

Isaiah Chapters 36-37, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

Grounding Isaiah's Theology in Biblical Stories

Isaiah 36 Has a Parallel in 2 Kings 18:13-19:37¹

¹There are two end-notes on **chapter 36**: 1. Wikipedia Article on the Ancient City of Lachish; and 2. King Hezekiah of Judah.

Alexander states that **chapters 36-39** “contain a historical appendix to the first part of Isaiah’s prophecies, relating chiefly to Sennacherib’s invasion and the slaughter of his host / army, to Hezekiah’s sickness and miraculous recovery, and to the friendly intercourse between him and the king of Babylon...

“The same narrative is found substantially in **2 Kings 18-20** and a different account of the same matter in **2 Chronicles 32**...Neither of the passages sustains, in all respects, the character of an original or an abridgment. Each contains matter which is not found in the other...

“From the strong resemblance of the passages, and the impossibility of fixing upon either as the more ancient and authentic of the two, the natural inference would seem to be, that they are different drafts or copies of the same composition, or at least that they are both the work of the same writer, and that this writer is Isaiah...

“As to the variations of the two from one another, they are precisely such as might have been expected in the case supposed, that is to say, in the case of the same writer recording the same facts...

“The simple common-sense view of the matter is that since the traditional position of these chapters among the writings of Isaiah corresponds exactly to the known fact of his having written a part of this history of Judah, the presumption in favor of his having written both the passages in question cannot be shaken by the mere possibility, or even the intrinsic probability of other hypotheses, for which there is not the least external evidence [but if the evidence is that **Isaiah 36-37** is quoting from **2 Kings 18-19**, and editing / abbreviating the material found there, as we think is obvious, the fact that **2 Kings** depicts the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in 587 B.C.E., means that the historical Isaiah, who lived in the 8th century B.C.E., cannot have been the author]...

“The specific end, for which the narrative is here appended to the foregoing prophecies, appears to be that of showing the fulfillment of certain prophecies which had relation to a proximate [near-by] futurity, and thereby gaining credence and authority for those which had a wider scope and a remoter combination.” (Pp. 43-45)

Oswalt states that “**Chapters 36-39** conclude the section relating to Assyria and the question of trust which that nation’s presence on Judah’s borders posed. They demonstrate that it is not necessary to revoke one’s dependence on God and turn to

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human powers in order to survive. In this way they constitute a lived-out example of the truths taught in **chapters 13-35**...

“The section [**chapters 36-39**] appears to be divided into three segments: **chapters 36-37; 38; 39**...

“In the first, Hezekiah, reduced to helplessness before Assyria, turns to God and finds relief...

“In the second, Hezekiah is again helpless, this time before illness. He again turns to God and is restored...

“In the third segment, Hezekiah has the opportunity to give glory to God in the presence of Babylon, but instead falls prey to the temptation to parade his own glory, with the result that the coming captivity to Babylon is announced...

“The structure of the section raises a number of questions. Chief among these is: what are the functions of **chapters 38** and **39**? If...the overall section is a reversal of **chapters 7-12**, exhibiting trust in the face of a military threat rather than untrust, it seems odd that these two incidents, which do not present Hezekiah in a very favorable light, should be included.” (P. 629)

Oswalt’s solution is that “Hezekiah has shown (**chapters 36-37**) that Isaiah’s teachings about trust are true. But he has also shown that it is in God that we trust and not in human perfectibility (**chapters 38-39**)

Slotki states that **chapters 36-37** contain “A historical record of the campaigns of Sennacherib in Judah, his threat to Hezekiah, the siege of Jerusalem, Hezekiah’s prayer, the Divine message of assurance, the miraculous destruction of the Assyrian host [army] and the deliverance of Jerusalem...

“**2 Kings 18:13-19:37** contains a parallel record with slight variations, omitting the Psalm of Hezekiah in **Isaiah 38:9-20**...

“The purpose of this historical supplement to **chapters 1-35** is fairly apparent. It was intended to meet the convenience of the Jewish readers of the oracles of the prophet, who desired to have a clear account of the great historic episode in which he played so distinguished a part.’ [Slotki is quoting O.C. Whitehouse, a Christian Hebraist, in the **Century Bible**]...

Motyer entitles **36:1-37:38** “The rock of history.”

He comments that “Comparing this historical narrative with that in **2 Kings 18:13-19:37**, we find that Isaiah cuts into the story at the point where, having

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apparently accepted Hezekiah's submission and agreed to a monetary satisfaction (**2 Kings 18:13-16**), the king of Assyria renewed his pressure on Jerusalem...

“Chapters 36-37 put the rock of history under the fabric of eschatology. In **chapters 6-12** Isaiah contended that Divine grace would triumph in the coming of the Divine Davidic king to the throne, not only of Judah but of the whole world...

“Chapters 13-27 explored this world panorama further, envisaging one Lord reigning as the one King over one world. Egypt and Assyria in particular were used (**Isaiah 19:23ff.; 27:13**) to typify the incoming of the nations into the single people of the Lord.

“Chapters 28-35 explored a limited tract of history in which Judah, Egypt and Assyria were embroiled, predicting that it would demonstrate the concrete reality of Divine rule in the world and therefore validate all the foregoing promises. But up to now all was still prediction. Did it actually happen? Was there a demonstration of Divine sovereignty? Is the Lord the King? Here is the attestation.” (P. 276)

Motyer entitles **36:1-37:7** “The first Assyrian embassy.”

He comments that in this passage, Isaiah is concerned “to bring us to the point where he will demonstrate what faith can do and how realistic it is in the hard political crises of life.” (P. 276)

Watts entitles **36:1-22** “A Reading from History: The Assyrian's Speech.”

He comments that “The narrative of this and successive chapters is generally equivalent to that in **2 Kings: Isaiah 36:1 = 2 Kings 18:13; Isaiah 36:2-22 = 2 Kings 18:17-37**. The rest of the Hezekiah narrative in **2 Kings 19-20** appears *in toto* [as a whole] in **Isaiah 36-39** with only the major addition of the Prayer of Hezekiah (**Isaiah 38:9-20**)...

“This account [in **Isaiah**], with its implied negative evaluation of Hezekiah's policies of independence and rebellion [do you see an implied negative evaluation of Hezekiah's policies in this material?], stands in sharp contrast to the adulation of Hezekiah found in **2 Kings** and in **2 Chronicles**...

“The [**Book of Isaiah**] creates an interesting situation when it portrays exilic Israel reading the account in **2 Kings 18-20** in a setting when Jerusalem has just fallen to its enemies, when the policy of rebellion has just brought disaster, and when the prophecies of **chapter 20** are literally fulfilled. What irony it is! [But where is exilic Israel portrayed as reading the material from **2 Kings 18-20**? We think this is Watts' imagination at work] ...

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“One should think of a narrator reading the passage to a gathering of Jews. The place is not defined. It could be in Palestine or it could be in Babylon. The time is defined by its position in the [**Book of Isaiah**]. It is before 540 B.C.E. when the following chapters are set, and after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E.” (Pp. 22-23)

Watts is very certain of these conclusions and dates, but for the reader of the **Book of Isaiah** without his commentary, these are difficult conclusions to come by, or agree with. Watts admits as much, when he writes, “The position of **chapters 37-39** (= **2 Kings 18:13-20:19**) in the heart of the [**Book of Isaiah**] is a puzzle for interpreters... Why should a narrative about 8th century Jerusalem appear where one would expect a description of the Kingdom of Judah in the 6th century B.C.E.?”

“The author / composer of the [**Book of Isaiah**] has chosen to spare the reader another account of the gory narrative that is so completely chronicled in **2 Kings 24-25**, in **Jeremiah**, in **Ezekiel**, and in **Lamentations**. Instead, he has repeated the narrative of Hezekiah and Isaiah...”

“The 5th century author uses the story in **2 Kings** about Isaiah and Hezekiah. He projects a drama-Vision to begin before that story but in Isaiah’s lifetime...”

“Using the idea of Yahweh’s strategy (עצה), which included sending the Assyrian and raising up the Persian, and the idea of trust (בטח), which God expects from kings and exiles alike, he sketches the work of God over three centuries. He shows how God created the new order that the author and his contemporaries experience through the efforts of Artaxerxes, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

“If this is correct, the [**Book of Isaiah**] demonstrates how prophetic literature is a commentary on existing Scripture as well as a reinterpretation and redirection of it. As the author wrestles with the promises that Jerusalem will be saved and never fall (**Isaiah 37:35**), in light of his knowledge of the catastrophe of 586 B.C.E., he is led to see how destruction has become a tool of redemption. Salvation is recognized as the re-creation of Zion in a totally new form. Hezekiah’s city has not been saved. But the city high on Mount Zion where Yahweh is pleased to dwell has been saved and will be kept forever.” (Pp. 23-24)

Kaiser states that “In **chapters 36-39** we possess more or less popular narratives in which, apart from the concluding story in **chapter 39**, the prophet Isaiah appears as the intermediary of Divine messages of salvation, and indeed as a healer, together with King Hezekiah, who is portrayed as an example of piety and confidence in God. The fact that the whole block of tradition is almost literally identical to **2 Kings 18:13, 17-20:19** (compare also **2 Chronicles 32:1, 9-26**) makes it necessary to decide in which of the two books of the **Bible** the narratives were originally handed down...It seems obvious that it is the **Book of Kings** which has the priority [we agree; **Isaiah 36-**

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37 has been taken from **2 Kings 18-20**, and the author has edited and shortened the material. See our commentary on **2 Kings**...

“It is possible that by the date of their incorporation **chapters 40ff.** already formed part of the **Isaiah roll [scroll]**, so that **chapter 39** with its allusions to the Babylonian exile provided a transition to the prophecies of salvation of the anonymous prophet of the exile whom we call the second Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah. Since this story was clearly written some time after the event of the year 597 and 587 / 86 B.C.E. and indeed should probably be dated after the exile, we possess in it a terminus a quo [a point of origin in time], an absolute upper limit, for the incorporation of the narratives into the **Book of Isaiah**, which must accordingly be regarded as post-exilic...

“The portrait of Isaiah as a prophet of salvation in the year 701 B.C.E., as portrayed in **chapters 36-37**, cannot be reconciled with the picture of his activity presented in our preceding commentary [over **chapters 1-35**].” (Pp. 367- 68)

We have to largely agree with Kaiser in this statement, as a result of our reading **Isaiah 36-37** side by side with **2 Kings 18-20**. But we do not agree that the pictures of Isaiah’s activity in these two chapters cannot be reconciled with earlier picture of his activity in **chapters 1-35**. The depiction is somewhat different, but that does not mean that it is irreconcilable.

Kaiser entitles **36:1-37:38** “The Deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib.”

He comments on **36:1-10** that “The narrative places us in the year 701 B.C.E., when Hezekiah and his allies felt the punitive blows of the Emperor against whom they had rebelled in 703 B.C.E. After Sennacherib had defeated Merodach-Baladan, the usurper of the Babylonian kingdom, which was united with the Assyrian kingdom in a personal union, and had then made the eastern frontier safe by a preventive campaign against a possible attack from Elam, he turned to suppress the rebels in the west, where his mere arrival was sufficient to bring most of them to recognize his supremacy...

“In the south of Palestine, only the Philistine states of Ashkelon and Ekron, together with the kingdom of Judah, offered resistance, relying upon Egyptian help. The Egyptian army which actually set out was defeated at Elthekeh, so that the cities of the allies, who were still in a state of revolt and probably still hoped despairingly for fresh Egyptian support, were open to the conqueror’s attack. He subdued one fortress after another. When he was besieging Lachish, which protected the quickest way from Egypt into the mountain country of Judah, or had already conquered it, he sent the Rabshakeh, his second highest military leader, whose title is treated by our narrator as a personal name, to Jerusalem with considerable army...[that] must have formed the army which was intended to besiege the enemy capital...

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Chapter 36, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

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“A message delivered in the name of the Emperor and addressed to Hezekiah, who logically is not given the title of King, points out to the Judean delegation that in the eyes of the Assyrians any further resistance is pointless...Even if someone placed two thousand horses at their King’s disposal, he would not possess the troops to mount them. Behind this statement lies the fact that as early as the ninth century the Assyrians had introduced cavalry, whereas Israel and Judah do not seem to have possessed it. Thus in his opponent’s eyes—as unfortunately in reality—the only hope remaining to Hezekiah, who did not possess sufficient forces himself, lay in the arrival of a force of Egyptian chariots, and therefore in a helper whose value the narrator compares, in accordance with his people’s experience, to that of a reed used as a staff which has an (unnoticed) crack in it, breaks off when one leans on it and pierces his hand...

