***THE PROPHET’S WIFE***

**Part Four: *In the Courtyard, Miriam’s Dream***

Miriam joined her husband in the garden at his favorite spot, under the ancient oak tree. She had been busy in the house with the ordinary work of the day, and decided to take a break with her husband, Isaiah.

“You have been quiet, Ishi,” Miriam said to him softly.

“It is a peaceful place,” he responded. “That is why I love this place, my love.”

“No,” Miriam corrected herself. “I mean that you have been quiet for a long while with no visions from the Lord?”

“Oh!” he said, understanding her now. “Yes..no visions for a long while, which can be a good sign.”

“No new is good news,” she said.

“Or the calm before the storm,” Isaiah said with conviction. “I do believe that the worse is yet to come, and I am determined to do all I can to at least lessen it.”

“Well,” Miriam was hesitant to begin, “I have been having dreams…again.”

Isaiah straightened up and gave her his attention. “Please, tell me, since I believe the Lord speaks to the both of us, just not always at the same time,” he said with conviction.

“At first the dreams were wonderful and exciting when the new king began his reign,” Miriam began. “I felt that this one is different. Here is a king who is doing what is right in the sight of the Lord.”

“Yes! I agree. He has purified the Temple of the Lord and removed the images of the other gods, including the bronze serpent of Moses,” Isaiah added.

“At first I felt that this was the ruler after the Lord’s own heart,” Miriam said, “until he removed the bronze serpent. I felt that he was going too far.”

“It is a pagan symbol,” Isaiah reminded her.

“That was used by Moses to heal the children of Israel in the wilderness,” she added.

“Tell me,” Isaiah prompted. “What was the real reason?”

“It was at this time that our King Hezekiah invaded the territory of Philistine,” Miriam said reluctantly, since she knew that Isaiah was pleased with all that Hezekiah had done so far.

“I am hoping that the silence that I have been experiencing these few years,” Isaiah also admitted, “is because the Lord is pleased with what our king has done? But I am also open to what the Lord is speaking to you!” he said again with conviction.

“When the idols were removed,” Miriam continued, “I knew then that we had crossed a threshold, a point of no return, but I was glad to see them go. And my dreams seem to confirm that.”

“The idols are part of our covenant with Assyria. To remove those idols means we have broken our covenant with them, and there will be reprisals even if the king had not invaded Philistine territory,” Isaiah admitted.

“Yes, I agree!” Miriam said. “But aside from that, I feel now that the dreams do not refer to this king, Hezekiah, but to another king in the future.”

“Oh?” Isaiah seemed disappointed, but also relieved.

“The dreams seem to point more and more to the child you mentioned at Shiloah where you met King Ahaz with our son Shear-jashub.,” Miriam said excitedly.

“Immanuel?” Isaiah said surprised. “But that would be Hezekiah!”

“Yes and no!” Miriam tried to explain. “I now truly believe that King Hezekiah is not this child, Immanuel!”

It is in two other passages that Isaiah’s vision in this regard comes to its fullest expression: his justifiably famous sketches of an ideal ruler, in Chapter 9 verses 1 to 7 and Chapter 11 verses 1 to 9. Both are well known to most Christian as Messianic prophecies foreshadowing the appearance of **Jesus of Nazareth** some centuries later.

**Yahweh’s plan**, as Isaiah viewed it, had great relevance not only for special and religious affairs, but for public policy. Isaiah believed that those in leadership who really understood what Yahweh was doing would take action, or refrain from acting along certain quite specific lines. In fact, his attempts at confronting the leadership of his nation with his views in this regard are among the most dramatic episodes of his prophetic career.

In the immediate aftermath of this disaster, sweeping religious reforms occurred in Judea under the leadership of King Hezekiah—*this is the* ***fourth major historical event*** *in the background of Isaiah’s mission.* Strangely, there is no reference to these reforms in Isaiah’s writings, even though he might have helped to bring them about.

As previously noted, **Levites** from the North, bringing with them their sacred writings, including some version perhaps of the *Book of Deuteronomy*, may have fled south at this time. They too might have had some influence on these religious developments. In any case, a century later, when the temple was being repaired, a book of laws was found there that most scholars agree on the basis of the laws referred to in 2 Kings 23 was Deuteronomic in character. From their point of view he was the first specifically Judean king to adopt the laws of Moses, as preserved by the Levites in the Book of Deuteronomy as a ***state policy***!

The Assyrian efforts to rebuild Samaria signal the ***eradication of Israelite culture*** in that region, since Sargon II repopulates it with peoples from other parts of his empire, including rebellious Arab tribes.

The effect of this ***traumatic event on Judah*** is manifest in the prophets who point to Israel’s demise and warn Judah and Jerusalem that they may well suffer the same fate. With the Assyrians still a very real threat to their own existence, however, the more likely reactions among the people of Judah are shock, fear, and apprehension for the future. The psychological effects of the disaster may have been fueled by the lurid tales of Assyrian atrocities carried south by the refugees from Israel’s cities.

In this charged atmosphere, **Hezekiah** succeeds his father, Ahaz, as ruler of Judah around 726. While his assessment of the political situation is probably quiet similar to that of his father, he is portrayed as a king more open to the message of Isaiah.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Ideal Ruler, Isaiah 9:1-7 and 11:1-9