

The Book of Isaiah

Chapters 36-37

Historical Events at the Time of Isaiah

These chapters contain historical information, **drawing the curtain on the Assyrian crisis**. Isaiah describes the siege of Jerusalem under Sennacherib and the glorious deliverance by the Lord.

Backstory: The Assyrian conquest of Samaria and the 10 Northern Tribes of Israel under Assyrian King Shalmaneser and the deportation of Israel into Assyria (**2 Kings 17:3, 5-6 cf. 18:9-11**). The importation of foreigners into the land, which will come to be known as “the Samaritans” (**2 Kings 17:24**).

Some 10 years later the Assyrian king Sennacherib came and took the fortified cities of Judah, Lachish being their new strong hold in the region (**2 Kings 18:13 – 14**).

I. Hezekiah and the Assyrian Danger (36:1- 37:20): Just prior to attacking Jerusalem, King Sennacherib of Assyria sends his military commander to threaten, ridicule, and intimidate King Hezekiah and his people.

A. Sennacherib and Hezekiah – Round One (**36:1-22; 37:1-7**)

1. The men from Hezekiah (**36:1-3**): Three of Hezekiah’s top officials – Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah – meet with Sennacherib’s military commander.

2. The message to Hezekiah (**36:4-21**): In essence the commander’s warning is twofold:

a. What Judah cannot do (**36:4-12, 18-21**)

(1) They cannot depend on Egypt (**36:4-6**)

(2) They cannot depend on their God (**36:7-12, 18-21**)

b. What Judah should do (**36:22, 37:1**)

3. The lament of Hezekiah (**36:22, 37:1**)

4. Isaiah and Hezekiah (**37:2-7**)

a. Hezekiah’s request to Isaiah (**37:2-4**): The king informs Isaiah of the terrible danger and begs him to pray for God’s help.

b. Hezekiah's reassurance from Isaiah **(37:5-7)**: Isaiah tells the king that his foe Sennacherib will soon experience defeat and death.

B. Sennacherib and Hezekiah – Round Two (37:8-20)

1. The Assyrian king to Judean king **(37:8-13)**: Like his words previously **(36:4-12, 18-21)**

2. Hezekiah Prayer to God **(37:14-20)**

II. Hezekiah and the Angelic Deliverance (37:21-38)

A. God through the Prophet Isaiah condemned Sennacherib (37:21-29)

1. Sennacherib's Pride **(37:21-28)**

2. His Punishment **(37:29)**: Sennacherib will be led back to Assyria.

B. God Consoles Hezekiah (37:30-38)

1. The Promises **(37:30-35)**: God assures Hezekiah of two things:

a. The land will soon enjoy abundant crops **(37:30-32)**

b. The Assyrians will never enter Jerusalem **(37:33-35)**

2. The Power **(37:36-38)**: That very night God's angel destroys 185,000 Assyrian troops.

The Book of Isaiah

Chapters 38-39

Historical Events at the Time of Isaiah

These chapters contain historical information, **raising the curtain on the Babylonian crisis**. Isaiah describes King Hezekiah's sickness, healing, and self-exaltation.

I. The Healing of Hezekiah (38:1-22)

- A. The sickness of Hezekiah (38:1)
- B. The supplication of Hezekiah (38:2-3)
- C. The Salvation of Hezekiah (38:4-6)
- D. The Sign of Hezekiah (38:7-8)
- E. The Summary by Hezekiah (38:9-22)
 - 1. Regarding Hezekiah's Depression (9-16)
 - a. He feels betrayed (38:9-12)
 - b. He feels broken (38:13-16)
 - 2. Regarding Hezekiah's Deliverance (38:17-22)
 - a. What God has done (38:17-18)
 - b. What Hezekiah will do (38:19-20)
 - c. What Isaiah tells Hezekiah's Servants (38:21)
 - d. What Hezekiah asks (38:22)

II. The Hospitality of Hezekiah (39:1-8)

- A. The foolishness of Hezekiah (39:1-2)
- B. The Faulting of Hezekiah (39:3-8)
 - 1. The Rebuke (39:3-7)
 - 2. The Response (39:8)

The Destruction of Lachish

The following are artifacts recovered from Lachish that record its fall to the Assyrians in approximately 701 BC.



