

# Introduction

## The Near Fall of Jerusalem

Jerusalem was about to fall. The Assyrian army stood ready at the city's gates. It had been sent by Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, in 701 BCE to wrest back control of his territories in the aftermath of a collective uprising of vassal states in the Levant. As it ravaged the towns in the outlying Judean countryside, it gradually made its way to the center, to Jerusalem. In Judah's capital city, Hezekiah, a descendent of David, ruled as king. Some speculate that Hezekiah, who came to power sometime in the eighth century,<sup>1</sup> might have been the leader and instigator of this rebellion, which, like many revolts, came at the heels of a new emperor's ascension to the throne. Once secure in his rule, Sennacherib, Assyria's new monarch, sent his army to punish Jerusalem and its wayward king for the insurrection. Though Hezekiah had done much to prepare for the attack on Jerusalem—strengthening the fortifications, constructing the Broad

1. The exact dates of Hezekiah's reign are debated. 2 Kgs. 18:9–10 states that Samaria fell in the sixth year of his reign, thus putting his accession at 727/726 BCE. In 2 Kgs. 18:13, however, Sennacherib's conquest in 701 is said to have occurred in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, thereby placing his accession at 716/715 BCE. Some scholars have explained the discrepancy as reflective of a period of coregency with Ahaz, his father. Hence, the dates of Hezekiah's reign are either ca. 715–687 or ca. 727–698 BCE; see Mordecai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 11; New York: Doubleday, 1988), 228.

Wall, digging the Siloam Tunnel to bring water into the city (2 Kgs. 20:20; 2 Chr. 32:3–5), storing up food in the *lmlk*-stamped storage jars, and centralizing worship at the Temple in Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 18:4, 22; 2 Chr. 29–30; 32:12)<sup>2</sup>—the city, besieged and surrounded “like a bird in a cage”<sup>3</sup> by the Assyrian army, appeared in 701 to be on the verge of destruction.<sup>4</sup>

That Judah’s demise was possible, even likely, was substantiated by the earlier exile and destruction of Judah’s sister-state, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, by Assyria in 722/721 BCE.<sup>5</sup> Though the South

2. For archaeological evidence related to the 701 attack see: Oded Borowski, “Hezekiah’s Reforms and the Revolt against Assyria,” *BA* 58 no. 3 (1995): 148–55; Magen Broshi, “The Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh,” *IEJ* 24 (1974): 21–26; Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 246–51; Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 455–58; David Ussishkin, “Sennacherib’s Campaign to Judah: the Archaeological Perspective with an Emphasis on Lachish and Jerusalem,” in *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Seth Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 74–103; and see also Andrew Vaughn, *Theology, History and Archaeology* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), for a summary of opinions on the *lmlk* jars. For comparative Assyrian materials see: Michael Cogan, “Cross-Examining the Assyrian Witnesses to Sennacherib’s Third Campaign: Assessing the Limits of Historical Reconstruction,” in *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Seth Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 51–74; Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 246–51; *The Annals of Sennacherib*, trans. Daniel David Luckenbill (repr.: Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005).
3. Luckenbill, *Annals of Sennacherib*, 32–33.
4. Indeed, archaeological evidence speaks to the destruction suffered by Judah during this attack. The massive destruction levels at Ramat Rahel, Timnah, Arad, Lachish, and possibly Beersheba and Ziklag testify to the fact that Sennacherib did indeed capture and destroy the cities around Jerusalem, as stated in the annals. The notice in the Assyrian record that Jerusalem was put under siege is likewise confirmed, not only by the Lachish reliefs, which depict a graphic scene of siege warfare, but also by excavated remains of an Assyrian siege ramp and fortifications at Jerusalem (King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 246–51; Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, 455–58; Nadav Na’aman, “Sennacherib’s Campaign to Judah and the Date of the LMLK Stamps,” *VT* 29 [1979]: 61–86; Vaughn, *Theology, History and Archaeology*). The archaeological evidence is supported by textual evidence from the Hebrew Bible. Scholars have concluded that some passages in First Isaiah, such as Isa. 1:2–26—“Your country lies desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your presence aliens devour your land...” —refers to the state of Judah after the attack (Brevard Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* [London: SCM, 1967], 20–22; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000], 176–88; J. A. Emerton, “The Historical Background of Isaiah 1:4–9,” *ErIsr* 24 [1993]: 34–40).
5. Various scholars have suggested that the influx of Northern refugees into the South after the fall of Israel might have led to a surge in scribal activity as Northern traditions entered Judah.

explained the destruction of the North as the result of its heretical cultic behavior and its rejection of the rightful rule of the Davidic kings, Samaria's fall strongly hinted that, contrary to the theology espoused in the South (also known as Zion, royal, or Judean theology),<sup>6</sup> the continued existence of Judah was far from certain. Indeed, in 701, with the approach of the Assyrian army toward Jerusalem, the tenets of this theology seemed to have been refuted roundly. Zion, the city of David, appeared to be near its end.

