



Hezekiah's Pact with Egypt Condemned; Sennacherib's Judah Campaign; Hezekiah Recovers from Sin unto Death; Rabshakeh's Arrival at Jerusalem

- 5) The prophet Isaiah was assigned by the Lord to advise and counsel Hezekiah but unfortunately the king went into reversionism. It almost cost him his life and Judah its freedom.
- 6) It is God's desire that client nations depend upon Him for security, provision, and protection and historical circumstances should not change this approach.
- 7) In times of prosperity, believers find it easy to credit God for their many blessings. But when under threat from a predator nation they often accuse God of either being negligent or on vacation.
- 8) National leadership finds such threats a reason to rely on other nations for help, a notion that caused the prophet Jeremiah to comment in:

Jeremiah 17:5 - Thus saith the Lord, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord."

- 9) Hezekiah allowed the imminent threat of Assyrian military power to cause his spiritual failure and thus depend upon the Egyptians for the security and safety of Judah.
- 10) Isaiah vociferously implored Hezekiah against such foreign policy:

Isaiah 30:1 - "Woe to the rebellious children," declares the Lord, "Who execute a plan, but not Mine, and make an alliance but not of My Spirit, in order to add sin to sin;

v.2 - who proceed down to Egypt, without consulting Me, to take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh, and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!

v. 3 - "Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation."

- 11) In Hezekiah's fourteenth year, 701 B.C., Shalmaneser invaded Judah:

2 Kings 18:13 - In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.

- 12) The word "all" is not to be taken literally but rather as a means of expressing the success of Sennacherib's campaign. Of all the fortified cities that Sennacherib attacked in Judah, all of them were captured. There are still a few left to go and his streak will ultimately be broken at Jerusalem.
- 13) Sennacherib's campaign took him through a number of locations in Philistia and then into the low lands of Western Judah called The Shephelah \she-fē' lah\ where a number of strategic fortified cities were sacked. Details of this operation are provided by:

Rasmussen, Carl G. *NIV Atlas of the Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), 135-36:



With the death of pro-Assyrian Egyptian king Shabako \shab' a-ka\ in 702 B.C. and the ascension of Shebitku \sheb' it-ku\ (702-690 B.C.), there was probably a shift in Egyptian foreign policy to an anti-Assyrian stance. With much of the southwestern portion of the Fertile Crescent in revolt, it was mandatory for Sennacherib to reassert his sovereignty there.

Sennacherib's response in 701 B.C. is one of the best-documented events in the ancient world. Scripture describes his invasion from the Judean standpoint (2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 32:1-23; Isaiah 36-39; Micah 1:8-16; and Isaiah 10:28-32. From the Assyrian standpoint the "Prism of Sennacherib" describes this invasion in great detail. In addition, stone reliefs that lined the throne room of his palace in Nineveh depict various facets of his Judean campaign.

After marching westward from Assyria to the Mediterranean Sea, Sennacherib proceeded south along the Phoenician coast ... and captured Joppa, Bene Berak \ben' ē-bē' rak\, and Beth Dagon \beth-dā' gon\. The Egyptians and Ethiopians, who had responded to Hezekiah's call for help, were defeated in the Plain of Eltekeh \el' te-keh\. Sennacherib then moved eastward and captured the city of Timnah \tim' na\, thus cutting off the supply line between Ekron \ek' ron\ and her Judean ally, Hezekiah. This accomplished, the city of Ekron was conquered. Moving south to the Elah \ē' la\ Valley, Sennacherib captured first Azekah \a-zē' ka\ and then Gath.

Sennacherib proceeded further south and assaulted the Judean stronghold of Lachish \lā' kish\. The siege and conquest of Lachish must have been one of the high points of Sennacherib's reign, for the throne room of his palace at Nineveh was decorated with reliefs depicting this conquest. Recent archaeological excavations at Lachish have proven conclusively that the city was destroyed by Sennacherib. In some areas 6 to 10 feet of ash and debris from the destruction have been found.

From his camp at Lachish, and later from Libnah \lib' na\, Sennacherib sent his supreme commander, chief officer, and field commander with an army to demand the submission of Jerusalem.

- 14) Simultaneous with the Assyrian's campaign, Hezekiah was taken ill and in Isaiah 38 is informed by Isaiah that he has committed the sin unto death:

Isaiah 38:1 - In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'"

v. 2 - Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord,

v. 3 - and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

v. 4 - Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah, saying,

v. 5 - "Go and say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.

v. 6 - "And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city."

- 15) However, down at Lachish, Sennacherib decides to take advantage of what he perceives as the weakness of Hezekiah and that of his cabinet.



- 16) Sennacherib sends three members of his staff, both military and political to Jerusalem to meet with the government of Hezekiah and to seek a nonviolent solution to what he is confident would otherwise be a bloody conclusion to the situation.
- 17) These three individuals are identified in:
- 2 Kings 18:17** - Then the king of Assyria sent the Tartan \tar' tan\, general of CenCom, the Rabsaris \rab' sa-ris\, chief of staff, and the Rabshakeh \rab' sha-ka\, his secretary of state, from Lachish to King Hezekiah in Jerusalem.
- 18) The spokesman among the three officials is identified as the Rabshakeh in:
- Isaiah 36:2** - And the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway near the laundry.
- 19) This passage contains a number of propaganda techniques utilized by the Assyrian Secretary of State, the Rabshakeh. These same tactics were discerned by the Russians when they analyzed the work of Dr. Ivan Pavlov and were put into practice by them against their own people.