Nâsir-Pal II | (883-859 BCE) |
| S III | Shalmaneser III | (858-824 BCE) |
| AN III | Adad-Nirari III | (810-783 BCE) |
| TP III | Tiglath-Pileser III | (744-727 BCE) |
| S II | Sargon II | (721-705 BCE) |
| SB | Sennacherib | (704-681 BCE) |
| EH | Esarhaddon | (680-669 BCE) |

⁴⁹ About 1,500 skeletons were found outside the city of Lachish in adjacent caves situated on the western slope of the mound (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:248) and/or 1500 skeletons were found thrown into a deep water-shaft (Dever 2001:169).

Table 3: Judah's tribute payment in relation to payments by other countries or kings

| Country / city / (King) | Assyrian monarch | Gold in talents & minas | kg | Silver in talents & minas | kg | Lead in talents | Copper in talents | Iron in talents | Reference |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------|---------------------------|-------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Suhi - Iluibni | TU II | 20 m | 10 | 3 t | 90 | | | | ARAB I:130 |
| Halupe - Sûru | TU II | 20 m | 10 | 20 m | 10 | 32 | 130 | 1 | ARAB I:131 |
| Ḫindānu | TU II | 10 m | 5 | 10 m | 5 | 2 | | | ARAB I:130 |
| Sirku - Issin-Dada | TU II | 3 m | 1.5 | 7 m | 3.5 | | | | ARAB I:130 |
| Laqû >Harâni | TU II | 3 m | 1.5 | 17 m | 8.5 | 6 | | | ARAB I:130 |
| Laqû <Hamath | TU II | | | 10 m | 5 | | | | ARAB I:131 |
| Bit-Zamâni | ANP | 2 t (60 kg) | 61 | 2 t (60 kg) | 66.5 | 100 | 100 ⁵¹ | 300 | ARAB I:157 |
| Bit-Zamâni - Ilânu ⁵⁰ | | 2 m (1 kg) | | 13 m (6.5 kg) | | | | | ARAB I:181 |
| Hattina - Lubarna | ANP | 1 t | 30 | 20 t | 600 | 100 | | 100 | ARAB I:165 |
| Carchemish - Sangara | ANP | | | 20 t | 600 | | 100 | 250 | ARAB I:165 |
| Carchemish - Sangara | S III | 3 t | 90 | 70 t | 210 | | 30 | 100 | ARAB I:217 |
| Hatti - (?) | S III | 3 t | 90 | 100 t | 900 | | 300 | 100 | ARAB I:217 |
| Bit-Agûsi - Aramu | S III | 10 m | 5 | 6 t | 180 | | | | ARAB I:217 |
| Gabbari - Haiânu | S III | | | 10 t | 300 | | 90 | 30 | ARAB I:217 |
| Damascus - Mari | AN III | 20 t | 600 | 2300 t | 69000 | | 3000 | 5000 | ARAB I:263 |
| Tyre - Metenna | TP III | 150 t ⁵² | 4500 | 2000 t | 60000 | | | | ARAB I:288; Summ 7:16' |
| (Bit-Agûsi) Arpad - Mati'ilu | TP III | 30 t | 900 | 2000 t | 60000 | | | | Summ 9:24' |

⁵⁰ Nobles paid a punitive tribute for killing ruler Amma-ba'li. ANP placed his brother Ilânu on the throne and demanded further tribute (ARAB I:181).

⁵¹ The Kurkh Monolith lists 500 talents of copper. The Annals list 100 talents (ARAB I:181).

⁵² ARAB I:288 and Summary Inscription 7:16' state 150 talents. Summary Inscription 9:26' states 50 talents.

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|------|-----------------------------------|-------|--|
| Tyre - Hiram | TP III | 20 t | 600 | | | Summ 9:7' rev |
| Unqi | TP III | 20 t | 600 | | | Summ 9:26' |
| Israel - Hoshea | TP III | 10 t | 300 | X | | ARAB I:293; Summ 4:18' |
| Kardunias (Babylonia) ⁵³ | TP III | 10 t | 300 | 1000 t | 30000 | ARAB I:270; |
| Tabal - Hullî | TP III | 10 t | 300 | 1000 t | 30000 | ARAB I:288; Summ 7:15'; Summ 9:29' |
| Damascus - Rezin | TP III | 3 t | 90 | X | | ARAB II:274 |
| Gaza - Hanunu | TP III | X | | 800 t | 24000 | Summ 8:15' |
| Israel - Menahem | TP III | | | 1000 t | 30000 | 2 Ki 15:19 |
| Musasir – Urzana (temple) | S II | approx. 7 t =210 kg | 1239 | 162 t & 20 m-3/36 =5,879 kg | 9881 | ARAB II:109 |
| Musasir (treasury) | | 34 t & 18 m =1,029 kg | | 167 t & 2.5 m = 5,011 kg | | ARAB II:110 |
| Carchemish - Pisisir (booty) | S II | 11 t & 30 m | 345 | 2100 t & 24 m | 63012 | ARAB II:73 |
| Judah - Hezekiah | SB | 30 t | 900 | 800 t | 24000 | ARAB II:143; 2 Ki 18:14 |
| Iata', son of Hazeal ⁵⁴ | EH | 10 m | 5 | | | ARAB II:208 |

⁵³ Included several places conquered by Tiglath-Pileser III in 744 and 737 BCE (Tadmor 1994:164n).

⁵⁴ Hazeal was the king of the Arabs (ARAB II:207).

4.5 CONCLUSION

The above discussion shows that local goods and taxes could not account for the *nature* of Hezekiah's store of wealth. Apart from the livestock (excluding the horses), the agricultural products and perhaps some woven textiles, the greatest part of his wealth was made up of foreign good that originated beyond Judah's borders. They were all exotic and luxury items, coveted by the Judaeans as well as the Assyrian crown and court, the upper echelons of society, and the cultic institutions. The Judaeans were making full use of the international trade routes that traversed the Levant and reflect the flow of trade in both directions. Many of these items would have been transported to Judah by the camel or donkey trains plying the overland routes, while some would have come from even further afield, shipped first to the Mediterranean coast from across the sea by the Phoenicians before being transported overland to Jerusalem.

The contents of Hezekiah's treasuries and storehouses, as well as the substantial tribute paid to Sennacherib, should not be seen in isolation to Hezekiah's other expenditure. It was considerable and reflects an extremely healthy economy. The goal of the following chapter is to establish the source of Hezekiah's wealth.

C

CHAPTER FIVE

THE JUDAEAN ECONOMY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter extends the economic theme of Chapter 3, but here the focus shifts from the *nature* of Hezekiah's store of wealth to the *extent* of his wealth. It is generally accepted that agriculture constituted the basis of the ancient Israelite economy, with biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 8:7-8 quoted as textual evidence:

But YHWH your God is bringing you into a fine country, a land of streams and springs, of waters that well up from deep in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines, of figs, of pomegranates, a land of olives, of oil, of honey.

Different aspects of the Judaeen economy are discussed during the course of this chapter in an effort to establish whether revenue from trade in Judaeen agricultural products was responsible for the flourishing Judaeen trade portrayed by the epigraphic sources. Alternative sources of income, besides tithes and taxes imposed on the people, are discussed.

Our knowledge of the workings of the Iron Age Judaeen economy, indeed ancient economies in general, is very limited and hindered by a number of constraints. Firstly, the nature of ancient economic behaviour was such that limited archaeological evidence is now available. The majority of goods exchanged were 'invisible'.⁵⁵ They were perishable agricultural products and goods that leave behind no archaeological record (Hopkins 1996:122). Fortunately many of the commodities exchanged could only be transported or exchanged once they had been stored in containers or vessels that do leave behind artefactual evidence. If correctly investigated, these artefacts are capable

⁵⁵ This term was used by Crawford (1973) to refer to agricultural products such as grain, fish, oils, leather goods and textiles, all of which leave no archaeological evidence.

of providing some insight into the mechanisms of ancient economies (Kletter 1998:149).

Secondly, textual sources associated with the economy or economic activities in Judah are literally non-existent. The Bible and the Assyrian texts are both limited as a source of economic information. A critical reading of both, together with research in other disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology, as well as comparative research relating to other contemporary ancient Mediterranean societies, has made it possible to infer some details about the Judaeen economy at this time.

Archaeological evidence necessary to reconstruct the Judaeen economy is minimal. It is unlikely that the exchange of goods at the local markets would have been documented, but it can be expected that large-scale traders, private entrepreneurs, and also official temple and state operators documented their transactions. Again, the medium used to record these transactions would probably have been perishable parchment or papyrus. This might explain why no records similar to those from the temple archives in Mesopotamia have been unearthed in Palestine (Stevens 2006:23). A few ostraca, such as the Samarian ostraca, have been found, testifying to transactions on a smaller scale (Castle 1992:239). The numerous seals, scarabs and over 170 clay bullae found in the Old City of Jerusalem suggest the existence of an administrative centre where goods or letters were received from distant locations: none bear inscriptions in any of the Iron Age II languages, but the iconography and writing signs suggest they originated in Egypt and Phoenicia (Reich, Shukron & Lerner 2007:156).

As a result of these constraints, answers to questions surrounding issues such as the systems of exchange, the organisation of trade, the role of the elite in commerce and production, the role and social status of traders, price fluctuations, to mention but a few, will probably continue to elude researchers (Hopkins 1996:122).

The arrival of Assyria under Tiglath-Pileser III in the Levant heralded the end of the relative peace and prosperity enjoyed by both Israelite kingdoms during the

9th and 8th centuries BCE (Mazar 1992:404). Tiglath-Pileser III's military support during the Syria-Ephraimitic Crisis ultimately spelt the death knell of Judah's political independence, reduced the country to a vassal of the mighty Assyrian Empire, and placed a huge economic burden on the small kingdom. As a result of the Aramaean-Israelite war (2 Ki 16:5-6), Ahaz lost the additional territory gained by Uzziah, together with Edom and the port of Ezion-geber in the Red Sea, Judah's direct access to the lucrative trade from Africa and India. Bright (1981:277) believes this loss was a serious blow to Judah's resources. The economy of Judah, by the late 8th century BCE was, argues De Geus (1982:55), in an abysmal state. The description of Hezekiah's treasuries and storehouses, however, suggest otherwise.

Details surrounding the Judaeen agriculture, the questions of surpluses, exchange and trade of export products, tithes and taxes are discussed below. One could argue that as tithes were rendered to the Temple, they should be dealt with in the following chapter, Chapter Six, on the religious dimension of Hezekiah's reign. However, indirectly they constituted a source of income for the king and are therefore dealt with here. Based on the biblical evidence, the majority of the population remained involved in agriculture; very few were involved in trade (Elat 1979b:527). It is difficult to gauge from the biblical texts to what extent the crown became involved in trade, as was the case during the reign of King Solomon.

5.2 REGIONAL VARIATIONS AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Diverse climate and topography within Palestine influenced the agriculture. The coastal plains and hill country enjoyed a moderate climate, with early rains in October and late rains in April/May (Baly 1987:22). Highly variable rainfall made droughts, famines and plagues a constant threat. Farming was hard and labour intensive, with unpredictable yields due to the uncertain climatic conditions. The principal agricultural products were cereals, grapes, and olives. Different crops were more suited to different areas. Livestock and grain, particularly barley, did well in the drier regions to the south and east. Fruit and olive trees, sheep, and goat herds were more suitable to the uplands. Regional exchange must have

taken place to offset these regional variations. The Shephelah, according to Zimhoni (2004:1806⁵⁶), was the main source of food supplies for the entire Judaeen kingdom prior to Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE.

5.3 AGRO-PASTORALISM

Judah's system of production remained relatively constant. By the 8th century BCE the majority of the Judaeen population still lived in rural villages and towns, with only a small percentage living in densely populated urban centres. The lifestyles of the two population groups were radically different. The majority of the population consisted of rural peasant farmers engaged in a combination of mixed farming and stock-rearing, in various proportions. The cultivation of cereals, grapes, and olives, combined with the raising and breeding of herds of sheep and goats, facilitated risk-spreading and labour optimisation. Irrigation was widely practiced and necessary to counteract the irregular rainfall. Terracing created additional surfaces for cultivation, reduced soil erosion, and helped maximise the precipitation. Provisions for times of war, pestilence or drought, as well as the Sabbatical year, were made when possible by storing surpluses at home (Holladay 1995:393). The farmer, his family and animals, such as oxen, asses, and camels (dromedaries), constituted the main source of labour-energy.

Run-off farming was practised in areas of the country with low rainfall. Terraced fields were watered and cisterns filled with rainwater that was collected by means of channels and dams. This runoff farming made possible the establishment of settlements in the Negev desert, with the purpose of protecting the vital overland trade routes and also the country's borders (Borowski 2003:27).

The extended family unit remained the primary producer and consumer, with

⁵⁶ Zimhoni's research, *Two ceramic assemblages from Lachish Levels III and II*, written in 1990, was first published by L. Singer-Avitz & D. Ussishkin in 1997 in *Studies in the Iron Age pottery of Israel: Typological, archaeological and chronological aspects*, 211-261. Ussishkin has included the article in Volume IV of *The renewed archaeological excavations at Lachish (1973-1994)*, after undertaking editorial adaptations and relabeling the pottery groups according to the system finalised by Zimhoni shortly before her death in 1996 (Ussishkin 2004:1789). This research refers to the article published by Ussishkin.

surpluses used to barter for other basic necessities and/or to pay taxes, tithes, and, in some cases, the rent (Isserlin 2001:151). Sheep and goats served as a source of wool and hair, as well as products for consumption, such as meat and milk (goats). Home industry (basket weaving, pottery manufacture, weaving, and dyeing of fabrics) and specialised crafts (carpentry, stone-masonry) were means to supplement the family income (Botha 2000:131). Some families were specialised in certain skills and crafts: the know-how handed down from one generation to the next (Lowery 1991:45).

The main urban centre was Jerusalem, the administrative and religious capital of Judah. Surface surveys have shown that the densely populated city was dependent on hundreds of carefully planned agricultural communities to produce staple foods (grain and animals for bakers and butchers) and basic raw materials (flax, wool, hides) (Matthews 1995:224). Every piece of arable land surrounding the city was exploited, and the mountain slopes terraced in order to create new agricultural fields (Avni 1996:¶29). The surrounding settlements, villages, and fortresses were reciprocally dependent on the economically and politically stable urban centres (Edelstein & Gibson 1982:46). Apart from a few wealthy citizens who were *perhaps* responsible for the control and redistribution of the surplus produced by the farmers, most city-dwellers were either engaged in specialised handicraft manufacturing or full-time labour in a profession, for example royal officials involved in state administration and temple personnel (Matthews 1995:251). Isaiah (44:12) describes the ironsmith at work, shaping iron idols with a hammer over coals, and a carpenter using a pencil, planes, and a compass to fashion an idol out of wood (Is 44:13). Methods by which full-time artisans and craftsmen obtained their raw materials and then distributed their products must have existed (Stevens 2006:12). In addition, many of the urbanites must have purchased their requirements from dealers or intermediaries (Borowski 2003:56). Nevertheless, even in the urban centres, a good percentage of the population would have been farmers with fields lying outside the city walls (McNutt 1999:152) and some urban-dwellers, according to 2 Chronicles 31:6, still maintained herds inside the settlements.

The capital and regional centres dominated the society and economy in the

surrounding countrysides, which became tributary to the urban centres (Dever 1995:418). In order to meet the ever-increasing demands of the urban centres, the monarchy, and the elite, changes were necessary.

Biblical passages, such as 2 Chronicles 26:10, are regarded as evidence that by the late Iron Age II changes had taken place in the Judaeen agriculture:

He [Uzziah] built towers in the desert too, and dug many storage-wells, for he had large herds in the lowlands and on the tableland, and farmers and vine dressers in the hills and fertile lands...

It is hypothesised that the previously freeholding peasants populating the highlands were compelled to join together their small subsistence plots to form large estates, similar to *latifundia*, where the traditional mixed subsistence agriculture gave way to specialisation in one or two of the three major export crops (olives, grains or grapes), depending on the area⁵⁷ (Chaney 1993:253; Lowery 1991:37). Chaney (1993:254) bases his supposition on the proliferation of grape and oil processing installations and the introduction of the beam press during the 8th century BCE. De Geus (1982:56-57) has suggested these *latifundia* came into existence during Ahaz's reign, when forced production, cheap land, and low wages were possible.

5.4 TYPES OF CROPS

5.4.1 Olives

Olives were extremely important in ancient Israel, and olive oil, according to Hitchner (2002:72), was 'the single most important agricultural commodity in the ancient economy'. The biblical authors repeatedly refer to olives (Job 15:33), olive trees (Jer 11:16), and olive oil (Is 17:6). Although olives were apparently an important staple food in the Mediterranean, there is no indication in the Bible that olives were eaten raw before the introduction of salting and pickling in the Hellenistic or Roman period (Borowski 1987:123). Olive oil had numerous purposes, both secular and cultic. It was an invaluable source of energy,

⁵⁷ The nature and location of these areas in Judah have been discussed by Rainey (1982:58-59).

employed as medication (Is 1:6), and used to produce ointments and lubricants (Mic 6:15) (see 5.6.1 for archaeological evidence).

5.4.2 Grapes

Grapes, mainly cultivated in vineyards to produce wine, as evidenced by the presses found all over the Judaeian Hills, were also consumed raw and dried. Ancient winepresses have been found at Kibbutz Tzuba, or Suba, situated in the Judaeian Hills west of Jerusalem, and at Gvaot Winery in the Shiloh Mountains (Peck 2009). Other by-products included vinegar, raisins, and '*dibs*' (honey), which is grape juice boiled down to a thick juice (Nm 6:3; Borowski 1987:113; Goor 1966:61) (see 5.6.2 for archaeological evidence).

As with the olive, grapes and grape-vines are the subject of numerous biblical verses (for example, Lv 19:10; Jdg 9:27) and metaphors (for example, Is 6:2, 4; Jer 2:21; Ps 128:3), emphasising the high regard in which they were held by the ancient Israelites.

5.4.3 Cereals

Archaeological samples and biblical references show that cereal crops, such as wheat and barley, were cultivated during the Iron Age. Borowski (1987:164) is of the opinion that 'iron tools, crop rotation and fertilizing' enabled the peasant farmers to produce large surpluses to support the urban centres and for export.

If crop specialisation and intensified cultivation of cereals took place during the Iron Age II, as some scholars have suggested, then one would expect to come across large-scale grain storage facilities similar to those built by King Solomon when he introduced economic reforms. Numerous large structures were discovered in Iron Age I strata at sites throughout the country: Jericho, Lachish, Megiddo, Beth-Shemesh, Tell Jemmeh, Tell en Nasbeh, and Tell Beit Mirsim (Borowski 1987:78). Similar facilities for the storage of large quantities of surplus grain ready for export during Hezekiah's reign are largely lacking in the Iron Age II strata at sites excavated so far. A large grain-pit discovered at Beth-Shemesh

was still in use in the 8th century BCE (Bunimovitz & Lederman 1997:¶38). It was constructed next to the 'residency', a large building resembling a palace, which might have accommodated the district governor (Borowski 1987:74). The pillared structures (Beersheba, Lachish) are regarded by some as storehouses, while others consider them to be stables. Above-ground granaries are totally lacking during the time of the monarchy (Borowski 1987:78). Each family unit appears to have had storage facilities for agricultural produce and surpluses in jars in their individual courtyard houses (Holladay 1995:392). This dearth of archaeological evidence for mass/public storage during the Iron Age II leaves doubt whether any specialisation in grain actually took place.

5.5 LAND TENURE

Issues of land ownership and control of land are central to understanding an agricultural economy. The Bible refers to three types of land ownership: private, royal, and priestly (Borowski 1987:22). The land and the use it could be put to was the primary source of wealth in ancient societies (Stevens 2006:83), but the land of Israel, indeed the whole world, was the sole property of their national deity, YHWH: the Israelites only held it in safe-keeping.

5.5.1 Private property

According to the book of Joshua (18:3; 19:51), the land allocated each family when the tribes gathered before the door of the tabernacle in Shiloh was governed by a number of prescriptions. Ownership was inalienable and sale of the property outside the family or clan was restricted. These prescriptions were meant to prevent the buying and selling of land on speculation and was ultimately a means of preventing land monopoly. Land owners, however, could lease land for share-cropping (Stevens 2006:83). Only males could inherit the family property, thereby ensuring the property remained in the family and was not alienated by the marriage of daughters. When the father died, it passed on to the eldest son (Dt 21:17), who had the right to hand it on to another brother (Borowski 1987:22). If a male descendant was lacking, then the deceased's brother inherited the land. Money could not be borrowed against land (Matthews

1995:135). If financial circumstances forced a family to sell their property—and only if the entire family was in full agreement—this sale was only binding until the next Jubilee (Lv 25:8-12). This unique Israelite social and economic institution stipulated that the ancestral property reverted back to the descendants of the original owner in the 50th year after the sale (Buchholz 1988:410). The Jubilee was also an attempt to prevent poverty by providing everybody with a means to a livelihood (Buchholz 1988:410).

Another biblical injunction concerned the Sabbatical year (Lv 25:2-7). This law stipulated that the land was to be left to lie fallow for a year after it had been cultivated for six consecutive years. Just as the law of the Sabbath prescribed a day of rest and prohibited work on the 7th day of the week (Lv 23:3), so the land was afforded a period of rest, a year during which it was not to be worked. During the Sabbatical year all debts were cancelled and all slaves freed (Dt 15:1) (De Vaux & McHugh 1997:173-174).

5.5.2 Royal estates

Kings in the ancient Near East owned large tracts of land necessary to support the royal household. Apart from the biblical reference to a steward managing the crown property (1 Chr 27:25-31) and Samuel's warning that a king would 'make them plough his field and gather in his harvest' (1 Sm 8:12), there is very little evidence to suggest this was the practice in Israel and Judah. Royal vineyards and presses as well as royal wine cellars existed, for I Chronicles 27:27 states 'over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite: and over the increase of the vineyards for the wine-cellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite'. Animals from the king's estates are mentioned in 2 Chronicles 31:3 and 35:7.

5.5.3 'Priestly' lands

Unlike in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the Temple in Jerusalem does not appear to have been a land or property owner (Stevens 2006:93), but the priests and Levites associated with the Temple do.

The tribe of Levi, unlike the other tribes, was not allocated any territory of its own. Instead, the Levites received 48 cities in which to live (Num 35:1-8), 13 of which were assigned to the Aaronic priests (Jos 21:4, 13-19), together with surrounding 'suburbs' or pasture-grounds where they could graze their livestock (Nm 35:3-7) (Mays 1988:208). This provision ensured them a livelihood. Mentioned four times in the Bible, these common grazing lands belonging to the priests were probably situated in the vicinity of the rural shrines and high places where they served. According to Borowski (1987:30), the biblical statement that the tribe of Levi would not be allocated any territorial possessions (Nm 18:24), but would have to rely on the tithes for the food (Nm 18:24), was probably added later when the Levites moved to the cities after Hezekiah and Josiah centralised the cult in Jerusalem. The Levites were permitted to sell their property in the city, which they could redeem at any time, but they were forbidden to sell their pasture lands (Lv 25:32-34) (Borowski 1987:30).

The prophets' call for social justice in the 8th century BCE provides the most persuasive evidence for the introduction of intensified agriculture and crop specialisation. Conflicts over land rights and boundaries might have been the result of a few wealthy upper class citizens, or perhaps even the king, attempting to buy up land in order to establish large agricultural estates, although the numerous prescriptions surrounding the tenure of the land make this unlikely.

5.6 INDUSTRIES AND CRAFT SPECIALISATION

A number of small industrial installations for processing agricultural products have been excavated, but we have no way of knowing to what degree, if any, they contributed to the Judaeian economy. They included oil and grape presses, and looms and spindles for producing textiles (Mazar 1992:489).

5.6.1 Olive oil industry

Centres for the large-scale production of olive oil have been found at Lachish (9th – 8th centuries BCE), Tell Beit Mirsim, and Beth-Shemesh in the Judaeian Shephelah, and in the city-state of Ekron in Philistia, testifying to an increase in

the olive oil production during the Iron Age II (Bunimovitz & Lederman 1997; Silver 1983:13; Stern 1979:237). Archaeological evidence at Beth-Shemesh was found in buildings in all sections excavated, and included large rectangular crushing basin, pressing vats, perforated stone weights, plastered installations, and many pottery vessels, some of which contained olive pits. Perforated stone weights, which date to the second half of the 8th century BCE, were uncovered at Gezer (Stratum VIA). These weights prove that the more efficient beam press was already in use during the Iron Age II⁵⁸ (Borowski 1987:122). Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:159) claim an olive oil industry developed in the 9th century BCE in the Northern Kingdom, while in Judah the production of olive oil only shifted from local, domestic production to a state industry in the 7th century BCE.

Some 115 double oil presses have been found in the industrial zone of the Philistine city of Ekron, which flourished during the 8th and mainly the 7th century BCE (Gitin 2005:¶44; Scheepers 2006:597). The consistency of the soil of the Plains of Philistia did not support tree crops, namely, olive trees (Karmon 1983:175), which suggests a commercial arrangement between the nearby olive growing areas in the Judaeian Shephelah and the oil producing Philistine cities. The olives grown in Judah, the closest olive producing area, were probably processed in Ekron for consumption in Jerusalem and also for export (after the devastation of Judah in 701 BCE) (Mazar 1992:489).

5.6.2 Wine and viticulture

Excavations have shown that Gibeon was an important and prosperous centre for the production and possibly export of wine during the 8th and 7th centuries BCE (Pritchard 1993:512). In addition to surfaces for treading grapes, settling basins, fermentation tanks, some 63 underground cellars (about 7 ft or 2.15 m deep and capable of accommodating jars to store some 95,000 litres (25,000 gallons) of wine at a constant temperature of 18°C) were found hewn into the subterranean rock (Pritchard 1964:25). These bottle-shaped cellars were, on average, 2.2 m deep and measured 2 m in diameter. The opening at the top was

⁵⁸ Noth (1962:150) believed the beam press to extract oil from the olives first made its appearance during the Hellenistic period.

0.67 m in diameter. Wine presses carved from rock, with carved channels that conducted the grape juice into fermentation tanks and settling basins, were also found in the same area. The wine storage jars had a holding capacity of 36 litres. Smaller jars with inscribed handles were used for exporting the wine produced at Gibeon. Stoppers and a funnel for filling the wine jars were found together with the jars (Pritchard 1993:512).

A significant number of jar handles inscribed with the name Gibeon, together with the Hebrew inscription '*gdr*', were found during the excavations at Gibeon. The excavator, Pritchard, considered them labels for wines and dated them to the 7th (or 6th) century BCE. The inscriptions may have been the labels of private firms producing wine for export. The three centuries following the division of the kingdom were a time of 'unrivalled prosperity and expansion' for Gibeon, 'which reached a peak in the 7th century BCE' (Pritchard 1962:161-163). If the four names on the *lmlk* jars handles are centres for wine production, then one would expect Gibeon to have been one of them.

5.6.3 Pottery

Pottery making in Judah changed little, and then only gradually, between 925 BCE, when the two kingdoms separated, and the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE. This makes the detection and distinction of changes extremely difficult (Mazar 1992:508). The assemblage relating to the Assyrian destruction in 701 BCE has provided us with a firm stratigraphic and chronological framework for dating the pottery assemblages of this period.

The Judaeon pottery of the 8th – 7th century BCE was relatively homogenous and repetitive in shape, with identical forms and production techniques found throughout the kingdom. The repertoire included *inter alia*, bowls, chalices, goblets, cooking pots, pithoi, various storage jars, *amphoriskoi*, jars, and juglets. The Judaeon vessels were thrown on the wheel and of a high quality, particularly those produced in and around Jerusalem. They were characteristically orange-red slipped and wheel-burnished (Mazar 1992:508). Although pottery workshops made up of a family of potters probably existed in every village and produced

vessels for local domestic needs, it appears many vessels were produced in specialised workshops and then distributed throughout the kingdom. This applies to the Judaeian storage jars,⁵⁹ and in particular the royal *lmlk* jars that appeared during Hezekiah's reign. The scholarly speculations surrounding these jars continue unabated. Some of the jar handles bear a seal impression with the inscription '*lmlk*', meaning [belonging] to the king, situated in the upper part of the seal, one of two icons, and frequently one of four names.



Figure 9: Pottery of Lachish Stratum III and reconstructed *lmlk* storage jars (Ussishkin)
http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/archaeology/projects/proj_past_lachish.html

The two icons are generally considered to represent either a two-winged solar disk or a four-winged scarab, and are now accepted as the official insignia of the Kingdom of Judah. The four names are generally believed to represent places in Judah. Three of the four are mentioned in the Bible: *hbrn* is Hebron (Nm 12:22), *zp* is Ziph (Josh 15:22), *swkh* is Socoh (1 Sm 17:1), while the last, *mmšt* remains as yet unidentified. It has been suggested the names represented government administrative districts, the location of royal pottery workshops, or centres for the production of wine.