‘With the first speech of the Rabshakeh the narrative asks whom man should trust in extremity, himself, the help of other people, or God. It presents the mighty Emperor as denying that there is any possibility of deliverance from Him and as arrogantly claiming that he is carrying out his war of subjection in the name of God.’ (Pp. 386-87)

Watts comments that “The narrative of **chapter 36** is clearly constructed around two remarkable speeches by the Assyrian field commander. The first (**verses 4-10**) attacks Judah’s confidence (בטח) that help will come and invites them to negotiate a treaty...

“The second speech (**verses 13-20**) appeals to the people to disregard Hezekiah’s appeal for trust in Yahweh...This second speech sets the stage for the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian siege in **chapter 37** and coincides with the views expressed in the oracles of Zion found throughout the [**Book of Isaiah**].” (Pp. 23-25)

[Slotki states that **chapter 36** depicts] “The Assyrian invasion, Rab-shakeh’s scoffing and threats and his demand for unconditional surrender.” (P. 166)

Motyer entitles **36:1-10** “The Rabshakeh’s first speech: no salvation in faith!”

36:1² וַיְהִי בְּאַרְבַּע עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לְמֶלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ

עָלָה סִנְחֶרִיב מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר

²Alexander translates / comments on **verse 1**: “*And it was (or came to pass) in the fourteenth year of the king Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fenced (or fortified) cities of Judah, and took them...*”

“The parallel passage in **Kings** is immediately preceded by a summary account of the earlier events of Hezekiah’s reign, with particular mention of his religious reforms and his extirpation of idolatry, to which is added an account of the deportation of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser (**2 Kings 18:1-12**)...

“While Ephraim was carried away never to return, Judah was only subjected to a temporary chastisement, the record of which follows. The verse which directly corresponds to [**Isaiah 36:1**], **2 Kings 18:13**, differs from it only in the omission of the idiomatic formula וַיְהִי, **wayehiy**, ‘and it was or came to pass.’ The statement in **2 Chronicles 32:1** is, that he entered into Judah and encamped against the fortified cities and purposed (וַיֹּאמֶר ‘and he said’) to subdue them to himself...

“Between this verse and the next, as they stand in **Isaiah**, the narrative in **2 Kings** inserts three others, which relate what immediately followed the invasion of the country, and preceded the attack upon Jerusalem. The substance of this statement is that Hezekiah sent to Sennacherib at Lachish, saying, I have offended (i.e. in renouncing his allegiance to Assyria); return from me; that which thou puttest on me I will bear; that Sennacherib accordingly imposed a tribute of three hundred talents of silver and thirty of gold, to pay which Hezekiah gave him all the treasures of the palace and the temple, not excepting the metallic decorations of the doors and pillars (**2 Kings 18:14-16**)...

“Another addition to the narrative is found in **2 Chronicles 32:1-8**, where we read that Hezekiah, when he saw that Sennacherib was come, and that his face was towards Jerusalem for war, took measures to strengthen the defenses of the city, and to cut off the supply of water from the enemy, while at the same time he encouraged the people to rely upon Jehovah, and not to be afraid of the Assyrian host / army. All this is spoken of as having taken place before what is recorded in the next verse, **Isaiah 36:2**...

“If we suppose it to have followed Hezekiah’s message to Sennacherib and payment of the tribute, the inference would seem to be that the invader, having received the money, still appeared disposed to march upon the Holy City, whereupon the king abandoned all hope of conciliation, and threw himself without reserve on the Divine protection.” (Pp. 45-46)

עַל כָּל-עָרֵי יְהוּדָה הַבְּצֻרוֹת

וַיִּתְּפֹשֶׁם:

And it happened in (the) fourteenth year of the King Hezekiah,³

³Slotki comments concerning “the fourteenth year” that “The invasion [of Sennacherib], it is generally agreed, took place in the year 701 B.C.E.” (P. 166)

Oswalt comments on the phrase “In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah,” that it “Poses a problem in that Sennacherib’s attack cannot easily be dated prior to 701 B.C.E., which would be Hezekiah’s twenty-fifth (or at best twenty-fourth) year, according to **2 Kings 18:1, 9, 10**...Edwin Thiele has argued that this dating (14th year) is the only correct one in Hezekiah’s account, all others having succumbed to a twelve-year discrepancy which later scribes tried to smooth over...[But] the simplest solution is that 14 is an error for 24.” (P. 631)

In Hebrew, fourteen is אַרְבַּע עָשָׂר,)arba((esreh.

In Hebrew, twenty-four is אַרְבַּע עָשָׂרִים,)arba((esriym

Oswalt states that “This change would involve only two letters and requires no reworking of the text.” (P. 631) Edward Young holds the same view.

These two scholars, who (especially Young) constantly take other scholars to task for changing the biblical text, are doing the same thing here. What do you think?

And what did you expect from the biblical text—that it would be perfect, infallible, without any mistakes? We say, Change your expectations. The biblical authors were human beings, subject to mis-spelling words, and making mistakes, even though being the recipients of Divine revelation. Remember what **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:7-12** teach concerning the prophetic message!

Oswalt comments that “Hezekiah, apparently prompted by promises of Egyptian aid, and perhaps also with Babylonian encouragement (if the sickness and recovery of **chapter 38** were prior to 701 B.C.E.), was spearheading the revolt of the small states west and south of Samaria, extending from Tyre in the north to Ashkelon in the south...

“The Egyptian army finally made a stand at Eltekeh about twenty miles west of Jerusalem at the edge of the hill country. There Isaiah’s prophecies concerning the foolishness of dependence upon Egypt (**Isaiah 20:1-6; 30:1-5; 31:1-3**) proved painfully true as the Egyptians were routed and the Assyrians continued on to Lachish, Judah’s last hope for stemming the tide...Once Lachish’s fate was sure, Jerusalem would have no choice but to surrender.” (P. 632)

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Sennacherib,⁴ King of Assyria went up
against all Judah's cities, the fortified ones,
and he seized them.⁵

36:2⁶ וַיִּשְׁלַח מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּרִי אֶת-רַב-שָׁקָה מֶלֶךְ-יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

³(...continued)

In our Hebrew text, the name of Hezekiah is spelled חִזְקִיָּהוּ, **chizqiyyahu**; in **2 Kings 18:13** and also in 1QIs^a the name is spelled חִזְקִיָּה, **chizqiyyah**. The Greek spelling is Ἑζεκίας, **Hezekias**, signifying the translator's lack of understanding that the ending of the name in Hebrew contains the Divine name Yah or Yahu, shortened forms of Yahweh. The Hebrew name evidently means something like "YHWH has strengthened."

⁴The spelling of Assyrian names in Hebrew and Greek is difficult. Here the Masoretic text spells סַנְחֶרִיב, **sancheriybh**, but elsewhere also spells the name סַנְחֶרִיב, **sancheribh**. The Greek translator's spelling is Σενναχηριμ, **Sennacherim**. Josephus spells the name Σενναχήριβος, **Senacheribos**.

Watts states that "All of these are efforts to transcribe the Akkadian *sin-achche-eriba*, or *Sin-achchi-iriba*, "Sin [a Divine being] replaces the brothers." (P. 20)

⁵Watts notes that at the close of **verse 1**, the three verses in **2 Kings 18:14-16** are omitted. (P. 20) This leads us to think that **Isaiah 36** is copying from **2 Kings 18**, rather than the other way around. And if this is the case, and **2 Kings** is dated after the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar, then this material in **Isaiah 36ff.** must likewise have an exilic or post-exilic date.

As Iain W. Provan writes, "In their present form, **1-2 Kings** could not have been written before the sixth century B.C.E., since **2 Kings 25:27-30** describes the release of

King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon in 561 B.C.E., and the books must therefore date from time after that." (**ESV Study Bible**, p. 585)

⁶Alexander translates / comments on **verse 2**: "And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, to king Hezekiah, with a strong force, and he stood by the conduit (or aqueduct) of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field..."

"Rabshakeh may be named alone here as the chief speaker, or as the commander of the expedition..."

"Lachish was a town of Judah, southwest of Jerusalem on the way to Egypt. This place Sennacherib was now besieging (**2 Chronicles 32:9**), and being probably detained longer than he had expected, he detached a part of his forces to attack

(continued...)

אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ בְּחֵיל כְּבֹד
וַיַּעֲמֵד בְּתַעֲלֹת הַבְּרֵכָה הָעֲלִיּוֹנָה
בְּמִסְלַת שָׂדֵה כּוֹבֵס:

And the King of Assyria⁷ sent forth Rab-Shaqeh⁸ from Lachish⁹, ¹ to Jerusalem,¹⁰

⁶(...continued)

Jerusalem, or rather to summon Hezekiah to surrender.” (P. 46)

Oswalt states that “It is likely that the siege of Lachish was drawing toward a successful close (from an Assyrian perspective) when Sennacherib judged that the right time had come to put pressure upon the isolated Hezekiah. He sent his three highest officials, the Tartan, the Rabsaris, and the Rab-shaqeh, with a substantial force as a show of strength to demand Hezekiah’s surrender (**2 Kings 18:17**).” P. 632)

⁷Although in **verse 1** 1QIs^a spells “Assyria” by אֲשׁוּר, **ashur**, here in **verse 2** the last letter, *resh*, is omitted: אֲשׁוּ, **ashu**. This is probably simply a copyist’s error.

⁸Slotki comments that Rab-shakeh [רַב־שָׁקֵה, **rab-shaqeh**] in Assyrian is *Rab-saqu*, “said to mean ‘chief of the officers,’ ‘general’ or ‘chief cup-bearer.’” (P. 166)

Watts states that “The title רַב־שָׁקֵה, ‘Rab-shakeh’ may well have originally designated the chief cup-bearer to the king. But this ceremonial title became much more than that...He was not only the field commander of the army, but also the governor of [a province]. He was a high and trusted officer.” (P. 26)

2 Kings 18:17 includes two other officers along with the Rab-shakeh:

וַיִּשְׁלַח מֶלֶךְ־אֲשׁוּר אֶת־תַּרְתָּן מִן־לְכִישׁ
אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ
וְאֶת־רַב־סָרִיס וְאֶת־רַב־שָׁקֵה

And Assyria’s king sent forth Tartan from Lachish
to the king Hezekiah,
and Rab-sariys, and Rab-Shaqeh.

“Tartan” evidently means “General,” or “Field-marshal,” a loan-word from Assyrian, *tartānu*, *turtānu*. (So, **Brown-Driver-Briggs** and **Holladay**)

Rab-sariys evidently means “He Who is the Head / Chief,” from Assyrian,

(continued...)

to the King Hezekiah,^{11, 2} with a heavy / numerous / large army;¹²

⁸(...continued)

šarêši (rîši).” But the noun in Hebrew, סַרְיִס, **sariys**, means “eunuch,” and Hebrew readers would assume that title meant “Chief Eunuch.”

It seems apparent that the author of **Isaiah 36** is copying his narrative from **2 Kings**, but abbreviating it. Do you agree? There is certainly room for disagreement, and scholars vary in their opinions.

⁹Slotki notes that Lachish is “a city in the Shephelah [the ‘Judean foothills,’ a transitional region of soft-sloping hills in south-central Israel stretching over some 6 to 9 miles between the Judean Mountains and the Coastal Plain], identified with Tell-el-Hesi which is within a few miles of Umm Lakia. Standing in a commanding position on the road to Egypt, it was one of the most important fortresses of the Judean country.” (P. 166) For a **Wikipedia** article on Lachish, see our end-note 1.

Where our Hebrew text has מִל־לַחִישׁ, **millakhiysh**, “from lachish,” **2 Kings 18:17** has מִן־לַחִישׁ, **min-lakhiysh**, “from Lachish,” an alternative way of saying the same thing.

¹⁰Where our Hebrew text has יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, **yerushalameah** (omitting a *yodh*, but with the he-directive suffix) meaning “to Jerusalem,” **2 Kings 18:17** places the name יְרוּשָׁלַם, **yerushalam** (with a *yodh* implied by the Masoretes, but without the he-directive suffix) at the end of the sentence. If we are correct in thinking the author of **Isaiah 36** is copying from **2 Kings**, this is apparently an instance of the later author’s correcting the text being copied. However, there are numerous instances where the name of a location by itself, without the he-directive suffix, is used by Hebrew authors meaning “to” the place named.

¹¹For a **Wikipedia** article on King Hezekiah, see our end-note 2.

¹²Where our Hebrew text has בְּחֵיל כָּבֵד, “with a heavy / numerous army,” 1QIs^a adds an additional adjective, but in the feminine singular (חֵיל is masculine), מְאֹדָה, “exceedingly,” or “very.”