But Jerusalem survived.

This work is about its survival. More precisely, it explores how and why the memory of the survival of Zion in 701 came to be reflected, negotiated, and struggled over *in* and *through* the biblical stories about the monarch at the center of this event: King Hezekiah. Focusing on the conflicting and, at times, tonally contrasting stories about this figure in the biblical corpus, this research outlines the redactional and literary process by which such divergent stories about Hezekiah came together. In so doing, it will show that the biblical narrative about Hezekiah grew through a process of gradual redactional accumulation and rolling development whereby each story induced a subsequent response, which in turn spurred a succeeding counter-response. As this work will elucidate, the stories about Hezekiah thus reflect a continuous dialogue of memory about this king and the period of his reign.

See E. W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 94ff; William H. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 64–81.

6. J. J. M. Roberts sums up the three central tenets of Zion theology or tradition as the following: 1) Yahweh is the universal suzerain; 2) he has chosen David and his dynasty to rule as his regents and has promised that one of his descents will always sit on the throne of Judah; and 3) Yahweh dwells in Jerusalem, his earthly abode ("Zion," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld et. al. [Nashville: Abingdon, 2009], 5:987–88).

### The Significance of Hezekiah and the Purpose of this Study

Biblical evidence points to Hezekiah's uniqueness and significance. The lengthy and numerous treatments of Hezekiah in the Hebrew Bible speak to the importance placed on his kingship.<sup>7</sup> Three core stories about Hezekiah—the Assyrian attack in 701 (2 Kings 18–19; Isaiah 36–37; 2 Chronicles 32:1–23), Hezekiah's illness (2 Kgs. 20:1–11; Isa. 38:1–22; 2 Chr. 32:24–26), and the visit of the Babylonian envoys (2 Kgs. 20:12–19; Isa. 39:1–8; 2 Chr. 32:27–31)—are retold with variation in three separate books of the Hebrew Bible: 2 Kings, Isaiah, and 2 Chronicles. To this total we should add other allusions to Hezekiah, both direct and indirect: Hezekiah is mentioned in Jer. 26:19 as someone who repents and saves his city, and in Prov. 25:1, as a monarch associated with sapiential scribal activity; some argue that the Immanuel child of Isa. 7:10–17 might also allude to Hezekiah; and Isa. 9:2–7 might be a coronation hymn for Hezekiah's ascension to the throne.

The narratives concerning Hezekiah are not only numerous, but also oddly divergent. The first, about the Assyrian attack in 701 BCE, for example, portrays the king very positively. This story, which takes place during the Assyrian attack of Jerusalem, describes a terrifying scene not just of physical warfare, but also of words and theologies. A messenger, the Rabshaqeh, is sent by Sennacherib to taunt and intimidate the people of Judah to surrender. When Hezekiah hears of the Rabshaqeh's derisive and threatening speech, he dutifully and piously responds with a prayer for divine assistance. Shortly thereafter, God answers his request and the Assyrians stop their attack on Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup> By describing the king's pious behavior, the narrative

7. For a quick overview of scholarship on Hezekiah and his reign, see Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Hezekiah, King of Judah," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:189–93.

portrays Hezekiah as directly responsible for the salvation of Jerusalem.

However, this narrative in Kings and Isaiah is immediately followed by two other episodes—the first detailing Hezekiah’s illness, and the second, recounting the visit of the Babylonian envoys—that portray the king more negatively. The story of the illness, which immediately follows the story about the attack, describes how Hezekiah becomes mysteriously ill. He becomes so sick, in fact, that God sends the prophet Isaiah to tell the king that he soon will die. Shortly thereafter, however, the story describes God’s sudden and inexplicable change of heart as Isaiah is sent back by God to tell Hezekiah that he will recover. The narrative neatly ends with an extension of Hezekiah’s life (2 Kgs. 20:1-11; Isa. 38:1-22). Not only is the purpose and meaning of this pericope unclear, but equally mysterious is how this tale about Hezekiah’s illness is connected to the immediately preceding story of the Assyrian attack: why is the story of the miraculous salvation of Jerusalem followed by a narrative about the illness and near death of a king who earlier brought about the salvation of Zion?