The personal seal impression found on the *lmlk* jar handles, together with the royal stamps, underscore the idea that either 'royal' potters were responsible for the production of these storage jars or officials in the employ of the royal administration oversaw their production (Stern 1979:251). Reconstructed, these jars stand some 55-70cm high on a narrow, rounded base. They feature a narrow, plain-sloping neck, a wide rounded shoulder, and four handles. The jars

⁵⁹ The storage jars have been newly typified based on the pottery found at Lachish in a storeroom (Room 4014) near the city gate: the royal *lmlk* storage jars (Group III: SJ-1), the *lmlk*-like storage jars (Group III: SJ-2), the two-handled storage jars (Group III: SJ-3), 'hole-mouth' jars, and other miscellaneous storage jars (Ussishkin 2004:1794-1799).

are well fired and have a holding capacity varying between 45 and 53 litres. The *lmlk* stamp was therefore unlikely a royal guarantee of quantity (Ussishkin 1978:77-80). The jars were produced as storage jars for oil, wine, or grain. They were easy to transport and store, which might account for their popularity and widespread distribution (Zimhoni 2004:1795). Some bear marks incised after firing or at a later stage. These marks appear to have been made in an effort to cancel the validity of the initial or previous seal impressions, perhaps after the jar or the contents of the jar had served its initial purpose. They include a plus '+' sign, a hole, one or two concentric circles with a central dot, and parallel scratched lines (Pritchard 1959:22; Grena 2004:95-96, 98-100).

In 1984, samples of the clay of the *lmlk* jars were subject to neutron activation analysis⁶⁰ in an attempt to determine their provenance. The results showed that all the jars were made of the same clay, obtained from one place located somewhere in the Shephelah. Mommsen, Perlman & Yellin (1984:109-113) speculate that the jars were produced in the same workshop in Achzib (Khirbet tel-el Bayda) in Judah. A study of the chemical composition of the clay of the larger pithoi show that that they were made from clay obtained in the Jerusalem area: the clay of the pithoi matched the clay of the local pottery found in Jerusalem. Thus different potters were responsible for the production of the royal *lmlk* jars and the pithoi. There is also a notable difference in the skill of the potters who produced the jars and those who produced pithoi. The handles of the pithoi were produced rather carelessly (Grena 2004:80).

Petrographic analysis of samples taken from ceramic figurines found at excavations in the City of David has shown that the majority were made of the same type of clay. This suggests they originated from a production centre in the vicinity of Jerusalem (Yezereski & Geva 2003:63). The number and uniformity of the *lmlk* jars, as well as the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, hints at the existence of centres where ceramics were produced on a larger and organised scale (see 7.5.3).

⁶⁰ This is a sensitive scientific procedure to determine the exact breakdown of the main components and trace elements of the clay used to make the pottery with the goal of determining where the artefact originated (Currid 1999:84).

5.6.4 Crafts

Artisans and craftsmen formed an integral part of the Judaeen urban society. Mentioned or alluded to in the Bible, they included stonemasons (2 Ki 22:6), smiths (2 Ki 24:14), carpenters and builders (2 Ki 12:11), jewellers (Neh 3:8), ivory and seal carvers (Ex 28:9), potters (Is 30:14), weavers (2 Sm 21:19), as well as tanners and producers of leather goods (Ex 26:14). We have no way of knowing to what degree these people contributed to the Judaeen economy.

The inclusion of coloured fabrics in the Assyrian tribute lists indicates that they were coveted commodities in Mesopotamia. After analysing the Assyrian lists of tribute, Liverani (1992:157) suggested that Assyrian monarchs generally demanded tribute in commodities that were 'productive peculiarities of the different countries'. While we know that the majority of the goods delivered to Sennacherib were definitely not Judaeen, but originated outside Judah, De Geus (1982:56) advocates we do not dismiss offhand the existence of a Judaeen textile industry. A more plausible explanation for the presence of these textiles is to be attributed to the Phoenicians who imported them from Egypt, dyed them in their workshops, and then exchanged them for Judaeen agricultural products.

The Bible testifies to metal-working (1 Ki 7:45-46) in ancient Israel: the Deuteronomist likens Egypt to an iron furnace (1 Ki 8:51) and Isaiah frequently mentions iron weapons and tools, as well as the ironsmith (Is 44:12). Bronze continued in use during the Iron Age II, but was gradually replaced by iron as evidenced by the weapons and farm implements found. Unlike in the Late Bronze and Iron Age I periods, however, no archaeological remains of iron manufacturing workshops have been found that date to the Iron Age II (Mazar 1992:510). Either the metal workshops where armaments were produced to stock Hezekiah's armoury have yet to be found or Hezekiah imported everything. The latter hardly seems possible. The predominantly agricultural Judaeen society would have required metal farming implements and various other items for domestic purposes. Smiths and craftsmen were definitely part of the Judaeen work force, but we find little evidence for them in the archaeological record. Based on the limited archaeological evidence available, the work of the Judaeen

craftsmen appears to lack originality and innovation. This could be due to the prohibition in Deuteronomy 5:8: 'Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth', which resulted in them imitating the work of their colleagues from their neighbouring countries rather than developing their own styles (King & Stager 2001:129). Nevertheless, their skills were obviously highly regarded (Is 41:7), for Nebuchadnezzar deported a thousand craftsmen and smiths from Judah to Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem in 597 BCE (2 Ki 24:16) (King & Stager 2001:131).

In order for artisanal products or manufacturing to make a significant contribution to the economy, large scale production supported by an efficient and intense distribution system over large distances would have been essential. Evidence for both is lacking.

5.7 INSTITUTIONS

Jerusalem was the national capital, the secular and religious centre of the Kingdom of Judah. Unlike our present society, the boundaries between the government administration (secular) and the temple (religious) were poorly defined. This makes it extremely difficult to determine just what was applicable to the palace and what to the Temple (1 Ki 7:1-12; Stevens 2006:15). These two institutions were intimately connected (1 Ki 7:1-12), perhaps employing the same personnel, for both required skilled as well as unskilled and professional personnel, such as scribes, artisans, craftsmen, and perfumers, as well as people who oversaw supplies and repairs (Stevens 2006:12). The government and the Temple were also both financed to varying degrees by tithes and taxes imposed on the populace (Stevens 2006:15).

5.7.1 Royal administration

The institution of the monarchy imposed additional burdens upon the population. Taxation and corvée were now required to support the monarch, his royal household, and an administration consisting of, amongst others, numerous high-

ranking officials and various specialised civil servants (Dever 1995:428; Stevens 2006:12).

Legitimation of the Judaeen monarchy was grounded in the royal Zion theology that emerged in Jerusalem (see 2.2.2.2). As YHWH's chosen earthly representative, the king effectively had the right to control both secular and religious revenues. The biblical writers draw a clear distinction between the crown and Temple treasuries (1 Ki 15:26). When the need arose, the king made use of this right and used resources from both the Temple and the palace treasuries to meet secular financial obligations (2 Ki 18:5).

5.7.2 Temple

The Temple was not only a place of worship and sacrifice; it was *the* central social, political, economic, and religious institution in ancient Israel (Smith 2004:33). In addition to providing employment to several categories of personnel, cultic as well as non-cultic, with the priests and Levites most directly involved in the cultic rituals, the Temple functioned as a financial intermediary, collecting and storing tithes and taxes, and then redistributing them in various forms when necessary (2 Chr 31:5-6; Gossai 2000:1315).

5.7.2.1 Temple income

The costs involved in running the Temple and the wages of the Temple personnel were covered by taxes, tithes, and gifts received from the crown and the general population (Stevens 2006:82-120). Means employed to obtain additional funds when necessary are described in 2 Kings 12:2-17. When King Jehoash was in need of funds to finance repairs to the 'house of YHWH', the priests placed collection chests at the gate and altar. The silver donations received from worshippers visiting the Temple were used to remunerate the builders, artisans, and craftsmen for their labours (Stevens 2006:171). The Levites were responsible for collecting the tithes from the people who lived too far from the Temple.

5.7.2.2 *Temple expenditure*

In return for services rendered, the Temple provided the priests and Levites with food, shelter, and clothing. A wide variety of specialists, such as treasurers, scribes, prophets, and diviners, were also part of the temple staff. Skilled and unskilled artisans and craftsmen were essential for the maintenance of the Temple and also for the smooth running of the sacrificial rituals. Payment of these people made up a substantial part of the Temple's expenses (Dever 1995:428; Stevens 2006:121). The biblical reference (2 Ki 12:2-17) mentioned above, provides us with the additional information that the artisans and craftsmen received silver for their labours.

A less voluntary expense occurred when the Temple was plundered by the Judaeen king to meet the demands of a political aggressor. The Bible provides ample evidence for this practice (see for example, 1 Ki 15:18-19; 2 Ki 12:18).

As a result of the considerable taxes and tithes paid by the Judaeen population, the Temple in Jerusalem would have been in a position to assume the role of creditor to the community. Loans, in the form of either agricultural produce or silver, might well have been obtained from the Temple. Whether or not the Deuteronomic law (Dt 23:20-21) forbidding the lending and taking of interest between Israelites applied to the Temple as well can only be speculated. A law regulating the remission of debts (Dt 15:2) would not have been necessary, had the ancient Israelites not been involved in usurious practices (Stevens 2006:147).

5.8 TAXATION

Taxes are, by definition, a percentage of a person's income paid regularly to the governing political authority by all members of society to meet the expenses it incurs (Stevens 2006:7). These were generally levied in kind (agricultural produce or livestock) or in the form of conscript labour (1 Sm 8: 15, 17). Tithes were compulsory contributions offered to the religious institution to cover their expenses. Tithes could be in the form of agricultural products and livestock or

the equivalent in precious metals (Stevens 2006:6). Taxes and tithes were compulsory. Voluntary contributions to a government were also known as tithes, and as gifts and offerings to the Temple (Stevens 2006:7).

5.8.1 Tithes and taxes

The ancient Israelites were subject to several kinds of tax systems. In accordance with the law in Leviticus 27:30-33, the Israelites were obliged to render ten percent of their yearly agricultural produce to the Temple in Jerusalem in return for the use of the land allocated to them by YHWH. This tithe or 'tenth holy unto YHWH' could be agricultural products (grain, wine, and oil) and livestock, or it could be redeemed, in which case an additional fifth of the yield was to be added to the sum (Lv 27:31). Central to this practice was the stipulation that the tithe had to be taken to the designated shrine.

This cultic ritual was not exclusively Israelite, but was practiced throughout the ancient Near East (Gossai 2000:1315). It was a major source of income and a means to maintain the temples and holy shrines, as well as support the personnel serving the deity, the Levites and the priests (Nm 18:26; 2 Chr 31:5; Stevens 2006:95). In addition to the mandatory 'tithe', there were also voluntary offerings or contributions which could be made, for example, in appreciation for forgiveness or as a vow.

The members of the tribe of Levi were exempt from tithe payments because instead of land, they had been allocated 48 cities around the country in which to live (Nm 35:2-8). Without land the Levites were deprived of direct access to agricultural products. Numerous stipulations surrounding the tithe helped overcome this: a tenth of all the tithes received was to be set aside as compensation for their services; a tenth of the amount the Levites received was to be used to support the high priest (Nm 18:21-28); and every third year the tithe was to be eaten together with the Levites and the poor. Part of the tithe was also to be used for festivities (Lv 14:22-27).

Every Israelite over the age of twenty was also expected to pay their yearly half-

shekel as laid down in Exodus 30:13-14. This payment or 'tax' was secular, made to the governing political authority to support the temple economy. According to Stevens (2006:7), the fact that in ancient Israel little or no distinction was made between the secular and religious dimensions makes it difficult to determine which taxes and tithes were religious and which were secular. This lack of clear boundaries between the two is evident in 1 Samuel 8:15; 17, 'he [the king] will tithe your crops and vineyards to provide for his courtiers and officials ... [and also] your flocks'. It is unclear whether or not the tithe referred to here is an additional 'secular' tithe or the original 'religious' tithe meant to provide support for the Temple and its personnel (Powis Smith 1914:120). The tithe was also not always used for sacral purposes, but sometimes constituted a source of income for the state. This becomes apparent when King Hezekiah requested the collection of the tithes (2 Chr 31:5-6) (Gossai 2000:1315). The cult reformation introduced by Hezekiah (see Chapter Six) would have benefited the king financially.

The law governing the payment of the First Fruits does not stipulate any amount. It was left to the individual to decide how much would be paid to YHWH (Ex 22:29; 23:19). In addition, the first born male descendant, considered to belong to YHWH, was redeemed by an offering of not more than five shekels of silver within one month of the birth (Ex 13:12-15; Lv 27:6). Only 3 shekels were paid for the first daughter (Lv 27:6).

Additional taxes were imposed upon the people in times of necessity. According to 2 Kings 15:20, King Menahem of Israel (*Minnihimme*) levied a tax of 50 shekels on all the wealthy citizens of his kingdom to meet the demands made by Tiglath Pileser III in 738 BCE. One thousand talents is the equivalent of 3,000,000 shekels. Some 60,000 men would have had to pay 50 shekels to meet these demands. The population of the Northern Kingdom was approximately 209,750 in the late 8th century BCE (Broshi & Finkelstein 1992:54). This would mean there was one man to every 3.5 people. This payment guaranteed Menahem's seat on the Israelite throne.

5.8.2 Forced labour or corvée and military service

The practice of conscripting legally free citizens for various projects for one month of every year was one of the burdens referred to by 1 Samuel (8:11-12) that accompanied the introduction of the monarchy (Ahlström 1982:31). This was an institution well known in the Syro-Palestinian world, long before the Israelites introduced their monarchy. In addition to being called to do military service, the king could take the 'servants, men and women, of your oxen and your donkeys and make them work for him' (1 Sm 8:16). Whereas most believe that all citizens, Israelites as well as non-Israelites, were subject to forced labour, Mendelsohn (1962:35) argues that corvée was only enforced upon 'the lower and dependent classes'.

Solomon was only able to realise his ambitious building projects, the fortification of Jerusalem, as well as the construction of the Temple and the palace, by enforcing his right to uncompensated labour on the Israelite population (1 Ki 9:15-19). The use of conscripted labour is alluded to in only three other instances: when King Asa rebuilt Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah (1 Ki 15:22), when King Shallum built his palace (Jr 22:13), and when Nehemiah appealed for assistance to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem (Neh 2:17-3:32). One can assume that the kings of Israel and Judah made use of this right to accomplish other building projects, such as the wide-scale terracing of the highlands that took place during the 8th century BCE. Farmers, together with their plough animals, may well have been forced to work the crown properties and royal estates, and also to participate in the running of the royal household. The huge influx of refugees from the north would have provided Hezekiah with a ready supply of cheap labour with which to realise his fortification and building projects. A seal provides evidence that the practice of compulsory labour was still in use in Judah in the 7th century BCE. The inscription reads: 'Pela'yahu who is (in charge) over the corvée'. Based on the palaeographic evidence, it was inscribed in the 7th century BCE (Avigad & Sass 1997:29).

The close proximity of the hostile Syrians to the Northern Kingdom appears to have been an incentive for the Israelite kings to maintain a standing army as

introduced by David. The kings of Judah generally did not feel this was necessary. In 2 Chronicles 26:11, we learn that Hezekiah's great-grandfather, King Uzziah, reorganised the army. The author gives us some idea what this reorganisation entailed: a full-time, fully trained and equipped army under the command of Hananiah, a general, stood ready to support the king. Each soldier was equipped with a mail coat, a shield, a spear, a helmet, a bow, and stones for a slingshot.

The national militia came into being based on the national census. Those exempt were priests and Levites, anybody who built a new house, planted a vineyard, became engaged, was newly married, or was afraid (Dt 20:1-9) (King & Stager 2001:241). The militia was divided into twelve regiments under their respective officers. Each regiment was called out for one month reserve duty every year, but otherwise the soldiers lived at home and were only summoned in emergencies. This was imperative in a country, such as Judah, with 'a complex multi-seasonal agriculturalist regimen' (Holladay 2009a: private communication).

5.9 TRANSPORTATION AND TRADE-ROUTES

Several factors (political, economic, and geographical) determined whether goods were transported over land or by sea. Water transportation (sea- and river borne) was considerably cheaper and the more viable option for transporting high-volume, low-value goods, such as agricultural products. High-value, low volume luxury goods were transported long distances overland by donkey, and later, camel caravans. Both modes involved risks and dangers, such as storms, pirates, or robbers.

5.9.1 Overland transportation

Light loads were simply carried by the people themselves on foot, while donkeys, and less frequently mules, were the main means of transportation for heavy loads⁶¹ over short distances (Isserlin 2001:184). This limited the radius of the

⁶¹ Engels (1978:15) calculated that the average pack animal in the Macedonian baggage train carried on an average 250 lb (i.e. 113 kg). An adult donkey can carry between 40-80 kg

exchange of agricultural produce (Hopkins 1996:125). Most of the roads connecting the villages were little more than footpaths following the layout of the country and just wide enough for a donkey.

As evidenced by the iconography of the Lachish Reliefs, which depicts a camel with the belongings of a family loaded on its back, camels were being used as beasts of burden by the late 8th century BCE (Elat 1979b:539). Their ability to travel about 40 km per day, to go without water for three days, and to carry heavier loads (about 150 kg⁶²) made them ideal for transportation over long distances (Isserlin 2001:184; King & Stager 2001:186).



Figure 10: Camel caravan in the Danakil Depression, Ethiopia⁶³

Two or four wheeled carts, drawn by oxen,⁶⁴ donkeys, or mules, were used to transport loads too heavy or bulky to be strapped to a donkey's back. Biblical testimony to the presence and use of horses is usually in association with war. Horses were never employed as pack or draft animals, only for military purposes (King & Stager 2001:187).

depending on their age and cover about 30 km per day (FAO 1994:3).

⁶² This is an average as sources provide conflicting amounts. According to Engels (1978:14), a camel carries about 300 lb (i.e. 136 kg) over long distances. Holladay (2006:320) works with a carrying capacity of 195 kg.

⁶³ Photo: Author, October 2009.

⁶⁴ A bullock drawing a cart is depicted on the Lachish Relief (King & Stager 2001:189).

5.9.2 International routes

Situated on the eastern Mediterranean coast, ancient Israel formed a land-bridge between Egypt and the desert in the south, and Syria and the mountains in the north. The area was traversed by two major overland trade and communication routes, the *Via Maris* and the King's Highway (see Figure 11). While on one hand, they provided excellent trading opportunities, on the other hand, they also served as military highways for invading armies advancing from the north and from the south (Matthews 1995:xxv). The course of these highways was largely determined by the topography of the region.

5.9.2.1 *The Via Maris*

The *Via Maris*, a Latin term meaning the 'Way of the Sea' (Is 9.1), was *the* most important thoroughfare through Palestine. It ran parallel to the Mediterranean coastline connecting Egypt with Anatolia and Mesopotamia. From Egypt it ran northward close to the coast to Gaza where it forked either to the east to Petra or it continued north along the coast, through the Plain of Philistia, to Joppa. At Joppa it turned right to Aphek and then continued north along the eastern edges of the Plain of Sharon to Megiddo. At Megiddo it split: one route continued north through Hazor to Damascus, a second turned east through the Beth-Shean Valley and on to the Transjordan where it intercepted the King's Highway, and a third branched off to the left across the Carmel on to Tyre and the Phoenician Coast (Isserlin 2001:43; Mazar 1992:8).

Shortly after ascending the Judaeian throne, Hezekiah waged war against the Philistines and reclaimed the territory down to the Gaza (2 Ki 18:8). This move would have brought the *Via Maris* under Judaeian control. Judah, once again, would have been in a position to benefit from the lucrative trade traversing the *Via Maris*, which Sargon II (721-707 BCE) actively encouraged between the Assyrians and Egyptians (Tadmor 1966:92). Trade would also have passed along a highway that Isaiah (19:23) refers to, which ran from Egypt to Assyria.

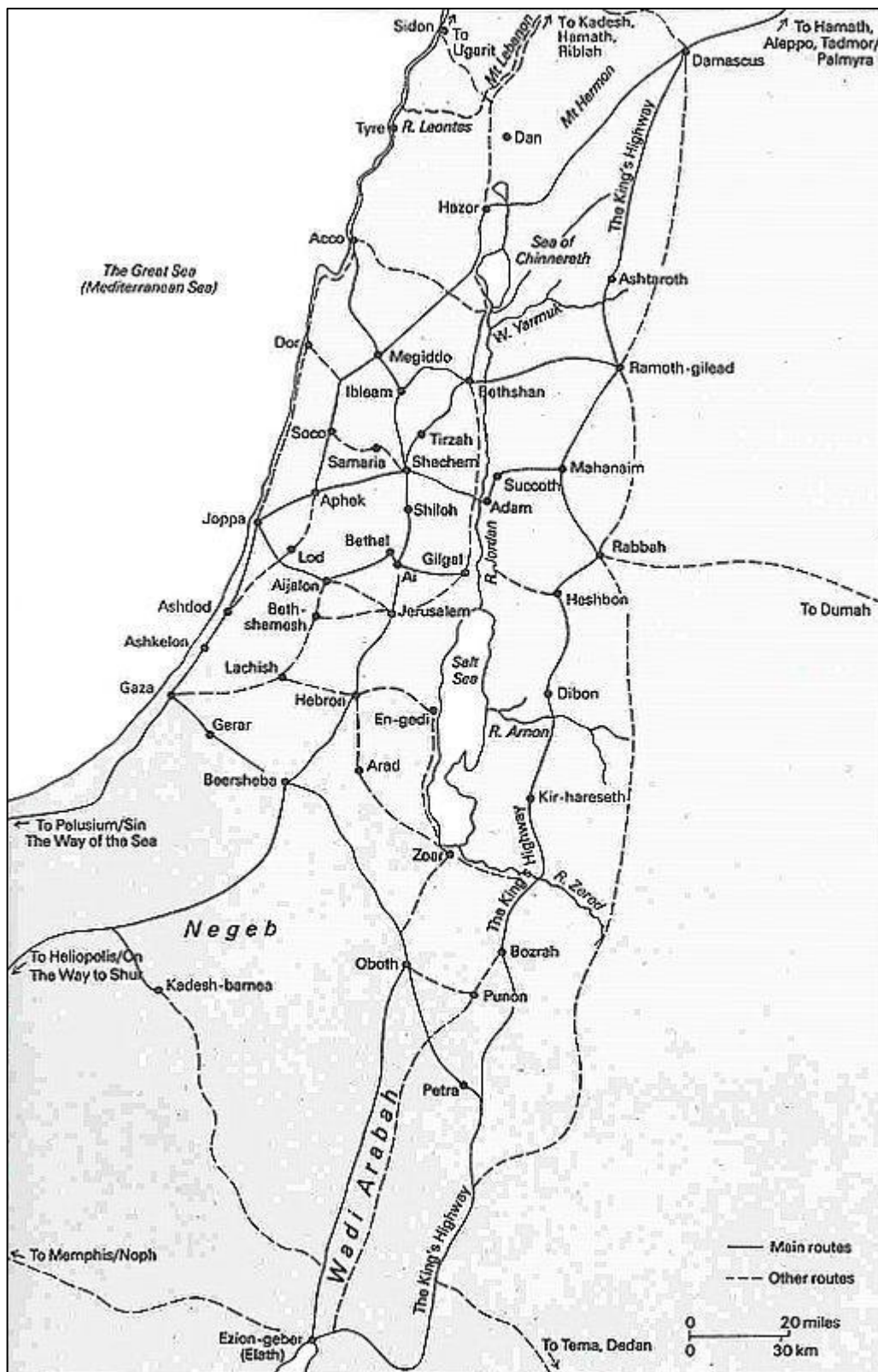


Figure 11: Main routes. Solid lines are routes with textual evidence, dotted lines are routes inferred on the basis of the terrain (NBA:65)

5.9.2.2 *The King's Highway*

Another major international route, known as the 'King's Highway',⁶⁵ ran the length of Transjordan from Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba in the south to Damascus in the north where it joined up with the *Via Maris* (Isserlin 2001:45).

5.9.3 **National roads**

5.9.3.1 *The National Highway*

There was a third trunk route that benefited Judah and linked the important political and religious sites of Beersheba, Jerusalem, Bethel, and Shechem (Astour 1995:1415). This longitudinal highway ran inland, along the crest of the central and southern Palestinian highland, from Hazor and Beth-Shean in the north through the Judaeen hills to Beersheba in the south, and then down on to Eilat/Elath (Dubovský 2006b:156). An alternative route led south from Hebron to Arad and on to Tel Malhata, where it met the road from Eilat/Elath. Arad was also the gateway of another road from Arabia and the east. From Edom it arrived at Arad after passing south of the Dead Sea (Dorsey 1991:125).

5.9.3.2 *Local Roads*

These three routes, the two international trade routes and the national highway, were inter-connected by numerous traverse roads running west-east: the 'way of Beth-horon' passed through Gibeon and on to Jerusalem; another led from the harbour town of Joppa to Jerusalem; and the 'way of the Arabah', just one of the numerous Judaeen routes that joined Judah to the southern Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea, led from Jerusalem through to the oasis of Jericho (Astour 1995:1416). It also joined Judah with Eilat/Elath. Another route led from Lachish to Hebron and Ein-ge-di on the shore of the Dead Sea and on to Moab (Silver 1983:42). A route via Beersheba and Arad linked Philistia to the King's Highway. This route also forked south through Kadesh Barnea in the Negev to the Gulf of

⁶⁵ Oded (1970:182) points out that *ḥarrān šarri*, the Akkadian for 'King's Highway', first appeared during the Neo-Assyrian imperial administration in the 8th century BCE. The biblical redactors might have borrowed this term and used it to refer to the route Moses used.

Aqabah and Eilat/Elath and was important to the caravans carrying incenses, gold, and spices from Southern Arabia to the Levantine ports on the Mediterranean coast (Isserlin 2001:46).

Surveys and archaeological excavations at over 1000 Iron Age sites have shown that these were not the only roads running through this narrow strip of land (Dorsey 1991:54). The heavily trafficked coastal regions were traversed by at least 62 longitudinal thoroughfares. Through the Judaeen and Samarian highlands ran some 34 longitudinal thoroughfares, while some 59 local and lateral roads ran through Judaea. The location of the harbours along the Mediterranean coast was another important determining factor. Some eleven roads led from the harbour town at Joppa to the highlands of Samaria and Judah. Undoubtedly not all of these reconstructed thoroughfares date to the Iron Age, but research at these sites has shown that virtually all are situated on reconstructible thoroughfares (Dorsey 1991:209).

5.9.4 Maritime

The Palestinian littoral lacked natural harbours similar to those found on the Phoenician coast. A few small bays and river mouths, such as those found at Dor, Ashkelon, Joppa, and Gaza, provided anchorage for the smaller vessels used by the Phoenicians (Isserlin 2001:21; Miller & Hayes 1986:43).

The coastal town of Joppa was, already during the reign of Solomon, a convenient harbour for ancient Israel. Numerous roads provided access to this vital port, which was a favourite stopping place for Egyptians on their way north (Dorsey 1991:62). It is listed as one of the cities conquered by Sennacherib during his 3rd campaign to Palestine and is recorded by the Assyrian scribes as one of the four cities belonging to Sidqa, the Philistine king of Ashkelon.

The international marine trade within the Mediterranean had been developing and extending ever since the Late Bronze Age, as indicated by the presence of imported pottery from Cyprus, Greece, and the Aegean Islands, Syria, and Egypt. Phoenicia's ideal location at a junction of marine and overland trade

routes ultimately led to the country dominating the seas of the Mediterranean (Khalaf 1996-2009). According to Herodotus (iii:107), the perfumes, spices, and incense from Arabia, transported overland by caravans, were forwarded to Greece and the West by the Phoenician sea merchants.

Water transportation was cheaper and the only viable method to transport low-value agricultural products over large distances, as is illustrated by the cargos of the following shipwrecks.

5.9.4.1 *The Ulu Burun shipwreck*

The cargo of a shipwreck discovered off the southern coast of Anatolia, Turkey, at Ulu Burun suggests royalty and consists primarily of raw materials. Manufactured goods are also present, testimony to the extensive trade that flourished during the late 14th century BCE (Potts 1995:1462). Among the raw materials were commodities such as silver, tin, 10 tons of primarily Cypriot copper ingots, cobalt-blue glass ingots, elephant and hippopotamus ivory, logs of Egyptian ebony,⁶⁶ cedar, murex opercula, ostrich eggshells (which were probably used as containers), tortoise carapaces to produce the sound boxes for stringed musical instruments, seashell rings, orpiment or yellow arsenic, and approximately one ton of terebinth resin stored in some 130 Canaanite jars and probably to be used for the making of incense. Among the manufactured goods were Cypriot ceramics, Canaanite jewellery, scrap gold jewellery, numerous precious Egyptian objects of gold, electrum, silver, and stone, as well as a scarab of queen Nefertiti, large quantities of beads made from agate, amber, faience, glass, and ostrich eggs, bronze tools, weapons, and fishing equipment. The cargo also included edibles for the crew, such as pistachio nuts, olives, pomegranates, figs, grapes, barley, wheat, coriander, black cumin, pine nuts, almonds, and various other unidentifiable pulses and seeds (INA:http://www.inadiscover.com/projects/all/southern_europe_mediterranean_aegean/uluburun_turkey/report/).

⁶⁶ Moorey (1994:352) maintains the wood was African blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*) and not ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*).