The Assyrian king Sennacherib sits on his luxurious chair on a low mound. There is a tent behind him. His commander-in-chief stands before him (in a very close proximity) and greets him after conquering the city of Lachish. Assyrian soldiers (the king's bodyguards) wear their exquisite military uniform and carry their weapons. Prisoners from Lachish are being reviewed and presented to the king. One prostrates and another two kneel; they seem to ask for mercy. Most likely, they were later beheaded. The king obviously had been watching the battle and its victorious aftermath. Neo-Assyrian Period, 700-692 BCE. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), panels 11-13, Room XXXVI of the southwest palace; the heartland of the Assyrian Empire. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. *Amin*.



This panel shows the Assyrian base camp from which the siege was conducted. It is fortified with a road running through the middle. Servants are working in tents, and two priests are performing a ceremony in front of the chariots on which are mounted the standards of the gods. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the South-West Palace, panels 14-16. The British Museum, London. Photo© Osama S. M. Amin.



The beginning of the attack on Lachish in 701 BCE. This is a detail of a large stone wall panel, which shows the Assyrian soldiers slinging small rounded stones (so-called "slingers") at the enemy soldiers defending the city's towers. From. Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room. XXXVI of the southwest palace, panels 5-6. The British Museum., London. Photo © Osama S. M. Am.in.



The beginning of the assault on Lachish in 701 BCE. This is a detail of a large stone wall panel, which shows Assyrian archers shooting arrows with their large bows. The archers stand behind siege engines (not shown here). From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panels 5-6. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



The beginning of the attack on Lachish in 701 BCE. This is a detail of a large stone wall panel which shows Assyrian soldiers in action, holding their long spears and rounded shields. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panels 5-6. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



This is the main documentation of the battle field. Lachish was a heavily fortified city, lying on a steep hill. The Assyrians had to build several ramps in order to transport their military equipment high up the hill in order to reach the city walls and gate. The city gate was situated at the southern side of the hill, which was much steeper than its northern counterpart. Siege engines and soldiers are ascending and attacking the city. The defenders (soldiers on city towers) are trying desperately to shoot arrows, throw stones and rocks, and pour water on the Assyrians. The Assyrians were well-equipped ruthless warriors. After few weeks of the siege, the city was sacked, and the Assyrians conquered the city. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room **XXXVI** of the southwest palace, panel 7. The British Museum, London. Photo© Osama S. M. Amin.



Here, the Assyrian army is crushing the enemy and has reached the city wall. The soldiers of Lachish are still within their protective towers. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panel 7. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



