

DID SENNACHERIB CAMPAIGN ONCE OR TWICE AGAINST HEZEKIAH?

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There is no lack of literature on the subject under discussion. Articles, too numerous to mention,¹ and several monographs,² have dealt with the problems of Sennacherib's dealings with King Hezekiah of Judah, especially with the question whether the Assyrian king conducted one campaign or two campaigns against Palestine.

There are two principal reasons why until recently it has been impossible to give a clear-cut answer to this question. The first reason is that the Biblical records agree in some parts with Sennacherib's version of the one and only Palestinian campaign recorded by him, but in other parts seem to refer to events difficult to connect with the campaign mentioned in the Assyrian annals. The second reason is that the Biblical records bring Sennacherib's campaign—or one of his campaigns, if there were two—in connection with "Tirhakah king of Ethiopia" (2 Ki 19: 9; Is 37: 9); but the campaign of Sennacherib, of which numerous Assyrian annal editions have come to light, took place in 701 B.C., some 12 years before Tirhakah came to the throne.

¹ A bibliography on articles in periodicals and treatments of the subject in commentaries and histories of Israel or of Assyria up to 1926 is found on pp. 117-122 of Honor's dissertation mentioned in n. 2. For more recent discussions see H. H. Rowley, "Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion," *BJRL*, XLIV (1962), especially the footnotes on pp. 404-406.

² G. Nagel, *Der Zug des Sanherib gegen Jerusalem nach den Quellen dargestellt* (Leipzig, 1902); J. V. Prášek, *Sanheribs Feldzüge gegen Juda* ("Mitteilungen der vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft," vol. VIII; Berlin, 1903); Leo. L. Honor, *Sennacherib's Invasion of Palestine* ("Contributions to Oriental History and Philology," No. 12; New York, 1926).

In the past the historical problems involved have been treated in three ways: (1) Some historians think that the mention of Tirhakah in the Biblical records is an anachronism and must be considered a historical error made either by the original narrator or by the later compiler.³ (2) Other scholars maintain that Tirhakah with his army actually fought against the Assyrians in 701 B.C., although he could not have done so as a king, but probably as commander-in-chief of King Shabaka, who ruled at that time over Egypt, and that Tirhakah was called "king" by the Biblical narrator after he had acceded to the throne.⁴ (3) Again, some historians believe that the mention of Tirhakah reveals clearly that parts of the Biblical narrative refer to a second campaign of Sennacherib against Judah, of which no Assyrian records have been found so far.⁵

In recent years evidence has come to light which eliminates the second of the three arguments, making it impossible to assume that Tirhakah could have confronted Sennacherib with an army in 701 B.C. Since, however, some scholars have questioned the validity of this evidence,⁶ a new discussion of

³ For example M. Noth, *The History of Israel* (2d ed.; New York, 1958), p. 268: "The reference . . . to the intervention of 'King Tirhakah of Ethiopia' against Sennacherib (2 Kings xix, 9) is evidently due to a mistake." Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 425: "It is true that there is an anachronism in naming the Ethiopian king Tirhakah, but since there has to be an anachronism somewhere, this is no count against the view here presented or in favor of the two-campaign theory."

⁴ For example André Parrot, *Nineveh and the Old Testament* (London, 1955), p. 55, n. 3: "It may be pointed out, however, that before his [Tirhakah's] accession he occupied a very important position in the Egyptian army."

⁵ For example W. F. Albright, *The Jews*, ed. L. Finkelstein (New York, 1949), p. 43: "Deuteronomistic tradition connects a disastrous pestilence with an Assyrian invasion which took place after the accession of the Ethiopian prince Taharqo (Tirhakah) to the Egyptian throne in 689. Since Hezekiah died in 686, the invasion would have occurred between 689 and 686."

⁶ For example K. A. Kitchen, in *The Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin*, No. 39 (Summer 1964), Supplement, p. V; *ibid.*, No. 41 (Spring 1965), p. 21.

the problem is justified, especially with regard to the recently discovered Tirhakah inscriptions.

Tirhakah

Tirhakah (using the Biblical spelling instead of the Egyptian Taharqa) was the third Ethiopian king of the 25th Dynasty. He is one of the many kings of the late Egyptian period—from the 21st to 25th Dynasties—concerning which our historical knowledge is fragmentary and in many respects rather meager.

The rule of the Ethiopians over Egypt started about 750 B.C. when Kashta, the king of Napata, a city lying between the third and fourth Nile cataracts, made himself master of Upper Egypt and had his daughter Amenerdas made "God's wife of Amen" in the great temple of Amen at Thebes. In this way he gave to his dynasty legal status in Egypt. Kashta's son and successor, Piankhi, conquered all of Egypt around 730 B.C. His military campaign is recorded in detail on a stela found in 1862 in the temple at Jebel Barkal.⁷ Although he seems to have overrun all of Egypt, he did not occupy the country, but returned to Nubia after having received the submission of the principal local Egyptian rulers including Tefnakhte, the prince of Saïs and founder of the 23d Dynasty. Tefnakhte was later followed by his son Bochchoris, whom the Greeks praised as a righteous and wise ruler.

After this brief Ethiopian intermezzo of Kashta and Piankhi in Egyptian history, an actual and more lasting rule over Egypt by the Ethiopians was established by Shabaka, the younger brother of Piankhi, who according to Manetho conquered all of Egypt, took Bochchoris captive and had him burned alive.⁸ The texts of Sargon II of Assyria seem to indicate that Egypt fell to the Ethiopians between 715 and

⁷ J. W. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* (Chicago, 1906), IV, 406-444.

⁸ Manetho, Fragment 67b (Loeb ed., p. 169).

711 B.C.⁹ A date in that period agrees with the statement of Herodotus that "the Ethiopians ruled Egypt for 50 years,"¹⁰ although Manetho, according to the preserved fragments, allows only 40 or 44 years for the 25th (Ethiopian) Dynasty.¹¹ After Shabaka's death, Shabataka, a son of Piankhi, took the throne. He was later followed by his brother Tirhakah.

The chronology of the 25th Dynasty kings depends entirely on the date for the commencement of the 26th Dynasty, which for the first time after the 12th Dynasty is based on unassailable chronological data and is therefore well established. According to good historical evidence Psamtik I, the first king of the 26th Dynasty, came to the throne during the Egyptian year which began Feb. 5, 663 B.C., and ended Feb. 4, 662.¹²

The connection between the first king of the 26th Dynasty and the Ethiopian King Tirhakah is made by the "First Serapeum Stela," known for more than a century. This stela, being the tombstone of a deceased sacred Apis bull, is now in the Louvre, Paris (No. 190). It contains the valuable chronological information that the animal was born in the 26th regnal year of Tirhakah, and that after having lived for 21 years and 2 months, it died in its 22d year on the 21st day of the 12th month in Psamtik's 20th year.¹³ This means that

⁹ Ed. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums* (3d ed.; Stuttgart, 1953), vol. II, part II, p. 57: "zwischen 720 und 711"; Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1961), p. 342: "The texts of Sargon appear to indicate 711 B.C. as the likely date"; J. Leclant and J. Yoyotte, *BIFAO*, LI (1952), 27: "Les textes de Sargon permettent de placer cette conquête après 715 et au plus tard en 711."