Motyer comments that “Hezekiah was isolated and, politically speaking, it is no wonder that Sennacherib pocketed the Judahite tribute while at the same time determining to leave no rebels behind when he returned home.” (P. 277)

Following this phrase, **2 Kings 18:17** gives additional text that is not found here

(continued...)

and he stood in / at a watercourse of the upper pool,¹³

on (the) highway (to the) Washer's Field.¹⁴

36:3¹⁵ וַיֵּצֵא אֵלָיו אֱלִיאִקִים בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּהוּ אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַבַּיִת

וּשְׁבְנָא הַסֹּפֵר וַיּוֹאֵחַ בֶּן־אֶסָף הַמְזֻכָּר:

And he went out to him,¹⁶ Elyaqim / Eliakim,¹⁷ son of Chilqiyahu, who (was) over the household,

¹²(...continued)

in **Isaiah 36**: וַיַּעֲלוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲמְדוּ “and they went up and they came and they stood.” These additional words are repetitive, and not necessary for the story, and it appears that the author of **Isaiah 36** is intentionally dropping them, or editing the text he is working from, copying. What do you think?

¹³Watts comments that “*The aqueduct of the Upper Pool* was outside the wall to the east of the city.” (P. 26) He had earlier stated, in his commentary on **Isaiah 7:3**, that “There is no agreement on the location. The Upper Pool may be located near the spring of Gichon in the Kidron Valley east of the northern part of the city. An aqueduct carried water from it to a pool inside the south wall.” (Volume 1, p. 91)

Oswalt comments that “given the preciousness of water in any siege, the decision of the Assyrians to make their threat at that point [the water-course] may have had a symbolic purpose as well.” (P. 633)

¹⁴Oswalt comments that “If the order of the account in **Kings** is chronological, the appearance of the Assyrians outside the gates of Jerusalem must have been a rude shock. Hezekiah had thought he had bought the Assyrians off with tribute, but there they stood, with all the calm arrogance of those who have absolute power on their side.” (P. 633)

¹⁵Alexander translates **verse 3**: “*Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiyah's son, who was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder...*”

Eliakim here appears as Shebna's successor, according to the prophecy in **22:20**, and Shebna himself as an inferior office-bearer.” (Pp. 46-47)

¹⁶Where our Hebrew text has אֵלָיו, “to him,” **2 Kings 18:18** has אֲלֵיהֶם, “to them,” in keeping with its depiction of three Assyrian officials being present, while **Isaiah 36** only mentions the one official. We say the author of **Isaiah 36** is abbreviating the narrative in **2 Kings 18**.

¹⁷See **Isaiah 22:20-25** for this official in Judah.

and Shebna¹⁸ the scribe,¹⁹ and Yoach, son of Asaph, the recorder.²⁰

36:4²¹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם רַב־שָׁקֶה

¹⁸**2 Kings 18:18** begins with the phrase וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ, “and they [the three officers **2 Kings** has mentioned] cried out to the king.” **Isaiah 36** omits this phrase.

See **Isaiah 22:15-19** for this official in Judah, שֶׁבְנָא, **shebna**), whose office Eliakim has now taken. **2 Kings 18:18** spells the name שֶׁבְנָה, **shebhnah**, while 1QIs^a spells the name שׁוֹבְנָא, **shobna**) or **shubna**).

¹⁹Slotki’s translation has “the recorder,” and he comments that it is “literally ‘the remembrancer.’ The same Hebrew noun is used for ‘secretary’ in modern Hebrew.” (P. 166)

²⁰Watts comments that “Hezekiah sent three high officials of his court to meet [Rab-shakeh]. The palace administrator (literally, ‘who is over the house’) was the highest official, a kind of prime minister...”

“The reader will note that in **Isaiah 22:15-19** Shebna was palace administrator. In **22:20-23**, Eliakim was promised the position. This reading from **2 Kings 18** already has their positions reversed. Eliakim is palace administrator and Shebna is the scribe... The name Joah means ‘Yahweh is Brother.’ (Pp. 26-27)

²¹Oswalt comments that “Estimates of the historical authenticity of the speech in **verses 4-20** vary widely...”

“Some see it as a masterpiece of reporting, successfully capturing the atmosphere as well as the content of the event...”

“Others see it as a piece of historical fiction in which the writer has combined a number of contradictory ideas without concern for coherence or flow...”

“The speaker drives home point after point, all the time betraying an intimate awareness of his hearers’ situation and their likely responses. For every possible defense the people might raise he has a ready answer, making it apparent that his purpose is not rational argumentation but demoralization. This is supported by his insistence on speaking in the language of the common people...”

“Thus, if this is fiction the writer has gone to great trouble to give it an air of authenticity, a practice for which there is no evidence in ancient literature.” (P. 633)

No evidence? Oswalt is badly mistaken. Compare the following statement concerning the speeches in Thucydides’ **Peloponnesian War**:

(continued...)

²¹(...continued)

“Thucydides...makes extensive use of speeches in order to elaborate on the event in question. While the inclusion of long first-person speeches is somewhat alien to modern historical method, in the context of ancient Greek oral culture speeches are expected. These include addresses given to troops by their generals before battles and numerous political speeches, both by Athenian and Spartan leaders, as well as debates between various parties. Of the speeches, the most famous is the funeral oration of Pericles, which is found in Book Two. Thucydides undoubtedly heard some of these speeches himself while for others he relied on eyewitness accounts.

“These speeches are suspect in the eyes of Classicists, however, inasmuch as it is not sure to what degree Thucydides altered these speeches in order to most clearly elucidate the crux of the argument presented. Some of the speeches are probably fabricated according to his expectations of, as he puts it, "what was called for in each situation" (1.22.2).” **Wikipedia**, 4/8/2018.

The same thing is true in Josephus’ writings, including the **Jewish War** and **Antiquities of the Jews**. Josephus constantly quotes the speeches of those involved in Jewish history, and the speeches play an important role in his understanding of history. And we add that the same thing is also true in the **Book of Acts**, with its constant quotation of speeches made by Peter, Stephen, Paul, and others.

Slotki entitles **verses 4-10** “Rab-shakeh’s first speech, arguing, insulting, threatening.” (P. 166)

Motyer states concerning **verses 4-10** that “The Rabshakeh’s clever speech develops four themes:

1. reliance on Egypt is a no-hope position (**verses 4-7**);
2. trust in the Lord as a solution is ruled out because the Lord has been alienated by the reduction of the places of worship (**verse 7; 2 Kings 18:4**);
3. even if Hezekiah had armaments as a gift he has not got the manpower (**verses 8-9**);
4. and Assyria has Divine authority for its attack (**verse 10**).” (P. 277)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 4**: “*And Rabshakeh said to them: Say now (or if you please) to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What is this confidence which thou confidest in?...*”

“He expresses his contempt by withholding the name of king from Hezekiah and calling his own master *the great king*, a common title of the Persian and other oriental monarchs...The interrogation in the last clause implies surprise and scorn at a reliance

(continued...)

אִמְרוּ-נָא אֶל-חִזְקִיָּהוּ
כֹּה-אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר
מָה הַבְּטָחוֹן הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בַּטַּחַת:

And Rab-Shakeh said to them,

Speak (imperative plural)²² now to Hezekiah,²³

In this way spoke the King, the great King of Assyria:

What is this trust / confidence²⁴ which you (singular) trusted?²⁵

²¹(...continued)

so unfounded.” (P. 47)

Watts states that “*The emperor* is literally ‘the great king.’ The designation reflects the Assyrian title that appears in Assyrian texts of the period: ‘Sanherib

[Sennacherib], the great king...the king of the four world regions’...

“The Akkadian *tsarru rabu*, which the Hebrew הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל, ‘the great king’ translates, became a fixed title, the equivalent of emperor...In the Persian period, Darius II uses the phrase ‘the great king, king of kings, king of Persia, king of lands’ in the Behistun inscriptions.” (P. 27)

²²Where our Hebrew text has the imperative plural verb אִמְרוּ, *imru*, “speak!”, 1QIs^a spells the verb אִמורו, *imuru*, which we take to simply be a mistaken spelling.

²³Where our Hebrew text spells the king’s name חִזְקִיָּהוּ, *chizqiyyahu*, 1QIs^a spells the name חזקיה, *chizqiyah*. See footnote 3 for the same thing.

²⁴Where our Hebrew text has מָה הַבְּטָחוֹן הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בַּטַּחַת, “what (is) this confidence / trust which you trusted?”, the Greek translation has τί πειθοῦς εἶ, “Why / what are you trusting?” Watts translates by “what confidence do you have?” (P. 20)

Where our Hebrew text has בַּטַּחַת, “you (singular) trusted,” 1QIs^a has אַתָּה

(continued...)

אִמְרֹתַי אֶךְ-דְּבַר-שְׁפָתַיִם עֵצָה וּגְבוּרָה לְמַלְחָמָה 36:5²⁶

עֵתָהּ עַל-מִי בִטְחָתָ כִּי מָרַדְתָּ בִּי:

²⁴(...continued)

בו בטחתי, “you, you trusted in it.”

Slotki comments that this “trust / confidence” is referring to Judah’s “expectation of help from Egypt.” (P. 167)

Motyer states that it “refers to the confidence that made Hezekiah bold enough to raise the standard of rebellion.” (P. 277)

²⁵Watts comments that “The field commander asks for an explanation of Hezekiah’s stubborn refusal to surrender in face of superior force. He is determined to shake that confidence to achieve his surrender...”

“Wildberger (p. 1399) notes a remarkable coincidence: the field commander and earlier text of the [**Book of Isaiah**] share a common goal in breaking down this false hope that Jerusalem is invulnerable. He insists that their real aims, however, are totally different. The [**Book of Isaiah**] wants to make room for a genuine faith in Yahweh, while the field commander wants them to transfer it to the Assyrian emperor...”

“But in the perspective of the [**Book of Isaiah**] the two goals have more in common than Wildberger thinks. Yahweh has brought the Assyrian (**Isaiah 7:17; 10:5**). The coming of imperial suzerainty is the will of God. Resistance to it is not according to that will. The field commander’s speech supports the [**Book of Isaiah’s**] position and may, in the version of **2 Kings 18**, have been the inspiration for the [**Book of Isaiah’s**] basic thesis.” (P. 27)

²⁶Alexander translates / comments on **verse 5**: “*I say (or have said), only word of lips, counsel and strength for the war; now on whom has thou confided, that thou hast rebelled against me?...*”

“The simplest construction is: “*I say, mere word of lips is (your) counsel and strength for the war, i.e. your pretended strength and wisdom are mere talk, false pretension. The allusion is not so much to Hezekiah’s prayers (Kimchi) as to his addresses to the people, recorded in **2 Chronicles 32:6-8**.” (P. 47)*

I said,²⁷ Surely a word of lips (is) counsel and might for the war.²⁸

Now, upon whom did you trust, that you rebelled against me?

36:6²⁹ הִנֵּה בַטָּחַת עַל-מִשְׁעָנַת הַקִּנָּה

²⁷Where our Hebrew text has אָמַרְתִּי, “I said,” 1QIs^a has אָמַרְתָּה, “you said,” and **2 Kings 18:20** has אָמַרְתָּ, “you (singular) said,” a variant spelling from 1QIs^a.”

²⁸Translations of this first line of **verse 5** vary:

King James, “I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war:”

Tanakh, “I suppose mere talk makes counsel and valor for war!”

New Revised Standard, “Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war?”

New International, “You say you have strategy and military strength--but you speak only empty words.”

New Jerusalem, “Do you think empty words are as good as strategy and military strength?”

Rahlf's, μὴ ἐν βουλήῃ ἢ λόγοις χειλέων παράταξις γίνεται, “(Surely) not with counsel or words of lips procession (for war) happens!”

Watts comments on **verse 5** that “The speech presumes a reply that objectively claims military *strategy* and *strength* to be the basis of Hezekiah’s policy [but is that what this verse says, or means?]...”

“Strategy (עֲצָה), (**etsah**) ‘counsel,’ ‘advice’) has been a key word in the [**Book of Isaiah**]...The [**Book of Isaiah**] has insisted that strategy must come from Yahweh alone. Yahweh’s strategy since the time of Uzziah has been to turn over military supremacy to the Assyrian Empire [this is Watts’ claim, made again and again, but is it in fact the case? We wonder]...”

“The Assyrian commander derides the response as nothing but *words of lips* [but the response is to trust YHWH, not the Assyrian empire!]...He challenges a *trust* that supports rebellion. In this the [**Book of Isaiah**] and the Assyrian [commander] agree.” (P. 27)

Watts’ view is confusing. What do you make of it? Do you agree that the **Book of Isaiah** holds the same view as Rab-shakeh? We do not.

