
Isaiah 37

After receiving the report from his servants, Hezekiah dresses in sackcloth. He is reassured by Isaiah. Hezekiah receives a letter from King Sennacherib re-doubling the blasphemous offenses. The king of Judah spreads the letter before the Lord in the temple. Isaiah, speaking on behalf of the Lord, promises safety to Jerusalem and punishment to the insolent Sennacherib and the Assyrian forces.

vv. 1–7. When Hezekiah hears the report from his servants, he reacts by dressing in sackcloth and going to the temple. Hezekiah sends Eliakim and Shebna to give a report to Isaiah. They express their feelings of great concern over the precarious situation that Judah found itself in and express their hope that the Lord will protect His people. Isaiah reassures them on behalf of the Lord and explains that King Sennacherib will not go unpunished. Rather, that he will speedily return to his own nation where he would fall by the sword.

1 ¶ AND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard [it], that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

As soon as King Hezekiah heard the contents of the distressing message recited by his representatives, the king tore his clothing in token of mourning and dressed himself in sackcloth. But that is not all. He right away turned to the Lord! He went into the House of the Lord—Holiness to the Lord—or the Holy Temple to pour out his heart unto God.

2 And he sent Eliakim, who [was] over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

And not only does King Hezekiah go to the Holy Temple, but he also sends his ministers to the Prophet Isaiah to have them share the recent events with him. Gill says: “*And the elders of the priests*] – as the chief of those that were concerned in civil affairs, so the chief of those that were employed in sacred things, were sent: this was a very honourable embassy; and it was showing great respect to the prophet, to send such personages to him: *Covered with sackcloth*] – as the king himself was, following his example; and this is to

be understood not of the elders of the priests only, but of Eliakim and Shebna also. These, so clad, were sent by the king. *Unto Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz*] – to give him an account of the present situation of affairs, of the distress he was in, and to desire his prayers: a very proper person to apply to, a prophet, one highly dear to God, and honoured by him, had near access unto him, and knew much of his mind.” ¶ But how blessed we are today that we ought to bring our own matters before God—for our own lives—unless the Prophet has already instructed us on the matter as a Church. Our beloved Prophet Joseph Smith lovingly instructed: “It is a great thing to inquire at the hands of God, or to come into His presence; and we feel fearful to approach Him on subjects that are of little or no consequence, to satisfy the queries of individuals, especially about things the knowledge of which men ought to obtain in all sincerity, before God, for themselves, in humility by the prayer of faith; and more especially a Teacher or a High Priest in the Church.”¹

3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day [is] a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: ✓ for the children are come to the birth, and [there is] not strength to bring forth.

✓ or, provocation

These (ISAIAH 37:3–4) seem to be the words of King Hezekiah’s messengers that they shared with Isaiah. The utterance about no strength at the time of birth is a proverbial expression of impotence—in reaction to the provocation of King Sennacherib. Barnes explains: *This is a day of rebuke*] – This may refer either to the reproaches of Rabsbakeh, or more probably to the fact that Hezekiah regarded the Lord as rebuking his people for their sins. The word which is used here (תוכחה), means more properly chastisement or punishment Psalm 149:7; Hosea 5:9. *And of blasphemy*] – Margin ||,

¹ Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1:338–339.

‘Provocation.’ The word used here (נִאֲצָה)², means properly **reproach** or contumely; and the sense is, that God and his cause had been vilified by Rabshakeh, and it was proper to appeal to him to vindicate the honor of his own name (ISAIAH 37:4).” Once again, *no strength for the birth* is an expression of impotence.

4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up [thy] prayer for the remnant that is left. ✓

✓ found

It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God. The expression “the LORD thy God” יהוה אלהיך, is a typical one of the times (in contrast to the יהוה אלהינו, Lord our God). In the story of the men who went to speak to Jeremiah about going into Egypt (Jeremiah 42, see discussion in notes on ISAIAH 30), we also saw the expression יהוה אלהיך used by the people talking to the Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 42:3) as well as when the Prophet spoke back to the people (Jeremiah 42:4) אל-יהוה אלהיכם and יהוה אלהיך (Jeremiah 42:5). Only *after* each had politely attributed the Lord to each other, did the people switch to *our* (Jeremiah 42:6), יהוה אלהינו, “the LORD our God.”³ The hope of the messengers is that the Lord will deal with this provocation—knowing that the Lord does not always intercede in such cases. The Lord will only honor His own name if we have also honored it. Barnes says: “The reproach of the ‘living God’ consisted in comparing him to idols ... The phrase ‘the living God’ is often applied to Yahweh in contradistinction from idols, which were mere blocks of wood or stone.” ¶ *And will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up [thy] prayer for the remnant that is left. By the remnant that is left*, in this context, meant the remaining tribes after Ephraim and her companions

² Also, humiliation (HALOT).