¹⁰ Herodotus, ii. 137 (Loeb ed., I, 441).

¹¹ Manetho, Fragments 66 and 67 (Loeb ed., p. 166-169).

¹² The data on which the chronology of the 26th Dynasty are based are conveniently collected by F. K. Kienitz, *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens vom 7. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert vor der Zeitwende* (Berlin, 1953), pp. 154-159.

¹³ A. Mariette, *Le Sérapéum de Memphis* (Paris, 1857), Pl. XXXVI; É. Chassinat, "Textes provenant du Sérapéum," *Recueil Travaux*, XXII (1900), 19; Breasted, *op. cit.*, p. 492; Henri Gauthier, *Le livre des rois d'Égypte*, V (Cairo, 1915), 34, 35. (On the chronological difficulties

Tirhakah's 27th year was the year which preceded Psamtik's first year. Since Psamtik I's first year was 663/662, Tirhakah's 27th regnal year was the year 664/663 B.C., which leads back to 690/689 as Tirhakah's first regnal year. This date is, however, at variance with dates obtained from Manetho, who according to Eusebius gave Tirhakah a reign of 20 years, but according to Africanus 18 years.¹⁴ If Manetho's data were valid, Tirhakah could not have come to the throne before 682 or 680 B.C., depending on which of Manetho's figures is accepted with regard to the length of Tirhakah's reign—the one transmitted to us by Africanus or the one preserved by Eusebius. It is possible, however, that the 20 (or 18) years of Manetho's statement refer only to the years of Tirhakah's sole reign following the death of his brother Shabataka. Since the new Kawa inscriptions (to be discussed below) provide hints that a coregency of six years between Shabataka and Tirhakah took place, it is possible that Manetho's data refer to Tirhakah's sole reign.

For Shabataka's reign we are on much less secure grounds than for that of Tirhakah. The highest regnal year of that king attested by any inscription is his third year, recorded on the quay in front of the great temple at Karnak. When this inscription, published by Legrain in 1896, was discovered, it provided for the first time inscriptional evidence for the correct sequence of the following three kings of the 25th Dynasty: Shabaka, Shabataka, and Tirhakah. Furthermore, this inscription states that the third year of Shabataka was the year "when his majesty was crowned as king."¹⁵ This

with regard to the end of Tirhakah's reign, and the relationship of his reign and the Assyrian conquest, see G. Goossens, "Taharqa le conquérant," *CdÉ*, XXII (1947), 239-244).

¹⁴ Manetho, *loc. cit.* For the latest computations of Tirhakah's reign see, G. Schmidt, "Das Jahr des Regierungsantritts Königs Taharqas," *Kush*, VI (1958), 121-123.

¹⁵ G. Legrain, "Textes gravés sur le quai de Karnak," *ZAS*, XXXIV (1896), 111-121; Breasted, *op. cit.*, pp. 451-453.

seems to indicate that Shabataka had ruled for two years together with his uncle Shabaka, and that he did not assume a sole reign until his third year, presumably after Shabaka had died. Manetho gives to Shabataka 14 years, according to Africanus, or 12 years, according to Eusebius.¹⁶ For lack of any other evidence scholars have therefore generally regarded a date somewhere in the neighborhood of 700 B.C. as the accession year of Shabataka.

On the length of Shabaka's reign some inscriptional evidence is available. One inscription in the Wadi Hammamat is dated in the king's 12th year,¹⁷ and another one on a statue in the British Museum in the 15th year,¹⁸ while Manetho gives him 12 years according to Eusebius, but only 8 years according to Africanus.¹⁹ In view of the various uncertainties with regard to the length of reign of Shabaka and Shabataka, it is understandable that the chronologies of these two kings, as adopted by scholars in recent works, reveal a great variety of opinion. The comparative table on page 7 shows this.

After an interval of many years during which no additional historical information concerning the 25th Dynasty came to light, some important evidence with regard to Tirhakah was discovered in recent years during the excavations at Kawa, the ancient Gematen, a Nubian site lying south of the Third Cataract. This additional information is of special interest to Biblical scholars since it seems to provide the answer to the question whether the Assyrian campaign of 701 B.C. was the only one carried out by Sennacherib against Palestine. Since discoveries made in Egypt have seldom shed direct light on Biblical events, the Kawa finds are therefore unusually important.

¹⁶ Manetho, *loc. cit.*

¹⁷ Gauthier, *op. cit.*, p. 14, No. VI; J. Couyat and P. Montet, *Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques et hiératiques du Ouâdi Hammâmât* (Cairo, 1912), p. 96, No. 187.

¹⁸ Gauthier, *op. cit.*, p. 14, No. VII; E. A. W. Budge, *The Book of the Kings of Egypt*, II (London, 1908), 70; J. Černý, *ASAE*, LI (1951), 441, 442; Yoyotte, *BIFAO*, LI (1952), 25; Albright, *BASOR*, No. 130 (April, 1953), p. 11, n. 33; *ibid.*, No. 141 (Febr., 1956), p. 25.

¹⁹ Manetho, *loc. cit.*

	Drioton- Vandier ²⁰ (1946)	Macadam ²¹ (1949)	Leclant- Yoyotte ²² (1952)	Albright ²³ (1953)	van der Meer ²⁴ (1955)	Gardiner ²⁵ (1961)
Shabaka	716-701	708-697	717-701	710/09-696/5	710-696	716-695
Shabataka	701-690	699-684	701-689	698/7-685/4	697-684	695-690
Tirhakah	690-664	689-664	689-664	690/89-	689-664	689-664

During the excavations at Kawa, carried out in 1930-1931 under the direction of F. Ll. Griffith and in 1935-1936 under L. P. Kirwan, a large number of inscriptions ranging from the Middle Kingdom to Christian times came to light.²⁶ The most important inscriptions are those of King Tirhakah. They contain records of his benefactions to the temple of "Amen-Re of Gematen [= Kawa]." Among them Stela IV and Stela V, both dated to year 6 of Tirhakah, occupy first place in historical importance.²⁷ Actually, Stela V contains no new text, since it is a duplicate text of several known inscriptions. Its first part, presenting an account of an exceptionally high Nile in Tirhakah's sixth year, is a duplicate of two texts of

²⁰ É. Drioton and J. Vandier, *L'Égypte* (2d ed.; Paris, 1946), p. 601.

²¹ M. F. Laming Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa; I. The Inscriptions* (London, 1949), p. 19.

²² Leclant and Yoyotte, *op. cit.*, p. 27. The parenthetical note "au plus tôt" is added by Leclant and Yoyotte to the year 701 in both instances, *i.e.*, where it stands for the terminal year of Shabaka and for the beginning regnal year of Shabataka's reign.

