

always crossed at the north of the great desert and thus came down into Philistia from the north. They are frequently referred to elsewhere in the Scripture as coming from the north.

This points the way to the true interpretation of the passage. Verse 28 is not the introduction to this passage but the conclusion of the previous one. Philistia is here told not to rejoice, not because of the death of king Ahaz, but because of the destruction of the army of Sennacherib as described in verses 24-27.

When Sennacherib came against Hezekiah, he marched southward through the Philistine plain, overwhelming many cities, and preparing to meet the army of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia and Egypt (cf. 2 Kings 19:9). Large portions both of Philistia and of Judah were devastated by the Assyrian forces and Jerusalem was seriously threatened. When the Lord smote the army of Sennacherib in the night and the king had to return to Assyria, both Philistia and Judah were freed for the time from the Assyrian menace. Jerusalem actually outlived the Assyrian Empire, and was not destroyed until Babylon had succeeded Assyria as the world power. But the relief of Philistia was only temporary. During the remaining century of Assyrian history, successive Assyrian armies marched through Philistia, pillaging and destroying.

In Isaiah 14:29-32, Isaiah tells the Philistines that the victory over Sennacherib was not wrought on their behalf. God did it in order to preserve Jerusalem. "As birds hovering so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem" (Isa. 31:5 American Standard Version). The temporary liberation of the wicked Philistines from the Assyrian threat was a by-product and would not continue more than a few years. Thus the prophet warns the Philistines not to draw false comfort from the defeat of Sennacherib. The miracle was not wrought for their sakes but for the sake of His own people.

Isaiah said, "Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken." He did not say that Sennacherib had died, but that Sennacherib's rod had been broken. He continued with the prediction that "out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." Sennacherib was succeeded by his