³ These sort of subtle details are also seen in the conversation between King Ahab and King Ben-Hadad of Syria in 1Kings 20:31–33, see the use of “my brother,” (אחי) and “thy brother” (אחיך) in these verses. Likewise, in the Book of Mormon we read, “... and also my father began to murmur against the Lord his God” (*emphasis added*, 1 Nephi 16:20). This is an example of a Hebraisms preserved in the text of the Book of Mormon.

had been taken captive by Assyria. Hezekiah’s messengers ask Isaiah to intercede in prayer on behalf of Jerusalem. The messengers are aware that the Lord has already heard the blasphemous words, but ask the Prophet to pray on behalf of Jerusalem.

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

The words in ISAIAH 37:3–4 seem to be those rehearsed to them by Hezekiah before leaving to see Isaiah.

6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

It is interesting that just like Hezekiah does not go in person to talk to Isaiah, the latter sends a message back, and does not go in person to speak with Hezekiah. The expression *your master* is literally, *your lord* or *your adonai* אדוניכם. The translators probably used the word *master* not to confuse Hezekiah with Jehovah (for instance, although correct, the Bishops’ Bible is more confusing as it has: “Say thus vnto your lorde, Thus saith the Lord”; LBLA likewise has: “Así diréis a vuestro señor: ‘Así dice el SEÑOR’”; while RV1960 has: “Diréis así a vuestro señor: Así ha dicho Jehová”). The words of the LORD to Hezekiah, spoken through Isaiah, are of great comfort: אל-תירא, “Be not afraid.” Ezekiel is likewise reassured thrice in one sentence, *not to be afraid* (אל-תירא), “And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house” (Ezekiel 2:6). When the Lord tells us not to be afraid, what comfort this brings to us. It is not merely *comfort* that He gives, however, but it is a *commandment* not to be unfaithful. This is such an important commandment—for us to learn to place our complete trust in God—that the Lord says: “Therefore, be not afraid of your enemies, for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy (D&C 98:14). Now the Prophet Isaiah goes on to make it clear that indeed He has heard the blasphemies of King Sennacherib’s servants, and by extension, of the king of Asshur. Numerous commentators speak of the disparaging connotation of the word נַעֲרֵי (from the

root **נָעַר** here translated as *his servants* when it would more correctly be translated as *his lads*. The ESV renders it: “Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the young men of the king of Assyria have reviled me.” Leeser offers: “Be not afraid because of the words which thou hast heard, with which the boys of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.”

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him,[✓] and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

✓ or, put a spirit into him

Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land. Rawlinson explains it: “*I will put a spirit within him; i.e. I will take away from him the spirit of pride and arrogance by which he has been hitherto actuated, and I will infuse into his heart, instead, a spirit of hesitation and fear.*” Barnes writes: “Margin ||, ‘Put a **spirit** into him.’ The word rendered ‘blast’ (**רוּחַ**) is commonly rendered ‘spirit.’ It may denote **breath, air, soul, or spirit**. There is no reason to think that the word is used here in the sense of blast of wind, as our translators seem to have supposed. The sense is probably, ‘I will infuse into him a spirit of fear, by which he shall be alarmed by the rumour which he shall hear, and return to his own land.’ The rumour or report here referred to, was doubtless that respecting Tirhakah king of Ethiopia (ISAIAH 37:9). It was this which would alarm him, and drive him in haste from the cities which he was now besieging, and be the means of expelling him from the land.” ¶ *And I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.* See ISAIAH 37:38, wherein we learn that King Sennacherib was killed by the hand of his own sons.

vv. 8–20. Rabshakeh leaves Jerusalem. Sennacherib sends a written message to Hezekiah along the same blasphemous lines as what we saw in the address of his servants to the servants of Hezekiah in the previous chapter. Hezekiah, upon receiving the letter, spreads it before the Lord in the temple and offers a faith-filled prayer. In it, Hezekiah shares the anguish felt at the reproaching and threatening letter received from Sennacherib. The King of Judah admits that Assyria has been strong in the past, but that her attacks have been against nations who lean on idols. Hezekiah asks the Lord to “**save us**” (**הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ**) so that He may be glorified.

8 ¶ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: Alexander writes: “Both these towns were in the plain or lowlands of Judea, southwest of Jerusalem (Joshua 15:39, 42), originally seats of Canaanitish kings or chiefs, conquered by Joshua (Joshua 12:11, 15). Lachish was one of the fifteen places fortified by Rehoboam (2 Chronicles 11:9), and one of the last towns taken by Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 34:7). It was still in existence after the exile. (Nehemiah 11:30). Libnah was a city of the Levites and of refuge (Joshua 21:13), and appears to have been nearer to Jerusalem.” ¶ *For he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.* AMP renders it: “So the Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah [*a fortified city of Judah*]; for he had heard that the king had departed from Lachish.” Rawlinson says: “Sennacherib’s object in moving upon Libnah is doubtful; but it would seem, from his monuments, that he had captured Lachish (Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, pp. 149–152), and had gone on to Libnah, as the next stronghold on the way to Egypt.” Regarding **נָסַע**, *departed*, Alexander writes: “The last verb in this verse properly denotes the removal of a tent or an encampment, an idea happily expressed in Lowth’s translation by the military term *decamped*”⁴ (*emphasis added*). Indeed **נָסַע**, means “to pull out tent pegs > to break camp > to move off... to depart (an army)” (HALOT, see also Gesenius). I particularly like this as I am studying the word **נָסַע** in my Modern Hebrew tapes at this time (July 2013). A similar American pop-culture expression is “Let’s blow this popsicle stand” which has simply come to mean *to leave quickly*.