A record of these 'invisible trade'⁶⁷ goods would never have been possible if the Ulu Burun had not been shipwrecked. Similarly, it is difficult to determine what, and in what quantities, Judah might have traded 'invisible goods' in exchange for the wares in Hezekiah's storehouses and treasuries. If such goods were already being shipped in such quantities back in the 14th century BCE, then it may be assumed that the bulk of the goods being trade between Egypt and Judah would have been transported by the Phoenician ships. Traders, however, might have opted for the overland routes when exporting goods to Egypt, for while sea voyages from Egypt up the Syro-Palestinian coast to Phoenicia benefited from the prevailing currents up the eastern Mediterranean coast, a sea voyage in the opposite direction meant sailing against them (Mark 1997:128).

5.9.4.2 *Two Phoenician shipwrecks*

Two Phoenician shipwrecks dating to *ca.* 750 BCE have been found lying at a depth of about 400 m opposite Ashkelon off the coast of Israel. The boats, now named *Tanit* (Shipwreck A) and *Elissa* (Shipwreck B) and carrying some 750 wine amphorae, were probably en route from one of the Phoenician harbours to Egypt or even the newly established Tyrian colony of Carthage (Ballard *et al* 2002:151). The evidence suggests that not only were these Phoenician boats manned by Phoenicians, but they were transporting amphorae, purpose-made for maritime transport and produced somewhere along the Phoenician coast. The origin of the wine they contained remains unknown (Ballard *et al* 2002:166).

5.10 TRADE AND COMMERCE

5.10.1 **Local or internal trade**

Trade on a national level was probably limited to the exchange of basic necessities over short distances, between villages and between the villages and the few cities. Erdkamp (2005:201) claims that a radius of 15-20 km was typical for the catchment area for a local market town in pre-industrial societies. In markets set up in the villages or towns, the city gate (2 Ki 7:1, 18) or at the large

⁶⁷ Refer to 5.1.

piazzas adjoining the gates (Beersheba, Lachish), farmers and craftsmen would have bartered their limited surpluses and finished products privately, without intermediaries and without documentation of the transaction taking place (De Vaux & McHugh 1997:78; Mazar 1992:511). Agricultural surpluses would have included grain, oil, and wine, perhaps some fresh and dried fruit, vegetables, and livestock, such as lambs and kids.

Small scale commerce was essential to the urbanites, many of whom were engaged in full-time labour. In Jerusalem, entire streets appear to have been reserved for commercial activities, such as the sale of pottery and foodstuffs (1 Ki 20:34; Jer 37:21). Specialised artisans and craftsmen might have sourced their raw materials (wood, metals for jewellery, and stone) independently or depended on intermediaries to do so. Payment would have been made using pieces of precious metals, such as *hacksilver*, precious stones, or in exchange for other goods or services (Borowski 2003:56). The increased appearance of weights as of the 8th century BCE suggests goods were increasingly paid for in precious metals, probably silver.

The appearance of the mass-produced *lmlk* jars and the standardised weights point to centralisation, with the crown playing a dominant role. Further archaeological evidence of volumetric measures being state supervised is provided by a small jar found in Beersheba, dating to ca. 700 BCE and bearing the inscription *ḥṣy lmlk*, meaning a 'half-royal (measure)': a full measure was the *iśšaròn*. The jug could hold 1.2 litres (Aharoni 1975:160-162; Avishur & Heltzer 2000:141). Amongst the *lmlk* jar handles, the inscription *bt lmlk*, 'royal *bat*' was found. The stamp could indicate that the crown guaranteed the measure *bat*, which was 22.5 litres. However, variations have been noted with the contents fluctuating between 20-24 litres, presumably due to the lack of a means to confirm the measurements (Avishur & Heltzer 2000:141).

5.10.2 International trade

5.10.2.1 *Export products*

Judah's export potential was limited to the three main agricultural crops and their by-products. A lucrative wood or fishing industry, as might have been the case in the Northern Kingdom, was lacking in Judah (Kletter 1998:149).

Trade in agricultural products was limited by transportation costs and the fact that, due to the similarity in climate, most countries in the region grew the same crops (grain, grapes, and olives). Although the epigraphic evidence suggests Judah exported wine and olive oil, prohibitive transport costs probably curtailed the export of Judaeian grain. The risks and dangers involved were also too high to make it a viable export product (Heichelheim 1965:224; Muth 2000:368). The cost of transporting grain farther than 20 km makes it financially unattractive (Clark & Haswell 1970:191).⁶⁸ If grain is transported any farther its net value exceeds its actual value in terms of saleability at a profit. For this reason, the Roman emperor Diocletian issued an edict in 301 CE that sought to stem inflation and control the prices of goods and transport. According to the edict, the cost of delivering a wagonload of wheat would double with a journey of 480 km (Muth 2000:368). Judaeian grain was probably not exported to Assyria either. According to Herodotus (i:193), Assyria was the richest grain-bearing country in the world.

Finkelstein & Silberman (2001:207) have suggested that Judaeian olive oil might have been profitably exported to both Assyria and Egypt, as both countries lacked suitable environments to cultivate olives. In the 7th century BCE Assyria went to great lengths to stimulate the production of olive oil in the Levant. Excavations at Ekron have brought to light over 115 installations capable of producing 1,000 tons, or 290 thousand gallons⁶⁹ of olive oil. This centre of olive oil production was conveniently situated close to the Judaeian olive groves, along the international trade route and close to the Mediterranean, from where it could

⁶⁸ I would like to thank Professor J.S. Holladay for drawing this valuable book to my attention.

⁶⁹ The 1000 tons, or 290 thousand gallons, is at 3,785 litres per US gallon, the equivalent of 1,097,650 litres.

reap the benefits of the extensive Phoenician maritime trade routes (Gitin 1990:¶25). The archaeological evidence, however, does not suggest that this was the case during Hezekiah's reign.

The Judaeans probably obtained some of the luxury goods, such as the purple-dyed fabrics and the carved ivories, from Phoenicia in exchange for agricultural products.

5.10.2.2 Import products

The extensive list of products imported by the Judaeans has been discussed in Chapter Four. The archaeological evidence has shown that Judah's imports were not limited to non-perishables. A large number of fish bones were found under the floor of a residential home dating to the 9th – 8th century BCE in the City of David. The bones were identified as belonging to Nile perch from Egypt; mullet, sea-bream, and red drum from the Mediterranean, and catfish from the freshwater rivers. As Jerusalem is situated too far from the sea or the Jordan River for the fish to have been sold fresh, they must have undergone some form of conservation, such as drying, salting or smoking, before transportation to the capital city. The biblical references to the 'Fish Gate' (Zph 1:10; Neh 3:3; 2 Chr 33:14) also hint at commercial activities involving fish; there were some wealthy urbanites who could afford such delicacies (King & Stager 2001:121-122; Reich *et al* 2007:160).

5.10.2.3 Trading partners

The exchange of goods and commercial ties on an international level existed among the countries in the Near East already in the late 2nd and early 1st millennia BCE. According to the Bible, King Solomon initiated and monopolised trade relationships with Egypt (1 Ki 10:28), Africa (1 Ki 9:28), Arabia (1 Ki 10:13), Phoenicia (1 Ki 5:10), and the Lebanon (1 Ki 9:19) (Elat 1979b:545; Isserlin 2001:72).

Trade with Egypt can be traced back to ca. 1500 - 1150 BCE when Canaan

came under Egyptian rule and heavily laden caravans transported Canaanite tribute to Egypt's pharaoh. Wine and particularly olive oil, which was valued by but unavailable to the Egyptians, was transported in 'Canaanite' jars made especially for trading, particularly for shipping. In Tuthmosis's 29th year, some 95,000 litres of wine from Palestine were delivered to Egypt (Ahlström 1993:251). Several of these undecorated jars have been found in both royal and private tombs in Egypt (Amiran 1970:140-141; Mark 1997:130). Hosea (12:1) mentions olive oil being exported to Egypt. The limestone weights appear in Judah during late 8th – 7th century BCE. They bear numerals incised in Egyptian hieratic testifying to trade relations with Egypt (Dalley 2004:389). The weights might have been a move by Hezekiah, who was very pro-Egyptian, to further encourage and facilitate trade with Egypt. Egyptian linen was transported to Judah either overland by merchant caravan or by sea on Phoenician ships (see 4.3.3.6). The import of horses from Egypt dates back to the time of Solomon (1 Ki 10:28) (see 4.3.2.2).

Epigraphic and archaeological evidence testifies to long established trade relations between the Israelites and the Phoenicians (Geva 1982:69). Solomon and Hiram of Tyre were involved in a joint trading expedition in the Red Sea (Mazar 1992:513). Tyre exchanged timber (cedar and fir) (1 Ki 5.10), metals for weapons and tools, luxury goods, such as fine pottery vases and ivory ornaments, exotica, and military equipment for raw materials and agricultural products from Israel and Judah (Ezk 27:17) (Geva 1982:69). Their dominance of the maritime trade in the Mediterranean ensured that the Phoenicians controlled international trade in the East (Is 23:2) (De Vaux & McHugh 1997:78).

The bulkier goods, such as timber (see 4.3.3.4) and ivory (see 4.3.3.5) from Africa, were probably brought to Judah more cost-effectively by Phoenician ships, while the small, high-value goods, such as the gold (see 4.2.1), precious stones (see 4.2.3 and 4.2.4), and incense and spices (see 4.2.2), were transported overland by merchant caravan from Arabia and places even further afield.

Trade with the 'Greeks' is evidenced by the Cypriot and Eastern Greek pottery

found at Israelite sites. They date from the 10th century BCE onwards (Mazar 1992:514). The Greeks, like the Phoenicians, were islanders and seafarers, and as a result more connected to and integrated into the rest of the Mediterranean (Stevens 2006:12-13).

An ostrakon was found on the surface at Tell Qasile, a port established by the Philistines and destroyed by Tiglath-Pileser III in 732 BCE. Written in Palaeo-Hebrew, which was common in Judah in the 8th century BCE, the ostrakon reads: 'Belonging to the king, one thousand and a hundred [units] of oil ... Hiyahu' (Negev & Gibson 2001:415), a person with an Israelite name. This ostrakon is the equivalent of a receipt confirming the delivery of a consignment of olive oil (Borowski 1987:125-126).

5.10.3 Merchants and traders

While trade does not seem to have constituted an integral part of the Judaeen economy, it could not have functioned entirely without it (Elat 1979b:527). Indeed, the biblical narrators appear to have been rather condescending towards traders and commerce. Their popular reference to a trader as *kěna'ănî'*, 'Canaanite', might simply have been a reference to their ethnicity, rather than derogatory. The Bible testifies to the diverse origins of traders living and working in ancient Israel: Phoenicians, especially Tyrians, Arabs, Midianites, and Egyptians (see for example, Gn 37:28; 1 Ki 10:15; Neh 13:16) (Elat 1979b:529; Heichelheim 1965:236).

The procurement of luxury goods and exotica for the court and the wealthy elite, as well as raw materials for specialised artisans, such as jewellers and blacksmiths, could only have been accomplished by merchants involved in international trade (Isserlin 2001:181). Items for the cultic rituals at the Temple as well as the priesthood (parchment for texts, fine linen garments, and incense) were acquired through trade, but as no temple archive has been found in Jerusalem, we have no way of knowing if—or to what extent—the Temple was involved in trade (Stevens 2006:120).

5.10.4 Money

The concept of money, or the equivalent thereof, was established early in the ancient Israelite society, although barter was probably the traditional form of exchange in Judah. According to the biblical texts, measured silver and not barter was the method of payment (2 Ki 6:25; 1 Ki 17:24; 1 Sm 9:8; 1 Ki 20:39; Elat 1979a:174).

If a farmer was prevented from delivering his tithe in kind, then, according to the Deuteronomic provision, he was permitted to 'turn it into money' (Dt 14:25). Herodotus (i:93-94) claimed the Lydians in Asia Minor introduced coins in the 5th century BCE, but his information was only partially correct. The oldest coins, discovered at the city of Ephesus in Turkey (ancient Lydia), were made from electrum, a naturally occurring mixture of gold and silver, and date to the second half of the 7th century BCE (Dedeoğlu 2003:50).

Before the introduction of coinages, precious metals in any shape and form were used as an index of value, a medium of exchange and payment. During the Iron Age, and particularly during the Neo-Assyrian period, silver replaced gold, copper, and bronze as the standard of value and exchange (Aubet 1987:61; Thompson 2007:xi). Transactions were concluded by weighing bits of broken silver jewellery or hacking off pieces from silver ingots or bars, hence the terminology '*hacksilber*' (King & Stager 2001:194). With time, bars of silver, which bore pre-marked indentations that divided the bar into sections, appeared. These indentations facilitated the breaking or hacking off the required amount. This is clearly illustrated by the silver hoard found at Tel Dor, the Phoenician port on the Mediterranean coast (Boshoff 2000:24-27; Thompson 2003:69).

The *shekel*, about 12 g, was the major weight standard employed during biblical times. It was also the basic unit of currency, as payments were made by weighing out silver. Shekel fraction weights included, in descending order of value, the talent (*kikar*), the mina (*maneh*), the shekel, the *pîm*, the *beqa'*, and the *gera* (King & Stager 2001:197). A talent, the largest unit of weight, weighed approximately 30 kg, and was equal to 60 minas or 3,000 shekels. One mina

was the equivalent of 50 or 60 shekels⁷⁰ (King & Stager 2001:197). One shekel of silver was the equivalent of approximately 200 shekels of copper and 277 shekels of tin. One talent of gold was the equivalent of four talents of silver. Thus, according to the biblical texts, Hezekiah's treasuries contained 900 kg of gold and 9,000 kg of silver, while Sennacherib claims to have received 900 kg of gold and 24,000 kg of silver. How did a king of such a small kingdom manage to accumulate such considerable quantities of precious metals?

5.10.5 Tolls, taxes, and duties

The Bible records that during the reign of King Solomon, the royal coffers benefited handsomely from the tariffs imposed on the goods imported and exported, as well as from customs collected on the merchandise and caravans that passed through the country (King & Stager 2001:194). His annual income amounted to six hundred sixty-six talents of gold. The biblical author emphasises that revenue from tolls and foreign trade, the Arab kings, and the provincial governors was additional to this amount of gold (1 Ki 10:14-15).

It appears this practice of imposing taxes and tolls on transit trade was common in the ancient Near East in the 8th century BCE. Hopkins (2000:1324) believes that the transit tolls imposed on the cargo may have been up to 25 percent of their commercial value.

Holladay (2006:321) uses the mid-8th century BCE merchant caravan from Temā and Šaba' as an example to illustrate and calculate the amount of the cargo traversing the Levant between Southern Arabia and Mesopotamia. According to the inscription found on a four column clay tablet in the Ḥaditha area of the mid-Euphrates region (see Appendix C), the caravan was on its return journey to Southern Arabia. The caravan's cargo included 'blue-purple wool, ... wool, iron <pappar>dilû-stones, [and] every kind of merchandise' (Younger 2000:282). There were 200 camels accompanied by at least 100 people from Tema and

⁷⁰ Kletter (1998:99-100) provides an overview on the argument whether one mina is the equivalent of fifty or sixty shekels.

Saba (biblical Sheba). At 150 kg⁷¹ per camel this caravan was moving, or could have moved, at a minimum, a total of approximately 30 metric tons of cargo. Some, if not all, of the people might have been carrying a load as well.⁷² Holladay (2006:320-321) points out that silver and/or precious metals are not mentioned as part of the cargo. He suggests that a smaller group of merchants carrying this precious cargo probably moved separately, travelling faster and lighter to avoid falling prey to robbers. While this is a possibility, it is more likely that the caravans only carried sufficient 'ready cash' to meet the duties and customs imposed along the way. The caravan's cargo obviously did not originate in Southern Arabia, suggesting that the practice was for merchant caravans to buy and sell goods along the way (Na'aman 2007:112). The profits only became evident once the cargo they carried was finally sold in the caravan's country of origin.

It appears the caravan failed to notify Ninurta-kuddurrī-ušur, the governor of Suḥu and Mari that it was passing through the area, close-by the wells of Martu (Ammurru?) and Ḫalatu. It then entered the city of Ḫindānu without paying the taxes due to pass through the area or those required to water the caravan's camels. The amount owing to the governor appears to have been considerable providing sufficient incentive for the governor to take up arms, travel through the night, and set up an ambush for the caravan.

A salt caravan, recently observed in the Danakil Depression in Ethiopia, was made up of over 1000 camels and about 250 donkeys, with one camel driver per 10-25 camels. All the drivers were on foot and, apart from those who were armed, carried only a flask of water. The political instability in the area, as well as the value of the cargo being transported, is incentive to search for safety in numbers. The majority of the donkeys carried 10 slabs of salt, while the camels were modestly loaded with 16 slabs. It was estimated that the salt slabs, measuring about 20 by 7 by 30 cm, weighed about 5 kg each. If the donkeys carried 25,000 kg and the camels 80,000, the caravan was transporting about 92

⁷¹ Holladay (2006:320) performed the same calculation, but arrived at a total of 36 metric tons with each camel carrying 195 kg.

⁷² According to Clark & Haswell (1970:202-205), men can carry over long distances an average of about 35 kg.

metric tons of cargo. It is reasonable to presume that similar circumstances prevailed in the Levant during the late 8th – early 7th century BCE and that the caravans traversing Judah would have been transporting cargo worth a similar small fortune.



Figure 11: Camels and donkeys loaded with slabs of salt in the Danakil Depression, Ethiopia.

5.11 CONCLUSION

Agriculture is generally believed to have constituted the basis of the Judaeen economy. The extent of Hezekiah's wealth suggests alternative sources of revenue, in addition to the income from tithes and taxes as a result of the religious reforms that are discussed in the following chapter, must have been available to the king. The following four possible sources have been identified: 1) international trade in exchange for exportable Judaeen products; 2) new industry; 3) a tax imposed on the people; or 4) tolls, taxes, and customs duties levied on the international overland trade passing through the area.

5.11.1 The export of Judaeen agricultural products

We have no way of gauging the economic importance of the Judaeen agriculture, but the preceding discussion has shown that the export of Judaeen agricultural products could not account for the *extent* of Hezekiah's wealth. They were insufficient in volume and value, and could not have been Hezekiah's (only) source of revenue for the following reasons:

- prohibitive overland transportation costs due to bulk and weight,
- the economies of the surrounding Mediterranean countries were all largely pre-industrial, self-sufficient subsistence agrarian economies supported by the same crops, which limited trading opportunities,
- the prohibitive biblical laws were responsible for the non-capitalist Judaeen society,
- the rural farmers were already over-burdened with substantial taxes and tithes imposed by political and cultic authorities (see 5.8.1), and
- limited archaeological evidence to prove otherwise. Nothing similar to the olive oil production centre at Ekron or storage facilities similar to those built by King Solomon have been found. Hopkins (2000:1325) considers the general absence of areas in the Iron Age cities similar to the Greek agora, evidence that the exchange of surplus commodities took place on a small scale, with the bulk of produce consumed by the farmer's family or rendered as tax to the crown or as tithes to the Temple.

As shall be evidenced in the next chapter, the Judaeen agriculture did contribute substantially to the Judaeen economy.

5.11.2 New industry

For either agricultural or artisanal products to make a significant contribution to the economy, large scale production supported by an efficient and intense distribution system over large distances would have been essential. Here again, supportive literary and archaeological evidence is lacking for both. The *Imlk* jars and the ceramic figurines suggest production on a larger and organised scale, but their appearance in the archaeological record is limited to the Judaeen heartland.

5.11.3 A tax on the men of Judah

There is the possibility that Hezekiah, like Menahem of Israel, imposed a tax on the men of Judah to meet the tribute demands. Working with the same ratio, i.e. one man to every 3.5, and a population estimated at about 111,500, every Judaeen male would have had to pay 86.5 shekels of silver to meet Sennacherib's demands, the equivalent of 920⁷³ talents of silver. Many farmers would have been hard-pushed to do so, especially considering the numerous taxes and tithes already imposed on them.

It is highly unlikely that Hezekiah resorted to these measures. Not only is the Deuteronomist silent on the subject, but judging from the biblical texts, the amounts of silver and gold were already available in the treasuries. There was no necessity to impose an additional tax on the people.

5.11.4 Tolls and customs duties levied on the international trade

The tributes demanded by the Assyrians from Tyre and Damascus were substantially larger than the demands made on the other countries and kings.

⁷³ One talent of gold was the equivalent of four talents of silver and 30 talents of gold the equivalent of 120 talents of silver. Together with the 800 talents of silver, Sennacherib's demand in silver was either 420 or 920 talents.

The size of the tributes reflect the cities' wealth and ability to meet their demands. Both cities lay at advantageous and important intersections of numerous international trade routes and are a clear indication of the financial benefits to be gained from maintaining control of the commercial activities in the region. The fact that the Assyrian monarchs were prepared to fight to gain or retain control of transit trade through the Levant, as well as the trade in the Mediterranean basin, provides substance to this claim.

Judah's role in the international market was limited by her lack of a major sea port and natural resources. Even though the two international trade routes lay outside her boundaries (Kletter 1998:149), an extensive network of roads criss-crossed the country, providing Judah and Hezekiah with ample opportunity to benefit financially from the trade that passed through the region.

It was customary to impose taxes in the form of tolls, duties, and transit fees on the cargo at toll stations or in the towns through which the caravans passed on their way to their final destinations (Barrell 1998:152). Handsome customs and duties were also extracted for a safe passage through the country, for the watering of the camels, and the feeding of both the animals and people accompanying the caravans. This practice was common in the ancient Near East. The Assyrians usually imposed *miksu* on merchandise and agricultural products that crossed borders and passed through stations within Assyria proper and its provinces (Elat 1991:26; Postgate 1974:354-355). It is not unreasonable to conclude that Hezekiah did likewise, rather like his ancestor, King Solomon, had done before him. If Hezekiah had begun milking the trade that passed through the Eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean, as the textual evidence suggests, then Sennacherib would have had every reason to march against him and reassert Assyrian hegemony in the region.

So, although Lowery (1991:130) maintains Judah's status as an Assyrian vassal 'drained the life of Judah', with a social crisis the inevitable outcome, this statement requires qualification. Judah's financial obligations to Assyria *should* have drained the life out of Judah, but they did not, as is evidenced by Hezekiah's bulging storehouses, treasuries, and armoury. Judah was financially

extremely well off, thanks partially or completely to the trade routes passing through the country. Socially, however, the outrage and accusations of the prophets suggest all was not as it should have been.

CHAPTER SIX

HEZEKIAH'S RELIGIOUS REFORMATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Hezekiah introduced comprehensive and uncompromising cultic reforms. According to the biblical narrators, these reforms were aimed at eliminating the Canaanite influences still evident in the Israelite religious practices at this time, to reverse the changes introduced by his apostate father, Ahaz (2 Ki 16:17-18), and to centralise the cult in Jerusalem, all with the ultimate goal of returning to true YHWHistic worship as set down in Deuteronomy (12:26-26:19).

It has in the past been assumed that the Assyrians imposed their gods and cult on the peoples of their vassal or conquered states. Bright (1981:279) writes:

The worship of Assyrian gods, which had been the entering wedge of paganism, could not be set aside, for this would itself be taken as an act of rebellion.

Apart from the stance Assyria adopted with Babylon⁷⁴ (Grayson 2000:35), there is no evidence to support this claim or to believe that the Assyrians imposed their gods on the Judaeans. The Assyrians were religiously tolerant and acknowledged the deities of the people they conquered. Although they regularly sacked the temples of foreign gods, it was the treasures stored in them that prompted these actions. It was not their intention to deliver a blow to the conquered nation's patron deities. When Assur-Nâsir-Pal II took away the gods of 'Azi-ilu of the land of Lakê', he did so because he acknowledged the authority and influence of the gods of the conquered state (*ARAB* I:162). When Assyria imposed vassalage on a country, contracts were signed in the name of Ashur *and* the god of the subjugated state (Van de Mieroop 2007:260). Disobedient

⁷⁴ The Assyrians resorted to extreme tactics in an effort to gain control over Babylonia. By delivering a blow to the nation's cult and destroying the temples and divine images, Sennacherib attempted to gain supremacy in Babylon (Grayson 2000:35).

vassals were severely punished because their actions were regarded as an act against the divine order (Bedford 2001:17).

McKay (1973:14) also points out that the Rabshakeh makes no reference to Assyrian gods (2 Ki 18:22; Is 36:7), but only mentions Hezekiah's removal of the local altars and his centralisation of the cult in Jerusalem (2 Ki 18:22). Neither does McKay (1973:17) believe that Hezekiah's reformation was a reaction to the Assyrian deities and rituals introduced by Ahaz (2 Ki 16:17-18).

The sharp divergence between the two accounts in the Bible, the fact that neither Isaiah nor his contemporary, Micah, makes any mention of the religious reforms, and the limited archaeological evidence, has left scholars doubting the historical credibility of the biblical accounts (Na'aman 1995). The Deuteronomist limits his description of Hezekiah's cultic reforms to one verse (2 Ki 18:4), while the Chronicler's lengthy rendition covers almost three chapters (2 Chr 29-31). The Deuteronomist depicts reforms which took place in Judah only: the Chronicler extends them to encompass Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh as well (Rowley 1962:429). The Chronicler also attributes far more non-cultic reforms to Hezekiah than the Deuteronomist does (Knoppers 1999:567). While lauding the king for his efforts, the Chronicler does not shy from mentioning Hezekiah's lack of orthodoxy and his rebuked invitation to the northern tribes to attend the Passover festival in Jerusalem. This lends authenticity to the events (Rosenbaum 1979:34).

The goal of this chapter is to determine what factors, other than genuine piety and righteousness on Hezekiah's part, may have motivated the king to implement these religious reforms. Might it be because they generated revenue with which to finance his expenditure and contribute to his wealth? The complexity of this task is compounded by the fact that the religion of the Israelites was so interrelated and interwoven with the other aspects of their lives (Scheffler 2001:20).

6.2 CULTIC REFORMS

The Deuteronomist and the Chronicler present two very different accounts of Hezekiah and his reign, in which religious concerns understandably take precedence over political concerns. Both, however, agree the cult was reformed and worship centralised in Jerusalem (2 Ki 18:4: 2 Chr 31) (Miller & Hayes 1986:349).

6.2.1 The high places, the pillars, and the sacred poles

According to 2 Kings 18:4, Hezekiah removed the high places (*bāmôt*), broke the pillars (*maṣṣēbôt*), and cut down the sacred poles (*asherīm*), but what were the high places, pillars, and sacred poles before Hezekiah destroyed them?

Before the construction of the national shrine in Jerusalem, the ancient Israelites worshipped at a number of local sanctuaries (such as Shechem, Bethel, Gilgal, Mamre, and Shiloh) some of which were constructed on the orders of the kings (2 Ki 23:19), making them royal, official, and legitimate cult centres (Scheffler 2001:20). The Judaeans also worshipped at rural shrines that they built ‘upon the hills, and under every green tree’ (Dt 12:12) and according to the Deuteronomist, these shrines date back to the early monarchy (1 Ki 14:22) (McKay 1973:13). The Deuteronomist also mentions the stone pillars (*maṣṣēbôt*) and sacred poles (*asherīm*), regular features of the *bāmôt* (Dt 7:5).

Maṣṣēbôt or stone pillars were hallowed places of worship, legitimately set up by the ancient Israelites until the time of Isaiah (Is 19:19). In Genesis 28:18, Jacob set up a pillar and then anointed it with oil. In Genesis 28:22, a pillar ‘shall be God’s house’ and in Exodus 24:4, Moses sets up twelve pillars. Although the three references to *maṣṣēbôt* in Deuteronomy (7:5; 7:25; 12:3) obviously refer to the idolatrous pillars erected by the Canaanites, the practice of setting up stone pillars representing the presence of the deity seems to have been a legitimate Israelite religious practice up until the time of Hezekiah (Heger 1999:92).

The *asherīm* (Heb. singular *asherah*) were in use from the ‘time of Judges’ up to

the time of Josiah (2 Ki 23:4; Smith 2002:109). The *asherah*, worshipped in the royal cult of both kingdoms, was a wooden pole fashioned by human hand to represent a tree. It was the symbol of the Canaanite fertility goddess by the same name, Asherah. Towards the late 8th century BCE, the sacred poles, or *asherīm*, too were targeted by the Deuteronomist, becoming a source of vehement condemnation (Smith 2002:160).

Despite the fact that *bāmôt* (Heb. singular *bāmāh*) are mentioned over 100 times in the Bible, no consensus has been reached as to their exact nature (King & Stager 2001:320). In general, they appear to have been elevated (naturally or artificially) installations situated on hill-tops in the country or erected on artificially raised platforms located within the settlements (King & Stager 2001:320). Whatever their exact nature, these local, rural shrines were within easy walking distance of the settlements. It was here that the people and the priests gathered for the major festivals, where they worshipped, offered sacrifices, and burnt incense (1 Ki 3:3). They were perhaps official centres for the collection of tithes and taxes that were stored and then redistributed when necessary. This is suggested by the ostraca found at Arad. Several inscriptions dealt with the distribution of supplies stored at the fortress (Stern 1979:258; Mazar 1992:441).

6.2.2 Nehushtan, the bronze serpent

According to the Deuteronomist, in addition to removing the *bāmôt* and destroying the *maššēbôt*, the *Asherah*, and/or *asherīm*, Hezekiah also broke the bronze serpent, Nehushtan, that Moses had made and to which the Israelites offered incense (2 Ki 18:4). This is the only reference to Nehushtan in the Bible. While the historicity of Hezekiah's reforms is questioned, the destruction of the brazen serpent should be—and is—considered reliable, for it is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. Had Nehushtan been worshipped for any length of time, then the biblical authors would surely have criticised it more frequently along with the high places, the pillars, and the poles (Lowery 1991:27; Swanson 2002:463).

