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Hezekiah Sent Eliakim and Shebna to the Prophet Isaiah

37: 1-13

Hezekiah sent Eliakim and Shebna to the prophet Isaiah DIG: What is the significance of Hezekiah tearing his clothes and wearing sackcloth? How would you react if a leader you admired did something like that? How does his response to this threat differ from that of his father Ahaz (see 7:2-13)? What changed Sennacherib's plans? How would his withdrawal affect the people of Jerusalem? In terms of mocking God, how does Sennacherib even outdo his field commander? What's the point of Sennacherib reminding Hezekiah of all his conquests?

REFLECT: How must the faith of Hezekiah have appeared to the Assyrians? In what situation has your faith in God's promises appeared equally foolish? Given your level of faith now, would you have clung to Isaiah's prophecies at this point, or would you have caved in to "reality?" Why? What "Assyrian threat" faces you now? To what promises of God are you clinging? Isaiah's promises must have been the anchor to which Hezekiah held. What promises of God serve as an anchor for you in times of crisis?



Hezekiah and the nation had disobeyed **Isaiah**, which brought about this invasion to begin with. **When Hezekiah heard the Assyrian demands from Sennacherib's field commander, he himself** joins the mourning. **His** reaction to the report of **his** messengers

revealed a man of faith. **He tore his clothes and put on sackcloth**, a biblical sign of mourning, but also repentance and humiliation, **and went to the Temple of God**. In addition, **he sent Eliakim, the palace administrator, Shebna, the secretary, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz (37:1-2)**. So shyly, and with much difficulty I am sure, **the king and his** delegation requested **Isaiah** to intercede. The irony of this situation could not be missed by anyone.

The message they sent to **Isaiah** was a message of distress because **the Assyrians** have taken the Land. **This is what Hezekiah** said: **This is a day of rebuke** because they finally realized it was the result of **their Egyptian** alliance. **This was a day of disgrace** because **the Assyrians** had disgraced the **God of Jerusalem**. And it was a time of **birth pangs and there was no strength left to deliver (37:3)**. **This is a metaphor for a critical moment, which finds one utterly helpless or unprepared**. A woman in this situation would die. And **Judah** was in the same situation, facing imminent death. Forty-six cities were already gone; only **Jerusalem** was left. **They** requested divine help.

The delegation said to **Isaiah**, very humbly: **It may be that ADONAI your God will hear the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that He will rebuke him for the words ADONAI your God has heard. Therefore, pray for the remnant that still survives (37:4)**. When speaking to **Isaiah** they refer to **ADONAI** as **your God** because **they** recognize that **they** have been in disobedience. **They** admit that **the field commander** has defied **the living God**. Perhaps **ADONAI** will rebuke the words of **Sennacherib** and let those who remain survive.

It is important to take note that **Hezekiah's** words: **This is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace (37:3a)** are an utter admission of failure. Not only had **his** policies brought **Judah** into **Assyria's** crosshairs, but more importantly **they** had also brought about **Judah's** rebuke from **God**. **When the delegation was sent to Isaiah, it signaled the end of the pro-Egyptian policy. At long last they had discovered the error of disobeying ADONAI and His prophet**. But even more seriously, **God Himself** had been brought into contempt. This is a lesson of life: the believer who lives a life of sin and debauchery will, at some point, bring reproach upon **the LORD** in the eyes of the world. The world will associate the sinful activity on the believer's part, with inability on **God's** part. And ultimately, they bring **YHVH** into contempt. Should we continue in such a lifestyle merely because we know that we are saved (see the commentary on **Romans, to see link click Bq - The Background of the Messianic Mikveh**)? **Heaven forbid** (*chalilah*, meaning *it makes no sense*), repentance is needed.

This kind of admission of helplessness is frequently necessary *before* **God** can help us. So long as we believe that we can handle any given situation, still claiming to be the lord of our own life, we are without hope. Only when we admit that we are completely spiritually bankrupt, are we able to receive what **the LORD** has for us. That was what **Hezekiah** did. But what will happen? **Hezekiah** and his officials had repudiated **Isaiah** for his words (**30:8-11**). What would **Isaiah** do? Would **he** reject them and leave them to wallow in the consequences of their own blindness?¹³²