9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard [it], he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

It seems that Sennacherib, upon hearing that King Tirhakah (**תִּרְחָקָה**) of Ethiopia was sending troops to attack (probably the advancing Assyrian forces), had

⁴ Lowth has: “But Rabshakeh returned: and found the king of Assyria besieging Libnah; for he had heard, that he had decamped from Lachish.”

moved on to meet Tirhakah. But feeling that the Rabshakeh had left unfinished business in Jerusalem, Sennacherib sent a new set of messengers for Hezekiah, and a letter to boot (ISAIAH 37:14). Alexander explains: “Tirhakah was one of the most famous conquerors of ancient times ... He was at this time either in close alliance with [Egypt], or more probably in actual possession of Thebais or Upper Egypt. The fact that an Ethiopian dynasty did reign there is attested by the ancient writers, and confirmed by still existing monuments. The Greek forms of the name (Ταρακός, Τάρκος, Τέρκων) vary but little from the Hebrew.” What follows is what the messengers said to Hezekiah.

10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given* into the hand of the king of Assyria.

* 2 Kings 19:10, delivered.

These words, delivered by the Assyrian messengers, were full of blasphemy, implying that the God of Israel was not capable of delivering Jerusalem from the hand of the king of Asshur. Gill notices: “[Sennacherib] gives Hezekiah the title of king, and owns him to be king of Judah; which was more than Rabshakeh his servant would do ... [however] nothing could be more devilish and satanical, to represent the God of truth, that cannot lie, as a liar and deceiver: in this the king of Assyria outdid Rabshakeh himself; he had represented Hezekiah as an impostor and a deceiver of the people, and warns them against him as such; and here Sennacherib represents God himself as a deceiver, and cautions Hezekiah against trusting in him: nothing is more opposite to Satan and his instruments, than faith in God, and therefore they labour with all their might and main to weaken it..”

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?

Alexander writes: “The interjection *behold* appeals to these events as something perfectly notorious; as if he had said, ‘See what has happened to others, and then judge whether thou art likely to escape’ ... This clause is, in most versions, rendered as an interrogation, but is properly on exclamation of contemptuous incredulity. *All the lands* may either be an elliptical expression for *all the lands subdued by them*, or, which is more in

keeping with the character of the discourse, a hyperbolic expression of the speaker’s arrogance.”

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, [as] Gozan, and Haran, and Rezep, and the children of Eden which [were] in Telassar?*

* 2 Kings 19:11, or Thelasar.

Rawlinson writes: “*My fathers*] – The Assyrian monarchs call all those who have preceded them upon the throne their ‘fathers,’ without intending to claim any blood-relationship. Sargon, Sennacherib’s father, though a usurper and the first king of a new dynasty, frequently speaks of ‘the kings his fathers’ (*Records of the Past*, Ch. 7. pp. 39, 51, etc.). *Gozan ... Haran ... Rezep ... Telassar*] – ‘Gozan’ is, beyond all doubt, the region known to the Greeks as Gauzanitis, which was the eastern portion of Upper Mesopotamia, or the country about the sources of the Khabour river. The *Assyrian* conquest of this tract is indicated by the settlement of the Israelites in the region (2 Kings 17:6; 18:11; 1 Chronicles 5:26). ‘Harsh’ is the well-known ‘city of Nahor,’ (Genesis 24:10) called in Acts 7:2 ‘*Charran*,’ and by the Greeks and Romans, ‘*Carrhae*.’ It has now recovered its old designation, and is known as *Hurrah*. ‘Rezep’ was in the neighborhood of Haran, and is mentioned as belonging to Assyria as early as B.C. 775 (*Eponym Canon*, p. 82). It had probably revolted and been reduced at a later date. ‘Telassar,’ ‘the Hill of *Asshur*,’ is not mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions, but was probably the Assyrian name of a town on or near the Euphrates, in the country of the Bent-Eden, which was not far from Carche-mish (see *Records of the Past*, Ch. 3. pp. 90–92). *The children of Eden*] – The Assyrian inscriptions mention a ‘*Bit-Adini*’ (comp. Amos 1:5), and a chief who is called ‘the son of Adini;’ both belonging to the Middle Euphrates region. The ‘children of Eden’ (Beni-Eden) were probably the people of the tract about Bit-Adini.” The vital point here, for these messengers who did not know the Lord, is that all of these people had fallen before Asshur and how dare Jerusalem think that she could withstand?

13 Where [is] the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad,* and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

* 2 Kings 19:13, or Arpad.

Alexander has: “The question implies that they were nowhere, or had ceased to be. The first three names

occur in the same order in Rabshakeh's speech (ISAIAH. 36:19), and the remaining two also in the parallel passage (2 Kings 18:34)."

