



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

“Cornered. Afraid. Vulnerable to the Enemy’s Popular Appeal.”

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Is 36:11-22; Isa. 29:15; 32:9-10; 28:18, 20; 31:3-8; Mic. 4:1-5; 1 Sam 15:22

As we come to the end of Isaiah 36, we’re sitting right in that tension-filled place: cornered, afraid, and vulnerable to the enemy’s popular appeal. Assyria is at the gate. Jerusalem is locked in. And where does it all happen? At the aqueduct—the place of resources, the place of vulnerability, the place where you start counting what you have left and how long it will last. It’s literally the same location where Hezekiah’s father Ahaz once stood in Isaiah 7, when *he* was afraid. In Isa. 7, the Lord offered Ahaz reassurance and an invitation to trust. But Ahaz gave the “religious” answer that sounded humble, but was really a cover for refusing to take God at His word. Now his son Hezekiah is facing a much bigger enemy, and the question is hovering: will he repeat his father’s faithlessness... or will he trust ADONAI?

And here comes the Rab-shakeh—Sennacherib’s spokesman—skilled, loud, and strategic. He brings a message that mixes truth with poison. He asks a valid question: “What are you trusting in?” And honestly, it *is* insane—humanly speaking—for Judah to resist Assyria. But the enemy’s tactic is always the same: truth, truth, truth... then the lie. Yes, Egypt is a splintered reed. Yes, Judah is outmatched. Yes, mere human strength won’t “snatch” them out. But then comes the hook: “So don’t trust ADONAI either.” That’s the deception—because the truth is, ADONAI hasn’t failed them. They just haven’t relied on Him. And even now, He’s still waiting, still calling, still offering another chance to return.

1. WHEN FEAR CORNERS YOU, THE ENEMY TRIES TO EXPOSE WHAT YOU HID AND WEAPONIZE IT

When Judah’s officials ask, “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic,” they’re not just being diplomatic—they’re trying to keep the people from understanding. *“Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, because we understand it... Don’t speak to us in Yehudit... when the people on the wall are listening.”* (Isa. 36:11). Why? Because secrecy has been their pattern. They’ve made plans “in the dark,” and the Lord already called it out: *“Oy, those who go to great depths to hide their plans from ADONAI!”* (Isa. 29:15). They brokered confidence through backroom deals, and the people became “at ease,” untroubled, thinking everything was handled—right up until the moment the blanket proved too narrow and the bed too short (Isa. 28:20).

But the enemy refuses to keep your secrets. That’s what the Rab-shakeh does—he turns their hidden vulnerability into public terror. He basically says, “This isn’t just about your officials; it’s about the men on the wall.” And then he paints siege warfare in blunt, humiliating reality (Isa. 36:12). Why? Because fear makes crowds move, and panic can overthrow leadership, open gates, and surrender without a fight. This is how the enemy operates: he waits until your plans collapse—until “the jig is up”—then he exposes what you tried to manage in secret, and he uses shame and dread to push you toward surrender.

2. THE ENEMY’S “POPULAR LANGUAGE” IS TRUTH MIXED WITH A LIE: “DON’T TRUST GOD”

Then the Rab-shakeh goes loud—he switches into the language everyone understands. *“Then the Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the language of the Jews...”* (Isa. 36:13). He’s not doing private diplomacy anymore; he’s preaching. And he even borrows holy language to do it: “Hear (shema) the words of the great king.” But he assigns “great king” to Assyria, a title we instinctively reserve for the Lord. And then he says something that is partly true: *“Don’t let*

Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you." (Isa. 36:14). That's real—Hezekiah can't snatch them out by his own power. Judah is outmatched. The fear is legitimate.

But then comes the lie meant to finish them: "*Nor let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in ADONAI...*" (Isa. 36:15). That's the central battle. "Don't trust Egypt" is rooted in truth—"Now Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses are flesh, not spirit." (Isa. 31:3). But "don't trust ADONAI" is the poison. And the enemy loves to use the moment when you're most afraid to convince you that God is the one who failed. When you're hemmed in and it looks like you did "everything religious," empty religion starts whispering, "This wasn't the deal. God didn't come through." But Scripture is blunt: "*To obey is better than sacrifice.*" (1 Sam. 15:22). The Lord isn't impressed with motion; He's after trust. And the real tragedy is this: God has been faithful—He has been calling, warning, inviting—and His people substituted outward observance for surrender.