²⁹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6**: “Behold, thou hast trusted in the staff (or support) of this broken reed, in Egypt, which, (if) a man lean upon it, will go into his hand and pierce it’; so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all those trusting in him. He

(continued...)

הִרְצִיץ תִּזְהַ עַל־מִצְרַיִם
אֲשֶׁר יִסְמְךָ אִישׁ עָלָיו
וּבֹא בְכַפּוֹ וַיִּנְקְבֶהָ
כֵּן פִּרְעֵה מִלֶּךְ־מִצְרַיִם לְכָל־הַבְּטָחִים עָלָיו:

Look³⁰—you placed trust³¹ upon this staff of the reed,
this the broken / crushed one, upon Egypt—³²
upon whom a man will support himself,
and it will come into his hand and pierce it.³³

²⁹(...continued)
answers his own question...

“Egypt may be called a broken reed, either as being always weak, or in allusion to what it had already suffered from Assyria.” (P. 47)

Watts comments on **verse 6** that “The field commander suspects Egyptian encouragement with promises of support. He was probably correct. His scorn for Egypt’s record of reliability is scarcely less than that expressed by Yahweh’s words in **Isaiah 30:2-5, 7; 31:1-3.**” (P. 28)

³⁰Where our Hebrew text begins **verse 6** with הִנְדָּה, “Look,” **2 Kings 18:21** begins the verse with עַתָּה, (**attah**, “Now (look...)”

³¹**2 Kings 18:21** has an additional phrase following the verb “you trusted,” לְךָ, **leka**, “for yourself,” that **Isaiah 36:6** omits, probably because the author felt the phrase unnecessary.

³²Oswalt comments that “Using words which are not so dissimilar from Isaiah’s (**19:14-16; 30:7; 31:3**), he says that Egypt is a cracked staff which not only cannot help the one who leans upon it but presents a positive danger (compare **Ezekiel 29:6, 7** for the same figure). So it had been for the king of Ashdod, whom the Egyptians had handed over to the Assyrians (**chapter 20**).” (P. 635)

³³Where our Hebrew text has וּבֹא בְכַפּוֹ וַיִּנְקְבֶהָ, “and it will come into his hand and will wound / pierce it,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) omits the last phrase,

(continued...)

So Pharaoh King of Egypt (is) for all those placing trust in him!³⁴

36:7³⁵ וְכִי־תֹאמַר אֵלַי

אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בִטְחָנוּ

הֲלוֹא־הוּא אֲשֶׁר הִסִּיר חֲזִקָתָהּ אֶת־בְּמִתְיוֹ וְאֶת־מִזְבְּחֹתָיו

וַיֹּאמֶר לְיְהוּדָה וּלְיְרוּשָׁלַם

לְפָנַי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַזֶּה תִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ:

And when / if you (singular) will say³⁶ to me,

On YHWH our God we trusted,³⁷

³³(...continued)

simply saying εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ, “it will enter into the hand of his.”

³⁴Motyer comments that “The Rabshakeh had already seen the defeat of Egypt at Eltekeh...He knew that Egypt was a positive danger to anyone who relied on it—confirming Isaiah’s estimate that to ally with Egypt is to ally with death (**Isaiah 28:15**).” (P. 277)

³⁵Alexander translates **verse 7**: “*And if thou sayest to me, We trust in Jehovah our God, is it not He Whose high places and Whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, before this altar shall ye worship?*”

He comments that “Rabshakeh’s question evidently refers to Hezekiah’s reformation of religious worship (**2 Kings 18:4**), which he erroneously regarded as a change of the national religion.” (P. 48)

What do you think? Was Rab-shakeh mistaken concerning Hezekiah’s religious reformation? Did the Israelites dedicate their altars and high places to YHWH?

³⁶Where our Hebrew text has the singular verb, תֹּאמַר, “you (singular) will say,” 1QIs^a, the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) and **2 Kings 18:22** all read the plural, i.e. תֹּאמְרוּן, “you (plural) will say.”

³⁷Watts comments that “Hezekiah is reported in **2 Kings 18:5** to have *trusted* (בִּטַּח, **batach**) in Yahweh with unparalleled loyalty which was rewarded with complete success in his rebellion against the king of Assyria. That stands in sharp contrast to this description...

(continued...)

Is He not the One Whose high-places and altars Hezekiah turned aside?³⁸

And He said to Judah and to Jerusalem,
Before this altar you (plural) shall worship.³⁹

36:8⁴⁰ וְעַתָּה הִתְעַרְבְּ נָא

³⁷(...continued)

“2 Chronicles 29-30 reports a massive cultic reform in Jerusalem under Hezekiah which resulted in removal of many altars outside the Jerusalem Temple (**2 Chronicles 30:1-4**). After a massive celebration of Passover (**2 Chronicles 30**), zealous participants moved through the towns of Judah destroying the high places, altars, sacred stones, and asherahs (**2 Chronicles 31:1**)...

“The text does not say to whom these sacred places were dedicated. Presumably, at least some may have been dedicated to Yahweh, as the field commander’s words suggest...

“The speech tries to separate loyalty to Yahweh from loyalty to Hezekiah. This, too, the [**Book of Isaiah**] has done, separating loyalty to Zion and to Yahweh from loyalty to a rebelling monarch or leader.” (P. 28)

³⁸Slotki states that the Rab-shakeh is referring to “the abolition of local places of worship in favor of the one altar in Jerusalem (compare **2 Kings 18:4**) which must have offended, in the view of the Assyrian heathen, Hezekiah’s God Whose protection and help he could, therefore, no longer expect.” (P. 167)

Motyer comments that “Hezekiah had conducted a centralizing reform of religion (**2 Kings 18:1-7; 2 Chronicles 29-31**) with the closure of local sanctuaries and their (at best) corrupt Yahwism. The Rabshakeh speaks from his own heathen background where reduction in quantity of worship detracted from a God’s glory, but he may have been playing also on the frayed nerves of any who were less than convinced of the rightness of what the king was doing.” (P. 277)

³⁹Oswalt comments that “The destruction of the worship centers outside Jerusalem must have seemed like a colossal blunder to the idolatrous and polytheistic Assyrians. For them, the more places at which some form of the God was worshiped, the more...power the ritual had. To limit the worship to one place could only lessen its power and infuriate the God...

“It is likely that the Assyrians also knew that substantial numbers of Israelites felt the same way...Thus the Assyrian officer’s confident assertion that God did not want to bless Judah probably touched the raw nerve of doubt which was already very near the surface of many a Judean consciousness (**Jeremiah 44:18**).” (P. 636)

⁴⁰Alexander translates **verse 8**: “*And now, engage, I pray thee, with my lord the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to*

(continued...)

אֶת־אֲדֹנָי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר
 וְאַתָּנָה לְךָ אֲלֵפִים סוּסִים
 אִם־תּוּכַל לָתֵת לְךָ רֶכָבִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

And now, make an exchange⁴¹ please,
 with my Lord, the King of Assyria;
 and I will give to you two thousand horses,
 if you are able to give for yourself horsemen upon them.⁴²

⁴⁰(...continued)
set riders upon them.”

He comments that this was “a contemptuous comparison between the Jews, who were almost destitute of cavalry, and the Assyrians, who were strong in that species of force (**Isaiah 5:28**).” (P. 48)

Watts comments on **verse 8** that “The commander urges negotiations, pointing to Judah’s weakness. Even if it had had arms (horses), it does not have the personnel to use them.” (P. 28)

⁴¹Alexander states that the *hithpael* imperative verb הִתְעַרְבּ, **hith(arebh)**, “exchange pledges (make a bargain)” is “not to *wager*, or to *give pledges*, but simply to *engage with*; whether in fight or in negotiation must be determined by the context.” (P. 48) Holladay holds that it means “make a wager.”

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) is μείχθητε, “mix with,” “come in contact with.” Our English translations vary between “make a wager” and “give pledges.” Watts translates by “please negotiate.”

Our Hebrew text has the singular form of the verb, but 1QIs^a has the plural, הִתְעַרְבוּנָא (with a suffix נָא, which we don’t understand. However its use of the plural verb is in accordance with its earlier use of plural verbs.

⁴²Slotki describes **verse 8** as “A scornful thrust at the scanty man-power and poor equipment of the Judean army.” (P. 167)

Oswalt comments that “Little Judah had never had the wealth or the manpower to assemble a significant core of chariotry. Even less so could it mount the newest military innovation—cavalry. The Assyrian knows this, and offers, tongue in cheek, to meet the Judeans halfway. The Assyrians are so powerful, they can afford to give Judah two thousand horses and still they will conquer the little Palestinian country.

(continued...)

36:9⁴³ וְאֵיךְ תָּשִׁיב אֶת פְּנֵי פַחַת אֶחָד עַבְדֵי אֲדֹנָי הַקְּטָנִים

וְתִבְטַח לְךָ עַל-מִצְרַיִם לְרֶכֶב וּלְפָרָשִׁים:

And how⁴⁴ will you turn back (the) face of one of the least governor(s) / captain(s)⁴⁵ of my lord's servants?

And you trusted yourself upon Egypt for chariot(s) and for horsemen (synonym)!⁴⁶

⁴²(...continued)

Judah could not even put trained riders on their own horses, so what good is it to ask for Egyptian help? The fact is, with or without Egypt's aid, Judah is not strong enough to defy the lowest of Sennacherib's underlings, let alone the great king himself." (P. 636)

⁴³Watts comments on **verses 9-10** that the field commander "sums up his appeal with a further disparaging reference to Egypt's help and the claim that Yahweh Himself had sent him." (P. 28)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 9**: "*And how wilt thou turn away the face of one governor (or satrap) of the least of my master's servants? So thou hast reposed thyself on Egypt, with respect to chariots and horses...*

"If Hezekiah could not command two thousand horsemen, he was unprepared to resist even a detachment of the Assyrian force, and if thus helpless, he must be trusting, not in his own resources, but in foreign aid." (P. 48)

So, at least, Rab-shakeh concludes. But according to the biblical accounts—**Isaiah 36, 2 Kings** and **2 Chronicles**—Hezekiah was trusting in YHWH, a trust that was to be richly repaid.

⁴⁴Where our Hebrew text has וְאֵיךְ, "and how?", 1QIs^a has וְאִיכָה which is only a slightly different way of spelling the same word, perhaps meaning "and in what manner?" The shorter form occurs some 61 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, while the longer form occurs some 21 times.

⁴⁵Slotki comments that "The Hebrew word פַּחַת, **phachath** signifies the governor of a province." (P. 167) The Greek translation (**Rahfs**) is τὸπάρχης, "governor" or "officer in charge of the place."

⁴⁶According to our reading of the biblical accounts (**Isaiah 36; 2 Kings; 2 Chronicles**), while it may have been true that at an earlier time Hezekiah had wavered in his trust, thinking for a while that he could depend upon Egypt, he later came to the

(continued...)

36:10⁴⁷ וְעַתָּה הַמִּבְלָעִי יְהוָה עָלִי עַל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְהַשְׁחִיתָהּ
 יְהוָה אָמַר אֵלַי עֲלֵה אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְהַשְׁחִיתָהּ:

And⁴⁸ now, was it without YHWH I came up against this land,⁴⁹ to destroy it?
 YHWH said to me, Go up to this land, and destroy it!⁵⁰

⁴⁶(...continued)

firm conclusion that he would trust in YHWH alone, refusing to place his trust in Egypt, probably as a result of Isaiah's preaching / influence.

It is a depiction of YHWH's prophet becoming deeply involved in politics, doing all in his power to influence the direction in which his nation was going.

What do you think? Do you think a Christian minister, or Jewish rabbi, or Muslim Imam, should get engaged in politics?

⁴⁷Alexander translates / comments on **verse 10**: “*And now (is it) without Jehovah I have come up against this land to destroy it? Jehovah said to me, Go up to (or against) this land and destroy it...*”

“Some interpreters suppose that the Assyrians had heard of prophecies in which they were described as instruments by which Jehovah meant to punish His Own people. It is much more natural, however, to regard this as a bold attempt to terrify the Jews by pleading the authority of their own tutelary [serving as guardian, protector] Deity for this invasion.” (P. 48)

Could both of these suppositions be true? If the Assyrian had heard of Hezekiah's reforms, could he not also have heard about the shockingly bold prophet in Israel who spoke his mind to Israel's king?

⁴⁸**2 Kings 18:25** omits the conjunction “and” at the beginning of this verse.

