

Isaiah Chapter 37, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes
Grounding Isaiah's Theology in Biblical Stories (continued)
Isaiah 37 Has a Parallel in 2 Kings 18:13-19:37¹

¹**Chapter 37** has one end-note: "Tirhakah, Taharqa, Cushite Pharaoh of Egypt."

Alexander comments that "This chapter is a direct continuation of the one before it. It describes the effect of Rabshakeh's blasphemies and threats on Hezekiah, his humiliation; his message to Isaiah, and the answer; the retreat of Rabshakeh, Sennacherib's letter, Hezekiah's prayer, Isaiah's prophecy, and its fulfilment in the slaughter of Sennacherib's army and his own flight and murder." (P. 52)

Watts entitles **37:1-20** "A Reading (continued): From Hearsay to Knowledge."

He comments that "This is a continuation of **chapter 36** and is a response to the previous narrative and speeches. The narrative is structured around four speeches. The motif of...'hearing' dominates them all..."

"The Assyrian's words were wrong in 701 B.C.E. But they had special pungency after 586 B.C.E. Had God deceived them? Was He deceiving them?...Many in post-exilic Judaism were not sure how they should answer that. **Job** and the [**Book of Isaiah**] answer differently from **2 Kings**."

"Hezekiah's prayer (**verses 16-20**) is more in line with the [**Book of Isaiah's**] position in putting it all in the perspective of Yahweh's sovereignty...There is here a tone of realism which pairs faith with history, with which the [**Book of Isaiah**] will agree."

"The Isaiah prophecy (**verse 7**) gives Yahweh's response to the Assyrian's direct challenge to His power and reliability. He will start moving, creating a rumor that will send the King home and eventually lead to his death. Yahweh can play the game of power words, too." (Pp. 33-34)

Motyer entitles Isaiah **36:22-37:7** "The king's reaction: faith at last."

He summarizes the passage: "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 2**), 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 (**verses 5-6**). The Lord will act to remove the threat (**verse 7**) and the threatener!" (P. 279)

Slotki comments on **verses 1-7** that they depict "Hezekiah's distress and pathetic appeal to God through Isaiah, and the prophets reassuring reply." (P. 170)

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Oswalt comments that these verses “describe a critical moment in Judah’s history. What will she do at this time, stripped of all allies, face-to-face with the crushing realities of which the Rabshakeh has spoken? Shall she admit his irrefutable logic and confess that God is simply one more national God, helpless before the Assyrian might? Or will she in fact be driven deeper into the Lord’s embrace? Will she now admit the folly of her other trusts and, for the first time in a very long time, commit herself to God alone?...

“In fact, this challenge was what turned the tide. Somehow Judah lurched awake, realizing what Isaiah had been crying so long: Nothing else can be trusted, but God can!...

“It is here that the greatness of Hezekiah comes to the fore. He sees what is called for and does it. Repentance is the order of the day...[Hezekiah and his people] had repudiated Isaiah for his hard words (**Isaiah 30:8-11**); would he now repudiate them, and leave them to wallow in the consequences of their own blindness?” (P. 643)

Kaiser doubts the historical reliability of the story told in **Isaiah 36-37**, and assumes that we can be sure of the “real history” through the Assyrian annals. “The fact that according to the Assyrian annals Hezekiah sent tribute to Nineveh, together with a delegation to pay homage, can be argued in favor of the view that Sennacherib found it necessary to withdraw very suddenly, and that only this permitted a capitulation which guaranteed the survival of the Davidic kingdom. A chance of survival, achieved as it were in the last moment and in spite of the siege of Jerusalem (which is suppressed in the present narrative [**Isaiah 36-37**], also explains the rejoicing of the people of Jerusalem and the population of the countryside, who were crammed together into the city, when the Assyrian troops withdrew, as is assumed in **22:1ff., 12ff.**

“When we recollect this passage...it becomes evident that the Isaiah whom we encounter in the present narrative is a later creation. He himself had attacked the alliance with Egypt in his preaching to the very last moment, maintained his prophecy of doom in the face of the behavior of the government in Jerusalem, and did not abandon it even after the Assyrians had withdrawn. But we can understand how in popular recollection the King and the prophet, both of whom were regarded as devout, later grew closer together, and the avoidance of the ultimate catastrophe came to be seen as a deliverance by Yahweh attributed either to the King’s prayers or the prophet’s, and of course basically to the fact that Yahweh heard the prayer.” (P. 384)

We are much more sceptical than Kaiser. Why should we believe the Assyrian annals as telling the whole story, the true story? They present an Assyrian telling of Near Eastern happenings, but certainly not anything like a complete story, or one told from a disinterested standpoint. And we say the same thing about the biblical accounts, both in **Isaiah** and in **2 Kings**. These are not at all disinterested, eye-witness accounts from which we can draw accurate historical conclusions. They are told from the standpoint of faith in YHWH, and are religious documents, depicting the Israelite

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view of history as the story of YHWH and His people. We can learn from them the Israelite view—but that is not the same thing as what we moderns call “the facts” of history. That the ancient stories agree at certain points, and disagree radically at others, is only to be expected. What do you think?

Kaiser goes on to state that “Against the background of the experiences which led to the disaster to the kingdom of Judah in 587 B.C.E., the survival of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.E. became more than ever the outstanding example of the way in which a nation and a king which trusted in Yahweh would not be put to shame...

“The faith of a later generation recognized that the survival of their forefathers was an act of grace, and their forefathers themselves are transfigured into archetypes of the confidence which the narrator knew was an effective force in his daily life.” (P. 385)

²Kaiser comments on **verses 1-7** that when the Judean delegation had returned to their King, “Because they have been given no opportunity for an honorable capitulation and have also heard the name of Yahweh blasphemed, they tear their clothes. When they bring him their report, the King is deeply moved by the news, likewise tears his clothes and puts on the sack, the penitential garment...

“The sending of the second delegation, composed in this way, to the prophet Isaiah, emphasizes the priority of the spiritual Israel over the secular, and also of the prophets over the priests...In accordance with the situation, the delegation also wore penitential garments.” (P. 389)

Motyer comments on **verses 1-2** that “What transpired on this visit to the Lord’s house we are not told...At last Hezekiah realized that the Lord was his only resource and at once turned to Him.” (P. 279)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 1**: “*And it was (or came to pass) when King Hezekiah heard (the report of his messengers), that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sack-cloth, and went into the house of Jehovah...*

“He resorted to the temple, not only as a public place, but with reference to the promise made to Solomon (**1 Kings 8:29**), that God would hear the prayers of His people from that place when they were in distress.” (P. 52)

Oswalt comments that “Hezekiah not only tears his garments at the dreadful report, but he also puts on sackcloth, the biblical sign of mourning but also of repentance and humiliation...He does not here evade the issue. He is the King; if the nation is under judgment from God, then it is he who must be the first to repent of his

(continued...)

וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיִּתְכַּס בַּשָּׂק

וַיָּבֵא בֵּית יְהוָה:

And it happened, as the King Hezekiah heard,³

and he tore his robes, and dressed in the sack-cloth,⁴
and came into YHWH's house / temple.

37:2⁵ וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֱלִיאִקִּים אֲשֶׁר־עַל־הַבַּיִת

וְאֶת־שֶׁבְנָא הַסּוֹפֵר וְאֶת־זִקְנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים

מִתְכַּסִּים בַּשָּׂקִים

אֶל־יִשְׁעֵיהֶוּ בֶן־אֲמוֹץ הַנְּבִיא:

And he sent forth Elyaqim who (was) over the household

and Shebna⁶ the scribe⁷ and officials / elders of the priests,⁸

²(...continued)
own sin." (P. 644)

³Slotki states that what Hezekiah heard was "the report of Rab-shakeh's demand the threats recorded in the previous chapter [that is, **chapter 36**]." (P. 170)

⁴Watts comments that "*Sackcloth*, the symbol of grief, accurately portrays Hezekiah's sense of futility and helplessness in this situation." (P. 34)

⁵Alexander translates **verse 2**: "*And he sent Eliakim who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the son of Amoz, the prophet.*

He comments that "While he himself resorted to the temple, he sent to ask the counsel and the intercessions of the prophet." (P. 52)

⁶Our Hebrew text has the phrase *taw* before the name Shebna, while the parallel narrative in **2 Kings 19:2** does not have the phrase.

⁷Alexander comments that "Eliakim and Shebna are again employed in this case, as being qualified to make an exact report of what had happened, and in order to put honor on the prophet by an embassy of distinguished men...Thus Josiah sent to Huldah (**2 Kings 22:14**), Zedekiah to Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 37:3**)." (P. 52)

⁸Watts comments that "Hezekiah sends a delegation to Isaiah. Compare **1**

(continued...)

dressing themselves in the sack-cloths,⁹

to Isaiah, son of Amots, the spokesperson.¹⁰

37:3¹¹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר חִזְקִיָּהוּ

יּוֹם-צָרָה וְתוֹכַחַת וְנֹאצָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
כִּי בָאוּ בָנִים עַד-מִשְׁבֵּר
וְכַח אֵין לְלִדָּה:

And they said to him, In this way Hezekiah spoke:

⁸(...continued)

Kings 22:5 and **2 Kings 22:12** for parallels.” (P. 34)

⁹Alexander comments that the Hebrew phrase, בַּשִּׂקִּים, **bassaqqiym**, “in the sack-cloths,” by using the plural, “seems to show that שִׂק, **saq**, is not here the name of the material but of the garment (*covered with sacks, or sackcloth dresses*).” (P. 52)

¹⁰Oswalt comments that “As the Syrian King had realized about Elisha some 135 years earlier (**2 Kings 6:12**), the prophet of the Lord was the most potent weapon an Israelite King could have...The King’s example had touched the entire government establishment at last. God was their only hope.” (Pp. 644-45)

Where our Hebrew text has “Isaiah, son of Amots, the prophet,” **2 Kings 19:2** has “Isaiah the prophet, son of Amots.”

¹¹Motyer comments on **verses 3-4**: “Now there is repentance and confession: the end of human strength...It speaks volumes for the reality of Hezekiah’s sense of sin that he bases no appeal on his own needs but only the possibility that the Lord will stand by His Own honor. In his prayer, the King makes no reference to himself but recognizes that the needs of the Lord’s people are always a valid ground of appeal to the Lord.” (P. 279)

Alexander translates **verse 3**: “*And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, A day of anguish and rebuke and contempt (is) this day, for the children are come to the birth (or to the places of birth), and there is not strength to bring forth.*”

He comments that the statement denotes, “not external danger merely, but the complicated distress, both of a temporal and spiritual nature, in which Hezekiah was involved by the threats and blasphemies of the Assyrian.” (Pp. 52-53)

A day of distress and rebuke¹² and contempt¹³—this day--¹⁴
Because children came as far as (the) place of birth,¹⁵

¹²Alexander comments that “*Rebuke* is applied by the [Greek translation] (ὀνειδισμοῦ) and some interpreters to the *reproaches* of Rabshakeh; but it is more agreeable to usage to explain it as signifying the Divine rebuke or chastisement, as in **Psalm 73:4** and **149:7**...The very same phrase (*day of rebuke*) is used in the same sense by **Hosea 5:9**...Interpreters are commonly agreed in making the noun here mean *blasphemy*...The present distress is like the pains of childbirth.” (P. 53)

¹³The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) adds a fourth statement concerning the nature of the day: καὶ ὀργῆς, “and of anger / wrath.”

¹⁴Watts comments that “Hezekiah’s message for Isaiah evaluates the situation. He uses three terms to describe it...

יּוֹם-צָרָה, ‘a day of distress’...
תּוֹכַחָה, ‘rebuke’... [and]
נִאֲצָה, ‘disgrace’...

The three terms describe three aspects of the day. It is a time of trouble that cries out for the help of God. It is a day of decision, for rebuke by God. For it has been a day of blasphemy against God.” (P. 34)

Do you agree with the way Watts summarizes these three words? If not, how would you change his summary?

¹⁵Oswalt notes that the Hebrew noun מִשְׁבֵּר, **mashber** means “place of parting” (Delitzsch ‘matrix’), thus ‘opening of the womb.’” (P. 642)

Brown-Driver-Briggs has “cervical opening,” “place of breech, i.e. mouth of womb.”

Oswalt adds that “The metaphor of labor is a telling one. All too familiar to them was the breech birth (the baby’s buttocks and / or feet positioned to be delivered first), or some other complication, which caused the mother to be unable to deliver the child although she labored herself to exhaustion and death. Furthermore, once labor began there was no turning back; either the child was delivered or both mother and child died...

“Hezekiah sees himself in that predicament. Jerusalem must be delivered, but neither he nor his government nor his people has the strength to do it.” (P. 645)

For the figure of the time of childbirth, compare **Isaiah 26:16-18**, and **66:7-9**.

and there is no strength to give birth!¹⁶

37:4¹⁷ אֹלֵי יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי רַב־שָׁקָה

אֲשֶׁר שְׁלָחוּ מִלֶּךְ־אַשּׁוּרוֹ אֲדַנּוּ לְחַרְף־אֱלֹהִים חַיִּי

וְהוֹכִיחַ בְּדַבָּרִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

וְנִשְׂאתָ תְּפִלָּה בְּעַד הַשְּׂאֲרִית הַנִּמְצָאָה:

Perhaps¹⁸ YHWH your God will hear (the) words¹⁹ of Rab-Shakeh,

¹⁶Oswalt comments that “The opening words of Hezekiah’s message to Isaiah are an abject [wretched, miserable] admission of failure...All the foolishness of their attempts to strengthen themselves by cultivating outside help is now revealed for what Isaiah had always said it was—foolishness.” (P. 645)

¹⁷Alexander translates / comments on **verse 4**: “*If peradventure Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the King of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard, then shalt thou lift up a prayer for the remnant (that is still) found (here)...*”

“It was because Hezekiah thought Jehovah might hear, that he asked Isaiah’s prayers in his behalf.” (P. 53)

¹⁸There is no dogmatic certainty in Hezekiah’s request to Isaiah. Rather, there is humility and lack of certainty—combined with hope. We think it is an important exercise in biblical Theology to look at all the occurrences of this Hebrew word, אֹלֵי, “perhaps” (which here goes untranslated by the Greek / **Rahlfs**). See:

Genesis 16:2, Sarai’s hesitant request for Abram to bear a child by Hagar;

Genesis 18:24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, Abraham’s hesitant, but hopeful bargaining with YHWH;

Genesis 24:5, Abraham’s servant’s questioning “what if the young woman refuses to come?”;

Genesis 27:12, Jacob’s questioning uncertainty with regards to his mother’s plan to trick his father Isaac;

Genesis 32:21, Jacob’s fearful uncertainty as to whether Esau will accept his atoning gifts;

Genesis 43:12, Jacob’s hopeful uncertainty as to whether the Egyptian ruler will accept his sons’ gifts;

Exodus 32:30, Moses’ uncertainty as to whether or not YHWH will forgive the Israelites’ “great sin”;

Numbers 22:6, 11, Balak’s hope that Balaam’s curse of Israel will be successful;

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- Numbers 22:33**, Balaam's donkey's seeking to avoid Balaam's being struck by YHWH's messenger;
- Numbers 23:3**, Balaam's uncertainty as to whether YHWH will respond;
- Numbers 23:27**, Balak's similar uncertainty;
- Joshua 9:7**, an Israelite's questioning whether or not the Gibeonites are from far away, or live in Israel's midst);
- Joshua 14:12**, Caleb's hopeful uncertainty concerning his ability in old age to conquer the powerful people living in Hebron;
- 1 Samuel 6:5**, the Philistines' wondering if their gift of gold tumors and mice will cause Israel's God to lighten their plague;
- 1 Samuel 9:6**, the young man with Saul says perhaps Samuel, the man of God, can tell them where to find the lost donkeys;
- 1 Samuel 14:6**, Jonathan tells his armor-bearer that perhaps YHWH will act on their behalf;
- 2 Samuel 14:15**, the woman from Tekoa states that perhaps King David will do what she asks;
- 2 Samuel 16:12**, David states that perhaps YHWH will turn the cursing he is being given into good;
- 1 Kings 18:5**, Ahab sends Obadyahu to perhaps find grass for Ahab's animals in the midst of a drought;
- 1 Kings 18:27**, Elijah mockingly tells the prophets of Baal that perhaps Baal is asleep;
- 1 Kings 20:31**, Ben-Hadad's servants tell him that perhaps the Israelite king will spare his life;
- 2 Kings 19:4**, parallel to **Isaiah 37:4**; Hezekiah says Perhaps YHWH your (Isaiah's) God will hear Rab-Shakeh's words;
- Job 1:5**, Job says, Perhaps my children have sinned;
- Isaiah 37:4**, parallel to **2 Kings 19:4**;
- Isaiah 47:12**, YHWH tells Babylon to stand fast in her enchantments and sorceries--perhaps she may be able to succeed; perhaps she will inspire terror;
- Jeremiah 20:10**, Jeremiah's close friends are watching for his fall, saying Perhaps he will be deceived and we can overcome him;
- Jeremiah 21:2**, the people of Judah ask Jeremiah to inquire of YHWH--saying Perhaps YHWH will do wonders and make Nebuchadnezzar withdraw from us.
- Jeremiah 26:3**, Jeremiah is told by YHWH to proclaim His word in the temple-court, and states that perhaps the people will listen and turn away from their evil way;
- Jeremiah 36:3, 7**, similar;
- Jeremiah 51:8**, upon Babylon's fall, the hearer is urged to wail for her and take balm for her pain; perhaps she will be healed;
- Lamentations 3:29**, let the young man enduring suffering put his mouth in the dust--perhaps there is still hope;
- Ezekiel 12:3**, YHWH tells Ezekiel that perhaps the people will understand his strange symbolic actions, with regards to going into exile;
- Hosea 8:7**, foreigners will devour what little grain may perhaps be produced by Northern Israel;

(continued...)

whose Lord, (the) King of Assyria sent to reproach (the) Living God;²⁰

¹⁸(...continued)

Amos 5:15, If Israel will hate evil, love good, and establish justice in its courts, perhaps YHWH will show mercy to her remnant (it's not a sure thing; it's only a hope);

Jonah 1:6, the ship's captain awakes Jonah, asking him to cry out to his God—Perhaps God will take thought for them, so that they will not perish;

Zephaniah 2:3, If the humble people will seek YHWH, perhaps they will be hidden on the day of YHWH's anger.