²³ Albright, *BASOR*, No. 130 (April, 1953), p. 11.

²⁴ P. van der Meer, *The Chronology of Ancient Western Asia and Egypt* (2d ed.; Leiden, 1955), pp. 81, 82, table 4.

²⁵ Gardiner, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

²⁶ The inscriptions, Egyptian and Meroitic, were published by the expedition's epigrapher, M. F. Laming Macadam, in a 2-vol. work in 1949 after a delay of many years caused by World War II, for the preface is dated 1940; see above, note 21. The following important articles reviewing this publication are worth noting: J. J. Clère, *BiOr*, VIII (1951), 174-180; B. van de Walle, *CdÉ*, XXVI (1951), 94-101; A. J. Arkell, *JEA*, XXXVII (1951), 115-116; Leclant and Yoyotte, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-39; J. A. Wilson, *JNES*, XII (1953), 63-65; J. M. A. Janssen, *Biblica*, XXXIV (1953), 23-43.

²⁷ Stela IV is now in the Merowe Museum in the Sudan, while Stela V is in the Ny Carlsbad Glyptotek in Copenhagen, Denmark.

which one was found at Coptos and the other at Maṭa'nah.²⁸ The last part of the new Stela V is a duplicate of a stela of which fragments were found at Tanis by E. de Rougé and Flinders Petrie many years ago, which, however, because of its fragmentary condition was greatly misunderstood and misinterpreted.²⁹

Because of their unusual importance those points which throw light on Tirhakah's life or on the historical events of his time must be listed.

Stela IV, erected in year 6 of Tirhakah, contains the following items of historical interest:³⁰

1. Tirhakah is the ruling king's brother.
2. He had spent his youth in Nubia.
3. He came to Thebes in the company of young men "whom his majesty, King Shabataka, had sent to fetch [Tirhakah] from Nubia, in order that he might be there with him, since he [= Shabataka] loved him [= Tirhakah] more than all his brothers."
4. He was accompanied on his trip to Thebes by "the army of his Majesty."
5. On his way to Egypt he visited the temple of Amen-Re at Gematen (= Kawa) and was disturbed to see it in a ruinous state.
6. After he was crowned he sent workmen from Egypt to Gematen to repair the temple.
7. At that time he was in Memphis.

Stela V, erected also in year 6 of Tirhakah³¹ is mainly

²⁸ V. Vikentieff, *La haute crue du Nil et l'averse de l'an 6 du roi Taharqa* (Cairo, 1930).

²⁹ F. Petrie, *Tanis*, II (London, 1889), pl. IX; the translation, made by F. Ll. Griffith, is found on pp. 29-30. See Breasted's translation and brief discussion of the Tanis Stela in his *Ancient Records of Egypt*, IV, 455-457. Some additional fragments were recovered by P. Montet during his excavations at Tanis and published by Leclant and Yoyotte in *Kémi*, X (1949), 28-42.

³⁰ See Macadam's translation and commentary of Stela IV in *op. cit.*, pp. 14-21.

³¹ See Macadam's transcription, translation and commentary of Stela V in *op. cit.*, pp. 22-32.

concerned with four events, repeatedly called "wonders," which had all occurred in the sixth year of the king's reign:

1. An unusually high Nile of 21 cubits.
2. Heavy rains in Nubia, a land which ordinarily has no rainfall.
3. The coronation of Tirhakah in Memphis after Shabataka's death.
4. The visit of his mother Abar, whom he had not seen for several years, ever since he had left her in Nubia at the age of 20, when he had been summoned by his royal brother to join him in Egypt.

The evidence of the two Kawa stelae seems clear enough to conclude that Tirhakah had spent the first 20 years of his life in Nubia, and had not been in Egypt before being called by his brother Shabataka to share the throne with him. In establishing this coregulation, Shabataka merely followed what his uncle Shabaka had done when he made Shabataka coregent. Since the date of Tirhakah's coronation in 690/89 is certain, Tirhakah must have been born in 710 or 709 B.C. as Macadam first pointed out,³² a conclusion which since the publication of the Kawa stelae has been endorsed by several scholars.³³

Those who have been doubtful about a coregency between Shabataka and Tirhakah point to the ambiguous sentence in lines 12/13 of Kawa Stela IV which says either (1) that Tirhakah "called to mind this temple [of Amen-Re at Gematen], which he had beheld as a youth [at the age of 20] in the first year of his reign," or (2) that he "called to mind this temple in the first year of his reign, which he had beheld as a youth." Macadam has discussed this passage and marshals weighty arguments in favor of the first reading, which he endorses.³⁴ It would indeed be difficult to understand why

³² Macadam, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

³³ Albright, *BASOR*, No. 130 (April, 1953), p. 9; Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 63; Gardiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 344, 345; Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

³⁴ Macadam, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 19. Leclant and Yoyotte (*BIFAO*, LI, 19-23) disagree with Macadam's readings and interpretations of the

Tirhakah, if he became sole ruler in 690/89 B.C., says that he remembered in his first year the bad condition of the temple at Gematen, but then waited another five years before doing anything to remedy the situation, because he states clearly that the repair work was begun in his sixth year. On the other hand, it makes perfect sense to see him starting to repair the temple in his sixth year, as soon as he had become sole ruler, having at that time a free hand to act as he desired, after remembering what the temple had looked like when he had seen it on his way to Egypt some five years earlier.

Adding the evidence as presented in the Kawa Stelae to the known dates of Tirhakah's reign as attested by the First Sereapeum Stela, the following historical conclusions can be reached: Tirhakah was born in 710 or 709 in Nubia, where he spent his youth until, at the age of 20, King Shabataka, his brother, summoned him to Egypt. He left his mother behind, and on his trip, being deeply religious, was greatly disturbed by the dilapidated state of repair in which he found the temple of Amen-Re at Gematen. Reaching Thebes in 690 or 689, he was made coregent by Shabataka and began to reckon his regnal years from that event on. When during his sixth year, *ca.* 684, Shabataka died in Memphis, Tirhakah became sole ruler. Several happy events seem to have made that same year, Tirhakah's coronation year as sole ruler, even more propitious, namely, unusual heavy rains in Nubia which "made all the hills [of that dry country] glisten," an exceptionally high inundation level of the Nile in Egypt, and the visit of his mother, whom he had not seen for several years. She probably came to witness the coronation ceremonies in Memphis.

passages which seem to point to a coregency, and Schmidt (*op. cit.*, p. 127, 128) has pointed to some weighty evidence against a six-year coregency between Shabataka and Tirhakah, though the last-mentioned scholar would allow a short coregency lasting up to one year. Since the matter of the coregency has no bearing on the main argument, that Tirhakah became king—either as coregent or sole ruler—at the age of 20 in 690/89 the question of the coregency will no longer here be pursued.