14 And Hezekiah received the letter* from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

* 2 Chronicles 32:16–17. And his servants spake yet [more] against the LORD God, and against his servant Hezekiah. He wrote also letters to rail on the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of [other] lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand.

Alexander has: "[The spreading of the letter before the Lord seems] to have been no studied, calculated movement, but a natural expression of anxiety and trust in God, as a protector and a confidential friend; a state of mind which to an infidel must needs appear ridiculous. As any man would carry an open letter, which troubled or perplexed him, to a friend for sympathy and counsel, so the pious king spreads this blasphemous epistle before God, as the occasion and subject of his prayers."

15 And Hezekiah prayed* unto the LORD, saying,

* 2 Chronicles 32:20, And for this [cause] Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven.

The book of Kings has both Hezekiah and Isaiah praying to the Lord while here we have Hezekiah praying. Most likely, both statements were true. Individual prayer never precludes a group prayer. At any case, there is much power in prayer. I know how lonely I was before I met the Lord through the reading of the Book of Mormon in December 1973 and my subsequent baptism and confirmation (9 March 1974) through which I have felt the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. I have never felt alone or lonely since then. I love these words from Amulek: "Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you; Yea, cry unto him for mercy; for he is mighty to save. Yea, humble yourselves, and continue in prayer unto him. Cry unto him when ye are in your fields, yea, over all your flocks. Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening. Yea, cry unto him against the power of your enemies. Yea, cry unto him against the devil, who is an enemy to all righteousness. Cry unto him over the crops of your fields, that ye may prosper in

them. Cry over the flocks of your fields, that they may increase. But this is not all; ye must pour out your souls in your closets, and your secret places, and in your wilderness. Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you" (Alma 34:17–27).

16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest [between] the cherubims, thou [art] the God, [even] thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

Gill has: "*O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubim*] – Or, 'the inhabitant of the cherubim' which were over the mercy seat, the residence of the Shechinah, or Majesty of God, the symbol of the divine Presence in the holy of holies; a title which the God of Israel, the Lord of armies in heaven, and earth bears, and distinguishes him from all other gods, and which several titles carry in them arguments to strengthen faith in prayer; being 'the Lord of hosts.' He was able to do whatsoever was desired, and more abundantly; being 'the God of Israel,' their covenant God, it might be hoped and expected he would protect and defend them; and sitting 'between the cherubim,' on the mercy seat, great encouragement might be had that he would be gracious and merciful, and hear and help: *Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth*] – this is opposed to the conceit of Sennacherib, that he was only the God of the Jews, and had no concern with other kingdoms and nations; whereas all belong to him, and him only; they are all under his jurisdiction and dominion, and at his will and control: *Thou hast made heaven and earth*] – and so has an indisputable right to the government of the whole world, and to the disposal of all things in it."

17 Incline* thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

* 2 Kings 19:16, bow down.

Hezekiah continues with an immense amount of faith and love for God, and pleads with the Lord that He may pay special heed to his prayer and notice to *all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God*—not the gods of wood. Some reject the expression about the *ear* and *eyes* as anthropomorphism. Yet the Bible tells us that we are made after the image of God: "So God created man in

his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, ✓ and their countries,*

* 2 Kings 19:17, have destroyed the nations and their lands.
✓ lands

This, then, is the prayer which Hezekiah uttered to Jehovah. Hezekiah begins by pointing out Assyrian success against אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרָצוֹת, all the land. Barnes has: “Of a truth] – It is as he has said, that all the nations had been subjected to the arms of the Assyrian. He now intends to add Jerusalem to the number of vanquished cities and kingdoms, and to boast; that he has subdued the nation under the protection of Yahweh, as he had done the nations under the protection of idol-gods. *Have laid waste all, the nations]* – Hebrew, as Margin ||, ‘All the lands.’ But this is evidently an elliptical form of expression, meaning all the inhabitants or people of the lands.”

19 And have cast ✓ their gods into the fire: for they [were] no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

✓ given

Hezekiah admits that the Assyrian feat against other gods, however, is hardly of note as these are all no-gods (לֹא אֱלֹהִים), the work of men's hands, made out of wood and stone. Regarding their being cast into the fire, Barnes explains: “This appears to have been the usual policy of the Assyrians and Babylonians ... They began usually by removing the people themselves whom they had subdued, to another land. They thus intended to alienate their minds as much as possible from their own country. They laid everything waste by fire and sword, and thus destroyed their homes, and all the objects of their attachment. They destroyed their temples, their groves, and their household gods. They well knew that the civil policy of the nation was founded in religion, and that, to subdue them effectually, it was necessary to abolish their religion.”

20 Now therefore, O LORD our God,* save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou [art] the LORD, [even] thou only.