The word “perhaps” expresses a lack of certainty, acknowledging the possibility that something different may happen. It is the opposite of dogmatic certainty.

Watts states that “Hezekiah's request to Isaiah is tentative. It speaks only of the possibility that Yahweh will *hear* and *rebuke*, if Isaiah *lifts a prayer*.” (P. 35)

Oswalt disagrees, stating that “The King has no doubt that God ‘heard’ the Assyrian's blasphemous words. The issue is whether God will choose to take action against Assyria for this particular affront.” (P. 646)

We say, No. Hezekiah's words indicate his uncertainty that God was even observing, or listening to what was happening to him and to Israel, since he, the King, and they, YHWH's people, had failed to listen to the Divine message through Isaiah. We think Hezekiah means, Our failure to pay attention to YHWH means we have no right to expect YHWH to pay attention to us. We can only hope He has heard, and will hear our prayers! What do you think?

¹⁹**2 Kings 19:4** has the word *lk* “all” before “the words.”

²⁰Slotki states concerning the phrase “the living God,” that it is meant to be contrasted with the inanimate Gods with which Rab-shakeh had blasphemously compared Him.” (P. 171)

Alexander likewise states that “The reproach and blasphemy of the Assyrian consisted mainly in his confounding Jehovah with the Gods of the surrounding nations, in antithesis to whom, as being impotent and lifeless, He is here and elsewhere called the *living God*.” (P. 54)

See **2 Chronicles 32:19**,

וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֶל-אֱלֹהֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם
כַּעַל אֱלֹהֵי עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ
מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי הָאָדָם

(continued...)

and He will reprove the words which YHWH your God²¹ heard;
and you will lift up a prayer²² on behalf of the remnant that has been found.²³

²⁰(...continued)

And they spoke to / concerning Jerusalem's Gods,
as / like concerning Gods of (the) peoples of the land—
a product of (the) hands of the human-being!

Oswalt states that *the living God*...is a phrase which expresses the Hebrew understanding of the difference between their God and the Gods of their neighbors. Those Gods were lifeless and helpless (**Isaiah 45:5-7**), but the Lord was alive, now and evermore." (P. 646)

²¹Oswalt comments that "*your God* is a source of some uncertainty to commentators. Some believe that it is only a witness to Isaiah's special calling as a prophet (Calvin), but others (for example, Delitzsch) believe it demonstrates a certain reticence on Hezekiah's part (compare also Saul in **1 Samuel 15:30**)...

"The latter seems somewhat more likely. The King is aware that, from one perspective at least, had God been truly his, as he claimed, he would have been more careful of God's honor. So here in shame he testifies that if God is to help them it will not be because he, the King, has some special claim upon God." (Pp. 646-47) We agree with Oswalt. Do you?

²²Alexander comments that "*To lift up a prayer* is not simply to utter one, but has allusion to two common idiomatic phrases, that of lifting up the voice in the sense of speaking loud or beginning to speak, and that of lifting up the heart or soul in the sense of earnestly desiring." (P. 54)

²³The phrase in Hebrew, הַשְּׂאֲרִית הַנִּמְצְאָה, *hashshe)eriyth hannimtsa)ah*, is literally "the remainder / remnant, the one that was found," but translations often have "the remnant that is left," or "the surviving remnant" or "the remnant that is left." The implication is that the vast majority have been slaughtered, or carried away into captivity, and only a few survivors have been found surviving following the catastrophe. 1QIs^a adds the phrase "in this city."

Alexander states that "The passive participle *found* is often used in Hebrew to denote what is present in a certain place, or more generally what is *extant* in existence, or forthcoming...The whole phrase...may either be a general description of the straits of low condition to which the chosen people were reduced...or be more specifically understood in reference to Judah as surviving the destruction of the ten tribes...or to Jerusalem as spared amidst the general desolation of Judah...

"In either case, the King requests the prophet to pray for their deliverance from entire destruction." (Pp. 54-55)

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וַיָּבֹאוּ עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ 37:5²⁴

אֶל־יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ:

And (the) servants of the King Hezekiah²⁵
came to Isaiah,²⁶

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ 37:6²⁷

²³(...continued)

Motyer comments that “The reference to the remnant ‘that happens to be here’ is touching. All round Jerusalem there is a veritable multitude of Hezekiah’s people, already enslaved to Assyria as really as if he had sold the himself.” (P. 279)

Oswalt states that “*the remnant to be found* probably refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all that were left from Judea since the Assyrians had captured all the outlying garrisons and villages (**Isaiah 36:1**).” (P. 647)

²⁴Alexander translates **verse 5**, “*And the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.*”

Kaiser states that “**Verse 5** makes it somewhat doubtful whether the words of the deputation were necessary at all; because it give the impression that the prophet was already in the picture and possessed Yahweh’s answer, a prophecy of salvation to which a reason is added...

“The fact that the sudden withdrawal of Sennacherib was attributed to a rumor which he had heard under the influence of a special spirit given to him by Yahweh (compare **1 Kings 22:19ff.**) shows that in the narrator’s view there was no objective reason for his sudden withdrawal.” (P. 390)

²⁵Where our Hebrew text spells the King’s name חִזְקִיָּהוּ, “**chizqiyyahu**,” 1QIs^a spells the name חִזְקִיָּה, “**chizqiyyah**.” []

²⁶Where our Hebrew text spells the prophet’s name יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ, **yesha(yahu)**, 1QIs^a spells the name יִשְׁעִיָּה, **yesh(yah)**.

²⁷Motyer comments on **verses 6-7** that “They asked Isaiah to pray, but he did not do so. There is no hesitation, no turning to God, no waiting on Him but only a simple belief that what the Lord once said He meant. An initial message of reassurance (**verse 6**) leads to a promise of Divine action (**verse 7**).” (P. 279)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6**, “*And Isaiah said to them Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of (literally from before or from*

(continued...)

כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן אֶל-אֲדֹנֵיכֶם

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

אֶל-תִּירָא

מִפְּנֵי הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתָּ

אֲשֶׁר גִּדְּפוּ נְעָרֵי מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר אוֹתִי:

And Isaiah said to them,²⁸

In this way you shall speak to your lords:

In this way YHWH spoke:

You (singular) shall not be afraid

from before the words which you heard,

with which (the) young men / boys²⁹ of the King of Assyria reviled Me.³⁰

²⁷(...continued)

the face of) the words which thou hast heard, (with) which the servants of the King of Assyria have blasphemed Me."

²⁸Where our Hebrew text has אֵלֵיהֶם, "to them," **2 Kings 19:6** has לָהֶם, which also means "to them."

²⁹The Hebrew phrase here is נְעָרֵי מֶלֶךְ-אַשּׁוּר, literally, "young men / boys of Assyria's King," and Slotki comments that "Hezekiah need not be upset by the empty boasting of irresponsible youth." (P. 171)

Most of our English translations have "servants," but **New International** has "underlings." Oswalt has "lackeys."

Alexander comments that "The word translated *servants*...strictly means *young men* or *boys*...Many interpreters regard it as a contemptuous description." (P. 55)

Oswalt is one of those interpreters: "God's contempt for the Assyrian blasphemy is seen in the use of 'lads' or *lackeys* for the Rabshaqeh and the other officers. Human beings might be awed by their power and authority, but God was not particularly impressed. They were just errand boys for an overblown ego." (P. 647)

³⁰Watts comments that "Isaiah is certain that Yahweh has heard, while Hezekiah had tentatively hoped that He had heard." (P. 35)

הַנְּנִי נֹתֵן בּוֹ רוּחַ 37:7³¹

וְשָׁמַע שְׂמוּעָה וְשָׁב אֶל-אֲרָצוֹ

וְהִפֹּלְתִיו בַּחֶרֶב בְּאֲרָצוֹ:

Look at Me—(I am) sending a wind / Spirit / spirit³² into him,³³
and he will hear a report;³⁴

³¹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 7**: “Behold I am putting (or about to put) a spirit in him, and he shall hear a noise, and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”

³²Slotki translates by the non-capitalized “a spirit,” and says it means a spirit “of fear which will undermine his strength of mind.” (P. 171)

Alexander notes that “Calvin...explains it to mean that God would carry him away as with a wind...The **English Version** renders it *behold I will send a blast upon him*, meaning either a pestilential blast or a destructive tempest. Other understand by רוּחַ the destroying angel, or an evil spirit...

“But most interpreters refer the phrase to an effect to be produced upon the mind of the Assyrian...

“The most probable conclusion is, that it does not denote a specific change, but Divine influence as governing his movements.” (P. 55)

³³Watts comments on this line, that it is “the key to the word from God...In effect, it means God will motivate someone to fight against Sennacherib.” (P. 35)

³⁴The Hebrew phrase is וְשָׁמַע שְׂמוּעָה, “and he will hear a hearing / what is heard,” but most English translations have “hear a report,” or “hear a rumor.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ ἀκούσας ἀγγελίαν, “and having heard a message.”

Slotki states that this means a rumor “about Tirhakah’s intentions (**verse 9**).” (P. 171)

Alexander comments that שְׂמוּעָה strictly means anything *heard*, and Luther accordingly translates the phrase, *he shall hear something*. Most writers understand this as referring to the news mentioned in **verse 9**.” (P. 55)

Oswalt states that “Things as ephemeral as a vague uneasiness or a distant rumor are all that is necessary to remove the Emperor from before Jerusalem...The

(continued...)

and he will return to his land;³⁵

and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his land!

37:8³⁶ וַיִּשָׁב רַב־שָׁקֶה

³⁴(...continued)

'spirit' mentioned here is neither the Holy Spirit nor an angelic spirit, but rather an attitude, disposition, or feeling (compare **Isaiah 19:14**; **Numbers 5:14**; **Hosea 4:12**; **Zechariah 13:2**; **2 Timothy 1:7**). God is going to predispose Sennacherib to leave." (P. 647)

Watts comments that "Sennacherib is...susceptible to the power of rumor and report. This one sends him home and finally to his death." (P. 35)

³⁵Where our Hebrew text has אֶל־אֲרָצוֹ, **2 Kings 19:7** has לְאֲרָצוֹ, using a different preposition, l. instead of la., both meaning "to his country."

³⁶Motyer entitles **verses 8-35** "The second Assyrian embassy." He entitles **verses 8-9a** "Assyria leaves Judah."

He comments that "The Assyrian dignitary and his 'large army' (**Isaiah 36:2**) withdrew from the city and rejoined the main force attempting to reduce Libnah, ten miles north of Lachish. It is best to understand **verse 9** as explaining the move to Libnah: *He had heard about Tirhakah...*The move north indicates Sennacherib's unwillingness at this point to face a prolonged Palestinian war. He had by no means finally dealt with the Babylonian threat to his empire and felt it necessary, therefore, to curtail his western objectives which had included the conquest of Egypt. The likelihood of further Egyptian incursion following the defeat at Eltekeh was remote but, as we know, the rumor was Divinely inspired [how do we know this? We think Motyer's certainty concerning historical events is unjustified]. The Lord of history knows when a whispered word is enough and 'the hearts of kings are in His rule and governance' [quoting The Collect for the Queen in the **Book of Common Prayer Communion Service**]." (P. 280)

Oswalt entitles **verses 8-35** "The King's Challenge," and entitles **verses 8-13** "The royal letter."

He comments that "Many commentators consider **37:8-35** (exclusive of **verses 8-9**) to be a different account of the same original event as described in **chapter 36**. They base this conclusion upon two major arguments. First, it is said that the letter makes the same points as the Rabshakeh did; and second, it is argued that if a personal embassy had failed it is hardly likely that Sennacherib would expect a letter to succeed."

(continued...)

וַיָּמְצֵא אֶת־מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר נֹלְחָם עַל־לִבְנָה

כִּי שָׁמַע כִּי נָסַע מֶלֶךְ־יִשׂ:

And Rab-Shakeh returned,

and he found Assyria's King fighting against Libnah;³⁷

³⁶(...continued)

But, Oswalt responds, "If Sennacherib was being faced with a threat from Egypt, as the text reports, then he needed Rabshakeh with him. However, he did not want Hezekiah to believe that he had had a reprieve; thus the letter comes to remind Hezekiah of the Rabshakeh's words and to inform him that the present relief is only temporary." (Pp. 648-49)

Kaiser comments on verses 8-9a that "With **37:8** the text loses its clarity...The present text, which in my view has been pieced together in a garbled fashion from an older text, gives the impression that the rumor that Tirhakah was setting out caused the withdrawal." (P. 390)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 8**: "*And Rabshakeh returned, and found the King of Assyria fighting against (i.e. besieging) Libnah, for he heard that he had decamped from Lachish...*

"Both these towns were in the plain or lowlands of Judea, southwest of Jerusalem...originally seats of Canaanitish kings or chiefs, conquered by Joshua (**Joshua 12:11, 15**). Lachish was one of the fifteen places fortified by Rehoboam (**2 Chronicles 11:9**), and one of the last towns taken by Nebuchadnezzar (**Jeremiah 34:7**)...Libnah was a city of the Levites and of refuge (**Joshua 21:13**), and appears to have been nearer to Jerusalem.

"Henderson infers that Sennacherib had conquered Lachish, most other writers that he failed in the attempt. Some of the older writers make Libnah an Egyptian city, either because one of the stations of the Israelites in the wilderness bore this name (**Numbers 33:20**), or because Josephus, in order to reconcile Isaiah's narrative with that of Herodotus, represents Sennacherib as leaving Lachish to besiege Pelusium." (P. 56)

³⁷Slotki states that the location of Libnah "is unknown, but it seems to have been situated in the vicinity of Lachish [a site well known by archaeologists]." (P. 171)

Oswalt comments that "Libnah has not yet been definitely located. Previously it had been identified with Tell es-Safi, about twelve and one-half miles north of Lachish, but more recently, Tell el-Bornat, six miles north, has been suggested. Why the Assyrian Monarch had moved there from Lachish is not clear. Perhaps Lachish had fallen and the Assyrians were now 'mopping up' the outlying dependencies. Or perhaps

(continued...)

because he heard that he pulled up / out³⁸ from Lachish.³⁹

37:9⁴⁰ וַיִּשְׁמַע עַל־תִּרְהַקָּה מֶלֶךְ־כּוּשׁ׃

לֵאמֹר יֵצֵא לְהִלָּחֵם אֵתְךָ׃

וַיִּשְׁמַע

וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָכִים אֶל־חִזְקִיָּהוּ לֵאמֹר׃

And he heard concerning⁴¹ Tirhaqah, King of Ethiopia,⁴²,¹

³⁷(...continued)

Sennacherib was pulling back to the north to put Jerusalem on his flank, rather than directly in his rear when he met the Egyptians.” (P. 649)

³⁸Alexander comments that “the last verb in this verse [נָסַע], *nasa*(, our ‘pulled up / out’] properly denotes the removal of a tent or an encampment, an idea happily expressed in Lowth’s translation by the military term *decamped*.” (P. 56)

³⁹For this statement, compare **Isaiah 36:2**.

⁴⁰Alexander translates / comments on **verse 9**: “*And he (Sennacherib) heard say concerning Tirhakah King of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee; and he heard (it), and sent (or when he heard it he sent) messengers to Hezekiah, saying (what follows in the next verse).*”

⁴¹Where our Hebrew text has the preposition **עַל**, “concerning,” the parallel passage, **2 Kings 19:9** has the preposition **לְ**, “to” or “into.” This may only be another example of how Hebrew prepositions have lost their exact connotations in later Hebrew, and are used somewhat interchangeably.

⁴²Slotki comments that “Tirhakah king of Ethiopia’s accession is said to have taken place in the year 704 B.C.E., one year after that of Sennacherib to the throne of Assyria. His rule extended later over all the Nile countries, and he was continually occupied in endeavors to undermine the power of Assyria by inciting its vassals to rebellion. Some critics, however, find difficulty in reconciling the chronology of the biblical Tirhakah with the ruler of the same or similar name in the Egyptian and Assyrian documents.” (Pp. 171-72) See our end-note 1 for a Wikipedia article concerning this Cushite or Ethiopian Pharaoh of Egypt.

Oswalt states that “*Tirhaqah, King of Ethiopia*, has been a source of considerable controversy. It is now clear that he did not become King of Egypt before 689 B.C.E. This fact has been used both to support the two-attack theory and to

(continued...)

saying He went forth to fight with you;
and he heard,⁴³
and he sent forth messengers to Hezekiah,⁴⁴ saying,⁴⁵

⁴²(...continued)

discredit the historical veracity of the account. However, the majority of modern commentators admit the possibility that Tirhaqah is here identified by a position which he held later in life (See K. A. Kitchen, **The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt**, pp. 154-72, 387-93)...

“Assyrian records only mention the battle of Eltekeh, and they place that battle before the siege of Jerusalem.” (P. 649)

Alexander states that “Tirhakah was one of the most famous conquerors of ancient times. Megasthenes, as quoted by Strabo, puts him between Sesostrius and Nebuchadnezzar. He is also named by Manetho as one of the Ethiopian dynasties in Egypt. He was at this time either in close alliance with that country, or more probably in actual possession of Thebais or Upper Egypt. The fact that an Ethiopian dynasty did reign there is attested by the ancient writers, and confirmed by still existing monuments...

“The bare fact of his having left his own dominions, with the purpose of attacking Sennacherib, would be sufficient to alarm the latter, especially as his operations in the Holy Land had been so unsuccessful. He was naturally anxious, therefore, to induce Hezekiah to capitulate before the Ethiopians should arrive...

“A peculiar difficulty arose also from the scarcity of water in the environs of Jerusalem, which has been an obstacle to all the armies that have ever besieged it.” (Pp. 56-57)

⁴³Where our Hebrew text has the verb **וַיִּשְׁמָע**, “and he heard,” the parallel passage, **2 Kings 19:9** has the verb **וַיָּשָׁב**, “and he returned.” 1QIs^a has both verbs, “he heard and he returned,” and the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) of **Isaiah 37:9** likewise has **καὶ ἀκούσας ἀπέστρεψε**, “and hearing / having heard he returned.”