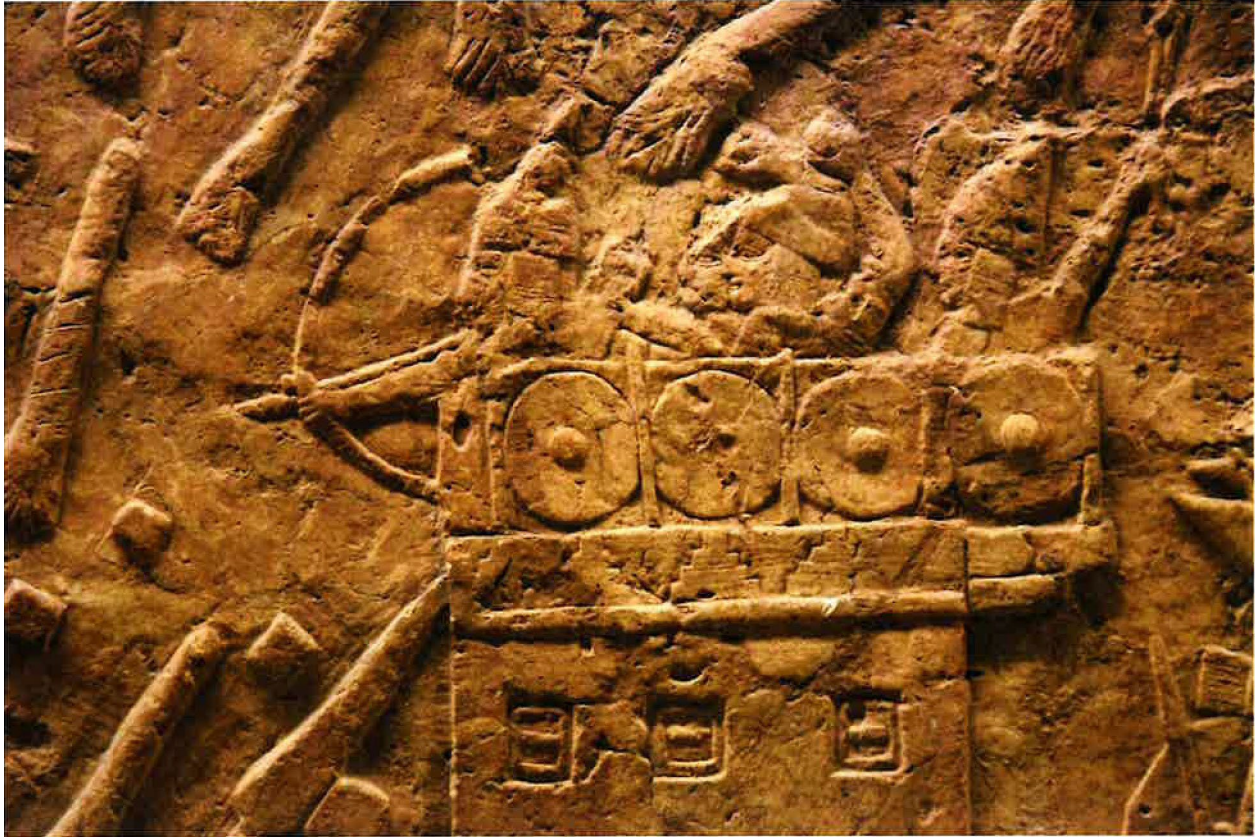
Assyrian slingers and archers ascend up the artificial ramp to the city walls. They are being led and protected by a spear man, who holds a large rounded shield. Note their highly professional military uniform, shoes, and helmets. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panel 7. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



An Assyrian siege engine ascends up the ramp. This is a wheeled vehicle with a platform for archers - a battering ram can be attached at the front for breaking through gates or walls. The engine is being attacked by stones, rocks, and fiery torches. One of the Lachish's towers appears on the right side of this photograph. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panel 7. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



This is a dynamic scene. The battering ram of the siege engine is being attacked by fire torches, which were thrown by the soldiers of Lachish. One of the Assyrian soldiers, within the engine, is ready and seems to anticipate this attack. He is pouring water on the engine in order to prevent it from catching fire. Despite all the damage, it seems that the engine is immune to this attack. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panel 7. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



The defenders - Hebrew soldiers - are positioned on one of the city wall's towers, trying to ward off the Assyrians. A soldier is throwing an arrow, while his companions are throwing stones and rocks. The surrounding environment is bombarded with fire torches and stones. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panel 7. The British Museum, London. Photo© Osama S. M. Amin.



Early in the battle, some of the soldiers of Lachish were captured by the Assyrian army. This detail of the stone panel depicts the impalement process: Three prisoners of war are being impaled by Assyrian soldiers. Impalement is not an ordinary method of execution; rather it is a very brutal and ruthless approach that was used in wartime to suppress rebellions. Prisoners of war were impaled in front of the city of Lachish to terrorize the city's inhabitants. Note that the victims appear to be handcuffed and naked. Death in this fashion is very painful and typically slow as many hours are required before the victim dies. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panel 7. The British Museum, London. Photo© Osama S. M. Amin.



Lachish's defense forces have started to collapse here. Lachish's gate has been opened, and the city's inhabitants are fleeing Lachish, holding their personal belongings or whatever they could bring with them. This detail shows women and two men. It appears that they are walking down the hill and have reached the Assyrian artificial ramp. It seems that the Assyrian army lets them go without killing them on the spot. The surrounding battle field is hellish. The Assyrians continue to progress successfully while the defenders of Lachish are desperately resisting the invasion. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room **XXXVI** of the Southwest palace, panel 7. The British Museum, London. Photo© Osama S. M. Amin.