The third and last story intensifies the tension created by the juxtaposition of the positive story of the attack and the more negative tales about Hezekiah. In this last story about this figure in Kings and Isaiah, Babylonian envoys visit Judah for an unstated purpose (2 Kgs. 20:12-19; Isa. 39:1-8). During the visit, Hezekiah, also for unexplained reasons, shows his visitors the riches that are in his storehouses. When the envoys leave, the prophet Isaiah arrives on the scene, and after hearing about the king’s display of Judah’s wealth, he prophesies that after Hezekiah’s death, his descendants and all

8. As we will discuss in a subsequent chapter, the account of the 701 attack in 2 Kings has a unique source, usually called Source A (2 Kgs. 18:13-16), which depicts Hezekiah as paying off Sennacherib by stripping the Temple.

the treasures of Judah will be taken into exile in Babylon. To this unpleasant prophecy Hezekiah gives a cryptic and seemingly callous reply that the word of the Lord that Isaiah has prophesied is good because Hezekiah's own days will be filled with peace and security.<sup>9</sup>

As this overview shows, not only are there numerous stories about Hezekiah in the biblical corpus, but these narratives also convey varying depictions of this figure. In the story about the 701 attack in 2 Kings and Isaiah, Hezekiah is portrayed as a pious and faithful king whose behavior leads to the survival of his city. The Chronicler, in his version of the tale, goes even further, depicting Hezekiah as a monarch who returns Judah to the golden age of David and Solomon. However, these positive stories are followed by other narratives that depict the king less favorably, perhaps even negatively. Especially odd is the pericope of the visit of the Babylonian envoys in 2 Kings and Isaiah, which portrays Hezekiah, the king responsible for Zion's salvation in 701 BCE, as inadvertently causing Zion's later destruction and the exile of her people at the hands of the Babylonians.

Unsurprisingly, this strange juxtaposition of stories is odd enough to have warranted the attention and editing skills of subsequent writers/editors. The Chronicler, for example, minimizes this dissonance by expanding the narrative about the positive aspects of Hezekiah's reign, including his cultic reform and behavior during the attack, and conversely by reducing the length and scope of the two more negative stories about Hezekiah concerning his illness and the visit of the Babylonian envoys. In contrast, classical rabbinic and Christian interpreters, instead of minimizing and smoothing over the tonal differences among the stories about Hezekiah, at times give increased weight to one aspect or another of this figure. Indeed, the

9. The verse concerning Hezekiah's reply to Isaiah's prophecy differs in 2 Kings and Isaiah. The variance will be addressed more fully in a later chapter.

schizophrenic portrayals of Hezekiah in the biblical corpus have led to equally mixed depictions of this figure in postbiblical traditions: Hezekiah is viewed in some classical sources as quasi-messianic (*b. Ber.* 28b and 94a; *b. Sanh.* 94a, 98b and 99a). In other sources, however, Hezekiah is pictured more negatively and is said to have become prideful and arrogant (*Num. Rab.* 20:6), relying on his treasures (*Marc.* 4.15) and his own good deeds (*b. Sanh.* 104a).<sup>10</sup>

Though it is not uncommon for kings in the Bible to be portrayed as both good and bad—King David being the prime example—the degree of contrast, especially the connection to Hezekiah of both Zion’s salvation and its destruction, seems to indicate something unique about this figure. At the very least, it shows that there was something peculiar about the way that this figure was remembered in the writing and editing of the biblical text. The main question of this work thus centers on the strangely numerous and contrasting biblical traditions about Hezekiah: Why are there so many and such varied stories about this figure in the Hebrew Bible? And by extension, what literary and historical processes underlie the formation of such a rich and divergent body of traditions?