⁴⁴Oswalt comments that “*He heard and sent messengers* suggests two possible motives for Sennacherib’s action. First, he may have been trying to force Jerusalem’s capitulation before he faced the rumored Egyptian attack so as not to have enemies both behind and before him. Second, he may have wished to prevent Hezekiah from receiving any encouragement from the reported action. It is as though he says to the beleaguered Judean, ‘Everything is just as it was. There is no hope for you.’” (P. 650)

⁴⁵Motyer entitles **verses 9b-13** “The letter to Hezekiah: the man of faith.” He comments that “This is the first of three sections dealing with the second Assyrian approach to Jerusalem...It reveals basic changes in Hezekiah from the situation in

(continued...)

כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן אֶל־חֲזַקְיָהוּ מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה לֵאמֹר 37:10⁴⁶

אֶל־יִשְׂאָךְ אֱלֹהֶיךָ

אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בּוֹטָח בּוֹ לֵאמֹר

לֹא תִנָּתֵן יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּיַד מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר:

⁴⁵(...continued)

36:1-37:7...There had been a time (**36:6-7**) when [Hezekiah's primary reliance] was on Egyptian armament. But now there is no reference to Egypt, only to 'your God on Whom you are trusting (**verse 10**)...Hezekiah has come to a straight-forward, personal and unequivocal faith.

"Sennacherib apparently addressed Hezekiah in verbal (**verse 10**) and written (**verse 14**) form; attacking the folly of his new-found position of faith (**verse 10b**); asserting the invincibility of Assyria over both nations (**verse 11**) and Gods (**verse 12**); and stressing the risk particularly to kings who oppose Assyria (**verse 13**)..."

"Sennacherib has consigned other cities to his God; can the city of the Lord thus become a devoted thing?" (Pp. 280-81)

⁴⁶Slotki comments on **verses 10-13** that they contain "A threatening message to Hezekiah from the King of Assyria, which is almost a repetition of Rabshakeh's harangue in **verses 13-20** of the previous chapter [**chapter 36**]." (P. 172)

Kaiser states that "What is told to the messengers in **verses 10-13** is entirely the product of the theological concern of the narrator to bring to the fore the contrast between confidence in Yahweh and confidence in the Gods [of the ancient Near East]." (P. 392)

Alexander translates **verse 10**: "*Thus shall ye say to Hezekiah, King of Judah, Let not thy God deceive thee, in Whom thou trustest, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the King of Assyria...*"

"In this message the design of the Assyrians was not to destroy the people's confidence in Hezekiah, but the King's own confidence in God." (P. 57)

Watts states that "These are ordinary messengers, in contrast to the high-level officers of the first delegation (**chapter 36**). These are words of a letter [/ letters] (see **verse 14**). They attack the trustworthiness of Yahweh Himself and thus the hope of safety for the city..."

"The exilic listeners [those hearing / reading Isaiah's message while in Babylonian captivity] would question whether the events of history had indeed sustained the Assyrian's claims." (Pp. 35-36)

In this way you (plural) shall speak to Hezekiah King of Judah, saying,

Don't let your God deceive you;⁴⁷

you are trusting in Him, saying,

Jerusalem will not be given into (the) King of Assyria's hand.

37:11⁴⁸ הִנֵּה | אֶתְּהָ שְׁמַעַתָּ

אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ מַלְכֵי אַשּׁוּר

לְכָל-הָאֲרָצוֹת לְהַחֲרִימָם

וְאַתָּה תִּנְצַל:

Look⁴⁹—you, you heard

⁴⁷Oswalt comments that “Unlike the Rabshakeh’s attack, which was upon Hezekiah, this one is upon God Himself. In the Rabshakeh’s attack it was Hezekiah who was deceiving the people. Now it is God Who deceives Hezekiah...

“Here too, since the purpose is not to discredit Hezekiah in the eyes of the people but to discredit God in the eyes of Hezekiah, Hezekiah is given the courtesy of the title ‘King.’” (P. 650)

⁴⁸Watts comments on **verses 11-15** that “Assyrian kings have dealt with many cities and their Gods. Why should Jerusalem be different?...Hezekiah’s response this time was to take the message to the temple, spread it out before Yahweh and pray. This time he himself prays.” (P. 36)

Alexander translates and comments on **verse 11**: “*Behold, thou has heard what the Kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, by utterly destroying them, and thou shalt be delivered!*”

The interjection *behold* appeals to these events as something perfectly notorious; as if he had said, See what has happened to others, and then judge whether thou art likely to escape...

“This clause is, in most versions, rendered as an interrogation, but is properly an exclamation of contemptuous incredulity.” (P. 57)

⁴⁹Oswalt comments that “As Young points out, *Behold* is an indication that the Assyrian considers the facts which he is about to recite as indisputably well known...

“Because Sennacherib does not know of a God Who is Master of history and can thus do unique things, he insists that the historical precedent is irrefutable. Judah is

(continued...)

what⁵⁰ Assyria's kings did
to all the lands, to destroy them;
and you, will you be delivered?

37:12⁵¹ הַהַצִּילוּ אֹתָם אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם

אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁחִיתוּ אֲבוֹתַי

אֶת־גּוֹזָן וְאֶת־חַרָן וְרֶצֶף

וּבְנֵי־עֵדֶן אֲשֶׁר בְּתֵל־שָׁר:

Did (the) Gods of the nations deliver them,
whom my fathers⁵² destroyed—⁵³

Gozan,⁵⁴ and Charan,⁵⁵ and Retseph,⁵⁶

⁴⁹(...continued)

one more nation like all the rest which the Assyrians have destroyed. How can she alone be saved?" (P. 650)

⁵⁰Where our Hebrew text has only the relative particle אֲשֶׁר, "what," the parallel passage in **2 Kings 19:11** and also **1QIs^a** have the phrase אֵת אֲשֶׁר, "what" preceded by the sign of the direct object.

⁵¹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 12**: "Did the Gods of the nations deliver them, which my fathers destroyed, (to wit,) Gozan, and Haran, and Rezep, and the children of Eden which is (or who were) in Telassar?"

⁵²Slotki comments that by "my fathers" is meant "the Assyrian kings who reigned before him. Sennacherib was only the second king in the dynasty founded by his father Sargon." (P. 172)

⁵³Where our Hebrew text has the hiphil הִשְׁחִיתוּ, "they caused to be destroyed," the parallel passage **2 Kings 19:12** has the qal, שָׁחֲתוּ, "they destroyed."

⁵⁴Slotki comments that Gozan was "on the River Chaboras, a northern tributary of the Euphrates." (P. 172)

"Halah (Hebrew: חֲלָה) is a city that is mentioned in the **Bible**. It is noted when the Assyrians invaded Israel and enslaved the people. They were sent into exile in

(continued...)

⁵⁴(...continued)

Halah, in Gozan on the Khabur River, and in the towns of the Medes. Halah was in Assyria, which was a major power in northern Mesopotamia. The city appears in **2 Kings 17:6** and in **1 Chronicles 5:26**, where the story is being retold.

“It has been suggested that Halah may have been an old name for Cilicia, as the Hebrew name is similar to Khilikku or Khilakku, the Assyrian name for Cilicia, though this association is uncertain. Another suggestion is that Halah is a variant of Calah.” **Wikipedia**, 8/17/2017.

Alexander states that “With respect to the places mentioned...all that is absolutely necessary to the just understanding of the sentence is, that they were well known, both to speaker and hearer, as Assyrian conquests. The difficulty of identifying some of them affords an incidental argument in favor of the antiquity and genuineness of the passage...

“*Gozan* is probably the modern *Kaushan*, the *Gauzanitis* of Ptolemy, a region of Mesopotamia, situated on the Chaboras, to which a portion of the ten tribes were transferred by Shalmaneser. *Haran* was a city of Mesopotamia, where Abraham’s father died, the *Carrae* of the Romans, and famous for the great defeat of Crassus. *Rezeph*, a common name in oriental geography, here denotes probably the *Ressapha* of Ptolemy, a town and province in Palmyrene Syria. *Eden* means pleasure or delight, and seems to have been given as a name to various places...*Tel-assar*...appears to be analogous in form to the Babylonian names *Tel-abib*, *Tel-melah*, *Tel-hasha*, in all of which *tel* means *hill*, and corresponds to the English *mount* in names of places.” (P. 58)

⁵⁵Slotki spells Haran, and notes that it was located “in northern Mesopotamia on the River Belikh, which is also a tributary of the Euphrates to the west of Chaboras.” (P. 172)

“Haran, Charan, or Charran (Hebrew: , transliterated as Charan) is a place mentioned in the **Hebrew Bible**...Haran was a place where Terah temporarily settled with his son the Patriarch Abraham (who was known as Abram at that time), his nephew Lot, and Abram's wife Sarai, all of them descendants of Arpachshad son of Shem, during their journey from Ur Kasdim (Ur of the Chaldees) to the Land of Canaan.

“The region of this Haran is referred to variously as Paddan Aram and Aram Naharaim. Abram lived there until he was 75 years old before continuing his journey. Although Abram's nephew Lot accompanied him to Canaan, other descendants of Terah remained in Paddan-Aram, where Abraham's grandson Jacob sought his parents' relative, namely Laban, for whom he worked for twenty years in Haran. In **2 Kings 19:12** and **Isaiah 37:12** Haran reappears in the late 8th to early 7th century B.C.E. context of the Neo-Assyrian Empire's conquests. It appears again in **Ezekiel 27:23** (6th century B.C.E.) as a former trading partner of the Phoenician city Tyre. In

(continued...)

and children of Eden⁵⁷ who were in Telassar?⁵⁸

37:13⁵⁹ אֵיִה מִלְךְ-חַמַּת וּמִלְךְ אַרְפָּד

⁵⁵(...continued)

the **New Testament**, Haran is mentioned in the **Book of Acts 7:2–4**, in a recounting of the story in **Genesis** wherein it first appears.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/17/ 2017)

⁵⁶Slotki spells “Rezeph,” and notes that it was “In the desert, about twenty miles south of the Euphrates and about sixteen miles south of Sura on the road from that town to Palmyra.” (P. 172) The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has Ραφες, **Raphes**.

⁵⁷Slotki comments on “the children of Eden” that “The Hebrew בְּנֵי-עֵדֵן, **beney-(edhen** corresponds to Bit Adini, situated on both banks of the middle Euphrates.” (P. 172)

⁵⁸Slotki states that Telassar means “the mound [te/] of Assur” and “was, as some suggest, the region called by its Hittite inhabitants Mitani.” (P. 172)

Where our Hebrew text has בֵּית־לַשָּׁר, **bithelassar**, **2 Kings 19:12** has בֵּית־לַאֲשָׁר, **bithela)ssar**. The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἐν χώρᾳ Θεμαδ, “in a country, Themad.”

Oswalt comments on **verse 12** that “Here Sennacherib sharpens his argument to make it plain that he considers the Lord to be merely one more of the Gods Whose lands his predecessors had devastated in northern Mesopotamia. All the cities mentioned here lay between the Tigris and the Euphrates, with Gozan being the farthest east on the Habur (**2 Kings 17:6**) and Telassar (which name several sites bore) perhaps being in the region of Carchemish.” (P. 650)

Kaiser states that “The Gods of the country of Gozan, far to the northwest on the river Habor (compare **2 Kings 17:6**; **1 Chronicles 5:26**), of the caravan crossroads of Haran to the west of it, of Rezeph, which may perhaps have lain between the Javel Sinjar and the Tigris, or of the Beth Adini, which lay on both sides of the middle Euphrates, with its capital Til Barsip, and Yahweh were all one and the same in [the Assyrian’s] eyes...Thus the confidence placed in Yahweh seems to be deceptive (compare **verse 10**) and the deliverance of Jerusalem impossible (**verses 11 and 12**).” (Pp. 392-93)

⁵⁹Alexander translates **verse 13**: “Where is the King of Hamath, and the King of Arpad, and the King of the city Sepharvaim, Henah and Ivvah?...”

“The question implies that they were nowhere, or had ceased to be. The first

(continued...)

וּמֶלֶךְ לְעִיר סַפְרַיִם הַנֶּעַ וְעֵנָה:

Where⁶⁰ (is) Chamath's king, and (the) king of Arpad,
and (the) king of the City of Sepharwaim,⁶¹ Hena and Iwwah?⁶²

37:14⁶³ וַיִּקַּח תְּזַקִּיהוּ אֶת־הַסַּפְרַיִם מִיַּד הַמְּלָאכִים

⁵⁹(...continued)

three names occur in the same order in Rabshakeh's speech (**Isaiah 37:19**) and the remaining two also in the parallel passage (**2 Kings 18:34**)...Of Hena, nothing whatever is known, and of Iwwah only that it may be identical with the Avva of **2 Kings 17:24**, from which Assyrian colonists were transferred to Samaria." (Pp. 58-59)

⁶⁰Where our Hebrew text has אַיְיָ,)ayyeh, "where?", the parallel passage **2 Kings 19:13** has אַיְיָ,)ayyo, "where is he?"

⁶¹For the cities of Chamath, Arpad and Sepharwaim, see our footnote on **Isaiah 36:19**.

⁶²These two cities or perhaps countries are mentioned in **2 Kings 18:34**, הַנֶּעַ וְעֵנָה, hena(and (iwwah. Slotki comments that "Their exact location is unknown. They were apparently Syrian towns or regions." (P. 172)

Watts states simply that "No cities by these names are known...The identity of these places is lost in antiquity, but Wildberger (p. 1417) is right in insisting that that is no excuse for eliminating them." (P. 33) We agree.

Oswalt comments on **verse 13** that "Terrible things had befallen Kings whom Hezekiah may have known personally. They too may have trusted oracles from their Gods and they had been flayed alive, impaled, mutilated, and killed." (P. 651)

⁶³Oswalt entitles **37:14-35** "Response to the challenge." He entitles **verses 14-20** "Hezekiah's prayer."

He comments that "Hezekiah...had no doubt received news of the Egyptian approach; he had watched the Rabshakeh depart; his hopes were raised and he breathed a sigh of relief. What an awful shock it must have been to see the Assyrian embassy back again with even more arrogant words. If ever Hezekiah was tempted to surrender, it must have been then. But at this critical moment he dared to do what his father Ahaz was never able to do: he dared to believe that the kingdoms of this world are the kingdoms of our Lord..."

"Prayers of monarchs in somewhat similar straits appear in extra-biblical sources. Two of these are the prayer of the Egyptian Sethos before the Assyrian

(continued...)

⁶³(...continued)

threat, and the prayer of Ashurbanipal in the Elamite crisis. In both cases the King

perceives himself to be *in extremis* [in an extremely difficult situation, or at the point of death] and cries out to his God, ultimately receiving assurances of help.” (P. 652)

Motyer entitles **37:14-20** “Hezekiah’s reaction: the man of prayer.”

He comments, “Contrast this with **Isaiah 37:1-2**, where Hezekiah rent his own clothes and asked Isaiah to pray. Now there is no rending of garments and he does his own praying. Here is a man who knows his way about in the realm of faith. Therefore, he begins by committing all to God (**verse 14**) and then turns to asking (**verses 15-20**).” (P. 281)

Alexander translates **verse 14**: “*And Hezekiah took the letters from the hand of the messengers, and read it, and went up (to) the house of Jehovah, and Hezekiah spread it before Jehovah.*”

He comments that “As nothing had been previously said respecting letters, we must either suppose that the preceding address was made not orally but in writing, or that both modes of communication were adopted. The latter is most probable in itself, and agrees best with the statement in **2 Chronicles 32:17**, that besides the speeches which his servants spake against the Lord God, and against His servant Hezekiah, Sennacherib wrote letters to rail on the Lord God of Israel and to speak against Him...

“The singular pronoun (it) referring to the plural antecedent (letters) is explained by David Kimchi distributively, as meaning every one of them; by the [Aramaic] Targum, as meaning simply one of them, i.e. according to Joseph Kimchi, the one that contained the blasphemy...But perhaps the most satisfactory explanation is, that סְפָרִים, like the Latin *literae*, had come to signify a single letter, and might be therefore treated indiscriminately either as a singular or a plural form...The [Greek translation / **Rahlfs**] and Luther make both noun and pronoun singular, while Calvin and the Latin Vulgate make both plural. The parallel passage (**2 Kings 19:14**) removes all appearance of irregularity by reading *them* instead of *it*.” (Pp. 59-60)

Oswalt similarly states that “*the letter* is plural in Hebrew (...literally ‘books’) but Hezekiah is said to have read *it* (singular). The [Greek translation / **Rahlfs**] takes ‘letter’ as singular while the [Aramaic] Targum leaves the plural ‘letters’ and resolves the problem by having Hezekiah read ‘one of them.’ Probably there is no contradiction; the plural form may be normal for a singular item.” (P. 652)

Motyer comments “How non-plussed [surprised and bewildered] the Assyrians must have been by the reaction of a man who keeps them standing while he reads their letter and then calmly goes to cast his burden on the Lord!” (P. 281)

וַיַּעַל בֵּית יְהוָה

וַיִּפְרֹשֶׁהוּ חִזְקִיָּהוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה:

And Hezekiah took the writings / letters⁶⁴ from (the) hand of the messengers,
and he read them;

and he went up (to) YHWH's house / temple;⁶⁵
and Hezekiah spread it⁶⁶ before YHWH.⁶⁷

וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל חִזְקִיָּהוּ אֶל־יְהוָה לֵאמֹר: 37:15⁶⁸

And Hezekiah prayed to⁶⁹ YHWH, saying:⁷⁰

⁶⁴Where our Hebrew text has the plural **הַסְּפָרִים**, **hassephariym**, “the letters / writings,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has the singular, τὸ βιβλίον, “the writing / book.” All of our English translations which we are using have the singular.

⁶⁵For this line, compare **Isaiah 37:1**.