⁴⁹Where our Hebrew text has הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת, literally “the land / earth, the this one,” **2 Kings 18:25** has הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה, literally “the place, the this one.” Motyer makes much of this difference.

⁵⁰Slotki comments that “The heathen's claim to be carrying out a Divine mission may have been mere pretense, its purpose being to impress his audience; or it may possibly have been the result of a genuine belief that since the God YHWH of Israel had allowed the Assyrian king to make so many conquests, He also expected and wished him to take Judah and Jerusalem.” (P. 168)

Motyer comments that “Behind this claim there no doubt lies some knowledge of what Isaiah had been saying...Spies are not a modern invention, and the Rabshakeh

(continued...)

⁵⁰(...continued)

knew enough to make a plausible perversion of the word of God. *To...destroy this land* is ‘to destroy this place’ in **2 Kings 18:25**. This is one of the differences in the two accounts that is inexplicable if some Isaiah-editor depended on **2 Kings**. Isaiah’s deeply-felt Zion theology would never have permitted ‘place’ to be changed to ‘land.’” (P. 278)

Motyer, as usual, is quite certain about this—but we are not. We say, Perhaps...

Oswalt observes that “It was not unusual for a conqueror to claim that his conquest was made possible because the God of the vanquished had joined the side of the conqueror (he refers to Pritchard’s **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, pp. 277, 278, 283, 286, 289, 390, 391, 393, 301, 312-15, 462)...

“We do not know whether the Assyrians were aware of Isaiah’s claim that God would use the Assyrians to punish His people (**Isaiah 8:7-8; 10:5-6**). At any rate the Hebrews were aware, and the Rabshakeh’s echoing of the prophet’s words must have seemed to sound the last knell of doom.” (Pp. 636-37)

⁵¹Motyer entitles **verses 11-21** “The Rabshakeh’s second speech: popular appeal—‘Make peace’”

He comments that “Arrogantly going over the heads of the king’s officials (**verse 11**), the Rabshakeh addresses the people directly (**verse 12**). But it is the same arrogant spirit which is now about to betray him into a fatal step. It is one thing—a fair diplomatic ploy—to advise against trusting either Hezekiah or the Lord (**verses 14-15**); it is even humanitarian to offer peace and a new home instead of the horrors of siege (**verses 16-17**); but to equate the Lord with the Gods of the nations (**verses 18-20**) and to scorn His ability to save Jerusalem is quite different (compare **Isaiah 37:4, 6, 15-19**).” (P. 278)

We see little difference between advising against trusting in YHWH and equating YHWH with the Gods of the nations. Do you see a great difference?

Kaiser states concerning **verses 11-21** that “The anxious request of the Judean delegation, that because of the people on the wall further discussions should be conducted in the diplomatic language, Aramaic, which [the people on the wall] did not understand, had the very opposite result, for it suggested to the Rabshakeh the idea of addressing the people directly...

“The Rabshakeh’s answer...skillfully attempts to drive a wedge between the government and the people by assuming a conflict of interests, and accordingly points out that the besieged people will ultimately have to eat their own excrement from hunger...

(continued...)

דְּבַר־נָא אֶל־עַבְדֵיךָ אֲרָמִית

כִּי שְׁמָעִים אֲנַחְנוּ

וְאֶל־תְּדַבֵּר אֵלֵינוּ יְהוּדִית

בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַחֹמָה:

⁵¹(...continued)

“At once the Rabshakeh solemnly and loudly addresses the people on the wall, to impress upon them that neither Hezekiah nor, as the King might have persuaded them, Yahweh could save them. All they need to do is make a blessing with him (the meaning of this expression, which occurs only here, is disputed. Some...explain it as a friendly attitude recognizable in the greeting, while others associate it with the formula of blessing and curse associated with a treaty), and then their land with all its sources of nourishment would be at their disposal...until—and then we see what he really has in mind—the Emperor deports them into another marvelous country...

“The Emperor shows a quite touching concern that the besieged people should not be misled by Hezekiah’s promise that Yahweh would help them. The series of Assyrian victories, he says, have shown what can be expected from the help of the Gods, for the kingdoms of Hamath on the Orontes, of Arpad further north, and of Sepharvaim, which may have lain further to the north-east, had been turned into Assyrian provinces either by Sargon in 720, or by Tiglath-pileser...The pointed mention of the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, Samaria...makes threateningly clear that Yahweh cannot be expected to help Jerusalem...

“The people on the wall preserve a disciplined silence, no doubt differing in this from those who first heard the story told, and obeyed the King’s command.” (Pp. 387-88)

Slotki comments on **verses 11-12** that they are “a request by Hezekiah’s representatives that Rab-shakeh should speak to them in a language that the people around did not understand,” and the request “is scornfully rejected. He, Rab-shakeh exclaims, came to speak to the common people, the real sufferers from their king’s policy, and not to Hezekiah or to his representatives.” (P. 168)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 11**: “*Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Pray speak unto thy servants in Aramean, for we understand (it), and speak not to us in Jewish, in the ears of the people who (are) on the wall.* This request implies an apprehension of the bad effect of his address upon the multitude.” (P. 48)

And Elyaqim⁵² said,⁵³ and Shebna and Yoach, to Rab-Shakeh,
 Speak now / please to your servants (in) Aramaic;^{54, 3}
 because we are listening;
 and you shall not speak to us⁵⁵ (in) Jewish / Judah's language,⁵⁶

⁵²Where our Hebrew text has simply the name אֱלִיאֲקִים, **elyaqiyim, 2 Kings 18:26** has the name of his father, בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּהוּ, “**son of chilqiyahu.**” We take this to indicate that the author of **Isaiah 36** considered the extra phrase irrelevant to his story.

⁵³Our Hebrew text has the singular verb “he said” in the phrase וַיֹּאמֶר, even though two other subjects are named. 1QIs^a corrects this, changing the singular verb to the plural וַיֹּאמְרוּ, “and they said,” followed by the preposition אֵלָיו, “to him.”

⁵⁴Slotki's translation of the Hebrew אֲרָמִית, **jaramiyth**, is “the Aramean language.” We translate by “Aramaic.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has Συριακή, “Syrian,” and the Latin Vulgate has *Syra lingua*, “Syrian language.”

Slotki comments that “This was the international medium of commercial and other intercourse throughout western Asia. Though unfamiliar to the populace, it was understood by Hezekiah's court.” (P. 168)

Motyer states that “*Aramaic* was the diplomatic language of the day and would enable negotiations to be carried out with a degree or secrecy.” (P. 278)

Oswalt notes that “Aramaic was alphabetic and thus was easier to read and write than the syllabic cuneiform. Yet, it was still a Semitic language, like Assyrian and the West Semitic dialects of Palestine.” (P. 638) For an article on “Cuneiform” see our end-note 3.

⁵⁵Where our Hebrew text has the prepositional phrase אֵלֵינוּ, “to us,” **2 Kings 18:26** has the prepositional phrase עִמָּנוּ, “with us.” 1QIs^a omits any prepositional phrase at this point in the text.

⁵⁶Slotki's translation has “the Jews' language.” He comments that this means “Hebrew, as in **Nehemiah 13:24.**” (P. 168)

וּבְנֵיהֶם חָצִי מְדַבֵּר אֲשֶׁר־הוֹדִית
 וְאִינָם מְכִירִים לְדַבֵּר יְהוּדִית

(continued...)

in the ears of the people who are upon the wall!⁵⁷

36:12⁵⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר רַב־שָׁקָה

הֲאֵל אֲדַנִּיךָ וְאֵלֶיךָ שְׁלַחְנִי אֲדַנִּי

⁵⁶(...continued)

וְכִלְשׁוֹן עִם וְעִם:

And their children, half speaking Ashdodhith,
and they were not recognizing to speak Judith / Jewish language,
but according to (the) tongue(s) of (one) people and (another) people.

Where our Hebrew text has “and you shall not speak to us (in) Jewish / Judah’s language,” 1QIs^a has “and do not speak these words in the hearing of the men who live on the walls.”

⁵⁷Watts comments that “This interlude provides interesting information about languages current at this time. Assyria had adopted Aramaic as its official imperial language, a practice continued by the Babylonians and the Persians. Yet the commander had apparently used Judean, a dialect of Hebrew...

“Hezekiah’s emissaries preferred to keep the negotiations secret from the people crowding the walls above them.” (P. 28)

⁵⁸Alexander translates **verse 12**: “*And Rabshakeh said: Is it to thy master and to thee, that my master hath sent me to speak these words? Is it not to the men sitting on the wall to eat their own dung and to drink their own water with you?*”

He comments that the last two lines are “obviously descriptive of the horrors of famine in their most revolting form. The same idea is conveyed still more distinctly in **2 Chronicles**: ‘Whereon do ye trust that ye abide in the fortress of Jerusalem? Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, the Lord our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?’ (**32:10-11**)”

Alexander also observes that “The Masoretic readings in the margin of the **Hebrew Bible** are mere euphemistic variations.” (P. 49)

Oswalt agrees, stating that “*dung...urine* are given more euphemistic readings by the Qere [‘to be read’] in each case, but there is every reason to believe that the Assyrian officer would have used the crudest, most shocking terms he knew in an attempt to brutalize and terrorize to a maximum extent.” (P. 639). See footnote 61.

Motyer comments on **verse 12** that “The Rabshakeh reminds the gathered populace (the men sitting on the wall / ‘the inhabitants on the wall’) of the hard facts of siege warfare...Astutely he attempts in one sentence to scare the people and alienate them from their leaders.” (P. 278)

לְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה

הֲלֹא עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַיֹּשְׁבִים עַל־הַחֹמָה

לְאָכַל אֶת־(חֲרָאֵיהֶם) [צוֹאֲתָם]

וְלִשְׁתּוֹת אֶת־(שִׁינֵיהֶם) [מִימֵי] [רַגְלֵיהֶם] עִמָּכֶם:

And Rab-Shakeh said,⁵⁹

Was it to⁶⁰ your lords and to you my lord sent me to speak these words?

Was it not to the men, the ones sitting upon the wall–

to eat their excrement,⁶¹

and to drink their urine of their feet / penises⁶² with you?⁶³

⁵⁹Where our Hebrew text has simply “and he said,” **2 Kings 18:27** has a prepositional phrase following: “and he said to them” (אֵלֵיהֶם). Both the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**), with its $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$, and the Latin Vulgate with its *ad eos*, follow the lead of **2 Kings 18:27**, both of them meaning “to them.” It seems to us that the author of **Isaiah 36** is abbreviating the text of **2 Kings** which he is copying, leaving out unessential phrases.

⁶⁰Where our Hebrew text has the interrogative phrase הֲאֵל, “Was / is (it) to?”, **2 Kings 18:27** has the interrogative phrase הֲעַל, “Was / is (it) against?” We think the author of **Isaiah 36** is changing the text he is copying, because Rab-shakeh’s message is not “against” the people on the wall, but a kindly offer for them to escape the terrors of the siege.

⁶¹The Masoretes offer two readings, first the *kethibh*, “what is written,” חֲרָאֵיהֶם, “their excrements”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” צוֹאֲתָם, “their filth / excrement,” a synonym. We hardly see how the *qere* is euphemistic; it is little more than a synonym.

Where our Hebrew text’s *kethibh* is spelled חֲרָאֵיהֶם, **har)eyhem**, **2 Kings 18:27**’s *kethibh* is spelled חֲרִייהֶם, leaving out the *aleph*. 1QIs^a spells חרייהמה. We think that these variant spellings simply indicate the different way copyists spelled words—not attempts at “euphemism.”

⁶²The Masoretes offer two readings, first the *kethibh*, “what is written,” שִׁינֵיהֶם,

(continued...)

וַיַּעֲמֵד רַב־שָׁקָה וַיִּקְרָא בְּקוֹל־גָּדוֹל יְהוּדִית 36:13⁶⁴

וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרַי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר:

And Rab-Shakeh stood and he cried out in a great Jewish voice,

⁶²(...continued)

“their urine”; and second, the *qere*, consisting of two words, מֵימֵי רַגְלֵיהֶם, “waters of their feet,” using the euphemism “their feet” for “their penises.” Again, we hardly see how the *qere* is euphemistic. What do you think?