* 2 Kings 19:19, our God, I beseech thee, save

Hezekiah requests that his prayer be honored so all the kingdoms of the earth (כָּל־מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ) will magnify the Lord as the one and only God. I have likewise prayed, when my children were younger, that God would listen to their prayers not for my sake, but so that my children might learn to have faith in God, and know the power of prayer. One time at Pinecrest Lake my children had been trying to fish from a little rental boat and had not caught anything for a very long time. I suggested prayer. One of my children offered the prayer and asked for a huge catch (perhaps as many as 100 fish!). I suggested that the prayer be repeated and that only one fish be part of the request. Within a few minutes that fish was caught. We caught no other fish that day. Gill says: “By [the Lord] doing that which other gods could not do (they could not save the nations that worshipped them from the hand of the Assyrians); if therefore the God of Israel saved his people from them, this would be a proof to all the world that he is God and there is none besides him.”

vv. 21–38. Isaiah, speaking on behalf of the Lord, promises Judah protection. Sennacherib has mocked Jerusalem but Jerusalem shall have the last laugh. In reproaching Judah and Hezekiah, Sennacherib had also reproached the living God. Sennacherib's arrogance is going to be shamed as the Lord will show His power. The Lord knows all things, even the rage felt by King Sennacherib. The Lord would protect Jerusalem and also send Sennacherib packing. The Assyrians camped against Jerusalem would suffer death at the hand of the angel of the Lord. These things were fulfilled as the Assyrians were defeated and Sennacherib returned home only to find death waiting for him.

21 ¶ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria:*

* 2 Kings 19:20, [That] which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

This is a very interesting pattern we see here. Hezekiah prays to the Lord and receives an answer through the prophet Isaiah. We pray to God the Eternal Father in the name of Jesus Christ and receive an answer through the Holy Ghost; or through Christ through the instrumentality of the Spirit. Or we may receive an answer through our Prophet, Stake President, Bishop or Branch President, or an inspired friend or speaker. In 2 Kings the Lord, through Isaiah, makes it clear that He has heard Hezekiah's prayer. How often can we be

instruments in the hands of God to help bring an answer to others' prayers? Gill says: "Isaiah, by a spirit of prophecy, was made acquainted by the Lord both with the prayer of Hezekiah, and the Lord's answer to it; and therefore immediately sent to the king, who was either at the temple praying, or was returned to the palace, to let him know, the mind of the Lord in this matter." Barnes has: "*Whereas thou hast prayed*] – Because thou hast come to me instead of relying on thy own resources and strength."

22 This [is] the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, [and] laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

The Lord paints Jerusalem in a state of mocking Sennacherib, despising him, laughing at him and shaking her head at him. *The virgin, the daughter of Zion* is given as representing Jerusalem. Gill has, "The fort of Zion, [is] called a 'virgin,' because it had never been forced, or taken and to show that it was a vain thing in Sennacherib to attempt it, as well as it would have been an injurious one, could he have accomplished it; ... [for] he who was her husband to whom she was espoused as a chaste virgin, would defend and protect her [from such a rape]; and the whole is designed to show the impotent malice of the king of Assyria; otherwise, at the time when these words were spoken, the daughter of Zion was in a fearful and trembling condition, and not in a laughing frame; but this declares what she might do now, and would do hereafter, for anything that he could do against her."

23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted [thy] voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? [even] against the Holy One of Israel.

Indeed, Sennacherib had directly, and through his servants, blasphemed the Holy One of Israel. Alexander writes: "To raise the voice may simply mean to speak, or more emphatically to speak boldly, perhaps with an allusion to the literal loudness of Rabshakeh's address to the people on the wall (ISAIAH 36:13)." Barnes has: "To lift up the eyes is an indication of haughtiness and pride. He had evinced arrogance in his manner, and he was yet to learn that it was against the living and true God."

24 By thy servants*[✓] hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, [and] the choice fir trees thereof:[✓] [✓] and I will enter into the height** of his border, [and]*** the forest of his Carmel.[✓] [✓] [✓]

* 2 Kings 19:23, messengers.

** 2 Kings 19:23, lodgings.

*** 2 Kings 19:23, [and into].

✓ By the hand of thy servants

✓ ✓ the tallness of the cedars thereof, and the choice of the fir trees thereof

✓ ✓ ✓ or, the forest and his fruitful field

Henderson explains: "Here the insolent monarch is called to account for his blasphemous arrogance; and a specimen is given of the vaunting language which he had dared to employ. No obstacle had hitherto impeded him in his progress. The most inaccessible regions of Lebanon had been explored by his troops; and, in the wanton pride of his heart, he had made havoc of its most stately trees."

25 I have digged, and drunk water;* and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged[✓] places.

* 2 Kings 19:24, drunk strange waters.