The Deuteronomist provides no clues as to the role Nehushtan played within the

Israelite cult, but it clearly violated the Second Commandment, which forbids graven images, and accounts for the Deuteronomist's condemnation (Dt 5:8).

Some scholars believe the bronze snake was another element of the Canaanite religion adopted by the ancient Israelites. Snakes were a well known feature of their fertility cult, often associated with the goddess Asherah (McKay 1973:14). If this was the case, then why did the Deuteronomist never refer to it before in his numerous condemnations of the *bāmôt*, *maššēbôt*, and the *asherīm*? Although the Canaanite influence on the ancient Israelites was significant, the origin of Nehushtan should be sought elsewhere.

Nehushtan could well date back to Moses, as claimed by the Deuteronomist. During their wanderings in the wilderness, YHWH sent 'fiery serpents' as a divine punishment to attack the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness. As a means to prevent further deaths, YHWH instructed Moses to fashion a snake and to set it on a pole⁷⁵ (Nm 21:4-9). Anybody bitten by a snake would survive if they looked at the staff. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing whether this is the very snake made by Moses, why it receives no earlier mention in the Bible, nor where it had been from the time of its creation till its appearance in the Temple (Rowley 1962:426).

During the late 8th century BCE, the Judaeen material culture shows a prevalence of Egyptian iconography, evidence of the close ties between the two countries. The serpent is clearly an Egyptian symbol, as are the two-winged beetle on Hezekiah's seal and the scarab icon on the *Imlk* jars. Hezekiah, perhaps emulating the Egyptian pharaoh, employed the Egyptian-inspired winged scarab as the symbol of his kingship on his seal. Swanson (2002:469) argues that as Judah was firmly in the hands of the Assyrians, Hezekiah was left no other choice but to get rid of all Egyptian iconography, which included Nehushtan. The evidence does not support this statement; not only did Hezekiah

⁷⁵ Joines (1968:251) explains that Nehushtan was used as a 'sympathetic magic', i.e. 'the belief that the fate of an object or person can be governed by the manipulation of its exact image'. A dangerous animal could be driven off by using an exact image of the animal. This was a practice frequently used by the Egyptians to protect the mummies in the underworld and would also explain why the Philistines fashioned golden mice when they were being plague by rodents (1 Sm 6:4-5).

approach the Egyptians to join his rebellion against Assyria, but the hieratic numerals incised on the Judaeian limestone weights during the late 8th century BCE continued and even increased during the 7th century BCE (Dalley 2004:390). The use of Egyptian numerals suggests that Judaeian trade relationships with Egypt flourished both before and after Sennacherib's invasion.

6.2.3 Centralising the cult in Jerusalem

By removing the *bāmôt* Hezekiah centralised the cult and consolidated all worship at the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chr 29). This reform had far-reaching results and consequences.

Three major feasts dominated the Israelite religious calendar: the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (7 days), the Feast of the Weeks⁷⁶ (1 day), and the Feast of Ingathering⁷⁷ (8 days) (Ex 23:14-17; Coogan 2006:134-136). The law obliged all males to make tri-annual pilgrimages to 'appear before YHWH your God in the place chosen by Him' for these feasts (Dt 16:1-17). This generated considerable income for the local cult sites, staffed by priests who conducted the sacrifices (1 Ki 13:2; 2 Ki 17:11) (Smith 2002:160). By authorising their removal, Hezekiah terminated their legal status and that of the cult personnel operating there. Tithes and taxes could no longer be conveniently delivered to the nearest local shrine. Taking into consideration the inconvenience of the journey and of tediously transporting the tithes to Jerusalem, the Deuteronomist pragmatically allows for the tithes to be redeemed for silver (Dt 14:24-26) (Stevens 2006:94). The appearance of the Judaeian weights for weighing precious metals (in this case silver) at the end of the late 8th century BCE might, logically be an incidental consequence of this reform, or vice versa.

6.2.4 The archaeological evidence

Despite extensive archaeological excavations conducted throughout Palestine, very few cult sites have been discovered, only two of which have been dated to

⁷⁶ This feast is also known as the Feast of the First Fruits or the Harvest (Coogan 2006:136).

⁷⁷ This feast is also known as the Feast of the Shelters or Booths (Coogan 2006:136).

the Iron Age II period: the sanctuary at Arad (Stratum VIII) and the large dismantled sacrificial altar at Beersheba (Stratum II) (Herzog *et al* 1984:19; Mazar 1992:496). The discovery of the domestic shrine at Tel Ḥalif, the various anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, Hezekiah's iconic seals, and the *lmk* jars, all dating to the late 8th – early 7th century BCE, suggest that Hezekiah's reforms were not comprehensively iconoclastic, but limited to the eradication of the local shrines so as to centralise the cult at the Temple in Jerusalem.

6.2.4.1 *The sanctuary at Arad*

Herzog (2001:156), who undertook renewed excavations at Arad in 1995-1996, produced new stratigraphical and chronological conclusions that suggest the temple and altar were abandoned and covered over as part of the reforms introduced by Hezekiah.

In the elevated Holy of Holies of the tri-partite sanctuary at Arad, two monolithic altars with concave tops, showing traces of burnt organic material, were found lying on their sides under a thick layer of soil in Stratum VIII (Herzog, Aharoni & Rainey 1987:¶47). Two chisel-dressed stones (*maṣṣēbôt*) stood against the rear wall of the Holy of Holies. The larger of the two limestone slabs, which stood about 90 cm high, had fallen over. It had a rounded back and side and a flat face, which showed signs of red paint. The slab in the other corner had probably been built into the wall and covered with plaster (Herzog *et al* 1984:19). The entrance to the Holy of Holies was positioned opposite the entrance to the broad room and flanked by two hornless limestone incense altars, 50 cm and 30 cm high, and two shallow (offering) platters bearing the Hebrew inscription 'qof kap',⁷⁸ all items considered religious paraphernalia peculiar to the cult (Bloch-Smith 2006:77). A sacrificial altar built of unworked fieldstones, measuring 2.5 by 2.5 m, stood in the courtyard that was abutted by the length of the broad room. The altar conformed to the specifications of the law laid down in Exodus 20:24-25. We know that the temple was dedicated to YHWH, for an ostrakon found there bears the inscription, 'the house of YHWH', and has led scholars to believe

⁷⁸ Herzog *et al* (1984:15) suggests this is the abbreviation for *qōdeš kōhānīm* meaning 'consecrated for the priests'.

that the *maššēbôt* represent YHWH and Asherah (Herzog *et al* 1987:¶61). As has been observed in most pairs of *maššēbôt*,⁷⁹ the one on the left is taller than the one on the right (Avner 2001:¶44), perhaps representing YHWH with his consort, Asherah.

The sanctuary is considered a YHWHistic temple, the only such temple found throughout Palestine, for the following reasons: it faced east like the Jerusalem Temple, and ostraca inscribed with Meremoth and Pashhur, two Israelite priestly names, were found in one of the storerooms built in the courtyard. These names are mentioned in Ezra 8:33 and 1 Chronicles 9:12 (Herzog *et al* 1987:¶61). Its destruction provides substance for Hezekiah's reforms, as well as evidence for the existence of *bamôt* and *maššēbôt*, which can no longer be dismissed as fictional. Evidence of *asherīm* is unlikely to be found as wood is perishable and seldom features in the archaeological record.

Dever (2006b:303) opines that in order for a structure to be labelled a 'temple' or 'sanctuary' evidence has to be found that points to the fact that worshippers believed the deity actually resided within the 9th – 8th century BCE structure. The temple at Arad supports this theory, but because only the dismantled altar, and no structure, was found at Beersheba, we cannot tell whether a temple existed there or not.

6.2.4.2 *The altar at Beersheba*

A large sacrificial altar (1.6 x 1.6 m) was found dismantled and in secondary use during excavations at Beersheba. Some of the large, smoothly carved ashlar that belonged to the four-horned altar had been built into the walls of a storehouse/stables in Stratum II (late 8th century BCE), while others had been found tossed into the fill of the earthen fortification rampart of the city (Finkelstein & Silberman 2001:205n). The original location of the altar is unknown, although the excavator, Aharoni, has suggested that it previously stood in a temple that was destroyed as a result of the reforms introduced by King Hezekiah. Yadin believes the altar was a *bamah* that stood at the city gate (Herzog 1993:172).

⁷⁹ In 2001 Avner (¶20) reported that *maššēbôt* have been found at 36 Iron Age sites in Palestine.

The biblical texts refer to a sanctuary at Beersheba (Amos 8:14) as well as a 'high-place' (2 Ki 23:8). The dressed stones violate the biblical law (to use uncut stones) found in Exodus (20:25-26) and Deuteronomy (27:5-6) (Mazar 1992:496). Four stones, clearly belonging to the upper surface of the altar, were found bearing signs of burning, proving that the altar had been used for sacrifices (Herzog 1993:172).



Figure 12: The reconstructed horned altar excavated at Beersheba⁸⁰

6.2.4.3 A domestic shrine at Tel Ḥalif

The archaeological results provide a very different picture to the very idealistic (and distorted) picture of the Israelite religion conveyed by the biblical texts. The discovery of a domestic shrine at Tel Ḥalif suggests that, while Hezekiah purged the country of *bamôt*, his reforms did not affect the domestic rituals. It appears the shrine was still in use when Sennacherib destroyed the city in 701 BCE, indicating that it survived Hezekiah's reformation (Borowski 1995:151). The shrine dates to the late 8th century BCE and was located in the rear broad room of a four-room house (Stratum VIB, Field IV). The shrine's cultic function is confirmed by the various other artefacts found: a Judaeen pillar figurine head, a

⁸⁰ Photo: Author, Tel Sheva, July 2008.

fenestrated incense stand, and two rectangular carved limestone blocks with bevelled edges and smooth faces, which could be either *maššēbôt* or stands (about 0.15 m wide x 0.25 m high).

6.2.4.4 *Clay figurines*

An abundance of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, many of which were broken and found out of their original contexts, have surfaced at most sites in Judah. A notably large number and variety of figurines that date to the 8th and 7th century BCE were excavated in the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem. Most, however, were found in fills near the fortifications along the northern side of the Southwestern Hill (Yezerski & Geva 2003:67).

The anthropomorphic figurines feature predominantly females, rarely—if ever—males. The pillar figurines depict a female using her hands to support her exposed breasts. Two types have been identified: the Judaeen Pillar Figurines (JPF), which are crudely made and found mainly within the geographical limits of the Kingdom of Judah, and the finely executed Pillar Figurines (PF) from the surrounding areas (Kletter 2001:181-183). The JPFs have solid, hand-made bodies, but no legs. The section below the breasts flares outward and is concave. The heads, prominent breasts, and arms are added afterwards. The head is either hand-made, pinched to form a nose and with depressions for eyes, or moulded, featuring a headdress with ridges and a fringe across the forehead (Kletter 2001:181).

JPLs are found at sites throughout Judah, including Jerusalem, and date mostly to the 8th – 7th centuries BCE. They frequently appear in domestic contexts, but have also been found in tombs and public places (Avigad 1980:36). Those found in secondary locations are usually broken—perhaps after serving their cultic purpose as suggested by Stern (1989:¶3), while those found in tombs are whole or almost whole. The resemblance of the lower body to a tree hints at a domestic or magical cult associated with Asherah, the Canaanite goddess of fertility (Kletter 1999:29). Kletter (2001:205), however, warns against taking this for granted.

Another group of figurines found within the geographical limits of the Kingdom of Judah are the fairly small and simply fashioned terracotta figurines of horses with or without riders. These horse figurines have been securely dated to the 8th century BCE. They are frequently found with other figurines, most notably nude females, animals, and various pieces of furniture, such as beds. The zoomorphic figurines are all handmade of light reddish-brown or pale orange-brown clay with few white grits and black core. They all vary in form and size. The fragmentary nature of the artefacts makes it difficult to determine precisely what animal is portrayed. In addition to the horses, zoomorphic figurines include a camel, sheep, and birds, such as a dove and a nesting bird (Yezereski & Geva 2003:66). These zoomorphic figurines seem to have served a cultic purpose as well. Some horse figurines bear sun disks and have been associated with solar worship (Dever 2001:191).

6.2.4.5 *Seals and Hezekiah's iconography*

The absence of iconography in ancient Israel has been attributed to the religious reforms introduced by King Josiah in compliance with the Deuteronomistic law (Ex 20:4) (Avigad & Sass 1997:46). Even though Hezekiah is accredited with implementing rigorous religious reforms, the two images associated with his royal seal blatantly violate the Deuteronomistic law forbidding images of anything in heaven, on the earth, or in the sea (Ex 20:4). This gives cause to suspect that this prohibition was a post-Hezekian development.

The *two-winged scarab* or dung-beetle (*Scarabaeus sacer*) is commonly, but not exclusively, associated with ancient Egypt. The ancient Egyptians adopted it as the symbol of the creator and solar god, Khepri (Hart 2005:84). Like the sun-god, who re-emerged each morning and rolled the sun across the sky, so the dung-beetle symbolised creation, resurrection, and eternal life (Keel 2001:58-59).

The second icon associated with Hezekiah, the *two-winged sun-disk*, is also believed to have originated in Egypt, where it made its appearance as early as the Middle Kingdom (Finegan 1989:46). It features frequently in the New Kingdom and represents Horus, the hawk-god who assumed the form of a disk

to overcome the evil god Set (Bianchi 1995:206). It has, however, also been associated with the Assyrians, the Hittites, the Phoenicians, and also the Northern Kingdom. This symbol has always been associated with divinity, royalty, and power in the ANE, and it communicated divine favour upon a king. The phenomenon of the stamped *lmlk* jars is evidence of the central role stamps played in a state-wide administrative system.

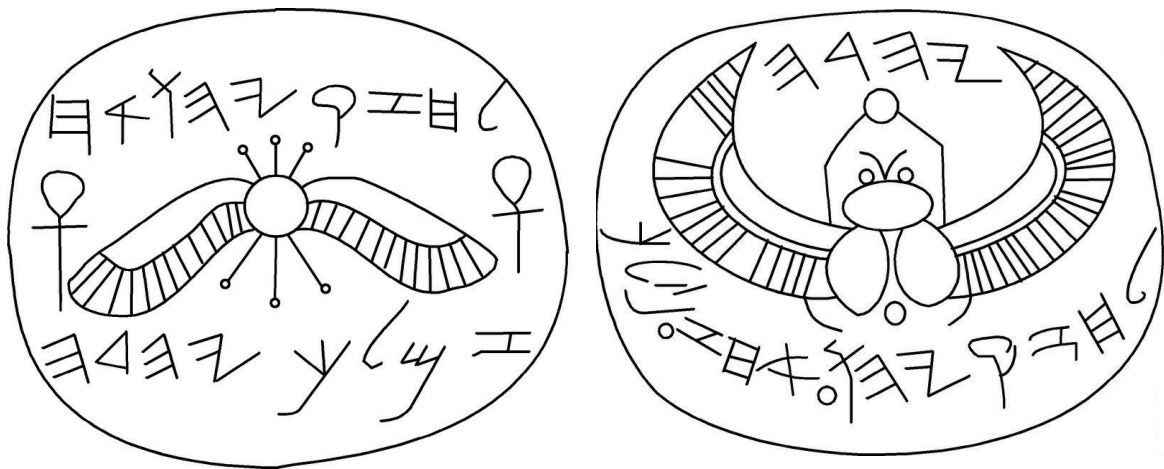


Figure 13: Drawings of the two clay bullae featuring (left) a winged sun-disk and (right) a winged scarab (Grena 2004:26).

A clay bulla bearing the impression of a two-winged scarab beetle and the inscription, 'Belonging to Hezekiah, (son of) 'Ahaz, king of Judah' has surfaced (Cross 1999:¶5). It measures about 1 cm in diameter and is about 2 mm thick. Although this bulla is unprovenanced, scholars are convinced of its authenticity; firstly, a forger would not have omitted the Hebrew '*ben*' meaning 'son of', and secondly, a similar, but less legible bulla, impressed with the same seal, has been found (Deutsch 2002:¶5). It is likewise unprovenanced. Both bullae are burnt and probably originate from the same burnt archive somewhere in Jerusalem (Cross 1999). The scarab seals used to make these impressions have to date not been found. These bullae support the theory that the jar handles bearing these two icons are in some way connected to King Hezekiah.

6.3 OTHER ACTIONS

The precise order in which Hezekiah carried out his reforms cannot be deduced from the biblical texts. Their momentousness suggests he would have set about implementing changes soon after ascending the throne, as confirmed by the Chronicler (2 Chr 29:3). Hezekiah would have had to first gain the favour of the populace, especially the approval and support of the priests, Levites, and prophets. This might have been the goal behind the unorthodox⁸¹ and protracted Passover celebrations, and the king's command to feed the priests and the Levites (Niditch 1997:80-81).

A brief, conceivable sequence of events follows. In the first month after ascending the Judaeian throne, Hezekiah reopened and repaired the Temple (2 Chr 29:3). He then gathered the Levites and priests together and instructed them to first cleanse and purify themselves, and then the Temple (2 Chr 29:3-19). The king's sacrifices (2 Chr 29:21) were followed by an invitation to all, from Dan to Beersheba, to celebrate the Passover (2 Chr 30:1) and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread in Jerusalem (2 Chr 30). It appears Hezekiah also invested a substantial fortune in redecorating the Temple, for when it came to meeting the Assyrian tribute demands, he was forced to strip the Temple doors and pillars of all the gold with which he had overlaid them (2 Ki 18:16).⁸² All these preparations would have served to arousing the people's curiosity and enticed them to journey to Jerusalem to attend the planned Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. The Chronicler spares nothing in his praise of Hezekiah, comparing him and his deeds to those of the great King Solomon (2 Chr 30:26). Having effectively seduced the population, Hezekiah introduced his sweeping cultic reforms, which, according to the Chronicler, were not limited to Judah, but included parts of the Northern Kingdom under Assyrian rule (2 Chr 31:1). This was followed by the reorganisation of the priestly and Levitical divisions and his administration.

⁸¹ Hezekiah's Passover celebration was unorthodox because it was celebrated in the second month rather than the first (2 Chr 30) (Borowski 1987:39).

⁸² Interestingly the *NJB* has replaced Hezekiah with 'an earlier' king, which cannot be correct as his father had previously stripped the temple in order to render tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Ki 16:8; 2 Chr 28:21).

6.4 REASONS BEHIND HEZEKIAH'S REFORMS AND THEIR RAMIFICATIONS

The ramifications of Hezekiah's reform programme suggest religious zeal was not the king's only motivating force. Political, economic, and strategic objectives appear to have played a significant role.

6.4.1 Religious

The Deuteronomist and the Chronicler both emphasise the religious reasons behind Hezekiah's reforms. Motivated by righteousness, Hezekiah did 'what YHWH regards as right' (2 Ki 18:3) and 'in absolute devotion to his God' (2 Chr 31:21). Pressure from the prophets Isaiah and Micah possibly influenced the king as well (Oded 1977:442).

Were a reconstruction of the events surrounding Hezekiah's reforms based solely on the textual evidence, there would be no reason to doubt the king's motives; righteousness, the desire to rid the cult of pagan or Canaanite ritual practices and to return to the laws laid down in the Covenant are portrayed as motives. Archaeology, however, provides a very different picture. If Hezekiah had been so pious and devoted to YHWH, then why did his royal stamp feature a scarab, a blatant violation of the Judaic law forbidding images (Ex 20:4)?

6.4.2 Political

Hezekiah was making full use of his rights as head of state to introduce changes to the practices, the festivals, and the organisation of the cult (Ahlström 1982:65). The extent of the reforms also emphasised his position, authority, and political power.

By removing the *bāmôt* and centralising worship at the Temple in Jerusalem, Hezekiah elevated the status of both the Temple and the capital city, increased and extended his own authority as YHWH's earthly emissary, and undercut the power and influence of the priests at the local shrines throughout the country.

This reform ultimately denied the cult personnel a means of a livelihood, food, and clothing, regulated in Exodus (23:19), Leviticus (2:14; 6:26, 29; 7:6-10; 26:1-10; 27:5), Numbers (18:8-19, 26-28; 31:25-47), and Deuteronomy (14:28; 26:12). Fully aware of the power and influence of the priests and Levites over their congregations, Hezekiah commanded the people to feed them (2 Chr 31:19). This directive would not only have prevented the cult personnel from being left destitute, but would have ensured their support for his reforms (Borowski 1995:153).

The cult centralisation was an attempt by Hezekiah to establish a bond to the national sanctuary and the royal city (Herzog *et al* 1984:21). Anticipating war with Assyria, this was an expedient move on his part, especially considering the significant number of refugees from the north living in Judah, who would not necessarily have developed the same nationalism as the Judaeans. Weinfeld (1964:202) points out that Oestreicher⁸³ already recognised the political undercurrent of Hezekiah's cultic reforms in 1922. In 1985 Gottwald (:369) supported the theory that Hezekiah's religious reforms were part of his 'nationalistic anti-Assyrian programme'. Coogan (2006:329), on the other hand, regards Hezekiah's invitation to the northern tribes to attend the Passover as a move to extend his royal control to the former Northern Kingdom.

6.4.3 Economic

The considerable economic benefits to be gained as a result of these reforms would not have escaped Hezekiah. Although a national census taken during Hezekiah's reign (1 Chr 4:38ff) was probably mainly for conscription purposes in preparation for war with Assyria, it would also have been taken with tax purposes in mind. Revenue from taxes would have helped finance Hezekiah's various building projects, equip the army, and protect the trade routes. As Gottwald (1985:389) points out, Hezekiah's religious reforms certainly reflect a reorganisation of the tax system in Judah. Ostraca found at the temple-fortress at Arad list rations of flour, oil, and wine that were to be distributed to itinerant

⁸³ Weinfeld refers to *Das deuteronomische Grundgesetz* by Th. Oestreicher (1923).

military personnel. This suggests the temple officials were responsible for storing and distributing commodities (Mazar 1992:441).

By centralising the cult at the Temple in Jerusalem, Hezekiah ordered all tithes and taxes be sent directly to the capital city (2 Chr 31:10ff). He effectively streamlined the flow of funds to the capital and removed the middlemen in the chain of financial flow. This reduced the chances of funds being siphoned off by each person through whose hands they passed. The complicated sacrificial system, which had in the past involved the redistribution of meat and grain, now came under royal control, along with the rest of the economy (Borowski 1995:153; Coogan 2006:328). The portion of the tithes designated for the priests and Levites would then be distributed from Jerusalem to the cities of Judah (2 Chr 31:14ff; Ahlström 1982:67).

All major festivals were also to be celebrated in Jerusalem. To ensure the people journeyed to Jerusalem with their tithes, instead of delivering them to the cult personnel at the rural shrines, Hezekiah ordered the destruction of the *maṣṣēbôt* and the *asherīm*, the divine symbols of the cult, and invalidated the significance of the *bāmôt*. After all, the cultic personnel had not been removed to Jerusalem.

With the long-established pilgrimage festivals now to be celebrated at YHWH's altar 'in Jerusalem' (2 Ki 18:22), thousands of pilgrims would have swarmed to Jerusalem in obedience to the law, and in order to prevent themselves from 'being cut off from the people' (Nm 9:13). The influx of pilgrims to the capital city at least three times a year for a minimum of 16 days would have had the beneficial side-effect of stimulating the domestic economy of Judah (Gottwald 1985:389). De Bellaigue (2007:15) describes the circumstances surrounding the prosperity of the city Mashhad, a capital of the northeastern province of Khorasan in Iran:

The city of more than two million people owes its importance to the shrine complex that has grown up around the tomb of Imam Reza, the most important Shiite figure to be buried within the borders of modern Iran; its prosperity depends on the millions of pilgrims who visit the shrine every year. ... [T]he [F]oundation [of the Disinherited and War Disabled] owns most of the city's real estate, renting out shop space to bazaaris and land to many of the city's eight-hundred-odd hoteliers.

Although over two thousand years separate these two instances, and the Temple of YHWH rather than a shrine was the attraction, it does illustrate how visiting pilgrims stimulate the economy and generate wealth for a city. Any great congregation of people presents myriad opportunities for trade and mutual profit. Most goods fetch better prices in cities than in small settlements. This is especially so when demand increases.

The journeys to Jerusalem would have afforded the rural population opportunities to engage in commercial activities through barter or in exchange for silver (Small 1997:276). In addition to the obligatory days of feasting, the pilgrims were instructed to eat the tithes, that is, the first fruits and the firstborn of the animals in Jerusalem, or 'if the road is too long', they could redeem their tithe for silver and then use it to purchase in Jerusalem whatever they pleased and consume it at the Temple (Dt 14:24-25). These reforms will certainly have benefited the economy, the capital, and the Temple.

6.4.4 Strategic

Strategic militaristic motives certainly underlie Hezekiah's reforms. By centralising the cult in Jerusalem, the bond between the people and the capital would have been strengthened and, with rebellion on the cards, hopefully heightened their resolve to loyally defend the royal city against the Assyrians (Miller & Hayes 1986:299).

In addition, if divine images and financially valuable cultic paraphernalia were features of the high places, then Hezekiah, anticipating the Assyrian attack, ensured their safety and prevented them from falling into enemy hands by closing down the rural sanctuaries and removing them to the Temple in Jerusalem (Handy 1988:113).

By having the tithes and taxes delivered directly to Jerusalem, Hezekiah secured food supplies for an eventual siege and also raised money with which to purchase weapons and arms. The accumulation of all agricultural surpluses in the well-fortified capital ensured that an invading army would be denied access

to badly needed sustenance. Judah was no newcomer to the scene as far as invading armies were concerned. Armies had traversed the Levant for centuries, and Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II had only shortly before campaigned in the region. Hezekiah would have been well aware of the logistics required to feed and water an invading or besieging Assyrian army. It is no coincidence that Hezekiah had already secured Jerusalem's water source by constructing the Siloam Tunnel, as it is no coincidence that Sennacherib targeted Lachish instead of Jerusalem. While water was essential to a besieged city, it was equally important to the besieging army, particularly an army stationed in the dry Judaeian highlands. The Franks reported the following about Jerusalem:

[T]he city of Jerusalem is located in a mountainous region which is devoid of trees, streams, and springs excepting only the Pool of Siloam, which is a bowshot from the city. Sometimes it has enough water, and sometimes a deficiency due to slight drainage (Fink 1969:116).

The Bible tells us that Sennacherib's army was at least 185,000 men strong. If each soldier required between 2.5 – 3 litres⁸⁴ of water per day, then without even considering the cavalry horses, Sennacherib's soldiers would have required a minimum of 462,500 litres of water per day. Following Engels (1978:57), who calculated that a Macedonian soldier using a 15-litre vessel could only remove about 87,216 litres of water in 24 hours for Alexander's army, Sennacherib's army would have required five soldiers, or ten soldiers working 12 hours—if the water sources did not run out first. The absence of rivers in the vicinity of Jerusalem was a major deterrent to Sennacherib. Access to water might have been less of a problem in the Shephelah, with its numerous *wadis* and pro-Assyrian cities situated in the plain of Philistia not far off (Rainey 2000:1001).

6.5 CONCLUSION

Hezekiah is hailed as a religious reformer. The archaeological evidence confirms the epigraphic sources, but shows that the reforms only applied to the official cult of YHWH. While the biblical writers present Hezekiah's reformation programme

⁸⁴ It is universally recognised that a person requires a minimum of 2.5 - 4.5 litres of water per day (Gleick 1996:84).

as motivated *solely* by piety and righteousness, they ultimately benefited him socio-politically, strategically, and more importantly, economically. They gave Hezekiah control of the entire Judaeian economy and directed the flow of tithes and taxes to the Temple in the capital city (Borowski 1995:153). Perhaps these were the riches received from YHWH to which the biblical writers referred. Either way, they would definitely have constituted a major source of income for Hezekiah.

These reforms would have profoundly affected the lives of the rural farmers, who were now not only compelled to leave their farms and pilgrim to Jerusalem, but were burdened with the additional expenditure of undertaking tri-annual journeys to the capital.

C

CHAPTER SEVEN

HEZEKIAH'S WEALTH AND THE SOCIO-CULTURAL REMAINS OF THE JUDAEAN SETTLEMENTS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussions in the previous chapters show that Hezekiah had access to considerable financial resources. The Assyrian sources confirm the biblical observation 'Hezekiah enjoyed immense riches' (2 Chr 32:27), but what about the rest of the Judaeian population? Did they benefit as well? Based on a survey of the archaeological evidence at the sites destroyed by Sennacherib during his campaign in 701 BCE, the goals of this chapter are to establish whether or not the archaeological record at these sites reflects this prosperity, and also to determine if, and to what extent, the Judaeans might have shared in this wealth.

In order to realise these intentions, we must first establish which sites were believed to have been destroyed by Sennacherib, then determine which archaeological period Hezekiah's reign falls into, and finally, establish what was considered an indicator of wealth in the late 8th century BCE.