This evidence makes it impossible to date Sennacherib's campaign, which is connected in 2 Ki 19: 9 and Is 37: 9 with Tirhakah's arrival in Palestine, earlier than 690/89 B.C. It also makes it impossible to see in Tirhakah the Egyptian king who fought against Sennacherib in the battle of Eltekeh in 701 B.C., although the various records mentioning this battle lack the name of the king of Egypt whose army supposedly was defeated at Eltekeh. The result of this evidence is that those who defend the theory that Sennacherib carried out two campaigns against Hezekiah, one in 701 B.C. and a second one after 690/89, are now in a much stronger position than they were before the discovery of the Kawa stelae.

Having discussed the Egyptian evidence favoring a two-campaign theory, we must now turn to the Assyrian records to determine how they fit into it.

Sennacherib's Annals

A large number of cuneiform texts, mostly building inscriptions, contain information about Sennacherib's military campaigns. These sources, called annals, are conveniently listed by D. D. Luckenbill in his publication of the "Oriental Institute Prism" of 689 B.C.³⁵ The final edition of Sennacherib's campaigns, as far as presently known, is contained in this prism. It presents the records of eight campaigns, as does also the "Taylor Prism" of the British Museum, composed two years earlier, in 691 B.C. The various texts recovered in the course of the last century contain the records of either one, two, three, four, five, six or eight campaigns, depending on the year of Sennacherib's reign in which each was composed. The "Bellino Cylinder," for example, written in 702 B.C. describes only the first two campaigns, while the "Rassam Cylinder," written in 700, as well as six other duplicate cylinders, three in the British Museum and three in the Berlin

³⁵ D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago, 1924), pp. 20-22.

Museum, contain the records of the three first campaigns of Sennacherib.

While on the one hand a minor military action, called merely a raid by Luckenbill,³⁶ carried out against a few villages in the neighborhood of Nineveh, was listed as the fifth campaign, on the other hand, expeditions undertaken by Sennacherib's generals against Cilicia in 696 and Til-garimmu in 695, were not listed in the official annals.³⁷ They are known from other documents. Strangely enough, no annals have so far been found which contain a record of Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon, the most violent act of his reign, which is known only from a rock inscription at Bavian and from a foundation stela found at Assur.³⁸ Furthermore, of the last seven years of Sennacherib (689-681) no historical records have come to light except a fragmentary report of an undated campaign against the Arabs mentioned on an alabaster slab in the Berlin Museum.³⁹

This brief survey of the Assyrian records dealing with the military activity of Sennacherib shows clearly the varied character of these records, and also, that they have not yet provided us with a complete picture of what actually happened during Sennacherib's reign. Certain campaigns were repeated in all official records, others were mentioned only occasionally, as for example the campaigns against Cilicia and Til-garimmu; one battle which ended in defeat—the battle at Halulê—was described as a victory,⁴⁰ and some other battles or campaigns of which the king may not have had reason to boast may have been left unrecorded. It is therefore entirely possible to assume that a campaign to Palestine, which ended in a catastrophe, carried out during Sennacherib's last seven years, was not entered in any official records.⁴¹

³⁶ Luckenbill, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁷ Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago, 1927), II, 137, 138.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-153, 185.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴⁰ See Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib*, pp. 16, 17.

⁴¹ It may be in order, in this connection, to quote a statement made

It may be simply an accident that no annals of Sennacherib composed later than 689 have come to light so far, and any further discoveries of such later annals may alter the picture as we see it now. On the other hand, it appears that from Sennacherib's last years there simply was nothing to boast about, for which reason no annals were produced. It would certainly be strange if fate should have given to archaeologists and Assyriologists annalistic records of Sennacherib for almost every one of the first 15 years of his reign, and for some years several duplicates, but not a single copy of the annals from his last years if such annals had been written.

If therefore historical reasons, like those connected with Tirhakah, discussed above, lead us to the conclusion that Sennacherib must have led a military campaign to Palestine after 690 B.C., the Assyrian records cannot be called upon to rule out such a later campaign. In fact, it is reasonable to assume that as war-loving a king as Sennacherib would not have been satisfied to sit at home for eight years without going on another military campaign. Probably he carried out more than one campaign during the last eight years of his reign, although we have no Assyrian records of such undertakings, except for the one undated campaign against the Arabs, which has already been mentioned.

many years ago, but still valid today, about the historical reliability of Assyrian records: "All official historical literature of the Assyrians culminates in the excessive praise of the king, and has as its only aim the transmission of this praise to posterity. It is clear that under these circumstances the credibility of royal inscriptions is subject to suspicion. Not one royal inscription admits a failure in clear words; instead we know of cases in which an obvious defeat has been converted into a brilliant victory by the accommodating historiographer. In most cases, however, it was common practice to pass in silence over any enterprises of which the king had little reason to boast. Even where the king was successful, one must not fail to deduct much from the enthusiastic battle reports, and one should not forget to remain critical toward unexpected transitions or sudden breaks in the narrative where the reader hoped to hear much more." O. Weber, *Die Literatur der Babylonier und Assyrer* (Leipzig, 1907), pp. 227, 228.

Sennacherib's Third Campaign

After these general remarks about the annals and other records of Sennacherib containing historical information, a discussion of his third campaign, conducted in 701 B.C., is in order. As has already been stated, this third campaign is described in practically every historical document of Sennacherib written after this event had taken place. The various copies giving detailed descriptions of the third campaign are practically identical and show that they all go back to one master copy. However, some non-annalistic records mention this campaign only briefly.

The latest known edition of Sennacherib's annals is found in the "Oriental Institute Prism" of 689 B.C., and practically all modern translations of Sennacherib's account of his Palestinian campaign in 701 go back either to this edition⁴² or to the "Taylor Prism" of the British Museum of 691 B.C.⁴³

Sennacherib's first military action during his third campaign was directed against Phoenicia, controlled at that time by Sidon. Luli, King of Sidon, was defeated and fled, after which all coastal cities as far as Acre are said to have fallen into the hands of the Assyrians. A new king by the name of Ethba'al was installed over Sidon and Tyre, and the submission of the rulers of Amurru, Arvad, Byblos, Ashdod, Ammon, Moab, and Edom was accepted. Continuing his campaign southward along the coast, Sennacherib invaded the territory of Ashkelon and captured its rebellious king Sidqia, who was sent to Assyria into exile. Detaching from Ashkelon several cities over which Sidqia had ruled, he installed over the remaining part Rukibtu, a former king of Ashkelon, who evidently had

⁴² See for example, A. Leo Oppenheim, in J. B. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (2d ed.; Princeton, 1955), pp. 287, 288.

⁴³ See for example, E. Ebeling in H. Gressmann, ed., *Altorientalische Texte zum Alten Testament* (2d ed.; Berlin, 1926), pp. 352-354; R. W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (2d ed.; New York, 1926), pp. 340-344; Parrot, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-54; D. J. Wiseman, in D. W. Thomas, ed., *Documents from Old Testament Times* (New York, 1961), pp. 66, 67.

been loyal to Assyria but had been pushed from the throne by Sidqia.