⁶⁶Slotki comments that Hezekiah “spread” the letter; a symbolic act, displaying the Assyrian’s blasphemies in the presence of God.” (P. 173)

⁶⁷Alexander states that this “spreading of the letter before YHWH” was “no studied, calculated movement, but a natural expression of anxiety and trust in God, as a Protector and a confidential Friend; a state of mind which to an infidel must needs appear ridiculous. As any man would carry an open letter, which troubled or perplexed him, to a friend for sympathy and counsel, so the pious king spreads this blasphemous epistle before God, as the occasion and subject of his prayers.” (P. 60)

Oswalt states that this spreading before the Lord is like the “later Maccabees, who spread a copy of the defaced law before the Lord (**1 Maccabees 3:48**).” He explains that it “is not an attempt to inform God of something He does not already know, but an expression of shock and outrage. Hezekiah does not merely wish to tell God about the offending document; he places it before Him in its entirety, as if to say, ‘Surely this cannot be left unanswered.’” (P. 653)

⁶⁸Motyer comments on **verses 15-20** that “Like all true prayer, Hezekiah’s is preoccupied with God: Who He is (**verse 16**); His honor (**verse 17**); His uniqueness (**verses 18-19**); and the revelation of His glory to the world (**verse 20**).” (P. 281)

Alexander translates **verse 15**: “*And Hezekiah prayed to Jehovah saying (what follows in the next verse).*” (P. 60)

⁶⁹Where our Hebrew text has *la*, “to,” the parallel passage (**2 Kings 19:15**) has

(continued...)

37:16⁷¹ יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל

ישב הכרבים

אתה הוא

האלהים לבדך לכל ממלכות הארץ

אתה עשית את השמים ואת הארץ:

⁶⁹(...continued)

לפני, **liphney**, “before (YHWH).”

⁷⁰Where our Hebrew text has לומר, “saying,” the parallel passage (**2 Kings 19:15**) has ויאמר, “and he said.”

⁷¹Slotki entitles **verses 16-20** “Hezekiah’s prayer.”

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 16**: “*Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, dwelling between (or sitting upon) the cherubim, Thou art He, the God (i.e. the only true God), Thou alone, to all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou has made the heavens and the earth...*”

“The parallel passage (**2 Kings 19:15**) omits צבאות [hosts]...What can be more natural...than that Isaiah should employ it in the case before us, and the simple prose form in the **Book of Kings**?” (P. 61)

Motyer comments on **verse 16** that “The heart of prayer is not its petitionary content but the acknowledgment of God.” (P. 281)

Oswalt states that “This verse is an invocation, proclaiming the basis upon which the following plea for deliverance is made...Sennacherib is not to be defeated because the Judeans are so righteous. Indeed, they are not. Rather, it is because the Assyrian has called the name of God into question.” (P. 653) Compare **Ezekiel 36:20-32**.

Watts states “The address [in **verse 16**] makes six statements about God. *Yahweh of Hosts...sitting (above) the cherubim...God of Israel...You are God, You alone...To all the kingdoms of the land...You have made the heavens and the earth...*”

“These...confessions lay the foundation for Hezekiah’s appeal for Divine intervention.” (P. 36)

YHWH of Armies,⁷² God of Israel,

(the) One dwelling / inhabiting the cherubim—⁷³

You are He,⁷⁴

⁷²Where our Hebrew text has the plural noun **צְבָאוֹת**, **tsebha)oth**, “armies,” the noun is omitted in the parallel passage, **2 Kings 19:15**.

⁷³For this matter of YHWH’s **יֹשֵׁב הַכְּרֻבִים**, **yoshebh hakkerubhiym**, “dwelling / inhabiting the “cherubim,” see **Exodus 35:18-22**.

We are puzzled as to what exactly is meant by this phrase. Does it affirm that YHWH, the God of the universe(s), lives exclusively in Israel’s sacred objects in the Jerusalem temple? And then, when the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, He had no further dwelling-place on earth? Which is absurd! If Ezekiel was about to draw such a conclusion, his vision of the awesome, mysterious presence of YHWH in Babylonia would keep him from drawing that conclusion!

Alexander states that “The *cherubim* were visible representations of spiritual beings...Some suppose an allusion, in the case before us, to Jehovah’s riding on the cherubim (**Psalm 18:11**), or angels through the air; others to His being enthroned above the material cherubs in the temple. This sense is given by Luther and the ancient versions, but Calvin and many later writers understand Him to be here described as *dwelling between* the cherubim. (Compare **Exodus 25 / 35:22**)..

“In either case there is allusion to His manifested presence over the mercy-seat, called by the later Jews *shechinah*, which word is itself used in Chaldee paraphrase of the verse before us.” (P. 61)

Motyer states that “The cherubim were the figures set at each end of the mercy seat, gazing inwards and downwards (**Exodus 37:6-9**). They formed the pedestal of the invisible throne of the God of Israel (**Ezekiel 1:22-28**)...The cherubim, as Ezekiel saw them, represent all created excellence (the lion represents wild beasts; the ox, domestic beasts; the eagle, birds; and man, the greatest of all creatures). Thus enthroned over all, the Lord was nevertheless present at the center of His people’s life.” (P. 281)

Oswalt comments, “While God is especially and uniquely present in that space [over the cherubim], He is not to be localized to the extent that He is conceived to sit *on* the cherubim. Thus this concept delicately balances two truths. God is no idol, a force Who exists for us but, on the other hand, He is not absolutely removed from us. He is, in Isaiah’s words, ‘God with us [Emanuel].’” (Pp. 653-54)

⁷⁴Oswalt notes that the phrase **אַתָּה הוּא**, “You-He,” is “called an emphatic resumptive phrase by Delitzsch (‘You, even You, are God’)...Similar expressions appear

(continued...)

the God by Yourself / alone for all kingdoms of the earth;⁷⁵

⁷⁴(...continued)

in:

Isaiah 43:25a, b

אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא
מִחָה פִּשְׁעֶיךָ לְמַעְנֵי

I, I (am) He--

One wiping away your transgressions for My sake...

Isaiah 51:12a,

אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא
מִנְחַמְכֶם

I, I (am) He--

your (plural) Comforter!...

2 Samuel 7:28a,b,

וְעַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה
אַתָּה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים

And now, my Lord YHWH,

You (are) He, the God!...

Nehemiah 9:6a, b,

אַתָּה הוּא יְהוִה
לְבַדְּךָ

You (are) He--YHWH

by Yourself! / only You!

Psalms 44:5^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}a, b,

אַתָּה הוּא
מֶלֶכִּי אֱלֹהִים

You (are) He--

my King, O God...

You made the heavens and the earth.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Alexander holds that “It is best to translate... *Thou (art) He*, and to regard what follows as explanatory of this pregnant and concise expression. *The God of all the kingdoms of the earth* is not an exact translation of the Hebrew words, in which *the God* stands by itself as an emphatic phrase, meaning *the only God, the true God*, and what follows is intended to suggest a contrast with the false Gods of the nations...

“Ikl is not simply *of all, in all, for all, or over all*, but *with respect to all*. Thou art the one true God, not only with respect to us, but with respect to all the nations of the earth. The reason follows: because Thou hast made them all, and not the earth only, but the heavens also [a powerful statement of universalism!]...

“All this is indirectly a reply to the Assyrian blasphemies, which questioned the almighty power of Jehovah, and put Him on a level with the idols of the heathen. The same antithesis between the impotence of idols and the power of God shown in the creation of the world, occurs in **Psalm 96:5** and **Jeremiah 10:11**.” (P. 61)

Oswalt comments that “Hezekiah has learned the truth which his father Ahaz refused to consider. The nations of the earth are not ultimate, nor are they to be trusted. It is the God of Israel, the God Who graciously manifests Himself from above the cherubim, Who rules the nations. It is not foolish to trust Him, contrary to Sennacherib’s assertions. In fact, it is the height of folly *not* to trust Him, for He, as Maker, is the only God. In many ways, this confession that God alone rules the nations is the climax of the entire first part of the **Book of Isaiah**. God is the One in Whom trust should reside, not in human glory, as typified in the nations [we agree!]...

“Nowhere in this prayer does Hezekiah boast of his or his nation’s righteousness as a motive for God’s deliverance. The King knows too well that there is no hope for them in human achievements. Their only hope is in the undeserved grace of the Sovereign of the nations.” (P. 654)

⁷⁶Here is a powerful statement of YHWH’s monotheism and universalism—He alone is the God, and He is God for “all the kingdoms of the earth”—not an Israelite God, or a God belonging to one earthly kingdom. He is such for He is the Maker / Creator of “the heavens and the earth,” that is of all that there is!

Oswalt states that “Hezekiah identifies the Lord in two primary ways: as King and as Creator...If God made the heavens and the earth, then it is He Who defines the earth and not vice versa. He is separate from the earth and nothing earthly can even be on a par with Him, let alone claim superiority over Him.” (P. 653)

Surely this truth has been overwhelmingly confirmed by modern sciences unveiling the immensity of the created universe!

37:17⁷⁷ הִטָּה יְהוָה אָזְנֶךָ וּשְׁמָע

פִּקַּח יְהוָה עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה

וּשְׁמָע אֶת כָּל־דְּבָרֵי סַנְחֵרִיב

אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח לְחַרֵּף אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים:

Incline, O YHWH, Your ear, and hear!

Open, O YHWH, Your eye,⁷⁸ and see!

And hear all⁷⁹ Sennacherib's words

which he sent forth to reproach a living God!

⁷⁷Alexander translates / comments on **verse 17**: “Bow Thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open Thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent (or who hath sent) to reproach the living God.”

Oswalt comments that “The audacity of Hezekiah’s faith is made plain here... How shall Hezekiah refute the claims that Judah should not trust in her God because no other God had been able to deliver its nation? The answer was ready at hand: the Lord was a different order of being from all those other Gods...Because God was other than this world, He could not be represented in the forms of this world.” (Pp. 654-55)

But is this not over-statement? Is not Israel’s God, YHWH, represented in forms of this world, such as a “Father” with children, or as dwelling “over the cherubim,” or as making the ark of the covenant His “footstool”? Is He not depicted as coming to His people’s aid in the form of human beings (see the stories in **Genesis 18** and elsewhere), etc.?

⁷⁸Slotki observes that “The Hebrew [עֵינֶיךָ, not עֵינֶיךָ] is written without the letter y [in the suffix], the vowel indicating that the plural is meant.” (P. 173)

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has neither “eye” or “eyes,” but rather has the imperative verbs εἰσβλεψον κύριε καὶ ἰδὲ, “look O Lord, and see!”

Alexander states that “More than fifty [Hebrew] manuscripts, and nearly twenty editions [of the **Hebrew Bible**], have the usual plural form עֵינֶיךָ.” (P. 62)

⁷⁹Where our Hebrew text has כָּל, “all,” the word is omitted in the parallel passage, **2 Kings 19:17**.

37:18⁸⁰ אֱמֵנִים יְהוָה

הַחֲרִיבוּ מְלֻכֵי אַשּׁוּר אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲרָצוֹת וְאֶת־אֲרָצָם:

Truly, O YHWH,

Assyria's kings have made desolate all⁸¹ the lands and their land,⁸²

⁸⁰Watts comments on **verses 18-19** that “Hezekiah acknowledges the truth of the Assyrian claim. They had destroyed cities and burned idols aplenty. But he notes the differences. These were idols, not really Gods in any independent sense at all. Created by human hands, they could be destroyed by human hands.” (P. 36)

Alexander translates **verse 18**: “*It is true, O Jehovah, the Kings of Assyria have wasted all the lands and their land...*”

He comments that “The first word in the original is a particle of concession, admitting the truth of what Sennacherib had said, so far as it related merely to his conquest of the nations and destruction of their idols. The repetition, lands and land, has much perplexed interpreters. Vitranga supplies nations or peoples before lands, as in **2 Chronicles 32:13**. Others suppose אֲרָצוֹת itself to be here used in the sense of *nations*...The meaning is that they had destroyed not only other countries but their own, which agrees exactly with the charge against the King of Babylon in **Isaiah 14:20**, *thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou has destroyed thy land and slain thy people...*”

“As this sense, however, is not so appropriate here, where Hezekiah is confirming what Sennacherib himself had said, it is better to adopt one of the other constructions, which brings the sentence into strict agreement, not as to form but as to sense, with the parallel passage (**2 Kings 19:17**), where we have the unambiguous term *nations*.” (P. 63)

⁸¹The word “all” is omitted in the parallel passage, **2 Kings 19:17**.

⁸²Slotki translates by “all the countries, and their land,” [even though the two nouns are the same, אֲרָצוֹת, ‘the lands’ and אֲרָצָם, ‘their land,’ the first plural and the second singular], and comments that “Not only have they devastated the territories of other nations but even their own land. Assyria, too, has been ruined as a result of their warlike aims and military preparations (compare **Isaiah 14:20**)...”

“Others regard ‘countries’ in this context as synonymous with ‘the nations’ [הַגּוֹיִם], the noun used in the parallel passage, **2 Kings 19:17**.” (P. 173)

Oswalt notes that “The Masoretic Text has ‘all the lands and their land’...an unlikely sounding statement. **2 Kings 19:17** has ‘the nations and their land’... **1QIs^a** has

(continued...)

37:19⁸³ וְנָתַן אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם בְּאֵשׁ

כִּי לֹא אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה

כִּי אִם־מַעֲשֵׂה יַד־אָדָם עֵץ וָאֶבֶן

וַיַּאֲבִדוּם:

and giving / putting⁸⁴ their Gods into the fire—

because they are not Gods,

but only (the) product / work of human hands—wood and stone—

and they served them.

37:20⁸⁵ וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

⁸²(...continued)

‘nations’ but does not include ‘their land,’ while [the Greek translation / **Rahlfs**] reads ‘the whole world’...The possibility of using ‘land’ both as ‘people’ and ‘territory’ is clear enough.” (P. 651)

⁸³Alexander translates / comments on **verse 19**: “*And given (or put) their Gods into the fire—for they (were) no Gods, but wood and stone, the work of men’s hands—and destroyed them...*”

“Throughout this verse, and that before it, he is simply acknowledging a reason for it, viz. that they were no Gods, but material idols. The application of the word Gods to the mere external images is common in profane as well as sacred writings, and arises from the fact that all idolaters, whatever they may theoretically hold as to the nature of their Deities, identify them practically with the stocks and stones to which they pay their adorations.” (P. 64)

Motyer comments that “Heathen worshipers would have looked beyond the cult object to the God as a spiritual force represented by it, but Hezekiah speaks for the **Old Testament** when he identifies the God with the idol.” (P. 281)

⁸⁴Where our Hebrew text has the qal infinitive, וְנָתַן, **wenathon**, “and giving / putting,” **2 Kings 19:18** has the qal perfect, וְנָתַנּוּ, **wenathenu**, “and they gave / put.”

⁸⁵Alexander translates / comments on **verse 20**: “*And now, O Jehovah our God, save us from his hand, and all the kingdoms of the earth shall know, that Thou Jehovah art alone (or that Thou alone art Jehovah)...*”

(continued...)

הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ מִיָּדוֹ
וַיֵּדְעוּ כָּל-מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ
כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבַדְּךָ:

And now,⁸⁶ YHWH our God,⁸⁷
save / deliver us⁸⁸ from his hand;
and all kingdoms of the earth will know that You, YHWH,

⁸⁵(...continued)

“The last words of the verse may either mean, that Thou Jehovah art the only One (i.e. as appears from the connection, the only true God), or, that Thou alone art Jehovah, with particular allusion to the proper import of that name as signifying absolute, eternal, independent existence...The deliverance of His people from Sennacherib would prove Jehovah to be infinitely more than the Gods of the nations whom he gloried in destroying.” (P. 64)

Perhaps...but Alexander assumes that he knows what YHWH means—“absolute, eternal, independent existence”—and that is reading a great deal of philosophical understanding into the enigmatic, mysterious name, which probably, when spoken by YHWH, means “I will be,” or “I will cause to be”; when spoken by human beings, means “He will be,” or “He will cause to be.” We can conclude from His name that He is the God of the future; or that He is the God Who will constantly be bringing into existence. To go beyond that, on the basis of the name, is to go too far, in our opinion, reading ideals into the name that are not genuinely contained in it, but that are derived from philosophical theology.

But we agree with Alexander’s last sentence. YHWH’s future action of delivering His people from the Assyrian conqueror’s hand would be a demonstration of His unequalled superiority to the so-called Gods Sennacherib boasted of having conquered. What do you think?

⁸⁶Where our Hebrew text has וְעַתָּה, **we(attah**, “and now,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has σὺ δέ, “but then You,” reading וְאַתָּה, **we(attah**, “and You.” It is easy to mistake these two similar sounding Hebrew words.

⁸⁷Watts comments that the phrase, *Yahweh our God*, “makes the personal relation a claim and a confession.” (P. 36)

⁸⁸The parallel passage, **2 Kings 19:19** has the additional word נַא, “please / now.”

(are) by Yourself.⁸⁹

⁸⁹Slotki's translation has "even Thou only," which he explains as meaning "Thou alone." (P. 173) The sentence is incomplete in Hebrew, and we interpolate the verb "are."

The sentence is likewise incomplete in its Greek translation: καὶ γνώσονται πᾶσαι αἱ βασιλεῖαι τῆς γῆς ὅτι σὺ κύριος ὁ θεὸς μόνος, "And all kings of the earth will know that You, Lord, the God, only / alone." 1QIs^a includes the word "God."

This is a universalist prediction that in the future, from the standpoint of the prophet, all kingdoms of the earth will know YHWH's unique position, as being alone, by Himself, the only God.

And we are reminded of Paul's statement in **1 Corinthians 15:28**,

ὅταν δὲ ὑποταγῇ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα,
τότε [καὶ] αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς ὑποταγήσεται
τῷ ὑποτάξαντι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα,
ἵνα ἢ ὁ θεὸς [τὰ] πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν.

So when all things are subjected to him,
then [also] the Son himself will be subject
to the one subjecting all things to him,
so that God may be [the] all in all!

Oswalt comments on **verse 20** that "The chief motive for Judah's being delivered is that the world may know that God alone is God." (P. 655)

Watts explains **verses 1-20** as follows: "The Assyrian's speeches (**chapter 36**) have had their effect. He had tried to break the people's trust in Hezekiah, in the city, and ultimately in Yahweh. He then questioned the possibility for Hezekiah, the city, or Yahweh to save the people from Assyrian power. His propaganda was skilled and effective. He knew the weakness of words—but also the power of words (**36:5**).

"**Chapter 37:1-20** portrays their effects and the response they evoked...Isaiah has no doubt about Yahweh's acoustical sense or attention...

