

ISAIAH 37 | Assyria Struck Down

Pray for the Remnant

1 As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Yahweh (בֵּית יְהוָה). 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz. 3 They said to him,

Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace. Children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that Yahweh your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock (חָרַף) the living God (אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים), and will rebuke the words that Yahweh your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer (תְּפִלָּה) for the remnant (שְׁאֵרִית) that is left.

Do Not Be Afraid

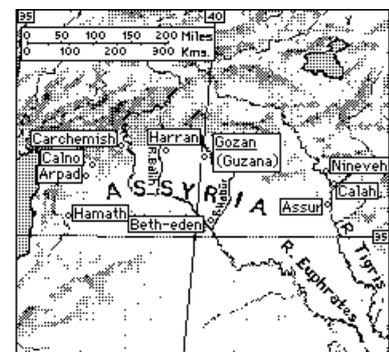
5 When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them,

Say to your master, Thus says Yahweh, Do not be afraid (אַל-תִּירָא) because of the words that you have heard, with which the young men of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7 Behold, I will put a spirit (רוּחַ) in him, so that he shall hear a rumour and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.

Don't Let God Deceive You

8 The Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9 Now the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, He has set out to fight against you. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah saying,

10 Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let your God in whom you trust (בטח) deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered (נצל)? 12 Have the gods (אֱלֹהִים) of the nations delivered (נצל) them, the nations that my fathers destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph,¹ and the people of



¹ This important caravan-centre on the route from the Euphrates to Hamath was identified by Ptolemy (5. 16; Gk. *Rhēsapha*) and is the modern *Resāfa*, about 200 km ENE of Hama, Syria. D. J. Wiseman, “[Rezeph](#),” *New Bible Dictionary*, 1019.

Eden² who were in Telassar?³ 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim,⁴ the king of Hena,⁵ or the king of Ivvah?⁶

Save Us that All the Earth May Know

14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. And Hezekiah went up to the house of Yahweh and spread it before Yahweh. 15 And Hezekiah prayed to Yahweh:

16 Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned (יָשַׁב) above the cherubim (כְּרֻבִים), you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 17 Incline your ear, Yahweh, and hear. Open your eyes, Yahweh, and see. And hear all the words of Sennacherib that he has sent to mock the living God (אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים). 18 Truly, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations (אֲרָצוֹת) and their lands 19 and have cast their gods (אֱלֹהֵיהֶם) into the fire. For they were no gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. 20 So now, Yahweh our God, save (יִשַׁע) us from his hand, that all the kingdoms (מַמְלָכוֹת) of the earth may know (יָדַע) that you alone are Yahweh.⁷

Because You Have Prayed to Me

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed (פָּלַל) to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22 this is the word that Yahweh has spoken concerning him:

² “A place that traded with Tyre, associated with Harran and Canneh (Ezk. 27:23). This Eden and its people are identical with the Beth-eden (House of Eden) of Am. 1:5 and the ‘children’ of Eden of Ki. 19:12; Is. 37:12—and these comprise the Assyrian province (and former kingdom) of Bit-Adini between Harran and the Euphrates at Carchemish” (K. A. Kitchen, “[Eden.](#)” *New Bible Dictionary*, 288-89).

³ “A place inhabited by the ‘children (sons) of Eden’ and cited by Sennacherib’s messengers to Hezekiah as an example of a town destroyed in previous Assyrian attacks.... The name *ṯelāssār* (2 Ki. 19:12) or *ṯelāssār* (Is. 37:12) represents Tell Assur (‘mound of Assur’). The *benē ‘eden* probably lived in the area between the Euphrates and Balih rivers, called in Assyrian *Bit-Adini* (Beth-Eden)...” (D. J. Wiseman, “[Telassar.](#)” *New Bible Dictionary*, 1155-56).

⁴ “The context implies that it lies in Syria or adjacent territory and this is supported by the name of its deities.... The place is unidentified, though Halivny’s suggestion that it is the same as the later Sibraim near Damascus (Ezk. 47:16) is possible” (D. J. Wiseman, “[Sepharvaim.](#)” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1077).

⁵ Hena is identified by the LXX with Ana on the Euphrates (M. A. MacLeod, “[Hena.](#)” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 465).

⁶ “Probably Ava of 2 Ki. 17:24. Imm (‘Aya) on the Orontes and ‘Ama in Elam are among suggested locations” (D. J. Wiseman, Baker D. W., “[Iva.](#)” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 533).

⁷ This may be the greatest concentration of God’s name, Yahweh, in the Bible.

Whom Have You Mocked?

She [Assyria] despises you, she scorns you—the virgin daughter of Zion. She wags her head behind you—the daughter of Jerusalem. 23 Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Holy One of Israel (אֱלֹהֵי קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל)! 24 By your servants you have mocked Yahweh, and you have said, With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon, to cut down its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses, to come to its remotest height, its most fruitful forest. 25 I dug wells and drank waters, to dry up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.