When King Hezekiah's officials came to Isaiah, he takes no satisfaction that his predictions have come true, or that the leaders of **Judah**, including **Hezekiah**, have to admit their foolishness by coming meekly to **him** (**37:5**). On the other hand, **he** makes no promises of **Judah's** deliverance. First, **he** speaks to the king: **Tell your master, This is what ADONAI says, "Do not be afraid"**. These were the same words **he** had spoken to **Hezekiah's** father Ahaz (**7:4**). **God** was greater than any obstacle; that being so, **he** did not need to live in fear. As a result, although **Hezekiah** was concerned as to whether **the LORD** had heard the blasphemy of **the field commander** and **Sennacherib**, **God** was concerned that **Hezekiah** had heard it and had become frightened. **Do not be afraid of what you have heard - those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me** (**37:6**). **God's** contempt for **the Assyrian** blasphemy is seen by the way **He** sees the **underlings**, like **the field commander** and the other officers. **Their** power and authority might frighten others, but **ADONAI** was not particularly impressed.

The prophet declared that he would **put a spirit in Sennacherib**. He said: **Listen! I am going to put a spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword** (**37:7**). The word **spirit** here denotes *a sense of compulsion*. **He** would put a compulsive **spirit** in **Sennacherib** that would influence **his** thoughts, attitude, and conduct. **God** was going to predispose **Sennacherib** to leave **Judah**. **He** said that **the king of Assyria** was going to hear a rumor of rebellion back home which will force him to return to Nineveh, and there **the LORD will have Sennacherib cut down by the sword**. Not surprisingly, this was exactly what happened, although there was a slight delay. **Isaiah** tells us that **Sennacherib, king of Assyria, broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there**. Twenty years later when **Sennacherib** was praying in the Temple to **his** own god, **his** own two sons killed **him by the sword**.

In the meantime, the **field commander** returned to **Sennacherib** empty-handed because he was unsuccessful in getting **Jerusalem** to surrender. By that time **Lachish** had fallen and another city of the countryside, **Libnah**, was besieged. **When the field commander**

heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah. Also, the news reached **him** that a **Cushite** invasion under **Tirhakah** was under way. **Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the Cushite king of Egypt, was marching out to fight against him (37:8-9).**

Feeling very confident, **Sennacherib** writes a letter to **Hezekiah** before leaving to meet the threat from **Tirhakah**. **He** wrote to the **king of Judah**, saying: **Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says: Jerusalem will not be handed over to the king of Assyria. Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? Did the gods of those nations which my fathers have destroyed deliver them, even Gozan, or Haran, or Rezepth or the people of Eden who were in Tel Assar? Where is the King of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, or of Hena or Ivvah (37:10-13).** But in writing **his** letter, **Sennacherib** made the mistake that **the field commander** had made. **Sennacherib** accused **ADONAI** of being deceptive. Basically, **he** was saying to **Hezekiah**, “Don’t trust your **God** if **He** says **Jerusalem** will not fall. Indeed it will.” **He** said other nations had fallen and the gods of those nations had proven to be defenseless. **He** listed the various nations that **he** had conquered and made the same point that **the field commander** made. The gods of those other nations failed to deliver them from the hand of **Assyria**. The implication was this: “What do you think your **God** is going to be able to do?”

Pride is the worst of all sins. It is the purest form of rebellion possible because we expel **the LORD** from the throne of our lives and put ourselves in **His** place (**14:12-15**). It is the sin of Adam and Eve, and before them the Adversary **himself**. It is the original sin, from which all others grow. And it was especially true of **Sennacherib**.

At that time **Hezekiah** wrote **Psalms 46** just after the mighty **Assyrian** army besieged **Jerusalem**. But **he** trusted in **ADONAI** when all seemed lost. **He** was a different man. Inspired by **God the Ruach Ha’Kodesh**, **he** wrote:

**God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore, we are unafraid,
even if the earth gives way,
even if the mountains tumble
into the depths of the sea,
Even if its waters rage and foam,**

and mountains shake at its turbulence. *Selah*

**There is a river whose streams
gladden the city of God,
the holy habitation of 'Elyon -
God is in the city.
It will not be moved -
when daybreak comes, God will help it.
Nations were in turmoil, kingdoms were moved;
He lifts His voice and the earth melted away.**

**The LORD of heavens armies is with us,
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah***

**Come and see the works of ADONAI,
the astounding deeds He has done on the earth,
To the ends of the earth He makes wars cease -
He breaks the bow, snaps the spear,
He burns the shield in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God,
supreme over the nations,
supreme over the earth.**

**ADONAI of heavens armies is with us,
the God of Jacob is our fortress (Psalm 46 CJB). *Selah***