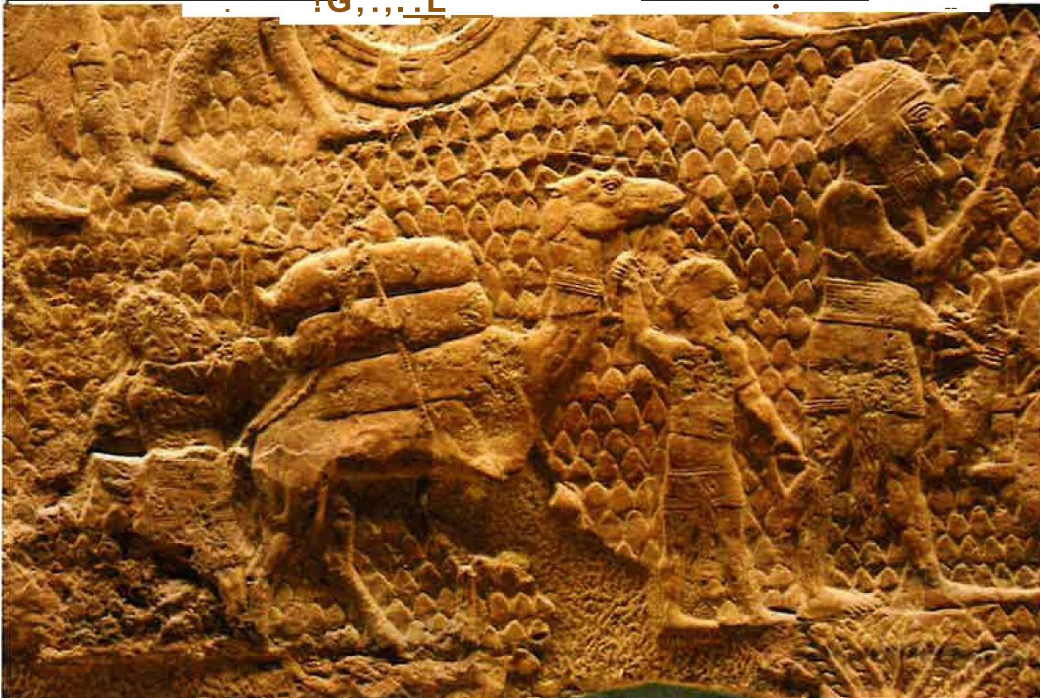
Finally, Lachish has collapsed and its defense forces are crushed. The city will be damaged and ransacked. The leaders of the rebellion will be executed on the spot, while ordinary soldiers and people will be deported into exile within the Assyrian Empire. This detail of the stone wall panel shows that Assyrian soldiers are flaying two naked prisoners from Lachish. Meanwhile, on the left, Lachish's people are deported while observing the torture. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panels 9-10. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



An Assyrian soldier guides a deported family from Lachish. A man holds a large box on his shoulders. A young woman guides a two-wheeled cart pulled by a bull, while a woman holds a boy and a girl. Note how the family tried to bring as much as they could from their household. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panels 8-9. The British Museum, London. Photo© Osama S.M.Amin.



Another exiled Judaeen family; note their personal belongings and the young kids. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the South-West Palace, panels 8-9. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M.



An exiled Judaeen family from Lachish is carrying their belongings on a camel in this scene. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panels 9-10. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



At the end of the battle and capture of Lachish, the victorious Sennacherib sits on a magnificent throne. He greets his commander-in-chief, who stands before him. The king's army parades booty and prisoners of war (not shown here) in front of him. The king's bodyguards are stationed around him. Two attendants stand behind Sennacherib, waving fly-whisks so that nothing, not even little creatures buzzing around in the air, disturb the king's tranquility. There is a royal tent behind the king. At the upper part of the panel, we can recognize figs and vines. The cuneiform inscription on the left reads: "Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria sat on a throne, and the booty of Lachish passed before him." The king's face was later deliberately defaced - most likely by an enemy soldier - after the fall of Nineveh in 612 BCE. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panels 11-13. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