⁶³Watts comments that “The commander ignores their request and astutely uses the occasion to his advantage in trying to undermine the morale of the people and their confidence in Hezekiah’s leadership.” (P. 28)

⁶⁴Slotki comments on **verses 13-20** that they contain “Rab-shakeh’s harangue, persuasive at first and threatening in the end.” (P. 168)

Motyer comments on **verses 13-17** that “The Rabshakeh was seemingly well informed about Isaiah’s ministry with its emphasis on the way of faith...He makes his offer in the most generous and attractive terms: an unmolested present (**verse 16**) and an agreeable future (**verse 17**). He is too shrewd to try to hide the well-known Assyrian policy of deportation, but he tries to sweeten the pill.” (P. 278)

Watts likewise comments on **verses 13-17**, stating that “The theme of the second speech (**verses 13-20**) turns on נָצַל ‘to deliver.’ The word occurs eight times in **verses 14-21**. While the first speech spoke about Jerusalem’s ‘trust,’ this one questions whether Yahweh or anyone can save Jerusalem from the Assyrians. Its purpose is to separate the people from their leaders.” (P. 28)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 13**: “*And Rabshakeh stood and called with a loud voice in Jewish* (i.e. Hebrew), and said, Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria...”

“In so doing he not only testified to his contempt for the king’s messengers by insolently disregarding their request, but made a political appeal to the hopes and fears of the multitude.” (P. 49)

and he said⁶⁵ Listen to (the) words of⁶⁶ the great King, King of Assyria!⁶⁷

36:14⁶⁸ כֹּה אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ

אֶל־יִשָּׂא לְכֶם חִזְקִיהוּ

כִּי לֹא־יִוָּכַל לְהַצִּיל אֶתְכֶם:

In this way the King⁶⁹ spoke:

Don't let Hezekiah deceive⁷⁰ you;⁷¹

⁶⁵Where our Hebrew text has וַיֹּאמֶר, “and he said,” **2 Kings 18:28** has the lengthier, redundant phrase, וַיִּדְבֵר וַיֹּאמֶר, “and he said and he spoke.” Again it seems apparent that the author of **Isaiah 36**, in copying **2 Kings 18**, is eliminating unnecessary language, “editing” the text he is copying.

⁶⁶Where our Hebrew text has the phrase שְׁמַעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, “hear words of the king,” **2 Kings 18:28** has שְׁמַעוּ דְבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ, “hear a word of the king.” Again, we think it is obvious that the author of **Isaiah 36** is editing, improving on the text he is copying.

⁶⁷Oswalt states that the contrast between Hezekiah and Sennacherib “is sharply delineated by the giving of the conventional titles to Sennacherib, while no title at all is given to Hezekiah.” (P. 639)

⁶⁸Alexander translates **verse 14**: “Thus saith the king: let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you.”

He comments that “The repeated mention of the king reminds them, that he is not speaking in his own name, but in that of a great monarch. The parallel passage (**2 Kings 18:29**) adds, *out of his hand*.” (P. 49)

⁶⁹1QIs^a adds “of Assyria” at this point in the text. We think the Qumran copyist was doing a little editing of his own!

⁷⁰The verb here is יִשָּׂא, (**yashshi**), from the root נִשָּׂא, hiphil imperfect 3rd person masculine singular, “deceive,” in the phrase “Let not Hezekiah deceive you people.” **2 Kings 18:29** spells the verb יִשְׂיֵא, which is a fuller spelling, making it more obvious that it is hiphil.

⁷¹Slotki’s translation has “beguile you,” and he explains that this means “[beguile you] by his assurance of ability to stand up to Assyria.” (P. 169)

because he will not be able to deliver you!⁷²

וְאֶל־יִבְשֹׁחַ אֶתְכֶם חִזְקִיהוּ אֶל־יְהוָה⁷³ 36:15

לְאמֹר הַצֵּל יִצְּלֵנוּ יְהוָה

לֹא תִנָּתֵן הָעִיר הַזֹּאת בְּיַד מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר:

And Hezekiah shall not / and don't let Hezekiah cause you to trust to / in YHWH,
saying, YHWH will certainly deliver us;

this city⁷⁴ will not be given into (the) hand of Assyia's King.

אֶל־תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל־חִזְקִיהוּ⁷⁵ 36:16

⁷²Where our Hebrew text has כִּי לֹא־יִוָּכַל לְהַצִּיל אֶתְכֶם: , because he will not be able to deliver you people," **2 Kings 18:29** adds the prepositional phrase מִיָּדוֹ, "from his hand"—which obviously makes no sense coming from the mouth of the king, and which the author of **Isaiah 36** has therefore deleted as he copies **2 Kings 18**. C.F. Burney notes that the Lucianic recension of the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Syriac Peshitto and the Aramaic Targum all read מִיָּדִי, "from my hand," which makes much better sense.

While **King James** retains "his hand" in **2 Kings 18:29**, **Tanakh**, **New Revised Standard**, **New International**, **New Jerusalem**, and **English Standard Version** all change the text to "my hand." We think this is a fairly strong indicator that the author of **Isaiah 36** is copying from **2 Kings 18**!

⁷³Alexander translates **verse 15**: "And let not Hezekiah make you trust in Jehovah, saying, Jehovah will certainly save us, this city shall not be given up into the hand of the king of Assyria." (P. 49)

⁷⁴Where our Hebrew text has the phrase לֹא תִנָּתֵן הָעִיר, "the city will not be given," **2 Kings 18:30** has וְלֹא תִנָּתֵן אֶת־הָעִיר, "and it will not be given—the city," with the conjunction "and" at the start, and with the sign of the direct object before "the city." We think the author of **Isaiah 36** has corrected a poorly constructed phrase in **2 Kings 18:30**, recognizing that "the city" is the subject of the niph'al verb "be given," not the object of the verb.

⁷⁵Oswalt comments on **verses 16-17** that "The king of Assyria promises to let the people penned up inside the city return to their own property for a while before he deports them to an equally good land...To people in [the circumstances they were in, faced with siege and starvation and death], the Assyrian offer to let people go back to

(continued...)

כִּי כֹה אָמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר

עֲשׂוּ-אִתִּי בְרָכָה

וּצְאוּ אֵלַי

וְאָכְלוּ אִישׁ-גִּפְנוֹ וְאִישׁ תְּאֵנָתוֹ

וּשְׁתּוּ אִישׁ מִי-בּוֹרוֹ:

You (plural) shall not listen to Hezekiah...

because in this way the King⁷⁶ of Assyria spoke:

Make with me a blessing,⁷⁷

⁷⁵(...continued)

their homes, to peace, privacy, and plenty, must have been like holding a cup of water before a man dying of thirst.” (P. 640)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 16**: “*Hearken not to Hezekiah, for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make with me a blessing, and come out unto me, and eat ye (every) man his own vine and (every) man his own fig-tree, and drink ye (every) man the waters of his own cistern...*”

“The inducements offered in the last clause are in obvious antithesis to the revolting threat or warning in the last clause of **verse 12**.” (P. 50)

⁷⁶Where our Hebrew text has הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר, “the king of Assyria,” **2 Kings 18:31** has מֶלֶךְ אֲשׁוּר, “king of Assyria,” without the definite article. We think this is the author of **Isaiah 36**'s editorial improvement of the text of **2 Kings 18**.

⁷⁷Slotki's translation has “make you peace,” but Slotki notes that the Hebrew is literally “a blessing.” (P. 169)

Alexander states that בְּרָכָה, *bherakhah*, “blessing,” in the phrase עֲשׂוּ-אִתִּי בְרָכָה, “*make with me a blessing*,” is explained by some as meaning “*make me a present, or make an agreement with me by a present*.” Others give the Hebrew word, in this one case, the sense of *peace*...It is possible, however, to adhere more closely to the usage of the term, by taking *blessing* in the sense of friendly salutation...To make a blessing with one then might mean to enter into amicable intercourse.” (P. 50)

Watts translates by “make with me a blessing,” but states that this is “an unusual

(continued...)

and come forth to me;⁷⁸
and you will each man eat (from)⁷⁹ his vine,
and each man (from) his fig-tree;
and drink each man from his cistern / well,⁸⁰

36:17⁸¹ עַד-בְּאֵי

⁷⁷(...continued)
sentence.” (P. 21)

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) is εἰ βούλεσθε εὐλογηθῆναι , “if you (plural) desire to be blessed”—which Watts mistakenly translates by “be / make willing to bless” (P. 21)

Isaiah 36:16 and **2 Kings 18:31** both have this same exact phrase, עֲשׂוּ-אִתִּי בְרָכָה, and we suggest that it means “make with me a blessing both for yourselves and for me,” or “Join with me in making a mutual blessing.” It will be a blessing to all concerned, sparing them from the horrors and hardships of the siege / armed conflict.

Watts mentions A. Murtonen’s “The Usage and Meaning of the Words *lebarek* [‘to bless’] and *berakah* [‘blessing’] in the Old Testament” in which he suggests that the phrase means “a situation in which the parties bless each other.” (P. 21) What do you think?

⁷⁸Slotki comments that this means “Surrender!” (P. 169)

Alexander comments that To *come out* is in Hebrew the common military phrase for the surrender of a besieged town.” (P. 50)

⁷⁹In this line and the next, 1QIs^a reads the sign of the direct object (ta before both “vine” and “fig tree.”

⁸⁰Slotki comments that Rab-shakeh means “Immediate submission would enable them to resume forthwith, though only temporarily, their usual economic pursuits and normal life.” (P. 169)

Watts comments that The Assyrian policy of exiling conquered peoples lies behind the sugar-coated offer. But immediate relief from hunger, thirst, and overcrowding in the city certainly had its appeal.” (P. 28)

⁸¹Alexander translates **verse 17**: “*Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.*”

He comments that “The parallel passage (**2 Kings 18:32**), adds, *a land of oil-*

(continued...)

וּלְקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֶרֶץ כְּאֶרְצְכֶם

אֶרֶץ דָּגָן וְתִירוֹשׁ

אֶרֶץ לֶחֶם וְכֶרְמִים:

until my coming;⁸²

and I will take you people to a land like your land,⁸³

a land of grain(s) and new wine,

a land of bread / food and vineyards—⁸⁴

⁸¹(...continued)

olive and honey, that ye may live and not die." (P. 50)

Oswalt comments that “*until I come* refers to the normal Assyrian policy of deporting the more influential people of a conquered territory to some distant place where their influence would be diluted and their patriotism nullified. In their place people believed to be more docile [ready to accept control, submissive] would be brought in. Since this practice was well known, the Rabshakeh apparently decided not to ignore it, but to try to put the best face on it and make it an asset.” (P. 640)

⁸²We understand this line to mean “until or when Sennacherib himself comes—from Lachish to Jerusalem—as the Rab-shakeh is speaking for Sennacherib.

⁸³Alexander comments that “This reference to the deportation of the people as a future event has led some interpreters to the conclusion, that Sennacherib was now on his way to Egypt, and deferred the measure until his return.” (P. 50)

⁸⁴The author of **Isaiah 36** has chosen to omit a good part of the last half of **2 Kings 18:32**, which he probably considered redundant:

אֶרֶץ זֵית וְיֶזֶר וְדִבְשׁ

וְחַיּוּ וְלֹא תָמוּתוּ

וְאַל-תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-חִזְקִיָּהוּ

a land of olive-tree(s), fresh oil and honey;

and you (plural) shall live, and you shall not die.

And you shall not listen to Hezekiah.

Slotki comments that “Though surrender meant deportation, the new land, Rabshakeh assures them, was as fertile and productive as their own.” (P. 169)

36:18⁸⁵ פְּנִי־סִית אֶתְכֶם תִּזְקֶינָהוּ לֵאמֹר

יְהוָה יִצִּילֵנוּ

הֲהִצִּילוּ אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם אִישׁ אֶת־אֲרָצוֹ

מִיַּד מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר:

so that⁸⁶ Hezekiah will not allure you (plural) saying,

YHWH will deliver us.

Did (the) Gods of the nations deliver⁸⁷ each One His land
from (the) King of Assyria's hand?⁸⁸

⁸⁵Motyer comments on **verses 18-21** that “This was the fatal error; the word of blasphemy the Lord heard (**Isaiah 37:7**)...

“As the Masoretic text stands it has wonderful sarcastic force: ‘Oh sure! They did deliver Samaria from my hand!’” (Pp. 278-79)

Watts comments that “The ‘soft sell’ of **verses 14-17** is followed by the ‘hard sell’ of **verses 18-20**. The commander attacks their dependence upon Yahweh claiming that no God can deter the Assyrians. He recalls earlier victories including that over Samaria in 721 B.C.E.” (Pp. 28-29)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 18**: “*Let not (or beware lest) Hezekiah seduce you, saying, Jehovah will deliver us. Have the Gods of the nations delivered every one His land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?*” (P. 50)

⁸⁶The Hebrew word פֶּן, **pen**, is said to mean “lest.” What “lest” means is “with the intention of preventing (something undesirable); to avoid the risk of.” We translate by “so that...not.” Here the author of **Isaiah 36** has changed the language of **2 Kings 18:32**, which has כִּי, “because,” instead of פֶּן. However, this slight change does not alter the meaning of the sentence.

