

BBFA Study: The Divided Kingdom, 930-586 BC  
“A Greater Power is with Us”: Seeking God in a Crisis  
Hezekiah and the Siege of Jerusalem, 701 BC

### Main Sources

- Old Testament: 2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 29-32; Isaiah 7-8, 36-39; Micah
- Archaeological etc: Sennacherib, *Annals*; reliefs from Nineveh; excavation of Lachish and Jerusalem; Herodotus, *The Histories*

### Background

- Death of Solomon (930 BC) results in a Divided Kingdom with the Northern Kingdom (Israel) under Jeroboam and Southern Kingdom (Judah) under Rehoboam
- Assyrian Empire is a rising superpower in the second half of C.8th BC. In 734 BC, Tiglath-Pileser III, conducts campaigns into northern Israel. Israel loses most of her territory and becomes a vassal, or tribute paying, state under King Hoshea
- In 722 BC Samaria, is finally conquered by Sargon II and the people are taken into exile in Assyria. Samaria becomes an Assyrian province

### Hezekiah (715-686 BC)

- Judah, Southern Kingdom, under King Ahaz (730-715 BC), Hezekiah's father, reaches its lowest point (2 Chron 28:1-4, 19-20)
- Hezekiah is the first king to be praised without reservation (2 Kings 18:1-7a, 2 Chron 29:1-2)
- Religious reforms: removal of idolatry, re-establishment of the worship of YHWH alone and centralising worship in Jerusalem; renewal of the covenant (2 Chron 29:3-31:20)
- Culminates in the celebration of the Passover in the Temple (Chronicles 30:1-5); a new sense of national unity and spiritual renewal (2 Chron. 30:12)
- Compared with both David and Solomon. His reign is a high point in this period, "...and God heard them." (2 Chron. 30: 23-27)

### Assyrian Threat and Hezekiah's Preparations

- Foreign policy (2 Kings 18:7b-8). Leads rebellion against Assyria (705 BC) and conquers the Philistines
- Building program (2 Chronicles 32:1-5,20). Strengthens Jerusalem's defences; secures its water supply (Gihon Spring and Siloam Tunnel); strengthens its walls and builds up armaments

### Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem, 701BC

- Sennacherib advances along the Phoenician coast and south along the coastal plain. Conquers the Egyptians and the Philistine cities of Ashkelon and Ekron, before turning against Judah

- Lachish conquered along with 46 other Judaeen cities. Hezekiah initially capitulates by stripping the Temple to pay off the invader (2 Kings 18:13-16)
- The Rabshakeh's two blasphemous speeches mock both Hezekiah and YHWH. "How then can your God deliver you from my hand?" (2 Kings 18:19-23; 28-35; 2 Chron 32:10-15)

### **Hezekiah's Response: He turns to God**

- He exhorts the people to put their trust in God because he is more powerful than the Assyrians and gains their confidence. "Be strong and courageous....for there is a greater power with us than with him" (2 Chron 32:7-8)
- He pours out his heart in prayer believing God will deliver them (2 Kings 19:14-19)
- He works with God's representative, the prophet Isaiah. He sends for him, prays with him and listens to the message he brings from God: God has heard his prayer, the siege would fail and a remnant of the house of Judah would survive and flourish (2 Kings 19:20-34)

### **God's Deliverance**

- Jerusalem is besieged and according to Sennacherib, Hezekiah is "shut up like a bird in a cage" (Sennacherib's *Annals*)
- But, in fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, the city is saved by the miraculous' intervention of an angel of the LORD. The Assyrians are forced to retreat "by the way they came" and later Sennacherib himself is assassinated by his own sons (2 Kings 19:35-37)
- Compare accounts of siege from other ancient sources: Sennacherib's, *Annals* and Herodotus's, *The Histories*

### **Lessons in a crisis:**

What can we learn from Hezekiah in our calling?