3. THE ENEMY WILL COUNTERFEIT GOD'S PROMISES, THEN COMMIT HIS FATAL ERROR:

COMPARING ADONAI TO IDOLS. Watch how slick the appeal gets. The Rab-shakeh says, "Make peace with me," but the Hebrew idea is even more biting: "Do a blessing to me... make your *b'rachah* to me." In other words, "Don't say, 'Blessed are You, ADONAI...—bless me.'" Then he paints a picture of comfort: vine, fig tree, water, security (Isa. 36:16). That's not accidental—because those images echo God's own promised peace, even spoken through Micah in that same era: "*But each man will sit under his vine and under his fig tree, with no one causing terror, for the mouth of ADONAI-Tzva'ot has spoken.*" (Mic. 4:4). The enemy is trying to co-opt the promises of God, sell a counterfeit "rest," and make surrender look like wisdom.

But he slips the truth into the offer: "until I come and take you away." He's offering exile dressed up as blessing (Isa. 36:17). And then he makes his fatal mistake: he puts ADONAI in the category of the gods of the nations—"None of them delivered. So will ADONAI deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" (Isa. 36:18–20). That's where arrogance meets the living God. Because the Lord already declared both realities: He would come against Jerusalem in discipline, and He would also deliver her. "*Like hovering birds, so ADONAI-Tzva'ot will protect Jerusalem... By protecting, He will deliver. By passing over, He will save.*" (Isa. 31:5). So the people are left with one question: **will you believe the loud messenger of fear, or the steady word of the Lord?** And wisdom shows up in one small act: "*But they were silent... for the king's commandment was, 'Do not answer him.'*" (Isa. 36:21). Sometimes faith is refusing to debate the devil in public. Sometimes trust is quiet. Sometimes the holiest thing you can do is not give the enemy your voice.

CONCLUSION

So here we are at the aqueduct of decision. The vulnerable place. The place where you realize your plans don't cover you, your alliances don't save you, and your outward religion can't "snatch" you out. And the enemy is loud—he speaks in your language, uses your fears, sprinkles in truths, then swings the lie: "God won't come through." But the real story of Isaiah is that ADONAI keeps calling people who don't deserve another chance. He's slow to anger. He keeps saying, "Return." He keeps saying, "Trust Me." He keeps saying that flesh can't save, but His Spirit can (Isa. 31:3, 6).

And if we're honest, many of us know what it is to feel cornered—by consequences, by pressure, by fear, by a crisis that exposes what we've been hiding. And in that moment, the enemy doesn't just want you scared—he wants you surrendered. He wants you to stop trusting the Lord, stop waiting, stop believing, stop obeying. But today the Lord is putting the question back in front of us: Will you trust Me *now*? Not with religious cover. Not with a performance. With your actual heart. With your actual obedience. With your actual life.

If you're in that cornered place right now—where the enemy's voice feels loud, where fear feels logical, where you're tempted to believe God failed you—I want you to hear this plainly: ADONAI has not abandoned you. He's been calling you to Himself. And maybe what's being exposed in this season isn't God's unfaithfulness—it's where you've been leaning on a splintered reed. Today, the Lord is inviting you to stop hiding, stop managing, stop substituting religious motion for surrendered trust, and return to Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where do you see the “truth, truth, truth, lie” pattern in the Rab-shakeh’s speech, and where do you recognize that same tactic in your own battles?
2. Why do you think the officials wanted Aramaic instead of Yehudit—what does that reveal about fear, control, and hidden plans? (Isa. 36:11; Isa. 29:15)
3. What are examples of “empty religion” that can masquerade as trust, while avoiding real obedience? (1 Sam. 15:22)
4. What is your “splintered reed”—the thing you’re tempted to lean on when you’re afraid? (Isa. 31:3)
5. What does it look like, practically, to “not answer him”—to refuse to give the enemy your voice and your agreement? (Isa. 36:21)

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, in the Name of Yeshua, we come to You at the aqueduct—the place where our weakness shows, the place where our fear gets loud, the place where our plans fail. We confess that we have often trusted in flesh, trusted in what we can see, and masqueraded our unbelief with outward religion. Forgive us. Cleanse us. Teach us to *shema*—to hear and to heed.

ADONAI-Tzva’ot, silence the voice of the enemy in our hearts. Give us discernment to recognize the mix of truth and lies. Give us courage to return to You, to cast away what we’ve relied on, and to trust Your word over our fear. Protect Your people like hovering birds—defend, deliver, and save. And for those who are cornered today, snatch them out—not by human strength, but by Your mighty hand. We trust You. We return to You.

B’Shem Yeshua, In Yeshua’s Name, Amen.