"Hezekiah's prayer makes possible the move from rumor to reality. His recognition of the greatness of God (**verse 16**) helps him regain perspective...He recognizes a partial truth in the Assyrian's words (**verse 18**), but he also recognizes the falsehood of his claims (**verse 19**)...

"This is the immediate and powerful message of this remarkable narrative, a story so great and so well told that it has been preserved by editors both in **2 Kings** and in the [**Book**] of Isaiah. But the readers of both these works must look at the story with a double application. They know that Yahweh answered Hezekiah's prayer and that

(continued...)

⁸⁹(...continued)

Jerusalem was saved in 701 B.C.E. But they also know, as **2 Kings 25** and **Isaiah 32** show, that in a similar situation under Zedekiah in 587 B.C.E. Jerusalem was not spared nor were its people saved. And the readers of [the **Book of Isaiah**] knew that the situation for Jerusalem had hardly improved over the century and more that had passed since then.

“**37:1-20** has dealt with how one is to cope with an assault by words used as weapons of power. Words (דְּבָרִים) and ideas (עֲצוֹת) are human and may be as empty and meaningless as fallible humans can make them. But they may come from God. He knows how to use them to fight His battles and to accomplish His purposes.” (Pp. 37-38)

We deeply appreciate this comment by Watts—and think it well worthy of reflection on the part of the student of Isaiah!

Is the earthly city of Jerusalem / Zion inviolate, untouchable? This might be concluded from the story of Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E., but certainly not in terms of Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.E.

Or can it be that the **Book of Isaiah** is thinking in terms of a “spiritual Jerusalem / Zion,” a city raised up above the hills and mountains, a city capable of welcoming all the nations of earth? Is the new Jerusalem / Zion a symbol for the people of faith, whose hearts welcome YHWH? Is it YHWH’s servant Israel, who willingly becomes the substitute for sinful Israel, dying on their nation’s behalf? Is it those who open the doors of His worship and knowledge and healing to all earth’s peoples, regardless of race or nationality, especially to those most in need of His presence? What do you say?

It is our hope that our reading of the remainder of the **Book of Isaiah** will reward us with solid answers to these questions!

⁹⁰Watts comments on **verses 21-38** that “Four of Isaiah’s eight speeches in **chapters 36-39** occur in this passage. They address the Assyrian threat, the survival of Jerusalem, the sanctity of Jerusalem, and the deliverance of the city.

“1. The First Speech: Yahweh to the Assyrians (**verses 22-29**)...Part of it (**verses 22-25** is spoken by someone else who stands near the throne, a spokesman who is privy to Yahweh’s intention. Then Yahweh speaks in the first person...The claim that Yahweh’s plans...made and prepared for long ago, are now coming to pass (**verse 26**) echoes throughout the [**Book of Isaiah**] (**14:26-27** and **chapters 40-48**)...The speech does not deny the list of Assyrian conquests. Rather, it adds to the list. But it claims (with **36:10**) that Yahweh’s plan and preparation made them possible...

(continued...)

⁹⁰(...continued)

“2. The Second Speech: Isaiah to Hezekiah (**verses 30-32**). A sign is offered to support confidence that Yahweh will be faithful to His word...The sign offered was that Judeans would survive the siege and repopulate their villages, replanting fields and vineyards...Isaiah’s message here is positive. God can and will use the surviving remnant to accomplish His purposes. The [**Book of Isaiah**] uses that hope as a foundation of its structure and message. It is emphasized in the name...A Remnant Will Return (**7:3**). It is spoken of Israel (**4:2; 10:20; 11:11, 16; 17:6; 46:3**), of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (**4:3; 37:32**), and of survivors of the Diaspora [Jews scattered abroad] (**45:20**). God can and will accomplish His work through them (**66:19**).

“The sign-speech looks beyond the apparent hopelessness of the moment to project three years of progress from survival to ordered village harvests for ‘the survivors that remain of the house of Judah’...The exiles had to acknowledge that even the catastrophe of 587 B.C.E. had not wiped out all Judean presence in Palestine. The readers / hearers of the [**Book of Isaiah**] saw its fulfillment in themselves...

“3. The Third Speech: A Prophetic Yahweh Speech (**verses 33-34**)...It assures the King that the Assyrian threat will not be carried out...The readers of this oracle were aware of events that ran counter to its promise...Nebuchadnezzar humiliated the city in 598 B.C.E. and then breached its walls and entered its sacred areas in 587 B.C.E. along with Edomites and others. The readers / hearers of the [**Book of Isaiah**] in the fifth century B.C.E. inhabited ruins that could hardly be called a city...Isaiah’s promise was fulfilled in a sense in 701 B.C.E. But neither it nor the broader genre of Zion promises had protected the city since that day...

“The Fourth Speech: Yahweh’s Promise to Zion (**verse 35**). This brief statement of Yahweh’s commitment to Zion, repeated in substance in **38:6**, is unequivocal. It is the heart of the [**Book of Isaiah’s**] commitment to Zion’s future. The theme of deliverance [/ salvation] (יְשׁוּעָה) is enunciated here...This amounts to a reinterpretation of Zion tradition and of Israelite doctrine for post-exilic Judean existence and faith...

“The [**Book of Isaiah**] positions the reading of this account in the generation of Babylonian ascendancy. By this the tension between the promise made concerning the city in 701 B.C.E. and the destruction of the city in 587 B.C.E. is heightened. No reader or hearer of the [**Book of Isaiah**] could have been unaware of this or fail to ask the question: If not then (701 B.C.E.), when then (587 B.C.E.)? The [**Book of Isaiah**] itself is an attempt to answer that question with its deeper implications.” (Pp. 41-44)

We think this is a very important comment, that should challenge every student of the **Book of Isaiah** to meditate upon, and respond to. How do you think the **Book of Isaiah** answers these questions that Watts has raised? See the end of the preceding footnote.

(continued...)

⁹⁰(...continued)

Slotki states that **verses 21-35** contain “God’s answer to Hezekiah’s prayer [that] is conveyed in a message through Isaiah.” (P. 173)

He adds that **verses 21-29** are “a taunt-song on Sennacherib, introduced by ‘this is the word which the Lord has spoken concerning him.’” (Pp. 173-74)

Motyer entitles **verses 21-35** “Isaiah’s spontaneous message to Hezekiah: the man of the word of God.”

He comments that Hezekiah’s “adoption of the way of faith opens the door whereby he speaks to God (**verses 14-20**) and God speaks to him (**verses 21-35**)...The way of believing prayer is the truly practical way of dealing with the harsh realities of this world...

“The Lord performs foreordained purposes in answer to prayer. The message which Isaiah sent to Hezekiah has a delightful ‘spur-of-the-moment’ spontaneity about it. It has all the marks of Isaiah’s word mastery but perhaps lacks the polish of a more finished product. But what an impact it makes in context!...

“The oracle is in two main sections, dividing at **verse 30** where Isaiah turns from focusing on Assyria to address Hezekiah.” (P. 282)

Oswalt entitles **verses 21-29** “Assyria ruled by the Lord.”

He comments that “These verses report the words of reassurance which came from the Lord to Hezekiah through Isaiah...In a much more vivid and emotional tone God declares that not only does He know of Assyria’s boasting but that her achievements have only been possible because He has planned them (**verses 23-27**). But now she has gone too far and God will prevent her from achieving her ultimate objective of this campaign—capture of Jerusalem (**verses 22, 28-35**)...How fortunate Hezekiah was to have someone like Isaiah near him at this time, a person who was so much in touch with God that he could convey the comforting words at once while the work of God in history unfolded more slowly.” (Pp. 658-59)

Motyer entitles **verses 21-22** “The prayer-answering God.”

He comments that “The text as we have it is...Isaianically forceful in its link between man at prayer and the word of God in reply, a clearer expression of the link between faith and practical politics which Isaiah has been insisting on.” (P. 282)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 21**: “*And Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, (as to) what thou hast prayed to Me (with respect) to Sennacherib King of Assyria, (the apodosis follows in the next verse)...*

(continued...)

כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֲשֶׁר הִתְפַּלֵּלְתָּ אֵלַי אֶל־סַנְחֶרִיב מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר:

And Isaiah, son of Amots, sent to Hezekiah, saying,

In this way YHWH, God of Israel, spoke:

Because you prayed to Me to / concerning⁹¹ Sancheriyb / Sennacherib King of Assyria;⁹²

37:22⁹³ זֶה הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר יְהוָה עָלַי

⁹⁰(...continued)

“Why Isaiah corresponded thus with Hezekiah, instead of speaking with him face to face, as he did in other cases, both before and after this, none of the interpreters have been able to explain, except by resolving it into a positive command of God.” (P. 64)

Watts states concerning **verse 21** that “This word is mediated through Isaiah, but it comes from *Yahweh, God of Israel.*”

Kaiser says that **verse 21** shows “the prophet conveying the Divine answer to Hezekiah without being asked. This makes it obvious that while Yahweh heard the prayer uttered in the temple, He was in direct contact with His prophet.” (P. 394)

⁹¹Alexander notes the use of אֶל here in the place of עַל. “אֶל may either be regarded as equivalent to עַל (against) in this connection, or be taken in the wider sense of *as to* or *concerning.*” (P. 65)

As we have read the later Hebrew documents in the **Hebrew Bible**, we have time and again observed these prepositions (along with others) being used interchangeably, no longer having precise, exact connotations, but being easily substituted for one another.

⁹²Oswalt notes that “**2 Kings 19:20** has ‘That which you prayed...I have heard.’ The parallel here in **Isaiah** lacks the verb, leaving an apparently incomplete relative clause. This has prompted some commentators (e.g., Delitzsch) to opt for the **2 Kings** statement as the more original.” (P. 656)

Where our Hebrew text ends with “King of the Assyrians,” **2 Kings 19:20** ends with “I have heard.” The Greek translation (**Rahfs**) of **Isaiah 37:21** puts the verb “I have heard” earlier in the sentence.

⁹³Oswalt notes that “Like **Isaiah 14:4b-21**, **verses 22-29** are a taunt song written using the form of the elegy...Assyria’s fall is not an occasion for sorrow but for mocking delight.” (P. 658)

(continued...)

בְּזוֹה לְךָ לְעֵגָה לְךָ
 בְּתוֹלַת בֵּת-צִיּוֹן
 אַחֲרֶיךָ רֵאשׁ הַנִּיעָה
 בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם:

This (is) the word which YHWH spoke concerning him:

She despised you, she mocked at you--

(the) virgin⁹⁴ daughter of Zion;⁹⁵

behind you, she shook / wagged (her) head,⁹⁶

⁹³(...continued)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 22**: “*This is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning (or against) him, The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee, she hath laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head after thee...*”

“The simple meaning is that what follows is a revelation from God in answer to the vaunting of Sennacherib and the prayers of Hezekiah...The meaning of the whole verse, divested of its figurative dress, is that the people of God might regard the threats of the Assyrian with contempt.” (Pp. 65, 66)

Watts states that “The speech encourages an attitude of mockery and disdain for the enemy.” (P. 44)

⁹⁴Motyer states that “*Virgin* is used here in the sense of being untouched by the marauder.” (P. 282)

⁹⁵See **Isaiah 23:12**, where the phrase “*virgin daughter of Sidon*” occurs as a description of Tyre.

Alexander comments that “The meaning of the whole phrase is, the virgin daughter of Zion, i.e. Zion considered as a daughter and a virgin. It may be a personification either of the whole [Israelite] church and nation, or of the city of Jerusalem, which last seems more appropriate in this connection.” (P. 65)

⁹⁶Slotki comments that the virgin daughter of Zion’s “shaking her head,” indicates “a gesture of contempt.” That it was made behind Sennacherib indicates that it is “an anticipation of his coming flight.” (P. 174)

Oswalt comments that “Sennacherib may style himself the world ruler; he may terrify his small neighbors. But it is the God of one of the least of these Who will close

(continued...)

(the) daughter of Jerusalem.⁹⁷

37:23⁹⁸ אֶת־מִי חֲרַפְתָּ וְגִדַפְתָּ

וְעַל־מִי הִרִימֹתָה קוֹל

וַתִּשָּׂא מְרוֹם עֵינֶיךָ

אֶל־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Whom have you reproached, and reviled?

And over against Whom have you raised (your) voice?⁹⁹

(...continued)

the book on who Sennacherib really is...

“So as the oppressor slinks away, the intended victim will stick out her tongue at him and wag her head from side to side in derision.” See **Psalm 22:8**^{Heb} / **7**^{Eng}; **Jeremiah 18:16**; **Lamentations 2:15**.

Oswalt adds, Sennacherib “could not do what he planned. And why not? Because Assyria has mocked the One Who is the Originator of all plans.” (P. 660)

⁹⁷Notice the parallelism of the first two lines of **verse 22** with its last two lines, which make it obvious that “(the) virgin daughter of Zion” is “(the) daughter of Jerusalem.”

⁹⁸Motyer entitles **verses 23-25** “The holy Sovereign.”

Slotki notes that **verse 23** contains “two rhetorical questions, the answers to which are obvious.” (P. 174)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 23**: “*Whom hast thou reproached and reviled, and against Whom hast thou raised (thy) voice, and lifted thine eyes (on) high towards (or against) the Holy One of Israel?...*”

“This is equivalent to saying, Dost thou know Who it is that thou revilest?” (P. 60)

Watts states that “The Assyrian dared to challenge, not Jerusalem as Hezekiah’s fortress, but Zion as Yahweh’s dwelling-place. His crime changed simple war to *blasphemy* which evokes holy war in return.” (Pp. 44-45)

⁹⁹Alexander states that “To raise the voice may simply mean to speak, or more emphatically to speak boldly, perhaps with an allusion to the literal loudness of

(continued...)

And you lifted your eyes on high,¹⁰⁰

to / against¹⁰¹ Israel's Set-apart One!

37:24¹⁰² בִּיד עֲבָדֶיךָ חֲרַפְתָּ אֶדְנִי

⁹⁹(...continued)

Rabshakeh's address to the people on the wall (**Isaiah 31:13**)." (P. 66)

¹⁰⁰Alexander notes that מָרוֹם "is a noun of place, here construed as an adverb, and in sense equivalent to *heavenwards* or *towards heaven*." (P. 66)

¹⁰¹The use of the preposition לָא, here demonstrates how Hebrew prepositions begin to lose their original meaning. Originally meaning "to" or "into," the meaning here has to be "against," as all our English translations translate it. The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) changes the wording in order to retain the original meaning of the preposition: καὶ οὐκ ἤρας εἰς ὕψος τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς σου εἰς τὸν ἅγιον τοῦ Ἰσραηλ, "and you (singular) did not raise into (the) height your eyes, to the Set-apart One of Israel."

The parallel passage **2 Kings 19:22** has the preposition עַל, perhaps meaning "against," again demonstrating the loss of distinctive meanings for such prepositions in later Hebrew.

¹⁰²Slotki notes that in **verses 24-25** "the prophet quotes Sennacherib's boast of his easy victories and of his power to overcome all obstacles in his way of conquest. Some of the expressions are obviously metaphorical." (P. 174)

Watts comments on these two verses that "The speeches of the field commander and of Sennacherib (**36:4-10, 13-20** and **37:10-13**) are summarized in poetry to document the charges of blasphemy and pride." (P. 45)

Oswalt states that "**Verses 24-25** read very much like portions of the Assyrian royal annals in which the Kings boasted of their conquests." (P. 660)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 24**: "*By the hand of thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord and said, With the multitude of my chariots (or calvary) I have ascended the height of mountains, the sides of Lebanon, and I will cut down the loftiness of its cedars and the choice of its firs (or cypresses), and I will reach its extreme height (literally, the height of its extremity), its garden-forest (literally, the garden of its forest)...*

"This may be regarded either as the substance of another message actually sent by Sennacherib, or as a translation of his feelings and his conduct into words...[It is most natural] to understand this verse as a poetical assertion of the speaker's power to overcome all obstacles." (Pp. 66-67)

וְהֵאמֵר בְּרֵב רֶכְבִּי
אֲנִי עָלִיתִי מְרוֹם הַרִים יִרְפְּתִי לִבְנוֹן
וְאֶכְרַת קוֹמַת אֲרָזָיו מִבְּחַר בְּרִשְׁיוֹ
וְאֵבֹא מְרוֹם קִצּוֹ יַעַר כְּרִמְלוֹ:

By your servants'¹⁰³ hand you reproached my Lord;¹⁰⁴
and you said With my numerous chariots¹⁰⁵
I, I ascended height of mountains, sides of Lebanon;
and I cut off (the) height (synonym) of its cedars, its choice¹⁰⁶ cypresses;

¹⁰³Where **Isaiah 37:24** has עֲבָדָיךָ, “Your servants,” **2 Kings 19:23** has מְלֵאכֶיךָ, “Your messengers.”

¹⁰⁴Where **Isaiah 37:24** has אֲדֹנָי, “my Lord,” a large number of Hebrew manuscripts of **2 Kings 19:23** read יְהוָה, “YHWH.”

We suspect that this may be an indication of the passage in **Isaiah 37's** being later than that in **2 Kings 19:23**. The tendency in Israel was moving from constant use of YHWH to “my Lord,” a tendency that reached its zenith in the translation of the **Hebrew Bible** into Greek, where the Divine name YHWH no longer occurs, but is always translated by “my Lord.”

¹⁰⁵Oswalt states that “*With my many chariots* begins the section which has direct parallels with the royal annals...”

“Chariots, like tanks or jet fighters today, were the most prestigious arm of the military, and even though they were useful only in flat-land fighting, it was still a point of honor with the Assyrians to take them everywhere they went, even over the most difficult terrain.” (P. 661)

Instead of “with my many chariots,” the *kethibh* (written text) of **2 Kings 19:23** has “with (the) driver of my chariot.”

¹⁰⁶Where **Isaiah 37:24** spells מִבְּחַר, *mibhchar*, “choice,” **2 Kings 19:23** spells מִבְּחֹר, *mibhchor*, evidently simply another way of spelling “choice.”

and I came (to the) height,¹⁰⁷ its end, (the) forest of its Carmel / garden.¹⁰⁸

37:25¹⁰⁹ אָנִי קָרַתִּי וְשָׁתִיתִי מִיָּם

וְאַחֲרַי בְּכַף-פְּעָמַי

כָּל יַאֲרֵי מְצֹרָה:

¹⁰⁷Here the “height” means the top of Lebanon / Carmel mountains in Israel.

