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Please Speak to Your Servants in Aramaic 36: 2-12

Please speak to your servants in Aramaic DIG: What arguments does the field commander offer for why Jerusalem should surrender? What tone of voice do you hear? How do Assyria and Isaiah compare in their view of Judah's alliance with Egypt (19:14-15; 30:3-5)? As a Judean leader, how would you feel, hearing the field commander repeat the same things Isaiah had been saying for years? What was Assyria's undoing? What is the meaning of the sarcastic offer in 36:8? What is he implying by his final statement in 36:10?

REFLECT: Can you remember a time in your life that you lacked spiritual discernment? Was that before you were saved? What changed? Where does one get spiritual discernment? How does one get it (First Corinthians 12:10c)? What must happen first? Why does the world lack spiritual discernment?

Then the king of Assyria sent his field commander with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. A great army accompanied him for the purposes of intimidation. **Hezekiah** was now isolated. In **Second Kings 18:17 the field commander** was accompanied by two other men, **his supreme commander**, the second to **the king** in command of the army **(20:1)** and **his chief officer**, **the king's** personal advisor. But the one in charge was **the field commander**. **He stood at the very same place where the confrontation between Ahaz, the king of Judah and Isaiah, the prophet took place back in 7:3**. It was **at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field (36:2). There, Isaiah gave Ahaz the option of trusting in God, or trusting in Assyria. Ahaz chose to trust Assyria and put Judah under her yoke. And now over twenty years later Hezekiah stood where his father stood, at the perilous crossroads where the way of faith and the way of works, trusting in God and self-reliance, meet. And like his father Ahaz, Hezekiah had the same choice.**

*If we don't get it right the first time, **God** will bring us right back to the same lesson. How many times has this happened in your life or mine? How many times have you thought to yourself, "Why do I keep going through the same thing?" I think you will agree with me that with **the LORD**, it is better to get it right the first time!*

The Jewish delegation was composed of three men. The first man was **Eliakim son of Hilkiah** who had become **the palace administrator** in fulfillment of **22:2-024**. Secondly, there was **Shebna the secretary** that is a partial fulfillment of **52:15-19** and **25**. **He** had been demoted in the first stage shown here, but **his** exile will come later. The third man, **Joah, son of Asaph the recorder**, also went out with them **(36:3)**.

Without any diplomatic niceties **the field commander** moves directly to the attack. **Speaking** on behalf of **the king of Assyria he** points out the futility of **Judah's** confidence. **The field commander** spoke to **them**. **He** says that **Judah's** rebellion will prove to be completely fruitless. **Judah** has no defense. **He** bluntly bypasses **the Judean** emissaries and addresses **himself** to **Hezekiah**, whom **he** refuses to call **king**. **The field commander** spoke to them. **Tell Hezekiah that this is what the great king, the king of Assyria,** said: **What are you basing your confidence on? You say you have strategy and military strength – but you speak only empty words (36:4-5).** But at the same time, **he** tries to demonstrate the supremacy of **the king of Assyria** by calling **him the great king**. Simply put, **he** says that **Hezekiah** is just a man of **empty words**, not actions. **His words** of war never got past the talking stage. Clearly then, this is not a request, but an ultimatum.

His first attack was against **Egypt** and the trust **the Judeans** had put in them. Using words which were not so different than **Isaiah's (19:14-16, 30:7** and **31:3), he** said that **Egypt** had proven to be no help because **the Egyptian** army had been defeated. The very thing that **Isaiah** had predicted had then been fulfilled. **Look now, you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces a man's hand and wounds him if he leans on it! Such is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to all who depend on him (36:6). Egypt** was nothing but a bruised, or **splintered reed**. Whoever **leans on a splintered reed** will fall. Sometimes we give our opponents ammunition to use against us because we have betrayed our trust in **God** by trusting in the world instead. **God** had prohibited trusting in **Egypt**, and now **the field commander** was able to mock them for doing such a foolish thing. Therefore, we need to examine closely our beliefs and actions to see if, in fact, they are a denial of our professed faith in **God**. If there are any

practices or relationships in our lives that will give others a chance to say that we talk a good game, but are really no different from the world **(First John 2:15-17)**, we need to get rid of them now before it kills our testimony.

And if you say to me, "We are depending on ADONAI our God," isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar" (36:7)? Many people today have no spiritual discernment. They are like **Sennacherib's field commander.** Had **he** stopped with **Assyria** defeating **Judah**, just as **Isaiah** had said, **he** would have been on safe ground. But **he** went on to say that **ADONAI** was of no help to **the Jews**. **He** was saying, "Don't you know that **Hezekiah** had all those **high places** destroyed?" **He** thought **Hezekiah** had destroyed the worship of the nation so that it had no **God** to turn to. **He** thought that the worship of heathen alters on **the high** hills was the same was worshipping the living **God** in **Jerusalem**.