- He prepares thoroughly for the impending crisis. Paul urges us to prepare for spiritual warfare by putting on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-18)
- He pours out his heart to God in prayer. Paul encourages us to "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- He trusts in God's greater power for his salvation. Paul encourages us to trust in God's "power that is at work within us." (Ephesians 3:20). See also Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:18-22; 3:14-20

## The Divided Kingdom, c.830 BC



<https://www.ancient.eu/israel/> by Richardprins published on 26 April 2012

## Neo-Assyrian Empire C.9th-7th BC



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_the\\_Assyrian\\_Empire#/media/File:Map\\_of\\_Assyria.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_Assyrian_Empire#/media/File:Map_of_Assyria.png)

## Taylor Prism, *The Annals of Sennacherib*



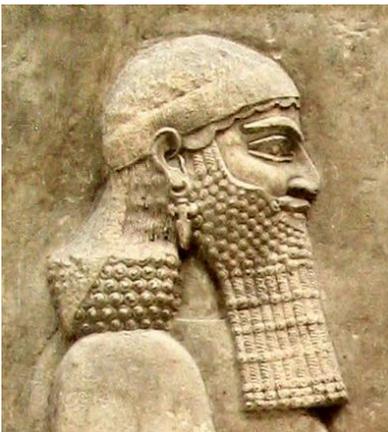
[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W\\_1855-1003-1](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1855-1003-1)

“As for the king of Judah, Hezekiah, who had not submitted to my authority, I besieged and captured forty-six of his fortified cities, along with many smaller towns, taken in battle with my battering rams. ... I took as plunder 200,150 people, both small and great, male and female, along with a great number of animals including horses, mules, donkeys, camels, oxen, and sheep. As for Hezekiah, **I shut him up like a caged bird** in his royal city of Jerusalem. I then constructed a series of fortresses around him, and I did not allow anyone to come out of the city gates. His towns which I captured I gave to the kings of Ashod, Ekron, and Gaza.”

## Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 2:141

“As he (King Sethos) lay here facing the Assyrians **thousands of field mice** swarmed over them during the night, and ate their quivers, their bowstrings, and the leather handles of their shields, so that the following day, having no arms to fight with, they abandoned their position and suffered severe losses during their retreat.”

## Siege of Lachish, 701 BC



[2011/11/22/who-murdered-king-sennacherib/](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1855-1003-1)  
<https://allmesopotamia.wordpress.com/>