7.2 PERIODISATION

The entire Iron Age period in Syro-Palestine extends from 1200 to 589 BCE, in other words, from the time the Israelites arrived in Palestine to when the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and dragged the Judaeans off into captivity. It is divided into the Iron Age I (ca. 1200-1000 BCE) and Iron Age II (ca. 1000-586 BCE). The Iron Age II is further subdivided into the Iron Age IIA or United Monarchy (ca. 1000-925 BCE) and Iron Age IIBC or Divided Monarchy (ca. 925-586 BCE). The transition from Iron Age IIB to Iron Age IIC is marked by the fall of the Northern Kingdom (ca. 720 BCE) and the beginning of the Assyrian presence in the West (Mazar 1992:30).

| IRON AGE PERIOD IN SYRO-PALESTINE ⁸⁵ (Mazar 1992:30) | | |
|--|----------|---------------|
| | Iron IA | 1200-1150 BCE |
| | Iron IB | 1150-1000 BCE |
| United Monarchy | Iron IIA | 1000-925 BCE |
| Divided Monarchy | Iron IIB | 925-720 BCE |
| | Iron IIC | 720-586 BCE |

7.3 SITES DESTROYED BY SENNACHERIB IN 701 BCE

Determining which sites were destroyed by Sennacherib is not quite so straightforward, especially as the Assyrian annals do not provide a detailed list of the places Sennacherib conquered. They simply tell us that after conquering Eltekeh and Timnah, Sennacherib went on to conquer '46 fortified cities,⁸⁶ fortresses and countless small villages' (Ahlström 1991:123).

The biblical texts mention Lachish and Libnah (2 Ki 19:8) and Hezekiah's contemporary, the prophet Micah (6:16), lists the following settlements that fell victim to the Assyrian army: Gath, Aphrah, Saphir, Zaanen, Bethazel, Maroth, Lachish, his home town Moreshah-gath, Achzib, Abdullam, and Mareshah. Micah also adds that the Assyrians attacked Jerusalem (Mi 6:9), a detail the Assyrian scribes chose to omit. It was not for want of trying though. The archaeological excavations have shown that the Broad Wall was damaged during the Assyrian siege, suggesting the Assyrians attempted to take the capital city from the north (Avigad & Geva 2000:82). As the pottery excavated in the eastern suburb and the suburb north of the wall on the western hill dates no later than that found in Stratum III at Lachish, it is believed that these suburbs were destroyed by the Assyrians when they advanced on Jerusalem in 701 BCE (Ariel & de Groot 2000:164; Broshi & Finkelstein 1992:56).

⁸⁵ Herr (1997:116) provides a good summary of the different periodisations of the Iron Age II for Palestine offered by various renowned archaeologists. The dating and periodisation employed by Mazar (1992:30) will be followed throughout this study.

⁸⁶ Ahlström (1991:123) considers this a reliable detail because it is an exact figure.

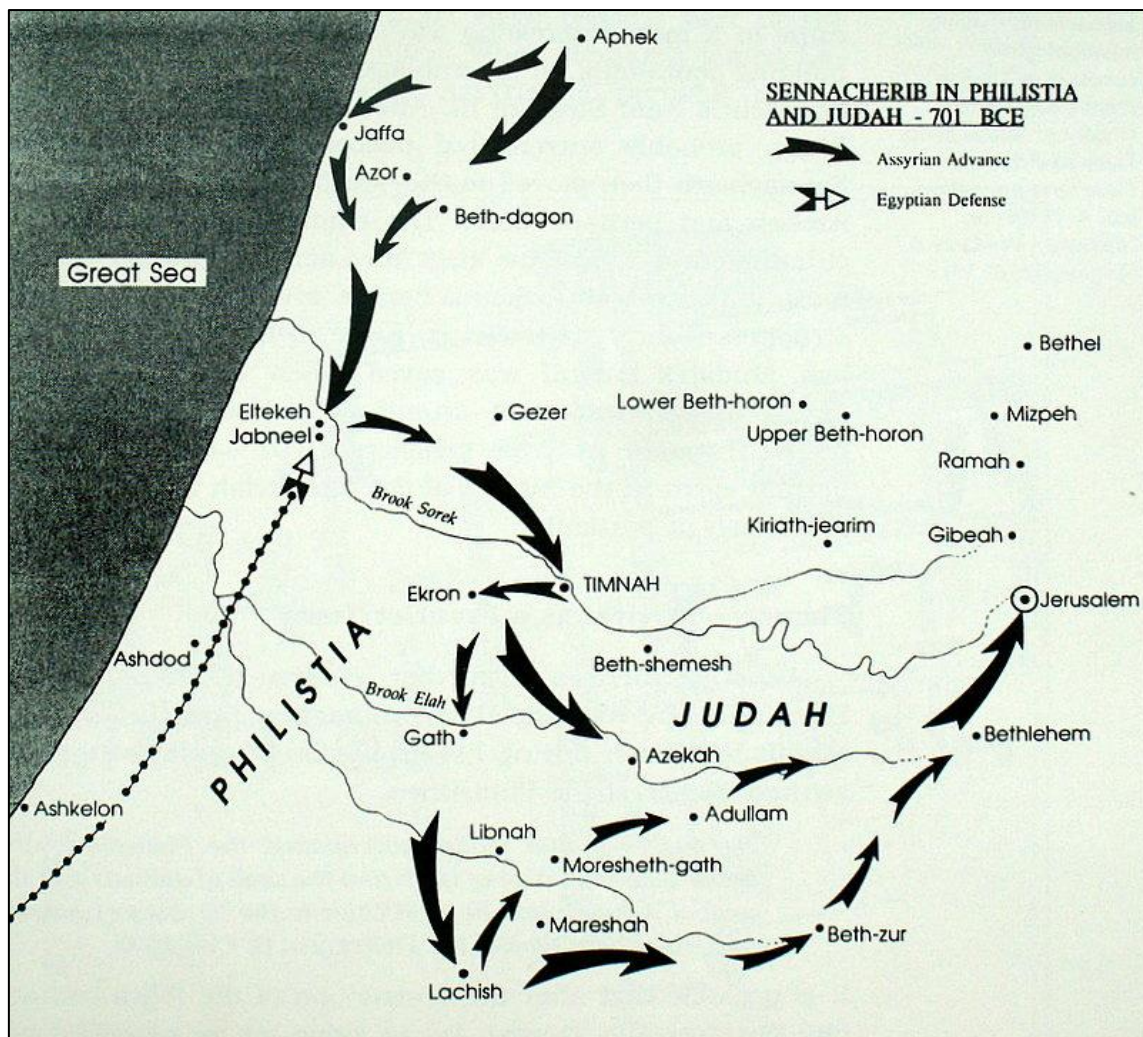


Figure 14: Sennacherib's 3rd campaign in Philistia and Judah in 701 BCE as proposed by Kelm & Mazar (1995:117)

Hezekiah's reign of twenty-nine years falls within the Iron Age IIC period. An attempt to date archaeological finds to precisely his reign is literally impossible; archaeological excavations rarely pin down finds to an exact date, unless of course, a destruction or conflagration layer can be ascribed to a datable event. Although a destruction layer is testimony to human tragedy, it is a goldmine of information for the archaeologists, for a layer of human occupation that is terminated and sealed by destruction contains valuable information that can be dated precisely. The archaeological evidence gleaned from the sites destroyed in 701 BCE provides insight into life in Judah during Hezekiah's reign.

It is now generally agreed that Sennacherib was responsible for the destruction of Lachish Stratum III in 701 BCE. The material culture recovered in this stratum

is used as a cornerstone for correlating 701 BCE destruction layers at other sites in Judah (Borowski 1995:152). The stamped *Imlk* jar handles found in this layer are generally accepted as being confined to Hezekiah's reign and makes them 'a powerful diagnostic tool when they are found *in situ*' (Grabbe 2003:311).

Table 4: Survey of the sites mentioned in the literature

| | Site | Remarks | Prior destruction |
|----|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1 | Arad VIII | | |
| 2 | Beth Shemesh IIc | | |
| 3 | Beth-Zur | Inconclusive | |
| 4 | Khirbet Rabud / Debir IIB | | |
| 5 | Lachish III | | |
| 6 | Ramat Raḥel VB | Inconclusive | |
| 7 | Tel Batash III / Timnah | | |
| 8 | Beersheba (II not III) | | Tiglath-Pileser III |
| 9 | Tell Beit Mirsim | | Tiglath-Pileser III |
| 10 | Tel Ḥalif VIB | | Tiglath-Pileser III |
| 11 | Tel `Erani VI | | Tiglath-Pileser III |
| 12 | Tel `Eton | | |
| 13 | Azekah | No clear destruction layer | |
| 14 | Mareshah | No clear destruction layer | |
| 15 | Tell Judeideh | In adequate information | |
| 16 | Tel `Ira | In adequate information, only preliminary results | |
| 17 | Tell el-Jib /Gibeon | Not destroyed | |
| 18 | Gezer VI | Inconclusive, Assyrian/Israelite material culture | |
| 19 | Tell en-Naşbeh | Not destroyed | |
| 20 | Jerusalem 12 | Attacked, besieged | |
| 21 | Tel Miqne /Ekron II | Philistine, pre-701 BCE Judaeans | |
| 22 | Tel el Hesi | Philistine | Tiglath-Pileser III |
| 23 | Tel Safi /Gath/Zafit | Philistine | |
| 24 | Tel Haror/Gerar | Philistine | |

According to an extensive survey of the western boundary of Judah, there were 354 thriving settlements in Judah before Sennacherib descended on Palestine in 701 BCE (Stern 2001:142). The above list of sites destroyed by Sennacherib was drawn up following a survey of the literature available.

The area south of Jerusalem, Judaeans sites in the Negev, the Shephelah, and even some sites situated on the crest of the Judaeans Hills, such as Beth-Zur and probably Ramat Raḥel, which lie on the immediate outskirts of Jerusalem, suffered at the hand of the Assyrians. Judging from the archaeological results,

they do not appear to have destroyed any of the settlements located in the region of Benjamin.

In 1981 Blakely hypothesised that the destruction of a number of sites, generally considered to have been destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BCE, were actually destroyed somewhat earlier by either Tiglath-Pileser III in 734 BCE or Sargon II in 720, 713, or 712 BCE. An analysis of the stratigraphic and ceramic records has shown that not only were they destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BCE, but

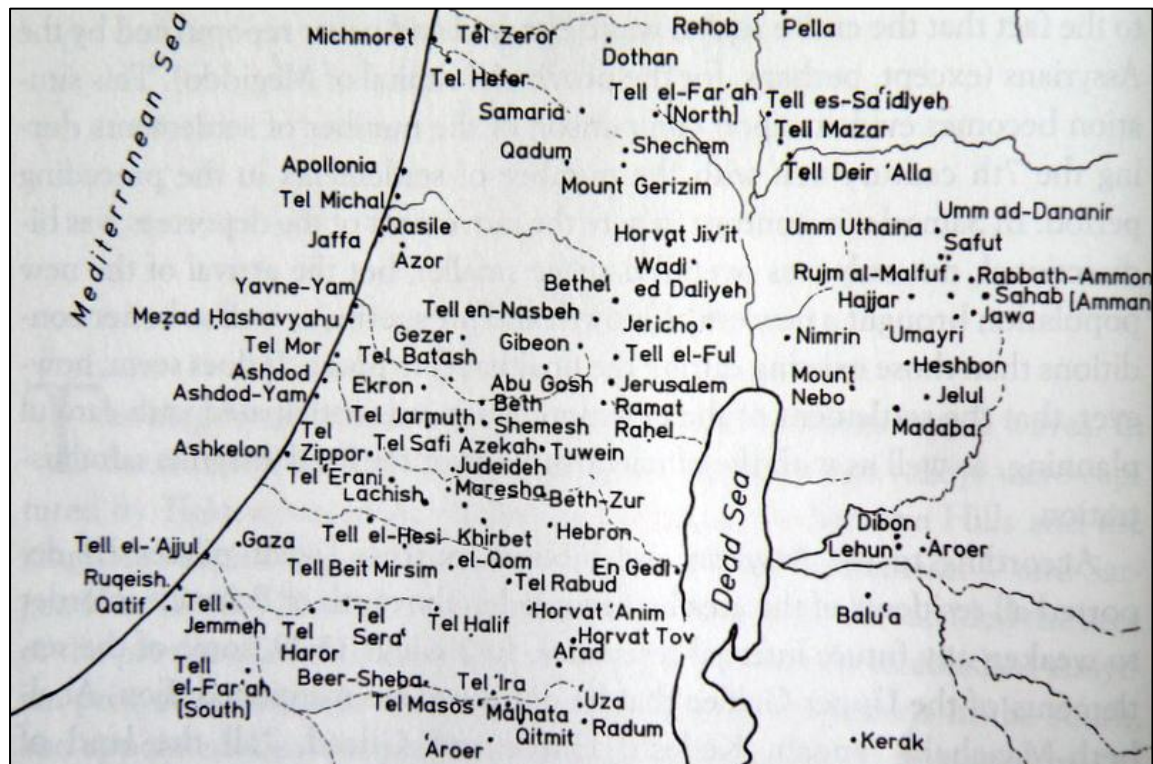


Figure 15: Judaeen sites (Stern 2001:44)

they also suffered destruction at the hands of Tiglath-Pileser III a few years earlier in 734 BCE. They include Tell Beit Mirsim, Tel Halif, Tel 'Erani, Tel 'Eton, and possibly Philistine Tell el-Hesi (Blakely & Hardin 2002:53).

7.4 INDICATORS OF WEALTH IN THE LATE 8TH CENTURY BCE

There is no straightforward definition of wealth, but an appropriate and contemporary meaning of this abstract concept is offered by Streeten (1964:755):

[Wealth] refers to the stock of economically significant items owned by an individual or a group (such as a class or a nation). For an item to be economically significant, it must satisfy two conditions: it must (a) be useful (capable of satisfying human wants) and it must (b) be actually or potentially exchangeable.

According to this definition and based on the contents of his treasuries and storehouses, Hezekiah would certainly be considered wealthy today.

The biblical writers are quite explicit as to what they considered indicators of wealth (Gn 13:2; 24:25). Based on 2 Kings 20:13, Isaiah 39:2, and 2 Chronicles 32:27-29, precious metals, precious stones, rare and exotic goods, abundant agricultural stores, and livestock were indicators of wealth in the late 8th – early 7th centuries BCE. Unlike today, however, property was not a sign of wealth, because the land belonged to YHWH; the Israelites were only strangers and sojourners in the land (Lv 25:23).

7.5 WHAT DOES THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE REFLECT?

A survey of the literature (see Table 4) determined that Lachish (III), Arad (VIII), Beth-Shemesh (IIc), Beth-Zur, Khirbet Rabud (IIB), Ramat Rahel, Tel Batash or Timnah (III), Beersheba, Tell Beit Mirsim, Tel Halif (VIB), Tel 'Erani, and Tel 'Eton are believed to have suffered at the hands of the Assyrians.⁸⁷ Jerusalem was not captured, but the importance of the capital city demands that it be included in the discussion.

7.5.1 Settlement patterns

Archaeological excavations have shown that Judah enjoyed relative peace, with no major destruction from the 10th century to the 8th century BCE. It was a period of gradual expansion and development (Mazar 1992:415). Archaeological surveys have indicated a nation-wide increase in population and number of settlements during the latter half of the 8th century BCE. The inhabited area had almost doubled from about 303 ha (750 acres) at the end of 800 BCE to about 607 ha (1,500 acres) by the time Sennacherib attacked in 701 BCE (Broshi

⁸⁷ Appendix D provides a summary of the archaeological details of each site.

1974:21-23; Ofer 1997:256). Only a small percentage of the Judaeen population lived in densely populated urban centres, the majority still lived in small towns or open villages. The farmers walked to their fields in the morning and back home again in the evening. Only during the busy harvest periods would a farmer and his family camp on their farm (Miller & Hayes 1986:53). The lifestyles of the two population groups were radically different.

In addition to Jerusalem, the capital city, small fortified towns, unfortified villages, isolated farms, and hamlets densely peppered the countryside of the Judaeen kingdom. Scholars are divided on where the majority of the population resided. Ofer (1997:256; 2001:28) claims that the Judaeen highlands, a once sparsely populated fringe region, now became the heart of the Judaeen kingdom, with 122 sites occupying 96 ha in the 8th century BCE, as opposed to 86 sites occupying 55.4 ha in the 9th – 8th century BCE. Mazar (1992:417) believes most towns were situated along the ‘the backbone of the country, in the Shephelah’ and also in southern Hebron. Settlements developed at strategic locations, with elevation, defensibility, water availability, and access to lines of communication vital considerations. An average of three to four kilometres separated the towns.

7.5.1.1 The capital city, Jerusalem

Jerusalem was the religious and administrative capital city of the Kingdom of Judah. Our knowledge about this city, probably the most excavated in the world, has been gleaned from the results of decades of archaeological excavations, supplemented by biblical and extra-biblical descriptions. Nevertheless, modern restraints prevent us from knowing more, as only small areas have been excavated. Jerusalem was characterised by a royal acropolis, markets, public buildings, and residential quarters (Mazar 1992:463). Surrounded by an exceptionally strong city wall and with a secure source of fresh water, the city was almost impregnable. The Judaeen kings appear to have been aware of the city’s weakness if assaulted from the north, for a line of fortresses was erected to provide protection and warning of an attack.

Jerusalem, according to Broshi & Finkelstein (1992:52), was in the mid-8th century BCE a modest capital city of about 4 ha (10-12 acres) with a population

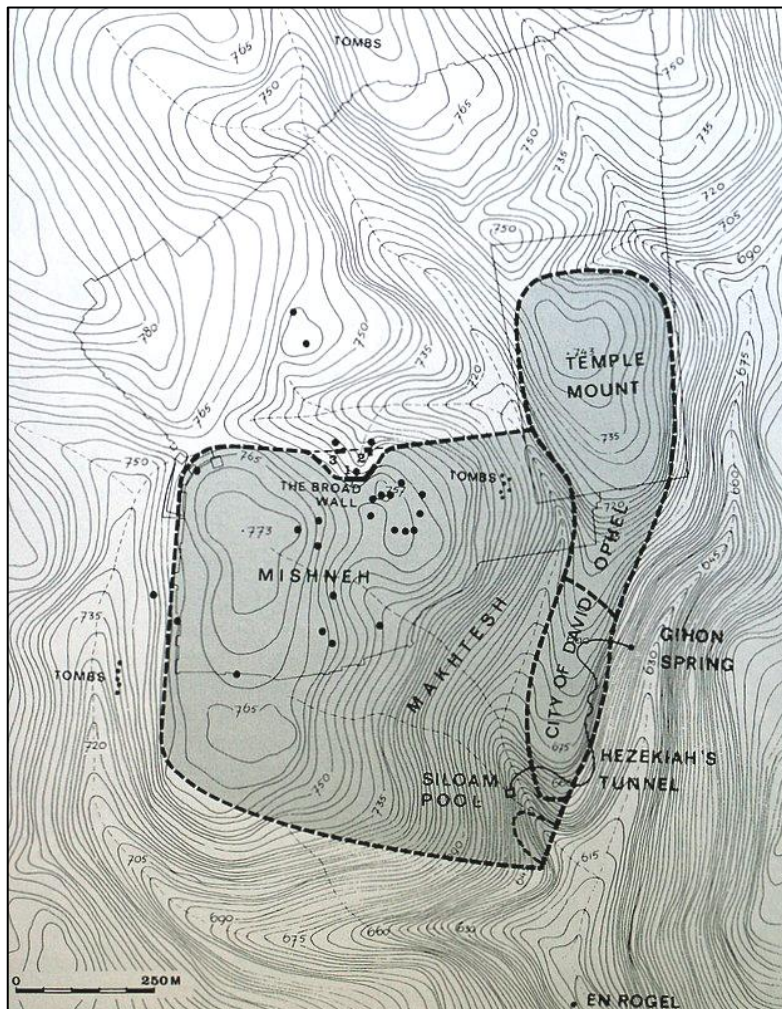


Figure 16: Layout of Jerusalem during Hezekiah's reign (Shiloh 1993:707)

of about 7,500 people⁸⁸. By the end of the 8th century BCE, or immediately after Sennacherib's third campaign, the city had metamorphosed into a metropolis that covered an area of about 50-60 ha. Broshi & Finkelstein (1992:52) emphasise that the size of Jerusalem in the Iron Age II 'has been bitterly debated'. Broshi (1974:20) estimates Jerusalem boasted a population of about 24,000 by the end of the 8th century BCE, while Finkelstein & Silberman

⁸⁸ It is estimated that about 6.8 percent of the Judaeans lived in Jerusalem (Broshi & Finkelstein 1992:54).

(2001:243) estimate about 10,000-15,000 people were living within the city walls.

The influx of new residents to the capital city appears to have exceeded the city's housing capacity, for evidence of human occupation has been observed in the natural caves in the vicinity of the capital, testimony to the desperate economic situation some people must have found themselves in at the end of the 8th century BCE (Mazar 1992:418). On the eastern slopes of the Western Hill, beyond the walls of the City of David, a new residential suburb developed, which might be the *mišhneh* or 'second quarter' referred to in 2 Kings 22:14. A new section of the city wall was constructed to the west to enclose this new area within the city's fortifications. Even a workshop building was constructed outside the western wall of the city during this time. The construction of residential areas outside the walls of Jerusalem ceased probably around the beginning of the 7th century BCE (Geva 2000c:6-7).

7.5.1.2 *Regional administrative centres*

Gezer, Lachish, Beth-Shemesh, and Beersheba have been identified as regional administrative centres, based on the following distinctive features: a fair size; a highly centralised, planned layout; impressive city walls and multiple entryway gates; a palace-administrative complex near the city gate and/or elsewhere, together with large pillared buildings that are best understood as government storehouses or stables; and monumental, well-engineered water systems to defend against siege warfare (Dever 1995:419). The palace-administrative section was separate from the residential quarters and built using ashlar construction techniques of a high quality. The more important a town was, the more space was taken up by administrative buildings and the less residential space was available. Many of the people employed within the city walls must have lived outside the city walls in primitive houses that did not necessarily leave much archaeological evidence. Evidence of extra-mural habitation has been found at Lachish and Arad, but people, especially newcomers, were probably forced to live outside the city walls at other places as well. Land availability was limited and had long been allocated to the families of the different tribes.

Careful urban planning is typical of the cities built during the 8th century BCE in Judah (Schoors 1998:72) and is evident, to varying degrees, in a large number of settlements. Beersheba, Tell en-Naşbeh (Mizpah), and Beth-Shemesh were well-planned. Less urban planning is observed at Tell Beit Mirsim, where houses of varying sizes were built very close together, probably as a result of the haste in which they were constructed.

7.5.1.3 *Residential towns*

Tell Beit Mirsim and Tell en-Naşbeh (Mizpah) are examples of rural residential country towns in Judah during the Iron Age II. These settlements were similar and sometimes even the same size as the regional centres, but featured no palace-administrative buildings. They were largely residential, usually fortified with a wall and gate, and had a secure water system. Many sites were constructed according to the ring-road arrangement: with houses or other structures often built up against it in a casemate manner, a street, and another belt of buildings. At intervals, other streets cut across the inner band of structures. Major public edifices were usually located near the gate or in the inner band (Fritz 1994:149).

7.5.1.4 *Outlying areas*

Various archaeological surveys have shown that the demographic changes that took place during the late 8th century BCE were not confined to the capital city. The Judaeen hill country, which is estimated to have had a population of about 26,000 to 30,000, was surveyed by Kochavi in 1968 and more recently by Ofer in 1990. Dagan⁸⁹ surveyed the Shephelah and estimated a dense population of about 50,000 (in Broshi & Finkelstein 1992:52). A population of about 1,500 was estimated for the Beersheba and Arad valley in the 8th century BCE (Broshi & Finkelstein 1992:53).

The numerous small constructions excavated on the Judaeen borders are

⁸⁹ In 1992 Dagan presented the results of these surveys in Hebrew in his M.A. thesis, *The Shephelah during the period of the Monarchy in light of archaeological excavations and survey*.

thought to have been fortresses and signal towers, casemate constructions erected with the purpose of forming a band of protection around the capital city. The settlements in the Shephelah were so spaced that warning signals could be sent from one to the other. Settlements, such as Ein-Gedi and Khirbet Qumran, which came into existence in the 8th century BCE, were part of the eastern line of defence; Beersheba, Arad, Tel 'Ira, and Tel Malhata formed part of the line of defence in the south.

In 1980 excavations were conducted at Khirbet er-Ras, a small terraced settlement lying southwest of Jerusalem in the Rephaim Valley (Edelstein & Gibson 1982:46). It dates from the 8th – 6th century BCE and might well have been one of the new settlements established during this time of expansion. Features of this settlement are the stone-built enclosure walls marking the boundaries and a number of structures situated in the centre of the settlement, at least one of which is a four-room house.

7.5.2 Fortifications and building projects

Judah in the late 8th century BCE featured unfortified villages, isolated farms, and hamlets, but also well-fortified cities, towers, and fortresses (King & Stager 2001:231). Assyria might have been the country with the greatest offensive army in the region, but Israel and Judah had developed extremely effective and sophisticated means of defence (Aberbach 1997:136). All defence mechanisms, from walls to weapons, required considerable resources in human labour, as well as financial resources.

7.5.2.1 *City walls*

Many of the casemate walls of the 10th and 9th century BCE had gradually been replaced by massive, solid, stone walls with an earthen glacis by the 8th century BCE (King & Stager 2001:232). This development was undoubtedly in response to the changing methods of warfare introduced by the Assyrians. Their huge battering rams and siege tactics demanded solid walls and a secured water source within the city walls (Mazar 1992:465; Yadin 1963:289).

Large-scale fortification of settlements was a mammoth undertaking requiring considerable resources in labour, time, and money. It almost goes without saying that settlements were only fortified if there was a reason to do so. The double circumvallation evident at Lachish and the thickness (7 m) of Jerusalem's city wall testify to the importance of these cities. Lachish was, after Jerusalem, the second most important city in Judah, and the fact that Sennacherib targeted it prior to attacking Jerusalem testifies to the city's military and strategic significance. Timnah, Tel Halif, and Arad also boasted impressive stone walls.

In the 1970's N. Avigad discovered a segment of an ancient city wall⁹⁰—the broadest and most massive Iron Age fortification discovered to date—in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, at the top of the Western Hill (Mazar 1992:420). Based on stratigraphy, chronologically indicative pottery, and other small finds, it has been dated to the late 8th century BCE. Whether or not this is the wall referred to in Isaiah 22:10 and 2 Chronicles 32:5 is unknown, but alone the presence of 44 jar handles bearing the *lmlk* seal impressions in the Jewish Quarter gives credence to the supposition that it was built during Hezekiah's reign (Knoppers 1999:574). This wall, commonly referred to as the 'Broad Wall', was only in use for a few years and was also damaged during this short period, probably by the Assyrians when they attacked the city from the north during their campaign in 701 BCE (Avigad & Geva 2000:82; Ussishkin 1979:142). During the 7th century BCE it fell into disuse after new, more efficient fortifications were constructed to protect the northern side of the city. The stones of the Broad Wall were robbed for secondary use and a floor (L.193) of crushed, beaten limestone was laid over it.

The wall is about 7 m wide, 65 m long, and stands over 3 m high (Avigad & Geva 2000:45). The section of the wall visible today consists mainly of the foundations that originally lay below the surface (Avigad & Geva 2000:49). Excavations revealed that the wall was built partly on bedrock (*terra rossa*) and partly on recently erected 8th century BCE houses that obviously had to give way for the construction of this wall. Perhaps these were the houses, 'pulled ... down to

⁹⁰ Wall W.555 of Stratum 8 in Area A of the excavations directed by N. Avigad (Geva & Reich 2000:37).

strengthen the wall', referred to by Isaiah (22:10) (Mazar 1992:420).



Figure 17: The Broad Wall in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem⁹¹

Trenches were discernable on both sides of the entire section of the wall. They varied considerably in width from 20 cm to virtually nothing, but this might be due to the way the wall was excavated (Avigad & Geva 2000:49). The wall is built of large *mizzi* fieldstones without the use of mortar. The fieldstones vary from 50 cm to 1 m in length and 50 cm in height. Some softer stones were also used (Avigad 1980:49). Larger fieldstones were used to construct the foundations. Hewn stones have been found in what remains of the superstructure (Avigad & Geva 2000:54). A 50 cm inset/offset has also been found, but due to the length of the wall excavated it is not clear whether similar structures were situated along the entire wall (Avigad & Geva 2000:45). The wall was either carelessly or hastily constructed. The workmanship is poor, perhaps due to the haste in which it was erected. Courses are evident, but they are not always horizontal and the gaps between the stones, which are sometimes quite large, are plugged with smaller stones and earth. The builders appear to have invested more care when constructing the inset/offset corners. Better-hewn stones were laid in alternating

⁹¹ Photo: Author, Jerusalem, August 2008.

header and stretcher style (Avigad & Geva 2000:55). As only a fraction of the superstructure has survived, it is impossible to tell whether the same standard of work was employed to build the rest of the wall. It is estimated that the wall reached a height of some 8 to 9 m (Avigad & Geva 2000:58).

Evidence of an extra-mural cobbled pavement was found adjoining the Broad Wall. It was 2 to 3 m wide and probably ran the entire length of the city wall (Cahill & Tarler 2000:36). On the inside, the wall supported several structures that were linked by a stepped alley and drained by a channel. The channel drained the water out of the city into the Kidron Valley (Cahill & Tarler 2000:37).

