

King Hezekiah of Judah

CHARACTERS: 10; 8M, 1F, 1 either. Iddo, JJ, RR (roving reporter), Hezekiah, Joah, Shebna, Lady 1, Isaiah, Rabshakeh (haughty and mocking), Eliakim

PROPS: none specified

SETTING: various or bare stage

RUN TIME: 9 minutes

SCRIPTURE/BASED ON: 2 Kings 18-21, 2 Chronicles 29-33, Isaiah 36-39

FK reading level: 6.4

Scene 1

A rise: TV news station

IDDO: Good evening. I'm Iddo the Seer

JJ: And I'm Jehu, JJ for short, former court secretary.

IDDO: And this is Judah's nightly news. Our top story tonight. King Ahaz is dead at the age of 36. His 20 year reign was full of idolatry and national insecurity.

JJ: Sources in the palace say preparations are in place to crown his 25 year old son Hezekiah. Speculation is rampant concerning what this will bring to Jerusalem and all of Judah. Leading experts disagree about the future and citizens are concerned about their welfare at this national juncture

IDDO: We take you live to Jerusalem University and the debate. [cut to]

RR: I'm roving reporter Rhonda here with Joah, the court historian. What do you see coming?

JOAH: They say the apple doesn't fall far from the tree so I'd say Hezekiah will be like his father Ahaz. He'll offer his children as sacrifices plunder the Lord's temple and shut its doors.

RR: How about you, Shebna? What do you predict as court secretary?

SHEBNA: I disagree. Hezekiah has watched as Judah has been overrun first by the Arameans, then Israel, then Edom, Philistia and finally Assyria. He's seen his own brothers killed by both enemy troops and his own father. He'll want change.

LADY 1: *(pushing her way in)* Yeah, can you believe the king offers his own children as sacrifices? Can you imagine growing up, like Hezekiah probably did, wondering if you would be the next son sent to die?

JOAH: True, true. He's seen his father and the priests destroy the Lord's temple and set up altars like the Assyrians have. He's seen things go from bad to worse because Ahaz turned his back on God. But he's only 25. What can he do to change things?

SHEBNA: Joah, I understand your concern that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree – but what if we look at Hezekiah's family tree on his *mother's* side? His mother is Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah and she will be a good influence on him. I predict he'll reestablish worship to Yahweh.

LADY 1: She's a good woman. Kept Hezekiah from being burned on an altar to (*scrunching up her face in disgust*) Molech.

RR: You bring up a good point about the king's age. How would a 25 year old change a nation?

ISAIAH: I'll answer that. Change starts within yourself. Come near to God and he will come near to you. If Hezekiah himself devotes himself to God, the people will see the results. It may be little by little, but as more and more people follow Hezekiah's lead, we'll see revival spread throughout the country.

LADY 1: Amen. Change starts with each of us.

RR: Back to you, IDDO.

IDDO: An outbreak of lion attacks are plaguing Israel. Twelve people were reported killed with over 30 injured in the latest count.

JJ: Sources inside Israel claim that these attacks stem from the transplanted resident's worshipping other gods. The transplants arrived after the king of Assyria conquered and deported most of the Israelites, replacing them with other nationalities.

Scene 2

A rise: TV news station

IDDO: We interrupt our regular programming to bring you this special news report.

JJ: The Assyrian army is massing at Jerusalem's gates. Things look bleak. Stay tuned for live coverage of the assault at our doorstep. [cut to]

RABSHAKEH: (taunting, mouthy) Tell Hezekiah to make a deal with my master, the king of Assyria. My king will give you 2000 horses (sneering) if you can supply riders! (ad lib laughter from Assyrian troops) Do you think Egypt is coming to save you? Forgetaboutit. (forget about it) Egypt is like a splintered stick. You lean on Egypt, the stick not only breaks, it wounds you in the process.

ELIAKIM: Please speak to us in Aramaic, since we understand it.

SHEBNA: Don't speak to us in Hebrew within earshot of the people who are on the wall

RABSHAKEH: Forgetaboutit. (forget about it) Those people will be the ones their own excrement and drinking their own urine. They might as well know up front Assyria will crush you.

ELIAKIM: Our God will deliver us.

RABSHAKEH: Your Yahweh didn't save anyone else. What makes you think he'll rescue you? You're all going down. [cut to]

JJ: Meanwhile at the palace, Hezekiah is meeting with Isaiah the prophet and other advisors. [cut to]

HEZEKIAH: Today is a day of distress, rebuke, and disgrace. Perhaps Yahweh our God will hear all the words of the Rabshakeh, who mocks the living God. Be strong and courageous! Don't be afraid or discouraged before the king of Assyria or before the large army that is with him, for there are more with us than with him. He has only human strength, but we have Yahweh our God to help us and to fight our battles. I order everyone to pray.

