***THE PROPHET’S WIFE***

**Part One: *In The Courtyard, The Visions***

“Miriam,” Isaiah calls out to her from across their courtyard.

“Ishi! \*” Miriam answers and waves.

“I waited until they were gone,” Isaiah said, looking exhausted.

“Sorry, they talked so long. I’m sure you must be tired after a long day,” Miriam looked concerned.

“What were they talking about?” Isaiah was interested.

“Come inside, my husband, and let me wash your feet,” she said, gently guiding him inside, “then I will tell you.”

“Ishti\*, you are too good to me,” Isaiah said to her with love. “A good wife is a true blessing from the Lord.”

“The women came because your visions,” Miriam said. “They were offended. I tried to calm them and tell that if they didn’t apply to them, why get offended?”

“They used to come to you for advice and your instructions on the way of the Lord,” Isaiah said sadly. “Now they come to complain about the burden of the law and instead seek the soothsayer and fortune-tellers for advice.”

“They were strong words,” Miriam said, trying to be diplomatic about it all. “*The daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with necks outstretched ogling and mincing as they go, their anklets tinkling with every step*,” didn’t help.”

“They did sound like the cows of Bashan heading out to the fields,” Isaiah said countering, “tinkling and jingling in the street as they left.”

Miriam couldn’t help laughing at his accurate description. “Your many years of teaching and writing have only improved your skills of description, Ishi,” Miriam said affectionately.

“That is what first attracted me to you, Ahuvati\*,” Isaiah said, looking into her eyes. “You were always different from the rest. How much I have appreciated your support and understanding over the years.” He paused, and then said, “I have a secret that I want to share with you,” Isaiah said softly.

“Yes, Ishi?” he had her attention now.

“I had revelation in the Temple today,” Isaiah began.

“Is this like your wonderful vision of Lord God Sabaoth from before?” she asked.

“No,” Isaiah said a little worried and sad. “That was wonderful and terrible! This is terrible and sad.”

Miriam got up from the floor and took a seat next to her husband. She recognized the look in his face…seen it before. All she could do now was to listen and support him. “Tell me.”

He began with a poetic cadence, “Speedily and promptly they will come. None of them will stumble with weariness,” Isaiah said, then continued with more confidence. “Their arrows are sharp and all their bows are bent. The hoofs of their horses seem like flint, and their chariot wheels like the hurricane. Their roar is that of the lion, like the lion’s whelps they roar; they growl and seize the prey, they carry it off and none will rescue it.” He felt exhausted, but a weight was lifted from his shoulders.

“The Assyrians,” was all Miriam said.

Isaiah nodded. “I am certain now that is what the revelation means, that Yahweh’s patience with our people is at an end.”

Miriam shook a little at what her husband had just revealed. Isaiah thought she would cry. So he held her.

“I have a secret, too,” Miriam whispered.

Isaiah held her tighter, “Tell me, my love.”

“I am with child,” was all she could say.

He whispered more to himself than to Miriam, “And his name shall be Shear-Jashub!” \*

*\*Ishi – my husband*

*\*Ishti – my wife*

*\*Ahuvati – my beloved*

\*Shear-Jashub – A Remnant-Will-Return

Isaiah is the first of three larger prophetic volumes sometimes referred to as Major Prophets because of their size. The other two are Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The reason for this, in the case of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, was the extraordinary length of their prophetic careers and the unusually large legacy of words and stories they left behind.

This is not why the Book of Isaiah is as large as it is. Its size is more a product of the influence Isaiah had on subsequent generations and the way those who preserved his oracles were challenged to supplement them with yet additional words from later prophets.

The book, therefore, as a whole can be divided into three parts, Chapters 1-39 is called **Isaiah of Jerusalem**, and characterize this collection as a vision or revelation which Isaiah received in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. With these references to certain kings we encounter the handiwork of those anonymous **Deuteronomists** who have given us the Books of Joshua through Kings. One division that immediately stands out is the rather extensive historical narrative in Isaiah 36-39. Strange to say, this section of the book is almost identical to 2 Kings 18:13-20:19, and indeed may have been copied from there.

Chapters 40-55, most scholars are convinced, are virtually all from the hand of a single prophet who lived in **Babylon** in the immediate aftermath of the first wave of Persian conquests in that region in 546. His prophecies have been added to those of the eighth century Isaiah of Jerusalem, and have come to refer to him as Deutero-Isaiah. Chapters 56-66 seems to reflect the activity of still another prophet, even though his message is quite similar to that of Deutero-Isaiah but no longer in Babylon. He is among those who returned to the land of Israel when the Persian conquered Babylon in 539 and released captive people there and is referred to as Third-Isaiah.

Isaiah in Hebrew is a compound of two words, one meaning ‘save’ or ‘salvation’ and the other a shortened form of Yahweh—the two together meaning: “**Yahweh Saves**”. His father’s name was Amos (not to be confused with the Prophet Amos).

Although it is nowhere stated in so many words, there are few things more certain about Isaiah than that he lived and prophesied in **Jerusalem**, capital city of the southern kingdom of Judah. Jerusalem is the target of virtually all of his criticisms, warnings and hopes. The Davidic kings in Jerusalem, as well as their advisors, appear to have been well known to him.

Neither Isaiah nor his disciples and editors of his book, tell us what his occupation was prior to his becoming a prophet. The fact that his wife is called a **prophetess** and that Isaiah himself is accorded an unusual degree of respect and protection by kings and officials in Jerusalem has suggested that he might have been a state appointed “**Seer**”.

At some point it had become clear to Isaiah that Yahweh’s patience with Israel was at an end, that his people’s moral condition was beyond converting or healing—consequently a terrible catastrophe lay ahead. This terrible truth also had earlier broken upon the consciousness of ***Amos*** during his third vision, and upon the mind of ***Hosea*** at the birth of his children. An invasion was imminent from which only a splintered stump of the tree of Judah would survive!

Not all was lost, however, for had he not heard Yahweh say that a stock of the blasted stump of his people would remain. Soon after this vision Isaiah had a son whom he named “**Shear-Jashub**” (A Remnant-Will-Return).

***SUGGESTED READINGS:***

Especially for this six part series, Isaiah, chapters 1-39, called “Isaiah of Jerusalem,” also known as Proto-Isaiah, or First Isaiah.

2 Kings 18:13 to 20:19, since this book is almost identical to Isaiah 36-39.