In the meantime an Egyptian army had arrived in support of the anti-Assyrian forces in Palestine. This army is said by Sennacherib to have consisted of chariotry of Egyptian (*Mušri*) kings and of the king of Ethiopia (*Meluhha*), which would mean, if correctly reported by the Assyrians, that Shabaka's army was supported by forces of Egyptian princes, probably of the Delta region. Sennacherib claims to have decisively defeated the Egyptian and Ethiopian army at Eltekeh.⁴⁴ He then turned against Ekron, a neighboring city whose king, Padi, had tried to remain loyal to Sennacherib, but whom his own subjects had turned over as prisoner to King Hezekiah of Judah. Ekron was taken and its leading citizens were severely punished. Later Hezekiah was forced to release Padi, whom Sennacherib re-established on his throne at Ekron, and whose territory was enlarged by areas taken away from Judah and Ashkelon.

Having secured the coastal areas of Palestine and repelled the Egyptian forces which had attempted to aid the anti-Assyrian coalition, Sennacherib was now free to turn his attention to Hezekiah of Judah, who seems to have been more or less the soul of the western anti-Assyrian alliance. Sennacherib claims to have captured 46 of Hezekiah's fortified cities and numerous open villages, from which he said he deported 200,150 people⁴⁵ and great numbers of livestock. He further-

⁴⁴ Eltekeh was located at *Khirbet el-Muqenna*⁴ by W. F. Albright (*BASOR*, No. 15 [Oct., 1924], p. 8; No. 17 [Febr., 1925], pp. 5, 6). However, that site has recently been identified as Ekron by J. Naveh (*IEJ*, VIII [1958], 87-100). Whatever the exact location of Eltekeh and Ekron is, there can be no doubt that they lay near each other, as can be gathered from Josh 19 : 43, 44, and from Sennacherib's statements.

⁴⁵ This number has often been considered as an exaggeration (see for example A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria* [New York, 1923], p. 305; R. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* [7th ed.; Stuttgart, 1925], p. 389, n. 4), and A. Ungnad has tried to show how the number 2,150 in the original records became 200,150 in the official annals, "Die Zahl der von Sanherib deportierten Judäer," *ZAW*, LIX (1943), 199-202.

more says that he besieged Jerusalem, Hezekiah's capital, although he makes no mention of having taken it, which he would certainly not have left unrecorded if Jerusalem had been captured or surrendered. However, his claims, that he "made Padi, their [Ekron's] king, come from Jerusalem,"⁴⁶ and that he forced Hezekiah to pay a great tribute which was sent "later, to Nineveh, my lordly city,"⁴⁷ seem to indicate that Hezekiah somehow was able to buy himself off,⁴⁸ and that Sennacherib departed from Palestine before having conquered Jerusalem.

Those who believe in only one campaign consider the catastrophe, recorded in 2 Ki 19:35, to have been the cause of Sennacherib's hasty return to Assyria, and think that he thus was prevented from accomplishing the full aim of his campaign. However, we may find other possible reasons for his return. News from the east, where Elam and Babylonia were ever-festering sores in the Assyrian empire, may have been of such a nature that it seemed wise to be satisfied with the voluntary submission of Hezekiah, without losing precious time which a prolonged siege and attack of the strongly fortified city of Jerusalem would have taken.⁴⁹

The question remains whether the reliefs from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh, now in the British Museum, showing the siege and conquest of Lachish,⁵⁰ depict an event during the earlier campaign of Sennacherib to Palestine or whether they refer to a later campaign. If Lachish was one of the 46 cities taken by the Assyrians, as seems likely, there is nothing to

⁴⁶ Translation is that of Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ In a Bull Inscription Sennacherib said that he "laid waste the large district of Judah and made the overbearing and proud Hezekiah, its king, bow in submission," Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

⁴⁹ The reader may be reminded of the fact that it took Nebuchadnezzar II more than a year and a half to take Jerusalem, a century later.

⁵⁰ Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton, 1954), Nos. 371-374; R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs* (London, n.d.), Nos. 44-49.

prevent us from attributing the events depicted in these sculptures to the campaign of 701 B.C., although the Assyrian annals do not mention Lachish. However, the possibility should not be ruled out that the Lachish sculptures refer to the second campaign, of which Sennacherib may have had little reason to boast except for the capture of the strong city of Lachish, the fall of which during the later campaign is implied in 2 Ki 19: 8, though not specifically spelled out.⁵¹

That the reliefs definitely deal with a campaign against Judah is proved by two inscriptions accompanying them. One inscription, engraved over a scene depicting Sennacherib receiving prisoners and spoil of the conquered city, reads: "Sennacherib, king of the world, king of Assyria, sat upon a *nîmedu*-throne and passed in review the booty from Lachish (*Lakisu*)." ⁵² Another inscription, engraved above the picture of the royal tent, reads: "Tent of Sennacherib, king of Assyria." ⁵³ While it is certain that the reliefs refer to Sennacherib's conquest of Lachish, the question must remain open whether the conquest depicted occurred during his first or second campaign to Palestine.

The Biblical Records

The Biblical records of Sennacherib's campaign or campaigns are found mainly in two parallel passages—2 Ki 18: 13 to 19: 36 and Is 36: 1 to 37: 37—which are almost identical, except that 2 Ki 18: 14-16 has no parallel in Is. The Chronicler's story in 2 Chr 32: 1-21, on the other hand, summarizes some parts of the 2 Ki/Is report but leaves out many details, though it contains some additional information with regard to the preparations made by Hezekiah to meet the expected Assyrian onslaught. In our discussion of Sennacherib's campaigns the narrative of 2 Chr will be disregarded, and

⁵¹ This argument is based on my view that 2 Ki 19: 8 and parallel texts refer to the second campaign of Sennacherib, as will be discussed below.

⁵² Oppenheim, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

⁵³ Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, II, 198.

quotations, unless otherwise indicated, refer to the recension of 2 Ki 18 and 19.

A study of the Biblical record shows that it easily falls into three parts:

(1) 2 Ki 18:13-16 contains a brief statement paralleling essentially the main features of Sennacherib's annals. It says that Sennacherib campaigned against Judah and captured all fortified cities. The Assyrian success convinced Hezekiah of the uselessness of further resistance, for which reason he sent an offer of submission to Sennacherib, who was at Lachish at that time. This offer was accepted, and a large tribute was placed upon Hezekiah.

(2) 2 Ki 18:17 to 19:8 contains the story of the mission of Rabshakeh to Jerusalem. It tells in detail how this high officer, accompanied by an army, made fruitless efforts to talk the population of Jerusalem and the ministers of Hezekiah into a surrender. However, Hezekiah, assured by Isaiah that Sennacherib on hearing "a rumor" (ch. 19:7) would return to his land without making an effort to take Jerusalem, refused to surrender. Thereupon Rabshakeh returned to Sennacherib, whom he found fighting against Libnah.

