

ISAIAH LESSON 31

Don't Fret the Lads^a
(Isaiah 36:1-37:7)

Isaiah 36:1-37:7 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

Sennacherib Threatens Jerusalem

36 In the fourteenth year of King Hezeki'ah^b, Sennach'erib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.^c ²And the king of Assyria sent the Rab'shakeh^d from Lachish to King Hezeki'ah at Jerusalem, with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field.^e ³And there came out to him Eli'akim the son of Hilki'ah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Jo'ah the son of Asaph, the recorder.^f

⁴And the Rab'shakeh said to them, "Say to Hezeki'ah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you rest this confidence of yours?'^g ⁵Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me?'^h ⁶Behold, you are relying on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.ⁱ ⁷But if you say to me, 'We rely on the Lord^j our God^k,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezeki'ah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'?'^l ⁸Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders upon them.^m ⁹How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?'ⁿ ¹⁰Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The Lord said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.'"^o

¹¹Then Eli'akim, Shebna, and Jo'ah said to the Rab'shakeh, "Pray, speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah^p within the hearing of the people who are on the wall."^q

¹²But the Rab'shakeh said, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?"^r

¹³Then the Rab'shakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria!"^s ¹⁴Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezeki'ah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you.^t ¹⁵Do not let Hezeki'ah make you rely on the Lord by saying, 'The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'"^u ¹⁶Do not listen to Hezeki'ah; for thus says the king of Assyria: Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat of his own vine, and every one of his own fig tree, and every one of you will drink the water of his own cistern;^v ¹⁷until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.^w ¹⁸Beware lest Hezeki'ah mislead you by saying, 'The Lord will deliver us.' Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?'^x ¹⁹Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharva'im? Have they delivered Samar'ia out of my hand?'^y ²⁰Who among all the gods of these countries have delivered their countries out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?'"^z

²¹But they were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him."^{aa} ²²Then Eli'akim the son of Hilki'ah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Jo'ah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezeki'ah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of the Rab'shakeh.^{bb}

Hezekiah Consults Isaiah

37 When King Hezeki'ah heard it, he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.^{cc} ²And he sent Eli'akim, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, clothed with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz.^{dd} ³They said to him, "Thus says Hezeki'ah, 'This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth.'^{ee} ⁴It may be that the Lord your God heard the words of the Rab'shakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God^{ff}, and will rebuke the words which the Lord your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.'"^{gg}

⁵When the servants of King Hezeki'ah came to Isaiah,^{hh} ⁶Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the Lord: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me.'ⁱⁱ ⁷Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.'"^{jj}

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

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^a 2 Kings 18:13–19:19; 2Ki 18:13, 17-37; 2Ch 32:9-19; 37:1-13pp — 2Ki 19:1-13; 37:14-20pp — 2Ki 19:14-19; 2 Kings 19:20–37 Jhan note: If you make this pact, Israel/Judah will never be independent state again and the Messiah will not be born a king. Is 7, Isaiah told Ahaz not to make the deal with Egypt. 36:1–39:8 Except for 38:9–20 (Hezekiah's prayer of thanksgiving), this historical appendix describing the siege, etc., is paralleled in 2 Kgs 18:13–20:19, which, however, has certain details proper to itself. The events are also reflected in the cuneiform inscriptions of Sennacherib.

^b Hezekiah - The Heb. name Hezekiah is usu. spelled Hizqiyah in 1QIsaa; 4QIsab MT spell the name Hizqiyahu.

^c (36:1) 2Ki 18:9-13; 2Ch 32:1; Ps 109:11 36:1 The occasion for this Assyrian attack was Hezekiah's attempt to reject Judah's status as vassal to Assyria, relying on help from Egypt, a course of action condemned by Isaiah (see notes on 28:15, 18; 28:16; 29:7–8; 30:1–17; etc.). 2 Kgs 19:14–16 reports that Hezekiah surrendered to the Assyrians and paid the tribute imposed on him—a report omitted in the Isaiah text.

^d Rab-shakeh or "his Field Commander". Other possible meanings of the title are "Chief Cupbearer" or Chief Advisor.

^e (36:2) Is 7:3; Jsh 10:3, 15:20, 15:39; 2Ch 32:9

^f (36:3) Is 22:15, 22:20-21, 37:2; Gn 41:40; 2Sm 8:16-17; 2Ki 18:18

^g (36:4) Is 10:8; 2Ki 18:14 [4-6] Chapter 19 describes Isaiah prophecy of Judgment upon Egypt while 30-31 pronounce woe on those from Judah would ally with Egypt. King Sennacherib was taunting Judah for trusting in Egypt.

^h (36:5) Is 8:12; 2Ki 17:4, 18:7 Pharaoh's word was not good, perhaps he was defeated, or simply defected, but trust God over any Pharaoh.

ⁱ (36:6) Is 30:2-7, 42:3, 58:5; Ps 146:3; Ezk 17:17, 29:6-7

^j Lord - Yahweh, or Jehovah (יהוה, YHWH), written with assumed vowel markings, is the proper name of God when pronounced and usually translated as Lord. See Note in the Introduction to this Study. YHWH appears here and in verses 36:10 (twice), 36:15

(twice), 36:18, 36:20, 37:1, 37:4 (three times), 37:6, 37:14 (twice), 37:15, 37:17 (twice), 37:18, 37:20 (twice), 37:21, 37:22, 37:33 and 37:36.