Where **Isaiah 37:24** has ~Arām., “height,” **2 Kings 19:23** has מְלוֹן, “lodging-place.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ εἰσῆλθον εἰς ὕψος μέρους τοῦ δρυμοῦ, “and I entered into (the) highest parts of the forest.”

¹⁰⁸For this language, compare **Isaiah 10:18; 29:17** and **32:15**.

Alexander states that כַּרְמֶל, **karmel**, must be taken in its primary and proper sense of *fruitful field, vineyard, garden, orchard*, or the like. It is here combined with *forest*, either for the purpose of describing the cedar groves of Lebanon as similar to parks and orchards, or of designating the spot where the cultivated slope of the mountain is gradually changed into a forest.” (P. 67)

Oswalt translates by “I have come to its most inaccessible heights, and its densest forest.” He notes that the last phrase is literally “forest of its garden-land’... thus a forest as dense and lush as a garden...”

On the extensive cutting of cedars for Assyrian building projects, especially by Sargon, see A. T. Olmstead, **History of Assyria**, pp. 272-74.” (P. 656)

Oswalt adds that “All the language here is to be taken hyperbolically. The Monarch is saying that nothing can stop him, neither high mountains in the north with their dense forests, nor the deserts of Sinai, nor the swamps of the Nile Delta in the south. This is not to say that he had actually done each of these, but that he could if he wished.” (P. 661)

¹⁰⁹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 25**: “I have digged and drunk water, and I will dry up with the sole of my feet (literally, steps) all the streams of Egypt.”

He states that the verse denotes that “he had begun his enterprise successfully and expected to conclude it triumphantly...No difficulties or privations could retard his march, that where there was no water he had dug for it and found it, and that where there was he would exhaust it, both assertions implying a vast multitude of soldiers.” (Pp. 67-68)

I, I dug / bored,¹¹⁰ and I drank water;¹¹¹
and I dried up with my foot's sole,¹¹²
all Nile's streams / canals.¹¹³

37:26¹¹⁴ הָלוֹא-שָׁמַעַתָּ

¹¹⁰Where our Hebrew text has “I dug / bored,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ ἔθηκα γέφυραν, “and I laid a bridge.”

¹¹¹Slotki explains that in **2 Kings 19:24**, this statement is not just “I drank water,” but **וּשְׁתִּיתִי מַיִם זָרִים** “and I drank foreign water,” that is, the water of foreign, conquered lands. (P. 175) **1QIs^a** likewise reads **זָרִים**, “foreign.”

Oswalt translates “I have dug [wells] and drunk water.” He notes that the Hebrew text is literally “I have dug and drunk water,” but **1QIs^a** and **2 Kings 19:24** both... add *zarim*, ‘strange, foreign,’ after ‘water.’” (Pp. 656-57)

¹¹²Sennacherib’s language is arrogant and hyperbolic—as if he were a giant treading through foreign lands, digging wells, and drying up rivers with the sole of his foot. Of course, the reality behind the arrogant words was the Assyrian armies, marching through foreign lands, accomplishing Sennacherib’s purposes.

Motyer comments that “Blasphemy is a human being acting as if he were God... The King sees himself as the arbiter of his own plans and, figuring his opponents as natural hazards, no height, no impenetrable jungle barrier could hinder him...The King’s past successes emboldened him to see even Egypt as his prey—a task as easy as that of the Egyptian farmer who closes the small irrigation channels which water his fields by heaping up soil with his foot. The King’s foot is equal to blocking even the Nile itself!” (P. 283)

¹¹³Slotki comments that this “last claim must be regarded as an empty boast since Sennacherib never invaded Egypt.” (P. 175)

¹¹⁴Motyer entitles **verses 26-29** “The executive Sovereign,” but there is no such statement in the text itself.

He comments that “Divine sovereignty is absolute,” but we think this is an example of the interpreter reading philosophical theological ideals into the text. To say Divine sovereignty is absolute leaves out of consideration the reality of human freedom and responsibility for the future. What do you think?

Slotki holds that in **verses 26-27**, “the prophet in the name of God apostrophizes [addresses an exclamatory passage in a speech or poem to someone or something] Sennacherib. All his power and achievements are due entirely to the will of God Who had decreed of old the fate of the nations he had conquered.

(continued...)

לְמַרְחֹק אֹתָהּ עָשִׂיתִי

מִיְמֵי קֶדֶם

וַיִּצְרַתֶּיהָ

עַתָּה הִבֵּאתִיהָ

וַתְּהִי לְהַשְׁאוֹת גִּלְיָם

נֹצִים עָרִים בְּצָרוֹת:

Did you not hear?

¹¹⁴(...continued)

We agree that most probably **verse 26** changes from the words of Sennacherib to the words of YHWH, but note that the first two lines of the verse give no indication of any change of speaker, and can be understood as continuing Sennacherib's proud speech, claiming that he had long ago planned what was now happening. It is only in **verses 27** and **28** that it becomes clear that the speaker has changed to YHWH, as the voice speaks to Sennacherib in the second person.

Oswalt states that **verses 26-29** "report that Sennacherib is in for a rude shock. The very One Whom he has accused of impotence before the Assyrian might is in fact the One Who has decreed and directed the Assyrian conquest...The tool has vaunted itself against the hand that swings it, and this attitude God will not abide (see **Isaiah 10:5-19**). The Assyrians will be cut down like the cedar forests they themselves boasted of decimating." (Pp. 661-62)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 26**: "*Hast thou not heard? From afar I have done it, from the days of old, and formed it. Now I have caused it to come, and it shall be (or come to pass), to lay waste, (as or into) desolate heaps, fortified cities...*

"Most writers, ancient and modern, are agreed in applying the first clause, either to express predictions, or to the purpose and decree of God. The sense is then substantially the same with that of **Isaiah 10:5, 15**, to wit, that the Assyrians had wrought these conquests only as an instrument in the hand of God, Who had formed and declared His purpose long before, and was now bringing it to pass." (Pp. 68-69)

But in saying "only," Alexander is, like Motyer, leaving out the freedom and responsibility of the Assyrians for their actions. What do you think?

Watts comments on **verse 26** that "No matter the distance, Yahweh claims that He did it. He also claims prior knowledge and responsibility for the idea, the plan and the execution of the Assyrian's campaign." (P. 45)

Long ago I did / made it,¹¹⁵
 since ancient days--
 and I formed it.¹¹⁶
 Now I brought it to pass--
 and¹¹⁷ you (singular) were to lay waste¹¹⁸ (with) waves / billows,¹¹⁹
 unassailable cities--(now) fallen in ruins.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵Slotki comments that this is YHWH's claim that He made / did it--that is, "the destiny of the nations defeated by Assyria." (P. 175)

¹¹⁶That is, like the great "Master Potter." But the Master Potter is working with human beings who have been given freedom and responsibility for their decisions, and the Potter's final work has to have taken all of this into consideration. See Motyer's statement in footnote 120 concerning the horse and its rider.

¹¹⁷Where our Hebrew text has וַיִּצְרַתִּיהָ, "and I formed it," **1QIs^a** omits the conjunction, reading only hytrcy, "I formed it." Watts holds that the Qumran scroll is correct, over against our Masoretic Text. (P. 40) The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has συνέταξα νῦν δὲ, "but then now I ordered."

¹¹⁸Where **Isaiah 37:26** has לְהַשְׁאוֹת, **lehash)oth**, "to lay waste," **2 Kings 19:25** spells לְהַשְׁאוֹת, which may only be a different way of spelling the same verb, but which some think means "to make to be like." See Watts, p. 40.

¹¹⁹Where our Hebrew text has גְּלִיִּם, "heaps," "waves," "billows" (Watts mistakenly defines the noun as meaning "ruins" or "stones" p. 40), the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἔθνη, "nations," evidently reading גְּוִיִּם, **goyim**, "nations."

¹²⁰Slotki states that these last two lines are literally "that you should be (able) to lay fortified cities waste," and Oswalt likewise translates by "that you should cause fortified cities to crash into heaps of ruins."

Motyer comments that "All the energy, even violence, belongs to the horse; all the direction, wisdom, guiding touch belongs to the rider. So Assyrian arrogance, brute force, imperialistic ambition etc. are real, morally responsible and culpable, but they are under Divine direction in their outworking (**Isaiah 34:16-17**)." We agree--do you?

Translations of **verse 26** vary slightly, as the Hebrew text can be understood in slightly differing ways:

(continued...)

¹²⁰(...continued)

King James, “Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it; *and* of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste defenced cities *into* ruinous heaps.”

Tanakh, “Have you not heard? Of old I planned that very thing, I designed it long ago, And now have fulfilled it. And it has come to pass, Laying fortified towns waste in desolate heaps.”

New Revised Standard, “Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins...”

New International, “Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone.”

New Jerusalem, “Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it; *and* of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste defenced cities *into* ruinous heaps.”

Rahlf's, οὐ ταῦτα ἤκουσας πάλαι ἃ ἐγὼ ἐποίησα ἐξ ἀρχαίων ἡμερῶν συνέταξα νῦν δὲ ἐπέδειξα ἐξερημῶσαι ἔθνη ἐν ὄχυροῖς καὶ ἐνοικοῦντας ἐν πόλεσιν ὄχυραῖς, “Did you (singular) not hear these things long ago, which I did? From ancient days I arranged / ordered; but then now I showed / demonstrated (them), to make nations in strong places desolate, and those dwelling in strong cities.”

Oswalt paraphrases the verse by “Don’t you understand? All these thing to which you have been attaching your ‘I,’ / have done them!”

He adds, “ Prior to 732 B.C.E., Isaiah had predicted that the Assyrians would sweep over Judah to the neck (**Isaiah 8:6-8**). Now here they are.” (P. 662)

¹²¹Oswalt comments on **verses 27-29** that “Here the prophet begins by agreeing with the Assyrians as to the results of their conquests: people have been helpless before the onslaught; they have been disgraced for trusting in fortifications or Deities which could not stand; they withered before the blast like grass with no roots (On the flat, clay-covered roofs of ancient Near Eastern buildings a rain could make wind-borne grass seeds sprout in a short time. However, because there was no depth of soil, a dry period of any length could kill the grass just as quickly.) But Sennacherib’s mistake was in his estimation of the cause of those effects...”

“The metaphors which Isaiah uses suggest...that God will treat Sennacherib like a balky [reluctant, uncooperative] beast who must be made to do his master’s bidding by means of bit and bridle. It is a vast come-down to go from self-made ruler of the world to stubborn mule, but the latter is a truer picture of the situation.” (P. 663)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 27**: “*And their inhabitants are short of hand; they are broken and confounded; they are grass of the field and green herbage,*

(continued...)

חֲתוּ וּבָשׁוּ
 הָיוּ עֵשֶׁב שָׂדֵה
 וַיִּרְקוּ דְּשֵׁא
 חֲצִיר גִּגּוֹת
 וַיִּשְׁדְּמָה לְפָנָי קִמָּה:

And their inhabitants--short of hand / strength--¹²²
 were dismayed and ashamed.¹²³

They became vegetation of (the) field,

¹²¹(...continued)

grass of the house-tops and a field before the stalk (or standing corn), i.e. before the grain has grown up...

“This may be regarded either as a description of the weakness of those whom the Assyrian had subdued, or as a description of the terror with which they were inspired at his approach.” (P. 69)

Kaiser states that “**Verse 27** describes in metaphorical terms the sad fate of cities which Sennacherib had conquered.” (P. 396)

¹²²The phrase in Hebrew is קִצְרֵי־יָד, “short ones of hand”—which is given varying translations, from “of small power,” to “helpless,” to “shorn of strength,” to “drained of power,” to “feeble of hand,” to ἀνεῆκα τὰς χεῖρας, “I weakened the hands.”

Alexander comments that “A short hand or arm implies inability to reach the object...In a negative sense, it is applied to God, **Numbers 11:23; Isaiah 50:2; 59:1.**” (P. 69)

Oswalt notes that “The phrase ‘short of hand’ is almost universally translated ‘powerless’ or ‘helpless.’ But it seems possible that there is reference here to the ancient Near Eastern practice of cutting off the hands of dead and dying enemies as a sort of body count.” (P. 657) He refers to pictures of the practice in Pritchard’s **Ancient Near East in Pictures**, #'s 340 and 348.

¹²³Where **Isaiah 37:27** has the qal perfect וּבָשׁוּ, “and were ashamed,” **2 Kings 19:26** has the qal imperfect וַיִּבְשׁוּ, “and will be ashamed.”

and green grass,¹²⁴
grass of roof-tops,¹²⁵
and a field¹²⁶ before (producing) standing grain / an east wind.¹²⁷

¹²⁴Compare **Psalm 129:6**,

May they be like the grass of / on rooftops,
that before it came up dried out–

Watts states that “Sod on the roofs kept houses both cool and dry. It often included grass seeds. After a rain they began to sprout. But the thin layer of sod gave them no depth or moisture for their roots. When the dry desert wind blew, they quickly withered and died. The figure fits the demoralized populations that faced the Assyrian attack.” (P. 45)

¹²⁵Alexander comments on the phrase “grass of the house-tops” that “there is reference at once to the flat surface, the earthy material, and the various uses of the oriental house-top, in consequence of which seeds would frequently spring up there, but without depth of root, and therefore short-lived.” He adds that “The comparison of human frailty and infirmity to grass is very common in the Scriptures.” (P. 69)

¹²⁶Alexander notes that “Instead of שֵׂדֵמָה [‘a field’], the parallel passage (**2 Kings 19:26**) has שֵׂדֵפָה, *blasting or blasted corn*.” Here, in **Isaiah 37:27**, “The comparison is simply with the weakness and fragility of immature grain, *field* being put by a common figure for its contents or products. The general meaning of the whole verse evidently is that they were unable to resist him [Sennacherib].” (Pp. 69-70)

Unknown to Alexander, who lived a century before discovery of the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, **1QIs^a** has שֵׂדֵפָה, *blasting or blasted corn* instead of שֵׂדֵמָה, “a field.”

¹²⁷Oswalt notes that for the Masoretic Text’s phrase לְפָנַי קָמָה, “before it stood,” a textual scholar by the name of Thenius “was the first in modern times to suggest לְפָנַי קָדִים, ‘before an east wind.’ This has now been confirmed by **1QIs^a**.”

Oswalt concludes that the reading of **1QIs^a** for the overall passage seems likely to be better witness to the original text than is the Masoretic Text. (P. 657)

Where our Hebrew text ends with וּשְׂדֵמָה לְפָנַי קָמָה, “and a field before (producing) standing grain / an east wind,” the Greek translation (**Rahfs**) has καὶ ὡς ἄγρωστικς, “and like wild grass (that mules feed on).”

37:28¹²⁸ קוּמְךָ וּשְׁבַתְךָ

וְצֵאתְךָ וּבֹאתְךָ

יָדַעְתִּי

וְאֵת הַתְּרַגְּוֹתַי אֵלַי:

(Your rising up)¹²⁹ and your sitting,¹³⁰

and your going forth, and your coming,

I knew,

¹²⁸Slotki comments on **verses 28-29** that “None of Sennacherib’s movements is hidden from the Lord and, as punishment for his arrogance in attributing his successes to his own power and his blasphemous raging against God, he will be taken under control like a wild beast and dragged back to his own lair.” (P. 175)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 28**: “*And thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, I have known, and thy raging (or provoking of thyself) against Me...*”

“The [Aramaic] Targum explains *sitting* to mean sitting in council, *going out* –going to war, and *coming*–the invasion of Judah. It is commonly agreed, however, that these phrases are combined to signify all the actions of his life, like *sitting down* and *rising up* in **Psalm 139:2**, *going out* and *coming in*, **Deuteronomy 28:6**; **1 Kings 3:7**, and elsewhere.” (P. 70)

Watts states that “*Rising and sitting, going out and coming in* are word pairs with single meanings. They are meant to include all of life.” (P. 45)

1QIs^a begins **verse 28** with the phrase hkmwq, “Your rising up,” and Watts comments that “The addition fills out the verse and makes excellent sense.” (P. 41)

What do you think? Does the Dead Sea scroll have a superior reading here?

¹²⁹This is the reading of **1QIs^a**, קוּמְךָ, “Your rising.”

¹³⁰Compare **Psalm 139:2**.

You (YHWH) knew my sitting and my arising;
You discerned / understood my purpose / aim from afar!

and your exciting yourself / raging against Me.¹³¹

37:29¹³² יֵעַן הִתְרַגַּזְתָּ אֵלַי

וְשִׂאֲנַנְךָ עָלַי בְּאָזְנִי

וְשִׂמְתִי חֲחִי בְּאַפְךָ

וּמִתְנִי בְּשִׁפְתֶיךָ

וְהִשִּׁיבְתִיךָ

בְּדַרְךָ אֲשֶׁר־בָּאתָ בָּהּ:

Because of your exciting yourself / raging against Me--¹³³

and your being at ease¹³⁴ went up into My ears--

¹³¹The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) omits the last line of **verse 28**.

¹³²Alexander translates / comments on **verse 29**: “Because of thy raging against Me, and (because) thy arrogance has come up into My ears, I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will cause thee to return by the way by which thou camest.” (P. 70)

¹³³This first line of **verse 29** is omitted by **1QIs^a**.

¹³⁴Alexander notes that “The sense of tumult, given by the English and other versions to **שִׂאֲנַן**, **sha)anan**, is founded on the etymology proposed by Rabbi Jonah, who derives it, through **שִׂאֲן**, from **שָׂאָה**. The more obvious derivation is from the verb [**שִׂאֲן**, **sha)an**]...meaning to *rest or be quiet*, from which we may readily deduce the ideas of security, indifference, nonchalance, superciliousness, and arrogance...The word is expressive of something in the conduct of Sennacherib offensive to Jehovah.” (P. 70)

Oswalt notes that the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**: καὶ ἡ πικρία σου, ‘and the bitterness of yours’) “seems to support the Masoretic Text, and there was a certain arrogant complacency in Sennacherib’s pointed dismissal of Judah’s God, so perhaps the Masoretic Text is best.” (P. 658)

We do not see how the Greek translation supports the Masoretic Text. Is “arrogant complacency” the same as “bitterness”?

and I will place My hook in your nose,¹³⁵
and My bridle in your lips,¹³⁶
and I will cause you to return
by the way on which you came!