### **Terminology and Demarcation of the Boundaries of This Study**

This study thus will focus on stories about Hezekiah in the Hebrew Bible, namely the cycles of stories found in 2 Kings, Isaiah, and 2 Chronicles. These three cycles, which are composed, as we have seen, of three main stories about Hezekiah (the 701 attack, Hezekiah’s illness, and the visit of the Babylonian envoys), will be designated the Hezekiah complex.<sup>11</sup> Included in this complex are stories about

10. See also *Const. ap.* 2.3; *b. Pesah.* 56a.

11. In her work on warfare and gendered language, Cynthia Chapman also designates the “bundle of metaphors” concerning Zion-as-woman the “Zion Complex.” However, while the “Zion Complex” is a bundle of metaphors, the “Hezekiah complex,” by contrast, is an interrelated

this king that are not found in all three of these biblical books, such as the narratives about Hezekiah's reform (2 Kgs. 18:4–6, 22; 2 Chr. 29:3—31:20) and the fall of Samaria (2 Kgs. 17; 18:9–12). The purpose of designating these stories the Hezekiah complex is to convey two key points: 1) the central character of these stories is Hezekiah, though we shall see that the prophet Isaiah plays an important supporting role; and 2) these stories form a collection of narratives that interact in multiple ways, influencing and speaking to and through each other. Hence, these stories truly make up a complex system that both intercommunicate and evolve over time.

In order to resolve the queries at the center of this study, this complex thus must be disentangled carefully. We must unpack and clarify the relationship between the redactional levels of each story, that of each story to its variant in another biblical book, that of each complete version of the cycle of stories to another cycle in a different biblical book, and finally the overarching relationship among all the stories in all three cycles.

### Methodology

To take apart and analyze the narrative system about Hezekiah, this work will rely primarily on literary (or source) and redaction-critical methods. It is broadly accepted that various sources and layers of composition underlie the stories that compose the Hezekiah complex.<sup>12</sup> For example, a majority view holds that the story of

conglomeration of stories. See Cynthia Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 60–66.

12. There have been some literary-critical examinations of the Hezekiah complex. David Bostock argues, using narrative criticism, that “faith” or “trust” is an often-disregarded leitmotif in 2 Kings 18–20 and Isaiah 36–39 (David Bostock, *A Portrayal of Trust: The Theme of Faith in the Hezekiah Narratives* [PBM; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006]). However, the work suffers from the limited scope of its investigation and, more importantly, the lack of a coherent thesis throughout. A similar critique can be leveled against John Hull's dissertation, a very detailed and useful literary analysis of 2 Kings 18–20 (*Hezekiah—Saint and Sinner: A Conceptual and Contextual Narrative Analysis of 2 Kings 18–20* [PhD diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1994]).



the attack on Jerusalem in 701 in Kings and Isaiah is comprised of three sources, usually demarcated as the following: Source A (2 Kgs. 18:13–16), Source B1 (2 Kgs. 18:17–19:9a, 36//Isa. 36:2–37:9a, 37), and Source B2 (2 Kgs. 19:9b–35//Isa. 37:9b–36).<sup>13</sup> The seams of these sources are recognizable by repetitions, differences in characterization, stylistic variations, or other textual oddities and incongruities. This work will thus pay special attention to the “artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else.”<sup>14</sup>

While the sources of the Hezekiah complex will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters, it is important to clarify that the central aim of this research is not to offer a new division of the sources of the Hezekiah complex *per se*. Rather, this study focuses on the *relationship* among the sources and the *development* of the Hezekiah complex, and hence on the redactors and the redactional process.

Redaction criticism,<sup>15</sup> though distinct, is closely connected to source criticism. The discovery of sources inevitably led to an inquiry into the redactors, “the Israelite scribes, archivists or collectors who must have been responsible for combining the sources into the finished works we now encounter.”<sup>16</sup> It is these writers and editors, and their “beliefs, theological concerns and literary skills,”<sup>17</sup> that are

13. The demarcation of these sources stems from Brevard Child’s modification of Bernhard Stade’s redactional analysis of the story of the attack. See Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, esp. 69–103; B. Stade, “Miscellen: Anmerkungen zu 2 Kō. 15–21,” *ZAW* 6 (1886): 156–89, esp. 172–78. For a summary of the source divisions of 2 Kgs. 18:13–19:37, see Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 242–51. The sources of the story of the attack in Kings and Isaiah will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

14. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic, 1981), 12.

15. For general introductions to redaction criticism, see John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984), esp. 45–61; and Rolf Knierim, “Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition, and Redaction,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (Chico: Scholars, 1985), 123–67.

16. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 47.

the central concern of this work. This study attempts to explore the mind of the redactors in order to decipher why they “combined source materials in ways that are superficially so puzzling.”<sup>18</sup> Of special interest are the theological and ideological concerns that drove the progression of the complex such that a lengthy and contrasting group of stories came to be associated with Hezekiah.

Because of the close relationship among redaction, source, and form criticism, the first two approaches cannot be utilized without also employing the third. Form criticism attempts to identify the genres of biblical literature, and “their structures, intentions and settings in order to understand the oral stage of their development.”<sup>19</sup> While source criticism has focused on the writing and editing of the biblical text, and redaction criticism on the writers/editors, form criticism “[looks] at the structure, genre and intention, both of what they [the writers/editors] have received and what they wrote.”<sup>20</sup> Hence, though this work will not focus on genre recognition or on the oral prehistory of the Hezekiah complex as such, it still will utilize form criticism insofar as it will pay special attention to the structure and literary setting of the complex as well as to the intention and message of the complex’s writers/editors.

Moreover, since literary analysis is utilized in order to support a redactional examination, we will not (and cannot) treat the Hezekiah complex solely as a unified text, as is the tendency of some literary critics.<sup>21</sup> Before the various sources can be brought together into a coherent, intelligible whole, the different layers of the Hezekiah complex must first be carefully separated and explained. Likewise,

17. *Ibid.*, 47.

18. *Ibid.*, 51.

19. Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 1.

20. *Ibid.*, 18.

21. For a literary reading of the Hezekiah complex as a unified text, see Hull, *Hezekiah—Saint and Sinner*.

we shall not ignore or dismiss historical concerns.<sup>22</sup> Though this study is not necessarily focused on the historicity of events during Hezekiah's reign as such, in order to effectively study the literature of the Hezekiah complex we nevertheless must have some level of understanding of the historical contexts that frame the narratives. As Sternberg notes: ". . . the more complex and reliable our knowledge of the world from which the Bible sprang, the sharper our insight into its working and meaning as a text."<sup>23</sup> This is especially so if we are to organize and order chronologically the sources within the Hezekiah complex.

### Previous Scholarship and Methodology

Other scholars have utilized similar methods to examine the biblical narratives about Hezekiah. However, they generally have tended to limit their examination of the stories about this figure to only a portion of the narrative. Indeed, the vast quantity and complicated nature of secondary research on the topic of Hezekiah make it very difficult to examine the narratives of the complex as a whole.<sup>24</sup> The most relevant scholarly works, for the most part, have usually focused on an individual tale, on a single version of the stories about this king in a particular book, or, at most, a comparison of two stories about Hezekiah in two different books of the Bible. In other words, a holistic study of the totality of stories about Hezekiah, especially one that tries to make sense of the purpose and process by which such varying and numerous tales came to be associated with this figure, is lacking.<sup>25</sup>

22. About the problems with the separation of literary and historical analyses of the Bible, see Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), esp. 7–23.

23. *Ibid.*, 16.

24. Modern scholarship on each separate incident of Hezekiah's tenure—the reform, the 701 attack, Hezekiah's illness, and the visit of the envoys—as well as critiques of these works will be delineated in detail in the followings chapters of this work.

The most useful of these works is a series of articles by Peter Ackroyd.<sup>26</sup> In these articles, Ackroyd attempts to elucidate the larger pattern or trajectory of the stories about Hezekiah. He argues that the biblical stories about Hezekiah, when examined closely, reveal a pattern of increasing idealization as they progress in compositional order from Kings to Isaiah to Chronicles. Relying on David Daube's lecture in 1966,<sup>27</sup> in which Daube argued that the figure of Hezekiah influenced the portrayal of Jesus as messiah in the New Testament,<sup>28</sup> Ackroyd maintains that the idealization of Hezekiah blossoms in rabbinic materials, which pictures Hezekiah as a messianic figure.<sup>29</sup>