By virtue of the location of this wall, which lies 275 m west of the Western Wall of the Temple Enclosure, we know that the settlement of Jerusalem during this time was not confined to the Temple Mount and the City of David (Avigad 1980:46; Avigad & Geva 2000:82; King 1989:5). It encompassed the entire Western Hill or Mishneh,⁹² up to the present-day 'Jaffa Gate, and continued southward about the Hinnom Valley around Mount Zion, and down toward the southern tip of the City of David' (Geva 2000c:6).

Casemate walls continued to be used at cities requiring fewer defences, such as Beersheba, where they were quite adequate, as the Egyptians, their closest possible enemy, did not have battering rams. The additional storage space and living room this construction provided for the standing army was more important (Yadin 1979:229).

7.5.2.2 *City gates*

Six-, four-, or two-chambered city gates were strategically situated and wide enough for chariots⁹³ to pass through (King & Stager 2001:236). Access to the Iron Age cities was usually provided by only one city gate (Fritz 1994:150). From the 10th century BCE, the six-chambered gates gave way to constructions with only four and later even two chambers. Double city gates were separated by a

⁹² Avigad identified the area south of the Broad Wall with the biblical *mishneh* (2 Ki 22:14; Zph 1:10-11) (Avigad & Geva 2000:82).

⁹³ The Stratum VI-III gate at Lachish was approximately 5.2 m wide (Ussishkin 1978:57).

courtyard. The fore-gate or bastion provided additional security and protection (Fritz 1994:150). City gates served as market places where local goods and agricultural surpluses were traded or bartered. Noteworthy gates have been found at Tell en-Naṣbeh, Gezer, Tell Beit Mirsim, and Lachish.

7.5.2.3 *Terracing*

Landscape archaeology carried out in the Judaeen highlands has shown that widespread and organised terracing was only undertaken during the 8th century BCE (Gibson 2001:137; Hopkins 1985:185). These results challenge the previously held belief that the appearance of agricultural terraces in ancient Israel was connected to the sudden expansion of settlements in these areas during the Iron Age I. Conventional field surveys, regional surveys, and site catchment analysis show that terraces were a major feature of the sedentary agriculture practiced in the highlands of Palestine since the Early Bronze Age. This initial terracing of the highlands, however, was only practiced on a small scale.

Terraces were obviously constructed with the main objective of exploiting the hill slope for agriculture and reducing soil erosion. For this reason, terracing was only effective if the entire hill slope was terraced, which entailed careful planning and organisation. It has also been observed that the soil for the terraces was not uniform, but had been brought from different places at different times, and that the construction of the terraces took place over a relatively confined period of time. Terracing was not accomplished by individual farmers. Terraces could only have been constructed by a huge labour force, co-ordinated by a strong central government during a period of political and economic stability, conditions that prevailed in Judah during the late 8th century BCE (Edelstein & Kislev 1981:53-56). These terraces would have enabled the Judaeans to meet the food requirements of the increased population that settled in Judah as a result of the Assyrian threat to the Northern Kingdom and the upheaval on the Judaeen-Philistine border.

7.5.2.4 *The 'Millo'*

According to 2 Chronicles 32:5, Hezekiah repaired and strengthened Jerusalem's city wall and also the 'Millo'. The precise nature of the 'Millo' continues to elude scholars (Mazar 1992:424), but from the biblical evidence we learn that it was already in existence when David conquered Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:9) and that it was rebuilt by Solomon (1 Ki 9:15, 24; 11:27).

As 'filling' is the generally accepted etymological sense of the word '*millo*', Mazar (1992:379-380) believes it refers to 'some artificial fill required to overcome a topographical obstacle that might have existed in the saddle between the City of David and the Temple Mount'. Some scholars believe the stone terraces discovered underlying the 'Stepped Stone Structure' might be the mysterious 'Millo'. This structure, discovered by Kathleen Kenyon in the 1960s at the top of the northeastern slope of the City of David, is ascribable to the 10th – 9th century BCE. It stands 15 m high and 12 m wide and consisted of 55 steps of large limestone blocks (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:164). Filled with earth and stones, these walls would have provided protection from the north and constituted the city's outermost defence (Cahill 2003:53).

In the 1980's Yigal Shiloh discovered three well-built houses on two terraces dug into the stones of the 'Stepped Stone Structure'. They date to the late 8th century BCE and, based on the artefacts found there, served as public or official buildings (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:165). This evidence indicates that construction work was undertaken there during the period under discussion.

7.5.2.5 *Water systems and Hezekiah's tunnel*

Advanced hydrotechnology and secured sources of fresh water were an integral part of the Judaeans defence system, and a major element to be taken into consideration by the city planners and engineers. Without a secure water source, the best city walls were of little benefit. During times of peace, these water systems provided the citizens with free and convenient access to fresh water. They are also testimony to the efficiency with which the ancient Israelites utilised

their precious water sources, their knowledge of engineering and hydrogeology, as well as their ability to plan and to organise an enormous amount of hard labour (Barkay 1992:332-333; Mazar 1992:478).

Jerusalem's principal source of water, the perennial Gihon Spring, lay near the floor of the adjacent Kidron valley on the eastern slope of the Ophel hill. It supplied water to three interconnecting water systems: Warren's Shaft, the Siloam or Middle Bronze Age Channel, and Hezekiah's Tunnel (see 2.3.1). Although several centuries separate the construction of each system, they were built to complement rather than replace each other (Mazar 1992:480).

The Chronicler (2 Chr 32:4) clearly states that Hezekiah built this tunnel in anticipation of an attack by Sennacherib (Borowski 1995:153). Many scholars believe that Hezekiah ordered its construction in preparation for his rebellion against Assyria, but fail to take into consideration the time required for such an undertaking (Dalley 2000:119). The construction of the tunnel and the fact that Hezekiah concealed and sealed the outlet of the Gihon spring with rocks (2 Chr 32:4) would have effectively denied a besieging enemy army access to fresh water, a rare commodity in Judah (King & Stager 2001:223). The serpentine tunnel was hewn using iron-headed picks. Based on the information from the Siloam Inscription, two independent teams of labourers cut from opposite directions through 533 m of solid rock and met in the middle. This method of construction effectively halved the time it took to hew the tunnel. The fact that no intermediate shafts were cut that would have facilitated underground connection and ventilation could be explained by the karst system of underground Jerusalem (Frumkin & Shimron 2006:227). The height of the tunnel ranges mostly from 1.3 to 1.8 m, while at its southern end it is 5.3 m high. It lies over 47 m below the ground (Herzog & Gichon 1978:177-179; Mazar 1992:480; Shiloh 1992:284).

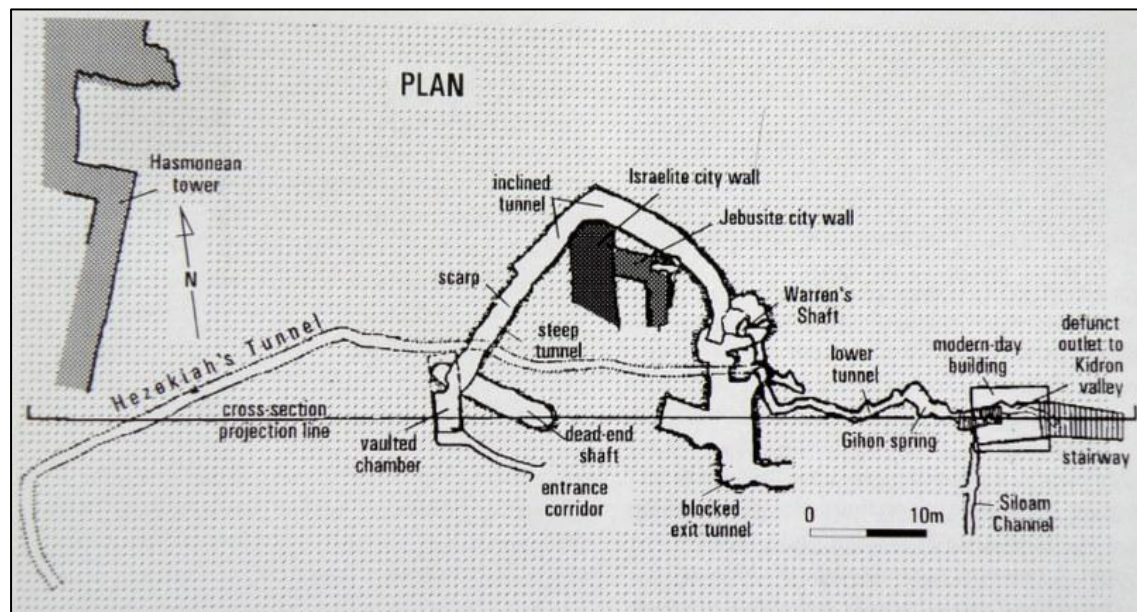
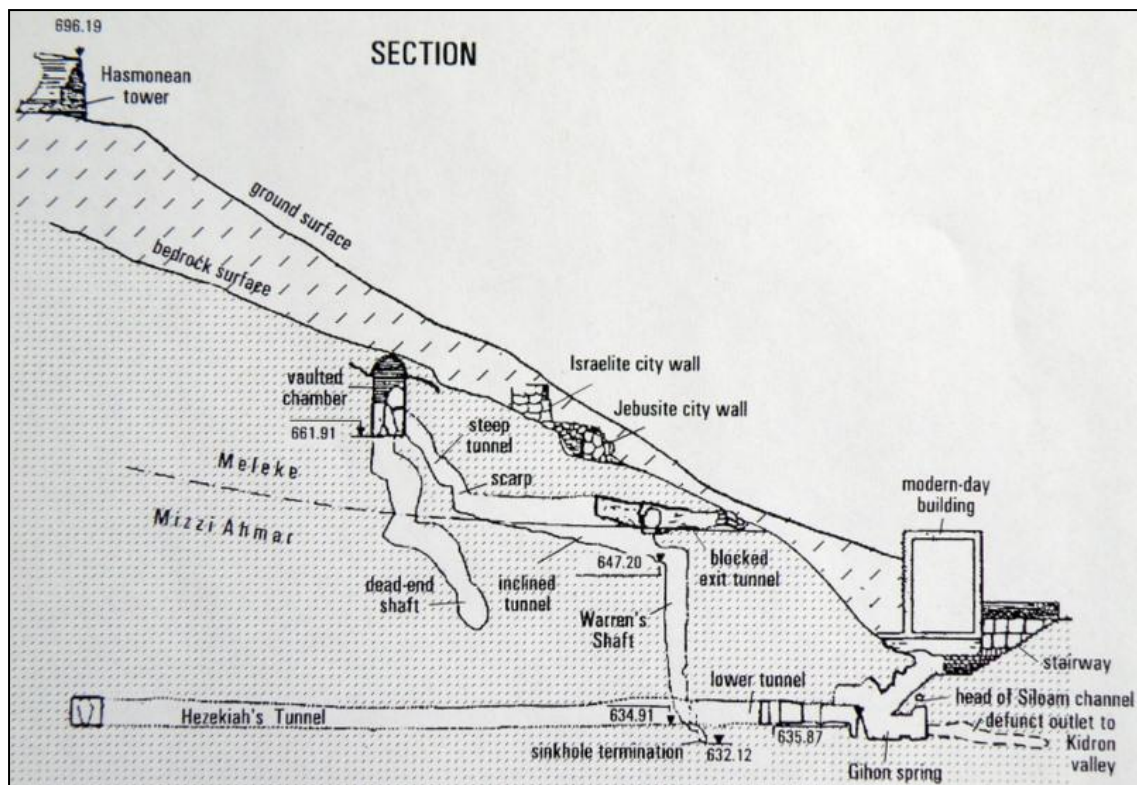


Figure 18: Jerusalem's subterranean waterworks. Section (top) and plan (bottom). The numbers in the section are elevations in meters above mean sea level (Gill 1996:7)

Hezekiah would have required considerable human and financial reserves to achieve such an undertaking. The influx of refugees from the north would have adequately provided the necessary labour, and judging from biblical and literary sources, Hezekiah could easily afford to finance this mammoth undertaking.

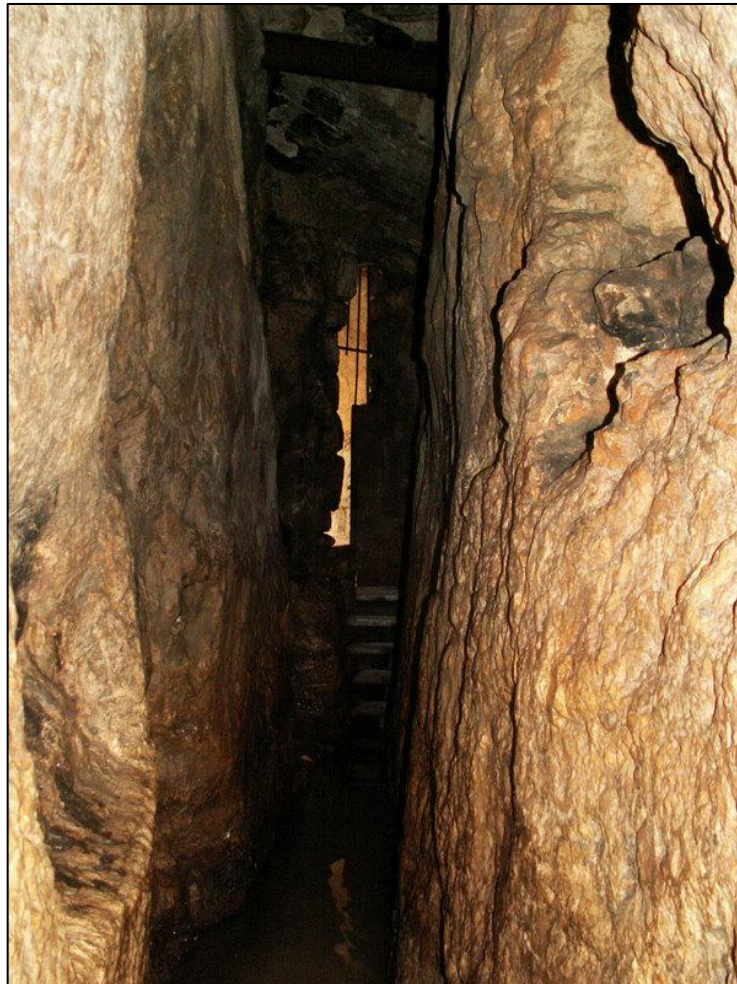


Figure 19: Inside Hezekiah's tunnel⁹⁴

7.5.2.6 *Towers and fortresses as part of a defence line*

Several towers and fortresses have been excavated in the central hill region of Judah, north and south of Jerusalem. All are built on elevated sites commanding unrestricted views of the surrounding countryside and towns. Their unique locations suggest that they were constructed as part of a line of defence for the Kingdom of Judah and its capital, which surrounded as it is on all four sides by

⁹⁴ Photo: Author, Jerusalem, August 2008.

higher ridges, was vulnerable if attacked by surprise (Mazar 1982:176-177). In the event of an attack, these forts and towers were meant to facilitate rapid communication and defend the capital's surrounding urban settlements (Mazar 1982:178).

The construction of only two of these towers, one discovered at Giloh, a modern suburb of Jerusalem, and the other at French Hill, just north of Jerusalem, are tentatively attributed to Hezekiah, who is believed to have initiated a programme to fortify the capital city. The others are considered the work of his predecessor, Jotham (Mazar 1982:177). The technique used to construct the walls of the tower at Giloh is very similar to that employed for the Broad Wall discovered in the Jewish Quarter. The construction and layout of the tower at French Hill is similar to that of Giloh, but larger. Both are built on massive podiums. The similarity in construction technique of the Broad Wall and the fortresses suggests Hezekiah ordered they be built to provide additional protection for the capital of his kingdom.

7.5.2.7 Palaces and administrative buildings

No archaeological remains of the palace Solomon built in Jerusalem have yet been found. Monumental and administrative complexes have been excavated at Lachish and Ramat Rahel. Both cities are believed to have functioned as administrative centres.

7.5.2.8 Storehouses, storerooms, and storage bins

Thirty-five large rectangular tri-partite buildings, with a layout similar to the pillared houses, have been found at twelve sites in Palestine. They consist of three long rooms with thick exterior walls separated by two rows of standing monoliths or wooden pillars standing on flat stones (Borowski 1987:79; King & Stager 2001:92). They occur in groups of three or more, are built side-by-side, and share common walls (De Geus 2003:63). Their purpose continues to baffle scholars, some opting for stables and others for storehouses. The buildings average about 16 to 18 m in length, 10 to 12.5 m in width and have 10 to 14

pillars in each row. The side halls were cobbled and the central aisle paved with beaten earth. The floors of the side halls appear to have been made damp-proof by underlying the stones with layers of clay, ashes, and charcoal. If these halls were used to store agricultural products, then this would have prevented them from moulding. The level of the central aisle was about half a metre higher than the floors of the halls on either side. The roof of the central room is thought to have been higher than those on either side to facilitate ventilation and provide light (De Geus 2003:66). These buildings stood in public areas, close to the city gates (Beersheba), or formed part of the buildings on an acropolis (Lachish) (Mazar 1992:476). They would have been ideal for storing the in-kind taxes in grain, wine, and oil that were delivered to the authorities and had to be stored in bulk (Isserlin 2001:137). Similar buildings were found at Tell el-Hesi, Tel Mique (several found but not published), and Timnah (in the 'industrial area') (De Geus 2003:64).

Only in Beersheba were any potsherds found on the floors of the side halls. The buildings were otherwise clean and devoid of artefacts. This complicates matters, because the artefacts found within a building give an indication of what the building was used for. On the other hand, a building could also have been used in a manner quite different to what it was originally intended (Yadin 1979:233). Not every large pillared building should be considered either a storehouse or stable, and it should not be assumed that all agricultural surpluses were necessarily stored in tripartite buildings.

At Tell en-Naṣbeh a chain of stone-lined storage bins were discovered in the area between the original city wall and the great 9th century BCE wall. The area between the two walls originally sloped steeply, but had been filled and levelled out. It is unknown whether the bins were part of a military scheme to store food, a precautionary measure in case of siege warfare or during a famine, or whether they served the dwellings located nearby (Zorn 1993:1101).

The room (Room 4014) located near the northeastern corner of the inner city at Lachish III, in which 54 storage jars were found, was obviously a storeroom of sorts. Grinding stones, stone stoppers, and other small artefacts were found,

suggesting the room was also used to prepare food (Zimhoni 2004:1790). Some 30 to 40 jars were found in a storeroom at the centre of Tell Batash. Storerooms are generally smaller than storehouses and built attached to civic or cultic buildings.

Hezekiah is accredited with the rebuilding of Stratum VIII at Arad and the fortification of Beersheba, perhaps in preparation for his rebellion against Sennacherib (Herzog *et al* 1984:22). The late 8th century BCE storehouses constructed in Stratum II at Beersheba and Stratum VIII at Arad are likewise attributed to Hezekiah (Herzog *et al* 1984:19). In my opinion, these storehouses could have served to store supplies for Hezekiah's anticipated conflict, to store supplies for the temple and temple personnel, and/or to deposit the taxes, tolls, and customs imposed on the transit trade that would have stopped at Arad and Beersheba for water. Unlike Arad, Beersheba was not rebuilt after Sennacherib's campaign in 701 BCE (Herzog 1993:170; Na'aman 1979:75). While this might have been due to lack of funds or the necessary workforce, Hezekiah might have refrained from doing so to ensure Judah benefited once again from the transit trade coming up from Aqabah and Eilat/Elath. Caravans destined for Tyre would have been forced to stop over at Arad before moving north through Judah on to Jerusalem and Tyre, keeping well away from the *Via Maris*, which ran along the coast, and the Philistine cities, which were then well in the hands of the Assyrians.

7.5.3 The royal *lmlk* jars

Some of the Judaeans storage jars bear a seal impression stamped on the handles. The impression features the inscription, '*lmlk*', an icon, and frequently one of four names. The inscription *lmlk*, meaning '[belonging] to the king', is written in Palaeo-Hebrew. These *lmlk* jars are generally considered a phenomenon of Hezekiah's reign in the late 8th – early 7th century BCE. Over 1,400 provenanced (and nearly 700 unprovenanced) *lmlk* jar handles have to date been excavated at some 60 sites in Palestine. They have been—and continue to be—the topic of much scholarly debate (Grena 2004:110; Diringier 1949:72). Except for a few isolated cases, most of the *lmlk* jar handle fragments

have been found within the geographical confines of the Kingdom of Judah. Places and corresponding numbers of jar handles found include: Lachish 415,



Figure 20: Jar handle bearing two-winged icon and concentric circles with central dot (Grena 2004:95)

Jerusalem 282, Ramat Raḥel 165, Tel el-Jib (Gibeon) 92, Tell en-Naṣbeh (Mizpah) 88, Beth Shemesh 71, Gezer 37, Tel Batash (Timnah) 15, Gibeah 14, Hebron 13, Arad 9, and Beit Mirsim 4⁹⁵ (Grena 2002: http://www.lmlk.com/research/lmlk_corp.htm; Mommsen *et al* 1988:89).

These jars would have been used to store oil, wine, or grain. Suggestions as to why they were produced differ considerably and, although Grena (2004:360) suggested that they might in some way be votives (if the seals are read from bottom to top) related to King Hezekiah's worship reforms, most scholars—by virtue of the word *lmlk*—support the theory that they were royal property and formed part of some administrative and/or military scheme (see 5.10.1 and 6.2.4.5).

7.5.4 Weights and measures

Hundreds of limestone scale weights have been discovered in Judah.⁹⁶ They include both inscribed and uninscribed weights, and date to both the late 8th, but predominantly 7th, century BCE. The inscribed limestone weights are a

⁹⁵ These numbers were transcribed on 31 July 2009 from Grena's website that was updated on 11 July 2009.

⁹⁶ First discovered by Guthe in 1882 (Kletter 1998:138).

specifically Judaeian phenomenon, uniform in inscription, material (stone and metal), shape and weight, indicating one single system with one major standard. Of the 211 weights with known provenance, only six can be dated conclusively to the late 8th century BCE and 188 to the 8th – 7th centuries BCE (Seiger 2000:90). The largest number of weights was discovered in Jerusalem (67), which was feasibly the centre of the Judaeian economy. Considerable numbers were found in the regional centres Lachish (25) and Arad (15) (Kletter 1999:32).

The Judaeian inscribed limestone weights (JIL) are small and dome-shaped with a flattened base. The inscription is incised into the dome and includes letters in Palaeo-Hebrew, numerals in a late form of Egyptian hieratic, and a shekel sign. Some bear personal names probably indicating ownership (Kletter 1998:65-66). The shekel was the basic unit of weight and equalled about 11.33 g, although slight deviations existed (Kletter 1998:140). The JILs were marked one, two, four or eight shekels, and others designated *nsf*, *pym*, *beqa*‘, and *gerah*. They were probably intended for weighing precious metals, such as gold, silver, and small quantities of copper, precious stones, incense, and spices. No heavy units have been found (Kletter 1998:144). The weights gave no guarantees, so that weighing was necessary every time these items changed hands. This might explain why the majority of the weights were found in domestic loci (Kletter 1998:140). Bulkier and heavier commodities were not weighed but bartered, which would explain why no larger weights have been found.

Although the majority of the inscribed weights found date to the 7th century BCE, a functioning system of weights and measures must have been introduced beforehand. Judah, like any other kingdom, would have had some system by which to weigh precious metals and stones, and make payments. The inscription, *ḥšy lmlk*, a ‘half-royal (measure)’, found on a small jar at Beersheba, provides evidence of volumetric measures already in existence by 700 BCE (Aharoni 1975:160-162; Avishur & Heltzer 2000:141). The uninscribed weights might well be the forerunners of the standardised inscribed weights of the 7th century BCE (Kletter 1998:143). The six JILs conclusively dated to the 8th century BCE confirm that the inscribed weights functioned as a system at the end of the 8th century BCE at the latest (Kletter 1998:44).

In 1972 one half of an ivory or bone cylindrical rod was discovered in the mid-8th century BCE Stratum IVb at Lachish, proving that weighing was already practiced in Judah during that time. The rod was found in a large courtyard of a house and has been identified as one half of an Egyptian balance beam.⁹⁷ The beam broke in the middle at the point where a diametrically bored hole had been drilled to thread a string from which the beam was suspended. Shallow scale pans hung on string from either end of the beam (Barkay 2004:2084). While numerous weights and scale pans, most of which are bronze and about 8 cm in diameter have been found, scale beams are rare. More than likely most beams were made from wood, a perishable material that does not survive well in Palestine (Barkay 2004:2086).

The weighing of precious metal gained in importance once Judah became a vassal with an annual tribute to pay. The introduction of weights was probably an attempt by the state to regulate, control, and guarantee supplies. Although the biblical evidence (2 Sm 14:26) hints at a royal weight system, Kletter (1998:143) does not regard the inscribed weights as royal weights. Royal weights, he feels, would have borne the defining royal inscription *lmlk*; similar to the one found on the jars handles. If the single *lmlk* inscribed weight found at Gezer is to be regarded as evidence for the existence of a royal weight system, then it would be the same as that of the inscribed weights, because the weight found at Gezer is the same as two shekels (Kletter 1998:141).

I suggest the increase in the number of weights in Judah is partially a result of Hezekiah's reforms. With the centralisation of the cult in Jerusalem, and the obligation of the people to pay their tithe in Jerusalem, people would have been forced to convert their tithe into silver instead of transporting it to Jerusalem. For this reason, more people would have been in possession of weights for weighing silver, the currency at that time.

The number of weights found in domestic loci also suggests more people were involved in the exchange of goods. The appearance of the weights suggests a

⁹⁷ A similar rod, dated to the 10th – 9th centuries BCE, was found at Megiddo (Barkay 2004:2084).

shift to a monetary system, a result of the Assyrian demands for precious metals. While the increased number of weights suggests an increase in the exchange of precious metals, there is a conspicuous absence of silver hoards found in Judah dating to the Iron Age II (Thompson 2003:70). Either the people were in no financial position to accumulate any wealth, or the silver was being sent elsewhere, probably to the capital city in the form of taxes and tithes.

7.6 DETERMINING THE ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE JUDAEAN POPULATION

Based on the archaeological evidence, or rather, the lack of archaeological evidence, there are only three criteria that afford any insight into the economic situation of the Judaeans: their housing; their funerary architecture and the grave goods that accompanied the deceased; and the increased appearance of seals and bullae. Hoards of precious metals are absent and, apart from a little jewellery accompanying some burials, no evidence of obvious personal wealth has been found. Either the Judaeans did not possess any, or the Assyrians looted whatever was to be found after they had stormed Lachish.

7.6.1 Housing

Remains of floor plans excavated at numerous Iron Age II sites, urban as well as rural, show that single or two-storeyed, and three- or four-room pillared houses characterised the Iron Age II period in Judah. A 'four-room pillared house' measured, on average, 10 by 15 m² (De Geus 2003:78). The ground floor consisted of two or three long rooms separated by rows of pillars with an additional 'broad room' at the back. These rooms were used for housing livestock, storing products, preparing food, and for commercial activities, such as weaving. In some Iron Age II settlements, a casemate of the city wall functioned as the broad room (Borowski 2005:31). The broad room was the main living area. Massive pillars and thick stone outer walls suggest they supported a heavy upper level. Stone or wooden steps led to the upper storey, which partially or completely covered the ground floor, and was used for sleeping, eating, and entertaining. The house was entered through a door into the long room in the

middle that was usually wider, frequently uncovered, and functioned as a courtyard. The ground floors were either cobbled with beaten earth or made of crushed chalk (Borowski 2005:31). At Tel H̄alif, grinding stones and ceramics were found in the debris originating from the second floor, indicating that the preparation of food was not confined to the ground floor (Borowski 2003:18). The roof served as additional living and sleeping space during the hot summer months.

Although the local topography largely influenced the layout of the house, the standards of the family would also have played a role (Yadin 1979:232). The layout of the four-room house appears to have adequately suited the needs of the Israelite family in all segments of the population, both rich and poor (Yadin 1979:232). The size of the house was not necessarily an indication of wealth, but was determined by the needs of its inhabitants (Faust 2003:96). Urban houses were not necessarily smaller than rural houses, where one would expect to find larger houses for storing agricultural equipment. The agricultural tools found in the houses in Lachish III suggest that 'even as city-dwellers the [Judaean] remained farmers that worked on the land surrounding the city during the day, leaving the city in the morning and returning at night' (Fritz 1994:152). A difference in internal division, however, appears in the layout of the urban and rural houses. The rural houses appear to have more rooms, perhaps because they housed extended families that required more segregation and privacy (Faust 2003:96). Well-built four-room houses with thick walls, a high standard of masonry, and a second storey, probably belonged to the wealthier people living in urban settlements (De Geus 2003:182).

The predominant building materials in Palestine were mainly stone and mud, together with wood and reeds. Undressed fieldstones were used for the foundations and mud-bricks for the upper courses of the houses built for the lower income groups and villagers. Costlier building materials, such as dressed stone and carved wood, were used to construct homes for the elite in the cities and larger towns.