That would be **his** undoing. **He** did not understand the difference between Jewish monotheism and the worship of idols. **He** reasons that the **God** of **Isra'el** would prove useless because **Hezekiah** had not been faithful to **his God**. **Speaking** for **his king**, **Sennacherib, he** feels that **God** would not help **Judah** because **Hezekiah** had **removed** all of **the high places and altars**. So why would any god want to help **him**? **He** did not realize that those very **high places** themselves were contrary to what **ADONAI** had instructed. Thus, **Sennacherib** and **his field commander** reveal a total lack of knowledge of the **God** of **Isra'el**.

The Bible teaches us that only **Ruach ha-Kodesh** enables us to have spiritual discernment. It is possible to read, study and memorize large parts of the Bible and still not understand it. The scribes and Pharisees of **Yeshua's** day were highly trained in the Torah and the TaNaKh, yet they missed its central message. They completely failed to recognize **the Messiah** when **He** came, even though **He** lived right among them **(John 5:37-39)**. **People without the Holy Spirit do not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to them, and they cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned (First Corinthians 2:14)**. Because **Sennacherib** and **his field commander** did not belong to **the LORD, they** could not understand **the LORD**. **God's** Word is spiritually evaluated, discerned and understood. But **people** in **their** fallen state, before salvation, are spiritually dead.

To **the field commander**, **Jerusalem's** only reasonable action was to surrender. In contrast to the weakness of **Judah**, **he** brags about the superiority of **Assyria**.

“Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses – if you can put riders on them (36:8)! Mockingly, **he** even offered to **give** the Jews **2,000 horses if they** could provide **2,000** riders to fight against **him**. The point of this taunt is that **Judah** does not have enough men to withstand the assault of **the Assyrians**. **He** obviously believes that **Judah** is not strong enough to withstand **Assyria**. **He** points to the superiority of **Egypt**, who was much stronger than **Judah**. **How then can you repulse an officer of the least of my master’s officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen (36:9)?** However, the help of **Egypt** could not turn the smallest and the weakest **Assyrian officer** back. The point here is that **Egypt** is not strong enough to help **them** either.

His speech was so convincing precisely because it contained so much that was true. But its basic premise was false; namely, that **ADONAI** had forsaken **Judah**, and therefore, that trust in **Him** was futile. It is always Satan’s way to make us think that **God** has abandoned us, and to use logic woven from half-truths to convince us of it. This speech was so subtly devilish in character that it might have been written by Satan himself. The truth is that **the LORD** brought **Judah** to the end of **her** own resources so that **she** might learn again what it meant to trust **Him** completely. **He** had not abandoned and would not abandon **her**. **He** has not and will not abandon us **(John 6:37-40** and **47, 10:27-30; Jude 24)**.

Finalizing **his** argument, **the field commander** arrogantly boasted that **ADONAI,** the **God** of **Isra’el**, had ordered him to **destroy Judah**. **Furthermore, have I have come to attack and destroy this land without the LORD? The Lord Himself told me to march against this country and destroy it (36:10).** It is **Judah’s** own **God**, **he** says that has brought **Assyria** to conquer. **Chapter 10:5-11** makes it clear that **Assyria** was commissioned by **God** to invade **Judah**. But **Assyria** went far beyond **her** commission in **10:12-19**. That will prove to be a serious error. **The field commander’s** point here is that **your God cannot help you.** This was and is the purest form of defiance possible; it is ousting **ADONAI** from the throne of our lives and putting ourselves first. It is the sin of Adam and Eve, and before them, of Satan himself. It is the primal sin from which all others grow. And it was especially, in this case, the sin of **the king** of **Assyria**, **the great king (36:13, 37:23).**[131]

What **the field commander** did in **his** speech was to reveal the essential nature of the issue that is always before us. Shall we commit ourselves to **God** or to human might and glory? But more importantly, **he** threw down the gauntlet to **the LORD**

Himself. If **God** wants to be known as **God**, **He** would need to reveal **Himself**. **ADONAI** was waiting for the right opportunity.

Up to this point **the field commander** has been **speaking** in **Hebrew**. But realizing the seriousness of their situation, the three Jewish negotiators request that the negotiations be carried on **in Aramaic** rather than **Hebrew. Aramaic** was the major diplomatic language in that day. It was similar to **Hebrew,** but different enough that the common people could not understand it. **Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall" (36:11).** The reason for this request is to prevent the inhabitants of **Jerusalem**, many of whom were standing on top of the wall and listening to the proceedings, from hearing **the Assyrian** threats.

Of course, **the Jewish** delegation's protest only caused **the field commander** to talk all the louder. **Sennacherib** had sent **him** to **speak** to all of **the people**. As a result, **He** arrogantly declared: **Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the men sitting on the wall – who, like you, will have to eat their own filth and drink their own urine (36:12)?** Confident of victory, **he** said that **the Jews** would be forced to **eat** and **drink their own** body waste to survive in the siege. **The Assyrians** used psychological warfare to **their** greatest advantage. And so does **the devil, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Gs – Before Abraham Was Born, I Am**).