⁸⁷Where **2 Kings 18:33** has the interrogative double verb-phrase, הֲהִצִּילוּ הִצִּילוּ, meaning something like, “Did they deliver delivering?”, a typical way of giving emphasis in Hebrew, the author of **Isaiah 36** shortens the interrogative phrase to simply הֲהִצִּילוּ, “Did they deliver?”

⁸⁸Alexander comments that “The Assyrian here with characteristic recklessness,
(continued...)

36:19⁸⁹ אֵיִה אֱלֹהֵי חַמַּת וְאַרְפָּד

אֵיִה אֱלֹהֵי סַפְרַוַיִּים

וְכִי־הֲצִילוּ אֶת־שְׁמֵרוֹן מִיָּדַי:

Where (are) the Gods of Chamath⁹⁰ and Arpad?⁹¹

Where (are the) Gods of Sepharwaim?⁹²

⁸⁸(...continued)

forsakes his previous position, that he was but acting as Jehovah's instrument, and sets himself in disdainful opposition to Jehovah Himself." (P. 50)

⁸⁹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 19**: "*Where (are) the Gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where the Gods of Sepharvaim? And (when or where was it) that they delivered Samaria out of my hand?...*

"In the rapidity of his triumphant interrogation, he expresses himself darkly and imperfectly. The last clause must of course refer to the Gods of Samaria, though not expressly mentioned." (P. 50)

We say, Perhaps...But was not the God of northern Israel, with its capital city of Samaria, supposedly YHWH?

Alexander adds that "The question (where are they?) seems to imply not only that they had not saved their worshipers, but that they had ceased to be." (P. 51)

⁹⁰Slotki, in his notes on **Isaiah 19:9**, states that Chamath is "the modern Hamah, half-way between Carchemish and Damascus on the river Orontes; it was captured in 738 B.C.E. by Tiglath-Pileser and again in 720 B.C.E. by Sargon." (P. 50)

It is some 150 miles north of Damascus and 275 miles northeast of Jerusalem.

⁹¹Slotki also in the same note states that "Arpad [is] the modern Tell Erfad, some fifteen miles north of Aleppo, captured by Tiglath-Pileser about 720 B.C.E." (P. 50)

It is some 85 miles north of Hamath, halfway between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates River.

⁹²The author of **Isaiah 34** omits two additional countries mentioned in **2 Kings 18:34**, הַנֶּנֶע וְעֵוָה, **hena**(and (**iwwah**, again abbreviating the text he is quoting from. He probably didn't recognize what countries these were—and neither do we.

Slotki states that Sepharvaim is "identified by some authorities with Shabarain in

(continued...)

And (the God, YHWH)⁹³ that delivered Samaria from my hand?⁹⁴

36:20⁹⁵ מִי בְּכֹל-אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרְצוֹת הָאֵלֶּה

⁹²(...continued)

northern Syria, situated between Damascus and Hamath. It was destroyed by Shalmaneser IV.” (P. 169)

“Sepharvaim--taken by a king of Assyria, probably Sargon II, (cited in the **Old Testament** in **2 Kings 17:24, 31; 18:34; 19:13; Isaiah 37:13**). It was a double city, and received the common name Sepharvaim, i.e., "the two Sipparas," or "the two booktowns." The Sippara on the east bank of the Euphrates is now called Abu-Habba; that on the other bank was Akkad, the old capital of Sargon I, where he established a great library. The recent discovery of cuneiform inscriptions at Tel el-Amarna in Egypt, consisting of official despatches to Pharaoh Amenophis IV. and his predecessor from their agents in Palestine, leads some Egyptologists to conclude that in the century before the Exodus an active literary intercourse was carried on between these nations, and that the medium of the correspondence was the Assyrian language and script. (See Kirjath-Sepher.) However, it has not been conclusively proven which Egyptian Pharaoh the Amarna Letters reference or that the Judean Exodus necessarily occurred after these letters. Sepharvaim was the center of the worship of the God Adrammelech. They also worshiped the God Anammelech. After the deportation of the Israelite tribes, at least some of the residents of this city were brought to Samaria to repopulate it with other Gentile settlers.” (**Wikipedia**, 4 / 8 / 2018)

⁹³Where our Hebrew text has וְכִי, “and that,” **2 Kings 18:34** has only כִּי, “that,” without the conjunction.

Watts states that וְכִי, “and that,” is “unclear in meaning... Several Greek manuscripts add in the text of **2 Kings 18:34**...’and where were the Gods of the territory of Samaria?” (P. 22)

⁹⁴We think Rab-shakeh implies that Samaria, the capital city of northern Israel, even though Jewish and supposedly worshipers of YHWH, was not delivered by YHWH, but instead, fell to the Assyrians just as did the other countries. Others think Rab-shakeh implies that Samaria was in fact a worshiper of other Gods, the Gods of the other nations, whom they failed to deliver, just as they failed to deliver Samaria.

Watts notes that several **Septuagint** Greek manuscripts add into the text of **2 Kings 18:34**, “and where are the Gods of the country of Samaria?”

⁹⁵Oswalt states that “The whole speech [of Rab-Shaqeh] comes to its point in this **verse 20**.” (P. 642)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 20**: “*Who (are they) among all the Gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that Jehovah should*

(continued...)

אֲשֶׁר־הִצִּילוּ אֶת־אֲרָצִים מִיָּדִי

כִּי־יִצִּיל יְהוָה אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם מִיָּדִי:

Who among all (the) Gods of these⁹⁶ lands
that delivered their land from my hand?

(Causing you to believe) that YHWH will deliver Jerusalem from my hand?

36:21⁹⁷ וַיַּחֲרִישׁוּ וְלֹא־עָנּוּ אֹתוֹ דְּבַר

⁹⁵(...continued)

deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?...

“In this argumentative interrogation, he puts Jehovah on a level with the Gods of the surrounding nations. This is still more frequently and pointedly expressed in the parallel passage in **2 Chronicles 32:13-15**,

- 13 Know ye not what I and my father have done
unto all the nations of the countries?
Were the Gods of the nations of the countries
able to deliver their country out of my hand?
- 14 Who was there among all the Gods of these nations,
which my fathers utterly destroyed,
that was able to deliver His people out of my hand,
that your God should be able to deliver you out of my hand?
- 15 And now, let not Hezekiah deceive you,
and let him not seduce you,
neither believe him;
for no God of any nation or kingdom
has been able to deliver His people out of my hand,
and out of the hand of my fathers;
how much less shall your God deliver you out of my hand?

⁹⁶The author of **Isaiah 36** interpolates the phrase הַאֵלֶּה, literally “the these,” at this point, a phrase not found in **2 Kings 18:35**, the text he is copying and most often abbreviating rather than lengthening.

⁹⁷Oswalt entitles **36:21-37:7** “Response to the challenge.”

He comments on **verses 21-22** that “Even had Hezekiah not commanded silence, it is difficult to see what reply could have been given to the Assyrian.” (P. 644)

Alexander translates **verse 21**: “And they held their peace, and did not answer him word, for such was the commandment of the king, saying, Ye shall not answer

(continued...)

כִּי־מִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ הִיא לֵאמֹר

לֹא תַעֲנֶהוּ:

And they were silent,⁹⁸ and did not answer him a word—

because it was the king's command, saying,

You shall not answer him!

36:22⁹⁹ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵלֵיהֶם בְּנֵי־חֶלְקִיָּהוּ אֲשֶׁר־עַל־הַבַּיִת

⁹⁷(...continued)

him.”

He comments that “Some interpreters refer the first clause to Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah; but the parallel passage (**2 Kings 18:37**) says expressly that *the people held their peace.*” (P. 51)

⁹⁸As Alexander has just noted, where **2 Kings 18:37** has the phrase וַיִּחַרְיֹשׁוּ הָעָם, “and the people were silent,” as does 1QIs^a, the author of **Isaiah 36** shortens the phrase to וַיִּחַרְיֹשׁוּ, “and they were silent,” not indicating the subject of the verb—i.e., does he mean the three officials of Hezekiah were silent, or the people on the wall?

Watts holds that “The text here [in **Isaiah 36**] assumes the subject to be the emissaries.” (P. 22) We do not think the text makes this clear.

⁹⁹Motyer entitles **36:22-37:7** “The king's reaction: faith at last.”

He comments that “Word is brought to the king, who immediately reacts with penitence and seeking the Lord (**37:1**). Out of this arose a deputation to Isaiah (**verse 20**, eating humble pie indeed (**verse 3**), noting the element of blasphemy in the Rabshakeh's words (**verse 4**) and requesting prayer. But Isaiah does not need to make any fresh approach to the Lord: what he has once said stands (**verse 5-6**). The Lord will act to remove the threat (**verse 7**)—and the threatener!” (P. 279)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 22**: “Then came Eliakim, Hilkiyah's son, who (was) over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah Asaph's son, the recorder, unto Hezekiah, with their clothes rent (literally, rent of clothes), and told him the words of Rabshakeh...”

“Some of the older writers understand the rending of their garments as a mere sign of their horror at Rabshakeh's blasphemies; some of the moderns [mid-19th century C.E.] as a mere sign of despondency and alarm at the impending dangers; whereas both may naturally be intended.” (P. 51)

וְשִׁבְנָא הַסּוֹפֵר וַיּוֹאֵחַ בֶּן־אֶסָף הַמְזַכֵּיר
 אֶל־חִזְקִיָּהוּ קְרוּעֵי בְגָדִים
 וַיִּגִּידוּ לוֹ אֵת דְּבַרֵי רַב־שָׁקָה׃

And Elyaqim, son of Chilqiyahu¹⁰⁰ who (was) over the household,
 and Shebna the scribe, and Yoaach, son of Asaph, the recorder,
 came to Hezekiah, their clothing / robes torn;¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Where **2 Kings 18:37** spells the name חִלְקִיָּהוּ, **chilqiyah**, the author of **Isaiah 36** changes the spelling to חִלְקִיָּיָהוּ, **chilqiyyahu**.

¹⁰¹Slotki comments that their tearing of their clothes was “an expression of deep anguish and sorrow at the heathen’s blasphemy and threats.” (P. 170)

Watts states that “The *torn clothes* of grief indicate their estimate of their helpless situation.” (P. 29)

Watts explains **chapter 36**, stating that ‘In **2 Kings 18-20** this narrative forms the epitaph to Hezekiah’s reign as it recites events from the last significant part of it, about 701 B.C.E. In the [**Book of Isaiah**] **chapters 36-39**, it is the epitaph marking the end of the kingdom of Judah which came in 587 B.C.E. under the siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian armies. On that occasion there had been no deliverance for Zedekiah [the Judean king]’s forces. [Is this the case? Where is anything said in **Isaiah 36** about Babylon, or the end of the kingdom of Judah? Is not this material about Assyria, and Sennacherib’s field commander, Rab-shakeh?]

“The narrative begins at a point in which the Assyrian army had already destroyed all Judean resistance outside Jerusalem. Sennacherib reported that he had ‘shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage’ [See Prichard, **Ancient Near-Eastern Texts**, p. 288]. The blockade had already been in force for some time and Hezekiah’s vaunted water system was being severely tested by the overcrowding because of refugees from towns and villages.

“The field commander’s first speech (**verses 4-10**) gets directly to the point. It questions the rationale of rebellion. **2 Kings 18:7b** had listed Hezekiah’s rebellion against Assyria as his greatest achievement, his unwillingness to serve the Assyrian Emperor as his greatest merit. **2 Chronicles** would later portray Hezekiah’s greatest achievement to have been his renovation of the Temple and its worship. But it also would credit to him the rebellion and the subsequent survival of Jerusalem with winning

(continued...)

¹⁰¹(...continued)

acclaim and gifts from 'all the nations'...It also recounts the great preparations made by Hezekiah...in repairing his aqueducts and walls, in rearming, and in preparing the morale of his nation for war (**2 Chronicles 32:5-8**).

"The field commander's speech challenges this assessment of Hezekiah's strategy and military potential. It astutely demonstrates the weaknesses in Hezekiah's position...

"First, it points to the demonstrated unreliability of Egypt as an ally (**Isaiah 36:6**). The [**Book of Isaiah**] had done the same in **chapters 30-31**...

"Second, it notes the inconsistency between a claim that Yahweh will help and Hezekiah's attacks on apostasy (**Isaiah 36:7**). Judah was in no spiritual shape to claim Yahweh's protection. The [**Book of Isaiah**] has repeatedly shown her sin and unbelief from **chapter 1** on...**2 Kings** showed that the apostasy that led to Samaria's fall had also infested Judah and Jerusalem...