7.6.2 Funerary architecture and grave goods

The rock-hewn bench tombs that appeared as of the 10th century BCE had become the standard or typical form of burial in Judah by the late 8th century BCE, although slight changes were evident. They were larger, the workmanship was of a higher quality, and the decorations were more elaborate (Mazar 1992:521). The increased evidence of Egyptian, Philistine, and Phoenician influence suggests foreign craftsmen and/or interaction. Rock-cut pillows or headrests for the dead also appeared in tombs, particularly in Jerusalem, and augmented mortuary assemblages accompanied the deceased (Bloch-Smith 2002:128-129).

Examples of such rock-hewn burial tombs were excavated by Ussishkin in 1974 and Tzaferis in 1982 in the valleys surrounding Tel 'Eton (Tell 'Aitum). The tombs excavated in the Iron Age cemetery at Tel Ḥalif contained fragments of and whole bowls, oil lamps, black juglets, cooking pots, and necks and handles of jars that date to the 9th and 8th centuries BCE, and possibly to the beginning of the 7th century BCE. They are all Judaeian tombs with an entrance court, a narrow entrance with steps, a square burial chamber, one to three burial benches, and one or two repositories. The large number of iron arrowheads found with the tombs suggests a link to the destruction layer in Stratum VIB at Tel Ḥalif that contained numerous sling stones and arrowheads, as well as beads, silver earrings, and rings (Borowski 1993:560).

Pottery, personal items, jewellery, tools, models, and figurines were amongst the items that frequently accompanied the deceased. Ceramic vessels, such as lamps and bowls, usually contained oil for light and food as an offering. Jewellery was a standard mortuary inclusion and was not necessarily an indication of the gender of the deceased. The various colours, shapes, and materials of the jewellery were believed to possess protective and vivificative powers (Bloch-Smith 1992:81). The tools, such as flints, spindle whorls, pounders, and loom weights, possibly reflect the notion that the deceased was expected to continue labouring in the afterlife, but together with the personal items, such as combs, seals, and gaming pieces, they were a clear indication of the social standing of

the deceased (Bloch-Smith 1992:90). There exist varying explanations for the inclusion of terracotta models and figurines in the mortuary assemblages (Bloch-Smith 1992:94-103).

The cemeteries in the vicinity of Jerusalem are particularly informative. The wide variety of tomb forms found reflects perhaps the mixed population resident in the capital city. Phoenician features on the tombs in Silwan and the Tyropoeon Valley testify to the foreign interaction in and around Jerusalem in the 9th – late 8th centuries BCE. This evidence included a ‘combination of monolithic and ashlar block chambers, with stone coffins, gabled ceilings, an Egyptian cornice carved along the upper edge of the facade, and pyramid-shaped superstructures’ (Bloch-Smith 1992:136).

The emergence of a small, urban elite made up of wealthy individuals and government officials is evidenced by the tombs in the vicinity of Jerusalem and in the Shephelah in the 8th – 7th century BCE. Their tombs are large with multiple burial chambers reflecting the deceased’s wealth, status, and earthly abode. In addition to personal possessions, such as seals, jewellery, and weapons, the deceased was also provided with varied offerings for the afterlife, such as ceramic vessels containing food and oil (Mazar 1992:525).

7.6.3 Seals and bullae

A significant number of stone stamp seals have been brought to light at controlled excavations throughout Palestine. Those found at Judaeian sites generally date to the 8th – 7th centuries BCE.

The Syro-Palestinian seals are predominantly elliptical with a flattish or slightly convex surface into which an inscription and/or image was engraved in mirror image. They vary in shape and size, and are made from a wide range of materials (Millard 1985:112-113). Generally no larger than about 2.2 cm by 1 cm, seals were often set in a ring or had a hole drilled through them so that they could be hung around the neck. The material from which the seals were made reflected the financial status of the owner: bone and limestone for the poorer

citizens, while the wealthy chose between precious stones, copper, gold, or silver (Isserlin 2001:226-227).

Seals were used to indicate ownership, and they identified and adorned the wearer or user. Possession of a seal with an inscription does not preclude illiteracy of the owner (Dever 2001:205). Pressed into soft clay, seals left an easily identifiable impression. Seals were used to stamp (or seal) little balls of clay (*bullae*) attached to string that was fastened around papyri or scrolls of tanned leather.⁹⁸ They fulfilled a variety of purposes; legal as well as non-legal, were offered as gifts to the gods, used in administration and trade, worn as amulets to keep evil spirits at bay, and often buried with the owner (Pittman 1995:1590).

Seals designated ownership and were visible evidence of the wearer or user's wealth and/or authority. The king, officials with responsible positions in the employ of the king, but also ordinary men and women, owned seals (Dever 2001:205). Seals provide valuable information on the government, administration, and religious practices. Numerous seal and seal impressions have been found bearing names of people we are familiar with from the Hebrew Bible, such as the bulla with Hezekiah's name (see 6.2.4.5). The large number of different titles found inscribed on the bullae and seal impressions provide invaluable information on the organisation of the Judaeen administration, the various functionaries, and offices. Importantly, we gain a general impression of the considerable number of people who would have benefited economically as a result of their position, office, or association with the administration and crown. To mention but a few, seals or seal impressions belonging to the following people have been found: the recorder (*hmzkyr*), the priests, the scribe, the king's son, the king's friend, the commander in chief, the governor of the city (*śar ha'ir*), the head of the bakery (*śar ha'ofim*), the royal guard (*mšm't*), the king's servants (*'bdy hmlk*), the judge (*šofet*), the *šōṭēr*, the eunuch (*sārīs*), the gatekeeper of the prison, the manager or guide, the standard bearer, and the official (Avishur & Heltzer 2000).

⁹⁸ Parchment, finely processed leather made from the skin of goats or sheep, was first used in Pergamum in the 4th century CE (King & Stager 2001:309).

Many seals bear names with theophoric suffixes (containing the divine name YHWH in the form *-yhw*, *-yw* and *-yh*), an indication that the worship of YHWH was well established in the wealthier and educated levels of Israelite, and particularly Judaeen society. This also indicates that the state religion was part and parcel of practices and the worldview of daily society (Avigad & Sass 1997:24).

7.7 CONCLUSION

The available archaeological evidence gives every indication that Judah enjoyed a wealthy economy, but it was one that favoured a powerful minority. These findings support Elat (1979a:186):

Particular geopolitical conditions ... allowed Judah and Israel to participate in international trade by virtue of their control over [the] international routes or parts of them. This ... transit trade ... produced profits for the royal court and raised the standard of living of those close to it, [but] it had only a limited influence on the local economy or on the occupational distribution of the country's inhabitants.

This discussion confirms the claim that epigraphic sources reflect the higher echelons of society, while archaeology possesses the potential to illuminate the lower. An overall conclusion to the study is presented in the following chapter.

C

HAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

A multidisciplinary and holistic approach has been employed in the course of this study to gain a more comprehensive view of Hezekiah's reign and determine *whether or not the contents of the storehouses listed in 2 Kings 20:13, 2 Chronicles 32:25-28, and Isaiah 39:2, defy or reflect the reality of the Judaeen economy during the late 8th – early 7th century BCE*. The two main disciplines employed are history and archaeology, but also biblical studies, economics, geography, and religion. A critical stance has been adopted towards the literary sources to glean from them as much 'historical' information as possible.

From the discussion on the literary sources in Chapter Two, it is evident that ideology underlay both the Assyrian and the biblical texts. Both sources were written with *political* and *religious* intentions: to honour and extol the virtues of the king or deity in whose name they were commissioned. Not only do the Assyrian sources confirm to some extent the biblical sources, but the results of *archaeological* excavations have shown conclusively that the Bible certainly contains historically reliable information surrounding Hezekiah's reign.

Chapter Three on the *political* dimension of Hezekiah's reign emphasises how events in the political arena ultimately affected the Judaeen *economy* and the *social* circumstances of the Judaeen population. Chapters Four and Five deal with economic aspects: Hezekiah's personal wealth and its source, as well as the different aspects of the Judaeen economy. *Political* domination of the region traversed by the international trade routes afforded the crown and upper strata of the Judaeen society considerable economic advantages.

The benefits of the holistic approach are particularly well illustrated in Chapter

Six, dealing with the religious dimension of Hezekiah's reign. While the biblical literary sources accredit Hezekiah's cultic reformation to religious piety, the ramification of these reforms would suggest *political*, *economic*, and *strategic* objectives played a major role (see 6.4).

Chapter Seven examines the archaeological evidence in an attempt to establish whether or not the entire Judaeen population shared in this wealth. Events in the *political* arena, as well as Hezekiah's *religious* reforms impacted on the *socio-economic* situation of the Judaeans. The results of this study, a more balanced and comprehensive view of Hezekiah's reign in the late 8th – early 7th century BCE, illustrate how closely interwoven the different dimensions are.

8.2 ACHIEVING THE GOAL OF THIS RESEARCH

In order to achieve the goals set for this study, answers to the following questions have been sought, based on an integration of the information gleaned from the discussions in the preceding chapters:

- Could the Judaeen agrarian economy have been the source of Hezekiah's incredible wealth, for which it was necessary to build storehouses and additional treasuries, even though the country was a vassal of the mighty Assyrian Empire at the time?
- Were alternative sources of revenue available to Hezekiah?
- Does the archaeological evidence reflect a healthy Judaeen economy?

According to the biblical texts and the royal Assyrian annals, Hezekiah was fabulously wealthy, with bulging storehouses, treasuries filled with numerous luxury and exotic items coveted throughout the ancient Near East, well-stocked armouries, and the necessary financial resources to undertake military campaigns and major building projects. The members of the Babylonian envoy were afforded a conducted tour of all his assets, partially to prove Judah's preparedness for war (2 Ki 20:13-15). Even if the sources do not coincide on the number of silver talents that changed hands, both sources agree that Hezekiah rendered substantial tribute to Sennacherib. The *only* indication of the source of

Hezekiah's wealth is found in the epigraphic sources. According to the Chronicler, 'YHWH had made him immensely wealthy' (2 Chr 32:29).

2 Kings 18:8 mentions Hezekiah's military campaign against the Philistines. This campaign enabled Hezekiah to reclaim the territory down to Gaza and, most importantly, gained him access to the *Via Maris*. Isaiah (44:12) refers to an ironsmith, so although no archaeological evidence for metal-working has been found in the Iron Age IIC strata, some must have existed, if only to produce metal farming implements. Although we have no means to gauge the extent to which the Judaeans craftsmen and smiths (2 Ki 24:16) contributed to the Judaeans economy, we do know that they were highly skilled (see 5.6.4).

The extent of Hezekiah's wealth is gleaned from biblical sources, which itemise the contents of Hezekiah's storehouses, treasuries, and armouries, and Sennacherib's annals, which list the elite goods Judah rendered as tribute. A study of the royal Assyrian annals shows that Judah's tribute of 30 talents of gold was the third highest amount paid by any country; larger quantities were only received from Tyre and Musasir. The Assyrians claim to have received 800 talents of silver from Judah. Only five other countries or kings paid more silver than Hezekiah did. Most of these countries, including Tyre and Musasir, were situated at locations where they could benefit from the transit trade, while others boasted substantial natural resources, particularly in metals.

The biblical texts indicate that the running of the government and the Temple was financed by tithes, taxes, and gifts, rendered either in kind or conveniently converted to silver. As YHWH's earthly representative, Hezekiah would have had control over, and access to, both the religious and secular incomes. The prophets lash out at the social injustices that prevailed in the Judaeans society. The people involved in trade and commerce did not rank highly with the biblical writers and were, according to Isaiah (1:22) and Micah (3:11), corrupt. There were obviously people in positions of authority who took advantage of, and also benefited from, those less fortunate (see 2.2.3.1).

8.2.1 AGRICULTURE AND HEZEKIAH'S WEALTH

Far-reaching, substantial, and long-term changes in traditional farming systems are necessary for agriculture to make a significant contribution to a national economy. Such changes began in Judah during Uzziah's reign (767-740/39 BCE) (2 Chr 26.10). Basing their arguments on accusations by Isaiah (5:8) and Micah (2:2) that land and property were unjustly confiscated from the poor, Chaney (1993:253) and De Geus (1982:56-57) suggested that these were used to create extensive estates, similar to *latifundia*, where crop specialisation and intensified farming took place to produce large surpluses for exchange and export. The continued terracing, observed in the archaeological record, would have facilitated intensified farming. The poor farmers, however, would still have been hard pressed to produce food sufficient for their own consumption, feed the increased urban population (the result of the deluge of refugees from the north during the latter half of the 8th century BCE), pay their tithes and taxes, and still produce surpluses for trade and periods of famine or drought (see 5.3).

Judah's export potential lay in grain, wine, and olive oil. High transport costs and the fact that most countries in the area cultivated the same crops would have limited trade and trading opportunities. The archaeological evidence at Ekron (see 5.6.1) and Gibeon (see 5.6.2) suggest substantial quantities of olive oil and wine were being produced, possibly for export. When surpluses were available, Judah exported olive oil and wine to Egypt—products that were largely lacking there (Hs 12:1). Some olive oil might possibly have been exported to Assyria, especially as Assyria set about developing the olive oil industry at Ekron in the 7th century BCE. Long-established trade relations existed between Tyre and the Israelite kingdoms. Hezekiah probably exchanged agricultural products, particularly grain, for some of the luxury items commonly traded by the Phoenicians and listed in his treasuries and storehouses (see 5.10.2.1).

Hezekiah's religious reforms and cult centralisation resulted in all tithes and taxes being delivered directly to the Temple in Jerusalem. This move would have placed considerable funds and stores at his disposal. As the majority of the population were farmers, agricultural product made up a substantial part of

tithes. The prescribed tri-annual pilgrimages of the farmers from the outlying communities to the Temple, financed by revenue from agriculture (see 5.8.1), would have benefited and stimulated commerce in the capital city. The Deuteronomic provision that tithes could be rendered in silver might well have been included in the biblical texts after Hezekiah introduced his reforms. The appearance of numerous limestone weights, obviously meant for the weighing of precious metals and stones, suggest precious metals were being exchanged. As no silver hoards dating to the late 8th – early 7th century BCE have (as yet) been found within Judah, this suggests it was all delivered to the capital as taxes and tithes (see 7.5.4).

Epigraphic and archaeological evidence exists testifying to the export of Judaeen agricultural products, but it is highly unlikely—considering all the limitations—that the Judaeen agriculture generated, either directly (export) or indirectly (tithes and taxes), sufficient surpluses to stock Hezekiah's storehouses. In addition, their value was insufficient to account for the bulging treasuries.

8.2.2 HEZEKIAH'S OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME

The Judaeen agriculture could not solely account for the nature of Hezekiah's store of wealth. The greater part of the Judaeen tribute was made up of foreign goods that originated far beyond Judah's borders (see Chapter Four). Judaeen agricultural products, in the form of livestock—excluding the horses—and perhaps some textiles, were but a small part of the tribute. Some of the silver would have been obtained in exchange for agricultural products from the Phoenicians who sourced silver in Sardinia and the western Mediterranean. The foreign goods reached Jerusalem by way of merchant caravans, or they were shipped to a Phoenician harbour and then transported overland to Jerusalem. When Hezekiah regained the territory down to Gaza (2 Ki 18:8), he secured Judah's access to the lucrative *Via Maris*, the international overland trade route that ran along the Mediterranean coast. Together with the National Highway that ran inland, these routes would have provided ample opportunity for Hezekiah to impose taxes, tolls, and custom duties on the caravans and their valuable cargoes. Remuneration for safe passage, food, and water for the people and

animals in the caravans would have provided additional income. The financial potential of the caravans and their cargo is obvious from the inscription recording the capture of a merchant caravan from Temā and Šaba (see 5.10.2).

Whereas Solomon's involvement in international trade is well documented in the Bible, limited direct textual evidence exists referring to Hezekiah's involvement in trade or commercial undertakings. Fortunately, artefactual evidence corrects this situation somewhat. The discovery of bones of fish from the Nile shows that Judah imported products from Egypt, most probably by way of Phoenicia (see 5.10.2.2). The appearance of the royal *lmlk* jars and the limestone weights bearing hieratic numerals reflect efforts on Hezekiah's part to encourage and facilitate trade between Judah and Egypt (see 5.10.2.3). Certain items required for cult rituals could only have been obtained through international trade. As no Temple archive has been discovered, we have no way of knowing to what extent—if at all—the Temple was involved in commerce and trade.

As mentioned above, Judah's tribute payment was in the same range as those paid by countries that clearly benefited from either their geographical location or involvement in international trade (see 4.4). This would suggest the Judaeans economy likewise profited financially from the trade that traversed the area. Tolls, taxes, and custom duties imposed on this trade traversing the region constituted a lucrative source of income for the king. However, it would be reasonable to assume that instead of one single source, these two sources (agriculture and revenue from the trade routes) supported the Judaeans economy to varying degrees at different times.

8.2.3 THE ECONOMY FAVOURED A POWERFUL MINORITY

The construction of the Broad Wall and the Siloam Tunnel in Jerusalem, the terraces, the fortresses and signal towers, as well as the fortification to varying degrees of the Judaeans settlements, all entailed considerable financial expenditure on the part of the Judaeans central government under Hezekiah, even if cheap labour, in the form of numerous unemployed refugees from the north, was readily available (see 7.5.2). Hezekiah's extensive wealth, together

with the healthy Judaeian economy, enabled him to feed his people, offer them security, and provide them with employment opportunities.

The appearance of the stamped *lmlk* jars, the limestone weights, and the building projects suggest a strong, central government, one capable of coordinating considerable human resources. Furthermore, there is evidence that Hezekiah's government was extensive. Personal seals bearing the names and functions of numerous different administrative officials have been found (see 7.6.3). Sufficient revenue must have been available to finance Hezekiah's administration and court, further suggesting that Judah boasted a healthy national economy.

The fact that people were living beyond the city walls (evidence found in Jerusalem, Lachish, and Arad, see 7.5.1.2), while others sought refuge in caves in the vicinity of Jerusalem (see 7.5.1.1), suggests some people were enduring considerable hardship and living on the fringe of society. On the other hand, the archaeological evidence reflects the emergence of an elite class of society with access to wealth. These people probably benefited from their association with, and employment by, the crown and Temple, and feasibly were the same people who could afford dried or preserved fish from the Nile and houses that were well built, although the size of the houses was not necessarily a reflection of the financial status of the owner. The needs of the inhabitants determined the size and layout of the houses (see 7.6.1). The small number of elaborate tombs with augmented grave assemblages concentrated in the vicinity of Jerusalem and the Shephelah further indicates the appearance of a wealthy minority (see 2.3. and 7.6.2). Apart from a little jewellery, found mainly in the mortuary assemblages, none of the luxury goods mentioned in the epigraphic sources turn up in the archaeological record.

While the majority of the Judaeans benefited from Hezekiah's wealth (through civic improvements such as fortified cities and secure, convenient access to water), they do not appear to have been able to accumulate any wealth themselves. On the contrary, while their contributions to the economy were probably not excessive, they appear to have been oppressive. The prophets'

accusations that the upper classes profited at the expense of the needy (Is 3:14; Mi 6:12) appear to be well-founded (see 2.2.3.1). The Judaeen population was largely made up of rural farmers who wrestled a hard livelihood from the earth. They faced droughts, famine, pests, and social injustices, and were still expected to render numerous tithes and taxes (similarly not always just; Mi 2:8) to finance the extensive Judaeen administration and the running of the Temple. The three pilgrimages to Jerusalem surely resulted in additional hardship for the farmers, because work on the farm and in the fields ceased for at least 16 days a year (see 6.2.3). Although these journeys provided opportunities for the rural population to engage in trade and commerce, they were ideal opportunities for those in the world of business and trade to profit unjustly from these people. Increased prices would have been just one way the poor rural farmers would have been taken advantage of (Is 1:22; Mi 3:11).

The biblical writers hail Hezekiah a good king, but from a 21st century CE perspective he is not. It is only when the Assyrian army advances upon Jerusalem and his own person is threatened that Hezekiah shows any common sense, sends a message of apology to Sennacherib at Lachish, and offers to pay tribute. This offer comes too late to save the inhabitants of the 46 Judaeen towns and cities that Sennacherib had already destroyed. The mass burials at Lachish (see 4.3.3.9) are testimony to this tragedy. The omission of these details in the scriptures makes one question the value placed on people's lives at that time.

Stansell (2005:97) claims: 'the drive for wealth is bound up with the drive for power'. This certainly applies to the monarchs of the Assyrian Empire, and it could easily apply to Hezekiah. After accumulating the necessary financial resources, he was determined to rebel against Assyria and reclaim the power and control of his kingdom.

Based on the substantial evidence found in the literary, historical, and archaeological sources—and in answer to the leading questions set forth in the goals of this research—this study affirms that the contents of the storehouses listed in 2 Kings 20:13, 2 Chronicles 32:25-28, and Isaiah 39:2, as well as the disproportionately huge tribute paid to Sennacherib in 701 BCE detailed in the

royal Assyrian Annals, do *reflect* the reality of the Judaeen economy during the late 8th – early 7th century BCE. The archaeological evidence shows that Judah under Hezekiah enjoyed a healthy, even sumptuous economy, but it was one that favoured a powerful minority.

APPENDIX A

TEXT OF THE RASSAM CYLINDER

The Rassam Cylinder, dated Iyar 700 BCE, is the earliest copy of the cuneiform text and was written about six months after the hostilities ended (Cogan 2000:302). The list of tribute is more detailed than that found on the Chicago and Taylor Prisms (Mayer 2003:169).

‘In my third campaign, I marched against Hatti. The awesome splendor of my lordship overwhelmed Lulli, king of Sidon, and he fled overseas far-off. The terrifying nature of the weapon of (the god) Ashur my lord overwhelmed his strong cities, Greater Sidon, Lower Sidon, Bit-zitti, Sاریtu, Mahaliba, Ushu, Akzib, Akko, walled cities (provided) with food and water for his garrisons, and they bowed in submission at my feet. I installed Tuba’lu on the royal throne over them and imposed upon him tribute and dues for my lordship (payable) annually without interruption.

The kings of Amurru, all of them – Minuḥimmu of Samsimuruna, Tuba’lu of Sidon, Abdili’ti of Arvad, Urumilki of Byblos, Mitinti of Ashdod, Puduilu of Beth-Ammon, Chemosh-nadbi of Moab, Ayarammu of Edom – brought me sumptuous presents as their abundant audience-gift, fourfold, and kissed my feet.

As for Şidqa, king of Ashkelon, who had not submitted to my yoke – his family gods, he himself, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his brothers, and (all the rest of) his descendants, I deported and brought him to Assyria. I set Sharruludari, son of Rukubti, their former king, over the people of Ashkelon and imposed upon him payment of tribute (and) presents to my lordship; he (now) bears my yoke. In the course of my campaign, I surrounded and conquered Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Bene-berak, Azor, cities belonging to Şidqa, who did not submit quickly, and I carried off their spoil.

The officials, the nobles, and the people of Ekron who had thrown Padi, their

king, (who was) under oath and obligation to Assyria, into iron fetters and handed him over in a hostile manner to Hezekiah, the Judean, took fright because of the offense they had committed. The kings of Egypt, (and) the bowmen, chariot corps and cavalry of the kings of Ethiopia assembled a countless force and came to their (i.e. the Ekronites') aid. In the plain of Eltekeh, they drew up their ranks against me and sharpened their weapons. Trusting in the god Ashur, my lord, I fought with them and inflicted a defeat upon them. The Egyptian charioteers and princes, together with the charioteers of the Ethiopians, I personally took alive in the midst of the battle. I besieged and conquered Eltekeh and Timnah and carried off their spoil. I advanced to Ekron and slew its officials and nobles who had stirred up rebellion and hung their bodies on watchtowers all about the city. The citizens who committed sinful acts I counted as spoil, and I ordered the release of the rest of them, who had not sinned. I freed Padi, their king, from Jerusalem and set him on the throne as king over them and imposed tribute for my lordship over him.

As for Hezekiah, the Judean, I besieged forty-six of his fortified walled cities and surrounding smaller towns, which were without number. Using packed-down ramps and applying battering rams, infantry attacks by mines, breeches, and siege machines, I conquered (them). I took out 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, cattle, and sheep, without number, and counted them as spoil. He himself, I locked up within Jerusalem, his royal city, like a bird in a cage. I surrounded him with earthworks, and made it unthinkable for him to exit by the city gate. His cities which I had despoiled I cut off from his land and gave them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron and Şilli-bel, king of Gaza, and thus diminished his land. I imposed dues and gifts for my lordship upon him, in addition to the former tribute, their yearly payment.

He, Hezekiah, was overwhelmed by the awesome splendor of my lordship, and he sent me after my departure to Nineveh, my royal city, his elite troops (and) his best soldiers, which he had brought in as reinforcement to strengthen Jerusalem, with 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, choice antimony, large blocks of

carnelian,⁹⁹ beds (inlaid) with ivory, armchairs (inlaid) with ivory, elephant hides, ivory, ebony-wood, boxwood,¹⁰⁰ multicoloured garments, garments of linen, wool (dyed) red-purple and blue-purple, vessels of copper, iron, bronze and tin, chariots, siege shields, lances, armor, daggers for the belt, bows and arrows, countless trappings and implements of war,¹⁰¹ together with his daughters, his palace women, his male and female singers. He (also) dispatched his messenger to deliver the tribute and to do obeisance (Cogan 2000:302-303)

From the booty of those lands which I plundered, 10,000 bows, 10,000 shields I took therefrom and added them to my royal equipment. The rest, the heavy spoil of enemy (captives), I divided like sheep among my whole camp (army) as well as my governors and the inhabitants of my large cities' (*ARAB* II:137).

⁹⁹ Instead of carnelian, Luckenbill (*ARAB*:248) has *sandu*-stones and Mayer (2003:188-190) has 'AN.GUG-stone' in their translations.

¹⁰⁰ - ¹⁰¹ is omitted on the Taylor and Chicago Prisms and replaced by 'all kinds of valuable treasures' (Cogan 2000:303n).

APPENDIX B

TEXTS OF THE TAYLOR AND CHICAGO PRISMS

The texts of the Taylor Prism and Chicago (or Oriental) Prisms are almost identical except for minor deviations and orthographical variations (Mayer 2003:190n58).

Chicago Prism Column 2

³⁷In my third campaign, I went against the Hittite-land. ³⁸Lulê, king of Sidon, the terrifying splendor ³⁹of my sovereignty overcame him, and far off ⁴⁰into the midst of the sea he fled. There he died. ⁴¹Great Sidon, Little Sidon, ⁴²Bît-Zitti, Zaribtu, Mahalliba, ⁴³Ushu, Akzib, Akko, ⁴⁴his strong, walled cities, where there were fodder and drink, ⁴⁵for his garrisons, the terrors of the weapon of Assur, ⁴⁶my lord, overpowered them and they bowed in submission at my feet. ⁴⁷I seated Tuba'lu on the royal throne ⁴⁸over them, and tribute, gifts for my majesty, ⁴⁹I imposed upon him for all time, without ceasing.

⁵⁰From Menachem, the Shamsimurunit, ⁵¹Tuba'lu the Sidonite, ⁵²Abdi-liti the Arvadite, ⁵³Uru-milki the Gublite, ⁵⁴Mitinti the Ashdodite ⁵⁵Budu-ilu the Beth Ammonite, ⁵⁶Kammusu-nadbi the Moabite, ⁵⁷Malik-rammu the Edomite, ⁵⁸kings of Amurru, all of them, numerous presents ⁵⁹as their heavy tribute, ⁶⁰they brought before me for the fourth time, and kissed my feet.

But Sidka, ⁶¹the king of Ashkelon, who had not submitted ⁶²to my yoke, the gods of his father's house, himself, his wife, ⁶³his sons, his daughters, his brothers, the seed of his paternal house, ⁶⁴I tore away and brought to Assyria. ⁶⁵Sharru-lu-dari, son of Rukibtu, their former king, ⁶⁶I set over the people of Ashkelon, and ⁶⁷I imposed upon him the payment of tribute: presents to my majesty. ⁶⁸He accepted my yoke. In the course of my campaign, ⁶⁹Beth-Dagon, Joppa,

⁷⁰Banaibarka, Asuru, cities ⁷¹of Sidka, who had not speedily bowed in ⁷²submission at my feet, I besieged, I conquered, I carried off their spoil.

⁷³The officials, nobles, and people of Ekron, ⁷⁴who had thrown Padi their king— bound by oath and curse of Assyria— ⁷⁵into fetters of iron and ⁷⁶⁻⁷⁷had given him over to Hezekiah, the Judahite—he kept him in confinement like an enemy— ⁷⁸their heart became afraid, ⁷⁹and they called upon the Egyptian kings, the bowmen, chariots and horses ⁸⁰of the king of Meluhha [Ethiopia], a countless host, and ⁸¹these came to their aid. ⁸²In the neighborhood of Eltekeh, ⁸³their ranks being drawn up before me,

Chicago Prism Column 3

¹they offered battle. With the aid of Assur, ²my lord, I fought with them and ³brought about their defeat. The Egyptian charioteers and princes, ⁴together with the Ethiopian king's charioteers, ⁵my hands captured alive in the midst of the battle. ⁶Eltekeh and Timnah ⁷I besieged, I captured, and I took away their spoil.