(3) 2 Ki 19:9-36 contains the story of a second mission sent to Hezekiah by Sennacherib. This time messengers carrying a threatening letter were sent to Jerusalem after hearing of the approach of Tirhakah's army. Isaiah, predicting the downfall of the Assyrians, assured Hezekiah that Sennacherib would return to his land without taking Jerusalem. His prediction was fulfilled when 185,000 soldiers in the Assyrian army lost their lives in one night, weakening Sennacherib's forces to such an extent that he had to return to Assyria.

Scholars who believe in only one campaign have usually considered (1) to be a résumé of the whole campaign, with more details given in (2) and (3), though they generally do not agree in their views whether (2) and (3) should be considered as two parallel though somewhat different narratives of the same events, or should be treated as one continuous narrative

of successive events. Hence, some scholars believe that Sennacherib sent two embassies to Hezekiah while others think that only one was dispatched. All reconstructions of the events, if one believes in only one campaign, pose serious problems. Some of these will be mentioned in the following brief discussion of a few reconstructions of the course of events as seen by defenders of the one-campaign theory:

A. T. Olmstead in his *History of Assyria*,⁵⁴ believing in only one embassy to Hezekiah, describes the following sequence of events. After Sennacherib had taken Phoenicia and accepted the submission and tribute of the Ammonites and several other nations, he fought against Tirhakah at Eltekeh and defeated him. He then took Ekron and punished the city, subsequently also Ashkelon. In the meantime Rabshakeh was dispatched to Jerusalem. Hezekiah, who had learned by bitter experience not to lean on Egypt, offered his submission and paid a high tribute. He thus bought himself off, since Sennacherib was found willing to accept his vassalage instead of an unconditional surrender. During Rabshakeh's visit to Jerusalem to receive Hezekiah's tribute, Lachish was taken by Sennacherib, after which he moved his army to Libnah, where he heard of the new approach of an Egyptian army which had recovered from the earlier defeat at Eltekeh. However, the outbreak of the plague ravaged the Assyrian army, with the result that Sennacherib came to terms with Shabaka of Egypt and then returned to Assyria.

Rudolf Kittel, also believing in only one embassy, defends the following reconstruction of events in his *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*.⁵⁵ He thinks that the battle of Eltekeh, fought after the taking of Ashkelon, was not a decisive victory for the Assyrians, which would explain the continued resistance of Hezekiah. Sennacherib therefore turned against the fortified Judean cities. They surrendered without a fight (see Is 22 : 3).

⁵⁴ Olmstead, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-309; see also Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria* (New York, 1931), pp. 471-481.

⁵⁵ Kittel, *op. cit.*, pp. 387-390, 430-439.

This unforeseen course of events forced Hezekiah to offer his submission to Sennacherib by sending a heavy tribute to Lachish and surrendering Padi, the loyal king of Ekron. Sennacherib, however, demanding Hezekiah's unconditional surrender, sent Rabshakeh with an army to Jerusalem to enforce it. In the meantime Lachish was captured, and when the Assyrians moved to Libnah, the Egyptians under Tirhakah approached again. However, a catastrophic disease broke out in the Assyrian army and forced Sennacherib to return to Assyria and to give up any further ambitions of conquest.

Theodore H. Robinson in his *History of Israel*,⁵⁶ Vol. I, believing in two embassies, has a different reconstruction of events. He thinks that the battle of Eltekeh was fought against Tirhakah after Rabshakeh's return from Jerusalem, where he had obtained Hezekiah's surrender and tribute. Sennacherib, however, being unsure of Hezekiah's loyalty, when he heard of the approach of the Egyptian army sent messengers with a letter to Hezekiah to demand an immediate unconditional surrender. In the meantime Sennacherib defeated the Egyptians, then took Ekron, but was prevented from following up his victory by the outbreak of the plague in his army.

André Parrot in his *Nineveh and the Old Testament*,⁵⁷ believing also in two embassies to Jerusalem, follows as closely as possible the sequence of events as described in the Biblical record. He believes that Hezekiah, after Sennacherib's arrival in the Philistine plain, on the one hand prepared Jerusalem for resistance (2 Chr 32 : 1-8), but nevertheless sent envoys to Sennacherib at Lachish to ask for peace terms. Sennacherib, while concentrating his efforts on the siege of

⁵⁶ W. O. E. Oesterly and T. H. Robinson, *A History of Israel* (Oxford, 1932), I, 394-399, 409, 500.

⁵⁷ Parrot, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-62. Parrot, who knows about the new evidence concerning Tirhakah, and that "he was only nine years old in 701" (see *op. cit.*, p. 55, n. 3), nevertheless maintains without any further explanation on p. 60 of his work that Tirhakah fought against Sennacherib at Eltekeh.

Lachish, thereupon sent officers and some forces to Hezekiah for negotiations. Bolstered by Isaiah's support, Hezekiah stiffened up and refused to surrender, so that Rabshakeh had to return with a negative answer. He rejoined Sennacherib at Libnah, to which city he had moved after the fall of Lachish. When Sennacherib heard of the approach of Tirhakah and his army, which led to the battle at Eltekeh and a victory of the Assyrians over the Egyptians, he sent a second embassy to Hezekiah, this time with a threatening letter. Hezekiah gives in and pays a high tribute, though he is spared further humiliations by the hasty retreat of Sennacherib from Palestine caused by the outbreak of the plague in his army.

These four examples of scholarly reconstructions of the events connected with Sennacherib's 701 B.C. campaign, using the Biblical and Assyrian records, show a variety of opinions which could be increased indefinitely if more authorities were drawn into the picture. However, the reconstructions by the defenders of the one-campaign theory do not by any means meet all the problems involved, and many objections can be made against various items in them. Only a few of these objections will be discussed.⁵⁸

(1) *Two encounters with the Egyptians.* Is it reasonable to assume that Sennacherib had to meet the Egyptian army twice in the same year, as some scholars think (e.g., Olmstead, Kittel), first at Eltekeh and again a little later, after the defeated Egyptians had recovered from the Eltekeh disaster? Both the Assyrian records and the Bible mention only one encounter, the former the battle at Eltekeh early in Sennacherib's campaign, the latter the approach of Tirhakah in the later part of the campaign.

(2) *One encounter with the Egyptians.* Some scholars (e.g., Robinson, Parrot), seeing the difficulty just mentioned, attempt to circumvent it by compressing it into one encounter,

⁵⁸ For some other arguments raised against the one-campaign theories, see also John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 284-286.

assuming that the Assyrian annals place the battle of Eltekeh too early in the narrative, and that it should be seen as the result of Tirhakah's arrival in Palestine after the fall of Lachish. However, this view creates another problem. Eltekeh and Ekron lay close together at some distance to the north of Lachish. Sennacherib describes logically that he first fought the battle of Eltekeh and conquered Ekron before moving inland against Judah. Is it likely that he would have passed the hostile city of Ekron and left it unconquered at his back while besieging Lachish, and that he moved back to Ekron only after the fall of Lachish?