^k God - Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) is the plural form of the generic El (אֱל), meaning god. Although it is occasionally used to mean gods, it is overwhelming translated as God, meaning the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the Septuagint it is typically translated as theos (θεός) meaning Lord or Master. Some have suggested that the use of the plural form for God is a prefiguring of the concept of the Trinity. It appears here and in verses 37:4 (three times), 37:16 (twice), 37:20 and 37:21.

^l (36:7) Dt 12:2-5; 2Ki 18:4-5; 2Ch 31:1; Ps 22:8; Mt 27:43 36:7 The Assyrians assert that Hezekiah's removal of the high places and altars (unofficial sanctuaries) was taken by the Lord as an insult. They declare to Jerusalem's emissaries that the city therefore no longer has a right to the Lord's protection and that they are the ones who truly carry out his will (cf. v. 10). The Assyrians misunderstood the meaning of tearing down the high places, and thought God would be mad about that. Satan tries to confuse or deceive us. People don't necessarily need to be sinful to be ineffectual for the Lord, they need only be confused about what God wants. God's Word keeps us on track with what God wants.

^m (36:8) Is 30:16; Ps 20:7

ⁿ (36:9) Is 10:8, 20:5, 30:2-7, 31:1-3, 37:24; Ps 20:7

^o (36:10) Isa 10:5-7, 26:2, 22:6, 22:12; 1Ki 13:18, 22:6, 22:12 The Assyrian general comes to the walls and speaks in hearing of the defenders in their own language that they are going to be beaten unless they surrender in an attempt to demoralize them.

^p The language of Judah - Lit. in these words; so 1QIsaa; MT LXX read in the Judean language. Aramaic was the international language of the time and place. The delegation spoke Aramaic and asked the Assyrian to speak that language so the men on the walls would not understand.

^q (36:11) Ezr 4:7; Dn 2:4 36:11 The emissaries of King Hezekiah ask that the conversation be carried on in Aramaic, not in Hebrew, for they fear the effect of the Assyrian claims upon the morale of the people.

^r (36:12) 2Ki 6:25; Ezk 4:12

^s (36:13) 2Ch 32:18 Jhan note: The commander never call Hez. King.

^t (36:14) 2Ch 32:6-8, 32:15, 37:10

^u (36:15) Ps 3:2-7

^v (36:16) 1Ki 4:25; 1Ki 5:5; Pr 5:15; Mi 4:4; Zec 3:10 This is the choice mankind is given, serve the devil or the lord

^w (36:17) Gn 27:28; Dt 28:51; 2Ki 15:29, 18:11 The Assyrian general offers the starving city defenders food, though they would eventually be deported, in accordance with Assyrian policy, the deportation would not be to a bad place.

^x (36:18) Is 37:11; 1Ch 5:25

^y (36:19) Is 10:9-11, 37:13; 2Ki 15:29, 17:6, 17:24, 18:34; Jr 49:23 The Assyrian general now insults God by saying that the gods of all the other places could not save their worshippers, and it would be no different now.

^z (36:20) Is 10:8-11, 36:15, 37:10-13, 37:18-20, 40:18; Ex 5:2; 1Ki 20:23, 20:28; 2Ch 25:15, 32:29; Dn 3:15;

^{aa} (36:21) Is 26:4; Pr 9:7-8, 26:4

^{bb} (36:22) Is 22:15, 22:20, 33:7, 36:3; Gn 37:29; 2Sm 8:16; 2Ki 18:18; 2Ch 34:19

^{cc} (37:1) Is 3:24; Gn 37:29, 37:34; 2Sm 3:31; 1Ki 8:33, 21:27; 2Ch 34:19; Mt 21:13 37:1-35 There appear to be parallel accounts of Hezekiah's appeal and the response received (vv. 1-7 and vv. 14-35): in each, Hezekiah goes to the Temple, refers to the Assyrian boasts (found in 36:15-20; 37:10-14), and receives a favorable response from Isaiah.

^{dd} (37:2) Is 1:1, 13:1, 20:2, 22:15, 22:20, 38:1; 2Ki 18:18

^{ee} (37:3) Is 3:8, 5:30, 22:5; 26:16-18, 33:2, 66:9; Jdg 6:2; Hos 13:13; Nah 1:7; Hab 3:16 37:3 A proverbial expression. In the Bible the pangs of childbirth often typify extreme anguish; cf. 13:8; Jer 6:24; Mi 4:9–10. In this instance there is reference to the desperate situation of Hezekiah from which he would scarcely be able to free himself. Judah is compared with a woman giving birth without the strength to deliver, which would bring death to both woman and child in days before Caesarian births. Rather than give up, finally Hezekiah turns to God.

^{ff} Living God - Elohim Chay – Here and in verse 37:17

^{gg} (37:4) Is 1:9, 10:20-22, 46:3; Dt 5:26; Jsh 3:10; 1Sm 7:8, 17:26, 17:36; 2Ch 32:17; Jr 10:10; Am 7:2 Hezekiah follows Isaiah's calls throughout the earlier chapters of the book by turning to God and watching Him come to Judah's aid.

^{hh} (37:5)

ⁱⁱ (37:6) Is 7:4, 10:24, 35:4, 52:5; Nu 15:30; Jsh 1:9; Ps 44:7, 44:13-16; Rm 2:24

^{jj} (37:7) Is 19:14, 31:8; Nu 5:14; 1Ch 5:26; Hos 4:12; Zec 13:2; 2Tm 1:7