⁸I approached Ekron and slew the governors and nobles ⁹who had rebelled, and ¹⁰hung their bodies on stakes around the city. The inhabitants ¹¹who rebelled and treated (Assyria) lightly I counted as spoil. ¹²The rest of them, who were not guilty of rebellion ¹³and contempt, for whom there was no punishment, ¹⁴I declared their pardon. Padi, their king, ¹⁵I brought out to Jerusalem, ¹⁶set him on the royal throne over them, and ¹⁷imposed upon him my royal tribute.

¹⁸As for Hezekiah the Judahite, ¹⁹who did not submit to my yoke: forty-six of his strong, walled cities, as well as ²⁰the small towns in their area, ²¹which were without number, by levelling with battering-rams ²²and by bringing up siege-engines, and by attacking and storming on foot, ²³by mines, tunnels, and breeches, I besieged and took them. ²⁴200,150 people, great and small, male and female, ²⁵horses, mules, asses, camels, ²⁶cattle and sheep without number, I brought away from them ²⁷and counted as spoil. (Hezekiah) himself, like a caged bird ²⁸I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city. ²⁹I threw up earthworks against him— ³⁰the one coming out of the city-gate, I turned back to his misery.

³¹His cities, which I had despoiled, I cut off from his land, and ³²to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, ³³Padi, king of Ekron, and Silli-bêl, ³⁴king of Gaza, I gave (them). And thus I diminished his land. ³⁵I added to the former tribute, ³⁶and I laid upon him the surrender of their land and imposts—gifts for my majesty. ³⁷As for Hezekiah, ³⁸the terrifying splendor of my majesty overcame him, and ³⁹the Arabs and his mercenary troops which he had brought in to strengthen ⁴⁰Jerusalem, his royal city, ⁴¹deserted him. In addition to the thirty talents of gold and ⁴²eight hundred talents of silver, gems, antimony, ⁴³jewels, large carnelians, ivory-inlaid couches, ⁴⁴ivory-inlaid chairs, elephant hides, elephant tusks, ⁴⁵ebony, boxwood, all kinds of valuable treasures, ⁴⁶as well as his daughters, his harem, his male and female ⁴⁷musicians, which he had brought after me ⁴⁸to Nineveh, my royal city. To pay tribute ⁴⁹and to accept servitude, he dispatched his messengers (AS:31-36; Hanson 1995-2005: <http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/meso/sennprism2.html>).

APPENDIX C

NINURTA-KUDURRĪ-UŠUR - SUĦU ANNALS #2 (2.115B)

Discovered in the Haditha Dam area, this four column clay tablet is inscribed with a text written in the Babylonian dialect with both Assyrian and Aramaic influences. The text records Ninurta-kudurrī-ušur's victory over the city of Ra'il and the capture of a caravan from Temā and Šaba':

'I, Ninurta-kudurrī-ušur, governor of the land of SuĦu and the land of Mari: regarding the Temanites and Saba'eans, whose country is far away, from whom no messenger had ever come to me, and (who) had never travelled to meet me, their merchant caravan came near to the water of the wells of Martu (Amurru?) and Ḫalatu, but it passed by and entered into the city of Ḫindānu. While in the city of Kār-Apla-Adad, I heard a report about them at noon; and I (immediately) harnessed (the horses of) my chariot. I crossed the river during the night and reached the city of Azlāyanu before noon of the next day. I waited in the city of Azlāyanu for three days and on the third day they approached. I captured 100 of them alive. I captured their 200 camels, together with their loads – blue-purple wool, ... wool, iron <*pappar*>*dilû*-stones,¹⁰² every kind of merchandise. I plundered their abundant booty and brought it back into the land of SuĦu.

In the 7th year of Ninurta-kudurrī-ušur, governor of the land of SuĦu and the land of Mari, this report was made (Younger 2000:279-282).

¹⁰² Agates and onyxes were often used for their magical powers. According to (Dalley 1999:77) the *pappardilû* stone was one of these.

APPENDIX D

DESTRUCTION BY SENNACHERIB IN 701 BCE

1 LACHISH III

Lachish was the second most important town in the Kingdom of Judah. One of the largest ancient sites in Israel, the summit covered over 8 ha (Feldman 2002:¶3). It was situated in close proximity of the route that passed from the Coastal Plain to the Hebron Hill. The conflagration, observed in all the buildings excavated in Stratum III, is evidence of the death and destruction at the hands of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib in 701 BCE.

The pottery of Stratum III has provided a benchmark for dating other Judaeans pottery assemblages. Almost the entire 8th century BCE Judaeans ceramic repertoire was present in Stratum III and included all kinds of cooking pots, bowls, craters, jugs and juglets, lamps and most of the storage jars types in use just prior to the destruction of the city by the Assyrians (Zimhoni 2004:1793). Some 80 ceramic vessels, 54 of which were storage jars, were found in Room 4014 in Stratum III, located near the inner city gate. The heat of the fire in this storage room was so intense that it melted the mud bricks and changed their colour to reddish yellow. The shape of many of the ceramic vessels was also altered (Zimhoni 2004:1790). Further finds included grinding stones and stone stoppers. There is evidence that these jars could have contained barley or liquids, such as wine and/or olive oil (Zimhoni 2004:1791).

Lachish was protected by a solid outer revetment, situated half way down the slope, and a massive inner wall, 6 m thick. It was built of mud bricks on a stone foundation. The area between the two walls consisted of an earthen glacis of packed layers of soil and pebbles (Ussishkin 1993:906).

The gate complex, which together with the enclosure wall and palace-fort, was all rebuilt on the foundations of the previous stratum. It consisted of a huge outer

gate, *aka* a bastion, and an inner gate separated by an inner courtyard or piazza (Kelm & Mazar 1995:126; Ussishkin 1993:906). The inner gate was six-chambered and roofed. The gate complex was located on the western slope of the mound. A paved access ramp led from the base of the mound to the outer gate and was well protected.

The palace-fort, located in the centre of the city, probably served as the governor's residence. This monumental building, measuring 36 m by 76 m, was not only rebuilt on the raised foundations of the previous building, but also enlarged. It opened up onto a spacious, paved courtyard to the east that was flanked by two pillared buildings to the north and south. It is unknown whether these buildings were stables or government storehouses. The courtyard is believed to have been used for exercising horses after Hezekiah stationed a chariot unit at Lachish (Ussishkin 1993:907). Ussishkin (2004:86) believes the one pillared building could easily have stabled some 100 horses. The six-chambered gate incorporated into the southern pillared building opened onto the courtyard. A road that led from this gate through the residential quarter to the main city-gate was flanked by shops and houses (Mazar 1992:429; Ussishkin 2004:84). A massive stone wall connected the palace-fort to the inner city wall and separated the domestic structures and the courtyard (Ussishkin 1993:907). Iron agricultural tools were found in the houses suggesting that the inhabitants still engaged in agricultural activities (Ussishkin 2004:84). A large section of the *tell* to the north of the courtyard was not built up, and there is also evidence of extra-mural quarters of unclear extent at the foot of the tell (Tufnell 1953:219-228; Zukerman & Shai 2007:731n7). Several wells supplied the town with water (Ussishkin 1993:897). One well, 44 m deep and stone-lined, was dug in the north-eastern corner of the *tell*.

An incised rectangular, soft limestone slab was found *in situ* in the innermost chamber of the gate-chamber in Stratum III. It has been identified as the game board for the *senet* game and is only the second board game to have been found in Iron Age Palestine. Incised on the surface of the slab are 3 rows of ten squares and two depressions to the left of the board for the gaming pieces. The slab was immobile, perhaps a step, and illustrates how people passed the time

while they waited in the gate chamber. Information surrounding the game has been gained from illustrations in Egyptian tombs and the book of the dead. It was played in Egypt from the period of the 3rd Dynasty (Sebbane 2004:690).

Excavations at Lachish (III), particularly in the city-gate area and at the foot of the city wall, brought to light the remains of a wide variety of weapons, such as bone and iron arrowheads, perforated stones, sling stones, and iron chains (Ussishkin 2004:519, 699). Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines were also found (Ussishkin 1993:908; 2004:89). A drastic decrease in the number of imported goods from the Coastal Plain was observed in Levels IV-III.

2 ARAD VIII

Tel Arad in the northern Negev desert is the site of an Israelite hilltop fortress constructed in the 9th or 8th century BCE and occupied until the early 6th century BCE. It lies about 30 km slightly north-east of Beersheba. A tripartite temple arranged along an east-west axis abutted the northern-western wall of the fortress in Stratum XI. The temple served the garrison that was stationed at the fort to protect the country's south-eastern border and the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. It also served as a roadside sanctuary for the merchants and travellers underway along the road from the Judaeian Hills to Moab and Edom in the east and Arabah in the south-east. The temple and altar was buried in fill before Stratum VIII was constructed. Storerooms were added when the altar was buried (Herzog *et al* 1984:19).

The fortress of Stratum VIII measured about 50 by 50 m and was protected by a solid stone wall. A two-towered gate provided access to a central courtyard, the temple, and storage and dwelling rooms. Rock-cut cisterns for storing water were found inside the fortress. Water was brought by donkey from the deep well located at the foot of the mound and emptied into the channel that ran from outside the fortress, through the wall, and into the cisterns (Mazar 1992:438-439). This fortress was perhaps rebuilt by Hezekiah in the late 8th century BCE (Scheepers & Scheffler 2000:299). Extra-mural houses have been found at the foot of the citadel.

The pottery in Stratum VIII is almost identical to the pottery in Stratum III at Lachish. The destruction of Stratum VIII in 701 BCE has been attributed to either Sennacherib or his Edomite and Philistine allies (Ahlström 1991:123). Nine broken jar handles bearing *Imlk* seal impressions were found (Lemaire 1997:177).

3 BETH SHEMESH IIC

Beth-Shemesh is situated in the north-eastern Shephelah, about 20 km southwest of Jerusalem on the southern bank of the Sorek valley. It lies on the route leading through the Shephelah valley to the major settlements of Azekah, Moresheth, Gath, Mareshah and Lachish. The settlement's name, 'House of the Sun', suggests Canaanite origins and alludes to the existence of a temple to the sun god. During the reign of Ahaz, the Philistines seized Beth-Shemesh from Judah (2 Chr 28:18), but it is generally agreed that the presence of *Imlk* seal impressions indicates that it was under Judaeans rule during Hezekiah's reign (Bunimovitz & Lederman 1993:249).

Beth-Shemesh was first excavated by Mackenzie (1911-12) and then Grant (1928-33). Although the stratigraphy was somewhat confused, three subphases of the Iron Age stratum, Stratum II, were identified: IIa (ca. 1000-950 BCE); IIb (ca. 950-700 BCE) and IIc (ca. 700-586 BCE).

In 1990 Bunimovitz & Lederman undertook renewed excavations to clarify basic stratigraphical and cultural questions regarding the site. In the north-eastern quarter of the *tell* (2.8 ha), the only section of the *tell* not already excavated down to bedrock, an industrial complex used for the storage and distribution of agricultural commodities was uncovered just below the surface. The complex buildings, which replaced a 10th – 9th century BCE iron-smith workshop, have been dated to the 8th century BCE.

Installations for the production of olive oil were found (Isserlin 2001:159). Numerous unstamped *Imlk* jars were also found amongst the pottery fragments. One handle bore the *Imlk hebron* seal impression with the four-winged icon.

Some were also stamped with stamps belonging to royal officials. The presence of the numerous *Imlk* jar handles in the final level has led the excavators to credit Sennacherib with the final destruction of Beth-Shemesh during his campaign in 701 BCE (Dever 1997a:312).

Bunimovitz & Lederman discovered the remains of a complex system of fortification, contradicting claims by Mackenzie & Grant that Beth-Shemesh was not fortified during the Iron Age II and proving that 'the kings of Judah invested considerable effort and resources' into fortifying this border town (Bunimovitz & Lederman 1993:253). A massive wall built of four stepped courses of large boulders was excavated some 10 m from the edge of the mound. A formidable two-chambered gate provided access to the plastered city square in the north (Bunimovitz & Lederman 1997:¶40). Beth-Shemesh was a carefully planned town in the Iron Age II. A series of casemate rooms adjoined the wall and even a hidden passage for use in emergencies was found. A large stone-lined silo held grain. The houses were built around the edge of the mound, facing inward upon a street that formed a large semi-circle within this area. A few public buildings were built among the private houses. One spacious residence probably housed the city or district governor. A tripartite pillared building served as a storehouse or stable. Plastered channels in the town led water to a huge cross-shaped subterranean water reservoir built in the 10th century BCE and with a holding capacity of 800 m³ (Bunimovitz & Lederman 1997:¶41).

The rich pottery assemblage discovered in Stratum IIc resembles the pottery of Lachish IV and transitional pottery groups between Lachish IV and III, Arad XI, Beersheba IV, and Temporary Stratum 4 at Tel Safi/Gath. Level 2, not Level 3, has been identified as that destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BCE. The excavators believe that Level 3 was destroyed during the first half of the 8th century BCE. The findings from Level 3 suggest that Beth-Shemesh functioned as a western governmental outpost of the Judaeen kingdom, but that the town of Level 2 was modest and probably unfortified (Bunimovitz & Lederman 2006:424). The town was not inhabited after the 8th century BCE (Vaughn 1999:31).

4 BETH-ZUR

This unfortified site was occupied from the late 8th and 7th centuries BCE. The settlement extended beyond the old city walls. Excavations revealed meagre architectural remains, but jar handles bearing the *Imlk* and the rosette stamps. The excavations in 1931 recorded signs of destruction that were initially dated to 586 BCE. Vaughn (1999:43) dates the destruction to 701 BCE. These signs of destruction were no longer detectable during the renewed excavations of 1957 (Funk 1993:261). The inhabitants of an unfortified site would have fled to the next fortified settlement, which might explain the meagre evidence of destruction had the Assyrians attacked (Vaughn 1999:43). The broken handle of a bone cosmetic spoon and a piece of carved inlay have been attributed to this layer (Funk 1993:261; Stern 2001:164-165).

5 KHIRBET RABUD IIB

Khirbet Rabud is located on top of a rock hill in the Judaeen Hills south-west of Hebron. It is surrounded on three sides by the bed of Naḥal Hebron. A defence wall, about 4 m thick, surrounded the settlement, and the city gate is believed to lie in the south-east, below the present village. The layer of destruction that is observable in all rooms adjoining the city wall has been attributed to Sennacherib in 701 BCE. Stratum IIB contained a large amount of pottery which included vessels with *Imlk* jar handles. Two jar handles bore the personal stamp 'Shalom son of Aḥa' (Kochavi 1993:1252).

6 RAMAT RAḤEL

Ramat Raḥel is strategically situated on a hilltop (818 m above sea level), about 4 km south-west of Jerusalem and midway between the Old City and Bethlehem. It commands a view of the main road leading to Jerusalem from the south. Although the site boasts some impressive architecture and has revealed some 200 *Imlk* seal impression, it has been largely neglected, which could be due to the fact that Ramat Raḥel is not mentioned in the Bible. In 1984 Barkay renewed excavations at the site and discovered that it was larger than previously believed.

The site was settled some time during the 8th and 7th century BCE. Stratum VB is dated to the 8th century BCE and Stratum VA to the 7th century BCE. Like so many of the other hilly sites, the remains lay very close to the surface, between 1.5 m and 50 cm. This makes differentiating between the strata extremely difficult. Very little remains of the underlying Stratum VB for it was destroyed and disappeared when later buildings (Stratum VA) were erected.

In the upper stratum, Stratum VA, a magnificent royal residence was found located in the centre of the city on the peak of the *tell*. It consisted of an inner and outer citadel and was protected by an outer fortification system. When exactly the palace complex was built is still undecided.

Stratum VB revealed a few 'pre-citadel' walls, agricultural terraces, and a developed area to the west of the acropolis (Vaughn 1999:39). Small sections of a massive casemate wall were found. The wall was built of hewn stones laid out in head and stretcher fashion similar to the walls of the VA Stratum citadel above. Both strata contained *Imlk* jar handles (Vaughn 1999:8).

A large number of 8th and 7th century BCE pottery vessel types were found in the fill that was used to level the ground beneath the Stratum VA citadel floors. These were found together with the *Imlk* stamp impressions featuring mostly the two-winged type, but also some four winged icons and an ostrakon bearing two names, 'Ḥasdiyahu' and 'Aḥiyahu'. One jar handle even bore two seal impressions: a *Imlk hebron* seal featuring a two-winged icon and a private seal with an inscription, '(belonging to) Nera (son of) Shebna' (Aharoni 1993:1263).

It is suggested that this earlier royal citadel measuring 50 by 75 m was built by Hezekiah and destroyed by Sennacherib in 701 BCE (Barkay 2006:38; Stern 2001:164). Barkay (2006:43) has also suggested that Ramat Raḥel is the unknown *mmšt* from the *Imlk* jar impressions and that the pottery sherd depicting a seated figure depicts King Hezekiah. The painting in black and red ink was found on a piece of locally produced pottery in the palace.

Timnah, situated on the fertile plains in the northern lower Shephelah, controlled the road leading from the coast to Beth-Shemesh and Jerusalem, as well as the vital north-south road running along the western base of the Judaeen Hills. This excellent example of a well planned and fortified Iron Age Judaeen city remained Judaeen until captured along with other cities in the Shephelah by the Philistines during the reign of Ahaz (Kelm & Mazar 1995:119). Timnah with its villages became part of the city-state of Ekron together with Beth-Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederot, Suco with its villages and Gimzo with its villages (2 Chr 28:18). Stratum III was only established in the early 8th century BCE (Bunimovitz & Lederman 2006:409).

The town was only partially destroyed by the Assyrians after their victory at Eltekeh and before their attack on Ekron (Mazar & Kelm 1993:152; Stern 2001:143). It boasted massive public buildings, residential quarters and barracks (Kelm & Mazar 1995:127). Some 40 broken *Imlk* jars were found on the floor of a large storeroom. Almost half of them have been restored (Kelm & Mazar 1995:131). Their presence suggests the city (Stratum III) was under Judaeen rule when Sennacherib attacked the city in 701 BCE. Either that or Hezekiah had stationed a garrison there in anticipation of Sennacherib's campaign. The pottery assemblage found is not characteristically Judaeen. The strong system of fortifications was similar to those found at other Judaeen fortified cities, such as Lachish and Tel Halif: a 4 m wide stone wall with a solid wall lower down the mound created a low, outer defensive line against siege machines and siege ladders (Mazar & Kelm 1993:155). An earthen glacis of compacted layers of alluvial soil and river pebbles was found in between the upper and lower walls, similar to Beersheba and other sites (Kelm & Mazar 1995:121). The gate complex was made up of a two towered outer gate and a four chambered inner gatehouse (Kelm & Mazar 1995:127).

Three moulds for casting ceramic figurines were discovered in Stratum III. Two of the moulds were complete (Kelm & Mazar 1995:136-137).

Built on a hill in the northern Negev, the town was strategically located at an important intersection of roads leading to Mount Hebron in the north, to the Judaeen Desert and the Dead Sea in the east, to the Coastal Plain in the west and to the Negev hills, Kadesh-Barnea, and Eilat/Elath in the south (Herzog 1993:167). Beersheba symbolises the southern boundary of the land of Israel (Jg 20:1).

Iron Age II Beersheba contains four strata. Stratum III and II contained very similar cultural material. The major destruction of Stratum II has been attributed to Sennacherib in 701 BCE, although Na'aman (1991:82) suggested Sargon II was responsible for the destruction of Stratum III when he campaigned south in 720, 716 or 712 BCE, i.e. before the *lmlk* stamped jars came into use (Herzog 1993:171). Blakely & Hardin (2002:53) studied the archaeological evidence and concluded that Stratum III was destroyed by Tiglath Pileser III in 733 BCE. Unstamped *lmlk* jars have been found, and one giant 2-handled pithos bearing the *lmlk* stamp was found by Rainey in a chamber of the Stratum II city gate (Rainey 1982:60).

The city layout of Stratum II reflects careful planning. The site is oval shaped and built on the summit of an ancient mound. The mound was fortified with an outer casemate wall separated from an inner wall by a glacis (Vaughn 1999:47). The casemate wall showed signs of reinforcement and buttressing. The streets form concentric circles running parallel to the city wall. Radial lanes ran perpendicular to the wall and converged at the gate square. A four chambered gate built into the casemate city wall of Stratum III and reused in Stratum II on the south side of the town, provided access to the interior of the town. A drain passed through the gate. Located inside the gate was an open square that was probably used for public functions, gatherings and the market (Barkay 1992:330-331).

Some stones from a large, four-horned altar were found built into the walls of the storehouses of Stratum II. One can therefore conclude that the altar predates the storehouses. The pottery of Stratum II also matches that found at Lachish III. No

temple has been found despite large scale excavations (Mazar 1992:496). It is unknown whether the pillared buildings located near the gate were stables or storerooms.

9 TELL BEIT MIRSIM

This mound is located where the hill country and the Shephelah meet, about 25 km northeast of Beersheba, about 20 km southwest of Hebron and 13 km south east of Lachish. It is the largest mound in the vicinity. After a re-evaluation of epigraphic and ceramic results of the excavations undertaken by Albright, Aharoni, together with Zimhoni and Ussishkin, concluded that Sennacherib was responsible for the destruction of the town in 701 BCE (Albright & Greenberg 1993:180). Blakely & Hardin (2002:19) now argue that the main walled town (Stratum A2) was destroyed by Tiglath-Pileser III a few years earlier, in 734 BCE, and that the town was later resettled but on a much smaller scale, reusing the stone from the city wall. This settlement functioned as a watchtower or citadel until it was destroyed by the Assyrians in 701 BCE.

The material culture of the last two layers is almost identical. This makes clear stratification extremely difficult. The finds are typically Judaeian and include weights, clay figurines and pottery (Stern 2001:150). The houses were solidly built of stone, often with quite massive stone pillars supporting the second floor and roof. They were also characteristically built into the casemate city wall. The difference in the upper layer is that in the vicinity of the citadel two personal seals of Eliakim and four *Imlk* stamped jar handles were found (Blakely & Hardin 2002:17). Following a reappraisal, these handles are believed to belong to jars belonging to the '*Imlk-like*' (Group III: SJ-2) group (Zimhoni 2004:1797). The difference between the *Imlk* and the '*Imlk-like*' jars has yet to be determined. Whether or not a chronological difference separates them has not been established. It might be that they were simply produced in a different workshop or from different clay (Zimhoni 2004:1796).

City planning is less evident in Tell Beit Mirsim, as houses of varying size were found built very close together (Schoors 1998:73).

This prominent mound is strategically located on the south-western flank of the Judaeen Hills. It overlooks the Shephelah and the plain of Philistia to the west, the Negev to the south and the route from Egypt and the coast into the Judaeen Hills towards Hebron and Jerusalem. It guarded the agricultural lands and water resources in the south-eastern Shephelah (Seger 1993:553).

The town constituted part of a major line of defence along the western frontier of the Judaeen kingdom. The other towns included Beth-Shemesh, Azekah and perhaps Jarmuth, Socoh, Tel Goded (Judeideh), Mareshah and its frontier fortress at Tell Burnat, Lachish, Tel 'Eton and Tell Beit Mirsim (Stern 2001:147).

The results of large-scale excavations indicate that the substantial Phase VIB (late 8th century BCE) of Stratum VI (9th – 8th centuries BCE) was destroyed by an intense fire that took place towards the end of the 8th century BCE, that is, probably during the Assyrian invasion in 701 BCE.

This 8th century BCE Judaeen town was fortified by a casemate city-wall that surrounded the crest of the mound. It featured projecting towers and a cobblestone-faced glacis that sloped down and outward at an angle of about 40 degrees. Several cisterns that were filled by runoff water were carved in the bedrock inside the town ensuring a water supply in case of siege. A number of pillared houses built into the wall were excavated. Remains of many weapons, such as ballista stones, lance heads, and bronze and iron arrowheads, were found on the floors and embedded within the collapsed mud brick in many of the rooms. Loom weights and pottery were also found amongst the destruction. The pottery is similar to that of Lachish III. Two *Imlk* jar handles were found (Borowski 2005:35).

In the rear, broad-room of a four-room house built attached to the casemate wall, evidence of a shrine was found together with a number of artefacts that could be considered cultic: a fenestrated incense stand, the head of a pillar figure, painted white, and two rectangular, carved limestone blocks that stood on either side of

the censer. Their purpose is unclear, but as the tops of the blocks had been knocked off, they could have functioned as the legs of an offering table, supported offering bowls or functioned as *maššēbôt* (Borowski 1995:152).

11 TEL 'ERANI

This mound lies on the south-eastern coastal plain west of Lachish. It was a frontier fort and probably a watch post for Lachish, for it dominated the entire northern Philistine plain. Five phases were identified by Yeivin (1956-61) dating from 8th – 6th century BCE. The excavations have shown that the settlement was fortified with a wall as well as a gate during the early 7th and early 6th centuries BCE (Strata VI-IV). Strata V and VI both contained jar handles stamped with *Imlk* seals. The occupational levels represented by strata VIII and VII were destroyed by Sennacherib: both contained *Imlk* jars bearing seal impressions, some even complete, a Hebrew ostrakon, and various Judaeans figurines (Stern 2001:146). In the courtyards of the houses excavated in areas A and G, remains of industrial installations were found destroyed beyond recognition of the use to which they were put to. The installation consisted of an oblong structure, plastered and whitewashed on the outside, about 1 m high. In the centre was a slightly raised clay collar surrounding a deeper oval hollow, both mud plastered and whitewashed (Yeivin & Kempinski 1993:419). There is confusion as to which levels were destroyed by Sennacherib.

12 TEL 'ETON

This unidentified fortified Judaeans site is situated in the Shephelah, about 18 km west of Hebron and 14 km south of Tel Lachish. It is strategically located at the intersection of several important roads. Faust began excavations in 2006 after conducting several small-scale salvage excavations at the site. Blakely & Hardin (2002:35) claim that the different pottery assemblages indicate two layers of destruction, the first attributable to Tiglath-Pileser in 734 BCE and the second to Sennacherib in 701 BCE. Faust (2009:private communication) finds this claim 'interesting', for so far he has found only one layer of destruction, which he has tentatively attributed to Sennacherib. The layer of destruction contains a large

number of arrowheads (Faust 2008:58).

The remains of what might have been a fort have been found at the highest part of the *tell*. Double walls filled with stones created an outer wall measuring over 3 m in width. The construction is not datable. A well-preserved building with nicely hewn corner stones and an uncovered plastered courtyard measuring roughly 180 m² was found beneath this construction. This building resembles the 'western tower' found at Tell Beit Mirsim. In one of the rooms attached to the courtyard, several broken jars and vessels were found, some of which still held their contents. This structure appears to have been converted from a public building to a home for wealthy residents. It also had a second floor (Faust 2008:58-59).

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---------|--|
| AJA | <i>American Journal of Archaeology</i> |
| AJT | <i>American Journal of Theology</i> |
| ANET | <i>Ancient Near Eastern texts relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by JB Pritchard, 1969 |
| ARAB | <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> by DD Luckenbill, 1969 |
| AS | <i>The Annals of Sennacherib</i> by DD Luckenbill, 1924 |
| BA | <i>Biblical Archaeologist</i> |
| BAR | <i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i> |
| BASOR | <i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i> |
| BJRL | <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> |
| BJS | <i>Brown Judaic Studies</i> |
| CBR | <i>Currents in Biblical Research</i> |
| CBQ | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> |
| EB | <i>Economic Botany</i> |
| EDB | <i>Eerdmans dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by N. Freedman, 2000 |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations |
| HTR | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i> |
| IA | <i>Israel Affairs</i> |
| IAA | Israel Antiquities Authority |
| IEJ | <i>Israel Exploration Journal</i> |
| INA | Institute of Nautical Archaeology |
| JAOS | <i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> |
| JAS | <i>Journal of Archaeological Science</i> |
| JBL | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> |
| JCS | <i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i> |
| JESHO | <i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i> |
| JLR | <i>Journal of Law and Religion</i> |
| JNES | <i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i> |
| JS | <i>Journal for Semitics</i> |
| JSOT | <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> |
| JSOTSup | <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series</i> |
| NBA | <i>New Bible atlas</i> . Edited by JJ Bimson, JP Kane, JH Paterson & DJ Wiseman, 1985 |
| NEAEHL | <i>The new encyclopedia of archaeological excavations in the Holy Land</i> . Edited by E Stern, 1993 |
| NEA | <i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i> |
| NEJ | <i>The new encyclopedia of Judaism</i> . Edited by G Wigoder, 2002 |
| NJB | <i>New Jerusalem Bible</i> . 1990. New York: Doubleday |
| OEANE | <i>The Oxford encyclopedia of archaeology in the Near East</i> . Edited by EM Meyers, 1997 |
| OED | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> |
| OJA | <i>Oxford Journal of Archaeology</i> |
| OTE | <i>Old Testament Essays</i> |

| | |
|------------|---|
| <i>PA</i> | <i>Palaestina antiqua</i> |
| <i>TA</i> | <i>Tel Aviv</i> |
| <i>UF</i> | <i>Ugarit Forschungen</i> |
| <i>VEC</i> | <i>Verbum et Ecclesia</i> |
| <i>VT</i> | <i>Vetus Testamentum</i> |
| <i>WA</i> | <i>World Archaeology</i> |
| <i>WI</i> | <i>Water International</i> |
| <i>ZAW</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> |

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