✓ or, fenced and closed

I have digged, and drunk water. Gill explains: "In places where he came, and found no water for his army, he set his soldiers to work, to dig cisterns, as the Targum, or wells, so that they had water sufficient to drink; in 2 Kings 19:24, it is 'strange waters,' which were never known before." Probably strange was put for foreign. ¶ *And with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.* Gill explains: "Or, as the Targum, 'with the soles of the feet of the people that are with me'; the Syriac version, 'with the hoofs of my horses': with which he trampled down banks of rivers, and pools, and cisterns of water; signifying the vast numbers of his soldiers, who could drink up a river, or carry it away with them, or could turn the streams of rivers that ran by the sides, or round about, cities besieged, and so hindered the carrying on of a siege, and the taking of the place; but he had ways and means very easily to drain them, and ford them; or to cut off all communication of the water from the besieged. Some render it, 'I have dried up all the rivers

of Egypt' (כל יאורי מצור) 'omnes rivus Aegypti,' Vitrina), as Kimhi, on 2 Kings 19:24, observes, and to be understood hyperbolically; see ISAIAH 19:6, so Ben Melech observes." Henderson writes: "Nor had he experienced any want of water in the desert for the supply of his immense army; the mere introduction of which into Egypt would dry up the Nile, and all its branches! The language is mainly figurative; since the marching of troops over the ridges of Lebanon would have been as preposterous as the conveyance of chariots over those elevated, precipitous, and snow-clad regions impossible. As he had conquered every difficulty so now he would carry all before him." Barnes has: "The boast of drying up streams with the sole of the foot, is intended to convey the idea that he had not only supplied water for his own empire by digging wells, but that he had cut off the supplies of water from the others against whom he had made war. The idea perhaps is, that if such an army as his was, should pass through the streams of a country that they should invade, and should only take away the water that would adhere to the sole or the hollow of the foot on their march, it would dry up all the streams. It is strong hyperbolical language, and is designed to indicate the number of the forces which were under his command."

26 Hast thou not heard long ago, [how] I have done it; [and] of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced* cities [into] ruinous heaps. ✓

* 2 Kings 19:25, Fenced.

✓ or, Hast thou not heard how I have made it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? should I now bring it to be laid waste, and defenced cities to be ruinous heaps?

The Lord stops quoting Sennacherib and now responds to the king's insolence. The expression "Hast thou not heard" הָלֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ is also found in an extended form in ISAIAH 40:28, הָלֹא יָדַעְתָּ אִם-לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ, Hast thou not known, or hast thou not heard." Gill writes: "Hast thou not heard long ago?" – By report, by reading the history of ancient times, or by means of the prophets; these are the words of the Lord to Sennacherib. The Targum adds, 'what I did to Pharaoh king of Egypt.'" Barnes has: "Hast thou not heard" – This is evidently the language of God addressed to Sennacherib. It is designed to state to him that he was under his control; that this was the reason (ISAIAH 37:27) why the inhabitants of the nations had been unable to resist him; that he was entirely in his hands (ISAIAH 37:28); and that he would control him as he pleased (ISAIAH 37:29). Long ago how I have done it] –

You boast that all this is by your own counsel and power. Yet I have done it; that is, I have purposed, planned, arranged it long ago. *That thou shouldest be to lay waste* – I have raised you up for this purpose, and you have been entirely under my control." In other words, the Lord made it possible or allowed the king of Asshur to conquer the nations and this is why Sennacherib had so much success, and no other reason.

27 Therefore their inhabitants [were] of small power, ✓ they were dismayed and confounded: they were [as] the grass of the field, and [as] the green herb, [as] the grass on the housetops, and [as corn] blasted before it be grown up.

✓ short of hand

Therefore their inhabitants [were] of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: It was not hard, explains the Lord, to conquer these nations. Sennacherib should not flatter himself of any great thing, as these nations were of little strength or power to withstand. It was their weakness, rather than Asshur's strength, that permitted Sennacherib's success. Man often makes comparisons to make himself look greater. ¶ *They were [as] the grass of the field, and [as] the green herb.* This theme is expanded upon in ISAIAH 40:6–8, wherein the frailty and transitory beauty of man is compared to the grass that withers. ¶ *[As] the grass on the housetops, and [as corn⁵] blasted before it be grown up.* Alexander explains: "In this last expression there is reference at once to the flat surface, the earthy material, and the various uses of the oriental house-top, in consequence of which seeds would frequently spring up there, but without depth of root, and therefore short-lived." Regarding the blasted corn, Delitzsch explains: "This idea is expressed still more strikingly in Kings, 'like corn blighted (שָׂדֵבָה), compare שָׂדֵבֹן, corn-blight) before the shooting up of the stalk;' the Assyrian being regarded as a parching east wind, which destroys the seed before the stalk is formed." HALOT explains שָׂדֵבָה as: "scorching, heat (grain dried up by an early east wind)."

28 But I know thy abode, ✓ and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

✓ or, sitting

⁵ Not maize, but rather *grains* (see ISAIAH 17:5).

The Hebrew word for *abode* שָׁב also means *sitting*. Where one sits is one's abode, so to speak. The Lord here is saying that He knows *everything* about Sennacherib: where he dwells, his comings and goings, and the anger that the king felt toward Jehovah.

29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears. Elsewhere we have said that God is not limited to a conversation with one person at a time, but rather, He is able to simultaneously hear and respond to prayers from an unlimited number of persons. And not just prayers, but He is able to hear all of our thoughts and words—and in the case of King Sennacherib, his thoughts and words against the Holy One of Israel. Sennacherib might have thought he was speaking privately to someone or that his thoughts were private. In the New Covenant we read often how the Savior read the thoughts and intents of men: “And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?” (Matthew 9:4; also see Mark 2:7–8).