37:30¹³⁷ וְזֶה-לְךָ הָאוֹת

¹³⁵Motyer states that “*My hook in your nose* is cruelly apt; according to their monuments, Assyrians led prisoners in this way.” (P. 283)

Oswalt notes that “Here, as elsewhere in **Ezekiel (19:4; 38:4)**, something approximating the ring put in a bull’s nose to which a halter rope may be attached seems to be intended.” (P. 658)

¹³⁶Alexander states that “the figures [in the third and fourth lines of **verse 29**] are drawn from the customary method of controlling horses.” (P. 70)

Where our Hebrew text reads the dual בְּשִׁפְתֶיךָ, “in your (two) lips,” **1QIs^a** reads the plural בְּשִׁפְאוֹתֶיכֶּה, “in your lips.”

¹³⁷Slotki comments that in **verses 30-35**, the prophet now addresses Hezekiah.” (P. 176) But we ask, does the text really give any indication of this change of person being addressed?

Oswalt entitles **verses 30-35** “Jerusalem’s deliverance.”

He comments on the passage that “As an indication that God is indeed at work in this, Isaiah makes a specific promise regarding the future when it will be possible to return to a normal agricultural life.” (P. 664)

Motyer entitles **verses 30-32** “The faithful Sovereign.”

He comments that “Lest anyone should think that the Assyrian withdrawal was no more than a happy chance, Isaiah adds a sign (compare **Isaiah 7:14; 38:7; Exodus 3:12**). For two years normal agriculture would be impossible, yet the land would of itself produce enough for the people until in the third year tillage could be resumed.” (P. 283)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 30**: “*And this to thee (O Hezekiah, shall be) the sign (of the fulfilment of the promise): eat, the (present) year, that which groweth of itself, and the second year that which springeth of the same, and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof...*”

Slotki later says: “The preceding verse closes the address to the Assyrians, begun in **verse 22**, and the prophet now continues his message to Hezekiah.” (P. 70)

אֶכֹּל הַשָּׁנָה סְפִיחַ

וּבַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיית שְׁחִים

וּבַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁלִישִׁית

זָרְעוּ וְקָצְרוּ

וְנִטְעוּ כִרְמִים

(וְאֶכֹּל) [וְאֶכְלוּ] פְּרִים:

And this (is) the sign¹³⁸ for you (singular):

eating this year spilled seed / what grows of itself;¹³⁹

¹³⁸Slotki states that the sign is “that the prophecy in the preceding passage will be fulfilled.” (P. 176)

Oswalt comments that “The sign here is not of the sort which comes before the event, but rather after the fact to demonstrate that God was indeed at work. So Isaiah says in effect, When you see things developing over the next period of time just as I said they would, you will know that it was truly God Who drove Sennacherib away.” He adds that “The use of sign here continues the parallelism between this segment and the one referring to Ahaz (**Isaiah 7-12**).” (Pp. 664-65)

Watts likewise states that “Some signs are aids to faith, like that in **38:7**. But others, like this one, aid later recognition that God was indeed at work. Only after the third year when vineyards bear their fruit again and Judah’s population is secure and reasonably prosperous can they look back, remember the crowded city under siege, and know that Isaiah had spoken a true word from God.” (P. 45)

¹³⁹The Hebrew word סְפִיחַ, **saphiyach** is defined by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** as meaning “growth from spilled kernels *poured out*, accidentally, in harvesting, according to most; **Buhl** thinks of *additional* growth...it is what springs up of itself in second year, and serves as food when no grain could be sown.” **Holladay** holds that it means “after-growth, what grows of its own accord during the sabbath-year or from grains that have spilled.”

They are in agreement with Alexander who a century earlier stated that “It is commonly agreed that סְפִיחַ, **saphiyach** denotes voluntary growth or products, such as spring from the seed dropped before or during harvest.” (P. 70)

(continued...)

and in the second year, grain that shoots up of itself.¹⁴⁰

And in the third year,
sow and harvest!¹⁴¹

And plant gardens!
And eat their fruit!¹⁴²

¹³⁹(...continued)

Motyer says, “On סִפְיָח, **saphiyach** see **Leviticus 25:5, 11**. What springs (שְׂחִיטָה, **shachiys**) is found only here...seemingly with the meaning of self-set seed...”

“The invasion prevented sowing in 702 B.C.E., yet when the threat lifted in 701 B.C.E., they would find sufficient self-sown crops. The ensuing situation with the Assyrians still present though evacuating would make agriculture impossible, yet again 700 B.C.E. would bring in enough through ‘chance growth.’” (Pp. 283-84)

¹⁴⁰Where **Isaiah 37:30** has שְׂחִיטָה, **2 Kings 19:29** has שְׂחִיטָה. Watts notes that both of these words occur only in these passages. **Brown-Driver-Briggs** takes them to be the same word, only spelled with a different sibilant. Because of the words not being found elsewhere, it is impossible to be certain as to their meaning.

¹⁴¹Oswalt comments that “During the current year the only food is grain which came up from seed spilled in the field by accident. During the next year only that which came up from the roots of the previous plants will be available. But in the third year life would return to normal with planting and harvesting...”

“The general import of this saying is evidently that although the present state of siege had thoroughly disrupted the agricultural base of the economy, there would soon come a day when no trace of the Assyrian threat would remain...”

“While three actual calendar years are intended, only about fourteen to fifteen months would be covered.” (Pp. 664-65)

¹⁴²Slotki comments that by the third year, “Normal conditions will return to the land and it will again yield its abundant produce.” (P. 176)

Alexander states that “As to the general meaning of the verse, there are two opinions...[The first,] that although the cultivation of the land had been interrupted for the last two years, yet now in this third year they might safely resume it...[The old and obvious interpretation,] refers the whole verse to the future...Thus understood, the verse is a prediction that for two years the people should subsist upon the secondary fruits of what was sown two years before, but that in the third year they should till the ground, as usual, implying that Sennacherib’s invasion should before that time be at an end.” (Pp. 70-71)

37:31¹⁴³ וַיִּסְפָּה פְּלִיטַת בֵּית־יְהוּדָה הַנִּשְׁאָרָה

נֶשֶׁרֶשׁ לְמַטָּה

וְעָשָׂה פְּרִי לְמַעְלָה:

And (the) escapee(s), the one(s) remaining¹⁴⁴ of Judah's household,
will add root(s) downwards,
and will make fruit upwards.

37:32¹⁴⁵ כִּי מִירוּשָׁלַם תֵּצֵא שְׂאֵרֵית

וּפְלִיטָה מִתֵּר צִיּוֹן

¹⁴³Oswalt comments on **verses 31-32** that “In these verses the prophet extends the agricultural figure and applies it to Judah and Jerusalem. Like the spilled grain, the remnant of the people will bear fruit again; like the old root-stock, it will send up its shoots again; like the fields plowed and sown, God’s people will spread over the land once more (**Isaiah 4:2,3; 10:10, 21; 11:1**). God’s ardor for them is in no way diminished, and whenever the faintest spark of trust appears in them, His breath is there to fan it into flame...Although Israel’s sins may reduce her to a mere shadow of her former self, even that shadow is redolent [strongly reminiscent or suggestive of something] of life because of God’s unflinching grace.” (P. 665)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 31**: “*And the escaped (literally the escape) of the house of Judah, that is left, shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.* This verse foretells by a familiar figure, the returning prosperity of Judah.” (P. 71)

Motyer comments that “What happens for the land is figurative of what will happen for the people, who will enter a period of security (*take root*) and prosperity (*bear fruit*).” (P. 284)

¹⁴⁴The phrase הַנִּשְׁאָרָה, **hannishe)arah**, “that is remaining” in our Hebrew text is changed to הַנִּמְצָא, “the one found” in 1QIs^a. The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has nothing as a translation for this Hebrew phrase.

¹⁴⁵Alexander translates **verse 32**: “*For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and an escape from mount Zion; the zeal of Jehovah of hosts shall do this.*”

He comments that “The first clause is an explanation of the use of the words פְּלִיטָה and נִשְׁאָרָה [‘an escape’ and ‘that is left’] in the foregoing verse.” (P. 72)

קְנֵאתֵי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה-זֹאת:

Because from Jerusalem¹⁴⁶ will go forth a remnant,¹⁴⁷

and escapee(s) from Mount Zion.¹⁴⁸

YHWH of Armies¹⁴⁹ zeal / ardor will do this!¹⁵⁰

37:33¹⁵¹ לְכֹן כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה

¹⁴⁶Where our Hebrew text has the phrase מִירוּשָׁלַם, “from Jerusalem,” **1QIs^a** has מִצִּיּוֹן, “from Zion.”

¹⁴⁷Motyer comments that “The word *remnant* [שְׂאֲרֵיתָן, **she)eriyth**] always has far-reaching resonances, looking beyond immediate experiences to the fact that the Lord will always preserve a people for Himself.” (P. 284)

¹⁴⁸In this third line of **verse 32**, where our Hebrew text has מִתֵּר צִיּוֹן, “from Mount Zion,” **1QIs^a** has מִירוּשָׁלַם, “from Jerusalem.” Compare footnote 146.

¹⁴⁹The word צְבָאוֹת, “Armies,” found in **Isaiah 37:32** is not found in the parallel passage, **2 Kings 19:31**.

¹⁵⁰Slotki comments that “It is the zeal of God for the vindication of His profaned honor and not Israel’s merit that will be the cause of Assyria’s downfall and Israel’s deliverance. The phrase occurred [earlier] in **Isaiah 9:6**.” (P. 176)

Watts states that “The power source for salvation lies in Yahweh, not Judean arms nor Jerusalem’s diplomacy. This is quoted verbatim in **9:6** and the basic idea pervades the [**Book of Isaiah**].” (P. 46)

Kaiser states that “**Verses 31 and 32** suggest that the sign may be allegorical in meaning, relating to the eschatological function of the remnant, which will have survived the tempest of the nations in the final days of history full of struggle and conflict, and it is consequently destined to be the nucleus of a new Israel, an Israel to which the nations will make pilgrimage and which will rule the earth.” (Pp. 396-97)

But this is reading eschatological ideas into the text that are not actually found there. What do you think?

¹⁵¹Motyer entitles **verses 33-35** “The preserving God.”

He comments that “The King will neither approach (to enter is ‘to come to’), nor threaten, either from a distance (*shoot an arrow*) or at close quarters (*with shield, build*

(continued...)

אֶל-מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר
 לֹא יָבוֹא אֶל-הָעִיר הַזֹּאת
 וְלֹא-יִזְרֶה שָׁם חֵץ
 וְלֹא-יִקְדֵּם מִנֵּה מִיָּגוֹן
 וְלֹא-יִשְׁפֹּךְ עָלֶיהָ סֶלֶלֶה:

Therefore,¹⁵² in this way YHWH spoke
 concerning Assyria's King:

He will not enter into this city,
 and he will not shoot an arrow there,¹⁵³

¹⁵¹(...continued)

a siege ramp), but he will go exactly as he came. He is under the Lord's control, and the city is under the Lord's care." (P. 284)

Oswalt states that **verses 33-35** "constitute the logical conclusion of the previous two points in the oracles: If Sennacherib's arrogant boasting against God is to be rebuffed, and if the remnant in Judah is once more to fill the land, then only one outcome is possible—Assyria will not be permitted to enter the city." (P. 666)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 33**: "*Therefore (because Jehovah has determined to fulfil these promises), thus saith Jehovah (with respect) to the King of Assyria, He shall not come to this city, and shall not shoot an arrow there, and shall not come before it with a shield (or a shield shall not come upon it), and shall not cast up a mound against it...*

"Some understand this as meaning simply that he should not take the city, others that he should not even attack it...

"This verse seems to show that Jerusalem was not actually besieged by the Assyrians, or at least not by the main body of the army under Sennacherib himself, unless we assume that he had already done so and retreated, and regard this as a promise that the attempt should not be repeated." (P. 72)

¹⁵²Slotki comments that the word *therefore* "refers back to the beginning of **verse 29**. It is another result of the Assyrian's raging and blasphemy." (P. 176)

¹⁵³Oswalt states that the phrase "*will not shot an arrow there* suggests that **Herodotus'** tradition (volume ii., p. 141) that a plague befell the Assyrian army on the

(continued...)

and he will not approach it (with a) shield;

and he will not pour out / form a siege-mound around it!¹⁵⁴

37:34¹⁵⁵ בְּדֶרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-בָּא בָהּ יָשׁוּב

וְאֶל-הָעִיר הַזֹּאת לֹא יָבֹא

נֶאֱמַר-יְהוָה:

By the way on which he came,¹⁵⁶ he will return;

and into this city he will not enter!¹⁵⁷

A saying of YHWH.

37:35¹⁵⁸ וְגִנֹּתַי עַל-הָעִיר הַזֹּאת לְהוֹשִׁיעָהּ

¹⁵³(...continued)

border of Egypt is generally correct and that the main body of the army never reached Jerusalem, or that if they did they were unable to begin preparations for the siege.” (P. 666)

¹⁵⁴Oswalt translates by “*nor cast a siege-mound against it,*” and comments that “Most ancient Near Eastern cities were built on hilltops, so that it was necessary for a besieging army to build ramps up which to push battering-rams, siege towers, etc. *Cast* probably refers to the pouring out of earth from the baskets in which it was carried to the site (**Habakkuk 1:10**).” (P. 666)

¹⁵⁵Alexander translates **verse 34**: “*By the way that he came shall he return, and to this city shall he not come, saith Jehovah...*”

He comments that “The first clause may simply mean that he shall go back whence he came, or more specifically, that he shall retreat without turning aside to attack Jerusalem, either for the first or second time.” (P. 72)

¹⁵⁶Where our Hebrew text of **Isaiah 37:34** has the qal perfect אָבָא, “he came,” the parallel passage **2 Kings 19:33** has the qal imperfect, יָבֹא, “he will come.”

¹⁵⁷Oswalt comments on **verse 34** that “By the same way that Sennacherib came, swaggering in his invincible might, he was to slink home, shorn of his army, only able to put the best face upon his failure by saying in his annals that he had shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage [see Pritchard’s **Ancient Near-Eastern Texts**, pp. 287-88].” (P. 666)

¹⁵⁸Alexander translates / comments on **verse 35**: “*And I will cover over (or protect) this city, (so as) to save it, for My own sake, for the sake of David My servant...*”

(continued...)

לְמַעַנִּי

וּלְמַעַן דָּוִד עַבְדִּי:

And I will defend / cover¹⁵⁹ over¹⁶⁰ this city, to save / deliver it,¹⁶¹
for My Own sake,¹⁶²
and for (the) sake of David My servant.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸(...continued)

“The terms of the promise in the first clause may be compared with those of **Isaiah 33:5**.” (Pp. 72-73)

Watts comments that “The cover is described in **4:5-6** in terms of fire and cloud which form a canopy over the city to protect it from sun and storm.” (P. 46)

¹⁵⁹Motyer notes that the verb here, וְגִנְוֹתַי, **wegannothiy**, as in **Isaiah 31:5** and **38:6**, “means ‘to surround’ (as a garden with a protective wall).” (P. 284)

¹⁶⁰Where **Isaiah 37:35** has the preposition עַל, “over,” the parallel passage **2 Kings 19:34** has the preposition לַ, “to.” We think this is another example of how Hebrew prepositions have lost their distinctive meanings in late biblical Hebrew, and are used somewhat interchangeably.

¹⁶¹Watts states that the promise of Divine deliverance / salvation “is repeated in **38:6** and the verb לְהוֹשִׁיעַ, ‘to save / deliver’; τὸ σῶσαι, ‘to preserve, rescue, save from death’] is an integral part of Isaiah’s name [יְשַׁעְיָהוּ, ‘Salvation / Deliverance of YHWH’]. It also forms Hosea’s הוֹשִׁיעַ, ‘Salvation,’ ‘Deliverance’] and Joshua’s יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, ‘YHWH Is Salvation / Deliverance’] names, and comes to form the name of Jesus [see **Matthew 1:21**].” (P. 46)

¹⁶²Compare **Ezekiel 36:22** for a very similar statement.

¹⁶³Oswalt mentions some three possible interpretations of this line:

First, “it may refer to the Divine promise to David to perpetuate his line on the throne (**2 Samuel 7:16**).”

Second, it is possible “that Hezekiah is taken as the present representative of ‘My servant David’ and it is for his sake that the Lord is acting.”

(continued...)

¹⁶³(...continued)

Third, “in the recognition of the messianic promises (**Isaiah 9:6**^{Heb} / **7**^{Eng}; **11:1; 55:3**) [there is another possibility:] If the true David were to sit upon the throne of Israel, then Israel must be enabled to survive whatever may befall her in the years ahead...Through this deliverance [of Jerusalem from Sennacherib] there was sufficient commitment on the part of some for the faith to survive the exile and to provide the basis for the messianic revelation in Christ.” (P. 667)

¹⁶⁴Motyer entitles **verses 36-38** “The finale: Assyrian overthrow.”

He comments on this passage that “Information from outside the **Bible** is... sparse for it was not the Assyrian way to record disaster...We know only that a Divine act of massive proportions settled the issue and provided the crowning demonstration of Isaiah’s contention that the Lord is Master of world history.” (P. 284)

Motyer says “We know”—but the fact is that we don’t *know* all that much concerning these stories from the ancient Near-Eastern world. We have the Assyrian monuments with their records, written from a definitely “pro-Assyria” point of view; and we have the biblical stories—both in **Isaiah**, **2 Kings**, and **2 Chronicles**, which tell basically the same story concerning Isaiah, Hezekiah, and Sennacherib, but which are written from a definitely “pro-Israel” point of view.

But to say that “We know” is to imply a certain knowledge concerning ancient history that is no longer possible. We should rather say, We believe, or We agree with the biblical writers, with their view of a God-centered world, in which God is actively at work, creating, blessing, punishing. But we should not claim to “know” more than we truly know. Those who read these biblical stories and reject them as nothing more than ancient myths with no foundation in history, claiming to “know” that they are non-historical myths / stories, are likewise claiming a certainty of knowledge that is no longer possible. What do you think?

