***THE PROPHET’S WIFE***

**Part Five: *In the Courtyard, Naked***

 “In front of your son and his friend, Isaiah?” his wife Miriam scolded.

 “Shear-Jashub, get my robe,” Isaiah told his son.

 “The king and his court have listened?” Ammi asked him.

 “They have,” Isaiah smiled at his wife, “so now I can get dressed. I don’t like this anymore than you do, my wife!”

 “I am used,” Miriam teased him, “But after three years they are still shocked, she said pointing to her son and his friend.

 “Good! That is exactly what I want, to shock them all,” Isaiah said, “so that maybe they will listen and we will still have sons.”

 “They didn’t listen to my father,” Ammi said to no one in particular.

 “Your father, Hosea, was a great man, a brave man,” Isaiah said to Ammi, “and he would be proud of his son and the path that he has chosen and remained faithful. Truly, I tell you, the people from the tribe of Levi from the North are Yahweh’s People, *Ammiah*!” Isaiah said with conviction.

 “Ammi has decided to work with his father’s disciples in compiling his writings,” Sear-Jashub said, “now that he has learned so much from us.”

 “It would not have been possible without your help,” Ammi humbly admitted.

 “You have come a long way over these several years, Ammi,” Isaiah said to him. “Know that you have my blessings.”

 “Please do not make your visit to our home rare,” Miriam added. “You are always welcome here.” Sear-Jashub and Ammi leave the garden area.

 “No word of his family?” Miriam asks Isaiah a little hopeful.

 “No word yet, but some close friends believe they may be around. They did leave almost too late and may have taken a longer but safer route.”

 “Tell me, my husband, what is the good news that made you stop your parading around Jerusalem naked? “ Miriam asks him a little eager to know the latest news. “And where is Maher?”

 “He went back to join the other students, since his brother and Ammi were here with you,” Isaiah informed her. “That was a great suggestion to bring him, *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*!”

 “*’Quick spoils, speedy plunder’*,” Miriam repeats, “And what better way to remind the king and his cohorts of the dangerous game they play!”

 “I had forgotten how effective bringing Sear-Jashub, A-Remnant-Will-Return, when I met king Ahaz his father at Shiloah,” Isaiah said pleased with his wife. “May your name be never forgotten!”

 “I felt it would be a great reminder to put all in the hands of Yahweh and not on any coalition,” Miriam said.

 “I am sure the Pharaoh Tirhakah put them up to it,” Isaiah said with distain, “to hopefully weaken the Assyrians at our expense.”

 “I am sure they thought our King Hezekiah would join them after extending our borders to Gaza,” Miriam suggested.

 “It was a move by King Hezekiah that unfortunately will be labeled as a rebellious act by the Assyrians. That was why it was most important I convince the king not to join in this suicidal rebellion of king Azuri of Ashdod.”

 “… And to remain neutral ourselves,” Miriam added.

 “We will see,” Isaiah said not very convinced.

 “Does that mean more naked walks through Jerusalem?” Miriam asks almost teasingly.

 “Next time nothing will convince him,” Isaiah said sadly.

Another insurrection against Assyria broke out in Palestine in 714, the fifth major event of Isaiah’s prophetic career. This time it was centered in the Philistine coastal city of **Ashdod**. Supporting it was a resurgent Egypt under the leadership of an enterprising Ethiopian named Tirhakah. Isaiah’s shocking protest as he walked the streets of Jerusalem for three years naked may have been partly responsible for saving Judah from becoming involved in this futile affair. As a consequence Jerusalem was spared when Assyria once again invaded this region and quashed the rebellion in 711.

Given the devastation eventually visited **on Ashdod and Gath by Sargon II**, Hezekiah’s decision is a wise one. In his annals, Sargon II boasts of stripping Ashdod of its inhabitants, treasury, and gods and of deporting a segment of the people. Isaiah’s nakedness could not have more graphically portrayed the condition of way prisoners to his audience.

What was called for in these times was ***an inner tranquility and trust toward*** ***Yahweh*** that would lead to conversion and faith in Yahweh alone as the One who would bring deliverance. Until then, the Assyrian invasion was inevitable. This is what Isaiah offered to Hezekiah’s father Ahaz, but his father would not hear of it, not even when Isaiah offered him the option of requesting a miraculous sign that would confirm the truth of what he was saying. Then it was that Isaiah, as now with Hezekiah that **an unbreachable gulf had opened up** between himself and his contemporaries.

He did not dread what they feared, nor was all conspiracy what they called conspiracy. They and he had come to a parting of the ways. For Isaiah the reality of Yahweh Sabaoth was everything. **For them** this same God had become *a snare and a trap* (8:14). His message was falling on deaf ears.

Yahweh’s power is such that **all lies under his control**, including the destinies of the mightiest nations, who function only as instruments of his policy. Yahweh has a policy or plan which he carries out in history with supreme wisdom. All human plans to the contrary are doomed to futility. Thus, Isaiah thought it folly for Judah to attempt to carve out its own destiny, especially when this involved turning to Assyria or Egypt. To trust in Yahweh’s help and protection is faith, whereas to fail to do so is lack of faith. Because the royal advisers, acting on purely human wisdom, led Ahaz and Hezekiah into paths contrary to those advocated by Isaiah, he has a special polemic against these so-called wise. (NJBC 15:4)

This same group was responsible for the administration of justice and is condemned for their failure to live up to the high ideals of the wisdom tradition in which they were trained. **Isaiah saw pride as the cardinal sin**. It is the antithesis of faith and brings judgment. Thus Isaiah sees Yahweh’s intention to bring punishment on Israel and Judah. Such punishment can, however be medicinal and prepare the way for restoration. Thus, Isaiah opened a door for hope. His own followers exhibited the faith to be a remnant of sorts, and the Jerusalem traditions which so influenced him, the Zion tradition and the promises to David’s dynasty, inspired him to leave some of the brightest promises for the future in the Old Testament. (NJBC 15:4 cont.)