¶ *Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.* As a result of this insolence on the part of Sennacherib, the Lord would guide him back home with the ease—and with a total lack of resistance—that an oxen or a horse is guided. Rings are put on bulls or cattle's noses in order to obtain their obedience; horses are guided through bridles. Faussett mentions that: “In a bas-relief of Khorsabad, captives are led before the king by a cord attached to a hook, or ring, passing through the under lip or the upper lip, and nose.”

30 And this [shall be] a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat [this] year such as groweth of itself;* and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

* 2 Kings 19:11, such things as grow of themselves.

Rawlinson explains: “*This shall be a sign unto thee*” – rather, *the sign*.⁶ The prophet now turns to Hezekiah,

⁶ The sign, הַאֵימָה.

and makes an address to him. ‘This,’ he says, ‘shall be the sign unto thee of Sennacherib’s being effectually ‘bridled,’ and the danger from Assyria over. In the third year from the present the land shall have returned to its normal condition, and you shall enjoy its fruits as formerly. Meanwhile you shall obtain sufficient nourishment from the grain which has sown itself.’ The ‘third year,’ according to Hebrew reckoning, might be little more than one year from the date of the delivery of the prophecy. The entire withdrawal of all the Assyrian garrisons from the country, which no doubt followed on Sennacherib’s retreat, might well have occupied the greater part of a year. Till they were withdrawn, the Jews could not venture to till their territory. *Plant vineyards*] – The Assyrians had, no doubt, cut down the vines (see *Records of the Past*, vol. 3. pp. 40, 62, 79; vol. 7. p. 43, etc.; Layard, ‘Monuments of Nineveh,’ second series, pl. 40).”

31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah √ shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward:

✓ the escaping of the house of Judah that remaineth

Faussett has: “Judah *remained* after the ten tribes were carried away; also those of Judah who should survive Sennacherib’s invasion are meant.” But also looking forward to the last days, the remnant that would return unto Christ from each of the tribes of Israel. Barnes explains: “*Shall again take root downward*] – Like a tree that had been prevented by any cause from growing or bearing fruit. A tree, to bear well, must be in a soil where it can strike its roots deep. The sense is, that all obstructions to their growth and prosperity would be removed.”

32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape √ out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

✓ the escaping

Out of those who would be preserved in Jerusalem and more particularly mount Zion, out of this remnant, there would be a buildup of population. Gill writes about the Zeal of the Lord: “[The Lord’s] concern for his own honour and glory, and his great love to his people, shall engage him to perform all that is here promised and foretold.” Also, the whole of the Lamanite nation are included here, as they left out of Jerusalem for the American continent.

33 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

After comforting the Jerusalemites about the restoration of peace in the land, growth of food and of Judean population, the Lord further solaces the people with the most urgent matter at hand, Sennacherib. As Rawlinson explains, the typical Assyrian attacks are here summarized [but “God promises that Jerusalem shall experience none of these things at Sennacherib’s hands.”]: “The first assailants were the archers. They boldly approached in large bodies, and strove to clear the battlements of the defenders. Then shields were brought into play. Under their cover the archers drew nearer; the scaling parties brought up their ladders; the miners attacked the foundations of the walls; and the torch-bearers endeavoured to fire the gates. Finally, if these tactics did not avail, banks were raised against the walls, which were then assailed with battering-rams till they were breached and the assailants could enter.”

34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

Instead of an Assyrian attack led by Sennacherib, the king would return to his homeland the very way that he came. The elliptical comment is that in so doing, the king would be like a dog who after much barking and bravado is so scared that he runs away with his tail between the legs.

35 For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

The Lord will defend His own honor in this whole matter and will do it in part to fulfill promises made to King David (about preserving a remnant from David’s loins—who would be the Christ). See ISAIAH 37:29, where the Lord states that He shall lead a submissive Sennacherib back to his own place, like a bull pulled by his nose ring. This seems to have been the end of the revelation. We next hear of the Lord’s fighting on the side of Jerusalem.

36 Then the angel* of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a

hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they [were] all dead corpses.

* 2 Kings 19:35, And it came to pass that night, that the angel.

* 2 Chronicles 32:21a. And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria.

Or, as explained by the Amplified Version, “And the Angel of the Lord went forth, and slew 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when [*the living*] arose early in the morning, behold, all these were dead bodies. [*II Kings 19:35.*]” In other words, the armies that arrived to besiege and harm Jerusalem perished in the night by the hand of the angel of the Lord. Those who arose early in the morning were the Jerusalemites. Regarding this angel (מַלְאָךְ), Barnes explains: “The word ‘angel’ (מַלְאָךְ) from מַלְאָךְ to send) means properly **one sent**, a **messenger**, from a private person Job 1:14; from a king (1Samuel 16:19; 19:11, 14, 20). Then it means a messenger of God, and is applied: (1) to an angel (Exodus 23:20; 2Samuel 14:16; et al.); (2) to a prophet (Haggai 1:13; Malachi 3:1; (3) to a priest (Ecclesiastes 5:5; Malachi 2:7) ... The general sense of the word is that of ambassador, messenger, one sent to bear a message, to execute a commission, or to perform any work or service. It is known that the Jews were in the habit of tracing all events to the agency of invisible beings sent forth by God to accomplish his purposes in this world ... And there is no more improbability in the supposition that God employs invisible and heavenly messengers to accomplish his purposes, than there is that he employs man. Whatever, therefore, were the means used in the destruction of the Assyrian army, there is no improbability in the opinion that they were under the direction of a celestial agent sent forth to accomplish the purpose.” ¶ It is also possible that the מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה, **angel of the LORD**, is a representation of the Lord Himself in His pre-mortal state.