25. Though a new work by Robb Young (*Hezekiah in Text and Tradition* [Leiden: Brill, 2012]) discusses all three core stories about Hezekiah in Kings, Isaiah, and Chronicles, his monograph, unlike this research, focuses on the historical and archaeological aspects of these stories.
26. P.R. Ackroyd "The Biblical Interpretation of the Reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer (JSOTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 247–59; idem., "The Death of Hezekiah: A Pointer to the Future?" in *De la tórah au messie: Mélanges H. Cazelles. Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles pour ses 25 années d'enseignement à l'Institut Catholique de Paris, Octobre 1979*, ed. M. Carrez, J. Bore, P. Grelot, et al. (Paris: Desclée, 1981), 219–26; idem., "An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile: A Study of 2 Kings 20, Isaiah 38–39," *SJT* 27 (1974): 329–52; idem., "Isaiah 36–39: Structure and Function," in *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 104–20.
27. David Daube, *He that Cometh: Lecture, October 1966, Held in the Crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral* (London: Council for Christian–Jewish Understanding, 1966), 1–6.
28. While it is true that parts of the Talmud allude to Hezekiah as a messianic figure, as we will show in the conclusion, Daube neglects to mention that even in the Talmud, Hezekiah sometimes is presented in a more negative light (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 104a; *b. Pesah.* 56a). Likewise, although it is a possibility, there is, however, no direct textual evidence in the New Testament for Daube's contention that the idea of Hezekiah as the messiah influenced the portrayal of subsequent messianic figures, especially Jesus.
29. So also Manfred Hutter, *Hiskija König von Juda: ein Beitrag zur jüdischen Geschichte in assyrischer Zeit* (Grazer theologische Studien; Graz: Instituts für Ökumenische Theologie und Patrologie an der Universität Graz, 1982), esp. 102–5. Other scholars also have alluded briefly to similar conclusions, but with even less elaboration than Ackroyd. Moshe Weinfeld, for example, states that the messianic visions found in Isaiah (e.g., Isa. 2:2–4; 9:1–6; 11:1–10) and Micah (5:1–5) are centered on Hezekiah, whose birth right after the death of Tiglath-Pileser III and Ahaz engendered great eschatological hope in the prophets. Although Weinfeld never elaborates on these findings, he also seems to believe that the idealized vision of Hezekiah as messiah has biblical roots; see "Roots of the Messianic Idea," in *Mythology and Mythologies: Methodological Approaches to Intercultural Influences, Proceedings of the Second Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project Held in Paris, France, October 4–7, 1999*, ed. R. M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), 279–87.

Unfortunately, Ackroyd's argument minimizes the presence of negative stories and traditions associated with this figure, and, hence, does not explain how or why these darker stories came to be linked to Hezekiah.

Brevard Childs also proposes that the character of Hezekiah becomes progressively more idealized as one moves from the various redactional layers of the story of the 701 attack in the book of Kings and then subsequently into the version of the attack story in the book of Chronicles.<sup>30</sup> Like Ackroyd, however, Childs focuses on the story of the 701 attack and abstains from a thorough examination of the two more negative stories about Hezekiah concerning his illness and the visit of the Babylonian envoys.

In contrast to Childs, R.E. Clements focuses on the stories about Hezekiah in Isaiah 36–39.<sup>31</sup> Rather than the progressive idealization proposed by Childs and Ackroyd, Clements posits that there is a wavering—an enhancement and a detraction—in the portrayal of Hezekiah. He argues that Sennacherib's attack in 701 BCE and the role of Hezekiah in this event were reinterpreted as the “high point of the whole story of the monarchy”<sup>32</sup> by writers associated with the Josianic court who wanted to create a parallel between the 701 attack and what they believed was the imminent overthrow of Assyria during Josiah's reign. After Josiah's tragic death, that is, sometime after 598, in order to prevent the misunderstanding that God would protect Jerusalem unconditionally, especially from the impending

30. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, esp. 69–111.

31. R. E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem: A Study in the Interpretation of Prophecy in the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 13; Sheffield: JSOT, 1980). Another scholar who attempts to clarify the progression of the narratives about Hezekiah in Kings and Isaiah is Christopher Seitz (*Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991]). Seitz's work, however, is also limited to a comparison of the stories about Hezekiah in 2 Kings and Isaiah, and without an analysis of the narratives in the book of Chronicles. In addition, as will become clear later, Seitz's starting premises are at odds with the ones presented in this research. A brief synopsis and critique of his research are offered in subsequent chapters of this study.

32. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance*, 16.