"Third, it supports the invitation to negotiate a peace-treaty by reference to his own position of strength (**Isaiah 36:8-9**) and by the claim that Yahweh Himself had dispatched him on this campaign against Judah (**Isaiah 36:10**). In this too, the field commander's speech has echoes in the message of Isaiah in the [**Book of Isaiah**]

(compare **Isaiah 5:26**, against Israel; **7:17-25**, against Judah; and **8:6-8**, against Israel and Judah)...

"This speech is an excellent illustration for the writer of the [**Book of Isaiah**] of the way the Assyrian Empire could play a positive role in God's strategy. It supplies a solid rationale against Hezekiah's policy of rebellion [but it is only a solid rationale if faith in YHWH is mistaken, a hoax!].

"The field commander's second speech (**Isaiah 36:13-21**) changes the tone. It is much more threatening, referring to the privations of a crowded city under siege (**Isaiah 36:12**) and attempting to speak directly to these refugees over Hezekiah's head. The propagandist intent is evident. The theme turns from the 'trust' of the first speech to the possibility of 'deliverance'...

"In trying to break down the people's confidence in Hezekiah and in Yahweh, the commander ridicules the ability of Hezekiah (**36:14**) and of Yahweh (**36:18-20**). Instead he suggests that the king of Assyria is the true 'deliverer,' the only one who can provide peace and prosperity for the city and its refugees (**36:16-17**).

"His argument is cogent. The emperor has the power to provide many elements needed for peace and prosperity. Earlier portions of the [**Book of Isaiah**] supported a policy which would accept fealty to Assyria as the propitious, even God-willed, way for

(continued...)

and they declared¹⁰² to him (the) words¹⁰³ of Rab-Shakeh.

¹⁰¹(...continued)

Judah. For this reason Isaiah...consistently opposed Hezekiah's rebellions (see **chapter 20** [which does not mention Hezekiah!]).

“However, the field commander overplays his hand. When he asserts that no God can deliver a people from him, not even Yahweh (**36:18-20**), he has blasphemed the very God that he had claimed to obey (**36:10**). From this point on, no case could be made for Yahweh's support of the Assyrian in Judah...

“The [**Book of Isaiah**] had already noted this characteristic of the Assyrians and the way that Yahweh will deal with them (compare **Isaiah 10:5-19; 14:24-27; 20:31-33; 31:8-9**). Yahweh will not tolerate arrogant insubordination and blasphemy from any servant. That had been the case in **7:1-9** when Isaiah first appeared to Ahaz. It was true in 701 B.C.E. when Isaiah was called to speak to Hezekiah. Undoubtedly it was understood to hold true for the group that is listening to the narrative in its setting of Babylonian oppression...

“The audience of the [**Book of Isaiah**] who heard it presented as a play must have had questions concerning their own Persian rulers, questions which will be dealt with in the next act [‘Good News for Jerusalem, **40:1-44:23**].” (Pp. 29-30)

¹⁰²Where **2 Kings 18:37** spells the verbal phrase **וַיִּגְדְּוּ**, **wayyaggidhu**, “and they declared,” the author of **Isaiah 36** spells it **וַיִּגְדְּוּ**, **wayyaggiydhū**, perhaps in an attempt to correct the spelling of the text he was copying.

¹⁰³Where the author of **Isaiah 36** uses the sign of the direct object **אֵת** before “words,” **2 Kings 18:37** does not. Here again, we think the author of **Isaiah 36** is correcting / editing the text which he is copying.

(continued...)

¹⁰³(...continued)

1. **Wikipedia Article on the Ancient City of Lachish**

“In the first half of the 9th century B.C.E., under the kings Asa and Jehoshaphat, Lachish became an important city in the kingdom of Judah. It was heavily fortified with massive walls and ramparts and a royal palace was built on a platform in the center of the city. Lachish was the foremost among several fortified cities and strongholds guarding the valleys that lead up to Jerusalem and the interior of the country against enemies which usually approached from the coast.

“In 701 B.C.E., during the revolt of king Hezekiah against Assyria, it was besieged and captured by Sennacherib despite the defenders' determined resistance. Some scholars believe that the fall of Lachish actually occurred during a second campaign in the area by Sennacherib ca. 688 B.C.E. The site now contains the only remains of an Assyrian siege ramp discovered so far. Sennacherib later devoted a whole room in his ‘Palace without a rival,’ the South-west palace in Nineveh, for artistic representations of the siege on large alabaster slabs, most of which are now on display in the British Museum. They hold depictions of Assyrian siege ramps, battering rams, sappers [also called pioneers or combat engineers, who perform a variety of military engineering duties such as breaching [breaking openings in walls], demolitions, bridge-building, laying or clearing minefields, field defenses as well as building, road and airfield construction and repair, tasks involving facilitating movement, defence and survival of allied forces and impeding those of enemies], and other siege machines and army units, along with Lachish's architecture and its final surrender. In combination with the archaeological finds, they give a good understanding of siege warfare of the period. So much attention was given to the success at Lachish also because, unlike it, Jerusalem managed to withstand Sennacherib's onslaught.

“The town was rebuilt in the late 7th century B.C.E. during the decline of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. However, the city fell to Nebuchadnezzar in his campaign against Judah in 586 B.C.E.

“Modern excavation of the site has revealed that the Assyrians built a stone and dirt ramp up to the level of the Lachish city wall, thereby allowing the soldiers to charge up the ramp and storm the city. Excavations revealed approximately 1,500 skulls in one of the caves near the site, and hundreds of arrowheads on the ramp and at the top of the city wall, indicating the ferocity of the battle. The city occupied an area of 20 acres and was finally destroyed in 587 B.C.E. Residents were exiled as part of the Babylonian captivity.” (Wikipedia, 7/10/2017)

2.

King Hezekiah of Judah

“Hezekiah was, according to the **Hebrew Bible**, the son of Ahaz and the 13th king of Judah. Archaeologist Edwin Thiele has concluded that his reign was between about 715 and 686 B.C.E. He is considered a very righteous king by the author of the Book of Kings. He is also one of the most prominent kings of Judah mentioned in the **Hebrew Bible** and is one of the kings mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in the **Gospel of Matthew**.

“According to the **Hebrew Bible**, Hezekiah witnessed the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel by Sargon's Assyrians in about 722 B.C.E., and was king of Judah during the invasion and siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E. Hezekiah enacted sweeping religious reforms, including a strict mandate for the sole worship of God and a prohibition on venerating other deities within the Temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah and Micah prophesied during his reign.

“The main account of Hezekiah's reign is found in **2 Kings 18–20, Isaiah 36–39, and 2 Chronicles 29–32** of the **Hebrew Bible**. **Proverbs 25:1** mentions that it is a collection of King Solomon's proverbs that were ‘copied’ ‘by the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah.’ His reign is also referred to in the books of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Micah. The books of Hosea and Micah record that their prophecies were made during Hezekiah’s reign.

Family and Life

“Hezekiah was the son of King Ahaz and Abijah. His mother, Abijah was a daughter of the high priest Zechariah. Based on Thiele's dating, Hezekiah was born in about 741 B.C.E. He was married to Hephzibah. (**2 Kings 21:1**) He died from natural causes at the age of 54 in about 687 B.C.E., and was succeeded by his son Manasseh (**2 Kings 20:21**).

Reign over Judah

According to the **Hebrew Bible**, Hezekiah assumed the throne of Judah at the age of 25 and reigned for 29 years (2 Kings 18:2). Some writers have proposed that Hezekiah served as co-regent with his father Ahaz for about 14 years. His sole reign is dated by William F. Albright as 715–687 B.C.E., and by Edwin R. Thiele as 716–687 B.C.E. (the last ten years being a co-regency with his son Manasseh).

Hezekiah purified and repaired the Temple, purged its idols, and reformed the priesthood. In an effort to abolish what he considered idolatry from his kingdom, he destroyed the high places (or bamot) and "bronze serpent" (or "Nehushtan"), recorded as being made by Moses, which became objects of idolatrous worship. In place of this, he centralized the worship of God at the Jerusalem Temple. Hezekiah also resumed the Passover pilgrimage and the tradition of inviting the scattered tribes of Israel to take part in a Passover festival. He sent messengers to Ephraim and Manasseh inviting them to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover. The messengers, however, were not only not listened to, but were even laughed at; only a few men of Asher, Manasseh,

and Zebulun came to Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the Passover was celebrated with great solemnity and such rejoicing as had not been in Jerusalem since the days of Solomon. Hezekiah is portrayed by the **Hebrew Bible** as a great and good king.

Political moves and Assyrian invasion

“When Sargon II, the king of Assyria, died in 705 B.C.E., states, including Judah, that were subject to Assyria saw an opportunity to throw off their subservience to the Assyrian kings. Hezekiah ceased to pay the tribute imposed on his father, and entered into a league with Egypt. In 703 B.C.E. Sennacherib, Sargon's son and successor, began a series of major campaigns to quash opposition to Assyrian rule. After dealing with rebels in the eastern part of the realm, in 701 B.C.E. the king turned toward those in the west. Though Hezekiah expected the Egyptians to come to his aid, they did not, and Hezekiah had to face the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib.

“The Assyrians recorded that Sennacherib lifted his siege of Jerusalem after Hezekiah acknowledged Sennacherib as his overlord and paid him tribute. The **Hebrew Bible** records that Hezekiah tried to pay off Sennacherib with three hundred talents of silver and thirty of gold as tribute, even despoiling the doors of the Temple to produce the promised amount, but, after the payment was made, Sennacherib renewed his assault on Jerusalem. Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem and sent his Rabshakeh to the walls as a messenger. The Rabshakeh addressed the soldiers manning the city wall in Hebrew, asking them to distrust Yahweh and Hezekiah, pointing to Hezekiah's righteous reforms (destroying the High Places) as a sign that the people should not trust their God to be favorably disposed (**2 Kings 18:17–35**). **2 Kings 19:15** records that Hezekiah went to the Temple and there he prayed.

Hezekiah's construction]

“Knowing that Jerusalem would eventually be subject to siege, Hezekiah had been preparing for war for some time by fortifying the walls of Jerusalem, building towers, and constructing a tunnel to bring fresh water to the city from a spring outside its walls. He made at least two major preparations that would help Jerusalem to resist conquest: the construction of the Siloam Tunnel, and construction of the Broad Wall. "When Sennacherib had come, intent on making war against Jerusalem, Hezekiah consulted with his officers and warriors about stopping the flow of the springs outside the city...for otherwise, they thought, the King of Assyria would come and find water in abundance." (**2 Chronicles 32:2–4**).

“The narratives of the **Hebrew Bible** state that Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem (**Isaiah 33:1; 2 Kings 18:17; 2 Chronicles 32:9; Isaiah 36**) [and that Jerusalem was miraculously delivered from his army].” (**Wikipedia**, 7/10/ 2017)

3. **Earliest Form of Writing in the Ancient Near East–Cuneiform**

“Emerging in Sumer in the late fourth millennium B.C.E. (the Uruk IV period) to convey the Sumerian language, which was a language isolate, cuneiform writing began as a system of pictograms, stemming from an earlier system of shaped tokens used for accounting. In the third millennium B.C.E., the pictorial representations became simplified and more abstract as the number of characters in use grew smaller (Hittite cuneiform). The system consists of a combination of logophonetic, consonantal alphabetic and syllabic signs.

“The original Sumerian script was adapted for the writing of the Semitic Akkadian (Assyrian / Babylonian), Eblaite and Amorite languages, the language isolate Elamite and the language isolates Hattic, Hurrian and Urartian languages, as well as Indo-European languages Hittite and Luwian; it inspired the later Semitic Ugaritic alphabet as well as Old Persian cuneiform. Cuneiform writing was gradually replaced by the Phoenician alphabet during the Neo-Assyrian Empire (911–612 BC). By the second century C.E., the script had become extinct, its last traces being found in Assyria and Babylonia, and all knowledge of how to read it was lost until it began to be deciphered in the 19th century.

“Between half a million and two million cuneiform tablets are estimated to have been excavated in modern times, of which only approximately 30,000–100,000 have been read or published. The British Museum holds the largest collection (about 130,000), followed by the Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin, the Louvre, the Istanbul Archaeology Museums, the National Museum of Iraq, the Yale Babylonian Collection (about 40,000) and Penn Museum. Most of these have lain in these collections for a century without being translated, studied or published, as there are only a few hundred qualified cuneiformists in the world.” (**Wikipedia**, 4/8/2018)

