***THE PROPHET’S WIFE***

**Part Two: *The Courtyard, Alliance with Assyria***

It was still warm in the late afternoon, but the little garden provided shade and some comfort on days like today, especially when there was a breeze. Miriam approached Isaiah sitting by himself in his usual place after a long day with his students and sometimes meetings in the capital.

“How did things go, my husband?” Miriam asked.

“Good and bad, my wife,” Isaiah answered. “We met again at Shiloah.”

“That seems to be a favorite place for the king,” Miriam stated.

“I know he is worried when he checks the city’s water supply…but it is safe,” Isaiah said worriedly.

“Who else was there with him?” Miriam asked.

“That is the problem, both his good and bad councilors; those who urge the king to submit as a vassal state to Assyria and those who want him to put his trust in Yahweh,” Isaiah said with disgust. “At least the urgings through your contacts have helped sway a few more to listen to the Lord.”

“I knew from some of the women that their husbands could see no other way out of this crisis with Syria and Ephraim except through listening for the Word of the Lord through his prophets,” Miriam said with hope.

“When I met the king at the water conduit of Shiloah, I saw his wife, a very young woman but very much pregnant,” Isaiah said with excitement. “I had told the king to ask for a sign as a confirmation that all will be well for Jerusalem if he listens to the message from the Lord that I gave him.”

“Oh,” Miriam looked surprised, “…and what was the message?”

“The king said he would not tempt the Lord,” Isaiah said in disgust, “and yet he had sacrificed his first born son to Molech. I suspect that his mind is already made up.”

“The message,” Miriam asked again excited.

“So, I gave him the sign anyway,” Isaiah said. “The sign I received from the Lord was, ‘the *ha alma*\* shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him *Immanuel*’\*.”

“What could this mean, Ishi?” Miriam asked.

“It means we will have to wait for a future king to do what Yahweh desires,” Isaiah said sadly, “since this king has turned away from the Lord.”

“I believe you are right, husband,” Miriam said resigned. “At least the future holds hope for us with this wonderful sign when it comes to pass.”

“I have received word from my contacts though that the King has asked help from Assyria,” Isaiah said.

Miriam is shocked, “Then we will become a vassal state of Assyria, and no longer of Yahweh.”

“Ironically, only Yahweh can save us now!” Isaiah mourns. “Our hope depends on the child of this young wife of the king.”

“And our child that I am carrying now will grow to know him, too,” Miriam surprised Isaiah with her news.

“Is it true?” Isaiah asked with surprise and growing joy.

“It seems every time you have a sign…,” Miriam said with content and happiness.

\*ha alma - young woman

\*Immanuel – God with us

We are told that at a critical moment early in his prophetic career Isaiah did something that, so far as we know, no other prophet before him had done: he bound up and sealed his ‘instruction’ from God in the heart of his disciples. That is, he had a group of his followers memorize his massages and thereby established what might be termed an **Isaianic Group or School**, one that must have felt itself responsible for preserving the spiritual legacy of its founder. It was this group that edited and supplemented his legacy and from which other prophets may have arisen whose messages were then appended to it as well.

Isaiah viewed **Israel as a unified people** and is aware of its exodus origins. But far more important for him than this is the role he believes Jerusalem has been singled out to play in Yahweh’s plan for Israel and the world.

For one thing Yahweh had chosen it to be his **dwelling place on earth**. This had happened shortly after David had *captured it and made it his residence*. Then he arranged to have brought to this city that ancient symbol of Yahweh’s rule and presence; *the Ark of the Covenant*. The train of events that made this possible was so uncanny that the conviction emerged that not just David, but Yahweh himself had been active in bringing this to pass. It was not David, but Yahweh who had chosen Zion, saying, “Here shall I rest for evermore, here shall I make my home as I have wished.”

Just as Yahweh had chosen Zion to be his home forever, so also, it was believed, he had chosen the **Family of David** to establish a line of kings to reign there forever. Unlike the covenant made at Sinai, Yahweh’s covenants with Zion and with David were forever. These twin convictions, Yahweh’s choice of Zion and the Davidic Dynasty, were the pillars of **Jerusalem Theology** and hence of Isaiah’s theology as well.

**Six major episodes** may be identified in the background of Isaiah’s mission, virtually all of them related, in one way or another, to the struggle of these petty kingdoms of Palestine nations for survival in the face of this imminent threat of destruction by Assyria. The background for this present article is the ***Syro-Ephraimitic War***, through a united attack, strangely enough since they had been implacable enemies, by the combined forces of Syria and Ephraim against Judah in 734 BCE. Its purpose was to force Judah to join them in an alliance against Assyria. **King Ahaz of Judah** rightly saw their plan as a piece of folly, but in an equally foolish move stridently opposed by Isaiah, turned to the Assyrians themselves for assistance.

(The following articles will entail the five other episodes and will be explained then.)