God Determined It Long Ago

26 Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you [Assyria] should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins, 27 while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded, and have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown.

My Hook in Your Nose

28 I know your sitting down, your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. 29 Because you [Assyria] have raged against me and your complacency has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.

Take Root and Bear Fruit

30 And this shall be the sign (אוֹת) for you [Hezekiah]. This year you [Judah] shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that. Then in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 31 And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah (פְּלִיטַת בֵּית־יְהוּדָה) shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.⁸ 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant (שְׂאֵרִית), and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors (פְּלִיטָה). The zeal (קִנְיָה) of Yahweh of hosts will do this.

I Will Defend This City

33 Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege mound against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares Yahweh. 35 For I will defend this city to save (ישַׁע) it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.⁹

⁸ **Is 27:6** 6 In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit.

⁹ This is quite a long statement from Yahweh.

185,000 Assyrians Struck Down

36 And the angel of Yahweh (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה) went out and struck down 185,000 (וּשְׁמַנְיִים וְחַמְשָׁה אַלְפֵי) in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. 37 Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, returned home, and lived at Nineveh. 38 And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch (נִסְרוֹךְ)¹⁰ his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword. And after they escaped into the land of Ararat (אַרְרָט),¹¹ Esarhaddon (אַסְרַחְדּוֹן)¹² his son reigned in his place.

¹⁰ “Nisroch may then be a rendering of the name of the Assyr. national god, Ashur... A form of the god Nusku (assuming an original *nswk*) of Marduk, or a connection with the eagle shaped army standards has also been suggested” (D. J. Wiseman, “[Nisroch](#),” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 826).

¹¹ “There is little doubt that biblical *’arārāt* was the *Uratu* of the Assyrian inscriptions, a kingdom, which flourished in the time of the Assyrian empire in the neighbourhood of Lake Van in Armenia. ...Excavations, notably at Toprak Kale, part of the ancient capital, *Ṭuṣpa*, near the shore of Lake Van, at Karmir Blur, a town site near Erivan in the USSR, and at Alting Tepe, near Erzincan, have revealed examples of art and architecture. In the 9th century, reports of Assyrian campaigns against *Uratu*...become more frequent, and about 830 bc a new dynasty was founded by Sardur I, who established his capital at *Ṭuṣpa*. His immediate successors held the frontiers, but the kingdom was badly shaken at the end of the 8th century by the Cimmerian...invasions, and was only briefly revived in the mid-7th century by Rusa II, who may have been the king who gave asylum to Sennacherib’s assassins. The end of *Uratu* is obscure, but the Indo-European-speaking Armenians must have been established there by the late 6th century bc.... *Uratu* probably disappeared as a state in the early 6th century, at about the time of Jeremiah’s prophetic summons” (T. C. Mitchell, “[Ararat](#),” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 68).

¹² “ESARHADDON...was king of Assyria and Babylonia 681-669 bc. He succeeded his father Sennacherib who was murdered in Tebet in 681 bc (2 Ki. 19:37; Is. 37:38). ...In the W Esarhaddon continued his father’s policy. He exacted heavy tribute from the vassal kings of Syria and Palestine, listing Manasseh (*Menasī*) of Judah (*Yaudi*) after *Ba’ali* of Tyre, with whom he concluded a treaty, having failed to isolate and thus subdue the port. The rulers of Edom, Moab and Ammon were made vassals after a series of raids on their territory in which he sought to counter the influence of Tirhakah of Egypt, who had incited a number of the Philistine cities to revolt. ...About this time Gaza and Ashkelon were counted among his vassals. The subordinate kingdoms in Syria and Palestine were called upon to provide materials for Esarhaddon’s building operations in Assyria and in Babylon, which he now sought to revive after earlier changes of fortune. This may explain the temporary detention of Manasseh in Babylon (2 Ch. 33:11). In May 672 bc Esarhaddon brought all the vassal-kings together to acknowledge his arrangements to ensure that the succession to the throne was less disturbed than his own. ...Copies of the treaty imposed on the Median city-chiefs on this occasion, found at Calah (Nimrud), show the provisions to which all, including Manasseh, would have had to assent. They declared their loyalty to the Assyrian national god Ashur and their willingness to serve Assyria for ever. History tells how soon all the client kings broke their oaths. Having gained control of the W, Esarhaddon subdued Egypt, defeated Tirhakah, besieged Memphis and counted the land as an Assyrian dependency under Neco. When the victorious army was withdrawn, local intrigues developed into open revolt. While Esarhaddon was on his way to deal with this in 669 bc he died at Harran...” (D. J. Wiseman, “[Esarhaddon](#),” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 332-33).