Babylonian threat, later writers/editors diminished this elevated vision of Hezekiah by adding the more negative stories of his illness and the visit by the Babylonian envoys.<sup>33</sup>

This research is indebted to Clements's thought-provoking and often persuasive argument. Some aspects of his perspective remain questionable, however, particularly those concerning the relationship between the Josianic court and the narratives about Hezekiah. As Christopher Seitz has noted, there is little evidence that Sennacherib's attack and its aftermath were ever viewed as the high point of Israelite history. Moreover, there is contrary evidence (2 Kgs. 18:4, 22) that a Josianic writer attempted to downplay,<sup>34</sup> not heighten, the accomplishments of Hezekiah.<sup>35</sup> Hence, while Clements is correct that the different redactional layers show that the character of Hezekiah was continually reinterpreted and in dialogue with preceding tradition, his work does not provide a complete answer as to why and how such a mixed tradition came to be associated with this particular figure.

Though this work has benefited from the research of these scholars as well as those of others who have studied and focused on various literary aspects of Hezekiah and the period of his reign, what is still lacking is a comprehensive study that examines all the stories about Hezekiah in the biblical corpus, with the purpose of explaining how and why such a diverse biblical tradition came to be associated with this figure. By close reading<sup>36</sup> and deep analysis of the literary features

33. Clements proposes that this later redaction must have been composed during the reign of either Jehoiakim or Zedekiah; see *ibid.*, 65.

34. See the arguments of Christopher Begg, "The Deuteronomistic Retouching of the Portrait of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs. 20, 12-19," *BN* 38-39 (1987): 7-13, 14-18; and Frederick Moriarty, "The Chronicler's Account of Hezekiah's Reform," *CBQ* 27 (1965): 399-406.

35. Similarly, Clements never addresses why this Josianic writer, who wanted to draw an analogy between the two kings, did not excise the unfavorable Source A account of the attack (2 Kgs. 18:13-16), which states that Hezekiah paid off Sennacherib with the treasury from the Temple. For a summary of the source divisions of 2 Kgs. 18:13-19:37, see: Coogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 242-51.

of the biblical stories about Hezekiah,<sup>37</sup> as well as by a careful study of the redactional development that underlies these narratives,<sup>38</sup> this research makes a contribution to the understanding of this important figure by showing that the mixed stories about Hezekiah resulted from a succession of responses and counter-responses. These responses took the form of editorial reactions whereby the preceding text was reinterpreted, adapted, and supplemented by later writers/editors dissatisfied with the theology and ideas perpetuated in the preceding pericope. Thus, the biblical narratives about Hezekiah in the Bible reflect and function as the locus of continual conversation and discussion—a dialogue of memory, if you will. This dialogue, as we will show, was generated by an ever-increasing tension between history and royal theology as events both during and after Hezekiah's reign came into conflict with the theological tenets of Judah.

### ***Fortschreibung* and Redactional Development**

To clarify further the terminology utilized in this research, a similar type of rolling development, termed "*Fortschreibung*,"<sup>39</sup> has been proposed by Walter Zimmerli as underlying the development of the book of Ezekiel. Though the terms *Fortschreibung* and "redaction" sometimes are used interchangeably,<sup>40</sup> we hesitate to use the term

36. Close reading means that we will pay special attention to the "artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional unites, and much else" (Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 12).
37. There have been some literary-critical examinations of the stories about Hezekiah, which will be utilized in the current work. In a published monograph on Hezekiah, David Bostock, using narrative criticism, argues that "faith" or "trust" is an often-disregarded leitmotif in 2 Kings 18–20 and Isaiah 36–39 (*A Portrayal of Trust*). Moreover, John Hull's dissertation offers a very detailed literary analysis of 2 Kings 18–20 (*Hezekiah—Saint and Sinner*).
38. While we will discuss the sources of the Hezekiah narratives in more detail in subsequent chapters, it is important to clarify that, for the most part, this study accepts the delineation of sources generally agreed upon by modern scholarship.
39. Walter Zimmerli, "Das Phänomen der 'Fortschreibung' im Buche Ezechiel," in *Prophecy: Essays presented to Georg Fohrer on his sixty-fifth birthday, 6 September, 1980*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1980), 174–91.

*Fortschreibung* to describe the development of the stories about Hezekiah for several reasons. First, *Fortschreibung* describes a consistent expansion of an *Urtext*, something like a commentary.<sup>41</sup> Karel van der Toorn<sup>42</sup> has convincingly shown, however, that such a process in the Hebrew biblical corpus “is simply not consistent with ancient Near Eastern scribal practice.”<sup>43</sup> He finds two features of *Fortschreibung* especially problematic: the gradual speed of the process and the nature of the changes, which he considers slight or minor. While van der Toorn concedes that changes were made to the text of the Hebrew Bible, he argues that the alterations were large and substantial, not slight and minor. Moreover, he argues that the changes were usually more abrupt, coming every forty years or so when the scroll would wear out and a new edition was created. Van der Toorn’s idea of redactional development is more consistent with our own about the growth of the stories about Hezekiah. As we will show, these stories about this king grew, not by “slight” or “minor” textual accretions, but by supplementations of larger portions of texts, either sources or entire narratives spaced at least forty years apart.