(3) *Why did Hezekiah both surrender and refuse to surrender?*

All kinds of historical juggling have to be performed to explain how Hezekiah is said first to have surrendered and to have paid a high tribute (2 Ki 18: 14-16), but afterwards to have refused to do this very thing, for Sennacherib through envoys and letter accused him of active rebellion and stubborn defiance (ch. 18: 19-22, 29, 30; 19: 10-13). That all this should have happened at the same time is not easy to believe.

(4) *Would Hezekiah have continued to rely on Egypt after the battle of Eltekeh?* He was accused of relying on Egypt (ch. 18: 21). Would Rabshakeh not have pointed out that the Egyptians had just been beaten, instead of saying that they were merely an unreliable "broken reed"? Scholars who have recognized this difficulty have put the battle of Eltekeh later, but in doing that have created the difficulties mentioned under (2).

(5) *Did Hezekiah surrender, and was he spared a surrender by a deliverance?* To assume that Sennacherib's campaign ended in an unconditional surrender of Hezekiah, as the Assyrian annals claim, and as the Bible confirms (ch. 18: 14-16), and also to believe that it ended through a miraculous deliverance, seems rather contradictory.

In the author's opinion all these and several other historical difficulties are solved by accepting a two-campaign theory, as is now being done by an increasing number of scholars.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Hugo Winckler seems to have been the first who suggested the

(I) *The First Campaign* (701 B.C.).⁶⁰ It has generally been observed that there are virtually no disagreements between Sennacherib's annals and the Biblical narrative of 2 Ki 18: 13-16, although the latter mentions only the military events pertaining to Judah. It confirms Sennacherib's claim of having conquered all fortified cities of Judah, 46 in number, according to the Assyrian annals, and admits Hezekiah's submission and his payment of a heavy tribute to Sennacherib. The only discrepancy between the two reports appears in the payment of tribute. Both accounts agree with regard to the

two-campaign theory in his *Untersuchungen zur altorientalischen Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1889), pp. 31-35, and in several of his works written later. Among scholars who followed this theory were Prášek, *op. cit.*; Otto Weber, "Sanherib König von Assyrien 705-681," *Der alte Orient*, VI: 2 (Leipzig, 1905), p. 21; K. Fullerton, *BS*, LXIII (1906), 611; P. Dhorme, *RB*, VII (1910), 503-520; Alfred Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des alten Orients* (4th ed.; Leipzig, 1930), pp. 588-596; Albright, *JQR*, XXIV (1934), 370, 371; *BASOR*, No. 130 (April, 1953), pp. 8, 9; *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York, 1963), pp. 78, 79; Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 282. Bright calls the one-campaign theory the "majority opinion," but the present writer in his preparation for this article has come to the conclusion that the number of scholars who accept a two-campaign theory is steadily increasing, especially since the discovery of the Kawa stela of Tirhakah.

⁶⁰ Although scholars differ in their views with regard to the chronology of Hezekiah's reign (see my article in *AUSS*, II [1964], 40-52), there can hardly be any doubt with regard to the date of Hezekiah's death: ca. 687/86 B.C. See E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (2d ed.; Chicago, 1955), pp. 153-157; Albright, *BASOR*, No. 100 (Dec., 1945), p. 22, n. 28. This date is based on the statement made in 2 Ki 18: 13 and Is 36: 1, that Sennacherib's campaign took place in the 14th year of Hezekiah. The Assyrian annals date this campaign rather definitely in the year 701 B.C.: "Since the latest edition [of the annals] which does not contain an account of the Palestine campaign is that of the year 702, and the earliest known edition which does contain the account is of the year 700, it is certain that the campaign must have taken place prior to 700 and it is safe to assume that it took place after 702—consequently the date that is usually assigned for the campaign is 701." Honor, *op. cit.*, p. 4. If Hezekiah's 14th year of (sole) reign was the year 702/01 (autumn-autumn) and he died after a reign of 29 years (2 Ki 18: 2), his death year must have been 687/86 B.C.

gold (30 talents), but while the Bible speaks of a tribute of 300 talents of silver paid by Hezekiah, Sennacherib claims to have received 800 talents. Whether his claim is an exaggeration or whether the discrepancy has to be explained by assuming the existence of two different types of talents, the Babylonian lighter talent and the Jewish heavier silver talent, as many scholars believe,⁶¹ cannot be ascertained with the information available at the present time.

It can easily be understood that Hezekiah, learning of the defeat of the Egyptian army at Eltekeh and the break-up of the anti-Assyrian alliance, and seeing that all his cities were captured and his country was overrun, would ask for peace terms while the Assyrians were still at Lachish in the Shephelah before they would appear at Jerusalem. There is nothing inconsistent and incredible in this interpretation of the course of events of the 701 campaign as known from Sennacherib's annals and from 2 Ki 18 : 13-16. It should also be pointed out that several prophecies of Isaiah, whose genuineness no one denies, had clearly foreseen a national disaster as the result of Hezekiah's unfortunate pro-Egyptian and anti-Assyrian activities (e.g., Is 28 : 14-22; 30 : 1-17; 31 : 1-3).

That Sennacherib in his annals says that Hezekiah's tribute was sent to Nineveh after the Assyrian army's return, seems to indicate that Sennacherib had urgent reasons to break off his western campaign in a hurry and return to the east before the troubles in Babylonia or Elam, or in both of those countries, should get out of hand. He may therefore have been satisfied with Hezekiah's submission and promise of tribute, without insisting on an unconditional surrender or capture of the capital of Judah at that time.

(2) *The Second Campaign.* The date for the second campaign can be fixed only within the limits of Tirhakah's arrival in

⁶¹ To the references given by James A. Montgomery and H. S. Gehman in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings* (New York, 1951), p. 485, can be added the *Bible du Centenaire*, note g to 2 Ki 18 : 14; A. Pohl, *Historia populi Israël* (Rome, 1933), p. 130.

Egypt in 690/89⁶² and the year of Hezekiah's death in 687/86.⁶³ For this later campaign no Assyrian records are available, as has already been pointed out; in fact, nothing is known about Sennacherib's activities during these years, except that he carried out a campaign against the Arabs of which the date remains unknown.⁶⁴ Hence, our sole information for this campaign is the Biblical narratives and possibly Herodotus' somewhat legendary statement concerning Sennacherib's defeat while fighting against Egypt.⁶⁵

The Biblical parallel records of 2 Ki 18: 17 to 19: 36 and Is 36: 2 to 37: 37 probably contain only some highlights of Sennacherib's second Palestinian campaign. In the first place they lack a date, and furthermore, they fail to say how much military success, if any, Sennacherib had in Judah,⁶⁶ and whether he was successful in his encounter with Tirhakah's army, if an encounter took place, before his army suffered the catastrophe described at the end of the Biblical narratives.