Commentary

1. Pray for the Remnant (Is 37:1-4).

- a. **Is 37:1-4** 1 As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Yahweh. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace. Children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that Yahweh your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that Yahweh your God has heard. Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.

2. Do Not Be Afraid (Is 37:5-7).

- a. **Is 37:5-7** 5 When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, 6 Isaiah said to them, Say to your master, Thus says Yahweh: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the young men of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumour and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.

3. Don't Let God Deceive You (Is 37:8-13).

- a. **Is 37:8-13** 8 The Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9 Now the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, He has set out to fight against you. And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah saying, 10 Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let your God in whom you trust (בטח) deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered? 12 Have the gods (אלהים) of the nations delivered them, the nations that my fathers destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?

4. Save Us that All the Earth May Know (Is 37:14-20).

- a. **Is 37:14-20** 14 Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it. And Hezekiah went up to the house of Yahweh and spread it before Yahweh. 15 And Hezekiah prayed to Yahweh: 16 Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 17 Incline your ear, Yahweh, and hear. Open your eyes, Yahweh, and see. And hear all the words of Sennacherib that he has sent to mock the living God (אלהים חי). 18 Truly, Yahweh, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands 19 and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. 20 So

now, Yahweh our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are Yahweh.¹³

5. Because You Have Prayed to Me (Is 37:21-22).

- a. **Is 37:21-22** 21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22 this is the word that Yahweh has spoken concerning him....

6. Whom Have You Mocked? (Is 37:22-25).

- a. **Is 37:22-25** 22 She despises you, she scorns you—the virgin daughter of Zion. She wags her head behind you—the daughter of Jerusalem. 23 Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes to the heights? Against the Holy One of Israel! 24 By your servants you have mocked Yahweh, and you have said, With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon, to cut down its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses, to come to its remotest height, its most fruitful forest. 25 I dug wells and drank waters, to dry up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt.

7. God Determined It Long Ago (Is 37:26-27).

- a. **Is 37:26-27** 26 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, 27 while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded, and have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown.

8. My Hook in Your Nose (Is 37:28-29).

- a. **Is 37:28-29** 28 I know your sitting down, your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. 29 Because you have raged against me and your complacency has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.

9. Take Root and Bear Fruit (Is 37:30-32).

- a. **Is 37:30-32** 30 And this shall be the sign for you [Hezekiah]. This year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that. Then in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 31 And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. 32 For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.

10. I Will Defend This City (Is 37:33-35).

- a. **Is 37:33:35** 33 Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege mound against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and

¹³ This may be the greatest concentration of God's name, Yahweh, in the Bible.

he shall not come into this city, declares Yahweh. 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.

11. 185,000 Assyrians Struck Down (Is 37:36-38).

- a. **Is 37:36-38** 36 And the angel of Yahweh went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. 37 Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, returned home, and lived at Nineveh. 38 And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword. And after they escaped into the land of Ararat, Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.
- b. Herodotus records the following regarding Sennacherib's encounter with Egypt.
 - (1) "The next king was the priest of Hephaestus whose name was Sethos. He despised and had no regard for the warrior Egyptians, thinking he would never need them; besides otherwise dishonoring them, he took away the chosen lands which had been given to them, twelve fields to each man, in the reign of former kings. So when presently king Sanacharib came against Egypt, with a great force of Arabians and Assyrians, the warrior Egyptians would not march against him. The priest, in this quandary, went into the temple shrine and there before the god's image bitterly lamented over what he expected to suffer. Sleep came on him while he was lamenting, and it seemed to him the god stood over him and told him to take heart, that he would come to no harm encountering the power of Arabia: 'I shall send you champions,' said the god. So he trusted the vision, and together with those Egyptians who would follow him camped at Pelusium, where the road comes into Egypt; and none of the warriors would go with him, but only merchants and craftsmen and traders. Their enemies came there, too, and during the night were overrun by a horde of field mice that gnawed quivers and bows and the handles of shields, with the result that many were killed fleeing unarmed the next day. And to this day a stone statue of the Egyptian king stands in Hephaestus' temple, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription to this effect: 'Look at me, and believe.'"¹⁴
 - (2) <https://www.bible-history.com/empires/prism.html>
 - (3) "Sennacherib...extensively rebuilt Nineveh, its palaces, gateways and temples, and to ensure water-supplies aqueducts...and dams were built. This was also used to irrigate large parks around the city. Prisoners from his campaigns, including Jews, were used on these projects and are depicted on the palace reliefs."¹⁵
- c. God's triumph over Assyria is the culminating proof he will triumph over all nations who persist in rebellion against him.

¹⁴ Herodotus, *Herodotus, with an English Translation by A. D. Godley*, ed. A. D. Godley (Medford, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 141.1-6.

¹⁵ D. J. Wiseman, "Assyria," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 98.