Along similar lines, Brevard Childs argues that *Fortschreibung* and editorial redaction are distinguished by “characteristic differences in emphasis.”<sup>44</sup> While *Fortschreibung* is “highly specific and text oriented,” in editorial redactions the “emphasis falls, above all, on

40. Karl Möller, “Reconstructing and Interpreting Amos’s Literary Prehistory: A Dialogue with Redaction Criticism,” in *“Behind” the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, C. Stephen Evans, Mary Healy and Murray Rae (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 420.

41. Brevard Childs, “Retrospective Reading of the Old Testament Prophets,” *ZAW* 108 (1996): 364.

42. Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

43. *Ibid.*, 149. Van der Toorn notes: “If a text exists in a single master copy written on a papyrus scroll, the opportunities for a steady accumulation of slight changes, deletions, minor expansions, and the like are almost nil” (*ibid.*, 148).

44. Childs, “Retrospective Reading,” 365. Childs writes that that editorial redaction and *Fortschreibung* share many characteristics: “In both there is an original written core tradition



the effect of changing sociological forces on the editors who then sought to harmonize an original text with their new perspectives through a systematic process of literary layering.”<sup>45</sup> Since this study will emphasize the underlying “changing sociological forces” that led to the development of the narratives about Hezekiah, rather than offering a new way to separate the sources underlying the stories about Hezekiah *per se*, it is best to characterize this research as about editorial redaction, not *Fortschreibung*. Hence, the focus of this study concerns the *relationship* among the sources and the *development* of the narratives about Hezekiah, and, thus, on the redactors and the redactional process.

### Outline of Chapters

In order to delineate the redactional development of the stories about Hezekiah, the chapters of this work will proceed in the redactional order of the biblical sources. Chapters 1 and 2 will focus on the stories about Hezekiah in the book of 2 Kings, which we will show is the original context of these narratives. Chapter 1 will closely examine 2 Kings 17 (the narrative about the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel), 2 Kgs. 18:1-12 (the Deuteronomistic summary of Hezekiah’s reign), and the story of the 701 attack in the earliest redactional sources about Hezekiah, known as Source A and Source B1. Chapter 2 will continue the examination by looking at the story of Hezekiah’s illness, the story of the visit of the Babylonian envoys, and the story of the 701 attack in Source B2 in the book of Kings. We will show that the stories about Hezekiah in the book of Kings developed through a series of responses and counter-responses, as each story reacted to problems inherent in the preceding narrative.

which is reinterpreted and extended; in both later historical perspectives are retrojected onto the text; in both critical literary and historical reconstruction is needed to disengage the levels.”

45. *Ibid.*

Chapters 3 and 4 will delineate a different kind of development in order to elucidate further the dialogue of memory that constitutes the stories about Hezekiah in the Bible. In these chapters, we will examine why and how the narrative in Kings was adopted, revised, and inserted into the book of Isaiah and the book of 2 Chronicles. In Chapter 3, we will closely analyze the Isaianic version of the stories about Hezekiah in Isaiah 36–39, showing that the Isaianic editor altered the narrative in Kings in order to transition it into a complicated literary bridge that connected First and Second Isaiah. As part of this transformation, the more negative stories about Hezekiah were subtly altered into more positive tales, and the negative tones of these narratives were further minimized. Chapter 4 will examine the Chronistic version of the stories in 2 Chronicles 29–32. We will show that Hezekiah is portrayed even more idealistically in Chronicles because the memory of the reign of this king was imagined, in hindsight, as one of the high points of the history of Israel, akin to the reigns of David and Solomon. As a result, the stories about Hezekiah in Chronicles were changed and “renovated” so as to prefigure the restoration of Judah.

The concluding chapter of this research will offer a succinct outline of the post-biblical traditions about Hezekiah. It also will summarize the historical, theological, and literary processes that underlie the development of the dialogue of memory about Hezekiah in the Hebrew Bible and propose further lines of research in the study of this important figure.