Oswalt entitles **verses 36-38** “The army of Assyria destroyed.”

He comments that “With a terrible suddenness, which is reinforced by the brevity and terseness of the account, the long interchange of **chapters 26-37** is brought to a close. The mighty Assyrian emperor, stripped of his army, hurriedly departs for home, never to set foot in Judah again. As Napoleon discovered before Moscow and Hitler learned at Stalingrad, there are limits to even the most towering of human pretensions.” (P. 668)

Kaiser states that “The fulfilment of the prophet’s oracle takes place in a wholly unexpected way: At night the angel of Yahweh, who represents Yahweh in direct interventions on earth and so mediates between heaven and earth, goes forth to slay an immense number of those who were in the camp of the Assyrians, as he has once done to the first-born of Egypt (compare **Exodus 12:29**).” (P. 395)

(continued...)

¹⁶⁴(...continued)

Slotki comments that **verse 36** depicts “The sudden destruction of the Assyrian hosts by Divine intervention. This, according to tradition, occurred before the walls of Jerusalem to which Sennacherib had returned after defeating the King of Ethiopia.

“Another serious calamity befell the hosts [armies] of Sennacherib, according to an Egyptian tradition recorded by Herodotus. A plague of field-mice broke out in his camp at Pelusium in Egypt. In one night the mice gnawed the thongs of his armies’ shields as well as their bows and, by depriving them of their main weapons, exposed them helpless to the mercy of their enemies.” (P. 177)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 36**: “*And the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of Assyria an hundred and eighty and five thousand, and they (the survivors or the Jews) rose early in the morning, and behold all of them (that were smitten) were dead corpses...*

“The terms used can naturally signify nothing but a single instantaneous stroke of Divine vengeance, and the parallel passage (**2 Kings 19:35**) says expressly that the angel smote this number [בַּלַּיְלָהָ תְהוּאָה, ‘and it happened in that night]...

“The parallel narrative in **2 Chronicles 32:21**, instead of numbering the slain, says that all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders, and the captains in the camp of the Assyrians were cut off...

“Throughout the sacred narrative, it seems to be intentionally left uncertain whether Jerusalem was besieged at all, whether Sennacherib in person ever came before it, whether his army was divided or united when the stroke befell them, and also what proportion of the host escaped. It is enough to know that one hundred and eighty-five thousand men perished in a single night.” (Pp. 73-74)

But again we ask, Do we really “know” that exactly 185,000 men perished in a single night? Must we not rather say that this is what the biblical story reports—but we have no way of confirming its accuracy, no way of determining how such “body counts” were made or their accuracy?

The biblical story / stories affirm that there is a God Who is constantly at work in human history, judging, blessing, saving, destroying, before and in Whom we human beings live—a God Who, on rare occasions works marvelous historical acts on behalf of those who put their trust in Him.

These stories call us to put our faith in this God—but to go beyond that and say that we “know” the facts of ancient history, or even of modern history, is to go far beyond reality—especially if we draw the conclusion that whenever we put our faith in God, God will miraculously deliver us from our enemies—no matter how powerful.

(continued...)

וַיָּכֹה בְּמַחֲנֵה אֲשׁוּר מֵאֵה וּשְׁמֹנִים וַחֲמִשָּׁה אֲלָף

וַיִּשְׁפִּימוּ בַבֶּקֶר

וַהֲנִה כָּל־פְּגָרִים מֵתִים:

And YHWH's messenger / angel¹⁶⁵ went forth,

and it struck in Assyria's camp a hundred and eighty and five thousand.

And they arose in the morning,

and look—all of them dead corpses!¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴(...continued)

Must we not rather say with Paul “We walk by faith, not by sight”?

¹⁶⁵Motyer comments that “Instead of the angel of the Lord it would be more consonant with **Old Testament** theology to print ‘the Angel of the Lord’—that **Old Testament** personage who is both the Lord and distinct from the Lord (for example, **Genesis 16:7, 11; Judges 13:21-22**), and who combines in himself Divine holiness and Divine condescension (**Exodus 23:20-23**)...

“Thus Isaiah brings together in this incident five major Divine manifestations:

1. the word (**Isaiah 31:2**),
2. the Spirit (**Isaiah 37:7**),
3. the hand (**Isaiah 31:3**),
4. the arm (**Isaiah 30:30**) and
5. the angel.

The Lord is indeed ‘Lord of hosts.’” (P. 284)

We think this is unnecessary overstatement, and that the word, the Spirit, the hand, the arm and the angel / messenger are not Divine personages, but varying ways of affirming the Divine action, which can use any and all instruments necessary to accomplish the Divine purposes. We don't think the biblical theologian should be attempting to develop a a “Quadrity” or a “Pentity” in place of the Christian theological attempt to develop a “Trinity” from the biblical materials. What do you think?

¹⁶⁶Watts comments that “Wildberger cautions that one should not question numbers in a miracle account or seek exact information about the means. Let a miracle be a miracle and wonder at its power. But the [**Book of Isaiah**] goes beyond the simple telling of a miraculous story. It teaches throughout that the age in which God chooses to use Assyria and Persia for His purposes demands that Israel and Judah depend on Him for direction and protection. They are not needed to play active roles for military or political purposes. This story bears that out.” (P. 47)

וַיִּסַּע וַיֵּלֶךְ 37:37¹⁶⁷

וַיָּשָׁב

סִנְחַרְיִב מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר

וַיָּשָׁב בְּנִינּוּהַ:

¹⁶⁷Kaiser comments on **verses 37-38** that “When the King returned to Nineveh... he met the fate prophesied for him in our narrative in the form of a *vaticinium ex eventu* [a technical theological or historiographical term referring to a prophecy written after the author already had information about the events being ‘foretold.’ The text is written so as to appear that the prophecy had taken place before the event, when in fact it was written after the events supposedly predicted] in **verse 7**: he was murdered, not, moreover, in a place, in circumstances and by people who were a matter of indifference, but as he was praying in the temple and by his own sons...

“The two cuneiform texts which refer to this event, the annals of his grandson Assurbanipal and the Babylonian chronicle, cannot be wholly reconciled with the present narrative. The annals of Assurbanipal show that the king was killed by several persons. The fact that they seemed to have used the statues of protective Deities as their instruments may confirm the biblical narrative that he was murdered in the temple, although it has not so far been possible to interpret the name of a God Nisroch given in **verse 38**...

“The Babylonian chronicle suggests that the deed was done by one of his sons, but similarly mentions no names, while in the biblical narrative it is questionable whether they are given correctly or completely...

“But the main purpose of **verses 37** and **38** is not to give us historical information, but to provide a contrast to **37:2ff.** and against the background of **36:4ff., 13ff.**: whereas the prayer to Yahweh, the living God, was heard, Sennacherib was murdered in the temple as he prayed. This demonstrates Who is the living God and Who are the lifeless idols of the nations.” (P. 391)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 37**: “*Then decamped, and departed, and returned, Sennacherib King of Assyria, and dwelt (or remained) in Nineveh...*

“The rapid succession of the verbs suggest...the idea of confused and sudden flight.” (P. 74)

Watts comments that “The end of the story is short and abrupt. Sennacherib *broke camp and left*. He returned home and *lived in Nineveh*. That means that he did not return to Palestine. He lived some twenty years but no further campaigns in Palestine are reported.” (P. 47)

And he pulled up, and went,¹⁶⁸
and he returned,
Sennacherib, Assyria's King,
and he dwelt in Nineveh.¹⁶⁹

37:38¹⁷⁰ וַיְהִי הוּא מִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה בַּיַּת נִסְרוֹךְ אֱלֹהָיו

¹⁶⁸This line is missing in the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**).

¹⁶⁹Slotki holds that the phrase “and he dwelt in Nineveh” “may signify that he remained in his own capital and undertook no more campaigns.” (P. 177)

Alexander states that Sennacherib’s “dwelling in Nineveh is supposed by some interpreters to be mentioned as implying that he went forth no more to war, at least not against the Jews. An old tradition says that he lived only fifty days after his return; but according to other chronological hypotheses, he reigned eighteen years longer, and during that interval waged war successfully against the Greeks, and founded Tarsus in Cilicia.” (P. 74)

Motyer states that “Sennacherib reigned for another twenty years and engaged in further military exploits, but never again in Palestine; that road was closed to him. He was assassinated in 681 B.C.E., and it is possible that Isaiah lived to see this final stroke and to note the contrast between the living God Who hears the prayer of His King and in Whose house the King first began to find his true security and a God of wood and stone in Whose very house His King was struck down!...

“The names Nisroch, Adrammelech and Sharezer are not found outside the **Bible**, but the **Babylonian Chronicle** records the assassination of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon’s accession.” (Pp. 284-85)

Watts adds that “Ashurbanipal, who succeeded Esarhaddon, reported that he avenged the murder of his grandfather by striking them with the same statues with which they had killed his grandfather (Pritchard’s **Ancient Near-Eastern Texts**, 2, 288b).” (P. 47)

¹⁷⁰Slotki states that **verse 38** depicts “Sennacherib’s assassination.” (P. 177)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 38**: “*And he was worshiping (in) the house of Nisroch his God, and Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword, and they escaped (literally, saved themselves) into the land of Ararat, and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead...*

“The Jews have a tradition that Sennacherib intended to sacrifice his sons, and that they slew him in self defense. Another tradition is, that he had fled into the temple of his God as an asylum. A simple supposition is, that the time of his devotions was

(continued...)

וְאֶדְרַמְלֵךְ וְשָׂרֵצֶר בְּנֵי הַכֹּהֵן בַּחֶרֶב

וְהִמָּה נִמְלְטוּ אֶרֶץ אֲרָם

וַיִּמְלֹךְ אִסְרָחֶדָן בְּנוֹ תַחְתָּיו:

And he was worshipping (in the) house / temple of Nisrok his God,¹⁷¹
and Adrammelek¹⁷² and Saretser his sons struck him with the sword;¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰(...continued)

chosen by his murderers, as one when he would be least guarded or suspicious.” (P. 74)

¹⁷¹Oswalt states that “When Hezekiah prayed to his God, he was delivered, both from enemies and from sickness. When Sennacherib prayed to his God, not only was he not delivered, but his sons who, in God’s economy, were expected to honor their father, slaughtered him.”

He adds in a footnote, “To date, no Assyrian God by the name Nisroch is known. However, given the biblical record for accuracy in the reporting of obscure details of ancient life, it is reasonable to assume that archeology has simply failed to uncover the data as yet...Young and others see the name as a possible corruption of Marduk, perhaps in mockery.” (P. 671)

¹⁷²Alexander notes that “The name *Adrammelech* occurs in **2 Kings 17:31** as that of a Mesopotamian or Assyrian idol.” (P. 74)

¹⁷³Slotki notes that “The **Babylonian Chronicle** records that Sennacherib was killed ‘on the 20th day of Tebeth, by his son, in an insurrection.’ Some historians give Adrammelech as the name of his son. Sarezer, accordingly, may not have been guilty of actual murder which, however, may well be attributed to him as an accomplice who aided and abetted his brother.” (P. 177)

Oswalt comments that “In fact, [Sennacherib] did not die for some twenty years, not until 681 B.C.E. However, there is nothing in the present statement to demand an immediate death, and the fact that the writer’s report of the nature of the death coincides with the Assyrian account (see Pritchard, **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, pp. 288-89)—murder by his sons in his own temple—makes it plain that the author knows of the intervening period but is consciously telescoping events in order to show how God’s promise concerning Sennacherib and Jerusalem was kept.” (P. 670)

Oswalt adds in a footnote that “Since there is no evidence that Isaiah was still alive in 681 B.C.E., it has been argued by some that this verse is the work of a later hand. In itself this is not impossible, particularly since it is not written as prophecy but as narrative. So a disciple of Isaiah’s, noting how God’s promises had been kept, could

(continued...)

and they escaped (to) Ararat Land;¹⁷⁴

and Esar-Chaddon his son ruled instead of him.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³(...continued)

have included this report as the theological conclusion to the account. At the same time it must be said that we have no reliable account of Isaiah's death and thus cannot be certain he did die prior to 681 B.C.E." (P. 670)

¹⁷⁴Slotki states that Ararat Land is "Armenia, called by the Assyrians Urartu." (P. 177)

Alexander notes that "The original name [Ararat] is retained in the [Latin] Vulgate, while the [Greek translation / **Rahlfs**] renders it Ἀρμενίαν [Armenia]." (P. 75)

¹⁷⁵Slotki notes that "According to an inscription, Esarhaddon, who was engaged in a military campaign elsewhere, on hearing of the murder of his father, collected his men and immediately marching on Nineveh defeated his brothers' armies." (P. 177)

Watts explains **verses 21-38** by stating "The reading contains a treasure trove of Isaiah's oracles on the occasion of Jerusalem's moment of dire threat. He delivers the powerful taunt against the Assyrian. In doing so he lays the foundation for every other **Old Testament** claim to Yahweh's sovereignty over the emperors of the eighth to the second centuries in the Ancient Near East...

"The [**Book of Isaiah**] has placed these speeches in the perspective of a broader time to show how that moment in history was an aberration from Yahweh's announced direction, an aberration caused by Sennacherib's provocation. The longer view of the safety of Jerusalem, of the Davidic dynasty, and of Israel's future had to be seen in light of the God-willed rise of empire, the failure of Israel and Judah to follow God's direction, and the events of 734, 721, 714, 598, and 587 B.C.E. as well as those of 701 B.C.E...

"This longer view given in the [**Book of Isaiah**], as it had been in the Deuteronomic History [a modern theoretical construct holding that behind the present forms of the books of **Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings**, the 'Former Prophets' in the Hebrew canon, there was a single literary work], showed the direction of God's plan for history. The events and oracles of 701 B.C.E. showed that Yahweh was still in control, that He valued Zion as His city, and that He would not be bullied by the emperor. These were lessons that were still needed in fifth century Judaism." (P. 48)

1. Tirkah, Taharqa, Cushite Pharaoh of Egypt

“Taharqa was the son of Piye, the Nubian king of Napata who had first conquered Egypt. Taharqa was also the cousin and successor of Shebitku. The successful campaigns of Piye and Shabaka paved the way for a prosperous reign by Taharqa.

“Taharqa's reign can be dated from 690 B.C.E. to 664 B.C. E. Evidence for the dates of his reign is derived from the Serapeum stela, catalog number 192...

“Although Taharqa's reign was filled with conflict with the Assyrians, it was also a prosperous renaissance period in Egypt and Kush. When Taharqa was about 20 years old, he participated in a historic battle with the Assyrian emperor Sennacherib at Eltekeh. At Hezekiah's request, Taharqa and the Egyptian / Kushite army managed to stall the Assyrian advance on Jerusalem, with Sennacherib eventually abandoning the siege due to the loss of 185,000 soldiers at the hand of the Lord according to the Biblical account.

“The might of Taharqa's military forces was established at Eltekeh, leading to a period of peace in Egypt. During this period of peace and prosperity, the empire flourished. In the sixth year of Taharqa's reign, prosperity was also aided by abundant rainfall and a large harvest. Taharqa took full advantage of the lull in fighting and abundant harvest. He restored existing temples, built new ones, and built the largest pyramid in the Napatan region. Particularly impressive were his additions to the Temple at Karnak, new temple at Kawa, and temple at Jebel Barkal.

“Scholars have identified Taharqa with Tirkah, king of Ethiopia (Kush), who waged war against Sennacherib during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah (**2 Kings 19:9; Isaiah 37:9**). The events in the Biblical account are believed to have taken place in 701 B.C.E., whereas Taharqa came to the throne some ten years later. A number of explanations have been proposed: one being that the title of king in the Biblical text refers to his future royal title, when at the time of this account he was likely only a military commander.

“Herodotus, the Greek historian who wrote his Histories about 450 B.C.E., speaks of a divinely-appointed disaster destroying an army of Sennacherib, which was defeated by Sethos after praying to the Gods. The Gods sent ‘a multitude of field-mice, which devoured all the quivers and bowstrings of the enemy, and ate the thongs by which they managed their shields.’ This is commemorated in ‘a stone statue of Sethos, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription to this effect “Look on me, and learn to reverence the Gods.”’

“According to Francis Llewellyn Griffith, an attractive hypothesis is to identify the Pharaoh as Taharqa before his succession, and Sethos as his Memphitic priestly title, ‘supposing that he was then governor of Lower Egypt and high-priest of Ptah, and that in his office of governor he prepared to move on the defensive against a threatened attack by Sennacherib. While Taharqa was still in the neighborhood of Pelusium, some

unexpected disaster may have befallen the Assyrian host on the borders of Palestine and arrested their march on Egypt.’

“The two snakes in the crown of pharaoh Taharqa show that he was the king of both the lands of Egypt and Nubia.

“It was during his reign that Egypt's enemy Assyria at last invaded Egypt. Esarhaddon led several campaigns against Taharqa, which he recorded on several monuments. His first attack in 677 B.C.E., aimed at pacifying Arab tribes around the Dead Sea, led him as far as the Brook of Egypt. Esarhaddon then proceeded to invade Egypt proper in Taharqa's 17th regnal year, after Esarhaddon had settled a revolt at Ashkelon. Taharqa defeated the Assyrians on that occasion. Three years later in 671 B.C.E. the Assyrian king captured and sacked Memphis, where he captured numerous members of the royal family. Taharqa fled to the south, and Esarhaddon reorganized the political structure in the north, establishing Necho I as king at Sais. Upon Esarhaddon's return to Assyria he erected a stele alongside the previous Egyptian and Assyrian Commemorative stela of Nahr el-Kalb, as well as a victory stele at Zincirli Höyük, showing Taharqa's young son Ushankhuru in bondage.

“Upon the Assyrian king's departure, however, Taharqa intrigued in the affairs of Lower Egypt, and fanned numerous revolts. Esarhaddon died en route to Egypt, and it was left to his son and heir Ashurbanipal to once again invade Egypt. Ashurbanipal defeated Taharqa, who afterwards fled to Thebes.

“Taharqa died in the city of Thebes in 664 B.C.E. and was followed by his appointed successor Tantamani, a son of Shabaka. Taharqa was buried at Nuri, in North Sudan.” (**Wikipedia**, 4 / 9 / 2018)