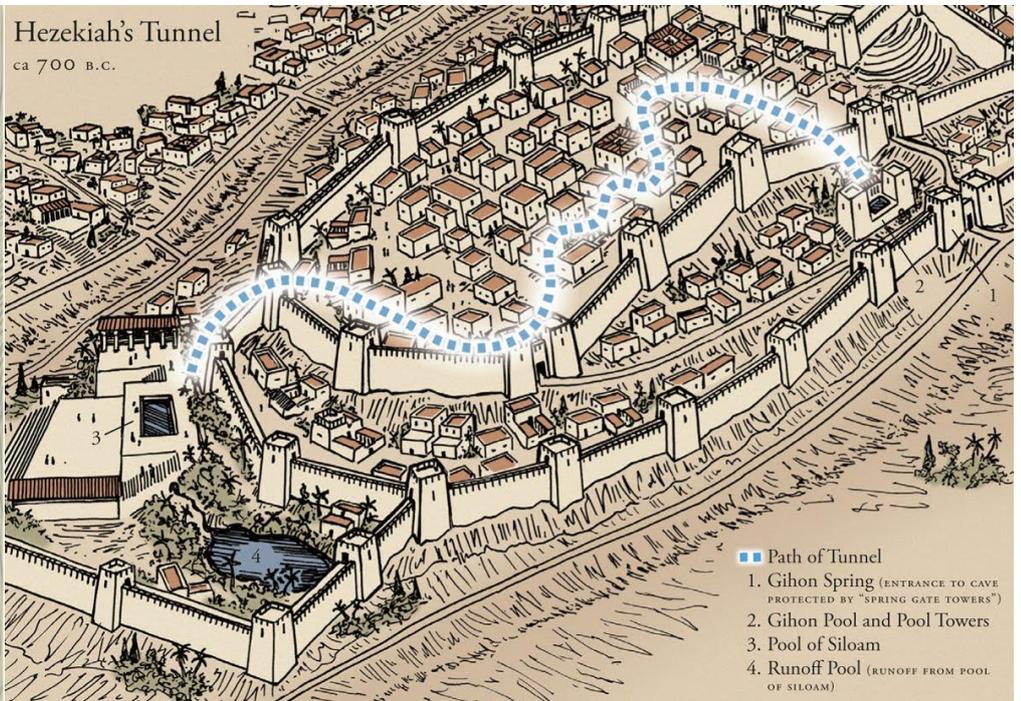
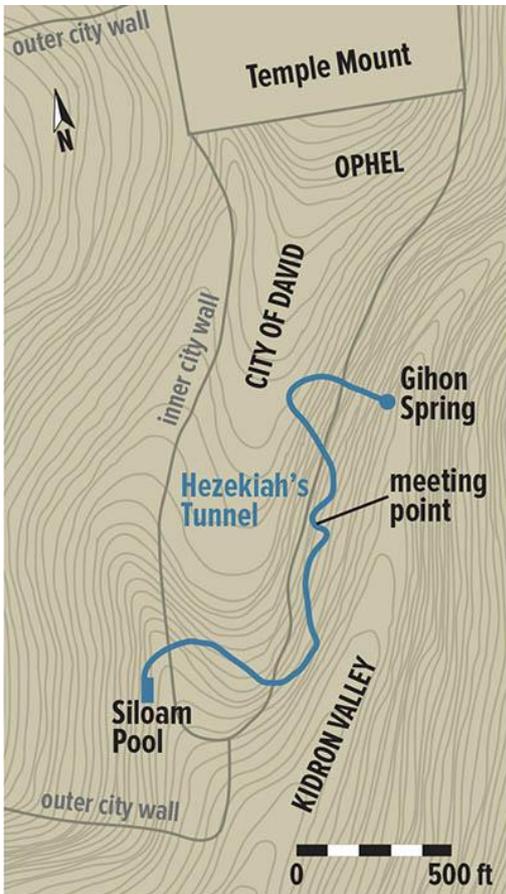
Sennacherib relief



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/shankrad/5224695543>

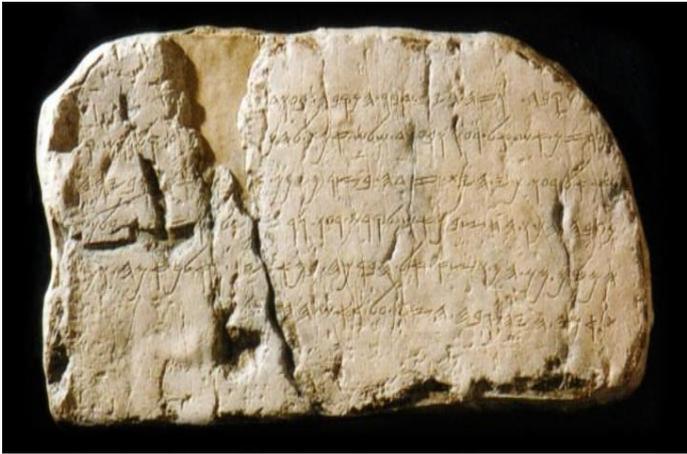
Lachish reliefs, British Museum, which were originally mounted at the palace of Sennacherib in Nineveh.

# Siloam or Hezekiah's Tunnel



<https://biblicalisraeltours.com/tag/siloam-tunnel/>

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Hezekiah-plan.jpg>



<https://www.hopechannel.com/au/read/siloam-inscription>

This is the story of the tunnel while ...the axes were against each other and while three cubits were left to (cut?) ... the voice of a man ...called to his counterpart, (for) there was ZADA in the rock, on the right ... and on the day of the tunnel (being finished) the stonecutters struck each man towards his counterpart, axe against axe and flowed water from the source to the pool for 1,200 cubits and (100?) cubits was the height over the head of the stonecutters ...

-- Siloam Inscription translation, C.8th BC



Sources: Photos by Peter Heath, 2018, unless otherwise attributed.

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