Assyrian soldiers parading the prisoners of war before Sennacherib (on the right and not shown here). Most likely, these figures represent the heads of the rebellion. All of them are bare-footed and wear nothing on their head, which is a sign of humiliation. All of them seem to ask for mercy. One prostrates, two kneels and the other three stand before the king. They were executed later on in all likelihood. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the southwest palace, panels 11-13. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



Some of the prisoners are beheaded here. The one on the left is about to be decapitated by an Assyrian soldier. Another prisoner on the right (most of his body is lost) has already been beheaded; his supine and flaccid posture suggests this. Two Assyrian soldiers on the right side observe the beheading process. Assyrian literature clearly mentions that only the heads of a rebellion (king, prince, commander-in-chief, high ranking officials,... etc.) face execution, usually through beheading. From Nineveh (modern-day Mosul Governorate, Iraq), Room XXXVI of the Southwest palace, panels 11-13. The British Museum, London. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.



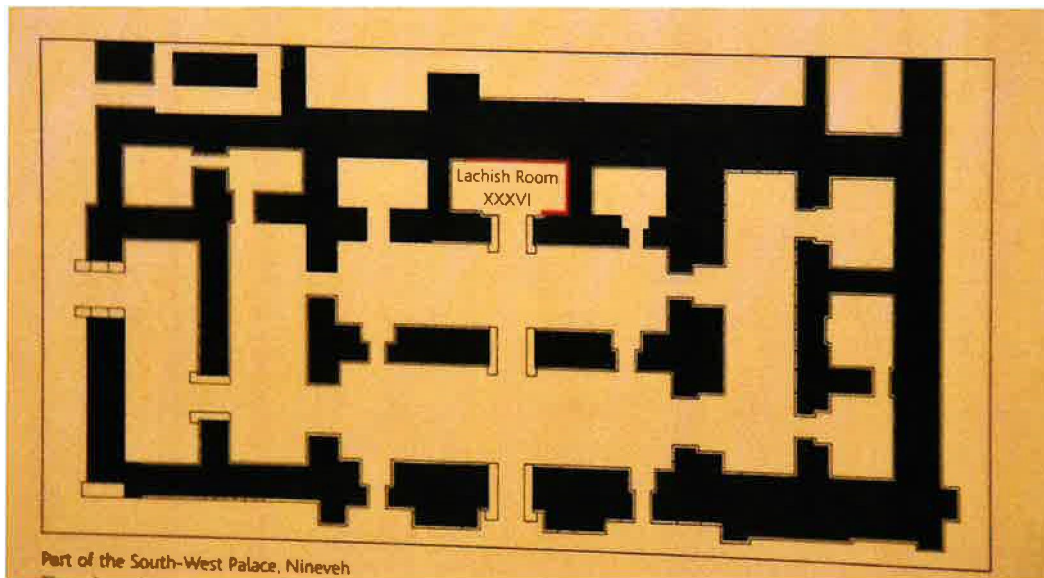
This is a detail of part of a terracotta prism. This foundation document is one of the annals of Sennacherib, dating back to 694 BCE. The Akkadian cuneiform inscriptions narrate the military campaigns of Sennacherib: The capture of Lachish and the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BCE. The King's account of the siege of Lachish is given in column iii, lines 38-81. From Nineveh, Mesopotamia, Iraq. The British Museum, London. WA 103000. Photo© Osama S. M. Amin.



Flint sling-stones (with modern sling). These stones were excavated at Level III of the city gate of Lachish. They were thrown by the Assyrian soldiers at the city's towers. Donated by Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome in 1956. The British Museum, London. Photo© Osama S.M.Amin.



These are arrowheads found at Lachish. There are six iron arrowheads and six "bone" arrowheads. The latter were produced during the siege when iron became scarce. There is incrustation and discoloration (from burns) of these bony arrowheads. Donated by Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome in 1956. The British Museum, London. Photo© Osama S. M. Amin.



Plan of the South-West Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh. Room XXXVI was labelled with red lines to show the original alignment and position of these wall reliefs, which are now housed in the British Museum. This image belongs to the British Museum. This photo is shot by and is © Osama S. M. Amin.



Room 106 at the British Museum. The Siege of Lachish wall reliefs can be seen here with their corresponding descriptions. Photo © Osama S. M. Amin.