ISAIAH: The LORD says: Don't be afraid because of the words you have heard, which the king of Assyria's attendants have blasphemed Me with. I will cause him to return to his own land, where he will fall by the sword.

HEZEKIAH: LORD of Hosts, God of Israel, who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are God—You alone—of all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth. Listen closely, LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, LORD, and see. Hear all the mocking words of the Assyrians. You are the living God! LORD, it is true that the kings of Assyria have devastated all these countries and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but made by human hands—wood and stone. Now, LORD our God, save us from his power so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD—You alone.

ISAIAH: The LORD, the God of Israel, says because you prayed to Me, I will defend this city and rescue it. Sennacherib king of Assyria will go back the way he came. [cut to]

IDDO: (excited) I have just been given a report from the battlefield. The Assyrian army has been decimated. The death toll is topping 180,000!

JJ: Eyewitnesses report that when the people of Jerusalem got up, looked over the wall, dead Assyrian bodies were everywhere.

IDDO: Witnesses are crediting an angel sent from the Lord. [cut to]

LADY 1: The LORD sent an angel who annihilated every brave warrior, leader, and commander in the camp of the king of Assyria. [cut to]

JJ: The Assyrian king has broken camp and is hightailing it for home, a beaten man.

Scene 3

A rise: TV news station

IDDO: Good evening. I'm Iddo the Seer

JJ: And I'm Jehu, JJ for short, court secretary.

IDDO: And this is Judah's nightly news. Envoys from Babylon visited the palace today and were treated to a tour of his treasure house—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the precious oil—and all his armory, and everything that was found in his treasuries.

JJ: The prophet Isaiah chastised the king for this action. [cut to]

ISAIAH: Hear the word of the LORD of Hosts: The time will certainly come when everything in your palace will be carried off to Babylon; nothing will be left. [cut to]

JJ: Dire prophesy, indeed. (to IDDO) Do you think the phrase “pride goes before a fall” might fit this situation?

IDDO: Hard to say, JJ. Possibly.

JJ: Reports from Assyria indicate a coup orchestrated by the king's sons has toppled and assassinated the king who marched against Judah. Another son, Esar-haddon, has become king in his place.

Scene 4

A rise: TV news station

IDDO: Good evening. I'm Iddo the Seer

JJ: And I'm JJ and this is Judah's nightly news.

IDDO: Topping the headlines today is the death of King Hezekiah. Sources in the palace confirm the 54 year old died peacefully. Preparations are being made to bury him in the caves near David's tomb and crown his 12 year old son, Manasseh.

JJ: How would you summarize his reign?

IDDO: Peaceful.

JJ: You have to recall his many deeds of faithful love.

IDDO: Hezekiah succeeded in everything he did.

JJ: He had abundant riches and glory, treasuries for silver, gold, precious stones, spices, shields plus warehouses for surpluses of grain, new wine, and oil.

IDDO: Abundant is the right word. God blessed him with flocks and herds in abundance.

JJ: His building program included channeling a river into Jerusalem [cut to]

LADY 1: Hezekiah did what was good, upright and true before the LORD his God.

ISAIAH: He was diligent in the service of God's temple and spiritual education. [cut to]

IDDO: In the first year of his 29 year reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the LORD's temple, repaired and consecrated it and had worship restored. [cut to]

HEZEKIAH: Our fathers were unfaithful and did what is evil in the sight of the LORD our God. They abandoned Him, turned their faces away from the LORD's tabernacle, and turned their backs on Him. It is in my heart now to make a covenant with Yahweh, the God of Israel so that His burning anger may turn away from us. [cut to]

IDDO: Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over how God had prepared the people, for this national revival came about suddenly.

JJ: Hezekiah invited Israel, Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh to observe the Passover. Even though some people mocked and laughed, other humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. [cut to]

HEZEKIAH: Israelites, return to Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel so that He may return to those of you who remain. Don't be like your fathers and your brothers who were unfaithful to Yahweh. Yahweh your God is gracious and merciful; He will not turn His face away from you if you return to Him. [cut to]

IDDO: I remember that Passover. It went on for 2 weeks with the king supplying many of the animals.

JJ: There was great rejoicing in Jerusalem, for nothing like this had happened since the golden days of Solomon.

IDDO: All the idols were destroyed and people returned to God.

JJ: The power of God was at work in Judah to unite and carry out the command of the king by the word of the LORD.

IDDO: Only time will tell what this 12 year old Manasseh will do.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: Cut to scenes can be videotaped and played on a screen OR separate the stage into three sections. Use the center section for the news anchors and stage left and right for "live" scenes.