37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

It is unclear how Sennacherib found out about the decimation of his troops, but it seems that this is what precipitated his retreat back home.

38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his

sons* smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: ✓ and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

* 2 Chronicles 32:21b, So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.

✓ Ararat

Barnes writes: “*As he was worshipping*] – Perhaps this time was selected because he might be then attended with fewer guards, or because they were able to surprise him without the possibility of his summoning his attendants to his rescue. *In the house*] – In the temple. *Of Nisroch his god*] – The god whom he particularly adored ... *That Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword*] – ... These two sons subsequently became, in Armenia, the heads of two celebrated families there, the Arzerunii, and the Genunii (see *Jos. Ant. x. 1, 5*, note). *And they escaped*] – This would lead us to suppose that it was some private matter which led them to commit the parricide, and that they did not do it with the expectation of succeeding to the crown. *Into the land of Armenia*] – Hebrew, as Margin ||, ‘Ararat.’ The Chaldee renders this, ‘The land of ܩܪܕܝܢܐ, that is, *Kardi-anum*, or, the mountains of the Kurds. The modern Kurdistan includes a considerable part of the ancient Assyria and Media, together with a large portion of Armenia. This expression is generally substituted for Ararat by the Syriac, Chaldee, and Arabic translators, when they do not retain the original word Ararat. It is a region among the mountains of Ararat or Armenia. The Syriac renders it in the same way – ‘Of *Kurdoya*’ (the Kurds) ... Ararat was a region or province in Armenia ... The name ‘Ararat’ belongs properly to the region or country, and not to any particular mountain.” Gill says: “*And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god*] – Josephus says, in his temple, called Arasce; but Nisroch was the name of his deity he worshipped; though who he was is not certain. Jarchi says, in one of their expositions it is said to be ܢܫܪ, ‘neser,’ a plank of the ark of Noah; in Tobit 1:24 it is called his idol Dagon; according to Hillerus, the word signifies a prince; and with Vitranga, a king lifted up, or glorious, and whom he takes to be the Assyrian Belus, worshipped in the form and habit of Mars: *That Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword*] – the former of these had his name from an idol so called, 2 Kings 17:31, which signifies a glorious king; and the

other may signify a prince of treasure. Josephus says they were his eldest sons ... Jarchi says that he prayed to his god, and vowed, if he would deliver him, that he might not be slain, he would offer up his two sons to him, who standing by, and hearing him, therefore slew him; the reason given for it in the Apocrypha: ‘And here passed not five and fifty days, before two of his sons killed him, and they fled into the mountains of Ararath; and Sarchedonus his son reigned in his stead; who appointed over his father’s accounts, and over all his affairs, Achiacharus my brother Anael’s son.’ (Tobit 1:21). According to Munster’s edition, is, that Sennacherib asked his counsellors and senators why the holy blessed God was so zealous for Israel and Jerusalem, that an angel destroyed the host of Pharaoh, and all the firstborn of Egypt, but the young men the Lord gave them, salvation was continually by their hands; and his wise men and counsellors answered him, that Abraham the father of Israel led forth his son to slay him, that the Lord his God might be propitious to him, and hence it is he is so zealous for his children, and has executed vengeance on thy servants; then, said the king, I will slay my sons; by this means, perhaps, he may be propitious to me, and help me; which word, when it came to Adrammelech and Sharezer, they laid in wait for him, and killed him with the sword at the time he went to pray before Dagon his god: *and they escaped into the land of Armenia*]; or ‘Ararat;’ on the mountains of which the ark rested, Genesis 8:4. Both the Septuagint version and Josephus say it was Armenia into which he escaped; and Jerom observes, that Ararat is a champaign country in Armenia, through which the river Araxes flows, at the foot of Mount Taurus, whither it is extended. The Targum calls it the land of Kardu; and the Syriac version the land of the Keredians, which also belonged to Armenia; in these mountainous places they might think themselves most safe: *and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead*]; whom Josephus calls Assarachodas; and in Ptolemy’s Caron he is named Assaradinus; the same, as some think, whom the Greeks call Sardanapalus; in the Apocrypha: ‘And Achiacharus intreating for me, I returned to Nineve. Now Achiacharus was cupbearer, and keeper of the signet, and steward, and overseer of the accounts: and Sarchedonus appointed him next unto him: and he was my brother’s son’ (Tobit 1:22).”

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