The main features of these parallel stories are Sennacherib's two embassies to Jerusalem, the first sent from Lachish during the siege of that city (2 Ki 18: 17), the second apparently dispatched from Libnah (ch. 19: 8, 9). Both embassies were unsuccessful, because Hezekiah, strongly supported in his

⁶² See above, p. 10.

⁶³ See above, note 60.

⁶⁴ See above, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Herodotus, ii. 141 (Loeb. ed., I, 447-449): King Sennacherib "with a great host of Arabians and Assyrians" marched against King Sethos of Egypt. When the army was encamped at Pelusium, "a multitude of field mice swarmed over the Assyrian camp and devoured their quivers and their bows and the handles of their shields likewise, insomuch that they fled the next day unarmed and many fell." It has been thought that the legend was based on a historical kernel, namely, that the ancients knew that the plague had been carried into the Assyrian camp by rats (here called field mice). Herodotus adds that to "this day a stone statue of the Egyptian king stands in Hephaistus' temple, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription to this effect: 'Look on me, and fear the gods.'" He claims to have received this information from Egyptian priests (*ibid.*, 142).

⁶⁶ The capture of Lachish is implied in 2 Ki 19: 8, though not explicitly spelled out.

defiance by Isaiah, refused to submit to Assyrian rule and to surrender his city voluntarily.

The culmination of the narratives is the disaster which befell Sennacherib's army in Judah and which forced the remnants of the Assyrian army to retreat. It is not impossible that Herodotus' story of Sennacherib's defeat at Pelusium, already referred to, is a vague memory of that disaster, although he places it in a wrong time of Egyptian history and in a wrong place.⁶⁷ Scholars who consider the catastrophe to which the Biblical stories and Herodotus refer, as a historical event, usually think that a sudden outbreak of a disastrous disease, possibly the bubonic plague, decimated the Assyrians. Some have seen it as a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that the Lord would send a "wasting sickness among his stout warriors" (Is 10: 16, RSV), and have also pointed to Is 10: 24, 25; 17: 14; 31: 8, 9 as utterances having a bearing on this catastrophe.⁶⁸

Just as certain of Isaiah's prophecies, already referred to, seem to point to Sennacherib's first campaign in 701 B.C. with its disastrous results for Judah, several other prophecies of Isaiah voice a calm assurance that Jerusalem would be saved by the Lord and that the might of Assyria would be broken (see Is 14: 24-27; 17: 12-14; 29: 5-8; 31: 4-9). In fact, some of these prophetic utterances are very similar in tone and purport to the messages which Isaiah sent to Hezekiah at the successive arrivals of Sennacherib's two embassies at Jerusalem (2 Ki 19: 6, 7, 20-31). It seems therefore that a careful study of Isaiah's messages also forcefully supports the two-campaign theory.

Furthermore, the later campaign finds support from the fact that the Biblical narratives (2 Ki 19: 37; Is 37: 38) give

⁶⁷ Most scholars consider the legendary story of Herodotus (ii. 141) to be based on a historical fact. For references see Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 346, 347; Kittel, *op. cit.*, p. 436, n. 2; Montgomery and Gehman, *op. cit.*, p. 497, 498.

⁶⁸ See for references Rowley, *op. cit.*, p. 423, n. 3.

the impression that Sennacherib's assassination took place soon after his Palestinian campaign that had ended in disaster. If there were only one campaign against Hezekiah, in 701 B.C., Sennacherib would have survived it by almost 20 years, because his death did not occur until 682, but if his disastrous campaign took place between 690/89 and 686, his death would have followed after a comparatively short time. It must be admitted that this last argument used in support of two campaigns against Hezekiah is not very strong, since the Biblical stories do not say how long Sennacherib "dwelt at Nineveh" (2 Ki 19 : 36) after his return from Palestine before he was murdered, but the text does not give the impression that it was a period of almost two decades, as one would be forced to assume if Sennacherib's disastrous campaign came in 701.

A brief observation on the number of slain Assyrians should be in order. The Hebrew texts in the two parallel narratives presents the number in the following way:

2 Ki 19 : 35 מאה⁶⁹ ושמונים וחמשה אלף
 Is 37 : 36 מאה ושמונים וחמשה אלף

These figures are usually rendered as 185,000, but read literally "180 and 5000" for the passage in 2 Ki, and "100 and 80 and 5000" in the Is passage. That this number has been rendered 185,000 by all modern translators is due to the LXX tradition, and also because the number 180, the smaller number, precedes the larger one, 5000. However, exceptions to the normal procedure, that the larger number precedes the smaller one, are found in Hebrew literature. 1 Ki 4 : 32 (Hebrew 5 : 12), for example, states that Solomon composed *ואלף* songs, which is regularly rendered 1005.⁷⁰ By

⁶⁹ According to Kittel's *BH*³ the conjunction "and" is added (just as in Is) in 34 Hebrew manuscripts; also in Syriac and in the Targum.

⁷⁰ Kittel's *BH*³ lists the LXX and some Vulgate manuscripts as reading "5000," indicating that in their *Vorlage* the conjunction "and" had apparently been missing.

analogy it should be permissible to read the number of slain Assyrians as 5,180 instead of 185,000.

Although we have hardly any exact figures on the size of a regular Assyrian army, it is unlikely that a campaigning force was comprised of 200,000 men or more, so that 185,000 could die in one night. The highest figure ever given for an Assyrian army is 120,000 men, with whom Shalmaneser III fought against Damascus in his 14th regnal year.⁷¹ Many times the armies may have been smaller. It is conceivable that the death of more than 5000 soldiers in one night as the result of the outbreak of a mysterious disease could result in such a panic that a sudden return of the surviving forces became necessary, the more so, since ancient man was always inclined to see the hand of a divine power in such an ordeal and to consider it as a punishment. It is not necessary to assume that only the death of an incredibly high number of soldiers—185,000, as the translators from pre-Christian times on have thought it necessary to render the Hebrew text—could have forced Sennacherib to abandon his military objectives and return as a beaten man.

⁷¹ Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, I, 240. See for a discussion of the size of Assyrian armies Bruno Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, I (Heidelberg, 1920), 101, 102.

Postscript: Due a regrettable lapse of memory when preparing this article I forgot that Richard A. Parker had convincingly demonstrated that the reign of Psamtik I began in 664 B.C. and not in 663 as most books on Egyptian history claim (see his "The Length of Reign of Amasis and the Beginning of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty," *Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo*, XV [1957], 208-212). The results of Parker's findings have found support from a Demotic text as has recently been shown by Erik Hornung, "Die Sonnenfinsternis nach dem Tode Psammetichs I.," *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, XCII (1965), 38, 39. This shift of the date of the beginning of the 26th Dynasty from 663 to 664 B.C. means that the regnal years of Tirhakah as presented in the present article must be raised by one year. However, the main argument of the present study is not effected by this change of date.